The Contemporary Korean History and Japanese Colonial Domination

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1. Introduction

Recently in Japan, with its phenomenal economic development and the strong wave of conservatism, the country's military expenditure has drastically increased and the dispatch of troops to foreign countries has been Japanese scholars' favorite topic. At the same time, there have been frequent remarks glorifying her colonial past conduct. This practice has been nothing new. However, it is worth noticing how much the Japanese government tacitly supports the trend. The officially approved Japanese history textbook is a good example. In this textbook for the young generation the Japanese aggression is beautified even to the degree of helping and developing Asia and her atrocities were covered up. It is clear that their remarks are not accidental but official ones strongly supported by the Japanese government.

To make the matters worse, these remarks are now widely supported and claimed by Japanese scholars. In the past, reckless remarks were made by a few politicians and conservatives who were not awakened from the Japanese dream of imperialism. At present, the same unbelievable remarks are repeated by scholars in a more refined way. They are advocating that the Korean economic progress since the 1960s has been the result of the successful Japanese colonial policies. In other words, they claim that the Japanese colonialism was an impetus to the modernization and industrialization of Korea. In order to support their claims they

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are endeavoring to collect various data to content that the Japanese rule of Korea was not always harmful.

The glorification of the Japanese colonial rule is practised not only by the Japanese scholars but also by some American and European scholars, and even by a few Korean scholars. It is really deplorable to see these advocates of the Japanese imperialism.

In the meantime, since the 1960s the Korean economy has made rapid strides in accordance with the well-planned economic policies. Korea has been acclaimed as one of the rare economic miracles of the world. It is evident that on the one hand Korea has enjoyed increased productivity and consumption. Even the Korean government propagated that Korea was ready to join the world’s most industrialized and developed blocs. On the other hand, the more progressed the Korean economy was, the more dependent it was on the Japanese one. The heavy reliance of the Korean technology on Japan resulted in serious deficits in trade for Korea. Besides, the indiscriminate importation of the decadent Japanese popular culture was a big concern for the discerned Koreans. Some Koreans even worry that Korea is on the verge of being economically colonized by Japan. The stagnant Korean economy of today adds to the worry.

At this juncture, the newly developed glorification of the Japanese colonial domination by the Japanese, Western and a few Korean scholars expressed a greater concern since it looked like a repetition of the past historians’ rationalization of the Japanese aggression. Our past history shows that a imperialist country usually propagates different ideologies and fabricated ideas which easily make the resistance of the colonized powerless. The Japan’s intentional reckless remarks could surely be taken as a sign of fabricated ideologies. The Koreans who underwent bitter experiences of the Japanese aggression cannot but be alarmed.

Like other fields of knowledge, the study of history pursues the solution of all the problems that human beings are facing. In other words, the study of history exists for the betterment of the human society. Historically and geographically Korea and Japan have maintained a close relationship. Whether we like it or not, the relationship will continue and prosper. As neighbors the two countries should try to have better understanding and cooperation.

This paper tries to refocus and reevaluate the meaning of the Japanese colonial rule in the contemporary Korean history in order to indicate the falsity of the glorification of the Japanese colonial domination recently discussed among some scholars. It is highly hoped that the two countries coexist for their mutual benefit and on an equal basis.
2. Glorification of the Japanese Colonial Domination

Nowadays it is common to hear the reckless remarks made by the Japanese. The "reckless remarks" do not indicate one or two false remarks made by the Japanese but represent most of the Japanese inner minds. The advocates of the remarks actually represent the majority of the Japanese. It seems no doubt that the reckless remarks are made more frequently nowadays.

In 1953, at the time of the third Korean-Japanese talks, the Japanese representative named Kuboda said the Japanese colonial rule was a great benefit to the Koreans. He talked like that in response to the Allred Nations' Cairo claim that "the Koreans are in a slave state..." Kuboda's remarks were certainly hysterical and was recorded as one of the very first unjust remarks. He added further that the confiscation of the Japanese estate and the expulsion of the Japanese by the American Military Government in Korea was a breach of the international law. The stunned Koreans asked him to withdraw his remarks. However, the Japanese government did not comply with the request and the Korean-Japanese talks came to a halt for four years and six months.

Finally, when the Japanese government expressed apologies for the reckless remarks of Kuboda, the fourth Korean-Japanese talks resumed. On June 11, 1958, the then Japanese representative Sawada reiterated as follows: "The Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War broke out because the two threatening powers already stepped on the Korean peninsula and we had to expel the threats outside the Yalu River." On the very following day Ono, the deputy premier of the Liberal Democratic Party made an improper remark. "If possible, it would be better to reconstruct the Great East Asia Common Prosperity Zone by making Japan into the United States of Japan including Korea and Taiwan." This statement was an exact reflection of the overambitious Japanese leaders. Again in January, 1965 Kousugi, representative of the Seventh Korean-Japanese talks said, "Japan's domination of Korea was for the betterment of the Korean people and the country, nothing else. Even though Japan was defeated in the Pacific War, it would have been much better for Japan to rule Korea for another twenty years."\(^1\) The above reckless remarks by four Japanese leaders could mark the prototype of the sort. The later improper remarks were of a similar type.

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\(^1\) Yi Hŏn-jong, "Ilbon chudoch'ūng-ūi taehan mangŏn yŏn'gu" (A Study of Japanese Leaders' Reckless Remarks on Korea), *Sun'guk*, 9/10, 1990
Kwon Yong-uk, Korean scholar-in-residence in Japan classified the Japanese attitudes towards Korea into four categories some thirty years ago. First, “the Japanese government helped lead and develop Korea in order to perpetuate peace in the Orient and to enhance the Japanese security in the region. The establishment of the protectorate government is beneficial not only to Japan but also to Korea.” It was the claim by the Extreme Rightists. Second, despite the injustice of the colonization of Korea, it was an inevitable historical event and hence beneficial to Korea in the long run. This view is shared by a majority of the Japanese. Third, the Japanese domination of Korea was simply the result of aggression which was totally unbeneifical to the Koreans and even led Koreans to tragedies and hardships (From the Koreans’ point of view, this view is regarded as the most conscientious). Fourth, while criticizing the colonial policies of Japan, its scientific and objective judgment and appraisal are advocated.\(^2\)

In one of his writings, a Japanese scholar Kinto said as follows: The Japanese claim like the colonization of Korea for the peace of the Orient and for the mutual prosperity of the two countries is as unjust as the Korean insistence of “the flagrant Japanese bandits” and “the atrocious invasion of Japan.” He reiterates further that every party involved should be more reasonable and retain composure. He adds to it that the Japanese intellectuals including himself criticize the Japanese rule of Korea as “a well-intentioned bad rule,” and this view has been accepted widely among the Japanese public.\(^3\)

The term “a well-intentioned bad rule” depicts and condemns Governor-General Teraug’s ruthless military government in the 1910s. The term, which was first in use by the Japanese in the 1920s, was used by Kinto in order to delineate the overall picture of the Japanese colonial rule. The phrase might sound a little different but it coincides with Kwon Yong-uk’s second claim presented above.

Naturally these attitudes aroused strong animosity and antagonism of Koreans toward the Japanese. The Korean-Japanese talks often came to a halt. However, the people in power after the May 16th Military Coup ignored the general Koreans’ discontent with it. They concluded an ignominious treaty with the Japanese without reprimanding the Japanese atrocities and ended up begging for funds. The

\(^2\) Kwon Yong-uk, “Kenkyu no kihonteki tado to sono kada (The Basic Attitude of Study and Its Task),” Kankoku kindai shiryo shusei (A Collection of Historical Materials of the Modern Korea), 1959 16-17

\(^3\) Kinto Kengichi, “Dokuzen ishiki to minzoku ishiki (Self-righteousness and Nationalism),” Kankoku kindai shiryo shusei (A Collection of Historical Materials of the Modern Korea), 1959 10-11
conclusion of the treaty again made the Japanese mistake their hallucinations for the truth.

The mistaken remarks by the Japanese were frequently heard from then on and finally in the 1980s they reached the climax. The Japanese government seemed to encourage the trend and formalize her stand on the matter. This was accompanied by the aggrandized economic power, the resultant waves of conservatism, and the appearance of new nationalism in Japan. Its climax could be found in the era of Prime Minister Nakasone who wished to finalize Japan's post-war settlements of account.\(^4\) It was at this time that the turmoil on the Japanese history books and their distorted views occurred. It is hard to know exactly how many Japanese agree on each of Kwon Yŏng-uk's classifications influenced the Japanese. However, all in all a majority of the Japanese seem not to regret their past aggression but firmly believe in the notion that the Japanese colonial rule did help the Koreans.

In the 1960s, the bold claims of the Japanese even developed into the work which tried to trace the Koreans' brilliant economic development, called the miracle of the Han River, in relation to the Japanese colonial rule of Korea. When Japan, assured by the great economic power and dreamt of the Great East Asia Common Prosperity Zone again, stepped forward into the world stage, the world's public opinion on her past colonial aggression and barbarous conducts must have worried her. However, instead of reflecting on her past atrocities, it looked like Japan found good excuses for her contribution in the brilliant development of Korea and Taiwan. Since both countries were once colonies of Japan, the Japanese were ready to talk about their past contribution to the industrial development of the two countries.

The claim that the Japanese colonial domination helped modernize Korea was suggested not only by the Japanese scholars but also by others. It was also like that in the United States whose influence was enormous in the development of the Korean history especially after 1945. In the preface to one of the studies on the Korean economic development cosponsored by the Harvard Institute for International Development and the Korean Development Institute, the following is suggested.\(^5\)

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\(^4\) For further discussion, refer to Yi Yŏng-hŭi, "Tibon-ŭi pesu hoegwi-ŭl kyŏnggyeham (A Warning against Japan's Return to Conservatism)", Shundonga 1986 6 and Shin Hŭi-ŏk, "Ilbon-ŭi shin'gukka chaun-wa hanbando (Japan's New Nationalism and the Korean Peninsula)", Wolgan Chungang 1988 11.

\(^5\) E.S. Mason and Kim Man-je et al, "Preface", Hanguk kyŏngge sahoe-ŭi kindaehwa (Modernization of Korean Economy and society), KDI, 1981. The word 'precedent' seems to refer to the economic growth in the Colonial Period.
The Japanese invasion did exploit the Korean people and shook violently the age-old isolationism and traditional mores in the Hermit Kingdom. However, the Koreans experienced for the first time, the modern technology and management. The rapid economic growth in Korea came into being in 1963. But the Korea's economic 'miracle' has its precedent.

In the same book another American scholar rationalizes the Japanese view that the colonial domination contributed to the economic development of Korea.  

- Compared to the long history of Korea, the time span of 35 years is rather a short time but the changes taken place at the period is enormous. Nationalistic Koreans (most of the Koreans) are, without exception, emphasizing the negative aspect of the colonial domination and it is no doubt that Koreans were exploited and deprived of everything. However, visitors in Korea can easily find the old bureaucratic economic system of Japan still lingering in the Korean system. The Japanese influence can also be found in all kinds of development for 30 years after 1945.

- The purpose of this study is to find out the cause of the rapid economic growth of Korea. In this sense it can hardly be said that the Japanese Colonial Rule only brought calamities to Korea. Even though the Japanese domination brought Koreans all kinds of hardships and tragedies, it cannot be denied that the domination lay a partial foundation for the future economic development of Korea.

In another book on the overall policies of the Imperial Japan, another American scholar indicates as follows:

Economic value and benefit must, of course, be also considered from the viewpoint of Japan's colonial peoples. Here the role of Japanese colonial history is more complex or more subject to disagreement than the impact of Japanese economic policy within the empire itself. The controversy is between those scholars who concentrate on Japanese economic activities in the empire which collectively merit the term "exploitation"—the harsh demands of the metropole upon the colonial territories, the economic inequities between the Japanese and their colonial charges, the distortions and imbalances wrought by Japanese policies in the economic structures of the colonies—and those who emphasize the creation of modern economic infrastructures in the colonies, the promotion of dramatic increases in both agricultural and industrial production, the consequent improvement of the economic conditions of the indigenous colonial peoples in terms of health, education, and increased opportunity and purchasing power,

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7 The book was made by both Korean and American scholars under the sponsorship of the Korean government. It was published by the KDI, a governmental institute. In a way it can be said not only the Korean scholars involved but also the Korean government share the view.
conditions which can be collectively called "development".\(^8\)

The above statement shows a trace of trying to keep a neutral position. In other words, it criticizes the previous stance of only emphasizing the Japanese cruelty and barbarism and it also indicates that the Japanese imperialism is not different from other forms of imperialism. It goes further that the Japanese imperialists made an indirect investment, enforced public education and industrialization. This stance tries to rationalize the Japanese colonial domination and reduce the Japanese guilty consciousness to a minimum.

As shown above, diverse Japanese views on the Korea-Japan relations exist. However, the relevant things to the topic can be said as follows: The economic policies made for the Japanese in the colonial period did not give much benefit to the Koreans. However, the various systems, facilities and experiences in the past contributed to the economic development of Korea and accordingly benefited the Koreans.

This kind of logic presupposes that Korean people did not have capabilities for industrializing the country and it was Japanese domination which gave impetus to the development of Korea. Except the shameless Extreme Rightists, most of the Japanese intellectuals say "We are sorry for the Koreans. But we don't have to feel too sorry for them." Some of them seem to believe in the good intentions of the colonial domination. Evidently they feel angry about the Koreans' condemnation that the Japanese were "aggressors" and "bandits." Among the Western scholars there are supporters and even among the Korean scholars there are sympathizers even though the number is small. Therefore, it is hard to condemn all the scholars unconditionally.

3. The Reality of the Japanese Colonial Domination

Let's look into the reality of the Japanese colonial rule, then, to see whether the above claims coincide with the true picture.

What is surprising is that the claims are too similar to those colonial historical views presented by the Japanese intellectuals in the late Chosŏn dynasty and the Japanese colonial period. In other words, the same view is not new only at this time but has a history of almost one century. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Korean historians tried to overcome the colonial view of history and was almost sure that

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they overcame it. However, the renewed lively discussion of the topic shows that the effort was not enough and even problematical. The contradictory comments are nothing new but this paper tries to reveal the groundless fabrications based on the results of recent studies.

It can generally be recognized that the Korean capitalization was in rapid progression during the Japanese colonial period. When an imperialist country infiltrates into an underdeveloped country, the usual approach is to transform the target country into a resembling one of the aggressors. This is what you call the effect of “the civilization of the imperialists’ capital export.” Whether you like it or not, you have to accept it. This is an objective truth. However, the truth is that all these were for the Japanese themselves. For the egoistic purpose Japan reorganized Korea into a colony and at that time it looked like a promotion of capitalism. This phenomenon can be called “the colonial modernization” on the whole. From the very beginning, the prosperity of the Koreans was not their concern. They only thought about Japan and the Japanese interests. Some Japanese scholars used the expression “a well-intentioned bad rule,” but the good intention could hardly be found.

The next item to be discussed is the Japanese claim that when Korea was invaded by the Japanese, Korea did not have an independent capability of modernizing herself. Since there had been enough discussions on the matter, an additional one is not needed. However, one clear fact is that however meager it was, the capitalistic sprout was growing at that time and the social force to support it was right there. Therefore, when the Japanese says “Chosŏn without the ability to modernize the nation and Japan which brought blessings of capitalism,” the Koreans know it is a lie. On the contrary, Japan’s modernization process killed the Korean sprout of capitalism and in its place was planted the weak Japanese capitalism. The typical example could be found in the importation of the “modern” monetary system which was enforced by Megata, a Japanese financial adviser right after the Russo-Japanese War. Through this process, the opposing Korean merchants and businessmen were completely ruined and the Japanese counterparts benefited. When the Japanese constructed railroads, they adopted ingenious methods of enlarging the power of the Japanese merchants. When building the new hub of a railroad station, they avoided the already existing places where the Koreans had business connections and

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interests. Moreover, they moved the Japanese merchants and carriers to the new spots collectively. The recent study reveals the fact. In 1910s the typical Japanese economic policy called “the company law” discouraged the growth of the indigenous Korean capital.

Agriculture underwent a great change in the Japanese colonial period. The establishment of the modern land ownership rights through the forced land survey expedited the capitalization of the land in Korea. At the same time, the forced reorganization of the Korean lands into the raw material suppliers for Japanese industry caused the downfall of the Korean peasants. Especially in the 1920s, rice became the principal commodity to be supplied to Japan, and a single-crop agriculture was established. As a result, the entire self-sufficient Korean agriculture was disintegrated and Korea had a colonial economy tied exclusively to Japan.

In the 1930s, with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, Korea was industrialized. The production value of agriculture and forestry decreased drastically from 67.5% in 1932 to 43.6% in 1940 while that of mining and industry increased from 8.1% to 47.2% in the same period. However, most factories built at this time were owned by the Japanese and the resultant capital gap between the Japanese and the Korean were becoming great. In the 1940s the Japanese owned 94% of the capital in manufacturing, and monopolized major products such as metal, chemical products, gas and electrical appliances.

Japan’s industrialization in 1930s was for the purpose of invading the continent. In other words, each industrial sector in Korea had no systematic relationship with each other and only connected with the monopolized industry in Japan. Therefore, the modern factories with up-to-date facilities could not be utilized efficiently. These factories were placed in the most strategic spots of Korea in order to achieve the aggression successfully. Factories were built in a place where they had easy access to the raw materials and transportation. Before the August 15th liberation of Korea, the light industry, such as textiles and spinning was concentrated in Seoul and the southern part of Korea, while the heavy industry, such as metal, machinery,


chemical, and cement located in, North Korea. The manufacturing factories of raw materials were near the harbor.

Anyway, with the industrialization of Korea, the number of workers in factories tripled during the span of 5 years from 1933 to 1938. It was estimated that near the end of the Japanese colonial rule there were around 2,000,000 workers. In 1938 alone there were about 600,000 workers suffering from low wage and long hours of work. Under the wartime mobilization, the laborers' wages were frozen and the inflation was high. The workers subsisted on meager food spending 14–16 hours in factories for military supplies.

The workers were supplied from the surplus of workers on the farms. Actually, the number of farmers engaged in farming and forestry decreased by almost 1,000,000 from 7,700,000 in 1930 to 6,700,000 in 1940. The workers were mostly bankrupt farmers who were mobilized from the south to the north and then forced to move to various spots in Japan. One Japanese scholar called this labor drain as "The rapid development of primitive accumulation." However, when the Japanese were expelled from the peninsula in 1945, this labor force being a product of the combined Japanese and Korean capital and not the pure Korean one, the workers returned to their farm lands and found themselves jobless and threatened the Korean economy because the unemployed were enormous.

Besides, Japan excluded Koreans from getting technical jobs. Even the small number of Korean technicians were only helpers working for the Japanese. In 1934, the number of Korean technicians engaged in manufacturing reached 2,000 which was less than 20% of the whole work force and even they were the intermediate level technicians. In metal and chemical industries only the 10% of the technicians were Korean. In 1944 there were 1,600 Korean technicians in the field of industry which was 19% of the whole manufacturing and construction area. The remaining 81% belonged to the Japanese. In metal and chemical industries which required a high state of technology and training, only 11% were Koreans. After the liberation the Korean economy was almost at a standstill.

What the Japanese claim as the industrialization of Korea in 1930s was actually the industrialization by the monopolized capital which was solely for the benefit of

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12 Chosôn Bank, Chosôn kyŏngje nyŏnbo (The Annual Report), 1948, I-99–114

13 Kwon Yong-uk, "Nihon teikoku shugi moto no Choson ryudo riiko (The State of the Choson Labor under the Japanese Imperialism)", Rekeshu kenku (A Study of History), 1965, 303

14 Chŏng Yŏn-t'ae, "Han'guk k'indaes in'gu idong-ŭi t'ŏkch'il" (Characteristics of the Population Movement in Modern Korea), Unpublished paper, 1991
the Japanese capital. The progression of industrialization meant the intensification of colonization. Therefore, the remark of establishing the Korean capitalism was irrelevant. What the Japanese were proud of were railroads, modern communication system which was only a subordinate system that the development of capitalism could show. They themselves are not indicators of the development. The industrialization showed its limit and collapsed after the liberation. Moreover, when the autonomous national economy was to be established, the colonial distortion of it was a hindrance.

What, then, was the standard of Koreans' consumption during the Japanese colonial period? Did it increase? Many scholars claim that there was a rapid economic growth in the colonial days. From 1910 to 1940 there was an annual 2% increase in the commodity production which was believed to be higher than that of other countries. However, this only shows the numerical product they got by dividing the gross national products into the number of people. It does not show to whom the fruit of growth went. Let us look into the matter more closely. What was the meaning of the economic growth to the Koreans? In 1930 a half of all the farmers, and in the case of tenants about 68% were starving in the springtime because they ran out of food. Their life was miserable. Even considering the impact of the worldwide economic crisis in 1930, what the Korean farmers experienced at this time was beyond words. They had nothing. All they wanted to have was a bowl of rice. What was the consumption of rice per person at this time? In 1910 it was 0.71 sŏk, in 1919 0.62 sŏk, in 1929 0.44 sŏk, in 1938 0.77 sŏk and in 1944 0.56 sŏk. Generally there was a gradual decrease with only a few exception. Korea became Japan's key food-supplying area. The amount of rice shipped to Japan went up enormously. This increase benefited Japan only Koreans had to cut down on their rice consumption and survive on millet and other low quality grain imported from Manchuria. How could anyone say that the Koreans had a better economy and life during the colonial period? The growth of the gross national product should be understood in relation to the colonial people's actual living standards.

What about the modern education system that the Japanese were so proud to have introduced to Korea? Setting aside the colonial elementary education for the

15 Yŏksa munje yŏn'gu guso (Institute of Historical Problems), Haebang samnyŏnsa yŏn'gu immun (An Introductory Study of Three Years after Liberation), Khach'ŏ, 1989 176


17. E.S. Mason and Kım Man-je et al, op cit pp 102-103
purpose of assimilating Koreans with the Japanese, and the abolition of the Sŏdang, a Korean education institute, the Japanese modern education was nothing worthy of notice. Even the Japanese scholars admit it. In the 1930s the school enrollment of Korean children increased. It was the time when the Japanese adopted the assimilation policy. Their popular education was for the purpose of annihilating the Korean race through the assimilation procedure.18

4. The Political Situation after the Liberation and the Inheritances of the Colonial Rule

In August 1945, Korea was liberated from the thirty-six-year tyrannical rule of Japanese imperialism. Even though the liberation was not attained by their own efforts, the Koreans were looking forward to building their independent country. Since all political activity in Korea had been completely suppressed, when the Japanese left, the social, economic, and political machinery in Korea simply collapsed. The economic chaos was most severe. However, the Koreans were more concerned with the expulsion of the economic disparities and restoration of the Korean identity which the Japanese endeavored to eradicate. Different political parties competed to present good solutions to these problems. At this crucial time Koreans should have liquidated the remaining vestiges of the Japanese domination in a systematic way and laid a firm foundation for a new nation.

However, the United States occupying Korea regarded her as one of the strategic spots of the world and did not listen to the Koreans’ ardent aspirations. To the Americans the majority of Koreans who wanted to have a drastic renovation of the Korean society looked like a big hindrance and so was the political power to them. The United States wanted to keep the same colonial social structure of Korea.19 The Americans made use of the same administrative, legal, economic and the police systems of the colonial period and for a certain period of time even the traitors, pro-Japanese people kept the previous posts they held in the Japanese period.20

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18 Kimura Mizuhiko, “Kankoku(Chosen) ni okeru shoto kyoiku no hukyu -1911~1955 (The Popularization of Elementary Education in Korea(Chosŏn)-1911~1955)” Aja kenkyu (A Study of Asia) 1985 33-34


20 In the U.S. Military Government were several Koreans. Most of them were active participants in Tonguhoe and Hŭngŏp kuraakpu. The two organizations were made by An Ch’ang-ho and Yi Kwang-su,
In 1949 when the Communist regime took over the China Proper, the United States made a change of policy, rearmed Japan, and recognized Korea under the power of Japan. In other words, even after the liberation nothing seemed to have changed and the so-called remnant power of the colonial rule was enforced.

After the liberation the economic chaos and difficulty were severe in Korea. Around 1947 and 1948 there was a drastic decrease of manufacturing and construction industries from 10,065 in 1943 to 4,500 and the number of employees dropped 41%. The output of the manufacturing industry was only 15% of that in 1939.

Many factories closed their doors. In North Korea where heavy industry was concentrated, the damage was greater. These phenomena were due to the division of the country, political unrest but more than anything else to the withdrawal of the Japanese technicians and managers and the loss of the Japanese market. The situation was aggravated in Korea by the Japanese sabotage. For instance, in North Korea there was an incident of extinguishing a pilot flame in a smelting furnace of the Kyŏmip'o Iron Foundry which produced the largest quantity of pig-iron in the nation. Therefore, the entire foundry became out of order. In addition, sixty-four mines were flooded and 174 mines were in a similar state. Nineteen munition factories were completely destroyed while forty-seven were severely damaged.

As of December 1947 the index number of the wholesale prices of Seoul marked over 3,000 when that of August 1945 was set at 100. The price of the following items soared: raw materials of textiles 180 times, construction materials about 65 times and textiles about 55 times. Such an exorbitant price increase was caused by the deliberate over-issue of the bank notes by the Chosŏn Government-general which foresaw the defeat of Japan in World War II.

The above facts were what the Japanese have repeatedly advocated as the well-intentioned industrialization and capitalization of Chosŏn. Whatever was left behind

Rhee Syngman and YMCA members and included intellectuals and men of property from the northwest and Kyŏnggi areas. These people were generally cooperative to the Japanese domination policies. In 1930s their inclination was made clear. For further discussions refer to Kim Sang-t'ae, “1920–1930nyŏndae Tonguhoe Hŭngŏp kuragpu yŏn'gu (A Study of Tonguhoe and Hŭngŏp kuragpu in 1920s & 1930s)”, SNU M.A. Thesis, 1991.

21 E S Mason and Kim Man-je et al, op cit p 104
22 E Broon & J Hersh, Chosen shakai shugi keizaishi (Social Economic History of Korea) Aves shobo, 1970 28
23 Chosŏn Bank, Chosŏn kyŏngje nyŏnp'yo (The Annual Report) 1948 III-115
by the Japanese were almost destroyed during the Korean War.

In the meantime, the Syngman Rhee regime asserted an anti-communism and anti-Japan policy. President Rhee took advantage of the Koreans’ anti-Japanese feelings and firmly established his power. By the declaration of the Rhee Syngman line, the capture of the Japanese fishing boats, the boycott of the Japanese goods and anti-Japanese demonstrations, the anti-Japanese movement was intensified. Again the Rhee regime adroitly made use of the above incidents. The same regime helped disorganize the Panmun t’ŏgwi, the special committee for uprooting the anti-nationalists, but instead utilized the Pro-Japanese powers and administrators in the government. As a result, the Pro-Japanese powers were protected and kept further. In establishing a new nation there ought to have been the liquidation of the colonial inheritances and redressing of the national spirits. However, no effort of this sort could be found anywhere. Rather it looked as if they tried to hide the realities of the Japanese period by simply presenting the contrastive pictures of the period “the cruel Japanese vs. the plundered Koreans, the oppressive Japanese vs. the resistant Koreans.”

From then on the Korean economy had to depend on U.S. aid for a good period of time. Around 1959, the U.S. aid policy switched from the free donations to loans with strings attached. Moreover, in order to lessen the country’s military and economic burdens, the U.S. made Japan her subordinate allies in the Far East and tried to establish the defence line against the U.S.S.R. Relying on this reorganized planning the U.S. encouraged Japan to advance into Korea. In order to achieve the plan the U.S. urged Rhee Syngman to resume the deadlocked Korea-Japan talks and normalize the relationships between the two countries. At that time, Japan was more than ready to advance into Korea. Japan was looking for a place to invest her surplus capital which had been made available through the Korean War and the economic boom period in the 1950s. The U.S. and Japan at this time had similar interests in Korea. Thus, the Korean economy in 1950s had a turning point of


25 Tomoaga Masuo, “Han’guk kongŏphwa-ŭi noll” (The Logic of Korean Industrialization), Han’guk kyŏngje-ŭi kyo (The Structure of Korean Economy), Hangmunsa, 1985. 269 According to P.W.Kuznets, in the period right after the Korean War(from 1953-55 to 1960-62) the industry was reconstructed and the new industries flourished. Thus in 1960s there was a completion of the economic structure. All these were made possible through the land reform and the development of education
stripping off its parasitic status of receiving aids and joined the international division of labor system through the medium of loans offered by the U.S. and Japan.26

At this time the Korean people were adamantly against the Korea-Japan talks which were known to have defied the national pride. However, Park Chung-hee did not respond to the demand because he felt that only through the economic development could he find the legitimacy of his political power. Since then with the combined efforts of the government and its people the Korean economy progressed by leaps and bounds. Simultaneously it had to be under the control of Japan.

The inheritances of the Japanese colonial domination played a big role at this time. As the Western scholars insisted, even though the inheritances of materials disappeared, since the social, economic and legal systems were almost kept intact basically, these systems became the conduits for the Japanese power infiltration. Unless there was a complete transformation of the social and economic structure, the complete elimination of the Japanese colonial inheritances could be impossible. This is the heavy bondage that the ex-colonizers engraved on the ex-colonized. No matter how disgraceful and humiliating the bondage is, it cannot be denied or negated. It is the reality. However, if there is no conscious effort to overcome the reality, the answer is too clear. The Koreans have been using the same Japanese words on legal system, economic structure without systematically translating them into Korean. Maybe because of this neglect there is still the persistent inheritances of the Japanese colonial education.

On top of that the pro-Japanese people came into power and the Japanese educated men became plutocrats. To make matters worse, after the liberation it was hard to find men of national consciousness among the so-called social and political leaders. It is almost fair to say that no major forces existed to deter various Japanese influences. The only alternative lay in the people’s consciousness, however, this, too, seemed to get insensitive because of the skillful manipulation of the politicians.

5. Falsity in Glorifying the Colonial Domination and Directions for Overcoming the Japanese Inheritance

What, then, is the meaning of the Japanese colonial domination in the contemporary history of Korea? Let us scrutinize whether the Japanese way of rationalizing her colonial rule could be justified.

Before touching on the main topic, let us think about the following: what is the desirable world ideas? What is a sound national history? In recent years mankind experienced the advent of the imperialist countries and the division of the world. All the imperialist countries were proud to have a little advanced civilization. Eventually they were so imbued with their sense of superiority that they looked down upon the natives and did cruel things to them. Moreover, the competing super powers around the colonies brought two world wars whose casualties and physical losses were enormous. The future world we dream should not be the one where the weak fall prey to the strong. It should be recognized that each race and every culture has its own indigenous values and beauties. Each nation has an equal right to make her own history. Some people may argue that the proposition is too weak and unrealistic. However, a scholar has a duty to endeavor for the cause.

It is more than clear that the sound national history does not consist of material affluence alone. As it is often quoted, man cannot live by bread alone. Any society should satisfy its member's spiritual and cultural needs as well as material needs. The sound historical development of a nation means not only the solution of the economic needs but also the establishment of its independent culture. It is evident that when the former becomes sound, the latter follows suit.

By taking the above stand, let us think about the expression that the Japanese colonial domination contributed to the modernization of Korea. First of all, even if the expression is legitimate, it should be made clear that that cannot relieve the Japanese of their brutalities and atrocities done to the Koreans. This is applicable to all the past imperialist nations. Their behaviors are indelible in the world history. The past imperialists should reconsider their wrongdoings. The civilized man's duty is not just protecting the endangered species but helping the poor people or a race in a powerless country.

Whether the Japanese colonial domination was helpful to the economic development of Korea, in a larger sense to the establishment of the modern society, or whether it contributed to the sound development of the Korean history, that could never be mentioned and might not be a topic for an argument. However, it should be indicated that in the case of selecting an academic research topic there is the principle of importance. When a topic is chosen among hundreds of candidates, its importance could play a major role. It is the same when it comes to choosing a topic on the Japanese colonial domination of Korea. When a researcher selects the quantitative economic growth among plentiful results of the Japanese imperial domination, he must have thought it most important. This kind of approach is indeed the imperialistic viewpoint which ignores the human beings. Nor is it a
serious approach to finding out the real state of affairs into the bargain. When one deals with the problems involved in colonization, she should pay attention to colonized people's sweats and agonies hidden behind the superficial physical growth and the grandiose statistical numbers. When a researcher sits on a chair and manipulates all kinds of numbers, he can easily glorify the colonial domination of imperialists without even noticing it. Then he too comes to join the imperialist group and cooperate their self-rationalization.

With the above viewpoint in mind let us look into what the Japanese call Korea's "development" and "cultivation." As it was already indicated, the economic development of the period could not even guarantee the Koreans' survival. The so-called industrialization was merely the industrialization of the Japanese imperialism. When the Japanese withdrew from Korea after the liberation, it all disappeared like a castle built on sand. Rather, it caused hindrances and all kinds of new problems to the Korean economy.

One disputant said that not only the Japanese but the Koreans used the railroads and the modern hospitals that the Japanese built. Concerning the dispute the Koreans could ask a question in turn. Why don't the Japanese think about the evil influence and the loss that the railroad gave to the Koreans? During the construction of railroads the lands were extorted, natural resources and farm products were plundered. What about the Korean farmers who were put to slave labor? Again, how about the workers and farmers who were sacrificed during the process? Who could compensate for their precious lives? From the very first, the Japanese built the railroads for the purpose of invading the continent and fulfilling their desires.

If the hospitals, built by the Japanese at the colonial time, were of great service to the Koreans, how about hundreds and thousands of Koreans who got sick and died of starvation? It was all because of the endless plundering on the part of the Japanese. Most peasants were deprived of the basis of their livelihood and to make matters worse they were put to hard work and died. To those Koreans who were forced to wander about unemployed, had nothing to eat, and were invalid, what was the use of a few modern hospitals? How many Koreans actually even made use of hospitals? Even in the 1960s and 1970s the general Koreans had difficulties to have access to hospitals. You could imagine how it was during the colonial period.

Even though one might say that during the Japanese colonial rule some Koreans had a comfortable life and admittedly the capitalization of the Korean economy was helped by Japan, it cannot be denied that the Japanese domination had an overall negative impact on the historical development of Korea. It is hard to estimate the Japanese rule only with the things visible. The negative effects of the Japanese rule
on our culture are countless. During the Japanese domination of Korea, for instance, the Koreans were forced to acquire the slave status education and were deprived of their traditional culture. All in all, the Japanese domination did more harm than good to the Korean people. From the viewpoint of sound development of a national history, the construction of a few factories cannot compensate for the harm and distress the Koreans experienced. Moreover, the construction did not have a good influence on the long-range economic development of Korea.

Whatever counterarguments the Koreans present, the Japanese insistence on their contribution to Korea would not waver. The Japanese say, "All right, we do understand what you say. Anyway, all kinds of facilities including roads and railroads were left behind and you gladly used them. That is why we insist the Japanese domination did help the economic development of Korea." In fact, if we accept the idea, the Japanese's contribution to Korea might have been enormous. Why only railroads and roads? However limited and discriminatory the Japanese would say they let Koreans have literacy whether it was Japanese or Korean. We talk about devastation of farmlands and plundering of farmers, but Korean farmers in one way or another did acquire advanced farming technologies. Even Korean laborers had some kind of training. There still exist pros and cons on using the Japanese terminologies. But the Japanese would insist that Koreans adopted many loan words from the Japanese language, especially in the field of law, government, science and, give and take of daily words. Besides, Korean political leaders after the liberation were mostly Japanese-educated.

The Korean generation over sixty were educated reading the world classics translated into Japanese. We also notice similarities between newspapers, magazines, and TV programs of both countries. As for managerial skills and technology we cannot deny that Koreans learned them from the Japanese. It is evident that Japanese books on these areas supplied up-to-date information and were applicable to Korean counterparts.

Concerning the above views, Koreans' reactions are as follows: of course, Koreans cannot just underestimate the Japanese influence. However, we cannot be thankful to them for their byproducts of the colonial domination. Under the most difficult circumstances, Koreans had to utilize whatever was available. It has been no more than the Koreans' contribution that Korean achieved modest development. How could the Japanese meddle with the result of development? Let us not say that the colonial construction of railroads and factories was for the purpose of expanding the Japanese colonial power and thus plundered Koreans and moreover, became a big hindrance to the development of Korean economy after the liberation. With
Koreans' endless endeavor and creativity Koreans could achieve steady development after the liberation. It is more than clear that the Japanese colonial domination was least interested in the economic development of Korea.

In fact, the talk of the Japanese colonial contribution to the Korean economic development came into being when Koreans began to enjoy its great development after the tribulations of the Korean war. Up to the period of 1950s and early 1960s when Koreans suffered from poor economic state and the division of the nation, the Japanese did not pay any attention to Korea. Instead Japan took advantage of the situation. At that time the Japanese never tried to recognize the causes and historical responsibilities of the desolate state of Korea.

As the Japanese notice the "rapid growth" of Korea recently, they mulled over the real cause and impetus behind Korea's economic growth and indicated that it all came from the Japanese colonial domination.

The Japanese should take heed whether the Korean economic growth has been sound, whether it has potentialities for sustainable development, and what kind of discrepancies it has had in its growth. Moreover, they should think about the cause of the discrepancies. In the same context, too, could the Japanese find their "contributions"? From my point of view, the cause of most discrepancies existing now in Korea could be traced back to the Japanese colonial period and the blame should also be shared with Korean leaders who could not solve the colonial remnants after the liberation.

Of course, whatever remained from the colonial period became the Koreans' property. It was really up to us how to make use of it. When the Korean government was newly formed after the liberation, a serious study should have been made as to its colonial remnants. However, the American Military Government and the political situation of that time made it impossible to liquidate the Japanese remains. Accordingly, almost all things from the Japanese period remained intact. The pro-Japanese Koreans became "patriotic" leaders in the new government and they even oppressed the progressive forces. Even with conscious efforts and revolutionary measures the colonial remains should have been hard to be eliminated. To the colonial remnants only the superficial measures were taken by the Korean government and things went on following the old Japanese road. Nowhere could be found the vivacious spirit of a new nation. In fact, when Koreans hear the Japanese remarks that the Japanese colonial domination contributed to the modernization of Korea, Koreans should be ashamed of themselves instead of getting angry with the Japanese.

Even though the Korean economy is not doing well recently, it enjoyed rapid
growth and prosperity, and has received worldwide acclaim. Many countries want to learn about Korean economy and showed a great interest in it. Korea was called "the second Japan." To this Koreans showed mixed reactions. It is hard to deny that Korean economy is dependent on Japan—Korea imports various items for its machinery. Korea’s export is dependent on Japan, too.

Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that the Japanese colonial domination of Korea contributed to the irreducible dependence of Korea on Japan, rather than to the modernization of Korea.

In conclusion, Koreans should take care of themselves, try to solve their adversities, and endeavor to go forward if they do not want to hear about the Japanese colonial "contribution" and so forth. When Koreans solve their own social problems and discard their discrepancies, they can create a truly independent and valuable history. Once a decent Korean society is established, after the Japanese and Western people and scholars notice true agonies and efforts on the part of Koreans, then they will realize how bad the Japanese colonial influence was and how unstable and distorted the Korean society was after the liberation. Finally, at that time, the debate on the Japanese colonial "contribution" to Korea could be resumed.

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