Early Migrations, Conquests, and Common Ancestry: Theorizing Japanese Origins in Relation with Korea

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ABSTRACT

By the early part of the twentieth century, Japanese scholars employing Western academic methods postulated significant waves of migrants from Korea to Japan in early times and contemplated their conquest of the native population in the process of state formation. Coupled with the existing conservative assertion that the ancient Japanese had subjugated Korea, the theory of migrations constituted Nissen dōsoron, the argument that the Japanese and Korean peoples shared common ancestry, which in turn helped justify the Japanese colonial annexation and assimilation of Korea from 1910 to 1945. After the contention of early Japanese hegemony lost its persuasion after WWII, the theory of migrations developed into the horse-rider theory that hypothesized an invasion of Japan by peninsular warriors in the fourth century. The notion of Korea’s supremacy inherent but repressed in the colonial theories is now exploited by Korean scholars who write on early Korea and Japan from nationalist perspectives.

Keywords: colonialism, common ancestry, conquest, migration, nationalism

Nissen dōsoron[in Korean, Ilsŏn tongchoron], the prewar Japanese assertion that Japan and Korea had shared common ancestral origins, was in fact comprised of two conflicting schools of thought.1 While conservative scholars who relied on Japan’s early chronicles asserted that ancient Japanese leaders had invaded and controlled Korea, scholars newly trained in Western academic disciplines contended that early peninsular people had migrated to the Japanese islands and contributed to the formation of the Japanese people and state. Although theoretically at odds, these two views together supported the assumption that the Japanese and the Koreans shared common ancestry and thus justified Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910 and its subsequent policy of assimilating the Korean people as Japanese subjects. Since 1945, both Korean and Japanese scholars have condemned the theory of common ancestry as a means of rationalizing Japanese colonialism.2

In addition to the political denunciation, the two groups of Nissen dōsoron scholars have been subjected to academic criticism. The conservative scholars were accused of falsely asserting Japanese subjugation and control of Korea in early times.3 The scholars who had adopted Western methodologies were criticized for studying Korea for Japanese sake and subsuming Korea’s past under Japanese history and prehistory.4 Yet, few studies have discussed important theoretical links between the second group of colonial Japanese scholars and later scholars on both sides of the Korea strait. In postwar Japan, the theory of migrations advanced by the colonial
scholars prompted the emergence of the horse-rider theory, which hypothesized a conquest of early Japan by invaders from the Korean peninsula. Although this invasion theory never took roots in Japan, it led Korean scholars to appropriate the concepts of migrations and conquests in their effort to hail Korea's early hegemony over Japan. Post-liberation Korean scholars were also influenced by colonial-era Korean scholars, who reacted to Japanese colonial views and policies but incorporated Japanese theories at the time.

This paper takes a close look at prewar Japanese studies concerning early migrations from Korea to Japan. It also demonstrates how these colonial Japanese scholarships provided a framework for Korean scholars to reconstruct early Korean-Japanese relations with their nationalist historical views. Although the prewar Japanese argument of early migrations constituted an arm of the Nissen dosor on support of the assimilation of the Koreans into the Japanese nation, it concurrently presented important tools for Korean scholars to utilize in their assertion of Korea's superior position. This paper seeks to demonstrate fundamental continuities in the discourse of Japanese origins and their ties with Korea under changing political circumstances of the last century.

Japan-centered Views and Dissenting Views

During the Tokugawa period (1600-1867), Japan's National Studies [kokugaku] scholars reacted to the dominance of China-imported learning and upheld the superiority of Japan's native culture expressed in classical Japanese literature and history. They projected their Japan-centered viewpoints in their interpretation of many Korea-related accounts in the early Japanese chronicles of Kojiki (Old Records) and Nihon shoki [History of Japan], compiled in the eighth century. Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) speculated that Susanoo, Japan's sun goddess Amaterasu's unruly younger brother, had founded Korea's Paekche kingdom (10 B.C.-660), based on his descent in a place called Soshimori in Korea, as mentioned in the Nihon shoki. Ban Nobutomo (1773-1846) went further and conflated Susanoo with Tan'gun, the mythical progenitor of Old Chosŏn, mentioned in the Samguk yusa compiled in thirteenth-century Korea. By claiming that the brother of the Japanese ancestress had founded Korean states, these scholars made Korea appear as an offshoot that separated from Japan in antiquity.

Examining the same early Japanese records, contemporaneous Japanese Confucian scholars reached different conclusions. Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), the leading scholar for the ruling Tokugawa house, suspected that early Japan's linguistic

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1 Earlier versions of this paper were delivered at the Fourth Korean Studies Association of Australasia, held at the University of Auckland, in Auckland, New Zealand, on July 15, 2005 and at the Eleventh Asian Studies Conference Japan, held at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo, Japan, on June 23, 2007.

2 Hatada 1969:36-37; Yi, Man-yol 1984:263-266.

3 Hatada 1969:243-244; Ch’oe, Yong-ho 1980:17.


and ritual roots may be found in Mahan, the precursor of Paekche. To Teikan (1732-1797) suspected that nearly all aspects of Japanese culture, including clothing, institutions, language, and rites, had developed on the Korean model until the seventh century and concluded that there was no fundamental difference in the makeup of the Japanese and the Korean peoples. His entire argument, along with his attempt to trace the Japanese ruling house back to Wu Taibo of the Chinese Zhou dynasty, one of the states of the Spring and Autumn era (722-481 B.C.), met vociferous attacks from Motoori Norinaga. Unlike the National Studies scholars, the Japanese Confucian scholars had high regard for Korea as they deeply owed their learning to Chinese and Korean scholars.

The National Studies views were passed on to jingoistic scholars of the Meiji period (1868-1911). Yoshida Tōgo (1864-1918), for instance, wrote a monograph, *Nikkan koshidan [Brief Early History of Japan and Korea]* in 1893 and contended early Japan's subjugation of Korea, referring to the examples of Susanoo and Empress Jin'gū's control of the Silla kingdom (57 B.C.-935). Yoshida also considered important early Korean figures, such as Hogong, the prime minister to the founder of Silla, and Sŏk T'alhae, Silla's fourth ruler, to be of Japanese origin on the grounds that “Wa” and “Tap'ana” mentioned in the *Samguk sagi [History of the Three Kingdoms]*, compiled in twelfth-century Korea, could correspond to Kyūshū and other Japanese place names. Yoshida emphasized the original oneness of the Japanese and Korean peoples on the basis of the alleged early Japanese expansion to Korea and control of the Korean people.

The notion that ancient Korea had been founded by Susanoo and the Koreans consequently shared the same ancestry [dōso] and origins [dōgen] with the Japanese was reiterated by many Japanese writers in the early decades of the twentieth century and emphasized by the Japanese colonial authorities in the last decades of their rule. The Governor-General of Korea Koiso Kuniaki stated in 1942 that “the twenty-five million natives of Korea undoubtedly descended from Susanoo and thus share the same ethnic roots with the Japanese who are offspring of Amaterasu”. According to this view, the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 was only a restoration of the ancient ties. The Japanese emphasis on the common roots did not mean an equal partnership with the Koreans. As colonial subjects, the Koreans were to change their ways and assimilate in the country owned by the Japanese. The parallel of the elder and younger siblings pointed to hierarchical relations just as in the traditional Japanese family.

In the late nineteenth century, the Japanese government promoted adoption of Western academic methods at their newly established institutions of higher education. As one of the many Western scholars employed by the Japanese government, the German historian Ludwig Riess (1861-1928) introduced Western historical methods.

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8 Yoshida 1893:4-5, 85-89.
to students and faculty at Tokyo Imperial University. One of the faculty members, Hoshino Hisashi (1839-1917), published in 1890 an article on early Korean-Japanese relations, reflecting his incorporation of Riess' methods. According to this article, the Yamato state founders arrived in Izumo in western Japan from Silla and conquered the natives before marching eastward and establishing their kingdom in Yamato. The residents of the islands and the peninsula were of the same ethnic stock and spoke the same language. Although the Yamato rulers initially dominated the peninsula, they lost influence over time and were forced to retreat by the seventh century.10

While Hoshino's full reliance on the Japanese chronicles represented conservatism, his analytical investigation into the origins of the imperial rulers was highly unorthodox. His argument that traced the imperial rulers back to Silla was diametrically opposed to the National Studies view and invited attacks from in and outside of the academic circles. About the same time, his colleague Kume Kunitake (1839-1931) also stirred controversy by comparing the Japanese Shinto with indigenous heaven-worshipping traditions in East Asia. Kume was ultimately dismissed from his position at Tokyo Imperial University while Hoshino managed to remain there.11 These scholars introduced fresh perspectives on the subject of the Japanese origins and prepared the stage for further explorations by succeeding modern Japanese scholars.

**Discussions of Early Migrations from Korea to Japan**

It was the importation of Western archaeology and anthropology that introduced a new framework to examine Japan's ancient past. In the 1870s and 1880s, Western scholars, including Edward S. Morse (1838-1925), Heinrich von Siebold (1852-1908), and John Milne (1850-1913), initiated excavations of Japanese shell middens and embarked on their search for prehistoric Japan. Siebold and Milne thought that the ancestors of the Ainu, now living in Japan's northern peripheries, had left Japan's Neolithic artifacts of the Jōmon culture while Morse speculated that another group of people had lived in the Japanese islands before the Ainu. The German physician Edwin Baelz (1849-1913) advanced his view that the modern Japanese people were comprised of the Ainu type, the Korean-Manchu type, and the Malay type, due to a blending of peoples from prehistoric times. Despite their disagreements in details, the Western scholars concurred that the ancestors of modern Japanese had not sprung up in the islands but had migrated from elsewhere, possibly north Asia, Southeast Asia, or even the Pacific Islands, and intermingled by the end of the Neolithic Age.12 The Japanese who followed the National Studies views reacted to this notion of Japan as a multi-ethnic nation and asserted that the Japanese ancestors were pure and indigenous, having received little population inflow from the outside.13 Nevertheless, emerging Japanese scholars learning the Western disciplines of

10 Hoshino 1890; Oguma 2002:66-68; Brownlee 1997:77-80 and 96-97.
archaeology and anthropology embraced the idea of mixed ethnicity in their quest for the origins of the Japanese people.

In 1884, Tsuboi Shōgorō (1863-1913), the founder of the Anthropological Society and founding professor of anthropology at Tokyo Imperial University, unearthed the Yayoi pottery, the vestige of a prehistoric culture that proved to accompany rice agriculture. Tsuboi thought that both the Yayoi and Jōmon cultures were part of the Stone Age and too primitive to be attributed to the ancestors of the modern Japanese. By the second decade of the twentieth century, however, Tsuboi’s disciple Torii Ryūzo (1870-1953) argued that the indigenous Ainu and their Jōmon culture had been driven out by the Yayoi culture, which in fact had belonged to the ancestors of the modern Japanese, or what he called “Japanese proper”:

Our national history conveys that our ancestors finally conquered the Ainu east of the Shirakawa River and north of present-day Niigata in the reign of Emperor Kanmu (r. 781-806) after many years of struggle. Yet, archaeologically speaking, the Yamato state’s northward exploration is only a part of the larger movement. Our ancestors spread to northeastern Honshū in the Stone Age [the Yayoi period] competing with the Ainu. The two groups sometimes intermarried and other times retained their respective physical traits. The same was probably true in Kanto, Kansai, other parts of Honshu and Kyūshū.14

Torii, the authority in Japanese anthropology by this time, contended that the “Japanese proper” had arrived with their sophisticated culture and overwhelmed the existing Ainu population. Then, where did the “Japanese proper” come from? Examining archaeological remains from many parts of East Asia, he took note of close similarities between the Yayoi relics and their counterparts in the northeastern Asian continent and the Korean peninsula and said:

…the Stone Age in Japan and that in Korea are very similar. The similarities are so outstanding that we can say their relationship was like that of cousins, if not of a parent and child, or siblings.15

The fact that the relics found in Iki and Tsushima Islands in the Korea strait had no Jōmon traits but were strictly linked to the Yayoi relics and their counterparts in Korea made him suspect that there had been population movements carrying the Yayoi culture from the peninsula to the Japanese islands. Adding linguistic and physical features of contemporary inhabitants in his comparisons, he became convinced of ethnic contiguity between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands in early times.

Torii envisioned the formation of the Japanese people in the following manner. First, the Ainu reached the Japanese islands from unknown places and developed

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14 Torii 1925:120-121.
15 Torii 1925:382.
the Jōmon culture. Millennia later, the “Japanese proper” arrived from northeast Asia primarily via the Korean peninsula and spread rice agriculture and Yayoi pottery on the islands, gradually driving away the Ainu in the process. Smaller numbers of migrants from the south, such as Malay-Indonesians from the Philippines, Taiwan, Borneo, and Sumatra and the Miao tribes from southern China, reached the Japanese islands by sea via the Kuroshio Current and provided the “Japanese proper” with southern cultural and physical traits through blending in. Finally, from the late third century on, northeast Asians once again moved to the islands from the Korean peninsula and developed the Kofun[tumuli] culture with the use of sophisticated metallurgy. Torii wrote:

To the Japanese islands where the “Japanese proper” had already been living, the same northern people began to migrate in the age of metal. The latter group’s legacy remains in the tumuli that they built, and its migration is portrayed in the Kojiki and Nishon shoki accounts. Their customs, including love of swords, skills in bow and arrows, tied hair, beads decorations, long sleeves and baggy pants, leather boots, and daggers on the belt, are exactly what you can find in early northeast Asia. The same can be said about their arrows with feathers and whistling arrowheads.17

He equated the Yayoi “Japanese proper” with the “earthly tribe”[kunitsu kami], mentioned in the Japanese chronicles, and the Kofun “Japanese proper” with the “heavenly tribe”[amatsu kami], also appearing in the chronicles. He added that a limited number of Chinese had also joined during the Kofun period as related in the chronicles.

Although Torii hypothesized a blending of many peoples and tribes in the making of the Japanese people, he emphasized that their primary component consisted of the northeast Asians who had arrived from the Korean peninsula and ushered in the Yayoi and Kofun periods. They constituted the trunk of the Japanese tree whereas the other migrants formed minor branches that were grafted on.18 This led him to believe that the Korean people were nearly identical to the Japanese in ethnological terms. At the time of the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, Torii had cautioned against hastily speaking of the Japanese and the Koreans as members of the same ethnic group.19 However, by 1919, immediately after the March First Independence Movement, he expressed ethnological equivalence of the Japanese and Korean peoples and spoke strongly against the idea of granting self-determination to Korea.20 The desire for independence expressed by millions of Koreans across the peninsula apparently made little impression on him as he saw no need for a separate political entity for them, who, he thought, needed to merge with the Japanese.

16 Torii 1925:45-46.
17 Torii 1925:621-622.
19 Oguma 2002:86.
Torii’s studies reflected academic trends in the West and Japan at the time. Western anthropologists and archaeologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries routinely attributed major cultural changes to migrations and conquests. Only much later in the twentieth century, did they begin studying internal development as an important factor for changes. Further, Torii’s inclination to link prehistoric artifacts to people described in the Japanese chronicles was typical in Japanese archaeology in this period, even among Western scholars. Nevertheless, his contentions clearly redefined the early relations between Korea and Japan. As discussed earlier, the National Studies scholars had argued the early Japanese invasion of Korea, and even Hoshino under the influence of Western historical methods emphasized Yamato’s hegemony over Korea. By contrast, Torii expounded the one-way flow of population to Japan from Korea and neighboring regions that had accompanied advanced cultures and even equated the peninsular migrants of the Kofun period with the early Japanese elites appearing in the Japanese chronicles. This placed Korea as a predecessor and Japan as a follower in the chronological scheme.

The notion that the Koreans were distant relatives and forerunners to the Japanese should have given ample reasons to pay respect to the Korean people and culture, particularly in East Asian culture, where earlier figures and objects are thought to occupy “higher” places in the mental space. This contradicted Torii’s actions including his support of the Japanese policy to assimilate the Korean people as Japanese subjects. The key to understanding this inconsistency may lie in his conviction of Japanese superiority and Social Darwinist views embedded in the minds of Japanese intellectuals at the time. Torii depicted the “Japanese proper” as the winner who absorbed the indigenous Ainu and other ethnic groups on the Japanese islands. The early Japanese victory, along with their current success in the contemporary world, must have convinced him of their superior status vis-à-vis the Koreans. Additionally, academic and financial benefits that he probably received from the expanding Japanese empire may have compelled him to support its colonial policies. The Japanese government and colonial authorities provided him with opportunities to conduct field work in the Liaodong peninsula immediately after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), Korea in the 1910s, Manchuria, Mongolia, and Siberia in the 1920s and 1930s, and China in the 1940s.

One of the most influential scholars who adapted Torii’s theory of migrations was the historian Kita Sadakichi (1871-1939), who wrote a series of articles on the origins of the Japanese in the 1910s and 1920s. According to his view, the Yayoi culture characterized by irrigated rice cultivation had originated in south China or Southeast Asia and arrived in Japan primarily via the Korean peninsula. Yet, the

22 Hudson 1999:34; Barnes 1993:29.
24 Hudson 1999:35.
Yayoi people were not cohesive, but divided into several groups, including the Wa specializing in fishery in northern Kyūshū, as recorded in the Chinese annals, as well as the Hayato tribe in southern Kyūshū and the Izumo tribe along the East Sea coast, both depicted in the Japanese chronicles. The Izumo tribe particularly had close relations with the population in Korea as seen in their primogenitor Susanoo’s residency in Silla. These groups constituted the Yayoi people, or the “earthly tribe,” and gradually absorbed the indigenous Ainu and newly arriving Chinese. Finally, at the dawn of the Kofun era, a new immigrant group, the “heavenly tribe,” arrived in Kyūshū from its mythical homeland of Takamagahara and established the first unified state. This predominant group assimilated the Yayoi people and later absorbed new immigrants from the Korean kingdoms.26

Kita also discussed the composition of the Korean people based on early historical records. Early Korea, according to him, was occupied by the Wa people, as corroborated by Yayoi-style pottery unearthed in Korea, as well as Chinese migrants arriving from the west. Yet, the last and central component of the Korean people came from the north, and more specifically from Puyō (?-494), a state along the Songhua River in present-day northeastern China. The Puyō people’s general southward movement to the peninsula is attested by the founding of the Puyō-derived kingdoms, Koguryō near the Yalu River and Paekche by the Han River.27

Kita’s unique contribution to the discourse on early migrations and common ancestry lay in his linking of Japan’s “heavenly tribe” to the Puyō people based on alleged linguistic, mythological, and religious similarities. Adding to the idea that the Japanese and Korean languages belonged to the Altaic language family and shared the same grammatical patterns, he emphasized that several extant Koguryō and Paekche readings of basic numbers and words showed remarkable similarities to Japanese counterparts.28 He also compared the Japanese foundation myth depicting the descent of the “heavenly tribe” to the Puyō and Koguryō myths portraying their primogenitors’ descent from heaven. He concluded that these parallels indicated a close relationship between the Japanese “heavenly tribe” and the Puyō29:

…the incoming heavenly tribe, who conquered, appeased, annexed, and assimilated the existing population and constituted the grand Japanese, were previously residents of a region in the continent. In view of their past, we can say that they were related to the Korean, Manchurian, and Mongolian peoples of the Ural-Altaic language family, with special ties with the Puyō people represented by Koguryō and Paekche. They had moved to the Japanese islands at some point.

26 Kita 1979:370-374 and 382-399.
27 Kita 1979:347-353 Although in basic agreement with Torii and Kita, the anthropologist Nishimura Shinji argued that the most important migrants from northeast Asia were the Tungusic people, who allegedly arrived in Japan in the second millennium B.C. (Nishimura 1930, 96-98). This led some scholars, including Mizuno Yū, to believe that the Tungusic were the most important northeast Asians who had migrated to the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands (Mizuno 1967).
28 The similarities between Japanese and the Koguryō language especially in basic numbers were first identified by the linguist Shinmura Izuru in 1916(Oguma 2002, 240).
Even though we cannot pinpoint where the homeland of the heavenly tribe Takamagahara was, it was undoubtedly on the continent.30

Although the ancestors of the imperial family were obviously at the core of the "heavenly tribe," Kita never mentioned them in his articles. Nor did he make speculations on the migration routes and timings. His restraint should be understood as self-imposed censorship commonly practiced in prewar Japan. Controversial research results were often kept within their closed circles. Although many Japanese historians in the 1920s and 1930s knew, for instance, that the founding of the Yamato state had taken place many centuries after the traditional date of 660 B.C., they publicly endorsed the foundation myths and took part in the 2600th anniversary ceremonies in 1940.31 In 1910, Kita was dismissed from his job in the ministry of education after he included in school textbooks an account on the northern dynasty of fourteenth-century Japan, the imperial branch unrecognized by the Meiji government.32 This incident probably made him cautious enough to refrain from making comments on the history of the imperial family. By 1929, before government censorship tightened in the 1930s, he stopped making references to the link between the Puyo˘ and the "heavenly tribe".33

At the time of Korea's annexation to Japan in 1910, Kita already spoke in favor of the assimilation of the Korean people into the Japanese empire.34 After the March First Independence Movement of 1919, he wrote:

Because the Japanese and Korean people were comprised of same elements at the beginning and have intermingled since, we can safely say that they belong to the same ethnic group. . . . The Korean people have developed different language, customs, habits, and thoughts due to political separations since the middle ages. The two peoples now comprise one country, having returned to the intimacy they enjoyed in antiquity. If the Korean people gradually assimilate to the majority, through modification of their language, customs, and habits as well as adjustments of thoughts, they will together form the larger Japanese entity that would melt away all factional distinctions.35

He thought that the unity of the Koreans and the Japanese would easily materialize, despite a long period of separation, as they were comprised of the same original components such as the Puyo˘, the Wa, and the Chinese. In 1921, he compared the two peoples to neighboring twigs of a tree, commenting that they could easily merge back into one.36

30 Kita 1979:39.
32 Oguma 2002:96.
33 Ueda 1979:426-427.
35 Kita 1979:355.
36 Kita 1979:360.
Just as Torii, Kita thought of a hierarchical merger in which the Koreans would dissolve to become part of the Japanese nation. Because the Japanese were thought to be occupying a central position in East Asia at the time, its absorption of a poorly performing neighbor was amply justified by Social Darwinist notions. Kita, as an advocate for the Japanese minorities, including the Ainu and the outcasts [burakumin], earnestly believed in their upward social and economic mobility through their integration into the mainstream Japanese society. The same humanitarian zeal convinced him that the Korean people, as well as other Japanese colonial subjects, would benefit from their assimilation into the Japanese empire.

As seen in Kita’s argument, an increasing number of Japanese scholars pointed out linguistic similarities between the Korean and Japanese languages after they were first compared by W.G. Aston in 1879. In the 1910s and 1920s, the linguist Kanazawa Shōzaburō(1872-1967) extensively published on the subject and popularized the notion that the two languages shared the common origins. At the time of the Japanese annexation of Korea, he wrote:

The Korean language belongs to the same line of languages as our [Japanese] language. This is a branch of our language, just as the Ryūkyū dialect is.

His desire to emphasize the proximity of Japanese and Korean also led him to equate their relationship with that between German and Dutch. He went on to identify over a hundred word roots shared between the two, all of which may not be recognized by scholars today. As an example of the original closeness of the Korean and Japanese languages, he pointed out that the Yamato courtiers of the sixth and seventh centuries had no difficulties in communicating with their counterparts in the Korean kingdoms. In 1929, Kanazawa published his monograph Nissen dōsoron, which made the expression “common ancestry” more prevalent than the “common origins,” dōgen. The book supplied linguistic evidence to strengthen the theories of migrations and common ancestry already advanced by Torii and Kita. He pointed out, for instance, that the Korean words for front and behind, arp(pronounced as “ap” today) and twi, also meant south and north, just as the Manchu and Mongolic words for south, north, east, and west, which also meant front, behind, left, and right respectively. Because the usage of the Manchu and Mongolic words stemmed from the southward migration of their speakers in historic times, the similar usage of the Korean words could indicate the early Koreans’ southward movement into the peninsula.

Kanazawa sought to demonstrate that this population movement had continued from the peninsula to the Japanese islands by pointing out remnants of

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37 Morris-Suzuki 175.
40 Kanazawa 1910:7.
41 Kanazawa 1978:52-60.
Korean words surviving in numerous Japanese place names. For example, *pŏl*, which meant settlements in Old Korean, is found in its variant forms of *fure*, *furu*, and *kohori* contained in many Japanese place names. Another Korean term *sŏ* or *sŏ*, related to present-day *soe*[iron or metal] and also representing early Silla, as seen in its capital *Sŏraborō*, is found in many Japanese place names such as *Aso[Asa]*, *Iso[Isa]*, *Susa*, *Usa*, and *Yoso[Yosae]*, followed by prefixes. He even broke down the male names *Sotshiko* and *Sachihioko*, making many appearances in the Japanese chronicles, into *Sŏ tsu/chī hiko*, i.e., the man of *Sŏ*. Likewise, *Izanaki* and *Izanami*, the names of the divine pair who created the Japanese islands according to the chronicles, was also taken apart as (i)*Sa no agi* and (i)*Sa no ami*, i.e., the man and woman of *Sŏ*, as *agi* and *ami* [or *ōmi*] meant man and woman in both archaic Japanese and Korean. He also pointed out *Soshimori*, the place where *Susanoo* resided before moving to *Izumo*, was a Japanese adaptation of *Sŏraborō*. Obviously, not all his analyses meet the standards of linguistic inquiries today.

Although Kanazawa emphasized the general direction of migrations from the northeastern continent to the Korean peninsula and from the peninsula to the Japanese islands, he avoided discussing the origins of the Yamato rulers. Instead, he only drew an ambiguous conclusion:

> The great achievements of imperial ancestors extended far into the Asian continent, and I believe that their original territory included Korea. … I presume that imperial ancestors had descended[to Japan] through a remote place.

According to his nephew’s later account, Kanazawa had a clear idea about the original relationship between Korea and Japan. After WWII was over, he confessed his prewar writings to be untruthful and spoke about his hidden conviction that Korea was the main house and Japan its offshoot. His book is indeed filled with linguistic evidence that Korea had the original forms and precedents while Japan had their extensions and variations. Obviously, he obfuscated his conclusions in fear of reprisals from the Japanese government and right-wingers.

Although the theory of migrations affirmed Korea’s significance and contributions to the formation of the Japanese people and state, the proponents of the theory did not promote the idea that Korea should be respected as Japan’s forerunner, or even a counterpart. These scholars, instead, spoke in support of the Japanese rule and assimilation of the Korean people as a restoration of the past when there was no distinction between Korea and Japan. For this reason, despite their new approaches and conclusions, the scholars arguing early migrations from the peninsula did not pose a threat to the National Studies scholars’ view on early Japan’s hegemony, but rather complemented it with the notion of common ethnic roots.

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44 Kanazawa, 1978.i.
Reactions by Korean Nationalist Historians

Korean nationalist scholars who emerged during the Japanese colonial period reacted to the theories of migrations and common ancestry in direct and indirect ways. The direct reaction is represented by the renowned nationalist Sin Ch’ae-ho(1880-1936), who sought to refute the Japanese arguments by establishing Korea’s historical independence and distinct identity. In his formative historical work in 1908, he refuted the Japanese claim of their early control over Korea, emphasizing Korea’s territorial integrity in the ancient period. He criticized the Japanese theory that conflated Tan’gun with Susanoo and other Japanese figures and chastised Koreans who were receptive to such views. What he saw in early Korean-Japanese relations were enormous cultural contributions made by the Koreans to the development of the Japanese:

Why did powerful Japan not attack Paekche till the very end? This is because everything in Japan had originally come from Paekche. Japan always imported letters and arts from Paekche. Even the Japanese themselves were organized by the Paekche people.45

His emphasis on the Korean kingdoms’ cultural contributions to Japan was passed on to many later Korean scholars. In the 1930s, for instance, his successor An Chae-hong(1891-1965) discussed the role of peninsular immigrants, particularly from the Kaya states in southern Korea, as transporters of advanced culture and technology to the Yamato state.46

By 1931, Sin’s reaction to the Japanese arguments reached its height. In his classic work Chosŏn sanggosa[Early Korean History], he argued that the Paekche king Tongsoŋ(r.479-500) had militarily attacked and subjugated Japan, based on his interpretation of a phrase in Jiu Tang shu[Old Records of Tang].47 He obviously reversed the Japanese assertions and portrayed Korea as an assailant, attempting to place the Korean people into the criteria of victors in Social Darwinist. Few historians have endorsed this particular view as Paekche was Japan’s unchanging ally. Sin was more successful in expanding the northern borders that defined early Korean history. While traditional Korean history focused on Silla and limited itself to the peninsula, he shed light on the nation’s origins beyond the peninsula, demonstrated by Tan’gun Chosŏn in the Changbai mountain region, Puyŏ along the Sungari River, and Koguryŏ based in the Yalu River basins. His attempt to establish north of the peninsula as the home of the core Korean ancestors and the main stage of ancient Korean history was somewhat linked to the Japanese views concerning northern origins of the Koreans and the Japanese.48 Nevertheless, he made no mention of large-scale migrations of the peninsular people to the Japanese islands, nor did he indicate any

45 Sin Ch’ae-ho 1977:495-496.
ethnic closeness between the two peoples.

Ch’oe Nam-sŏn (1890–1957), a prolific writer and scholar in colonial Korea, sought to assert Korea’s central position in antiquity in his historical writings. Although never formally trained in Western methodologies, he was deeply influenced by anthropological studies introduced by contemporaneous Japanese scholars.49 Reflecting the Japanese theory of migrations, his lengthy article “Asi Chosŏn” (Early Korea) in 1926 presented a large picture of prehistoric Asian migrations from their alleged original home in the Pamir plateau to the final destinations of Korea and Japan. According to this article, a group that reached the Altai Mountains moved eastward to the Greater Xing’an Range and settled along the Sungari River in present-day northeastern China. Then, they divided into three groups that headed in three different directions: the one that moved southwest toward China to become the so-called “eastern barbarians” as recorded in the Chinese annals, the one that went south to the Korean peninsula to develop into ancestors of the Koreans, and the one that migrated southeast to the Japanese islands to turn into ancestors of the Japanese.50

Ch’oe also discussed three navigational routes that took the northeast Asians to Japan: from present-day Russian Far East to Sakhalin and Hokkaido across the northern East Sea, from the eastern coast of the peninsula to the shores of western Japan across the southern East Sea, and from the southern coast of the peninsula to the northern coast of Kyūshū across the Korea strait. He suspected that the first migrants simply utilized natural currents to sail in small boats while later migrants had larger boats, better navigational skills, and geographic knowledge.

Those who entered the southwestern part of Japan in a later stage became the predominant group that formed the core of today’s Japanese, who developed the nation in the last thousand to two thousand years. … Even after the Japanese nation was formed by migrants and their descendants, their homeland, the Korean peninsula, kept sending new immigrants.51

The Silla prince Ameno hihoko, whose mythical travel from Silla to Japan is prominently related in the Nihon shoki, represented the new immigrants who joined the early Japanese nation.

Ch’oe’s articulation of the migration theory served as a prelude to his thesis that Japan belonged to the northeast cultural sphere presided over by Korea. This ancient cultural sphere, according to him, encompassed all of northeast Asia, centering on the tradition of heaven worship and theocracy as exemplified by Tan’gun. While Korea occupied the sphere’s central position, Japan, the current oppressor, and China, the historical suzerain, were merely its members.52 In his intention to place

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49 Yi Yong-hwa 2002:59.
50 Ch’oe Nam-sŏn 1974:154-168.
52 Allen 1990.
Korea above Japan in a historical context, he continued to emphasize the cultural ties between the two, taking the risk of being called a betrayer to the Korean nation.53 Nevertheless, Ch’oe’s focus was on the cultural and religious link between Korea and Japan, and not on the ethnic contiguity that the Japanese scholars emphasized. In 1934, he wrote:

Neither Koreans nor Japanese have been given a clear ethnological place, and thus it is too early to discuss the ethnological relations between the two.54

His reluctance to link the two peoples in ethnological terms represented Korean repulsion of the notion of common ancestry advanced by the Japanese. Ancestry and lineage had been of paramount importance in Korea since early times, and during the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) respectable Korean families maintained patrilineal genealogical records with utmost care and reverence. Under the Japanese colonial rule, ethnic nationalism grew among the Koreans, in part, to counter the threat of assimilation and eradication of Korean identity.55 The Koreans under Japanese control had no reason to accept the notion of shared ancestry with the Japanese, except for those who chose to actively collaborate with their colonial masters.56

The Horse-rider Conquest Theory, Korean Adaptations, and Recent Studies

When Egami Namio (1906-2002), a historian of Central Asia, first advanced his famous horse-rider theory a few years after the end of the Pacific War (1941-1945), it was unclear what prompted him to conceive of the notion of a conquest dynasty in early Japan. Later, he admitted that he owed the heart of his theory to Kita Sadakichi’s argument concerning the Puyo origins of the Yamato founders.57 Egami’s theory differed from Kita’s discussion in several important ways, however. While Kita noted the connection between Japan’s “heavenly tribe” and Puyo in the larger picture of the formation of the Japanese people, Egami focused on his attempt to prove that Japan had been conquered by Puyo warriors in the fourth century. Second, while Kita implied a Puyo-originated people’s peaceful migration, Egami hypothesized their abrupt military invasion and conquest based on his observation of a sudden change in grave goods. Third, while Kita did not discuss the nature of the Puyo society, Egami defined it as primarily a horse-riding nomadic society. He took pains in explaining the nomadic society’s unique features in marriage, religion, and succession patterns and pointed out that the same could be found in Puyo and the Yamato state. Finally, while Kita was restrained by prewar Japanese taboos, Egami freely conjectured that specific Yamato rulers had been invaders of Puyo descent. He singled out Sujin and Ojin, the tenth and fifteenth Japanese rulers on the traditional list, as conquerors of Japan descended from Puyo.

54 Ch’oe Nam-sŏn 1934:32.
55 Shin Gi-Wook 2006:45.
56 Hosaka 2002:150.
57 Egami 1967:147.
According to Egami, in third-century Korea, migrants from Puyŏ not only established Paekche but controlled small states in the south, including those that later grew to be the Kaya states along the Naktong River. From that base, Sujin, whose original name Mimaki iri hiko implied his Imna (another name for Kūmgon Kaya in this case) origin, crossed the Korea strait and invaded Kyūshū early in the fourth century. Later in the century, his descendant Ōjin, marched east from Kyūshū, overthrew the native dynasty in Yamato, and soon subjugated much of western Japan. The enormous tumuli attributed to Ōjin and his successors remain today to signify their power. The Japanese chronicles’ accounts of the first ruler Jinmu’s eastward expedition from Kyūshū to Yamato was none other than a reflection of Ōjin’s advance to and takeover of the heart of Japan. Despite the newness of Egami’s arguments, his evidence for the link between the Yamato state and Puyŏ, or Puyŏ-derived Koguryŏ and Paekche, stemmed from the similarities in founding myths, religious traditions, and basic numbers, pointed out by Kita decades ago.

Egami’s theory sparked debates that lasted for decades. Archaeologists familiar with the grave goods in the Kofun period criticized his perception of sudden grave goods changes, pointing out that the changes had been incremental and therefore should not be attributed to a conquest by outsiders. Fifth-century tombs exhibit continuities from the fourth century and even earlier, including the rather unique keyhole shape of tombs and the set of mirrors, swords, and jewels as grave goods, a practice that began in northern Kyūshū from the late Yayoi period. Besides, there is no archaeological evidence that suggests Sujin’s invasion of Kyūshū early in the fourth century.

Postwar Japan had other reasons to resist the horse-riding theory. The arguments of multi-ethnic origins had lost its appeal when Japan was stripped of its prewar colonies and colonial subjects. Japanese intellectuals were quickly leaning toward the theory of a homogenous nation, asserting that the Japanese ancestors had lived in the islands for millennia with few disturbances from newcomers. The postwar academic trend to look inward, rather than outward, was amplified by the influence of Marxism that looked for internal developments rather than forces from the outside.

Part of the resistance to the horse-rider theory undoubtedly came from nationalistic sentiments. Although the Japanese had just been defeated and occupied by the U.S. forces, they were not ready to subscribe to the idea that Japan had been overrun by peninsular invaders. Nationalistic pride was not hidden in comments made by the prominent Japanese archaeologist Saito Tadashi. After noting that he found no archaeological signs for a conquest by horse-riders, he wrote:

Of course, when looking at the development of the Kofun culture from the fourth century, we should not ignore strong continental influence, along with the spiritual and social development of the people of this country. However,

60 Oguma 2002:312-316.
this influence did not come in the form of a conquest by the so-called horse-riding people from the continent. As mentioned, Japan, due to its geographic proximity, had been linked to historical changes on the continent. Japan’s advancement was enhanced by those who had migrated from the continent through various places, such as China, the Chinese commanderies of Lelang and Taifang, Koguryô, and Silla, and by our own people who had connected themselves to the continent.61

Saitô attributed early Japan’s “continental” influence to the arrival of goods and knowledge through a limited number of Chinese and Korean immigrants and Japanese elites.

The notion of the horse-rider conquest found strong supporters outside of Japan, including the American scholar Gari Ledyard. As a historian of Korea, he depicted Puyô’s plight and ultimate fall caused by militant neighbors in the mid-fourth century; as well as its refugees’ building of Paekche in the Han River basin. According to his view, a Puyô branch departed for Japan from its southern Korea base under the leadership of Ôjin and conquered both Kyushû and Yamato by the late fourth century. Thus, Ledyard postulated a long march by the Puyô from their base north of the peninsula all the way to western Japan within one generation, but with little archaeological or historical evidence. The support for his link between the Yamato state and Puyô was derived from the linguistic and mythological similarities already discussed by Kita and Egami.62 Nevertheless, his article promoted the horse-rider theory internationally and incited many Korean scholars to put forward their versions.

Some Korean scholars argued that the conquerors of Japan had come from Paekche. According to Wontack Hong, Ôjin, the invader of Yamato, was a Paekche prince with little connection with Puyô.63 Based on the Japanese chronicles’ description of Ôjin’s close interactions with Paekche, including his welcoming of powerful immigrants and two princes, Hong concluded that Ôjin had been sent to Japan by Paekche kings Kûn Ch’ogo(r. 346–375) and Kûn Kusu(r. 375–384), after their successful expansion on the peninsula.64 In the same vein, Ch’oe Chae-sôk suspected that Paekche had maintained its control over the Yamato government for centuries. According to him, many Paekche princes and officials remained in Yamato in supervisory roles until the demise of Paekche in the seventh century.65

Others thought that it was Kaya that had dominated Japan through conquests and migrations. Chôn Kwan-u pointed to the similarities between the foundation myths of Kûmgwan Kaya and Yamato as evidence of their special relationship. Just as the Kaya foundation myth in the Samguk yusa conveys that the founder Suro

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62 Ledyard 1975.
65 Ch’oe Chae-sôk 2001:103-111.
descended on Mt. Kwiji from heaven in a golden box, the Yamato foundation myth relates that the Ninigi, Amaterasu’s grandson, descended on Kushifuru in eastern Kyūshū from heaven, or Takamagahara, in a blanket. Ch’ŏn attributed the enigmatic decline of Kūmgwan Kaya in the fourth century to its residents’ large-scale emigration to Japan. 

Many more Korean scholars and writers have developed their hypotheses regarding Korean conquests and control of the fledgling Japanese state. The majority of them trace the origin of the Japanese rulers to either Paekche or Kaya, which undoubtedly had close ties with the Yamato court, as seen in many accounts of the Japanese chronicles. Korean scholars invariably conclude that in early times Korea was the benefactor and Japan a follower. The one-way flow of people and culture made Japan a mere extension of the Korean culture and people as late as in the seventh century.

If the peninsular people came to constitute the core of the Japanese, the Koreans and the Japanese today do share at least part of their ethnic origins. Nevertheless, the majority of the Korean scholars defy any hint of common ancestry with the Japanese. For instance, after hypothesizing that Korean immigrants from Paekche, Silla, and Kaya had established separate settlements in Japan under the supervision of their respective home states, the North Korean scholar Kim Sŏk-hyŏng specifically denied the theory of common ancestry:

It is not true that the Koreans and Japanese share ancestors. The truth is that many of the Japanese ancestors had originated in Korea. What is correct about the Nissen do soron is not that the two peoples share common ancestry, but that the Korean migrants had advanced to Japan and played important roles in Japanese history.

Kim Tal-su, a Korean writer living in Japan, may be the only Korean who openly admitted common ancestry of the two peoples. He wrote in Japanese:

[The Koreans and the Japanese] came from common ancient roots, but grew to be quite different peoples as centuries passed. Japan was identical to Korea up until the Nara period (710-793), but developed its own unique culture through its transformation from the Heian period (794-1191).

The majority of the Koreans keep their distance from the rhetoric of common ancestry, a detested reminder of the colonial past.

Although the horse-rider theory has largely been rejected, the notion of early

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68 Kim Young-Duk 1998:98.
migrations from Korea to Japan remained valid in the study of the Yayoi culture. Postwar Japanese scholars debated for decades how irrigated rice cultivation, originally developed in southern China, had reached Yayoi Japan. Japanese scholars hypothesized three possible routes: the southern route directly from southern China to southern Kyushu via Okinawa, the middle route from China’s Yangtze river region to northern Kyushu (and at the same time to southern Korea) across the East China Sea, and the northern roundabout route from Chinese coasts to western Korea and finally to northern Kyushu. Although the first route was quickly rejected based on the lateness of rice cultivation in Okinawa, the second route, representing a shorter travel, received more support than the third. Whether the spread of rice agriculture was caused by internal development or migrations from the outside was another important question. Japanese scholars recognized the Yayoi population’s physical differences from the Jomon population, as exhibited in skeletal remains, and debated whether these changes resulted from migrations from outside of Japan, or simply from a new agricultural diet and lifestyle.

With the help of increasing excavations, archaeologists have found abundant evidence supporting the hypothesis that wet rice agriculture had reached Japan via the Korean peninsula, and not directly from China. Scholars also agree that it was migrations, not lifestyles or environment, that caused physical changes in the population. The most recent studies suggest that irrigated rice cultivation was first brought to northwestern Kyushu by migrants from southwestern Korea in the tenth century B.C., and their descendants gradually spread the new culture eastward in Honshu, admixing with the Jomon population in the process. An increasing number of Japanese scholars today agree that a significant number of peninsular rice growers crossed the sea and spread both their genes and technology across the Japanese islands. Some speculate that the expansion of metal culture, political chaos, and climate changes enticed their migrations. Torii’s hypothesis from many decades ago has now come alive with substantial evidence.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the anthropologist Hanihara Kazuro advanced his definitive theory that the Japanese were ethnologically dual-structured, consisting of native Jomon and immigrant Yayoi traits. Based on his morphological simulations and population growth calculations, he suspected the presence of more immigrant genes than Jomon genes in the Japanese by the Kofun era and estimated the immigration of as many as a thousand people a year, or a million over a millennium. Whether or not this computation is accurate, the dual structure model is confirmed by most recent genetic studies. Michael F. Hammer and his team of researchers identified sets of Y chromosomes marking the Jomon and the Yayoi populations in

71 Ando 1971.
72 Hasebe 1971.
74 Minzoku rekishi hakubutsukan 2007.
76 Hanihara 1987; 1991.
the Japanese paternal gene pool, going back over twenty thousand years and three thousand years respectively. The Jōmon chromosomes markers, according to the study, appear more frequently among the Ainu and in Okinawa than in Honshū and rarely appear in Korea. The Yayoi markers, however, are found widely in Korea and many parts of Japan, but much less in Okinawa and among the Ainu. This supports the hypothesis that peninsular migrants and their descendants prevailed in many parts of Japan while the native population and culture remained predominant in northern and southern peripheries. Genetic scientists, however, are not in agreement concerning geographic regions where these genetic markers originated. Hammer pointed to central Asia as a potential source for Jōmon and southern China or Southeast Asia for Yayoi while Omoto and Saitou saw only northeast Asian connections for both.\textsuperscript{77}

Comparative studies of Japanese and Korean by linguists have seen modest progress. Not all postwar Japanese linguists agreed that the two languages were inherently related. Some insisted that Japanese was an isolated language while others suggested its genetic relations with Tamil and the Austronesian language group.\textsuperscript{78} Korean linguists, however, generally placed Korean and Japanese closely together in the Altaic language family, or in the Tungusic branch of the Altaic.\textsuperscript{79} The possible genetic relationship between Japanese and the Koguryo language, first pointed out by the colonial Japanese scholars, is now seriously studied by Korean and Western scholars.\textsuperscript{80} If the link between the two is fully substantiated, we may have an answer to the opacity of the relationship between modern Japanese and Korean.

A better understanding of Japan's Kofun period has been at least partially hampered by limited access to royal tumuli. Yet, an increasing number of Japanese scholars acknowledge the significance of peninsular immigrants' cultural contributions to the Kofun culture, and the term \textit{toraijin}, referring to those who originated in Korea and China and settled in Japan in prehistoric and early historic times, has become popularized.\textsuperscript{81}

Nevertheless, some Japanese prefer to think that the \textit{toraijin} came from the "continent," rather than the Korean peninsula. A recent television series on Japanese origins, jointly produced by the National Science Museum of Tokyo and the National Broadcasting Service of Japan, hypothesized the homeland of the Yayoi immigrants to be the Shandong peninsula of China, where prehistoric rice paddies and human bones similar to the Yayoi counterparts were unearthed.\textsuperscript{82} Japanese nationalism continues to prevent scholars from admitting ancient Japanese roots closely tied to those of the Koreans, despite accumulating evidence.

\textsuperscript{77} Hammer et al 2006; Omoto and Saitou 1997.
\textsuperscript{78} For the history of linguistic studies concerning the origins of Japanese, see Unger 2001: 81-89, and Beckwith 2004:8-28.
\textsuperscript{79} Kim Pang-han 1984; Yi Ki-mun 1983.
\textsuperscript{80} Beckwith 2004.
\textsuperscript{81} As opposed to the Japan-centered term \textit{kikajin}, or the “naturalized,” the neutral term \textit{toraijin} is now popular. See Ueda, Kim Tal-su and Shibata 1975.
\textsuperscript{82} Kokuritsu kagaku hakubutsukan 2001.
Conclusion
Swayed by ethnocentric descriptions in the early Japanese chronicles, National Studies scholars of eighteenth-century Japan argued that Korea was an offshoot of Japan as it had been controlled by Japanese rulers in antiquity. This argument indeed laid a foundation for the Nissen dōsoron, the Japanese colonial assertion that the Koreans and the Japanese shared ancient ancestors and therefore should be reunited. Yet, another important arm of the Nissen dōsoron appeared among Japanese scholars who adopted the Western methodologies of anthropology, archaeology, history, and linguistics from the late nineteenth century. Following Western scholars’ view that the Japanese ancestors had migrated from outside of the islands in prehistoric times, these Japanese scholars studied ancient documents, languages, remains, and physical characteristics of the peoples in Japan and surrounding areas in search of Japanese origins. Many came to the conclusion that the formation of the early Japanese had been closely linked to significant waves of migration from the Korean peninsula.

Torii Ryūzō, after his extensive anthropological and archaeological research, conjectured that northeast Asians had come largely from the Korean peninsula and built both the Yayoi and Kofun cultures in Japan. Kita Sadakichi emphasized linguistic and mythological similarities between the early Yamato ruling group and the Puyō people of Koguryŏ and Paekche, important ancestors of the modern Japanese and Koreans respectively. Kanazawa Shōzaburō provided linguistic evidence for the basic flow of people from the peninsula to the islands. By 1920, these scholars determined that migrations of peninsular population not only contributed to the formation of the Japanese culture and state but played a key role in the constitution of the early Japanese people. As compared with peninsular migrants, the indigenous Ainu and immigrants from elsewhere played only minor roles. This argument led to the notion that the Koreans and the Japanese had common origins and ancestry.

The thesis that the origins of the Japanese people and culture had their origins in the Korean peninsula could have given rise to the view that Korea was Japan’s forerunner worthy of respect, especially in light of ancestral reverence in East Asia. This idea, however, never surfaced in the face of political reality. Korea lagged behind Japan in modernization and was reduced to a Japanese colony in 1910. The hierarchical order between Japan and Korea was legitimized by the Social Darwinism view that territorial expansion and control largely determined the ranking of the nations. Kanazawa, who regarded Korea as Japan’s forebear, self-censored his writings while others earnestly believed in Japan’s central position in the past and present. The proponents of the theory of migrations failed to show respect, or sympathy, to Korea and the Korean people as a possible ancestral homeland and relatives of the Japanese, and, instead, supported the Japanese colonial policies in general and the assimilation of the Koreans in particular. Under these circumstances, their scholarships were merely bundled together with the National Studies views as the Nissen dōsoron, an overarching justification for Japanese colonialism.

While the term ancestry was used in a broad sense in Japan, lineal ancestry was an integral part of Korea’s patrilineal social structure. To the Koreans who regarded their ancestry and lineage as the source of their pride and identity, the Japanese claim of the common ancestry and promotion of Korean assimilation
represented a major assault and thus was rejected by Korean nationalist scholars. Sin Ch’ae-ho, in reaction, asserted Korea’s distinct historical identity and cultural contributions to the early Japanese state. Ch’oe Nam-sön appropriated the theory of migrations and the idea of shared cultural heritage to argue Korea’s hegemony in early northeast Asia, but refused to acknowledge the theory of common ancestry.

After WWII, the horse-rider theory revived the notion of migrations with added force and dimensions. In the postwar environment of academic freedom, Egami highlighted a possible conquest of fourth-century Japan and conflated the invaders from Korea with specific early Japanese rulers. The conquest theory was generally rejected in Japan as it provided little evidence for violent conquest in Yamato or Kyūshū. Conversely, cultural contributions made by a large number of immigrants from Korea in the Kofun-period have become a common topic of discussions in Japan.

The potential implications of the prewar arguments, unleashed by the horse-rider theory, were eagerly exploited by Korean scholars. The idea that Japan owed its state formation as well as cultural progress to the peninsula gave a basis for Korean scholars to reclaim Korea’s dominant position in antiquity. Many embraced the conquest theory while others emphasized migrations and cultural contributions to enhance Korea’s historical position vis-à-vis Japan. The arguments begun by the Japanese colonial scholars now serve as important tools for Korea’s nationalist studies. Thus, Korean nationalist scholarship, in theoretical respects, is a successor, rather than a stranger, to Japanese colonial scholarship, although the link is seldom mentioned. The basic thesis concerning population movements has not changed a great deal since its first proposal nearly a century ago. Additionally, recent findings from archaeological studies and genetic research confirm that the peninsular migrants and their descendants who ushered in the Yayoi culture indeed laid the foundation for the formation of the Japanese population. Peninsular contributions to the Kofun culture are being recognized more as excavations progress.

Despite the mounting evidence of shared beginnings, today, neither the Koreans nor the Japanese demonstrate an interest in the concept of common ancestry. While many Korean scholars espouse the theories of migrations and conquests, they seldom refer to common ethnic stock of the two peoples. By the same token, while many Japanese scholars now recognize the paramount importance of early peninsular immigrants in the Yayoi and Kofun periods, others continue searching for their ancestors outside of the Korean peninsula. The prewar Japanese scholars had both academic convictions and political reasons when they espoused the notion of common ancestry. Until new political needs arise, the innate link between the two peoples may not draw a great deal of attention from either side of the Korea strait.

83 Korea’s unique experience under Japanese colonial rule does not easily permit analogies to other colonized peoples’ experiences. However, Korean scholars’ ambivalent handling of Japanese studies and scholars may resemble Indian scholars’ treatment of British scholarships and scholars. Although modern Indian scholars eagerly adopted British writings on India’s glorious past, they rejected British scholars as biased and politically motivated (Kejariwal 1988:233).
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