

Nam-lin Hur 許南麟

Associate Professor, Asian Studies, The University of British Columbia

## Korean Officials in the Land of the Kami: Diplomacy and the Prestige Economy, 1607–1811

### 1. Introduction

There were twelve Korean missions during the Tokugawa period (1600–1868), the first of them being in 1607 and the last being in 1811. Most Korean embassies, at Japan's request, were sent to congratulate a newly enthroned shōgun. As Japan and Korea were considered to be peers in this diplomatic interaction, the main duty of a Korean embassy was to exchange state letters and royal gifts with the Tokugawa shōgun. Chosŏn Korea's ongoing dispatch of embassies to Tokugawa Japan had to do with its devastating experiences of foreign invasions, including one from Japan. The Korean government considered having neighborly relations with Japan the best option available under the evolving circumstances of East Asian geopolitics. And as far as Tokugawa Japan was concerned, the Korean embassy was instrumental in enabling it to construct its own international order and national prestige.

Scholars, including Kang Chae-ŏn, Ronald P. Toby, Etsuko Hae-Jin Kang, Kang T'ŏk-sang, Yi Chin-hŏi, Nakao Hiroshi, and Shin Ki-su, emphasize, to one degree or another, the amicable nature of the so-called "kyorin" (交隣) relationship between Korea and Japan between 1607 and 1811. With regard to the suggestion that Japanese people in general remained quite negative towards Korea, these scholars argue that, at the collective level, the Tokugawa Japanese did not maintain any strong feeling of ethnic disdain or contempt towards Korea and Koreans. Kang T'ŏk-sang, for example, dismisses the theory of the deep-rooted tradition of Japan's disdain towards Chosŏn Korea, suggesting that it might be that there were some individuals who harbored a feeling of disdain towards Korea, but as far as the "common feeling" of the Japanese people was concerned, that was not the case.

Of course, some scholars call into question the indiscriminate use of the term "kyorin" in describing the framework of international relations between Chosŏn Korea and Tokugawa Japan. One of them is Son S'ŏng-ch'ŏl, a leading scholar in the field. Son S'ŏng-ch'ŏl charges that the term "kyorin" is too abstract, even deceptive, to be able to catch the multifaceted nature of the relations between the two countries that unfolded in the dynamics of confrontation, conflict, animosity, and competition over ethnic superiority, in addition to orderly diplomatic exchange. In particular, given that "the passage to the colonial period from the time of 'ch'ŏng-Han ron' (征韓論), or the 'subdue-Korea policy' was the historical outcome of the relations between Korea and Japan in the second half of the Chosŏn period," warns he, the term "kyorin," when used uncritically, might end up "fabricating a history," or at best, "smudging the historical factuality of Korean-Japanese relations." How this multifaceted relationship was developed, particularly at a popular level, is yet to be discussed.

Despite critical suggestions like Son's, when discussing the relations between Chosŏn Korea and Tokugawa Japan, most scholars still tend to ignore how the Korean people felt about the Japanese. The Koreans never lost their "deep feelings of revenge, animosity, and contempt" towards Japan. Japan was not a country that they could ever forgive. Koreans believed that, given the geopolitical situation of East Asia, there was simply no alternative to establishing neighborly relations with Japan. How do these scholars respond to what happened between the two countries before and after the Tokugawa period? Is the Tokugawa period an anomaly? Are scholars accounting for it by proposing "historical discontinuities" ?

As we all know, before the seventeenth century Chosŏn Korea was frequently plundered by the Japanese, who were commonly labeled "dwarf pirates," or waegu (倭寇). Relatively stable relations with Tsushima sometimes turned sour, as was demonstrated by the Disturbance of Three Ports in 1510. Needless to say, the biggest rupture in the relationship between the two countries came in 1592, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi invaded Korea in the name of conquering Ming China. The Japanese invasion of 1592 to 1598 was a devastating blow, and it turned much of Korea into an anguished wasteland.

On the other hand, Japan had preserved and nurtured the idea that Korea had once been its colony. The story of Empress Jingŏ's conquest of the three kingdoms of Korea, as is suggested in the *Kojiki* 古事記 and the *Nihon shoki* 日本書記, remained a perennial historical reminder to medieval Japanese leaders. Indeed, one of the reasons that Toyotomi Hideyoshi cited for his "Korean expedition" involved restoring the glory that Empress Jingŏ had bestowed upon the divine country. It was a common belief among the Japanese soldiers that Japan was engaged in fighting in order to recover what had been lost or neglected for long. We see this in the diaries and memos left by Japanese soldiers and monks, who, in their writing, tried to justify their war actions and to uplift their fighting spirit by evoking the myth of Empress Jingŏ. During the early modern period, were the Chosŏn Koreans and the Tokugawa Japanese able to put all these historical legacies behind them? The answer: No, not really.

What about the post-Tokugawa period? The Koreans remained suspicious, disdainful, or, at best, very cautious towards the Japanese throughout the late nineteenth century. Huang Tsun-hsien, a Chinese diplomat in Tokyo, proposed in his essay "A Policy for Korea" (*Ch' ao-hsien ts' e-lueh* 朝鮮策略) that Korea cooperate with China, Japan, and the United States. About this suggestion, in 1881 Yi Man-son and other Confucian scholars in the Kyongsang province were enraged: they submitted King Kojong a memorial in the name of "ten thousand men." In this memorial they denounced Japan, saying: "We have had relations with Japan for a long time. The Three Port Incident and the Imjin War have not been forgotten ... They are not like us and undoubtedly have aggressive designs." This was the view of most Koreans.

Probably, the only exception was a handful of progressives, such as Kim Ok-kyun, Pak Yŏng-hyo, Sŏ Kwang-bŏm, and their sympathizers, who tried to emulate the success of Meiji Japan's "civilization and enlightenment," or bunmei kaika (文明開化). But they were a minority, and their efforts never amounted too much.

How did the Meiji Japanese perceive Korea and Koreans? A chapter entitled "Defining the Koreans: Images of Domination" in Peter Duus's *The Abacus and the*

*Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895–1910*, is, if somewhat lopsided, quite clear with regard to how the Japanese perceived Korea and the Koreans at the turn of the 19th century. Arakawa Gorō, a Diet member and newspaper editor from Hiroshima who visited Korea right after the Russo–Japanese War, asks, “What kind of people are the Koreans?” His answer to his own question is as follows: “They all look just like the Japanese, of the same Oriental race, with the same coloring and physique, and the same black hair.” However, he concludes that, “If you look closely [at the Koreans], they appear to be a bit vacant, their mouths open and their eyes dull, somehow lacking.”

Does this sound familiar? If so, it is not surprising, for in the 1880s Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) had already warned his countrymen to avoid letting the West confuse them with Asians. He strongly argued that Japan should “get out” of Asia. Some Japanese acknowledged that the Japanese and the Koreans shared “a past, a culture, and even an ethnic heritage.” However, their views were later developed into the same-ancestry theory, or “Il-Sŏn tongjo-rŏn” (日鮮同祖論), which was used to justify Imperial Japan’s annexation of Korea.

Given all this, how do scholars who emphasize the “amicable relationship” between Chosŏn Korea and Tokugawa Japan explain the “surge of Japanese disdain” towards the Koreans during the Meiji period? Nakao Hiroshi, Kang Chae-ŏn, Yi Chin-hŏi, and Kang Tŏk-sang explain it by referring to the cessation of Korean embassies in 1811 and to the spread of Hirata kokugaku (平田学), or Hirata National Learning, which awoke an ethnic consciousness among the Japanese. In fact, the proponents of kokugaku emphasized the historical significance of the imperial institution and circulated the myth of Empress Jingŏ’s conquest of the three kingdoms of ancient Korea. The idea of shinkoku (神国), or the “country of the gods,” which was revived during the late Tokugawa period, was poised to be further developed during the Meiji period.

These scholars also cite the nationalistic discourses articulated by the ideologues of coastal defense (e.g., Hayashi Shihei, Yoshida Shŏin, and, later, Katsu Kaishŏ). Some Confucian scholars also spoke up. Nakai Chikuzan (1730–1804), who advised Matsudaira Sadanobu (1758–1829) with regard to his Kansei reforms in the late 1780s and early 1790s, was one of them. In his *Sŏbŏ kigen* 草茅危言, or the *Critical Words of Grassroots*, Chikuzan commented: “Since the time of Empress Jingŏ’s expedition, Korea has brought tribute to Japan. Although [Korea] has been our subject country for long, now it doesn’t seem to be the case. Koreans no longer bring tribute to our imperial capital of Kyoto.” Chikuzan insisted that Korea should bring tribute.

On the whole, the scholars who emphasize the neighborly relations between Chosŏn Korea and Tokugawa Japan argue that the idea of so-called “Chosen besshi” (朝鮮蔑視), or “disdain for Chosŏn,” is the result of an ethnic consciousness that did not emerge until the late Tokugawa period.

I challenge this view. I question the common characterization of the role of Korean embassies sent to Tokugawa Japan. It is true that there were no serious conflicts between Chosŏn Korea and Tokugawa Japan until the 1870s after the Imjin War. This was, I believe, a great diplomatic achievement for two countries that had long remained suspicious or hostile towards each other. At least on the surface, Chosŏn Korea and Tokugawa Japan successfully conducted a policy of equal and amicable diplomacy. However, we should not ignore the undercurrents of conventional ethnic perceptions and

collective identities that, in various ways, continued to boil beneath the surface and eventually led to head-on conflicts from the 1870s. The relations between Chosŏn Korea and Tokugawa Japan were multi-layered, and they unfolded on many levels, including the diplomatic, the ideological, the cultural, and the perceptual. In understanding the crisscrossing nature of Korean–Japanese relations, it is essential not to view it in a totalizing manner.

In order to diversify our understanding, I pay attention to how the Koreans and Japanese perceived each other. I will look at how the people of each country pursued their own ethnic prestige by playing it off of that of the other. The Koreans and Japanese coalesced ethnic prestige into state diplomacy by accentuating the otherness of the other and then stigmatizing it. Both Japan and Korea tried to preserve and implement prestige economies of their own in conducting diplomatic intercourse. I use the term “prestige economy” to refer to the “expectations of ethnic groups for a ‘self-justified’ prestige” – a prestige that exonerates their claim to distinctive ethnic and cultural status. The matrix of ethnic prestige at work between premodern Korea and Japan was never monochromatic. In an attempt to understand its multifaceted nature, I describe what those Korean officials who were sent to Tokugawa Japan observed and felt in the land of the kami (神). And I then look at how the Tokugawa Japanese received and interacted with them.

## 2. Korean Officials in Tokugawa Japan

### Things “Japanese”

For the Korean envoys, travel to Edo, which covered more than 2,500 miles over land and sea, was not an easy undertaking. By the same token, for the Japanese officials, the matter of treating and accommodating a diplomatic corps of 400 to 500 persons from Korea as well as hundreds of Tsushima officials and soldiers, who guarded and escorted the foreign guests, was a daunting task. The travel usually took more or less six months to complete.

Was the travel enjoyable? Not really. When they were appointed to the mission, the Korean envoys were usually very disappointed, assuming that all that awaited them was an arduous and dangerous journey to an alien country inhabited by “barbaric enemies.” However, contrary to their expectation, the Japan that they encountered was not that bad. First of all, the Korean officials found that Japan was extraordinarily beautiful. As far as natural beauty was concerned, Japan seemed to be unmatched: Tsushima, the Inland Sea, Osaka and Kyoto, the Biwa Lake, the Tokaidō Highway, and Edo were all wondrous to behold. Shin Yu-han, who was in the ninth embassy in 1719, spat out his jealousy: “How on earth can barbarians like the Japanese deserve a beautiful land like this”? When he passed Mount Fuji, he was so impressed that he determined that this must be a place that could be found only in the heavenly realm. It is true that over time, praise for the beauty of Japanese landscape gradually ebbed, and that there were debates comparing Mount Kŏmkang and Mount Fuji, but for the Korean envoys, Japan remained quite exotic and impressive in terms of its natural beauty.

There were also many things other than the natural scenery that amazed the Koreans and incited their wonder and curiosity. The towns, such as Akamagaseki, Tomonoura, Ushimado, Muronotsu, and Hyōgo, which they passed through, were crowded

and seemed prosperous; the people watching the procession of the embassy looked quite affluent; the streets were packed with hundreds of stores, which were filled with all kinds of goods. Osaka, known as the “kitchen of Tokugawa Japan,” was spectacular? hundreds of trade ships coming in and out; urbane buildings and luxurious residences; and all kinds of stores selling clothes, books, medicine, flowers, liquor, and other sundries.

Korean envoys were also impressed by Japanese material culture, agricultural technology, and craftsmanship they observed or came to know while traveling. For example, the Osaka guest house, Nishi Honganji, impressed many Korean officials with its clean, well arranged bedrooms, washrooms, kitchens, lounges, and other amenities, not to mention the massive size of its temple complex, which easily accommodated more than 1,000 travelers from Korea and Tsushima. Rooms were clean and bright, and sanitation was excellent. Many Korean officials, who were very keen at any signs of Tokugawa Japan’s military strength, saw how it was interlocked with economic strength, in addition to the factor of Japan’s own unique socio-political institutions.

As the journey progressed, however, Korean officials tried to find something that could offset their impression of Japan’s economic affluence and military superiority. They found it in Japanese customs and morals. Many Korean officials commented on the lack of Confucian ethics and ridiculed the poor state of Confucian learning in Japanese society. In particular, some officials found the sexual morality of Japanese people totally unacceptable. For example, Shin Yu-han, who found that there were too many brothel quarters and prostitutes, came to acquire knowledge of the red-light districts (Kuwa-ch?) in Osaka. He soon ventured out to the long street of Kuwa-ch?, which was colorfully decorated with silk brocades, red curtains, and exotic signboards, and at one spot, through his translator, he asked the names and ages of some prostitutes. The youngest was fifteen years old, and the oldest was twenty-five. He had finally found something that could compensate him for what he found quite perplexed in Japan’s economy and material culture.

In his travelogue *Haeyurok* 海遊?, or “the Record of a Journey over the Sea,” he wrote: “(Prostitutes), who sell their flirting beauty, demand hundreds of gold pieces for a night. The Japanese indulged in lechery and luxury, and men and women all wear silk.” Shin found a cultural yardstick by which he could measure the degree to which the “barbarous Japanese” were civilized or humanized. Needless to say, as far as he was concerned, the Japanese people failed miserably in this respect. He not only learned that in Japan, “a naked man and woman enter the bathroom together during the daytime, and at night, a man and woman always light the lantern and conduct licentious activities,” but he was also told that homosexuality was rampant in Japan. The love between men and women should follow the principle of harmony, as expressed in Yin and Yang. The Japanese people seemed to defy even the most basic principles human beings were supposed to honor. No wonder, marriage between people bearing the same family name was not taboo in Japan. What a country!

Chosŏn Korea was a country of Confucian morals. When boys and girls reached the age of seven they were even forbidden from sitting together. Female chastity was more important than life itself. To the Koreans, it was obvious that the moral standards of the Japanese people lagged far behind theirs. Or, there were no moral standards at all.

## Cultural Exchange

During their journey in Japan, the members of the Korean embassy engaged Japanese officials and scholars in “conversation in writing and recitation in harmony,” or p’ildam ch’ anghwa (筆談唱和). Koreans had no doubt that they far excelled the Japanese when it came to the mastery of (Chinese) letters – the essence of human civilization. And, indeed, the Japanese had the greatest respect for Korean literary skills and Confucian scholarly acumen. As Shin Yu-han observed: “[The] Japanese vogue for [Chinese] letters is notorious. Although they call themselves learned literati and great men, they flock in groups and seek [Korean] poems or writings. They pack in crowds on the street and block the gate.”

As far as the Korean envoys were concerned, cultural exchange was a sort of one-sided favor that they were bequeathing upon the Japanese. Their cultural intercourse with the Japanese was accompanied by extreme pride, and they were convinced that Japan should submit to the cultural and, by extension, political authority of Korea. It should, therefore, come by no surprise that Korean envoys, particularly those selected for the purpose of “cultural exchange,” were eager to devote much of their time to dealing with Japanese visitors, who included local officials and Confucian scholars, commoners, and even servants. The members of the Hayashi family were no exception: they showed genuine interest in having a chance to converse with these high-nosed Confucian faithfuls from the country of “orthodox” Neo-Confucianism.

For the most part, cultural exchange involved the endless exchange of Chinese poems and, sometimes, paintings with Japanese visitors. Tsushima officials often used their leverage to help people who were trying to reach Korean officials. At the lodging places along the route of the procession of Korean embassy, Korean envoys found long lines of people waiting for their arrival. Pressure for “civilizing,” or kyohwa (?化) the descendants of “dwarf pirates” really ran high. Shin Yu-han of the ninth embassy complained: “I was forced to bend my head down between the inkstone and the ink stick and to swallow the sour and pungent smell of the ink. I am like a donkey helplessly revolving around a millstone.” He produced poem after poem without really thinking about what he was writing.

Many Japanese people had an almost fanatic interest in the literary or artistic products of Korea. Korean envoys felt exalted and held sympathy toward the Japanese who seemed to yearn for what genuine human civilization could offer. “Regardless of the quality of poems or writings, whether high or low, or wise or foolish, [the Japanese] admire them as if looking up to gods or jewels.” What could be done about this was to dish out what they were longing for. It was not rare for Korean cultural envoys to produce hundreds of, even thousands of, Chinese poems during their journey in Japan. For example, Shin Yu-han had composed as many as about 6,000 poems by the end of his travel, which took just over six months.

Did the Japanese really yearn for Korean culture? Unlike the Korean officials liked to understand, there was a long tradition in Japan that had to do with fad for things exotic. “Basara” daimyō in the medieval times, represented by Sasaki Dōyō, a shugo from Ōmi Province, showed a habit of collecting things ostentatious and extravagant. Their yearning for things exotic spawned a fad for acquiring works of art and craft from China, or karamono (唐物), and helped the Zen monks of the Gozan (五山) seek the career path of

cultural connoisseur. These monks, known as *dōbōshū* (同朋衆, Buddhist coterie of artists and aesthetes), were involved in importing, cataloguing, displaying, and studying such cultural items from China as paintings, calligraphic items, sculptures, porcelains, and the like. In the early modern times, it surged in the form of “the Dutch craze” (*ranpeki* 蘭癖) ? a craze “which affected such practical persons as Tanuma Okitsugu, who encouraged Dutch studies, perhaps not so much as a policy as out of curiosity and a desire for rare objects.” George Sansom suggests that by the late Tokugawa period the daimyō of Satsuma, Hirado, and other clans were so afflicted by “*ranpeki*” that their domain governments “took on certain foreign characteristics.”

Even so, some Japanese intellectuals felt insulted and humiliated by the Japanese people’s almost blind enthusiasm for things “Korean.” Nakai Chikuzan could not stand the scene that poor Japanese calligraphers and poets gathered and asked for the Koreans’ poems, saying that those poems would be the honor of their lifetime. Worse yet, he was dismayed, “The Japanese lower their heads toward the arrogant Korean envoys, who often stretch out their foot and keep papers down with it instead of using a paperweight (*bunchin* 文?). Nakai Chikuzan’s cynicism was not unfounded. Indeed, the Korean envoys looked down upon the Japanese, who kowtowed to their “authentic” poetry and calligraphy.

Needless to say, for the Korean officials, this was proof of Korea’s superior civilization. They never concealed their contempt for Japanese literary accomplishments, which they thought were “mediocre, strange, childish, unreadable, boring, wild, or artless” . Even with regard to the presumably highest Confucian rector of Tokugawa Japan in the early eighteenth century, Hayashi Hōkoku, Shin Yu-han was merciless: “He is said to be Japan’s foremost scholar ... He thinks his poems are fine, but by and large [they] do not make any sense and are coarse, awkward and ridiculous.”

For Korean officials, civilization was something that should be gauged by the yardstick of Chinese poems, Chinese calligraphy, or Confucian etiquette, rituals, and music. It was neither clear to, nor bothered, the Koreans what things “Chinese” in origin or “Confucian” really meant to themselves and to their country. Without reflecting on how it came into being, they were convinced that they somehow represented “true civilization” demonstrated by things “Chinese” or “Confucian.” For them, all these cultural things were the means whereby the feeble human mind could be cultivated and brought towards the ideal of human civilization. Things “Chinese” or “Confucian” served as the cultural barometer that justified the differences, whether real or imaginary, between Korea and Japan. Based on this, Korean officials assigned “a differential value” to the ethnicity of Japan so as to elevate the cultural privileges of Korea. The Japanese had been, and had to be, different.

Having encountered some Japanese, Korean officials were able to confirm what they had already been taught in their home country. What they observed in Tokugawa Japan was what they had taken for granted as inviolable truth before ever encountering the Japanese. It is true that Korean officials agreed that in terms of population and national wealth, Japan has seen no better days than what it was experiencing now. However, in their eyes, this was the manifestation of martial rule rather than that of true (i.e., Confucian) civilization. Korean envoys all failed to find any solid evidence of (Confucian) civilization in Tokugawa Japan. There were neither authentic Confucian schools nor a national altar

dedicated to Confucius. To their shock, they even learned that the Japanese did not have ritual robes for the funeral ceremonies of their lords or parents.

All this confirmed what the Koreans had believed about Japan. Here are some typical examples. Before the Imjin, Yi Hwang (1501–70) viewed the Japanese as “barbarians like beasts and birds” and “an ignorant, dirty people,” even though he suggested that Koreans should conciliate them in order to prevent them from “revealing the true nature of their beastliness.” For Kim S?ng-il (1538–93), the Japanese were simply “barbarians” whose customs and manners were worthless and should be abandoned. After the Imjin, in his *Kanyangrok* 看羊? Kang Hang (1567–1618) characterized the Japanese to be “like a herd of dogs and sheep or a herd of aliens with squint eyes” and Japan a “country of dirty black teeth” despite his relatively accurate observations of Japanese politics, military, and customs. Yi Su-gwang, who extensively studied Japan as it was presented in Chinese books, maintained an intense animosity towards Japan but acknowledged the superiority of the Japanese military system and weaponry. However, his usual characterization of the Japanese was “dwarf villains” or “aliens.” Shin Ky?ng, the author of *Chaejo p?nban? chi* 再造藩邦志, maintained a strict binary division between the “efflorescent Koreans” on the one hand and the “barbarous Japanese” on the other and never relented his extreme animosity towards Japan. H? Mok (1595–1682), who authored *H?kch’ i y?ljon* 黑齒列傳, was also firm about Japan: “a country of black teeth,” a vassal country in terms of culture, or a “mongrel in the Sea of the East.” Yi Ik (1681–1763) acknowledged the advanced state of Japanese technology, its economy, and its military and emphasized the strategic importance of neighborly relations with Japan, but by and large he looked down upon Japanese culture and customs. Ahn Ch?ng-bok (1712–1791), the author of *Tongsa kangmok* 東史綱目 and *Y?ljo t’ onggi* 列朝統紀, was no different. He regarded Japan as being a country of barbarians and maintained that Japan should bring tribute to Korea. Lastly, Yi T?k-mu (? – 1793) was a bit flexible. He commended the Japanese for trying to civilize their barbaric culture through Chinese learning, emphasized the importance of neighborly relations being placed on an equal footing, and believed that the Japanese had improved their cultural level thanks to the importation of Chinese books through Nagasaki, but still considered Japan a country that should be culturally subordinate to Korea.

For these intellectuals, sources of knowledge of Japan included writings authored by Korean envoys, based on their superficial and emotional observations (there are about forty of these, including travelogues, diaries, reports, and literary expressions); books that Korean envoys brought from Japan; and books on Japan acquired in China. No matter what sources they acquainted themselves in order to learn about Japan, their views were exceedingly monochromatic, redundant, and ethnocentric in chorusing the substandard of Japanese cultural level.

All these conventional views helped the Koreans cement a taken-for-granted perception of Japan and the Japanese. What Korean envoys observed in Japan was a cultural discourse on that country that had already been deeply imprinted upon into their minds. Their observations simply offered a stockpile of “evidence” that was useful in shoring up Korea’s entrenched collective notions about Japan.

### 3. The Japanese Who Greeted Korean Envoys

#### State Diplomacy and Shinkoku

Just as the Korean envoys used the Japanese to shore up their cultural “superiority,” so did the Japanese use the Korean envoys to shore up their own ethnic prestige and to promote their own political agenda. On the pretext of promoting friendly relations with Korea, the bakufu assigned the daimyo the duty of feeding, accommodating, entertaining, transporting, and guarding the Korean envoys along their travel routes. This was an expensive proposition. Through having to bear the heavy costs of carrying out these tasks, local domains in Western Japan, which had traditionally shown tendencies towards independence, were painfully reminded of the diplomatic sovereignty of the shogunate.

Consider the Fukuoka domain of the Kuroda house, which was responsible for the district from Ainoshima to Akamagasaki. Aside from having to refurbish lodges, the Fukuoka domain had to mobilize more than 500 boats to drag, usher, and guide Korean as well as Tsushima ships through the wild waters of the Sea of Genkai. At the time of the ninth embassy the food that the diplomatic corps consumed in Ainoshima over a few days included 2,700 chickens, 18,000 eggs, and a large amount of fish, vegetables, sake, rice, and many other foodstuffs. The protection of the Korean envoys was an absolute duty, and the Fukuoka domain had to fulfill it no matter what the cost.

Beyond the cost imposed by the bakufu, there was an additional, seemingly unnecessary, cost that the Fukuoka domain embraced willingly, as was seen in the example of the ninth embassy. When the Korean embassy departed Ainoshima for the Sekimon Strait, a big storm and strong winds began to blow in a reverse direction. Sailors did their best, but before long they were totally exhausted and their fleet was on the brink of shipwreck as it huddled in the darkness on the raging sea. The Fukuoka commander decided to give up and take refuge on a nearby island called Jinoshima 地ノ島. Jinoshima was barren and small; it had no villages, just a shabby Buddhist temple and ten or so temporary shelter-huts for fishers. The three Korean ambassadors and high officials were ushered into the temple, but the rest had to remain in the boats. Due to the rain and strong winds, this predicament continued for the next five days.

In fact, this miserable crisis could have been alleviated to a great extent if the fleet had retreated to Ōshima 大島, a large nearby island that had villages and shelters. Despite the danger of drifting about on the wild sea, Fukuoka officials refused to evacuate the Koreans to the much safer Ōshima. The problem was that this island, which contained Munakata 宗像 Shrine, was too sacred to be defiled by foreigners. Ōshima was a symbol of the “divine country” (shinkoku), and its sanctity could not be violated by the presence of foreigners.

Munakata Shrine in Ōshima, also known as Nakatsu-miya 中津宮, is the second shrine of the triangular Munakata religious network in northern Kyushu, which enshrines each of the three female deities to whom Amaterasu gave birth. According to the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*, these three deities were born when Amaterasu and her violent brother, Susanoo, made a pledge of peace. They are Hetsuno-miya 津宮 (Ichikishimahime no kami) in the city of Genkai, Nakatsu-miya (Tagitsu-hime no kami) on Ōshima, and Okitsu-miya 沖津宮 (Tagorihime no kami) on Okinoshima 沖島. In ancient times, these shrines were the sites of purification rituals designed to ensure the safety of the diplomatic missions dispatched to the Asian mainland. Later, the Munakata cult spread throughout the nation, encompassing about 9,000 branch shrines. In particular, the entire islands of Ōshima and Okinoshima were considered kami themselves, and women were

always prohibited from setting foot on them. These islands were the symbol of Japan's divinity. That is why Fukuoka officials could never compromise its sanctity for the sake of friendship with a neighboring country.

Here we see a different type of ethnocentrism. Contrary to the "civilization type" of ethnocentrism, whereby the Koreans regard themselves as being "civilized" and the Japanese as being "barbaric," the Japanese considered themselves to be a "chosen people" and, thus, distinct from and superior to all other ethnicities. It is well known that the Japanese have been obsessed with ethnic purity and have understood themselves through the prism of the notion of the divine country. The idea of the divine country was not justified by Confucian values, but it was, as we shall see in another episode, promoted and strengthened by the principle of military authority, or *bui* (武威).

### The Lingering Shadow of the "Mound of Ears"

The Korean embassy stopped in Kyoto on its way back from Edo on the first day of the eleventh month of 1719. Through the Tsushima lord S? Yoshinobu, Kyoto Shoshidai Matsudaira Tadachika, the sh?gunal deputy, invited the Korean ambassador and his entourage to a farewell luncheon banquet. When Ambassador Hong Ch' ijung was informed about where the banquet would be held, he was dismayed. It was to be held in Daibutsuji 大?寺, which refers to H?k?ji 方?寺. The Tsushima lord added that, upon arriving at Daibutsuji, Korean officials were expected to pay homage to the Great Buddha of Daibutsuji, a giant wooden statue of Vairocana, or Dainichi. Ambassador Hong knew what this meant. Daibutsuji ? namely, H?k?ji ? was none other than the prayer temple of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the number one enemy of the Korean people.

The history of H?k?ji has it that in 1586 Hideyoshi decided to supplant the great statue of Vairocana of T?daiji at Nara with a grander Buddhist statue in a grander Tendai temple, which was to be built in Kyoto. It should be noted that Vairocana was believed the supreme Buddhist protector of the realm. In erecting Daibutsuji, Hideyoshi aimed at incorporating the Buddhist tradition of "pacifying and protecting the nation" (*chingo kokka* ?護?家) into his plan for national peace. The H?k?ji temple, constructed as a symbol of national peace, was destroyed by earthquake and fire in 1596. Hideyoshi died in 1598. Four years later, Hideyoshi's heir, Hideyori, began rebuilding the temple but only to have it burn down before his task was completed. In 1612 Hideyori, who was barely holding on to the diminishing legacies of his father, on the recommendation of the new hegemon, Tokugawa Ieyasu, successfully rebuilt the temple. Ironically, however, he soon found that his fate had been sealed by his very success. Ieyasu, who was now looking for an excuse to abolish Hideyoshi's remaining legacies, noticed some Chinese characters inscribed on the bronze bell that hung in the temple. He decided to interpret them as proof of defiance, and eventually destroyed Hideyoshi and his supporters in the Osaka campaigns of 1614 and 1615. But the temple survived. In 1662 the bronze statue was destroyed by earthquake and then replaced with a wooden statue, which would again be lost to fire in 1798. The temple complex, which had weathered through hard times, was guarded by a pair of dog statues called Komainu (?犬), or "Korean dogs" erected at the entrance gate. We will return to the issue of "Korean dogs" later.

Anyhow, Korean envoys knew, if only vaguely, the connection between the Daibutsuji temple and Hideyoshi. Ambassador Hong sternly informed S? Yoshinobu that the Korean embassy would not accept the invitation, arguing that there was no precedent

for doing so. S? Yoshinobu did not back off easily, arguing that there had indeed been such a precedent. This was, in fact, something that Hong knew to be true. As it happened, the previous Korean embassy, led by Cho T' aeok, had stopped by Daibutsuji in 1711. Hong understood that it had been a scheme arranged by Arai Hakuseki, who had masterminded the degrading treatment of the Korean embassy.

As a matter of fact, the banquet for the Korean envoys at Daibutsuji had been a sort of regular feature of the schedule since the time of the second embassy in 1617. After the presentation ceremony involving the state letter being handed to Sh?gun Hidetada at the Fushimi Castle, and after the state banquet that followed, bakufu elders offered yet another banquet to the Korean envoys at the garden of Daibutsuji. At the time of the fifth embassy in 1643 Korean envoys on the way back to Kyoto wanted to see the Great Buddha of the temple. And, after their sightseeing, the Tsushima lord invited them to a banquet at the garden of the temple.

Nevertheless, Ambassador Hong spoke emphatically to S? Yoshinobu: "Isn't Daibutsuji the prayer temple which Toyotomi Hideyoshi erected? Hideyoshi is the enemy of our country forever, an unforgivable enemy with whom we cannot share the same heaven. Do you mean that we are to have a drink at his temple?" The Tsushima lord knew better than anyone else that the planned banquet had to do with the political ambitions of the bakufu rather than the personal wishes of the Kyoto sh?gunal deputy. In order to salvage the situation, S? Yoshinobu ordered Amenomori H?sh? to persuade the Korean ambassador to attend the banquet. Amenomori H?sh? appealed to the Korean ambassador, arguing that the story that Daibutsuji had been a prayer temple of Hideyoshi was simply not true. Ambassador Hong was unmoved. S? Yoshinobu then compromised, saying that the banquet would not be held at Daibutsuji but, rather, at a temporary site in front of the temple complex. Ambassador Hong was still unmoved. The Kyoto sh?gunal deputy felt that the situation was growing urgent. Ambassador Hong had even cited the name of Sh?gun Yoshimune in standing by his firm refusal: "We will never enter the gate of Daibutsuji ... We have come here across the waves of 10,000 li, and we are not afraid of being killed."

The negotiation continued into the next day. Amid a flurry of efforts to find a solution, Tsushima officials came up with an idea that they thought would help to unravel the "alleged" link between Daibutsuji and Hideyoshi. The Tsushima lord showed the Korean ambassador a book entitled *Nihon nendai ki* 日本年代記, or "A Yearly Chronicle of Japan," adding that it was a classified history document, one that could not, under any circumstances, be shown to foreigners. Before opening the book, the Tsushima lord emphasized once again that he was risking violating national security. The Korean ambassador opened the book and read it. From what he read, it was apparently clear that Daibutsuji had been re-erected at the time of Sh?gun Iemitsu (r. 1623-51) and that it had nothing to do with Hideyoshi. It was obviously all fabrication ? the trickery of the Tsushima lord. The Korean Ambassador accepted the invitation.

Why did the Japanese government want Korean officials to visit Daibutsuji? Actually, it had to do with the mimitsuka (耳塚), or the "Mound of Ears" ? a misnomer of the "mound of noses" (hanatsuka 鼻塚), which refers to the tomb built at the foot of the H?k?ji temple. The noses of Koreans, which Hideyoshi's soldiers had collected in Korea, were buried in the mound. In late 1597 Hideyoshi ordered his top Buddhist priest, Seish? J?tai, to perform a grand memorial service to appease the unfortunate Korean souls who

had lost their noses in the Imjin War. Deeply moved by his master's warm heart, Seishō Jōtai did not fail to mention this in his tomb stupa: "Upon inspection [of the noses], the lord did not bring up feelings of revenge toward these dead enemies. Instead, he deepened his mind of compassion, and ordered the 'clean monks' of Five Mountains to erect an altar and perform a memorial service for the peace and tranquility of those souls."

In his *Chōsen seibatsu ki* 朝鮮征伐記, which was published in 1659, Hori Kyōan explained what the "Mound of Ears" signified:

[Japanese officials] carried ears and noses sent from Korea on carts, showed them to the people of Osaka, Fushimi, and Kyoto, built a mound in front of Daibutsu Hall on Higashiyama and buried them in it, and arranged Buddhist monks to offer a memorial service. In order to exalt the "glorious authority" (ikō 威光) of Japan that should shine forever, Hideyoshi officials named it hanatsuka ( "mound of noses" ), and let all people, including children, extol the glory it represented. I heard that each time Koreans visited Japan, [the Japanese officials] arranged [for] them to pay homage to this mound, saying that "these people had died for your country."

Tokugawa officials decided to believe that Koreans had come thousands of miles in order to pay respect to the "glorious authority" of the divine country. And the glory of the divine country was represented by the "mound of ears" – a sterling memorial to Japanese military authority.

### Popular Legacies of Shinkoku

At a popular level, too, the glory of the Japanese military far outshone that of the Korean military. In 1719, when the ninth embassy was scheduled to visit Japan, two puppet plays, or jōruri, which featured Japan's conquest of ancient Korea, were staged in Osaka. One was Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *Honchō Sankoku shi* 本朝三ヶ志, which was staged at Takemoto Theater in the second month, and the other was Kikaku's *Jingō kōgō Sankan seme* 神功皇后三韓責, which was staged at Toyotake Theater in the fifth month.

Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *Honchō Sankoku shi* tells the story of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's "expedition of a foreign country or ikoku (異?),” and it is based on the "ancient example of Empress Jingō's conquest of the three Korean kingdoms.” Of course, Hideyoshi's "expedition" refers to the Imjin War, or Bunroku–Keicho no eki (文?慶長の役). The plot of Act 5 of this play begins as follows: Takatomi Hisakichi (referring to Hideyoshi) defeats the Korean kingdoms; the kings of these kingdoms submit a pledge of surrender signed in blood; and Hisakichi returns to Kyoto, bringing with him the ears of enemies his soldiers had cut off. Hisakichi builds a mound of ears in Kyoto to bury them. We then flash back to the opening ceremony of a grand Buddhist hall (Daibutsuden 大?殿) dedicated to Oda Harunaga (referring to Oda Nobunaga) and his son. This grand Buddhist hall is none other than the Hōkōji temple. The plot goes on to detail the story of Hideyoshi's expedition: Hisakichi got angry because the king of Korea did not send annual tribute. So he ordered his generals to attack Korea. Katō Kiyomasa, who captured the Korean king, says, "if you want to save your life, you must bring tribute as has been done since the time of Empress Jingō. Upon this, the Korean king, who kneels

down, replies, “the Korean king will become a servant of Japan generation after generation, and bring tribute,” and then begs for his life. Then the scene moves to Japanese soldiers cutting the ears off captured Koreans, and then to the completion of the “mound of ears.”

Kikaion’s *Jing? kogo Sankan seme* tells the story of Empress Jing?’s conquest of Korea: the first division of Japanese forces defeats the country of Koma 高麗 (Kokury?), the second division brings Kudara (Paekche) to the point of surrender, and the third division attacks Shiragi (Shilla). Pushed into the corner, the Shiragi king begs the “sacred lord of shinkoku,” or the country of kami, to save his country, vowing that he would bring tribute. Empress Jing?, who is pleased, picks up a spear and, in big letters, writes on a rock: “The kings of three Korean kingdoms are dogs of Japan.”

Both plays were a big hit in Osaka. Puppet theater and kabuki were fixed cultural menus, and the residents of Osaka, Kyoto, and Edo were expected to enjoy them whenever the Korean embassy visited the country of kami. Korea was an object of entertainment that furbished the Japanese with high ethnic pride.

Similarly, kagura 神?, a genre of folk religious performance that combined music and dance, was also an effective medium for historicizing the myth of Empress Jing?’s expedition to Korea during the Tokugawa period. Hayaike kagura in the Tohoku region (Mount Hayaike lies in the current Iwate Prefecture) is a case in point. This type of kagura was performed by Shingon yamabushi. Among the kagura manuals used by the yamabushi in the late Tokugawa period there is one known as *Sankan seibatsu* 三韓征伐, or “The subjugation of the three Korean kingdoms.” The plot is quite simple: “The devils of Shiragi, Kudara, and Koma attacked Japan without reason. When this occurred, Empress Jing? ordered Takeuchi Sukune to quell them. It was a tremendous success.”

The kagura performance that featured the story of Empress Jing?’s subjugation of the three Korean kingdoms was widely performed in the villages in Iwami (Shimane Prefecture), in Bingo (Hiroshima), and in Aki (Yamaguchi). In particular, these “Empress Jing?” kagura incorporated the story of “Korean dogs” into them so as to emphasize the subordinate, tributary status of Korean kingdoms to Japan. It should be noted that, in these regions, the grassroots movement of National Learning, or kokugaku (??), was very strong. Empress Jing? was a high-standing symbol for the country of the gods.

Indeed, throughout the country, the story of Empress Jing? was so popular that many Japanese offered votive paintings (ema 馬) featuring Empress Jing? on horseback, sometimes flanked by generals, to Shint? shrines and Buddhist temples (such as Yasaka jinja, Sanj?san-kan Hall, and so on). Similarly, Empress Jing? was one of the most favored themes for the illustrative chronicles of Hachiman Bodhisattva, who had been a tutelary deity of the nation’s samurai estate since the medieval times.

In front of many Shint? shrines were erected a pair of stone images of animals. At the right-hand side was the image of a lion, and at the left-hand side was the image of a dog. According to explanations popular during the Tokugawa period, the dog image, which was called a Koma, or Korean, dog and was related to Empress Jing?, represented the inferior status of Korea vis-a-vis Japan. Kaibara Ekken (1630–1714) suggested in his *Jingi kibun* 神祇紀聞, the dog image reminded the Japanese of the inscription that Empress Jing? had allegedly carved on a rock in Korea. As one can easily find in the famous *Wakan sansai*

*zue* 和漢三才??, a sort of encyclopedia compiled in 1713, what it meant to the Tokugawa Japanese was unmistakable: “The king of Koma is a dog of Japan.” The H?k?ji had a pair of the images of Koma dogs as guards of the temple.

#### 4. Conclusion

While examining materials on this topic, I found that Albert Memmi’ s discussion of racism was quite useful. I mention four elements in particular: (1) an insistence on a difference, whether “real or imaginary,” between “We” and “They” ; this difference can be social, cultural, or religious; what matters is the existence of the difference, not its nature or content; (2) the imposition of a negative valuation upon the other, with the obvious implication that one is, in comparison, “superior” and more “prestigious” ; (3) this difference is then generalized and applied to the entire group; and (4) the purpose of this kind of ethnocentric perception is the attainment of privilege, self–valorization, and identity for one group at the expense of another.

We see these four elements in operation in the mutual ethnic perceptions and diplomatic practices of Chos?n Korea and Tokugawa Japan. Both countries relied upon a myth that spawned “mythical” discourses on each against other; a history was constructed and a future projected based on mutually negating idiosyncratic ideas of humanity and civilization that were rarely brought under self–reflection or criticism; and individual encounters, real and imaginary, that conveyed the individual and collective ego they desired were an occasion for reinforcing such ego, not much for something else. Furthermore, it should be noted that all this collective ethnic narcissism offered a useful instrument for domestic politics more than for international politics.

Korean–Japanese relations in the premodern period unfolded far beyond the framework of official diplomatic exchange or trade relations. The “neighborly” diplomacy of Korean embassy could not eclipse the diverging ethnicities. The Japanese and Koreans did not like each other. They were deeply imbued with what Memmi terms “heterophobia” ? Korea–phobia and Japanophobia. Within their collective psyches, the Koreans and Japanese, separated by the Strait of Tsushima, maintained an unbridgeable distance, whether real or imaginary. Or, to be more precise, they insisted upon the existence of unbridgeable ethno–cultural differences and, moreover, upon the atemporal nature of these differences that innately refused any serious reflective critique of them. Along these ethno–cultural differences, both peoples reconstructed a past as a function of the present and perennially projected it into the future. And all this served to help both peoples construct multiple ethnic worldviews of their own.