Japan Foundation Grant Proposal

Please summarize your project by, 1) stating research content, its purpose, and significance; 2) describing research methodology and research plan (concrete activities in Japan and the time required); 3) including the goals of the research project, proposed method of dissemination, and the mid to long-term goals in research and career. Project summaries should not exceed 1,000 words. (63 words)

In 1937, a group of over 100 Korean elementary school students went on strike in a primary school in Ch’unch’on, Korea. In occupied Korea, such strikes were not uncommon. However, the age of the students was unusual, in this case the majority were second to fourth graders, and even more striking was the cause of their discontent – the students were protesting the transfer of a beloved Japanese teacher and a principal back to Japan.

This incident raises questions about the role of Japanese teachers in the subjugation of Korean citizens. We usually think of teaching as a selfless profession, where enthusiastic educators devote their energies to sharing knowledge with a young generation of students. Yet in the context of Japanese colonialism, education has left a more contested legacy. E. Patricia Tsurumi’s study on education focuses on institutional aims and official policies, stressing the initial goal of assimilation (dōka) and later drive to create compliant “imperial citizens” (kōminka). In Korean, scholars like Yi Pyōngdam and Pak Chaehong tracked changes in standard issue elementary textbooks like the Book of Moral Instruction, and argue that discourses of “good boys and girls” were used by teachers to bring children in line with imperial ideology, instilling reverence for the emperor. In Japanese, Inaba Tsugio eschewed the contentious debate over educational ideology, asserting instead that teachers’ regional bonds and alma maters formed the basis for cooperation between Japanese teachers in Korea.

However, there is a underlying parochialism in these studies that tends to reify borders and consider history through the lens of Korea or Japan. In contrast, I plan to follow the tracks of Japanese teachers dispatched to Korea, providing an intellectual, social, and cultural history that incorporates both colony and metropole. My approach ties together three interrelated facets of education throughout the colonial period: theories of instruction, pedagogical training in Japan, and the schoolroom experience in Korea from 1910 to 1945. By following the three facets of theory, training, and implementation from Japan to Korea, I make history cross borders, much as these teachers did, presenting a broader and multifaceted vision of a period that still evokes such discord.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

My study tracks the history of education through a combination of official and unofficial documents: the archives of both state and civil society. Relying solely on official documents – such as those from the Government-General of Korea or the Education Affairs Bureau – does not provide a comprehensive picture of Japanese teachers in colonial Korea, as it lacks sufficient
context. Thus my research has three distinct segments. For the first portion, I will visit the National Diet Library, Tokyo University’s archives, and Waseda University’s libraries to collect Japanese language magazines like Education for the Empire, Trends in Education, and Korean Education to investigate the broader context of education.

Much scholarship on education in Korea accentuates the role that imperialist education played in colonial discipline, but such studies would benefit greatly from a grasp of the state of educational science in the Japan. For example, the abundance of books with titles like Educational Establishments and Juvenile Delinquency suggests that the use of education as a tool for moral suasion was not limited to the colonies. In fact, one of the major publishing almanacs of books in Japan, Shuppan nenkan, shows that in 1929, more books in pedagogy were published on disciplinary topics like morality (dōtoku), self-improvement (shūyō), ethical training (shūshin), the Imperial Rescript (Chokugo) and juvenile delinquency (furyō shōnen) than on history, math, and science combined.

The second part of my project shifts attention to teacher education. The National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER) Library has a large collection of pre-1948 textbooks available on microfilm, and other than their prohibitively expensive copying fee ($0.45 per page), seems easily accessible. The teacher’s editions of textbooks like the Book of Moral Instruction are also available at the National Diet Library in Tokyo and should shed light on pedagogy. Furthermore, I plan to explore the archives of teacher training colleges active during the colonial period including: Tokyo Normal School (now University of Tsukuba), Ibaraki University, Utsunomiya University, Gunma University, Saitama University, and Chiba University. By perusing sources like teacher curricula, local school histories (enkaku), school bulletins (gakuji), and diaries, I can capture the voices of Japanese teachers destined for Korea.

Finally, I plan to follow my time in Japan with a trip to capture the experience in Korea. I am seeking supplemental funding for this phase of my research from the Korea Foundation. The National Library of Korea in Seoul holds many of the teaching materials published by the Governor General of Korea. Moreover, the records of high schools active during the colonial period, like Kwangju High School and Kyŏnggi High School, will provide information on the experience of colonial education in Korea.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

My field research in Japan and Korea will form the basis of a doctoral dissertation, which I plan on revising for publication by an academic press for English language audiences. Furthermore, because I speak English, Japanese, and Korean, I will be able to present the results in all three languages. The Society for Japanese-Korean Cultural Exchange (Nikkan bunka kōryū) supports similar research, and regularly holds conferences in Korea and Japan. Additionally, I will be working with Professor Lee Songsi at Waseda University, who also is versed in Korea-Japan dialogue. This will also provide a valuable arena for learning the nuances of academic presentations, as I am pursuing a lifetime career as a history professor, remaining involved in issues surrounding Korea and Japan.
Andre Schmid has challenged Japanese historians to consider the impact of Korea on Japan’s greater history. Yet because of language difficulties and the sensitivity of the issue, this call has gone largely unheeded. However, by focusing on the experience of border crossing teachers, this research considers the fate of Korea and Japan together. Looking at teaching, a profession dedicated to the betterment of a younger generation, will highlight both colonialism’s greatest aspirations and deepest contradictions. Moreover, these teachers’ experiences will illustrate how both colony and the capital shaped a period so crucial to both nations.

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