

*Assimilation and Exclusion: Assimilation Policy and
Japanese-Korean Intermarriage during the Japanese
Colonial Rule**

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The term *naisen kekkon* 内鮮結婚, referred to intermarriage between the Japanese and Koreans during the colonial period in Korea (1910-45). Even before it gained currency, there had been cases of *naisen kekkon*, albeit rare, either in reality or in imaginative discourse, due to increasing contacts between Koreans and Japanese after opening of Korea to Japan in 1876. It

* The original title for this book is *Donghwa wa baeje: Ilje eui donghwa jeongchaek gwa naeseon gyeorhon* 동화와 배제: 일제의 동화정책과 내선결혼. This review is an English translation of Ho-Chul Seo, “Naeseon gyeorheon, jeongchak/damron gwa gaeindeul eui unmyeong” (Japanese-Korean Intermarriage: Its Discourse and Policy, and Fortunes of Individuals), *Yeoksa bipyeong*, issue 125 (Winter 2018).

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was in no way a far-fetched metaphor in a male-oriented society that colonial rule by the alien was compared to the sexual union of the ruling male and the subject female. As a matter of fact, at the time of the annexation of Korea in 1910 and the imminent establishment of the Government-General of Korea (Chōsen sōtokufu 朝鮮總督府, hereafter the GGK), the *Tokyo Puck* (東京パック), a popular Japanese *manga* magazine of current affairs, featured an amicable image of a Japanese husband and his Korean bride as an epitome of the annexation.¹

The imaginative discourse that associated alien rule with sexual union between ruler and ruled—more exactly, sexual exploitation of the ruled female—had real effects. The *Maeil sinbo* 毎日申報, a pro-Japanese Korean newspaper, reported “a recent rumor that a number of Korean men and women have married hurriedly without selecting an auspicious day or preparing ceremonious food before a law for intermarriage between Japanese and Korean youths comes into effect from the first day of the coming month.”² And several ensuing articles tried to persuade Korean people that they were not to be misled, and that such misunderstanding would risk instigating underage marriage. Nevertheless, Korean parents had reason to feel anxiety about it and parents with unmarried daughters surely had more reason to do so.

As Japanese colonial rule over Koreans progressed over time, contact between the two peoples increased, resulting in a steady increase of cases of Japanese-Korean (J. *naisen*) marriages. Insofar as Korea remained a colony of Japan, *naisen* marriage could not be counted as an ‘international’ marriage. But, since there was no legal mechanism in which to report and register the *naisen* marriage at the beginning of colonial rule, such marriage followed the procedure of international marriage in order to gain the

¹ Han Jeongseon, “HanIl hapbyeong gwa siseon eui jeongchihak: geundae Ilbon jeguk eui sigak munhwa wa manhwa maeche” (Japanese annexation of Korea and viewer politics: Japanese empire’s visual culture and manga media), *Dongyangsahak yeon’gu* 93 (2005), p. 249.

² *Maeil sinbo* (Daily news), September 18, 1910, *jappo* (Miscellaneous), “Pungseol oin” (Rumor misleads people); Yi Jeongseon, *Donghwa wa baeje*, p. 55, note 45. Hereafter, citing from the author’s work will use parenthetical in-text citation.

state's recognition. If marriage was viewed purely as a matter of personal relationships between individuals, the state might limit itself to the role of instituting legal apparatuses to ensure its legal and administrative validity. The event of a *naisen* marriage, however, was touted as a telling symbol of the assimilation policies by the colonial authorities that put forth the assimilation slogans such as *isshi dōjin* 一視同仁 (impartiality and equal favor), *naisen yūwa* 內鮮融和 (harmony between Japanese and Koreans) and *naisen ittai* 內鮮一体 (Japan and Korea as one unity), as Japan's colonial rule progressed. From the beginning, the GGK didn't simply push ahead with legalizing the *naisen* marriage practices in colonial Korea by establishing legal procedures and institutions. But, it also articulated several times its position to champion such marriages between the two peoples, as in the case of the highly publicized royal intermarriage between Crown Prince Ŭimin (Yi Ŭn) and Crown Princess Yi Pangja (Masako) in 1920 as an ideal symbol of Japan's principle of *naisen yūwa*. Apart from a few high-profile strategic cases, however, the Japanese government and the GGK never fully supported the *naisen* marriage with policies and institutions. Most of the cases of the *naisen* marriage were arranged among Koreans and Japanese of lower classes who were driven by either free love or by necessity due to a hard life.

In this context, Yi Jeongseon's book, *Assimilation and Exclusion: Assimilation Policy and Japanese-Korean Intermarriage during Japanese Colonial Rule*, grasps the nature of Japanese colonial domination, including assimilation policy, by exploring the gap between the discourse on and the reality of the *naisen* marriage as well as between its propaganda and its actual policy. Needless to say, the first merit of this monograph lies in its latest and scrupulous research into topics encompassing its legal institutions, propaganda, actual legal cases, and the like. The book consists of the following three parts. The first part concerns the legal institutions of the *naisen* marriage and their operation, from 1910 to the 1930s. The second part treats the propaganda on the *naisen* marriage and its actual status, from 1910 to the 1930s. And, the third part explores the policy of *naisen* marriage and the problems of a mixed-blood population.

The first part of the book examines how the GGK amended and man-

aged the legal institutions pertaining to *naisen* marriage in order to give it legal sanction from the beginning of colonial rule until the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. As mentioned above, *naisen* marriage had been treated as a *de facto* international marriage. Even though colonial Korea was an integral part of the Japanese empire, the Japanese authorities were mindful that the same Japanese rights and duties could not be extended to the Koreans. Therefore, they designated colonial Korea as a separate “legal realm” (J. *hōiki* 法域) in order to distinguish it from mainland Japan in legal jurisdiction. Because Japanese law did not automatically take effect in Korea, though some parts did, its extension to Korea, if in part, had to be authorized by imperial ordinance or revised by the governor-general’s ordinances.

At the beginning of colonial rule, the *naisen* marriage entailed basically two legal problems. First, there existed no legal mechanism by which to link the civil register of Korea (*minjeok* 民籍) and the family register (J. *koseki* 戸籍) of Japan, which belonged to separate legal realms, respectively. The legal identity of both Koreans and Japanese was based on their place of residence. However, the transfer of individual and family to the other country’s family register through marriage or adoption was out of the question since its allowance could obscure the boundaries of the national identity of the two people, respectively. Then, according to the modern Japanese family registration system, a Korean woman, once married to a Japanese man, should be omitted from her native family register, and be newly entered into her husband’s family register.

Second, the civil registration system of Korea in the 1910s, based on the civil registration law in conformity with the Japanese family registration system during the time of the Korean Empire, was at variance with the Japanese system in several regulations due to Korean traditional customs including a reporting of marriage. The Japanese family registration system provided that marriage could be recognized by the state when both parties reported it. On the contrary, Korean customs had it that marriage had been acknowledged by marriage ritual and was followed by reporting to the state by the male family head. Besides, as had been practiced in Japan, Korean customs had not recognized adoption of the son-in-law as the heir, nor

the husband's marrying into the wife's family.

The differences of Korean customs from the Japanese laws notwithstanding, the GGK recognized the *naisen* marriage as a legal relation and tried to solve its procedural problems by amending some legal provisions in consultation with the mainland Japanese government. With regard to the matters (both civil and criminal) of family transfer and registration, a general law was issued in April, 1918, and applied both to the metropole and its colonies. The regulation, which stipulates an abrogation of one's membership in a family (*J. ie* 家) by reason of marriage or other cases, finally came into effect starting from July, 1921, after a period of its suspension. Two years later, when the Regulation of the Joseon Family Registration (*J. Chōsen hosekirei* 朝鮮戶籍令), in tune with the Japanese family registration system, was enforced, the GGK decreed that marriage be recognized through its reporting by the concerned couple to the state authorities, thereby removing almost all legal difficulties on behalf of the *naisen* marriage.³

The first and second chapters of the first part of the book describe the above-mentioned procedural problems and legal amendments pertaining to the *naisen* marriage. The third chapter describes actual cases of permissible and non-permissible transfers of family registration between Korea and Japan in the legal event of such relations as marriage, adoption, divorce, dissolution of adoption, and other issues. This chapter constitutes, to date, one of the most detailed researches into the legal aspects not only of the *naisen* marriage, but also of colonial Korea's family registration system.

The author depends largely on the primary sources centering on the Established Rules on Family Registration (*J. hoseki reiki* 戶籍例規). The *hoseki reiki*, delivered to the local functionaries from the GGK's judiciary bureaus in response to their questions on such difficult cases, is a collection

³ The *Chōsen hosekirei* 朝鮮戶籍令 (1923) of that magnitude should have been enacted under an imperial edict, but was issued by the ordinance of the GGK. This fact is indicative of serious conflict between the mainland Japanese government and the GGK over the issue of to what extent traditional Korean customs of family membership and inheritance ought to be acknowledged, even though the ordinance was considered much closer to the Japanese family registration system than to the *minsekihō* 民籍法, previously issued. See Yi Seung'il, *Joseon chongdokbu beopje jeongchaek* (Legal policy of the GGK) (Seoul: Yeoksa bipyeongsa, 2008), pp. 241-47.

of rules and standards regarding the knotty and difficult cases of family registration. The cases first appeared in the official bulletin (J. *Kanpō* 官報) of the GGK for national circulation and later were edited and published in book volumes. The author highly appreciates the value of the *hoseki reiki* for understanding and clarifying the difficult and complicated issues of the *naisen* marriage. To be certain, the cases contained in the *hoseki reiki* were brought up to the colonial central government for authoritative interpretation and clarification by local clerks who vividly encountered a variety of patterns of difficulty in executing family registration. The author's endeavor to sort out such highly complex and convoluted cases needs to deserve great attention.

The second part of the book that examines the propaganda and actual status of the *naisen* marriage seems much more dynamic than the first part. The first chapter focuses on the GGK's promotion and propaganda of *naisen* marriage. The author summarizes that "the GGK launched the promotion of the *naisen* marriage in earnest, only after its legal foundation was laid." (p. 447) In other words, it was not until the enactment of the Regulation of the Joseon Family Registration in July 1923 that the GGK started the promotion of *naisen* marriage in a serious manner. The priority of the GGK's assimilation policy in the 1920s shifted to the extension of mainland Japan's laws into colonial Korea in order to achieve the goal of *naisen yūwa* 内鮮融和 (harmony among Japanese and Koreans) in service of the cultural and racial unity under the ideology of *dōbun dōshu* 同文同種 (same script, same race) in the 1910s. The *naisen* marriage did receive considerable attention as a symbol of harmony and unity between Koreans and Japanese. Still, at the intersection of national separation, attributable possibly to the family registration system, and the racial assimilation through intermarriage (p. 30), the GGK did not provide full support for it. (p. 190)

The second chapter discusses statistics regarding *naisen* marriage, the numbers of which vary substantially depending on the materials used. Such differences seem to be derived from the unclarified nature of the statistical materials regarding whether they included the actual intermarriages in addition to the legally recognized ones or whether they also covered the intermarriages registered in mainland Japan in addition to colonial Korea.

Nevertheless, it can be assured that the *naisen* marriage never proliferated even if one chooses the most inclusive statistical material. Further, contrary to the common expectation, an overwhelming majority of the intermarriages were between low-class Japanese women and Korean men in the Japanese mainland, as mentioned above. The third chapter classifies the motivations for the intermarriages into several categories. And the fourth chapter explains the constraints on *naisen* love and marriage, as well as its conflicts and contradictions with other social institutions.

The third part of the book explores the policy changes concerned with *naisen* marriage during the period of wartime mobilization starting especially from the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. With the focus on the discourses and practices of *naisen ittai* 内鮮一体 (Japan and Korea as one unity) campaigns, such as name changing (*sōshi kaimei* 創氏改名), conscription (*chōhei* 徴兵) of Korean youths, some studies have explored literatures and institutions such as the Marriage Consulting Center. These researches have given rise to an assumption that a more rigorous launch of the *naisen*-marriage promotion policies were achieved by the GGK in this period.

However, the author refutes such assumptions as mistaken by pointing out two facts. First, the GGK never implemented its official promotion policy of *naisen* marriage as rigorously as the other assimilation projects such as name changing, use of the Japanese language, Shintō worship, and military conscription, even though they did make a significant effort to bring the *naisen* marriage closer to the goal of *naisen ittai*. For example, Governor-General Minami Jirō (August 1936 to May 1942) maintained that “the meaning of the *naisen* marriage can be found less in its effect of bringing integrity and harmony to the family through emotional relationships than in its effect of assimilating Korean values and lifestyles with those of the Japanese.” Second, confronted with the unintended increase of *naisen* marriages within the Japanese mainland due to the expanded migration of Korean men to Japan through labor and military mobilization, the officials from the Ministry of Health and Welfare (Kōseishō 厚生省) and the eugenicists voiced their anxieties about the drastic increase of intermarriage between the two peoples and their mixed-blood descendants in demo-

graphic policies. (p. 360) The Ministry of Health and Welfare was in charge of producing and raising healthy national subjects by healthy mothers in order to mobilize robust military forces; still, its policy was fundamentally intended for the increase of the ethnic Japanese population. The eugenics, geared to controlling the quality of the Japanese population, had a direct bearing on the maintenance of racial purity rather than the enhancement of the population qualities of Imperial Japan *en masse*.

Taken altogether, this monograph with its thick information defies easy reading. The coverage of source materials for the *naisen* marriage, including law revisions, the *hoseki reiki* 戸籍例規, actual cases and contemporary works on eugenics, is exhaustive. What is more, the skill to bring these varied materials together in a way to construct a coherent narrative on the *naisen* marriage merits high praise. Nonetheless, a question remains especially regarding the author's premise that the *naisen* marriage was part of assimilation policy of the GGK. Admitting that the GGK policy makers assumed an ambiguous attitude toward the *naisen* marriage, she holds on to the framework of assimilation in explaining the *naisen* marriage as the title of the book, *Assimilation and Exclusion*, suggests. Regardless of the challenge to the conventional studies, which tend to see the *naisen* marriage in terms of interracial and mixed-blood hybridity, she locates the assimilation policy in the dimensions of ideology, public sentiment, and education.

The author states that the *naisen* marriage was a form of assimilation conducted at the most intimate level. Yet, the idea of the *naisen* marriage could not be easily translated into the assimilation program of the GGK. This type of assimilation, given the nature of personal relationships, required a long-term change of the people's attitude toward the state, which was difficult for the state to wait and see. Moreover, there would be no guarantee that hybridity of intermarriage and mixed blood would result in one-sided assimilation. In fact, as in the second part, the author shows a number of *naisen*-marriage families that were rather assimilated into Korean practices according to class or residential conditions. Some of the *naisen*-marriage families might well resemble a new hybrid family of two cultures that can be found less in today's multicultural context than that of

the reality of colonial Korea at that time. We can sense, as illustrated in the third part, the anxieties of the Japanese officials during the wartime mobilization who took into serious account a racial and cultural blending in the process of the *naisen* marriage.

The author frequently mentions the GGK's 'promotion policy' of the *naisen* marriage while acknowledging it as lukewarm at most. If the policy just remained as rhetoric without being substantiated by some concrete programs, it can hardly be counted as a *bona fide* policy. In my estimation, a certain proactive policy maker of the GGK might give thought to the match making whose function is similar to the 'continental brides' (*tairiku hanayome* 大陸花嫁) sent to Manchuria. It should be remembered that during the time the ideals of 'free love' and 'marriage based on love' were celebrated. The GGK denounced the Korean custom of arranged underage marriage and lent legal recognition to marriage registration (thus willed) by spouses. It means that the GGK legalized the *naisen* marriage on the basis of the free will of both parties. Beyond such legal provisions, however, could they pursue promotion methods for the *naisen* marriage to achieve the goal of assimilation?

I would like to have an opportunity to listen to the author's answers to the questions and criticism, intended not to defame the author's exhaustive study on the topic by any means, as above. I expect future research, equipped with a perspective of 'coolness and warmth' (p. 8), to maintain the author's enthusiasm for and devotion to the theme of assimilation and exclusion.