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BOOK REVIEW: UNDER THE RISING SUN. JAPAN-KOREA RELATIONS DURING THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

Róbert Vancel*

KRIŠTOFOVÁ, V.: Pod vycházejícím sluncem. Japonsko-kórejské vztahy v průběhu 19. a 20. století. [Under the rising sun. Japan-Korea relations during the 19th and 20th century]. Praha: Nakladatelství Epoque, 2018. 392 s. ISBN 978-80-7557-113-7.

In her book, **Veronika Krištofová** deals with relations between the Japanese and the Koreans, emphasizing the key period since 1868, which is associated with the rise of Emperor Meiji to the throne, until 1945. The topic is constantly relevant, as historical disputes prevent the development of cooperation between Japan and South Korea. At present, we can witness the re-deterioration of relations, especially in relation with the so-called "comfort women" dispute. The judgment of the South Korean Supreme Court, which awarded compensation to four Korean people who were forced to work in Japanese steel mills during the Pacific War, also contributed to increased tension and possibility of international arbitration. However, more than the consequences of historical events, the book searches for their causes. The author sees this especially in the period 1905-1945, that is, when Japan occupied, respectively annexed the Korean Peninsula. However, I consider as highly beneficial also the chapter in which the author deals with the development of relations after 1945. Many of today's problems stem from the period when both Korean and Japanese tried to adapt to the new status quo.

The book, although it deals with a complicated subject, is also comprehensible to the wider public. Fluency, author's mastery of chronological and logical continuity, allows the reader to orientate easily. The publication is

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structured into several chapters, in which the author deals with specific periods of Japanese - Korean relations in the period under review. The author has truly processed a wide range of quality sources. In particular, it is necessary to appreciate the work with primary sources, especially those from the National Archives of Japan.

In the first chapter, **Křištofová** deals with relations until 1868, while also describing the first interactions that date back to 57 AD, and also deals with Japanese invasions that served as an argumentation base for annexation in 1910. At the same time, she stresses the importance of Korea over which craftsmen, architects, Buddhist monks and so on came to Japan. In this way, Japanese culture was both enriched and loosely coupled with the one on the Korean Peninsula.

In the next section, which maps the period between 1868 and 1895, **Křištofová** points out that Japan, despite its disunity, decided to adapt to development and catch up with the West. The Japanese flexibility has triggered the modernization and economic growth of the island state, which has begun to move away from its neighbours. This distinguishes Japan from both China and Korea, which suffered a shock following the defeat of China in Opium wars and the subsequent signing of unequal contracts and were unable to adapt to the new situation. Korea, on the other hand, continued to pursue a policy of isolationism, in which they were reinforced by more or less disrespectful attempts by the powers to open the world to Korea. In the second half of the 19th Century, there was a situation where Korea was out of the interests of Western powers and Japan was the only actor interested in ending Korean isolation. The modernization that has been successfully carried out has resulted in an increase in the sense of superiority over the Asian people. This feeling, combined with a number of samurais who have found their place in the army and government have led to an expansive foreign policy of the emperor. In this part, the author further describes the diplomacy of both countries, which led to mutual aversion. The author is also dedicated to crowding out Chinese influence from the Korean Peninsula, with the power vacuum fluently replaced by the Japanese. The author completes a description of the events in East Asia with an exhaustive amount of facts and events, which may be confusing in places, but I personally believe that these details and their processing are more than beneficial.

The second part deals with the very equalization of Japan with the West. Japan has opted for equality through the achievement of Western standards.

Nevertheless, even an unprecedented reform effort has not convinced the world powers to lift the unequal treaties they have signed with the Japanese. The equalization occurred only through the use of force due to the victory in the first Sino-Japanese War. Its causes were the rivalry for influence on the Korean Peninsula. Under the declared desire to help Koreans become independent of China, Japan launched the *Kabo* reform process. However, it resulted in Japanese interventions in Korea's internal affairs, which ultimately led to an increase in dependence on Japan. European powers have recognized Japan's maturity and abolished unequal treaties. For Korea, however, it meant that reactions on the Japanese proceedings on the peninsula were explicitly uncritical. After the Russian - Japanese dispute over influence in Korea, there was a short period in which Koreans attempted to reform and modernize themselves, without "help" from the surrounding states. However, as the author notes, this short era of complete independence has brought Korea political instability and an increase in military spending that has led to a financial crisis. **Křištofová** points out that further development on the Korean Peninsula was the result of Russian - Japanese rivalry. Several unsuccessful attempts to resolve the situation have led to a war between Russia and Japan, which ended in Japan's surprising victory. The Portsmouth Peace Treaty recognized the primacy of Japanese interests in Korea, which de facto led to a unilateral decision to establish a Japanese protectorate in Korea, as the Japanese "*could not allow another country to gain control over Korea.*" As the author notes, the primary narrative was that Korean people could not control themselves, and therefore the civilized Japanese domination was the right solution. In addition, The Japanese forced the Koreans to agree additionally by the threat of violence. It is precisely forcing the consent that serves as a Korean argument for refusing to recognize the Protectorate. **Křištofová** also documents the UN's 1963 opinion, which considers the treaty illegal. It was based on the Harvard study of 1935. Korea, as a Japanese protectorate, experienced an increase in nationalism, which was manifested mainly by the emergence of various patriotic movements, often called the so-called "*righteous armies*". Japan, on the other hand, has adopted the idea of "protecting" Asian nations. This related to the increase of self-esteem and confidence in the support of superpowers, especially the British Empire. The situation in Korea at the end of the Protectorate period escalated, while proliferating both anti-Japanese actions, but also increased pressure from the Japanese. However, the author also points out the positive impacts of this period, which are particularly evident in the field

of infrastructure development, economic development. However, **Křištofová** also claims that the recipients of the benefits in this case were mainly Japanese.

In the next chapter, the author deals with the causes of annexation and its course. The Japanese, despite the declared unwillingness to proceed to the complicated annexation process, planned to implement it. The assassination of General resident Itó in 1909 can be considered as an excuse for planned annexation. **Křištofová** then describes a very interesting concept of annexation, as the transfer of sovereignty among the emperors. In the statement to the citizens, the Korean emperor justified the annexation. The reason he stated was an ill health that would not allow him to function and develop the state. The Japanese argumentation against Koreans, as well as the world, was, as the author claims, based on an effort to maintain peace in East Asia, but it could not be done without the inclusion of the peninsula in the Japanese Empire. Persecutions and arrests of leaders of national liberation movements followed. In the chapter, **Křištofová** also describes the way the bureaucratic apparatus was built in the new Japanese colony. The dominance of Korea has led to an interest of Japan in Manchuria and Korea has thus become a "*base camp*" for Japanese continental expansion. The author further describes the building of a colonial administration in Korea, which, despite some positive aspects, was principally discriminatory against Koreans. After the suppression of the March 1 movement, which put hope in the Paris Peace Conference and the right of nations to self-determination, an attempt was made to pursue the cultural government. This was fully in line with the Japanese attitude when the Japanese, without experience of liberal ideas or democracy, responded to global trends. Of course, the easing rate on the peninsula had its fundamental limits. In this case, as **Křištofová** points out, there were cosmetic changes, declarative statements, and euphemisms used for discriminatory or racist practices. However, as the international situation has changed, especially as a result of the economic crisis, the Japanese have adapted to the trends of isolationism, entering their own spheres of influence and deviation from liberal and democratic values. In addition to political aspects, the author also addresses the economic aspect of Japan-Korean relations in the pre- Pacific war period. It provides quite a large amount of data that perfectly illustrates the various dimensions of the colonial administration of the peninsula.

In the chapters of the *Colonial Administration of 1937 - 1941* and the *Japanese Administration of Korea in 1941-1945*, **Křištofová** focuses on the development of relations in the context of the Second Sino-Japanese War and

Japanese expansion. At the same time, it describes problematic moments, such as the efforts of the Japanese to eliminate Korean culture, or the use of cheap labour, often forced labour. Further in this part of the publication, the author describes the development of the conflict between the Allies and the Japanese Empire, explaining the low level of involvement of Koreans fighting alongside the Japanese. They were not understood as sufficiently mature to be able to serve in the Japanese army. At the same time, the Japanese encountered resistance caused by the strong influence of the Confucian tradition, which did not support the enthusiasm for service in the army. Despite initial failure and general resistance, the Japanese command finally decided to mobilize hundreds of thousands of Korean men. However, they should serve primarily to defend the state and in the army had mostly auxiliary, lower functions. The author also briefly addresses the issue of "*comfort women*", where she briefly describes the factual state of the problem. The chapter on the Pacific War ends with the presentation of Allied ideas about the future of the Korean Peninsula, highlighting the contradiction in Stalin and Roosevelt's vision of the length of the "*custody*" of the Korean Peninsula.

In the penultimate chapter, **Křištofová** deals exclusively with post-war development in Korea, which is a slight offset from the issue of Korea-Japan relations. However, to understand the significance and impact of Japanese influence on post-war development of the peninsula, this chapter is of key importance. Korean efforts to obtain immediate sovereignty were not feasible, as in particular the Allies sought to stabilize the situation. In doing so, the Americans used the Japanese bureaucratic structure to administer Korea. Likewise, the force components were composed of Koreans who served in the police forces or the army under the Japanese. Conversely, the Soviets were in the administration of the northern part of the peninsula more open to the domestic population and sent captured Japanese and collaborators to Siberia. **Křištofová** also describes the differences between the two parts of Korea. In contrast to today's situation, there was an economically better northern part, which had the clear majority of all industry, as well as raw materials, and up to 92% of power plants. The increasing antagonism between the US and the USSR, which prevented the actors from finding a compromise solution to the situation on the peninsula, was also transformed into the Koreans' polarization on the right-left political spectrum. This resulted in the emergence of two states - South Korea and the North Korean People's Democratic Republic. The ensuing military conflict also affected Japan, confirming Japan's and Korea's

interdependence. Since the US had to move troops to Korea, in Japan it allowed the emergence of force components that later transformed into the current Self-Defence Forces. The Americans realized that not Japan, but the Communists are the biggest threat in East Asia. This feeling led to the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Equally positive was the impact of the conflict on the Japanese economy. Following the normalization of relations in 1965, economic cooperation has been re-established, resulting in the development of the South Korean economy thanks to massive Japanese investments.

In the last chapter, **Křištofová** returns to the topic of mutual Korean - Japanese relations from the moment of capitulation to the present. The issues of Korean citizens living in Japan, compensation, the bilateral abolition of schools, but also the germ of the territorial dispute over Takeshima Islands, in Korea called Tokdo, are relatively detailed. It also describes the most important moments and events that have shaped the relationship between Korean and Japanese in the post-war period, either in a positive or negative sense. It also assesses the impact of the quality of relations between the two Korea on relations with Japan, which we can also see in the present.

The author has succeeded in creating a comprehensive publication devoted to an interesting and constantly actual topic whose importance is not sufficiently reflected in our region. By processing a number of quality sources, **Křištofová** really managed to grasp the sensitive issues objectively, which is often a problem with this topic (especially in the works of the authors of the interested parties). By covering a number of dimensions of this relationship, the book reminds me of the *History of Japan* by E. **Reischauer** and A. **Craig**. Like these authors, it complements the description of historical development with a number of quantitative data that illustrate the situation, while delivering an expertise. As indicated in the introduction, **Křištofová** is mainly concerned with the development until 1945 and the subsequent research and description are more superficial, perhaps at the expense of the analysis of the situation in post-war Korea. However, this does not reduce the quality of the author's work. As a slight negative, I see a weaker coverage of the issue of "comfort women" and forced labour, which are currently the most up-to-date problems of Japanese-South Korean relations. However, to some extent, it is understandable, since both topics are complicated, and a deeper analysis could mean a significant diversion from the primary theme of the book. Overall, I consider the book highly positive Central European contribution to academic discourse, which will certainly find its readers in academia but also among wider audience.