

**Korea, a Pitiful Third-Rate Nation,
Even First-Rate Korean Newspapers Are Plagued with
Anti-Japanese Fundamentalism**
by Nishimura Kohyu
(Summary)

Nishimura Kohyu, journalist and critic, suggests that the Korean mistrust and fear of the Japanese crosses over into the realm of paranoia. The Korean mindset is characterized as imagining Japanese demons lurking behind every bush and the over-the-top, unreasoned responses to perceived wrongs committed in the past by Japan. Such thinking is characterized by Mr. Nishimura as “fundamentalist,” akin to Muslim fundamentalism espoused by the Taliban, and after reading Mr. Nishimura’s essay, one can hardly object. Indeed, Mr. Nishimura suggests that shrill anti-Japanese Koreans are currently engaging in “information terrorism,” comparing past and present Japanese acts, no matter how innocuous, to Nazi atrocities.

One aspect underlying Korean thinking is their previous status as “Small China”. Many Koreans have yet to discard the notion that they are “Small China,” an offshoot of “Big China” but still above all others, which gives them the right to view foreigners, including Japanese, as “subservient” and “inferior”. This thinking is reflected in the fact that Koreans, whether average citizens or high-ranking politicians, including former President Lee Myung-bak, have repeatedly called the Japanese emperor a “king” and for him to “kneel down” and “apologize” to “activists of the [Korean] independence movements”. Historically the Chinese reserved the title for their emperor and the Koreans obliged Chinese’ wishes.

One other aspect pointed out by Mr. Nishimura underlying Korean thinking is their cavalier disregard of the facts. Koreans have selectively ignored ugly aspects of their own history. Rather than acknowledge that Japanese annexation took Korea out of the dark ages of the Yi Dynasty and into the modern era, Koreans focus on how the Japanese “destroyed Yi Dynasty culture”. Such selectivity greatly influences the Korean historical outlook and leads to arrogance—reflected in their belittling of the Japanese emperor. Thus, the effects of a warped historical view and the suppression of facts are to reinforce their anti-Japanese fundamentalism. Public officials like former President Lee respond with eccentric words and actions.

The Japanese, however, have not been entirely passive. In response to Japanese outrage, the Korean media cut-out references to “kneeling down and apologizing”. Such a response, to hide the facts rather than admit to a mistake, is typical of most Koreans, notes Mr. Nishimura.

Mr. Nishimura further illustrates the warped Korean mindset with the incident involving a Korean soccer player holding a “Dokdo” banner at the London Olympics, in flagrante breach of protocol which ban political displays. Rather than expressing regret,

much less chiding the player for poor sportsmanship, in a bizarre display of contempt, the Korean press blamed Japan for this incident and further claimed that the Rising Sun flag is akin to the swastika flag flown by Nazi Germany. While one could downplay this kind of thinking as being limited to Korea, this would be a serious mistake as such thinking has spread to Koreans residing in the US.

Koreans will need to view their own history objectively, and this could lead to a more objective view of their neighbors. In the meantime, Nishimura also suggests that the Japanese acknowledge the issues that are of importance to them and to stand up for them.