

Comparing Imperialisms: Yanaihara Tadao's Colonial Studies Revisited

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Yanaihara Tadao was prewar Japan's preeminent scholar of colonialism and imperialism. He taught colonial policy in the economics department of Tokyo Imperial University from 1922 to 1937. However, he was forced to resign after clashing with the government by criticizing Japan's militarism and fascism due to his conscience as a Christian. While Yanaihara's period of academic activity was not long, during that time he published numerous theoretical works and case studies on colonial policy. His case studies included works on India and Ireland under British imperial rule and on Taiwan, Korea, China, and Micronesia under Japanese imperial rule. This presentation focuses on how Yanaihara compared the colonial policies and imperialisms of Great Britain and Japan.

Yanaihara's first single authored book was *Shokumin Oyobi Shokumin Seisaku* (Colonization and Colonial Policy). In this work, he classified colonial policy into three categories: subjugation, assimilation, and autonomy. He especially criticized the first two categories. On the other hand, he favorably regarded autonomy as a colonial policy. He cited the British Commonwealth, which united the colonizing country with dominions, or autonomous polities, as a good model. He compared this system with the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere conceived by Japan, criticizing the latter.

Yanaihara described the following three points as characteristics of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: (1) It had the outward appearance of expelling Western imperialism and supporting a war to liberate peoples. (2) It reached the stage of a regional imperialism under Japanese imperialism which espoused "Hakko ichiu" (all the world under one roof). (3) The driving force behind Japan's expansionist policy was fascism. Concerning (3), Yanaihara especially cited the relationship between the military and monopoly capital, which he criticized for not having public support.

Yanaihara evaluated the British Commonwealth highly. He considered it "an altogether new form of uniting political bodies." However, this does not mean that he was optimistic about its future. He was proven right later by the secession of Ireland. For Yanaihara, Ireland had a special character among Britain's colonies. Since the early modern era, Britain had adopted a strict assimilation policy, which Ireland resisted. In this regard, Yanaihara considered Korea as a colony similar in character to Ireland.

Using the British Commonwealth's autonomy policy as an example, Yanaihara criticized the contrasting Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. At the same time, he drew on similarities with Britain's Irish policy to criticize Japan's rule over Korea. Yanaihara thus compared colonial policies and imperialisms in order to criticize Japan's colonial policy.