

Between the March First Movement and the Great
Kantō Earthquake:
Critique of Colonialized Representation of
Koreans in Nakanishi Inosuke's Novella
Futei Senjin [The Unscrupulous Korean]

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Abstract

In the one hundred years since the March First Movement, the relationship between Korea and Japan is at its nadir. Keeping this current state in mind, this article examines how the March First Movement was understood in Japanese literature in an attempt to shed light on the various historical meanings of the March First Movement. Nakanishi Inosuke, the author discussed in this article, is a rare Japanese writer who recognized the historical nature of the March First Movement as a fundamental protest against colonial rule. He worked as a journalist in P'yŏngyang in the early 1910s and suffered the hardships of prison life in the colonies, which was extremely rare for a Japanese. Based on such experiences, he published a series of writings depicting colonial Korea in the 1920s. This article concentrates on one of such writings, *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean], and examines the meaning of this provocative title. Originally, the term "Futei Senjin" began to be used by the Japanese colonial power, which defined Koreans who resisted Japanese colonial rule as evil terrorists. And the March First Movement precipitated the rapid expansion of the term, from Korea to the colonial center. In the early 1920s, this term was widely recognized in the colonial center, creating an extremely negative and dehumanized image of the Korean people. In this vein, the term "Futei Senjin" can be characterized as an amalgam of the frightening, repulsive images of colonial Korea held by the Japanese during this period. Such images eventually led to the indiscriminate massacre of Koreans by the Japanese people amidst the chaos following the Great Kantō Earthquake in September 1923. Between the March First Movement and Great Kantō Earthquake, Nakanishi warned of the dangers of these distorted images of Koreans shared by the Japanese in his anti-colonial novella *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean], a warning that has yet to lose its validity in the current Japanese society filled with anti-Korean discourse.

Keywords: Nakanishi Inosuke, Futei Senjin, colonialism, March First Movement, Great Kantō Earthquake

1. Prologue: Nakanishi Inosuke and Colonial Korea

The hundredth anniversary of the March First Movement has recently passed, and in line with the attempt to shed light on the March First Movement from various perspectives, this article examines how Japanese literature understood this historical movement. Nakanishi Inosuke was a rare Japanese writer who recognized the historical nature of the March First Movement as a fundamental protest against colonial rule and published many a bold critique of Japanese colonialism in the 1920s. Nakanishi's achievement is even now quite novel, not having lost its unusual luster (Takayanagi 2013).

Born in Kyōto in 1887, Nakanishi moved to P'yōngyang around 1909. Having already encountered socialist ideology and Christian beliefs, Nakanishi gauged the realities in the colony as extremely unfair (Katsumura 2011), and working as a journalist, deepened his understanding of colonial Korea. According to his own retrospection, he was sent to prison for writing critiques against the Japanese Government-General and the mining companies (Kobayashi 1985). Eventually, he was imprisoned in P'yōngyang in 1914 and suffered the hardships of prison life in a colony, an experience all too rare for a Japanese.

He began his literary career in the early 1920s and published the colonial novel *Akatsuchi ni Megumu Mono* [What Sprouts in the Ruddy Soil] in February 1922. This groundbreaking work was noted as a critical portrayal of the realities of colonial rule in Korea for the first time in a long-form narrative (Katsumura 2009, 29). After the March First Movement, a number of Japanese intellectuals, including Yoshino Sakuzo, a leading thinker of Taishō Democracy, called for improvements in Japan's way of governing Korea. However, few people fundamentally took issue with the validity of the colonial rule (Nagata 2005, 271). Under such circumstances, Nakanishi was exceptional in questioning the colonial rule itself.

Following *Akatsuchi ni Megumu Mono* [What Sprouts in the Ruddy Soil], Nakanishi published his 1922 novella

Futei Senjin [The Unscrupulous Korean]. In February 1923, he published a long novel titled *Nanjira no Haigo Yori* [From Behind Your Back] featuring a Korean female independence activist. However, on September 1 of that same year, the Great Kantō Earthquake occurred, amidst the tremendous confusion of which Koreans were massacred indiscriminately, as is well known. Given this historical trajectory, the title *Nanjira no Haigo Yori* [From Behind Your Back] is truly significant; one can easily see how keenly Nakanishi perceived the times. In such a fashion, Nakanishi tried to inform the Japanese people of the reprehensible colonial rule by releasing anti-colonial novels in his homeland in the 1920s, which was greatly shaken by the aftermath of the March First Movement and the shock of the Great Kantō Earthquake.

The most noticeable feature of Nakanishi as a socialist writer is that he was keenly aware of the problem of ethno-nationality, which was generally neglected because it was considered less important than the problem of class at the time (Katsumura 2009, 28–29). In addition, it was not only colonial Korea to which he paid attention, but also Manchuria and Taiwan, about which he also produced writings in the 1930s (Katsumura 2009, 28–29). Nakanishi was that rare Japanese writer during the Japanese colonial period who steadfastly pursued anti-colonialism and anti-fascism (Katsumura 2006, 9).

The historical significance of Nakanishi as a colonial writer also needs to be explored. Nakanishi's novels about the colony can carry significant meaning beyond the bounds of Japanese literature, amidst the great trend in world literary history (Kurokawa 1996, 333). In 1902, Joseph Conrad published the classic colonial novella *Heart of Darkness*. And after World War I, some writers finally began to turn their attention to colonial issues, as cultural and ideological currents underwent fundamental changes within the Western powers. E. M. Foster's *Road to India* (1924) and André Gide's *Voyage au Congo* (1927), for example, offer intrinsic critiques of colonial rule, ultimately leading to a series of works that deserve to be registered in the history of world literature in the twentieth century. Subsequently, during World War II, colonial-born George Orwell and Albert Camus actively

engaged in literary production.

With this development of the history of world literature in mind, the importance of Nakanishi is even more pronounced when one hears Watanabe Kazutami's arguments: "It was only after World War I that writers of advanced nations began to turn to their own nations' colonial problems. Considering such anti-colonial literature in the 1920s, the pioneering aspect of Nakanishi Inosuke's *Akatsuchi ni Megumu Mono* [What Sprouts in the Ruddy Soil] should not be underestimated. And in portraying the March First Movement, *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean] captured a more heightened purity of anti-colonialism than that in *Akatsuchi ni Megumu Mono* [What Sprouts in the Ruddy Soil], (Watanabe 2003, 23)."

In such a milieu, *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean] bears paramount significance in its time of presentation. Through this novel, which was published in 1922, Nakanishi faithfully portrayed the image of Koreans within the Japanese imagination, which dramatically deteriorated after the March First Movement and fundamentally changed relationship between the two. Staged on the periphery of the colony, the novella posits a desperate atmosphere as if foretelling the literal ethnic massacre that took place in the heart of the empire just a year after its release.

2. Road to the Futei Senjin

Set three years after the March First Movement, *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean] tells the story of Usui Eisaku, a young Japanese man, who is traveling to meet a Korean man identified as the leader of the anti-Japanese forces with the thought, "I thought I should enter the den of the Futei Senjin based in the northwestern part of the country to talk with them sincerely (Nakanishi 2017, 12)." The background to the Korean man becoming an independence fighter is as follows: "A few years ago, when popular movements broke out in this country, leading to a huge whirlpool of unrest, his daughter, who was then only a schoolgirl, threw herself into that terrifying whirlpool and died (Nakanishi 2017, 18)."

It is important to note that the land where Eisaku travels

is located in the northwestern part of the Korean peninsula, probably somewhere on the edge of P'yŏngan Province. As is well known, P'yŏngan Province is an area where the March First Movement was particularly intense. Though Nakanishi was not in Korea during the March First Movement, he had lived in P'yŏngyang for several years during the early colonial period and so must have grasped first-hand the uniqueness of the region. Later, when Nakanishi mentioned the names of An Jung-geun and Kang Woo-kyu, he said, "The northern Koreans are by nature fierce and strong-willed. Numerous revolutionaries and righteous assassins came from northern Korea...It is no exaggeration to say that northern Korea is the spirit and matrix of modern Korea." He also praised the strong spiritual climate of northern Korea and its numerous achievements imprinted in history of modern Korean people (Nakanishi 1948, 29). In fact, the leader of the anti-Japanese forces in *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean] perfectly captures such an image of the northern Korean, and Eisaku is simply travelling to witness the "spirit of modern Korea."

Departing the train in a desolate plain, Eisaku crosses several symbolic boundaries before arriving at the destination of the trip. His anxiety of traversing a strange land is revealed through the scenery unfolded before his eyes. With his Korean interpreter, Eisaku walks through a path that resembles a valley because one side of the ridge has collapsed:

As Eisaku looked up at the cracks in the large strata that seemed just about to crumble, he thought it would collapse again right away. If the large strata up so high collapsed, Eisaku and his Korean interpreter would be buried in a flash. He hurried his steps and reached for a handful of the soil there. It was faded, brown soil mixed with sparkling granite, with not a hint of viscosity. A light thrust on one side of that high mountain seemed enough to make it crumble down at once, Eisaku felt. The sentiment was almost the same as what he felt about the Korean people. When one of them raises a voice of defiance against the oppressors, the entire people go wild with a unified voice—this is no different from the geological features of Korea, Eisaku thought, touching a handful of soil. (Nakanishi 2017, 19)

In such a way, Eisaku subconsciously harbors a great fear of the image of the unbreakable unity of the Korean people, and this feeling is projected onto the mountains and the soil he actually sees and touches. However, the unity or collectivity of the Korean people, which is made manifest vis-à-vis the March First Movement, is itself a reflection of the spirit of the “unscrupulous Koreans,” who conspire in groups and work to harm a peaceful Japanese society. In such a fashion, Nakanishi sets the main character as someone who is generally consumed with the thoughts of the “unscrupulous Korean,” much in the same way that the readers are.

After passing through the valley-like path and a mountain that has served as a boundary between the police force and the Futei Senjin in their confrontation, Eisaku finally steps into the base camp of the Futei Senjin. The next boundary is a river that blocks the road ahead. Eisaku cannot help but liaise the mysterious atmosphere in the river with the image of the Korean people: “It was already shining like the scales of a snake, reflecting the light of the sun that was already quite tilted westerly. Looking at the surface of the water, Eisaku remembered the eyes of the Koreans he had met on the street a little while ago. He thought that those eyes and this river might together be creating the peculiar atmosphere of this region (Nakanishi 2017, 21).”

There is a boat floating in the river, but no boatman. Eisaku begins to feel nervous because no matter how much the interpreter cries out for the boatman, but fortunately, the interpreter finds the boatman napping by the river and kicks him to wake him up: “The boatman, who came all the way to where Eisaku was standing, stood still, staring at him as though he had discovered something for the first time. Suddenly, the face that had appeared half asleep took on a blinding look, fierce and threatening. Eisaku’s heart abruptly, inexplicably, impulsively sank (Nakanishi 2017, 23).” The March First Movement clearly had changed the relationship between the Japanese and Koreans.

Eventually, at sunset, Eisaku arrives at the village where the leader of the anti-Japanese forces lives. Looking at the houses and the residents in the village, he recalls the pre-

modern images of the renowned popular uprisings in Japan from the old days. This perception of the Korean village as being pre-modern, which could not differ much from the agricultural villages of Japan during the same period, is clearly pregnant with the imperial consciousness of the colonizers. However, whenever Eisaku feels the gazes of the villagers staring at him as a stranger, he feels the slight but inescapable fear that the anxiety he has felt about the unity of the Korean people on his travels will become a reality: “Eisaku felt that if one of them shouted something, the villagers would pour out from their houses, armed to the teeth, and surround him in countless concentric circles (Nakanishi 2017, 30).”

3. Origin, Expansion, and Detonation of the Term “Futei Senjin”

Before examining the scene of Eisaku entering the colony’s “heart of darkness,” a detour is here needed. This is because it is necessary to more accurately confirm what Nakanishi meant by the provocative title *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean].

When the March First Movement transpired, the colonial authorities deployed troops for the first time since the suppression of the Righteous Armies. Given the following order—“In imposing as much pressure as possible with armed forces, we give the police agency the freedom to search and arrest...”—the Japanese troops deployed to various parts of the country ultimately committed various massacres, including those of the Jeam-ri Incident (Matsuda 2009, 239).

As is well known, in colonies such as Taiwan and Korea, the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, more commonly known as the Meiji Constitution, was not enforced, as the colonies were placed under legal systems divergent from those in the colonial center. Therefore, the Article 14 of the Meiji Constitution relating to the martial law was not applied to colonial Korea. However, the response of colonial power as above indicates that Korea was actually under martial law at the time. But the place where martial law was actually

enforced was not a colony, but the capital region of the colonial center on the day after the September 2, 1923—the day of the Great Kantō Earthquake. At that time, Japanese people as well as the police and troops, armed with primitive weapons such as bamboo spears massacred Koreans indiscriminately in Tōkyō and its environs, which were in a state of emergency. It is easy to imagine that this ghastly colonial violence was the decisive response of and sanguine revenge for the March First Movement by the colonial oppressors.

Needless to say, the responsibility of the Japanese government for the massacre is enormous. On the other hand, it is also a significant characteristic of the horrific incident that the general public took the initiative in instigating and exercising violence by avoiding the control of governmental authority (Ohara 2012, 121–122). Who is responsible for the massacre? Is it the government? Is it the vigilante corps? Or is it the media that instigated fear and hatred, or the army and the police that directly murdered the Koreans? Should only those who, outside governmental authority, actually committed the murders be punished? This problem has not been satisfactorily resolved to this day. In any case, the indiscriminate massacre of innocent Koreans demonstrates that it was in fact the center of the empire, which treated colonies as a land of darkness where the light of civilization failed to reach, that was really the “heart of darkness.” The fact that the Japanese people literally went hunting for humans was a decisive revelation that the Japanese themselves had been dehumanized to the point where they could not recognize as humans those under their colonial control (Kang Soyōng 2020, 277).

But the fear and hatred of the Korean people in the Japanese community, which led to the massacre, were closely related to the collective image of those who had caused the March First Movement in the colonies four years prior. And it was the derogatory term “Futei Senjin” that symbolized such an image. “Futei” means “complaining only because one is not satisfied,” “committing illegal acts,” and “being disobedient”: “Senjin” is an extremely arrogant, malicious term debasing the Korean people, a term that was not just the abridged

form of the word “Chōsenjin (literally, ‘people of Chosŏn,’ or Korean people).”

Originally, Futei Senjin was a term that was used by colonial powers to define Koreans who resisted Japanese colonial rule as evil terrorists, but the March First Movement led to the rapid expansion of the term from colonial Korea to the colonial center in Japan. As is well known, the period from the March First Movement to the early 1930s was when the anti-Japanese independence movements were most diverse and active in and around the Korean peninsula. This situation was also reflected in the language used by the oppressors of the independence movement. Of the seventy major public security reports of the Japanese Government-General in the decade between 1920 and 1930, twenty-four contained the term “Futei Senjin.” Eighteen of those twenty-four were in fact concentrated before the Great Kantō Earthquake (Matsuda 2009, 323–325). In addition, the number of newspaper articles published in Japan and Korea that included the term “Futei Senjin” in the headlines stood at 175. Although the term was nonexistent before 1919, it first appeared in April of the same year, its usage surging the following year. In the next four-and-a-half years until 1923, the year of the Great Kantō Earthquake, 119 uses of the term are found, but the number dropped sharply to 56 from 1924 to 1945 (Kim Puja 2014, 4). Thus, even in the colonial center, which had not experienced the March First Movement directly, the recognition of term “Futei Senjin” rapidly and firmly established the extremely negative and dehumanized image of the Korean people; the term can be seen as an encapsulation of the frightening, repulsive image of colonial Korea that the Japanese harbored during this period.

Meanwhile, the March First Movement also produced a simple yet highly powerful political effect of the “logic of numbers,” which had the potential to temporarily invalidate the existing dominant order in Korea (Ki Yuchōng 2017, 93–94). The bottom line was that no matter how much colonial oppression the Koreans were placed under, the fact that Koreans were an overwhelming majority in terms of population remained unchanged. Based on this “logic of numbers,” the various representations of the Futei Senjin,

the object of fear and disgust for the Japanese, began to be subverted in Korea, taking on meanings opposite to the original negativity. The Japanese living in Korea naturally were nervous about this unstable atmosphere. According to Yi Sŭngyŏp, changes in the use of the term “Futei Senjin” in various spaces were reported at a large gathering of more than a hundred Japanese businessmen in Korea in October 1920: “Those involved in the March First Movement who were then arrested were generally sentenced to less than three years in prison, and as many were granted amnesty, the Japanese people living in Korea were already complaining. They also complained that as a result of these actions, the arrested Koreans felt that they had become great national heroes and began to accept the term ‘Futei Senjin’ as no different from ‘national hero.’ Moreover, they pointed out that pro-Japanese Koreans were facing persecution by the independence movement organizations and insisted on thorough protection for those pro-Japanese Koreans.”

In light of such a backdrop, the novella *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean] can be seen as a work on the subject of the oscillation, agitation, or subversion of the representations of the term “Futei Senjin” precipitated by the March First Movement itself (Yi Sŭngyŏp 2005). For the Japanese, the meaning of “Futei Senjin” was ossified, a term symbolizing the image of a vicious criminal. For Koreans, however, it was an extremely dynamic concept that could rather be subverted to connote a heroic image. And Nakanishi Inosuke was attempting to overturn the image of a colonial Korean solidified within the psyche of the Japanese in his colonial homeland from within.

4. That Which Is at the “Heart of Darkness”

Now, let us enter the core part of the novella, namely the house of the Korean man identified as a Futei Senjin. Eisaku eventually arrives at the house, his destination of the trip, and as a guest from afar, he is received by the homeowner

throughout a long night full of tension. The first meeting between the two is described as follows: “Eisaku raised his gaze with a look of intent to read something out of that face. But the other party looked at his face with almost the same expression. The moment the two gazes met, Eisaku felt, with a slight nervousness as if not wanting lose, a sharp gleam from the man’s long eyes, like the light reflected off the blade of an exquisite sword (Nakanishi 2017, 33).”

Here, it would be helpful to think of *L’Hôtel* (1957) by Albert Camus, who was born in colonial Algeria, to gain a deeper understanding. In this colonial novel, a French teacher spends the night with an Arab suspected of murder at a school on the outskirts of Algeria. The teacher, clutching a gun, thinks about what kind of existence he should choose to be in front of an Arab whom he does not know. Interestingly, both *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean] and *L’Hôtel*, the authors of which have different nationalities and with disparate times of publication, share the basic structure of a colonizer’s uneasy psychology in confronting unfamiliar colonized people in the periphery where colonial power is substantially inferior. Moreover, the colonizer and the colonized spend the night in the same space in awkwardness (Yi Yöngsuk 2007, 33).

The owner of the house has several conversations with Eisaku in slightly clumsy Japanese. Tension is especially high when he talks about the painful memory of his daughter being murdered during the March First Movement. After getting to know each other to some extent, the owner brings a pretty box in front of Eisaku. Inside is the *chögori* (traditional Korean jacket) his daughter was wearing when she was murdered. The homeowner shows Eisaku the part of the garment torn by the swords of suppression forces and talks about the situation calmly, but almost obsessively in detail. (However, the important part of the story was censored and mostly deleted.) What Eisaku saw in the colony’s “heart of darkness” was the blood-stained *chögori*, a symbol of the Korean people, and the relentless sorrow and anger of a Korean man deprived of his lovely daughter.

After dinner, Eisaku, who, along with his interpreter, is guided to his bedroom, falls asleep with an incredible tranquility, given that he is in the den of a Futei Senjin. After

a brief period of deep sleep, Eisaku notices that a suspicious person is crouching in front of his and the interpreter's luggage. At that moment, he thinks, "Finally, the inevitable has come (Nakanishi 2017, 64)." However, the identity of the intruder is neither the Futei Senjin who is trying to kill his Japanese enemy, nor just a petty thief, but the owner of the house. Shocked at that moment, Eisaku feels the anger of the owner of the house reverberating throughout his whole body through an illusion in the dark:

The place where he was lying now instantly took on a grotesque atmosphere, and the surroundings at some point felt almost like a wilderness, where bone fragments were scattered in the shadows of bleak silver grass flowers gruesomely. And the image of the owner of the house, who had been extremely passionate in the evening, rose suddenly from among the silver grass and glared at him with a long glare like a spear—the eye burning with hatred and revenge! What does love for mankind even mean?! How do fellow Koreans throughout the world matter?! Look at this! Look at this! The owner of the house grabbed his daughter's torn, blood-soaked clothes with those trembling hands and shook them violently before his eyes, wailing like a wounded tiger. At one point, blood permeated the eyes of the homeowner and as though a sharp flash flood, seeped into Eisaku's whole body. (Nakanishi 2017, 67–68)

Only after the owner leaves does Eisaku sneak out of the room with the interpreter. And he looks out the door in fear of when the murderers the homeowner must have already gathered will flock. Just then, in the dead silence of the darkness, a loud voice "collecting a ferocious herd" resounds. What Eisaku sees and hears at this time seems to be the same phantasmagoria that the Japanese people would jointly see and hear immediately after the Great Kantō Earthquake, just a year after the novella was published. Completely overwhelmed by the illusion that the Futei Senjin were coming in throngs, the capital region of the Japanese empire became a chaos of the ruthless slaughter of Koreans;

it literally became a “moor where bone fragments were scattered in the shadows of creepy silver grass flowers”:

As Eisaku heard the voice, he pictured a flood of the murderers called forth by the homeowner and in cahoots with one another in the moonlight, with their crazed, frightening eyes he had seen passing through the field summer grass. They were all screaming from the depth of their bellies, blood-thirsty, as if they were going to relieve all of their years of pent-up rage there tonight. The scene of the moment began to swirl before his eyes, as if he were looking at a picture book depicting hell. They came in twos, threes, and fours, and from hill to the hill exchanged resounding voices as though promised in advance. (Nakanishi 2017, 70–71)

However, it turns out that all of this was but a figment of imagination born of Eisaku’s anxiety; what appeared in front of him as he was trying to climb over the earthen wall with a solemn heart was not a ferocious Futei Senjin, but a tail-waving house dog, and what he thought was the roar of the Futei Senjin was just the sound of owls calling. Only when Eisaku picks up the voice of the owner of the house asking if he needs to find the bathroom does Eisaku realize the intention of that man sneaking into the room, examining the guests’ luggage.

What is noteworthy here is that Eisaku’s fantasies about the Futei Senjin were not just an illusion independent of his context. The owner of the house mis-gauged the guest who had come suddenly for no good reason as a Japanese official or an assassin, and was so suspicious that he could not help but inspect the sleeping guest’s belongings. Such an interpretation is natural from the homeowner’s point of view, but as a result, this risky behavior serves as an opportunity for the specter of the Futei Senjin to explode in Eisaku’s psyche. In other words, the phantasmagoria Eisaku sees and hears is but a culmination of the refractions of amalgamating mutual distrust and fear between the colonizer and the colonized. While Eisaku is terrified that the Futei Senjin would hurt him, the target of this fear, the Futei Senjin, is also

suffering from a sense of crisis over a suspicious, uninvited guest whose identity is unknown. The vivid depiction of the structure of the lack of communication and fear in the interaction to which colonial rule gave birth is precisely the remarkable characteristic and historical significance of this novella.

5. Moving Forward: Beyond the Symbol of the “Futei Senjin”

The message that Nakanishi Inosuke tried to convey through his colonial novella *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean] was unfortunately not delivered effectively to the subjects of the colonial center, and in the end, the common illusion regarding the Futei Senjin resulted in an indescribable tragedy. What is worth noting is that the symbol of the Futei Senjin has not disappeared from Japanese society even now, nearly a hundred years after the novel was published. It is time to heed again the warnings from the novella *Futei Senjin* [The Unscrupulous Korean] so as not to repeat the mistakes of colonial history.

In the novella is a memorable scene concerning the communication among people who do not know one another well. Eisaku, who is speechless after hearing the story of the daughter of the Korean man, once again slowly observes the owner smoking while they are sharing wine: “When I saw the owner, who pulled his chin down as much as he could toward the long-slung bill of water, with his cheeks bulging, and sucked like a child clinging to the mother’s breast, Eisaku felt a simplicity that dared not be described. He couldn’t believe that an old man like this could be seen by some as a crazed demon in this very complex background of life (Nakanishi 2017, 58–59).”

In a way, the most meaningful realization that Eisaku gains through his trip may be as trivial and ordinary that above. However, let us imagine that after this trip, Eisaku goes to Tōkyō and experiences the Great Kantō Earthquake later. Would he have then chased and tried to murder

Koreans indiscriminately with bamboo spears? Perhaps not. And perhaps the only reason one can believe this is because Eisaku has realized that a human being, “who seems to some as though the devil were running wild,” is actually just ordinary, just like himself.

A few months after the Great Kantō Earthquake, Nakanishi forthrightly condemned the representation of the Futei Senjin that resulted in the massacre of innocent people:

As a test, please try reading articles about Korean people in daily newspapers published in Korea and Japan. What do you see reported there? It may be because I am ill-informed, but it may be fair to say that there are few articles that introduce the beauty of the Korean land, the true and the sublime embodied in Korean art, and the elegance of the Korean spirit. There have also been newspapers that have reported bombs, gunshots, raids, killings, in fact all kinds of sensationalized, terrifying words as the unscrupulous acts of the Futei Senjin—some newspaper has recently changed the term to Fuhei Senjin (malcontent Koreans) And all of this in an exaggerated style of writing that seems to be wishing that something would happen...The Korean people are sacrificed to “journalism” without any consideration and are engraved in the quotidian consciousness of the Japanese people as a vision of dark terror...Dare I say, might not the rumor of Koreans rioting have been the natural eruption of this Japanese subconscious? (Nakanishi 1981, 200)

It is almost incredible that this article was published almost a hundred years ago; the regrettable, hideous, slanderous writings about the Korean people saturating the Internet and the plethora anti-Korean books in bookstores with titles that cannot be uttered here tell us that Nakanishi’s warning to the people of his homeland still remains intact. What does it really mean that Japanese society is still suffering from the illusion of the Futei Senjin? It is that the unspeakable violence that propelled the massacre after the Great Kantō Earthquake still exists in our immediate midst, perhaps even inside us, at this very moment.

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