Korea's Role in Japan's Ethnogenesis: Oka Masao's Model of Cultural Strata and Tan'gun

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Abstract

Oka Masao (1898–1982), a pioneer of Japanese ethnology, studied in Vienna, where he encountered the diffusionist theory of culture circles. This inspired him to write a dissertation combining concepts of the culture circle theory with his knowledge of Japanese folklore studies and prehistory to create a model of Japanese ethnogenesis. The originality of this approach becomes apparent when contrasting Oka's interpretation of the Tan'gun myth with politically inspired studies of his contemporaries. The framework of culture circles allowed Oka to emphasize the parity and interconnectedness of early Korean and Japanese cultures. During the war, Oka conducted "ethnic studies" to support colonial policies. However, after the war he returned to the ethno-historical topics of his Viennese dissertation, which helped to overcome the emperor-centred wartime ideology and to correct chauvinist views of Korea in Japan. This article contextualizes this contradictory figure and his work with a special focus on his perception of Korea.

Keywords:

Oka Masao, ethnology, Tan'gun, ethnogenesis, theory of culture circles *(Kulturkreislehre)*

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Introduction

Oka Masao (1898–1982) is commonly regarded as one of the founding figures of Japanese ethnology. He studied in Vienna, where he came into contact with the diffusionist theory of culture circles, which had a deep impact on his outlook on Japanese ethnogenesis. In post-war Japan, Oka's theory of the heterogeneous origins of Japanese culture was widely disseminated and became hugely influential. This article discusses the role Oka assigned to Korea as one of the sources of Japanese culture. It traces Oka's early academic career from his studies in Japan, where he exchanged ideas with pioneers of folklore studies such as Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu (1), to his first research stay in Vienna from 1929 to 1935 (2). Here he encountered the Viennese theory of culture circles, a specific variant of culture diffusionism, which was the dominant paradigm in Germanophone ethnology at the time (2.1). The encounter with this approach inspired Oka to write a doctoral dissertation on "Cultural Strata in Ancient Japan," which combined concepts of the theory of culture circles with his intimate knowledge of Japanese folklore studies and prehistory to create a hybrid and highly original model of Japanese ethnogenesis (2.2). The originality of this approach becomes apparent when contrasting Oka's interpretation of the Tan'gun myth with earlier and contemporary studies on the myth in Japan and Korea, which were clearly driven by ulterior political motives (2.3). The theoretical framework of culture circles allowed Oka to overcome such limitations and emphasize that early Korean and Japanese cultures were on a par and intimately interwoven (2.4). After his return to Japan, however, Oka became more and more convinced that ethnologists should focus on the study of present cultures in situ to understand contemporary ethnic issues (3). During his second stay in Vienna (1938–1940), he encountered Nazi ethnology and admired its present-oriented approach (3.1). Back in Japan, he successfully petitioned for the establishment of an Institute of Ethnic Studies modelled on Nazi institutions (3.2). It was only after the war that Oka returned to the ethno-historical topics of his Viennese dissertation, which were instrumental in overcoming the emperor-centred wartime ideology and correcting chauvinist views of Korean culture in Japan (4). The present article attempts to historically contextualize this highly complex and contradictory figure and his work with a special focus on his perception of Korea.

1. First Encounter with Ethnology: Oka's Studies in Japan

Oka was born in Matsumoto in 1898 as the eighth and youngest child of a family with samurai roots.[1] At junior high school he met Okamura Chiaki

(1884–1941), who would later become assistant to Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), the founding father of Japanese folklore studies. In 1917, he entered Second High School (Daini Kōtō Gakkō) in Sendai, where he became friends with Shibusawa Keizō (1896–1963), grandson and heir of the famed industrialist and founder of Japan's first modern bank Shibusawa Ei'ichi (1840–1931). Keizō himself would later become Governor of the Bank of Japan and Minister of Finances. During his high school days, which coincided with the Russian Revolution, Oka learned Russian and read books by Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin, Friedrich Engels, and Lewis H. Morgan. Thus, Oka encountered Marxism and evolutionism and started to participate in the student-led democracy movement. It was during this period that he became interested in ethnology and decided to major in that discipline.[2] After graduating from high school, Oka enrolled in sociology at Tokyo Imperial University. Disappointed with Takebe Tongo (1875–1945), professor of sociology, he attended the lectures of anthropologist Torii Ryūzō (1870–1953). As Oka's later works demonstrate, Torii's comparisons of archaeological artefacts and religious concepts of the Asian mainland with those of Japan and his postulation of a cultural connection between the two regions left a strong impression on Oka.[3] In 1923, he graduated with a thesis on James Frazer's research about the role of magic in archaic societies.

After his graduation, Oka's schoolfriend Okamura arranged a meeting with Yanagita Kunio, who was so impressed by the young Oka that he admitted him to his study group. Consequently, Oka attended the weekly meetings at Yanagita's house. The study group comprised some of the leading figures of Japanese ethnology and folklore studies, including pioneers in Ainu and Okinawa studies. In 1927, Yanagita invited Oka to stay at his house as his student. During this time, Oka worked as an assistant editor for Yanagita's bi-monthly journal *Minzoku* (Ethnos).[4] The journal was published by Oka Shoin, the publishing house of Oka's elder brother, and financed by Oka's schoolfriend Shibusawa. Already at this young age, Oka showed an enormous talent for networking, which was to benefit him in his later academic career. Apart from Yanagita's study group, Oka was also actively involved in the Humanities Research Group (Jinbun Kenkyūkai). This was an informal group of young researchers interested in archaeology, prehistory, and ethnology (therefore, the group was renamed APE Group in 1936).[5] Two members of this group who were to play an important role later in Oka's career were the oriental historian Egami Namio (1906–2002) and the archaeologist Yawata Ichirō (1902–1987).

In 1929, however, Oka had a falling-out with his mentor Yanagita. Apparently, the reason for this was a talk by folklorist Orikuchi Shinobu (1887–1953) at Yanagita's study group. The topic of the talk was the belief in sacred visitors (*marebito*) from an otherworld beyond the ocean who came to visit the world of humans at specific times. Orikuchi's ideas inspired Oka to write his first article, "Ijin sono ta" (Strangers et Cetera), which was published in *Minzoku* in 1928.[6] Yanagita was less impressed with Orikuchi's talk and prohibited its publication in the journal. When Oka defied his mentor and published Orikuchi's article nonetheless,[7] Yanagita dissolved his study group and Oka fled from his mentor's house. Oka decided to give up his academic career and become a teacher at an elementary school instead, but Shibusawa offered him a scholarship for conducting fieldwork in Taiwan. Oka accepted the scholarship but persuaded Shibusawa to let him use the funds for studying ethnology in Vienna rather than for fieldwork in Taiwan. Apart from Oka's proficiency in German (his first foreign language), it was

1 The following sketch of Oka's early life is based on Kreiner, "Die Gründung des Instituts für Japankunde an der Universität Wien," 222–26; Kreiner, "Oka Masao," 4–10. For a review of recent scholarship on Oka, see Steger, "The Stranger and Others."

2 Nakao, "The Imperial Past of Anthropology in Japan," 26; Nakao, *Kindai Nihon no jinruigakushi*, 318.

3 Torii traced cultural elements such as specific types of garments or bronze bells to specific ethnic groups, which he in turn linked to eras such as the Stone Age or the Kofun period in a way similar to the model of cultural strata Oka would later propose in his Viennese dissertation. According to Oka's student Ōbayashi Taryō, Oka himself denied that Torii's scheme was a major influence on his own model of Japanese ethnohistory. Ōbayashi, "Torii Ryūzō no Nihon minzoku keiseiron," 127–28.

4 Shimizu, "What Was Ethnic Research (*Minzoku Kenkyū*)," 32.

5 Steger, "The Stranger and Others," 63.

6 Oka, "Ijin sono ta."

7 Orikuchi, "Tokoyo oyobi marebito."

the book *Völker und Kulturen* (Peoples and Cultures) written by Wilhelm Schmidt (1868–1954) and Wilhelm Koppers (1886–1961),[8] the leading proponents of the Vienna School of Ethnology, that induced Oka to this step. He had enthusiastically read this book shortly after graduating from Tokyo Imperial University. Thus, in 1929 Oka set off for Vienna.

It should be emphasized here that when Oka arrived in Vienna in July 1929, he was by no means a blank slate. He had already been in contact with leading Japanese scholars of ethnology and folklore studies, but also of archaeology, linguistics, and religious studies. Especially Torii's and Orikuchi's works were to exert a strong influence on Oka's later research. This is interesting since the former introduced European ethnological concepts and methods to Japan, whereas the latter's approach was very much focused on Japanese materials. In his theory of Japanese ethnogenesis, Oka would combine elements of these two research traditions, thus laying the foundation of modern ethnology in Japan.

2. Oka's First Stay in Vienna: Encounter with the Theory of Culture Circles

For Austrian ethnology, the year 1929 marked an important turning point, as Wilhelm Koppers was appointed to the first chair of ethnology at the University of Vienna that year. In October, Oka enrolled in the ethnology course and started to attend lectures by Koppers, by Wilhelm Schmidt, who lectured as an untenured professor at the university, and by Robert von Heine-Geldern (1885–1968), an adjunct professor specializing in the cultures of Southeast Asia.[9] In 1932, Oka began to work on an extensive study of Japanese ethnogenesis titled *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan* (Cultural Strata in Ancient Japan). In the following year, the first three volumes of that work were accepted as a doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Philosophy. A scholarship of the Rockefeller Foundation enabled Oka to write two further volumes by 1935. The five volumes, which were first published posthumously in 2012, amount to 1,453 typewritten pages.[10]

2.1 The Theory of Culture Circles: Germany's Answer to Evolutionism

Before delving into the contents of Oka's Viennese dissertation, it is worthwhile to consider what kind of research tradition Oka encountered at the University of Vienna. This makes it necessary to provide a short outline of the development of Germanophone ethnology. The dominant paradigm in German-language ethnology from 1910 until the 1930s was diffusionism. Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), one of the pioneers of this school of thought, challenged the idea of evolutionary development, which regarded the occurrence of two similar culture elements in spatially separated areas as the result of independent development. He rather postulated that humankind was characterized by a dearth of ideas (*Ideenarmut*). Only a limited number of geniuses, Ratzel argued, were able to invent new things or improve existing ones. Thus, he regarded the occurrence of similar culture elements in spatially separate areas almost without exception as the result of diffusion from a limited number of cultural centres.[11]

A key term of diffusionism is "culture circle" (*Kulturkreis*), denoting "an area

8 Schmidt and Koppers, *Völker und Kulturen*.

9 Kreiner, "Die Gründung des Instituts für Japankunde an der Universität Wien," 220–21.

10 Kreiner, "Einleitung: Oka Masao und sein Werk Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan," in Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, IX.

11 Gingrich, "The German-Speaking Countries," 90; Rössler, Die deutschsprachige Ethnologie bis ca. 1960, 7–9. In contrast to Sekine's contribution to this volume, I use the term diffusionism in a broad sense to include cultural transfer through migration.

of unified culture."[12] This term was coined by Leo Frobenius (1873–1938), who in *Der Ursprung der afrikanischen Kulturen* (The Origin of African Cultures, 1898) postulated the existence of a "Malayonigritic culture circle" spanning the southern part of Africa and Southeast Asia based on his analysis of museum objects.[13] The museum ethnologists Bernhard Ankermann (1859–1943) and Fritz Graebner (1877–1934) adopted the term in articles on Africa and Oceania,[14] and Graebner provided an in-depth definition of the term in his 1911 book *Methode der Ethnologie* (Method of Ethnology):

> When in the course of cultural history a culture expands and engulfs areas that originally possessed another culture, as Roman-Greek culture has done in Europe, Hellenistic-Byzantine culture in the Near East, and Hindu culture in western Indonesia, it hardly ever supplants the older cultures completely; even the overlap is usually not without gaps, so that usually not all elements of the new culture occur in all parts of the area of distribution. Nonetheless we speak of a Roman, Hellenistic, and Indic culture circle. These culture circles are not characterized by absolute cultural uniformity—after all, one newer culture can overlay several culturally heterogeneous areas—nor by an absolute continuity in the distribution of all individual elements, but by the simple fact that a particular complex of culture elements is typical for a specific area and mainly confined to this area.[15]

Two criteria were central to discovering a culture circle, namely "the criterium of form, that is, the correspondence of characteristics that are not necessitated by the nature of the object [in question], and the criterium of quantitative correspondence," that is, the quantity of elements that meet the former criterium.[16]

The importance of material culture (in the form of museum objects) to the proponents of the theory of culture circles (*Kulturkreislehre*) is evident. However, culture circles were based on a holistic conception of culture which besides material culture also included forms of social organization and spiritual culture.[17] Especially in the Viennese variant of the *Kulturkreislehre* and the works of its main proponents Schmidt and Koppers, the problem of the chronological sequence of the (re-)constructed culture circles was of central importance. Schmidt postulated a sequence of primordial, primary, and secondary cultures.[18] Despite their critical attitude toward evolutionism, proponents of the theory of culture circles were forced to adopt some of its tenets in order to reconstruct a sequence of cultural strata (*Kulturschichten*). In stark contrast to evolutionism, however, Schmidt, and to a lesser extent his students, depicted the history of humankind not only as the result of technical progress but also as a history of moral decay. In the course of history, Schmidt claimed, humankind had digressed further and further from the ideal state of a primordial culture which had been characterized by monotheism and monogamy.[19] This shows the theological thrust of the Viennese *Kulturkreislehre*, which has been described as an "ethnological proof of God's existence."[20] Schmidt and his leading disciples were all priests of the Catholic missionary order Societas Verbi Divini (Society of the Divine Word), and the former was rather outspoken about his goal to infiltrate ethnological research through the skilful use of missionary networks and thus to counter the challenge of "irreligious scholarship" to Catholic faith.[21] Despite this theological bias, the Viennese theory of culture circles remained one of the most influential schools in Germanophone ethnology until the late 1930s.[22] This was certainly one of the reasons why Oka decided to go to Vienna to study ethnology.

12 Graebner, *Methode der Ethnologie*, 132.

13 Frobenius, *Der Ursprung der afrikanischen Kulturen*, 9, 173; cf. Streck, *Leo Frobenius*, 31–34.

14 Ankermann, "Kulturkreise und Kulturschichten in Afrika"; Graebner, "Kulturkreise und Kulturschichten in Ozeanien."

15 Graebner, *Methode der Ethnologie*, 132–33. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this article are mine.

16 Graebner, *Methode der Ethnologie*, 108.

17 Rössler, *Die deutschsprachige Ethnologie bis ca. 1960*, 11; Graebner, *Methode der Ethnologie*, 30–31. This is especially true for the works of Schmidt and Koppers, who put more emphasis on spiritual culture and forms of social organization than other proponents of the *Kulturkreislehre*.

18 For a more detailed discussion of Schmidt's model of culture circles, see Scheid's contribution to this volume.

19 Schmidt and Koppers, *Völker und Kulturen*, 46–47; Rössler, *Die deutschsprachige Ethnologie bis ca*. 1960, 13–14.

20 Scheid, "Das Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 9.

21 Scheid, "Das Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 6–8, quote on 8. On Wilhelm Schmidt and his contribution to the Vienna School of Ethnology, see also Blumauer, "Wilhelm Schmidt und die Wiener Schule der Ethnologie."

22 Rössler, *Die deutschsprachige Ethnologie bis ca. 1960*, 14.

2.2 Oka's Viennese Dissertation

The impact of the theory of culture circles on Oka's Viennese dissertation already becomes apparent in the title: *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan* (Cultural Strata in Ancient Japan). In the introduction, Oka describes the theoretical premises and the aim of his study in the following way:

> specific culture elements are connected to specific culture complexes or culture circles. All these culture elements or culture complexes have to be traced back … to a specific culture circle, then their culture-historical position has to be ascertained and reconstructed in layers.[23]

Based on this method, in the concluding chapter of his thesis Oka identifies a number of cultural strata that he connects to successive waves of immigration from the South Pacific region and the Asian mainland. In the body part of his thesis, Oka provides detailed descriptions of various aspects of ancient Japanese material and spiritual culture and society—that is, the particular culture elements he then attempts to systematically group into cultural strata in the concluding chapter. These descriptions are based on archaeological findings, textual sources such as the eighth-century chronicles *Kojiki* (Account of Ancient Matters) and *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan), and ethnographic observations of regional customs. Despite this clearly culture-historical approach, Oka only sparingly uses terminology connected to the *Kulturkreislehre* in his thesis.[24] And even when he does, his usage is not always consistent with that of other proponents of the theory. For instance, Oka refers to the local culture of the Izumo region as "Izumo culture circle" and seems to question the holistic nature of culture circles by distinguishing "religion circles" and "myth circles."[25] Nonetheless, Bernhard Scheid has shown striking parallels between Schmidt's theory of culture circles and the model of cultural strata postulated by Oka. When identifying these strata and determining their chronological sequence, Oka uncritically adopts axiomatic premises of the Viennese *Kulturkreislehre* such as the linking of lunar myths, matriarchy, and secret societies with agrarian culture circles or the attribution of patriarchy, aristocratic stratification, and belief in a Supreme God to nomadic cultures.[26] In a lecture given in Tokyo in 1935, Schmidt himself praised Oka's dissertation as an exemplary demonstration of the "operating principles of the new culture-historical method"[27] and incorporated Oka's findings into his world-spanning model of culture circles.[28]

It would certainly be a mistake, however, to see Oka as nothing more than a passive recipient of the Vienna School of Ethnology who uncritically arranged the Japanese material in accordance with Schmidt's schema of culture circles. During his stay in Vienna, Oka actively sought contact with ethnologists unrelated to the Vienna School, such as Fritz Graebner[29] (Berlin) or Leo Frobenius (Frankfurt), as well as critics of the theory of culture circles such as Robert von Heine-Geldern, arguably Schmidt's biggest opponent in Vienna.[30] Oka also met scholars from other European countries and came into contact with various methodological approaches whose influence can be observed in Oka's own research (especially in the case of Heine-Geldern).[31]

Even more important, however, is the influence Japanese scholars exerted on Oka's way of thinking. In the introduction to his Viennese dissertation, Oka acknowledges Yanagita, Orikuchi, and Torii as trailblazers of ethnological studies

23 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 5.

24 One such example is Oka's mention of the "culture-historical criterium of quantity." Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 169.

25 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 284, 486, 608.

26 Scheid, "Das Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 14; Scheid, "Oka Masao und das schwierige Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 80–81

27 Schmidt, *Neue Wege zur Erforschung der ethnologischen Stellung Japans*, 34.

28 Scheid, "Das Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 13–14; Scheid, "Oka Masao und das schwierige Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 76–78.

29 Despite following a culture-historical approach and using the concept of culture circles like Schmidt, Graebner was highly critical of Schmidt's work. See Graebner, *Methode der Ethnologie*, 38–39, 61–62, 124–25, 156, 167.

30 In 1920, Heine-Geldern published an article that was highly critical of Schmidt's research. He criticized not only the insufficient empirical basis for Schmidt's far-reaching conclusions but also Schmidt's tendency to misrepresent other scholars' findings to fit his theory. In a later article, he explicitly denied that it was possible to reconstruct cultural strata or culture circles. See Marschall, "The Viennese Roots of Oka Masao," 87–89.

31 Kreiner, "Oka Masao," 10–13.

in Japan.[32] A consideration of Orikuchi's concept of sacred visitors (*marebito*) will show that Oka regarded these scholars not only as ethnographers and collectors of research material but also as sources of inspiration for his own work. In *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, Oka distinguishes two conceptions of divine beings that can be traced in Japanese myths and customs, namely the *kami* belief and the *marebito* belief. Following an old (and, as we know today, incorrect) etymology of the word *kami* 神 (deity), Oka argued that its original meaning was "up, above" (*kami* 上) and concluded:

> The nature of *kami* belief is that the deities are imagined as residing in heaven and that it is believed these deities descend from heaven. … Possibly, *kami* belief can be called a vertical conception, which contrasts with the horizontal conception of *marebito* belief. The latter is based on the conception of deities who at certain times come to visit from the primordial motherland beyond the horizon.[33]

This distinction of vertical and horizontal worldview, which plays an important role in Oka's model of cultural strata, is based solely on Japanese research on the terms *kami* and *marebito* and has no direct parallel in Schmidt's schema of culture circles.[34] However, in a further step, Oka deftly integrates this complex into Schmidt's model of culture circles by linking the two religious conceptions to different cultural strata. According to Oka,

> *kami* belief and its supposed bearers were characterized by many patriarchal elements, whereas *marebito* belief clearly shows matriarchal elements. Taka-mi-musubi, the sun deity who forms the centre of the myths belonging to *kami* belief, also shows, if only faintly, characteristics of a Supreme God.[35]

Terms such as "patriarchal elements," "matriarchal elements," or "Supreme God" indicate that in this passage Oka operates completely within the theoretical framework of the *Kulturkreislehre*.

This example shows the hybrid nature of *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, which took shape through Oka's synthesizing of Japanese and Germanophone research traditions.[36] While Oka's remarks about *kami* and *marebito* belief are based on the work of Japanese researchers, his juxtaposition of the two conceptions as a vertical and a horizontal worldview was an innovation that might have been inspired by premises of the theory of culture circles such as strict social stratification and belief in a Supreme God as typical characteristics of nomadic cultures or the egalitarian ("horizontal") nature of agrarian cultures.[37] According to Oka, *kami* belief had entered Japan from the Asian mainland as an element of the sixth and last cultural stratum to which the ancestors of the imperial family had belonged. He characterized this cultural stratum as "nomadic, militaristic, horse-breeding, patriarchal"[38]—attributes that closely correspond to the primary culture circle of patriarchal nomadic cattle-breeders postulated by Schmidt.[39] Oka's mention of a Supreme God in this context can even be understood as an echo of Schmidt's primordial monotheism, which was kept alive in nomadic cultures. Another element that Oka associates with this cultural stratum is the myth of Tan'gun. Before turning to Oka's interpretation of this narrative, the following section will briefly introduce the tale and discuss its significance in modern discourses on Korean-Japanese relations.

32 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 3–4.

33 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 289, 486.

34 Scheid points out parallels with Kume Kunitake's (1839–1931) remarks on the origins of Shinto. In a controversial article that resulted in Kume's forced resignation as professor at the Imperial University in Tokyo, he characterized the belief in *kami* as a form of sun or heaven worship. Scheid, "Oka Masao und das schwierige Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 81–82. Kume's fate demonstrates the political danger inherent in conducting scientific research on myths connected to the imperial family and provides one possible explanation for why Oka first published the findings of his Viennese dissertation in Japanese after the end of the war. The etymology connecting the term *kami* (deity) with the word "above" can be traced back to the work of the Confucian scholar Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725), who argued that the deities mentioned in the ancient myths were in fact nothing else than "those above," that is, the ruling elite in ancient Japan. Burns, *Before the Nation*, 48.

35 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 486.

36 See Weiss, "Oka Masao in Wien."

37 See Scheid, "Das Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 14–15; Scheid, "Oka Masao und das schwierige Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 83–84.

38 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 1039.

39 Scheid, "Das Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 14–15; Scheid, "Oka Masao und das schwierige Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 83.

2.3 Tan'gun: The Mythical Founder of Korea and His Role in Discourses on Korean-Japanese Relations

The oldest extant version of the myth of Tan'gun is recorded in the *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms, 1281). According to this version, Hwanin, the Ruler of Heaven, bestowed three heavenly treasures to his son Hwanung and sent him down to earth to rule. In the company of three thousand vassals, Hwanung descended to the summit of a mountain and ruled over humankind. When a bear and a tiger petitioned Hwanung to be transformed into humans, he told them to fast for one hundred days in a cave. While the tiger failed, the bear received a woman's body after fasting for 21 days. The bear-turned-woman became pregnant by Hwanung and had a son called Tan'gun. During the reign of Emperor Yao (trad. 2356 BCE–2255 BCE), he established the state Chosŏn, which he governed for 1,500 years until he was succeeded by Kija. Tan'gun then became the mountain god.[40] Later versions, such as the *Tongguk t'onggam* (Comprehensive Mirror of the Eastern Kingdom, 1484), removed most of the supernatural elements (such as the story of the tiger and the bear) and had Tan'gun himself descend from heaven beneath a sandalwood tree.[41] Despite these modifications, which supposedly made the myth more palatable to the Confucian elite, it was the Chinese sage Kija, who had supposedly introduced Confucian civilization to Korea, rather than Tan'gun who became the subject of a state cult.[42]

In Japan, the myth of Tan'gun was known at least from the mid-17th century, when Tokugawa Mitsukuni (1628–1701), the lord of Mito domain, commissioned a Japanese edition of the *Tongguk t'onggam*.[43] At the beginning of the 19th century, a theory emerged which held that Tan'gun was in fact identical with Susanoo, the younger brother of the sun goddess Amaterasu, progenitress of the Japanese imperial family.[44] After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, this theory was promoted by the Yasaka Shrine in Kyoto and found its way into academic research through the works of the Imperial University professors Hoshino Hisashi (1839–1917), Shigeno Yasutsugu (1827–1910), and Kume Kunitake (1839–1931).[45] Even though the professors were harshly criticized when they first voiced their views in 1890, some Japanese intellectuals soon discovered that the sibling pair of Amaterasu and Susanoo/Tan'gun provided a highly welcome model for Korean subjects' position within the Japanese family state. The overall implication of positioning Susanoo, the powerful but wayward god of Japanese myth, as Korea's founding deity was clear enough: for a successful modernization of their country, the politically immature Koreans, or so it was implied, were in need of Japan's benevolent rule, just as in the myths Susanoo depended on his elder sister's guidance.[46] Thus, the equation of Susanoo and Tan'gun came to play an important role in the so-called theory of common ancestry of the Japanese and Koreans, which Hatada Takashi aptly characterized as "an ideological prop in support of Japanese domination and the assimilation policy."[47]

But not everyone in Japan was convinced of Susanoo and Tan'gun's identity. As early as 1894, Shiratori Kurakichi (1865–1942), one of the pioneers of oriental history (*tōyōshi*), argued that the legend of Tan'gun was fabricated by Buddhist priests sometime after 372. He arrived at this date by pointing out Buddhist elements in the *Samguk yusa* version of the myth. Since Buddhism was introduced to Koguryŏ—where Tan'gun is said to have descended and founded his capitals—in 372, Shiratori concluded that the tale could not be older than that. He trusted the *Samguk yusa*'s assertion that the story of Tan'gun was recorded in the *Wei*

40 Grayson, *Myths and Legends from Korea*, 31.

41 *Tongguk t'onggam*, 295.

42 Shim, "A New Understanding of Kija Chosŏn as a Historical Anachronism," 273–78; Kim, *Making Myth, History, and an Ancient Religion in Korea*, 26–72.

43 Nishinaka, "Hayashi Razan to Tōgoku tsugan ni tsuite," 41.

44 No, "Han'guk ŭi Tan'gun kwa Ilbon ŭi Sŭsanoo," 45.

45 Weiss, *The God Susanoo and Korea in Japan's Cultural Memory*, 33–34, 116–26, 150–55.

46 The significance of the siblings' age gap and its implications for the hierarchical nature of Japanese-Korean relations have been pointed out by Allen, "Early Migrations, Conquests, and Common Ancestry," 107 and Suga, *Nihon tōchika no kaigai jinja*, 56–57.

47 Hatada, "The Significance of Korean History," 173.

shu (Book of Wei), a Chinese chronicle compiled between 551 and 554, and thus tentatively dated the tale's origin to the reign of King Changsu (r. 413–491), when Koguryŏ used the tale to legitimate its attempt to unify Korea under its rule.[48] This dating of the Tan'gun myth enabled Shiratori to demonstrate "that Korea as a unified country developed relatively late in the history of Asia, *and later than Japan*."[49] In 1910, Imanishi Ryū (1875–1932), a scholar of Korean history, dismissed the reference to *Wei shu* and dated the Tan'gun myth to the mid-Koryŏ period (918–1392).[50] Tan'gun, he asserted, "has no connection whatsoever to our country and, of course, he is completely unrelated to Susanoo no Mikoto."[51]

In Korea, Tan'gun was rediscovered as the founder of the Korean nation in the early 20th century. It was from 1905, the year that Korea was turned into a Japanese protectorate, that Korean newspapers started to use the Tan'gun calendar, which counted years from Tan'gun's alleged founding of Chosŏn in 2333 BCE.[52] While the court still retained its emphasis on Confucianism and the role of Kija, King Kojong's (r. 1864–1907) signing of the protectorate treaty had greatly diminished the court's authority. Moreover, China's declining role within East Asia raised doubts about the Sino-centric worldview underlying the Kija tradition.[53]

It was against this background that the nationalist historian Sin Ch'aeho (1880–1936) published his highly influential essay "Toksa sillon" (A New Reading of History) in 1908. The subject of Sin's history is the ethnic nation or *minjok*. This term, pronounced *minzoku* in Japanese, is a neologism coined in Meiji Japan which was soon adopted by nationalist writers throughout East Asia.[54] In Korea, the term became widely used after the imposition of the protectorate, as it "offered a locus for the nation independent of a state that had come increasingly under the control of a foreign power."[55] For Sin, Tan'gun's descendants formed the core of the Korean *minjok*. He identified a distinct ethnicity of the Korean people by tracing a genealogical history beginning with Tan'gun from Old Chosŏn through Puyŏ, Koguryŏ, Parhae, and Koryŏ to Chosŏn. Moreover, Sin saw history as a tool to instil patriotism in Korean youth. Tracing the Korean nation through the northern kingdoms of Puyŏ, Koguryŏ, and Parhae not only gave Sin the opportunity to distance himself from earlier Confucian histories such as the *Samguk sagi*, which had privileged the role of Silla; it also allowed him to claim a huge territory, including major portions of Manchuria, for the Korean *minjok* and thus emphasize its glorious past.[56]

In 1909, the nationalist Na Ch'ŏl (1863–1906) established Tan'gun'gyo (Tan'gun religion), a new religion dedicated to the worship of Tan'gun. Renamed Taejonggyo (Religion of the Great Ancestor) the next year, the group emphasized that it represented the revival of an ancient tradition that originated from Tan'gun himself.[57] Like Sin Ch'aeho, the Taejonggyo viewed Tan'gun as the progenitor of the Korean *minjok*. However, while Sin had considered Tan'gun a historical figure, the new religion saw him as a deity whose teachings had to be preserved and disseminated among the populace. As one means of showing respect for the divine progenitor, the group urged Koreans to celebrate the third day of the tenth month of the lunar calendar as the Day Heaven Opened (Kaech'ŏnjŏl) to commemorate Tan'gun's founding of Old Chosŏn. According to the Tan'gun calendar, 1909 marked the 4242nd anniversary of this event.[58] An editorial in *Hwangsŏng sinmun* (Capital Newspaper) in that year claimed that commemorating Tan'gun as the founder of Korea "will forever preserve the national character of our *minjok*, lead to harmony and solidarity, and will display our qualities as a civilized people."[59]

Ch'oe Namsŏn's (1890–1957) approach to the myth of Tan'gun was arguably

48
Shiratori, "Dankun kō."

49
Tanaka, *Japan's Orient*, 85, emphasis added.

50
Imanishi, "Dankun no setsuwa ni tsuite," 228. In fact, Tan'gun is mentioned in none of the extant versions of the chronicle.

51
Imanishi, "Dankun no setsuwa ni tsuite," 229.

52
This was not the only calendar Korean newspapers used at the time. Kim, *Making Myth, History, and an Ancient Religion in Korea*, 143, points out that besides the Tan'gun calendar the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* (Capital Newspaper) listed the date of each issue according to the Gregorian calendar, the Qing era name, the Korean era name, the Japanese era name, and as counted from Kija's founding of his dynasty.

53
Kim, *Making Myth, History, and an Ancient Religion in Korea*, 143–44.

54
Em, "Minjok as a Modern and Democratic Construct," 336–37.

55
Schmid, *Korea between Empires*, 174–75.

56
Em, "Minjok as a Modern and Democratic Construct," 339–45.

57
Kim, *Making Myth, History, and an Ancient Religion in Korea*, 158; Schmid, *Korea between Empires*, 192.

58
Kim, *Making Myth, History, and an Ancient Religion in Korea*, 177.

59
Cited in Schmid, *Korea between Empires*, 193.

closest to that of Oka, which will be treated in the next section. In contrast to earlier Korean scholars, he regarded the tale of Tan'gun as a myth rather than a historical account. Concepts from Western studies on folklore, religion, and mythology such as shamanism, totemism, or taboo provided him with a key to interpret aspects of the text that earlier studies had ignored. For instance, Ch'oe argued that the descent of Tan'gun's father Hwanung from heaven proved an ancient Korean belief in a three-layered cosmos consisting of heaven, the human realm, and the underworld—a common feature of Eurasian shamanism. The tale of the tiger and the bear, on the other hand, attested to the existence of totemism in ancient Korea. The tiger and the bear, Ch'oe maintained, were the totems of different clans, whereas the bear's 21-day confinement pointed to a taboo observed in ancient Korean society.[60] In his "Purham Culture Theory" (*Fukan bunkaron*), published in Japanese in 1927, Ch'oe argued that ancient Koreans had worshipped heaven as symbolized by the sun or mountains. He called this ancient tradition "Old Shinto" (*koshintō*). At its centre stood Tan'gun, a shaman-priest who held both political power and religious authority. Based on linguistic similarities in mountain names and other toponyms, he argued that Korea occupied the centre of an ancient Eurasian cultural sphere stretching from the Black Sea in the west to Japan and Okinawa in the east.[61] Tobias Scholl has characterized this argument as a case of colonial mimicry. Ch'oe takes over key elements of the theory of common ancestry but reverses the hierarchy of Korean-Japanese relations by claiming historical primacy for Korea.[62]

2.4 Oka's Interpretation of the Tan'gun Myth

As the last section has shown, Tan'gun stood at the centre of discourses on Korea's relationship to Japan at least from the early twentieth century. It is difficult to find any piece of academic writing on Tan'gun dating from this period that does not transparently use the deity to pursue a specific political agenda, be it Korean independence, Koreans' assimilation into the Japanese Empire, or the recognition of Tan'gun as a Shinto deity. Even though Tan'gun's ideological significance must have been known to Oka, his own interpretation of the myth is apparently free of such ulterior political motives. In his Viennese dissertation, he discusses the tale of Tan'gun in the same manner he treats any other culture element, with the aim of reconstructing the process of Japanese ethnogenesis.

He departs from an observation of parallels between the myth of Tan'gun and the tale of Ho no Ninigi's descent to Japan. According to the *Kojiki*, Ho no Ninigi was the grandson of the sun goddess Amaterasu and the heavenly god Takaki, therefore he is often called the Heavenly Grandson (*tenson*). Amaterasu and Takaki bestowed curved beads, a sacred mirror, and the sword Kusanagi[63] on their grandson and sent him down from the Plain of High Heaven to rule over the Land of the Plentiful Reed Plains and of the Fresh Rice-ears. He descended to Mt. Takachiho in southern Kyushu and built his palace there, at length becoming the grandfather of Jinmu, the legendary first emperor of Japan.[64] Oka identifies a number of parallels between this foundational myth of the Japanese imperial family and the myth of Tan'gun. In both narratives, he observes, a heavenly deity sends a descendant down to earth. In both cases, the descendant receives three sacred objects and descends on a mountain and in both cases the heavenly offspring is accompanied by vocational groups.[65]

60 Allen, "Northeast Asia Centered around Korea," 793–95; Kim, *Making Myth, History, and an Ancient Religion in Korea*, 277–79.

61 Allen, "Northeast Asia Centered around Korea," 796–802; Scholl, *Konstruktion von Gleichheit und Differenz*, 223–29.

62 Scholl, *Konstruktion von Gleichheit und Differenz*, 236–40.

63 Each of these objects had played an important role in the mythical plot. Later, they were turned into the imperial regalia.

64 Philippi, *Kojiki*, 137–41.

65 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 875.

Oka writes that "Hwanung is accompanied by vocational groups" when he descends from heaven.[66] However, it is not completely clear what passage he is referring to, as the *Samguk yusa* reports that Hwanung was accompanied by 3,000 people[67] as well as by the Earl of Wind, the Master of Rain, and the Master of Cloud.[68] The *Kojiki*, on the other hand, specifies that Ho no Ninigi was accompanied by "five clan heads" (*itsu tomo no wo*). In another myth, these five clan heads lured out Amaterasu, who had concealed herself in a cave, and thus restored order to the world. They were regarded as the ancestral deities of the families in charge of imperial rites.[69] Oka goes on to explain the significance of various vocational groups, called *be* 部 in the Japanese sources, for the social organization of ancient Japan. These *be*, Oka claims, were associated with *uji*, "unit[s] of a social organization of consanguineous lineage groups headed by a patriarch."[70] These patriarchs, "who concurrently served as the leaders of the *be*, were called *tomo no miyatsuko* or *tomo no wo*."[71] He provides linguistic evidence for the existence of similar groups on the Korean peninsula and points out that many of these *be* practised vocations such as blacksmithing, weaving, or horse breeding that had been introduced to Japan from the continent.[72] From these findings, Oka concludes that the "Japanese *be* can be traced to the continent both with regard to their vocation and their ethnicity" and that the "*be* … had by their nature connections with the old Korean vocational groups of slaves who were concerned with manual labour."[73]

Oka, moreover, draws attention to the fact that it had been the heads of *five* vocational groups that accompanied Ho no Ninigi during his descent from heaven. Both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* as well as the ninth-century *Kogo shūi* (Gleanings from Ancient Stories) agree on this number, which also appears in myths of heavenly descent in other Japanese sources. The *Sendai kuji hongi* (Chronicle of Old Matters of Former Ages), which probably dates from the tenth century, mentions that the ancestor of the Mononobe lineage of warriors was accompanied by the chieftains of five bands (*itsu tomo no miyatsuko*). Together with these five chieftains, the text continues, 25 units of "heavenly Mononobe" descended.[74] Oka argues that this points to a military organization in which one chieftain was in command of five units of warriors.[75] Based on Chinese sources such as the *Hou Hanshu* (Book of the Later Han, 5th c.), the *Book of Zhou* (636), and the *Book of Sui* (636), Oka argues for the existence of a similar form of social organization into units of five in Koguryŏ and Paekche. For both kingdoms, the Chinese sources mention an organization of five groups referred to as five *bu* 部 (Jp. *be*).[76] Again, Oka concludes that the system of five groups in Koguryŏ and the five bands appearing in the Japanese myths of heavenly descent can be traced to a common origin that might be connected to Mongolia.[77]

All the elements discussed above Oka groups together as the last cultural stratum in his model of Japanese ethnogenesis. The carrier of this cultural stratum was the Tenson tribe, that is, the tribe of the Heavenly Grandson, which, according to Oka, established the Yamato court and the imperial dynasty. With regard to social organization, this cultural stratum was characterized by patriarchal families (*ko*) and lineage groups (*uji*) with patriarchal chieftains, tribal organizations of allied lineage groups, vocational groups (*be*), aristocratic ranks (*kabane*) which Oka associated with the bone-ranks of Silla,[78] units of five, and exogamy of lineage groups.[79] With regard to religious beliefs, apart from the already mentioned *kami* belief, Oka assigns the worship of ancestors as heroes to this stratum. He believed that the carriers of this cultural stratum used an Altaic language and introduced

66 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 875.

67 Oka mistakenly writes of "23,000 people." Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 874.

68 Grayson, *Myths and Legends from Korea*, 31.

69 Philippi, *Kojiki*, 139, fn. 3; Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 757–58.

70 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 744–45.

71 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 756.

72 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 753–61.

73 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 761.

74 Cf. Bentley, *The Authenticity of Sendai Kuji Hongi*, 160–62.

75 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 771–73.

76 *Hou Hanshu*, vol. 85, Dongyi zhuan, Gaojuli: https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/後漢書/卷85#高句麗; *Zhou shu*, vol. 49, Liezhuan 41, Baiji: https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/周書/卷49#百濟; *Sui shu*, vol. 81, Liezhuan 46, Dongyi, Baiji: https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/隋書/卷81#百濟.

77 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 775–77.

78 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 768.

79 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 1008.

the practice of horse breeding to Japan.[80] He argues that the elements of this cultural stratum were introduced to Japan over an extended period of time and in the process were influenced by pre-existing matriarchal cultural strata in the archipelago.[81]

In summary, it can be said that Oka's treatment of Korea and its relationship to Japan differs significantly from contemporary Japanese scholars. In contrast to proponents of oriental history such as Shiratori Kurakichi, he accepts the antiquity of the Tan'gun myth and thus the antiquity of Korean culture. While he affirmatively quotes the findings of proponents of the theory of common ancestry such as Kita Sadakichi (1871–1939) and Kanzawa Shōzaburō (1872–1967) in his thesis, he uses these findings solely to analyse the impact of Korean cultures on Japanese ethnogenesis rather than claiming Japanese hegemony over ancient Korea.[82] On the contrary, he argues that the Tenson tribe that had established the Japanese imperial dynasty showed close affinities to contemporaneous cultures on the Korean peninsula.

The apparently unbiased nature of Oka's Viennese dissertation becomes clear when contrasted with the research of Mishina Shōei (1902–1971), a contemporary of Oka who applied a similar method to the comparison of Japanese and Korean myths. Mishina employed the concept of "culture area," developed by the American cultural anthropologist Clark Wissler (1870–1947), to the study of Manchurian, Korean, and Japanese myths. Culture areas are areas marked by common cultural elements and are thus not dissimilar to the concept of culture circles. In applying this concept to his mythological studies, Mishina detected a "composite structure" in Korean founding myths, which, he maintained, show "a clear heteronomous pattern, having been shaped by waves of dominant cultures and political powers arriving from all directions."[83] Japanese founding myths, on the other hand,

> show the characteristics of a unique culture area. … The fact that our founding myths do not share the features of those of the surrounding primitive culture area indicates that they are culturally and chronologically new phenomena or that they have been transmitted within a culturally advanced ethnic society.[84]

While Oka similarly ascribes a composite structure to Korean myths—for instance, he assigns the tale of the tiger and the bear to another cultural stratum than the myth of Tan'gun's descent from heaven[85]—he ascribed the same composite structure to Japanese mythology and culture as a whole. In fact, one could argue that it was the whole point of his dissertation to demonstrate how Japanese culture had been "shaped by waves of dominant cultures and political powers arriving from all directions." For Oka, the *Kulturkreislehre* offered a theoretical framework to analyse the genesis of both Japanese and Korean ethnic cultures as historically layered processes characterized by waves of immigration accompanied by the importation of new culture elements, including elements from the Korean peninsula to Japan (since he was primarily interested in Japanese ethnogenesis, flows of culture in the opposite direction fell out of the scope of his dissertation). Alas, subsequent developments were to show that Oka too was not immune to the political and ideological trends of his time.

80 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 1043.

81 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 1008.

82 Like Oka, Kita identified various ethnic groups and their contributions to the formation of Japanese culture. The political thrust of Kita's argument becomes apparent, however, when he describes Koreans as a "branch family" of the Japanese. He used his model of Japanese ethnohistory to justify the annexation of Korea as a return of a poor branch family to the home of its powerful "head family," the Japanese. In a similar vein, the linguist Kanazawa argued that Korean was only a branch dialect of Japanese. See Weiss, *The God Susanoo and Korea in Japan's Cultural Memory*, 35–38. On Kita, see also Sekine's contribution to this volume.

83 Mishina, *Shinwa to bunka kyōiki*, 266, cited in Hirafuji, "Colonial Empire and Mythology Studies," 92.

84 Mishina, *Shinwa to bunka kyōiki*, 266, 268, cited in Hirafuji, "Colonial Empire and Mythology Studies," 92–93.

85 Oka, *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*, 875–76.

3. Ethnology in the Service of the Japanese Empire

In spring 1935, Oka returned to Japan to participate in the celebration of Yanagita's 60th birthday and to prepare the stage for Schmidt, who was to visit Japan later that year as part of an extended trip to Asia.[86] At a workshop to commemorate Yanagita's 60th birthday in June, Oka gave a speech on "Folklore Studies in Germany and Austria," which was published as an article later that year.[87] Here, he discussed the historical development of folklore studies in the German-speaking countries, ending with a section on contemporaneous Nazi folklore studies. While Oka criticized that the discipline had "not yet achieved an adequate theoretical scheme," he approvingly noted that under Nazi rule, folklore studies had gained prestige as a "legitimate heir to the national academic tradition."[88] He also pointed out that "Nazi folklore studies characteristically defines itself as a contemporary [and empirical] science"[89]—an approach that Oka himself came to prefer over the culture-historical Vienna School in subsequent years. It was at the same workshop that Oka met Ishida Eiichirō (1903–1968), who decided to follow Oka's example and studied ethnology in Vienna from 1937 to 1939.[90]

When Schmidt visited Japan, Oka used his networks to organize a reception by the Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai (Association for International Cultural Relations), the predecessor of the Japan Foundation, in Tokyo. In a speech given on that occasion, Schmidt hinted at the reason for his visit to Japan, namely to secure funding for the establishment of an Institute for Japanese Studies at Vienna University.[91] The entrepreneur Mitsui Takaharu (1900–1983), whom both Schmidt and Oka met for the first time at this reception, agreed to sponsor the institute, which was to be headed by none other than Oka. The realization of the institute took time, however, and it was only in February 1938 that Oka arrived in Vienna to take up his position as director of the institute.[92]

3.1 Oka's Second Stay in Vienna, 1938–1940

Shortly after Oka's arrival in Vienna, Austria was annexed into Nazi Germany. The repercussions of this event in Oka's direct environment were considerable: Koppers was pensioned off and emigrated with Schmidt, a prominent supporter of Austrofascism,[93] to Switzerland. Heine-Geldern, who hailed from a Jewish family, stayed in the United States, where he had made a business trip at the time, taking up a position at the Smithsonian Institution. Oka's appointment as lecturer for Japanese language was delayed until August 4, and only on February 17, 1939, was he finally appointed as guest professor of Japanese language and cultural history. On May 1 of the same year, the Institute of Japanese Studies became operational. Oka lectured on topics such as ancient Japanese history, Japanese sociology, religions of ancient Japan, the Ainu, and Japanese folklore. Alexander Slawik (1900–1998), who had already helped Oka with his dissertation during his first stay in Vienna, was now employed as an assistant at the institute.[94] In 1939 and 1940, Oka actively participated in multiple events organized by the National Socialist Reichsstudentenführung (Reich Student Leadership) to ideologically influence Japanese students. According to German participants, Oka showed sympathy for National Socialist agendas, while being reserved with regard to

86 Schmidt's main objective was a visit to the Catholic Fu Jen University in Beijing, which had been administrated since 1933 by Schmidt's order, Societas Verbi Divini. However, he also visited Japan thrice, spending about two months in the country in 1938. See Scheid, "Der Ethnologe als Geburtshelfer," 208–9.

87 Oka, "Doku-Ō ni okeru minzokugakuteki kenkyū." For a partial translation into English, see Oka, "Folklore Studies in Austria and Germany."

88 Oka, "Folklore Studies in Austria and Germany," 25.

89 Oka, "Folklore Studies in Austria and Germany," 26.

90 Shimizu, "Ijin, genzaigakuteki minzokugaku, soshite shuzokushiteki keisei," 81. On Ishida, see also Scheid's contribution to this volume.

91 Schmidt, *Neue Wege zur Erforschung der ethnologischen Stellung Japans*, 51.

92 Kreiner, "Die Gründung des Instituts für Japankunde an der Universität Wien," 231–37; Scheid, "Der Ethnologe als Geburtshelfer," 208–12.

93 On Schmidt's relationship to Austrofascism and Nazism, see Scheid, "Oka Masao und das schwierige Erbe der Wiener Kulturkreislehre," 69, 78–79; Blumauer, "Wilhelm Schmidt und die Wiener Schule der Ethnologie," 48–52.

94 Kreiner, "Die Gründung des Instituts für Japankunde an der Universität Wien," 231–37; Scheid, "Der Ethnologe als Geburtshelfer," 237–40. On Slawik, see Biontino's contribution to this volume.

overly political topics.[95] Oka also lectured as a guest professor in Hungary at the Universities of Budapest and Szeged. He travelled extensively in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, possibly to gather intelligence on Pan-Asianist movements there. Scheid shows that Mitsui put tremendous effort into building pro-Japanese sentiment in Central and Eastern Europe by sponsoring a library and a chair for Japanese Studies at the University of Helsinki, a journal of East Asian Studies in Prague, a Japanese-Hungarian Society, a Japanese-Austrian Society, a Japanese-Romanian Society, and a Japanese-Bulgarian Society, all in the mid-1930s. Mitsui was also on good terms with the Nazis, as can be seen from his donation of a large sum for the rebuilding of the Japanese-German Cultural Institute in Tokyo, for which he was presented with a medal by Hitler. That Mitsui wanted Oka to play a role in his cultural diplomacy can be inferred from the fact that he made him the managing director of the Japanese-Austrian Society. There are also indications that in 1941 Oka was a candidate for the post of director at the Japan-Institute in Berlin. At that point, Oka had already returned to Japan, taking a sabbatical in November 1940. He was not to return to Europe until the end of the war.[96]

3.2 Oka's Return to Japan and His Role in Wartime Ethnic Studies

After his return to Japan, Oka launched a petition campaign for the establishment of a national Institute of Ethnic Studies (Minzoku Kenkyūjo). In an article published in 1941, Oka introduced the Auslandswissenschaftliche Fakultät (Faculty of Foreign Studies) in Berlin as a model for such an institute. The Auslandswissenschaftliche Fakultät had been established in 1940 under the leadership of the young SS officer Franz Six. Oka praised how this institution practised ethnology as a present-oriented science within a multidisciplinary framework comprising political science, linguistics, and what we would today call area studies. For this multidisciplinary field he coined the term "ethnic studies" (*minzoku kenkyū*), of whose utility for state policy he was convinced:[97] "It is imperative to promptly establish such institutions [for ethnic studies] and lay the foundation for our country's ethnic policy."[98] Oka's efforts were successful: the Ministry of Education announced the establishment of the Institute of Ethnic Studies in the same year. However, due to the outbreak of war with the United States, the opening of the institute was delayed until August 1943. In a programmatic speech in fall 1942, Oka asked ethnologists to overcome purely academic questions and approaches—he explicitly included the culture-historical approach he had followed in his Viennese dissertation in this category—and urged ethnologists to focus on research that provided solutions for practical issues that Japan faced in its colonies.[99] For him, the only legitimate aim of ethnology at the time was "to provide a foundation for ethnic policies" in Japan's colonial empire.[100]

Until the end of the war, the institute conducted fieldwork throughout the Japanese Empire in order to create and annually update "ethnic files" of the various groups living in Japan's colonial empire. While it is difficult to assess the impact of the institute's activities on colonial policies, its researchers certainly attempted to produce results. For instance, the Minzoku Kenkyūjo conducted fieldwork among Chinese Muslims at the behest of the Japanese army, which intended to fan ethnic conflict between Muslims and Han Chinese, thus winning control over China's Muslim minority.[101] Perhaps more important than the

95 Scheid, "Der Ethnologe als Geburtshelfer," 213.

96 Nakao, *Kindai Nihon no jinruigakushi*, 319–28; Scheid, "Der Ethnologe als Geburtshelfer," 213–19.

97 Oka, "Ōshū ni okeru minzoku kenkyū." For an English translation, see Oka, "Ethnic Research in Europe." Cf. Shimizu, "What Was Ethnic Research (*Minzoku Kenkyū*)," 39–41.

98 Oka, "Ethnic Research in Europe," 8.

99 Oka, "Gendai minzokugaku no shomondai." For an English translation, see Oka, "The Difficulties Facing Contemporary Ethnology."

100 Oka, "The Difficulties Facing Contemporary Ethnology," 14.

101 For a discussion of this project, see Nakao, *Kindai Nihon no jinruigakushi*, 485–92.

institute's activities in the colonies was its promotion of the idea of a single East Asian ethnic nationality, which was disseminated to the Japanese public in the course of several lecture series. While Oka was not the director of the institute, he coordinated the institute's activities as general manager and head of the department in charge of Northeast Asia.[102]

4. After the War: Japanese Ethnogenesis and the Horserider Theory

Despite a petition by Oka to the Ministry of Education to maintain the Institute of Ethnic Studies in reduced form by abolishing the departments intended to produce practical solutions for state policy, the institute was closed down on October 13, 1945. Oka returned to his birthplace in Nagano prefecture, where he worked as a farmer.[103] In January 1947, he was summoned to the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), where Donald R. Nugent, head of the Civil Information and Education Section, presented Oka with a copy of his Viennese dissertation and expressed his desire for a translation of the work into English.[104] Chun Kyung-soo suggests that it was Oka himself who approached GHQ to convince the occupation authorities of his work's utility in overcoming the emperor-centred ideology of the wartime period.[105]

In any case, the incident marks Oka's reappearance on the academic stage. In May 1948, Ishida organized a workshop on "The origin of Japanese ethnic culture and the genesis of the Japanese state," featuring Oka and his former colleagues at the Institute of Ethnic Studies, Yawata Ichirō and Egami Namio. At this workshop, Oka for the first time presented his model of cultural strata in ancient Japan to the Japanese public.[106] However, it was his younger colleague Egami's hypothesis of the imperial family's continental origin that drew most attention. According to this hypothesis, which is treated in more detail in Sekine Hideyuki's article in this volume, the ancestors of the imperial family belonged to a horse-riding people from Manchuria who had invaded the Japanese archipelago during the fourth century.[107] It need not be stressed that these horse-riding conquerors can easily be aligned with the last cultural stratum in Oka's model.

In the subsequent years, Oka managed to rekindle his academic career. In 1950 he was elected president of the Japanese Society of Ethnology, in 1953 he accepted a call to the chair of sociology at Tokyo Metropolitan University, in 1964 he was appointed founding director of the Institute for the Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and in 1958 he was even elected president of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences.[108] Oka's role in the institutionalization of ethnology in Japan can therefore hardly be overestimated.

The only thing that seems to have remained constant throughout Oka's long and eventful career is his opportunism. After an initial interest in Marxist and evolutionary ideas, Oka became infatuated with the culture-historical and diffusionist Vienna School of Ethnology, only to propose the establishment of a present-oriented and multidisciplinary field of ethnic studies that was to further Japan's colonial policies during wartime, and in a last step to convince the American occupation authorities of the utility of his culture-historical work for post-war democratization. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that his application

102 Doak, "Building National Identity through Ethnicity," 23–28; Nakao, "The Imperial Past of Anthropology in Japan," 29–31. For a detailed description of the institute's structure and activities, see Nakao, *Kindai Nihon no jinruigakushi*, 342–70.

103 Shimizu, "What Was Ethnic Research (*Minzoku Kenkyū*)," 39, 56.

104 Oka, "Nijūgonen no ato ni," 324.

105 Chun, "Why did GHQ Bring Oka's Dissertation from Vienna to Tokyo," 136–38.

106 Shimizu argues that Ishida used Oka to counter GHQ's strong emphasis on present-oriented ethnology, thus putting the Vienna School's culture-historical approach back on the agenda. Since Oka's own forays into present-oriented research were contaminated through his associations with the military and colonialism, he had little other choice than to return to the ethnohistorical research he had started in Vienna. Shimizu, "Ijin, genzaigakuteki minzokugaku, soshite shuzokushiteki keisei," 89–91.

107 Oka et al., "Nihon minzoku-bunka no genryū to Nihon kokka no keisei," 42–49.

108 Kreiner, "Oka Masao," 27–30.

of the *Kulturkreislehre* to the study of Japanese ethnogenesis was enormously fruitful and did have a liberating effect on post-war Japanese ethnology and cultural anthropology. Thus, in Vienna in the 1930s, Oka came up with a theory of Japanese ethnogenesis that was far ahead of its time, especially in its treatment of Korea as a culture on a par with Japan and in its emphasis on Korean contributions to Japanese culture.

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