

JAPANESE ASSIMILATION POLICIES IN KOREA

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BACKGROUND

- With the signing of the annexation treaty, Korea was annexed to Japan in 1910.
- Japan was determined to incorporate Korea into its own empire.
- Thus, a period of assimilation of the Korean population began.

WHAT IS ASSIMILATION?

- When a local culture is absorbed into a larger, more dominant culture.
- Many imperial powers tried to encourage what they believed were “lesser” cultures to adapt the culture of the imperial power.
- Examples: Native Americans in the U.S., Great Britain in India

KOREAN LANGUAGE

- The Korean language was banned from being taught or spoken. Korean schools were required to teach Japanese.
- Many newspapers (especially Korean Language ones) were shut down. This restriction was later relaxed during the twenties, then enforced again during the late 30's.
- Despite the ban, many Koreans resisted by having the language taught at home.
- However, even this carried a risk of discovery by the secret police.

RELIGION

- In addition to the native Confucianism and Buddhism, a decent number of Koreans were Christian.
- However, colonial authorities would later require Koreans to worship at Shinto Shrines.
- They were also required to take an oath to the Emperor of Japan, promising to be good, loyal subjects.

NAME CHANGE

- Later in the colonial period, Japanese authorities encouraged Koreans to change their names to Japanese sounding ones.
- Though not outright required, those who refused to change suffered discrimination.
- Thus, many encouraged their children to change their names.
- However, Koreans found clever ways to keep their names while appearing to change them.

RESISTANCE

- The death of the former emperor of Korea (Emperor Gojong) gave rise to the March 1st movement.
- Demonstrations were held all over Korea, demanding independence.
- Japanese responded by calling in the military, which proceeded to fire upon the demonstrators.
- Many activists were arrested and thrown into prisons such as Seodaemun.
- Others joined guerilla movements to attack Japanese possessions in Korea.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- What would you do if these policies were forced upon you? Would you resist? Or would you give in?



SEODAEMUN PRISON

WHERE MANY INDEPENDENCE ACTIVISTS, POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND OTHER "UNDESIRABLES" WERE IMPRISONED.

WHAT DID THOSE WHO WERE ARRESTED HAVE TO DEAL WITH?

- Prisons such as Seodaemun were designed to inspire fear into the inmates to coerce a confession, whether genuine or not.
- Many were shot, tortured, and starved.
- Methods of torture were inhumane.



WATER TORTURE

PRISONER'S HEAD IS FORCED INTO WATER TO MAKE THEM BELIEVE THEY ARE BEING DROWNED.



FINGERNAIL TORTURE

SHARP SKEWER IS PLACED BETWEEN A PRISONER'S FINGERNAIL



BOX TORTURE

PRISONER IS PLACED INSIDE A BOX WITH SHARP NAILS. BOX IS THEN KICKED AND THROWN AROUND BY THE GUARDS.

SECRET POLICE

- Policemen and informers were used to find people that were breaking any laws/encouraging resistance to Japanese rule.
- Even if one was released from jail, they would often be visited by the secret police.
- There were chances of being re-arrested on trumped up causes.

CONCLUSION

- Throughout the colonial period, Japan tried (unsuccessfully) to fully assimilate Koreans into the Japanese culture and way of life.
- Many of the methods involved the use of terror and discrimination.
- All cultural policies were removed upon Korean independence in 1945.

REFERENCE

- Kang, H. (2001). *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices from Colonial Korea*. London: Cornell University