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Title

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Journal

Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review, 1(32)

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Publication Date

2019-09-01

Transimperial Genealogies of Korea as a Protectorate: The Egypt Model in Japan's Politics of Colonial Comparison

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Mizutani, Satoshi. 2019. "Transimperial Genealogies of Korea as a Protectorate: The Egypt Model in Japan's Politics of Colonial Comparison." *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* (e-journal) 32: 22–49. <https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-32/mizutani>.

Abstract

Focusing on the three-year period starting in 1904, the very beginning of Japan's colonization of Korea, this article demonstrates how the idea of British rule in Egypt as a model of colonial rule played a critical role in the emergence of Korea as a protectorate. The article not only describes the scope and limits of Egypt as a model but also helps to reveal the motivations of those Japanese involved in the comparative debate; How did they promote—or oppose—this model, and to what effect? Why and how did they compare this model with other models, which one did they prefer, and for what reasons? By exploring these questions through an examination of relevant historical sources, the author argues that, on several grounds, Japan's initial colonization of Korea can be plausibly and effectively framed as a subject of "transimperial history" that takes seriously the influence of the "politics of comparison." The article also demonstrates that the theories and practices concerning the Egypt model can be fully understood only by seeing how the comparative views of the involved Japanese policymakers and intellectuals were influenced by the ways actors in other empires—namely, the British and French empires—had practiced their own "politics of comparison" with their specific motives and agendas.

Keywords: Korea, Egypt, Tunisia, protectorate, colonialism, transimperial, politics of comparison, Japanese Empire, British Empire, French Empire, East Asia, Africa

Introduction

On February 23, 1904, during the early days of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan concluded the Japan-Korea Protocol (also known as the Japan-Korea Treaty) with the Korean government. Article 1 of the Protocol stated that the Korean government would "place full confidence in the Imperial Government of Japan and adopt the advice of the latter in regard to improvement in administration" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1921, 36). This was the beginning of a three-year period in which Japan imposed upon Korea a series of protectorate treaties, the most important ones being the First, Second, and Third Japan-Korea Conventions concluded in 1904, 1905,

and 1907, respectively. In these years, comparisons between Korea and other colonial contexts in different empires were hotly debated. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was in charge of administering Korea as a protectorate, soon commissioned a Select Committee to conduct a comparative survey of various colonial situations across the globe. Among these cases was Egypt, which had been virtually governed by Britain as its informal protectorate since 1882. This article explores the emerging comparative scheme during these years by foregrounding the place of Egypt within that scheme. It is well known that a number of Japanese concerned with Korean affairs before and during the colonial period were keenly interested in Egypt. Scholars have noted how, in such areas of colonial administration as policing or taxation, British rule in Egypt served as a point of reference, exerting a degree of influence on the government of Korea by Japan.¹ In fact, the origins of this comparative tendency, analogically linking Korea to Egypt, can be traced at least to the mid-1890s, when Inoue Kaoru, a Japanese politician who, as Japan's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Korea, tried in vain to "Egyptianize" Korea (Duus 1998, 91–97).² This article examines the protectorization of Korea by Japan. Focusing on these few years at the very beginning of Japan's colonization of Korea, it demonstrates how the idea of British rule in Egypt as a model of colonial rule played a critical role in the emergence of Korea as a protectorate.

This article is part of a wider research project in which I rethink the colonial and anticolonial histories in and across two empires—Japanese and British—from the perspective of what I call "transimperial history."³ Transimperial history is a historiographical framework that I have been developing over the past few years with Nadin Heé, Daniel Hedinger, and others.⁴ One of the reasons behind the quest for a new approach has been our shared dissatisfaction with the "national" frames of historical analysis that have characterized conventional historical studies of colonial empires.⁵ For

¹ On taxation, see Miyajima (1990); on policing, see Matsuda (2000). For an overview of the Japanese view of Egypt as a model colony, see Bradshaw and Ndzesop (2009, 153–157) and Itagaki (1965, 41–42).

² In his monograph, Andre Schmid briefly discusses how a Korean newspaper, *Taehan maeil sinbo* (Korea daily news), compared British rule in Egypt and Japanese involvement in Korea before 1905. The Korean nationalist rendition of the Egypt-Korea analogy is an interesting topic, though it falls outside the scope of this article. See Schmid (2002, 118–119).

³ For my own case studies in transimperial history focusing on the relations between Japanese and British colonialism, see Mizutani (2014, 2015).

⁴ Together with Daniel Hedinger and Nadin Heé, I co-organized an international workshop, "In-Between Empires: Trans-imperial History in a Global Age," held at Mathias Rähler, Freie Universität Berlin on September 15–16, 2017. For the last three years, I have led a JSPS KAKENHI project (grant 16H03501) in Japan, conducting research with Nishiyama Akiyoshi, Namba Chizuru, Yoshida Makoto, Nakazato Nariaki, Matsuura Masataka, Komagome Takeshi, Azuma Eiichiro, and Aaron Peters with a view to establishing transimperial history as a viable field of study.

⁵ For historiographical explorations of transimperial history, see Hedinger and Heé (2018) and Mizutani (2018). For the case of the Japanese Empire in particular, see my introduction to this

example, the historical research on the Japanese and British empires, with which my own project is concerned, has been hindered by the restrictions of these frames. One such restriction is the division and compartmentalization of academic labor based on national and linguistic boundaries. The colonial territories in the Japanese Empire—such as Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria—and those in the British Empire—such as India, Egypt, the West Indies, and Australia—have been extensively studied by historians specializing in either of these empires. Rarely, however, have they been simultaneously researched within a single framework of analysis. When the two have been discussed, the argument has tended to become crudely comparative, often—if not always—based on assumptions of national character, searching for distinctive features that supposedly made particular policies “Japanese” or “British.”⁶ Transimperial history is anything but a mere comparative study of different colonialisms: it radically breaks from that approach by foregrounding the mutual influences and contemporary interactions between the different colonial situations unfolding across the different empires in question. Working within the framework of this new historiography, this article is emphatically *not* a comparative study of Korean history with Egypt as a frame of reference. Rather, it concerns itself with why and how comparisons with Egypt were drawn by those Japanese who were variously involved in the building of a colonial protectorate in Korea.

One of the pillars of transimperial history is the study of what Ann Laura Stoler has called the “politics of comparison” (Stoler 2001), and this article is a humble effort in that direction. A pioneering scholar long committed to colonial studies, Stoler has reminded us that comparisons as produced by administrators, intellectuals, and all others involved in colonialism were seldom neutral or objective. They were motivated, consciously or not, by an ultimately political need to find out which experiences or theories in other empires were useful and worthy of being adopted, and which ones were misleading and should be set aside or used as anti-models. To understand this subjective side of comparison, we need to consider its instances as *acts*—rather than as sources of objective knowledge—and the people involved as the subjects of these acts experiencing particular colonial situations with specific political agendas of their own (Stoler 2001; Stoler and McGranahan 2007).

Following Stoler’s insights, this article does not just describe Egypt as a model for Korea but also tries to reveal the motivations of those Japanese involved in the comparative debate. How did they promote—or oppose—this model, and to what effect? Why and how did they compare this model with other models, which one did they prefer, and for what reasons?⁷

special issue of *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* (<https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-32/introduction>).

⁶ On these problems, see, for example, Komagome (2015, 25–32).

⁷ For the reconstruction of how the question of Japanese rule in Korea was debated during these years among officials, scholars, and journalists, I am heavily indebted to the meticulous historical studies published more than forty years ago by Shin’ichi Tanaka (1977; 1978). My own work is less about the debate itself than about the politics of comparison involved therein.

Answering these questions requires a close examination of different, and often conflicting, perspectives. Based on an analysis of relevant historical sources, this article thus reveals the complexities of Japan’s politics of comparison. On the one hand, the Japanese government eventually adopted a French-style resident-generalship in Korea modeled on the protectorate in Tunisia. On the other hand, the philosophy of British “indirect rule” was more influential in terms of general inspiration, and it was the British Proconsul in Egypt—Lord Cromer—who was consistently invoked as a model colonial administrator for the Japanese politics of protectorate rule. What emerged in the end was a hybrid framework based at least on two comparative models used as its composite elements (figure 1). The Japanese politics of comparison in these years were complicated, multilayered, and even seemingly contradictory, defying any simplistic explanations of comparison and borrowing in terms of national characterizations, such as “British” or “French,” of colonial policy. In this article, I argue that such complexities reflected the ways in which the very idea of the colonial protectorate had been, to some extent, a product of politics of comparison—politics that had already been played by and among other empires even before Japan arrived on the imperial scene.

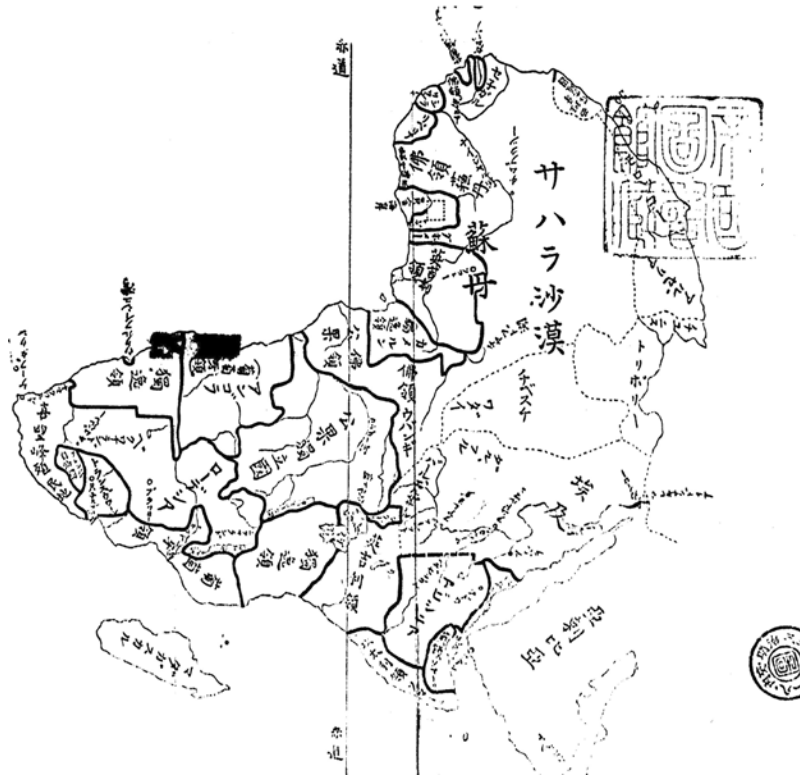


Figure 1. A map of European colonies in Africa, including Egypt and Tunisia, that appeared at the beginning of *Afurika no zento* (The future of Africa) by Tomizu Hirondo (1899).

The Egypt Model—Its Scope and Limits

Korea as “Another Egypt in East Asia”

As soon as the Japan-Korea Protocol was made public on February 27, 1904, there was talk in the Japanese press about Korea being made into “another Egypt in East Asia.” On March 1, a daily newspaper, *Kokumin shinbun* (The nation), published a piece expressing the need to find “a Lord Cromer of our own” (“Tōkyōdayori” 1904). A month later, on April 1, another newspaper, *Jiji shinpō* (Current news), editorialized that Japan should establish a post of *Sōkomon*, or “Adviser-General,” to pursue protectorate rule in Korea. Such a post would enable the Japanese representative in charge to rule like Lord Cromer, who, as the British Proconsul, was in a position to control all-important matters concerning the politics and administration of Egypt. The editorial also mentioned how the British in Egypt availed themselves of the post of a Financial Adviser. As *Jiji shinpō* noted, this adviser, whom Cromer appointed to the cabinet of the Egyptian government, had to approve every important decision on Egypt’s finances (“Shasetsu: Itō taishi no kichō to chōsenkeiei” 1904). It was believed that the British “adviser” system with the Proconsul at the top would serve as a useful model for Japanese protectorate rule.

In the first few months following the start of the Japan-Korea Protocol, the Japanese government was in tune with this line of public opinion. A Select Committee established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 5, 1904, asked Akiyama Masanosuke, a former official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs now working as an official in the army, to conduct a survey. Akiyama was an expert on international law known for his knowledge on the subject of colonial protectorates. Within two months, he submitted a report titled, “Hihogokoku no chii ni kansuru gaiyō” (The outline of the status of protected states), in which he presented two cases—French rule in Tunisia and British rule in Egypt—as model examples of protectorate rule. According to Akiyama’s report, the French protectorate in Tunisia was a form of government with a “Resident-General” as the effective head of the state:

Any matters relating to the relationship between other countries and the kingdom of Tunisia are to be dealt with in the hands of France. In the king’s dynasty, France stations its representative, named the “Resident-General,” who serves as the *foreign minister* of the kingdom of Tunis. (Tanaka 1978, 67)

Following his description of Tunisia, Akiyama moved on to Egypt. Strangely, he focused here on the “Financial Adviser” without mentioning the Proconsul:

Through the recommendation of the British government, a British Financial Adviser is installed. This adviser occupies a place in the cabinet, and without his approval, no matters concerning Egypt’s finance would

be ever decided. However, the same adviser, despite his place within the cabinet, is not himself an administrator, and as such, there is a minister in charge. Egypt is a dependency of Turkey only nominally; in reality, it is a protectorate of Britain. (Tanaka 1978, 68)

Soon after Akiyama submitted this report, it was used as an important reference by the politicians in charge, and it had a decisive impact on cabinet decisions on May 31, 1904, regarding Japan's policy in Korea (Tanaka 1978, 38–41). One of those decisions was to force the Korean government into hiring two “advisers”: one for financial management and another for diplomatic affairs.⁸ Of the two models Akiyama had presented in his report, Egypt clearly was one selected by the Japanese government. The introduction of an adviser system was firmly inscribed about three months later in the clauses of the First Japan-Korea Convention, concluded between the Japanese and Korean governments on August 22 of the same year. The first two articles specified the power and role of the Financial Adviser and the Diplomatic Adviser, respectively. The Financial Adviser is particularly interesting, not least because those who advocated a British-style adviser system for Korea tended to emphasize the importance of financial control in achieving effective domination. Article 1 read:

The Korean Government shall engage as financial adviser to the Korean Government a Japanese subject recommended by the Japanese Government, and all matters concerning finance shall be dealt with after his counsel has been taken. (Carnegie Endowment 1921, 37)

If we compare this clause with Akiyama's description of the adviser system in Egypt, we cannot help but be struck by their similarities. Without a doubt, at this initial stage of Japan's effort to make Korea its protectorate, the Japanese imperial government took British rule in Egypt as its model.

As soon as the policy to appoint a Financial Adviser was made public, there were speculations in the press about the role and power of this adviser. Amano Tameyuki, an influential journalist and academic, wrote two journal editorials a few weeks after the First Convention. He saw Egypt as an exemplary case that proved how the effective domination of a state could be achieved through taking advantage of its financial difficulties. Amano expected the new Financial Adviser to the Korean government to pave the way for the control of all aspects of Korean politics and administration, just as Evelyn Baring (made Lord Cromer in 1892) had first interfered in Egyptian affairs as one of the two control-generals in charge of managing the Egyptian debt (Amano 1904a; 1904b). Finally, on October 16, 1904, Megata Tanetaro, a high-ranking Japanese official from the Ministry of Finance, was appointed as Financial Adviser. When Megata arrived

⁸ Contained in the following two cabinet decisions made on May 31, 1904: “*Teikoku no taikan hōshin*” (The empire's policy toward Korea) and “*Taikan shisetsu kōryō*” (The institutional platform for Korea).

in Korea, he told Sir John Newell Jordan, the British Minister-Resident in Korea (1901–1906), that Japanese rule there was being modeled on British rule in Egypt (FO Confidential 8477/16).⁹ In fact, this was not merely diplomatic lip service. Once in Korea, Megata had his Japanese subordinates study the British experience of financial management in Egypt. This experience included Alfred Milner, who had served in Egypt as the Undersecretary of Finance in Egypt (1890–1892). One of Megata’s subordinates, Inoue Masaji, translated the relevant parts of Milner’s 1894 book *England in Egypt* into Japanese (Inoue 1906). Copies were circulated among the officers of the department to be read as a reference book (Inoue 1928, 566) (figure 2).

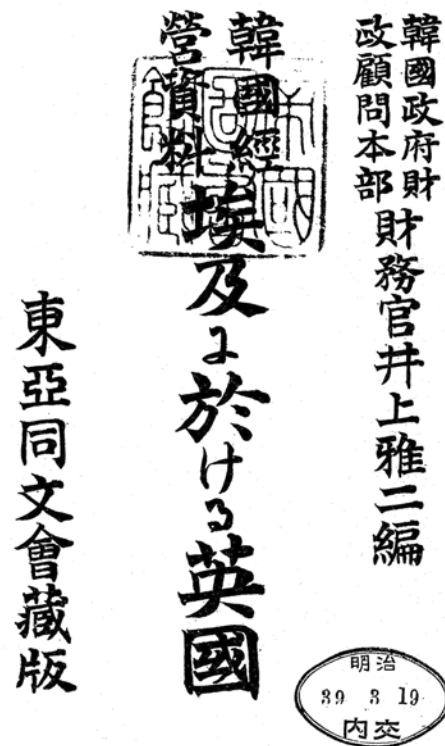


Figure 2. Front page of the Japanese translation of Alfred Milner’s *England in Egypt*. Source: Inoue (1906).

There are several reasons why many Japanese imperialists viewed Korea as analogous to Egypt. In addition to Japanese admiration at the time for British colonialism in general and Lord Cromer in particular (both of which will be discussed in the next section), a specific understanding of world history imaginatively connected Korea with Egypt. For example, in a lengthy book titled *Hogokokukukeiei no mohan: Ejiputo* (Egypt as a model for the administration of a protectorate, 1905), a Japanese

⁹ On this point, see also Katayama (2005, 14).

journalist named Katō Fusazō asserted that Japan's coming to power in Korea was a reenactment of the same historical act whereby Britain had acquired Egypt as its virtual protectorate: it was an inevitable manifestation in the East Asian context of a universal law of world-historical progress. Japan first claimed its right over Korea by undermining the geopolitical structure of the premodern Chinese Empire. This process, according to Katō, was similar to how Britain, along with France, made its way into Egypt, which was part of the declining Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the way Japan established its exclusive right by ousting Russia was said to be akin to how Britain made Egypt its own by pushing France away (Katō 1905, 191–192).¹⁰

The Informal Nature of British Rule in Egypt and the Problem of Applicability

The ascendancy of the Egypt model was short-lived, however. Its adoption by the Japanese government was subjected to criticism almost as soon as it was put into practice. Soon after the press began to editorialize on Egypt in early 1904, Tomizu Hirondo, a professor of law at the Imperial University of Tokyo, published a journal article titled “Ejiputo to Chōsen” (Egypt and Korea), in which he criticized the idea of a General Adviser (which had been advocated by *Jiji shinpō*) for vainly imagining the advent of “a second Egypt in the Far East” (Tomizu 1904a, 52). He was also against the idea of a Financial Adviser. As soon as he learned of the appointment of Megata, Tomizu published another essay on September 6 expressing his discontent over this policy, which had been “obviously learned from a British policy in Egypt” (Tomizu 1904b, 48). Tomizu was not critical of British rule in Egypt per se; rather, he did not believe that the Japanese in Korea would be able to replicate what the British had accomplished in Egypt. Tomizu doubted that any Japanese could adequately perform the role as had been done by British financial advisers such as Auckland Colvin and Edgar Vincent, who were regarded as skilled administrators with considerable experience. In Tomizu's view, this problem would be further exacerbated by the fact that no equivalent of the Proconsul had been installed in Korea yet. The adviser system functioned in Egypt, he pointed out, only because the Financial Adviser was firmly protected by the all-powerful Proconsul, Lord Cromer (Tomizu 1904b, 51). Because of these differences, Tomizu claimed, the Japanese Financial Adviser would not be able to control the finances of the Korean government, particularly when the Korean king was so stubbornly against financial reform (Tomizu 1904b, 52–53).

Ultimately, Tomizu was against the Egypt model because he regarded Korea not as a protected state but as a future settler colony of Japan. To safeguard the interests of Japanese settlers in Korea, nothing short of direct rule would suffice, and the idea of advisers being in charge of colonial politics was out of the question. In his eyes, Japanese rule in Korea shared little in common with British rule in Egypt in terms of the purpose of imperial rule. Uneasy with the very idea of a protectorate for Korea, Tomizu dismissed not just the Egypt but also the Tunisia model (Tomizu 1905). But it was not

¹⁰ On Katō's comparative view of Egypt as a model for Korea, see Nakaoka (1990, 361–369).

just men like Tomizu—those who advocated full colonization—who grew critical of the government’s policy. Even among those who were not initially opposed to the introduction of the British-style adviser system, it did not take long before a sense of frustration built up. For example, just a week after the official appointment of Megata, a daily newspaper, *Osaka Asahi shinbun* (Osaka Asahi news), sharply condemned him for taking what it saw as far too lenient a stance toward the Korean government. According to an editorial in the newspaper, Megata seemed to be serving more like a mere comptroller working literally *under* the Korean Minister of Finance. The editorial criticized Megata for not being determined to act as an imperial ruler. *Osaka Asahi shinbun* conveyed that this was not supposed to be how Korea should be governed: an adviser system should be something that serves Japanese interests by allowing Japanese advisers to act *above* Korean ministers. As the editorial put it, by “relinquishing the right [of the Japanese Adviser] to act higher than the [Korean] Minister [of Finance],” Megata made “completely meaningless the politics of advisers.” The newspaper approved dispatching advisers only insofar as, “despite their status not high enough nominally, it will be made sure that their actual power will be far stronger than that of [Korean] Ministers.” Without this practice, the editorial asserted, *Osaka Asahi shinbun* would no longer support the adviser system, advocating instead the introduction of governor-generalship (“Saigo no saku wo hodokosubeshi [jyō]” 1904, 1).

It is not necessarily the case that *Osaka Asahi shinbun* was opposed to the idea of taking British rule in Korea as a model per se. Rather, the perceived problem lay in *how* the introduction of the model was being put into practice. The newspaper was particularly frustrated with the alleged looseness with which the Japanese government had applied that model. What was nothing less than a form of colonial rule in disguise in Egypt seemed to have turned into something much less reliable as an instrument of foreign domination in Korea.

Katō Fusazō shared this view. Unlike *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Katō did not go so far as to propose replacing the Egypt model, but he agreed that this model had been poorly adapted by those currently in charge. According to Katō, the Japanese government seemed to have taken the concept of “advice” far too literally, failing to see that, in Egypt, British advisers actually manipulated Egyptian ministers to the advantage of Britain’s imperial interests because the “advice” was, in effect, “orders.” Katō also deplored the fact that the Japanese adviser system in Korea lacked an equivalent of the Proconsul—a fact that further undermined an already defective system. Written with imperial policymakers in mind, Katō’s *Hogokokukukeiei no mohan* aimed to show why and how Japan should grasp the true nature of the Egypt model as an instrument of imperial domination in order to follow it in Korea much more strictly. This point was all the more crucial because, in Katō’s eyes, Koreans were more “barbarian” than Egyptians and thus needed to be subjected to even more drastic measures of control (Katō 1905, 214–219).

From the perspective of these critics, what was lacking in Korea was a full-fledged transplantation of the structure of power that existed in Egypt, supporting, albeit

covertly, the authoritarian nature of the British adviser system. Certainly, British rule had started as a military occupation with no initial intention of imposing durable colonial rule. At least initially, the plan was to end the occupation in the foreseeable future with troops withdrawn whenever appropriate. Officially, it was not even a protectorate,¹¹ and on the surface, it was local, rather than British, rulers and officials who ran the Egyptian administration. However, the British government made sure that the Viceroy of the Ottoman Empire—the Khedive—and the Egyptian Ministers under him were obliged to follow the “advice” given by the British. Indeed, Katō correctly pointed out that this “advice” was effectively an “order.” On January 4, 1884, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, sent a confidential telegram message to Lord Cromer (then Evelyn Baring), making it clear that:

In important questions, where the administration and safety of Egypt are at stake, it is indispensable that Her Majesty's Government should, as long as the provisional occupation of the country by English troops continues, be assured that the advice which, after full consideration of the views of the Egyptian Government, they may feel it their duty to tender to the Khedive, should be followed. It should be made clear to the Egyptian Ministers and Governors of provinces that the responsibility which for the time rests on England obliges Her Majesty's Government to insist on the adoption of the policy which they recommend, and that it will be necessary that those Ministers and Governors who do not follow this course should cease to hold their offices. (Great Britain. Foreign Office 1884, 176)

By giving the British authorities the right to dismiss disobedient Egyptian administrators, this “Granville Doctrine”—officially expressed in the foreign secretary's circular of January 3, 1883 (Granville 1956)—made the adviser system a colonial apparatus of power. Japanese advocates of the Egypt model expected this doctrine to be applied to the newly introduced system in Korea only to find that, much to their frustration, it did not seem to have been applied as strictly as they deemed necessary.

Legalist Objections and the French Protectorate of Tunisia as Another Model

Amid mounting criticism against the tactless application of the British adviser system, the Japanese government searched for a new model, with the Select Committee continuing its comparative research on various protectorates across different empires. By the fall of 1905, the government reversed its former policy of modeling Japanese rule in Korea on the British adviser system in Egypt. Based on a report of the Select Committee, the cabinet decided to adopt resident-generalship as the administrative

¹¹ It became a formal protectorate only in 1914 as a result of Britain's declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire, of which Egypt had been a part, if only nominally.

structure for Korea.¹² Korea would continue to be ruled as a protectorate under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Japanese representative there would serve as a “Resident-General.” Three weeks later, on November 17, Japan imposed on the Korean government the Second Japan-Korea Convention, whose article 3 stated, “The Government of Japan shall be represented at the Court of His Majesty the Emperor of Korea by a Resident-General” (Carnegie Endowment 1921, 55). After about a year and a half, on July 24, 1907, the Third Japan-Korea Convention concluded. Its first article read, “The Government of Korea shall follow the directions of the Resident-General in connection with the reform of administration” (Carnegie Endowment 1921, 58). Through these clauses, the Japanese Resident-General was formally entrusted with the power to control both the internal and diplomatic affairs of the Korean government.

These developments in the latter phase of Japan’s efforts to make Korea its protectorate represented a reversal of the initial decision that had favored the Egypt model over that of Tunisia. That French rule in Tunisia was taken as the new model can be partly seen by the fact that, as the historian Arai Shin’ichi points out, we can observe striking similarities between the new Japan-Korea Conventions and the two treaties that France imposed on the Tunisian government in the early 1880s, namely, the Treaty of Bardo (May 12, 1881) and the La Marsa Convention (June 8, 1883).¹³

Why and how was the Egypt model dropped by the foreign ministry’s Select Committee? What was the perceived difference from the Tunisia model that contributed to this crucial change? To answer these questions, we must consider the views of Tachi Sakutarō, a prominent professor of law at Tokyo Imperial University who played a crucial role in this shift in comparative thinking. Invited by the government to be a member of the Select Committee, he served throughout its duration. It was his report, *Hogokoku nikansuru torishirabe* (An investigation of protectorates), —submitted sometime between April and July 1905—that had an irrevocable impact on the last two protectorate treaties between Japan and Korea (Tanaka 1977, 59–63). As Tachi admitted, his comparative study was not purely academic: it was inherently political as well as pragmatic, concerned ultimately with the question of how Korea could be transformed into a more fully controlled protectorate than the one specified in 1904 by the First Japan-Korea Convention.¹⁴ Why and how did the Egypt model lose favor in

¹² The cabinet decision on October 27, 1905: “*Kankokuhogokenkakuritsujikkō ni kansuru kakugikettei no ken*” (On the cabinet’s decision on establishing and exercising the right of controlling Korea as a protectorate).

¹³ Articles 1 and 2 of the Second Japan-Korea Convention of 1905 are similar to article 6 of the Treaty of Bardo. In the same way, articles 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the former are similar to articles 4, 5, 1, 3 of the latter (Arai 2008, 240).

¹⁴ Tachi’s imperialist stance is well articulated in his critique of Ariga Nagao —one of the most prominent legal scholars in Japan at the time. In his 1906 book, *Hogokoku ron* (A treatise on the protectorate), Ariga classified the status of Korea as a protected state as hanging somewhere between independence and subjugation. Tachi criticized this as an idle academic talk at best, allegedly divorced from the realities of East Asia and the concurrent imperialist condition of the world at large. Contrary to Ariga, Tachi recognized no possibility for Korean sovereignty

Tachi's scheme, giving way to another model? What politics of colonial comparison lay behind his dismissal of the Egypt model?

Tachi's 1905 report was devoted almost exclusively to descriptions and analyses of French protectorates, past and present, with Tunisia figuring as one of the most important examples. Although some British protectorates, such as the Transvaal, were mentioned, Egypt was not identified as an example to be considered as a model (*Hogokoku nikansuru torishirabe* 1905). What, then, was Tachi's view of Egypt? We find the answer in Tachi's "Hogokoku ron" (A treatise on the protectorate), a journal article published in August 1905, soon after the publication of his report and several months before the Second Convention. Tachi did not argue that the British enterprise in Egypt was a failure. Rather, he emphasized how, through the Granville Doctrine, the administration of Egypt had been as stringently controlled as possible, despite the seeming autonomy of the Khedive (Tachi 1905, 66–67). There was no doubt that, as a de-facto protectorate, Egypt was a successful case. However, Tachi was a legal expert, and in the context of Japanese rule in Korea he wanted to find emulative cases in which the nature of protectorate rule was defined by formal treaty arrangements in terms that were recognizable by the norms of "international law." Starting as a military conquest, and gradually turning into an informal protectorate, British rule in Egypt lacked a clear legal definition that could be compared with the situation in Korea, in which several treaties had already been concluded. Except for the British foreign minister's circular addressed to the Powers, which was not a treaty between Britain and Egypt, there was nothing that legally specified Egypt's international status. Nor was the Granville Doctrine concerning the control of Egyptian high officials regarded as a formal arrangement sanctioned by law: it was more a policy directive than an internationally recognized legal clause. For Tachi, this absence of formal legal arrangements was the primary factor that disqualified the British adviser system in Egypt as a model.

Despite Tachi's eventual dismissal of the Egypt model, it had a specific value for his politics of colonial comparison. In citing it as an anti-model, he was trying to demonstrate how the rulers of a protectorate without formal legal arrangements might suffer otherwise avoidable setbacks. Comparison was a useful strategy, but seeing Korea as analogous to Egypt was a misguided use of it and threatened to compromise Japan's interests as a colonizing power. To make his point, Tachi alluded to a particular passage of Milner's *England in Egypt*. In this enormously influential book, Milner glorified British rule, enumerating its achievements. In the particular pages to which Tachi alluded, however, Milner disclosed a sense of frustration with the inconveniences brought about by the informal nature of British protectorate rule. He wrote:

whatsoever, arguing that the protectorate must be seen as an instrument that would enable Japan to hold Korea in the age of imperialism (Tachi 1906, 35–37). For discussion of Ariga's view on Korea as a protectorate and his debate with Tachi, see Dudden (2005, 63–67) and Yamamoto (1992, 18–24).

Thus we did after all establish a Protectorate in Egypt, but not a complete or legitimate one. On the contrary, it was a Protectorate which we would not avow ourselves, and therefore could not call upon others to recognize. It was a veiled Protectorate of uncertain extent and indefinite duration for the accomplishment of a difficult and distant object....It is far from being my intention to criticize this policy, much less to condemn it....All I wish to point out now is, how the attainment of our object of setting up a stable order of things—complicated enough in any case—was rendered enormously more complicated by our preference for an incomplete and informal over a thorough-going and proclaimed Protectorate. (Milner 1894, 34–35; mentioned in Tachi [1905, 66])

By drawing on Milner's discontent, Tachi exercised a twofold point in his politics of colonial comparison. First, he made it clear that Japanese rule in Korea could not be compared with British rule in Egypt because the former, unlike the latter, is actually founded in international law. Citing the view of Thomas Joseph Lawrence, a British legal scholar, Tachi argued that it was internationally recognized that Korea had formally come under the protection of Japan as a result of the 1904 Japan-Korea Protocol (Lawrence 1904, 269–285; cited in Tachi 1905, 34–35). This being said, however, the terms of the First Convention that followed the Protocol some months later were nowhere near sufficient in completely subjugating Korea under Japanese control. After all, Japan would still need to work on the international status of Korea by imposing another set of treaties. Thus, by showing Milner's dissatisfaction and anxiety, the second point of Tachi's politics of comparison was to show that Japanese rule in Korea was not free of possible dangers arising from definitional ambiguity. The Japanese government, he argued, must overcome the incompleteness of the current arrangements, partly caused by the decision to adopt Egypt's adviser system as a model.

If British rule in Egypt was unsuitable as a model because of a lack of legal sanction, French rule in Tunisia was suitable for exactly the opposite reason. After invading Tunisia, France imposed the Treaty of Bardo. This treaty, however, was found insufficient in guaranteeing France full sovereignty over Tunisia, as it had implicitly acknowledged, for example, the domestic sovereignty of the local Tunisian ruler—the Bey. In order to augment its colonial domination, France tackled the perceived lack of power by imposing additional treaties in subsequent years. In 1883, for example, France concluded with Tunisia the La Marsa Convention, demanding that the Bey make any reforms that the French authorities deemed necessary (Lewis 2014, 22–23, 105, 166). The very method that France implemented to rectify its initial lack of full domination—concluding additional treaties—was inspirational for Japanese legal experts like Tachi, who felt that Japan's protectorate rule in Korea as specified by the First Convention was not stringent enough to secure Japan's effective sovereignty.

The system of protectorate rule that eventually emerged in Tunisia was attractive to Tachi for several reasons. First, unlike the British Proconsul in Egypt, the positions of the French Resident-General and the French officials who worked under him were guaranteed by law. As Tachi noted in his 1905 report, article 5 of the Treaty of Bardo defined the French representative as a Minister-Resident (*ministre résident*) only to be later renamed Resident-General (*résident général*) on June 23, 1885 (*Hogokoku nikansuru torishirabe* 1905, slide no. 0512) (figure 3).

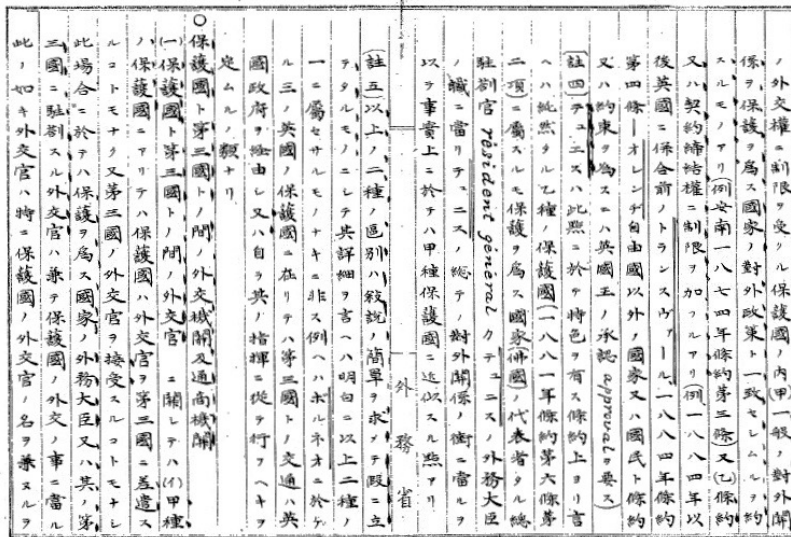


Figure 3. The section of Tachi Sakutarō’s report where he mentions the “résident général” in Tunisia. Source: *Hogokoku nikansuru torishirabe* (1905, slide no. 0512).

This precedent gave Tachi a comparative framework for prescribing the power of the future Japanese Resident-General in Korea. Furthermore, in addition to the legally sanctioned installation of a Resident-General, the French in Tunisia seemed to have more power than the British in Egypt to influence the internal administration of the protectorate. With his imperialist belief that it was the self-interest of the colonial powers that made the protectorate a popular choice—a belief that reflected the imperialistic view held by many Western scholars of international law at the time¹⁵—Tachi’s comparative survey of protectorates necessarily entailed an assessment of how far and in what ways the protecting state would be able to control the domestic affair of the protected state. The Tunisia model fared prominently in his scheme

¹⁵ As Emmanuelle Tourme-Jouannet points out, the liberal credentials of international law—characterized by neutrality, equality, and freedom—disappeared into thin air once they entered colonial contexts. The legal relations that Europe imposed on the rest of the world justified inequality and dependence, and colonial protectorates were one such legal construct (Tourme-Jouannet 2014, 17–21).

because, as he noted in an article published in September 1907, it was the most notable case in which nationals from the protecting state were appointed to the highest posts of the protected state, actually occupying ministerial positions, rather than merely serving as “advisers.” Not only was the Prime Minister-cum-Foreign Minister French; seven out of the nine members of the cabinet were as well (Tachi 1907, 51).

Tachi did not regard British rule in Egypt, widely regarded as an eminently successful example of foreign domination, as being any less successful than French rule in Tunisia. For him, the problem was that its success seemed to depend heavily on the tact and charisma of certain experienced administrators, Lord Cromer being the most prominent example. Tachi did not see this reliance as an appropriate model for Japanese rule in Korea. A “veiled protectorate” could hardly be a model for a new empire like Japan, whose colonial administrators inevitably lacked experience. Tachi wanted something more formal both legally and institutionally, precisely what the Tunisia model offered.

The Institution of the Colonial Protectorate and Its Transimperial Genealogies

British Influence on French Protectorate Rule and the Japanese Politics of Comparison

The Japanese government eventually chose Tunisia over Egypt as an institutional model for Japan’s protectorate rule in Korea, but as will be discussed in the next section, Egypt continued to be relevant for Japanese rule in Korea. The adoption of the Tunisia model should not mislead us into thinking that French colonialism was somehow preferred over its British counterpart. The Japanese politics of comparison at the turn of the century was more subtle and complicated than that, as can be seen by exploring the comparative colonial thought entertained by the historian and politician Takekoshi Yosaburō. The most important reason is that his writings reflected the sharp awareness among Japanese theorists at the time that the very idea and practice of protectorate rule had transimperial dimensions and were irreducible to such national characterizations as “French” or “British.” Another reason is that on the question of Korea, he was an advocate of Tunisia—not Egypt, which he did not count as a protectorate—as a model (Takekoshi 1906a, 126–127), making his perspective almost exactly the same as Tachi Sakutarō’s, and, by extension, that of the Japanese government. Exploration of Takekoshi’s politics of comparison, therefore, can help us better understand the perceived differences between the two models and the reasons why one was preferred over the other as an applicable model for legal and institutional systematization. At the same time, it has the benefit of giving us a broader picture of the Japanese comparative scheme because, whereas Tachi’s writings tended to focus on matters of law, Takekoshi’s comparative arguments concerned colonial policy more generally.

Takekoshi was known as an expert on colonial affairs. His publications included *Hikakushokumindeido* (A comparative study of colonial systems, 1906), a substantial

portion of which was devoted to a discussion of different protectorates as a modern colonial institution, including Tunisia (Takekoshi 1906a, 126–127). An enthusiast for the Japanese use of protectorate rule he regarded the idea of annexing Korea as “absurd” (Takekoshi 1906b, 64). He saw the use of the protectorate as more suitable and advantageous than full colonization given the contemporary state of imperialism in the world (Takekoshi 1904, 61). When the process of colonization began, Takekoshi expected the Japanese in Korea to establish a well-organized protectorate, but the First Japan-Korea Convention worried him greatly because of its perceived incompleteness in fully making Korea a protectorate. In an article aptly titled “Chōsen niokeru hanjyōrakka no seisaku” (A half-baked policy in Korea), published on November 1, 1904—three months after the First Convention—Takekoshi expressed his disappointment, saying that the current state of Korea was nowhere near that of Tunisia, which he regarded as a genuine protectorate. First of all, the First Convention was not clear enough about Japan’s right to dictate the diplomatic affairs of Korea, leaving room for other powers to conclude treaties with the latter. This situation contrasted sharply with the emergence of Tunisia as a protectorate, when France immediately declared to Italy and other interested countries that their former treaties with Tunisia were no longer valid now that France controlled its diplomacy (Takekoshi 1904, 61). Takekoshi lamented that, though the Japanese government had once studied Tunisia, it failed to use it as a model, preferring the British adviser system. He argued that the government should have followed the Tunisia model from the beginning, making the Japanese representative in Seoul the foreign minister of the Korean government rather than merely its “adviser” (Takekoshi 1904, 62). As an enthusiastic proponent of introducing the Tunisia model, Takekoshi was pleased that, following the comparative survey by the Select Committee, Japan imposed a French-style resident-generalship on Korea in 1905 (Takekoshi 1906b, 63). In his view, it was the French who first started to use the protectorate in an admirable and exemplary way.

It is important to note, however, that Takekoshi qualified this view by adding that, *when seen genealogically*, the salience of the protectorate as a new instrument of colonial expansion could not be attributed to the French alone. That is, when examined carefully in terms of its origins and historical evolution, the protectorate could not be understood without taking into consideration the influence of British colonialism. In an article published in 1906, he wrote:

France was the country that discovered the value of the protectorate as a system, but it was Britain that had long practiced the principle of non-intervention, which is the very essence of that system. British colonialism has been successful because it has done its utmost in trying not to destroy traditional customs, not to replace native officials, and not to increase the costs of administration....*It is in the British style that I would like our country to practice its colonial rule* (Takekoshi 1906b, 65; emphasis added).

Takekoshi thought it crucial that Japanese rule in Korea adopt a non-assimilationist colonial policy based on cautious utilization of local traditions and customs, a policy originally attributed to the British rather than the French. He categorically opposed the idea of assimilating Koreans into Japanese political institutions and cultural values and was a leading critic of Japan's adoption of *dokashugi* (assimilationism), a colonial policy most ardently promoted by France. He saw it as an ineffectual and dangerous approach based on the universalistic imposition of one's own ways. If the French were at all worthy of praise, it was precisely because of their recent shift *away from* assimilationism toward protectorate rule: in Takekoshi's words, such a shift was "nothing but an attempt to make British what used to be the French way of colonialism" (Takekoshi 1906a, 119).

Transimperial Trajectories of the Evolution of Protectorates across the Globe

Our examination of Takekoshi Yozaburō's politics of comparison reveals not just the influence of past experiences in other empires on the formations of Japanese colonial policy but also the significance of comparison for those very empires from whose experiences Japanese theorists and policymakers tried to draw object lessons. Takekoshi's view sharply reflected the prevalence of colonial comparisons the world over. Anticolonial movements had been on the rise since the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and different colonial powers looked to one another in their efforts to find new ways to circumvent the problems they were commonly facing. By the time Takekoshi penned his writings on Korea, the institution of the protectorate had emerged out of such historical circumstances, having been used in various colonial empires. Its perceived usefulness only increased with the advent of the scramble for Africa—whose climax was marked by the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885—when new territories were acquired by competing European powers on a first-come-first-served basis. As scholars of international law such as Antony Anghie and Martti Koskenniemi have point out, protectorate rule was not intended to be a lesser form of colonialism. Rather, it was conceived of as a flexible means for the colonizing forces to acquire and then control newly acquired territories without the potential risks, burdens, and criticisms that came with more explicit forms of conquest and domination. The protectorate was not a poor substitute for a colony; ultimately, for good reasons, the distinction between protectorates and colonies was highly equivocal (Anghie 2005, 67–90; Koskenniemi 2001, 124–125).

The evolution of the protectorate as a colonial system had a lot to do with a particular shift in colonial policy across empires. Into the late nineteenth century, the two dominant modern empires, the British and French, were not always confident about their own strategies of rule. Britain faced a major revolt in India, and French rule in Algeria was far from secure. These empires searched for new strategies and by the last few decades of the century, there was a turn against colonial liberalism in the case of the British and against assimilationism in the case of the French. As historian Karuna

Mantena has demonstrated in *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (2010), the kind of liberalism flourishing in the British Raj during the first half of the nineteenth century—epitomized by the policy of “English education”—was criticized after the Great Revolt of 1857, giving rise to a new conservative approach to colonialism that emphasized a strategic use of what were regarded as Indian customs and traditions. This approach is widely known as “indirect rule,” a term coined by Frederick Lugard, a British soldier and administrator who systematized this form of rule in the context of British rule in Nigeria in the early twentieth century. Historically, however, it can be traced to British jurist Henry Maine’s thought on Indian society and its application in the Indian context by such powerful British rulers as Alfred Lyall and John Strachey. Actually, Lord Cromer, with his prior experience in India, was one of those British imperialists who were well-versed in this school of thought and applied it to a non-Indian context: Egypt as the “veiled protectorate” was one ground where the new approach was consciously applied.¹⁶

The transimperial dimension of this spread of British indirect rule is of crucial importance for our discussion. Its influence as a new theory of colonialism was not confined to the British Empire: among other things, it deeply affected the French turn against their own policy of assimilationism toward a new approach called “associationism.” To a great degree, French associationism was a product of politics of comparison with British rule in India as a critical reference point. Influential French theorists of colonialism, such as Gustave Le Bon, Jules Harmand, and Joseph Chailley-Bert, were highly aware of the work of their British contemporaries, including Strachey and Lyall (Mizutani 2014, 435–441).

It is crucial to note that the protectorate was an incrementally important mode of indirect rule. Because British indirect rule had significantly inspired the very formulation of French associationism, it is unsurprising that France’s new colonial policy relied extensively on the protectorate as a form of indirect rule. Raymond Betts, a historian of colonialism, reminds us that in this context the rule of the protectorate in the French Empire was often synonymous with the practice of associationism (Betts 2005, 131). Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to say that, genealogically speaking at least, the French use of protectorate rule in Tunisia was influenced by British indirect rule.

Importantly for our discussion, some influential Japanese theorists of colonialism—such as Mochiji Rokusaburo and Tōgō Minoru,¹⁷ as well as Takekoshi—were acutely aware that the French turning away from assimilationism—which has long been regarded as the hallmark of French colonialism—and toward associationism was a product of the politics of comparison. These Japanese theorists gained much inspiration from the ways the French theorists, such as Chailley-Bert, were advocating anti-assimilationism against the grain. The

¹⁶ Lord Cromer was an admirer of Maine, as well as a friend and close associate of Lyall (Mantena 2010, 224 n89).

¹⁷ Both Mochiji and Tōgō were involved in Japanese rule in Taiwan at the beginning of the twentieth century as colonial administrators.

Japanese theorists did so in part because they were highly critical of assimilationism within Japan's empire. In their efforts to shake off the assimilationist tendencies prevailing in the Japanese attitude toward colonialism, they considered the French politics of comparison immediately useful. The Japanese in question were not simply making comparisons. It would be more accurate to say that they found themselves utilizing a range of *politics of comparison* that had already been engaged in the past by others in the French and other empires (Mochiji 1912, 575–593; Mizutani 2014, 443–447). It was against the background of these transimperial trajectories of colonial theory and practice that Takekoshi understood the reasons behind France's willingness to use the protectorate: it derived, at least partly, from France's effort to make its own colonial policy more "British."

Thus, Takekoshi's promotion of the Tunisia model did not indicate any intention on his part to embrace French colonialism in contradistinction to British colonialism. On the contrary, Takekoshi never failed to stress the influence of the British on the evolution of modern colonial ideas and practices across empires. Ultimately, however, his comparative vision was predicated not on a nation-specific but on a transimperial frame of analysis that rejected any naive assumption of supposedly unchanging national characteristics, such as "British" or "French." He was not in the least blindly uncritical of British colonialism. For example, as with other Japanese theorists like Tōgō, he regarded the British policy of educating Indian elites in English as one of the worst colonial policies ever attempted in history (Takekoshi 1906a, 228). Takekoshi's politics of comparison was motivated by a perceived need to persuade his Japanese readers to see beyond conventional categories so that they could decide which kinds of colonial policy were to be selected and which ones were to be dismissed.

The British Proconsul in Egypt as the Model for the Japanese Resident-General

The view articulated by Takekoshi Yosaburō, that the institution of the protectorate had multiple origins, may partly explain a peculiar paradox of the Japanese politics of comparison. Why was it that, despite the eventual dismissal of British rule in Egypt as a formal institutional model for Korea, the Japanese press still frequently referred to Lord Cromer, a *British* colonial administrator, as a model for the new Japanese Resident-General? Further, the same press hardly mentioned Paul Cambon, the French Resident-General in Tunisia who established French dominance there. Despite the French origin of the institution of resident-generalship in Korea, almost invariably the British Proconsul in Egypt was the individual invoked as an inspiration.

It was common, for example, to compare Itō Hirobumi, the Japanese politician who actually assumed the position of Resident-General, with Lord Cromer, as was done by a noted journalist, Toyabe Shuntei, in an article titled "Itō-kō, Kurōmā, oyobi Lanessan" (Marquis Itō, Lord Cromer, and de Lanessan), published on September 1, 1907. Toyabe compared British and French colonialism, concluding that he could not help "wishing the Marquis [Itō] would become not like a French-style colonial politician but like Lord

Cromer.” Toyabe wrote, “Britain’s prerogative to protect Egypt had not been defined by [international] law,” forcing its administrators to work with considerable skill to compensate for the lack of legal sanction. Lord Cromer would be the prime model for Itō precisely because of his ability to govern a territory that was not even an official protectorate. As for French colonialism, Toyabe’s judgment was strikingly similar to that of Takekoshi. Toyabe did not fail to acknowledge Jean-Marie de Lanessan, the Governor of French Indochina from 1891 to 1894, as the other prominent protectorate ruler besides Lord Cromer. However, whereas Toyabe praised Lord Cromer for his exemplary “British” skill and pragmatism, he did not attribute de Lanessan’s qualities to his “Frenchness.” Rather, Toyabe pointed out how de Lanessan was being self-consciously “un-French” by relinquishing assimilationism while serving in Indochina (Toyabe 1907, 31–32).

Even after the Tunisia-inspired institutionalization of resident-generalship in Korea, the idea of Egypt as a model of protectorate rule did not wither away; rather, it survived in another form. Certainly, the position of Governor-General was modeled on a “French” example. However, many people, including British observers, thought it natural that the post should be occupied by someone with the stature and reputation of an experienced British imperial ruler like Lord Cromer. As Sir John Newell Jordane put it, “If Japan can find a Lord Cromer for the post of Resident-General in Seoul, she may in time succeed in effecting an appeasement of the bitter feeling that has so long existed between the two races” (FO Confidential 8703/45). When British observers learned that none other than Itō Hirobumi, a former Prime Minister of Japan, had been appointed, they expressed high expectations that someone as prominent as Itō could indeed play the role of Lord Cromer.¹⁸ Itō himself was keenly aware that he was expected to play the role of a Lord Cromer, rather than that of a de Lanessan or a Cambon. Claude MacDonald, the British ambassador in Tokyo, met Itō right before his departure for Korea on November 1, 1905. He reported to the Foreign Secretary in London how he and the new Resident-General agreed that Itō’s role in Korea was going to be the same as that of Lord Cromer, under whom MacDonald had served in Egypt in 1884 and 1885 before coming to East Asia.¹⁹ Like other British observers, MacDonald did not seem to be bothered by the fact that the Japanese government had adopted the Tunisia-inspired system of administration. He saw a continuum between Korea and Egypt (rather than Tunisia), a view to which Itō fully subscribed. As MacDonald wrote:

¹⁸ For example, *The Times*—a London-based newspaper—predicted that Itō, as the first Resident-General, was going to face the challenge of the “intractability” and “inveterate prejudices” that supposedly characterized Korean politicians and court favorites. And yet, they described Itō as “a statesman of much sagacity and experience” similar to British rulers in Egypt. Thus, *The Times* was sure that Itō would “work in Korea wonders as great and as beneficent as those which they have accomplished in different, but perhaps not less trying, conditions during our own occupation of Egypt” (*The Times*, November 20, 1905, 9).

¹⁹ MacDonald’s early career was in Egypt. During 1884–1885, he served as military attaché to Lord Cromer.

I ventured to remind the Marquis [Itō] that the secret of our success in Egypt was that our best men had been selected to organize and get into working order the various Departments of the Egyptian Administration, Lord Cromer himself being a man of the very highest ability. Under his wise and statesmanlike guidance Egypt had been administered for, and in the interests of, the Egyptians, and so I thought that Japan should send her very best and broad-minded men to Korea [*sic*] to solve the many difficult problems which would assuredly arise, and to administer the country for, and in the best interests of, the Koreans. *The Marquis [Itō] expressed himself in accord with my views, and said that the success of our Administration in Egypt was an object-lesson to Japan, and one which he would use all his influence to make her take to heart and follow in her dealings with Korea.* (FO Confidential 3703/92; emphasis added)

Thus, it was with the idea of Korea as “another Egypt in East Asia” that Itō was to assume his role as the Resident-General, and once in Korea, he met Japanese officials like Megata Tanetaro and Inoue Masaji who, like himself, believed that they were doing what the British had been doing in Egypt. Inoue, the Japanese translator of Milner’s *England in Egypt*, brought a copy of the book to Itō, engaging him in a comparative discussion of Egypt and Korea (Inoue 1928, 566).

The legacy of Lord Cromer as a model administrator continued even after Itō’s death by assassination in 1909 and the end of protectorate rule as a result of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty of 1910 the following year. In 1911, for example, Lord Cromer’s book *Modern Egypt* (1908) was translated into Japanese. The preface to the translated version was written by Ōkuma Shieigenobu, a former colleague of Itō, who, like him, had once served as Japan’s Prime Minister. In the preface, Ōkuma praised the English for their talents as great colonizers (Iwasaki 1909, 240–242). He had confidence in Itō’s resident-generalship precisely because of the latter’s willingness to learn from Britain’s colonial experiences, and conveyed that if there is to be a Lord Cromer in Korea, it should be none other than Itō (Iwasaki 1909, 229–230). In the same preface, Ōkuma recollected the time he sent Resident-General Itō a collection of speeches by Lord Cromer as a gift that he thought would serve as a guide for the Japanese, who by now had begun to rule Korea as a full colony (Ōkuma 1911, 12).²⁰ In fact, the annexation did not stop Lord Cromer’s rule of Egypt from being used as a point of reference; even though Korea was no longer a protectorate, it continued to inform Japanese rulers in Korea.

²⁰ For a discussion of the historical implications of Ōkuma’s preface, see Kibata (2007, 112–114).

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that, on several grounds, Japan's initial colonization of Korea in the three-year period beginning in 1904 can be plausibly and effectively framed as a subject of transimperial history that takes seriously the influence of the politics of comparison. First, a close look at the debate among concerned Japanese has revealed the extent to which various observers contemplated the situation in Korea in terms of analogical thinking. This thinking was based on intense and organized inquiries into supposedly similar colonial situations unfolding in and across other empires. In this context Egypt under British rule, along with Tunisia as a French protectorate, emerged as a model. It is not an exaggeration to say that Japan's policy to make Korea a protectorate can never be fully grasped without considering its extensive engagement in the politics of comparison. The protectorate treaties concluded from 1904 to 1907 were all based on the comparative studies that the Japanese government conducted on various protectorates. The case of Japanese rule in Korea in these years can be taken as a vivid example of how comparative reasoning not only shaped the contours of debate on colonial policy but went so far as to condition—if not determine—political decision-making.

Second, our attempt to understand the seemingly contradictory ways in which the Japanese simultaneously explored the possibilities of two models derived from the preceding experiences of rival empires—the British and French—has shown the relevance of transimperial interactions for the global evolution of various protectorates, including the Japanese protectorate of Korea. Without a doubt, the extraordinary importance that the Japanese government attached to comparison was due in part to the country's international position at the time. Japan was a very young empire with only a decade of experience in colonial government. Considerable uncertainties lay ahead, and Japan's political leaders, state functionaries, and concerned intellectuals were naturally hungry for information on various colonial experiences in the rest of the world. This hunger alone hardly accounts, however, for the phenomenal salience of comparison in the Korean context under consideration. By the turn of the century, comparative knowledge had become important for all empires practicing colonial rule. The Japanese Empire was not the only one in which the politics of comparison played a significant historical role. For example, the adoption of protectorate rule that increasingly characterized France's approach to colonialism was in part a consequence of its strategic learning from British colonial experiences. Identifying French colonialism uncritically with "Republican assimilationism"—conventionally regarded as its essence—would blind us to the influence of transimperial comparison on the transformations of French colonial policy over time.

Careful attention to such transimperial evolutions and circulations of colonial theories and practices urges us to go beyond nation-based categories of colonial history. The protectorate rule in Korea was not purely "Japanese" any more than French rule in Tunisia—serving as an institutional model for the former—was quintessentially "French,"

as has conventionally been understood. Neither was the “British” approach to colonialism necessarily privileged as a universal model to be emulated without question. The ideas and examples associated with British indirect rule were tremendously influential among those Japanese involved in Korean affairs, and British rule in Egypt under the leadership of Lord Cromer consistently supplied them with inspiration. But, at the same time, they also recognized the practical difficulties of directly transplanting the Egypt model, not least because of its characteristically informal character, thus revealing its shortcomings in the kind of legal and administrative specificities otherwise required for direct borrowing. Hence, the Japanese eventually selected Tunisia as a model, though for the specific purpose of legal and institutional systematization and not necessarily through general inspiration.

Viewed as a whole, what emerged in Korea after the first three years of colonization by Japan was the regime of a colonial protectorate significantly inspired by, and modeled on, multiple examples of colonial rule experienced in other empires. In more than one sense it was a product of the politics of comparison. During these years, various Japanese people joined the debate, and their acts of comparison reflected their different political views and agendas. The relations among these diverse comparative arguments were complicated and ambivalent, often with no clear-cut demarcations. Nonetheless, over time, some of the arguments turned out to be more influential than others, resulting in the emergence of a composite and hybrid framework of colonial rule based on British as well as French experiences. Although this framework was formed in ways determined largely by the conditions of the specific colonial situation in Korea at the time, the ideas that informed the Japanese politics of comparison—which played a historical role in conditioning a range of possible perspectives and decisions—were not themselves completely original. They were heavily inspired by how actors in other empires had practiced their own politics of comparison with their specific motives and agendas. Only by considering the influence of these transimperial evolutions of colonial ideas and practices can the scope and limits of Egypt as a model for Korea be fully understood.

Foregrounding the historical significance of comparison for various colonizing nations is a key step toward establishing “transimperial history” as a viable field of research. Transimperial historians are not comparatists: rather, they subject comparison itself to critical scrutiny. One might wonder, of course, how they, as historians, would manage to remain completely free of comparative thinking when the comparative frame of mind is so deeply ingrained in their discipline. Indeed, going beyond comparison might not be so straightforward a move as the practitioners of transimperial history would hope.²¹ Nonetheless, I would argue that it is time to try to break the mold, not least in order to renew and deepen our critical engagements with some of the dire problems of our time, including the question of colonial responsibility. How should

²¹ For more on this point, see my introduction to this special issue of *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* (<https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-32/introduction>).

historians try to determine who and what were responsible for the emergence of particular colonial regimes or policies, and by extension, for the injustice, exploitation, and violence that occurred thereunder? Traditionally, historians have remained surprisingly faithful to the national, or “mono-imperial,” framework in asking this question. Korea as a protectorate is a case in point. Across the political spectrum, historians—Japanese, Korean, or other—who are committed to this theme have tended to focus exclusively on Japan’s historical role at the expense of ignoring or downplaying the possible influence of other empires.

My argument here is not that Britain or France was responsible for Korea’s fate as a colonized nation in the same way as Japan: there is no doubt that the Japanese government was directly responsible. Nor should my emphasis on transimperial comparison be taken as allowing historians to make Japan’s colonial responsibility equivocal. Rather, the findings of this study should be taken as an indication of the extent to which different powers proceeded with their respective acts of colonial domination in a heightened atmosphere of mutual awareness and interaction. In the age of imperialism, particularly from the scramble for Africa onward, the various colonial empires, old and new, did not just compete; they expanded side by side, partly by learning from one another, and this global occurrence of transimperial collaboration made them collectively responsible for the spread of various colonial regimes across different regions. Recognition of this phenomenon has critical implications for trying to understand the arrival of colonialism in East Asia from a global perspective. The colonization of Korea in this period was not a solo act by Japan. It was in part an act of collaboration with Britain, a nation whose imperialism was operating not just in Asia but in almost every corner of the world. Partly because of the geographical distance involved, Britain did not intend to colonize Korea by itself. However, it is important to register the fact that Britain was responsible, albeit indirectly, for the emergence of a colonial protectorate in the Korean peninsula. British officials and observers were not only willing to let Japan colonize Korea on behalf of their empire, but, as shown in this article, wanted the colonization by Japan to be executed in as British a way as possible, with Egypt under Lord Cromer’s rule serving as a model.²² The case of Korea as a protectorate is an illuminating example of how studying historical comparison can help us ask important questions about colonialism from a fresh perspective: comparison played definite historical roles, serving colonialism to propagate itself in a world where its different perpetrators co-existed in increasingly intimate relations of complicity.²³

²² How the British responded to both Japan’s self-asserted rights in Korea and the Korean claim to independence, and what politics of comparison underwrote these responses are extremely important questions whose answers require detailed research. My empirical work on these points is still underway, though some parts of it were presented in a paper at the 3rd TUDOKU Conference (Mizutani 2017).

²³ Recognition of this deep complicity is a motif of Takashi Fujitani’s work, which analyzes the strategies of military mobilization in both the Japanese and American empires (Fujitani 2013).

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