

Corean's Opinion of Russian and Jap

By Archer Butler Hulbert, Formerly Editor of the Corean Independent



A Corean Nobleman's Horse and attendants.

A COREAN NOBLEMAN'S SADDLE HORSE AND ATTENDANTS.

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FOR CENTURIES Corea has been overrun by the contending armies of Japan and China; and while the national dress in Corea is pure white, only the children wearing colors, according to American standards, it should be mourning black.

Nor have the enemies of Corea lived only on its east and west sides; the Manchu conquerors, who spread south and east to conquer China and Russia, overran Corea and starved one of its old-time kings out of his fortified capital, Nom-hou.

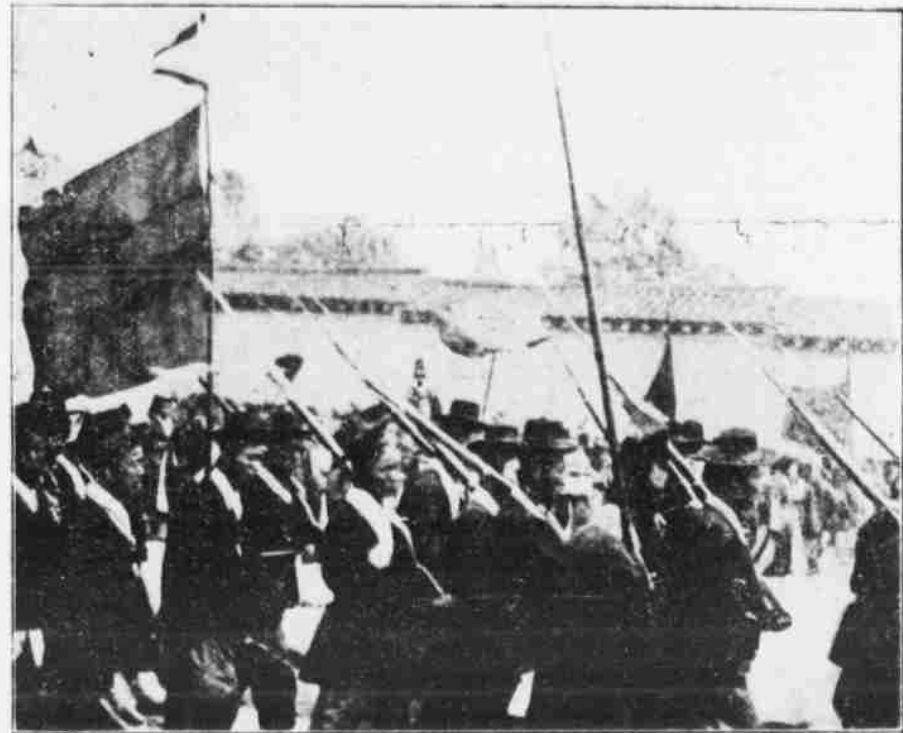
Corea is once again in the track of contending armies; once again its rice fields are to be ravaged, its cities despoiled and its people driven to the bitterest of extremities. Little do the contending armies care what the Coreans think; but the world naturally asks, Whom do the Coreans fear, and what do they desire?

In the first place, the people, as a people, don't know any more about the burning question of far eastern politics than the dray horses in New York know whether Tammany hall, or their political opponents, rule the city. So far as their practical knowledge of the situation goes, they are without consciousness; and, once given their choice between Russian rule and Japanese domination and total annihilation, the nation, as a nation, would choose annihilation simply because they did not know what it meant; whereas, they have had several tastes of Japanese rule, and one good strong dose of Russian domination, and are sure that they never want either of these again.

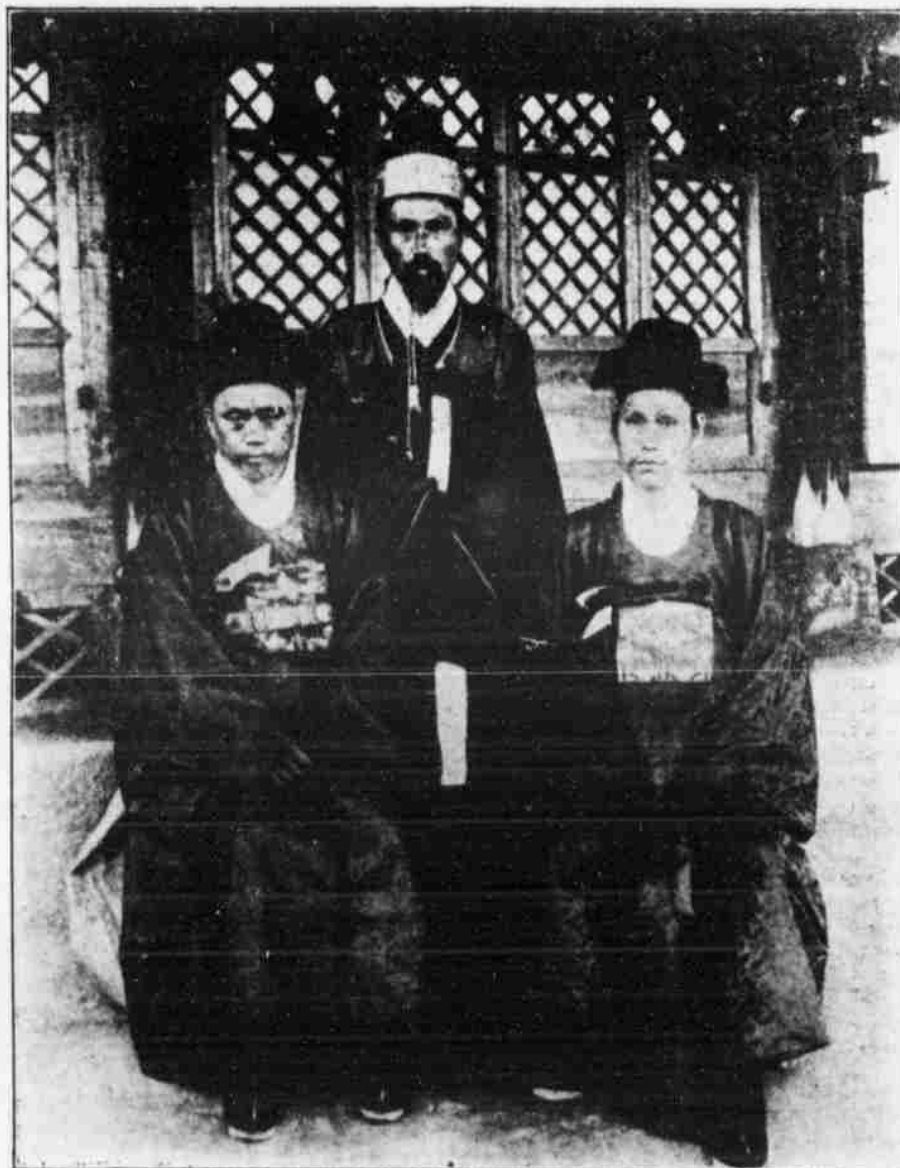
Japanese sovereignty in Corea has been spasmodically exercised throughout the centuries of the Christian era; for many years a long, bloody conflict went on between Japan and China, and Corea was the mutual battleground; just as in early American history, Kentucky was the battle ground between the Iroquois Indian nations of the north and the Cherokees and Creeks of the south. And, as Kentucky was known as the "Bloody Ground," even before the white man's day, so Corea has been the "Bloody Ground" of Asia for five centuries.

China claimed Corea, and has been, for the greater part of the time, its nominal master. From China Corea has received its literature and official language, most of its customs, its court and official methods, much of its architecture, its military standards and a thousand odd customs which will hound it for as many years to come. Yet the Coreans are not in any sense Chinese, any more than they are Japanese. The difference between the Coreans and its two neighbors is so great that it may be stated with certainty that the people came originally from the Malay peninsula, by way of the islands along the Chinese coast, until they entered the peninsula on which they are today.

This is to be remembered as a point in the case, that the Coreans cannot and do not favor one of these nations because of any racial connection; there is none. Nor is there any racial connection or sympathy between the Coreans and the peoples to the north, the Manchus, with whom Russian statisticians have long affirmed that Russia will assimilate, because the ancient Manchurians under Ghengis Khan conquered European Russia. The Manchus are distinct from even the Chinese proper; they are a pastoral people and speak an agglutinative language (containing declensions and conjugations) which far removes them, so far as basic traits can do so, from the real Chinese. The Coreans are not of Manchu stock and have no affiliation with it. In fact, Ghengis Khan, who broke down the great wall and stretched his conquests to



THE COREAN ARMY, WHICH IS MADE UP OF THE SCUM OF THE COUNTRY AND IS SAID TO SIDE WITH JAPAN.



REPRESENTATIVE COREAN NOBLEMEN, WHO HATE JAPAN BECAUSE SHE INTERFERED WITH THEIR GRAVITATION METHODS.

the Atlantic, never subdued central and southern Corea.

Thus, the Corean people are as strange, considered historically, as is their position politically. They have fought Chinese, Japanese and Manchu as far back as their hoary records go. And now, passing down into modern days, there has been no assimilation and no change in the depth of their hatred and distrust of the people who surround them. Japan, always jealous of China's claim as suzerain over Corea, jumped at the chance in 1895 to free Corea. Internal trouble in Corea gave her an opportunity to throw her troops into that land, precipitating war with China. Corea did not resent Chinese suzerainty, for it was only nominal, and she did not ask or want Japan to free her from China. And this is a remarkable fact that cannot be forgotten today—throughout the Japan-China war, in which Japan freed Corea from China, the sympathy of the entire British populace of the far east was with the Chinese and not with the Japanese.

In that war Japan's armies swept up the Corean peninsula to the Yalu and drove the weak Chinese hordes back to the Liaotung peninsula; there, on the tip of the Tiger's Tail, they captured Port Arthur, the Gibraltar of the Yellow Sea and northern China. The cry then was "On to Peking!" At this point Russia and Germany stepped in and bade Japan pause. Not only that; they demanded that Japan give up every foot of soil that her armies had conquered—Manchuria and Corea. The reason was that the possession of these

regions would ever be a menace to the integrity of China.

Japan acceded and received an indemnity and the island of Formosa and the "freedom" of Corea. The Coreans hated their liberators—from a yoke they never really felt—with a perfect hatred. Everything Japan tried honestly but short-sightedly to do for Corea made the Coreans hate her worse. It instituted a reform cabinet about the Corean emperor; these and various other well meant efforts at reformation were not well received by the wholly corrupt band of plundering Corean statesmen—or official bloodsuckers, to give them a more fitting name—and what happened? The Empress Min was soon suspected of neutralizing all the Japanese carpet-bagging plan of reconstruction in Corea; a band of infuriated Japanese desperadoes broke into the palace on the night of October 2, 1895, and murdered the offensive empress. The act received a great condemnation officially and publicly in Japan as in the outside world, but from that morning Japanese influence was nil in Corea, and the emperor of Corea fled from his palace to the Russian legation.

By its invidious policy of flattery Russia had, at an early day, made good friends with the Coreans in northern Corea. In coming across Asia it had had a good deal of practice in ingratiating itself with new peoples; for instance, it published Korans at its own expense for circulation among the Mohammedans of central Asia at the same time that it

was running to the ground and imprisoning the followers of the prophet in European Russia; and one of its tricks with the Chinese was to cast coins for general circulation with the image of the Chinese emperor on one side and that of the czar on the other. With the Coreans it instituted trade regulations that were of distinct advantage to both parties. Its policy with Japan has been of the same nature, and you will find the mikado has received every decoration and honor—save the highest only—which the czar of Russia can give.

With their emperor at the Russian legation the Coreans did not know what to make of the situation; and slowly but surely Russia began to make its possession of his majesty felt in the peninsula. MacLeavy Brown, commissioner of customs, was soon after asked to step out by the Corean government, and a Russian was installed in his place. A Russian was appointed military supervisor of the Corean army. A Russo-Corean bank was established, and the funds of the government were moved thither from the native bank. In a short space of time after the doors of the Russian legation closed upon the emperor of Corea, Russia had practical control of the land.

This was proven by the sudden activity of the independence club, an organization of Corean patriots who had banded together for the unity and integrity of Corea. By backing a paper operated by Americans the Corean Independent, which published both English and native editions tri-weekly, and by various public meetings, an intense sentiment against the pro-Russian trend of affairs was aroused. This culminated in the murder of the Corean interpreter to the Russian legation, who was believed to be an important cog in the Russian wheel.

At last, in the middle of March, 1896, the Russian minister submitted to the Corean emperor a paper asking whether the Corean government wished Russia to recede from the position it had taken. To the surprise of the world the emperor gave an affirmative answer. Then "the mouse began to gnaw the rope and the rope began to hang the butcher"; the Russian commissioner of customs graciously yielded up his position to MacLeavy Brown; the Russo-Corean bank closed its doors, the funds going back to the Corean bank, and the Russian officer in charge of the Corean army went away.

As a result of the Corean people's experience in those days, Russia had been feared by them as much as Japan had been hated; and such has been the case ever since.

The residents of Seoul know fully the feeling of the Coreans to both Japanese and Russians. I have seen Cossacks go galloping down the wide avenues of Seoul and burst suddenly upon a crowd of Coreans without an instant's warning, and never look behind to see what injuries they heedlessly caused. A riot in the Japanese section of Seoul is of common occurrence, though the Japanese are very law-abiding; one Corean, half full of sul, can find all the fighting he wants, and find it quick, in the Japanese quarter. The islanders have flocked in large numbers to Seoul and southern Corea, much to the delight of foreigners, who find them obliging and efficient. Japan is building up a large trade with Corea, but the jealousy is deep-rooted and it will take generations to wipe it out. Hatred of Japan is one of the great obstacles to Corean prosperity; and as the tramp of armies shake the bare hills of Corea, and the roar of the guns of battleships echo along her desolate coasts, the hatred of Coreans for both the contestants will increase with every ounce of powder that is spent.