

Aiming for the Asia of Tomorrow:  
The Japanese Invasion of Korea — What We Should Do Now  
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Good evening, everybody. I belong to the Board of the SAITAMA YMCA, and am responsible for the International Service Committee.

You are all here at Work-Camp together, although you are all of different nationalities, races and cultures. As a result, you have many difficulties because of the language barrier. In spite of these difficulties, however, I believe that you learn many lessons through this Tala and Marashiqui Work Camp. Working together toward the same purpose is the best opportunity to become true friends.

My own college days took place during the 1960's — a time before many of you were even born. During college life, I went to work camp more than ten times, to help in places devastated by typhoons or earthquakes. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend overseas work camp, because at the time, ordinary Japanese were not yet allowed to go to foreign countries. Going abroad was merely a dream in those days. Furthermore, had I come to the Philippines at that time, I would have been sure to have met fierce anti-Japanese sentiments, and as a young man, I was at a loss as to how to respond to such sorrow and anger.

My first visit to a foreign country took place during the spring of 1969. I applied for a youth fellowship sponsored by Omori Minoru, a journalist critical of the American involvement in the Vietnam War. In the middle of the Vietnam War, and in the midst of the Cold War between the United

States of America and the Soviet Union, three hundred and fifty of us young men boarded a charter ship which belonged to the Soviet Union, and left Kobe Harbor. After three days, we were near Okinawa, but we could not pull into port.

Had we gone near Hanoi Harbor, in North Vietnam, we risked being attacked by the American Air Force. We could not help but come near Mui Bai Bung, the southern tip of Vietnam. Suddenly we saw a small black dot, which was American air reconnaissance appearing on the horizon. In no time, and at a low altitude, the plane circled us, and disappeared again on the horizon. I also absorbed the feelings of war in Vietnam when we saw the jungles along the seacoast of Vietnam.

After seven days, we finally arrived at Kampot Harbor, in Cambodia, which was a center of anti-American and pro-Soviet sentiments. My first experience in a foreign country, then, took place in a real battleground.

I am sorry that this introduction is so long, but I wanted to point out how different the situation was then, from the way it is today. Your generation should go forward with the cause of personal international relations, as exemplified in the work of the YMCA, the biggest non-governmental organization (NGO) in the world.

My topic today is the Japanese invasion of Korea. Since the last part of the nineteenth century, Japan was a nation embarked on a plan of militaristic invasion. We dispatched troops to Siberia, Nomun-Khan in Mongolia, China and Korea. As we look back on this story of our Asian invasions, I cannot help wondering about the causes of the war, and why we could not stop the wars. As you know, Japan was the only Asian country which colonized other Asian countries, such as Formosa and Korea. Japan ruled Formosa as a colony for fifty years, and Korea for thirty-six years. In doing so, Japan undertook the same role of imperialism that was taken by the European and American imperialists.

We Japanese have to admit this historical fact. Frankly speaking,

Japanese modernization occurred in order to facilitate this military imperialism. I feel sorry that Japan's improvements came about because of the great sacrifice of many other Asian countries.

For more than one thousand years, Japan was the recipient of so much of Korean culture: engineering, architecture, Buddhism, Chinese characters, sericulture, and even political philosophy. The two countries were the best of friends until the sixteenth century. But from the time of Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea, the Japanese gradually developed a feeling of disdain for Koreans. Finally, in 1910, we annexed Korea, and colonized the country for the next thirty-six years, until 1945. Korea, a peninsular country, suffered the same fate as other peninsular countries, serving as a cultural crossroads, but also as a through-way for countries on their way to other countries. Korea was attacked or invaded more than two hundred and twenty times, although Korea never once invaded any other country.

The Japanese invasion of Korea was much more cruel than the European invasions of other countries. Japan did not want to lose control of Korea because it served as a logistical base for operations both in Russia and China. Therefore, Japan tried to keep Korea under absolute and complete control. Let us analyze the three phases of Japanese control in Korea. The first period was one of military government. The second period was one of conciliatory measures. The third period had the goal of the absolute obliteration of Korean culture (under the guise of assimilation), and included the fifteen year war between China and Japan from 1931 until 1945. This period also saw the Japanese invasion of the Philippines.

What exactly did Japan do during this third phase in Korea? First, Japan prohibited the use of the Korean language. It demanded the constant use by Koreans of the Japanese language, even to the adoption of Japanese names. Further, compulsory labor was used to construct railroads, bridges, and to work the coal mines. Korean men were forced into the Japanese army, and Korean women were forced to become "comfort women" in

army camps. Land and property, oxen, rice were taken from Koreans by force. Koreans were also denied higher education.

Two weeks ago, August 15th marked the anniversary of the Japanese defeat in the war. It is not a national holiday in Japan. For many other Asian countries, August 15th is the anniversary of their liberation from Japanese rule. Unlike other Asian countries, many Japanese national holidays are unrelated to our historical relationships with other countries. This is a big difference between countries. Many Japanese have a strong belief that history is like running water, flowing ever away. History is not running water. It thickens, and becomes opaque, like quick silver. The former German president Weizekar once said, in a famous speech, that "if we close our eyes to the past, we cannot see the future".

Today, Japan is struggling to accept for our responsibility for the war. We face problems if we pay compensation money to those held captive in the past, such as the comfort women and other Asian people. Whatever amount is deemed reasonable as payment, first of all we Japanese should make an effort to understand our past history, and to make a sincere apology for our actions, from the depths of our hearts. Perhaps the present government of Japan will not accept enough responsibility for the war, and it will be the young men of your generation who will inherit the problem, for many Asian people insist that they can "Forgive, but not forget".

We Japanese must learn the historical facts. On the twenty-third of this month, we YMCA Board members visited Corregidor Island, site of a horrendous battle in the war. We were shocked that we had not known what happened there. We had not known the concrete facts. My generation grew up in a post-war democratic system, but we were not taught the true and concrete facts about the Japanese invasion of Asia. I am not qualified to blame you young men today for not knowing the historical facts of the war. Not knowing is not sin. What is sin is not wanting to know.

We live in good times, when Japanese can visit many countries. Get to know people from other countries. Use your own eyes, your hands, your feet. What is most necessary to achieve this is good will, and imagination. As for the YMCA, our first task is not to think of international relations in terms of political and economic systems. Our most important task is to become good personal friends. Mr. and Mrs. Choi, friends, and Korean by chance; Jose, friend, and Filipino by chance; Yamada, friend, and Japanese by chance.

We are all children of our Heavenly Father. It is my earnest hope that you open yourselves to a new world, through walking together, and practicing person-to-person international relations. Thank you.

(This is the report given to the Japanese and Filipino YMCA students in work-camp. They came to the Condora Seminary House of the Philippine United Church, and conducted a peace-seminar in the evening.)

追：このレポートは、1995年8月に行われた埼玉YMCAとフィリピン、ダグーパンYMCA共催による第5回日比青年友好ワークキャンプの一環として行われた「平和セミナー」第1日目の講演原稿である。私の拙い原稿を見てくださった Pamela Lee Noviek 先生（本学専任講師）に心から感謝します。