

TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTION BUILDING AND TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES IN EAST ASIA

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MARC PASCHKE

“ADVENT AND GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS IN EAST ASIA THROUGHOUT THE 19TH AND 20TH: THE YOUNG MEN’S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS (YMCA) OF KOREA AND JAPAN”

Objective

Christian youth organizations undoubtedly had a lasting impact on East Asian societies from the 19th century on. A comparative history of the Young Men’s Christian Associations of Japan and Korea has not been done before. Here, I will focus on the identity construction of YMCA members, situated in the context of a global Christian identity of YMCA members in general.

Methods

The YMCA is a non-governmental, Christian and Western organization, independent from the Protestant denominations. A transnational perspective will accentuate the crossing of Western values and morals, with traditional values and an arising “national” identity in both countries. Western and Christian values were inextricably linked and likely reshaped the social identification of young converts. The timeframe, ranging from the late 19th to the middle of the 20th century, incorporates a large mass of publicized texts, of which a content analysis will highlight important points in time, that I will zoom into, entering a discussion based on hermeneutical methods.

Hypothesis

How did members of the YMCA mediate these values, that were often contradictory, in the construction of their identity? Summer schools and debates organized by the YMCA, also provided young converts from Japan and Korea with a forum for the discussion of these identities. While in Japan it seems that Summer schools became a forum for “nationalist” rhetoric and action used for cultural independence from Foreign missionaries, in Korea, these were aimed at political independence from Japan. Arguing from there, these topics must have had quite the influence on young adults, as this is the core time of identity construction.

My Aim

... is to combine the global and the local, looking at how members of the YMCA in Korea and Japan mediated their identities; not only from a national perspective, but also from a transnational perspective, comparing Korea and Japan, and situating both in the global context of debates on Christianity and on Christian identity. This will give new insights into how Christianity was translated and adapted in Korea and Japan. As this likely was not a one-way road, the transnational perspective will help to emphasize the multi-directional process that Christian and Western values went through in East Asia.



<http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b33283/>
Title: Korea - Seoul. Y.M.C.A. building
Date Created/Published: [between 1910 and 1920?]
Medium: 1 photographic print.
Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-86808 (b&w film copy neg.)
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.
Call Number: LOT 5806 [item] [P&P]
Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA



<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b47775/>
Title: Y.M.C.A. emblem formed by officers, men, and camp activity workers at Camp Wheeler, Ga.: Lt. Gen. J.B. Moss [commanding]
Creator(s): Mole & Thomas, photographer
Date Created/Published: [c1917 or 1918]
Medium: 1 photographic print.
Summary: Formation photograph.
Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-77283 (b&w film copy neg.)
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.
Call Number: LOT 5357 [item] [P&P]
Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

Subtheme: Transcultural Identities and Institutions: the Universal and the Local