

COLONIAL LEGACIES #1

Colonial Elites in Cuzco, Viceroyalty of Peru, c. 1680

In 1680 Cuzco was a prosperous urban center in the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru. It had a political leader, the Spanish Corregidor, an elaborate court system, city magistrates, a bishop and an ecclesiastical council, patrons of the arts, Andean caciques, parish priests, artists, Jesuits, schools for the children of local elites, ordinary men, women and children. The population included Andeans, Spanish, and an increasing number of the children of marriages between Andeans and Spanish, known as mestizos. As the former capital of the Inca Empire, Cuzco was still home to Andeans who could trace their lineage back to Inca rulers.

These Andean elites benefited from Spanish notions of nobility and for over a hundred years, since the 1570s, the people who could validate their claims to nobility had received privileges from the Spanish rulers. Of course it was in their interest to preserve those rights, but in the century that had elapsed since they were initially granted them, others in Andean society had made similar claims. Court records attest to hot contestation over who was and was not a true descendant of Inca rulers.

One of the ways to reaffirm and legitimate high noble status in Andean society was to participate in the annual celebration of the Christian feast of Corpus Christi. A major part of the festival consisted of a procession around the city in which leaders of each of the city's parishes took part. Leaders of the Andean parishes led their groups, dressed in lavish Inca costume, including tunic, headband, headdress, and the royal fringe, worn on the forehead. Since in Inca times only the supreme ruler had worn the fringe, called the "maskapaycha", the wearer in 1680 was asserting a direct relationship between himself and former rulers. But what kind of a relationship was it? Did Andeans dressed up as Incas in a Christian festival in 1680 mean to raise a rebellion against Spanish rule? And if they did have rebellious intentions, why didn't the Spanish stop them and forbid Inca dress and the wearing of the maskapaycha? Or were these colonial elites really only trying to ensure high status in colonial society?

As subjects of study in colonial history colonial elites have entered the world of scholarly concern comparatively recently. Their presence acknowledges scholarly recognition that colonized societies are not homogenous; not all the people in them have a common viewpoint. The idea that colonized societies were homogenous was formulated by colonizers.

To challenge ideas about the homogeneity of colonized societies scholars have had to find sources that will provide access to a more complex colonial perspective. In many cases of colonial study, and in the case of the Cuzco elite, sources are not primarily textual, as they are for the study of Spanish perspectives, or of Europeans in general. Major sources for the study of the Cuzco elite perspective in the late 17th century are visual and fall into two categories: (1) portraits of wealthy Cuzquenos who had themselves painted in Inca dress; and (2) a series of eighteen large canvases of the Corpus Christi procession in Cuzco, of which sixteen are still extant, believed to have been painted by two Andean artists around 1680. The interpretation of these visual sources suggests that during the nearly two hundred years separating the Conquest from the painting of the Corpus Christi pictures the signs of Inca royalty and supremacy were undergoing radical changes. By 1680 the Inca insignia of supremacy had come to represent not universal rule, but Inca ethnicity in a Spanish colonial world.

Why would late 17th century urban elites want to assert ethnic identity? How would it benefit them? Who would they hope to convince?

Sources:

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“Processional Finale,” Corpus Christi series (Museo delo Arzobispo, Cuzco)

“Portrait of Don Marcos Chiguan Topa,” (Museo Arqueologico, Cuzco)

COLONIAL LEGACIES #2

Haitian revolutionaries, 1791-1804

In August, 1791, people who were enslaved in the French colony of Saint-Domingue rose up in great number, perhaps as many as 50,000, and attacked the planters who owned the plantations where they worked. First they requested the local representatives of the French colonial government to grant their request for a shorter work commitment and more time to do their own planting and earn their own money. When the colonial officials did not grant them what they wanted they fought on. When Napoleon sent his army against them, they defeated the forces of the great general, and finally declared their independence from France in 1804. They declared the establishment of the republic of Haiti, and awaited recognition from the other free countries of the world. Political recognition was not immediately forthcoming, and historical recognition has been even slower in coming. What went wrong with the Haitian revolution? Why did people at the time, and historians later, not see the achievements of the enslaved people in challenging the two institutions of slavery and colonialism as worthy of notice?

Among the revolutionaries there were no intellectuals whose tracts other people at the time and historians later could have read, as one means for understanding what was happening. In the absence of such testimony, revealing the revolutionaries' sense of where power lay, why they were mistreated, and on what grounds they claimed redress, planters, colonial officials, and ordinary French men and women simply didn't know how to comprehend the meaning of what they were hearing about. The revolutionaries, in their view, were slaves from Africa; they could not have banded together, organized themselves, thought out a plan of action, and carried it through.

The Haitian Revolution attracts scholarly attention as a prime example of silencing, and the silencing seems to have begun at the very moment when news of the

events first reached Paris. Some of the Saint-Domingue planters were in Paris for the assemblies that were part of that other revolution, the French one, and so escaped the attacks. When they heard the news they were as dumbfounded as other Parisians who had no experience in Saint-Domingue. What could really be happening, they wondered; and how long would it take to return things to normal? Who was behind the slave uprising? What discontented planter could have brought about this catastrophe? Who was using the otherwise docile and obedient slaves to advance their own interests against those of civilization?

The Haitian Revolution offers a good case study for seeing why the historical record is not complete, argues historian and anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot. For events to become history, Trouillot says, there has to be more than event itself. There has to be a trace of the event, in some kind of material evidence that it leaves behind; and then there has to be some sort of narrative about it. Somebody has to tell the story. Finally, there are the people who find the trace of the event in the material evidence, who listen to the stories, and who see significance in what happened. People who left the largest mass of material evidence about the Haitian Revolution were not the revolutionaries themselves, but the planters, the colonial officials, the government officials in France, the French journalists, and the ordinary French people. What they all shared was the inability to believe that people who had been enslaved could organize and carry through a revolution and then establish a stable and enduring government.

Source:

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995)

COLONIAL LEGACIES #3

Colin Mackenzie: British Administrator in India, 1783-1821

Colin Mackenzie was 29 when he arrived in Madras in 1783. Like many Scots of his generation, he came to India to further his military career. He was not just an ordinary soldier, though. Mackenzie already knew enough about India to have acquired an interest in Hindu mathematics, and from the time of his arrival until he died in 1821 he was to spend a good deal of his time learning whatever he could about history. He was not unique among the British for having an interest in India's history, but he was unique in the way he expressed that interest. As surveyor for the army, then as Surveyor General in Madras in 1810, and finally as first Surveyor General of India in 1815, he amassed one of the largest collections of Indian materials to be assembled by the British government in India. Why did he do it? History, as Hegel was telling the learned Europeans of the time, was about politics; was Mackenzie looking for the political history of pre-colonial India? If so, how did he go about it? ? And once the massive archive was put together, what use was it?

Mackenzie was already a skilled surveyor when he arrived in India, and he had ample opportunity to use his skills. British rule in India was expanding, and from 1792 to 1799 he surveyed lands newly ceded to the British by Haidar Ali of Mysore and the Nizam of Hyderabad. Between 1799 and 1809 he extended the survey to include yet more land acquired by the British when they defeated Haidar Ali's son, Tipu Sultan. Mackenzie's method of surveying included making extensive maps, providing written descriptions, and collecting local accounts of the land. In his official capacity as Surveyor General, first in the Madras presidency and then in all India, he expanded policies he had already begun, of collecting everything of possible historical interest: books, inscriptions, traditions, family histories, royal genealogies, coins, antiquities, drawings on tombs, and records of gifts conferring honors, titles, emblems, and the like. In addition, he and his assistants made 1500 drawings of such things as agricultural equipment, temple sculptures, landscapes, forts, ancient buildings, local architecture, clothing worn by Indians, and British people set against an Indian landscape.

To carry out the work, Mackenzie, who never learned any Indian languages, hired Indian assistants, whom he trusted as his entrée into the Indian world. Chief among his assistants was Kavelli Venkata Boria, who knew several languages, Tamil, Telegu, Kanarese, and Sanskrit, and who worked for Mackenzie from 1796 until his early death

in 1803. Boria collected texts, traditions, and other materials, which he explained and translated for Mackenzie. Equally importantly, he recruited and trained other Indians to work with him. They would fan out into the villages, win the confidence and support of local elites, and gain permission to copy from books, interview local Brahmans, and take down information from local headmen and chiefs.

Was the information reliable? What kinds of questions did Boria and his associates ask, to which local elites responded? Were these elites representative of all the people in the villages? Was it easy for Boria and the others to translate what was said to them, and what they read, into English? Of course there are lots of questions to ask about how Mackenzie and his team of Indian associates went about gathering and interpreting the materials they collected. When we voice suspicions about Mackenzie's method, though, we need to ask ourselves how we would propose to improve upon Mackenzie's techniques, especially if we wanted to learn about the history of area into which British control was spreading. In any case, Mackenzie did think that the material being collected by Boria and the others was sufficiently varied and complex to provide a rich context for understanding.

Initially, other members of the British administration marveled at Mackenzie's patience and persistence, and at the collection itself, and many had high hopes about what it would yield. At the time of his death in 1821, however, Mackenzie had not written the history for which the mass of material had been collected. In fact, the collection wasn't even fully catalogued. Time passed. Futile attempts were made to at least continue the cataloguing, but when Boria's brother, Lutchmia, applied for the job, the head of the Asiatic Society, James Prinsep, turned him down, noting in his private papers that no native could be expected to carry on the work without British supervision. The Mackenzie collection ended up gathering dust. Something had gone wrong. What was it?

People like Mackenzie have recently begun to attract scholarly attention because they don't fit easily into the ready-made categories of colonizer and colonized. They live somewhere in between. Mackenzie did not share the more popular British view that Indians couldn't be trusted to do certain kinds of intellectual work; but nor did he think that the British were wrong to be in India. And Mackenzie's hope for a complex history of India based on the sources he had collected was not realized, in his lifetime nor

immediately after. While Mackenzie wanted a history of India that would shed light on the political arrangements that had been in place before the coming of the British, other British administrators, especially in the generations after him, wanted information about what people believed and what their daily customs were, so that they could be more efficiently ruled.

Sources:

Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

COLONIAL LEGACIES #4

JAVANESE PUPPETEERS IN THE 1920S AND 1930S

In the 1920s and 1930s how would a talented Javanese youth learn to be a puppeteer? Whether you lived in a small village where most people spoke Javanese, or in one of the big cities with their mixture of Dutch, Javanese, East Indian and Eurasian populations and languages, you would have known about the shadow puppet theatre, and you probably would have been to at least a couple of performances. If you had wanted to become a puppeteer how would you have gone about doing it?

The question is not so easy to answer. In the 1920s and 1930s Java was part of the Dutch East Indies Empire and, like other colonizing groups, some of the Dutch colonial rulers were interested in Javanese arts. In fact, in the 1920s and 1930s the shadow puppet theatre, or *wayang*, was attracting a lot of attention from the Dutch community. Would Dutch interest in *wayang* have had any effect on Javanese youths who aspired to be puppeteers?

Ever since the early 19th century some among the Dutch, primarily missionaries and a few colonial administrators, along with scholars of the East Indies who stayed home in Holland, had been aware of the Javanese puppet theatre. Some had thought it

was just rough and vulgar village entertainment and didn't pay much attention. Others wanted to know what the stories were and what the plays were about. Dutch colonials encouraged Javanese to collect *wayang* stories and to write them down. Once there were written texts the Dutch could read, the scholars among them realized that some of the stories were about characters from the Indian epic traditions, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. For Dutch scholars in the Indies and in Europe, Indian epic characters in Javanese stories strongly suggested an Indian origin for the Javanese puppet theatre. It wasn't long before Dutch philologists were arguing that the puppet theatre tradition had been brought to Java from India, had first taken root in ancient Javanese courts, and had then spread into the villages where it had been corrupted. The result was the vulgar village puppet theatre of the day.

Colonial ideas like these don't have much effect unless the colonizers either try to stamp out the tradition or to change it. But how do colonizing groups succeed in changing the artistic traditions and entertainments of their colonized subjects? Contrary to what we might expect, Dutch colonizers, like their British and French peers, did not try to police the behavior of all colonized subjects. They could bring about change, they thought, by means other than force; and one of the most effective means was through education.

Dutch education had always been open to Eurasian children, those with one Dutch and one East Indies parent. By the end of the 19th century Dutch education was available to the children of Javanese elites, especially the children of the old Javanese ruling class. By the 1920s and 1930s some non-aristocratic Javanese could receive a Dutch education as well. Most of what a young Javanese would learn in a Dutch school or university would focus on the European world, whether in history, literature, philosophy, or science. But an interested Javanese student could also read what Dutch scholars had written about Java. What would a Javanese youth make of Dutch authored political, literary, and artistic histories of Java? Of course one cannot say without some evidence from the Javanese reader. What scholars do say, however, is that the kinds of things the Dutch wrote about Java were not the kinds of things Javanese wrote about themselves. Dutch writers fit what they learned about Java into their own epistemological categories. When dealing with textual traditions, for instance, Dutch scholars wanted to know about origins and

authentic texts. An authentic text was the one judged to be the oldest text they could find, if not the first one written. Once the oldest text was found, others that were dated later were read to see if and where they deviated from the original. Any deviation was judged to be a corruption. Obviously there were value judgments involved in these scholarly assertions? Why was it important to find the original text? Why was older necessarily better? Why was change a sign of corruption rather than an acknowledgment of different circumstances or audience?

It was easy for the Dutch to impose their categories in areas like dating and the question of what an authentic text was, though, than in what any story or textual tradition meant to its first audience. When it came to talking about meaning, the Dutch were often willing to listen to Javanese. Javanese who could write in Dutch could always find a Dutch audience eager to hear what a “native” had to say about Javanese artistic traditions. But being able to write in Dutch usually meant having had a Dutch education. And having had a Dutch education meant learning to think in European categories. For the Dutch educated Javanese in the beginning of the 20th century, notions of authenticity could seem important.

It was the combined efforts of Dutch scholars and Dutch educated Javanese intellectuals who created the conditions in the early decades of the 20th century that might have affected the youth ambitious to be a puppeteer. Although village traditions remained more fluid, and a youth who grew up in a family of puppeteers could always find a place, other choices were available, both for training and for understanding what *wayang* was all about. Some of what an educated person learned might have nothing to do with what a revered elder knew.

The talented youth of the 1920s and 1930s could leave behind the village apprentice system and enroll in a school for puppeteers at one of the small courts that the Dutch allowed to exist, even though their rulers had no real power. In the court school the puppeteer students would learn a set canon of stories and memorize a number of scripts. The performances they would be prepared to give would run for two, rather than nine, hours, and would appeal to urban audiences who preferred to sit in a theatre rather than on the ground. The accompanying music, too, was standardized by being written down, and musicians played accordingly. Whether the audience understood it or not,

they would have been told that what they were seeing had a deep, mystical meaning, which somehow, in some mysterious way, revealed the Javanese soul.

Sources:

Laurie J. Sears, *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996)

COLONIAL LEGACIES #5

Yi T'aejun, Twentieth Century Korean Writer

Korean writer, Yi T'aejun, was born in 1904, one year before the Japanese established a Protectorate over Korea, and six years before the formal annexation of Korea and establishment of Japanese colonial rule. What was it like to grow up as a colonial subject in Korea? What did Yi T'aejun know of Korea apart from its status as a colony of Japan? Did he have a sense of changes that had occurred once the Japanese took over? What could he have known about the long Korean past or even of life during the five hundred year old Choson dynasty, which officially ended with the emperor's abdication when Yi was a boy of six? For that matter, what could the young boy have known about the immediate past, when Koreans had attempted to engage with western learning on their own terms, while fending off efforts of the international community to decide Korea's future? Why, in any case, would the Korean past have been important to this Japanese educated early 20th century Korean writer?

In the first phase of colonial rule, which historians label the Dark Period, from 1910 to 1919, the Japanese colonial rulers attempted to still any opposition to the annexation by closing newspapers, forbidding assembly, outlawing organizations, and taking over the running of schools. Just as Yi would have been entering school, the

repressive measures were being put into effect. Since the educational policy was aimed at educating Koreans in Japanese culture and language, Yi would not have been learning about Korea in school.

Yi was fifteen at the time of the first major nation-wide protest against Japanese rule, which began on May 1st, 1919; and he would have been the beneficiary of the more liberal cultural policy put into effect by the Japanese after the uprising in the hope of winning more Korean consent to colonial rule. There were youth groups for him to join, newspapers to read, and hundreds of new magazines with serialized novels, short stories, essays, and all manner of writing representing the Korean writers' engagement with new genres associated with the West. The period from 1920 to 1925 was an exciting one for a Korean who aspired to be a writer. For those young people, and Yi was one of them, fortunate enough to go to Japan for higher studies, there was an even larger literary and cultural world to devour. Tokyo in the early 1920s was a very modern city, bursting with department stores, cafes, bookstores, lecture halls, exhibitions, and all manner of entertainment. But how much of that world had anything to do with Korea?

Back in Korea, Japanese openness to Korean intellectual activity began to come to an end in 1925, with the silencing once again of the Korean language press. By the early 1930s, when the Japanese launched an aggressive expansionist campaign, starting with Manchuria, colonial policy in Korea was aimed at assimilating the Korean people into the larger Japanese cultural sphere. Students had to recite a pledge of loyalty to the Japanese emperor before beginning the school day; Japanese language was mandated as the language of schools, government, and finally, business; Koreans were required to attend Shinto religious ceremonies; freedom of assembly was forbidden, and, beginning in 1938, Koreans were recruited into the Japanese army.

It is not surprising that the attempt to turn Koreans into loyal Japanese should have failed, and that it should have given rise to a virulent nationalist movement; but how did Koreans, including Yi T'aejun, fight against assimilation? What tools did they have? Historians have tended to focus on literary and politically active nationalists as the leaders of anti-Japanese activity, without paying too much attention to the rest of the population. A result has been scholars' willingness to divide Koreans into two camps: resisters, and collaborators, allowing for the assumption that resisters were the true

Koreans. Is a true Korean someone completely untouched by colonial rule? Historians who have tended to see the effects of Japanese colonialism limited to the realm of the political and the economic are now making room for those interested in the cultural and intellectual legacies of colonial rule.

In essays and in short stories in the early 1940s, Yi T'aejun was grappling with questions of identity, asking himself what it meant to be Korean and how, as a Korean in 1940, he could gain access to the Korea of the Choson period. Here we have to travel with Yi back to his school days in Tokyo.

Japanese interest in the Korean past provided one means for Koreans to learn about Korea in former times. Like colonizers elsewhere, Japanese colonial administrators collected vast amounts of information about Korea. Korea became a site for Japanese tourism, and tourists with an artistic sense collected Korean objects. Yanagi Soetsu, for instance, formulated notions about a Korean aesthetic, which laid the groundwork for the organization of Korean objects in Japanese museums. Although intellectual elites in the 1870s in Korea had written about such far-flung places as Switzerland, the U.S., Italy, Poland, Russia, France and Vietnam, it was in Japan that a coherent image of the world, divided between Orient and Occident, was forged. In this conception, dependent, of course, on Japanese knowledge of Western world imaginaries, Korea had a place as part of the Orient, a place distinctive from the West, especially in its values. Koreans would have had access to this worldview when they studied in Japan. It was thus within the givens of a Japanese discourse that Koreans were able to map put a place for themselves in the world. It is one of the ironies of colonialism that the Japanese notion of an Orient, with themselves as leaders, was originally a Western idea.

Yi T'aejun is the beneficiary of the Japanese colonial legacy, which provided him with the organizing devices for endowing Korean objects with cultural meaning, and recognizing that access to the past which he desired was not possible by other means.

Sources:

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