

Bodies and Borders in Post-imperial Japan:

A study of the coloniality of biometric power

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Abstract

In this article, I conduct a study of what may be called the coloniality of biometric power. In recent years, scholars in social sciences and humanities have shown the continuities of colonialism and racism in the politics of biometric identification. Not only are the origins of biometrics closely related to colonial governance and scientific racism, but contemporary biometric technologies also continue to carry on colonial and racial dimensions in their infrastructures and operations. Inspired by Quijano's notion of 'coloniality of power' and departing from existing social and cultural studies of biometrics, the article explores how biometrics is used for the racial classification of people, the (re)production of colonial structures and subject-object relations during and after colonialism. The article focuses on the case of fingerprinting border controls and surveillance in post-imperial Japan. This particular case geographically expands the literature on the relationship between biometrics and colonialism, which has been largely centred upon European and North American contexts. It also helps to understand how one mode of racialization through biometrics is replaced by another, which empowers a new form of racial governance. Drawing on my analysis of the postwar Japanese fingerprinting system, I suggest that it is important to register different forms of racialization through biometrics as there are different forms of racialized control in different historical and geographical contexts.

Keywords

Biometrics, borders, colonialism, coloniality, Japan, racialization

Introduction: Coloniality of biometric power

Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2015: 13) argue that ‘there is a crucial *corporeal* dimension to the race-concept. Race is *ocular* in an irreducible way. Human bodies are visually read, understood, and narrated by means of symbolic meanings and associations.’ Social and cultural studies of biometrics¹ in the past decade or so have foregrounded the persistence of colonialism and racism in the ways in which bodies are identified and controlled. The history, or perhaps better *histories* (with respect to multiplicity in its development and deployment across the world), of biometrics is closely entangled with that of colonialism. On the one hand, an earlier method of fingerprint identification was developed and introduced by Europeans in colonized countries. The history of modern fingerprint identification can be traced back to nineteenth-century British India where fingerprinting was introduced for civil identification. Colonial officers in India such as William Herschel and Edward Henry contributed to the early development of fingerprint classification (Cole, 2001). At

¹ The term ‘biometrics’ literally means ‘measurements’ (metrics) of ‘life’ (from the Greek *bios*). Across social sciences and humanities, the term has been typically used to denote measurements of the body in general, which include, but are not limited to, facial recognition and fingerprinting (Ajana, 2013; Breckenridge, 2014; Browne, 2015; Dillon, 2008; Introna and Wood, 2004; Madianou, 2019; Magnet, 2011). The common use of the term today might refer exclusively to computerized and machine-readable identification technologies. For example, Kelly Gates (2011: 45) has noted that the term was not usually used in reference to fingerprinting before digitization. However, while traditionally non-digitized measurements may not be understood as biometrics, several studies have suggested to include them in order to understand their complex origins (for example, Pugliese, 2010: 10). In this article, I use the term ‘biometrics’ in this broad sense and examine (non-digitized) fingerprinting for a study of biometrics. I do not claim that the history of fingerprinting and that of biometrics in general are the same thing; the former should be understood as part of the latter. Nevertheless, as existing historical analyses of fingerprinting have shown (Cole, 2001; Nishiyama, 2015; Pugliese, 2010), and as will be explored in this article, histories of fingerprinting can help understanding the relationship between biometrics and colonialism in the past and present.

the turn of the century, the model of biometric government developed in India was also brought to another British colony, South Africa, which Keith Breckenridge (2014: 20) has characterized as a 'twentieth-century laboratory of empire.' On the other hand, precursors to contemporary biometric technologies were also rooted in nineteenth-century colonial and racial sciences. Francis Galton, another prominent contributor to modern fingerprint classification, was interested in fingerprint patterns not only to identify individuals but also to trace heredity, ethnicity and race (Cole, 2001). The analysis of fingerprints as anthropological data, racial classification, or indeed 'racialization' – understood as 'the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group' (Omi and Winant, 2015: 13) – became popular among scientists since the late nineteenth century and throughout the early twentieth century. Western scientists had attempted to prove the 'superiority' of white people over non-white people across the world (Cole, 2001: 97-118). A similar racialization through fingerprinting was also adopted by Japanese scientists who classified what had previously been generically categorized as 'Asian' or 'yellow race' and contributed to the creation of racial differences between the Japanese and their colonized populations (Nishiyama, 2015).

Recent scholarship on biometrics have revealed that racial dimensions of biometrics did not cease to exist after decolonization and the refutation of scientific racism; instead, such characteristics still persist in contemporary biometric technologies that are typically not regarded as racial. Joseph Pugliese (2010) has suggested that contemporary biometric technologies still contain racial biases and carry over the norms of whiteness, which were common in nineteenth-century scientific theories. Somewhat resembling social Darwinism and degeneracy theory, some contemporary biometric technologies such as fingerprint recognition systems treat white bodies as norm and universal while differentiating, marginalizing, and excluding non-white bodies (Pugliese, 2010: 62). Simone Browne (2012, 2015), for her part, has argued that biometric, and more broadly

surveillance, technologies are embedded within the 'white gaze' which discriminately targets the black body. From transatlantic slavery to computer software and airport security measures, blackness continues to play a crucial role in how bodies are identified and governed (Browne, 2015). Far from being objective and 'race-free,' new technologies sometimes still go on to have 'old,' scientifically already discredited, norms of race and racial classification (see also, Dillon; 2008; Introna and Wood, 2004; Magnet, 2011). Both historically and in the present day, therefore, biometrics is used as racialized and racializing technologies that demarcate socially constructed groups and discriminately target particular bodies.

Other scholars have argued that the use of biometrics for controlling migrants *itself* is a colonial practice. Today, biometric technologies are widely used for border controls across the world. In Europe, for example, the EURODAC Regulation established an asylum fingerprint database that is shared by European Union member states. The introduction of fingerprinting of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants can be understood as a colonial practice in several ways. One way, perhaps the most widely noted, is that taking fingerprints of migrants criminalizes and illegalizes them (Ajana, 2013: 584; van der Ploeg, 1999). Somewhat resembling the imperial biometric government of the colonized bodies in places like British India (Cole, 2001), contemporary biometric border controls place (often non-European and non-white) 'others' under surveillance, exhibiting clear power asymmetries between the controller and the controlled (Madianou, 2019: 9). Another way in which fingerprinting of migrants can be seen as a colonial practice requires the contextualization of its introduction. Nicole De Genova (2016: 78) argues that controls of migrants in Europe today manifest what Anibal Quijano (2000, 2007; see also Mignolo, 2007) called 'coloniality of power'. Quijano (2000: 216-8, 2007: 171) theorized the 'coloniality of power' as a form of power that entails the classification of people in the world based on the idea of 'race' and racial hierarchical differences (in terms of not only physiological but also cultural and mental differences), which

operates in accordance with the structure of colonial domination. Coloniality 'is still the most general form of domination in the world today, once colonialism as an explicit political order was destroyed' (Quijano, 2007: 170). The coloniality of power also entails the production of knowledge, which creates a subject-object relation, objectivizing the 'other' who is to be observed and absent in the production of knowledge (Quijano, 2007: 172-3). For De Genova (2016: 79), European border controls are a manifestation of the coloniality of power because by posing the 'immigrant problem,' they find and reconstitute their identity after decolonization, that is, their 'postcolonial whiteness.' The current 'migrant crisis' is, therefore, better understood as a European 'racial crisis' (De Genova, 2018). As such, the introduction of biometrics for European border controls becomes a colonial practice, which is embedded in (post)colonial European racialization and objectivizing migrants under the Eurocentric idea of rationality. Such coloniality of power, as Micra Madianou (2019) has recently noted, operates beyond Europe too. Expanding the definition of colonialism to 'a practice of domination involving the subjugation of one people [by] another' (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, cited in Mignolo, 2018: 116), Madianou (2019) has analysed the case of Rohingya refugees and showed how similar power asymmetries are in operation in biometric registrations in Bangladesh.

These various accounts of the relationship between biometrics and colonialism exhibit what I would suggest calling the 'coloniality of biometric power.' With direct reference to Quijano's concept, the coloniality of biometric power is a type of coloniality of power that is enacted by the use of biometrics during and after colonialism. Like the coloniality of power, it entails the racial classification of people, the (re)production of colonial structures and subject-object relations under the (Eurocentric) ideas of knowledge and rationality (Quijano, 2000, 2007), but focuses on those that are produced by practices of biometric identification. In this article, I conduct a case study of the coloniality of biometric power in Japan. As empirically demonstrated in the following sections,

the case of Japan offers an important insight into the ways in which the colonality of biometric power persists beyond European colonialism and beyond Japanese colonialism. In particular, the article explores the use of fingerprinting during and after Japanese colonialism and shows different and changing ways in which fingerprinting is used for (post)colonial racial governance. As scholars such as Pugliese (2010) and Browne (2015) have demonstrated in their critiques of 'infrastructural whiteness' and 'white gaze,' there are continuities of race, racialization, and colonality in biometrics after colonialism. Equally important, I would argue, is the transformation of the ways in which biometrics such as fingerprinting is used as a racialized and racializing technology. Inspired by Ann Laura Stoler's (2013: 8) proposition to go beyond the notion of 'colonial legacy,' the article explores the imperial formations and *re*-formations of fingerprinting and contributes to the understanding of the durability of the colonality of biometric power.

The structure of the article is as follows. The first section revisits the use of biometrics, and fingerprinting in particular, during Japanese colonialism. It is sometimes argued that Japan's colonial politics of difference was largely based on the discourse of culture as opposed to that of skin colour as in the Eurocentric colonial politics of difference (Askew, 2004: 61). Yet, as the section explores, the body was still an important domain of the production of racial knowledge during Japanese colonialism. Particular attention is given to scientific practices of measuring the fingerprints of the colonized, which consolidated the ideas of 'race' in East Asia and racial hierarchy between the Japanese and their colonized populations. This is not to say that the imperial use of fingerprinting was limited to the production of racial knowledge. Like similar developments during European colonialism (Cole, 2001), fingerprinting was also introduced for surveillance of the colonized (namely, workers in Manchuria) (Takano, 2012). The reason for focusing on fingerprinting for the production of racial knowledge is to show how different forms of colonality through biometrics were enacted for different forms of racial governance. The second section

briefly discusses an apparent shift in the history of biometrics that gradually emerged in the mid-twentieth century. By the end of the Second World War, biometrics such as fingerprinting as a technology of the production of racial knowledge was considered to be ‘pseudo-scientific’ (Cole, 2001: 113). The colonial and racist mode of fingerprinting was largely discredited in the field of science and was replaced by a ‘true’ science of fingerprinting, namely, fingerprinting as individual identification. The third section critically investigates this seemingly de-colonized and de-racialized science of fingerprinting. Drawing from the empirical case of post-imperial Japan, I show how fingerprinting as individual identification was reinvigorated as a technology of new racial governance. Somewhat resembling the contemporary illegalization of migrants in Europe (De Genova, 2018: 1766), Japan’s former colonial subjects, notably Koreans, were illegalized and criminalized in the dominant postwar political discourse and placed under fingerprinting registration. The fourth section discusses implications of the present study. The transformation of the colonality of biometric power in post-imperial Japan indicates the concurrent process of de-racialization and re-racialization of fingerprinting, which, I suggest, raises an important question of the rationality of biometric identification. Following critiques of humanism and moral progress (Fassin, 2012; Foucault, 1979), I argue that not only did colonality persist in the different uses of fingerprinting, but also the very transformation of fingerprinting allowed for a new, postcolonial, mode of racial governance.

Fingerprinting and the production of racial knowledge in the Japanese empire

Since the early years of Japanese imperialism, biometrics – broadly understood as ‘a cluster of technologies that have all been preoccupied with the measurement of the body in order [to] identify, classify, evaluate and regulate target subjects’ (Pugliese, 2010: 10) – was widely used for the production of racial knowledge. As the empire expanded, Japanese scientists, notably from the disciplines of anthropology and biology, began to study the bodies of the colonized (Askew, 2004;

Shimizu, 1999). Following Japan's annexation of Taiwan in 1895, the Taiwan Anthropological Society was established in Taipei in order to promote scientific research on the 'human race' (*jinrui*) in the colony (Inō, 1896). Their primary focus was Taiwanese aboriginal tribes, who were known to Japanese anthropologists and colonial officials as '*seiban*' or 'raw barbarians.' Anthropologists such as Itō Kanori, Torii Ryūzō and Mori Ushinosuke conducted extensive research on Taiwanese aboriginal tribes. They used various measurements of the body – ranging from height, head size, and skin colour to the size of palms and feet – to study colonized bodies and understand biological and racial differences. Torii, in particular, conducted extensive fieldwork across East Asia in the following decades and contributed to the development of the field of 'race studies' (*jinshu gaku*) within the discipline of anthropology (Shimizu, 1999: 129). As the empire extended to Korea and Manchuria after the Russo-Japanese War, studies of colonized bodies continued to grow across the new imperial dominions. Japanese scientists conducted similar studies to the analysis of Taiwanese tribes in Korea after Japan's annexation of the peninsula in 1910. For example, Kubo Takeshi, a newly appointed professor of anatomy at Keijō Medical College,² conducted a series of anthropological and anatomical studies of Korean bodies in the 1910s. Like earlier studies in Taiwan, Kubo's anatomical study sought the 'racial peculiarities' of Koreans (Kubo, 1915). There were also similar studies conducted by Japanese scientists in Manchuria, which extended to studies of the bodies of Chinese people (for example, Miyake, 1923).

The measured differences of the colonized populations contributed to the Japanese colonial production of racial knowledge not simply in terms of physiological differences. They were also interpreted as biological signs of their racial 'inferiority' in a similar yet distinct way from the theories of evolution and social Darwinism. Evolutionary theories and their application to human

² Keijō was an administrative district of Korea under Japanese rule, which was established in today's Seoul.

society were popularized in Japan during the late 1870s and 1880s (Weiner, 1995: 442-3) but these essentially Eurocentric thoughts were soon translated in accordance with Japan's imperial expansion. Like the earlier introduction of the ideas of race and racial hierarchy that were applied to construct the Japanese race and other Asian races (Nishiyama, 2015; Takezawa, 2015), social evolutionary theories were adopted by Japanese scientists in order to construct racial hierarchical differences *within* East Asia. Korean and Chinese fingerprints and palm prints were interpreted as the biological traits of their degeneracy in comparison not only with Europeans but also with the Japanese people (Miyake, 1923). Similarly, fingerprints of Taiwanese aboriginal tribes were interpreted as a sign of the level of civilization and as a sign of their primitive nature among other populations in Asia (Kanaseki, 1929). Some of the Japanese scientists were more explicit than others in their application of biological determinism. For example, Kubo overtly criminalized his Korean students when a skull went missing from a laboratory at Keijō Medical College, accusing them based on his anthropological knowledge of the Korean people (Kim, 2013: 417-8).

The use of fingerprints in particular further proliferated in the 1920s and 1930s following the introduction of the 'fingerprint index' by Furuhashi Tanemoto. In 1926, Furuhashi, then a professor of forensic pathology at Kanazawa Medical University who later became one of the leading figures in the development of scientific methods of identification in Japan, introduced a mathematical formula called the 'fingerprint index' in order to classify and numerically order fingerprint patterns of different 'races' (Furuhashi, 1926). After its introduction and throughout the 1930s, Furuhashi and his students and followers conducted large-scale studies of the fingerprint index using fingerprint samples collected across Japan's imperial sphere and also secondary data from across the world (see also Nishiyama, 2015). Their studies contributed to the production of racial knowledge in three closely interrelated ways, which are all specific to the geographical context of Japanese imperialism.

First, they produced racial knowledge by classifying and ordering different nations and indigenous populations across the world, who were all treated as races, and by locating the Japanese within its hierarchy. In the transcript of one of his lectures in 1926, which was published in *The Nippon Medical World (Nihon no ikai)* in the same year, Furuhata provided a page-long table of the fingerprint indexes. The table was primarily organized in the following order: Japan's colonial subjects, the Japanese, and Europeans (Furuhata, 1926). It located the Japanese between other Asians and Europeans, suggesting that the Japanese are biologically closer to Europeans than other Asians.³ Second, the studies of fingerprints produced the racial biogeography of the Japanese, which sought to understand the origins of the Japanese race. In addition to the classification of colonized populations across East Asia, the fingerprint index was used to identify regional biological differences among Japanese people. Furuhata's school analyzed fingerprint patterns of over 17,000 Japanese people across forty seven prefectures and calculated the average fingerprint index for each prefecture in order to discover the hereditary influence of other racial groups from the continent and trace the racial origins of the Japanese (Hirai, 1928). Even though it did not affirm the permanent existence of the Japanese race (i.e., without any prehistoric migration influence), this was still a form of the construction of the Japanese race, which was closely correlated to the construction of other races on the continent. Third, fingerprinting did not only make social groups genetic but also made their behaviour and character genetic. As one of the earlier studies put it, it was to understand the relationship between 'constitution' and 'temperament' (Hirai, 1928: 1256). This was particularly evident in fingerprint studies of Taiwanese aboriginal tribes. Some of the tribes such as Atayal were less obedient to Japanese officers in Taiwan and had taken rebellious stances to the colonial rule, as seen in the case of the Musha incident (see Ching, 2000). Their

³ A similar but more extensive table was produced by Furuhata's student in the 1930s (Hibino, 1935).

rebellious, and violent in the eyes of Japanese colonials, behaviour was explained by fingerprint patterns, which ‘proved’ their ‘primitive’ character (Itō, 1935: 1441). In turn, the constructed knowledge of their primitive nature fortified colonial rule and the Japanese ‘mission to civilize’ them.

Studies of fingerprints, and anthropological studies of colonized bodies since the late nineteenth century more broadly, show the translation of scientific racism to the context of Japanese imperialism and the role of biometrics in it. Importantly, this translation was in accordance with this particular geographically-coded structure of domination. Eurocentric ideas such as the idea of ‘degenerate fingerprints’ (Cole, 2001) were not applied to racially differentiate white bodies from non-white bodies but translated to racialize and differentiate the Japanese people from other Asian populations. That is to say, the colonial power of biometrics was not limited to European colonialism. Nor was it limited to Eurocentric theories or the norms of whiteness (cf. Pugliese, 2010). The ideas of race and racial hierarchy and the scientific principle of measurement – the theory that racial differences are measurable on the surface of the body – were more permeable than this. They were mobilized for the development of a new classification of people in a new empire and to support an emerging colonial structure.

Interlude: De-racializing fingerprinting

By the end of the Second World War, however, the use of fingerprinting for the production of racial knowledge was largely marginalized in the field of science. Across Western countries, the scientificity of fingerprinting was increasingly sustained solely as a forensic technology of individual identification. This is not to say that fingerprinting as a technology of individual identification did not exist prior to this period. In fact, fingerprinting had been used both as a technology of racial classification and as a technology of individual identification since the early

years of its development. In colonial India, a prototype of fingerprinting was introduced for civil contract and pension disbursement, which was later expanded for the purpose of prisoner registration (Cole, 2001: 63-6). In Japan, fingerprinting was also introduced as a technology of identifying recidivists during the period of modern penal reform at the beginning of the twentieth century (Hiranuma, 1908). Later, fingerprinting was extended to monitor the mobilities of workers in Japanese Manchuria (Takano, 2012). While the two modalities of fingerprint identification co-existed for several decades since the late nineteenth century, the gradual marginalization of the racialist modality began to emerge in the first half of the twentieth century. In the United States, already in 1925, Thomas G. Cooke, Director of the Institute of Applied Science in Chicago, the leading fingerprint school in the country at that time, condemned the calculation of race and degeneracy through fingerprint patterns as 'pseudo-sciences', arguing that it hindered the establishment of fingerprinting as a 'real science' (Cole, 2001: 112-3). It should be noted that the denouncement was concurrent with the increasing interest in fingerprints among police and prison officials (Cole, 2001: 112-3). There was a similar movement in Japan during the early twentieth century. While racialist research on fingerprints continued across the 1930s as discussed in the previous section, fingerprinting as forensic identification began to receive increasing interest from Japanese officials. It came into the limelight in 1929 when the high-profile robber Tsumaki Matsukichi was finally arrested by using fingerprint identification (Furuhata, 1930: 346-54). By the late 1940s, fingerprinting for the production of racial knowledge largely disappeared from the field of science and the dominant discourse of fingerprinting moved to the field of forensic identification. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Furuhata, who led biological studies of fingerprints in the 1920s and 1930s, became the prominent figure in the science of fingerprinting not in terms of racial classification but as a 'true' forensic method of identification. Furuhata was also later appointed as the director of the National Research Institute of Police Science, which was initially established in 1948 as an attached organization of the National Police Agency. Both the figure of

Furuhata and the science of fingerprinting regained their scientific authority by what Cole (2001: 100) characterizes as ‘selective amnesia,’ that is, virtually completely forgetting biological research on fingerprints before the war.

With the international denouncement of racial sciences as manifested in UNESCO’s *Race Question* (Montagu, 1972), the scientificity of fingerprinting transformed by the mid-twentieth century. The scientificity of fingerprinting was now sustained not by the imperial will to racial knowledge as in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, but for the sole purpose of individual identification as widely used in contemporary forensics. It was a shift in the scientific norms of fingerprint identification. The shift was not a sudden change that is exclusive to the postwar context or as a direct outcome of the UNESCO anti-racist statements, but a gradual development from earlier scientific and police discourses and practices. Although some scientists including Furuhata himself still continued to seek to classify, though not hierarchize (at least not explicitly), races through fingerprinting (for example, Furuhata and Masahashi, 1949), the scientific methods of measuring the body were largely ‘de-racialized.’

Postcolonial biometric border control and surveillance

This seemingly de-racialized and de-colonized fingerprinting soon came to be incorporated into a new, postcolonial, mode of racial governance in Japan after the war. Upon the restoration of its sovereignty, in April 1952, the Japanese government promulgated the Alien Registration Act. Resembling the US Smith Act, the Japanese Alien Registration Act introduced fingerprint registration of non-Japanese residents in the country. It mandated those who were 14 years-old and above to provide their fingerprints on official documents including one that was to be kept by the government and one that was required for them to carry at all times. Although the name seems to suggest that it would apply to all foreign residents, in practice, the act primarily, if not exclusively,

applied to former colonial subjects who were already residing in Japan. Prior to the introduction of the act in 1952, there were no foreigners residing in Japan other than the officials and relatives of the Allied Powers and those who had migrated from the Japanese colonies as labour force during the imperial period. The vast majority of migrant workers were from Korea. The reason for there being no other foreigners in postwar Japan was because immigration was suspended during the Allied Occupation. In 1946, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) suspended immigration to Japan after an outbreak of cholera in Korea. Although the directive was initially intended as an emergency order, the immigration ban was carried on and intensified even after cholera was no longer a major health threat to the country (Takemae, 2003: 449). It should also be noted that the ban following the outbreak of cholera did not apply to immigration *from Korea* in general; it only prohibited the immigration *of Koreans*. As Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2010: 70) notes, ‘the cholera epidemic did not prevent the occupation authorities from continuing to repatriate Japanese from Korea, China and Manchuria.’ The suspension continued in 1947 when the Alien Registration Ordinance, the predecessor of the 1952 Alien Registration Act, prohibited immigration as a whole, except the officials and relatives of the Allied Powers. This exception was carried on to the 1952 Alien Registration Act, which exempted US military personnel and their relatives who remained after the Allied Occupation.

In addition to the fact that there were only Korean residents, and to a lesser degree Chinese and Taiwanese residents, who could be subject to the Alien Registration Act, there is another reason that the postwar fingerprinting registration should be understood as a measure particularly targeting Korean residents in Japan. Prior to 1952, there was already the practice of fingerprinting registration in operation not at a national scale but at a local scale. Since 1946, a local authority in Osaka (in cooperation with the occupation army) had started taking fingerprints from Korean residents. Osaka was home to many Korean people and the local police authority suspected that there were many

'illegal' Koreans who came to Japan despite the immigration ban. In order to detect, and effectively deport, 'illegal' Koreans, they introduced a fingerprinting registration system (Teikoku gikai shūgiin, 1947: 10).

Like the case of Osaka, Japan's postwar fingerprinting registration under the Alien Registration Act was rationalized as an immigration control measure to identify 'illegal' Koreans. It is important to note that this 'illegality' was constructed by the ill-judged and discriminatory policy that was endorsed by the Japanese government and the Allied Powers. Following the postwar immigration ban, 'newly arriving' immigrants, most notably from Korea, were *illegalized*: they were labelled as 'illegal immigrants' (*mitsunyūkoku sha*) or 'stowaways' (*mikkō sha*). This illegalization completely ignored complexities that were embedded in post-imperial border crossing. Many of the 'illegal immigrants' from Korea were actually returnees who were simply trying to come back to the country where they had lived until recently (Morris-Suzuki, 2010: 55). As a part of the demobilization of the empire, hundreds of thousand Koreans in Japan were repatriated by the end of 1946 (Dower, 1999: 54). When they arrived in the peninsula, they encountered confusion, uncertainty, and severe unemployment and hardship in post-colonial and US/USSR occupied Korea. Consequently, some of them decided to return to Japan, undertaking a risky journey in a small boat on the sea. Despite the devastating circumstances in the peninsula and their decades-old connection to Japan, their (re)entry was illegalized. Some of them were arrested, deported without judicial process, or died in a detention centre (Morris-Suzuki, 2004, 2006). The Japanese officials themselves knew that many 'illegal' immigrants were formerly residents of Japan. For example. Furuya Tōru, a senior police officer and later the deputy Superintendent-General of the Metropolitan Police Department, stated during a discussion on the introduction of fingerprinting at the Diet in 1951 as follows: 'The vast majority of illegal immigrants are very likely those who had lived in Japan before the war. They know the geography of Japan thoroughly and speak Japanese

well' (Kokkai shūgiin, 1951: 11). The authorities such as the Metropolitan Police Department were also aware of the fact that some of them were coming back to the country to see their family. Ironically, statements such as this were made at the Diet to highlight the difficulty of apprehending 'illegal' Koreans, underscoring the need for an effective method of identification rather than the need to revise the outright exclusion of former colonial subjects.

Instead of pursuing post-imperial integrity and taking these aspects into consideration, the introduction of fingerprinting was justified particularly with reference to the increasing number of cases of impersonation and forgery. The discourses around impersonation and forgery facilitated the illegalization and criminalization of Koreans even further: they are 'illegal' not only because of an act of immigration, which was abruptly banned after the war, but also because they impersonate and engage with forgery. They were now criminalized beyond immigration itself despite the fact that this was their only means to come back to Japan. In other words, the mobility of former colonial subjects in postwar Japan could only be 'unauthorized' and 'illegal', which bears some resemblance with the contemporary illegalization of migrants in Europe that scholars such as De Genova (2018: 1766) among others have noted in recent years.

In the meantime, the Japanese government was also eager to introduce fingerprinting registration for the purpose of maintaining public order and security inside the country. In the late 1940s, there was a growing interest in fingerprinting for the purpose of criminal and forensic identification beyond identification of recidivists. The officials drew particular attention to fingerprinting and the 'scientification' (*kagaku ka*) of criminal investigation in the aftermath of the disappearance and death of the first president of the Japanese National Railways, Shimoyama Sadanori. The president Shimoyama went missing in early July 1949, and was soon found dead and dismembered on the railway line in Adachi ward, Tokyo. The official autopsy of Shimoyama's body was conducted by a

forensic pathology school at Tokyo University, led by Furuhashi and Kuwashima Naoki, who were the leading scholars in the aforementioned biological and racialist studies of fingerprints less than two decades previously. As a high-profile case, the Shimoyama incident was discussed at the Diet and the Committee on Judicial Affairs held meetings on the incident and to discuss the scientification of criminal investigation. At a meeting in August 1949, the committee invited expert witnesses in the relevant fields, consisting of forensic scientists including Furuhashi, a senior officer from the Metropolitan Police Department's criminal identification section, and the director of the National Research Institute of Scientific Investigation, the predecessor of the National Research Institute of Police Science (Kokkai shūgiin, 1949). At the committee meeting, Furuhashi emphasized the importance of fingerprinting for forensic identification, suggesting to collect the fingerprints of the nation. The idea of fingerprinting the nation – sometimes called the 'National Fingerprint Act' (*kokumin shimon hō*) – was discussed among politicians, police authorities, and scientists at the Diet in 1949 and 1950, and its petition was eventually filed by a member of the House of Representatives (Kokkai shūgiin, 1950: 14). The idea of nation-wide fingerprinting surveillance never materialized, though there were several occasions on which selected Japanese citizens were fingerprinted (see for example, Tanaka, 1995: 86). Yet, it did not go beyond implementation on a local scale.

What was implemented on a national scale was the elevation of fingerprinting for surveillance of suspects and 'dangerous' groups. The use of fingerprinting was expanded so as to monitor and investigate suspects in custody in 1948 by the amendment of the Code of Criminal Procedure (*Keijisoshō hō*, Article 218.2). All suspects in custody were now subject to fingerprinting regardless of their conviction and without issuing a warrant. The police's use of fingerprinting was also extended to those who are not even taken into custody but alleged to be 'dangerous' to society. The Metropolitan Police Department used fingerprinting as a measure to monitor prostitutes, as

Tsukamoto Kyūichi from the criminal identification section explained: 'we are taking fingerprints of 'night ladies' and prostitutes due to hygiene and security concerns' (Kokkai shūgiin, 1949: 18).

Fingerprinting Koreans under the Alien Registration Act can be understood as a racialized form of such surveillance of suspects within the country. Since the end of the war, Korean residents were seen and discursively constructed as a 'suspicious' and 'dangerous' population by the Japanese officials and the officials of the Allied Powers. In addition to their illegalization, Koreans were also criminalized as 'black-marketeers' and violent people who would threaten to undermine Japanese postwar economy. Black market activities became prevalent across war-torn cities in Japan. With severe scarcity of basic goods, they became an essential part of life. As the former SCAP official David Conde (1947: 41) reported at the time: 'Nearly everyone has had to buy or sell in the black market in order to live, particularly food stuffs and other necessary items which are controlled and frequently unobtainable.' For many people in Japan, the black market was, as historian John W. Dower (1999: 139, emphasis original) puts it, 'virtually *the* economy.' Conde (1947: 41) noted that black market activities were known to the authorities since the beginning of the Allied Occupation in autumn 1945, but they hardly became the security concern until mid-1946 and the illegal economy was often ignored by the police. At times, the municipal authorities and local police even indirectly approved the black market through supporting Japanese gangs who organized the black markets in major cities (Dower, 1999: 141-2). The black market became one of the major security concerns in the early summer of 1946, when the issue became racialized. Despite both Japanese and former colonial subjects engaging in the illegal economy alike, national newspapers began to describe black marketeers as 'non-Japanese' and soon more explicitly as Korean and Taiwanese. They warned that these people caused disturbances, made a large amount of profits illegally, and had adverse effects on the state's food and price policies (Conde, 1947: 41-2). The problematization of black market activities was also consistently racialized at the Imperial Diet. Following the violent

conflict related to black market territories between Japanese gangs and a gang formed by Taiwanese residents in July, the Secretary of the leading Liberal Party, Ōno Banboku, proclaimed: ‘social order is being destroyed by non-Japanese nations’ (cited in Conde, 1947: 42). From the beginning of August 1946 the government initiated the nation-wide control of black markets with the police’s attempt to assure, to borrow Conde’s (1947: 42) own terms, ‘a racially-pure black market.’ The state officials began to exclude non-Japanese street-vendors and legalize the control and organization of black markets by Japanese gangs.

This attempt to maintain and ‘racially purify’ the black market coincided with the increasing arbitrary problematization of Koreans in which they were seen as criminals and the root cause of (‘unlegalized’) black markets. A member of the Japanese Progressive Party Shiikuma Saburō stated in his applauded speech at the plenary session of the House of Representatives:

The central root of the black market in Japan is today’s outlawry Koreans. Their impact on current Japanese commerce, trade, and social life is staggering. We definitely cannot ignore the situations that they are making illicit sales on the main street, occupying street stalls, and trading them in broad daylight while insulting the police (Teikoku gikai shūgiin, 1946a: 453-454).

Sometimes, the criminalization of Koreans in postwar Japan resembled more explicitly the racialization of Japan’s ‘others’ during colonialism in which they were generically classified as a criminal race or nation. During a discussion on the control of Koreans and the Taiwanese, the Home Minister Ōmura Seiichi explicitly referred to Koreans as a ‘delinquent nation’ (*furyō minzoku*) that was causing violence at black markets (Teikoku gikai kizokuin, 1946). With the racialization of black marketeers, the problem of the black market became also the problem of immigration, and vice versa. Since they had no access to official food distribution, illegal immigrants were suspected of making a living by black marketing and other criminal activities. Ōmura proclaimed in September, 1946, that the illegal Korean immigrants ‘are mostly engaged in black-marketing and

other unproductive activities' (cited in Conde, 1947: 44). On the very same day, the government set up the extensive border control on the coasts which was designed 'to cope with those Koreans causing deleterious affects to the country's economic life' (cited in Conde, 1947: 44). The double insecuritization of black market and immigration was also endorsed by the Allied Powers (Conde, 1947: 43; Morris-Suzuki, 2004: 15-6). The criminalization of Koreans as illegal immigrants and black marketeers proliferated in the late 1940s and eventually Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru wrote a letter to SCAP, requesting SCAP to deport all Korean residents (see Ōnuma, 1979).

The introduction of fingerprinting registration put repeatedly-criminalized Koreans under new scientific criminal investigation. Fingerprinting for criminal investigation rather than solely for immigration control is evident in a provision in the Alien Registration Act. The Act required a full set of ten fingerprints, rather than the few, or single fingerprint, suggested in its initial proposal. If the purpose of fingerprinting Koreans were solely about verification of individuals as in the management of 'illegal' immigration, effectively one or few fingerprints would be sufficient. Collecting ten fingerprints, by contrast, was essential for forensic and criminal investigation in order to maximize the likelihood of identification at a crime scene. Accordingly, Morris-Suzuki (2010: 115) argues: 'under this system each foreigner was to have a full set of ten fingerprints taken each time he or she was registered. The practical difference was small, but the symbolic significance profound. ... There could be one reason for taking all ten prints: to provide a store of data against which police could match prints found at crime scenes.' This interpretation needs a slight correction, however. The requirement of ten fingerprints, which is also highlighted in other existing studies in this field (for example, Chung, 2010: 107), was in fact repeatedly criticized at the Diet prior to the enforcement of the act in April 1955. For example, the head of Immigration Bureau Suzuki Hajime condemned the collection of ten fingerprints (for example, Kokkai shūgiin, 1954: 1-2). Eventually, this proposal was repealed and the fingerprinting registration was officially

introduced with the requirement of only one (left) index fingerprint as clarified in Article 7 of the Ordinance Related to Fingerprints for the Alien Registration Act (*Gaikokujin tōroku hō no shimon ni kansuru seirei*). Nevertheless, the racialized surveillance of suspects remained even in this modification: the collection of a full set of ten fingerprints remained a requirement in the case of re-issuing a registration card. Those who requested re-issuing were made subject to criminal investigation. The rejection of fingerprinting registration would be imposed by penalties such as fine and imprisonment. Furthermore, the registration card was required for their social accesses: without it, they would not be able to access food supply, to send their children to school, to obtain a driving license, and, not to mention, to re-enter the country (Kokkai shūgiin, 1956: 4). With these legal structures, they were placed under postcolonial fingerprinting surveillance for the next few decades until the end of the twentieth century when the fingerprinting provision was finally abolished.

A critique of humanism and ‘biometric reason’

The concurrent process of de-racialization and re-racialization of fingerprinting that this article has explored poses important questions of humanism and what may be called ‘biometric reason.’ The evolution of the penal system from public execution to modern prison, Foucault (1979) suggests, did not humanize punishment. It was not the celebration of humanism. Rather, it marked a new way of operating power over the body; it marked a new “‘political economy’ of the body’ (Foucault, 1979: 25). Similarly, Didier Fassin (2012) sheds a critical light on ‘humanitarian reason’ in the contemporary political climate of humanitarianism. For Fassin (2012: 4-8), ‘humanitarian reason [that] governs precarious lives’ is not ‘a sign of moral progress’ but ‘a new moral economy’ that has replaced the language of injustice by that of suffering, and the language of violence by that of trauma. More recently, humanitarianism is problematized in its role in the introduction of biometric control of refugees. Drawing on her case study of Rohingya refugees, Madianou (2019) argues that

the introduction of biometric identification, which is supposed to help delivering humanitarian aid, manifests power asymmetries in that there is a lack of data protection and no meaningful consent during their registration.

While it is not directly related to humanitarianism, at least humanitarianism as conventionally understood in terms of delivering aid, the case of fingerprinting registration in post-imperial Japan offers a critical insight into a progressive and de-racialized account of biometric identification from a genealogical perspective. On the surface, the epistemological change in the science of race and the corresponding technological change in biometrics that emerged in the mid-twentieth century may be understood as a form of humanist and moral progress in this particular field. They may be understood as a humanizing of the measurement of the body. Yet, when social and political applications of biometrics such as fingerprinting are also taken into consideration, this progressive view becomes something that needs to be questioned, if not rejected wholesale. The shift from the biometric production of racial knowledge to the biometric surveillance of racialized 'others' is better understood as, following Foucault's terminology, a shift in the 'political economy of the body.' That is to say, it was a shift in how the body is used for, and becomes a domain of, racial governance.

This critical insight leads to another question on the rationality of biometrics, or more precisely, the rationality that underlines the social and political deployment of biometrics. The social Darwinist use of fingerprinting became irrational not simply with regard to its scientificity in the mid-twentieth century. It became irrational also with regard to a newly emerging political situation. It was no longer an effective technology of racial governance to attest the racial inferiority of the Koreans and other Asians who remained in mainland Japan after the war. Or it can be even argued that just as much as public torture is not *in itself* more irrational than imprisonment (Foucault, 1991:

79), the 'pseudo-scientific' fingerprinting was not *in itself* irrational; but it was irrational in terms of a new type of racial governance.

Conclusion

The science of fingerprinting may have rebelled and regained its independence from overt and explicit racist ideologies. Scientific methods and theories that were based on the belief in racial hierarchy and that sought to identify such hierarchy were discredited and seemingly effectively de-racialized, or humanized, in the mid-twentieth century. Yet, the de-racialization of fingerprinting did not lead to the end of fingerprinting as a technology of racial governance. While at the level of scientificity the history of fingerprinting seems to have had a form of humanist and moral progress by de-racializing its modality of calculation, such reformation also entailed the re-racialization of the technology in its application in society. The de-racialized science of fingerprinting was deployed for postcolonial border control and surveillance in a way that it was reinvigorated as a technology of new, postcolonial, racial governance. Both fingerprinting for the production of racial knowledge and fingerprinting for racialized border control and surveillance are forms of racialization, which have significant corporeal dimensions to them and yet which operate differently. Such corporeality of race and racialization is not limited to 'symbolic meanings and associations' in which the body was read as an indicator of racial difference and hierarchy. The case of fingerprinting in postwar Japan attests that the idea of race and racialization are corporeal also, because the body was used as the domain of racially coded forms of control. Or to put it another way, there are different forms of racialization: on the one hand, there is racialization that makes social groups biological (and indeed racial) and hierarchically orders them; on the other hand, there is racialization that does not, in itself, produce racial groups, but operates (in the disguised and de-racialized form) in conjunction with already-racialized assumptions of particular populations. It is important to register these different forms of corporeal racialization and foreground the difference

not simply because both exist in history and in the present but also because a change and difference in racialization contributes to the (re)production of colonial structures in the apparent de-racialized and de-colonized world.

What I suggested calling the coloniality of biometric power does not just continue as a legacy, for example, as in the case of white norms (Pugliese, 2010). It also transformed across space and in its mode of racial classification and the production of hierarchical structures and subject-object relations, whilst retaining its very colonial and racial (il)logic of governance. Fingerprinting as the power of inscribing racial knowledge on the surface of the body during Japanese colonialism, which in itself was a transformation from the Eurocentric model, transformed into fingerprinting as the power of policing. The remodelling of the power of fingerprinting corresponded to the mode of governing. What needs to be governed was no longer the truth and knowledge of the Japanese race, which needed to, facing Western imperial powers, be distinguished from other Asian races and be proved superior to them (Nishiyama, 2015). This was the imperial model of the power-knowledge, subject-object, of biometrics. After the dissolution of the empire, the mode of governing transformed into the management of cross-border movements of former colonial subjects and their criminal activities. With the internationally discredited science of race, it became a technology of monitoring illegalized and criminalized former colonial subjects.

What was found more effective, or indeed rational, after the war was to monitor their cross-border movements and criminal and *criminalized* activities. Across these two historical contexts, the racialized discourse of criminality and barbarity was prevalent but the relationship between fingerprinting and the discourse of criminality transformed. The binary opposition of rationality and irrationality, of reason and unreason, must not be made solely based on the scientific norms of

fingerprinting, and biometrics more broadly. It must be investigated in relation to the rationality of governance in a given historical context.

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