

Nakajima's Colonial Mentality: Translation as Colonization in Colonial Korea

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Abstract

Colonization can be found in the national history of many peoples to this day. In 1910 when Japan began their colonization of Korea, they were late to the game that Western civilization had become systematically proficient. As a result of colonization's dependence on representing the colonized as inferior; the act of translation became a tool for colonizing nations to cement their authority. It is in this way that the concept of originality becomes a metaphor for colonized nations becoming a translated copy to the colonizers original. Japan, like the colonizing nations before them, saw this connection and used translation to create a discourse that exemplifies Korea's dependence on the Japanese original, as well as a strategy of control against resistance. Through his 1929 short story "Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch of 1923", Japanese writer Atsushi Nakajima mediates his mixed sense of colonized and colonizer through Korean patrolman and translator Cho who is forced to side with the colonizers while also being the colonized. By examining how translation has been used as a discourse for colonization and control, Nakajima's text is seen as a rendition of his sympathies for the people Japan colonizes due to his own self-colonization, but also his ambivalence towards the ethics Japan's colonial endeavors.

Keywords: Colonization, Originality, Colonial Korea

By the time Japan had settled on Korea as the next colonial endeavor, they had "an apparatus of soldiers, policemen, bureaucrats, technicians, and teachers to guide the Koreans in the proper fulfillment of their duties as obedient and productive subjects of the Emperor" (Kubin 80). For Japan, colonization was a way to present its power, influence, and modernization to the world and Korea

was a large asset in doing so. In 1945 at the end of World War II, Japan was forced to give up its colonies, however the remnants of colonization remain.

The concept of “originality” in translation and the importance of the original is evident in the discourse of colonial Korea. By choosing to colonize themselves with Western ideals, Japan created in itself a translated version of the Western “original” despite viewing themselves as a new original text (Uchiyama 74). Japan carries on the discourse of original versus translation to its colony Korea by viewing it as inferior to the Japanese original, and never reaching the same power and significance. In 1929, Atsushi Nakajima, a Japanese author and educator wrote “Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch of 1923” as a critical short story of Japan’s colonial rule of Korea in order to reflect through a series of encounters between Koreans and Japanese their positions as colonized and colonizer. Originality here is seen as the giver of authority where as translation is thought to be the inferior copy.

Furthermore, translation was one the major elements that allowed Japan’s colonization of Korea to become engrained in Korea’s society and culture. It is because “colonial powers forced their subjects to ‘translate’ their local language, sociality, or culture into the terms of the dominant colonial power” (Howland 47), that colonization and the loss of colonized cultures and languages have taken place. The ways translation has been used as a colonial mode of control of colonized peoples is also demonstrated by the American education system in 1901 Philippines. Here translation works to eliminate the distinct mindset of Filipinos and replace that with American values. Nakajima suggests this in his text where Japan has naturalized its position as the ruler of Korea to the point where any divergence from this discourse is unsettling to the main character. This character’s position as a translator is an issue in the colonial use of translation in that he himself is colonized by Japanese authority but also, through translation, colonizes his own people.

Through his short story, Nakajima is revealed to be uncertain of how those who, like him, sympathize with the colonized but also wish to hold authority over them fit within the Japanese colonial context and as a result uses his main character as a way to mediate this divide. It is in this way that “Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch from 1923” speaks to Nakajima being a product of translation as both a tool and discourse of colonization towards Japan and Korea.

Japan's Colonialism and Nakajima's Ambivalence

In 1910 Japan assumed control of Korea making it an official colony of the Japanese empire. Though Japanese occupation was extremely oppressive and violent for Koreans, Japan's colonizing rhetoric attempted to show how Korea would benefit from Westernization and modernization from Japanese rule (Kim 12). The Korean people were expected to live their lives as members of the Japanese empire, adopting the culture, religion, and language. Life under Japanese colonial rule was oppressive for Koreans as they struggled to adapt to their new circumstances and fight to keep their own culture and language alive, "even today the Japanese colonial legacy influences literature education in Korea" (Kim 12).

Atsushi Nakajima (1909-1942) was a Japanese writer of various short stories criticizing Japan's colonial endeavors. Despite this perspective Nakajima who grew up in colonial Korea and lived in Micronesia (occupied by Japan), worked as an English and Japanese teacher in Korea at the time. In his move to Micronesia, he took up a position in Palau in the government agency responsible for governing Micronesia (Tierney 155). Upon seeing the living conditions in Palau however, Nakajima notes:

To make the natives happy, there are many things of far greater importance than textbooks, which are really a triviality, the last thing they really need. In the present conditions in Nan'yo, we have more and more trouble providing them with adequate food and shelter.
(from Tierney 156)

While Nakajima was alarmed at the manner that Japan was administering its authority in Micronesia, he is not dissenting to the fact that Japan was indeed colonizing these people. Nakajima has been described as "the quintessential writer of the colonial period" (Tierney 155), however he remains ambiguous on his stance of Japan's colonial intervention in general. Robert Tierney, translator of many of Nakajima's texts, suggests Nakajima was perhaps unconscious of his own self-colonization and through his texts was unsure of his own place within Japan's empire (155).

Written in 1929, "Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch from 1923" was one of Nakajima's critical renditions of Korean life under Japanese occupation. The short story follows Korean Cho Kyoyong as he narrates his own struggles as both colonized and colonizer (his occupation as patrolman and also translator indicates

his compliance with Japanese authority) as he witnesses' oppressive colonial life in Korea. Through the text, Nakajima looks to scrutinize Japan's repressive and violent authority in the lives of Koreans as well as raise sympathy for them and these conditions. However Nakajima, speaking from a Japanese colonizer perspective, is providing a view of colonial Korea that is not representative of a colonized Korean perspective.

The Japanese "Original"

Viewing the original as superior to the translation, led Japan to create in itself the new Eastern original in order to avoid being the West's translation. This was guided by educators such as Yukichi Fukuzawa (1835-1901) who, through his translations of Western literature, hoped to "introduce Western civilization to Japanese society" in order for Japan to become inspired by Western systems and embody Western ideas, leading to "self-colonization" (Uchiyama 76). Japan saw the West "partly as a means of survival" (Uchiyama 75) and so decided to introduce Western modes of modernization. Fukuzawa was a large proponent of this, believing that in order for Japan to be its own independent nation it should be "absorbing Western culture in order to resist domination by that same culture (Uchiyama 74), and did so through his methods of translation. Fukuzawa favored a free, more adaptive method of translation believing that the translator should express his or her own originality (Uchiyama 73). These approaches speak to his support for Japan to "self-colonize" and create a new "original" from a translation of the West.

Bassnett and Trivedi as well as Akiko Uchiyama speak of "cannibalistic" translation (Uchiyama 74). This is in reference to a tribe in Brazil, the Tupinambà, who ate a Catholic Priest, not as an "illogical act on the part of the Tupinambà", as Bassnett and Trivedi put it; "one does not eat people one does not respect" (1). It is in this way that devouring the colonial authority on the side of the colonized is seen as devouring the colonial "original" in order to save one's self from being colonized, and in Fukuzawa case "self-colonizing" as a result. Because "translation has been used to facilitate colonization, helping to mould cross-cultural relations into unequal power relations", Fukuzawa saw the translator as absorbing the original and in the process creating "something 'new' in the target language". He called for the "alteration and appropriation of the original to suit the "nutritional needs" of the translator (and the Japanese people) (Uchiyama 83-84). Through "self-colonization" Japan wanted to create in itself the "new

original” and not have the status as an inferior translation to the West. However, as a result of this tactic Japan still harmonized with the Western narrative and in doing so making itself also the colonized.

Through “Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch of 1923”, Nakajima is showcasing his self-colonized self through Cho. Cho, who is caught between colonizer and colonized as a result of his occupation as well as being a translator within the police organization, feels that he does not belong to either side and is lost. While this was not the typical case for colonized Koreans, Nakajima passes this off as such because of his own perspective of self-colonized and colonizer. Cho becomes a way for Nakajima to mediate his own position in Japan and Korea as translation of the West and translator of Korea.

This attempt to bridge a gap between Japan and Korea on Nakajima’s part is similar to Japanese editor and translator Hosoi Hajime (1886-1934) who wished to support Japan’s “independence” from the West through his translations. However, in doing so he was more focused on uniting Japanese and Koreans under the Japanese empire in order for Korea to prosper as Japan had. Many “Japanese imperialists viewed Japan as a victim that had suffered at the hands of the white race, they stressed that the Japanese shared common ground with and identified closely with the people they colonized.” and in this way thought of themselves as liberating the people they colonized from Western colonization (Tierney 152). Japanese colonial discourse viewed Koreans as imitating Chinese civilization, Hosoi believed this and thought it was Japan’s duty to save them, for “Koreans did not know what they needed” (Suh 43). He translated Korean literature in order for the colonizing culture to understand the colonized and hoped for their empathy in doing so (Suh 27); similar to Nakajima’s critical but not dissenting, perspectives.

Because Japan considered itself the Eastern “original”, those they colonized were therefore inferior translations. Unity would be brought on through the Japanese language and translation would be the mode this process would take. However, despite unity being the goal, this did not stop Japan’s violence towards Koreans such as the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake where thousands of Koreans were massacred in its wake (Tierney in Nakajima 8). Hosoi believed “Japan as the big brother should not hesitate to chastise Korea when necessary to guide it to the right path” (Suh 21). Despite wishing for Japan to show Korea the “right” way to modernize and grow to have “noble ideals” (Suh 25), Hosoi “also slighted translation as an unworthy act of copying, parasitically dependent on the original” (Suh 39). Alike to some translation circles where the original is viewed as the only

true version, and translations being no more than a “copy”, Japan viewed itself as the original and despite taking the time and effort to treat Korea as part of the empire, it was treated as nothing but an inferior copy.

Looking now at “Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch from 1923”, Nakajima illustrates how Koreans lived under Japanese colonization. He addresses how Koreans were expected to conform to their role as Japanese translations when Cho recalls a Korean candidate who makes a speech in a legislative assembly among other Japanese candidates. Speaking in fluent Japanese he says: “I am still one who firmly believes that all of us here belong to the glorious Japanese people” (Nakajima 3), shortly after being heckled by a Japanese audience member. This incident expresses the way some Koreans had internalized their role as inferior to the colonizing power and much like Hosoi, believed they needed the guidance and colonization of Japan. Tierney suggests the concept of “colonial mimicry” developed by Homi Bhabha where “the colonizer both requires successfully colonized subjects and rejects them: they are, impossibly, required to be ‘almost the same but not quite’” (Bhabha in Tierney 150). This “double bind”, as Tierney puts it, makes it impossible for the colonized to ever really be able to identify as part of the Japanese Empire as the case may be. The colonized may act the part but they will never be allowed the same rights and recognition as the colonizer. Nakajima has included this scene in order to express this “double bind” but has ignored the fact that not all Koreans have the same perspective that this candidate holds. While Nakajima wishes to demonstrate the inconsistent and cruel conditions that Koreans are subject to, it also shows his own view that Koreans should be willing to accept and conform to the Japanese empire.

In a passage where Cho encounters a Japanese gentleman asking for directions the man is continuously courteous and polite to Cho throughout their exchange, which surprises him. Cho reflects: “Being treated politely by that Japanese gentleman just now gave me a real, if slight, feeling of pleasure. I was happy without really knowing why just as a child is delighted when adults show signs of taking him seriously” (Nakajima 5). Although this exchange would seem typical in a different context, for Cho, being treated in this way by a Japanese gentleman is extremely unusual and exciting. Because Cho is Korean and expected to be deferential to Japanese citizens, he feels “happy without really knowing why just as a child is delighted when adults show signs of taking him seriously”. Cho has become naturalized to the mentality of Japan being the big brother to Koreans that need the direction of a dominant authority. Nakajima is complicating the relationship that Japan and Korea have through this encounter, suggesting that

this kind of exchange is what should be expected of colonizing Japanese people towards Koreans who, as Hosoi suggests, needs guidance.

However, contributing to Nakajima's complicated rendition of Korean colonial life, a schoolyard is introduced. "[A] new principal fresh from the home islands held forth in a solemn voice on the virtues of obedience and submissiveness to the student assembly. (He was a bit mortified when he realized that he had always tried to instill his students with the spirit of independence and self-respect in the middle school where he used to work in the homeland)" (Nakajima 6). Nakajima himself taught English and Japanese in Korea and seems to be again reflecting on the double standard colonized Koreans were held in. The values of "independence and self-respect" are what inspired Japan to "resist" direct Western colonization and instead undertake its own translation of Western ideals. To have "obedience and submissiveness" to the Japanese empire is what was expected of Japan's colonies, making these colonies the new translations to Japan's new original. Koreans, much like the candidate previously mentioned, are being taught to internalize values of the inferior and therefore become "translated" copies.

Nakajima though, is contradicting himself here when compared to the passage with the Japanese gentleman. He advocates for Koreans' acceptance of the colonizing Japanese in the case of the Korean candidate and Japanese principal, but also for equality like with the Japanese gentleman. Nakajima is shaky with where translated Koreans should fit in a Japanese empire that has been again translated from Western ideals, and as a result these encounters that Cho faces are a way for him to think through a character that faces the same issue of where to belong as translator.

The War of and on Translation

As Bassnett and Trivedi put it: "Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems." (2). It is with this insight that translation, as a tool for colonial oppression is understood. Colonial authority is dependant on showing the colonized how they are inferior and reliant on the colonizers whether through military, hegemony, and/or cultural denouncement. Translation then becomes an imperative part of internalizing the colonizers wishes as it shows just how different languages and cultures can be. The colonizers language is given privilege in colonial translation allowing the colonized

language to take on a secondary position, ultimately being lost in the act of translation.

Translation and the input of a foreign language in order to solidify the authority of a colonial body can be seen in the case of the US' colonial English education system that took place in the Philippines (1901). Instruction was taught solely in English to “speed up pacification, drawing natives closer to American interests and thereby putting an end to their resistance” (Rafael 284). Students were then expected to reject their own language and be able to translate on the spot; doing so meant, “gaining fluency in English” which “would enable students to think in the other language...no longer having to translate.” (Rafael 292). While translation was used as a method of control, it was also a handicap to “[becoming] like Americans” (Rafael 292) that had to be overcome. The act of translating is used to make those in the target culture think in English in order to internalize the views of the colonizers on the colonized. Translation used in this way becomes an ideological act through the transfer of naturalized mindsets; making what is foreign, natural to the colonized works to support the claim to authority the foreign colonizers have presented as the natural way of things.

Looking closely at “Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch from 1923”, similar to the American discourse in the Philippines, a reality created by a colonizing body is put forth as natural, and assumes translation no longer has to take place as a result of the integration of the dominant foreign power into everyday life. In the beginning of the text Cho portrays everyday life in the Korean city as generally mundane, where “crowds swarmed into the streets at this time of day with the regularity of the tides” (Nakajima 1). However when he over hears a quarrel between a Japanese woman and Korean student on his train home the story takes on a different tone. The woman offers the student her seat on the train, but addresses him using the derogatory term *yobo*, referring to Koreans. She is ignorant to the fact that despite adding the formal Japanese equivalent to “Mr.”, she is insulting the student who becomes angry about her outright comment. Cho reflects on this commenting: “Why did this young man get caught in such a quarrel? And why did this woman who protested her innocence take such pride in the fact that she was an outsider? And why did one always have to feel ashamed of who one was?” (Nakajima 1). It appears that Nakajima is again struggling with his views of injustice on the side of the colonized, however is still uncertain about where he stands, as the colonizer, in relation to it. What has seemed natural to him much like the normal-ness of crowds swarming for Cho is being questioned through this misunderstanding. While Nakajima believes Koreans should be

treated well by Japan as the “big brother”, he is still concerned with whether Koreans should be submissive or not. It is because of this that Cho’s naturalized reality of Japan taking control of the lives of Koreans is constantly being uprooted throughout the story: Nakajima himself is unsure of what to do with his conflicting feelings because of his ability to identify with colonized Koreans as (self) colonized, but still part of the naturalized colonizing Japanese discourse.

Cho then acts as a way for Nakajima to play both sides. Cho is confused and guilty about his position as an officer despite needing the job to support his family. He is looked down on by his Japanese colleagues as a traitor to his country, but also by his community who sees him “as a potential saboteur who might manipulate communication between the colonized and the colonizers” (Suh 2). Cho’s position as translator for the Japanese police, leveled him to colonial functionary in order to “make sure that colonial power pervaded every nook of colonized society” (Suh 2). It is because of his position as a translator that he is in colonial limbo. These experiences, like the argument on the train, are what make him “[agonize] over his split loyalties to the Japanese state and the Korean nation” (Suh 2). Nakajima uses Cho’s position as a translator, who must navigate both sides, as a way to contemplate a power balance.

Drawing on the case of the America education system in the Philippines, the theme of translation in “Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch from 1923” also speaks to the colonizers “war of” and “on translation” (Rafael 292). The US wanted to use translation as a way to naturalize and sustain their claim to authority, much like the use of Korean officers as colonizing agents to translate Japanese authority. What Cho’s encounter with the woman who “takes such pride in the fact that she was an outsider” and what the US wanted to avoid in their colonization of the Philippines, is the disturbance of the narrative that they wished to convey through translating their ideals and agendas to the context that suits them.

A uniform colony speaking the same language with the same culture, subservient to the colonizer is what translation in these cases is used for. Translation “thus produces strategies of containment. By employing certain modes of representing the Other - which it thereby also brings into being translation reinforces hegemonic versions of the colonized, helping them acquire the status of what Edward Said calls representations or objects without history.” (Niranjana 773). This statement exemplifies the way Cho and the colonized Filipino students were treated. The “strategy of containment” makes Cho “never free from the oppressive sense that he had left some duty unattended to”

(Nakajima 3). Because of his position as colonizer and colonized, Cho is able to recognize that he is becoming an “object without history” and is remorseful for his inability or knowing to combat what he as a colonial “functionary/translator” (Suh 2) stands for. It is because of this sense of oppression that Cho is distressed by his seemingly “natural” surroundings when confronted with discrepancies like his train experience.

Conclusion

It is through a close reading of Nakajima’s “Landscape with Patrolman: A Sketch from 1923” that it can be seen as a product of translation as a method to imbed and naturalize the rule and control of a colonial power onto colonized peoples. Nakajima’s subjectivity as being Japanese and self-colonized from Western ideals as well as part of the colonizing empire, results in this short story becoming a way for him to mediate his mixed relationship with colonization.

Translation not only acted as a way to control colonies, but also as a way to thwart colonization from the West. Japan wished to avoid domination by Western powers and instead chose to “self-colonize”. This was done with the help of translators such as Fukuzawa and Hosoi who advocated for Japan to “devour” the Western colonizer and instead appropriate these values to the homeland’s needs. Koreans were seen then as translations of the original Japan and as a result was again perceived as inferior.

Translation has also been used as a way for the colonized to be brought into the colonizers context by learning to think in the same ways. By translating into the colonizers language, the colonized’ language is being written away leaving only the colonizing authorities language left. The colonized are then left with nothing but the culture and lifestyle of the colonized, having to adapt to it in order to survive. Japan used this tactic to naturalize their authority and inferiority of Koreans so as to limit their ability to resist the Japanese empire.

Nakajima has persistent sympathetic feelings towards the colonized’ conditions, while also being ambivalent in his opinion of Japan’s colonization of other nations. He is able to sympathize with the colonized because of Japan’s “self-colonization” but also feels the same loss of culture at the hands of the colonial West. He is unable to reconcile how he is both colonized and colonizer and instead uses Cho as a way to mediate between the oppressive force and helplessness of how to combat it. Although translation has been used as a way to show the differences between a source language and target language, it can also,

such as in Nakajima's case, be used to reflect on the complicated political, social, and cultural relationship between the two and as a result create a better understanding of the dynamic cultures of the world.

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