Japanese Imperialism and Colonialism

Andrew Reed Hall

Early Meiji

In the nineteenth century, Western powers saddled non-Western states with a variety of unequal arrangements, from fixed tariffs and extraterritoriality to formal colonization. The 1858 Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and Japan marked the inclusion of Japan into the unfortunate side of this equation. Japanese nationalists protested the insults against their national sovereignty and led the forces which overthrew the Tokugawa regime. The prevention of further loss of sovereignty and the revision of the unequal treaties remained the new Meiji government's most pressing issues for the next twenty years. Leading their list of goals was the need to strengthen the military in order to withstand future Western impositions. They studied the organizations and techniques of Western governments and militaries, and they modeled their own institutions on them. Thus the Meiji government was born in an imperialistic milieu, and their primary models were the world's leading imperialistic states. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Japanese government would created its own empire as soon as it was able.

Early in the Meiji period, the Japanese government consolidated its hold on the peripheral islands of the Japanese archipelago: Hokkaidō (Ezo), the Ryūkyū Islands, and the Bonin Islands. By the end of the seventeenth century, Ezo and Ryūkyū fell under the control of Japanese domains, but throughout the entire Tokugawa period they were still considered foreign entities, and the native populations there were not considered fully Japanese. The Tokugawa regime had entrusted the Matsumae domain with control of Hokkaidō. While most of the island was reserved for exclusive Ainu habitation, in practice Japanese fishers and merchants established outposts throughout the coastal areas, which they began to populate permanently in the 1840s. In 1869, Ezo was incorporated into the new state as "Hokkaidō" (North Seas District). According to David Howell, "After the Meiji state came to power it immediately launched a vigorous program of agricultural and industrial development. The assimilation of the Ainu was an integral aspect of that policy." (Howell 1994, 91) The Meiji regime tried to wipe out markers of Ainu ethnicity (earrings and tattoos, for example) and prohibited the Ainu from practicing their religion or hunting in their ancestral hunting-grounds. In 1899, the state enacted the "Law for the Protection of Former Hokkaidō Aborigines," which removed land from communal control, thereby forcing the Ainu to become petty farmers.

Japanese assimilation policies not only dispossessed the Ainu, they destroyed nearly all indicators of Ainu cultural and ethnic identity.

The Ryūkyū Kingdom was formed in the early fifteenth century on a chain of islands stretching from the southwest of Japan to the northeast of Taiwan. The largest of the islands was named "Okinawa." The islands were populated by peoples who spoke a language closely related to Japanese, although they were also greatly influenced by Chinese culture. Although the Ryūkyū kings sent tribute to the Ming and Qing courts in China, in the seventeenth century the kingdom came under the domination of the Satsuma domain of southern Kyūshū. The Tokugawa regime used the Ryūkyū kingdom as an intermediary in trade with China. Neither the Ryūkyū Kingdom nor China were strong enough to resist the demands of the assertive Meiji government. In 1879, the last Ryūkyū king was forced to abdicate, and the Ryūkyū Kingdom became Okinawa Prefecture. The Meiji government, which had already offended the Qing court by declaring sovereignty over a Chinese tributary state, initially was hesitant to cause further tension by pushing an assimilation policy like that in Hokkaidō. Japan's victory over the Qing in the late 1890s (Sino-Japanese War), however, removed Japanese inhibitions, and in 1899 the government passed the "Okinawa Prefecture Land Reorganization Law." As in Hokkaidō, the law replaced communal with private land ownership.

Teresa Morris-Suzuki says of the law:

The tradition by which the village controlled farmland and had the power to redistribute it from time to time among inhabitants was replaced by a system of individual property rights vested in the heads of households. . . . This removed some of the arbitrary and oppressive aspects of the old regime, but opened the way to the rapid consolidation of farm holding in the hands of landlords, many of whom . . . were Japanese merchants (Morris-Suzuki 1998, 27).

The Japanese government also embarked on a policy of cultural assimilation in Okinawa during this same period, paying particular attention to discouraging the use of the native Okinawan language and enforcing the use of standard Japanese among schoolchildren.

Japanese officials and intellectuals universally treated the Ainu and Okinawan cultures as primitive and uncivilized, thereby justifying assimilation policies as a way of "raising up" the native populations. However, because of supposed evidence of Ainu contribution to the ancient Jōmon culture of Japan, and because of the relationship of Okinawa's language to Japan's ancient language, some also thought of these peoples as representations of Japan's antiquity. The Ainu and Okinawans could thus be viewed simultaneously as Japanese and non-Japanese-as timeless pools left behind by the

mainstream, as if "marooned in some earlier phase of national history" (Morris-Suzuki 1998, 31).

Factors in Japan's Late Meiji Imperial Expansion

While the securing of the peripheral islands of the Japanese archipelago was done at the expense of relatively weak indigenous peoples, any further growth would have to come at the expense of established East Asian states and/or Western colonial powers. Despite the dangers, leading Japanese intellectuals and government officials in the 1880s and 1890s began to support the idea of winning control over neighboring regions. Three factors were responsible for this drive: a nationalist desire for equality, desire for access to the raw materials and markets of East Asia, and strategic needs.

The first was the nationalist desire for equality with foreign powers. A colonial empire was seen by many as a mark of becoming a "first-rate" modern country—a label many Japanese desired. An example of this inclination was a memorandum by Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru in 1887, in which he pointed out to his colleagues the Western powers' rapid division of the world into colonies and the need for Japan to get into the game. He concluded,

In my opinion, what we must do is to transform our empire and people, make the empire like the countries of Europe and our people like the peoples of Europe. To put it differently, we have to establish a new, European-style empire on the edge of Asia (Myers and Peattie 1984, 64).

A second factor was the economic benefit of gaining secured access to the raw materials and markets of East Asia, which could be lost if another Western power gained control of the regions first. In the 1880s and 1890s, the Meiji political leadership saw industrialization as the key to national strength, yet the domestic market by itself was not yet strong enough to make large-scale industry profitable. The Japanese leaders hoped that the huge China market would spur development of their industries, if only they would be allowed in. Koura Juntarō, a leader in the Foreign Ministry, stated in an inter-departmental report in 1895,

The territory of China is vast, her people are numerous, and her resources not inconsiderable. If our marine products and manufactured products are to have one great market in the future, then we must take this opportunity to expand our commercial privileges [in China] (Myers and Peattie 1984, p. 135).

Peter Duus, in a study of the Japanese business community, concluded that they largely supported the expansionist policies of the government:

"Until the end of the Russo-Japanese War (1905) big business leaders and the highest echelons of government were moving on parallel tracks in their assessments of the economic future, their evaluation of an expansionist foreign policy, and their sense of economic promise in Asia. . . . Both government leaders and businessmen were responding to the same situation with shared attitudes (Myers and Peattie 1984, 146)."

More than any other factor, however, the political instability of China and Korea and the concerns the Japanese leaders had for their own country's security were the primary motivations for imperialist expansion. Unlike the Western powers, whose empires were in distant continents, Japan would expand in regions adjacent to itself in East Asia. As Mark Peattie has noted,

"No colonial empire of modern times was as clearly shaped by strategic considerations. . . . Many of the overseas possessions of Western Europe had been acquired in response to the activities of traders, adventurers, missionaries, or soldiers acting far beyond the limits of European interest or authority. In contrast, Japan's colonial territories (with the possible exception of Taiwan) were, in each instance, obtained as the result of a deliberate decision by responsible authorities in the central government to use force in securing territory that would contribute to Japan's immediate strategic interests (Duus 1988: 218)."

Japanese leaders in the 1880s and 1890s were well fully conscious of the fierce competition among powers for position in East Asia. They saw the declining fortunes of the Chinese and Korean courts as potential opportunities for Western intrusion. Preventing a third country from taking control of Korea became a chief concern in Japanese foreign policy. The Prussian advisor to the Meiji government coined a phrase which was repeated endlessly in the period: that the Korean peninsula was "a dagger thrust at the heart of Japan." Japanese officials and private interests therefore took it as their natural right to intrude in Korea's internal affairs.

As Korea had for centuries been in a tributary relationship with the Chinese regimes, jockeying for position in the peninsula between Japan and Qing China in the 1890s soured relations between those two countries. War broke out in August 1894, and by April 1895, the Japanese military overwhelming defeated the Chinese army and navy. The Treaty of Shimonoseki, which ended the war, ceded the Pescadores, Taiwan, and the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan, recognized Korea's independence from China, and required China to pay an indemnity and offer commercial concessions to Japan. The military victories and treaty concessions were very popular in Japan, as they seemed to validate the direction the country had gone in modernizing itself in the previous decades.

The exhilaration of victory turned into humiliation and anger one week later though, as German, Russia, and France demanded that the Japanese government give up its claim to the Liaodong Peninsula-an event known as the Triple Intervention. Unable to stand up to three great powers at once, the Japanese government was forced to comply. In reaction to the Triple Intervention and Russia's subsequent taking control of the Liaodong Peninsula in 1900, the Japanese government prepared for a war with Russia by increasing military expenditures and finding a powerful ally of its own. They succeeded in their search for an ally in July 1902, when the government signed an alliance with Great Britain.

Leading Japanese generals had planned on winning control of the Liaodong Peninsula of Manchuria as a way of securing Korea. This followed a strategic logic explained by Prime Minister Yamagata Aritomo at the opening session of the Diet in 1890. As he explained,

"The independence and security of the nation depend first upon the protection of the line of sovereignty and then the line of advantage. . . . If we wish to maintain the nation's independence among the powers of the world at the present time, it is not enough to guard only the line of sovereignty; we must also defend the line of advantage . . . and within the limits of the nation's resources gradually strive for that position (Hackett 1971: 138)."

Yamagata declared that Japan's security depended on the establishment of Japanese influence beyond its actual territorial limits. In 1890, this "line of advantage" referred to Korea, and later it would be extended to include Manchuria and areas beyond.

As Russian intervention in Manchuria and Korea appeared to the Japanese government as a threat, in February 1904 Japan declared war on Russia. The Japanese military, in particular the navy, eventually defeated the Russian forces, but the cost in casualties was ten times higher than that in the Sino-Japanese War. The resulting peace treaty signed at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, resulted in Japan's winning recognition of its interests in Korea, the lease of the Liaodong Peninsula, railway rights in southern Manchuria, and the acquisition of the southern half of the island of Sakhalin, which the Japanese named Karafuto.

Taiwan

The aboriginal inhabitants of Taiwan were Malayo-Polynesians, and they had little or no cultural affiliation with China. After the Qing regime wrested control of Taiwan from Ming loyalists and pirates and placed it under the administration of Fujian province in 1683, however, Chinese immigrants began to arrive. By the mid-nineteenth century, the

majority of Taiwan's inhabitants were Han Chinese. In 1886, Taiwan became an independent province of China.

After the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, to govern Taiwan the Japanese Diet created the office of Governor-General. They granted the Governor-General authority to issue any executive ordinances he saw fit. The system resembled the British colonial system of separate government.

Most Japanese saw the control of Korea and Southern Manchuria as the primary goals of the Sino-Japanese War, so it was somewhat of a surprise when Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi forced the Chinese government to cede Taiwan to the Japanese empire. Japan was not prepared to administer a large, semi-tropical colony, and so it had to start from scratch. Additionally, after the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed, both Han Chinese and Aborigines rose in rebellion, and a group of local elites tried to establish an independent republic. Although resistance against the Japanese was divided and chaotic, it continued, with support from the Aboriginal community in particular, until 1902.

After three years of bureaucratic flailing, General Kodama Gentarō was named the fourth Governor-General of Taiwan. He appointed the medical doctor Gotō Shinpei as the chief civil administrator. Gotō launched a variety of projects that laid the foundation for extensive economic development and modernization in Taiwan, such as modernizing harbors, building roads, expanding postal, telegraph and telephone service, and creating a banking system. He also introduced a series of reforms intended to improve the health and hygiene of the population, including the establishment of a public hospital and medial college in Taipei.

Gotō's administration also created a public school system which resembled Japan's two-track system, in which only a small number of elementary school graduates were allowed to advance to general education middle and higher schools, while the majority went no further than elementary school or a vocational middle school. In Taiwan, the first group consisted of Japanese residents, while Taiwanese children constituted the second group. The schools for the Taiwanese taught the Japanese language, Japanese culture, technical skills and political obedience, so that after a long, gradual process they could be assimilated into Japanese society.

Gotō once remarked that true assimilation would take at least a hundred years.

After 1919, those who advocated for a faster assimilation process gained power over the colonial administration. Two governors-general in a row worked to improve the secondary school system for the Taiwanese, and they opened Japanese schools to worthy Taiwanese students. This measure, however, actually reduced the number of

Taiwanese who received higher education because they were then forced into competition with Japanese children using tests whose results were based largely on students' mastery of the Japanese language.

Taiwan's economy in the colonial era was dominated by a triangular trade. Taiwan's agricultural sector exported sugar and rice to Japan, while Japan exported manufactured goods to the island's non-agricultural sector. The non-agricultural sector, in turn, supplied industrial goods and commercial services to the agricultural sector. During the period of colonial rule under Japan, agricultural production in Taiwan showed a rapid advance, partly through the increases in land, labor, fertilizer, and irrigation inputs. Industry was partitioned into a large traditional sector, largely operated by the Chinese, and a modern enclave, dominated by the Japanese. Japan's domination of the modern enclave allowed it to control Taiwan's economy and transfer profits back to the Japanese mainland.

Korea

Unified in terms of ethnicity and language and self-governed for centuries, Korea was an unlikely victim of colonial subjugation. Koreans had responded to Japanese modernization and expansion by instituting their own drive for modernization in the period from 1876 to 1910, but it was not effective enough to preserve the nation's sovereignty. Korea had begun its modernization drive twenty years later than Japan, and by 1910 Korea remained significantly weaker than Japan in all meaningful indices of state power. Japan took advantages of these vulnerabilities.

Alexis Dudden has shown how Itō Hirobumi and his allies, among the first East Asians to master Western diplomatic and legal language, used this new "vocabulary of power" to both invalidate China's long-held position in East Asia and discredit Korea's claims of independent nationhood. After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan established a protectorate over Korea, under the direction of Itō. He tried to gain public support for a modernization plan that favored Japanese interests, but was met with widespread opposition fueled by Korean nationalists. One of these nationalists assassinated Itō in 1909, and the following year the 518-year-old Choson Dynasty ceded the remaining vestiges of its sovereignty to Japan, thus making Korea a Japanese colony. In a 1905 secret agreement with Japan, the United States traded rights to Korea for rights to the Philippines, and Great Britain acknowledged Japan's interest in Korea in exchange for Japan's recognition of British rule in India.

The new colonial government was intensive but selective in its reach. In some areas of major interest, such as the economy, the Japanese were highly interventionist, whereas in other areas, such as social policy, they left undisturbed many aspects of Korean

tradition and custom, including the family and clan systems. Japanese perceptions of themselves helped determine the nature of Japanese rule in Korea. Japan's sense of cultural uniqueness, pride in its distinctive process of modernization, a lingering sense of inferiority vis-à-vis the great powers, and a sense of racial and cultural superiority vis-à-vis other Asians all helped create a mindset among Japanese which viewed Koreans with contempt.

It was important to the Japanese, therefore, to demonstrate the historical inevitability of Korean annexation. This gave rise to an assimilationist ideology which highlighted both Korea's proximity to Japan as well as the supposed "backwardness" permeating all spheres of Korean life. Through such propaganda, Japanese leaders claimed that Korea was merely a culture that had outlived its time and that should therefore be "rejoined" to Japan, with Japan's serving as a "big brother" of sorts who could bring Korea by the hand into the civilized world.

Such ideas did not go over so well in Korea, however. Beginning on March 1, 1919, massive numbers of Koreans participated in demonstrations against Japanese rule, known collectively as the March First Movement. The movement's inspiration was the ideology of self-determination promoted by Woodrow Wilson, and the spark was the death of the last Choson monarch. A group of prominent religious figures from the Chondon (a native Korean religion), Christian, and Buddhist churches signed a Declaration of Independence. The signers were subsequently arrested, but there were widespread demonstrations which led to violent countermeasures from the police. Hundreds of Koreans were killed and thousands more were arrested or forced into exile.

About this time in Japan, the atmosphere had changed to one which favored a reform of the colonial policy in Korean. Wartime prosperity and the victory of the Western democracies in World War I had infused Japanese politics with a more liberal spirit, which manifested itself in the growing power of popular political parties. Prime Minister Hara Kei instituted a new set of policies designed to prevent a repeat of the March First demonstrations, known as the "Cultural Policy." As a part of this change in direction, the colonial government adopted a series of measures to eliminate discrimination, abandon some of the more petty forms of government interference in daily Korean life, provide more opportunities for Koreans in education and civil service employment, and allow more freedom of expression and assembly.

Micronesia

Under the stipulations of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Japan entered World War I on the side of the Allies in August 1914. During the war, Japan occupied German-leased territories in China and German-owned islands in the Pacific including the Marshalls,

Marianas, and Carolines. The Treaty of Versailles awarded the occupied Pacific islands to Japan under a League of Nations mandate.

The prime value of the islands was initially perceived as strategic. Economic justification for the acquisition soon followed, and the islands were intensively developed. By the 1930s, all economic activity in Micronesia was controlled by three quasi-governmental Japanese companies. The development brought a higher standard of living for most island communities, but their share of the profits was very low, and their traditional society was greatly damaged by the establishment of Japanese plantations and towns.

Micronesia differed from most other colonies in terms of demographics. After 1935, Japanese residents outnumbered Micronesian residents, and the Marianas came to be inhabited almost entirely by Japanese. The official Japanese policy was to assimilate the Micronesians, but in actuality the government was essentially indifferent to them. Indigenous peoples experienced almost no assimilation policies at the hands of the Japanese.

Manchuria

Japan's 1905 victory over Russia won for Japan all interests previously controlled by Russia in southern Manchuria. These included the Liaodong leasehold, which Japan renamed the Kwantung Leased Territory. Japan also won control of the Russian-built railway line from Dalian to Changchun, along with special economic and administrative rights in towns situated along the line. To manage the railway and the other assets that came with it, the Japanese government in 1906 authorized the creation of the South Manchurian Railway Company (SMR). The railroad company served as the spearhead of Japanese economic and cultural activities in northeast China, and it accumulated substantial profits for much of its history. The Japanese army stationed troops, named the Kwantung Army (Jp. Kantōgun), in the leased territory and along the SMR rail line.

On the evening of September 18, 1931, elements of the Kwantung Army manufactured a clash with Chinese troops which led to the Army invading and occupying the entire northeast China region. The incident's planners acted in order to create a base of military operations and a buffer zone against the Soviet Union, so as to protect existing Japanese economic interests from competition and to secure the region as a source of future raw materials and as a site for industrial development. After the incident, planners then fabricated an indigenous independence movement as a pretext for creating a nominally autonomous state. This new state, Manchukuo (Jp. Manshūkoku), was established on March 1, 1932, with the former Qing emperor Pu Yi as its puppet leader. The Japanese government allowed the Kwantung Army to control Manchukuo as a virtual colony until the war's end in 1945.

The Chinese government appealed to the League of Nations for redress, and the League agreed to establish a commission of inquiry. Following the investigation, the commission's report acknowledged that Japan had legitimate grievances against the Chinese government. However, the report condemned the Japanese invasion and refused to recognize Manchukuo as an independent state. When the League adopted the report, Japan withdrew from the League.

By creating a puppet state, the Kwantung Army opened a new chapter in Japan's colonial history.

In the formal colonies of Taiwan and Korea, the populations were considered subjects of the Japanese Empire and, therefore, all attempts at creating a national or cultural identity separate from Japan were prohibited. In Manchukuo, however, nominal independence created ideological breathing room, a freedom which some Japanese saw as an opportunity to create a new kind of culture and national identity for the inhabitants there.

Japanese officials tried to create a new "Manchurian" national consciousness which they hoped would replace Chinese nationalistic identity among the majority Han Chinese. At first, they tried to forge this identity by employing familiar Chinese models, which they expected would mask Japanese control. They used Confucian terminology and appealed to historical precedents to try to legitimize the creation of an independent northeastern state. In time, however, the weight of Japanese demands for empire-wide ideological orthodoxy led the Manchukuo leaders to abandon the Chinese models and instead portray the state as client, dependent on the Japanese Emperor and in need of an injection of Japan's superior culture. Leading Japanese officials began to support forcing the Chinese to follow Japanese linguistic and ceremonial forms in hopes that it would cause them to appreciate and even willingly support the Japanese effort to create a unified Greater East Asia. In other words, their goals changed from one of creating a new ethnicity to one of recreating Japaneseness. Ultimately, however, both proved unsuccessful.

War with China

In July 1937, Japan and China went to war against each other, and in December 1941 Japan attacked American and British forces, thereby beginning the Pacific War. From 1937, Japan came to control large swaths of the most populated areas of China, and from 1941 until its defeat in 1945, it took control of more regions in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

In constructing justifications for its domination of foreign lands, Japan faced the problem of how to legitimize imperialist expansion in a world where colonialism was no longer

legitimate. Like other imperialist powers of the time, it had to disguise its domination in new language that made it seem as though they were actually respecting Wilsonian concepts of self-rule.

In 1940, Japan established a reorganized Nationalist Government of China at Nanjing and allowed this puppet government to use the symbols of Chinese nationalism it had avoided using in Manchukuo. While the puppet government in Manchukuo had rejected Sun Yatsen's "Three Principles of the People," the new Nanjing government, manned by former Guomindang members, openly embraced them, declaring itself the true successor to Sun's legacy. The Japanese even let the new Nanjing government use the tricolor Guomindang flag, albeit with a small pennant proclaiming "peace, national reconstruction, and anticommunism." In reality, however, the regime was not so different from Manchukuo, for its Japanese advisers were controlling policies at almost every level.

The second ideological problem was how to interpret the expansion of the wartime empire beyond the boundaries of the Sinitic world. In the Meiji empire, notions of common culture and common race were plausible justifications for colonial domination, and to speak of helping "younger brothers" in Taiwan or Korea made some sense. But the wartime empire included places that had little in common with Japan. The ideological framework built to legitimate the Meiji government's colonial expansion, therefore, had to be revamped so as to justify the inclusion of Southeast Asia. In June 1940, Foreign Minister Arita Hachirō put forth a new vision. He said it was natural for those closely related geographically, racially, and economically to form a sphere for their own coexistence and co-prosperity and to establish peace and order within that sphere. In August, the new Foreign Minister, Matsuoka Yōsuke, gave this vision a name: the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. What is striking about the concept is how rapidly it acquired the status and legitimacy of a national goal.

Kōminka in Taiwan and Korea

During the wartime period, the ultranationalist fervor in the Japanese homeland was reflected in the colonies by the kōminka policy movement. Transitioning from the relatively liberal policies of the 1920s, kōminka policies called for a rapid assimilation of colonial peoples, making them "truly Japanese" not only in deed but in "spirit." For anyone familiar with Japanese wartime discourse, when the term seishin ("spirit") was endlessly repeated, it is not surprising that "spirit" would become the touchstone of the wartime Japanization movement in the colonies. The urgency was due to the expanding scope of the war in the region, a conflict that Japan could not fight alone. Wartime pressures caused Japanese colonial officials to mobilize all colonial resources and manpower, and without the colonial subjects' wholehearted loyalty toward the mother

country, such mobilization would be insufficient. The movement to promote the "Japanese spirit" was, therefore, essential to Japan's war effort.

In 1937-38, though, when the war with China began, Japan instituted four new programs to increase its ability to control the colonies. These programs consisted of religious reform, a national language movement, a name-changing campaign, and increased military recruitment.

In terms of religious reform, Japan's colonial governments started to promote State Shinto religious practices while prohibiting the expression of indigenous religions. In Taiwan, Japan built Shinto shrines and encouraged the public to visit them. Colonial administrators also encouraged families to maintain a Shinto altar (kamidana) in each household. In Korea, the policy focused on controlling Christian independence movements. Several Christian mission schools refused to participate in Shinto rituals, and they were consequently shut down. In 1940, Japan cracked down on Christians in Korea, shutting down 200 churches and arresting 70 ministers and around 2,000 church members. More than fifty of the ministers died in jail.

Regarding the control of national languages, in April 1937, the colonial government in Taiwan removed classical Chinese from the elementary and middle school curricula and forbade any use of Chinese in newspapers. The following year, the colonial government in Korea not only removed Korean language education from most schools, it even banned students from using Korean at school at all and discouraged them from using it outside of school. The governments in both Korea and Taiwan promoted the use of Japanese. While in Taiwan there was no attempt to ban the public use of Chinese or other indigenous languages, Taipei Prefecture began a program in 1937 honoring those families who claimed to speak only Japanese in the home. In Korea, however, the colonial government considered the native language a greater threat than Taiwanese was considered by the Taiwan colonial government, and so it worked more actively to ban its use in from public places.

The Taiwan and Korea colonial governments announced in February 1940 a new set of regulations on household registration which encouraged colonial subjects to replace their original names with Japanese ones. In Taiwan, the regulations were not rigidly enforced; but even so, in five years around seven percent of the population had changed their names.

In Korea, however, the name change was mandatory. There, the Japanese used a different rationale. They argued that last names then in use were clan names rather than family names and that Koreans did therefore not have a "modern family system." The requirement to change one's name came into effect in February 1940, and the government gave everyone six months to comply. Richard Kim's autobiographical work,

Lost Names, provides a moving representation of the humiliation Koreans felt during this period. Many Koreans responded by dressing in black so as to express their sorrow over the loss of their names and family identities.

By August, seventy-five percent of Korean households had adopted new Japanese names. If a family refused to participate, their children could not go to schools and the adults were either demoted at work or deprived of job opportunities.

For about one hundred years, from about 1850 to 1945, Japan tried its best to respond quickly and strategically to political and military pressures from the outside in order to save itself from becoming a colony. On one hand, Japan opted to fight against colonial advances on the Japanese islands and, on the other, aspired to become itself a colonial power that would rival any Western nation. To achieve these goals, the nascent nation-state of Japan quickly and successfully put into motion two broad initiatives, one to develop a political rhetoric to legitimatize nationalistic and expansionist policies, and the other to modernize and industrialize the nation as quickly as possible.

By the end of Meiji, Japan was able to renegotiate unequal treaties with the West and became a member of the modern nations, and put some of its imperial aspirations into practice.

It is possible to view the challenges Japan faced and policy decisions Japan made during this time as largely necessitated by the rules of the geopolitical contest being played out in Asia by Japan and Western colonial powers. Japan was ultimately defeated in this contest at the end of World War II.

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