

Debates over Military Use of Koreans before and after the March First Independence Movement

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Introduction

World War I is considered to have significantly impacted all countries around the globe in regard to their politics, economies, societies, militaries, cultures, and philosophies. Japan was no exception. In particular, two trends affected the ruling order of Imperial Japan. First, as the empires of Russia, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottomans dissolved after their defeats and post-war settlements, the drive for independence, spurred by Vladimir Lenin's and Woodrow Wilson's proclamation of national self-determination, rose worldwide among colonized peoples. Second, imperial nations, such as Britain and France, mobilized local people and material resources from their colonies in India, Indochina, and Africa for their war efforts.¹ Follow-

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¹ The Japanese army also seems to have been interested in mobilizing people and resources from its colonies. For instance, the Special Military Investigation Committee (臨時軍事調査委員), which had been formed in September 1915 to research World War I, requested resident military officers stationed in western countries to collect information on the war in September 1918. The information that they requested included "the types and formations of colonial troops, especially those comprised of different races, and their values." See "The Submission of Full Accounts

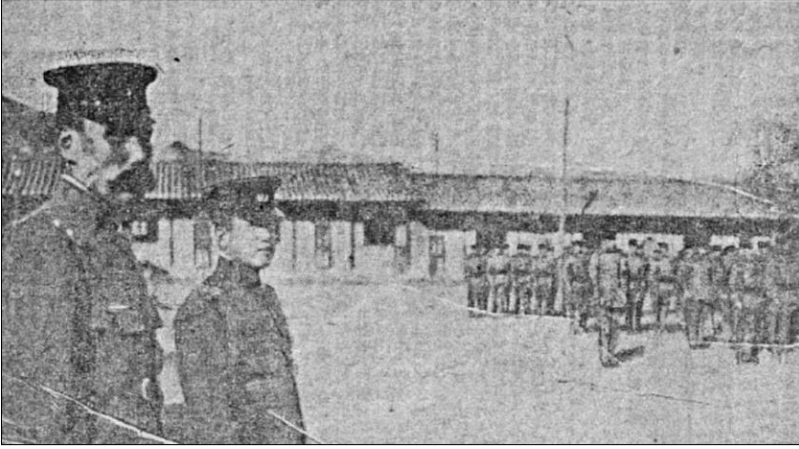


Figure 1. King Yeongchin, Lee Eun, and Commander of the Korea-Stationed Japanese Forces, Matsukawa Toshitane (*Maeil Sinbo*, January 20, 1918, 3)

ing the end of World War I and in the wake of colonial Korea's March First Independence Movement (hereafter, March First Movement), Japan also sought to reshuffle its imperial institutions including the army.

The Japanese forces stationed in Korea were the physical foundation for Imperial Japan's rule of colonial Korea. Research on these forces has mainly been concerned with either their institutional formation along with its name changes to *Hanguk juchagun* (韓國駐劄軍) (lit., Korea-Stationed Forces) during the Russo-Japanese War to *Joseon juchagun* (朝鮮駐劄軍) (lit., Joseon-Stationed Forces) and then to *Joseon-Gun* (朝鮮軍) (lit., Joseon Forces), or the role of the *Joseon-Gun* (hereafter, KSJF, an abbreviation of Korea-Stationed Japanese Forces, to avoid confusion with native Korean or Joseon troops) in the suppression of resistance and independence movements in Korea while being in the vanguard of Japan's conti-

on Duties" [業務願未書提出の件] (The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, JACAR Ref. C03025405000, Image no. 92 [歐受大日記], Taisho thirteenth year [大正13年・3冊之内其3], Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies).

mental invasion in wartime.²

This study, however, explores the Imperial Japanese troops in Korea from a different angle by focusing on how the KSJF sought to use Koreans for military purposes as a means to facilitate Korea's assimilation to Japan before and after the March First Movement. In order to examine this issue, this article looks into the KSJF's thoughts on the military use of Koreans in the early days of the annexation,³ the KSJF's and its commander Utsunomiya Tarō's (宇都宮太郎) pre- and post-measures regarding the March First Movement,⁴ debates within the Japanese army over the military use of Koreans, and how all of these issues were later reflected in the volunteer recruit and conscription systems of Korean enlistees.⁵

Keeping in view the KSJF's dual role in colonial Korea as the main agent of repression of the Korean independence movement and as a facilitator of the 'assimilation' policy regarding the Koreans, this article inquires into (1) how the Japanese army discussed the military use of Koreans and the reinforcement of the KSJF on this account, and (2) how the March First

² Examples of such research are, Sin Ju-back and Chung Young-hwan, trans., "Chōsengun gaishi" [A history of Korea-stationed Japanese forces], in *Guntai to Seiboryoku: Chosen hanto no 20-Seiki* [Military and sexual violence: The 20th century of the Korean Peninsula], ed., Song Youn-ok and Kim Young (Tokyo: Gendai Shiryo Shuppan, 2010); Seo Min Gyo, "Kankoku chusatsugun no keisei kara Chōsen-gun e: Josetsu shidan no tanjō" [From the Formation of the Korea-Stationed Forces to Joseongun: The Birth of Permanently Stationing Forces], in *Chiki no Naka no Guntai* [The troops in the region], ed., Sakamoto Yūichi, vol. 7, *Teikoku shihai no Saizensen, Shokuminchi* [The Frontline of Imperial Rule, a Colony] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2015); and Anzako Yuka, "Chōsen ni josetsu saretā dai ichikyu-shidan to dai ni-shidan" [The Permanently Stationed Japanese Army in Korea—the nineteenth and second Divisions], in *Sakamoto Yūichi*, vol. 7.

³ Park Choengho, "Kindai Nihon," 233; Lee Hyung-sik, "Joseon heonbyeong saryeonggwan Tachibana Koichirō and mudantongchi: Tachibana Koichirō ilgilul jungsimuro" [Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Military Police in Korea Tachibana Koichirō and Military Rule: With a Focus on Tachibana Koichirō's diaries], *Minjok munhwa yeongu* [Korean Cultural Studies] 57 (2012): 292-98; Lee H. *Chōsen sōtokufu*, 42-45.

⁴ Kira, "Utsunomiya Tarō Kankei shiryō," *Shisō* 46 (2005); Kim Dong-Myung, *Jibaewa Jeohang*, 42-49; Kira and Miyamoto, 解題 大正時代中期の宇都宮太郎: 第四師団長・朝鮮軍司令官・軍事参議官時代, in *Nippon rikugun* 3, Utsunomiya Tarō Kankei shiryō Kenkyūkai, ed. Miyamoto, "Utsunomiya Tarō to Chōsen shihai," in *Kindai Nihon*, ed., Yasuda and Cho (2010).

⁵ Tobe, "Chōsen chuton Nippongun," 399-405.

Movement affected the Japanese army's view. Various historical documents and records of that period, however, indicate that the KSJF sought aggressively to use Koreans for military purposes from around the time of the annexation and that its endeavor became more obvious amid the shock of the March First Movement. This article also points to the fact that the KSJF's request for troop reinforcements were intended not only to consolidate its military control of Korea but also to prepare for hiring Koreans for the Japanese army. However, the Japanese Army Central was consistently reluctant to make a move. Let us start with two opposing stances regarding use of Koreans for military purposes in the Japanese army.

The Japanese Army's View of Native Troops before the Annexation of Korea

Japan achieved its first colony on foreign soil, Taiwan, after its victory in the war with Qing, which ensued from 1894 to 1895. Immediately after the Qing-Japan War and the subsequent conquest of Taiwan, a member of Department Three of the General Staff, Akashi Motojiro (明石元二郎), surveyed Taiwan, French Indochina, and Thailand, accompanying the deputy department head of the General Staff, Kawakami Sōroku (川上操六), from October 1896 to January of the following year. This expedition aimed to research France's colonial policies and Akashi particularly stated that one of his set goals was to research "the regimentation and training of native soldiers and the proportion of the French officers involved in these tasks."⁶

Based on his research during this survey trip, Akashi wrote "Opinions on Taiwan Survey Trip (J. Taiwan-to shinsatsu iken 臺灣島視察意見)," in which he proposed to hire colonial Taiwanese as native troops:

⁶ In addition to the matter of native soldiers, Akashi also included in his goals to investigate the nature, training, weapon provision, and age of village guard corps (護郷兵), comprised of locals that France organized, trained, and gave weapons for protecting their own villages. Refer to Murata Yasusada, ed., *Akashi Taishō Etsunan Nikki* [General Akashi's Vietnam Diary] (Tokyo: Nikkō Shoin, 1944), 133.

It is necessary to employ natives for military purposes. Experience so far has proven that deploying elite troops from the homeland not only costs an enormous amount of money but also can cause many soldiers to fall ill who are not accustomed to the local climate. Therefore, we have to employ native soldiers to aid our troops and seek to reduce the burden on the state coffers.⁷

Having learned from bitter experience in the conquest war of Taiwan,⁸ Akashi was advising Imperial Japan to recruit Taiwanese to the army and have them aid the occupying Japanese troops so as to save on deployment costs and prevent the loss of forces from endemic diseases. Drawing from the precedents of Western empires, he argued for organizing native troops so that Japan could “eliminate harmful natives by natives” without sending elite Japanese troops to clamp down on “herds of local rebels and bandits,” thus adopting the ‘divide and rule’ strategy against the colonized people.⁹

At the same time, Akashi was also aware of the risks of having Taiwanese in the Japanese army. He cautioned that the ratio of natives to Japanese soldiers was the most important matter:

The smaller number of Japanese troops than that of the native soldiers will undermine the authority of the former, and furthermore can lead to questioning the capability of the Empire. . . . Therefore, we must equip the Japanese troops to overpower the native soldiers and assign only Japanese in commanding positions to control them. If we do thus, native units will be undoubtedly useful to us.¹⁰

⁷ Akashi Taisho Etsunan Nikki, 162. Henceforth, in all citations, editorial comments are marked in square brackets, and all year specifications follow the western calendar.

⁸ Japan landed its troops in northern Taiwan in May 1895 after the Shimonoseki Peace Treaty but ended up losing over 10,000 soldiers by March of the following year due to the fight against fiercely resisting natives and local illnesses (Yūichi Sakamoto, *Teikoku Shihai*, 17-18).

⁹ Akashi Taisho Etsunan Nikki, 162-63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

Then, what did Akashi estimate to be the ideal number of troops in Taiwan and the ratio between Japanese and Taiwanese soldiers? Most of all, he emphasized keeping three mixed brigades in order to quell local resistance with an insufficient police force and to defend Taiwan on their own in an emergency.¹¹ Then he proposed recruiting Taiwanese into the military from late 1897, with a detailed plan as follows:

Each infantry brigade shall hire 500 native infantrymen in December 1897. If its outcome is satisfactory, then it should continue to recruit 500 natives every year. . . . By increasing the number of native soldiers, we can reduce the deployment of soldiers from the homeland . . . thus by the sixth year, the imperial army in Taiwan will consist of 3 Japanese infantry regiments—9 battalions (a ratio of one Japanese regiment per brigade)—and 3 native regiments—that is, one native regiment per brigade. Hence, each defense infantry brigade in Taiwan will comprise one regiment of Japanese soldiers and one regiment of native soldiers.¹²

As shown above, Akashi proposed that each infantry brigade be comprised of one Japanese regiment and one Taiwanese regiment, reaching a total one-half Japanese and one-half Taiwanese in the army by the sixth year of recruiting Taiwanese soldiers. The Taiwanese units were advised to be led by Japanese officers while cavalry, artillery, and engineering units to be comprised solely of Japanese. Still, his proposal of organizing the occupying army with nearly the same numbers of Japanese and Taiwanese soldiers was considerably bold given the continuing local resistance at that time.¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 164-65. However, the troops in Taiwan were gradually reduced to two mixed brigades in 1902 and then to two infantry regiments (= one brigade) in 1907.

¹² *Ibid.*, 167.

¹³ Masami Kondō points out in his article “Chōheirei” that Governor-Generals of Taiwan, Nogi Maresuke (乃木希典) and Kodama Gentarō (兒玉源太郎) made a few attempts at using Taiwanese for military purposes such as forming “village guard corps” (non-Han Taiwanese only) and recruiting “volunteer soldiers” (Han Chinese only) with an aim of implementing the conscription policy in the future, but they were all stopped in 1903. This failure, according to Kondō, provided grounds to believe that the conscription of natives was premature.

Having managed to win the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905, Japan established a Resident-General in the Korean Empire (hereafter, Korea) and made it a protectorate. In 1907, Japan ousted Emperor Gojong for having sent secret envoys to The Hague Peace Conference and disbanded the Korean military. In consequence, “righteous army” activities surged in Korea. Akashi was posted in the commander position of the military police in Korea in October 1907. In a letter to Army Minister Terauchi Masatake (寺内正毅) in May 1908, Akashi requested the deployment of more military police from Japan to clamp down on Korean righteous army soldiers and made a proposal to recruit a sufficient number of Koreans as military police assistants under the Japanese military police.¹⁴

In order to enhance the capability of quell and defense, we should have the Korean government cover the expenditure to hire about 4,000 Koreans to aid the clamp-down agency. . . . My plan is to have one Japanese military policeman monitor with two Korean assistants following the examples of other countries, which are generally maintaining the ratio of two natives to one homeland soldier. However, we will not apply the conscription law to the Koreans but instead will recruit volunteers in order to have as many Korean civilian gunners apply as possible. We will also emulate the European system of hiring natives in their colonies (Akashi Motojirō’s letter to Terauchi Masatake, dated May 3, 1908).¹⁵

Akashi hoped Koreans to play in the assistant role of military police by way of adopting the Western model that utilized natives for military pur-

¹⁴ In 1907, the actual number of military policemen stationed in Korea amounted to 797 (all Japanese) in total. By the next year, however, the number of Japanese military policemen nearly tripled to 2,398 and 4,234 Korean military police assistants were added, resulting in 6,632 military police personnel all together, nearly eight times more than the previous year. See Matsuda Toshihiko, “Kaisetsu Chōsen kenpei-tai shoshi” [A Brief History of Military Police in Korea with Comments and Analyses], in *Chōsen Kenpeitai Rekishi* [The History of Military Police in Korea], Chōsen Kenpeitai Shireibu, ed. (Reprint, Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2000), vol. 1: 4.

¹⁵ *Terauchi Masatake ate Akashi Motojirō Shokan* [Akashi Motojirō’s letters to Terauchi Masatake], Shōyūkurabu Shiryōchōsashitsu et al., ed. (Tokyo: Shōyū Kurabu, 2014), 20-21.

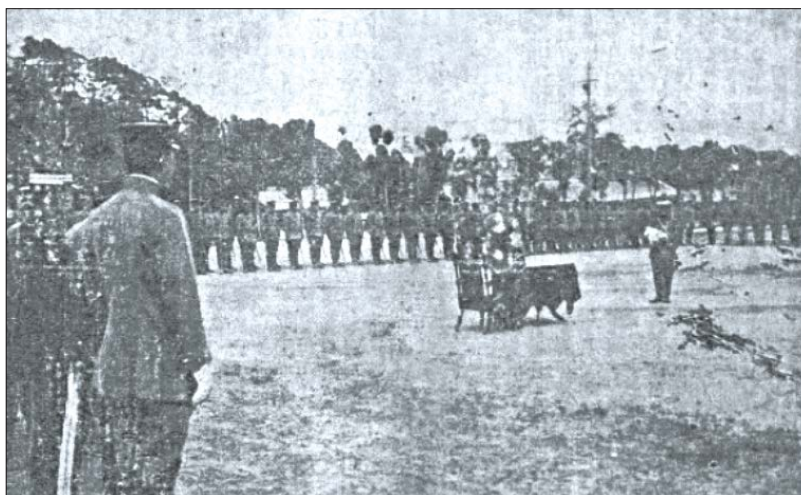


Figure 2. Akashi Motojirō, Commander of the Japanese Military Police in Korea, Attending the Graduation Ceremony of the Military Police Assistants (*Maeil Sinbo*, June 1, 1913, 1)

poses. He further encouraged recruiting “civilian gunners,” including disbanded Korean soldiers, to curb the combat capacity of the righteous army and to divide the Koreans for the benefit of the imperial ruler.¹⁶ This proposal of Akashi was fundamentally identical to the native military units proposed in his Taiwan report.¹⁷

However, Akashi thought that the ratio of Korean assistants versus Japanese military policemen should be two to one while the ratio of native soldier to Japanese soldiers one to one in Taiwan. Akashi seemed to assume that Koreans could be controlled with a smaller number of Japanese.

¹⁶ Akashi cited to then Resident-General of Korea, Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文), the following three advantages of installing the Korean military police assistant system and succeeded in obtaining his approval: ① It can expand the capacity of the military police at a low cost; ② The Korean assistants can be utilized as interpreters for the military police; ③ It will absorb some portion of the disbanded Korean troops, thus weakening the righteous army. See *Chōsen Kenpeitai Rekishi*, vol. 1, 227.

¹⁷ For more discussion on the formation of the military police assistant system and its implications, see: Lee Sung-hee, *Kankoku Heigō*, 95-108; Matsuda, *Nihon no Chōsen*, 54-57.

The rationale for this judgment is not clear but Akashi enclosed an article cut from *The Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun*, which claimed, “The Japanese military police are enjoying an unexpectedly good reputation and trust in Korea.”¹⁸ This optimistic perception of the Korean reactions toward Japan and its military police might have been the reason behind his thought regarding the higher native force proportion in Korea.

However, Korean and Japanese bureaucrats in Korean Internal Affairs and the National Police Department went against Akashi’s Korean military police assistant project and instead insisted on hiring them as regular police. Akashi refuted this idea in that “disregarding the ratio between Japanese and Koreans in the military will end up exponentially increasing the potential danger” and that having Korean assistants work under the Japanese military police “will make it easier to watch and supervise” them.¹⁹ As in his plan of hiring Taiwanese soldiers, this refutation shows that Akashi put importance on the ratio of Japanese versus Korean soldiers to watch and control the armed Koreans in the Japanese military.

By this time, Japan had greatly expanded its imperial domain by acquiring Russian sovereignty in South Manchuria and South Sakhalin and seizing Korea as a protectorate after its victory in the Russo-Japanese War. However, the Japanese army was suffering severe financial strain due to its immense wartime expenditures and had to balance the wartime budget for the war with Russia and the military budget for the imperial rule over its expanded territory.

During this critical time after the Russo-Japanese War, Tanaka Giichi (田中義一) took charge of the practical affairs of Japan’s army reform to emerge as the new leader of the Chōushūbatsu (長州閥) in the army. He sent a letter to Terauchi in August 1905, while serving as a staff officer in the Manchuria State, and argued for the withdrawal of troops from Manchuria as soon as the peace treaty with Russia was signed. Then he urged

¹⁸ This is from the same letter, dated May 3, 1908 (*Akashi Shokan* 22), and the news article, entitled “*Nihon kenpei no kōhyō* (日本憲兵の好評),” which means ‘Praises for Japanese military police,’ was dated March 22.

¹⁹ Akashi’s letter to Terauchi, dated May 8, 1908, *Akashi Shokan* 24.

Japan to “take a utilitarian stance and give priority to economic interest” and to protect its rights and interests in Manchuria and Korea by stationing a large force there at Qing’s expense. Regarding the postwar armaments against Russia, he strongly advised Japan to “concentrate on substantiality rather than expansion without any random investment in massive careless expansion.”²⁰ Thus, Tanaka placed importance on economics in the postwar policy of Japanese army armament and the policy on the continent.

While the Ministry of Army and the General Staff were in dispute over the level of the postwar armament, Tanaka wrote “Writings of Random Thoughts” 隨感雜錄 from April to July 1906 and suggested a broad postwar policy. When Terauchi and Yamagata Aritomo (山縣有朋) received the proposal, Yamagata immediately requested Tanaka to compose a national defense policy draft and this draft became the foundation of the imperial defense policy formulated in April 1907.²¹

In his proposal “Writings of Random Thoughts,” Tanaka suggested a few measures to contrive the expenses necessary to maintain and expand the postwar armament. Those measures included downsizing each division headquarters, economizing clothing, reducing the number of officer horses, and ceasing the medal annuity to active officers, as well as “reorganizing the troops stationed in Korea.”

The issue that requires of us the most thorough consideration is whether we need to maintain the current volume of armaments in Manchuria and Korea. . . . The troops stationed in these areas [the south and west of Korea] do not have any strategic value [against Russia] but are solely for the purpose of maintaining the security of Korea. Then the cost of the two deployed divisions almost amounts to that of four homeland divisions, and most of the cost should be covered by the budget of the

²⁰ Terauchi Masatake’s letter to Tanaka Giichi, dated August 29, 1905, “Terauchi Masatake Sekigakari bunsho” [Terauchi Masatake documents] (The Modern Political and Constitutional History Collection of the Japanese National Diet Library), 315-18.

²¹ Kitaoka, *Nippon Rikugun* 9.

Korean government other than that of the Japanese army.²²

What Tanaka argued here is that the duty of the Japanese troops in Korea was essentially to prepare for war with Russia and that maintaining public order within Korea should be the responsibility of its Resident-General or the police. On this premise, he proposed that Japan reorganize the Korea-stationed troops from two divisions to one mixed brigade for “the purpose of military operations” and one weak division of volunteers financed by the Korean government, “special troops for political purposes,” or alternatively to one division should the former suggestion not be feasible.²³ Ultimately, the Japanese army reduced its forces in Korea to one division in February 1907, thereby saving on its military budget and instead building two new divisions.

Furthermore, Tanaka insisted that the Korean government shoulder the entire cost for occupying Japanese forces since they were maintaining order in lieu of the Korean government. He claimed, “The Korean army, which cannot even maintain order and peace in its own territory, should be dissolved and its budget must finance our forces in Korea.” However, he was opposed to employing Koreans for military purposes as the British Empire did with native Indians for the following reasons:

From what I have heard, the Korean government plans to invite a few of our infantry officers as advisors and have them reshape their troops. . . . This kind of palliative measure will be a source of trouble in the future and anyone who knows the unique character of the Koreans, apt

²² Tanaka Giichi, *Writings on Random Thoughts* 「隨感雜錄」 (*Tanaka Giichi Kankei Bunsho* [Tanaka Giichi documents], vol. 7 (The Modern Political and Constitutional History Collection of the Japanese National Diet Library, Original copy in Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives): 210-11. Since this document is very long, I have included the page numbers in the Japanese Parliament Library for convenience. There are many parts that have been modified and written over in this document. This modified version was transcribed by Kurono Taeru in April 1995 and October 1997. “Tanaka Giichi Chusa shuki,” *Suikan zatsu roku*, vols. 1-2 田中義一中佐手記「隨感雜錄」第一・二回, *Kaigunshi kenkyū* vols. 3-4 「海軍史研究」第3・4号.

²³ Tanaka Giichi, *Random Thoughts*, 213.

at sneaky and sly tricks in the least, will not be deluded into adopting the British system of employing native Indian soldiers. We must proceed to disband the Korean army immediately and seize Korea's military sovereignty so as to prevent future trouble and establish the foundation of our reign.²⁴

While Akashi proposed hiring Koreans as assistants to Japanese military police to crack down on Korean resistance fighters, Tanaka opposed the military use of Koreans, claiming it a "delusion" to keep order within the peninsula. Tanaka's opposition was grounded on the following three reasons: (1) his prejudice of "the unique character of the Koreans"; (2) his conviction of disbanding the Korean army to be the groundwork for colonizing Korea in the future; and (3) his consistent emphasis on finances concerning armament and continental expansion after the Russo-Japanese War.

As discussed so far, Akashi proposed using Taiwanese and Koreans for military purposes following the examples of Western empires in order to reduce the cost of maintaining occupying forces and to divide the locals against themselves. Nevertheless, he was also aware of the risk of arming and accepting the colonized locals under the Japanese military. Therefore, according to his reinforcement plan, Japan should keep three mixed brigades, comprised of an equal number of Japanese and Taiwanese soldiers in Taiwan, and increase the presence of military police in Korea at a ratio of two Korean police assistants per one Japanese military policeman. On the other hand, Tanaka, devising military strategies during the Russo-Japanese War and planning armament policies as a crucial figure in the Army Central, did prioritize the economic and military rationality. Thus, he strongly believed that the Japanese troops stationed in Korea, unable to conduct military operations against Russia, needed to be cut and that the Korean troops, incapable of maintaining order within their own country, were simply a source of potential trouble to be stamped out. In addition, he ada-

²⁴ Ibid., 212.

manly rejected the idea of accepting Koreans in the Japanese military due to his prejudice against the Koreans.

The KSJF's Stance on the Military Use of Koreans before and after the March First Movement

In August 1910, Japan finally colonized Korea through an annexation treaty. Colonial Korea was still left with three groups of soldiers and para-soldiers. The first group was 760 of the last members of the Korean Empire's military, who had remained even after the troop disbandment in 1907 for the purpose of guarding palaces or conducting ceremonies for the Korean imperial house, but ultimately the entire organization had been abolished in 1909. Then, they were officially labeled *Joseon gunin* (hereafter, *Joseon soldiers*); some of them assigned to the headquarters of Japan's occupying forces or to the military police and some were absorbed into the Korean infantry or cavalry units. The second group was the cadets trained by Japanese specialists commissioned by the Korean Empire in 1909. After the annexation, 33 of them completed Japanese military academy training in 1914 to 1915 and were appointed second lieutenants in the Japanese army where they were called *Joseonin Janggyo* (hereafter as *Joseon officers*).²⁵ The third group comprised approximately 4,500 military police assistants to the Japanese military police. They were stipulated to be treated similarly to army privates or to corporals and receive uniforms almost identical to those of military police sergeants.

Immediately after the annexation, as pointed out in previous studies, high-ranking Japanese officers stationed in Korea were optimistic—at least outwardly—regarding the process of Korean assimilation into Japan colonial rule and the possibility of enforcing conscription on the colonial Koreans in the future. The rationale behind this optimism was the presence of the *Joseon soldiers* and Korean military police assistants. For instance,

²⁵ For an overall explanation on the *Joseon soldiers* and *Joseon officers*, see Lee Kidong, *Bigeukui Gunindeul*, 19-28.

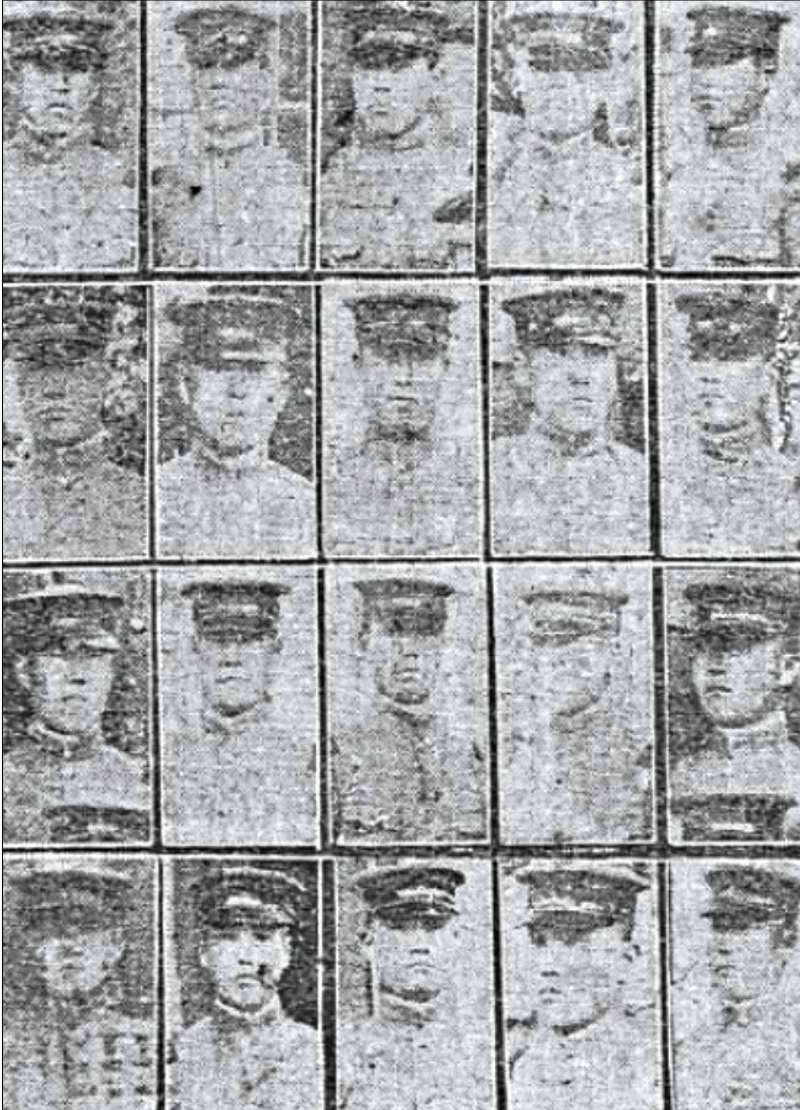


Figure 3. Korean Cadets Graduating from the Japanese Military Academy in the 27th Class after the Annexation (*Maeil Sinbo*, June 19, 1915, 3).

Akashi, military police commander of Korea created the position of military police assistant, expressed his optimism on ‘assimilating’ the Koreans by stating that “Korean military police assistants and police assistants have all progressed so much that they now appear hardly distinguishable from Japanese military police or regular police at first glance. Furthermore, their mindset has become similar to that of the Japanese.”²⁶ Tachibana Koichirō (立花小一郎), chief of the Japanese occupation forces in Korea, also voiced his optimism to cite the example of Korean laborers during the Qing-Japan War: “The Koreans are by no means unsuitable for soldiers. Indeed, they must be cultivated and prepared to be loyal and honorable Japanese soldiers in the future.”²⁷ Iguchi Shōgo (井口省吾), commander of the *Joseon-Juchagun* or Japanese occupation forces in Korea, was yet another example of these optimists. He said, “[Korean soldiers] show excellent performance and are not dangerous at all, as some would think. They are very obedient and rigorously follow the military rules. Koreans are highly promising as soldiers. They will excel particularly in the transportation corps.”²⁸

In particular, Iguchi inspected the Korean infantry several times while serving in Korea as commander of the occupation force from January 1915 to August 1916 and professed his satisfaction with the outcome. In April 1915, for example, he reported his assessment of the Korean infantry as “being remarkably good” after inspecting it for the first time.²⁹ In February 1916, he inspected the infantry again with an attendant from Japan and praised the Korean soldiers for “answering his attendant’s questions clearly and fluently enough to surprise all.”³⁰

²⁶ “Chōsen hito dokaron to meishi” [The Assimilation Policy and Prominent Korean Figures], *Chōsen* 45 (November 1911): 3.

²⁷ Tachibana Koichirō, “Gunjijo yori mitaru Chōsen minzoku” [The Korean People Seen from the Military], *Chōsen oyobi Manshū* [Korea and Manchuria] 75 (October 1913): 14.

²⁸ Kyokuhōsei 旭邦生, 「井口軍司令官を訪ふ」, *Chōsen oyobi Manshū* [Korea and Manchuria] 94 (May 1915): 9.

²⁹ Iguchi Shōgo Nikki Kankōkai, ed., *Iguchi Shōgo Nikki* [Iguchi Shōgo Diary], vol. 4 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2018): 301 (entry dated April 9, 1915).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 402 (February 13, 1916).

Through his experience with Korean soldiers, Iguchi saw great potential for using Koreans for military purposes and sought to implement this view. After returning to Japan as Deputy Director for Military Affairs, he made the following suggestions in October 1916 to Hasegawa Yoshimichi (長谷川好道), the new Governor-General of Korea:

1. Have grace to provide official posts for Korean officers
2. Move forward quickly with the pension law for Korean officers
3. Allow Koreans to apply to be cadets
4. Conscript Koreans to serve mandatorily as transport privates for a short period of time—this will bring no harm but gains only.³¹

The “Korean officers” in Iguchi’s suggestions as above refer not to the *Joseon officers*, graduated from the Japanese military academy, but to the remaining officers of the Korean Empire. Iguchi asked that their status be improved by providing them government posts and pensions. In addition, he advised having the Japanese military academy open to Koreans as in no. 3 and hiring Koreans as transport privates under the supervision of Japanese transport soldiers similarly to the Korean assistants of the Japanese military police as in no. 4. It is noteworthy that he suggested a short-term mandatory service but not a volunteer recruitment of Koreans here. He was likely trying to lay the groundwork for a full-fledged conscription for the future by successively producing Korean officers and imposing a short-term mandatory service on Koreans.

The strongest advocate for the military use of Koreans was Utsunomiya Tarō. He was a senior member of the Uehara faction (上原派)³² and was appointed Commander of the KSJF in July 1918. Being conscious of

³¹ Ibid., 475 (October 26, 1916).

³² The Uehara faction led by Uehara Yūsaku (上原勇作) from Satsuma was a minor group centered in the General Staff Office in the Japanese army at that time. Its main objectives were (1) breaking down the dominance of the Chōshū Clique; (2) strengthening the General Staff Office; and (3) promoting an aggressive continental policy. For further discussions, see Kitaoka, *Nippon Rikugun*, 74-77.

‘racial competition’ with western nations since the Qing-Japan War, he promoted the federation or the coalition of Japan, Qing, and Korea to ‘save’ Asian peoples.³³ Utsunomiya had been acquainted with numerous Koreans including graduates of the Japanese military academy and political exiles.³⁴ In addition, he had extensive knowledge of colonial India and Egypt thanks to his working experience in London as an officer attaché.³⁵

When arriving in Korea as the new commander in August 1918, Utsunomiya was greeted by the *Joseon soldiers* to whom he was close.³⁶ Having grasped the conditions of *Joseon soldiers* in their country and their usefulness, he managed to obtain overall approval on the military use of Koreans through meetings with Tanaka Giichi, the Minister of the Army of the Hara Takashi (原敬) Cabinet on his trip to Tokyo in November.³⁷ Accordingly, he sent a letter to Tanaka in January 1919 and recommended the following implementations:

1. Form border guard units comprised of Koreans.
(Allow application, long-term service, wife accompaniment, retirement grant, and pension.)
2. Form a Korean royal guard unit.
3. Hire *Joseon officers* as military aides-de-camp to the imperial family or in the Imperial House.
4. Hire *Joseon officers* as aides-de-camp or in our military headquarters. Consider raising their wages.
5. Provide the remaining Imperial Korean soldiers with official posts.³⁸

To compare Utsunomiya’s proposal with Iguchi’s, first, it can be noted that

³³ Miyamoto, “Utsunomiya Tarō to Chōsen shihai,” 158-63.

³⁴ Ibid., 166-67.

³⁵ Kira and Miyamoto, 「解題 大正時代中期の宇都宮太郎: 第四師団長・朝鮮軍司令官・軍事参議官時代」, 13.

³⁶ *Utsunomiya Diary*, vol. 3: 134 (August 10, 1918).

³⁷ Ibid., 185 (December 13, 1918).

³⁸ Ibid., 198-99 (January 6, 1919).

Utsunomiya also recognized the necessity of improving the treatment of the *Joseon soldiers* by providing incentives such as official posts or conferment of decorations. Second, Utsunomiya pursued a more aggressive use of the existing *Joseon officers*. Third, he suggested employing Koreans in actual military functions such as border guards, not just assistants to transport soldiers as suggested by Iguchi. In particular, hiring Koreans as royal guards or aides-de-camp to the imperial family was a very bold idea in that it meant allowing Koreans to enter Japan's Imperial House, the heart of the empire's governing body. On the other hand, different from Iguchi, Utsunomiya did not consider any long-term plan for successively producing Korean officers or imposing conscription on Koreans.

Two months after his proposal had been submitted, however, the March First Movement broke out. Utsunomiya reinforced six more infantry battalions and 300 more infantry military policemen from Japan and ordered a complete clampdown on the uprising, resulting in a great number of casualties, as happened in the Jeamri massacre. Ironically, though, the March First Movement inspired him to assert even more intensely the necessity of military use of Koreans as a means to expediate the 'assimilation' and to reinforce the KSJF for this goal.

On May 14 1919, Tanaka telegraphed Utsunomiya to request "unreserved opinions" regarding "the reform of the governing policies of Korea and administrative system of the Government-General, and other necessary institutional reforms."³⁹ Three days later he submitted "Chōsen jikyoku kanmi (朝鮮時局管見) [View on the current situation of Korea]," which he claimed to be solely from his "personal opinions without consulting anyone including the chief of staff." In the report, Utsunomiya ruled out the independence or the autonomy of Korea but specified the ultimate goal in Korea to be its total 'assimilation' to Japan, which would include the enforcement of the Japanese constitutions in Korea.

To this end he proposed a number of measures such as the lowest level of local self-government, transfer of central power to local governments,

³⁹ Ibid., 253 (May 14, 1919).

replacement of military police with regular police, and inducement of Japanese immigration, as well as the following suggestions regarding military use of Koreans:

7. Install some Koreans (volunteers only for the time being) in at least 5 divisions of the Japanese troops . . . It may be inevitable in the long-range future to gradually enforce the conscription draft of Koreans (on a limited scale at the beginning, of course) once the Japanese constitution is fully implemented in Korea. To prepare this future, I recommend showing Koreans the hope that they can serve in our military if they want and especially organizing a few small military units comprised of Korean volunteers for a while (not immediately though) in order to allocate current and future commissioned Korean officers.⁴⁰

Here, Utsunomiya demanded increasing the number of occupying troops from the current two divisions to six or even ten divisions in colonial Korea. He argued that five divisions would not be an excessive number to station in Korea in order to secure control of Korea amid the turbulence of the March First Movement and to “counterbalance the Korean troops that must be installed in the future.” He also claimed that all empires were making use of natives for military purposes and that no empire would succeed without being able to do so. Finally, he stressed the importance of forming Korean troops, comprised of volunteers, to prepare for future conscription draft, show Koreans that Japan would not consider them to be dangerous or alien to the empire, and create positions for future Korean officers.

As a rationale for stationing 5 divisions of Japanese troops in Korea, Utsunomiya argued for the need to “counterbalance” Korean troops, which indicates that he also took the ratio of Japanese versus Koreans within the

⁴⁰ Utsunomiya Tarō, “Chōsen jikyoku kanmi” [View on the Current Situation of Korea (pictures)] (May seventeenth, 1919), *Saitō Makoto Bunsho* [Saitō Makoto Documents], Document no. 104-3 (The Modern Political and Constitutional History Collection of the Japanese National Diet Library).

military into consideration. Nevertheless, his estimation was considerably different from the ratios that Akashi had proposed for the Japanese vs. Taiwanese soldiers and Japanese military police vs. their Korean assistants.

With five divisions of Japanese troops stationed in Korea, it should be ensured that Korean troops not exceed five mixed brigades (given the size of the Korean population, around this number of troops will have to be drafted in Korea once the imperial constitution takes full effect here.) or smaller than that (in the far future, though). In other words, the ratio of two Japanese soldiers to one Korean soldier seems adequate, which is the inverse ratio of British to native soldiers in India.⁴¹

In the report to Tanaka, Utsunomiya advised the Japanese military to station at least double the number of Japanese soldiers as that of Korean soldiers by limiting the number of Korean troops to five mixed brigades for the equal number of Japanese army divisions in Korea. This proposition contrasted with the ratio of British versus Indian soldiers, set as one to two, and Akashi's suggestion of a one-to-one ratio between Japanese and Taiwanese soldiers. Utsunomiya rationalized his ratio by explaining that India was a multiethnic and multicultural nation with no powerful neighbor, thereby presenting thoroughly different conditions from Korea. However, the overpowering proportion of Japanese soldiers in his proposal unveils the dent that the March First Movement had made to his confidence in the Japanese rule of Korea and the assimilation of the Koreans to Japan.

This proposal by Utsunomiya was actually reflected in the official report of the KSJF. In July 1919, the General Staff of the KSJF submitted a written opinion entitled "The Causes of the Upheaval, Challenges in Governing Korea, and Armament" to the Ministry of the Japanese Army. This report, read by the minister of the Japanese Army, contained a creation of four independent guard units (a total of 12 infantry battalions—that is, a size of one division) in Korea only to guard the borders and maintain order,

⁴¹ Utsunomiya Tarō, "Chōsen jikyoku kanmi."

in addition to two existing divisions, and incorporate Korean troops into those guard units.

2. It is required to incorporate Korean troops into the independent guard units and have them serve guard duties. We must create Korean military units (for now, just as mercenaries) in order to make Koreans feel the burden of defending and guarding Korean territory and give the *Joseon officers* jobs. Hiring Korean soldiers is also necessary to prepare for the future conscription draft. We recommend having two to three new companies of Korean soldiers in a garrison of guards but gradually increase their number.⁴²

This report has a number of shared points with Utsunomiya's proposal. Both argued for the need of Korean troops in order to have them share military experience with Japanese, provide job opportunities for the *Joseon officers*, and prepare for the future conscription draft. However, an independent guard garrison comprised an average of 3 infantry battalions (12 companies), thus reinforcing 2 to 3 more companies of Korean soldiers in the garrison would render the ratio between Japanese and Korean soldiers to change from 4:1 to 6:1. This indicates that the March First Movement led the Japanese military to ensure an overpowering number of Japanese soldiers to watch and control Korean soldiers while slowly increasing the number of Korean soldiers.

The KSJF took an optimistic view regarding both colonial Koreans' assimilation to Japan and military use of them immediately after the annexation. Therefore, Iguchi and Utsunomiya proposed training more Korean officers, hiring Korean soldiers through volunteer recruitment or a temporary draft, and even deploying Koreans as royal guards or aides-de-camp, thereby opening the Imperial House to colonized subjects. Although aggressively crushing the March First Movement, the KSJF also realized the

⁴² 「騒擾の原因及朝鮮統治上注意すべき件並軍備に就いて」(July 14, 1919, The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, JACAR Ref.C06031106200, Image no. 68-69, 「朝鮮騒擾事件関係書類」大正8年乃至同10年・共7冊其4, vol. 7, Book 4, Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies).

desperate need for the ‘assimilation’ of Koreans, which propelled them to propose Korean military units. This accommodative vision went in concert with a blueprint for a reinforcement of the KSJF and Japan’s complete rule of Korea.

The Japanese Army Central’s View on Military Use of Koreans

In contrast with the KSJF, the Japanese Army Central was skeptical about military use of Koreans from the beginning of the annexation. They had no plan to accept Koreans into the Japanese military academy or to improve the treatment of the *Joseon soldiers*. Neither did they have any intention to create Korean military units nor to increase the presence of Japanese forces in Korea.

From the end of the Meiji era to the Taishō era, stationing two additional divisions in Korea was a political issue. Japan set an armament goal to rearrange 25 army divisions and organize a fleet of 8 battleships and 8 armored cruisers after the Russo-Japanese War. This strengthening of war potential became the source of rivalry among the cabinet, the army, and the navy over the budget and the hegemonic competition between the army and the navy. In particular, the army had been demanding the deployment of two more divisions in Korea in light of the Xinhai Revolution in late 1911, but the request was not accepted. Because of this, the Army Minister Uehara Yūsaku (上原勇作) resigned in the following year, which brought the entire resignation of the Saionji Kinmochi (西園寺公望) cabinet. This incurred public resistance toward the army and the Chōshū Clique and led to the Taishō Political Crisis. Thus, it was not until 1915, after the First World War had broken out, that two more divisions of troops were finally deployed to Korea by the Okuma Shigenobu (大隅重信) cabinet.

In November 1912, just before the bill for a deployment of two more divisions to Korea was ultimately rejected by the cabinet, the Japanese army distributed the document “Reasons for Increasing Two More Divisions (二師團増設理由書)” to all cabinet ministers. What is significant here is that the Japanese army gave prominence to a changing external defense

environment, such as Russia's new Siberian double-track railroad in addition to the new Heilong River line and China's chaotic situation resulting from the Xinhai Revolution, as the main rationale for the need of an additional deployment to Korea. Regarding the situations in Korea proper, they underscored the higher expenses of the current rotational deployment of one division and the logistical infeasibility of dispatching the troops stationed throughout the peninsula to keep order at the initial stage of war with Russia. The plan to accept Korean soldiers in the Japanese military was not included among the reasons.⁴³ This indicates that deploying two additional divisions in Korea was based solely on a strategic consideration against Russia on the part of the Japanese Army Central, not on a policy matter of governing Korea.

Turning to the matter of producing Korean officers successively, a young Korean man was found to apply to one of Japan's provincial military preparatory schools in December 1915. Notified by the Keijo Municipal Government (京城府) [i.e., present-day Seoul] of this news, the KSJF asked the Ministry of Army about how to handle this matter and received the following answer:

(We won't be receiving any Koreans as cadets for the time being. Should there be an applicant, please reject his application without offending him.) Based on this policy, no Korean or Taiwanese has been so far accepted to our military academy and the Inspectorate General of Military Training shares our opinion. (The natives currently in our military or academies are special cases and cannot be generally applied.)⁴⁴

⁴³ 「二師團増設理由書」(November 23, 1912), The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, JACAR Ref.C14061034400, 「二個師團増設理由書 同所要額調」Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies). This document has been printed by the Bureau of Military Affairs in the Ministry of Army. For reference, the letter that Army Minister Uehara Yusaku sent to Prime Minister Saionji Kinmochi around the same time and the memoir by Tanaka Giichi, in which the background of Uehara's sole resignation was explained, provide similar rationales (Takakura, ed., *Tanaka Giichi Denkijō*, 490-93; 506-17).

⁴⁴ 「朝鮮人の幼年學校生徒志願に關する件」(The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, JACAR Ref.C02030726800, Image no. 2, 「大日記甲輯」Taisho fourth year, Class 1 & 2, Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies).

The Ministry of Army affirmed that there had been no precedence of accepting Koreans or Taiwanese as cadets and that it had no plan of doing so for some time. They drew the line at the Korean second lieutenants, commissioned and assigned already at military units, and the *Joseon officers*, attending Japanese military academies, as exceptions that had been negotiated through a ‘special discussion’ in the process of the annexation of Korea. As above seen, the Japanese Ministry of Army had no intention to produce Korean officers successively by educating Koreans in their military academies. Nevertheless, they were requested to reject the application “without offending him” and encrypted the parenthesized messages in the above quote, which means that they attempted to avoid provoking the sensitivity of the Koreans.

The Army Central had the same approach to the *Joseon soldiers*. As was discussed in Section 3, Iguchi and Utsunomiya, who were the commanders of the KSJF, appealed to the Minister of Army to provide the *Joseon soldiers* with official posts, decorations, and pensions for the betterment of their conditions. In November 1915, the Japanese Government-General of Korea submitted to the Ministry of Army a legislative bill to enact a pension program for the *Joseon soldiers* and military police assistants.⁴⁵ But the Army Ministry reduced it to an imperial edict for the provision of simpler aid for bereaved families for the following reasons:

The *Joseon soldiers* are a relic of a transitional period and their existence has not been acknowledged as an essential body for the defense of the empire. . . . Moreover, since the *Joseon soldiers* will gradually diminish along with the *Joseon officers* whose number is declining by years, it is not deemed necessary to secure their future specifically as legal rights. A substantial aid program, supporting their future livelihood

⁴⁵ 「朝鮮軍人憲兵補助員の恩給法制定に関する件」(The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, JACAR Ref.C02030884000, Image no. 28-40, 「大日記甲輯」Taisho eighth year, Class 3, Japan’s National Institute for Defense Studies). Those who argued for adopting a pension system for the *Joseon Soldiers* were Terauchi Masatake, Governor-General of Korea, and Akashi Motojiro, former Commander of the Japanese military police in Korea (Image no. 26-27).

and hence preventing their desertion, is deemed sufficient for the convenience of governance.⁴⁶

As a matter of fact, the *Joseon soldiers* were meant to be a device to stage Japan's annexation of Korea as a merger of 'equal' partners and Japan's respectful treatment of the Korean imperial house and had been retained on the pretext of guarding palaces and performing Korea's imperial ceremonies. The Ministry of Army regarded them as a 'relic of a transitional period,' saw no military value in them, and had no plan to supplement new officers. Accordingly, the aid program for the *Joseon soldiers* was not a long-term support program to facilitate the maintenance of their abilities by providing them with a livelihood even after their retirement but merely a conciliatory measure to more easily control Korea by preventing their defections.

As explained in Section 3, just before the March First Movement Utusnomiya consulted with Army Minister Tanaka about military use of Koreans and obtained an overall approval. Even after the breakout of the movement, he continued to advocate for forming Korean military units in his report of "Chōsen jikyoku kanmi (朝鮮時局管見) [View on the current situation of Korea]," written at the request of Tanaka. Later on, they continued to cooperate on current issues surrounding the *Joseon soldiers* and *officers* in addition to the March First Movement.

First, they abolished discrimination against the *Joseon soldiers* in terms of official posts, rewards, promotions, wages, and pensions. Moreover, they accepted the *Joseon officers* as Japanese army officers in the Japanese military. Some *Joseon officers*, affected by the March First Movement, left the Japanese army and joined the independence movement.⁴⁷ Thus, Japan brought back *Joseon officers* in Japan to Korea and utilized them for the governance policy of Korea and promoted them as a symbol of 'equal' treatment and 'assimilation' of Koreans. Finally, the Mil-

⁴⁶ 「朝鮮軍人憲兵補助員の恩給法制定に關する件」(Image no. 20). The imperial edict was enacted in July 1918 to provide aid for the *Joseon soldiers* and their bereaved families.

⁴⁷ Lee Kidong, *Bigeukui Gunindeul*, 28-31.

itary Police Assistant System was reformed as Auxiliary Military Police under the order of the Ministry of Army and officially became part of the Japanese army with legitimate promotion and pension programs.

Despite all these concerted efforts, they did not always agree on the reinforcement of the KSJF for this assimilative project. Utsunomiya met Tanaka on his trip to Tokyo in September 1919 and, with the same rationales in “Chōsen jikyoku kanmi [View on the current situation of Korea], appealed to him for sufficient armaments in Korea and asked for more troops from Japan if installing Korean military units was not feasible.⁴⁸ Assuming that he had gained approval from Tanaka, he persuaded new Governor-General Saitō Makoto (齋藤實) to submit a bill of claim to Prime Minister Hara Takashi, requesting the reinforcement of the armaments in Korea by “either raising substantial troops in Korea or, if that is not feasible, deploying some more homeland divisions to Korea.”⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Hara received an unenthusiastic response from Tanaka, which was “[T]he substantiality of the current divisions in Korea has already been calculated and reflected in the 1920 budget, so I think it is enough as it is now,”⁵⁰ and delivered this message to Saitō.⁵¹ In fact, the 1920 army budget ultimately counted only the cost of maintaining the existing number of troops in Korea by including only the plan of advancing the completion date of stationing two more divisions by one year and having some deployed troops join the KSJF in order to clamp down on the March First Movement.⁵² Utsunomiya continued insisting on five divisions to station in Korea⁵³ but it was ultimately not accepted.

⁴⁸ *Utsunomiya Diary*, vol. 3: 305 (September 15, 1919). Utsunomiya also visited Prime Minister Hara Takashi and made the same request. (Hara Keiichirō, ed., *Hara Takashi Diary*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Fukumura Shuppan, 1965): 145 (September 17, 1919).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 336, 340-41 (November 26 and December 4-5, 1919).

⁵⁰ Hara Keiichiro, ed., *Hara Takashi Diary*, vol. 5, 187 (December 9, 1919).

⁵¹ Hara Takashi's letter to Saito Makoto, dated December 21, 1919 (*Saito Makoto Bunsho*, Document no.1265-2).

⁵² Rikugunshō, ed., *Ji Meiji 37th year Taishō 15 nen Rikugeunshō enkakushi furoku* 『自明治三十七年至大正十五年 陸軍省沿革史 附録』 (Tokyo: Gannando Shoten, 1968), 365-67.

⁵³ According to his diary (*Utsunomiya Dairy*, vol. 3: 381), Utsunomiya invited all the division

As mentioned above, Utsunomiya took a successive production of future Korean officers for a *fait accompli* and underlined the creation of Korean military units in order to provide employment for those Korean officers. In fact, he seemed to have requested the Army Central to open Japanese military academies to Koreans. However, in May 1920, after he met Vice-Minister of Army Yamanashi Hanzō (山梨半造), he wrote in his diary, “[T]he matter of Korean officer cadets has not been solved.”⁵⁴ This contrasted with the Japanese Navy, which decided to accept Koreans as navy cadets to its navy academy in January 1921, referring to the drastically changing “situations in Korea” and “surrounding state of affairs” since the March First Movement.⁵⁵

Furthermore, since the March First Movement Japan formed a view of the Koreans as being dangerous and exhibited hesitation in using them for military purposes. In April 1921, when the Japanese government legislated the extended military pay act for Japanese soldiers to include Korean military police assistants, the Imperial House of Representatives Committee asked the following questions to Yamanashi while evaluating the draft:

Kimura Gon’emon (木村権右衛門) (Member of the House of Representatives, Independent): “I would like to ask a question. Does the Auxiliary Military Police hire Japanese?”

Yamanashi Hanzō (Government Official): “It hires Koreans. It is extremely difficult to guard the borders without knowing the Korean language.”

Kimura Gon’emon: “Do they receive any military training?”

commanders of the occupation forces in Korea as well as the chief of staff of the KSJF to a dinner party on March 21, 1920 and persuaded them to support him “in regard to the reinforcement of troops in Korea (a proposal of 60 battalions submitted to the Army Minister in May last year).” One division consisted of 12 infantry battalions, thus “60 battalions” amounted to 5 divisions.

⁵⁴ *Utsunomiya Diary*, vol. 3: 400 (May 17, 1920).

⁵⁵ However, it seems that no Korean navy cadet was commissioned after all. For more details, see “Chōsenjin o seitonisaiyō no ken” 「朝鮮人ヲ生徒ニ採用ノ件」, in *Kaigun seido enkaku 12* 『海軍制度沿革 12』, vol. 12, Kaigun daijin Kanbo, ed. [Minister of the Navy] (Tokyo: Kaigun Daijin Kanbo, 1940), 476.

Yamanashi: “We are providing them with three-month special training.”

Kimura Gon’emon: “Are we training Koreans?”

Yamanashi: “We hire Koreans and then train them for their duties as military police.”⁵⁶

The House of Lords Committee asked similar questions such as whether military police assistants were Japanese or Koreans, whether Koreans would be hired as military police assistants, and whether Korean assistants would be given military training.⁵⁷ While the memory of the March First Movement was still vivid, the news of Koreans trained in Imperial Japan must have disconcerted the parliamentary members. Combined with this negative view of Koreans, their pre-existing economic and military objectives seem to have made the Army Central more hesitant in regard to military use of Koreans.

As discussed so far, the Army Central did not argue for stationing two divisions in Korea as part of the policy of governing Korea immediately after the annexation. Also, it did not see the need to open its military academies to Koreans or improve the conditions of the *Joseon soldiers* despite ongoing requests from the KSJF. Although Tanaka was generally cooperative with Utsunomiya on measures dealing with the March First Movement, he was not enthusiastic about the latter’s proposals, such as training more Korean officers, creating Korean military units or reinforcing the KSJF to counter-balance Korean soldiers. The reasons behind his reluctance can be summarized as follows: (1) economic and military preparations for a potential war after the Russo-Japanese War, (2) the political burden of increasing armaments amid the global atmosphere of disarmament after World War I, and (3) anxiety of having Koreans in the Japanese mili-

⁵⁶ 「第四回帝國議會衆議院委員會議錄 大正九年法律第十號中改正法律案外一件」(First meeting, March 9, 1921, 1, The Japanese National Diet Library Digital Collection of Imperial Japan’s minutes).

⁵⁷ 「第四回帝國議會貴族院委員會議事速記錄 大正九年法律第十號中改正法律案外一件」(First meeting, March 15, 1921, 2, The Japanese National Diet Library Digital Collection of Imperial Japan’s minutes).

tary amid the shock of the March First Movement. After the March First Movement, the *Joseon soldiers*, *Joseon officers*, and Korean military police assistants were eventually all incorporated into the Japanese army. But their numbers remained fairly fixed.

Conclusion

So far we have explored the discussions on military use of Koreans within the Japanese army with a focus on the conflicting stances of the KSJF and the Army Central from the time of the annexation to the post-March First Movement. The KSJF was eager to utilize Koreans for military purposes; in fact, Utsunomiya argued in favor of hiring Koreans in the Japanese military as a means to accelerate the Koreans' assimilation to Japan two months after the March First Movement took place. However, the Japanese Army Central did not accept his proposals of forming military units comprised of Korean volunteers, increasing the number of Japanese troops in Korea, and producing Korean officers successively. Furthermore, since the negative perception of the Koreans emerged in Japan due to the March First Movement, using Koreans in military roles did not proceed for awhile.

Here, I would like to summarize how the two parties came to form different positions on this matter and how the matter unfolded subsequently. First, Akashi, Iguchi, and Utsunomiya, all of whom commanded military police or armies stationed in Korea, did not hesitate to adopt the western empires' examples of employing native troops. While working in Korea and having contact with the locals, they probably had seen the potential value of Koreans as human resources. They took the lead in advocating for military use of Koreans, demanding the reinforcement of Japanese troops in Korea, and supporting the enforcement of conscription upon the Koreans. Even though the ratio of soldiers was rearranged to ensure the definite superiority of Japanese soldiers to Korean ones in number after the March First Movement, they believed that the need for Korean troop units and additional Japanese forces in Korea was more legitimate due to the Movement.

On the other hand, Tanaka from the Army Central had a different

stance from the three people above. The immediate objective of the Japanese military at that time was preparing strategies and armaments for the possible revenge of Russia following the Russo-Japanese War. To accomplish this objective, Tanaka focused on the political, economic, and military needs of the homeland, taking the national budget and the domestic political environment into consideration. Therefore, according to Tanaka, military use of Koreans was not a means to advance their assimilation to Japan but a final-stage objective after the assimilation was accomplished sufficiently to implement conscription in Korea. Moreover, he was more concerned with the cost of stationing several divisions in Korea and the logistical disadvantages of mobilizing them in case of war. He also paid great attention to the rising public opinion concerning disarmament in Japan after World War I.

These two opposing stances regarding the military use of Koreans continued. First, Governor-General of Korea Saitō Makoto requested Prime Minister Yamamoto Gonbe (山本権兵衛) to send an additional division to Korea.⁵⁸ The Institution Investigation Committee, newly installed to reform the Japanese army, advised the transfer of a division from Japan to Korea. Army Minister Ugaki Kazushige (宇垣一成) of the Katō Takaaki (加藤高明) cabinet denied it due to the lack of sufficient budget.⁵⁹ Saitō again requested the additional deployment of an infantry division or a cavalry brigade to Ugaki in July 1925 but it was rejected again.⁶⁰

Military schools were also not fully open to Koreans. As previously explained, the Japanese navy decided to accept Korean navy cadets in January 1921. However, it was not until December 1924 that the army finally decided to accept the applications of Koreans and Taiwanese. At the same

⁵⁸ *Chōsen ni rikugungeiryoku zōka o yōsuru ken ni fusōri Daijin ni gushin no ken* 「朝鮮に陸軍兵力増加を要する件に付總理大臣に具申の件」 (The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, JACAR Ref.C03022597400, Mitsudai nikki 「密大日記」, Taisho twelfth year, Book 4, Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies).

⁵⁹ Takasugi, *Ugaki Kazushige* 27 and 32.

⁶⁰ 「朝鮮に常設師團増加の意見」 (The Japan Center for Asian Historical Record, JACAR Ref. C03022721700, 「密大日記」, Taisho fourteenth year, Book 4, Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies).

time, it was instructed to “apply a strict screening and limit the number at the discretion of the administration” with regard to colonial applicants. In fact, Korean applicants were not accepted under the name of tough competition.⁶¹ Only the former Korean royalty members and their school peers were accepted to the Japanese military academy and Korean army officers were not produced any longer for the time being.

Finally, we will look into the matter of Korean infantry units. In December 1926, the KSJF appealed to the Ministry of Army to give Korean infantrymen the same level of training as Japanese infantrymen in order to test Koreans’ military capabilities in preparation for conscription or recruitment but its appeal was rejected.⁶² In July 1929, the KSJF was opposed to disbanding the Korean infantry forces on the grounds (1) that they had been retained for the sake of showing respect to the imperial house of Korea, (2) that retired Korean soldiers had been contributing to the harmony of Japanese and Koreans, and (3) that they could be utilized as reserves or interpreters. It also wanted to appoint Korean officers, who graduated from the Japanese military academy, as deputy commanders of the units.⁶³ However, the Korean infantry unit was disbanded in April 1931 to save military expenses after the death of King Sunjong. The dispute between the KSJF and the Army Central over the military use of Koreans was not settled until

⁶¹ 「朝鮮人学生陸軍軍医依託志望の件」(The Japan Center for Asian Historical Record, JACAR Ref. C01003853200, Image no. 6-7, 「密大日記」 Showa fourth year, Book 2, Japan’s National Institute for Defense Studies); 「朝鮮人台湾人を陸軍武官候補者に採用の件」(The Japan Center for Asian Historical Record, JACAR Ref.C02031211800, Image no. 4, *Dainikki koshū* 「大日記甲輯」, Taisho 14th year, Class 2, Japan’s National Institute for Defense Studies).

⁶² *Chōsen ni rikugungeiryoku zōka o yōsuru ken ni fusōri Daijin ni gushin no ken* 「朝鮮歩兵隊訓練向上に関する内議の件」(The Japan Center for Asian Historical Record, JACAR Ref. C01003726500, Image no. 3-7, *Mitudai nikki* 「密大日記」, Showa 2nd year, Book 2, Japan’s National Institute for Defense Studies). Regarding this matter, the Recruiting Division of the Bureau of the Military Affairs in the Ministry of Army attached its opinion to the report that imposing military service on the Koreans was not appropriate when their assimilation to Japan had not been yet accomplished and they were not yet given suffrage and that it was also too early from the military perspective.

⁶³ 「朝鮮歩兵隊存置に関する意見の件」(The Japan Center for Asian Historical Record, JACAR Ref. C01003881700, 「密大日記」, Showa fourth year, Book 4, Japan’s National Institute for Defense Studies).

the mid-1930s. Eventually, Korean graduates from the Japanese military academy were fully accepted from 1937 when the Special Order of Army Volunteers to recruit Korean volunteers was enacted in February 1938. In fact, a new war with a foreign country offered a new motive for military use of Koreans in colonial Korea and beyond.

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