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## COLONIAL RULES COMPARED: WESTERN AND JAPANESE USE OF VIOLENCE IN EAST ASIA

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Individual colonial violences, connected with a specific country, situation or period, have been dealt with in numerous publications. They have emerged almost as early as the modern colonial phenomenon itself - a seminal piece being Bartolome de Las Casas' *Brief Narration of The Destruction of The Indies* (1551)<sup>1</sup>, one of the most influential book in European history. But two recurrent shortcomings have plagued that literature. First, comparative studies in that field are even more sorely missing than in most others, probably because of the dominant imperial or nationalist perspective among the authors. That leaves the field open to non scientific, ideologically conditioned statements, that tend or to underestimate, or to exaggerate the dimensions of colonial violence: apology or denunciation are far too seldom dissociated from the mere drawing up of the facts. Second, a serious deficiency in the existing literature is the overemphasis on the biggest outbursts of violence: conquest, insurrections, liberation struggles... Whatever the importance of these dramatic (but generally rather short) episodes, that leaves in the dark "daily" violence (the behaviour of police forces, of the judicial courts, of colonists and their private militias, etc), as well as "non physical" violence, in the administrative, economic, cultural fields... And yet, in most colonial experiences, those trivial, routine encounters

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<sup>1</sup>In which that Spanish monk (1474-1566) put into light the terrible devastation resulting from his country's takeover of Mexico and Peru.

between the colonizer and the colonised were by far the most likely to happen.

Yet, as a new generation of scholars is emerging, that escaped colonial nostalgia as well as the passions going with decolonization crises, now well over, a new crop of studies is appearing, and that should renew completely the narratives of colonial history. That renewal is in many ways connected to the emergence of new trends in historical studies: the re-focussing of social history on the question of representations, of political history on the institutions and the collective feelings, of cultural history on the constitution and transmission of expertise, habits and prejudices. In all these fields the emphasis is put on the amazingly complex and changing ideas and behaviour of individuals and groups ceaselessly split, merged and redrawn by the movement of history.

To compare Japanese and Western behaviour in their respective Asian colonies could be obviously rewarding intellectually. First, Japanese colonialism -a latecomer in the colonial sphere- obviously took its inspiration and its methods from the European one. Second, it spread over Asian societies not completely different from some of the populations dominated by the West: Chinese in Taiwan were closely connected, culturally or economically, with Chinese in Hongkong or Singapore; there was no significant Korean community under Western rule (except in a way in Hawaii), but, culturally and politically, the common Chinese influence makes Vietnam and Korea especially interesting to compare. It can also be stated that France's Prime Minister Jules Ferry's *mission civilisatrice*<sup>2</sup> played some role in the formation of Japan's colonial ethos, as developed for example by Goto Shimpei. Thus I shall often refer to French Indochina, and not only because that colonial experience has been one of the most violent in the whole world.

In such a short paper, one should not expect a full-sized summing-up of such an enormous subject as colonial violence in Asia. I shall not try to give a fair account of even the most dramatic episodes - one should feel confident that my omissions will not proceed from any malignant impulse to hide or to downplay the major crimes whose colonial powers bear the indelible responsibility. More modestly, I shall

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<sup>2</sup>"Civilizing mission" - a concept developed in 1885 in a heated debate in Paris Parliament.

attempt to present a framework of analysis for that problem, and some tentative conclusions that further works should verify and specify.

### **I-From conquest to liberation: a cyclical violence?**

A major difficulty in the comparison between Western and Japanese colonialisms lies in the huge temporal dissymetry between them. Japan's colonial empire lasted only 50 years -many late Yi dynasty officials, such as Yun Ch'ihō, were able to see the 1945 Liberation-although the European dominion in East Asia, initiated and ended by the Portuguese, spanned almost five centuries (Malacca 1511-Macao 1999). So an extended first phase of loose, mostly mercantile colonial domination remains the preserve of the Europeans (the Americans being as late imperialists as the Japanese). But, in the shorter cycle of "high imperialism", after circa 1850, the similitudes between the temporalities of the various colonial histories are striking. The takeover of many significant territories (Annam, Tonkin, Laos for the French; Bali or Aceh or New Guinea for the Dutch; most Malay States, North Borneo or Upper Burma for the British; the Philippines for the Americans) took place in the same time span than the Japanese conquest. And most recovered their independence less than a decade after Japan's colonies.

#### *a) 16th century-c.1850: sporadic cruelties*

During the three first centuries of Western presence in East Asia, the Europeans, few in numbers (usually no more than a few thousands for the whole region), and only solidly established in some islands, remained for most Asians a remote threat. Most of their very victims probably regarded them as one of the numerous invaders that had plagued their countries since time immemorial. If Europeans seldom shied at killing, plundering, destroying, transporting, enslaving, that behaviour, seen by Asians, remained unexceptional, be it in cruelty, in intensity or in extension.

Violence remained confined. But occasionally it could reach the extreme. The Portuguese treated the largely Muslim Moluccas islanders with a dreadful mix of Christian crusade spirit and sheer greed for their famed spices. Their inability to generate anything else than fear explains the fragility of their dominion, crumbling as early as the first decades of the 17th century under the Dutch offensive. The new rulers, if more

cunning, proved as bloody as the old ones. In 1621, in the rebellious Banda islands, they torture and massacre elders and leaders, reduce part of the population to slavery and send it to Java, while thousands of others, driven away to arid mountains, starve to death. All indigenous villages and boats are destroyed, and the islands are converted into Dutch plantations using imported slaves. In 1623, "Amboyne massacre" stirred more emotion in Europe: 21 merchants in an English factory were arrested, tortured, sentenced after a fake trial, and executed by the Dutch<sup>3</sup>.

By way of contrast, the Spanish conquest of the Philippines seems to have been relatively peaceful. King Philippe II feared a devastation similar to what had happened in America, and the indigenous tribes opposed only sporadic resistance - except the Muslim *Moros* of the far South. Their violence was more or less permanent along the three centuries of Spanish domination: the Sulu sultan submitted in 1878 only, a few years before the collapse of the colonizer. It had been a fight without mercy: on the one side the seafaring *Moros*, one moment allied to the Dutch, devastate year after year Philippines' harbours, enslaving their Christian inhabitants, occasionally raiding communities in coastal Borneo, or as far away as in Taiwan; on the other side, Manila send punishing parties that destroy their villages<sup>4</sup>.

Chinese immigrants, although much less numerous than after 1850, suffer severely then from the Europeans, sometimes overzealously religious and often cynical. Manila Chinatown is ravaged by racial riots in 1603, 1639, 1662 and 1782 - an unwanted consequence being the economic stagnation of the Spanish colony<sup>5</sup>. When the Dutch East India Company (VOC) starts to decline, in the early 18th century, several harsh measures (including the transportation to Ceylon of the "unwanted ones") are adopted against the Chinese, accused of breach of public order and of smuggling. Many scared Chinese run away from Batavia, and undertake to gather some weapons. Then, in July 1740, Governor-General Valkenier allows the Javanese, supported by sailors and soldiers of the VOC, to initiate an awful massacre. Valkenier himself gives orders for the execution of all Chinese prisoners.

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<sup>3</sup>D.G.E. Hall, *A history of South-East Asia* (4th edition), London, Macmillan, 1981, p. 271 & 332-334

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 272-279, 749, 759

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 274-275

However, as early as the 17th century, some of these atrocities are blamed in the name of superior moral or political principles. Thus Gysels, a colleague of Coen, who devastated the Bandas, writes: "We must realize that (the indigenous) fought for the freedom of their land just as we expended our lives and goods for so many years in defence of ours"<sup>6</sup>.

*b)c.1850-c.1950: Between moralism and ultra-violence*

The last century of colonization is the century of its glorious apex and of its ignominious fall. The period is also more complex, more contradictory than any time before. Unprecedented moral considerations adjoin the worst horrors. One should not forget that the most successful colonizers -Britain and France, and to a lesser extent the Netherlands and Belgium- were simultaneously the most democratic powers of their time. The progressive triumph of the British/American/French revolutionary ideals led to a sincere revulsion regarding wanton massacres, cruelties, and more generally arbitrary, extra-judiciary repressive measures. It does not mean that the colonial armies stop committing terrible crimes; but their moral rejection among the metropolitan population, the explosion of information channels, and the growing freedom of a not too complacent Press bring about a dose of "self-censorship" even among the most brutish officers. Indignations are commonly selective, and all too often they rise more easily against governments of unfriendly countries. But they would lose any credibility if, from time to time, they were not directed against their own nation.

The British are often the introducers of new sets of ideas. With Singapore, Thomas Stamford Raffles creates in 1819 the first colony based on free trade. A few years earlier, having taken over Java from the Dutch, he adopted there decisive measures against slavery, particularly the banning of slave trade, in 1813. Simultaneously he prohibited the use of torture, and limited the use of death penalty<sup>7</sup>. In 1837, the British envoy to the Burmese court, Burney, intercedes against the common torturing of noble women, provoking the ire of the Mandalay king. Gordon (later to be the ill-fated British conqueror of Sudan) and other officers assigned to the Chinese imperial troops fighting against Taiping

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 333

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. p. 526-527

rebels inform London newspapers of the innumerable atrocities committed by the army they advise; finally the British parliament compels the government to withdraw his support.

The growing concept of human rights is by no means limited to the British. In Java, the years 1830-1870 had been characterized by the harsh *Cultural System*, sometimes degenerating into semi-serfdom: forced labour, assignation of much of the best land to industrial, export crops. The next period puts progressively in its place an *Ethic System*, more liberal and more humanitarian - strikingly a bestselling novel, *Max Havelaar*, exposing the unjust and exploitative character of colonial rule<sup>8</sup>, had triggered a change of mind in public opinion and in Parliament. Auguste Pavie, who won Laos over to France, is remembered as a rare example of a humanistic colonization, truly concerned with the indigenous people's well-being - in exchange of their submission to French rule.

And actually the West, during that period, has much greater ambitions, and means, than before. Hence a multiplication of military expeditions, sometimes with large forces - 30 000 French soldiers occupy Tonkin (northern Vietnam) in 1885. These wars of conquest are plagued by awful, recurring massacres. Thus, when the fortress of Hue, Vietnam's capital, was stormed in 1883 by admiral Courbet, a witness, the famous novelist Pierre Loti, describes terrible acts: "Nobody left to kill. Then the sailors, driven insane by the sun and the noise, went out of the fort and threw themselves on the injured, with a kind of nervous shivering. Those who were gasping with fear, crouching in holes; who simulated death, hidden under mats; who moaned, stretching out their hands to implore mercy; who screamed *Han !.. Han!* with an heartrending voice, - they finished them, bursting them with bayonettes, breaking their heads with the butt of their guns"<sup>9</sup>. Devastation and terror are the orders of the day, and the French general staff bears full responsibility for the situation. here are for example the marching orders of lieutenant-colonel Godard, for operations of 6-10 March 1885 in Kep area: "Deserted villages should be burned, and the inhabitants who will run away before the French troops should be used as targets for

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<sup>88</sup>David Joel Steinberg & al., *In search of South-East Asia - a modern history*, Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 152-153, 188

<sup>9</sup>Pierre Loti, *Le Figaro*, 17 October 1883 - It should be noted that Loti self-censored that fragment in the collection of his articles on Vietnam that he published in 1897...

our rifles... Destroying the (fruit) trees should be our principle"<sup>10</sup>. A disgruntled French soldier narrates: "Passing through the villages, we were allowed to kill everybody and plunder everything when people did not offer their submission. Therefore we never lacked chicken and pigs..."<sup>11</sup>. In 1871 already, admiral Dupré, talking about the provinces of Western Cochinchina, had admitted: "We have taken them, we have ruined them, we have depopulated them"<sup>12</sup>. During Java's great revolt of 1825-30 (also known as Diponegoro War), the Dutch lost 15 000 soldiers (half of them local recruits), but probably 200 000 Indonesians villagers perished<sup>13</sup>. Between 1898 and 1901, the conquest of the Philippines -who had declared independence from Spain- mobilized 130 000 American soldiers, and included many ugly episodes; as late as 1906, 600 Moro insurgents were massacred by US forces<sup>14</sup>.

It is difficult to give even a rough figure for the human losses connected with colonial conquest. For the Netherland Indies, 300 000 deaths appear a bare minimum<sup>15</sup>. For Indochina (probably in Burma too, where resistance to the British was fierce between 1886 and 1891) , the figure should be at least in tens of thousands. To these high losses should be added the even higher ones (they should be counted in millions) connected with the disruption by colonization of many traditional equilibriums, be they ecological (irrigation systems in particular), economic, social or political. They manifested themselves in an upsurge of famines and epidemics. During its first decades, French Indochina suffered a severe demographic decline - but there is less evidence of it in other Southeast Asian colonies.

The end of the colonial period has often been marked by fresh outbursts of massive violence. The Spanish, between 1896 and 1898, develop an atmosphere of terror in the rebellious Philippines: even the most moderate of the nationalists, such as Jose Rizal, could be killed.

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<sup>10</sup>Quoted in Charles Fourniau, *Annam-Tonkin, 1885-1896: Lettrés et paysans vietnamiens face à la conquête coloniale*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1989, p. 23

<sup>11</sup>Letter published in Paris by *La Lanterne*, 13 December 1886. The soldier adds that there was no mercy, even regarding women and children.

<sup>12</sup>Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Court of Hue, 20 July 1871, French Overseas Archives, Fonds Indo GGI, cote 11688

<sup>13</sup>Bouda Etamad, *La possession du monde: Poids et mesures de la colonisation*, Bruxelles, Complexe, 2000, p. 101, 125

<sup>14</sup>Steinberg, op. cit., p. 195

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 125

The British shot dead dozens of peaceful leftist demonstrators or strikers in post WWII Malaya. The Dutch made a widespread use of military means under the guise of "police actions" during their failed 1946-49 attempt at reimposing their rule in Indonesia, and played dangerously on ethnic divides - a source of the present-day violences in the Moluccas archipelago. Malaya's independence (1957) was preceded since 1948 with a war of attrition, finally won by the British army over the Communist guerillas; although violence, rather low-scale, was more or less limited to the jungles and their margins, thousands were killed, hundreds of thousands were forcibly displaced to *New Villages* in army-controlled areas. By far the most bloody decolonization has been Vietnam's, where more than 400 000 inhabitants (among them a majority of civilians) perished during the war against the French, between 1946 and 1954. Only the French in Cambodia, the British in Singapore and Hong Kong, the Portuguese in Macao (but not in East Timor) and the Americans in the Philippines succeeded a relatively peaceful decolonization - but, in the latter case, it had been preceded by the terrible devastations of WWII and followed by a protracted guerilla war between the Communist Huks and the US-supported Manila government.

*c) Japan: A follower with some peculiarities*

That brief sketch should allow a better evaluation of Japan's use of violence within its colonies. At a quantitative as well as temporal level, it seems not to have been really exceptional. As in most other cases, the most bloody episodes take place at the time of conquest. In Taiwan - a bit like in the nearby Philippines, almost simultaneously- the conqueror had to fight against a new indigenous Republic, in that case organized by Chinese loyalists protesting against the "betrayal" of the Qing dynasty that had transferred the island-province to its victor, in 1895. Like in Upper Burma ten years before, or in Aceh (northern Sumatra) after the 1873 Dutch invasion, there was first an "official" resistance, that lasted five months: it was headed by the provincial government converted into a provisional "republic", helped by local militias and irregular troops from the mainland, including a group of those Black Flag warriors<sup>16</sup> who, interestingly, had been a formidable opponent to the French advance in

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<sup>16</sup>W.G. Goddard, *Formosa: A Study in Chinese History*, London, Macmillan, 1966, p. 153-56

Tonkin and Laos, between 1873 and 1888. But, after the collapse of the republic when its capital, Tainan, fell to the Japanese, a more low-key, popular guerilla developed, and lasted seven more years. Among its main promoters were Hakka Chinese villagers of the south, traditionally unruly. Those years were marked by massacres, the worst taking place in Yun-lin in June 1896 (around 6000 victims). It has been established that the population suffered around 6000 losses in 1895, around 12 000 between 1898 and 1902. All together, 30 000 violent deaths seems to be a very conservative estimate - that means around 1% of the then 3 million Taiwanese. The seriousness of the fighting can be hinted from the 5300 killed or wounded that the Japanese forces suffered in 1895 alone<sup>17</sup>.

Large scale violence did not stop after 1902. It became more sporadic, but there were at least six local uprisings between 1907 and 1915, quelled by more than 800 executions. The last unsubdued groups were in the jungle-clad (and timber-rich) high mountains: the fightings concentrated after 1911 on the Aborigines tribes; they had to suffer bombardments both from naval and aerial forces, and many of their villages were razed to the ground. The aboriginal territories had been cordoned off from the rest of Taiwan by a five-hundred mile long heavily guarded line<sup>18</sup>. The last armed revolt happened in 1930: some Atayals killed or maimed 350 Japanese, and suffered in return around 500 deaths<sup>19</sup>.

Things did not go very differently in Korea, where the main fightings -and the worst cases of repression- came around the time of the Japanese takeover. However two differences could explain that human losses were less staggering, especially if they are related to an almost five times bigger population (15 millions in 1913): first, Japanese political penetration was much more gradual, starting as early as the 1870s, and the 1910 annexation being preceded by the 1905 protectorate; second, the long land border with Manchuria allowed hard-pressed opponents to take refuge or to regroup there, although in Taiwan they had to submit, or to fight to the finish. On another hand, geopolitics thus allowed a sporadic armed struggle to be maintained in the border

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<sup>17</sup>Harry J. Lamley, "Taiwan Under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945: The Vicissitudes of Colonialism", in Murray A. Rubinstein (ed.), *Taiwan: A New History*, Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, 1999, p. 205-08

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 211-12

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 224

area throughout the Japanese occupation - an opportunity obviously unreachable for the thousands of Taiwanese who had been allowed until 1897 to keep their Chinese nationality by emigrating to the mainland.

The worst human losses seem to have occurred during the transition period that ended with the forced abdication of Emperor Sunjong. The small disbanded Korean army had joined with the recently politicized intelligentsia and, probably more decisively, the peasants militia who had first been mobilized by the *Tonghak* movement (1892-1895). The apex of the anti-Japanese struggle took place in 1908, when the occupation authorities estimated the guerilla forces to 70 000<sup>20</sup> - almost 0,5% of the total population. That truly national army was very badly equipped, and suffered enormous losses: almost 15 000 deaths between July 1907 and the end of 1908, 3000 in 1909. Consequently its strength and its fighting capacity dwindled fast: 25 000 troops in 1909, 2000 in 1910; 1 500 encounters in 1908, 52 between September 1910 and August 1911, five in 1912...<sup>21</sup> The Koreans had been conquered, not convinced: 50 000 Koreans were arrested in 1912, 140 000 in 1918; at least 200 000 had been sentenced to flogging - a punishment never used against a Japanese - during the 10s<sup>22</sup>. The intelligentsia, especially its dynamic Christian branch, was targeted as a potential alternative political center: in 1911, 135 were arrested, and most of them heavily sentenced after a mock trial. US protests resulted in a general revision of the sentences.

Quite unlike Taiwan, open political struggle and violence never receded completely in Korea. The remarkable March 1919 mass Independence Movement led to more than 500 deaths (some Korean estimates run as high as 7000) and almost 12 000 two-years detentions; the very fact that, according to the Japanese, only eight officials had been killed (and some of Korean origins could have been among the demonstrators) indicate enough that a non-violent protest had been met with a terribly violent suppression<sup>23</sup>. In 1929-30, a nationwide student movement, followed by a harsh repression, looks like a rerun of 1919, on

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<sup>20</sup>Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co, 1997, p. 146

<sup>21</sup>Andrew J. Grajdanzev, *Modern Korea*, New York, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1944, p. 44-45

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 47

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 55-56

a lower scale. And, during all these years, the Korean far north and, increasingly, the adjacent part of Manchuria were rife with guerilla activity. To quell it was one of the Japanese motivations for intervening in that part of China: a punitive expedition, in 1920, seems to have slaughtered 4000 Koreans; large-scale intervention and permanent occupation, from 1931, made life for the guerillas more difficult, but by no means destroyed them: official Japanese documents mention for year 1938 almost 3900 incidents involving at least 20 000-30 000 "Korean bandits" (each appearing several times), and causing nearly 400 deaths (and almost 4000 abductions) among the colonial forces and their protégés<sup>24</sup>.

A French cannot fail to remark that what is lacking in Japan's colonial history is the experience of the large-scale liberation wars that led elsewhere to independence. The explanation is simple: as Germany during WWI or Italy during WWII, Japan lost its colonial empire in one stroke, for geopolitical reasons. Therefore the inverted Gauss curve by which, in so many cases, colonial violence could be represented (one summit at the beginning, another towards the end) lacks the second "high" in the Korean and Taiwanese cases (although in the latter several thousands deaths resulted in 1945 from the US bombings and, even more, from the complete economic and social disruption they contributed to worsen).

Another interesting characteristic is the probable absence of any significant demographic decline after the conquest - even taking into account the large Japanese immigration. During the whole colonial period, Taiwan's population more than doubled, and Korea's jumped by two thirds - some of the fastest growths in the colonial world. And yet the intensity of economic exploitation under the Japanese is a well-known fact; and the increase in the average standard of life is at best dubious, especially in Korea. The rapid economic development - multiplying the stable sources of income -, the improvements in basic health and hygiene, and the rapid expansion of a reliable transportation system<sup>25</sup> could explain that somewhat paradoxical result.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 66 & 257-58

<sup>25</sup>In India's case, the development of railways seems to have been the most important single factor in the disappearance of great famines, around 1900.

Finally, where to place the human losses linked to Japanese colonialism on the sad scale of colonial history? Even if here are very rough estimates, one could say that around 1% of the Taiwanese, around 0,5% of the Koreans have been the direct victims of their colonizer. That compares quite well with deaths in the Netherland Indies (but there they have been spread along a much larger period of time) ; for Vietnam, the figure is significantly higher (probably 2-3%), but mostly because of the 1946-54 war.

So, where to locate the originality of Japan's use of colonial violence ? Even a very sketchy analysis of some of its qualitative aspects could be of some help.

## II - Ordinary violence, extraordinary goals

Between the main crisis periods, usually far and apart, the colonies were subjected to much milder, regularized forms of violence. Without ever adopting the same legal and judicial norms than in the metropolitan countries -even when they were at best semi-democracies, such as in Germany or in Japan-, colonial authorities, populated by civil servants and politicians often quite representative of the political mainstream of the time, had increasingly to take into consideration their ministry's orders, parliamentary control and, from time to time, rabid press campaigns. Thus, for example, when, in 1930, Indochina *Gouverneur-général* Pasquier crushed the mutiny of Yen Bay indigenous garrison with 80 death sentences, the appeal before the Minister of Colonies succeeded in quashing around 40% of the judgments, and led to a few acquittals.<sup>26</sup> Of the more than 10 000 Indochinese political prisoners of 1931 (probably the peak before WWII), about 80% had been liberated before 1936, when the *Front Populaire* government decided to amnesty almost all the remaining<sup>27</sup>. So, after the period of conquest and before the eventual period of liberation wars, there has been an almost permanent attempt at trivializing the ways of governing colonies<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup>Patrice Morlat, *La répression coloniale au Vietnam (1908-1940)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1990, p. 122 sq

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 207 & 231

<sup>28</sup>That attempt was not automatically doomed: in the few, admittedly small colonies that survived the great decolonization wave, the rule of law had finally by and large triumphed:

Nevertheless, there was an almost insolvable contradiction between those efforts and the extraordinary, even exorbitant nature of colonial rule, recognized in the most solemn way at the Paris 1919 Peace Conference, as well as in the Charter of the League of Nations: even if France, Britain and Japan succeeded in preserving their colonial empires, it became internationally admitted that no new full-fledged colonies could be created. Hence the uproar when, in the 30s, Japan in Manchuria and Italy in Ethiopia tried to revive colonial conquest time. But, in its more settled colonies, Japan's colonial administration was in many ways deceptively common in its daily use of violence against its subjects, and in its obstinate denial of their rights. And yet, after many errings, partly because Japan's wartime propaganda presented itself as the "Liberator" of an Asia suffering Western colonial yoke, partly because the pressure of war imposed an ever-increasing mobilization of its subjects, Tokyo adopted at last a radically assimilationist policy, even if Taiwanese and Koreans were never to be treated on a par with the Japanese.

*a) Colonies as police states*

Everywhere in the colonial world, tiny and sometimes minute Western minorities had to hold out against the vast majority. Hence the overemphasis on these two functions: watching and punishing - to paraphrase Foucault. And the centrality of police in the colonial systems. In Vietnam, since 1917, the *Sûreté Générale Indochinoise* develops a tight network of informers who will play havoc in the nascent nationalist and communist movements. In Korea, the police force grows from 7 700 in 1910 to 20 600 in 1937 - nearly as many as the school teachers...<sup>29</sup> In Taiwan, 930 police stations have been established as early as 1901. They will receive wide-ranging administrative powers, especially in the villages, later on very gradually taken over by the civilian administration: land survey, public health, population census, immigration and prostitution controls, primary education, agricultural modernization, non criminal justice... The control over the Aborigines is especially tight:

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in Hong Kong with the British as well as in the French West Indies or Indian Ocean *départements d'outre-mer*.

<sup>29</sup>Grajdanzev, op. cit., p. 257

in 1931, almost half the 11 000 policemen are posted in their reserves, and play the roles of doctors and educators...<sup>30</sup>

The police is the nucleus of an omnipresent control system. To fight the Taiwanese guerillas, a force reaching 130 000 militiamen in 1903 was constituted; it was going to be re-activated during WWII. From 1898, the traditional *pao-chia* ("ten households self-control") system is revived, under police supervision; only the Chinese have to take part in it.<sup>31</sup> In Korea the traditional leaders, village elders, etc, are heavily used; the 2500 police substations plan regular visits into every household<sup>32</sup>.

Colonial justice in French Indochina has been characterized as "brutal, humiliating, unfair"<sup>33</sup> - these expletives could easily be assigned to the other colonies. Brutal: in Tonkin, against the revolts, special courts, the *Commissions criminelles*, render hasty justice, sentencing dozens to death; their judgments were often nullified by normal tribunals or by the Minister of Justice; in Korea, the summary police jurisdiction tries more than 100 000 cases a year; in Taiwan, the governor-general could make judicial law at will: the 1898 Bandit Punishment Ordinance and the 1904 Fine and Flogging Ordinance were applied till the late 10s<sup>34</sup>. Humiliating: corporal punishments were overused; Vietnam's jails, overcrowded with 61 000 detainees in 1931 (including more than 10 000 political detainees)<sup>35</sup>, could in Tonkin reach a mortality rate of 4,3%<sup>36</sup>. Unfair: as a matter of principle, the colonizers were judged according to the metropolitan law, the colonised according to the harsher colonial law - when they were not simply fined or detained by administrative decision; a huge majority of judges, especially in the higher positions, were colonizers; and the governor-general could easily interfere with justice, as he usually had the latitude to nominate and dismiss the judges, contrary to metropolitan uses.

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<sup>30</sup>Lamley, ch. quoted, p. 212

<sup>31</sup>Ching-Chih Chen, "Police and Community Control Systems in the Empire", in Ramon H. Myers & Mark R. Peattie (ed), *The Japanese Colonial Empire 1895-1945*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 216

<sup>32</sup>Lamley, ch. quoted, p. 222

<sup>33</sup>Pierre Brocheux, "Le colonialisme français en Indochine", in Marc Ferro (ed.), *Le livre noir du colonialisme*, Paris, robert Laffont, 2003, p. 357

<sup>34</sup>Lamley, ch. quoted, p. 217

<sup>35</sup>Three times more than in Korea at the same time, for a slightly smaller population

<sup>36</sup>Morlat, op. cit., p. 209

The judiciary, in the British colonies, was always more independent. Consequently, it had to be bypassed if "subversive" movements were to be suppressed efficiently: everywhere the newly independent states inherited of almost unlimited administrative detention powers, completely negating the *habeas corpus* principle; they had apparently been used first against the Irish, and, for example, were practiced on a grand scale against the Malayan radical left during the Emergency period (1948-1960).

*b) The paucity of political rights*

A growing proportion of the colonised populations had the opportunity to get some modern education, including, for a tiny minority, the local or metropolitan universities. Consequently those *éduqués* were at the forefront in the struggles for equality of rights. But the colonizer, and even more the colonists, were not disposed to share what they considered their hard-won power and privileges. In most cases, opposition political parties were not allowed to operate. And even the assimilationist movements raised suspicion: the *Taiwan Dokakai*, who gathered huge crowds in 1914 on the motto of "becoming Japanese" - and thence the equals of the resident Japanese- was disbanded by the Governor-General in 1915<sup>37</sup>. The League for the Establishment of a Taiwan Parliament petitioned the Japanese Diet from 1921 till 1934, to no avail<sup>38</sup>. Nowhere universal suffrage was introduced: the electorates remained based on fortune and ethnicity (the *congrégations* -European, Chinese, Indian, etc...- in Vietnam, and a very similar system for the Netherlands East Indies Volksraad). Interestingly, the "decolonized" Hongkong electoral system is probably the last in the world to operate partly in that way, despite the explicit wishes of the population: Beijing rulers are the unexpected faithful heirs of a Paul Doumer. In any case the essential powers fully remained in government hands: almost everywhere, no legislative assembly with real powers existed before WWII, even if heated elections took place in French Cochinchina (Trotskyites being elected in the 30s to Saigon Municipal Council...) <sup>39</sup> or for the Netherlands Indies People's Council. The only true exceptions

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<sup>37</sup>Lamley, ch. quoted, p. 219

<sup>38</sup>Ibid. p. 233

<sup>39</sup>Cf Daniel Hémery, *Révolutionnaires vietnamiens et pouvoir colonial en Indochine, 1932-37*, Paris, Maspéro, 1975

were the American Philippines, where philippinisation of public offices and open elections already prevailed in the 1900s, the country being already engaged on the road to independence since 1934, and more partially and lately Burma, since 1937.

Nevertheless, everywhere the 20s were years of political detente: Woodrow Wilson's *New Diplomacy* and the impulses coming from the League of Nations created a new atmosphere, and the general prosperity allowed some political and social concessions. The most blatant abuses concerning forced labour, sexual slavery or drug trade were curbed, albeit slowly and timidly. Some moderate, assimilationist or reformist political organizations were at last allowed to operate, such as the *Constitutionnalistes* in Vietnam, or the *Sin'ganhoe* in Korea, or even the more radical, independentist Sukarno's *Partai Nasional Indonesia*, in Dutch Java. The press became simultaneously more free and more widespread, and appeared in Korea as the symbol of the new "cultural policy" introduced by Japan soon after the crushing of the 1919 Independence movement: still the stick, for sure, but a more consistent carrot too<sup>40</sup>. But, from the end of the decade, the simultaneous decline of world economy and rise of radical contestation -the newly appeared Communists being frequently at the forefront- led to a general political regression and to renewed harsh repressive policies, only briefly interrupted in Indochina in 1936-37 under the ephemeral rule of France's People's Front<sup>41</sup>.

### c) *Ethnocide or national promotion ?*

The late 30s and 40s led in the Japanese colonies to a paradoxical situation, that brought them further and further apart from their explicit model - the European colonial system. On the one hand the constraints were more severe than ever. All autonomous organizations had been disbanded, the independent newspapers closed. Police controls tightened, pretexting after 1937 the wartime necessities. Even more strikingly, the authorities attempted the uprooting of indigenous language and culture: since 1937/38, Chinese and Korean languages were

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<sup>40</sup>Gregory Henderson, *Korea: The politics of the vortex*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1978, pp. 88-94; Andrew C. Nahm, *Korea: Tradition and Transformation - A History of the Korean People*, Seoul, Hollym, 1988, pp. 290-308

<sup>41</sup>Cf Ngo Van, *Viêt-nam 1920-1945: révolution et contre-révolution sous la domination coloniale*, Paris, L'insomniaque, 1995

supposed to disappear from the school curriculae, from the media, from public life; and an unprecedented compulsory family name conversion was launched (with only poor results in Taiwan<sup>42</sup>), symbolically nipponizing the identities.<sup>43</sup> The families were supposed to introduce Shinto altars in their homes, and to marry in the newly built Shinto shrines<sup>44</sup>. Almost a textbook ethnocidal policy... Forced labour was introduced on a grand scale, inside and even more outside the colonies<sup>45</sup>: at the end of the war, at least 10% of the Koreans had had to leave to Japan, to Manchuria, to China, or to the Imperial army - men in combat positions, women as prostitutes...<sup>46</sup> A good sign of the resulting tensions could be the mistreatment, or even the murder of thousands of civilian Japanese by the local population, mostly in Korea, after August 15th, 1945<sup>47</sup>.

On the other hand, spectacular measures were taken that were leading towards total integration, and were probably felt so in Taiwan and in Korea. In the political field, youths and adults were invited to join mass organizations very similar to those then sponsored in Japan by the army - and they did it, by millions<sup>48</sup>. In December 1944, Japanese laws

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<sup>42</sup>7% of the Taiwanese had changed names before the war ended; but 51% could speak at least some Japanese - Lamley, ch. quoted, p. 240

<sup>43</sup>Henderson, op. cit., pp. 103-104; Nahm, op. cit., pp. 232-233 & 255

<sup>44</sup>That could explain that, in 1945, during the eight days following Japan's capitulation, no less than 136 Shinto sanctuaries were burnt by Koreans - see Ienaga Saburo, *Japan's last war*, Canberra, Australia National University Press, 1979 (1st Japanese edition: 1968), p. 157

<sup>45</sup>660 000 Koreans were mobilized for working in Japan's wartime mines and factories - ibid, p. 158; some 200 000 Asian coolies had to work in 1942-43 on the Bangkok-Rangoon "death railway", enduring great human loss; hundreds of thousands more (may be millions) had to join less spectacular works, or became Japanese troops' servants.

<sup>46</sup>Cummings (op. cit., p. 175) says 11,6%, but without detailing; 209 000 entered the army - Ienaga, op. cit., p.158; some 1 300 000 joined Japan's workforce, forcibly or not - John W. Dower, "Sensational Rumors, Seditious Graffiti, and the Nightmares of the Thought Police", in *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays*, p. 117; in addition there were students, non-working family members, up to 100 000 "comfort women", and hundreds of thousands settlers or traders in Manchuria and North China. Nahm (op. cit., p. 284-285) quotes the figures of 1,6 million (in 1942) for that last group, and 1,8 million for the Koreans in Japan (in 1943). Korea's population in 1945 was 25 millions.

<sup>47</sup>Some 29 000 Japanese civilians, residents or refugees from Manchuria, were murdered (by Koreans or by the Soviet troops) in what was to become North Korea - cf Ienaga, op. cit., p. 233

<sup>48</sup>Cummings, op. cit., p. 177

and constitution were extended to the colonies, with a transition period.<sup>49</sup> In March 1945, the colonies were invited to send representatives to the (almost powerless) Diet - but the war ended too soon. In the educational field, all schools were integrated (in 1941 in Taiwan) - although the Japanese residents strived to preserve exclusive schools for their children<sup>50</sup>. In the military field, recruitment was gradually extended from 1937, and general conscription was finally introduced between late 1944 and early 1945<sup>51</sup>. In Taiwan, more than 200 000 had been drafted before the end of the war, mostly in administrative or support positions; 62 000 fought on the battlefield, about half being killed.<sup>52</sup> Again, there is no reason to doubt the enthusiasm and dedication of many colonised subjects: the applications for joining the army, sometimes written with blood, constantly exceeded the availabilities, sometimes by 50 for one (17 000 of the 802 000 Korean volunteers were effectively recruited between 1938 and 1943; as late as 1944, there were 90 000 applications for 3 000 positions in the Navy<sup>53</sup>; the situation was very similar in Taiwan when the volunteer system was introduced, in 1942); there were almost no desertion, no rebellion, no strike, no demonstration, even when the war turned obviously sour. The contrast with the restive years that had followed the conquest is all the more striking.

## Conclusion

So, at last, a truly original feature in Japanese colonial policy may be acknowledged. No such integrationist attempt could be spotted in other Asian colonies - although France has succeeded (until now !) at integrating its small Caribbean and Indian Ocean possessions, and had tried the same policy in Algeria, without enough resolution.

The mention of Algeria should allow us to understand better Japan's attitude after 1937. Algeria is generally considered as a "population colony", where the main goal was to create, through French immigration, a new extension of the metropolitan territory. And yet only

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<sup>49</sup>Nahm, *op. cit.*, p. 235

<sup>50</sup>Grajdanzev, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-270; Lamley, *ch. quoted*, p. 243

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 241

<sup>52</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 241, 243 & 260

<sup>53</sup>Nahm, *op. cit.*, p. 234

around 600 000 French did move there - 1,6 million Japanese moved into their empire, a not insignificant percentage of the indigenous population. So one could think that the ultimate goal for Tokyo has been, if not always, at least early in the colonial period, to create new overseas Japans. With the rise of geopolitical and internal tensions, that goal became more urging. Obviously, Taiwanese and Koreans could not be treated like Australian Aborigines (but Ainus in Hokkaido and Karafuto *were* treated like them !). So the only realistic option was to use simultaneously the stick and the carrot to induce them, by love or by fear, to become as Japanese as possible - even if, for sure, only second-class citizens for a very long time.

It worked, for a time, because the downfall of democracy in Japan itself eliminated the incertainties that would have come with democratization in the colonies (France or Britain had always been very conscious of that kind of risk); and because, for a long time, Japan could make people believe that it was winning the war, and that here was a golden opportunity to join the winners. Nevertheless the relative passivity of the colonized people all along those years remains something of a mystery. One should admit that the enthusiastic support of so many Japanese for the crazy war plans of their fascist-militarist ruling clique is an even greater mystery. And, perhaps, these two mysteries are linked...

Let's come back finally to our main purpose. Japan may not have been especially violent with its colonies, but nevertheless it has been *very* violent ! At the same time it devoted much energy and enormous resources (huge number of soldiers, large investments, first-class politicians...) to their development and integration (most other colonies lacked all that). So, initially, the installation of the Japanese new order was felt by the colonised as a kind of violation, and there was much resistance, and consequently a savage repression. But, at the following generation, the density of Japanese presence prevented rebellions, and its general efficiency induced some accomodation. Thus "rampant", "ordinary" violence remained high, and became higher, in police or justice behaviour, or in blatant economic exploitation, but without much blood being spilled<sup>54</sup> - even as, politically, Japan switched closer

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<sup>54</sup>Between 1940 and June 1944, 5600 Koreans were detained for political reasons (Id.) - hardly a widespread terror, and nothing comparable with what was happening at the same

and closer to fascism. After all, was the situation *that* different for people in Japan proper in the 30s and 40s?

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time in occupied China or Philippines. No book mentions any political execution (there was none in Japan itself).