Japanese-Korean Relations

*Historical Ideas of Superiority and their effect on Current Relations with the Koreas*

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í japönsku máli og menningu

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Janúar 2016
Abstract
This thesis will be a detailed account of Japanese-Korean relations from prehistory to the present. It will describe the good relations between the Japanese Archipelago and the Korean Peninsula until the 7\textsuperscript{th} century AD and why they changed for the worse as ideas of Japan’s superiority began to permeate society. Attention will be drawn to the various elements that contributed to this belief throughout history as well as the events that were partly caused by this belief, culminating in the annexation of Korea in 1910 and colonial rule until 1945. The thesis will then describe the effect the events caused by this notion of superiority have had on Japan’s modern relations with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, or North Korea and South Korea respectively.
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Timelines

Relations

The end of good relations 668

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Introduction

The relationship between Japan and Korea is a long and complicated one. Both states are very old, with evidence of civilization dating back thousands of years BC. Only following the Second World War did it become possible to research the countries’ complicated history in a relatively unbiased and professional manner.

Archaeology is generally accepted to be the best way to research old civilizations, yet it is not without its pitfalls as both human error and political agenda often enter the mix. During the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945 and the Japanese period of intense nationalism and belief in the emperor from 1868 to 1945, archaeology was heavily restricted. Anything found in Korea was to be interpreted in accordance to Japanese superiority and research on Japanese history could not interfere with the ideology that the emperor was descended from the gods. Not only do these views of Japanese superiority color the archaeological findings and historical research of that time, in Japan there were remnants of them after the Second World War so that until the 1970s and 1980s, care must be taken when interpreting Japanese academic sources. The same applies to Korean academic sources, for those who were not colored by extreme Japanese nationalism were often full of extreme Korean nationalism instead. Therefore, it is only recently that it has become possible to research the two countries on a middle ground that is necessary for a professional analysis, although unfortunately, this is not yet the case when it comes to archaeology in North Korea.

When researching the history of Japan and Korea, the geographic location of the two states must be kept in mind and how it has affected the cultures through millennia. Japan is an island and as such it is isolated from its neighbors. The wars and struggles in Japan were mostly between people that lived on the same island and had similar cultures, language, and history with each other. Korea, however, is a part of the Asian mainland. Not only did Korea have internal struggles and wars, the country also had problems with its neighbors, especially China, who were more often than not far larger and more powerful. Furthermore, in addition to these neighbors being longer established than Korea, they also shared borders with the country. It is also interesting to note that when a centralized state appeared in Japan, i.e. the Yamato (ca. 3rd century to 7th century), that state seems to always be the center of other state formations. Instead of being destroyed by another neighbor state, the Yamato state develops from within and becomes bigger and stronger, eventually evolving into the imperial state, then into a
state governed by samurai warriors and finally into modern Japan. The history of Japan is therefore arguably the history of one state. On the other hand, the history of Korea is the history of many states with borders to each other. These states conquered each other, sometimes with the help of China. When the Peninsula was finally united it suffered invasions from its neighbors, was directly controlled by others, e.g. by Mongols, or was a tributary state, e.g. to China. The unified Korean state was in theory independent, but had little choice other than to be complacent to stronger bordering states. Korean history is therefore heavily influenced by various Korean states having to respect neighboring countries while Japan was free to evolve largely by itself.

This thesis will graph the relations between Japan and Korea from a historical perspective, seeking to illuminate the main sources of conflict between the countries and to show how these historical conflicts affect the relationship between Japan and the two Koreas today. There is still discrimination and prejudice in both Japan and the Koreas, most of which arguably derives from historical reasons. According to a recent article on the Asahi Shimbun’s, one of Japan’s main newspaper’s, website, a survey conducted by Gallup Korea (a South Korean research company) showed that 46% of South Koreans think that the summit that recently took place between Japan, South Korea, and China in order to restore good relations was unproductive. Out of the respondents 76% thought that Japan would not change its position when it came to the ‘comfort women’ issue, an issue that will be further examined in later chapters (Asahi Shimbun, November 7th 2015). It would seem from these figures that South Koreans are not very trusting or optimistic towards Japan. Similarly, the Japanese seem to have an equally distrustful stance towards Koreans as the Korea Times, one of South Korea’s main newspapers, reported that according to a survey done in Japan in 2014 59,7% of Japanese people hate Korea (Kang, November 8th 2015). However, caution must be taken when interpreting these surveys as Japanese newspapers are reporting on Korean “hate” and Korean newspapers on Japanese “hate”. This could suggest that the media is encouraging and feeding this distrust.

Despite this supposed mutual “hatred”, South Korean pop culture, such as movies and music, is immensely popular in Japan. “South Korean actors and actresses now make regular appearances in the Japanese mass media and enjoy immense popularity among Japanese audiences, perhaps even greater than Japanese celebrities themselves experience” (Kim, Singhal, Hanaki, Dunn, Chitnis, & Han, 2009: 596). Consequently, the modern Japanese view towards South Korea seems very
contradictory. It could be argued that this contradiction is the result of different opinions between generations as the South Korean pop culture phenomenon is fairly recent in Japan, starting in the year 2003 with the popularity of the Korean TV show *Winter Sonata* (Kim, Singhal, Hanaki, Dunn, Chitnis, & Han, 2009: 596).

Japan received almost all the technology that enabled it to evolve into a centralized society from the Korean Peninsula, but even so, for a very long time it perceived itself to be superior to Korea. This belief of superiority and the events this belief caused continue to affect Japanese-Korean relations today, as historical relations have a primarily negative influence on modern relations, which though gradually seem to be taking a positive turn. It is therefore arguably very important to understand the historical relationship between the countries so as to be able to comprehend the current relationship between Japan and the two Koreas. As most of the historical hostility seems to stem from a Japanese belief of Japanese superiority over Korea, this is a focal point when it comes to historical and modern relations. How has the Japanese view of superiority affected Japanese-Korean relations throughout history and how do the events that this view caused affect modern Japanese-Korean relations?

Throughout this thesis the Modified Hepburn Romanization system\(^1\) will be used for Japanese words and the Korean Ministry of Education’s Romanization system\(^2\) will be used for Korean words. Japanese and Korean names will be presented in the Japanese and Korean order, i.e. surname first.

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1 All Japanese letters have clear English counterparts. It is therefore only necessary to look up rules in the Modified Hepburn System in special cases. For this thesis it is only important to know that a hyphen situated over a vowel, e.g. ō, makes the vowel long, “j” is always pronounced like the “j” in “judge”, “i” is “ee”, and “u” is “oo”. The rest is very similar to English.

2 Unlike Japanese letters, Korean letters and sounds are quite different from English, and Korean has no prevailing Romanization system. However, to remain consistent throughout this thesis, it was decided to use the Ministry of Education’s Romanization system. The main variations from English are the letters “ae”, pronounced like the “a” in “apple”, and “oe”, pronounced like the Icelandic and German “ö”. The letters ŏ and ŭ are pronounced like the “o” in “ton” (or the Icelandic “o”) and the “oo” in foot, respectively (Nahm, 2004: xi).
1. Early Relations between the Japanese Archipelago and the Korean Peninsula and the Beginning of Controversy

Archaeological evidence clearly shows contact between Japan and Korea as early as 5000 years ago (Brown, 1997: 270). Based on the similarities between pottery found at archaeological sites, contact between the two cultures was most prominent in northern Kyushu\(^3\) and Pusan\(^4\), concerning both looks and method of making (Brown, 1997: 270). The main line of communication probably went through Tsushima and Iki islands\(^5\) as archaeological discoveries there have shown an interesting mixture of Korean and Japanese cultures (Miyamoto, 2009). Despite this communication, the cultures on the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago developed quite independently, as the influence the cultures had on each other was by far the strongest where the countries were geographically closest.

From 1500 BC to the beginning of the Japanese Yayoi period around 900 BC there was little contact between the two areas, as evidenced by differences in pottery styles and stone tools (Miyamoto, 2009; Brown, 1997: 270). This was the period during which wet rice agriculture became common in Korea\(^6\) (Choe, 1982: 524; Choe & Bale, 2002: 113). Interaction began again around 900 BC, which changed Japanese culture dramatically and irreversibly as innovations, such as wet rice agriculture, spread to Japan from the Peninsula\(^7\). Rice had not been grown by the Jōmon people\(^8\) (14,000-900/400 BC) and is not indigenous to Japan, thus it must perforce have been imported (Brown, 1997: 270-271; Choe, 1982: 519-520).

It would seem that people emigrated on a large scale from the Korean Peninsula to Japan after 900 BC and the immigrants not only brought rice cultivation but also specialized knowledge such as “bronze metallurgy and new forms of settlement organization and burial customs” (Fuller, Qin, Harvey, 2007: 40). Research also shows that the modern Japanese are genetically closer to Yayoi immigrants and people from

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\(^3\) One of Japan’s four main islands and the closest one to the Asian mainland.

\(^4\) A port city in South Korea situated on the southeastern-most part of the Peninsula and is therefore very close to Japan.

\(^5\) Two islands situated between the Japanese Archipelago and the Korean Peninsula.

\(^6\) The first evidence of rice agriculture on the Korean Peninsula dates from ca. 2000 BC.

\(^7\) There are other theories as to how rice first came to Japan, however, the aforementioned theory is generally acknowledged among the academic community, since rice cultivation seems to have started in northern Kyushu, Japan’s closest point to Korea, and Japanese rice cultivation tools are very similar to the tools used on the Korean Peninsula.

\(^8\) The first known settlers in Japan.
the Asian mainland than to the Jōmon people, and that the Jōmon people’s most direct descendants, the modern day Ainu, now live in areas where the Yayoi culture did not prevail, i.e. the northernmost areas in Japan, most notably Hokkaido (Matsumura, 2007: 27; Brown, 1997: 272-273). With this renewed contact between the two countries, Tsushima seems to have become the center of trade once again, as pottery from Korea and Japan can be found there from the Yayoi period and onwards as new technologies, notably iron, were continuously transmitted from Korea to Japan. As Tawara Kanji argues, “the productiveness of agriculture steadily grew, and the cultural interaction between Korea and Japan intensified. As a result, Yayoi society moved towards social complexity and cultural integration” (2009: 14).

(Schirokauer, Lurie, & Gay, 2013: 18).

The map above shows ancient Japan and Korea. The enlarged square on Japan indicates where the Yamato state was situated. The map of Korea shows the sites of the main Korean states during the most prominent time in ancient Korean history, and the time in antiquity that Japanese-Korean relations were strongest; the Korean Three Kingdom period, named after the kingdoms that dominated the Korean Peninsula at the time. The oldest is agreed to be Koguryŏ, established in the first century AD, and in 313

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9 The northernmost of Japan’s four main islands.
AD it established its capital where Pyongyang is today. Next came the kingdom of Paekche north of modern Korea, later moving to the vicinity of modern Seoul because of Koguryŏ influence and then even further south (Hoare & Pares, 1988: 24). The final kingdom to emerge was Shilla, which “emerged from the various tribes of the south west, probably around the middle of the fourth century AD” (Hoare & Pares, 1988: 24). The Three Kingdom period lasted until 668 AD. During the period there was also a federation on the south-east corner of the Peninsula called Kaya or Mimana. This federation will, however, be discussed in detail in chapter 1.2.

The Korean Three Kingdom period roughly coincides with the Japanese Tomb and Asuka periods. The Tomb period began around 250 AD and was the continuation of the Yamato state that had come to be during the late Yayoi Period. The next period was the Asuka Period, beginning around 592 AD, during which the new Asuka court emerged and the state became stronger and more centralized. (Schirokauer, Lurie, & Gay, 2013: 16). The development of the Yamato kingdom and the Asuka court was heavily influenced by the Korean Kingdoms as will become clear in the next chapter. During this time the Japanese view of superiority towards Korea had not yet formed.

1.1 Early Japan and the Korean States up to the year 668

During the early Tomb period the civil war in China effectively cut China off from Japan. The Cambridge History of Japan suggests that this was one of the reasons Japan “turn[ed] to Korea as a source of high culture, technology, and luxury items [...] as the Korean states] were in general more advanced than Japan was during this period” (Brown, 1997: 308). However, unlike Chinese-Japanese relations of the time, in which China was the dominant party, the Japanese-Korean relationship was based on mutual benefit.

The inventions and innovations that came to the Japanese Archipelago from the Korean Peninsula were often of Chinese origin, yet it would be incorrect to assume Japan was being influenced by China. William Wayne Farris has categorized the imported items into three categories; “[the first category consists of] those [items] for which the imprint of the peninsular peoples was essential, [...] the second of items

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10 The Tomb period is named after the mound tombs of impressive size originating in the Kinai area in Japan, i.e. the area in south Honshu, Japan’s main island, around the cities of Nara and Kyoto. The Asuka period is named after its ruling court.
transmitted] from China long after their invention, [...] and the third of items] mediated soon after their appearance in East Asia” (Farris, 1996: 4). Therefore, many items were transmitted after having undergone extensive developments on the Korean Peninsula.

According to archaeological findings, Shilla was the first of the Korean kingdoms to have relations with Japan. However, the Japanese soon turned to Paekche and the two countries enjoyed a very good relationship. Jonathan W. Best summarizes their relationship rather well:

[...]Relations between the two states from the middle of the fourth century to the middle of the seventh century were remarkable for their closeness and constancy. During this lengthy period the Korean kingdom repeatedly provided the Japanese court with the lettered and technical personnel needed for the introduction of the advanced civilization of the continent. In return the Japanese rulers, their situation at home permitting, supplied military support in the form of arms and troops to assist Paekche in its ongoing struggles with its Korean neighbors (Best, 1982: 448).

It was through Paekche that Buddhism was originally transmitted to Japan in the 6th century11 (Brown, 1997: 370-371). Unlike many of the things that were transmitted unintentionally from the Korean Peninsula to the Japanese Archipelago, that is to say, brought to Japan by immigrants and consequently taken up by the Japanese, Buddhism was deliberately transmitted to Japan by order of the king of Paekche. It is very likely that Buddhism, and consequently writing, was brought to Japan as a commodity in exchange for military support (Schirokauer, Lurie, & Gay, 2013: 24-25).

It is hard to say exactly when writing first came to Japan, but it was most likely around the same time as Buddhism, as there is no evidence of a previously existing writing system in Japan and the Japanese had to be able to read and write down the Buddhist scriptures. The Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, the chronicles written in Japan in the years 712 and 720 respectively, both state with similar accounts that Chinese script was introduced by Paekche. In the article The Origin of Man’yōgana, John R. Bentley has compared Japan’s phonetic writing system, called man’yōgana, in the Nihon Shoki to phonetic writing systems used in contemporary Shilla, Paekche and Koguryō. The results show 75% overlap with Paekche orthography. In comparison, the study shows approximately 41% overlap with Koguryō orthography and 61% overlap with Shillan

11 This conclusion has been drawn based on “an examination of the channels, conditions, and timing of the Korean acceptance of Buddhism” (Brown, 1997: 370). There is also an early Chinese source which describes how the Yamato state received Buddhism and a written language from Paekche (Brown, 1997: 370-371).
orthography^{12} (Bentley, 2001: 69-70). Of the varying numbers of phonograms that remain from the Three Kingdom Period, most of them are from Shilla and very few from Paekche. Judging by how little of Paekche orthography remains, it is remarkable that such a large amount overlaps with Japanese orthography.

During the early 5th century Shilla began taking over its neighbors, and the first state to be conquered by Shilla was Kaya. It was under this impending Shillan threat that Paekche formally introduced Buddhism to the Yamato court and Paekche was further threatened by the unification of China and China’s political alliance with Shilla. Even though the Yamato sent military forces to assist their ally in exchange for Korean goods, innovations and ideas, endeavor proved futile and Paekche and Yamato forces suffered a humiliating defeat. Paekche was permanently defeated in 660 by joint Shillan and Chinese armies, who then went on to defeat Koguryŏ in 668 (Hoare & Pares, 1988: 26). The Korean Peninsula was now unified under Shilla, the only Korean state openly hostile to Japan.

The unrest on the Peninsula led to conflict in Japan in the late sixth century. The victors of this conflict were the Soga family, “almost certainly immigrants or descendants thereof. They were closely associated with groups of artisans that had recently arrived from the Korean Peninsula, especially from Paekche, and were among the earliest patrons of Buddhism” (Schirokauer, Lurie, & Gay, 2013: 25). The Soga had had strong ties with Paekche before its ruin and were the force behind the creation of the Asuka court, which was considerably stronger than the Yamato court it replaced. The events on the Korean Peninsula therefore played a direct role in the development of the Japanese state and culture, as Buddhism and the writing system brought to Japan strengthened the centralized state. However, the Yamato court’s devastating defeat on the Peninsula was to possibly have a greater effect on the relationship between Japan and Korea than the years of good relations that came before it. The humiliation of defeat quite possibly influenced writing on Korea and Korean relations in the early chronicles, the Kojiki and the Nihon Shoki, thus directly initiating the belief of Japanese superiority toward Korea.

1.2 The Kojiki, Nihon Shoki, and Early Controversy

Interestingly, the accounts in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki contradict the now commonly accepted events described above, depicting Japan’s superiority over its neighbor.

^{12} The list of phonograms Bentley uses is not exclusive.
According to the *Nihon Shoki*, Shilla, Paekche, and Koguryŏ submitted immediately to the Japanese empress Jingō when she arrived in the Korean Peninsula and consequently continued sending her tributes.

[Jingō] arrived at Silla [sic]. The tide-wave following the ships reached far up into the interior of the country. [...] The king of Shilla felt that his country was about to be destroyed by this extraordinary force, and was terrified out of his senses. [...He took a white flag, and of his own accord rendered submission, tying his hands behind his back with a white rope [...] and said :“Henceforward, as long as Heaven and Earth endure, we will obediently act as thy forage-providers. Not allowing the helms of our ships to become dry, every spring and every autumn we will send tribute of horse-combs and whips. And, without thinking the sea-distance a trouble, we will pay annual dues of male and female slaves.” *(Nihongi, Aston (transl.), 1972: 230 vol. 1)*

The ancient text continues to describe how loyal the king of Shilla promises to be to Japan, and a little later it mentions Koguryŏ and Paekche:

Hereupon the kings of the two countries of Koryŏ [sic] and Pêkché [sic] hearing that Silla [sic] had rendered up its maps and registers, and made submission, secretly caused the warlike power (of the Empress) to be spied out. Finding then that they could not be victorious, they came of themselves without the camp, and bowing their heads to the ground, and sighing, said :“Henceforth for ever, these lands shall be styled thy western frontier provinces, and will not cease to offer tribute.” *(Nihongi, Aston (transl.), 1972: 231-232 vol 1)*

The *Nihon Shoki* very clearly states Japanese superiority over the Korean kingdoms, the kingdoms being so in awe of Japan’s power that there was no attempt to defend the kingdoms against the Japanese, and that surrender was immediate. The *Kojiki* goes even further in establishing Japanese superiority because it describes godly intervention as empress Jingō was possessed by the gods who spoke of a land to the West full of riches and consequently conquered Korea with the support of the gods *(Chamberlain (transl.), 1982: 284-286)*. The *Kojiki* therefore alludes to Korea being a land promised to Japan by a higher power. The *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* were accepted by the Japanese government as fairly accurate accounts of Japan’s history until the mid-20th century.

In his article *Ancient Japan’s Korean Connection*, William Wayne Farris suggests that the defeat of Japan’s technologically advanced allies by Shilla, their enemy, was a bitter blow, one used to motivate Japan’s new imperial ideology in which the emperor was the center of the state. By making empress Jingō superior to the Korean kingdoms the texts emphasize the superiority of the emperor. Shilla’s takeover
of the other Korean states could also be seen as a warning, i.e. if the people of Japan did not unite and follow the emperor, Shilla could also take over Japan (1996: 14). This ideology also caused Korean immigrants in Japan to be clearly marked as outsiders.

This is a very interesting hypothesis, since the two historical texts were, after all, written under the supervision of the emperor and strangely only half a century after Shilla’s victory. Furthermore, upon reading the Nihon Shoki, Shilla comes up a few times as the state that had stopped being loyal to Japan, harassing its neighbors Paekche and Koguryō. In each of these instances Japan quickly suppresses Shilla. Shilla was Japan’s contemporary enemy and the Nihon Shoki and Kojiki could be used to explain why animosity existed between Japan and Shilla and to justify that hostility, i.e. by having Shilla betray the Japanese state by not sending tributes and behaving aggressively towards other countries under Japanese control. The two works also conceal Japan’s devastating defeat and the fact that Japan’s greatest ally on the mainland was not strong enough to keep Shilla at bay. It could also very well be that the Japanese were ashamed of needing so much help from another nation and decided to use these two texts to emphasize their own strength.

The state that Koreans call Kaya, but the Japanese called Mimana, was also very controversial. The country was situated on the south-east corner of the Korean Peninsula. Until at least the 1980s it was academically accepted that this state was a Japanese colony formed by Japanese states (Best, 1982: 323; Waida, 1976: 447). However, modern research shows that Mimana was indeed a Korean state, today usually referred to by its Korean name Kaya. This Japan-centric view on Kaya could be the result of archaeological findings being interpreted by using Japanese nationalistic views, by Japanese nationalists and by Japanese and Korean archaeologists forced to conform to Japan’s doctrine. Although we still know very little about Kaya we do know that it “had the closest relationship to Japan of all the Korean states [and…] provided a foothold on the peninsula [sic] for the Japanese until the middle of the sixth century” (Brown, 1997: 308-309).

It is highly unlikely that Japan could possibly have controlled the Korean Peninsula for three centuries as the Nihon Shoki and the Kojiki suggest, considering that the Korean kingdoms were far more technologically advanced than Japan, even in

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13There is still much debate over if Kaya was a Japanese colony or not, but most sources and the newest sources used for this thesis consider it more likely that it was not under Japanese rule but had a very close relationship with Japan.
fundamentals such as weapons and iron-working techniques (Farris, 1996: 14-15). The Nihon Shoki and the Kojiki became the very source of contempt for Korea, used as a reason for Japan to look down on and invade the Peninsula for more than a millennium. There was still some contact between the two countries after Shilla took over the Peninsula, but it remained very tense and infrequent up until the end of the 16th century.
2. The Invasion of Korea 1592-1598

The Invasion of Korea in 1592 has no agreed upon name in English language historical texts, but from a Japanese perspective it is usually referred to as The Invasion of Korea and from a Korean perspective as the Imjin War. As this thesis primarily focuses on the Japanese point of view the name ‘Invasion of Korea’ will be used.

In 1185 there was a monumental shift in power in Japan as the warrior classes, the samurai, seized control and gained rule over the emperor from the city of Kamakura in eastern Honshu, and later from Muromachi, an area in Kyoto. During the late 15th century and the 16th century the Muromachi Shogunate was in decline and in the late 16th century certain figures began unifying all of Japan under one central government. The first of these was Oda Nobunaga, a daimyo, who was succeeded by another daimyo, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the leader who decided to invade Korea.

Unified Shilla fell in 890 and was replaced by the kingdom of Koryŏ in 918 after a period of fighting. Koryŏ was constantly at war with its neighbors and beset by internal fighting. The kingdom finally collapsed in 1392 when general Yi Sŏng-gye decided to overthrow the kingdom and established the Chosŏn dynasty, a relatively peaceful country. Chosŏn was the Korean country that Hideyoshi attacked. During this time of little communication, the accounts in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki continued to have a negative effect on Japanese view of Korea.

2.1 Events leading to the Invasion

The Japanese were, unlike Chosŏn, a military nation. While Chosŏn may have viewed cultural sophistication to be strength and therefore been militarily weak unlike its predecessors on the Korean Peninsula, the Japanese thought of strength in purely military terms. This became evident when Hideyoshi first decided to attack Korea, as opposition seems to have been minimal. It may have seemed completely natural for a country like Japan that had always been at war to find a new country to fight once united. It can even be speculated that this was considered a good way to boost the people’s morale and comradery, the whole Japanese nation coming together as a whole to fight a common enemy.

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14 The Korean name for the year in which the Invasion began.
15 The old Japanese governments of Kamakura, Muromachi, and Tokugawa are called “Shogunate” in English as the most powerful office was that of the ‘shogun’.
16 A Japanese local lord.
Officially, Hideyoshi decided to invade Korea because he wanted his name to be known throughout Japan, China, and India, as he wrote to King Sŏnjo of Korea in 1590 (Totman, 2000: 213). Although attitudes expressed in the *Nihon shoki* and the *Kojiki* undoubtedly played a part in the Invasion, there were other reasons that may have led Hideyoshi to perceive that Korea could easily be invaded.

During the almost 400 years leading up to the Invasion, the Mongols had conquered much of the Asian mainland, expanding their empire all the way to Europe. They invaded the Korean Peninsula in 1231. The Koreans were no match for the Mongols and were forced to negotiate for peace and thereafter to pay the Mongols an absurdly high tribute. There was still some resistance and there was still a Koryŏ\(^{17}\) king, but resistance remained futile and the king was under Mongol command. Concurrent to this the Mongols gradually took over China, and following the conquest of both China and Koryŏ, set their sights on Japan, consequently worsening the situation for Koryŏ due to its strategic placement. The Mongols attacked Japan twice, first in 1274 and again in 1281. Koryŏ was forced to supply a large percentage of soldiers and ships for both invasions. During the first Mongol invasion the Mongol army was forced to withdraw, probably because of a mixture of Japanese resistance as well as bad weather. During the second invasion a great typhoon destroyed the Mongol ships, after which approximately 100,000 of the 140,000 soldiers in the Mongol army were reported dead (Nahm, 2004: 95). The typhoon was called *kamikaze* by the Japanese, “divine wind”. With the failure of these invasions Hideyoshi had two reasons to justify his own invasion. Not only had Japan been strong enough to repel the army that had conquered Koryŏ and the great China, defeating soldiers from the conquered countries in the process, they now also had proof, or so Hideyoshi could argue, that Japan truly was a country loved and protected by the gods. Some priests even tried to take credit for convincing the gods to send them the *kamikaze*, i.e. Nichiren.

From the early 13th century *wakō*\(^{18}\) had been attacking Chinese and Korean shores. The Japanese government was not always sympathetic or helpful to their neighbors as there was considerable conflict going on in Japan. By the middle of the 14th century the *wakō* raids had become so prolific so as they could hardly be perceived as pirates, since they not only inflicted harm at sea and shores but also went onto land,

\(^{17}\) The unified Korean state that preceded Chosŏn.

\(^{18}\) The *wakō* were pirates. Depending on the characters used to write the word “wakō”, it can mean either “Japanese pirates”, preferred by the Japanese, or “dwarf pirates”, preferred by the Koreans and the Chinese (Horae & Pares, 1988: 33).
destroying everything and killing everyone in their way (Han, 1970: 180). Korea and China were ultimately able to keep the wakō at bay but were unable to rid themselves of them completely.

From what has been explored, it becomes apparent that there was historical evidence of Koreans being dependent on someone else for centuries, although the local perception differed. Koryŏ could only fight off the Mongols and other invading forces after Ming China had prevailed over the Mongols. Koryŏ was forced to accept and adopt a Ming policy to be able to fight its enemies, as it could not repel them on its own. Koryŏ was severely weakened by the Mongol invasion, as well as by having to participate in the Mongol invasions of Japan. The wakō and Chinese bandits also contributed to Koryŏ’s weakened state. This weakness enabled general Yi Song-gye to overthrow the kingdom and establish Chosŏn, “Korea’s longest-reigning and best-known dynasty” (Horae & Pares, 1988: 30). Chosŏn had a trading relationship with Japan, but, more importantly, it was a vassal to China. Chosŏn always viewed itself as independent, yet it was generally acknowledged that it could not go against China, and China may well have seen Chosŏn as one of its subjects. Both Koryŏ and Chosŏn being controlled, directly and indirectly, in this way must have seemed strange to Japan which had never been governed by a foreign leader. This could have enabled Japanese leaders to picture themselves as Chosŏn’s new overlords. It can also be added that the Japanese population had had little contact with the peoples of the Korean Peninsula since the Korean Three Kingdom period and the Japanese were likely very ignorant of Chosŏn. Chosŏn’s military weakness and its inability to rid itself completely of foreign control was further cause for Japan to look down on the country and consider it an easy target, resulting in Hideyoshi attacking Chosŏn.

### 2.2 The Invasion

Hideyoshi invaded Chosŏn in 1592, yet when Hideyoshi made this decision, it was not really Korea he was after but China. Hideyoshi sent king Sŏnjo of Chosŏn a message in 1590 asking for passage into China, saying that Sŏnjo need not worry about the Japanese troops. However, king Sŏnjo could by no means grant Hideyoshi’s army safe passage as Chosŏn continually sent tributaries to the Chinese court in exchange for the empire not attacking them and sending them military aid in case of war. The Invasion was therefore consequent to Chosŏn’s refusal to grant Hideyoshi passage.
Initially, the Japanese invading forces were victorious as Chosŏn was not expecting Japan to attack. The Korean view was that Japan had received all its civilization forming technology from the Korean Peninsula and so Chosŏn looked down on Japan, just as Japan looked down on Chosŏn (Kang, 2009: 58). Furthermore, Chosŏn did not subscribe to the misconception that Japan had ruled the Korean Peninsula in ancient times. Chosŏn had been peaceful for more than 200 years and they held arts and scholarship in much higher regard than primitive fighting. They bore little respect for Japan, a country that valued fighting above all and had been governed by warriors for 400 years. The Chosŏn army was therefore very poorly trained, especially compared to the Japanese one (Horae & Pares, 1988: 37). At the time, there was infighting in the Chosŏn government and the yangban\textsuperscript{19} did not think they needed to concern themselves with Japan, which had expressed no interest in the Asian mainland since the 7th century (Kang, 2009: 58).

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{invasion_map.png}
\caption{A map of the Invasion of 1592}
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\caption{A map of the Invasion of 1592}
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In modern times, the Invasion of Korea has been called “Asia’s first “regional world war”” (Swope, 2005: 11). The Japanese easily defeated the unprepared Koreans

\textsuperscript{19} The Korean aristocracy and nobility.
in Pusan and moved further into the country. Not only were the fighters in the Chosŏn army untrained, many of the commanders were also hopelessly unqualified (Swope, 2005: 27-28; Kang, 2009: 61). The Japanese conquered Seoul within a month of the beginning of the Invasion and proceeded to Pyongyang (Schirokauer, Lurie, & Gay, 2013: 116). It was then that the Chosŏn government sent a cry for help to Ming China. A combined Korean and Chinese force was almost completely annihilated, taken by surprise by the Japanese. Hearing of this, the Ming government immediately sent more troops to Chosŏn, now having further reason to want the Japanese gone from the mainland. The Japanese did, however, have a healthy respect for the army of the Ming giant and avoided direct confrontation with them all through the war when possible (Swope, 2005: 30). It is important to note that it was during this time that “the Korean hatred of foreign domination [...] began to assert itself” (Han, 1970: 272), a hatred that would be strengthened during the Japanese occupation of Korea before and during the Second World War.

Although the situation may have seemed hopeless for Chosŏn on land, this was not the case when it came to the sea. During the Invasion the Chosŏn navy won some of the greatest victories in Korean history and its leader, Admiral Yi Sun-shin, is still regarded as one of Korea’s greatest heroes (Han, 1970: 271; Kang, 2009: 94). Because Hideyoshi saw ships mainly as a way to transfer troops to the Asian mainland, the Chosŏn and Ming navies were superior to the Japanese in almost every way, having fought battles with the wakō for centuries. The technological superiority of the Chosŏn navy lay mostly with their “turtle ships”20, an invention of Yi Sun-shin’s. “These ships were pretty much impervious to any weapons the Japanese could muster [...] and they] seriously hamper[ed] Japanese operations in Korea” (Han, 1970: 271), for example by having inbuilt spikes to prevent the Japanese from boarding, which was a tactic the Japanese depended almost entirely upon. The “turtle ships” also had superior weapons and equipment and had rowers on oars which made it possible to maneuver them without being dependent on wind, whereas the Japanese only had ships with sails (Swope, 2005: 31-32; Kang, 2009: 63).

The Chosŏn navy itself was also strategically superior. The ships were manned with professional sailors, unlike the Japanese ships, and the navy had a naval

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20 “[The “turtle ship” was] probably the first iron-clad in history. This was a galley decked over with iron plates to protect the rowers and armed with a large iron ram in the shape of a turtle’s head” (Han, 1970: 271).
commander-in-chief so there was no infighting as opposed to the Japanese navy, where the four commanders who were supposed to work together tried to gain personal glory and kept their personal plans and information to themselves (Marder, 1945: 23-24). During the entire war Yi Sun-shin fought 23 sea battles and was undefeated (Kang, 2009: 63).

In 1593 the Ming finally came to Chosŏn. With Ming help the Chosŏn army managed to reclaim Pyongyang and Seoul (Swope, 2005: 37-38). The peace negotiations that lasted from 1593 to 1597 were further cause for the Japanese to look down on Chosŏn and for Korean embarrassment, because the Koreans did not take part in these negotiations. There were no Korean representatives present when the Chinese and Japanese negotiated terms that were rather generous to the Japanese. In the end, Chosŏn had neither been able to defend itself on its own nor taken part in the peace negotiations. Both sides of the war refused to agree that they had been defeated in any way and so Hideyoshi attacked again in 1597 (Han, 1970: 272-273).

During the peace negotiations Admiral Yi Sun-shin had been relieved of his position because of internal Korean rivalries. He was quickly reinstated during the

A map of the Invasion from 1597-1598
(Swope, 2005: 33)
second invasion as the Chosŏn navy had been defeated in battle without him and Japanese troops had again managed to gain considerable inland ground. Yi Sun-shin was killed in action in 1598 during the second invasion. The Japanese troops were becoming increasingly restless. Morale was decreasing as they were held up and many commanders pressed for a withdrawal (Swope, 2005: 39-41) so when Hideyoshi died in 1598 the Japanese forces returned to Japan immediately. The Japanese, having withdrawn on their own accord, never viewed themselves as having been defeated, and the devastation they had inflicted on Chosŏn and its inability to defend itself was further reason to look down on the country. Today, the Invasion of Korea and the ruins Korea was left in continue to cause discord between Japan and the Koreas (Han, 1970: 274).

2.3. Consequences of the Invasion

Korea was completely devastated after the Invasion. Whole villages had disappeared and the population had declined drastically. Agricultural land was now only one third of what it had been before and the main agricultural province was only able to use one sixth of its formerly arable land. The destruction of books and historical records made proper taxation almost impossible, not to mention the cultural loss as buildings and great works of art were ruined. Yangban acquired land they had no right to and some slaves had burned their registers and thus freed themselves. Central control disintegrated and the government was virtually impotent. There was much national confusion and devastation, resulting in many uprisings. This confusion was not only caused by the Japanese but also by Chosŏn’s Chinese allies (Han, 1970: 274). Everything that Chosŏn had been comprised of – government, agriculture, social order, culture – had been destroyed. The Invasion of Korea was the start of “an undying hatred of the Japanese for this wanton and unprovoked attack, which was handed down from generation to generation, and which proved to be justified in modern times” (Han, 1970: 274).

As no battles had been fought on Japanese land, the Japanese were completely spared the national devastation. On the contrary, the Invasion could be seen as a testament of Japanese strength as not even the great China had been able to force them to surrender and Korea had barely been able to fight back by itself. The Invasion could also be seen as a confirmation of Japan’s superiority over Korea. This was not only because of Korea’s inability to defend itself, but also because of stolen Korean goods and all the captives taken to Japan, many of whom were experts in their fields, such as
pottery and printing, and contributed to Japanese arts and literature (Han, 1970: 274). Despite the two countries still being at odds, relations were soon restored.
3. Relations between Japan and Korea from approximately the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries 1830-1945

Although peace was restored between Japan and Korea in 1606 and trade began anew, the Japanese seclusion policy in 1630 reduced all foreign contact to a minimum. Japan had been united under the daimyo Tokugawa Ieyasu and the Tokugawa Shogunate was in control until 1868 during which Japan was virtually secluded from the outside world.

After the Invasion, Korea was invaded by Manchuria. After the Manchus had conquered Ming China, they also took over Korea in 1636. The Koreans were forced to accept yet another overlord but remained independent in theory, as they always had. After approximately 200 years of peace new ideas began to reach Korea, now mostly from Europe. Burnt by earlier events concerning foreigners, Korea’s stance was very conservative. With Japanese modernization beginning earlier than that of Korea, Japan viewed itself as being superior to its slower developing neighbor and as the Asian country most similar to the Western powers.

3.1 The Meiji Restoration, Chosŏn, and the Korean Empire 1860-1905

In 1853 Americans came to Japan and forced it to accept a letter from the President of the United States which included terms of Japan’s opening of its borders. Japan did not have the power to fight the US and therefore had to accept some of these terms when the Americans returned in 1854. Japan then gradually opened its ports to Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Russia (Schirokauer, Lurie, & Gay, 2013: 161). The opening of ports caused much dispute in Japan, but in 1868 the Shogunate was finally destroyed and the Meiji Restoration began\(^{21}\).

With the opening of ports and increased foreign relations came a heightened awareness of Japan’s weaknesses when compared to the Western nations. In 1869 Chosŏn had insulted Japan by refusing its request for new relations. Furthermore, the samurai, stripped of their ruling titles, were growing restless. Some said that a military expedition to Korea would serve as a diversion, dividing the samurai’s attention from the new Japanese government in which they had no place, leaving the government torn over if they should or should not invade Korea once again. However, those who wanted to begin building Japan up from within won this conflict and an expedition to Korea was suspended for the time being. Japan settled on sending warships to Korea in 1875

\(^{21}\) This marked the beginning of the restoration of the emperor and with it came rapid modernization.
and 1876, forcing the Korean government to “[establish] new diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan […] making Korea a subordinate nation to Japan as the Western nations had done to China and Japan earlier” (Nahm, 2004: 147). With this new treaty, which declared Korea to be independent, Japan had new material to use to insist on their superiority over Korea.

This new relationship caused tension in Korea. Korean conservatives, i.e. those who were pro-China, were not happy with the growing pro-Japanese faction in Seoul, and the Chinese government tried to lessen Japanese influence by having Korea sign treaties with the West, as China was discontent with Korea being considered independent. However, the old governments in China and Korea were collapsing, causing Japan to fear that these governments would be replaced by the stronger Western powers. The Western powers were a threat to Japan, and therefore “it was the need for security that was the primary motive for imperialist expansion” (Pyle, 1996: 135).

Originally, the official reason for Japan to take part in Korean affairs was to preserve Korea’s independence. Conflicting Chinese and Japanese interests in Korea took its toll on the Korean people and finally, in 1894, the Tonghak Rebellion, an uprising of the people against the government and foreign forces, took place and changed the political environment. Earlier, in 1884, Japan and China had decided to “withdraw their forces and inform each other if either decided in the future that it needed to send in troops” to Korea because Japanese and Chinese forces were always clashing in Korea when there were insurrections in Seoul and the countries sought to avoid outright war (Schirokauer, Lurie, & Gay, 2013: 194). The Korean King asked for Chinese assistance to suppress the Tonghak Rebellion and the Chinese saw this as a good opportunity to regain control of Korea. However, the Chinese did not notify the Japanese that they were sending troops to the Peninsula and therefore violated the agreement made 10 years earlier. The Japanese saw this as a cause for war and attacked the Chinese.

Thus began the Sino-Japanese War, which lasted from July 1894 to March 1895, in which Japan and China fought and Korea was powerless to send the foreign armies away from its country. During the war Japan “forced the Korean government to cancel all existing agreements with China and sign a series of agreements with Japan” bringing about reforms (Nahm, 2004: 162). These reforms included a pro-Japanese stance in the government and more modernization. The Japanese defeated the Chinese, but their victory was short-lived, as France, Germany, and Russia forced Japan to give the
Liaodong Peninsula, the spoils of war, back to the Chinese. This reminded Japan bitterly of how inferior it still was to the Western powers. To make matters worse, Russia had come in China’s stead in Korea. Because Korea had seen Japan’s weakness in the face of the Western nations, Japan’s influence in Korea weakened and many Korean officials opted for a pro-Russian stance. Korean view of Japan took a sharp turn to the worse when the pro-Russian Korean Queen was murdered as Japanese soldiers suppressed an anti-Japanese usurpation, causing the Korean King to flee to Russia’s legation and take refuge there (Beasley, 1987: 72).

Under Russian protection, the Korean King was able to return to his palace in 1897. He renamed his country the Great Han Empire and Korea was relatively free to govern itself while Japan and Russia were still at odds. Japan and Russia came to an understanding in 1898 that required both countries to keep equal distance from Korea, but stated that Japan did have predominant economic interests on the Peninsula. With this agreement, Japanese influence in Korea became stronger again, with Japan e.g. building railways and founding banks.

This fragile peace did not last long. In 1901 Russia sent troops to Manchuria and kept its troops in China after having helped to suppress an uprising there in 1900. The increase of Russian troops in China led Japan to form the Anglo-Japanese Alliance with Britain which “promised British assistance if Japan became embroiled in conflict with more than one power” and also “[overcame Japan’s] previous diplomatic isolation […] and] provided the first military pact on equal terms between a Western and non-Western nation” (Pyle, 1996: 139-149). Japan had therefore risen above other Asian nations and to add on this alliance, the United States also formally recognized Japan’s superior interest in Korea.

In 1904, when Russia failed to withdraw its troops from Manchuria on schedule, the Russo-Japanese War began. The war was over in September 1905 with Japan’s victory over Russia. The peace treaty forced Russia to recognize Korea as an independent nation. This was, however, far from true;

Korea was controlled by Japan almost from the outset [of the war]. […] A series of agreements with the Korean government aimed at formalizing Japanese control culminated in a 1905 protectorate agreement which went unchallenged by other countries. The protectorate established a Japanese residency in Seoul, deprived Korea of any independent foreign policy, stationed Japanese troops within the country and installed influential Japanese advisers at all levels of government (Hunter, 1989: 48).
After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan was the only foreign influence in Korea and began gradually taking over the country. The Japanese could now be sure of their supremacy as they were the only non-Western nation to have defeated an old Western power at war.

3.2 Japanese Colonial Rule 1905-1945

Even though Korea did not become an official colony until 1910, Japan had virtually full control over the Peninsula from the year 1905. Early Korean responses were especially bad towards the Japanese as Korea had always perceived itself to be an independent country and because from 1897 to 1904 the nationalistic movement in Korea had gained considerable strength. This was suppressed as “[t]he Japanese established the Residency-General, took away Korea’s sovereign right to conduct its own foreign affairs, made the Korean government a Japanese puppet in 1905, and abolished its army and took away police and judicial administration in 1907.” Consequently, tens of thousands of Koreans fled the country. (Nahm, 2004: 172-173).

Japan made changes to the Korean government structure to strengthen its position in Korea under the pretext of the Japan-Korea protection treaty that was signed in 1905, but the King of Korea22 made it very clear that he had been forced to sign this treaty and implored other countries to help Korea. However, no help came as Britain felt that Japan was a better choice to govern Korea than China and Russia, and the United States had other things to be concerned about.

Righteous Armies, bands of Korean patriots fighting against the Japanese, were located all over the Peninsula. Some groups had been a part of the Korean army before it was disbanded by the Japanese, “others came from the tradition of the peasant uprisings of the past” (Horae & Pares, 1988: 51). Additionally, many Korean patriots committed suicide. In 1907 the king tried once again to free Korea from Japanese rule by sending a secret mission to the second World Peace Conference in Hague. They were not admitted into the conference because the chairman said that “Korea had no rights to diplomatic representation” (Han, 1970: 452). The envoys could still visit delegations and participate in International Press Club sponsored meetings, but the mission was a

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22 In order to not confuse the Emperor of the Great Han Empire with the Emperor of Japan he will be referred to as the King of Korea in text. This is also done because the Korean imperial line was a direct continuation of the king of Chosŏn and the country has virtually no history of being an empire, only having been an empire for 13 years, during which it was heavily influenced or in effect controlled by other countries.
failure, Korea received no help from the international community and Japan forced the king to abdicate, the Crown Prince becoming Korea’s last monarch (Han, 1970: 451).

The Japanese suppressed all uprisings and although exact numbers do not exist, 1451 incidents were recorded in 1908 involving approximately 70,000 men, which had dropped down to 147 incidents involving approximately 1,900 men in 1910 (Horae & Pares, 1988: 52). A total number of armed clashes between 1907 and 1910 were around 2,800 and around 17,690 Righteous Army members lost their lives (Nahm, 2004: 174). In 1909 Itō Hirobumi, who had been Korea’s first Residency-General, was assassinated, making the Japanese more eager to completely annex Korea, forcing the king to sign an annexation treaty on August 22nd 1910.

Japan ruled Korea with a military regime, a trend that had started before the official annexation, “about 2,000 Japanese military policemen [being in Korea] by 1907 […] and by 1908 4,234 Koreans had been recruited to serve the Japanese in subjugating their countrymen […] Japan was blurring the distinction between civilian police and military organizations” (Han, 1970: 453). Koreans were especially angry because they had originally “looked to Japan for help against a conservative, autocratic government and for encouragement to “modernize”’ and because “[f]or the initial years after 1910 Korea was under a brutal military regime which attempted to crush all anti-Japanese activity and sentiment” (Hunter, 1989: 48-50). Japan’s policy was to destroy all that was Korean and it renamed the Great Han Empire “Chōsen”. The Japanese took over all prominent positions of society. Most teachers were Japanese and studying the Japanese language became mandatory in schools. Korean was only taught until 1938, as Japanese had become the official language in the 1930s, and it was illegal to teach Korean history. Whilst the Japanese had democratic rights, the Koreans had none. Korean independence movements did not last long, but the remnants of the armed resistance were based in Manchuria. It was later controlled by communists, most notably by Kim Il-sung, the future dictator of North Korea.

Things came to a head on the 1st of March 1919. In what was later called the March 1st Movement a Proclamation of Independence was presented, signed by 33 leaders of the independence movement nationwide. Tens of thousands of citizens took part in Seoul and the forbidden Korean national flags were waved. The same happened in cities all over the country. The Japanese arrested those who had signed the document, and many others, and brutally suppressed the movement. The March 1st Movement lasted for a month and quickly turned violent. The Japanese did grant Koreans more
rights after the Movement, especially because the movement discredited Japan in the eyes of other world powers, but censorship became stricter. The gendarmerie’s control over civilians was abolished but numbers in the police force increased instead (Nahm, 2004: 185-188).

In 1941 Japan joined the Second World War and things became even worse for Korea. In 1943 Koreans were allowed to “volunteer” for the army and were later subjugated to a conscription law. Women were recruited as ‘comfort women’ to provide sexual favors to Japanese soldiers, and it was only on December 28th 2015 that Japan acknowledged this issue, allowing South Korea and Japan to finally come to an agreement on it (Kim, December 28th 2015). During the occupation years there was considerable forced emigration of Korean men to Japan for labor, especially in 1944, the last year of the colonial years. However, as the Japanese were occupied with the war, Koreans were able to gain higher positions within the government. On the 15th of August 1945 the Japanese surrendered unconditionally to the Allied Nations and Korea was free at last (Nahm, 2004: 193; Han, 1970: 497).

According to Janet E. Hunter, “Japan’s legacy in Korea was one of brutality, exploitation and suppression”, which is undoubtedly very true and these years still have an immense effect on Japanese-Korean relations today. However, as James Hoare and Susan Pares point out:

Japanese influence was of course not wholly negative. It benefited all when marsh land was drained, or other health measures were taken […]. The new railways and roads [that the Japanese built] made travel easier for Koreans as well as Japanese. The Koreans did learn about modern administration and how to run industries. New concepts in literature and art were introduced, sometimes directly from Japan, sometimes from the west via Japan (Hoare & Pares, 1988: 59).

Japan’s conquest in Korea shows a continuity in the fast held ideas pertaining to Japan’s superiority over Korea. In addition to historical reasons already mentioned, the broader international context might also have strengthened this belief of superiority. Having witnessed the United Kingdom’s grandeur and excessive holdings, Japan might have seen itself reflected therein, a small island nation that governed countries all over the world. The Japanese government also wished to prove itself to the Western nations that had looked down on it for so long, and attempted to gain that respect by defeating China and Russia, and acquiring colonies. These international reasons are, however, arguably not as pertinent as those mentioned before because according to contemporary
sources Japan always saw itself as bringing civilization to a primitive country. Korea being its equal does not seem to have occurred to the Japanese government. This Japanese belief that has been chronicled to have persisted throughout history is largely the cause of the strained and complicated Japanese-Korean relationship today.
4. The Relationship Today

Following the Second World War the Japanese infrastructure was completely reorganized, technically by the Far Eastern Commission\(^{23}\), but in actuality by the Americans. Since that the country has been at peace, yet war and misery were not over for the Koreans.

Japan was demilitarized; the emperor was demystified\(^{24}\) but not charged with war crimes; universal suffrage and human rights were instituted; the educational system transformed\(^{25}\); the economy restructured. Japan – the country and the nation – was in ruins (Schirokauer, Lurie, & Gay, 2013: 236). The occupation officially came to an end in 1952 when Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru signed a defense treaty with America, having signed the peace treaty the year before. Of course these developments took longer than 7 years to cement, and some are still evolving, but with the occupation came democracy that has only become stronger as time has passed.

Map of modern Japan, South Korea and North Korea

(Google Maps, 2016)

\(^{23}\) The Far Eastern Commission was based in Washington, D.C. and included representatives of all the countries that had been at war with Japan (Schirokauer, Lurie, & Gay, 2013: 236)

\(^{24}\) Until the end of the Second World War the Emperor of Japan was believed to be a deity, descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu. This was a big part of Japanese nationalism because it supposedly justified Japan’s right to rule.

\(^{25}\) Before American occupation the official history of Japan was based on the Nihon shoki and the Kojiki, with the emperor as the center of everything. This now changed to a more realistic approach which has since then changed even more with recent archaeological findings and a decrease in ultranationalism.
The case was very different for Korea. Americans and Soviets disagreed on matters of the Peninsula and the 38th parallel appeared in 1945, dividing Korea into the North and the South. The United States and the Soviet Union tried to discuss unification with no results. The Soviet Union did not adhere to policies the United Nations agreed upon and North Korea did therefore not take part in the Korean elections of May 1948. On May 31st 1948 the recently elected assembly gave South Korea its official name, The Republic of Korea, while North Korea was named the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in September of the same year. After these separate regimes had emerged the United States and the Soviet Union withdrew from the Peninsula.

The Korean War began with the North attacking the South, the armies going back and forth over the entire Peninsula until the two states were yet again separated by the 38th parallel, South Korea having received help from the United States, North Korea from China. The bulk of the war took place in 1950-1951 but peace talks lasted until 1953 with an armistice agreed upon. South and North Korea have, however, not signed the peace treaty and are to this day, technically still at war. At first, South Korea was arguably more conservative than North Korea, but after Park Chung-hee became president in a bloodless coup in 1961, South Korea has gradually evolved into a democratic state, just like Japan. North Korea has remained a dictatorship since 1953.

4.1 Japan and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea 1945-2015

Japan’s relations with North Korea are mainly limited to trade and private relations. Japan’s view of Japanese superiority was part of what convinced Japan that it could take over Korea in 1910 and this takeover has direct consequences on Japanese-North Korean relations today because one of North Korea’s prerogatives for normalized relations between the two countries is for Japan to apologize for the injustice towards Korean citizens during the occupation period and provide compensation. In this aspect the historical context is very clear.

Japan is, however, unable to provide compensation or enter into diplomatic relations with North Korea even though it has officially apologized for the occupation period, because of South Korea. Japan has recognized the South Korean government in

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26 The border between North and South Korea.
27 The Republic of Korea will be referred to as South Korea in text as it is the country’s better known name.
28 The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea will also be referred to by its better known name in text, i.e. North Korea.
Seoul as the only legitimate government of the Korean Peninsula and has established diplomatic ties with South Korea. Japan can therefore not establish diplomatic ties with North Korea because both countries claim that each is the sole legitimate government on the Peninsula. Diplomatic ties can therefore only exist with one or the other. Japan cannot compensate North Korea for the occupation period as it has refused to compensate South Korea, citing the San Francisco Peace Treaty as the reason for its refusal, as shall be discussed in the chapter on Japanese-South Korean relations.

Most Japanese-North Korean communication has been about Japanese aid to North Korea, but Japan is unable to do even this officially because Japanese law only permits Japan to provide foreign aid to a country that is not actively “producing weapons of mass destruction” (Söderberg, 2006: 441). As North Korea is producing nuclear weapons and is not a part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty\(^{29}\), the country is not eligible for Japanese foreign aid. Japan has sent supplies through organizations such as the Red Cross or UNICEF instead.

Anti-North Korean feeling in Japan is also very strong because of North Korea systematically abducting Japanese citizens in the latter half of the 20\(^{th}\) century, as well as the constant threat of nuclear attack (Shim, November 11\(^{th}\) 2015; Hagström & Söderberg, 2006: 381-383). Today, disputes between Japan and North Korea are therefore mainly about the nuclear threat and the abduction issue, not because of history. This is not the case regarding Japan and South Korea.

**4.2 Japan and the Republic of Korea 1945-2015**

Japan and South Korea have had more disputes than Japan and North Korea, mostly because South Korea can afford to keep pressing historical issues. In fact, in a Korean survey conducted in 2005, 93% of Koreans felt that unsettled historical problems were important to Japanese-Korean relations (Shin, 2010: 663).

Japan, South Korea, and China recently had a summit where they are reported to have completely restored their relations (Ap, Kwon, & Wakatsuki, November 3\(^{rd}\) 2015). Even so, there are still some unresolved matters. One of the most prominent of these is that of the ‘comfort women’. North Korea has brought this subject up recently and it has been suggested that the reason the country did so now was to make it more difficult for its neighbors at the summit to restore relations (Kim, November 6\(^{th}\) 2015). This does not

\(^{29}\) The international treaty that declares which countries are allowed produce nuclear weapons. North Korea did not sign this treaty.
seem to have caused too much friction between Japan and South Korea but South Korea nonetheless pressured Japan to solve the problem and admit to the Japanese government’s involvement, which until recently had never officially been acknowledged by Japan.

There are also the issues of Japanese apologies for the treatment of colonized peoples as well as the Yasukuni shrine. Yasukuni shrine is a Japanese shrine in Tokyo dedicated to those who lost their lives fighting for Japan in wars following the Meiji Period (1868-1912). This includes the Pacific War and the Second World War. South Korea and other countries colonized by Japan have announced their discontent with Japanese government officials still visiting this shrine, making Japan’s apologies for their aggression seem insincere. Things were especially bad when Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi frequently paid his respects at the shrine during his term in office (Shin, 2010: 669). Prime Minister Abe Shinzo recently stayed away from the shrine when lawmakers went to visit it so as to not jeopardize the summit with South Korea and China (Soble, October 20th 2015). Tied in with the criticism on Japanese apologies is the censorship of history books prevalent in Japan. All books used in schools are uniform and need to be approved by the Ministry of Education, in which the Japanese aggression on the Asian mainland is de-escalated.

Two disputes between South Korea and Japan can be traced to the US-Japanese peace treaty signed in San Francisco in 1952: the Takeshima/Tokto\(^{30}\) debate and the fact that Japan has not paid compensation for crimes committed during the Second World War. In the first drafts of the peace treaty Takeshima Island was to go to Korea. However, as time went on communism strengthened its hold on the Peninsula and in 1949 the treaty claimed that Takeshima should belong to Japan. As it was yet to be seen if communism would take over the Korean Peninsula or not, this would secure Takeshima as land belonging to allies of the US. In the final draft, however, Takeshima was not mentioned because of the final draft being more concise than the ones that came before and possibly to allow ambiguity for the US to use to its advantage. It is possible for Japan and South Korea to bring the Takeshima dispute to the International Court, and Japan has tried to do so, but South Korean refusal and other conflicts have made it so that there is still a debate over which country Takeshima belongs to.

\(^{30}\) The former is the Japanese name of certain islands between Japan and Korea, the latter the Korean name.
As those nations who had suffered most because of the Japanese were not sufficiently represented during peace negotiations, the San Francisco Peace Treaty mostly focused on Japan’s actions towards the Western allies (Shin, 2010: 664). The result was that the Japanese Emperor was absolved and Japan did not need to pay compensation. No matter how often lawsuits have been filed in Japan or the US, Japan has always cited the peace treaty and refused any legal obligation to pay, causing discontent in both Koreas. This refusal to pay compensation, along with the Invasion of Korea, the occupation, and the Second World War, has caused increased anti-Japanese feeling in both Koreas. This may, however, be changing in the case of South Korea as Japan has recently agreed to pay compensation to former ‘comfort women’, which is a monumental step forward in Japanese-South Korean relations, but the results of this agreement are yet to be seen. Japan was able to offer South Korea financial aid which South Korea decided to interpret as compensation and give to victims of the colonial rule whereas this has not been possible for North Korea.

Zainichi Koreans living in Japan are also a cause for dispute. Today these Koreans are mostly third or even fourth generation descendants of Koreans that were forced to relocate to Japan during the colonization period. Most of these Koreans are born and raised in Japan, yet do not automatically receive Japanese citizenship. Many of them live in Korean communities and attend Korean schools that do not have the same legal status as their Japanese counterparts. These Koreans are discriminated against and many of them have very negative views towards Japan. Unfortunately, issues between Japan and the Koreas usually cause further discrimination against Koreans living in Japan. The younger generations of the Zainichi Koreans, however, are much more open to Japan, sometimes even adopting Japanese names. Many Koreans are now fighting for their rights in Japan and consider themselves to be Japanese Koreans, as they have lost their ties to Korea and were born and raised in Japan (Sugimoto, 2014: 213).

There is still much to be done to mend Japanese-Korean relations, but settling historical disputes is the first step to forming a better relationship between the countries, as the settling of the ‘comfort women’ issue will hopefully demonstrate.
Conclusion

Throughout history Japan and Korea have had a tumultuous relationship. As has been demonstrated, most of the conflicts have occurred because of, or in part because of, Japan perceiving itself as being superior to Korea. This belief initially began with fallacious documentation for political interests. It increased and escalated for example because of the wakō (pirates), the Invasion of Korea, Japanese victories over nations – Asian and Western – that had conquered or had strong influence on Korea, and international precedents. Unfortunately, the events that this perception of superiority caused still influence Japanese-Korean relations today. The ‘comfort women’ issue has been a top priority in modern Japanese-Korean relations and official visits to the Yasukuni shrine as well as censorship of Japanese history books have undermined Japanese apologies. The historical relationship has influenced modern relations, not only due to ancient resentment, but also the negative stereotype that the countries have of each other. Because of their formerly hostile relationship, negotiations tend towards inflexibility and caution, with all sides expecting the worst from each other.

However, it must be kept in mind that Japan is not to blame for all of its disputes with Korea. The San Francisco Peace Treaty, for example, was drawn up by the United States, it was the US that technically absolved the emperor and the international community also ignored Korea when it was taken over and controlled by Japan. There has been a tendency to view Japan’s disputes with its neighbors as a purely Asian conflict but international power came into play as well, as is evidenced by the Peace Conference in Hague and the American occupation of Japan.

South Korea – and other countries that were suppressed by Japan between 1868 and 1945 – continue to demand that Japan acknowledge all the atrocities performed during the occupation, but these nations also need to examine their own history of nationalism and oppression of other nations or minority groups as “this can provide a foundation for exploring the possibilities of alternative cooperative perspectives” (Selden, 2008: 76). If Japan is not prepared to take responsibility for its actions and South Korea is not prepared to lessen its demands to a certain extent, these two countries, with the addition of North Korea in the event of reunification, cannot have a good relationship. Both (or currently all three) countries need to let go of their prejudice towards each other in order to have a peaceful future and hopefully, with the passage of
time and the emergence of generations that have not been directly affected by war or oppression, the nations will be able to peacefully coexist at last.
References


Picture References
