



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Botany and national identities: The Tokyo Cherry

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## Argument

When Japan faced the world after the collapse of its feudal system, it had to invent its own modern identity in which the Tokyo Cherry became the National Flower. Despite being a garden plant, it received a Latin scientific species name as if it was an endemic species. After Japan's colonial conquest of Korea, exploring the flora of the peninsula became part of imperial knowledge practices of Japan. In the wild, a different cherry was discovered in Korea that was proposed as the endemic parent of the Tokyo Cherry, supporting imperialist policies. Following Japan's defeat after the Pacific War, South Korea in turn entered its search for cultural identity. The supposed parent of the Tokyo Cherry was now successfully acclaimed as the parent species of the colonial oppressor's Tokyo Cherry and named the King Cherry. Such scientific practice into cherries smoothly intertwined with nationalism and its legacy continues to interfere with research today.

**Keywords:** Imperial Biopower; impure scientific standards; King Cherry; Mount Halla; 'Someiyoshino'; Wangbeonnamu

## Introduction: From nation and imperialism to nationalism

Gardeners and herbalists have been searching for useful, vegetal resources since time immemorial. As civilization advanced, plantsmen started working in service of society, state, or King. When plant hunting effectively came under an umbrella of science, plant names became fixed data managed on dried herbarium sheets or with illustrations. Carl Linnaeus' (1707–1778) binominal nomenclature standardized the naming of plants worldwide, but separated a plant name from its local variation, soil, climate, and practical meaning. This separation essentially secluded cultivated plants that were of a lower order. Linnaeus himself, when exploring wild species found in undisturbed nature, was proud to advertise the patriotism that motivated the survey of all his fatherland's plant resources (Svenska 1986, 476). When a fatherland becomes a nation and nations start to compete, patriotism becomes nationalism or imperialism, in which colonial empires must be defended and defined. As a practical tool in imperialist science, botany and its Linnaean nomenclature gained a wide importance, as an “imperial biopower” that overruled local perceptions and values.<sup>1</sup> The case of Japan is typical as the country constructed its own imperial botany ahead of being colonized itself.

When Japan faced the world after the collapse of its feudal system, it had to invent its own modern identity, in which cherries emerged as a symbol of the new nation. In practice, this role was more specifically occupied by the Tokyo Cherry, which was the most widely used symbol of imperialism and militarism in Japan into the Pacific War (Ohnuki-Tierney, 2002). Mass produced by gardeners, the Tokyo Cherry, with its spectacular blossom, is still the most commonly planted

<sup>1</sup>Schiebinger and Swan (2004) on the larger frame of European colonial botany; Lafuente and Valverde (2004) and Müller-Wille 2004, 46–48 on the role of Linnaean botany in this respect. Lee (2015) on how Japan overcame the European hegemony illustrated with a case study focusing on Nakai Takenoshin.

cherry within Japan, and it is exceedingly popular elsewhere in the world.<sup>2</sup> In essence it is a horticultural product, but in the early twentieth century it received a Linnaean species name in Latin, *Prunus yedoensis*, which gave it the status of a wild species. This effort to consolidate the Tokyo Cherry's meaning through science was accompanied by the start of fervent cherry research among plant scientists in Japan. With the colonial conquest of Korea, exploring natural plant life of the peninsula became part of imperial knowledge practices of the imperial center Japan (Lee, 2016). Within this context, a different, but similar looking cherry was discovered in Korea, and was understood as a wild variety of the species *Prunus yedoensis*. In the end and with highly questionable reasoning, it gained status as the Korean endemic parent of the Tokyo Cherry, supporting Japanese imperialist claims to Korea.

Such scientific fabrication might have been expected to collapse with Japan's defeat after the Pacific War, but the imperialist legacy dragged on. Celebrating the independence of the new Republic of Korea, the supposedly endemic parent of the Tokyo Cherry was successfully acclaimed by a Korean botanist as the parent species of the colonial oppressor's Tokyo Cherry and named the King Cherry. The importance the King Cherry gained in subsequent journalism and scientific research has resulted in it being listed as an endangered species in a national list (Kim 2014, 156). In populist views among Koreans, the Tokyo Cherry has come to stand for Japanese nationalism while the King Cherry exemplifies the nation of Korea.<sup>3</sup>

Scientists today define the King Cherry of Korea as being not-related through parentage to the Tokyo Cherry, though both are taxonomically classified under *Prunus × yedoensis*.<sup>4</sup> While King Cherries look similar to the Tokyo Cherry, they are not propagated by gardeners, but are spontaneous hybrids with different parentage (Lee 1996; Kim Chan-soo et al. 1998; Chang et al. 2004; Roh et al. 2007, 2015). This conclusion may seem to have settled the dispute. Yet, without addressing the legacy of nationalist bias, researchers in Korea and Japan have entered the field of biotechnology, inflating problems of provenance, and classification (Innan et al. 1995; Kato et al. 2014; Cheong et al. 2017; Baek et al. 2018). The present paper explores the Korean and Japanese perspectives on this issue through an analysis of the more intimate workings of taxonomy confronted with cherry biology, and intends to show how the ethical standards of science were compromised within the framework of nationalism and colonialism.<sup>5</sup>

## A garden plant as symbol of the Japanese Nation

In ancient Japan cherry planting had become a symbolic action for claiming power. This began in the ninth century when the emperor planted a cherry in front of his palace to replace a Chinese style plum. After power systems had shifted from emperors to shoguns the practice remained. In the old capital of Kyoto a new shogun brought in cherries from the Yoshino Mountain, south of the city where the emperor was exiled. Planting these Yoshino cherries at an imperial garden in Kyoto obviously asserted territorial claims. Botanically speaking these were wild Japanese Mountain Cherries (Kuitert 1999, 44–53; Kuitert 2007, 135).

For a new feudal dynasty of shoguns, a capital city was founded in 1603. The city was named Edo and the shogun's dynasty is often referred to as the Edo Period. In the newly established capital Edo, it was self-evident that the shogun would plant Yoshino cherries. Thus wild Japanese Mountain Cherries—not brought in from the famous and far away Yoshino Mountain but locally grown from seed—came to be planted deliberately in urban areas that needed to be controlled.

<sup>2</sup>Kuitert (2021/2022) on botany of the Tokyo Cherry—clone and offspring; Kuitert (2022a) on how this cherry spread worldwide as an emblem of Japan's pride.

<sup>3</sup>Mitsuhashi (2016) demonstrated the position of these cherries in an educational experiment.

<sup>4</sup>Masamune and Suzuki (1936) proposed the Tokyo Cherry as a hybrid species, whence the  $\times$ -mark enters discourse as in *Prunus × yedoensis* or *Cerasus × yedoensis* as synonym.

<sup>5</sup>Moon (2015) gives a more condensed overview of the social and cultural history of the Tokyo Cherry and the King Cherry explored as comparative studies.

Throughout the Edo period, planting occurred along strategic rivers and irrigation canals and also around a Kan'ei-ji Temple, north-east of the shogun's main castle. According to superstition, the north-east was believed to generate evil influence; the temple with its cherries mitigated this and protected the shogun (Kuitert 1999, 69). After the last feudal shogun stepped down in 1867, the Kan'ei-ji Temple buildings were burnt in the troubles that accompanied the downfall of the shogun's government. Most likely the cherries also suffered. But Edo became modern Tokyo and the Kan'ei-ji Temple grounds were under a new Tokyo administration and turned into a public space, the Ueno Park. A park survey over the years 1885 and 1886 brought different cherries—not Japanese Mountain Cherries—in focus; these had recently been transplanted by a gardener as “Yoshino” cherry, a name that functioned as a marketing strategy, because of the fame of the mountain.<sup>6</sup> This “Yoshino” had been propagated by the thousands as a clone and, as it quickly grows into a proper tree, it must have helped to reestablish the fame of the Ueno cherry blossoms whose symbolism had been so important for its urban planning. But since these were not from the Yoshino Mountain and had been brought in by a gardener from a nursery village Somei, the park survey took them as “Somei-yoshino”—which is still the name by which the Tokyo Cherry is well-known in Japan today. Years later, in 1900, this vernacular name was published in a horticultural magazine (Fujino 1900).

The shogun's castle, protected by the Kan'ei-ji Temple with its cherries, was now the palace of the new Meiji Emperor secured by institutions of the new state. In the Ueno Park, with its Tokyo Cherries on the revered grounds, a brand-new National Museum, Zoo, and National Museum of Nature and Science were all guiding the emperor and the nation towards modernity. Setting up and managing of modern inventories of useful plants were the task of new administrators. Among them was Tanaka Yoshio (1838–1916) a magnate and plantsman, also one of the founders of this last Museum. He was responsible for such early inventories, where the Tokyo Cherry was headed under the Japanese Mountain Cherry (Agricultural 1895, 134–135). Cherries of symbolic significance could only be endemic Japanese Mountain Cherries, and not garden hybrids as feudal scholarship had indicated.<sup>7</sup> That was simply common sense among all Japanese, including the Somei gardener who had brought his “Yoshino,” named as if it was an endemic specimen. Later however, Tanaka suspected it to be some form of the Ōshima Cherry (Makino 1926, 8), a tree not endemic in Japan's mountains, but on the islands and coasts of the Izu region. The tone was set: this could not be an uneasy clonal cherry from some servile gardener, but should be a native plant from the wild.

The issue of the Tokyo Cherry's homeland, so important in embellishing the institutions of the new state and, by extension, protecting the emperor, would be settled by botanical science—another new tool for nation building. The tree's provenance and identity were established by the botanist Matsumura Jinzō (1856–1928). As a university assistant, Matsumura had helped his professor collect specimens from all over the country, and had published a first inventory list of the plants of Japan (Matsumura 1884). He had been working in the Koishikawa Botanical Garden for many years before he became the first official director in 1897. He proved to be a prolific writer of species descriptions in Latin, describing twenty-eight species—an average of more than two per month—in 1901 (IPNI 2019). Among these is the Tokyo Cherry, where Matsumura gave it the new Latin name of *Prunus yedoensis* (see figure 1).<sup>8</sup> Using Linnaean binominal nomenclature, he

<sup>6</sup>Kuitert (2022b) on the horticultural history of the Tokyo Cherry and the Somei gardeners, from feudal times into the modern age.

<sup>7</sup>Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), a prominent scholar in feudal times, compared the Japanese spirit with Mountain Cherry blossom in the morning sun, setting the tone for centuries to come.

<sup>8</sup>Matsumura (1901) in my translation of his description in Latin: ‘*Prunus* (*Cerasus*) *yedoensis*, described by Matsumura as a new species/Big tree, smooth branches, gray bark. Veins at the backside of young leaves are silky, smooth on both sides when mature, broadly elliptic, ovate, oval, or elongated oval shape, with base obliquely acute or somewhat rounded, with two glands, finely double serrated, with an acute tip or shortly caudate, eight to seventeen veins, with hairy leaf stalks, and incised stipules. Flowers are precocious. Corymbs with two to three flowers; downy pedicels are shorter than the flowers, wedge-shaped bracts

***Prunus* (Cerasus) *yedoensis*, Matsumura sp. nov.**

Arbor magna, ramulis glabris, cortice griseo. Folia juvenilia subtus ad costas sericea, adulta utrinque glabra, late elliptica, v. ovata, ovalia, oblonga, basi oblique acuta v. subrotundata, biglandulosa, minute subduplicato-serrata, apice acuta v. breviter caudata, 8–17-costata, petiolis pilosis, stipulis laciniatis. Flores praecoces. Corymbus 2–3-flori; pedicelli pubescentes floribus breviores, bracteis cuneatis pubescentibus apice glanduloso-dentatis; tegmenta interiora obovato-oblonga, utrinque villosa, exteriora late obovato-elliptica margine minute glandulosa. Calyx turbinato-cylindraceus, pubescens, lobis ovato-lanceolatis denticulatis, tubo brevioribus; petala late obovato-elliptica, emarginata sub initio dilute roseo suffusa, dein alba; stylus pilosus. Putamen osseum glabrum, subelliptico-lenticulare, 9 mm. longum, 7 mm. longum. Pedicelli fructif. patentes, subpubescentes.

A *P. pseudo-Ceraso*, Lindl. floribus praecocibus, stylo piloso, petiolis pedicellisque plus minus pubescentibus differt.

Hab. in hortis Tokyoensibus ample culta. Patria ignota, ex insula Ōshima, prov. Izu allata esse dicitur.

Figure 1. The Tokyo Cherry proposed as species; description by Matsumura Jinzō. From Matsumura (1901).

indexed a gardener's clone from Somei, a feudal village, under the *Prunus* umbrella of modern international botany, befitting the new capital with a new species adorned with an epithet *yedoensis*—indicating that it is a cherry from feudal Edo, also spelled as Yedo. *Prunus yedoensis* in an English translation is “Tokyo Cherry.”

Matsumura noted in his description of the Tokyo Cherry that it is extensively cultivated in the gardens of Tokyo. He distinguished it clearly from the wild Japanese Mountain Cherry pointing to morphological details, and added that its origin is unknown, but it is said to have been brought from the island Ōshima in the province of Izu. The island is known for its Ōshima Cherries, which do indeed bear some resemblance to the Tokyo Cherry. Matsumura made his description from a set of Tokyo Cherries planted in 1875 in rows on a lawn by the head gardener who had procured these plants as root suckers from a very old Tokyo Cherry elsewhere in the garden (see figure 2).<sup>9</sup> One of his students in posthumous praise said “This cherry has a most striking appearance compared to all others, as was brought to a complete understanding among the botanists, when in 1901 professor Matsumura named it as *Prunus yedoensis* MATSUM.” (Koidzumi 1932a, 177).

What is nonetheless striking is that the Tokyo Cherry had already been described as a cultivated plant the previous year in a horticultural magazine, albeit not in authoritative international botanic Latin. Moreover, it had been cloned as a garden plant within his own Botanical Garden, but Matsumura added a dubious provenance by suggesting it was a wild

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are pubescent and gland-like serrate along the tip; interior bud scales are obovate to oblong, hairy on both sides, the outer scales are broadly obovate-elliptic and finely glandulose at the edge. The calyx is pear-shaped cylindrical, pubescent, with sepals that are ovate, tapering to the end and have few teeth, are shorter than the calyx tube; petals are broadly obovate, elliptic, are notched and from the beginning soft pink, turning to white; the style is hairy. The stony seed is smooth, somewhat elliptic, lenticular (like a lentil seed), 9 mm. long, 7 mm. long. The fruit stalks are spreading, somewhat pubescent./It is different from *P. pseudo-Ceraso*, Lindl. because of the early flowers, the hairy style, and the petioles and pedicels that are more or less pubescent./Habitat is in the gardens of Tokyo where it is extensively cultivated. Unknown origin, brought from the island Ōshima in the province of Izu, is it said.’ Earlier Matsumura gave the wild Japanese Mountain Cherry as *Prunus pseudocerasus* Lindl. var. *spontanea* Maxim. (Matsumura 1895, 239).

<sup>9</sup>Nakai (1935) discusses this old Tokyo Cherry standing at the entrance of Matsumura’s Koishikawa Botanical Garden that served as mother plant; root suckers were planted higher up the slope deeper in the garden as a backup of this precious cherry for preservation purposes (Nakai 1935, 48); Iketani (2013) and Kuitert (2022b) on the present state.



**Figure 2.** Spring under Tokyo Cherries in the Koishikawa Botanical Garden. Trees are regrowths after the devastating 1945 air raids from the earlier trees seen in [Figure 3](#). Koishikawa Botanical Garden, Tokyo. Photo by author, March 31, 2019.

Ōshima Cherry. Yet he remained vague as his status as scientist was at stake. It is telling to see how Matsumura began to feel uncomfortable with the mushrooming symbolic importance of the Tokyo Cherry a few years later.

Cherries had been important garden plants for the feudal elite, but near the end of the nineteenth century, through purposeful policy procedures, they became plants for the masses and a propaganda tool for the intense nationalism and militarism of the modern government. A yearly Cherry Viewing Party supervised by the emperor himself commenced from 1881 onwards, further intensifying the cherries' educational message (Ama 1991, 2–5). Entering the twentieth century, the popularity of the Tokyo Cherry quickly rose outside Tokyo as well (Makino 1933). After Japan had won the war with Russia in 1905, amidst the excitement of national pride, parks nationwide were adorned with the easily propagated, and now mass-produced and spectacularly flowering Tokyo Cherries. These were often planted around the memorials celebrating events (Matsumura 1906; Sano 1998, 95). Militarism had also stressed the strategic importance of the Korean peninsula, where the Japanese navy established a naval port at Jinhae. Tokyo Cherries were planted massively in this port city starting in 1906 and, in following decades, all over Korea (Korea Institute 1998, 22; Hwang 2007, 26). Jinhae happens to have a mild climate, and its cherries are almost the first ones in all of Korea to flower, heralding the wave of blossoms that spreads over the peninsula each spring (Korea Institute 1998, 20). This must have given intense and added feelings of pride and possession to the Japanese involved. Militarist agitation blended with emotions of imperialist progress that clung to the aesthetics of the Nation's Flower.

Matsumura, in his essay “Notes on Cherries,” expressed his irritation at the general public, who do not differentiate this Nation's Flower from the various other cherries and simply see all of them as beautiful. The *real* Japanese, he argued, should appreciate the refined elegance of the native Japanese Mountain Cherry rather than the vulgar and voluptuous beauty of the Tokyo Cherry (Matsumura 1906). Miyoshi Manabu (1861–1939), a conservative cherry scholar, felt the same, arguing that the cloned Tokyo Cherry not only offers no fodder for research, but also has no aesthetic merit, as each individual specimen is the same (Miyoshi 1920a, 11). Miyoshi did not address the Tokyo Cherry at all in his monograph (Miyoshi 1916). But Matsumura had seen

herbarium specimens from flowering cherries in Europe that were collected not only from Japan, but also from Yunnan in China and the Himalayas in India. Although he understood that cherries could hardly be seen as plants unique to Japan, he succumbed to political correctness and praised their refined elegance as part of classic Japanese aesthetics (Mito 2014).

In “Notes on Cherries,” Matsumura referred to the Tokyo Cherry not as “Somei-yoshino” but as *Takigi-zakura* (Matsumura 1906), a name that translates as the Charcoal Cherry and is another folk name for the Ōshima Cherry. Obviously referring back to his earlier suggestion for the provenance, Matsumura stressed once more that he thought the Tokyo Cherry was some form of the Ōshima Cherry rather than a nursery product. It seems that for Matsumura, the idea that it was a gardeners’ bastard, and not a pure wild, indigenous species may have been indigestible. However, there was simply no return from the mushrooming popularity of the Nation’s Flower. Ten years later, in the international arena, this Ōshima Cherry was indeed understood as one of the parent species of the hybrid Tokyo Cherry by British plant hunter Ernest Henry Wilson (1876–1930). The other parent, according to him was a Higan Cherry, a judgement that he derived from botanical details, such as pubescence, growing habits and the like (Wilson 1916, 15–17). Wilson was well-informed on Japanese flowering cherries through various local experts, including gardeners, nursery men, and horticulturalists (Koehne 1917, 1) and they will have helped him to reach at a more realistic classification. Wilson’s statement could not be ignored, but it was decades before Japanese scientists picked it up.

### Yamato in Korea, an imperial hybrid as species

Matsumura’s conjecture that the Nation’s Flower cannot be a nursery product, but should be classified correctly as a true, wild species was realized during the imperialist conquest of Korea. Exploring the new land not only provided botanists with mouth-watering chances to discover and describe new plants (Mori 1922, 2–3), but it also slid the cherry discourse smoothly into cultural policies towards a unified colonial empire.<sup>10</sup>

The plantsmen of Japan, joined by two Frenchmen and a German, all scrambled for what seemed a second and different Tokyo Cherry found in an outermost corner of the expanding empire, on Jeju Island (known as Quelpaert until 1910) off the southern tip of the Korean peninsula. An herbarium specimen of this Jeju cherry reached Emil Koehne (1848–1918), a German dendrologist and good botanic draftsman who was preparing a publication on Japanese cherries (Harms 1919; Koehne 1917; Pax 1918). The specimen resembled the Tokyo Cherry that he had studied since one was planted in the Berlin arboretum in 1900 (Koehne 1917, 39–40). Now, imagining this single herbarium specimen as a representative of many identical trees in a wider area, Koehne proposed a new regional variety *nudiflora*, headed under *P. yedoensis* (Koehne 1911/12). Matsumura’s hopeful aspiration that *P. yedoensis* itself was a species and not a cultivated clone was, with its variety *P. yedoensis* var. *nudiflora* corroborated, at least on paper and in a respectable international scientific paper in Latin.

The herbarium consulted by Koehne had been collected by French amateur botanist Émile Taquet (1873–1952) who had been put in charge as a Catholic missionary on Jeju island in 1902. It was just after a massacre of Christians and naturally proselytizing efforts were slow. With time to travel, Taquet started observing and collecting plants, and sending herbarium specimens out (IRFA 2020a). He found inspiration and encouragement for his efforts in his respected senior colleague Urbain Faurie (1847–1915). Faurie too was a French missionary, and had settled in

<sup>10</sup>Hyun (2019, 245) on support for the assimilation of the Korean race into the Japanese that motivated certain researchers on blood, where some tried to prove that the Japanese race should be superior to the Korean. The Tokyo Cherry discourse also meant mending species together when it came to the cherry found in Jeju that is discussed in this section. However, the Japanese made no effort to prove that Japanese cherries were better than Korean as there were already hundreds of superior cultivated forms within Japan; such forms were not found in Korea.

northern Japan two decades earlier. But as hearts of the Japanese were stubbornly closed to Christianity he found solace in botany and, from the 1880s onwards, was botanizing (IRFA 2020b). Faurie had visited Jeju Island once (Kakuta 1992, 70), but the visit was too short to fully explore its natural wealth, the product of its generous climate conditions. Now, however, the floral abundance of the island was in Taquet's reach every day, and he could send out numerous herbarium specimens. The specimens included material of several cherries that were growing high up on the slopes of the Halla Mountain behind his church village Sohong-ni on southern Jeju where he lived. On April fourteenth, 1908, Taquet numbered three specimens from the same cherry as 4638 and it was one of these that Koehne studied.<sup>11</sup>

Koehne's report likely did not amuse Faurie. Being a staunch nationalist and having personal experiences in the war with Prussia, Faurie hated anything German (Hayata 1916, 270; Kitamura 1979, 94) and perhaps he was aware that Koehne had been wounded quite severely in the Battle of Metz (Harms 1919, 74–75). Ignoring Koehne, Faurie addressed a young Japanese botanist and student of Matsumura. This was Koidzumi Gen'ichi (1883–1953) (Hisauchi 1954; Kitamura 1954, 1982). Having seen Taquet's herbarium at Faurie's, and another Japanese botanist's suggestion, Koidzumi published a miscellaneous and short note that the natural habitat of the Tokyo Cherry is Jeju Island (Koidzumi 1913a, 395). Despite of lacking data and argument this note was quoted by Miyoshi (Miyoshi 1916, 23).<sup>12</sup> And although Koidzumi was corresponding with Koehne (Koehne 1917, 1), he did not refer to Koehne's classification published the year before.

To the Japanese, the meaning of Korea and of cherries had by now evolved significantly. After being taken as a protectorate in 1905, the peninsula was fully annexed by Japan in 1910. Meanwhile, cherries had become a powerful state gift, after more than six thousand had been shipped to the USA at the wish of the first lady Helen Taft in February 1912, setting a tradition of American blossom festivals (Jefferson and Fusoni 1977). More than ever before, cherries were a symbol of Japan's Empire, precisely expressed by Nitobe: "it is still a living object of power and beauty among us" and also illustrated with his poem "Isles of blest Japan!/Should your Yamato spirit/Strangers seek to scan,/Say - scenting morn's sun-lit air,/Blows the cherry wild and fair!" (Nitobe [1899] 1900, 1, 109–111).

In a full overview of the *Rosaceae* in Japan, Koidzumi gave Matsumura's Tokyo Cherry an extensive new description in Latin, updating its scientific status. He added that it is commonly cultivated, and that Jeju Island is its natural area of distribution, without any reference to Koehne's *nudiflora*. In Koidzumi's overview, the only illustrative photos are of flowering twigs of a few other Japanese cherries, yet strikingly, the Tokyo Cherry gets a page-wide photo of the trees in blossom in the Koishikawa Botanical Garden (see figure 3). It also receives a new and telling *nomen novum*: "Yamato-sakura" (Koidzumi 1913b, 263–264, followed by Koehne 1917, 38). Nationalist qualities of the Tokyo Cherry could hardly have been brought further than this, as Yamato was a heavily laden nominator for the true, native Japanese people, including their history, territory, their pure blood, and their samurai fighting spirit. This Yamato Cherry was naturally distributed in Korea.

The exploration of the whole flora of Korea, by order of the Japanese government, had begun in 1906. Another young and brilliant student of Matsumura was engaged for this project—Nakai Takenoshin (1882–1952) (Nakai 1927; Lee 2015, 668). Nakai became the foremost specialist on Korean botany (Hara 1953) and, by order of the Japanese colonial government in Korea, he reported on the Jeju cherry in his *Flora Sylvatica Koreana*.<sup>13</sup> An extensive text, it explores the problem of how this cherry could ever have reached Japan in feudal times, but ultimately states that the Tokyo Cherry is wild (not native) but rare in Jeju. The abstract, written in international

<sup>11</sup>See Chang (2019) with data of the three samples found in the collections of the Universities of Tokyo and Kyoto, and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

<sup>12</sup>Miyoshi (1916) in his introduction shortly introduces Matsumura's *P. yedoensis* and quotes Koidzumi, but does not treat the Tokyo Cherry in his taxonomical overview.

<sup>13</sup>See Lee (2015, 671) on the international acclaim that Nakai gained through this Flora.

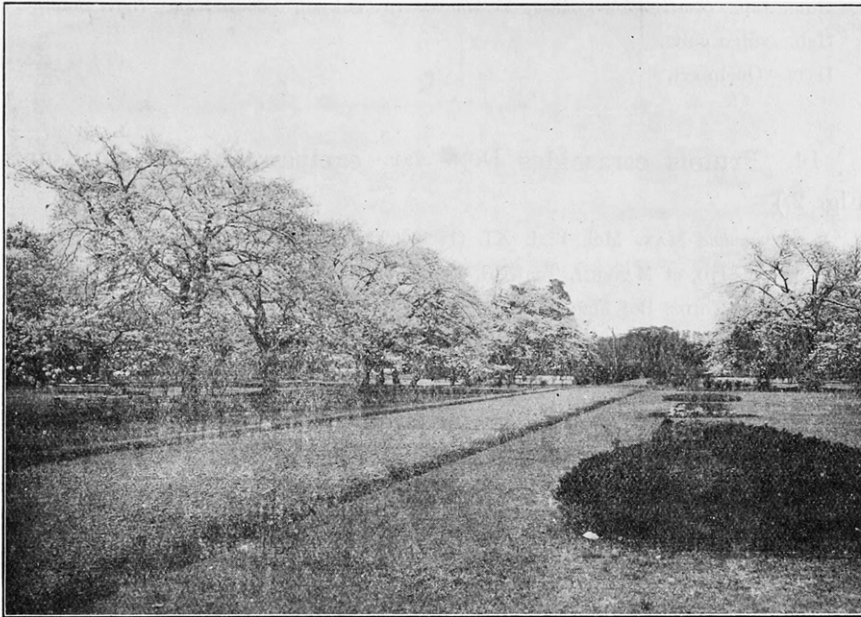


Fig. 1. *Prunus yedoensis*, MATSUM. (in Bot. Gard. Koisikawa, Tokyo.)

Arbor ramis glabris cortice griseo vel fusco innovationibus pubescentibus rarius glabris; gemmæ ovatæ tegmentis interioribus obovato-oblongis minute glanduloso-denticulatis utrinque pilosis, exterioribus ovatis fuliginosis extus pubescentibus vel pilosis. Folia juvenilia subtus ad venas pilosa, adulta utrinque glabra sed saepe subtus ad costas medias versus basin pubescentia, elliptica acuminata argute serrata; serraturis apiculatis; basi rotundata vel acuta; petiolis pubescentibus; stipulis lanceolatis glanduloso-fimbriatis caducis. Flores praecoces umbellati albi ante expansionem rosei; corymbis 2–3-floris, pedicellis pubescentibus quam flores brevioribus, bracteis foliaceis puberulis apice glanduloso-dentatis. Calycis tubus cylindricus pubescens, laciniae ovatae acutae denticulatae tubo breviores post anthesin reflexae intus glabriusculae. Petala obovato-rotundata emarginata minute unguiculata. Stamina circ. 30; filamentis subulatis glabris. Stylus hirsutus stigmatate capitato. Drupa subglobosa purpureo-nigra 7–8 mm in diametro, sarcocarpio succoso putamine rotundato-apiculato laeve.

Nom. Jap. *Somei-yoshino-sakura*, *Yoshino-sakura* (Tokyo), *Yamato-sakura* (nov. nom.)

Hab. vulgo culta.

Distr. Quelpaert.

Figure 3. A page-wide photo of the set of Tokyo Cherries in the Koishikawa Botanical Garden accompanies Koidzumi's extensive Latin description of his *Prunus yedoensis*, "Yamato-sakura". From Koidzumi (1913b).



Latin, also quotes Koehne's *nudiflora* as living in the forests of Jeju. This is followed by a note that this plant is common in gardens of the Japanese, and is said to have stemmed from the gardens of Somei in olden times, while the Ōshima Island is not its home because that only has the Ōshima Cherry (Nakai 1915, 141; 1916, 9–10, 24–25). On this latter point, Nakai introduces a minor critique on his teacher, professor Matsumura. On the whole, however, Nakai constructed, supported by Koidzumi, a learned classification for the Nation's Flower as being a wild species in Korea, bolstering the imperialist meaning of Japan's cherries for colonial politics.

The First World War brought further economic prosperity to Japan, while commercial fairs advertised colonial wealth. But the self-confidence about the greater imperialist purpose also led to thoughts of independence and resistance in Korea. Cultural policies were increasingly required to back up colonial rule, in which the Tokyo Cherry played a key role. From 1933, school text books took the cherry as a main theme for teaching primary school kids Japanese language, or middle schoolers biology (Kuitert 1999, 94–96, 135). At the same time, more general or popular-science plant books unequivocally explained the Tokyo Cherry as being a wild plant of Korea's native flora (Mori 1922, 212; Makino et al. 1931, 500; Uyeki 1933, 84). Cherries were planted by the thousands (Kim 2011, 127–133) and blossom festivities were promoted more effectively. The Tokyo Cherries were an innovative propaganda tool in the new botanical garden of Seoul, which had been set up in one of the former royal palaces. From 1924 onwards, the flowers were celebrated with electric illumination and night-time festivities (Kim 2017, 180–183). Particularly these cherries were seen as having “a role in the establishing of Our Land” (Ishidoya 1929, 67).

The Bureau of Forestry of the Japanese colonial government of Korea also advertised the Jeju hypothesis, suggesting that an original tree could have been brought by ship to Japan in remote history (Ishidoya 1929). This announcement was made by Ishidoya Tsutomu (1884–1958) a staff member who was also teaching at the Imperial University in Seoul.<sup>14</sup> On a late afternoon in April 1932, Koidzumi arrived in person as the first true plant scientist to verify the cherry flowers of amateur Taquet on the higher slopes of Halla Mountain in Jeju. Guided by Ishidoya and the staff of the Bureau, he was shown what they thought to be the real and wild Tokyo Cherry. Blatantly wrong, but in full triumph, Koidzumi claimed to have seen a real Tokyo Cherry on a mountain walk in Jeju in a miscellaneous essay that was published shortly after his visit (Koidzumi 1932a). Conveniently, this time he does quote Koehne (1911/12) as an important authority proving that the Tokyo Cherry is endemic (not wild, and not natural) on Jeju Island, although its phyto-geography remained problematic: why should this garden plant cherished in Tokyo be on the slopes of a mountain in Jeju? The solution that Koidzumi proposed was again a tree resembling the Tokyo Cherry, *Prunus sacra*, that had been discovered earlier (Miyoshi 1920b, 168–169). Koidzumi suggested that this sacred cherry found at an old temple in the Yoshino Mountain in the Yamato Province must have been the one that had arrived by ship from Jeju at the end of the feudal dynasties in tandem with the Tokyo Cherry, from which the latter then had arrived in Edo as “Yoshino” (Koidzumi 1932a, 179).

The Jeju hypothesis for the Tokyo Cherry now fully endorsed the status and ambitions of imperialist Japan:

This Somei-yoshino Cherry [Tokyo Cherry], crossed over to Chosen [Korea] after the annexation, and did not spread straight from the native place of birth of Chosen's Somei-yoshino which is Jeju Island, but only temporarily it went to the mainland [Japan] and from the mainland it crossed over again to Chosen. Furthermore, it was sent from our country to Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles in America, and to London in England among others, above all in Washington it breeds successfully and displays its full blossom in no

<sup>14</sup>See Fedman (2020) on the wider strategies of the colonial forestry in Korea, with a biography of Ishidoya (103–104, ff). Lee (2016) on the details of Ishidoya's career and cooperation with his Korean assistant Jong (Jong Taehyon, in a different romanization spelled by Lee as Chung Tyaihyon).

means inferior to our land. These cherries growing rampant overseas, these are all the Somei-yoshino Cherry. Thus, the fact that the Somei-yoshino Cherry, native to Jeju Island spreads all over the world, takes after the stretching of the majesty of our nation, which is really a delightful thing. (Mori 1933, 68).

Although it is easy in retrospect to see through the proposals of Koidzumi and Nakai, both were highly respected as corresponding members and visitors of eminent international scientific institutions, and both were employed in reputable imperial universities performing at an international level—all new achievements for the quickly rising superpower state Japan. But they were also based in mainland Japan, and therefore at a distance from the fieldwork in Korea.<sup>15</sup> Less biased by the imperialist center was the righteous criticism of Takenaka Yō (1903–1966), a plant science professor in higher education at the Imperial University in Seoul, whose research was more horticulturally framed. He too climbed the mountain in Jeju and found several fundamental inconsistencies (Takenaka 1936). Nevertheless, his critique was ignored. A small group of Korean botanists led by Jong Taehyon (1883–1971), who had been educated as an assistant to Ishidoya, began a project to make an inventory of vernacular plant names in the late 1930s in a drive to find Korean identity in botanical geography.<sup>16</sup> Despite all the efforts by the Japanese to insert the Tokyo Cherry in a Korean phytogeography, these Korean botanists were not convinced and gave no Korean name for Koehne's *nudiflora*, whereas the Tokyo Cherry itself was called simply “Sagura” after *sakura*, the generic Japanese for cherries (Jong et al. 1937, 96).

### The King Cherry, a hybrid for independence and national pride

Then the Pacific War broke out. Cherry blossoms became an important Japanese propaganda tool for recruiting young students to serve as kamikaze pilots (Ohnuki-Tierney 2002). During and after the war the USA continued its cherry blossom celebrations every spring in Washington D.C. (Kuitert 2022a). In Japan, many Tokyo Cherries were replanted immediately after the defeat (Hiratsuka 2001, 158–159). However, for Koreans, the end of the war meant the end of Japanese colonialism, and for some the uprooting of Tokyo Cherries, that now could burn as fuelwood, often with feelings of revenge (see figure 4) (Anonymous 1945; Takekuni 1999, 234–235; Hwang 2007, 25–26).

The new Republic of Korea assigned Park Mankyu (1906–1977), a middle school biology teacher employed by the Ministry of Education, the critical post-liberation task of investigating the natural resources of plant life (Hyun 2020). His *An Index of the Plants of Our Country* lists fifty-eight species and varieties of *Prunus*, with synonyms and sometimes a short remark. Matsumura's *yedoensis* is given as “Someiyoshino” and explained as a cultivated decorative blossom cherry with a vernacular name, *Wangbeonnamu*, with Jeju Island as native land. In contrast, Koehne's *yedoensis* var. *nudiflora* gets a Korean name *Minbeonnamu* with a simple “Jeju Island” (Park 1949, 118–121). This seems to be the first time that Wangbeonnamu, King Cherry Tree, was published officially as a vernacular name for the Tokyo Cherry. The “*wang*” (king) is a complementary for “big” in plant names, and referred, in this case, to the king-size flowers. But a few years later the peninsula divided and the Korean War soon broke out, with its disastrous and destructive consequences.

In Japan, a new genetic research facility was set up where, from 1949, Takenaka Yō, who had returned from Seoul, began investigating cherries. His breeding experiments with the Ōshima Cherry and Higan Cherry as parents, following Wilson's classification, led to a wide range of

<sup>15</sup>Lee (2015, 669, 676) on the divergence between the local contexts of field work in Korea and the armchair scientists within Japan proper secured by imperial power.

<sup>16</sup>Lee (2016) in detail on the cooperation and careers of Ishidoya and Jong (Jong Taehyon = Chung Tyaihyon), and their interaction with Nakai Takenoshin. Lee (2013) on plant research as national task in Korea.



**Figure 4.** The desire to remove the cherries that had been the symbol of Japan’s colonial rule was one of the expressions of revenge among the Koreans immediately after liberation. From *Byeol nara* 1945, coll. Kobay Auction.

plants very similar to the Tokyo Cherry, supporting the case that it was a nursery hybrid and not a wild species (Takenaka 1963). One of these chance seedlings was named “Shōwa-zakura,” in reference to the imperial era of Shōwa and its Emperor Hirohito, a figure whose responsibility and role in the war are still under discussion. In April 1965 the Emperor himself visited Takenaka to see this cherry in person (Mori 2013).

The international acclaim for the *yedoensis* case had thus far been limited to circles of fellow researchers. However, in the 1950s, in the milder zones of Soviet Russia, decorative cherries from the East regained interest from an unanticipated source. The botanist Aleksandr Vasil’yev (1902–1979), attached to the Sukhumi Botanical Garden in Abkhazia, had travelled to China and various European countries to explore useful plants to grow in his region (Ayba et al. 2015). Using earlier Soviet taxonomy, he classified Japanese cherries under the genus *Cerasus*, including this time

*yedoensis* (Vasil'yev 1957, 124), thus unexpectedly augmenting the scientific status of this garden plant from outside the established circles of cherry research. The Soviet Union and China soon became allies with North Korea in 1961, and the iron curtain fully descended over Northeast Asia. Japan and South Korea were thus forced to become geopolitical allies, bringing the South Koreans into a period of nation-building and a politically supported search for cultural identity (Kim 1976, 10–12). To this end, South Korea borrowed Japanese methods of cultural mobilization to facilitate national development as part of a deliberate state policy. Korean government policies were pro-Japanese in effect, while promoting “triumph over Japan,” rather than anti-Japanese emotions in its populism (Park 2010, 71–76). The legacy of cherry symbolism in Korea found its own solution within this paradox.

In April 1962, a group of researchers sponsored by the Dong-A Ilbo newspaper, and headed by Park Mankyu—who had just become a university teacher of plant taxonomy and now was director of Korea’s National Science Museum (Hyun 2020) climbed Halla Mountain (Park 1965, 14). A few days later, the local newspaper could report in jubilant phrasing that a group of scientists had discovered the King Cherry Blossom Tree (*Wangbeotkkot-namu*) on Halla Mountain, the native place of Japan’s National Flower (Park 1962). Consequently, the King Cherry and not an internationally acclaimed scientific Latin plant entered the public discourse nationwide a few days later (Kim 2011, 132). Park’s academic paper followed, and natural monuments to protect sites of the wild King Cherry were set up (Park 1965, 14–15).

Assured that the Tokyo Cherry was of native Korean blood, Jinhae City decided to revive the cherry image of its naval port as a strategy to promote tourism. However, because planting material was not easily available in Korea, the first two thousand clonal Tokyo Cherries were imported from Japan. With added support from Koreans living in Japan, the city had managed to plant over 300,000 cherries by 2006 (Hwang 2007, 26–28; Korea Institute 1998, 22–25). During these years not only in Jinhae, but all over South Korea, cherries were planted abundantly, boosted by the Great Cherry Planting Campaign announced by President Park Chunhee (Mitsubishi 2016, 39–40). The idea of celebrating spring with a picnic or a walk under “native” cherry blossoms, those that had generated the colonial oppressor’s Tokyo Cherry, made the Jeju hypothesis attractive, this time not for Japanese imperialists, but now paradoxically for Korean chauvinist researchers.

Research on Jeju, however, was not easy. Among the islanders, the cherry was valued as timber, so that old trees were extremely rare (Korea Institute 1998, 11–12). Taquet had found the tree for his herbarium no. 4638 high on the slopes of the Halla Mountain. In these early years of the twentieth century, and at the altitude where he found the specimen, the forest was not undisturbed. A number of shiitake-mushroom farms were actively being cultivated (Rikuchi 1917/18) which established a secondary forest edge as a habitat for cherries in hybridization, and also made the mountainside accessible to plant explorers on foot.<sup>17</sup> Koidzumi, Takenaka, and Park found their King Cherries at roughly the same altitude at the upper edge of pasture land in remnant patches of forest (Takenaka 1936; Park 1965, 14). However, researchers who have searched Mount Halla in the 1980s and beyond have so far not been able to rediscover either the trees found by Taquet or those found by Koidzumi and Takenaka (Kim 2011, 132).

Korean research began as an investigation into morphological details of flowers and leaves of trees on Halla Mountain. It became clear, first, that the King Cherry was rare; among the many Higan and mountain cherries only ten specimens were counted in 1965, and it also seemed to be a hybrid between these two (Harn 1965, 11, 18). Horizontal starch gel electrophoresis in three buffers gave further strong evidence for this hybridization (Harn et al., 1977). Yet, other electronic microscopy research on pollen found a morphology that seemed to deny such hybridization (Park et al., 1984). Cladistical analysis of morphological characteristics again introduced a different

<sup>17</sup>Darapisa (2019) illustrates how deviating Jeju cherry hybrids were mostly discovered close to the mountain trails of the Halla Mountain, rather than deep in the forest.

parent species (Kim 1990). Academics did not interfere with the public discourse, but sought answers to pressing questions about the King Cherry's identity through natural science, mathematics, and technology, setting the mood for decades to come. In a conclusive assemblage of all possible scientific research, an official government report stressed the close relationship between the cultivated Tokyo Cherry and the King Cherry hybrids, concluding that the wild King Cherry of Jeju had evolved as a distinct, independent taxon (Kim Yun-sik 1998, 68–69), nicely affirming the geopolitical setting of a self-confident and independent Korea in partnership with its neighbor.

On Jeju Island, from 1997, a cherry festival with various events was staged, attracting many visitors, including not a few Japanese tourists (Korea Institute 1998, 28–30). Jeju City and Jeju University gained a clear role. A research team from the university surveyed the natural habitat of the King Cherry discovering this time thirty-three specimen trees of various sizes distributed up the Halla Mountain at an altitude of between 450 and 800 meters; flowers, leaves, fruits, and seed were sampled and also showed a large variability whereas the size of these was mostly smaller than of cultivated Tokyo Cherries. A further two pubescent cherries, with morphological details slightly differing from the ones that Nakai had named before, were also classified as different *forma*, while two new *Prunus* species and a new variety for *P. yedoensis* were identified (Kim Chan-soo 1998, fig.20, 89; Kim Chan-soo et al., 1998). The minute definitions of new taxa went hand in hand with the discovery of a large variability. It was clear that research had to focus more in detail on the King Cherry itself.

With the changing political mood and its popular appeal, the King Cherry had turned into an asset for developing cultural tourism. To this end the Korea Institute of Environmental Policy and Evaluation from the Ministry of Environment stressed that genetic research was of utmost importance to find and propagate an excellent variety that should be mass-produced by tissue culture and widely distributed (Korea Institute 1998, 23, 56, 57). Research on mass propagation technology soon began (Kim et al., 2012).

It might have been expected that genetics would be a promising avenue for evaluating excellence and parentage. However, such sophisticated research technology in itself does not guarantee good science, and genetics in plant taxonomy depart from results that are already known from field morphology.<sup>18</sup> In Japan, the Tokyo Cherry was indeed proved to be a hybrid of the Ōshima Cherry and the Higan Cherry, where the latter was the seed parent and the Ōshima Cherry the pollen donor (Kaneko et al. 1986; Innan et al. 1995; Iketani et al. 2007; Kato et al. 2014). After Wilson (1916) and Takenaka (1963), this does not come as a sensational surprise. Traditional cherry nurseries had the famed selections thanks to centuries of breeding experience. Many of these cherries are not sterile and continue to produce freely germinating seeds today. Any such nursery automatically begins to function like some condensed and highly variable hybrid swarm where spectacular cherry hybrids are easily found among seedlings, including hybrids of the parents of the Tokyo Cherry. The Ōshima Cherry is grown as rootstock and the Higan Cherry has a striking weeping form, which, since the seventeenth century, has appeared in cherry lists as *ito-zakura*. That the Tokyo Cherry showed up in a specialized cherry nursery in feudal Somei is natural and self-evident.

And what about the King Cherry? Genetic research by a group of scientists in Korea on five King Cherries found on Jeju indicated that four—one of these legally protected—were natural hybrids from a cross between seed parent Higan Cherry and a paternal mountain cherry, all clearly different from the Tokyo Cherry; the fifth one in this research was an accession of the Tokyo Cherry escaped from culture (Baek et al. 2018, 10–11). Tokyo Cherries can be found one hundred meters from one of the natural monument sites in Jeju (Korea Institute 1998, 58); many had

<sup>18</sup>Chang (2000, 97–100) on declining field work and herbarium research in Korea, while the number of plant scientists working on screens in molecular biology, computer science, and biotechnology is growing; research towards understanding biodiversity suffers. This is a worldwide disaster anyway.

supposedly been planted on Jeju Island during and after the 1910s (Takenaka 1936), and again in a large-scale roadside planting during the 1930s (Park 1965, 13–14). Elsewhere on the Halla Mountain the clonal Tokyo Cherry has left its genetics in natural habitats of the King Cherry (Cho et al. 2019, 11–12). Bees can bring pollen to and from the Tokyo Cherry as far as two to three hundred meters (Mukai 2014, 24–25); flying birds bring seeds for kilometers. And, of course, there are also several wild cherry species in the forests of Jeju. One officially protected King Cherry was in fact a Higan Cherry (Lee 1996), and Taquet’s herbarium number 4638 is presently interpreted as the pubescent form of the Japanese Mountain Cherry (Chang and Kim 2019). The flowering cherries of East Asia are known for their intra-specific hybridization. An active and complex hybridization of wild cherry species, including back-crossing of hybrids with their parent species, and with the Tokyo Cherry, has resulted in a highly active hybrid swarm on Jeju Island; it is not the kind of hybridization that produces a new hybrid species (Cho et al. 2017, 457).

However clear the conclusions may be, genetic research has not been free from bias. The wild King Cherry is considered to have “superior flower, cherry, and shape ornamental characteristics” with “a beautiful shape”, “with superior ornamental characteristics” (Baek et al. 2018, 2, 3, 11). Yet, earlier research had stated that its botanical details were generally smaller than the Tokyo Cherry (Kim Chan-soo 1998, vii). For the researcher, the problem then becomes to “correctly identify” the King Cherry in the wild “with highly precise tools as molecular markers” (Baek et al., 2018, 11). In line with the Ministry of Environment, and the financial support of the National Research Fund of Korea, genetic research was directed towards an active hybrid swarm with the task of finding the “correct” King Cherry. But the Tokyo Cherry also must be defined as “correct”: the clone that derives from the Koishikawa Garden is the true clone, others not (Iketani et al., 2007, 2–4), while propagating by seedling is considered incorrect (Katsuki et al., 2016, 1415). Although genetics can bring hard data, the research papers above do not explain how that genetic data can be used to establish correct ancestry.

## Two iconic cherries, concluding remarks

Sometime around the mid-nineteenth century a Somei gardener brought his spectacular Tokyo Cherries to the Kan’ei-ji Temple grounds. He could not even have dreamt about its future as National Flower or the bias and the overblown discourse it would bring to modern plant science. Why was this garden plant inflated so much?

Japan’s wild flora had entered Western scientific discourse through plant hunters such as Thunberg and Von Siebold. With the advance of society in post-feudal Japan, plantsmen and herbalists faced the European hegemony of modern scientific botany<sup>19</sup> where they were in an underdog position while native plant material, collected by foreigners, was sent in a never-ending flow of garden material and herbaria to Western botanists: Faurie discovered well over 1300 “new” species in Japan (Koidzumi 1936, 11–12). To the frustration of Japanese botanists, Europeans quickly published spectacular numbers of light-hearted new names for plants they had never seen in the wild (Yatabe 1890). But victories in the Sino-Japanese War (1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1905) made Japan a major world power, admired by many Western nations and provided Japanese botanists with the psychology to overcome their frustration of not having been taken seriously by the West.<sup>20</sup> Japan’s cherries were a celebrated, well distributed, local group of plants with rich horticultural practice where victory could be gained globally. In a straightforward competition with Wilson, Miyoshi published his monograph on Japanese cherries only twenty days earlier than his American rival (Miyoshi 1916; Wilson 1916), while Koidzumi and Koehne worked more in cooperation on theirs (Koidzumi 1913b, 254–312; Koehne 1917). In the heat of

<sup>19</sup>See Lee (2016) on how Japanese and Korean researchers were guided and limited by the hegemony of European science.

<sup>20</sup>See Lee (2015) on how Nakai Takenoshin, in this context, overcame this frustration and received international recognition as Japanese botanist on Korean flora.

the battle, Miyoshi assigned dozens of new Latin *forma* names to deviating individuals of Japanese Mountain Cherries found at famous cherry sites, choosing new Japanese names or turning to the names given by cherry lovers in the past.<sup>21</sup> In a similar drive to excel among Western botanists, (Lee 2015, 676), Nakai discerned seven forms of pubescent cherries in Korea, relying on minute details (Chang et al. 2007, 36). And these botanists were not the only cherry scholars. Botany, which had been claimed by western imperialist scientists could be returned to the Japanese by Koidzumi and Nakai, becoming corresponding members of a global community and visited the West to verify herbarium collections on Japanese plants (Ohwi 1932). It is this context, including defeat and victory in real war and a typical Berlin School drive for encyclopedic perfection, that made Koehne support Matsumura's perspective on the Tokyo Cherry by proposing his *nudiflora*. If Koehne had been aware that this herbarium was a hybrid, he would not have taken the trouble as, for him, hybrids were inferior bastards that should not be named separately or described extensively (Koehne 1893, IX). It was an explicit statement of a self-evident truth in plant taxonomy. Authority and ego of the new, scientific persona, the male botanist could push such things through in a dialectic of science adjusting to increasing and cheering nationalism.<sup>22</sup> An East Asian professor-student attitude made Nakai and Koidzumi eager to provide a wild or even an endemic species taxon to the clonal garden plant their professor had tried to classify as species. After independence Korean researchers entered the international arena in a similar underdog position and relied on research reports of the Japanese (Park 1949, 3–10). Statements were once again made quickly and without many research standards. While passing on a problematic taxon, a vernacular Korean identity for the Tokyo Cherry was incidentally constructed, while more balanced local research was ignored (Takenaka 1936; Jong et al. 1937).

From the 1950s, taxonomists worldwide began adhering to the obligatory rules for publishing valid and legitimate botanical species names. The hybrid taxon *Prunus* × *yedoensis* or *Cerasus* × *yedoensis* was internationally accepted and became used for a range of cherries that were similar to the Tokyo Cherry. Besides the Tokyo Cherry, Korean and Japanese scientists have discovered and discerned today a large number of *yedoensis*-related taxa.<sup>23</sup> All of these are present as few trees in the wild or as a few cloned ones from a wild tree that has disappeared, or as herbarium only. All are hybrids with the Higan Cherry as the seed parent; for the pollen parent we find the Korean Mountain Cherry, the Japanese Mountain Cherry, or the Sargent Cherry (Katsuki et al., 2016, 1416–1419). These were discovered where distribution of the parent species overlaps. In such a habitat, new hybrids between the parents will continue to spring up. And as East Asian cherries are quite variable, these foreseen hybrids will have visibly varying botanical details with a different genetic profile. Should these receive a Latin taxon name then?<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Miyoshi (1916), introduced for example the rows of Japanese Mountain Cherries planted at the Koganei canal as selections from the wild (*Wildformen*) and gives thirty-eight of them a new Latin name.

<sup>22</sup>Daston and Sibum (2003) on scientific persona and the dialectic of mutual adjustment.

<sup>23</sup>See Katsuki and Iketani (2016, 1416–1419) sorting taxons out according to their taxonomic standing; here given in alphabetical order: *Cerasus fukudana* (Koidz.) Masam. & Suzuki; *C. × kashioensis* (H.Kubota & Moriya) T.Katsuki & Iketani; *C. leveilleana* f. *kashioensis* (H.Kubota & Moriya) H.Ohba; *C. mochidzukiana* (Nakai) Masam. & Suzuki; *C. × mochizukiana* (Nakai) H.Ohba; *C. × naganoi* (H.Kubota & Moriya) H.Ohba; *C. nikaii* (Honda) Masam. & Suzuki; *C. × nudiflora* (Koehne) T.Katsuki & Iketani; *C. × sacra* (Miyoshi) Masam. & Suzuki; *C. shirataki* (Koidz.) Masam. & Suzuki; *C. × yedoensis* (Matsum.) Masam. & Suzuki; *Prunus fukudana* Koidz.; *P. fukudana* var. *pendula* Koidz.; *P. hallasanensis* Chan S.Kim & M.H.Kim; *P. longistyla* Chan S.Kim & M.H.Kim; *P. media* Miyoshi; *P. mochidzukiana* Nakai; *P. mutabilis* f. *subsessilis* Miyoshi; *P. × naganoi* H.Kubota & Moriya; *P. nikaii* (Honda) Koidz.; *P. quelpaertensis* Nakai; *P. sacra* Miyoshi; *P. sacra* f. *longipes* Miyoshi; *P. shirataki* Koidz.; *P. tobagenzoana* Koidz.; *P. verecunda* var. *kashioensis* H.Kubota & Moriya; *P. yedoensis* Matsum. var. *angustipetala* Chan S.Kim & M.H.Kim; *P. yedoensis* var. *nikaii* Honda; and, of course *P. yedoensis* var. *nudiflora* Koehne.

<sup>24</sup>Kawasaki (1993, 149–178) gives the most obvious solution to group them as hybrids under their maternal parent, the Higan Cherry. Kawasaki Tetsuya (1929–2002) was an eminent field researcher on cherries, but did not graduate from Tokyo University. His clear classification departing from five *Prunus* ideotypes did not get the recognition it deserves. In the posthumous re-edition of his book the ideotypes were even removed.

Later in the same year, after his daring statements, Koidzumi reported that *Prunus sacra* was in fact not the missing link between the Jeju cherries and the Tokyo Cherry. Toning down the discourse, he reported it to be a simple hybrid between the Higan Cherry and the Japanese Mountain Cherry that had been planted in the temple by a gardener who had found it nearby (Koidzumi 1932b). But Japanese researchers never quoted this paper by Koidzumi, as it could be ignored in face of the exhilarating discourse that has been examined throughout my paper. For centuries, gardeners have been selecting special cherries from among hybrids on the nursery and in the forest. There can be various reasons for selecting these cherries, but they always differ according to time, place, and cultural predilection. It seems to me that some Korean and Japanese botanists have been eager to select hybrids from the Higan Cherry in the wild, or from an old temple; nationalistic biases and present-day chauvinism made them arbitrarily select plants resembling the Tokyo Cherry, and these botanists consequently named them in respectful Latin and classified them as wild varieties or even species. Because botany, taxonomy, and genetics are considered natural sciences, questions of correctness arise. But how can natural science define the correctness of the King Cherry? And once the “correct” King Cherry is located on Mount Halla, what should be done with the perhaps not so correct Natural Monuments, the King Cherry as an endangered species, and the rest of this hybrid swarm on the mountain that confuses the beautiful landscape of the correct King Cherry? In the end is all of this research not interfering with far more urgent biodiversity research? The correct Tokyo Cherry is only relevant in historic respects and, for some, perhaps in reverence to the respected professor Matsumura, or to the Nation’s Flower. Since it is a clone we do not even need a type specimen. Should all incorrectly propagated Tokyo Cherries, the genetically different ones procured from seed, be uprooted and burned?<sup>25</sup>

These two cherries are highly cultural and belong to the field of humanities, horticulture and landscape business, but have been pulled into the field of natural science starting with an impurity of standards around Matsumura Jinzō’s basionym in 1901.

Note: Names of Korean and Japanese persons are given family name first, followed by given names.

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<sup>25</sup>Pooler (1999) on the celebrated set of Tokyo Cherries planted in Washington D.C., USA at the Potomac Tidal Basin that has clearly various differing forms, resulting from propagation by seed collected in Japan. Also in Japan one may come across variant forms, including weeping ones.



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