

Representing the Invisible: The American Perceptions of Colonial Korea  
(1910–1945)

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## ABSTRACT

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This study argues that American views of Korea during the period of Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945) shaped U.S. policy toward Korea in the colonial period and after, setting the stage for direct U.S. involvement in Korea's post-liberation years after 1945. Korean nationalists perceived the U.S. as a special ally and a model country, and expected it to play a positive role in resolving Korea's colonial status. In fact, American views of Korea in the early twentieth century were mixed, and depended greatly on the respective observers' relationship to Korea—whether as missionary, as scholar, or as diplomat. At the same time, Japan played a crucial role in mediating American views, reflecting the Asia colonizer's interest in winning international approval for its imperialist project.

When Korean-American diplomatic relations began in the late nineteenth century, American observers typically regarded Korea as an uncivilized but distinct Asian country. This perception of backwardness persisted into the early twentieth century, even as Korea lost its status as a nation-state with the Japanese annexation of 1910. Awareness of Japanese subjugation of Korea would expand significantly in the period 1919-1922, as

journalists and missionaries conveyed news of the March First Movement to the American public and Korean nationalists countered Japanese government efforts to influence international opinion. Nationalist efforts to influence U.S. policymaking in the 1920s and 1930s were persistent but never fully successful, in part because of Korean factional rivalries, changing Japanese strategies of colonial control, and American diplomats' desire to protect U.S. colonial interests in the Philippines. Although Korean nationalists failed to accomplish their ultimate goal of participating directly in the U.S. government's wartime discussions on Korea in the early 1940s, they nevertheless succeeded in making the American public aware that Korea was a cultural and racial entity distinct from Japan. This awareness would lay a foundation for American direct intervention in Korean political, social, and military problems after 1945.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter One</b>	
<b>Initial Encounters: American Views of Korea in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries</b>	15
Emerging Western Views of Korea	
(1) Western Travelers' Eyes	
(2) Positioning Korea in the World	
Japan Speaking Out to the World	
American Ways of Seeing Korea	
(1) The Beginning of Diplomatic Relations	
(2) Expert Commentators – Calling for Change	
(3) An Optimistic View – Homer Hulbert	
The Korean Enlightenment Movement: A View of the Self	
American Reactions to the Korean Annexation (1910)	
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
<b>The Military-Rule Period (1910-1919) and the March First Movement (1919)</b>	88
Prologue to the March First Movement	
(1) The 1911 Conspiracy Case: Persecution of Christianity?	
(2) The Korean Presence in the United States	
- The Formation of a Korean Community	
- The Hemet Accident (1913): Koreans Protecting Themselves	
(3) The United States Reconsiders the Annexation of Korea (1915-1916)	
American Reactions to the March First Movement (1919)	
(1) American Missionaries and Christian groups	
(2) Official Attitudes and the U.S.-Japanese relationship	
The Aftermath of the March First Movement – American Reevaluation of Japanese Rule in Korea	

Japan Defends Its Position

**Chapter Three**  
**Korean Nationalist Voices and American Ears** 147

The Official U.S. Position

- (1) Officials in Charge
- (2) An Ambivalent View

Raising Voices in the Public Sphere

- (1) Korean Nationalist Leaders
- (2) Korean Voice at Post–First World War Conferences
- (3) The Right to Represent Oneself
- (4) Arguments of Korean Leaders

American Responses

- (1) The League of the Friends of Korea
- (2) The Korean Issue in the U.S. Congress

**Chapter Four**  
**American Ambivalence, 1924-1936** 222

Changes in Colonial Rule and Divisions in the Korean Nationalist Movement

- (1) Cultural Rule and the Korean Nationalist Movement of the 1920s
- (2) Assimilation Policies of the 1930s

American Journalistic and Scholarly Views

- (1) A Romantic Colony: Affirmation of Korea as a Colony
- (2) The Emergence of Technocratic Ideas
  - On Economy and Agriculture
  - On Political and Ideological Issues
  - On Religion and Missionary Work

Official U.S. Perspectives

- (1) Race and the Japanese Empire
- (2) Koreans' Politics
- (3) Was Japan's Rule a Success?

**Chapter Five**  
**Impact of the Pacific War, 1937-1945** 287

Nationalist Interactions with the U.S. Government

- (1) A Useful Korea

- (2) The Exemption of Koreans from the Category of “Enemy Aliens”
- (3) Non-Recognition of the KPG

Plans for Post-colonial Korea

- (1) The Idea of Trusteeship
- (2) The Joint Occupation of Korea

Langdon’s Report (1945)

<b>Conclusion</b>	348
<b>Bibliography</b>	358

## INTRODUCTION

Both the beginning and end of colonialism in Korea (1910-1945) happened within international settings. Because of the country's geopolitical position, Korea was a center where powerful neighbors' interests intersected until Japan proclaimed its sole dominant influence over the Korean peninsula at the turn of the twentieth century. When Korea was finally emancipated from Japanese colonialism in 1945, the two emerging powers of the Cold War period, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., decided on the division of Korea into two zones and each occupied one. From the outset of Korea's colonization and liberation to the post-liberation period, the U.S. has been deeply involved, whether intentionally or not, more than any other foreign power in modern Korean history. The present study examines how Americans have formed the discourse of Korea and shaped the specific perspective on Korea during the country's colonial period and therefore prepared the U.S. government's direct involvement in the division (1945), the establishment of the South Korean government (1948) and the Korean War (1950-53).

Korea's name as a nation-state was erased from the world map upon the annexation in 1910, and replaced by the name "Chosen," a colony and a province of Japan. With the annexation, all Korea's international relationships seemed to be extinct. Nevertheless, because of the Korean people's persistent aspiration for independence, Japan's unique status as the only non-Western colonizer and Korea's historical and geographical position, the country continued to be a subject of international discourse. In



particular, because the Korean people perceived the U.S. both as a special ally and a model country and therefore expected the U.S. to play a special role in resolving Korea's problem, Americans, at both official and unofficial levels, attentively observed Korean problems related to colonial Korea, and were major participants in the discourse of Korea.<sup>1</sup>

That there were no diplomatic relations does not mean that no interaction between the two countries existed. Rather, the U.S. and Korea had several points of interaction during the Korean colonial period. From the American side, American missionaries and residents in Korea, Foreign Service officers in Korea and East Asia, officials of the State Department, and American intellectuals observing the Korean people's nationalistic cause represented various American views on Korea. From the side of the Koreans, Korean immigrants, and nationalist groups in the U.S. and other countries actively played roles as agents speaking for their lost and "invisible" country.

Previously, two time frames have dominated historical accounts about Korean-American relations of the modern period. First, studies of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries focused on how Korea was "opened" to the outside world and the United States in particular. In this period, Korea experienced internal and external turmoil. Internally, a sense of crisis was pervasive among the Korean people, who were generating various notions of progress and reforms for the country. Externally, while the West's new technologies and knowledge poured into the country and spurred "a

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<sup>1</sup> By "Korean problem," I refer to the issue of colonial Korea, about which Korean nationalists and pro-Korean opinion makers intended to provoke discussion and the following resolution. Participants in discourse of "Korean problem," therefore, were Korean nationalists and attentive foreign observers of the country.

reconfiguration of state-society relations,”<sup>2</sup> Korea’s neighboring powers—China, Japan, and Russia—were competing over their interests in the Korean peninsula. Rivalry among these powers finally resulted in two international wars surrounding Korea: the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). As a victor in both wars, Japan’s interest in Korea was recognized by the international community through its alliance with Britain in 1902 and an unofficial agreement with the U.S. in 1905, by virtue of which it became the sole dominant power on the Korean peninsula. Japan finally annexed Korea in 1910.

In the midst of this turmoil, the United States occupied a unique position which gave the country a relatively positive image of Koreans, since America’s expansion in East Asia was seen as relatively more private and peaceful than that of the other imperialist powers.<sup>3</sup> This rather favorable relationship derived from Washington’s largely ignorant and indifferent attitude toward Korea, which Patterson referred to as “friendly disinterest.”<sup>4</sup> The private activities of missionaries, businessmen, and individual diplomats were seen as benefiting Korea, providing the country with modern education, medication, and modern technology to build an electricity and rail infrastructure.<sup>5</sup> Studies of this period usually end with the Taft-Katsura Agreement of 1905, in which the U.S. government secretly recognized Japan’s sphere of influence in Korea, in exchange for

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<sup>2</sup> Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 1896-1910* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 177.

<sup>5</sup> Tyler Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia* (New York: Macmillan, 1922); Fred Harvey Harrington, *God, Mammon and the Japanese: Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1944).

Japan recognizing the influence of the U.S. in the Philippines, and the formal annexation of Korea in 1910.

The second time frame that most historical accounts of U.S.-Korean relations have focused on is the post-liberation period. Studies of this period have raised questions, such as who was responsible for the division, where the Korean War originated, and whether the Korean War was an international or a civil war. Recent scholarship has extended attention to a variety of perspectives including those of the Soviets, Chinese, and Koreans in the North and the South, as well as the Americans.<sup>6</sup>

Only a few historians have studied the Korean-American relationship during the colonial period, and when they have done so it has been usually within a limited time frame. Due to the sensation that it made internationally, the March First Movement of 1919 has been a primary focus of such studies. The studies usually cover the period of the Movement and subsequent years, the latest being end point the early 1920s, when the Syngman Rhee group failed to participate in the Washington Conference.<sup>7</sup> Even the few studies of the history of U.S.-Korean relations from the beginning to the postwar period tend to skip the 1920s and 1930s. As a consequence, previous studies have tended to

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 1: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1983); Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, vol. 2: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); James I. Matray, *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941-1950* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1985); Pak Myông-lim, *Han'guk chônjaeng ùi palbal kwa kiwôn (Outbreak of the Korean War and Its Origins)*, 2 vols (Seoul: Na'nam, 1996); William W. Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Chông Yong-Wook, *Haebang chônhu miguk-ûi taehan chôngch'aek (America's Korean Policy Before and After the Liberation)* (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Frank P. Baldwin, Jr. "The March First Movement: Korean Challenge and Japanese Response," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1969; Nagata Akifumi, *日本の朝鮮統治と国際関係, 1910-1922 (Japanese Rule of Korea and International Relations)* (Tokyo: Heibunsha, 2005); Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2007).

focus on surface phenomena only, failing to discuss continuities and changes in American attitudes and policies towards Korea from a long-term point of view.

The present study takes a precisely such long-term perspective, paying attention to how the American government and opinion-makers had an interactive relationship with Korean nationalists and how the discourse of Korea generated outside the Korean peninsula provided the foundations of U.S.-Korean relations in the postwar period. Especially because there were no diplomatic relations between Korea and the U.S. during the Korean colonial period, this study stresses interrelations among people at both official and non-official levels in constructing the discourse on the country's (de)colonialization, questioning the dichotomy between official and unofficial aspects of foreign relations.

The Korean colonial period was significant in different ways for the U.S., Japan, and Korea. It involved issues such as the growing rivalry between the U.S. and Japan in the Pacific region, the West's encounter with unfamiliar "Oriental" imperialism by Japan, racist bias and the anti-immigration movement in American society, and the conflict between colonialism and anti-colonialism. On the American side, colonial Korea was an issue that at times candidly disclosed seemingly contradictory aspects of the American position in foreign relations of the period preceding the Cold War. On the one hand, the U.S. claimed itself to be unique and exceptional as a civilized as well as a moral power. American missionaries' activities in underdeveloped countries at the private level and the country's image of being a "powerful but benevolent power" at the diplomatic level all contributed to the making of this exceptionalistic position. The Wilsonian principle of "self-determination" during the First World War and the Atlantic Charter's declaration that "the victorious allies would pledge to make sure that sovereign rights and self-

government would be restored to those who had been forcibly deprived of them”<sup>8</sup> during the Second World War, symbolized America’s distinct position in international relations. This was the very aspect that inspired Korean nationalists to appeal for America’s help with the Korean independence movement. As Iriye points out, what was exceptional about the United States’ policy toward the Third World<sup>9</sup> was that it assumed that “[the U.S.] did have a chance, that it could make a difference in the destiny of Third World countries, and, therefore, that it was possible to steer them toward a less violent and more constructive direction of change.” The United States “developed an approach that sought to extend American economic and cultural influence in such a way as to help promote that country’s nation-building efforts.”<sup>10</sup> In this sense, American colonial rule in the Philippines was seen differently from other imperialist moves and Korean nationalist leaders generally agreed on this claim.

On the other hand, despite there being several American supporters of Korean nationalism, the general American public and official attitude was closer to a “civilizer” of the uncivilized world than to a supporter of Korean independence. The United States was one of the great powers that enjoyed special privileges in colonial and semi-colonial countries and was in a relationship of growing rivalry with Japan in the Pacific region. For the United States, competition and cooperation among powers took priority over sympathy toward colonized peoples. In dealing with issues related to Korea, in particular,

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<sup>8</sup> Third clause of the “Atlantic Charter” announced by the U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, on August 14, 1941

<sup>9</sup> Although the term “Third World” was coined during the Cold War to define undeveloped countries that were considered as markets and sources of ideological support for the Capitalist and Communist blocs of countries, here it designates undeveloped countries that were often colonies or semi-colonies controlled by great powers in earlier period.

<sup>10</sup> Akira Iriye, “The United States and Japan in Asia: A Historical Perspective,” In *The United States, Japan, and Asia*, edited by Gerald L. Curtis (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 34.

American relations with Japan could strongly sway American attitudes. This explains why the United States government remained silent at the annexation of Korea and the continuous appeals of Korean nationalist groups for help. Because Korean nationalist groups expected that the U.S. would be a different imperialist power from those of Europe and Japan and appealed to the moral and philanthropic aspect of the U.S., these two seemingly contradictory but complementary aspects of the American position were displayed in the most obvious way with regard to the issue of Korea. At the same time, the official American position of non-intervention related to the Korean problem was at times obscured by American officials' personal attention to conditions in Korea and sympathy toward the colonized people. Korean nationalists exposed cracks and ruptures in the utopian image of Japanese imperialism that led in turn to changes in the American view of Japanese imperialism.

For Japan, Korea was a long-awaited colony constituting the Japanese empire. Along with Taiwan, southern Manchuria, and South Sakhalin it was expected "to assist the home country economically and militarily."<sup>11</sup> "As Europe, the United States, and Japan collectively established their superiority over the rest of the world," great powers began to recognize Japan as belonging to "the top group at the turn of the twentieth century, because it was "civilized"; and it was "civilized" because it was powerful."<sup>12</sup> Yet, there existed a biased view from the West about the fledgling power, Japan. Japan was careful to prosecute its use of military power in wars with "meticulous adherence to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 32-3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 33.

the laws of war and then publish books about this achievement.”<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Korea was substantial evidence for Japan to prove that it was powerful as well as civilized enough to conduct a modernizing mission in this historical but backward colony. As Iriye argues, although the U.S. and Japan shared self-identification as being among the most powerful and the most advanced countries, they began to diverge on the question of “whether the two nations should jointly try to respond to the awakened nationalism of Third World countries, especially China.”<sup>14</sup> Since Korea was a less serious issue than China for both Japan and the U.S., the different positions of these two countries towards Korea were overlooked until these two came to directly confront each other. As growing competition and conflict developed between the U.S. and Japan, Japan’s answer for the undeveloped countries in Asia was fixed as pan-Asianism from the 1930s. The Sino-Japanese War was “justified as an attempt to end the West’s long suppression of Asian aspirations” for equal relationships and to help liberate Asians from Western colonialism.<sup>15</sup> Seen in this light, colonial Korea was mobilized by Japan’s aggressive move.

The Korean nationalist movement during the colonial period faced a constant struggle to challenge Japanese propaganda boasting of its legitimate rule in Korea and modernistic development in the colony, as well as to challenge the American geopolitical attitude toward Korea. Like other Asian peoples, except for a few collaborators, Koreans were “under no illusion that Japan’s replacement of Western colonialism would hasten their independence.” Rather, for nationalist leaders, “the defeat of Japanese imperialism

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<sup>13</sup> Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008), 155.

<sup>14</sup> Iriye, “The United States and Japan,” 33.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

was an essential condition for attaining their goals.”<sup>16</sup> Relying on the humanistic nature of American beliefs in foreign relations, the majority of Korean nationalist leaders anticipated that America would assist their country’s independence, because of the seemingly exceptional position of the U.S. and also because of its influence as an emerging power. By this interpretation, they hoped it would transcend legal restrictions, *realpolitiki*, and the traditional balance of power relations. Nevertheless, the Koreans’ reliance on American public opinion and the U.S. government’s favorable position towards the Korean nationalistic cause was not effective until the U.S. actually needed anti-Japanese Korean people in order to counterattack Japan in the Pacific War.

The central aim of the present study is to analyze the intertwined relations among the U.S., Japan, and Korea, with a focus on how these relations impacted American understandings of Korea: the colonialism and nationalism of Korea, which is to say, the “Korean Problem.” In order to delve into informal but visible changes and transformations of the American view of Korea, this study examines how Korea was described, illustrated, and analyzed in the mass media, such as journals and daily newspapers. I intend to examine the public opinion of Americans on Korea through these mass media, partly because of the absence of an American official position towards Korea during the colonial period and also because Korean nationalist leaders in the U.S. were eagerly oriented towards awakening the American public to the significance of the Korean problem, hoping that public opinion favorable to Korea’s independence would have an influence on government policy. In this sense, the present study is a case study of how and to what extent public opinion works in having an influence on foreign policy-

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



making in the U.S.<sup>17</sup> I also analyze official documents of the U.S. government on Korea, especially American diplomatic officials' reports from Korea and other East Asian countries. These officials reported to Washington about how the Korean people responded to colonial modernity and how they personally thought about it from the actual spot, contributing both to the creation of and changes to the American government's attitude toward Japanese imperialism.

The issue of race and immigration in American society in the early twentieth century is another subject that this study tries to illuminate. Race was one of the most significant issues in the relationship between Japan and the U.S., as was also the issue of illegal immigration to the United States. As Mae Ngai has commented, accretion of illegal populations in Asian and Latino communities "contributed to the construction of those communities as illegitimate, criminal, and unassimilable." "The association of these minority groups as unassimilable foreigners" led to "the creation of "alien citizens"—persons who are American citizens by virtue of their birth in the United States but who are presumed to be foreign by the mainstream of American culture and, at times, by the

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<sup>17</sup> Although public opinion had once been seen as "largely ignorant, characterized more by 'moods' than by well-reasoned opinions" (G. Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* [New York: Praeger, 1960], quoted in Philip J. Powlick, "The Sources of Public Opinion for American Foreign Policy Officials," *International Studies Quarterly* 39 [1995]: 427-51), recent studies have viewed it as both rational and stable, or "pretty prudent" (B. I. Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992]; B. W. Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force," *International Studies Quarterly* 36 [1992]). It is believed that foreign policy officials are attentive to public opinion and that public opinion matters to their decisions (P. J. Powlick, "The Attitudinal Bases for Responsiveness to Public Opinion among American Foreign Policy Officials," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35 [1991]; Douglas C. Foyle, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Elite Beliefs as a Mediating Variable," *International Studies Quarterly* 41 [1997]). In addition, public opinion tends to precede policy and substantial congruence exists between opinion and policy. Therefore, public opinion changes are viewed as important causes of policy change (Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy," *The American Political Science Review* 77 [1983]: 175-90). In particular, the importance of the news media as a source by which officials "operationalize" public opinion has also been demonstrated (Powlick, "The Sources of Public Opinion").

state.”<sup>18</sup> Growing anti-immigration sentiment in American society was marked by such legislation as the national origins quota system and a series of immigration exclusion acts, typified by the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. As a doubly marginalized community, being both colonial subjects and a racial minority, Korean-Americans struggled to represent themselves and to distinguish their status from that of Japanese in the U.S. The present study explores Korean-American people’s understanding of their marginalized position.

Chapter 1 of the dissertation explores the earliest encounters that Americans had with Korea and the Korean people. Starting as a traveler’s view, Americans’ vague interest in Korea developed into a more sophisticated form as time went by. The chapter also investigates how Japan’s efforts to promote the justification of its occupation of Korea were effective and how Korean intellectuals responded to international changes and a reconsidered position of their country at the turn of the twentieth century.

Chapter 2 focuses on the effect and aftermath that the March First Movement of 1919 had on the international discourse regarding Korea. The Movement, a nation-wide independence demonstration of the Korean people against the Japanese occupation after the first decade of colonialism, made an international sensation. This chapter explores how news of the Movement became a turning point for American views of Korea. The Movement also impacted U.S.-Japanese relations. The initial American reaction to the March First Movement stemmed from Christian sympathy towards the weak, victimized, and especially Christian Koreans that Americans saw as having been inhumanely and religiously persecuted. American public opinion sympathizing with Koreans was

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<sup>18</sup> Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 2.

enhanced by humanitarianism. Therefore, American public opinion generally called for civil reform in Korea by Japanese colonizers, rather than for the complete independence of Korea.

The March First Movement, however, extended the audience for news of Korea. This condition now provided Koreans with an international stage on which to raise their own voice. Chapter 3 looks into how Koreans struggled to represent themselves outside their occupied country. Whether Koreans could culturally, ethnically and legally represent themselves separately from the Japanese was a critical issue for the Korean-American community and Korean nationalist groups. I argue that Korean-Americans in the racially biased environment for Asian immigrants in American society in the 1910s and 1920s prioritized the struggle to achieve the right to ethnically represent their identity as Korean over their desire to complain about racism. Meanwhile, Korean nationalist leaders appealed to emotional sympathy and a sense of justice on the part of the international community in order to condemn Japan's unjust rule in Korea and to finally liberate Koreans from colonial rule. The chapter articulates the points that Korean leaders presented, as well as the rhetoric and images that they employed to proclaim the legitimacy of international society's intervention in and resolution of the Korean problem.

Chapter 4 turns to changes in American public and official views on Korea between 1924 and the 1930s. After the sensation of the March First Movement calmed down and Japanese authorities announced their reform policy in Korea, American articles specifically dealing with the Korean problem diminished. Nevertheless, the present study shows that much analytical and professional research was generated during the interwar

period encouraging for U.S. official understanding. Amidst growing conflicts between the United States and Japan due to immigration and racial issues, Korea's case provided a good source for American observers to understand the character of Japanese imperialism. The chapter argues that while analyzing the conditions of Korea and the Korean people, American officials began to raise questions about the effectiveness and suitability of Japanese colonialism in Korea.

Finally, Chapter 5 scrutinizes how Korean nationalist voices and the U.S. government's official position changed during the Pacific War years. This chapter pays especially close attention to how some Korean nationalist groups astutely understood *realpolitik* and the American view on the matter, changing their strategy in contacts with the State Department. By looking at interactions between U.S. governmental agencies and Korean nationalist-movement leaders, this chapter analyzes how active encounters of these two sides during wartime led to American decision-making about post-colonial Korea, regardless of whether or not American decisions coincided with what those Korean leaders intended. Rather than digging into detailed stories of competitive relationships among various Korean nationalist groups or discussions of postwar plans by the great powers, this study focuses on how America's earlier understanding and position related to Korea laid the foundation stone for its major decisions at the last stage of the Pacific War, especially the trusteeship plan and the joint occupation of the liberated country by the U.S. and U.S.S.R. By comparing reports by William Langdon, a former American consul in colonial Korea and official of the U.S. military government, the chapter tries to synthesize how constant and changing factors of the American view about colonial Korea resulted in American policy after 1945.

Note: For Korean names, Romanization is based upon the McCune-Reischauer system. For Korean and Japanese names, family names are placed before given names, according to the practice in Korea and Japan, with the exception of Syngman Rhee and other names that have traditionally appeared in English with the family names last. In the case of Korean and Japanese names in English-language sources, names in the original sources are used.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Initial Encounters: American Views of Korea in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries**

The name Korea has been erased from the map of the world and its disappearance marks the final failure of an ancient people to isolate themselves from the rest of humanity. On August 23, 1910, Korean territory was annexed by Japan. The late emperor Yi became a Japanese prince without political power. A Japanese governor-general took into his capable hands authority misused by a long dynasty of autocrats.

- The Right Rev. Bishop Frodsham, "The Land of Morning Calm: A Japanese Experiment in Colonisation," *Cornhill Magazine* 120 (July 1919)

#### **Introduction**

Westerners' visits to Korea began in the sixteenth century, as European expeditions to parts of the world started in this period. Korea's name, however, was not well known to European and American public until the late nineteenth century.

Increasing attention to the country corresponded with internal and external crisis of Korea in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Ironically, the weaker geopolitical status of Korea as a country became, the more cultural curiosity about the country from the other side of the globe was growing. American observers, the most attentive ones of Korea from outside, witnessed the sudden emergence of the name "Korea" and soon its dramatic disappearance in the early twentieth century. Korea's status as a nation-state ended at its annexation by Japan in 1910, and the process leading to its colonization provoked international curiosity and attention. Scattered images and impressions of

Korea to Western eyes in the eighteenth century became to constitute an entity of descriptive and analytical observation of Korea at the turn of nineteenth to twentieth century. The present chapter examines the formation of a Western discourse on Korea from the late nineteenth century. It pays attention to how American observers viewed this “Far Eastern” and unknown land, amidst rapid changes of international relations with Korea from the late nineteenth to the first decade of the twentieth century.

Korea began to participate in modern-style commercial trade by opening trade ports to Japan in 1876. Increasing rivalry among powers surrounding the Korean peninsula resulted in two international wars, the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). These international conflicts attracted sudden and weighty outside attention to Korea’s geopolitical status and its internal issues. When the first Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed in 1902 and Japan defeated Russia in 1905, Korea’s fate seemed to fall into Japanese hands. In 1905, Japan declared Korea a protectorate country, and in 1910, Japan official annexed Korea.

## **1. Emerging Western Views of Korea**

### **(1) Western Travelers’ Eyes**

As the Western world became more familiar with Korea in the 1880s, it began to call Korea with the nicknames “Land of Morning Calm” and “Hermit Kingdom.”<sup>1</sup> By the

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<sup>1</sup> From the nineteenth to early twentieth century, “Hermit Kingdom” and “Land of Morning Calm” were the two of Korea’s most frequently used nicknames in the English world . The former nickname was a popular and symbolic description of the Western image of Korea’s isolation from the international society. The term became popular since Griffis’ book *Corea, the Hermit Nation* came out in 1882. The latter nickname was a literary translation of the two characters of the Korean dynasty’s name, *Chosôn*, and first used by Percival Lowell in his book *Chosôn, the Land of the Morning Calm*, in 1886 (William E. Griffis, *The Hermit Nation: I. Ancient and Medieval History; II. Political and Social Corea; III. Modern and Recent History* [London, W. H. Allen, 1882]; Percival Lowell, *Chosôn* [Boston, MA: Ticknor and Co., 1886]).

time the Korean government opened its trading ports to Japan and then to the United States and European countries, a growing number of Westerners—missionaries, businessmen, travelers, scholars, soldiers, and diplomatic officials—had visited Korea and experienced its far-from-modern society. Their writings in the mass media, travelogue publications, and postcards from the hidden land gained popularity among the Western public. This trend became the start of Western discourse on Korea.

The predominant form of English writings on Korea in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was travel writing, which effectively depicted Korea as an object of curiosity for American readers. These early travel writings on Korea became fashionable in Europe and the United States and resonated with the popularity of European travel books about non-European parts of the world that were already in vogue.<sup>2</sup> In later years, these early writings would become a model for outside views of Korea.

At the dawn of the seventeenth century, Western travelers'<sup>3</sup> accounts usually included descriptions of Korea's landscape, its customs, and the physical characteristics of the Korean people. Since the very earliest description of Korea appeared in the West, the country was seen as a place almost unreachable from the Western world, both geographically and culturally. The immediate interest in the country was centered on its natural surroundings, such as its landscape, animals, plants, mineral resources, and native

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<sup>2</sup> European travel accounts of the non-European world created what Mary Louise Pratt calls "contact zones" as well as "the domestic subject" of European imperialism among metropolitan reading publics. Pratt uses the term "contact zone" rather than "colonial frontier," aiming "to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination." It refers to the space of colonial encounters, where people who are geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and have interactive relations (Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* [New York, NY: Routledge, 1992], 4-7).

<sup>3</sup> By the term "Westerner" or "West," I refer to the common view in the West, regardless of whether it is held by European or American writers, as seen in their early travel accounts. This also shows that American travelers' views were basically derived from those of Europeans. The emergence of a view specific to American writers will be dealt with in section 3 of this chapter.



people.<sup>4</sup> The interest in the natural scenes of exotic countries was the extension from the earlier trend: Europeans in the eighteenth century tried to systematize nature as a European knowledge-building project that created a new kind of Euro-centered planetary consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

As Mary Louise Pratt asserts, these accounts created a utopian, innocent vision of European global authority.<sup>6</sup> Western descriptions of exotic lands paralleled initial descriptions of Korea. Western travel writings about Korea were typically adventure stories of an unknown land and narrators tended to exaggerate and highlight the mysterious and exotic aspects of the country without basing them on factual evidence. For example, Martino Martini, an Italian Jesuit missionary to China in the seventeenth century, described Korea as a land of abundant gold, silver, and pearls, without ever having visited Korea.<sup>7</sup> The utopian view was also clear in the famous seventeenth century story of Hendrik Hamel, which was about the author's real experience in Korea. Hamel, a shipman from the Netherlands, was taken captive with other seamen in Korea for fourteen years after a shipwreck. After returning back to his homeland in 1668, he published his story in Korea. The story had many versions of publication and was translated into many languages including French, English, and German. Hamel's story

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<sup>4</sup> To name a few, Basil Hall, *Account of Voyage of Discovery to the West Coast of Corea, and the Great Loo-Choo Island* (Philadelphia: Abraham Small, 1818); Henry Balfour, *Waifs and Strays from the Far East* (London: Trubner & Co., 1876); Ernest Oppert, *A Forbidden Land: Voyages to the Corea* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1880); E. Bretschneider, *Botanicon sinicum*, 2 vols (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1881-1893); Elisée Reclus, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants - Asia*, vol. 2 (New York: Appleton & Co., 1884).

<sup>5</sup> Pratt, 29.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>7</sup> It is understood that Martini stayed in China for many years, but never visited Korea. Martino Martini, *Novus Atlas Sinesis* (A new atlas of China), vol. 6 (Amsterdam, 1655), 168-69, quoted in Yi Chi-ûn, *Waegok-toen han 'guk, oeroun han 'guk* (Distorted Korea, Lonely Korea) (Seoul: Ch'aek-sesang, 2006), 37-43.

became the first book to introduce Korea to Western Europe.<sup>8</sup> While publishing several different versions of the story, editors at times added unsubstantiated but entertaining stories, along with illustrations, such as one in which crocodiles were depicted as eating human flesh.<sup>9</sup> In other words, Hamel's story did more to entertain readers than to present facts about Korea. These fantastical images, such as a treasure land and cannibalism in exotic settings, regardless of their credibility, coincided with readers' expectations of spectacular stories and actively constructed a discourse about Korea as the exotic world.

Pictorial images of Korea in books and postcards presented the (imagined) "otherness" of Korea to European and American audiences.<sup>10</sup> Images of Korean people appeared in travelogue articles and books on East Asia, inserted in commercial advertisements for food products,<sup>11</sup> or published as a series of stereo-view cards.<sup>12</sup> The

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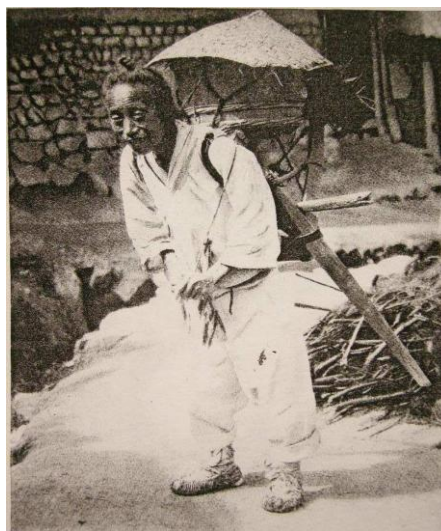
<sup>8</sup> L. George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910* (P'yongyang: Union Christian College, 1929), 30.

<sup>9</sup> There were several different published versions of Hamel's diary. The one mentioning the story of crocodile was the Saagman-edited version in 1669. Hendrik Hamel, *Story of the Hunt the Sparrow Hawk and the Befall of Shipwrecked on the Island Quelpart and the Mainland Korea (1653~1666)* (Verhaal van Het Vergaan van Jacht de Sperwer En Van Het Wedervaren Der Schipbreukelingen op Het Eiland Quelpaert en Het Vasteland Van Korea), quoted in Yi Jieun, 71-77.

<sup>10</sup> For discussion about how photography functioned as a culturally constructed "way of seeing," rather than the unencumbered vision of objective historical eyes, see the Introduction of James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Beyond the publications of illustrated or pictorial images, what satisfied the European and American people's desire to look at exotic and ethnic characters in the most extreme way was the live displays of the so-called savage peoples at international exhibitions in the late nineteenth century. The public went to these exhibitions in London, Paris, and Chicago expecting to see the spectacle of ethnographical specimens. As Maxwell argues, the idea of displaying the colonized peoples in exhibitions was "not just to expose the masses to the spectacle of racial difference, but also to make people of the white Anglo-Saxon nations feel mentally, physically and morally superior to the colonized, using a language that the public would understand – a language of stark oppositions" (Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the "Native" and the Making of European Identities* [London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999], 2).

<sup>11</sup> The Liebig, a German company, issued many sets of chromo cards in many languages from the 1880s. The trade cards were published for a department store to distribute illustrated cards to consumers as advertisements. Illustrations on the cards were often images of exotic flowers and plants, and ethnic views. On the development of postcards, see Frank Staff, *The Picture Postcard and Its Origins* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966); and Ryan.

most striking images of Korea were ethnic scenes that depicted real people, such as a man wearing an A-frame carrier (*jige*) [Figures 1 and 2], a woman in traditional dress exposing her breasts [Figure 3], an old man wearing a traditional white gown, top-knot, and horse-hair hat (*kat*), smoking a long pipe on the street [Figure 4], and boys with traditional pigtail hair styles. Unfamiliar garments, headdresses [Figure 5], and superstitious customs frequently became subjects of curiosity. These popular visual spectacles of Koreans symbolized and represented the differences, backwardness, and traditions of the “uncivilized” world.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 1. A food vender**

Source: “Every-day Koreans,” *Asia 21* (Jun 1921): 514.

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<sup>12</sup> A series of *Stereoviews, Underwood & Keystone, Japan, China & Korea* was published during the years 1860 to 1930.

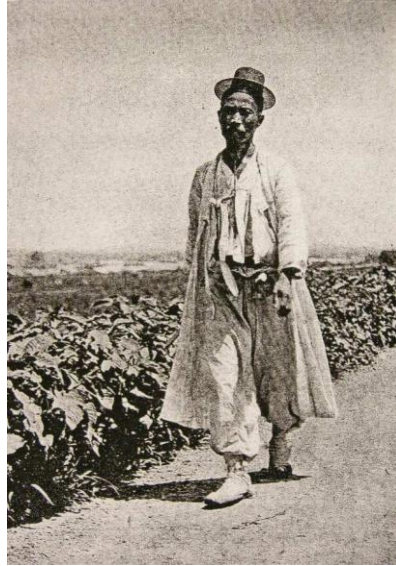
<sup>13</sup> These images were parallel to early Western images of China and Japan. Although China “seemed to have riches aplenty – spices, silk, silver, gems, and opium – this great wealth had no discernible impact on China, which was often described as a nation static and stuck in time” (Michael L. Krenn, *The Color of Empire: Race and American Foreign Relations* [Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006], 52).



**Figure 2. Carriers carrying swine to market**  
 Source: William W. Chapin, "Glimpses of Korea and China,"  
*The National Geographic Magazine* 21 (Nov 1910): 904.



**Figure 3. The land of the happy pedestrian [original caption]**  
 Source: Alice Tisdale, "The Feet of the Mighty," *Asia* 20 (Sep, Oct 1920): 790.



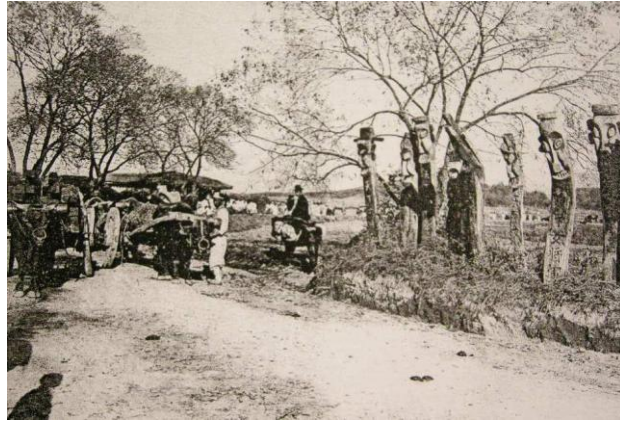
**Figure 4. A gentleman of the road—His social status is not made so evident by his attire as by the fact that he carries nothing [original caption].**

Source: Alice Tisdale, "The Feet of the Mighty," *Asia* 20 (Sep, Oct 1920): 790.



**Figure 5. National hat and house hat [original caption]. This article introduced twenty six different hats and headdresses.**

Source: Foster H. Jenings, "Korean Headdresses in the National Museum," *Scientific American Supplement* 1473 (Mar 26-Jun 25, 1904): 23608.



**Figure 6. Road gods worshiped as protectors against devils along the highway [original caption].**  
 Source: Alice Tisdale, “The Feet of the Mighty,” *Asia* 20 (Sep, Oct 1920): 794.

These images also projected Koreans as subjects in need of the enlightened European standards of transportation, sexual sensibility, sanitation, and diligence. For example, European observers used a picture of Koreans worshipping “road gods” (*Ch’ônha daejanggun* in Korean) on the street [Figure 6] as evidence of “unenlightened” Korean customs.

## (2) Positioning Korea in the World

What was popular and curiosity invoking to readers in writings on Korea were descriptions of the native people and their customs. In the process of describing the Korean people and their society in the early period, Western viewers disclosed their euro-centric perspective on Korean civilization. This perspective positioned Korea within the hierarchy of the modern international system. In contrast, Western observers viewed that Meiji Japan (1868-1912) had “reshaped the country in keeping with the substance and

style of a modern nation.”<sup>14</sup> It is notable that Western observers usually compared Korean characteristics to those of Japanese, rather than to those of Westerners.

The earliest account of alien Korean social customs to Western observer was often misguided and exaggerated, and even developed into unfounded, strange images of the culture, such as allegations of a lack of civil laws and rules in the Korean society.

Hamel fabricated a story about Korea’s penal system:

If a woman kills her husband, she is buried alive up to her shoulders in a highway that is much frequented, and by her is laid an axe, with which all that pass by, and are not noble, are obliged to give her a stroke on the head till she is dead.<sup>15</sup>

The story in another part read:

...they punish murder: After they have long trampled upon the criminal, they pour vinegar on the raw body, which they then pour down the offender’s throat through a funnel, and when he is full they beat him on the belly with cudgels till he bursts. Thieves are trampled to death; and though this be a dreadful punishment, yet the Coreans are much addicted to stealing.<sup>16</sup>

Stories of these cruel and barbarous methods of punishment parallel today’s Western sphere’s image of Islamic customs. These images implied that Korean society had no reasonable and civilized laws or customs. This Western view of Korea was separated from the European way of gazing at the rest of the world through a lens based on the idea of the European self and others: the stark contrast between the superior “us” and the inferior “them.” In this sense, European imperialism, as a pervasive and persistent set of cultural attitudes towards the rest of the world informed to varying degrees by militarism,

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<sup>14</sup> Alexis Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>15</sup> Henrik Hamel, *Narrative of an Unlucky Voyage and Shipwreck on the Coast of Corea*, translated in William Eliot Griffis, *Corea: Without and Within* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1885), 126.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

patriotism, racial superiority, and loyalty to a “civilizing mission,” was plainly reflected in the Western view of Korea in this early stage of encounters.

As more Westerners visited and observed Korea by the late nineteenth century, observers attentively noted the physical and racial traits of the Korean people. Interestingly, these observers clearly distinguished Koreans from other Asian races from the beginning. As for appearance, Koreans were often described in a positive way: handsome and physically strong, compared to other Asian races, as seen below:

...they [Koreans] are strikingly dissimilar from both their nearest neighbors, the Chinese and Japanese; that there is a remarkable variety of physiognomy among them; that they have straight and aquiline as well as broad and snub noses, with distended nostrils, and dark, or, more often, russet brown hair, ... that their eyes, though dark, vary from dark brown to hazel; that their cheekbones are high, their brows frequently lofty and intellectual, their ears small and well set on, their usual expression cheerful, with a dash of puzzlement, and that, in short, the Korean physiognomy indicates in its best aspect quick intelligence rather than force or strength of will.

...The men are very strong, walk remarkably well, and carry heavy weights. As a rule, they are strong and healthy, ...<sup>17</sup>

Often these positive external features of Korean people were contrasted to their neighbor’s negative physique:

...they [Koreans] are much better-looking and different in every way from the Japanese or Chinese. Tall, well featured and well built, they seemed a very superior type to the busy little Japs who had come on board and who were already at work on the cargo. But these fine-looking men in such dirty white clothing, listless and lazy though they at first seemed to be, held their own when it came to lightening the ship...<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Isabella Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors* (New York, Chicago, Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905), quoted in “Korea, Isabella Bird Bishop’s Recent Travels in That Country,” *NYT*, Jan 29, 1898.

<sup>18</sup> H. G. Ponting, “From Japan to Korea,” *Harper’s Weekly* 48 (Apr 16, 1904): 589-93.



Ironically, this relatively favorable depiction of Koreans' physical traits provoked readers to wonder why the country had such poor conditions despite the natural advantages enjoyed by its people. One commentator asserted that the most prominent characteristics of the Korean people were their extraordinary apathy and an aversion to work in any form, in other words, laziness,<sup>19</sup> and gross and unnatural immorality.<sup>20</sup> The discord between Korean people's advantageous physical traits and their negative attitudes and character was frequently contrasted to the physically weaker, but sanitary and diligent, Japanese people. An article in *Harper's Weekly* in 1897 said,

As a race the Koreans are considerably larger men than the Japanese and at the same time incomparably slower and more clumsy [*sic*] in their movements. They have none of the rapid energy, either of body or of mind, which so eminently distinguishes the native of Japan, ...<sup>21</sup>

An article quoting Bishop's book wrote,

An aristocratic class without dignity; a useless, idle, extortionate upper class; an official middle class, insolent, vulgar, rapacious, and dissolute; a commercial class reduced to the level of mere hawkers from hamlet to hamlet; a peasantry with bone and muscle enough, but fleeced and dispirited; women despised, overworked, isolated; children educated in superstitious terrors and a handful of mischievous prejudices, such are the constituents of the Korean nation. Nowhere is there vigour, independence, home-life, hope, or happiness.<sup>22</sup>

One observer described Korean people as being good natured but lacking energy and moral sense:

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<sup>19</sup> “[the Korean] shirks his work if employed and does a boy’s task if his own master. ... he avoids manufactures and is as lazy and idle as it is possible to be without starving or freezing to death.” (Margherita Arlina Hamm, “Mongol Triad: Japan, Korea and China,” *Overland Monthly and Our West Magazine* XXV, no. 146 [Feb 1895]: 137). “Generally speaking, Koreans are constitutionally lazy. It is born and bred in them. ... The Koreans are probably the laziest people among nations occupying a cool zone.” (W. L. Swallen, “Types of Korean Christian Character,” *Missionary Review of the World* 25 [Mar 1902]: 192)

<sup>20</sup> Arthur H. Lee, “Korean Notes,” *Harper's Weekly* 38 (Dec 1, 1894): 1134.

<sup>21</sup> “Korea and Its People,” *Harper's Weekly* 41 (Jul 24, 1897): 728-9.

<sup>22</sup> A. M. Stoddart, “Mrs. Bishop in Korea,” *Blackwood's Magazine* 163 (Feb 1898): 287.

...Korea's case is one of degeneracy as to both civilization and stamina. Finer-looking than the Chinese, taller than the Japanese, these men in white coats starched to a luster that excels our shirt fronts, and in big hats and with long pipes, are jolly and good-natured fellows for the most part. Yet they lack moral fiber, having neither the grit of the canny islanders nor the patient industry of the persistent continentals. Let the Japanese to-day thank their stars for the thousand years' drill of the feudal system as "a stage of progress."<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 5. Korean coolies and loafers in front of a Korean house [original caption]. This kind of picture of sitting on the street and smoking pipes was a symbolic image of "lazy" Koreans.**

Source: Arthur J. Brown, "Politics and Missions in Korea,"  
*The Missionary Review of the World* 25 (March 1902): 182.

Interestingly, many writers yet viewed that laziness and lack of stamina were not because Korean people lacked intellectual ability. One commentator in *Fortnightly Review* in 1894 said as follows:

The Coreans, it must be understood, are lazy and depressed, but they are by no means stupid. ... when they wish to learn anything, they are wonderfully quick at understanding even matters of which they have never heard before.<sup>24</sup>

Many agreed that laziness was the major reputation of Korean people. In their view, the laziness necessarily begot the filthy conditions of the Korean cities and people, which frequently became a criterion in determining the uncivilized nature of Korea. A British visitor to Korea said,

<sup>23</sup> Williams Griffis, "Kim the Korean," *Outlook* 76 (Mar 5, 1904): 544.

<sup>24</sup> A. H. S. Landor, "Visit to Corea," *Fortnightly Review* 62 (Aug 1894): 184-90.

Travelling in Korea can hardly be described as luxurious. The Korean is not lavish of home comforts for himself, and he certainly provides a minimum of the same for the travelling foreigner. The average Korean hotel compares unfavorably with a modern pigsty, and one has to sleep as best one can in the midst of surprising dirt, a colony of cattle and fowls, and other things which shall be nameless.<sup>25</sup>



**Figure 8. Traveling missionaries in Korea. Western travelers usually rode on palanquins and horses, accompanied by a Korean guide.**

Source: Horace H. Underwood, "My Korean Friends," *Asia* 44 (Jun 1944): 260.

And this filthiness of cities and people in Korea was also strikingly contrasted to those of Japan. The same author said,

The chief subjects of remark in Korea are the laziness of the general population and the filthiness of the lower classes. It is well to keep to windward of the Korean coolie, but there is no keeping away from the squalor and smells of the native dwellings. Fusan, however, is of but passing interest, and a great portion of it is Japanese, therefore clean. We shall see more of Korean dirt and methods of living as we come nearer to the capital... One leaves the port with mingled feelings of approval and disgust [;] approval of the neat Japanese buildings with their cleanly spotless interiors, and disgust for the filthy hovels in which the Koreans eke out their slothful, aimless existence. ...<sup>26</sup>

In short, the early Western view of Korea transformed over time: the early European writing prior to the eighteenth century described Korea as a mysterious place, whereas their view in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries evidenced naked curiosity over the "strange" country. At the same time, the audience for these writings

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> H. G. Ponting, "From Japan to Korea," *Harper's Weekly* 48 (Apr 16, 1904): 589-93.

shifted gradually from elites to the general public.<sup>27</sup> In addition, these two changes paralleled the growing interest in systematic means of measuring racial differences among ethnologists and scientists in the nineteenth century. Ethnologists who supported racial pluralism in the nineteenth century tried to find the origins of racial differences, making use of “aesthetics,” phrenology, cultural attainments, and linguistics. For example, J. C. Nott, an American ethnologist and racial theorist, argued that the pyramidal-shaped head of the Chinese and their “primitive” language indicated racial inferiority. According to his biological research, “the inadequacies of the skulls of Mongol, Indian and Negro, and all dark-skinned races,” were “especially well marked in those parts of the brain which have been assigned to the moral and intellectual faculties.” The subsequent conclusion was that the “dark-skinned races” were biologically incapable of imitating Caucasians.<sup>28</sup> Although it is arguable how much the scientist community accepted this trend of polygenesis, both pluralists and monists assumed the inferiority of the colored races.<sup>29</sup> The increasing attention to the different races was easily connected to the cultural imperialist view of the non-Caucasian peoples.

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<sup>27</sup> This change coincides with Tchen’s periodization of American Orientalism over China. He argues that representation of Chinese things, ideas, and people to European Americans shifted dramatically from 1776 to 1882 according to the economic, cultural, and political development in the United States. First (from the early decades of the United States) was the “patrician form,” which appeared when American elites sought to possess Chinese luxuries and vaguely admired Chinese civilization; second was the “commercial form” (antebellum to the end of the Civil War) that commodified the Chinese people, their culture, and products to fulfill the public’s desire for spectacle; and third (since the nation’s reconstruction) was the “political form” so that the “Chinese Question” became the focus of national politics, with debate on the Chinese Exclusion Act passed in 1882. For more details, see John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). Based on this transition of Orientalism, Western view of Korean society in the nineteenth century was a mixture of the first and second forms of orientalism in Tchen’s explanation.

<sup>28</sup> J. C. Nott and George Gliddon, *Indigenous Races of the Earth; or New Chapters of Ethnological Inquiry* (Philadelphia, 1857); J. C. Nott, *Two Lectures on the Connection Between Biblical and Physical History of Man* (New York, 1849), quoted in Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 154-57.

<sup>29</sup> Miller, 156-57.

## 2. Japan Speaking Out to the World

At the turn of the twentieth century, Korea garnered increased international attention as the country was considered as a “bone of contention” in the East Asian region.<sup>30</sup> If the earlier Western view mostly stemmed from curiosity about a strange land, the newly increasing interest around the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) was more of political character. Naturally, the political attention on Korea was closely related to Japan’s motives in East Asia. The United States was one of the most cautious observers of Korea’s future and Japan’s intention in East Asia.

On Japan’s side, Japanese officials, after the sweeping Meiji reforms from 1868, were still making efforts to let the Western world know that the nation’s civilization was becoming more modern—that Japan was no more the “uncivilized” country that had been forced to sign unequal treaties with the Western powers because of the allegedly inferior social system of Japan. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Japanese policy-makers responded by conducting internal reforms to its judicial system, which allowed it to emerge as the most modernized country in East Asia. Against doubtful eyes, Japan claimed the position of colonizer so as to present itself as possessing all the prerequisites necessary to civilize others. The nearest and easiest target to claim Japan’s “civilizing power” was Korea. As Robert Valliant points out, Japan attained its position as a world power firstly by defeating a major Western power, Russia, in 1904-1905 and secondly by initiating a calculated press campaign “to persuade the West that Japan was its equal and

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<sup>30</sup> H. S. Hallett, “War-Cloud in the Farthest East,” *Nineteenth Century* 46 (Dec 1899): 990-91.

deserved a place among the more enlightened nations of the world.”<sup>31</sup> By claiming dominance over Korea, as Dudden says, Meiji Japan intended to take “charge of defining its Korean policies to the world community in what can only be described as the self-conscious language of colonial power.”<sup>32</sup>



**Figure 9. David and Goliath [original caption]. This image of Japan as David against Goliath, symbolizing Russia, displayed small but smart and powerful Japan, defeating big and dull Russia. This cartoon had been originally printed in *Jiji Shimpo* in Tokyo and then in an American periodical.**

Source: “Korea, Japan, and Russia,” *The American Review of Reviews* 30 (Jul 1904): 95.

Furthermore, it is notable that Japan projected its claims as a power mainly toward American audiences. Andre Schmid argues that Japanese officials likely viewed themselves as in competition with the United States in the Pacific area, which was exacerbated by the American colonization of Hawaii and the Philippines and also by debates on immigrants’ exclusion acts in California. They were afraid, Schmid says, that there would be another conflict if another issue provoked American religious and economic leaders.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Japanese officials and elites believed that Japan was “stalking a large game, a very large game,—nothing less than a triple understanding between the United States, Great Britain, and Nippon [Japan.]” In their judgment, this

<sup>31</sup> Robert B. Valliant, “The Selling of Japan: Japanese Manipulation of Western Opinion, 1900-1905,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 29, no. 4 (Winter 1974): 415-38.

<sup>32</sup> Dudden, 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> Andre Schmid, “Colonial Japan’s Promotional Activities in the United States,” in *The Foundation of the Ruling System in the Japanese Colonial Period*, edited by Dong-no Kim (Seoul: Hyeon, 2006), 316.

understanding between powers was “strong enough to form a despotic tribunal which will be able to dictate the peace of the Far East, whether anybody else wishes it or not.”<sup>34</sup> In this conviction that agreement with the U.S. and Britain would guarantee Japan’s occupation of Korea, Japan concentrated its advertising activities about its superiority and power in producing English-language literature. Its campaign peaked in 1905 with the announcement of Japanese protectorate rule in Korea.

To demonstrate that Japan was legitimately helping with the development and modernization of Korea, the Japanese government published English-language reports on the progress of Korea since the Japanese advance since the early 1900s. The most important English-language publication was *the Annual Reports on the Progress and Reforms in Korea*, which the Japanese authorities in Korea issued continuously from 1907 to until the end of colonial period. The obvious theme of the series was that Japan, a modern power, was improving Korea. The *Report*’s format was usually a “before and after” presentation with statistics, text, and pictures of the changes and progress that Japan had accomplished on the peninsula, statistics about financial development, increases in agricultural productivity, and so on; those reports presented pictures of hygienic conditions and road systems, judicial courts, and even bridges in contrast to the formerly backward conditions.<sup>35</sup>

The most striking aspect of the *Report* was that it “flaunted Japan’s efforts in Korea as a wholly civilizing endeavor, a *mission civilisatrice* [Italics original],” as

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<sup>34</sup> Adachi Kinnosuke, “The Japanese in Korea,” *The American Review of Reviews* 36 (Oct 1907): 472-75.

<sup>35</sup> Government-General of Chosen, *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chosen (Korea)*; Schmid, *Korea between Empires*, 161-62.

Dudden points out.<sup>36</sup> Japan's English-language publications about Korea firstly intended to demonstrate to the world that Koreans were unfit to rule themselves and therefore could not participate as subjects in international terms,<sup>37</sup> and that Japan had an inevitable burden of civilizing the country for the benefit of both countries. Topics that the Japanese authorities in Korea's English-language publications covered were various, from a booklet about the relationship between the government and Christianity in Korea to a picture book of Korean scenery and guidebooks of Korea for foreign visitors.<sup>38</sup>

As there were almost no other English-language works about Korean history or society than publications by the Japanese government, Japan's English-language accounts about Korea were viewed as the most convincing and trustworthy source of information about Korea. Based on Japan's publication about its rule in Korea, an editorial in an American journal, *Nation*, wrote that Japan was thoroughly developing Korea:

Regarding the question whether Korea and Manchuria offer such opportunities [for emigration] to Japan, there has been a great deal of contradictory assertion. So far as Korea is concerned, we may answer the question with a fair degree of accuracy on the basis of the annual reports issued by the Governor-General of Korea, of which the latest volume, for the years 1912 and 1913, is now at hand...

The thoroughness with which the Japanese Government has set to work at the development of the country [Korea] is exemplified on every page of this official report. It is a record of enlightened and painstaking endeavor of which the results are already visible. No field of governmental effort has been neglected, from the preliminary operations of land survey and census enumeration to public sanitation and hygiene, public education, agricultural and industrial development, railway building, afforestation, mines, fisheries, and the fostering of trade and commerce.

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<sup>36</sup> Dudden, 20.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> The series of publications by the government-general's official organizations includes the following and many other books: Kiyoshi Nakarai, "Relations between the Government and Christianity in Chōsen [*sic*]" (1921); Bank of Chōsen, *A Brief Review of the Work of the Bank of Chōsen* (1918); Bank of Chōsen, *Pictorial Chōsen and Manchuria* (1919); Government-General of Chōsen, *Illustrated Chōsen* (1920).



The volume before us tells a story of scientific experimentation applied in every direction...<sup>39</sup>

Through the English-language travel guides and pictorials with English captions, the Japanese authorities tried to describe Korea's traditions, while positioning themselves as objective observers. Their presentation of Korea's traditions frequently paralleled the Westerner's gaze, which viewed Korea as a spectacular subject. Using an objective tone and scientific evidence of the changes, such as statistics of stabilized finances and pictures of before/after a steel bridge crossing the Han River, furnished the Japanese authorities with the suitable power of colonizing Korea.<sup>40</sup> Another channel for Japan to publicize its position internationally was by writing in American periodicals. Japanese opinion makers published extensively many articles in American periodicals in the 1900s and 1910s. Some Japanese periodicals, such as *Taiyō*, had English-language sections. There were also all English-language periodicals, such as *The Japan Magazine*, published in Japan. Being written in English, these articles were directed to the international public, rather than the Japanese readers.

Japan's account of the history of Korea and Japan was typically a field wherein Japanese writings in English successfully influenced the Western accounts. From the

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<sup>39</sup> "Japan as Colonial Administrator," *Nation* 100 (Jun 24, 1915): 702.

<sup>40</sup> Among the Japanese governmental publications regarding conditions in Korea during the colonial period were: Dai-Ichi Ginko Limited, *Report on Currency Adjustment in Korea* (Tokyo, 1911); Government-General of Chōsen, *The Chōsen Educational Ordinance and Various Attendant Regulations*, Translated by the Bureau of Education (1912); Bank of Chōsen, *A Brief Review of the Work of the Bank of Chōsen* (Seoul: Bank of Chōsen, 1918); Government General of Chōsen, *Illustrated Chōsen* (1920); Bank of Chōsen, *Economic History of Chōsen* (Seoul: Bank of Chōsen, 1920); Government-General of Chōsen, *Chōsen in Pictures* (Seoul :s.n, 1921); Government-General of Chōsen, *The New Administration in Chōsen*, (Seoul, 1921); Government-General of Chōsen (Keijō: Chōsen sotoku-fu, 1925); Semman annai-jo, *Chōsen Manshu ryoko annai* (Traveler's guide to Korea and Manchuria) (Tokyo, 1932); Government-General of Chōsen, *Thriving Chōsen: A Survey of Twenty-five Years' Administration* (1935); Foreign Affairs Department, Government-General of Chōsen ed., *Chōsen Industry Leaps Ahead*, 1938; Board of Tourist Industry, *Japanese Government Railways* (1939); Chōsen Sotokuf, ed., *Chōsen sotokufu tokei nenpo* (Seoul: n.p., 1912-1943); Government-General of Chōsen, *Chōsen*.

early 1890s, Japanese elites who had studied in the United States contributed to American magazines and argued for a history that claimed Korea had been under the power of Japan since ancient times. Kuma Ōishi's article in an American magazine, *Arena*, in 1894 is the very first example of English writing that mirrors the Japanese historical view. The article read,

Japan in olden times twice invaded that Kingdom [Corea], and compelled her to pay annual tributes, though Corea did so only reluctantly and irregularly. Situated between the two powerful nations, Japan and China, like a maiden courted by two admirers, for neither of whom she cared much, Corea had no alternative other than to smile, sometimes on one, sometimes on the other, sometimes on both, as the case required. It was Japan that finally rescued her from this awkward position by recognizing her independence in 1876.<sup>41</sup>

The historical interpretation seen here that Korea was a historically submissive country, being colonized several times by Japan and China beginning in ancient times, was a common account of Japanese writers. It is also notable that submissive Korea is being described as feminine. Like a maid who always looks for someone to smile at and depend on, the author said, Korea needed to be “rescued” by Japan. Because of this narrative of submission, Japanese writers further argued that Korea was now looking to the United States and American Christian missionaries in a submissive and dependent mindset with the hope of expelling the Japanese from their country. Japanese magazine *Taiyō*, in its English-language section, published an interview with Sadakichi Tsuruhara, former Chief Civil Administrator of Korean Residency General. In this interview, he said that Korea's history was “a repetition of dependence on a third country and continual agitation.” He said [*Italics added*],

*The Koreans are imbued with hereditary instincts for submission to the strong.*  
The history of Korea attests to the fact that she had always been under pressure by

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<sup>41</sup> K. Ōishi, “Causes Which Led to the War in the East,” *Arena* 10 (Nov 1894): 721-35.

a powerful foreign country, submitting to her and trying to gain her favour... *Her history is a repetition of dependence on a third country and continual agitation...* They had once relied upon Russia then upon China, just as they are now doing upon Japan... What country is to replace Japan is a problem which is hidden in the recesses of the head of every Korean. The reason why there are great numbers of anti-Japanese Koreans among the native Christians is because they hope to expel the Japanese with the aid of American influence, the country of their missionaries.

It is a fact that there are many anti-Japanese element [*sic*] among the Korean Christians. Their antipathy is not due to simply their being Christians, but to their desire to utilize the influence of the foreign missionaries as well as of their country of origin.<sup>42</sup>

The author here was implying that the popularity of Christianity in Korea stems not from pure spiritual conversion, but from political motivations to use the missionaries' influence.

Andre Schmid says that this kind of Japanese interpretation of the "submissive and static" Korean history quickly dominated the English-language accounts of Korean history in this period, even before the emergence of many English-language studies of Korea or Korean nationalist accounts. Schmid highlights that the Western observers' uncritical acceptance of the Japanese historical account is seen in their unquestioning use of Japanese theories of *Mimana*.<sup>43</sup> *Mimana* was the term designating Japan's colony in

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<sup>42</sup> "Korean Problem – Humane and Glorious Policy: Interview with Mr. Sadakichi Tsuruhara, Former Chief Civil Administrator, Korean Residency General," *Taiyō* 16, no. 4 (Mar 1910): 6.

<sup>43</sup> Japanese historians claimed that Japan maintained a colony named *Mimana* (*Imna* in Korean) in the southern part of Korea for more than two centuries beginning in the late fourth century. *Mimana* is the traditional Japanese kana rendering for *Imna*. The Japanese claim is inspired by records on *Imna* that appeared only on a Japanese source, *Nihongi*, but never on any other chronicles of East Asia. A Japanese historian Kuno in 1937 said, "the power of Japan to rule in Korea began with the creation of the State of *Mimana* as her protectorate so that Silla could not invade it. ... The date of the founding of *Mimana* is therefore essential to a determination of the period of suzerainty that Japan exercised over Korea prior to 1905" (Yoshi S. Kuno, *Japanese Expansion of the Asiatic Continent*, vol. 1 [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1937], 193, quoted in Wontack Hong, *Paeche of Korea and The Origin of Yamato Japan* [Seoul: Kudara International, 1994], 205). The debate on *Mimana/Imna* persists until today. Many Korean historians have refuted this argument, saying that the Japanese claim was based on an arbitrarily fabricated story and used to justify the Japanese imperialistic expansionism of military power into Korea in the early twentieth century. For more details about the debate, see "The *Mimana* Question," in Hong, *ibid.*, 205-19. The story of *Mimana* also frequently appeared in English-language articles about Korea's relationship with

ancient Korea, according to Japanese historical record. Japanese commentators mentioned *Mimana* as evidence of Japan's historical dominant rule of Korea. As Schmid says, the tendency to see *Mimana* as an early episode of colonialism foreshadowed contemporary events.<sup>44</sup>

Underlying the Japanese presentation of its historical account for the world audience was the historical research of *Tōyōshi* (Oriental history). Facing the dilemma of “how to become modern while simultaneously shedding the objectivistic category of Oriental and yet not lose an identity,” Japanese historians tried to reinterpret the past and the present of Japan and the Asian countries through a new lens. For example, as if responding to George Kennan and other American writers' criticism of Confucian tradition, Hattori Unokichi, a leading Confucian scholar in Japan, separated Chinese from Japanese Confucian values. In sum, he argued that there were two forms of the Will of Heaven, one passive and the other active, and that the former corresponded to China while the latter referred to Japan. According to this separation, the form in Japan contained not only benevolence and justice, but also a progressive spirit.<sup>45</sup> This separation classified Korea as belonging to the Chinese form of Confucian tradition, passive and stagnant, and therefore it needed to be in the hands of the new possessor and authority of the Orient, Japan.<sup>46</sup> The earlier Western traveler's impression of Korea as lazy, dirty and poor combined with this Japanese historical account of “stagnant” Korea and resulted in a

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Japan. Most of the Western writers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries accepted the Japanese claim and regarded the story as the historicity of Japan's domination and influential power in the Korean peninsula, and expectedly, used the Japanese term *Mimana* rather than *Imna*.

<sup>44</sup> Schmid, “Colonial Japan's Promotional Activities,” 323; Schmid, *Korea between Empires*, 167-70.

<sup>45</sup> Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 149.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

synthesized understanding of Korea as an uncivilized and hopeless society. Japanese authors also used visual images of Korean submission. Illustrations inserted in Adachi Kinnosuke's article in *The American Review of Reviews*, excerpted from the Japanese magazine, *Tokio Puck*, depicted the scene of signing on the agreement of Korea's protectorate [Figure 10]. In the cartoon, the Korean official, or possibly Korean king, is dressed in traditional garment for high official and is sitting on his knees on the ground and putting the royal seal on the treaty of the protectorate, in a seemingly voluntary manner. In contrast, Japanese officials in modern uniforms are sitting in chairs, looking down at the Korean. Despite their military uniforms, they are not seen as forcing the Korean to agree on the treaty, but as just silently waiting for the Korean to put the seal on it. In the heavens above them were the spirits of the legendary empress Jingo and the other heroes of Japan. Excerpted paragraph along with this illustration from *Tokio Puck* explained that the ancient Korean king had promised to pay tribute to Japan. It stated, millions of Japan's sons were sacrificed for this cause in the Sino-Japanese War. Now, with the treaty, Korea was brought under Japan's control, and the caption commentated, "the spirits of the great Empress Jingo and of all the other departed heroes of Japan rest in peace satisfied in their heavenly abode."<sup>47</sup> In this way, it visualized the protectorate and annexation of Korea as the accomplishment of a long awaited task, finally completed but peacefully and voluntarily. By using the images of Japan's legendary figures, the illustration claimed that Japan had the sacred and inevitable burden of "absorbing" Korea.

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<sup>47</sup> Kinnosuke, 473.



**Figure 10. Tranquility in Korea at last—A Japanese view of the “absorption” [original caption].**

Source: Adachi Kinnosuke, “The Japanese in Korea,”  
*The American Review of Reviews* 36 (Oct 1907): 473.

As the annexation of Korea became immanent in the 1900s, Japanese opinion makers knew that they needed to convince powerful countries that the powers would have commercial benefits and unchanged legal privileges of tariffs and extraterritoriality after Japan colonized Korea. Asakawa wrote in an American magazine, *Atlantic Monthly*, in 1905,

The reforms in currency and transportation, in navigation and trade, and even in agriculture, would even tend to enrich foreign entrepreneurs faster than the Koreans themselves.<sup>48</sup>

Motosada Zumoto, in an American Magazine, *Independence*, in September 1910 also said,

None of the foreign Powers with any interests in Korea need in any way be disturbed by the change that has taken place in the political status of Korea, for the Japanese Government will scrupulously protect all foreign interests... Small as is the actual amount of trade which the foreign Powers have with Korea, it would

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<sup>48</sup> K. Asakawa, “Korea and Manchuria under the New Treaty,” *Atlantic Monthly* 96 (Nov 1905): 699-706.

be seriously injured if Korea were brought under the sway of the Japanese tariff, which is much higher than that now in force in Korea. But the intention of the Japanese Government, as I am reliably informed, is to keep Korea outside of the Japanese tariff limits and maintain the existing rates applicable to goods imported from all countries, including Japan.<sup>49</sup>

Kiyoshi Kawakami, a Japanese journalist who was also well known in the United States for his contributions to American magazines, wrote in an American magazine *World To-day* in November 1910,

The apprehension entertained by a section of the American people, that under Japanese rule there will be a wholesale discrimination against foreign interests in Korea, seems hardly justifiable in the light of the measures actually adopted by the Japanese administration. While it is not given to Japan to sacrifice her own interest in order to promote that of other nations, her methods in competing with western nations will always be legitimate.<sup>50</sup>

Despite Japanese opinion makers' assertion that Korea had been under the control of neighboring countries whose commercial interests would not be harmed by Japan's occupation, the critical question still remained: did Japan have a legitimate reason to colonize Korea? In order to answer this question, Japanese writers tried to persuade international readers that Korea would require foreign interventions in order to survive and that that colonizing power should be Japan. They stressed that, because of Korea's weakness and inability to defend itself, Japan had already fought two wars to maintain its independence.<sup>51</sup>

Japanese authors invoked two justifications the Korean occupation: firstly for national security of Japan and secondly for Japan's obligation of civilizing the neighboring country. Ōkuma Shigenobu, who served as Japan's Foreign Minister and

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<sup>49</sup> Motosada Zumoto, "Passing of Korea," *Independence* 69 (Sep 1, 1910): 452.

<sup>50</sup> Kiyoshi K. Kawakami, "America in Korea," *World To-day* 19 (Nov 1910): 121-23, 1223.

<sup>51</sup> "Through the gallant efforts of Japan Korea has been saved from the suzerainty of China. Japan did this solely for the purpose of laying a lasting foundation of peace in the Orient" ("The Present Condition of Korea," *Taiyō* 1, no. 1 [Jan 1895]).

Prime Minister from the 1890s to 1910s,<sup>52</sup> was one of the main speakers who employed the first justification. Through frequent contributions both to Japanese and American periodicals, he represented the position of the high officials of the Japanese government toward the English-reading public. His main argument was that Japan did not have a choice in occupying Korea, not because of its territorial ambitions, but because of the Korean government's weakness, which posed an indirect threat to Japanese security. In 1906, in a contribution to an American journal, *Forum*, he emphasized that occupying neighboring countries for Japan was a matter of necessity for national security, not a matter of ambition; otherwise, he went on, it would mean the "national death" of Japan, as the power occupying Korea would seek to advance to Japan as well. Beyond ensuring Japan's survival, he implied that it was Japan's duty to civilize Korea's corrupt and weak national system, which had been a harmful burden on its neighboring countries including Japan:

It is not a question of ambition, but a matter of necessity, that Japan should become a great power on the Asiatic continent. Should she fail in that, there is but one thing left for her—national death. Our very existence depends upon her attainment of this object. It is forced upon us as a means of self-defense...

...For many years, the failure and impotency of the Korean government have been the root of all the political troubles in the Far East. The neighbors of Korea have always been the victims of her lamentable weakness, the sufferers from her abuses and blunders. This is true particularly of our own country...it is more than a mere measure of self-defence on the part of Japan; it is a matter of world-wide significance. Should Japan succeed in the task of cleansing the Far East of its political sins, she will be entitled to the respect and gratitude of the world, for permanent peace in this portion of the globe will thereby be established. Korea will then, in truth, become an independent state.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838-1922) twice served as Prime Minister of Japan in 1898 and in 1914-6. He organized the Rikken Kaishintō (Progressive Party) and founded Waseda University.

<sup>53</sup> Ōkuma Shigenobu, "Japan's Policy in Korea," *Forum* 37 (Apr 1906): 571, 576.



Here Ōkuma hinted that Korea could be independent only Japan's help in its reformation, which would finally "cleanse" the political sins of the Far East.

Other commentators agreed that instability of Korea's status was because the country lacked an ability to govern itself.<sup>54</sup> They argued that Japan's protectorate rule of Korea gave the country a chance to modernize and learn self-governing skills, but "a fatal unwillingness or incapacity on the part of Korea to seize the most unique opportunity ever offered her for her regeneration and advancement along the line of modern civilization." They asserted that this made Japan the "undisputed and legitimized protector and guardian of Korea."<sup>55</sup> In other words, Japanese commentators asserted that it was the incompetence of the Korean government rather than Japan's aggressive expansionism that was to responsible for Korea's fall.

Japanese opinion makers invoked the second justification for gaining control of Korea by underlining Japan's duty to civilize "uncivilized" Korea. Ōkuma Shigenobu argued,

...under a wise administration they [Koreans] can be transformed into good citizens...they are not such a hopeless people by nature. Once going to a freer country, they become a different people. Japanese and Koreans have descended from the same ancestor...Therefore, there is no reason why they can not develop themselves and enter on the path of civilization as their insular relatives have done...The betterment of administrative system...will offer to Koreans the chance to develop themselves.<sup>56</sup>

Ōkuma's speech was translated into English in *Taiyō* in its 1906 issue,

If the time comes when the annexation of [the] Korean Empire to our country is beneficial to the people of the former, we will not hesitate to destroy the independence of that kingdom and transform it into a part of our Empire.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Y. Ozaki, "Misunderstood Japan," *The North American Review* 171 (Oct 1900): 572.

<sup>55</sup> Motosada Zumoto, "The Passing of Korea," *Independent* 69 (Sep 1, 1910): 448.

<sup>56</sup> "Count Ōkuma's Speech upon Problem of Korea," *Taiyō* 12, no. 7 (May 1906).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

Japanese elites who were familiar with Western criticism of Japan, such as Kiyoshi K. Kawakami, and some of the Western writers used English-language Japanese magazines to argue for the advantages that the annexation presented for both Korea and Japan. In articles in *Taiyō* in 1906 and early 1910 Kawakami said, while Japan had been faithful to the treaties promising Korean independence, the course of events showed that independence would completely ruin the country. He argued that Korea's independence had already been granted in name, and the best alternative would be to unite Korea and Japan into one empire so that the "masses of Korea [would] enjoy the benevolent rule of His Imperial Majesty."<sup>58</sup> Even politically, one commentator expressed in *Taiyō* that Korea's independence had now been permanently safeguarded with the annexation.<sup>59</sup> The same author compared Japan's colonization of Korea to colonial rules of other imperialist countries: Great Britain in India, the United States in Hawaii and Philippines, and France in Indo-China. He bluntly added that every state is egoistic [*Italics added*]:

*Every state is egoistic* to some extent as every individual. So long as any state proceeds with a good object, she should endeavour to catch an ample opportunity to carry out her ambition. So long as her ambition is not in defiance of the broad interest of other countries, but is for the general peace of the world, anybody is not entitled to raise serious objections. Any alliance and entente cordiale is to mutually preserve their self-interests, besides the common welfare of the world. That Japan has now been enabled to annex Korea for the sake of her own existence and for the peace in this part of the world is largely due to Great Britain's epoch-making alliance with Japan and the ententes concluded with France, Russia, and the United States. All these compacts are based on the preservation of the mutual interests and rights. So long as they stick to this principle, there will be no serious trouble at any time. Japan's policy in Manchuria might not be necessarily ideal, but it is certainly improper to hastily

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<sup>58</sup> K. K. Kawakami, "The Remaking of Korea," *Taiyō* 12, no. 10 (Jul 1906); "Korean Problem - Humane and Glorious Policy: Interview with Mr. Sadakichi Tsuruhara, Former Chief Civil Administrator, Korean Residency General," *Taiyō* 16, no. 4 (Mar 1910).

<sup>59</sup> C. D., "Special Contribution: Japan's Annexation of Korea," *Taiyō* 16, no. 13 (Oct 1910), 14.

criticize her policy, from an [*sic*] usual foretelling that a victorious country acts arbitrarily.<sup>60</sup>

In this process, Japanese writers differentiated Japanese rule in Korea from European control of its colonies by emphasizing Japan's policy of assimilation. For the sake of its "benevolent" assimilation of colonial peoples, Japanese writers argued that, under certain circumstances, even violence and oppressive control could be condoned.<sup>61</sup> Kawakami argued that the hostility of colonies against colonizers was a common and predictable phenomenon. Yet, he continued, "the Filipino's dislike of the Americans does not necessarily mean American maladministration in the Philippines, and the disaffection in India and Egypt is no indication of British outrages in those countries."<sup>62</sup>

Similar to the narratives of progress that were reported in official Japanese reports, Japanese opinion makers responded to international skepticism by publishing articles about the myriad benefits of the occupation: Japan built railways, established experimental associations to grow cotton, started enterprises, cultivated soils in developed ways, developed mines, established banks, and reformed the administration and the military.<sup>63</sup>

Over time, Japanese authors began to frame the assimilation policy as part of a grander vision for the powerful Japan, not just for territorial expansion and material development. Japanese writers were conscious that Japan's success in assimilating Korea

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>61</sup> Dr. Kambe, "Problem of National Expansion," *The Japan Magazine* 7, no.4 (Jul 1916).

<sup>62</sup> Kawakami also added that many cases of so-called "Japanese outrages" in Korea were without evidence or were accidents in the unique situations during the war years (Kiyoshi K. Kawakami, "Special Contribution: 'Japanese Outrages in Korea,'" *Taiyō* 16, no.14 (Nov 1910).

<sup>63</sup> "Japan and Korean Railways," *Taiyō* 9, no. 4 (Apr 1903); "Japanese Shipping Enterprises in Connection with Korea," *Taiyō* 10, no. 7 (May 1904); "The Experimental Growing of Cotton in Korea," "The Seoul-Wiju Railway Opened," *Taiyō* 11, no. 16 (Dec 1905); "The First Bank and Korean Finance," "Progress of Reorganization of the Finances of Korea," *Taiyō* 12, no. 4 (Mar 1906).

would determine its competence as a world power. Ōkuma's speech was translated into English:

The Great Powers of the world are watching our act with jealous eyes. We will lose the sympathy of the world unless we are very cautious in our Korean policy...Korea is a touch-stone for Japan to test whether she has this assimilating power. When we can not assimilate Korean people...we can not aspire to become a great people.<sup>64</sup>

To highlight that Japan was civilized enough to colonize other countries, Ōkuma in another article asserted, “a nation's place in the race for high civilization is not determined by any racial quality peculiar to it, but by its habits, customs, character and the absence or presence of mistaken thought.” Ōkuma contended that it is not a matter of race but a matter of how well a country is civilized itself and said, “such a vital difference between Japan and China is not due to any inherent racial peculiarity but to habits, customs and circumstances that are permitted to interfere with China's good.” While admitting that Japan's traditions were rooted in the Chinese civilization, he stressed that the two countries differed, as Japan was now “civilized”—in the Western and modern ways.<sup>65</sup> Again, facing the theory of “yellow peril” and a Western view of Japan as a militaristic country accepting only military and material aspects from Western civilization, Japanese writers asserted that Japan loved peace morality than military.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> “Count Ōkuma's Speech,” *Taiyō* 12, no. 7 (May 1906).

<sup>65</sup> Ōkuma Shigenobu, “The Mission of Japan,” *The Japan Magazine* 5, no. 8 (Dec 1914): 441-44.

<sup>66</sup> Dr. J. Ingram Bryan, “Are the Japanese a Warlike People?” *The Japan Magazine* 4, no. 10 (Feb 1914). The “yellow peril” was a rather vague fear among Western countries of the threat of Asian hordes. Kaiser Wilhelm in 1895 coined the term, when Russia, France, and Germany combined to force Japan to return the Liaotung peninsula to China. According to Valliant, the yellow peril had at least three different forms – a military peril, an economic peril, and a suspicion that the Asians wanted Asia for themselves. The cautious view of Japan by Americans around 1919 combines these three forms (Robert B. Valliant, “The Selling of Japan,” *Monumental Nipponica* 29, no. 4 [Winter, 1974]: 426).

Japan's flurry of propaganda was effective in the 1900s. As there was no English-language account of conditions or history of Korea, Western observers easily accepted Japanese authorities' English-language account, which projected Korea as an uncivilized country that needed colonial rule. In addition, European and American observers respected modern and reformed Japan's ability as a fledging power. Therefore, the comparison between Korea and Japan was an essential part of emerging American views on Korea from the 1900s.

### **3. American Ways of Seeing Korea**

#### **(1) The Beginning of Diplomatic Relations**

The American government contacted Korea in the late nineteenth century in the hopes of opening commercial trade relations. The first official government contact with both Japan and Korea began in February 1845, when U.S. Congressman Zedec Pratt submitted an amendment to a bill entitled "Extension of American Commerce—Proposed Mission to Japan and Corea." The amendment specified that it was in "the general interests of the United States that steady and persevering efforts should be made for the extension of American commerce," and it was resolved that "it is hereby recommended that immediate measures be taken for effecting commercial arrangements with the empire of Japan and the kingdom of Corea."<sup>67</sup> The U.S.-Korea Treaty of 1882 marked the realization of the U.S.' economic interest in Korea. The Treaty was the first official agreement that Korea had with a Western nation. By the turn of the twentieth century, Korea had become more open to foreign countries, especially the United States, which

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<sup>67</sup> "Proposed Mission to Japan and Corea," *the Congressional Record*, quoted in Craig S. Coleman, *American Images of Korea* (Seoul: Hollym, 1990), 30.

they viewed as rich and powerful, while maintaining what Wayne Patterson called a “friendly disinterest”<sup>68</sup> in territorial expansion.<sup>69</sup> From the 1880s until Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905, an increasing number of American missionaries and businessmen began to visit and reside in Korea. The influx was so great that Americans, especially American missionaries, outnumbered residents from all other Western countries combined.<sup>70</sup> During this period, American observers began to develop their own way of seeing and understanding the Korean people and culture; as distinguished from the European view of the earlier period, the idea of American exceptionalism permeated

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<sup>68</sup> Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 11. A Chinese diplomat Huang Zunxian’s policy paper in 1880 “Chaoxian Celue” (“Strategy for Korea,” Chosŏn chekryak in Korean) advised Korea to strengthen itself by “keeping close to China, creating ties with Japan, and allying with the United States.” This paper greatly influenced Korean intellectuals’ understanding of the United States. In this paper, Huang explained that it was well known that the United States was not interested in expanding territory, as the country’s land was already extensive and rich with natural resources. He also commented that American Protestantism never interfered in politics. Such statements led the Korean government and intellectuals to form a relatively favorable perception about America (Huang, “Chaoxian Celue,” quoted in Young Ick Lew, “Korean Perception of the United States during the Enlightenment Period,” In *Korean Perception of the United States: A History of Its Formation*, edited by Young Ick Lew et al. [Seoul: Minŭm Publishing Co., 1994], 58-61).

<sup>69</sup> Patterson, 177.

<sup>70</sup> The total number of protestant missionaries in Korea in 1884 to 1910 was approximately 499, with growing number of new missionaries that arrived in Korea each year. Among these missionaries, those who were from American mission boards comprised about 78%. Four American mission boards, namely, northern and southern Presbyterians and their Methodist counterparts, dominated the missionary community in Korea. Scholars have shown that the American missionary community in Korea was constituted by youths of American middle-class homes. Ryu demonstrates that this surge of American interest in Korean missions corresponded was fueled by the growing economic strength of the U.S. along with the dominance of evangelical Protestantism following the “Second Great Awakening” (Dae Young Ryu, “Understanding Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884-1910): Capitalist Middle-Class Values and the Weber Thesis,” *Archives de Sciences sociales des religions* 113 [2001]: 93-117). The number of missionaries in Korea from each mission board is as follows: 165 from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (33.1%); 114 from the Methodist Episcopal Church (22.9%); 62 from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.) (12.4%); 46 from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (9.2%); 27 from the Australian Presbyterian Church (5.4%); 15 from the Canadian Presbyterian church (3.0%); and 54 from others, including the Salvation Army, the Oriental Missionary Society, and the Seventh Day Adventists (10.8%). The first four mission boards were from the U.S. (Harry A. Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1884-1934* [Seoul: Chosen Mission, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1934], 625-32; Sophie Montgomery Crane, comp., *Missionary Directory* [Atlanta: Division of International Mission, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1987], 59-77; J. S. Ryang, ed., *Southern Methodism in Korea: Thirtieth Anniversary* [Seoul: Board of Missions, Korea Annual Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1929], 9-13; Seungtae Kim and Hyejim Bak, *Naehan Sŏn’gyosa Ch’ongnam, 1884-1894* [A Directory of Protestant Missionaries to Korea] [Seoul: Institute for the Study of the History of Christianity in Korea, 1994]), quoted from Ryu, 95).

the American view. American exceptionalism is the idea that the United States has a moral superiority rooted in its exceptional ideals in politics, economy, and religion. In addition to the European conception of having a civilizing mission toward the rest of the world, the ideals of democracy and capitalism permeated the American gaze. Among some Korean nationalist groups who believed in the United States' role as a peacemaker in the world, these ideals stimulated hope that America would help them to attain independence from Japan.

The U.S. and Korea had different interests in one another from the beginning: as Coleman points out, Korea's interest in signing a treaty with the U.S.—its first treaty with a Western country—was in “acquiring a Western political and military ally to check Japanese, Russian, or Chinese potential aggression.”<sup>71</sup> The treaty also guaranteed protection of Korean students in the U.S. The fact that the U.S. was not a colonial power in the Asian region, Coleman argues, supported America's case for a treaty with Korea.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to Koreans, American observers were primarily interested in Korea's economic value. Before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the U.S. had a substantial and continuously growing economic interest in Korea. American businessmen considered Korea as a potentially lucrative market for commercial trade with the U.S., a site for developing natural resources, or for gaining mining or railroad concessions.<sup>73</sup> American businessmen signed lucrative contracts for gold mines, electric lights, railways,

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<sup>71</sup> Coleman, 39.

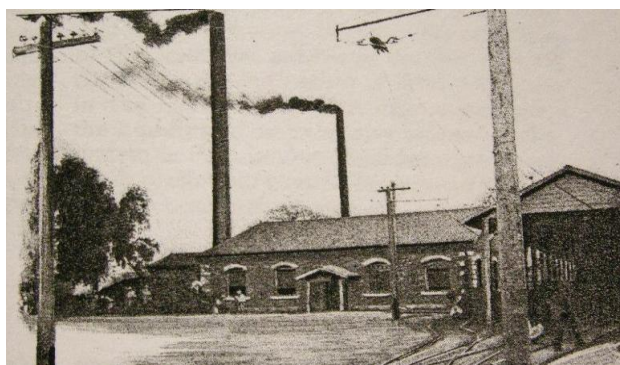
<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> “Use of Tobacco in Korea; Consul General Allen Says the Natives of Both Sexes Are Inveterate Smokers,” *NYT*, Sep 4, 1898; “The Opening up of Korea; American Consul Reports a Trade Decreased Owing to Credit Extended to Irresponsible Natives,” *NYT*, May 29, 1899; “Big Gold Mines in Korea; Successful Operations in That Country of the Oriental Consolidated Company,” *NYT*, Jun 14, 1902; “Mines in Korea; Gold, Silver, Copper, Iron, and Coal Found in the Hermit Kingdom,” *NYT*, Oct 24, 1904.

and so on. They even commoditized Korean immigrants as a potential source of labor in Hawaii.<sup>74</sup> For instance, for American businessmen in the electricity industry, the Russo-Japanese War was a new opportunity to extend their market to Korea if Japan won the war. Consider the words of a contemporary commentator [*Italics added*]:

Particular attention is called to the development of the electrical industry in Asia by the present war between Russia and Japan, and especially to that part of it which Americans have established. American engineers and capitalists were the pioneers in Korea and Japan in introducing electrical plants for lighting and power production, and even throughout southern Manchuria... The effect of the war upon Korea must inevitably prove momentous, and Far Eastern representatives of American electrical concerns are anxiously watching the progress of events.

In the event of Japan proving victorious, Korea will undoubtedly become a fertile field for the exploitation of American electrical machinery. Japan, instead of discouraging American manufactures in Korea, would distinctly favor their introduction. [...] *Should Japan defeat Russia and hold Korea, the peninsula empire would become one of the most fertile fields for electrical development in the Far East.*<sup>75</sup>



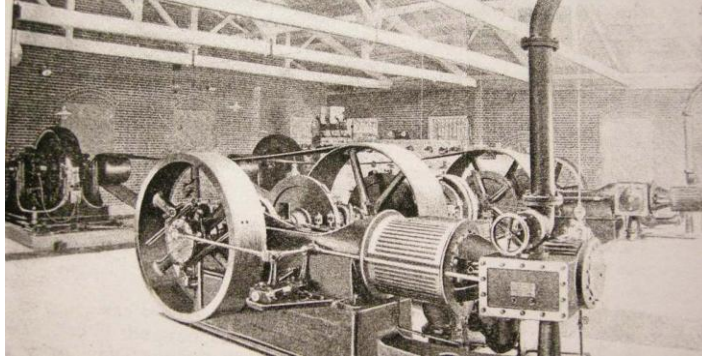
**Figure 11. The power house**

Source: R. A. McLellan, "Electric Light and Power in Korea," *Cassier's Magazine* 22 (Sep 1902): 599.

<sup>74</sup> For more about American interest in Koreans as a potential source of labor for plantations in Hawaii, see Patterson, *Korean Frontier in America*.

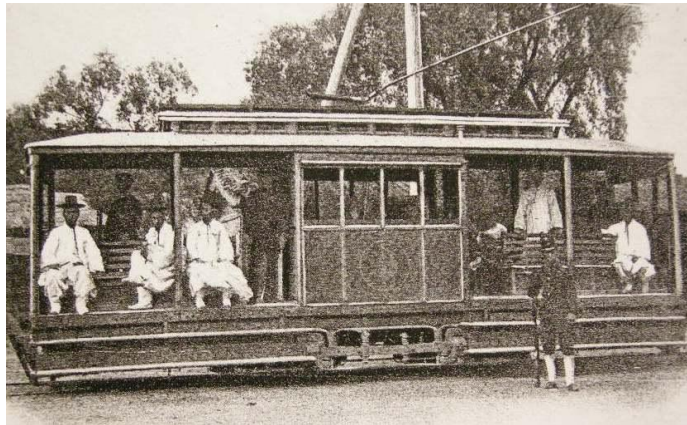
<sup>75</sup> "Electricity in Korea and Japan," *Scientific America* 90 (Jun 11, 1904): 454.





**Figure 12. The power house interior**

Source: R. A. McLellan, "Electric Light and Power in Korea," *Cassier's Magazine* 22 (Sep 1902): 599.



**Figure 13. A passenger car**

Source: R. A. McLellan, "Electric Light and Power in Korea," *Cassier's Magazine* 22 (Sep 1902): 600.

As American businessmen hoped, American companies could develop electric light and power and other infrastructure. This kind of economic view generally had a vested interest in the continued Japanese domination of the Korean peninsula. A British commentator, Alfred Stead, agreed that Japanese possession of Korea would benefit the world economy, as colonized Korea would provide a profitable market:

Japan has assumed the responsibility of Korea, and it rests with her to do the right thing by it, even in the face of the world, but the world can afford to be generous in this case, since a reformed administration will mean an enormously extended market for all manner of goods, an international benefit ...<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> A. Stead, "War: Korea and Russia," *Fortnightly Review* 82 (July 1904): 98.

American observers became to focus more intently of the problems of Korea's governmental system. The unanimous opinion was that there were incurable problems in the old Korean system and therefore "old Korea must soon die."<sup>77</sup> The problem most frequently cited was the incompetence of the Korean government and the pervasive corruption of its officials. Writers frequently characterized Korean King Kojong, in particular, as incompetent, weak-kneed, ridiculously irresolute, and dependent on foreign advisers;<sup>78</sup> some even called him the worst ruler in the whole East Asia.<sup>79</sup> They also applied these identical traits to the next king, Sunjong.<sup>80</sup> Not only did they see the king as bad ruler, but also the government system and factionalism as extremely unstable. The incessant news of conspiracies to overthrow the government reflected this view.<sup>81</sup>

Although Americans were initially interested in Korea's economic value or governmental corruption, as time went, American observers began to delve into the origins of these conditions. From the early 1900s, American readers witnessed the appearance of more knowledgeable commentators who demonstrated a deeper

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<sup>77</sup> W. E. Griffis, "Korean and Her Bosses," *Harper's Weekly* 39 (28 Dec, 1895): 1244.

<sup>78</sup> "The Korean Foreign Minister, . . . formally expressed his own willingness to open the port, .... The difficulty, however, is the inaccessibility of the Emperor, who locks himself in his palace and refuses to agree to any proposal of whatever nature. The result is much disorganization and instability of government... The Emperor consults a fortune teller at every emergency, and, in spite of the abundance of official declarations proclaiming the amicable intentions of Russia and Japan, continues to be disquieted..." ("Korean Emperor Scared; Shirts Himself up and Will not Negotiate with Foreigners," *NYT*, Oct 24, 1903). "...the Emperor, however, refuses to return, [after the fire of Kyong Bok Palace] saying that the palace is haunted by the ghost of the murdered Queen." ("Korea's Ruler Fears Ghost," *NYT*, Apr 17, 1904).

<sup>79</sup> "Its King is the worst type of ruler to be found in the whole East, and an interview with him and his son is a suggestion of society of Gomorrah" (H. Norman, "Question of Korea," *Living Age* 203 (Oct 6, 1894): 52.

<sup>80</sup> "The biggest idiot in Korea,' was the description of the new Emperor given by Joseph de la Neziere, a French painter now residing in Paris, who spent several years in Seoul. He says: 'He used to follow his father about like a dog, never showed the slightest energy or initiative, and is just the right kind of ruler for the Japanese...'" ("Says New Korean Ruler Is a Fool," *NYT*, Jul 28, 1907).

<sup>81</sup> "Fresh Uprisings in Korea - Russian Officials Leave the Country for China"; "Threats against Korea: Plot to overthrow the government was unraveled at Pekin"; "New Conspiracy in Korea"; "A Conspiracy in Korea - Series of Dynamite Explosions Directed Against the Premier and Royal Household Department; "Large Rebellion in Korea," *NYT*, Apr 13, 1898; Aug 12, 1898; Jul 11, 1898; Aug 1, 1899; Apr 14, 1900.

understanding of Korea's context. Lacking knowledge in language and history of Korea, American commentators heavily relied on English-language Japanese account.

The Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) determined protectorate status of Korea and drew attention to geopolitics of East Asia. American readers were already aware that Korea had been “the bone of contention” in Asia for centuries, with Japan and China both claiming it as a vassal state.<sup>82</sup> Being the battleground for the age-old and age-enduring jealousy between the two neighboring big countries, observers regarded the geographical position of Korea as “lamentable.”<sup>83</sup> Not only had this happened in the past, but it was also continuously occurring in the contemporary period. As J. S. Gale, a Canadian Presbyterian missionary to Korea, commented, “A whole Eastern question is pending, in which Korea is the storm-center, and from all decision in which she is hopelessly shut out.”<sup>84</sup>

At the heart of the debate over Korea was the perception that it had been under the control of a tutelage or tributary system, if not colonization, by neighboring countries for the majority of its history.<sup>85</sup> This historical understanding—that Korea had been historically passive among the great powers—caused many readers to assume that another colonization was natural for Korea in the contemporary. For instance, Speer said,

It may have seemed strange to some people that Korea herself has been ignored in the Russo-Japanese quarrel as though entitled to no voice. But history tells that Korea has for centuries known nothing but tutelage. And she is fit for nothing else.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> H. S. Hallett, “War-Cloud in the Farthest East,” *Nineteenth Century* 46 (Dec 1899): 990-91.

<sup>83</sup> W. E. Griffis, “Jack and the Giant in Korea,” *Outlook* 50 (Aug 11, 1894): 213.

<sup>84</sup> J. S. Gale, “Unconscious Korea,” *Outlook* 68 (Jun 29, 1901): 497.

<sup>85</sup> Even Homer Hulbert, who had favorable view of Korea's independence, was no exception to this view. H. B. Hulbert, “Enfranchisement of Korea,” *North American Review* 166 (Jun 1898): 708-15.

<sup>86</sup> Richard E. Speer, “Korea, Japan, and Russia,” *The World's Work* 7 (Mar 1904): 4514.

Another observer, E. B. Rogers said,

...still rubbing her eyes after a sleep of centuries, Korea has awakened to find herself famous, to discover that her geographical position has invested her with an importance that her native merit would never have brought her, and what observers of Eastern events have long foreseen has now come to pass... The nation is poor, it has no navy, and its cities are defenceless.<sup>87</sup>

The historical view seen here indicates that the metaphor of “sleeping Korea” which had been used by earlier Western visitors was still dominant. When Japan won the war against China for control of Korea in 1895, American viewers attributed the victory Japan’s acceptance of modern military skills from the West.<sup>88</sup> Because of this, they no longer considered China a match for Japan, which may even represent civilization in contrast to China, which represented “antiquity and ideas which no longer survive in modern life.”<sup>89</sup> Writers often described Japan as small but smart, brave, wise, and quick-witted “Jack” opposing to China, big but dull and asleep “Giant”<sup>90</sup>:

...she [Japan] is a plucky little nation, not afraid of her bigger neighbours, full of energy and enterprise, showing a wonderful power of assimilating modern knowledge and civilization, and a natural genius and aptitude in warfare both by sea and by land. An alliance between England and Japan... would be so formidable that, without fighting, it could command respect for their rights and interests...<sup>91</sup>

The view of Japan as a dominant power in East Asia, in part a result from the passionate propaganda by Japan mentioned previously, became pervasive and prevalent by the turn

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<sup>87</sup> E. B. Rogers, “Korea,” *Harper’s Weekly* 38 (Aug 4, 1894): 727.

<sup>88</sup> “...Because the Western civilization was superior to their own in many respects, therefore, argue they, it was superior in all respect[s], and we will adopt it and make it our own. Upon this platform the entire nation has worked unceasingly. It now has an army, a navy, a customs, a post office and a civil service of the best type. ... They have borrowed or adopted our system of mining engineering and applied it to their rich coal-fields. In this way, they have developed an industry... They have adopted our commercial and industrial methods and are now beginning to control the East markets...” (M. A. Hamm, 138-39).

<sup>89</sup> Griffis, “Jack and the Giant.”

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Hallett, 899-90.

of the twentieth century. American commentators began to recognize Japan as standing apart from the other (uncivilized) Asian countries as a true world power, equal to, and possibly even better than, some Western countries:

It is no exaggeration at all to say that in the future, when distinguishing between the nations of Europe and those of Asia, Japan must be classed for all practical purposes with the former.<sup>92</sup>

Of Japan, her achievements are the best witnesses. She will soon be, if she is not already, one of the Great Powers. In all probability she will enter the Twentieth Century the equal, intellectual, industrial and material of any of the family of nations. Or it may be that she will wisely refuse to follow the bad example of the Christian nations and so develop her people in peace and prosperity.<sup>93</sup>

Before and during the Russo-Japanese War, the English-language authors were more sympathetic to the Japanese side than to the Russian one in the conflict. On the one hand, the majority of Western commentators agreed that Korea was of more vital importance to Japan than to Russia, as Japan drew much of her food supply from Korea; the blood of Japan's soldiers had been shed to preserve Korea's independence, and Japan was looking to Korea to supply her with territory for its ever-increasing population. On the other hand, writers argued that Korea was "the rounding off of the Asiatic Empire" for Russia: there was barely a valid excuse for Russia's aggressive policy.<sup>94</sup> In addition to its utility as a commercial and population outlet, most writers agreed that Japan needed Korea for security reasons. If Japan yielded Korea to Russia, it would mean exposing itself to peril along the whole western side of its territory. Given that "Japan [had] struggle[d] to lead China and Korea out into civilization," one commentator argued, it would not be acceptable for Japan to see the "Russian glacier slowly moving across both

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<sup>92</sup> Henry Norman, "Question of Korea," *Contemporary Review* 66 (July/Dec 1894): 311.

<sup>93</sup> M. A. Hamm, 140.

<sup>94</sup> A. Stead, "Question of Korea," *Fortnightly Review* 80 (Nov 1903): 862.

of them, walling her out from her natural destiny and barring before her any entrance to the continent of which she has dreamed that she was to be the savior.”<sup>95</sup> Most writers thus agreed that Japan had the more legitimate right to control Korea because of its historical hegemonic efforts and, more significantly, for its national defense.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that American interests in Korea “were of no comparison to the U.S. economic interest in Japan and in Manchuria.”<sup>96</sup> As Seung-young Kim argues, the main priority of U.S. policy in East Asia in the early twentieth century was to maintain a favorable balance of power in the region for its economic benefits. According to Kim, Theodore Roosevelt’s administration “found a common interest with Japan and Britain in suspending Russia’s encroachment of Manchuria.” Therefore, Roosevelt administration supported Japan, regarding it “as playing America’s game in keeping Manchuria open when the United States was not ready to use force for such a purpose.”<sup>97</sup> Kim argues that the Roosevelt administration expected that a confrontation between Russia and Japan “would keep Japan away from expanding toward the ocean and conflicting with the United States,” when the U.S. was not ready to use force in the East Asian region.<sup>98</sup> This context of American interest in East Asia helps us understand why the U.S. government took no action when Japan annexed Korea in 1910. By condoning Japan’s colonization of Korea, the U.S. chose to support a balance of power in East Asia for its own interests. Still, because of its

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<sup>95</sup> Speer, 4525.

<sup>96</sup> Seung-young Kim, *American Diplomacy and Strategy toward Korea and Northeast Asia, 1882-1950 and After: Perception of Polarity and US Commitment to a Periphery* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 31.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

geopolitical position, colonial Korea remained a significant subject of observation for Americans.

## (2) Expert Commentators – Calling for Change

From the early 1900s, several American commentators representing different groups became known as experts on the Korean problem. Their expert writings were distinguished from the earlier English-language writings on Korea, which were stories of intermittent visitors of the country. These commentators were usually scholars, Christian leaders, journalists, and politicians. Like the earlier travelogues about Korea, the newly appearing experts also demonstrated negative and condemning views toward Korean society and government. Now as they had compiled more knowledge about the country, their assessment of Korea became more specialized than the earlier writers. Most of them agreed that the problems in Korea were so profound that a drastic change was necessary. However, the particular problems and solutions varied depending by writer. Another characteristic of this new wave of commentary was the frequent comparison of the colonizer-colonized relationship between Japan and Korea to that between the U.S. and the Philippines. While they were critical of some of Japan's policies concerning Korea, they usually sympathized more with the position and issues of the colonizer, Japan, than the colonized, Korea.

Here we will explore writings of three opinion makers—Arthur J. Brown, George Kennan, and George Ladd—, whom represented the views of religious leaders, journalists, and scholars, respectively. Arthur J. Brown was an author, a missionary, and later the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. His writings

on Korea, which were based on his experience as a missionary in East Asia, were influenced by American Protestantism, especially the idea of noninterference between religion and politics. George Kennan, a journalist, was a severe critic of Korea's governmental system and social conditions. Kennan, in particular, assured American readers of the importance of the Korean issue, because of its implications regarding American colonial rule in the Philippines. George Ladd was a scholar in philosophy. As a close adviser to Ito Hirobumi, one of leaders of the Meiji Restoration and Resident-general of Korea, Ladd was an ardent supporter of Japan's rule of Korea.

Arthur J. Brown was an influential Presbyterian minister who had abundant experience as a missionary in East Asia and a distinguished Christian opinion maker in the United States.<sup>99</sup> Brown began to write about Korea from 1904. As a missionary, Brown found the Korean people to be potentially intelligent but their educational system was in shambles due to government corruption. Therefore, under the assumption that changing individuals will help develop their society, he stressed the necessity of educating the Korean people, which included their conversion to Christianity. As a high-level leader in the American Presbyterian Church, Brown argued for separation between politics and religion in Korea.

In his article in 1902 about Christian missions in Korea, Brown wrote that Korea's problems derived from the weakness of its corrupt government and the

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<sup>99</sup> Arthur Judson Brown (1856-1963) was a prolific author of articles and books on the world missionary movement. He was well known especially for his knowledge about and travels to missions in Asian countries. He served as the Chairman of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America and the honorary vice-president of the League of Nations Non-Partisan Association in 1917, the chairman of the American Committee on Religious Rights and Minorities from 1920 to 1937, an organizer of the International Missionary Council in 1921, a member of the National Committee on American-Japanese Relations in 1924, and the executive secretary of the Presbyterian Board for 34 years, from 1895 to 1929. One of his important works was *The Mastery of the Far East: the Story of Korea's Transformation and Japan's Rise to Supremacy in the Orient* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919).



conflicting ambitions of Russia and Japan.<sup>100</sup> In addition to the Korean people's weakness, "lacking the energy and ambition of the Japanese and the industry and persistence of the Chinese people," Brown thought, the country's geopolitical position between powerful neighbors kept the Korean people from determining their own fate. He said, "no possible development of their own resources could make the Koreans independent of their stronger neighbors, so that long ago they helplessly acquiesced in the inevitable."<sup>101</sup>

Brown maintained that the Korean people were naturally peaceable, kindly, and not lacking in intelligence. He believed that they held the potential to develop into a fine people if given a good government and a fair chance.<sup>102</sup> However, due to their weak, effeminate, and corrupt officials and governmental system, and the prevailing poverty in the country, he had a less than cheerful view on the future of Korea if it were to remain independent. For this reason, Brown was a supporter of Japan's domination of Korea:

Too weak to be independent, and with subjugation to a foreign nation inevitable, the outlook is not cheering...

Still, the future under either Japanese or Russian domination can hardly be worse than the present. The government lacks the moral fiber needed at such a critical time, and official corruption is well-nigh absolute.<sup>103</sup>

While admitting that Koreans were antagonistic toward Japanese control, Brown expected that Japan had the ability to develop Korea. Although there was criticism about Japan's rule in Korea, he argued that when it came to nation building, some mistakes

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<sup>100</sup> Arthur J. Brown, "Politics and Missions in Korea," *Missionary Review of the World* 25 (Mar 1902): 180.

<sup>101</sup> Arthur J. Brown, "The People," *Chautauquan* 41 (Aug 1905): 501.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

<sup>103</sup> Arthur J. Brown, "Unhappy Korea," *Century Magazine* 68 (May 1904): 147.

were inevitable.<sup>104</sup> In expressing his sympathy with Japan as a ruler, he projected the Anglo-Saxon's status as colonizer onto Japan's position in Korea:

...They [Japanese] manage the Koreans with the brusqueness of the Anglo-Saxon rather than the suavity of the Oriental; ignore "face," which every Asiatic sensitively cherishes; and, in general, deal with the Koreans about as Americans deal with the North American Indians and as the British deal with their subject populations. The Anglo-Saxon is therefore hardly the person to criticise the Japanese... The army necessarily occupied the country during the war and for some time after its close. Military rule is strict everywhere. It has to be in the more or less lawless conditions which follow a war; but it is none the less galling to civilians. We know how Filipinos and Americans alike chafed under the rule of the United States army in the Philippines,...

Keeping in mind that some missionaries were supportive of the independence of Korea, Brown assertively concluded that the United States should assist Japan in order to improve the situation in Korea:

...We shall not help the Koreans by reviling the Japanese, but by co-operating with them. The anti-imperialists are simply aggravating our situation in the Philippines, and the alleged friends of the East Indians who are fomenting discord in India are only intensifying the very conditions which they profess to lament. Japan is in Korea to stay, and we cannot aid the Koreans by cursing their rulers.<sup>106</sup>

As a Christian missionary, Brown believed that the "Gospel always has and always will be a revolutionary force in a corrupt nation," but opposed the church's involvement in Korean political movements:

...What we desire in Korea is not the dethroning of the emperor or the degradation of any official, or the interference with any proper law or custom. We simply seek the regeneration of the individual man, and through him the purifying of society and the reign of that justice and honesty and morality which are indispensable to the stability of all government and to the welfare of a people...

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<sup>104</sup> Arthur J. Brown, "Japanese in Korea," *Outlook* 96 (Nov 12, 1910): 592.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 591.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 595.

<sup>107</sup> Brown, "Politics and Missions in Korea," 188.

His point here was clearly that Christian missionaries should not be involved with any political ideas or movements. What mattered to him was the spiritual change in individuals, so that they could ultimately change the society. Nevertheless, given that Brown himself was an advocate of Japan's domination of Korea, it can be said that his view was not neutral either.

George Kennan, a journalist and Russian specialist, was another prolific writer on Korea.<sup>108</sup> Also known as an expert of Russia, Kennan wrote many articles on Japan and Korea while he served as a war correspondent in Japan and Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) for a monthly journal, *Outlook*. Writing articles from Japan, Kennan's view was supportive of Japan. Kennan assessed that Korean culture and system was "rotten" and they were incomparable to those of prospering Japan. While Brown sympathized with Japan's position as a colonizer, Kennan was more straightforward and blunt in supporting Japan's colonization of Korea. From a comparative view, Kennan assessed that Korea was "ages behind its wide-awake, energetic, and progressive neighbor," Japan, "in all the characteristics that are the outgrowth and flower of human endeavor," while "so far as climate and fertility of soil were concerned, Korea [equaled] and perhaps [surpassed] Japan."<sup>109</sup> One of critical yardsticks of his differentiation between progressive Japan and backward Korea was the sanitary condition of each country. For

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<sup>108</sup> George Kennan (1845-1924) was born in Norwalk, Ohio. He is also known as an elder cousin to George F. Kennan (1904-2005), a diplomat, political scientist, and historian during the Cold War period. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kennan spent many years in Russia as an explorer, journalist, and activist for Russian democracy. Through prolific writings and publications, Kennan earned a reputation as an expert on Arctic affairs and Russian matters. He also served as a journalist for *Associated Press* in the 1870s and as a war correspondent for the magazine *Outlook*, stationed in Cuba during the Spanish-American War (1898) and in Japan and Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) (Frederick F. Travis, "Kennan, George"; <http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-00899.html>; *American National Biography Online* Feb. 2000. Access Date: Wed Jan 13 2010 14:50:24 GMT-0500 [EST]).

<sup>109</sup> George Kennan, "Land of Morning Calm," *Outlook* 78 (Oct 8, 1904): 364.

Kennan, the unsanitary conditions in Korea were proof of the backwardness of the people, as evidenced by his words in *Outlook*:

To one who comes fresh from the perfect order and immaculate neatness of Japan, the choked drains, the rotting garbage, the stinking ponds, the general disorder, and the almost universal filthiness of Korea are not only surprising and disgusting, but absolutely shocking. ... American friends who have spent in the peninsula more years than I have weeks tell me that the Korean, as a man, is intelligent, courteous, teachable, kindhearted, and superior in many ways to the Japanese; but, in the first place, he is so abominably dirty in his personal habits and his environment that I find it almost impossible to credit him with a spark of self-respect. ... He remains dirty either from laziness or from choice, and not from ignorance of better methods of living...<sup>110</sup>

Although he admitted that the Korean people had a somewhat positive nature, being intelligent and teachable, he implied that their filthiness demonstrated their incompetence and laziness. In another article, Kennan again related dirtiness in person and circumstances with lacking keenness of perception in social or emotional senses:

Koreans strike a newcomer as dirty in person and habits, apathetic, slow-witted, lacking in spirit, densely ignorant, and constitutionally lazy.<sup>111</sup>

This view, one that considers cleanliness as the most significant standard for judging the extent of a country's modernization, became common by the late nineteenth century. For example, Mark Harrison points out that the gradual spread of aristocratic standards of personal hygiene in European society led the European [British] colonists to view the sanitary habits of natives [Indians] with a more critical eye.<sup>112</sup> As Harrison says, the consequence of this "civilizing process"<sup>113</sup> was that "the 'great unwashed' came to be

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 366.

<sup>111</sup> George Kennan, "Korea: A Degenerate State (I)," *Outlook* 81 (Oct 7, 1905): 307.

<sup>112</sup> Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India, 1600-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21.

<sup>113</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process, I: The History of Manners*, translated by E. Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), quoted in Harrison, 21.

regarded as a danger to health and public order.”<sup>114</sup> The consciousness of the threat regarding sanitary conditions and disease posed to Europeans by indigenous peoples of colonies paralleled to American perception of sanitary conditions in Korea. Although the significance of Korea’s unsanitary conditions had were commonly seen in earlier European and American travelers’ writings, Kennan’s writings embodied the perspective Japan should proceed “civilizing process” in Korea.

Kennan asserted that Korean civilization, like that of China, was utterly stagnant. He said, “Korea presents a case...of disintegration and decay.” Due to the incompetence of its ruling class, “its civilization has not become stagnant, it has rotted”<sup>115</sup>:

He [Emperor of Korea] is unconscious as a child, stubborn as a Boer, ignorant as a Chinaman, and vain as a Hottentot.... The atmosphere that surrounds him is one of dense ignorance, and consequently he is as timid as a fallow deer. He is extremely superstitious... He has never advanced one step in the way of true reform... He is absolutely incapable of forming a correct judgment with regard to men and events, and in consequence of this mental disability he is deceived by his courtiers and robbed and cheated by all who have business dealings with him... the Emperor of Korea is not only bad, but weak and cowardly.<sup>116</sup>

[The Korean government] regards the “squeezing” of the population with indifference, so long as it does not lead to violence and disorder... Ministers, sorcerers, and high officials sell the provincial offices... the palace ring of eunuchs, fortune-tellers, and courtiers is engaged in robbery on its own account...<sup>117</sup>

...conservatism is not the yangban’s [ruling class] worst failing, and with all his good nature he is capable of horrible cruelty and ferocity. Regarding him either as citizen or ruler, his worst vices are selfishness, laziness, untruthfulness, dishonesty, treachery, and greed... the yangban is intensely obstinate and conservative, and seems to be no more capable of adapting himself to a changed environment... The most competent foreign observers in Korea attribute the intellectual degeneration of the yangbans largely to the benumbing and paralyzing

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<sup>114</sup> Harrison, 22.

<sup>115</sup> Kennan, “Korea: A Degenerate State,” 308.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 308-9.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

effects of Chinese education... Limitation of education to a mere knowledge of the Chinese classics may explain satisfactorily the intellectual decline of the yangbans, but it does not account for their moral degeneration... Idle, ignorant, conceited, superstitious, selfish, greedy, and often cruel, the yangban would seem to be an absolutely impossible person to do anything with or make anything out of...<sup>118</sup>

By describing the Korean Emperor and *yangban* (ruling class) as extremely incapable, corrupt, and intellectually degenerate, Kennan implied that Korea's endangered position during this period was primarily attributed to the incompetence of its rulers. Furthermore, he attributed the incapability of the ruling class to an education based on Chinese classics, and the vices of the Korean people to ignorance and savagery. Like most of the other Western commentators, Kennan believed that Christian, modern, and Western education could solve many of these problems by transforming the people into intelligent, trustworthy, and patriotic men.<sup>119</sup>

In contrast, Kennan admired Japan's attempt to civilize itself and its neighbors. He noted that Japan's civilizing influence in Korea was an unusual phenomenon of non-Western country "transforming" others:

For the first time in the annals of the East, one Asiatic nation is making a serious and determined effort to transform and civilize another... no Oriental nationality ever made a conscious and intelligent attempt to uplift and regenerate a neighbor until Japan, a few months ago, took hold of Korea... There can be little doubt, I think, that she [Japan] is about to assume the leadership of the so-called Yellow Race.<sup>120</sup>

In addition, Kennan anticipated that Japan's domination would relieve Korea from the Russian threat. It already built railroads; it lent the Korean government three

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<sup>118</sup> George Kennan, "Korean People: The Product of Decayed Civilization," *Outlook* 81 (Oct 21, 1905): 411-12.

<sup>119</sup> Kennan argued that Christian education transformed a few of *yangban* into intelligent, trustworthy, and patriotic men and took Yun Ch'i-ho as an example (*Ibid.*, 412).

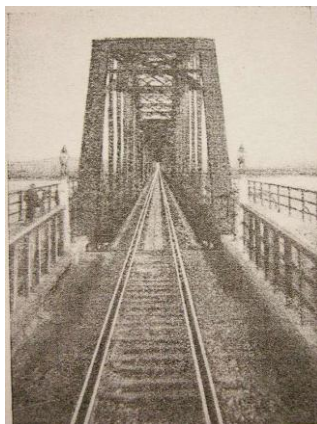
<sup>120</sup> Kennan, "Korea: A Degenerate State," 307.

million yen and laid the foundations of a financial reform; it made encouraging attempts at modernization, such as preparing textbooks and getting teachers for schools, improving sanitation, increasing shipping facilities at seaports, and reorganizing the army.<sup>121</sup>



**Figure 14. One of the modern buildings erected by the Japanese in Seoul, The Bank of Chosen [original caption]. Pictures of modern architecture— buildings, railways, and railroads—functioned to vividly display Japan’s modernization of Korea.**

Source: “What Japan is Doing on the Mainland,” *The American Review of Reviews* 49 (Feb 1914): 229.



**Figure 15. The Bridge across the Yalu River at Antung leading from Korea into Manchuria [original caption].**

Source: “What Japan is Doing on the Mainland,” *The American Review of Reviews* 49 (Feb 1914): 230.

Kennan viewed these as “a gigantic experiment,” substituting “modern enlightenment for the gloomy darkness of semi-barbarism.”<sup>122</sup> He added that Americans should regard the Japanese efforts in Korea with the deepest interest and sympathy,

<sup>121</sup> George Kennan, “What Japan Has Done in Korea,” *Outlook* 81 (Nov 11, 1905): 669.

<sup>122</sup> Kennan, “The Product of Decayed Civilization,” 416.

because they themselves were trying a similar experiment in the Philippines.<sup>123</sup> It is notable that American commentators in this period compared American and Japanese colonization. Although fear and suspicion about Japan's expansionism in the later years, Kennan and others' writings indicate that this period from the 1890s to 1910s was a high moment of favorable view toward Japan in the Western hemisphere. This favorable view toward Japan must be in part a result of Japan's aggressive advertising activities using English-language media, as detailed above.

Kennan moreover encouraged Japan to assimilate Korea more aggressively. He wrote in November 1905, right before Japan and Korea signed a protectorate agreement, that Japan's mistake was to attempt "to reconcile Korean independence with effective Japanese control."<sup>124</sup> Kennan suggested, "Japan should abandon the pretense of treating Korea as if she were really a sovereign and independent State."<sup>125</sup> His opinion was that as soon as Japan considered Korea as a colony, assimilation would ensue, which would aid in the modernization of Korea. Quoting Saburo Shimada's article in the Japanese magazine *Taiyō*, Kennan showed an outlook that the Japanese and the Koreans might become like one nation "by education, intermarriage, and hearty cooperation in various enterprises."<sup>126</sup> In sum, Kennan not only agreed that Japan should colonize Korea, but also hoped that it would rapidly assimilate the country. Japan's experiment of modernizing Korea through improved material, financial, and sanitary conditions would prove meaningful for the U.S., which was controlling another backward, non-modern,

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> George Kennan, "The Japanese in Korea," *Outlook* 81 (Nov 11, 1905): 609.

<sup>125</sup> Kennan, "What Japan Has Done in Korea," 672.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 673.



Asian-Pacific country, the Philippines. As discussed above, most American expert commentators viewed Japan as a pioneer, rather than a competitor, in the East Asian region, but this would change in later years.

George Ladd was a theologian, philosopher, and professor at Yale University and one of close acquaintances and unofficial advisers to Ito Hirobumi. He published several books on Japan and gained a reputation as an American intellectual with extensive knowledge of Japan and the situation in East Asia.<sup>127</sup> Ladd viewed the Japanese occupation most favorably. In addition, he continued to publish this pro-Japanese view in major periodicals even after Japan occupied Korea and was criticized for its radically oppressive policies.<sup>128</sup> Ladd's pro-Japanese opinion was in many ways similar to that of George Kennan. Both contrasted Japan and Korea and considering the former developed, modernized, and positive, and the latter backward, degenerated, and in need of reforms. If the standard for evaluating the two countries was their sanitary conditions for Kennan, for Ladd it was their attitude toward foreigners:

...[in Japan] the most eager interest in the subjects upon which the prospective audiences wished to be addressed, and the attitude of an open mind and even of warm personal attachment toward "friend of Japan."

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<sup>127</sup> George T. Ladd (1842-1921) was a professor of moral and mental philosophy at Yale University. He gave many invited lectures in Japan, India, and Korea. He received the Third Order of the Rising Sun in 1899 and the Second Order in 1907. He published *In Korea with Marquis Ito* based on his experiences in Korea and in this book he proposed "a groundwork for lasting peace between Korea and Japan." He had also reputation as a psychologist, cofounding and serving as second president of the American Psychological Association. His books on the East Asian region include *The Future of Japan* (in English and Japanese), lecture delivered at Kazoku Kaikan, Tokyo, Dec 22, 1906; *In Korea with Marquis Ito* (London: Longmans, Green and New York Scribners, 1908); *Rare Days in Japan* (New York, NY: Dodd Mead and London: Longmans, Green, 1910) (Herman J. Saatkamp and Clay Davis Splawn. "Ladd, George Trumbull"; <http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-00556.html>; *American National Biography Online* Feb. 2000. Access Date: Wed Jan 13 2010 14:50:24 GMT-0500 [EST]).

<sup>128</sup> After the March First Movement in 1919, he debated about who was responsible for the movement with Korean nationalist opinion makers in the *New York Times*. This will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

... in Korea, however, all the influences would be of precisely the opposite character—indifference, deficiencies, hindrances, if not active opposition, so far as the native attitude was concerned.<sup>129</sup>

In addition to this closed mindedness of the Korean people, Ladd pointed out that its corrupt politicians eroded the little hope that Korea had for maintaining its independence.<sup>130</sup> He summed that it was Japan's responsibility to reform these conditions, as Japan already sacrificed itself fighting two wars to take on this burden [Italics added]:

... inasmuch as Japan had already fought one internal and two foreign wars, at a cost of millions of treasure and thousands of lives, on account of the political weakness and misrule of Korea, it could not possibly, with a wise regard either for its own interests or for those of the Korean people themselves, allow the repetition of similarly disastrous events. The two nations must learn to live together in amity and with their common interests guarded against invasion and injury from without. History had amply shown that this end could not be secured under existing conditions by Korea alone. *The most sacred obligations, not only of self-interest, but also of a truly wise regard for the Emperor and his subjects, bound the Japanese Government to establish and maintain its protectorate over Korea.*<sup>131</sup>

Ladd noted that some Koreans were looking to foreign countries, especially the United States, to interfere with the Japanese administration.<sup>132</sup> However, he believed that no foreign nation, including the United States, would be likely to intervene between Japan and Korea.<sup>133</sup> Like other American writers, Ladd concluded that modern education and the spread of Christianity would finally reform Korea.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> George T. Ladd, *In Korea with Marquis Ito: Part I. A Narrative of Personal Experiences; Part II. A Critical and Historical Inquiry* (New York, NY: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908), 37.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 455.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>134</sup> "The foundation of schools of the modern type, especially for technical and manual training, and the spread of Christianity, will, almost inevitably, combine to raise a body of thrifty, fairly intelligent, and upright, self-respecting citizens. This will go far toward solving the problem of the reform and redemption of Korea" (*Ibid.*, 455).

### (3) An Optimistic View – Homer Hulbert

Homer Hulbert was a rather minor, but unique, expert commentator, in that he advocated Korean nationalism.<sup>135</sup> Hulbert served as a Christian missionary in Korea from the 1890s and went to the White House and the State Department to transmit King Kojong's secret letter asking aid from the U.S. government in 1905 and 1906. He became one of a few foreign supporters of the independence of Korea even after the annexation of Korea. As Andre Schmid argues, Hulbert was also generous about Japanese control in Korea in the future as other commentators in the late nineteenth century, but his support for Korea's independence became fixed since 1905. Schmid highlights that Hulbert's opposition to Japanese control in Korea was not against colonialism itself but specifically against the colonialism conducted by Japan.<sup>136</sup> Hulbert's support for Korea's independence and his opposition to Japan's colonization were closely related to his experiences in Korea and his belief in Christian evangelism.

Like other commentators, Hulbert maintained that Korea had been continuously under the influence of foreign powers throughout its history:

Never since the year 1122 BC<sup>137</sup> has she known complete independence until within the past few months...there was never a time when her allegiance was not

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<sup>135</sup> Homer B. Hulbert (1863-1949) was born in Middlebury, Vermont. In 1886, while studying at Union Theological Seminary, Hulbert was sent to Korea as one of teachers for the U.S. government's plan to establish an academy in Korea, where he remained until 1891. He returned to Korea as a Methodist missionary in 1893 and later served as the Special Envoy of the Emperor Kojong to the conferences in Washington (in 1905 and 1906), and the Hague Peace Conference (in 1906 and 1907). He was compelled to return to the United States in May 1907 by the Japanese authorities due to his political activities in Korea and in the U.S., but Hulbert continued to support the Korean nationalists' cause by giving public lectures and contributing articles to periodicals.

<sup>136</sup> Andre Schmid, "The Challenges of Oriental Colonialism: The Limits of Anglo-American Critiques," *Yŏksa munje yŏn'gu* (Critical Studies on Modern Korean History) 12 (2004): 161-86.

<sup>137</sup> The year 1122 BC was the year when Kija Chosŏn was recorded as being established. There has been historical debate on the character of Kija Chosŏn, due to lack of historical evidence and written records. The controversial part is that according to Chinese records, Kija was a descendent of the Shang dynasty's

demanded by one or other of her neighbors, and when influences and forces, over which she had no control, were not moulding her to their own designs...<sup>138</sup>

In his early writings, Hulbert was hardly different from Kennan, Brown, and other writers in deploring the evil influence of Chinese civilization on Korea.<sup>139</sup> But Hulbert distinguished himself by separating the Korean people from their government. He once said:

The trouble [of the Korean people] lies, not in lack of energy, nor in innate laziness, but in crass ignorance and in suspicion bred of long centuries of indirection.<sup>140</sup>

What further distinguished Hulbert from the other opinion makers is that he took one more step and asserted that Korea must be independent: he said, Korea “must be digged from his clay prison and set upon his feet” and “Korea must be liberated from her moral and intellectual thralldom.”<sup>141</sup>

This relatively optimistic outlook for Korea by Hulbert derived from his positive assessment of Korean people:

Intrinsically and potentially the Korean is a man of high intellectual possibilities, but he is, superficially, what he is by virtue of his training and education. Take him out of this environment, and give him a chance to develop independently and naturally, and you would have as good a brain as the Far East has to offer.<sup>142</sup>

His compliment about Korean people’s potential was far from the usual stereotypes of their laziness, indifference, and hopelessness as seen in the writings of George Kennan or

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royal house who migrated to the east to establish Kija Chosôn, thus introducing Chinese civilization to the Korean peninsula. It was written that King Wu of the Zhou dynasty later enfeoffed Kija. Although the authenticity of this legend is disputed to this day, the story of Kija was invoked by Western observers at the turn of the twentieth century as typical of Korea’s submission to powerful countries. As seen in the text, it was effective to Hulbert’s view of Korean history as well.

<sup>138</sup> H. B. Hulbert, “Enfranchisement of Korea,” 708.

<sup>139</sup> H. B. Hulbert, “Korea and the Koreans,” *Forum* 27 (Apr 1899): 217-22.

<sup>140</sup> “Korean Characteristics,” *Review of Reviews* 30 (Oct 1904): 477-78.

<sup>141</sup> Hulbert, “Korea and the Koreans,” 221.

<sup>142</sup> Homer B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (1906, Reprinted by Yonsei University Press, 1969), 33.

George Ladd. This might be partially attributed to Hulbert's personal experience as a teacher and missionary in Korea, which made him actually interact with Koreans and discover their positive characteristics.

A few more commentators in this period were impressed by the Korean people. Nevertheless, none but Hulbert, argued for Korea's independence. On the contrary, a British writer suggested that because its people were teachable and loyal, Korea should be considered as a possible British colony.<sup>143</sup> In this sense, Hulbert's comment about Judea had distinguished implication from other Western accounts about Korea's future:

Perhaps we may apply to Korea the words used by Pere Hyacinthe, in speaking of Judea: "The Little States: They are constituted by the hand of God, and I trust in Him that they never will be removed. He has placed them between the Great States as a negation to universal empire, a pacific obstacle to the shocks of their power and the plots of their ambition."<sup>144</sup>

About Korean people's characters compared to other neighboring peoples,

Hulbert argued:

[t]he temperament of the Korean lies midway between the two [Japanese and Chinese], even as his country lies between Japan and China. This combination of qualities makes the Korean rationally idealistic. . . . a most happy combination of rationality and emotionalism. And more than this, I would submit that it is the same combination that has made the Anglo-Saxon what he is.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> E. H. Parker, a British consular officer and historian, said, "The Korean people, whatever their defects, are much more susceptible of improvement than the Chinese or Japanese. Though destitute of religion, they make the most loyal of converts and obstinate of martyrs when once their hearts are touched." His conclusion was that Korea would be a fine British colony, if they could colonize it (E. H. Parker, "Corea," *Fortnightly Review* 69 [Feb 1898]: 224-38). For another example, Speer said that Korean people are good and capable. With a fair government and a sense of security, he argued, they would be a quiet, orderly, childlike and simple people (Richard E. Speer, "Korea, Japan and Russia," *The World's Work* 7 [Mar 1904]: 4514-25).

<sup>144</sup> Hulbert, "Enfranchisement of Korea," 715.

<sup>145</sup> He also said, "...it is easier to understand the Korean and get close to him than it is to understand either the Japanese or the Chinese. He is much more like ourselves. You lose the sense of difference very readily, and forget that he is a Korean and not a member of your own race" (Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, 31)

These idealized qualities placed Koreans, as distinct from other Asian people, in the same league as Anglo-Saxons. Furthermore, Hulbert argued that the rapid spread of Christianity throughout Korea was evidence of the noble characteristics of its people. Whereas Hulbert viewed the Japanese as assimilating only the material aspects of Western civilization, he believed that Korea could become a civilized *Christian* country and could even help to evangelize the whole Asian region. Therefore, Japan's colonization was seen as a threat to Korea's evangelizing power.<sup>146</sup> In short, Hulbert's rare position of opposing the Japanese colonization stemmed from his observation of each country's receptivity to Christian evangelism, which caused him to extol Korea's potential, while expressing his fundamental doubts of Japan's promise of development.



**Figure 16. Little Korean girl with her Bible. For writers such as Hulbert, the spread of Christianity among Korean youth was the basis of a hopeful perspective on Korea.**

Source: Walter C. Erdman, "The Bible in Chosen,"  
*The Missionary Review of the World* 40 (Sep 1917): 677.

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<sup>146</sup> Schmid, "The Challenges of Oriental Colonialism," 177.



**Figure 17. Koreans at evangelist Kim's meeting in Songdo, Korea.**

Source: John N. Mills, "the Cause of Changes in Korea,"  
*The Missionary Review of the World* 45 (Feb 1922): 117.

In the same context, Hulbert understood that the moral stagnation of Koreans had not originated in the intrinsic characteristics of the people, but in "the ponderous load of Chinese civilization" since the formative stage of the country.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, he suggested that the only way to prevent destruction of Korea was to educate "the people up to a point where they can prove themselves the equals of their conquerors and, by the very force of genuine manhood, exert an influence which shall counteract the contempt which the Japanese feel."<sup>148</sup> Hulbert urged the American public to watch carefully the course of events in Korea and to personally serve or financial support to educating the Korean people. Hulbert added protecting Korea from foreign powers would be beneficial to America's commercial interests in East Asia:

Japan began and carried through this whole matter by the clever use of misinformation and broken promises, which successfully hoodwinked the American public. For this reason I urge with all the power at my command that the course of events should be carefully watched by those who are interested in the preservation of the principle of an open door in the Orient, and the preservation of rights which, though only partially utilized as yet, are full of potentialities for the future; and I urge that immediate steps be taken to forestall

<sup>147</sup> Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, 33.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 463.

the concession to Japan, by the executive department of our government, of the right to dominate the persons and the interests of American citizens in Korea. ...The trouble is that Americans do not realize that the tender feeling of Japan toward us politically is based upon the fact that we are giving her every opportunity to kill us commercially in the Far East.<sup>149</sup>

On the other hand, Hulbert stressed the active role of American missionaries in Korea under the Japanese control as early as the year of 1908, when Korea was a protectorate but had not yet been officially annexed. Hulbert's opinion about the active role of missionaries in alleviating Korea's social problems clearly contrasted with Arthur Brown's emphasis on the neutrality of churches. Taking umbrage at the Japanese authorities' consent that morphine could be sold to Koreans, Hulbert argued that it was time for missionaries to speak out about the Japanese wrongdoings in Korea. He expected a possible clash in Korea between Christianity and Japanese civilization: "Christianity can not endorse the present regime in Korea without stultifying itself and betraying its scared trust."<sup>150</sup>

The emergence of expert commentators on Korea's problems in the early 1900s indicates that American intellectuals paid much attention to Russo-Japanese War and Korea's geopolitical position in its aftermath. As seen in commentators from various backgrounds, such as religious leaders, journalists, and scholars, usual American perceptions about Korea and its fate in this period were gloomy and pessimistic. Therefore, it was common to expect Japan's complete occupation within a short period. Hulbert's optimistic and positive outlook about Korea's future and his call for Korea's independence was not a general view about the country. In later decades, Hulbert became

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 462.

<sup>150</sup> Homer B. Hulbert, "Japanese and Missionaries in Korea," *Missionary Review of the World* 31 (Mar 1908): 209.



one of the major supporters of Korean independence movements in Korea and the United States.

#### **4. The Korean Enlightenment Movement: A View of the Self**

The American and Japanese discourse on Korea at the turn of the twentieth century presented Koreans as numb and passive to what was happening in and about their own country. These discourses tended to intentionally and unintentionally exclude Koreans' representation of themselves, which according to Schmid "shaped the parameters and content of nationalist thought."<sup>151</sup> Contrary to contemporary outsiders' assumptions, groups of Korean intellectuals and reformers had developed complex ways of thinking and writing about their nation by the turn of the twentieth century. In contrast to the view of Japanese officials and the majority of Western and American viewers, Korean intellectuals argued that their country had long been independent and self-sufficient. Admitting that the country needed immediate changes, Korean opinion makers suggested that their own government could initiate reforms, while also reaching out to external audiences. This section examines how Korean intellectuals represented their country and to what extent that representation interacted with outside views of the country.

As Western, American, and Japanese observers unanimously pointed out, Koreans themselves also perceived the necessity of reforms and changes for their country. Various groups of Koreans reacted differently under the pressure of change.<sup>152</sup> Among the

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<sup>151</sup> Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 3.

<sup>152</sup> As Schmid summarizes, the history of Korea from the 1890s to its annexation is recounted along three narrative lines: the royal house; the ultimately doomed efforts of state-generated reform; and the growth of

different streams, this section focuses on the writings of the intellectuals of the so-called Enlightenment Movement, especially those of the Independence Club and its main figures, such as Sô Chae-p'il and Yun Ch'i-ho, through the periodicals they published. I intend to analyze the Enlightenment Movement's response to the outside view on Korea, as this group was the most interested in Korea's new position in the world, in making resolutions for the country's future, and in interacting with the outside world. Also this group became foundation of a Korean nationalist group which would struggle to represent their country in the international stage, a topic discussed in later chapters. The Enlightenment Movement actively accepted Western values as they sought to configure their own nation during the period of colonialism and imperialism. They reconsidered their nation's position corresponding to the recent discussion of civilization, which "had become the foundation of international law and, with its claims to universality had become the central tenet of an international modern discourse."<sup>153</sup> Their writings about self-knowledge and aspects of change in Korean society through the printed mass media corresponded to American and Japanese writings concerning Korea's problems. Here we especially examine *Tongnipsinmun*, or *The Independent*, a Korean newspaper published in both vernacular Korean (*Ô nmun*) and English in Korea.<sup>154</sup> The publication of this

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a nationalist movement, which includes the Righteous Army Movement and the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement (Ibid., 27-30).

<sup>153</sup> Schmid, 33.

<sup>154</sup> *Tongnipsinmun* or *The Independent* (published from April 1896 to 1899) represented the views of the enlightenment movement. Sô Chae-p'il (English name: Philip Jaisohn) published this paper with funds received from the Chosôn government in 1896. The paper was the first private newspaper in Korea. Its first publications had four pages in total, three in Korean vernacular and one in English. From January 1897, Korean and English versions were published separately. It had been published every other day, and became daily on July 1, 1898. After Sô returned to the United States in May 1898, Yun Ch'i-ho became the editor. In the editorial of its first publication, the paper proclaimed to maintain a fair view for all of the Korean people, inform the people about what the government was doing, accuse corrupt government officials, and let the government know about the affairs of the people. It had a circulation of approximately 2,000 to 3,000, and its primary Korean readership consisted of officials and intellectuals. Based on the fact that one

bilingual newspaper uniquely shows how a Korean intellectual group tried to propagandize their cause toward the foreign community in Korea and the international readers. Although the primary readership of *Tongnipsinmun* was Korean intellectuals, we may assume that the paper's English-language version attracted many readers as well, especially among foreign residents in Korea.

Reading Korean newspapers of the late nineteenth century seemed to take almost the opposite view of Korea that the contemporary outsider viewers that we have examined in earlier sections. They contrasted most strongly over the issue of where to put Korea in terms of civilization and in which direction Korea should look to in order to escape its current crisis. As we have seen in the earlier sections, the Western viewers categorized China as symbolizing negative Oriental traditions, as an embodiment of the uncivilized and of failed modernization; this was in contrast to Japan, which was viewed as civilized, progressive, and modern. They often blamed many of the disease-like problems that Korean society was suffering from on the evil influence of Chinese civilization throughout its history. If the outside view classified Korea as belonging to the same old, isolated civilization as China, Korean intellectuals in newspapers in the late nineteenth century endeavored, as far as possible, to separate Korea's position—in terms of civilization and social reforms—from that of China:

Qing people [the Chinese] have thought for thousands of years that China is the most enlightened, the strongest, and the richest country in the world, so they have admired the laws and customs and size that were made thousands of years ago. Then they fought with the English and Beijing was all burned; China compensated thousands won to England; and some ports were stolen by the

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third of its commercials were in English, it is assumed that foreign residents in Korea were important readers of the paper (Vipan Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea: Enlightenment and the Independence Club* [Berkeley, CA: Center for Korean Studies, University of California, 1988], 5-10; Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 51; *Tongnipsinmun* 1, no. 1 [April 7, 1896]). (*Tongnipsinmun*: Korean version; *The Independent*: English version).

English... If any Korean, regardless of being an official or common person, sees this example of China but still recommends us to follow China's example, he is the enemy of our country.<sup>155</sup>

[Chinese classics] must be of benefit for Chinese people, but they are not for Koreans today. But also, you will know that they are greatly harmful for the Chinese today also, if you see China today. Even though there are many more people in China who know well about the Four Books and Five Classics [Confucian canons] than in Korea and its land is bigger and the population is bigger... even a European country whose size is one-tenth of China is warmly received ten times more than China in the world; and its government and the people are one-hundred times stronger and richer than China. The very reason is because all people in Europe learn in schools for about ten years, while they just study the Four Books and Five Classics in China. As a result, China is always defeated by foreign countries, as civilized and enlightened people know how to train troops, how to make trains, railroads, telephones, comfortable clothes, sound food, clean accommodation... In contrast, Chinese do not learn one of these, the people are weak, vulgar, stupid, dirty, and have no respect of their country. Even if they get disdainful treatment, they don't recognize it as disdainful; even if they are neglected, they don't resent it.<sup>156</sup>

Adopting Western and Japanese views of civilization and modernization, Korean intellectuals agreed that traditional Chinese teachings were outdated and inappropriate for then-contemporary Korea. Just as the contemporary Japanese historians tried to separate Japanese civilization from Chinese one with the new historical interpretation of *Tōyōshi*, Korean intellectuals made efforts to distinguish the nature of the Korean people from that of the Chinese. The editors of *Tongnipsinmun* said,

The Koreans are quite unlike Chinamen in the matter of patriotism. They are truly loyal to His Majesty and patriotic to their native land, but they have never been taught how to show their feelings in a public demonstration. The handful of Christians of Seoul took the initiative in the public celebration of their National Holiday and demonstrated to the world that they love their King and their native country. It was not a suggestion of foreigners, but they got it up voluntarily.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> *Tongnipsinmun* 1, no. 52, Aug 4, 1896.

<sup>156</sup> *Tongnipsinmun* 1, no. 9, Apr 25, 1896.

<sup>157</sup> *The Independent* 1, no. 65, Sep 3, 1896.

The editors stressed that Koreans, in contrast to the Chinese, are actually patriotic; they just did not know how to express their patriotic feelings. Therefore, it was not a matter of the Korean people's qualification as modern citizens, such as nationalism and patriotism, but a matter of the skills required to manage and demonstrate those virtues, which can be learned. The editorial also implied that Korean converts to Christianity were beginning to use the modern political skills they had acquired from the West, and that they were practicing these skills voluntarily.

Beneath the Korean writers' acceptance of the Western view of China as an exemplar of barbarity<sup>158</sup> and a country not to emulate, there had been a far-reaching endeavor to separate their country from China, that Andre Schmid calls "the decentering of the Middle Kingdom."<sup>159</sup> In particular, China's military loss to Japan in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) was seen as the final alarm informing the world that the old knowledge was succumbing to the new knowledge.<sup>160</sup> By contrast, the Korean writers saw Japan as standing alongside Western countries at the apex of civilization.<sup>161</sup> This reflected a shift in the definition of civilization, and a shift away from one hegemonic system toward another, centered on the West, among Korean intellectuals.<sup>162</sup> This new perspective, which had existed before Japan colonized Korea, considered Japan as an exemplar and China as the opposite. It was pervasive among Korean intellectuals, many of whom were calling for modernization.

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<sup>158</sup> Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 56.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-100.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 107; *Hwangsôngsinmun* Sep 28, 1899; Apr 7, 1904; "If One Looks at Japan and Other Enlightened Countries," *Tongnipsinmun* Sep 13, 1898.

<sup>162</sup> Schmid, 57.

In Japan, the shift in understanding the criteria for becoming “civilized” brought with it the dilemma of how to position the nation, of how to modernize while maintaining its identity, as we have seen in the earlier sections. Similarly, feeling endangered by foreign powers and necessary for immediate changes for the nation compelled Korean intellectual groups to reinterpret their national history. National history of Korea and history of Western countries in Korean newspapers enjoyed unprecedented popularity. The editors of most of the newspapers including *Hwansôngsinmun* attempted to discover “in the Korean and East Asian pasts cases of enlightened practices”<sup>163</sup> to show that the whole civilizing process and reforms in fact followed principles inherent in a global history; not just for the West, but also for East Asia and for Korea.

Another use of history for the Korean editors was to prove their criticism of the notion that Korea had always been subordinate to China. As if refuting the Western and Japanese comments, the Korean editors stressed that Korea had always been independent even before this was recognized by modern treaties. Korea, an editorial argued, had always been on friendly terms with China, and China had never interfered with the internal affairs of Korea. Rather, the editorial said that it was only in recent years that China had tried to exert her influence over the Korean government and that because of that, China had lost its popularity by exporting its corruption to Korea.<sup>164</sup>

The criticism of the problems of Korean society in Korea’s local newspapers was not strikingly different from that of outside commentators. The self-criticism includes complaints about corrupt government officials, lack of sanitation, and lack of modern-style education in the country. On sanitary conditions, it is notable that an editor pointed

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>164</sup> *The Independent* 2, no. 18, Feb 13, 1897.

out that the neglect of sanitary regulations and disregard of hygiene laws were harmful not only for Koreans, but also for foreign residents' health. He added that the filthy conditions were injuring the reputation of the country in the eyes of many foreigners.<sup>165</sup> Korean editors frequently pointed out that lack of education was responsible for many serious problems in the country. The importance of education—in particular, modern education—was one of the most common topics of editorials. The following editorial highlighted that the spread of proper education should precede reform and progress [Italics added]:

Zealous reformers and ardent patriots need sometimes to be reminded that *civilization is not made by law*. It is not a garment to be donned like clothes of a different pattern, but is the product of cultivated minds. *It is in short the outcome of sound education*...we have to look to educational except the Four Books and the Five Classics is maintained by the Government just so long must people wait to see some progress made in Korea. It is all very well to blame the unsympathetic apathy of the masses. That is only a symptom. Underlying all the inertia, in fact the very cause of it, is the stupendous ignorance and dense superstition in which the nation is steeped. The only remedy is the unceasing and steady diffusion of knowledge of facts about things, the persistent education of the people by every means at our disposal... *Education is the most potent lever for reform and progress* and by its means alone will the status of the country and the condition of the people be permanently improved.<sup>166</sup>

One of the harmful effects of the inadequate educational system was that the Korean people were indifferent to their country's future. Newspaper articles continuously emphasized the necessity of awakening the people,<sup>167</sup> while arguing that the Korean people "lacked not in patriotism but in incentive to use."<sup>168</sup> This view paralleled some

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<sup>165</sup> *The Independent* 2, no. 44, Apr 15, 1897.

<sup>166</sup> *The Independent* 1, no. 53, Aug 6, 1896. Also see *Tongnipsinmun* 1, no. 9, Apr 25, 1896; 1, no. 37, Jun 30, 1896; *The Independent* 1, no. 18, May 16, 1896; 2, no. 55, May 11, 1897.

<sup>167</sup> *Tongnipsinmun* 1, no. 52, Aug 4, 1896.

<sup>168</sup> *The Independent* 3, no. 70, Jun 18, 1898.

American commentators' evaluation of the Korean people — that they had intelligent capability but had no fair chance to use it.

However, in opposition to the outside view of the necessity of foreign powers to intervene, Korean opinion makers perceived that the Korean government was initiating reforms. An English-language editorial in *The Independent* complained about the outside opinion that affairs in Korea were standing still:

We would sum up the work of the last three months then as follows. Vigorous work on the part of the army detachments in the country; the rehabilitation of the Financial Department; the cleaning out of the pay department of the army; the contract for a Seoul-Chemulpo railroad; the founding of a school; the important work of street repairs; the refitting of the printing bureau.

The man who calls this standing still must be an American “hustler” from Nebraska.<sup>169</sup>

The editor here asserted that Korean society had achieved great progress, which included building infrastructure and spreading education. In contrast to the view of many outside observers, the editors of *Tongnipsinmun* maintained great expectations of Korea's progress in the future, while it still needed reforms. This optimism came not only because of recent reforms, but also from the potential of the Korean people, especially educated youths.<sup>170</sup>

In publishing both Korean and English-language versions, editors of *Tongnipsinmun* had different readers in mind for the two versions. In short, the Korean-version *Tongnipsinmun* sought to inform the Korean people about the problems of their society and what must change to enlighten the readers, so that the country could be strong and rich. On the other hand, the English version *The Independent* frequently aimed to propagandize Korean progressives toward the international readers. One discovers this by

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<sup>169</sup> *The Independent* 1, no. 21, May 23, 1896.

<sup>170</sup> *The Independent* 1, no. 104, Dec 3, 1896; 1, no. 105, Dec 5, 1896.



looking at the fact that the editors of the paper often laid out different contents for the Korean and English versions of the same issue, although some issues of the paper carried the same contents translated in both languages.

For example, the Korean version of the May 28th, 1896 editorial dealt with a recent article in a Japanese newspaper about possible negotiations between Japan and Russia regarding Korea. While hoping that the two countries agreed upon the autonomy of Korea, the editor commented:

We believe that Japan and Russia will be consistent with reason (*tori*) and Korea also needs to be consistent with reason now. At this time, when Korean people are consistent with reason, then help from others will be effective and they [foreign countries] will like to help us more. If Korean people are not consistent with reason; merely trust others; have power games with each other according to the old custom; try to put any friends or relatives on official positions regardless of his qualifications; hate each other; are jealous of each other; deal with matters obstinately without thinking of the people's benefits but their own interest...this would be like selling the country to the others.<sup>171</sup>

The editor tried to persuade his Korean readers that it was the Korean people's duty to change the wrongdoing of their society before asking for foreign powers' help. On the other hand, the English version of the same issue commented on Siam.

The February 18 1897 issue is another example. In the Korean version, the editorial lamented Korea's powerlessness and argued for the Korean people to throw out 'the old customs' and to seek enlightenment and progress. The English version of editorial, however, argued that Korea had always been independent, throughout history, from China.<sup>172</sup> At times, the English editorial was used to refute articles in Japanese newspapers about Korea.<sup>173</sup> In this sense, Korean intellectual groups used the English

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<sup>171</sup> *Tongnipsinmun* 1, no. 23, May 28, 1896.

<sup>172</sup> *Tongnipsinmun*; *The Independent* 2, no. 18, Feb 13, 1897.

<sup>173</sup> *The Independent* 1, no. 88, Oct 27, 1896; vol. 1, no. 91, Nov 3, 1896.

version of the paper to reach out to foreign and international readers, and to represent and appeal Korea's independent position to them. However, this goal was not fully realized due to the limited readership of the newspapers. Despite repeated efforts to interact with the international society, it was not until decades later that the Korean voice would begin to be heard and have an impact on the outside view of Korea.

### **5. American Reactions to the Korean Annexation (1910)**

After almost five years of protectorate rule, Japan formally declared its annexation of Korea by signing the Annexation Treaty on August 22, 1910. Until right before the formal colonization, Kojong's tried to "play the other foreign powers off against the Japanese, a tactic he had pursued since the opening of the country in the 1870s."<sup>174</sup> He sent his message that Korean desire to remain independent was being forced by Japanese through Homer B. Hulbert to the U.S. government in 1905 and dispatching delegates to peace conferences at the Hague in 1907 to bring Korea's case before the international community. Under pressure of Japanese, Kojong abdicated in July 1907. Beginning in 1905, Japan enjoyed unrestricted freedom to reform and modernize Korea. As we have explored in earlier sections, from 1905 to 1910 Japanese authorities disseminated propaganda about their modernizing results in Korea to the international community. As a result, most American opinion makers acknowledged Japan's status as a potential world power.

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<sup>174</sup> Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 205.

The American media hastened to transmit news of the Japanese annexation.<sup>175</sup> Considering that the signing of the treaty meant the dissolution of a country with a 4,000-year history, the news maintained a nonchalant tone, as if the event had long been expected. American commentators mostly confirmed their earlier attitude toward Korea: that Korea needed help from the outside and that Japan was ideally situated to make the necessary changes. When Japan declared Korea a protectorate country in 1905, commentators saw complete annexation as a natural and “inevitable”<sup>176</sup> course for the country. Once again, opinion makers noted the unique nature of the colonization: Japan was the first Asian country to colonize another.<sup>177</sup>

American writers suggested Japan’s reforms since 1905 as evidence that Japan’s annexation would help Korea by giving a new opportunity for liberty and progress for the Korean people.<sup>178</sup> Edwin Maxey, a professor of public law and diplomacy at University of Nebraska, wrote that the balance of power in Asia was of vital interest to America and the world. Therefore, Japan’s task in Korea became of world interest and also a serious one. He assessed that Japan proved its high qualities as a civilized power in undertaking educational, sanitary, economic, administrative, and legal reforms in Korea. The annexation was necessary because “the maintenance of the forms of Korean sovereignty

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<sup>175</sup> “Japan Is About to Annex Korea, Negotiations Have Begun, It Is Expected They Will Be Concluded in Two or Three Days,” “Korea as a Nation to End This Week, No Disturbance Expected,” “Korea Now Japanese,” “Japan Announces Korea’s Annexation,” “Korean Sovereignty Ended,” Korea Becomes Chosen,” *NYT*, Aug 18, 1910; Aug 22, 1910; Aug 23, 1910; Aug 25, 1910; Aug 27, 1910; Aug 29, 1910.

<sup>176</sup> “Korea – The Passing of a Nation,” *Chautauquan* 60 (Oct 1910): 331-32.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> W. E. Griffis, “Japan’s Absorption of Korea,” *North American Review* 192 (Oct 1910): 518; “Korean Meteorology – Old and New,” *Nature* 85 (Jan 12, 1911): 341-42; Arthur T. Pierson, “First Impression of Korea,” *Missionary Review of the World* 34 (Mar 1911): 183-87.

hampered the world of the Japanese.”<sup>179</sup> Because of the history of conflict in the Korean peninsula and Japan’s demonstrated improvements, most writers thought it was “best for Korea, for Japan, and for the peace of the world, that what had to happen should happen at the earliest moment.”<sup>180</sup> Editors of *The Nation* commented, “annexation may give the Korean the privileges and immunities of Japanese citizenship without burdening him more heavily than he is burdened at present.” The editorial ended with an interesting implication: “The peaceful assimilation of a people whose numbers are estimated at anywhere from eight to seventeen millions is a task that is sure to keep Japanese statesmanship busy for many years to come. To that extent *it will save us from the world-wide schemes of Japanese aggrandizement* which the strained jingo eye discerns in the most insignificant daily event of Tokio politics [*Italics added*].”<sup>181</sup> This comment confirms Iriye’s argument that as long as the direction of Japanese imperialism was toward Korea and Manchuria, which pushed it away from the Philippines or the many British colonies, it had the blessing of London and Washington.<sup>182</sup>

Writers did not hesitate to say that world powers including the U.S. welcomed the annexation, as seen in a travelogue in *The National Geographic Magazine*’s November 1910 issue: “so far as revealed, Japan’s intentions seem satisfactory to the powers and ultimately to the advantage of the people of the Mikado’s new province, Cho-sen.”<sup>183</sup> Similarly, it was not a secret that the U.S. did not object the Japan’s plan of colonizing

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<sup>179</sup> Edwin Maxey, “The Reconstruction of Korea,” *Political Science Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Dec 1910): 673-87.

<sup>180</sup> “The End of Korea,” *The Nation* 91, no. 2356 (Aug 25, 1910): 159-60.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>182</sup> Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 47-48.

<sup>183</sup> William W. Chapin, “Glimpses of Korea and China,” *The National Geographic Magazine* 21, no. 11 (Nov 1910): 928

Korea, although it could have raised objections based on the ‘good offices’ clause of the 1882 treaty.<sup>184</sup> Rather, as in earlier years, American commentators confirmed that American commercial interests were safe even after the annexation.<sup>185</sup>

## Conclusion

From the late nineteenth century until the annexation in 1910, American interest in Korea transformed from a mere curiosity about an unknown land to an ambivalent perception of a troublesome but pitiable country. American views became more sophisticated at the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. Accordingly, the center of American attention to Korea was connected to its interest in Japan, as the newly rising imperial country from the beginning. Not only American interest in Japanese movements in East Asia and the Pacific grew throughout the early twentieth century, but it was also concerned Japan’s adoption of imperialistic rhetoric in its own interpretation of the political landscape. All of this contributed to development of question about the American role in East Asia and its effectiveness in the future.

Japanese officials’ campaign to present Japan as a colonizing power helped shape American views of Korea. By establishing itself as a colonizer, Japan sought to enter the civilized world along with Western powers, which it had hoped for long since the humiliating moment of unequal treaty in 1854. Korea was the easiest target to experiment and propaganda Japan’s power. As we have examined, Japanese authors contrasted

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<sup>184</sup> “The great powers, including the United States, offered no objection, though their treaties with Korea entitled them to raise objections and put obstacles in Japan’s way. They refrained from doing this because, no doubt, the annexation had long been expected and regarded as inevitable” (“Korea Annexed by Japan,” *Chautauquan* 60 [Nov 1910]: 331).

<sup>185</sup> Griffis, “Japan’s Absorption of Korea.”

“backward Korea” to “modern Japan.” They also built up Japan’s legitimacy in colonizing Korea, especially from the perspective of national security. Our analysis of various American writings on Korea in this period has demonstrated that these American observers unquestioningly accepted the Japanese account. Therefore, the Korean annexation in 1910 was not at all surprising, nor was it cause for concern among most American opinion makers. Although Korean intellectuals asserted the autonomy of their country, their voice was yet too soft to be heard by anyone outside of Korea.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Military-Rule Period (1910-1919) and the March First Movement (1919)**

#### **Introduction**

Within a decade of the Japanese annexation of Korea, America's attitude toward Korea fundamentally changed from that of a distant spectator to that of a rather inquisitive observer. The critical turning point came during March and April of 1919, when over half a million Koreans participated in the March First Movement, which was the first nationwide movement against Japanese colonial rule.<sup>1</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Western world viewed Korea as a backward and uncivilized country that was ruled by the incompetent old Chosôn government. Less than ten years after the annexation of Korea, Korean nationalists initiated a series of demonstrations against Japan. The March First Movement, in particular, became known internationally and caused the American public to reconsider and reexamine their understanding of Korea and the "Korean problem," which, ostensibly, had not mattered for the Western world. If in 1910 the most common perception was that the Korean people were indifferent toward their own country's fate or to the civilized world, by 1919 Korea was seen as politically active and problematic: "not

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<sup>1</sup> Japanese officials counted 553 killed and over 12,000 arrested from the movement, while Korean nationalist sources tallied 7,500 killed and 45,000 arrested (Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun* [New York, NY: Norton & Company, 1997], 155).

an extinct but an active volcano,” or “the Ireland of the Far East.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, Koreans’ nationalistic movement from 1919 and onward provoked outside observers, especially American ones, to view conditions in Korea as “problem.”

The Movement occurred in a particular context. Japan’s rule of force in the first decade of colonial rule, the so called “Military rule” (*budan seiji* in Japanese; *mudan t’ongch’i* in Korean), had provoked the Korean people to rise up against the foreign colonizers. Japanese authorities employed extremely forceful policies during these years, mainly because of the “sharp resistance at their accession to power in the period 1905-10.”<sup>3</sup> It was literally a military rule: the first Governor-general, Masatake Terauchi, was a military man; gendarmerie forces was established; officials and even classroom teachers wore uniforms and carried swords; and Koreans were not permitted to assemble or publish. Yet, signs of the rising Korean nationalist spirit appeared everywhere both inside and outside of the Korean peninsula.

Along with the Korean people’s protests during these early years of colonialism, debate over World War I presented an opportunity for American supporters of the Korean cause to criticize the United States’ inaction against Japan’s rapacious actions in Korea. Wartime discussion led to the debate over the position of the United States in the world—a world transformed after the first major war among great powers. In particular, Woodrow Wilson’s attempts to form the League of Nations were evidence of his vision of a peaceful world order under the civilized and puritanical American ideals. Especially,

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<sup>2</sup> “A Japanese Proposal for Free Korea,” *Literary Digest* 63 (Oct 25, 1919): 23.

<sup>3</sup> Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 152.



his idea of “self-determination” had a fundamental and deep impact on the Korean nationalist movement itself as well as on American’s perception of Korea in this period.<sup>4</sup>

As recent scholarship has maintained, it is important to distinguish between “mass opinion,” on the one hand, and “public judgment,” on the other. According to Daniel Yankelovich, “mass opinion” refers to the volatile, confused, ill-informed, and emotionally clouded public responses to an issue when underlying value conflicts remain unresolved. “Public judgment,” on the other hand, refers to the public’s viewpoint once people have had an opportunity to confront an issue for a time and have arrived at a settled conviction. It is the sum of people’s second thoughts after they have pondered an issue deeply enough to resolve conflicts and tradeoffs and to accept responsibility for the consequences of their beliefs.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, the March First Movement caused the American perception of the Korean problem to transition from “mass opinion” to “public judgment,” particularly for intellectuals and opinion makers. This chapter explores how the March First Movement and its aftermath precipitated this transition.

## **1. Prologue of the March First Movement**

### (1) The 1911 Conspiracy Case: Persecution of Christianity?

Although the Korean problem did not draw worldwide attention until the March First Movement in 1919, the anti-Japanese sentiment in Korea had already been made known to the American public through mass media, daily newspapers, and magazines.

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<sup>4</sup> Erez Manela calls the influence of Wilson’s self-determination on the colonial world the “Wilsonian moment.” He argues, “a positive, even idealized image of America has been no less, and perhaps more influential in the history of the American impact on the world” (Manela, xi).

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Yankelovich and Sidney Harman, *Starting with the People* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 9-10.

News about the so-called “Conspiracy Case”<sup>6</sup> in 1911 was the first sensational incident to be transmitted to the outside world and known among the American readers since the annexation in 1910. In December 1911, Japanese authorities had arrested 105 Korean Christian leaders, falsely accusing them of conspiring to assassinate Terauchi Masatake, the first Japanese Governor-General of Korea.

At first, the Japanese police arrested about 700 people for the charge, and held 123 for public trial. Among 123, 105 people received a verdict of guilty. After more than two-years of hearings, a hundred of the accused were acquitted. There was no conclusive evidence against them other than the confessions of guilt that they were said to have made in the course of the preliminary investigation. Six accused, including Yun Ch’i-ho, were convicted in October 1913 by the Taegu Court of Appeal and sentenced by the Supreme Court to six years of penal servitude. Sixteen months later, in February 1915, the six who had been convicted were finally released through amnesty.

Historians have usually understood the “Conspiracy Case” as part of a Japanese effort to dissolve a secret society, the New People’s Society (*Sinminhoe* in Korean). The Japanese suspected that the society was a terrorist group opposed to its rule in Korea. The New People’s Society became a target because of its regional base in northwest Korea, which was assumed to be rebellious toward the central administration. In addition, the Christian influence among its members was thought to encourage anti-Japanese activities. Throughout the course of the trial, Japanese authorities accused 24 missionaries from the

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<sup>6</sup> The case was called “Chosôn Conspiracy Case,” “Sunch’ôn Conspiracy Case,” or “Sinminhoe Case” by contemporary Korean and Japanese newspapers. The common term used in English-language writings was “The Conspiracy Case.” Its official name during the trial was “The Conspiracy Case of Attempted Assassination of Governor-General Terauchi.” Because scholars consider this case a Japanese fabrication than a conspiracy, it is usually called in a neutral name, the “105 Persons Case,” in Korean (Yun Kyông-ro, *Paegoin sagôn kwa sinminhoe yôn’gu* [A Study on the 105 Persons Case and Sinminhoe] [Seoul: Ilji-sa, 1990], 9).

United States and Britain as assisting conspirators. The Conspiracy Case was a result of an effort by the Japanese authorities to make an example of how strictly they would deal with any hint of suspicious activities, not only those among Koreans, but also among foreign citizens in Korea. The focus here is how Americans saw the case and how the American audience, mainly intellectuals, viewed and reacted to the news, rather than the nature of the case or trial.

What made the case sensational in the United States, far away from the place where the incident occurred, were the large number of accused, the suspicion that the Japanese used torture to elicit confessions, and the involvement of American missionaries. As known throughout news reports, the majority of the prosecuted men were Christians, most of whom had connections with the American Presbyterian or Methodist missions in Korea.<sup>7</sup> The case, regardless of its nature or background, naturally became a subject of debate among American opinion makers as to whether or not the Japanese were persecuting Christians and whether American missionaries were endangered.

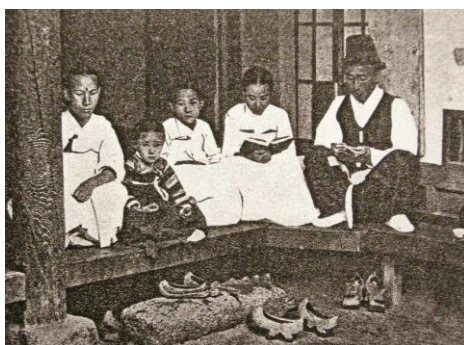
American missionaries were the first to transmit the news of the case to the United States. Facing the situation in Korea, especially the unexpected charges against them, the missionaries in Korea requested a hearing with the Governor-General.<sup>8</sup> But

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<sup>7</sup> "Korean Conspiracy Case." *Independent* 73 (Dec 5, 1912), 1329. According to a survey by Japanese police, among the 105 offenders, 81 were Protestants and 2 were Catholics. 2 were Ch'ôndogyo, and the rest two had no religion (Government-general, "Reports on the Conspiracy Case and the Trial"; and The Office of the Japan Chronicle, "The Korean Conspiracy Trial," 2 vols, Kobe, Japan, 1912 and 1913, quoted in Yun, 89).

<sup>8</sup> As representatives of the missionary groups in Korea, O. R. Avison, Samuel A. Moffett, and Norman C. Whittemore met with Governor-general Terauchi on January 23rd, 1912. In this meeting, the missionaries said that mission groups in Korea were trying to follow the Japanese control of Korea and had no intention of protesting against it; they testified that the accused Koreans were highly-respected men and questioned the methods of the investigation. The meeting ended without any clear answer or resolution from the Japanese authorities ("Summary of the Meeting between the Governor-General Terauchi and American

after failing to reach any agreements with Japanese authorities,<sup>9</sup> they formally asked for help from their mission headquarters in the United States,<sup>10</sup> while informally transmitting the situation to their fellow Christians in the United States. A July 1912 editorial in *Missionary Review of the World*, a renowned missionary magazine, mentioned that it was receiving many correspondences from missionaries in the Far East who described the case and the conditions of the Korean Christians.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 6. Christian Koreans worship. American audiences viewed such images as typical of the Korean people's devotion to Christianity.**

Source: W. A. Noble, "Christianity in Korea To-day," *Missionary Review of the World* 44 (Sep 1921): 687.

Accordingly, mission boards in the United States contacted the U.S. government

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Missionaries," Ministry of Foreign Affairs ed., *Documents of Foreign Affairs of Japan* 45, no. 1, 458-61, quoted from Nagata Akifumi, *Japanese Rule of Korea*, 51-52).

<sup>9</sup> Comments on the missionaries' effort to make a resolution were common in articles dealing with the Case. See "Cruelties to Korean Christians," *Literary Digest* 44 (Mar 16, 1912): 1302 for example.

<sup>10</sup> H. Underwood attended the meeting of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in May 1912 and presented the serious situation in Korea, proposing that the case and the situation should be revealed to the public and that the Board should ask the American government to settle the problem ("Minutes," May 13, 1912, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Board of Foreign Missions, P.C.U.S.A., quoted in Yun, 158).

<sup>11</sup> "Editorial: Stirring Letters from Korea – Japanese Arrest of Korean Christians," *Missionary Review of the World* 35 (Jul 1912), 506). American missionaries, in letters to the mission boards in the United States, said that they did not know why young students from mission schools in Sunch'ôn were arrested. When they met with the imprisoned students, they heard that the Japanese suspected there was a plot to kill the Governor-General in Sunch'ôn. Although the missionaries were certain that the men and boys arrested were innocent, there were more arrests and several mission schools were closed (Ibid., 506-7). The Japanese gendarmerie began to oversee church gatherings such as Sunday services, and the number of attendants at Christian churches in the Sunch'ôn region rapidly decreased (*The Japan Times*, Feb 12, 1912).

and Japanese diplomats in the U.S. Notably, Arthur Brown initiated actions on the part of the missionary groups against the Japanese's handling of the case. Brown was the secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions at that time and author of a number of significant volumes about political, social, and religious problems in Asian countries. As we have examined in Chapter 1, he had advocated the Japanese annexation of Korea before 1910, arguing that since the Korean people had been unable to maintain their independence, they would be unable to do so in the future. However, as the secretary of the mission board, he was in a position that needed to react to the pleas of missionaries. He and other member of the missions went to Washington D.C. and met with Japanese First Secretary, Masanao Hanihara, Charge d' Affaires, and the newly-appointed Ambassador Viscount Chinda in order to request Japanese authorities' favorable handing of the case in February 1912, but without resolving any issues. While he and other members of the mission boards were making vain efforts to appeal to Japanese diplomats, Brown published highly detailed reports of the case in November 1912, as "the outcome of a conference of representatives of all the missionary organizations of the United States which [were] conducting work in Korea."<sup>12</sup>

Another American group that advocated on behalf of the accused Koreans came from personal were friends of Yun Ch'i-ho, the main figure of *Sinminhoe*.<sup>13</sup> Three senators and bishops of the Southern Methodist Church met with Japanese Ambassador Chinda, while those three and other friends of Yun sent a letter on Yun's behalf to

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur Judson Brown, "Foreword," *The Korean Conspiracy Case* (New York, Nov 20, 1912).

<sup>13</sup> Yun Ch'iho was the president of the Southern Methodist College at Song-do and Vice-President of the Korean YMCA at that time.

Japanese embassy.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, as Brown wrote in his booklet, “conditions in Korea grew worse and became public through other channels, as was inevitable in this age of travelers, telegraphs and newspapers.”<sup>15</sup> Whereas American news media had previously focused on how Korea was backward and had become the object of international competition in the East Asian region, in the period from 1911 to 1915, the Case and its meaning became the main focus when discussing Korea.<sup>16</sup> As mentioned above, the American media’s main concern in their coverage of the Case was Japan’s alleged persecution of Christianity in Korea.

Articles in American newspapers and magazines mostly were sympathetic toward the oppressed Koreans, giving the American readers an impression that “the real impulse to the terrific dragonade [*sic*] [was] a fierce aversion to Christianity and a determination to stamp out the Church in Korea.”<sup>17</sup> When all of the convicted withdrew their confessions in open court, saying that the police had cruelly tortured them and forced them to confess, Americans became increasingly convinced that Japanese was actively persecuting Christianity.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Augustus O. Bacon and Nathan P. Bryan were Georgia Senators. Sen. Hoke Smith was a Florida Senator who went to college with Yun. The Senators met with Ambassador Chinda on May 24, 1912. Bishops A. W. Wilson, W. B. Murrah, W. A. Candler, and E. E. Hoss sent a letter to Chinda on May 29, 1912. “Chinda Documents,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs ed., *Documents of Foreign Affairs of Japan* 45, no. 1 (Jun 5, 1912): 475-77, quoted in Nagata, *Japanese Rule of Korea*, 54.

<sup>15</sup> Brown, “The Korean Conspiracy Case,” 2.

<sup>16</sup> Twenty-three articles among forty-four about Korea published in major American periodicals in 1911 to 1915 focused on the Conspiracy Case and its aftermath in Korea.

<sup>17</sup> Confidential letters from the American missionaries, quoted in “Japan’s Clash with Korean Missions,” *Literary Digest* 44 (Mar 16, 1912), 536. According to a study by Eleanor Tupper and George E. McReynolds on American public opinion about Japan, most leading papers, including the New York Tribune, the New York Herald, the New York Sun, the Outlook, and the Independent, sympathized with the persecuted Koreans (Eleanor Tupper and George E. McReynolds, *Japan in American Public Opinion* [New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1937], 97).

<sup>18</sup> It was reported that the accused were “hung up by the thumbs, stripped, flogged until unconscious, starved, burnt with hot irons, scorched with charcoal fires, stripped naked in mid-winter, with ice water poured over them for hours at a time, pricked with knives, bound and left for hours in half stooping

Facing this public attention from abroad, the Japanese authorities hurriedly justified their policy. Japanese officials admitted to the American missionaries and missionary boards in the United States that many of the arrested were Christians, but denied that torture had been used. More importantly, they emphasized that their response had nothing to do with religion. Japanese asserted that they guaranteed religious freedom; their stated principle was that politics and religions should not be mixed, but always kept separate from each other.<sup>19</sup>

The main advocates for Japanese policy writing in the U.S. were private Japanese intellectuals. For example, in his contributions to periodicals in the United States, Kiyoshi K. Kawakami further emphasized that “Japan decided not only to allow foreign missionaries in Korea unrestricted freedom of religious propaganda, but to make them virtual coworkers in the grand undertaking of the regeneration of Korea.” On the other hand, he warned, “the missionaries were given to understand that Japan would not connive at the acts of those who, under guise of spiritual work, would not scruple to instigate the natives to oppose Japanese measures,” adding that it was but a thinly veiled secret that those Koreans who were engaged in sedition and conspiracy against the Japanese protectorate were under missionary influence and had made Christian churches and schools their havens of retreat. Therefore, he made it clear that given the missionaries’ unfriendly attitude toward Japanese rule, the presence of so large a number

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positions able neither to sit nor to stand, that their wrists were bound so tightly and left bound so long that pus issued from the swollen and suppurating parts, and other similar things, too numerous, too hideous, and too indecent to mention” (Albertus Pieters, “Korean Conspiracy Case,” *Independent* 74 [Mar 27, 1913]: 466).

<sup>19</sup> Memorandum from Count Terauchi to the Board of Foreign Missions, P.C.U.S.A., transmitted by the Imperial Japanese Embassy in Washington, D.C. quoted in “Cruelties to Korean Christians,” *Literary Digest* 44 (Mar 16, 1912): 1302; Cablegram from the Foreign Office by the Consulate-General of Japan in New York, appeared in *The New York Evening Post*, quoted in “Japan’s Clash with Korean Missions,” *Literary Digest* 44 (Mar 16, 1912): 536.

of foreign missionaries in Korea created a situation that demanded serious attention on the part of the Japanese authorities.

As Tupper and McReynolds observed via American mass media, “only a few of the church group” accepted the Japanese explanation that “the charges against Japan were false, and that Japan was not working against the interests of the Christian missions.”<sup>20</sup> There were still pro-Japanese writers: George Kennan, a journalist who used to describe pre-colonial Korea as backward and barbarian, asserted that the charge against the Japanese was a result of prejudice. He added that the report of persecution of Korean Christians was not trustworthy, as “the average Japanese is more likely to tell the truth, perhaps, than the average Korean.”<sup>21</sup> Sidney Gulick, an American missionary to Japan who was well-known for his campaign against California’s anti-Asian legislations in the United States, wrote that “Unless Japan is false to her record for the past forty years, she is not persecuting Christians or Christianity, but merely seeking to root out what is believed to be disloyalty, sedition, and anarchism.”<sup>22</sup> These pro-Japanese opinion makers agreed that native Korean violent “bandits” led the authorities inevitable to use harsh policy.

Most American commentators, however, were critical of the Japanese harsh rule in Korea. The booklet written by Brown mentioned above shows the major opinion raised about the case among the American elites. One of the main points he tried to make was that the accused Koreans were not of the criminal or irresponsible class of society, but

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<sup>20</sup> Tupper and McReynolds, 92.

<sup>21</sup> George Kennan, “Is Japan Persecuting Christians in Korea?” *Outlook* 102 [Dec 14, 1912]: 806-7.

<sup>22</sup> S. L. Gulick, “Japan Evangelist,” quoted in Kennan, “Is Japan Persecuting Christians in Korea?”



intelligent and self-respecting figures of the highest standing, most of them Christian.<sup>23</sup> He criticized the Japanese criminal code under which the Government-General could convict people merely for having entertained political opinions antagonistic to Japan. The hostile and unjudicial attitude of the court, he wrote, became more and more apparent as the trial proceeded, and even the Japanese media questioned the justice of Japan's methods in Korea.<sup>24</sup> He claimed that the mission boards were "not asking consideration for the accused Korean Christians because [they] believe them to be guilty, but because [they] believe that their guilt has not been reasonably established. [They] are therefore not imploring pardon, but urging thorough investigation."<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, speaking on behalf of Christian mission boards, Brown was careful in his comments on political issues. He stressed that the American missionaries were not anti-Japanese, but agreed with the Japanese colonization of Korea, because "it would be better both for Korea and for the world." He implied that what the mission boards were against was the recent actions of the gendarmerie, not the colonization of Korea itself, especially the civil government that Ito Hirobumi had established.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, other

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<sup>23</sup> According to Brown, two of the accused were Congregationalists, six Methodists, and eighty-nine Presbyterians. Of the Presbyterians, five were pastors, eight were elders, eight deacons of churches, ten leaders of village groups of Christians, forty-two baptized church members, and thirteen catechumens. Brown, "The Korean Conspiracy Case," 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Jiji Shimpō*, an influential Japanese daily newspaper, criticized the trial court for having a prejudicial and narrow-minded dealing with the case "due undoubtedly to the fact that the Court had too much fear of the Governor-General to assert the true dignity and inviolability of the judicial administration" (Ibid., 19-20).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 17-21.

<sup>26</sup> "The American missionaries were outspoken in praise of Prince Ito's policy and did everything in their power to influence the Koreans to accept it as best for their country" (Ibid., 3-4). It was a common opinion in the United States that the iron rule in Korea was due to Koreans' violent resistance, as seen in the Ito's assassination in 1909. Even an editorial in the *Missionary Review of the World*, the representative missionary journal, said that "it is also said that Koreans do not look on assassination with the same horror with which it is regarded in America, but consider it a legitimate weapon with which the weak may remonstrate against oppression" ("Editorial: The Japanese and Koreans," *The Missionary Review of the World* 36 [Jan 1913]: 59). In this context, the editor of the magazine *Independent* commented that after Ito Hirobumi was assassinated, it was not surprising that his successor as Governor-General was a military

commentators used a mild tone in determining whether Japan was persecuting Christians or not, saying the Japanese were suspicious of Christians, not because they were Christians, but because they happened to come from the more intelligent, independent classes of Korean society.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, many of Japanese high officials in Korea were Christian, according to an American newspaper correspondent in Tokyo. But the trouble was that none of them was really in power in Korea, as the whole civil administration was “completely overshadowed by the military establishment.”<sup>28</sup> The underlying idea was that the Conspiracy Case was a possible temporary deviation from the normal, reasonable, and modern system run by the Japanese authorities. The Case was a unique situation, whereby potentially violent and disorderly Koreans required swift and decisive action, necessitating the domination of the military gendarmerie over the civil administration.

In general, American opinion makers still maintained the belief that the Japanese system was reasonable as well as modern.<sup>29</sup> Some writers brought up news of the acquittal of all but six accused of the Case in 1913 to show that the Japanese Government had no prejudice against Christianity in Korea and to compliment its judiciary system.<sup>30</sup>

From this viewpoint, Brown believed that the Japanese policy in Korea was a

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figure, Terauchi. The editor added, “the Japanese authorities should be suspicious and watchful,” and it was not strange that they “should suspect the Christians of secret plottings.” He concluded, “It is to be hoped that the trials will be hastened after the long delay, and the guilty punished, the innocent freed, and conditions revert to those of confidence and peace. We have sufficient faith in Japanese justice to believe that this will be the case” (“Editorial: Korean Christian Arrests,” *Independent* 72 (Jun 13, 1912): 1339-40).

<sup>27</sup> “Stirring Letters from Korea,” 505.

<sup>28</sup> An article in *The Continent*, quoted in “Japan’s Clash with Korean Missions,” *Literary Digest* 44 (Mar 16, 1912): 536.

<sup>29</sup> The editor concluded, “It is to be hoped that the trials will be hastened after the long delay, and the guilty punished, the innocent freed, and conditions revert to those of confidence and peace. We have sufficient faith in Japanese justice to believe that this will be the case” (“Editorial,” *Independent* 72, 1339-40).

<sup>30</sup> “Korean Conspiracy Case,” *Independent* 74 (Mar 27, 1913): 677-78.

little harsh, but Japan will overcome difficulties in the colony soon. He concluded that American friends of Japan should help Japanese by frankly telling them about their wrongdoings:

The real friends of Japan at this juncture are [...] those who frankly tell their Japanese friends that “the recent course of the Gendarmerie in dealing with the people of Korea has awakened grave misgivings as to its justice, its effect upon the unhappy Koreans, and also upon that reputation for the humane and enlightened rule of a subject race which the Japanese have shown that they rightly value.” [...] Japan undoubtedly has a hard task in Korea, and the mission Boards earnestly desire to avoid anything that might make it more difficult. We cordially recognize the many splendid things that the Japanese have done, and we lament only that this unfortunate affair has done so much to prevent them from exerting their full beneficent effect. We are convinced, as we have been from the beginning, that as soon as the central Government in Tokyo and the Japanese nation as a whole know how their true purposes regarding the Koreans have been distorted by the Gendarmerie and the Judges of the lower Court in Seoul, they will take such action as will prove to all the world that the name of the era of the late Emperor, Meiji (Enlightenment), and that of the new Emperor, Taisho (Righteousness), are not empty names, but that they represent the real spirit and intent of the Japanese nation toward a subject race.<sup>31</sup>

In sum, while appeals from missionaries and efforts of mission boards in the United States to help “the innocent Koreans” spread news of Japanese military rule in colonial Korea, most American observers thought that civil government should replace the Japanese military rule, rather than decolonization. It was for both Korea and Japan.<sup>32</sup> The reactions from both Americans and the Japanese authorities to the Conspiracy Case foreshadowed the reaction from each later in the March First Movement.

## (2) The Korean Presence in the United States

### The Formation of a Korean Community

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<sup>31</sup> Brown, “The Korean Conspiracy Case,” 27.

<sup>32</sup> “Stirring Letters from Korea,” 512.

The migration of Korean people to the United States began in the 1880s. Between 1903 and 1920, some 8,000 Koreans left Korea for the United States. The Korean migrants were from diverse backgrounds—farmers, common laborers, bureaucrats, clerks, students, and so on.<sup>33</sup> Not only poverty and economic suffering, but also religious and political reasons encouraged many Koreans to immigrate to the United States.<sup>34</sup> According to Takai’s study, many Korean migrants left as political refugees, “escaping from Japanese-government persecution.” For them, Hawaii represented a haven from Japanese imperialism.<sup>35</sup> For Koreans who suffered economic hardships due to famine and drought, emigration to Hawaii was attractive with promise of free housing, medical care, and sixteen dollars a month (a small fortune to Koreans) for only 60 hours of labor in plantations each week. They borrowed money for transportation and settlement from a bank in Korea that was financed by the Hawaiian sugarcane planters.<sup>36</sup> About seven thousand Koreans arrived in Hawaii in the period between 1903 and 1905, as laborers for plantations.<sup>37</sup> Many of those who first came to Hawaii as plantation

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<sup>33</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 53.

<sup>34</sup> Some American missionaries helped recruit emigrants by encouraging their church members to join the emigration to Hawaii that was then taking place within the broader Korean society. As a result, the Christian influence was pervasive among the first group of Korean immigrants to Hawaii. (Patterson, 47-58).

<sup>35</sup> Takaki, 53-54.

<sup>36</sup> Patterson, 99-100; Takaki, 47-48.

<sup>37</sup> The white sugar planters in Hawaii employed native Hawaiians on a contract-labor basis to work the sugarcane fields and, due to a shortage of labor, began to recruit foreign immigrant laborers from the 1850s. As racial prejudice against the Chinese resulted in the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in California in 1882 and the first legislative restriction limiting the number of Chinese allowed to enter in Hawaii was enacted in 1883, the planters turned to Japanese and Koreans for a sufficient supply of inexpensive plantation labor (Patterson, 2-5).

laborers, their relatives, or “picture brides”<sup>38</sup> migrated again to the mainland of the United States after their initial contract expired, expecting better wages and better working and living conditions on the continent.<sup>39</sup> The Korean population on the continental United States was counted as 1,224 in 1920, and 1,860 in the 1930 U.S. census, although it is assumed that the actual number was larger.<sup>40</sup> In addition to economic reasons, educational and political reasons motivated Koreans to migrate to the United States. However, Korean immigration was decreased since 1905, when the Japanese protectorate prohibited Korean emigration to Hawaii “in order to curb Korean labor competition with Japanese workers in Hawaii and to cut off the source of Korean-independence activities in the United States.”<sup>41</sup>

In their geographical and occupational origins in the homeland and in their motives for migrating, Korean immigrants were rather heterogeneous compared to Chinese and Japanese immigrants.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the Koreans showed strong solidarity, even though they did not develop their own residential communities in early years as the Japanese and the Chinese did. As Takaki argues, the Koreans in the U.S. showed intense

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<sup>38</sup> The picture bride system was marriage contracted between immigrant Korean males and females residing in Korea via the exchanging of photographs. The practice began among Japanese in the United States (H. Brett Melendy, *The Oriental Americans* [New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1972], 126; Takaki, 46-47).

<sup>39</sup> By 1907, around one thousand Koreans had re-migrated inland to Utah, Colorado, Arizona and Alaska, but over half of the Korean population in the U.S. settled in California (Takaki, 270).

<sup>40</sup> Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census: 1920, III, Population by State*, 693; Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census: 1930, II, General Report*, 88, quoted in Hyung June Moon, “The Korean Immigrants in America: The Quest for Identity in the Formative Years, 1903-1918,” Ph.D. diss., University of Nevada, Reno, 1976, 97.

<sup>41</sup> As the Korean labor supply was cut off in 1905, the Hawaiian planters began to import laborers from the Philippines (Takaki, 27, 56-57).

<sup>42</sup> Moon, 59-60.

ethnic solidarity due to a unique “necessity,” that is, their sense of obligation to struggle against colonialism in Korea.<sup>43</sup>

The living and working conditions in the United States were disappointing for the majority of Koreans, since they had to work long hours in the highly demanding workplaces, like plantations, mining camps, and railroads. In addition, Korean immigrants, like other Asians, were seen as “strangers from a different shore” and experienced racial prejudice and “ethnic antagonism” from white workers.<sup>44</sup> However, many Koreans who wanted to go back to their home country were afraid of the Japanese rule there. Their doubly marginalized status as a colonial people back in Korea and strangers in the host country gave them a strong, politically oriented national identity. The fact that the Japanese were restricting the right to speak imposed the burden of what Moon calls “self-appointed-savior-mentality” on Korean immigrants.<sup>45</sup>

The sense that there was no one to protect them besides themselves inspired Korean-Americans to form nationalist organizations, such as *Sinminhoe* (The New People’s Association, est. 1903 in Hawaii) and *Kongnip hyôp’oe* (est. 1905 in San Francisco, which became *Taehan kungminhoe* [the Korean National Association, or KNA] in 1909). While many other immigrant communities formed nationalist organizations to promote ethnic solidarity and a sense of security,<sup>46</sup> Korean immigrants

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<sup>43</sup> Takaki, 270; Moon, 132-36.

<sup>44</sup> Takaki, 271-72.

<sup>45</sup> Moon, 84, 161. A leader of the Korean group once said, “Now our business should be for all Koreans and our activity should be based on the welfare of our mother country. Thus we are not sojourners, but political wanderers, and we are not laborers but righteous army soldiers” (*Sinhanminbo*, Dec 1, 1909, quoted in Moon, 161).

<sup>46</sup> Takaki explains that for Japanese immigrants, ethnicity was more significant factor to determine social relations in the mainland than class, which was prioritized in Hawaii. He argues, racial exclusionism in the mainland America “defined the Japanese as “strangers” and pushed the Issei [first generation of Japanese immigrants] into a defensive Japanese ethnicity and group self-reliance” (Takaki, 180).

had another motivation: at the heart of these organizations was the struggle for Korean independence from Japan. As Takaki observes, the first generation of Koreans in America felt themselves as sojourners and found themselves suddenly becoming *yumin*, drifting people, after Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910. This self-identity as drifting people drove Korean immigrants to create and rely on those nationalist organizations. These organizations developed as the center of the Korean nationalist movement in the United States. A distinctive aspect of the Korean community in the United States was its interwoven relationship with church organizations. The high percentage of Christian converts among Korean-Americans<sup>47</sup> and especially among nationalist leaders enabled this.<sup>48</sup> The Korean immigrant group began to publish Korean-language newspapers almost immediately after they settled in the United States, as early as 1904.<sup>49</sup>

As one of their nationalist activities, the KNA began a campaign to convince Korean immigrants to stop returning to Korea in the period right before annexation of Korea. The point of the campaign was that Koreans living in the United States, given much more freedom and more education and economic opportunities than they had had at home, should develop themselves here and contribute to the homeland's emancipation from the oppressors, rather than just returning to Korea. One resolution passed by the KNA general meeting in 1909 was meant to dissuade Korean immigrants from returning to Korea:

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<sup>47</sup> It was estimated that by the early 1910s, Christian converts constituted more than half of the Korean-American population (Kim Wôn-yong, *Chaemi hanin osim nyônsa* [Fifty Year History of Koreans in America], edited by Son Pogi [Seoul: Hyeon, 2004], 44).

<sup>48</sup> Moon comments that the 'mingling' of religion and politics was shown in the fact that "membership in the Korean Christian churches did not create bonds of fellowship with the Japanese Christians," because "the Korean Church, in a way, was a means to the expression of national spirit" (Moon, 233).

<sup>49</sup> Moon, 272-73.

Koreans in Korea are not able to come to the United States even if they use fortune. Therefore, the Koreans in the United States should not waste opportunities. We dissuade the Koreans from returning to Korea unless they achieve scholarship or are financially successful.<sup>50</sup>

An editorial in *Sinhanminbo*, a Korean-language newspaper based in California,<sup>51</sup> lamented,

...If one says going back home, it is possible when he has a country and home. If not, one cannot say so. I hear that some Koreans in America have in mind to return; I believe that they should discern if they have a country and home or not. Do you think that you have a country because there is the king? The Ch'angdôk Palace is just a prison.... Let's go back home only when the freedom bell rings and the independence flag is raised and we can only advance, not retreat....<sup>52</sup>

These Korean nationalist organizations gave financial and moral support for two Korean convicted prisoners, Chang In-hwan and Chôn Myông-un, who shot to death Durham White Stevens, an American diplomat and an advisor for the Japanese Foreign Ministry, in March 1908 in San Francisco.<sup>53</sup> In 1904, the Japanese government appointed Stevens an advisor for foreign affairs of the Protectorate of Korea. Because Koreans regarded him as a “faithful Japanese servant” and traitor to Korea, Stevens had been the subject of severe criticism by the Korean newspapers in the U.S. before his arrival in San Francisco. After the incident, Korean newspapers justified the assassination by saying, “the violence was hatched by a spirit of patriotism so it could not be judged by the law, nor by the community of civilized people; rather it was the case of a man who, himself

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<sup>50</sup> “Announcement of Resolution at the North American General Meeting of Korean National Association,” *Sinhanminbo*, Feb 24, 1909.

<sup>51</sup> The first Korean language newspaper published in the United States was *Sinjosinmun* in Honolulu. Since *Sinjosinmun*, Korean language newspapers and magazines flourished. In 1910, all Korean newspapers had failed or were merged into the *Sinhanminbo* in San Francisco and *Kukminbo* in Honolulu (Moon, 274).

<sup>52</sup> “There Is No Country to Return If It Is Not Independent,” *Sinhanminbo*, Apr 14, 1909.

<sup>53</sup> Stevens was on his way to the United States on official duty and to visit his family. He died two days after the shooting. For a description of the incident, and Chang and Chôn's statements after the shooting, see Dudden, 81-9; and Moon, 329-46.



well-clothed, did not think of freezing; himself well-fed, did not consider the hungry.”<sup>54</sup>

At the news of the incident, Korean people within and outside of the United States donated money to support the defense of the trial.<sup>55</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Korean immigrant group was sensitive to the responses of foreign countries to the news about Korea. This led them to have a realistic sense of international affairs. At the news of the annexation of Korea in 1910, the Korean newspapers in the United States not only expressed emotions of sorrow and grief, but also demonstrated a realization of the coldness and selfishness in the world of diplomatic relations. An editorial in *Sinhanminbo* asked,

Why would foreign countries care that a country perishes, if they benefit from it? For this reason, Japan could not abolish the extraterritoriality and preceding tariff system of foreign countries [in Korea]. So international relations is not a matter of justice, but of advantages and disadvantages.<sup>56</sup>

Another article on the same issue pointed out,

Ever since Japan occupied Korea, there have been various opinions around the world... American and other countries' newspapers say that Japan and Korea had been in the same position, but Japanese people are successfully united and accomplished enlightenment. Korea could not do so, and fell back behind the others, and they ask how it was possible for Japan to occupy the country. Or they say that it does not matter if it does not cause damage to their countrymen's trade. Their tone is only cold.<sup>57</sup>

Korean immigrants' will to struggle against Japanese colonialism, along with their enduring racial discrimination and hard working conditions, fostered a strong ethnic identity, which became a source of community.<sup>58</sup> Korean-language

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<sup>54</sup> *Kongnipshinmun*, Mar 25, 1908; Moon, 353-54.

<sup>55</sup> Kim recorded that Korean immigrants' donations reached \$7,390 for the two Koreans (Kim Wôn-yong, 243-44).

<sup>56</sup> *Sinhanminbo*, Sep 21, 1910.

<sup>57</sup> "Attitude of the Nations of the Annexation," *Sinhanminbo*, Sep 21, 1910.

<sup>58</sup> Takaki, 270.

newspapers played a role of awakening the Korean immigrants' patriotism.

Living as a minority group in the United States at times gave the Korean people chances to project their identity as Koreans toward the rest of American society.

### The Hemet Accident (1913): Koreans Protecting Themselves

One day in June 1913, eleven Koreans arrived in a small town called Hemet, California. They visited the town to work as apricot pickers. However, the news of the arrival of the foreign workers from Asia angered the local workers. When the Koreans stopped to eat at a café a crowd gathered in front of the building. As the Korean workers came out, the crowd threatened the Koreans and asked them to leave. They left the town on the next train.<sup>59</sup> After this 'Hemet Accident' was reported, the Secretary of State ordered an investigation into the incident and the Japanese consulate office suggested legal protection over the mistreated Korean workers. Nevertheless, the Koreans rejected the interference of Japan, saying that they were satisfied with the indemnity paid by the rancher. Moreover, they declared that they were not Japanese subjects, as they had left their native land before it was annexed by Japan.<sup>60</sup>

Although what happened in Hemet on that day was a short episode, it marked the first time that the Korean community in the U.S. publicly positioned itself as separate and independent from Japanese authority. In the beginning, the occurrence in Hemet became

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<sup>59</sup> For details about the Hemet incident, see the following articles: "Drive out Orientals," *Los Angeles Times [LAT]*, Jun 27, 1913; "Drive Asiatics from Town: Californians Thought Japanese, but Found Them Koreans," *New York Times [NYT]*, Jun 27, 1913; "Drive out Koreans: Citizens of Hemet, Cal, Load Fruit Pickers on Train, Japanese Make a Protest, Indignity to Mikado's Subjects Opposed by Mayor of Town," *Washington Post [WP]*, Jun 27, 1913; "Hemet Mayor Worried, Disclaims Responsibility," *LAT*, Jun 28, 1913.

<sup>60</sup> "Hemet Inquiry Is Dropped: Korean Fruit Pickers Not Japanese Subjects," *LAT*, Jul 2, 1913; "Japan Sends a New Note," *NYT*, Jul 2, 1913.

a hot issue in American society, and was linked to a larger discussion of anti-Asian immigrant sentiments on the Pacific Coast.<sup>61</sup> To understand the significance and meaning of the incident, one needs to see the background of the anti-Japanese (and Asian) immigrant movement in American society. The number of Japanese immigrants to the U.S. mainland greatly increased at the turn of the twentieth century. The majority of Japanese immigrants came to work as farmers and peasants in the U.S., coming to play an important role in local agriculture, and began to compete with American farmers. As the numbers of these cheap and strange immigrants from Asia surged, they came to be seen as a threat to the American agricultural enterprise. As a result, there appeared conspicuous anti-Japanese movements among American laborers in communities along the Pacific Coast where the Japanese population was clustered, centering in organizations such as the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League in San Francisco (est. 1905). Furthermore, the hostile sentiments against Japanese immigration to the U.S. led to a series of policies on the part of California and the federal government.<sup>62</sup>

Amidst the increase of anti-Japanese sentiments, American major newspapers reported the Hemet incident. Some misreported first that the Asian workers who were forced to leave were Japanese, but even after the correction that they were in fact Koreans, the news still remained sensational. The news soon provoked instant reactions

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<sup>61</sup> The crowd who drove out the Korean workers in Hemet thought that the workers were Japanese. *NYT*, Jun 27, 1913.

<sup>62</sup> The California Board of Education passed a regulation that segregated Asian children into a separate public elementary school in 1906; the California state legislature passed a bill to ban land ownership by aliens in 1913; in a California referendum in 1920, two-thirds of the voters approved tightening up the 1913 alien land law; although the Japanese government agreed to greatly restrict the number of Japanese immigrants to the U.S. in the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-1908, persistent anti-Japanese sentiment finally led to the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924 that completely barred Japanese immigration to the United States. For more about legislative actions and racial discrimination against the Japanese, see Izumi Hirobe, *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice: Modifying the Exclusion Clause of the 1924 Immigration Act* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 1-10.

from both the American and Japanese governments that linked the incident in Hemet to the sensitive issue of legislature about Japanese immigrants.<sup>63</sup> The Secretary of State, William J. Bryan, ordered an investigation into the Hemet incident, requesting the Department of Justice to inquire into the circumstances of the case. The instant response from the American government was from anxiety that the incident would strengthen adverse sentiments between the United States and Japan. For Japan, this case might offer a timely chance to ask American government to guarantee equal and better treatment of Japanese subjects in the United States.<sup>64</sup> The shared assumption here was that, since was “a province of Japan,”<sup>65</sup> the Koreans were under the protection of the Japanese government.

However, the incident was concluded in an unexpected way: when the Japanese consulate officials in San Francisco met Korean representatives, Koreans made it clear they wanted no interference from the Japanese government. The reason was that they were Koreans, not Japanese, and they were responsible for themselves. They insisted that Japan had no reason to protest to Washington for the Koreans’ troubles.<sup>66</sup> *Sinhan minbo*, the Korean-language newspaper in San Francisco, complained that the Japanese unnecessarily made the incident a controversy that Koreans did not want. The implication of this comment was that the Koreans wanted to minimize the event, and they were satisfied that the Korean workers involved were already paid for expenses for traveling to

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<sup>63</sup> One article commented, “This act, coming at this particular time, when relations between the two governments have been at a serious stage over the anti-Japanese legislation in the California Legislature, was regarded as especially unfortunate because of the adverse sentiment that will be aroused in Japan by the action of the California citizens” (“May Order Investigation,” *LAT*, Jun 27, 1913).

<sup>64</sup> “Calls It Boys’ Prank,” *LAT*, Jun 27, 1913.

<sup>65</sup> “May Order Investigation,” *LAT*, Jun 27, 1913.

<sup>66</sup> “Letter from Mr. Ko Pyông-gwan,” *Sinhanminbo*, Jul 4, 1913; “Koreans – Not Japanese,” *LAT*, Jul 6, 1913.

and from Hemet.<sup>67</sup> The Koreans did not intend to be involved in the tense relationship between Japan and the United States, but considered Japan as irrelevant to them.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the President of the Korean National Association, David Lee (Yi Tae-wi in Korean) telegraphed the State Department: “the Koreans involved were not Japanese subjects, because they had left their native land before it was annexed by Japan.”<sup>69</sup> It was a relief for the American government who concerned the Hemet incident as complicating the controversy over Japanese immigrants to the U.S. Secretary of State Bryan ordered the discontinuation of the investigation into the Hemet incident, quoting the Korean claim that they were not Japanese. For Japan, because of the strong opposition from the Koreans that they did not want Japanese aid or interference, “it was difficult to use the incident without exposing their harsh colonial policy over Korea as well as their diplomatic maneuver with the protest of the Alien Land Law.”<sup>70</sup>

Despite the short time from the event to its conclusion, the Hemet incident revealed several significant and symbolic dimensions of Korean immigrants’ political representation in the United States. Above all, it was the first case where a Korean immigrant group actively contacted the United States government and clarified their

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<sup>67</sup> “Letter from Mr. Ko Pyông-gwan.”

<sup>68</sup> “Seventy Dollars of Indemnity,” *Sinhanminbo*, Jul 4, 1913.

<sup>69</sup> “Hemet Inquiry Is Dropped: Korean Fruit Pickers Not Japanese Subjects,” *LAT*, Jul 2, 1913; “Japan Sends a New Note,” *NYT*, Jul 2, 1913. The whole text of Lee’s telegram read: “I have the honor to inform you of the recent expulsion of Korean laborers from Hemet, California, and to address you concerning the Japanese Consulate-General’s demand for indemnity. We, the Koreans in America, are not Japanese subjects, for we left Korea before the annexation of Korea by Japan, and we will never submit to her as long as the sun remains in the heavens. The intervention of the Japanese Consulate-General in Korean matters is illegal, so I have the honor of requesting you to discontinue the discussion of this case with the Japanese Government representatives. If there is any financial question between the Koreans and the persons who expelled our laborers, we will settle it without Japanese interference. Yours most respectfully, David Lee, President, Korean National Association of North America, June 30, 1931” (Korean Information Bureau and the League of the Friends of Korea, *Independence for Korea* [Philadelphia, 1919], 9).

<sup>70</sup> Moon, 390-92.

national identity. The Korean community's response to the incident clarified that they were to legally and diplomatically represent and be responsible for their own, without interference from the Japanese government. Through this specific case, the Korean group chose its identity as "drifting people" rather than colonial subjects under the Japanese government's protection. Secretary of State Bryan was reported to have stated, "United States official functions should, henceforth, deal directly with the Korean National Association on all matters concerning Koreans."<sup>71</sup>

From then until the Korean Provisional Government was established in 1919, the Korean National Association dealt with de facto matters that were usually overseen by consulate offices in the U.S. The Association made arrangements with the American immigration offices to admit Koreans who arrived without passports. At times the Association even provided references to immigration offices for identities of Koreans who had no required documents or money could enter the ports.<sup>72</sup> The KNA was incorporated as a benevolent organization in California in 1914 and it proclaimed that the organization's purpose was to protect and educate Koreans in North America.<sup>73</sup> The organization went on to issue Korean membership certificates to Korean immigrants to use in lieu of a passport.<sup>74</sup> The Korean community established vigilante town associations (*Tonghoe*) to protect women, to maintain law and order. *Tonghoe* also functioned to

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<sup>71</sup> Statement of the State Department," (July 2, 1913), quoted in Kim Wôn-yong, 97.

<sup>72</sup> Moon, 394-97.

<sup>73</sup> "Approval of the North America Council [of KNA]," *Sinhanminbo*, Apr 9, 1914.

<sup>74</sup> Moon, 396-97.

solidify Korean immigrants for nationalistic cause.<sup>75</sup> It symbolized the Korean community's desire of self-protectiveness and self-representation.

Second, how the Koreans reacted to solve the Hemet incident indicated that they were able and willing to come together around their national identity to struggle against racial discrimination in American society. Although it could have been financially advantageous if they had accepted Japanese citizenship, most Koreans did not even consider this as an option. Even if they felt racially discriminated against, Korean immigrants usually chose to Americanize themselves rapidly, rather than complain about how they were treated in the United States.<sup>76</sup>

The Korean people's response to the Hemet incident demonstrated a will to represent their own rights in American society. Occurring in the time when the United States and Japan were negotiating the Alien Land Bill, the event in Hemet itself became sensational and was viewed seriously in American media outlets and governmental reports. Accordingly, the unexpected conclusion of the incident by the Korean immigrant group made a deep impression on American readers. Before Koreans proclaimed national independence in the March First Movement in 1919, the Korean immigrant group in the U.S., through a small but portentous incident in Hemet, clarified that they had a strong will for self-defense, autonomy, and self-representation, and severely rejected of Japan's intention to include them in its sphere outside of Korea. It was a prelude to the earnest

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<sup>75</sup> According to Moon, Korean immigrants formed vigilante town associations "wherever a sizable group of Koreans settled." The organization of the vigilante town association usually had a headman and one or two sergeants-at-arms or police, under the rules and regulations of the town. As the KNA was established in 1909, vigilante town associations were either absorbed into, or remained in a cooperative relationship with, their local KNA branch. For more about Korean vigilantism, see Moon, 237-49.

<sup>76</sup> The fast Americanization of the Korean immigrants was not only a way of surviving in a strange land, but also politically motivated. The Korean group perceived that Japan had conquered Korea by accepting Western knowledge and considered that becoming "Americanized or Westernized was the surest way for them to best the Japanese and to regain national independence" (Moon, 162-63).

and well-known nationalist movement by Koreans from 1919 onward. This newly created impression of the Korean group within American society later contributed to the U.S. government's recognition of their community as separate from the Japanese immigrants.

Lastly, it is essential that the strong national display of Korean identity in the Hemet incident was possible because it happened outside of Korea during the period of Japan's military rule. Around the time of Korea's annexation and also at the end of the Great War, the KNA and other Korean nationalist groups in the U.S. sent delegates to postwar conferences to appeal for Korea's national independence. Although these nationalist activities did not make a huge sensation until the March First Movement, they influenced on the Declaration of Independence by Korean students in Tokyo (February 1919). The declaration in Tokyo again provoked the March First Movement a month later.<sup>77</sup> Because Japan's military rule in the first decade of colonial rule in Korea suppressed anti-Japanese protest, it was Korean migrant groups outside of their native country who ignited nationalist sentiments. Koreans abroad thus exerted a strong influence on start of the nation-wide protest in Korea against Japanese colonialism in 1919.

### (3) The United States Reconsiders the Annexation of Korea (1915-1916)

Within several years after the Conspiracy Case and the Hemet Incident, American opinion makers began to pay more attention to issues in Korea. From 1915 to 1916, the American mass media dealt with the background story of the annexation of Korea, even though there was no special news from Korea. It is worth noting that this occurrence

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<sup>77</sup> Chông Pyông-chun, *Unam yi sŭngman yôn'gu* (Study of Unam Syngman Rhee) (Seoul: Yôksa pip'yông-sa, 2005), 278.



came at the same time as debate on American foreign policy during World War I. It was Homer B. Hulbert, supporter of Korean independence, who at first discussed the Korean annexation in relation to American foreign policy. As seen in the earlier chapter, Hulbert had been a missionary and special delegate of Korean Emperor Kojong in 1905 and in 1907. After being compelled to return to the United States in May 1907 by the Japanese authorities due to his political activities in Korea, Hulbert continued to support the Korean nationalists' cause by giving public lectures and contributing articles to daily newspapers and journals.

In his contribution to the *New York Times* on December 12, 1915, Hulbert indirectly criticized American policy concerning Korea's fate, comparing the Japanese annexation to the German invasion of Belgium in 1914. The German invasion of Belgium, the so-called "Rape of Belgium," was widely viewed as being in violation of the Treaty of London signed in 1839, which guaranteed the independence and neutrality of Belgium. This new state of affairs required reconsideration of the American place in the world, which imposed upon President Woodrow Wilson the dual task of bringing the United States into the world while maintaining moral purity and distance, especially from the War.<sup>78</sup> Woodrow Wilson shared the majority view of American opinion makers in 1914 that the United States should stay out of the war. But he also stated that the international system would have to be completely reformed under American leadership, which developed into his famous "Fourteen Points" at the end of World War I. Still, Wilson preferred the United States to appear "neutral so as to be able to play the role of the arbiter and get the belligerents to peace negotiations based on the premise of no

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<sup>78</sup> Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1995), 112.

gains.” On the other hand, Theodore Roosevelt argued for immediate military preparedness to intervene, criticizing the German invasion of the neutral country, Belgium.<sup>79</sup> Former President Roosevelt criticized President Wilson for his failure to protest Germany’s attack upon Belgium.

It was against this foil that Hulbert invoked the occasion to draw public attention to the “Korean problem.” In his letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, he said that it was amusing to read former president Roosevelt’s diatribe on the Wilson administration, because his words were even more “applicable to himself and his own acts in 1905.” Hulbert said, Roosevelt spoke of Korea as unable to hold her own against Japan. Japan had guaranteed Korea’s independence as Germany had for Belgium, but both powers violated the neutrality of the smaller nations. For Hulbert, “Japan’s acts were far worse than Germany’s, for Korea consented to let Japan use her territory to strike at Russia, and in spite of this, Japan destroyed Korea.”<sup>80</sup>

He went on to say that it was the duty of America to protest against Germany’s violation of Belgium’s neutrality as well as against Japan’s encroachments in Korea, and “precisely as the present Administration failed to protest in the case of Belgium, so Roosevelt failed to protest against the rapacity of Japan in 1905.”<sup>81</sup> He criticized the Roosevelt administration for not aiding Korea, despite the treaty between the United

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 113-15.

<sup>80</sup> Homer B. Hulbert, “Roosevelt and Korea: Japan’s Attack Compared to the German Invasion of Belgium,” *NYT*, Dec 12, 1915. An article on the *Milwaukee Journal*, lacking an indication of the author, similarly criticized Roosevelt. It said, “We can’t think of any more damning comment on the sincerity of all of Roosevelt’s talk about Belgium than Mr. Roosevelt’s own words about the time when Korea was being ravished and he didn’t protest” (“Roosevelt the Practical,” *The Milwaukee Journal* (Feb 25, 1916)). Clipping of the article was circulated within the State Department (895.00/569-1/2, *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Korea, 1910-29*, Microfilm (National Archives, 1962), no. 426, roll 2). Documents in *Internal Affairs of Korea (IAK)* and *Internal Affairs of Japan (IAJ)* files are written in order of sender, receiver, date, and the classification number from now on.

<sup>81</sup> Hulbert, “Roosevelt and Korea.”

States and Korea of 1882, the first clause of which promised, “If other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either Government, the other will exert their good offices, on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable arrangement, thus showing their friendly feelings.”<sup>82</sup> Hulbert’s comments marked the first time that this “good offices” clause was invoked publicly in support of the Korean cause. From then until 1945, it became the common theme of the Korean nationalist movement in the United States when asking for help from the American government.

Hulbert then stated that since the annexation of Korea was forced by the sword, this was explicitly an occasion in which the United States, as a country friendly to Korea, should have intervened and mediated. Instead, President Roosevelt and the State Department had refused a written message from the Korean Emperor requesting help from the United States. As the envoy of the former Emperor of Korea, who carried the message to the U.S., Hulbert revealed the story that the Secretary of State rejected to accept the message, asking, “Do you want us to get into trouble with Japan?” He asserted that it showed the cowardly state of mind to which the administration was reduced by the distant possibility of a clash with Japan. Hulbert added, “the last person in the world to complain of international timidity is Theodore Roosevelt, not Wilson.”<sup>83</sup>

In a more detailed article in March 1916 about the collapse of Korea and its request for international aid, Hulbert wrote the full story of how he brought the Emperor’s letter to Roosevelt, condemning Roosevelt who denied that he was aware of the contents of the letter. According to Hulbert, in 1905 Korean Emperor Kojong asked the American government to intercede with its good offices to pacify the threat of

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<sup>82</sup> Article I of “The Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the US and Korea.”

<sup>83</sup> Hulbert, “Roosevelt and Korea.”

unlawful seizure of Korea by Japan. While Hulbert was on the way to Washington, “the Japanese seized the palace in Seoul, filled it with gendarmes and police, blocked every approach to the Emperor, brought the Emperor and his Cabinet together, and peremptorily demanded that they sign the death warrant of Korean independence,” as reported to him by Prime Minister Han Kyu-sôl. While the Emperor and the Prime Minister never signed the agreement, three officials signed it and it was said that the Japanese stole the Great Seal of State from the Foreign Office, and they affixed it to the paper. The letter written by Kojong declared: “The treaty was null and void, that it had been secured at the point of the sword, that it had been wrested from his Foreign Minister under duress, and that he himself had never signed it or acquiesced in its signature.”<sup>84</sup>

Hulbert arrived in Washington and secured the emperor’s letter from a friend, to whom it had been sent in the legation mail pouch. However, as his earlier article revealed, both the White House and Department of State refused to receive the letter from Korea and in a few days, the American Government accepted Japan’s unsupported statement that the protectorate had been secured to the satisfaction of the Korean court:

Without a word of inquiry at the Korean Legation at Washington, without a word to the Emperor of Korea, without a single diplomatic formality in consideration of the Korean people and Government, the American Administration accepted Japan’s bald statement, cabled the American Minister in Seoul to close the legation and broke off friendly intercourse with a treaty power, weak, to be sure, and needing all things, but a power to which we had been saying for twenty-five years that American stands for a square deal, for right as against mere brute force, a power that had given to Americans more opportunities for productive enterprise than to all other peoples combined, a power to which we had given our promise that if in her hour of need she should appeal to us we would exert our good offices in her behalf.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Homer B. Hulbert, “American Policy in the Cases of Korea and Belgium: The Special Envoy of the Korean Emperor Tells for the First Time the Full Story of His Attempt to Get President Roosevelt to Intervene against Japan,” *NYT*, Mar 5, 1916.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

As Hulbert's story became known, Robert Ritchie, who had been in Korea as a correspondent for *Harper's Magazine*, also provided corroborative testimony of the conditions in Korea right before the Protectorate treaty of 1905. According to Ritchie, as Japan's intention to annex Korea became manifest, "every foreigner in Seoul at all familiar with the Korean viewpoint and the attitude of the remnant of patriots still loyal to the Emperor shared with him the hope, almost amounting to conviction, that intervention to save the tottering sovereignty of the country must come from Washington," due to the "good offices" clause in the treaty between the United States and Korea. As Hulbert stated, Ritchie was refused recognition by the Washington Government because he did not appear with formal credentials as a special emissary. Ritchie emphasized this point:

[...] the Emperor of Korea did not dare intrust his personal appeal to President Roosevelt, signed as it was by his personal seal, to a Korean armed with the exequatur of a special ambassador, because the Japanese would never have permitted such a messenger to leave the country. His arrest and the discovery of the imperial appeal would precipitate extreme action on Japan's part. Mr. Hulbert the Japanese did not dare intercept, but Mr. Hulbert, being an alien, could not be invested with the powers of a special ambassador. Later the Emperor paid dearly for violating the rule of safety he adopted in Mr. Hulbert's case. The arrest of a native emissary to The Hague tribunal led to the last swift stroke of Japanese domination and the dethronement of the Emperor."

Ritchie also gave a supplementary account of the Japanese use of force in making Korea a protectorate:

Because of his absence in Washington Mr. Hulbert did not see the drama set in Seoul on the night of Nov. 17, 1905. He did not hear, as I did, the tramp of infantry descending from the Japanese barracks to surround the palace and overawe with rifles the timorous people of the capital, while Marquis Ito went to the council chamber of the Korean Ministers, with a body guard of armed men, to force the signing of the treaty robbing the ancient empire of its prerogatives of sovereignty."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Robert W. Ritchie, "Korea's Vain Appeal," *NYT*, Mar 7, 1916.

Yale professor George T. Ladd, famous for his close relationship with Ito Hirobumi and his favorable view of Japan, rejected both Hulbert and Ritchie's accounts, arguing that it was not true that the Japanese government stole the Korean Seal of State. He said that the American government had acted with "diplomatic wisdom and according to international usage and essential justice," when it was approached by Hulbert with the Emperor Kojong's letter.<sup>87</sup> Against this, Frederick McCormick, a correspondent in the Far East, again confirmed that the Korean Emperor acted under duress with full reservations.<sup>88</sup>

Hulbert's effort to let the public know about how Japan had forced Korea into submission was successful to some extent, as the issue provoked debate not only among opinion makers but also in the U.S. Congress. The Senate, as a response to Hulbert's articles, adopted the resolution on February 21, 1916, which requested the President, if not incompatible with the public interests, to transmit to the Senate the correspondence between the official representatives of the Government of the United States and the representatives of the Government of Korea relating to the occupation of Korea and the establishment of a protectorate over her by Japan. The report of the Secretary of State had the approval of President Wilson.<sup>89</sup>

The disclosed correspondences between the American Legation in Korea and the American government (the White House and the State Department) showed that an American representative in Korea, Horace N. Allen, sympathized with the Korean

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<sup>87</sup> George T. Ladd, "Korea, Japan, and America: Professor Ladd Tells Another Story of the 1905 Treaty," *NYT*, Mar 9, 1916.

<sup>88</sup> Frederick McCormick, "The End of Korea: Frederick McCormick Rejects Both the Hulbert and Ladd Accounts of the Great Events in Seoul," *NYT*, Mar 13, 1916.

<sup>89</sup> *Journal of the Senate*, Feb 21, 1916, 179-80

government. However, Allen believed that it was not a good idea to invoke the good office of the United States, as it would only be an embarrassment to the Korean court. Also, Allen notified the U.S. government that the Korean Emperor “confidently expects America will do something for him at the close of this [Russo-Japanese] War, or when opportunity offers, to retain for him as much of his independence as possible,” but the Secretary of State instructed him to “observe absolute neutrality.” In October 1905, Edwin V. Morgan, Minister to Korea, cabled: “The Emperor confides in me that the Japanese are pressing him to arrange a protocol. Although unwilling to do this, he may ultimately be constrained to agree. He desires particularly to maintain the present right of direct relations with foreign powers.”<sup>90</sup>

Even though there was no further development of the debate or comment in the Congress on the conditions in Korea and Korea’s request for help from the United States in 1916, the disclosed correspondence and witness accounts confirmed that the American government was aware of the position of the Korean court. It chose to be neutral, which was in fact complying with the Japanese orientation toward colonizing Korea.<sup>91</sup> Notwithstanding, this was the first time that the conditions leading to Japanese control of Korea and the response of the U.S. government were made public in the United States.

## **2. American Reactions to the March First Movement (1919)**

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<sup>90</sup> “Korea Wanted Aid, but Made No Appeal: Correspondence over Occupation of Kingdom by Japan Is Given to Senate,” *NYT*, Feb 24, 1916.

<sup>91</sup> A secret agreement between the U.S. and Japan, the Katsura-Taft Agreement of 1905, enables us to confirm this American position in Korean issue. In this secret agreement between American Secretary of War and Japanese Prime Minister, the U.S. recognized Japan’s sphere of influence of Korea and Japan recognized American sphere of influence in the Philippines. Existence of such agreement was not known until in 1924 (Raymond A. Esthus, “The Taft-Katsura Agreement-Reality or Myth?,” *Journal of Modern History* 31[1959]: 46–51; Jongsuk Chay, “The Taft-Katsura Memorandum Reconsidered,” *Pacific Historical Review* 37 [1968]: 321-26).

A terrible thing happened at --- about --- miles from ---. In a village there the men were ordered by the soldiers to go to the church on a Tuesday afternoon. About a dozen Christians and some twenty members of the Chundokyo responded. When they were in the church, the soldiers fired through the windows, killing and wounding the party. Then the church was set on fire. The flames set one-half of the village on fire, and the soldiers then set fire to the other half. All but three houses were destroyed.<sup>92</sup>

On March 27th, at about 9 pm, a large body of young men gathered at Andong, Seoul, and shouted “Mansei.”<sup>93</sup> The shouting had continued for a few minutes when a large force of police gendarmes and soldiers arrived and dispersed them. The above-name young man, like the others, was peacefully going home and alone, was walking along a small street when suddenly some one pushed him violently in the back, causing him to stumble and fall. His assailant was a policeman who had seen him in the crowd and followed him to the place where he thought fit to make the attack. After throwing him to the ground the policeman drew his sword and literally hacked at him “like a woodsman would attack a rough old oak.” His skull was cut right through so that the brain was visible.<sup>94</sup>

We were marching from the station toward Chongno, cheering and shouting “Mansei.” As we were nearing the Dok-su Palace, all of a sudden a Japanese policeman seized me from behind by my hair and I was violently thrown to the ground. He kicked me several times with his merciless foot. At this I was rendered almost unconscious.... I was led to the Chongno Police Department. [...] I was made to kneel down with my legs bound together, and each question and answer was accompanied alternately by blows in the face. They spit in my face. This with curses and invectives of the worst kind. He said, “You prostitute, you vile, pregnant girl!” I was ordered to expose my breasts, but refusing, they tore my upper garment from me and I was told all sorts of inhuman things which shocked me terribly. They tied my fingers together and jerked them violently. [...] <sup>95</sup>

Such shocking accounts of the March First Movement occurred from March 1, 1919 in Korea made the front pages of the American newspapers. As American writers

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<sup>92</sup> “A Personal Letter,” In *The Korean Situation: Authentic Accounts of Recent Events by Eye Witnesses*, edited by The Commission on Relations with the Orient of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America (1919), 95.

<sup>93</sup> Meaning literally “ten thousand years,” *mansei* was a symbolic term of Koreans’ peaceful demonstration of the March First Movement. By shouting *mansei*, “May Korea live ten thousand years,” Korean people expressed their desire for national independence.

<sup>94</sup> “Death of a Korean Young Man by Name of Koo Nak Soh,” in *The Korean Situation*, 43.

<sup>95</sup> “The Experience of a Korean Girl under Arrest by the Police,” in *The Korean Situation*, 48.



expressed, this was a big change from four years ago when half the people in America did not know such a country existed.<sup>96</sup>

Although the public demonstration on the streets in Korea since March 1, 1919 was suppressed by the end of April, the movement continued outside of Korea—in Japan, Manchuria, China, the United States, Siberia, Moscow, Paris, and Britain—and the aftermath of the Movement was not easily destroyed. At first, it was reported that Korean nationalist groups had declared the independence of Korea and had appealed for help to the U.S. officials and government, claiming that the Japanese annexation of Korea was illegal, as Hulbert and other American supporters of Korean nationalism had claimed since the middle 1910s.<sup>97</sup> The Korean National Association proclaimed the Constitution of the Korean Republic in June 1919 in San Francisco.<sup>98</sup> Korean activists concentrated their points on the four thousand year history of Korean independence, the illegality of the annexation, and the immorality of the Japanese assimilation policy, referencing their arguments to American president Wilson's idea, the right of all peoples to "self-determination," to freely decide on their sovereignty.<sup>99</sup> In an article on Korean appeal based on the Wilson's idea, E. S. Bisbee said, "The appeal related that the desire of the people was freedom from domination by Japan and the preservation of nationalism." He went on, "Korea, the Hermit of the Orient, is today crying for recognition by the Peace

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<sup>96</sup> William Dudley Pelley, "Korea and Japan's Boot: The Annexed Country Objects to the Manner and Method of Nippon's Uplift Work," *Sunset* 43 (Oct 1919): 22.

<sup>97</sup> "Ask United States to Plead for Korea – Korean Independence Committee in China Present Petition to American Minister," *NYT*, Mar 1, 1919. *New York Times* reported that the Korean National Association asked President Wilson "to initiate action" for Korean independence at the Peace Conference. Another article, published alongside this one, reported that many Koreans were killed or wounded ("Koreans Petition Wilson: Ask Him to Initiate at Peace Conference Action for Independence," *NYT*, Mar 17, 1919).

<sup>98</sup> "New Constitution Framed by Koreans," *NYT*, Jun 7, 1919.

<sup>99</sup> According to Manela, it was the Korean community in the United States, who "recognized early the potential usefulness of Wilson's rhetoric for their cause and took the lead in preparing to present the Korean claim for self-determination before world opinion" (Manela, 125-26).

Conference and for the right to that self-determination by small and subject nationalities which was made one of the most conspicuous of the Fourteen Points of President Wilson.”<sup>100</sup> To borrow Frank Baldwin’s words, Korean perceptions of Wilson and their hopes for his support drew on longstanding views of the United States as an exemplar of modern civilization and the power most sympathetic toward colonial aspirations for independence.<sup>101</sup> As Manela argues, this perception of the United States was more common and more deeply entrenched among Korean nationalists than among other colonial peoples, due to the impact of Protestant missions in Korea and the prominence among expatriate activists of men who studied and lived in the U.S.<sup>102</sup>

The news of the March First Movement appeared in American newspapers within ten days,<sup>103</sup> following the personal correspondences from missionaries in Korea to their friends, family, and mission boards in the U.S. It was reported that Koreans declared their independence in nonviolent protest of Japanese military rule.<sup>104</sup> On the contrary, the Japanese authorities were oppressing the movement very cruelly, newspapers reported. The mass media presented the striking contrast between the nonviolent Korean

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<sup>100</sup> E. S. Bisbee, “Korea Appeals to Wilson for Freedom: “Hermit Kingdom,” Now under Japanese Control, Looks to the Versailles Peace Conference for Aid – How Koreans See Their Country’s Situation,” *NYT*, Jan 26, 1919.

<sup>101</sup> Frank P. Baldwin, Jr. “The March First Movement: Korean Challenge and Japanese Response,” Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1969, 16.

<sup>102</sup> Manela, 127. The activities of Korean nationalists and their mindset when they asked the U.S. for aid to the independence of Korea will be covered in the next chapter.

<sup>103</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* reported the news of the independence movement of Korea, quoting a cable received by the Korean National Association of San Francisco from Hyun Soon, special representative of the Korean National Independence Union, on March 10th, 1919 (“Renounce Rule of Japan,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 10, 1919). It was followed by further and more detailed reports from China, Japan, and Washington (“Korean Independence Movement Spreading: Japanese Strip Theological Students and Tie These to Crosses,” Mar 13, 1919; “Korea Movement Spreads,” Mar 15, 1919). It was on March 13th that a report about the movement firstly appeared in *The New York Times* (“Koreans Declare for Independence: Thousands Who Engage in Demonstration Are Arrested by the Japanese,” *NYT*, Mar 13, 1919).

<sup>104</sup> “Korean Revolt Peaceful; People Are Told Not to Resist Japanese Assaults or Arrest,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr 3, 1919; “Koreans Are Using Only Peaceful Means,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr 4, 1919.

demonstrators and brutal Japanese soldiers. For example, *The Missionary Review of the World* reported,

...the Korean leaders issued an “Important Announcement” calling on the “Respectable, Noble, Independent Korean Band not to insult the Japanese, or strike them with their fists, for these are the acts of barbarians.” They had no weapons and their method was merely to leave schools, close shops, march [*sic*], singing and shouting Manzai [*sic*] through the street. For this they have been shot down, maltreated and haled to prison.<sup>105</sup>

The tone of the newspaper reports was at times extreme and emotional, as seen in titles such as “Butchery in Korea,” “Korean Women Stripped, Tortured by Japanese,” “American Women Beaten by Japs,” and “Girl’s Hands Cut off.”<sup>106</sup> These reports were often coupled with pictures, such as a scene of crucifixions of the “Korean victims of Japanese militarism” [Figure 7] or the remains of churches burned by Japanese soldiers.<sup>107</sup> Despite the potential repercussions, Koreans continued to protest the Japanese militarism, which earned them international praise as a vigorous, courageous, and strong-willed people, traits which were rooted in a strong sense of nationalism, pride of their own history and traditions, and belief in humanity and justice.<sup>108</sup> This was a very different

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<sup>105</sup> “The Struggle for Liberty in Korea,” *The Missionary Review of the World* 42 (Jun 1919), 407.

<sup>106</sup> “Korean Independence Movement Spreading; Japanese Strip Theological Students and Tie Them to Crosses,” Mar 13, 1919; “Butchery in Korea; Report Says Dead Number 10,000; Number Arrested by Japanese During the Demonstration Forty-five Thousand; Missionaries Let the World Know How Flocks are Being Murdered,” Mar 21, 1919; “Japs Fire on Rioters; Massacre Alleged in Seoul Cable; Outbreaks Reported in Hundreds of Places; Many Are Killed; Tokio Sends Troops to Put down Revolution Blamed on Bolsheviki,” Apr 13, 1919; “Japs Raid Missions,” Apr 18, 1919; Japs Slay Missionaries; Gendarmes in Korea Clash with Christians, Kill Twenty, Wound Many,” Apr 22, 1919; “Korean Women Stripped, Tortured by Japanese; Oriental Brutality at Seoul is Told by Eyewitnesses,” Apr 26, 1919 (heretofore *Los Angeles Times*); “Koreans Mowed by Japanese Fire; Scores of Persons Have Been Killed Since the Independence Move Was Begun-Korean Girls Are Taking Part,” Mar 17, 1919; “American Women Beaten by Japs,” Mar 19, 1919; “Koreans Bound To Wood Crosses; And Cruelly Flogged by Japanese,” Apr 9, 1919 (*Atlanta Constitution*); “Girl’s Hands Cut off; Atrocity by Japanese Soldiers Reported by Koreans,” Mar 15, 1919 (*Washington Post*).

<sup>107</sup> An article in *Literary Digest* was accompanied with pictures of the site of a church burning (“Japanese Persecution of Christians in Korea,” *Literary Digest* 62 (Aug 16, 1919): 32-33).

<sup>108</sup> A magazine quoted *London Post* commenting that the Koreans seem “madly determined” to go on with their revolt or sedition or treason in the face of “the clubs, swords and bayonets freely used upon them.”

image of Koreans formed from that in the American press and literature up to the years around the Korean annexation.



**Figure 7. Crucifixions in 1919 - The Korean victims of Japanese militarism were placed in a kneeling position for execution, with arms extended upon a rude cross, as if to cast ridicule on the Christian religion [original caption].**

Source: "More Light from Korea," *Literary Digest* 61 (May 31, 1919): 35.

Ironically, because of the contrast between the violence of the Japanese police and the "passive demonstrations" of Koreans, the news of the Movement easily spread, eliciting discourse about Japanese colonialism among American opinion makers. In addition to the organizing skills of Korean demonstrators, American readers were impressed by their nonviolent way of protesting, which exhibited "a remarkable degree of shrewdness," for "it has served from the first to put Japan on the defensive before the world"<sup>109</sup>; it was common knowledge that Japan was extremely sensitive to international opinions. A commentator expected in May 1919 that Japan would "act very quickly when she knows the world's mind about Korea."<sup>110</sup>

#### (1) American Missionaries and Christian groups

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The Koreans do not care whether they are killed or not because, they argue, death is better than the horror of their lot under Japanese rule ("Efforts of Japan to Crush Korea," *Current Opinion* 67 [Sep 1919]: 220).

<sup>109</sup> Rae D. Henkle, "Benevolent Assimilation of Korea," *Nation* 109 (Oct 1, 1919): 505.

<sup>110</sup> "Uncensored News of Korean Christians," *Literary Digest* 61 (May 10, 1919): 33.

What made those shocking scenes of Korean demonstration believable to Americans as well as emotional—and possibly religious—was the witness of missionaries in Korea. As in the Conspiracy Case in 1911, but with much more desperation now, it was missionaries who started to transmit the news of Korea to their family, friends, mission boards, and the American public. Missionaries also tried to contact the Japanese officials in Korea, Japan, and the U.S., but were not successful.<sup>111</sup>

Many missionaries reported that they witnessed, “children beaten, old men ejected from their houses, and women struck with swords, and they could not keep quiet, for humanity’s sake, whatever the cost to their missionary work and themselves.”<sup>112</sup> A. E. Armstrong, a Canadian missionary, after observing the situation, lamented, “What I learned in Korea roused my indignation and sympathy—indignation at the cruel treatment given the Koreans by Japanese police and soldiers, sympathy for an oppressed and defenseless people crying out for justice.”<sup>113</sup>

The missionaries’ accusations of Japanese cruelty led to the question again of whether Christians were actively being discriminated against and persecuted. News that Japanese soldiers had gathered Christian men in Cheam-ri village into the local church and then burned them alive provided strong evidence for such accusations.<sup>114</sup> The

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<sup>111</sup> For several times during March and April of 1919, a delegation of Western missionaries in Korea met with Governor-General Hasegawa and other officials in the government. Other American missionaries visited Japan and met with Japan’s Prime Minister Hara, requesting reforms in Korea. See Chapter 7 of Nagata, *Japanese Rule of Korea* for American missionaries’ activities during and after the March First Movement.

<sup>112</sup> “Missionary Charges Cruelty in Korea; Says Complaint Was Made to American Consul,” *NYT*, Mar 19, 1919.

<sup>113</sup> “Uncensored Account of Korea’s Revolt; Official of Presbyterian Foreign Missions Board Tells of Conditions He Found,” *NYT*, Apr 23, 1919; “Uncensored News of Korean Christians,” 32-33. Armstrong was Assistant Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

<sup>114</sup> H. H. Underwood, an American missionary, revealed about the massacre that he heard from the witnesses in Cheam-ri village. The incident frequently appeared in the magazines. Underwood visited the

impression that the Japanese were unfairly dealing with the native Christians in the Conspiracy Case in 1911 led to the assumption that many innocent Koreans were being harshly treated because of their Christian religion in 1919. In addition, the news media had reported that Christians had led the beginning of the March First Movement.



**Figure 8. Native Korean Christian preachers—whose efforts to change the religion of Korea are opposed by Japan. Bishop Harris, of the Methodist Church, stands in the center of the group [original caption].**

Source: “Uncensored News of Korean Christians,” *Literary Digest* 61 (May 10, 1919): 32.

American Christian groups refrained from publicly commenting on the situation in Korea in the early stages of the movement, fearing that it would instigate anti-Japanese feelings in the United States.<sup>115</sup> For this reason, missionaries in Korea, following the guidance of their consular officers, tried to remain politically neutral. However, they could not ignore the brutality of the Japanese authorities. Under the slogan “No

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market town in Kyonggi Province in April 1919 and heard that Japanese troops had massacred the inhabitants and burned thirty-six of the forty homes of the village Cheam-ri. Underwood, Curtis, the American Consul in Seoul, and A. W. Taylor, a correspondent of the Associated Press visited the village and had a conversation with a Korean near the smoking ruins, learning that the Korean witnessed that Japanese soldiers ordered all the Christians – about thirty of them - to gather in the church and then killed them all. Underwood also provided two more accounts of the burning of the church at Chôngju in North P’yôngan Province (“Japanese Atrocities in Korea Denounced by American Churchmen,” *Current Opinion* 67, no. 3 [Sep 1919]: 176). After the incident was known all over the world, the American missionary W. A. Noble and the acting British Consul General in Seoul, William M. Royds also visited the village investigating the situation (Bergholz [Seoul] to Lansing, May 12, 1919, 895.00/642, *IAK, 1910-19*, roll 3).

<sup>115</sup> Akifumi Nagata, “American Missionaries in Korea and US-Japan Relations 1910-1920,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* 16 (2005): 172.

Neutrality for Brutality,”<sup>116</sup> missionaries in Korea were sending more and more information about the real situation that would have been censored in the early days. The increasing worry about the security of Christians and missionaries in Korea caused the Commission on Relations with the Orient of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America—the interdenominational organization of American Protestant churches—to release information about the Movement and recent events in Korea from July 1919, while contacting the Japanese Foreign Offices.<sup>117</sup>

The Commission made it clear that it would not concern itself with political questions, that is, whether Korea should be independent or not; rather, its main purpose was to ensure that “brutality, torture, inhuman treatment, religious persecution, and massacres shall cease everywhere.”<sup>118</sup> However, as political scientist Willoughby pointed out, the fact that the Council felt compelled to issue a public report itself was indicative of the extent of the atrocities committed, “for it is well known how unwilling church bodies are openly to criticize the governing authorities of the lands in which they carry on missionary work.”<sup>119</sup> The Commission in its publications hoped that a sound and enlightened public opinion among Americans would strengthen the progressive and anti-militaristic forces in Japan and secure justice and fair dealings in Korea.<sup>120</sup>

It is notable that the Commission still did not avoid showing its personal opinion that the independence movement was hopeless and that “some measure of self-

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<sup>116</sup> Contribution of Methodist Bishop Welch to the New York Christian Advocate, quoted in “Japanese Persecution of Christians in Korea,” 33.

<sup>117</sup> From Sidney Gulick to Consul General Yada; From Foreign Minister Uchida to Consul General Yada; From National Committee for Constructive Immigration Legislation (Sidney Gulick) to Division of Far Eastern Affairs (R. S. Miller) (Jun 4, 1919), 895.00/633, *IAK, 1910-19*, roll 3.

<sup>118</sup> *The Korean Situation*, 6-7.

<sup>119</sup> W. W. Willoughby, “Japan and Korea,” *Unpartizan Review* 13 (Jan 1920): 37.

<sup>120</sup> *The Korean Situation*, 6.

government is the most that can ever be secured.”<sup>121</sup> The self-government, the Commission commented, would be possible through Americans’ moral support of the progressive and anti-militaristic forces, as opposed to the reactionary and autocratic Japanese authorities.<sup>122</sup> This rather moderate position of the Commission may have derived from the pro-Japanese stance of Sidney Gulick, the secretary of the Commission at that time, as Nagata argues.<sup>123</sup> However, the Commission’s moral criticism on the cruelty of the Japanese authorities in Korea was obvious in their vivid accounts of the situation. In its second booklet, the Commission claimed that Americans naturally and inevitably sympathized with the patriotic aspirations of the Korean people, but that the assimilation policy of the Japanese military government-general in Korea was futile and foolish. It stated that while Americans regarded the chief issue in Korea as essentially one of humanity and justice for Koreans, Japan and many Koreans regarded the chief issue as political. It stressed that the Korean question was not primarily an issue between paganism and Christianity, but a political issue. By saying this, the Council tried to express its neutral position politically while showing its indignation at the cruelties against Koreans.

On the other hand, the Commission did not shut off the possibility of Korean independence. Although immediate independence would be undesirable, it suggested that

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>123</sup> Nagata, “American Missionaries,” 171. Gulick, who had been an activist for the rights of Japanese immigrants in the US, worried more about if the situation in Korea would have a bad impact on Japan’s image among Americans, rather than the condition of Koreans itself, when he contacted with Japanese officials in the US (“...the strong feeling in America over the news from Korea is not only being used by anti-Japanese agitators but is deeply hurting those who for years have admired and trusted Japan”; Exhibit B, Cable from Gulick to Yada). In another cable to the Japanese Consul general in New York, Gulick expressed the same concern. (Exhibit E, Cable from Gulick to Yada [May 29, 1919], 895.00/633, *IAK*, 1910-19, roll 3).



any ‘friends of Korea’ remember that readiness for independence under a democratic form of government depends on the fitness of a people trained in self-control and educated for citizenship and that the local autonomy promised by Japan may be wisely utilized as a step toward the goal of complete independence. This was a comparatively rare optimistic view of the Korean independence. Also, the Commission showed a rare political comment. The Commission’s statement demonstrates that despite their neutral position, the American churches could not ignore the interwoven relationship between the political and religious aspects of the Korean situation and its potential repercussions in the U.S. The Commission evaluated that Koreans displayed high-spirited and noble patriotism during the past year and it “inspired all friends of Korea with new respect for the people and new hope for their future.”<sup>124</sup> That Koreans should take the opportunity of training themselves with self-governing skills in order to gain complete independence would become a common belief among American officials in later years.

## (2) Official Attitudes and the U.S.-Japanese relationship

As Americans gained knowledge of the atrocities taking place in Korea, American organizations, churches, and citizens began to petition the State Department and the United States Congress for help in resolving the problem. Some petitions asked that the “US government keep a close, careful watch on things over there,” as “there [were] good many Americans in that little country and at this time it seems that they [were] in a right perilous situation.”<sup>125</sup> Others were more radical. For example, one petition suggested that

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<sup>124</sup> The Commission on Relations with the Orient of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, *The Korean Situation*, no.2 (New York, 1920), 22-27.

<sup>125</sup> From W. P. Hornady of Dawson to Wm. J. Harris, Senator (July 9, 1919), 895.00/644, *IAK, 1910-19*, roll 3.

the new government of Korea led by Syngman Rhee “should be put in power” and this could be done by “the United States taking it over after the fashion of the Philippine Islands for a period of say 25 years and during this time Korea could repay Japan for the money the latter country has expended in Korea during the time Japan has been in control.”<sup>126</sup>

What made the U.S. government react to the Korean situation, however, was Japan’s policy toward foreigners in Korea rather than these petitions. Japanese authorities accused Western missionaries of encouraging a revolutionary spirit, including the conception of self-determination. For American officials, it seemed that the government-general in Korea feared that inaugurating administrative reforms before it had pacified the country would be viewed as a sign of weakness or an admission of fault. Americans observed that there was “a strong tendency in certain quarters [in Japan] to shift the responsibility to foreign influence and particularly to America.”<sup>127</sup> In other words, although the March First Movement was a strong expression of the dissatisfaction many Koreans felt toward military rule, they understood that the Japanese authorities and mass media instead looked for other “outside” factors as the real causes so as to avoid admitting their responsibility for the disturbances. They identified two factors of American influence to provoke Korean resistance against Japan. According American officials’ analysis, those factors were: Korean misunderstanding of the concept of self-determination; and American missionaries’ influence over Koreans.<sup>128</sup> That was why the

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<sup>126</sup> From H. P. Rising to Division of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State, (June 18, 1925), 895.01/20, *IAK, 1910-19*, roll 4.

<sup>127</sup> From Morris (Tokyo) to Secretary of State, 895.00/594, *IAK, 1910-19*, roll 1.

<sup>128</sup> Morris to Secretary of State (Lansing) (March 8, 1919), 895.00/587; Morris to Lansing (March 21, 1919), 895.00/586, *IAK, 1910-19*, roll 2; Nagata, “American Missionaries,” 165.

Japanese authorities were making an effort to “brand the uprising as a Christian movement,” although it was not true in American officials’ opinion.<sup>129</sup>

To American officials in East Asia, it seemed “desirable to restrain the missionary bodies in certain instances in the expression of undue sympathy for the natives, thereby causing the latter to be indifferent to the dictates of the Japanese Government authorities.”<sup>130</sup> The American Consul General already had requested that all American missionaries in Korea refrain from intervening in Korean domestic and political issues even before the Movement began.<sup>131</sup>

The arrest of an American missionary, Eli M. Mowry, by the Japanese police in P’yôngyang in April 1919 drew unique attention from the U.S. government as well as the American public: the fact that an American citizen received a guilty verdict in Korea for a political crime was itself sensational. His charge was that he had permitted several Koreans to use his premises for printing propaganda in connection with the Korean independence movement.<sup>132</sup> He was sentenced to six months of hard labor and, after an appeal, bail was set in the sum of 300 yen.<sup>133</sup> As Nagata points out, the reason why the Japanese authorities arrested Mowry and did not find him innocent in the courts might be that they wanted to demonstrate to Koreans the meaninglessness of their reliance on American missionaries and also wanted to show missionaries that Japan would not to

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<sup>129</sup> From Vance C. McCormick to Secretary of State, Appendix A. “The Korean Troubles” (May 29, 1919), 895.00/645, *IAC, 1910-19*, roll 3.

<sup>130</sup> From Shanghai to Secretary of State (July 22, 1919), 895.00/653, *IAC, 1910-19*, roll 3.

<sup>131</sup> Bergholz to Secretaries of the American Mission Stations in Korea, January 24, 1919, *Foreign Affairs of the United States, 1919*, vol. II (Government Printing Office, 1934), 458-9, quoted in Nagata, “American Missionaries,” 165.

<sup>132</sup> “Japanese Arrest Americans in Korea; Houses of Rev. Drs. Moffett, Gillis, and Mowry at Pyeng Yang Searched by Policy,” *NYT*, Apr 14, 1919.

<sup>133</sup> “Mowry Is Sentenced,” *NYT*, Apr 22, 1919.

condone any hint of their participation in the independence movement.<sup>134</sup> As we have already seen, this tendency that the Japanese authorities showed in 1919 was parallel with their attitude toward the western missionaries when they were mentioned as having been involved in the Conspiracy Case in 1911. For readers in the U.S., the fact that the rights of American citizens could be endangered by political charges from the Japanese police in Korea was understood as a warning which left a strong impression that Japanese rule in Korea was an atrocity.<sup>135</sup> Although American opinion makers admitted that missionaries were responsible for instilling in Koreans the desire for progress, they consistently denied that the missionaries were responsible for any anti-Japanese movement.<sup>136</sup>

However, the State Department was very cautious when responding to appeals for the U.S. to aid the Korean cause. It was impossible for the State Department to comment or show any opinion on the Korean political issue, which would be an intervention in another country's domestic issue, unless the security or rights of American citizens in that country were involved. In the same context, the State Department instructed the American Consulate Office in Korea to warn American missionaries in Korea to be extremely careful not to cause the Japanese authorities to suspect them of interfering in the political affairs of the country.<sup>137</sup> American missionaries' involvement in the Korean

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<sup>134</sup> Nagata, "American Missionaries," 167.

<sup>135</sup> "Missionaries have been assaulted and imprisoned. It may be true that some . . . were close to the line of what was legally wrong, but certainly there was nothing to justify some of the sentences. In point of fact, Japan has not attempted to justify any atrocity" (Lucy L. W. Wilson, "The Reality in Korea," *Century Magazine* 99 [Feb 1920]: 537).

<sup>136</sup> "The Struggle for Liberty in Korea," *The Missionary Review of the World* 42 (Jun 1919): 405.

<sup>137</sup> From Washington (W. Carr) to Seoul (R. Miller) (Dec 26, 1919), 895.00/667, *IAC, 1910-19*, roll 3.

political issue, regardless of the extent to which they were implicated, could be troublesome for American consulate and the State Department.

However, it did not necessarily mean that the officials personally did not feel sympathy toward the missionaries or Koreans. For example, although the American Consulate General in Shanghai, in his cable to the Secretary of State, said that missionaries should refrain from expressing their sympathy for Koreans, he also mentioned that he was very impressed after meeting with Rev. J. S. Gale in 1919. Gale was a Canadian missionary in Korea who had been well-known for his ultra-conservative and pro-Japanese stance, but who had become anti-Japanese, even loathing “the procedure of the Japanese militarists in Korea in ruthlessly cutting down with sabers and firing upon with ball cartridges the Koreans who merely express patriotism for their country and the hope that independence might be obtained.” The Consul General commented about the change of Gale’s view,

...it would seem that a very broadminded and highly educated man, who has spent a lifetime in studying the Koreans, with a view to improving their lot, had ultimately come to the conclusion that the Japanese had failed in their administrative policies in that country.<sup>138</sup>

This shows that although the officials were careful not to be seen as sympathizing with the Koreans’ nationalist cause in their official policy, there was an impact of the movement and the series of petitions on the ways of personal thinking of American officials. Changes in the official policy of the U.S. government on the Korean problem over time and the relationship between policy and what officials’ personal thoughts will be discussed in later chapters.

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<sup>138</sup> “Indictment of Japan in Korea,” From Shanghai to the State Department (Jul 22, 1919), 895.00/653, IAK, 1910-19, roll 3. Gale also condemned the failure of the Japanese military administration in Korea when he met with Japanese officials in Seoul (*The Korea Situation*, 27).

### 3. The Aftermath of the March First Movement – American Reevaluation of the Japanese Rule in Korea

Once the March First Movement provoked the interest of the American public, American commentators continued to debate the origins of the nation-wide protest in Korea even after the Movement was quelled down. In addition to the criticism of the brutality that the Japanese soldiers showed in treating the demonstrators, the debate developed into the more fundamental question of how to evaluate the Japanese rule in Korea. Illustrations depicting Japanese as formidable and brutal vis-à-vis suffering Koreans began to appear in American periodicals. A cartoon [Figure 9] shows a Japanese soldier holding a leash which is wrapped around a Korean man's neck, while pointing a gun at another soldier. Similarly, a Japanese samurai in Figure 10 carries Korea, a child figure, on a fishing hook, symbolizing mistreated Korea and despotic Japan.



**Figure 9. Illustration from the sketch-books of Willard Straight**  
Source: Louis Graves, "An American in Asia," *Asia* 20 (Dec 1920): 1079.



**Figure 10. Knott in the Dallas News.**

Source: “Korea’s Struggle for Independence,” *Literary Digest* 61 (May 3, 1919): 22.

At the same time, Americans viewed Japanese militaristic censorship over Koreans the most outstanding character of the Japanese rule. Reports from Korea pointed out that they were denied political rights, such as freedom of speech, press, and assembly. In other words, Koreans were denied the fundamental elements of civil liberty, as Willoughby wrote.<sup>139</sup> For many commentators, the impression was that the Japanese government and its colonial policy was a faithful copy of Prussian policy in Poland, that is, “to crush out the national civilization of Korea, and to transmute the Koreans into Japanese.”<sup>140</sup> With all its brutalities and engendered hatreds, an article said, Japan’s military subjugation in Korea had an inevitably bad odor from the beginning.<sup>141</sup> Although the militaristic system was not sudden, American readers became aware of Japanese harsh rule in Korea since the March First Movement. Now it did not sound like an exaggeration that foreigners in Korea, including consuls, businessmen, and missionaries

<sup>139</sup> Willoughby pointed out, “No constitutional principles or general administrative orders have protected the governed against arbitrary arrests, or against domiciliary searches and seizures by the gendarmerie. No writ of habeas corpus or other similar privilege has protected them against unjust arrest and imprisonment. And, without just compensation, their property has often been taken from them” (Willoughby, 30).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>141</sup> Carroll K. Michener, “Korea under Japanese Rule,” *Bellman* 26 (Apr 26, 1919): 461.

were unanimous in their condemnation of the system which had ruled Korea since 1910.<sup>142</sup> American viewers saw the Japanese policy of prohibiting Koreans students from learning their native language and history even more heartless: they labeled the Japanese policy a “death sentence,” an execution of their race, their culture, and their 4,000-year-old civilization.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, Koreans were given relatively little opportunity than Japanese to obtain a higher education.

Other commentators acknowledged the ultimate difference between Korea and Japan from history, and accordingly believed the compulsory but impossible assimilation policy of Japan over Korea as the reason for the recent disturbance. It did not seem that the agitation would cease, as the very efforts of the Japanese to instill patriotic ideas—for the Japanese empire—into Korean students was “only firing his soul the hotter for his own country.”<sup>144</sup> Critics pointed out the hypocrisy of the Japanese policy that was stressing assimilation of Korean people into Japanese but treating the colonized people as an inferior race.<sup>145</sup> Since American public gained more knowledge about the Japanese harsh treatment of Koreans, even traveler’s writing now commented that the material improvements in Korea were largely for the benefit of the Japanese.<sup>146</sup> Although American commentators at times compared the Japanese colonization of Korea to the American colonization of the Philippines, now they saw that the Japanese policy regarding Koreans was “almost antithetical” to American policy in its colony.

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<sup>142</sup> Statement of Rev. A. E. Armstrong, quoted in “Uncensored News,” 32.

<sup>143</sup> Nathaniel Peffer, “Korea’s Rebellion: the Part Played by Christians,” *Scribner’s Magazine* 67 (May 1920): 520.

<sup>144</sup> James S. Gale, “The Missionary Outlook in Korea,” *Missionary Review of the World* 43 (Feb 1920): 118-20.

<sup>145</sup> Statement of Armstrong in “Uncensored News.”

<sup>146</sup> Edith Wilds, “The Modernizing of a Hermit,” *Travel* 34 (Apr 1920): 5.



Willoughby insisted that American rule in the Philippines, in contrast to Japanese rule, “incorporated the American ideals of political justice, substituted civil for military government, employed natives in the higher as well as lower branches of the administration, granted almost complete administrative and financial autonomy as well as almost complete local self-government, and the promise of absolute independence to the islands.”<sup>147</sup>

Nevertheless, as in earlier writings, a majority of commentators did not see how Korea would benefit from political independence. Its immediate independence would not guarantee a stable government, nor freedom to the individual.<sup>148</sup> It was likely that absolute independence might be her “further undoing.”<sup>149</sup> Commentators generally believed that Koreans, despite the skills and shrewdness that they had shown throughout the Movement, were still incapable of self-government.

Therefore, what was desirable were reforms of the system in Korea initiated by the Japanese, especially replacing the military rule by civil rule. This basic tone that favored a secure rule in Korea but in a peaceful way had been consistent with the general reaction from American commentators to the Conspiracy Case in 1911. The difference was that now there was a more desperate calling for ending the militaristic rule that had unmasked itself throughout the first decade of the Japanese rule in Korea. Figure 11 and Figure 12 describe the American view that military rule in Korea, but not the fundamental conditions of colonialism, should change. Illustration of Figure 12 is more

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<sup>147</sup> Willoughby, 40-41.

<sup>148</sup> “Egypt and Korea,” *NYT*, Mar 20, 1919, 12; David Starr Jordan, “Pity the Poor Hermit!” *Sunset* 44 (Jun 1920): 50.

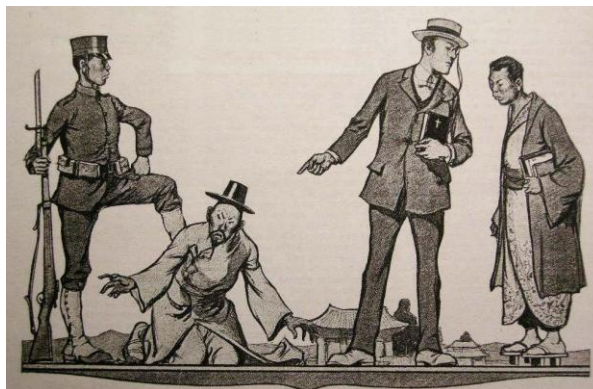
<sup>149</sup> Jordan, 50. Pelley worried that if Korea is independent, the country would sink back to “the same slough of racial shiftlessness it had been in for the past thousand years” (Pelley, 23).

symbolic with an American character: in this illustration, a missionary, the figure in the center who is holding a Bible, points to a mistreated Korean, who is pinned under the foot of a Japanese soldier. The missionary is whispering to a Japanese official seems to be seriously listening with a stiffened face. As the title of the article implies, the illustration seems to demand that Japanese authorities treat the Korean people in a more humane manner.



**Figure 11. How not to bring up the baby—grandpa Japan can never quiet baby Korea till he takes off that rattling saber [original caption] (from Jiji-shimpo).**

Source: “Failure of Japanese Militarism in Korea,” *Literary Digest* 62 (Aug 1919): 31.



**Figure 12.**

Source: David S. Jordan, “Pity the Poor Hermit!” *Sunset* 44 (Jun 1920): 48.

In this context, American commentators began to consider the Japanese plan for reforms that started with the assignment of a new Governor-General who had been a civil officer and pursued self-government in Korea a significant change.<sup>150</sup> For American reviewers, who thought that Koreans were not yet ready to govern themselves due to lack of experience, self-government was a wise and appropriate policy through which Korean leaders could be trained “in the practical work of administration according to the more advanced ideas of the suzerain power,” and it might eventually make currently colonized peoples like Koreans and Egyptians capable of ruling themselves. An editorial of the *New York Times* commented that both countries would benefit from a continuance of “enlightened rule” from the outside, with gradual progress toward self-government, which would also be in the best interest of the international community.<sup>151</sup>

The March First Movement had an impact on the American understanding of, and relationship with, Japan. As we have examined in the earlier chapter, the American view of Japan revealed two opposite sides of the same coin—not only praise for its rapid modernization of Korea (and itself), but also suspicion of an expansionist move. Although the Japanese authorities framed the disturbance in Korea as a domestic problem of the Japanese empire, American readers viewed the Movement as evidence of expansionist ambitions.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> It was reported that Japan’s Premier Hara announced the abolition of the military administration in Korea and the introduction of a civil administration. The system of gendarmerie in Korea was to be replaced by a force of police under the control of local Governors, just as in Japan proper. In the statement, he said that the reform had been planned before the Movement and it was actually the disturbances themselves that retarded the introduction of the reforms. “To Rule Koreans Like Japanese,” *NYT*, Aug 21, 1919; “Saito Promises Reforms in Korea,” *NYT*, Sep 5, 1919.

<sup>151</sup> “Egypt and Korea,” *NYT*.

<sup>152</sup> Willoughby, 24.

#### 4. Japan Defends Its Position

Facing the surge of international comments and criticisms regarding its control of Korea, Japanese authorities felt compelled to justify their position on the world stage. In the early 1920s, English-language publications by the Japanese government and government-general in Korea increased substantially, and included pamphlets about newly designed reforms, statistics on economic development, and guidebooks on the attractions in Korea. At the same time, leading Japanese officials and other elites published articles in major American magazines. The purpose of these publications was to correct the misrepresentation of Japan's international image, especially to the American audience, who had harshly criticized Japan's treatment of missionaries in the wake of the March First Movement. The editor of the *Seoul Press*, the English-language organ of the Government-General in Korea, explained, "the present campaign of slander against Japan will gradually disappear as the American people learn by degrees what Japan has been doing and will do concerning Shangtung [Shandong, China] and Chosen [Korea]." He continued,

As, however, the sooner the sky is cleared up the better it is for both America and Japan, we must do all we can to correct these misrepresentations and exaggerations which have been so unscrupulously disseminated in the States by the enemies of Japan.<sup>153</sup>

Japanese writers pointed out that many parts of the American criticism of the Japanese stemmed from misunderstandings and mistaken reports by the media. For example, an article in *The Far East*, the English-language magazine published in Japan, stated that the photo of the crucifixion of Korean Christians by Japanese soldiers reported

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<sup>153</sup> "Campaign of Slander," Sep 18, 1919, *Administrative Reforms in Korea: Articles Reprinted from the "Seoul Press"* (Seoul, Chosen: Seoul Press Office, 1919).

in *The Literary Digest* and *The Public* [Figure 7] was a fabricated image. It also denied that the Japanese were stamping out Christianity in Korea. It said that because this picture was carried by a first-class magazine in the United States, the picture made an effective pictorial misrepresentation of Japan, on which some actions should be taken.<sup>154</sup> Japan's reaction showed that they were continuously very sensitive to the American public opinion on Japan.<sup>155</sup> Many publications continued to emphasize the progress and development of Korean sanitation, industry, agriculture, transportation and communication since the annexation, complete with before-and-after pictures, which had been a typical propaganda method of Japan before the March First Movement.<sup>156</sup> On the two main criticisms of the Japanese policy in Korea, the gendarmerie system and persecution of Christianity, Japanese writers stressed that the gendarmerie system was temporary but inevitable for peaceful annexation; and that the conditions of Christians in Korea were exaggerated, as Koreans had lied to American missionaries about their persecution. Moreover, they claimed, Japanese and foreign missionaries had the same purpose, that is, the progress of Korea.<sup>157</sup>

If Japanese rule in Korea brought such developments to Korean society, why did the disturbances happen? It was the primary question that the Japanese writers needed to

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<sup>154</sup> "Government Measures in Chosen: Serious Pictorial Misrepresentation," *The Far East*, July 12, 1919.

<sup>155</sup> As Andre Schmid argues, Japan's propaganda efforts toward the English-speaking audience were a testament to the special circumstances of Japan's rise to the status of colonizer: its late arrival in world historical events, its potential for conflict with the United States, which was also expanding into the Pacific Ocean, and its continued dependence on the goodwill and capital of the United States (Schmid, "Colonial Japan's Promotional Activities," 327).

<sup>156</sup> *Pictorial Chosen and Manchuria* (Compiled in Commemoration of the Decennial of the Bank of Chosen, Seoul, Korea, October 1919); Makoto Saitō, "A Message from the Imperial Japanese Government to the American People: Home Rule in Korea?" *Independent* 101 (Jan 31, 1920): 167-69; I. Yamagata, "Korean Annexation: A Japanese View," *Outlook* 130 (Feb 1, 1922), 185-88.

<sup>157</sup> See Kiyoshi Nakarai's pamphlet, "Relations between the Government and Christianity in Chosen" (1921) for Japan's declaration of its policy toward Christianity.

answer. A typical answer was to blame the activities on exiled Koreans, who they claimed that misunderstood and misused Wilson's self-determination idea in provoking Korean demonstrations. Yamagata, the editor of *Seoul Press*, said, quoting an American missionary, Frank Smith, that "without the instigation from outside, from America, Hawaii, Shanghai, and Vladivostok, no demonstrations would have occurred," and that the movement was not nationwide, but took place at only a score or more of the chief centers.<sup>158</sup>

The Japanese authorities publicized the fact that they were making reforms of Japanese rule in Korea. At the same time, they tried to stress that the changes and reforms were not made in response to Korean protesters, but were part of the continued efforts to improve conditions in Korea. Rather, they claimed, the March First Movement delayed reforms that were to be carried out, as it kept the authorities occupied with restoring order.<sup>159</sup> The government-general had already pursued the aim "of placing the Japanese and Korean peoples on a footing of equality, of promoting the welfare and happiness of the two peoples, and of securing the permanent peace of the Far East," since the annexation. With the material progress and achievements in Korea, the government-general insisted that they would propel further reforms in the same spirit. As to the specific content of the reforms, Japanese writers made several points. Above all, now civil officials, not only military officials, were made eligible for the post of governor-

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<sup>158</sup> Yamagata, 187.

<sup>159</sup> "Encouraged by the progress made by the Korean people in both culture and material well-being, the Government of Japan decided to set in motion a series of reforms so as to fit the administration of Chosen to its new conditions, and plans for that purpose were already in the process of being drafted, when in March, 1919, disturbances suddenly broke out in different parts of Chosen, and for several months the Government found itself fully occupied in restoring order." (Government-General of Chosen, *The New Administration in Chosen* [Seoul: Government-General of Chosen, 1921], 3). For similar arguments, see articles of Yamagata and Makoto Saitō.

general, and the policing of the country was placed in the hands of the ordinary police, not the gendarmerie. They insisted that they had also abolished all discrimination between Japanese and Korean officials in terms of salary and available posts in the government-general. The new Governor-General, Makoto Saitō, wrote in his contribution to an American magazine, *The Independent*, that he desired to hear the opinions and complaint of Koreans and would mold his policy so as to satisfy their reasonable desires.<sup>160</sup> With these reforms, Korea and Japan proper would form equally integral parts of the same Empire, and it was the ultimate purpose of the Japanese government in due course to treat Korea as in all respects on the same footing with Japan. Although this idealistic outlook on the Korean problem by the Japanese writers did not always seem realistic to American readers, it was enough to show that the Japanese authorities were making efforts to ameliorate the social conditions in Korea.

Reports on the American rule in the Philippines by Japan's English-language magazines supplemented the justification of the Japanese control in Korea. For instance, an article in *The Far East* on the problem of Philippine independence mentioned that the American residents in the colony were almost unanimously opposed to independence. It went on to say that the American argument was that a strong, stable, and experienced government was the first essential prerequisite for the development of the resources in the Philippines, and that the Filipinos were physically and temperamentally unfit for national independence.<sup>161</sup> The reference to the American rule in the Philippines was to find similarities between Japanese and American colonial rule and to earn American sympathy for Japan's struggle as a colonizer.

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<sup>160</sup> Saitō, 168.

<sup>161</sup> "Philippine Independence," *The Far East* 20, no. 445 (Nov 6, 1920).

## **Conclusion**

By early 1920, Americans who had known little about Korea became aware of the situation that the country was facing under the harsh Japanese colonialism. Based on information from the Japanese, Americans had previously considered Korea merely as a legitimate colony of the newly rising Japanese empire. But after the March First Movement, Americans became aware of Korea's plight under colonial rule. In other words, the American attitude toward the "Korean problem" changed from indifference to concern and careful observation.

In this process, the majority of American writers sympathized with the Korean people and requested the Japanese authorities implement more humanitarian policies toward Koreans, under the motto of "No Neutrality for Brutality." At the same time, the best resolution possible for the present conditions in Korea was civilian reform. Although American elites and officials were aware that Korean nationalists desired absolute independence, these Americans believed that it was not desirable for the order of East Asia and the world. This cautious view on the Korean problem from the American side remained and lasted until the end of colonial rule in Korea in 1945. Nevertheless, what is noteworthy in this period is that Korean nationalist activities eventually caused American elites, religious groups, and officials, that is, the opinion makers, came to have more a specific view on the Korean problem.

As the "Korean problem" up to the early 1920s was mentioned and debated among American and Japanese opinion makers, Koreans also began to raise their own voice, appealing directly to the American audience in various ways. The next chapter will



deal with how this Korean nationalist voice engaged the American public and how Americans responded.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Korean Nationalist Voices and American Ears**

#### **Introduction**

In the wake of the March First Movement (1919) both Korean nationalists and outside observers began to view Korea differently. The Movement provoked many Korean nationalist and communist groups to emerge from the early 1920s. At the end of the First World War, Korean nationalists were full of hope that discussions of self-determination and expressions of international sympathy for the Korean people would quickly precipitate Korea's independence. As outside observers showed more interest in the Korean problem from 1919, the changed outside perception of Korea provided Korean people with the opportunity to express their thoughts on the international stage almost for the first time. By raising their voices, Korean people living in the United States, in particular, began to inform American audiences of the conditions in colonial Korea. The post-First World War period from 1918 to 1921 marked a peak of American public interest in Korea's colonial situation. Korean nationalist leaders reorganized and systematized their propaganda activities to the American people, including politicians. They also organized a group of pro-Korean Americans during this period. Korean leaders focused on appealing to the American audience, much more than in other countries, because they believed in the special role of the U.S. in the newly reorganized world as

well as in its relationship with Korea. This chapter explores how these Korean leaders' beliefs were presented to, and received by, American audiences in the post-First World War years.

## 1. The Official U.S. Position

### (1) Officials in Charge

The Division of Far Eastern Affairs of the Department of State was the main U.S. governmental institution in charge of Korea-related issues during the colonial period.<sup>1</sup> As an institution for handling the American federal government's foreign relations, the Department of State assigned Foreign Service personnel to nations maintaining diplomatic relations with the U.S. Under the 1882 U.S. and Korea Treaty, the first American ambassador arrived in Korea in 1883. However, the protectorate treaty was enforced on Korea on November 17, 1905, which caused American officials to withdraw the American legation on November 24, 1905.<sup>2</sup> With this immediate action, the U.S. became "the first country to announce the decision to withdraw its legation from Korea."<sup>3</sup>

The withdrawal of the U.S. legation from Korea did not mean the immediate departure of all American citizens. American citizens could stay in Korea the same way

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<sup>1</sup> The Division of Far Eastern Affairs (FE from now on) had "general charge, under the Secretaries of Department of State, of relations, diplomatic and consular, political and economic, with China, Japan, and Siam, and with the Far Eastern possessions and territories of European nations and the foreign-controlled islands of the Pacific not included therein, and of such matters as concern [the State] Department in relation to the American-controlled islands of the Pacific and to the Far East in general"; and had "charge of such matters as concern State Department in relation to the control of the traffic in narcotic drugs" ("Organization of the Foreign Services," U.S. Department of State, *Register of the Department of State* [Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1936], 10).

<sup>2</sup> From the Secretary of State (Root) to Seoul (Morgan), *Instructions, Korea*, M. 77, R. 109; From the Secretary of State (Root) to Seoul (Morgan), Nov 24, 1905, *FRUS, 1905*, 631; From the Secretary of State (Root) to Diplomatic Officers of the United States, Nov 25, 1905, *FRUS, 1905*, 626, quoted from Seung-young Kim, 60-65.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Croly, *Willard Straight* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1924), 192.

they were allowed to stay in Japan. For practical reasons, such as the protection of American citizens in the country, the U.S. also maintained its Consular Office in Korea, although there was no effective diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and Korea. At Korea's annexation, the U.S. Consular Office in Korea was absorbed into the U.S. Embassy in Japan. As Consular Officers, American diplomatic officials in Korea were in charge of dealing with "every problem that enters into the relation of the U.S. with foreign countries, whether it be political, commercial, administrative or social."<sup>4</sup> In addition to handling these diplomatic issues, an important task of officials in the Consulate Office was transmitting information about conditions in Korea to the State Department. Notably, Foreign Service officers who had served in Consulate Offices and embassies in East Asian countries were later assigned to the Division of Far Eastern Affairs in many cases, because of their experience in the region and language skills.<sup>5</sup>

American Foreign Service officers in colonial Korea collected, translated, and transmitted major news and issues of Korea to Washington. Because the State Department encouraged them to analyze and report on political and economic conditions and trends of significance to the U.S.,<sup>6</sup> it was also common for officials in Korea to express their own opinions with detailed information on Korean domestic issues. Their major informants were the Japanese officials of government-general and American residents in Korea, mainly businessmen and missionaries. Due to officials' limited

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<sup>4</sup> *Register of the Department of State*, 337-39.

<sup>5</sup> It is significant that many of the former consular officers in Korea, Japan, and other East Asian posts came to serve in the Division of Far Eastern Affairs and participated in making decisions on liberated Korea after the Pacific War in the 1940s. Therefore, eyewitness observation and the following opinion on the Korean problem of these officials in the fields would be ultimately applied to the American official policy when it was needed.

<sup>6</sup> *Register*, 338.

interaction with Koreans, American missionaries served as crucial informants, providing inside stories regarding the general sentiment of, or social and political changes among, Koreans.<sup>7</sup>

As the American Consulate was not responsible for diplomatic activities, but was charged with maintaining American citizens' status and security, U.S. officials in Korea were primarily concerned with the impacts that the annexation would have on American residents and businessmen in Korea. In June 1910, for instance, while reporting about Korea's imminent colonization, the Division of Far Eastern Affairs advised the Secretary of State: "when annexation does take place, whether in the near future or later on, the points in which the United States are particularly concerned are the surrender of extraterritorial jurisdiction and the customs tariff."<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, in a report to the American ambassador to Japan on the Korean political situation in August 1910, the Vice Consul General in Seoul wrote,

I judge that the Korean Emperor will request annexation and that annexation will be followed by an attempt to abrogate the existing treaties, with the customs tariffs and extraterritorial rights which they provide.

Local British and German firms, it is said, have strongly protested to their respective governments against the probable abrogation of the treaties. To "temper the wind to the shorn lamb," it is considered here possible that Japan will allow the treaties to continue fearing that the unpopularity of her Russian agreement and new tariff forbids any further annoyance to foreign powers at present.

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<sup>7</sup> At the time of the March First Movement, American Consul Officers gathered information about Korean demonstrators and the Japanese suppression of them through contact with American missionaries, including D. M. McRae, of the Canadian Presbyterian Mission, S. A. Moffett of the Northern Presbyterian Mission, John Thomas, the head of the Oriental Missionary Society, Stacy L. Robert of the Northern Presbyterian Mission, and O. R. Avison, President of Severance Hospital. Consul General Bergholz in May 1919 requested members of the Methodist and Presbyterian Missions to prepare a brief historical narrative of Korea and its relations to Japan and the various causes which led to the current uprising in Korea and transmitted the report to the State Department for information (From Seoul [Bergholz] to Secretary of State, May 22, 1919, 895.00/639, *IAK*, 1910-29).

<sup>8</sup> From FE to Secretary of State, Jun 23, 1910, 895.00/474, *IAK*, 1910-29.

He summarized, “it may be pointed out that American interests will be in no way helped by the loss of our treaty rights,” adding, “That the customs tariff should not be altered at present is the opinion of many Japanese as well as all foreign business men.”<sup>9</sup> As seen here, the major interest of American officials related to Korea in the 1900s was the practical one of the commercial rights of American companies, rather than the political one of Korea’s fate as a nation. Officials were concerned about whether the annexation of Korea would nullify the privileges of Americans, especially the most favored nation status and extraterritorial rights for American citizens in Korea, which had been guaranteed by the U.S.-Korean Treaty of 1882.

Although the U.S. Consular Office pursued the preservation of American commercial interests and legal rights in Korea during the colonial period, it was instructed to do only so as long as this did not lead to any disruption of friendly relations with Japan. One example was the “Unsan” gold mine case. The American owners of the Unsan gold mine in Korea were granted a concession from the Korean royal household in 1895 and developed it into one of the world’s foremost producers of gold.<sup>10</sup> By the middle of the 1930s, the mine was America’s last remaining resource for economic profits in Korea. The U.S. Consulate received letters from the gold mine company asking it to mediate cases in which foreigners could “no longer acquire mining rights in Korea,

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<sup>9</sup> He also mentioned specific names of American companies that would be impacted by this change: “The Standard Oil Company will be a heavy loser; the British-American Tobacco Company, large importers of American tobacco in manufactured forms, will, doubtless, be forced out of business; American cotton goods, at present competing successfully with Japanese fabrics, will have to abandon most of their market here, and many other American imports will find no ‘open door’ of opportunity, if the Japanese tariff is to be applied here and if Japanese goods are to enter duty free...” (“Korean Political Situation,” From American Consulate General [Ozro C. Gould, Vice Consul General, in charge] to American Ambassador to Japan (T. J. O’Brien), Aug 8, 1910, 895.00/493, *IAK*, 1910-29).

<sup>10</sup> By 1939, Unsan gold mine had become “the most lucrative enterprise of its kind in Asia.” Spencer J. Palmer, “American Gold Mining in Korea’s Unsan District,” *The Pacific Historical Review* 31, no. 4 (Nov 1962): 379.

except by becoming Japanese juridical persons” with newly enacted mining regulations. When the Japanese authorities enforced an export embargo on gold in 1932, they “compelled all gold producers to sell their gold at a price fixed from time to time by the Imperial government”;<sup>11</sup> and controversy on the tax levy and the company’s concession occurred in 1933-37. The Consulate Office in Seoul was instructed to be cautious and to maintain neutrality in dealing with these issues.<sup>12</sup>

Another crucial role of the Consular Office was to collect and transmit information about conditions in Korea under Japanese rule. In addition to understanding the development of industries, commerce, and education in Korea, as well as political trends among the Korean people, the U.S. government utilized the Consular Office in Korea as a channel to understand Japanese intentions as an imperial power and colonizer. At the same time, as officials in Washington were hardly familiar with issues in East Asia, the State Department naturally recognized American officials in Korea as experts on the region.

## (2) An Ambivalent View

American officials in colonial Korea could have ambiguous position, due to the U.S.’ diplomatic relationship with Japan, not Korea, while the conditions in Korea frequently called for the humanitarian and moralistic attention of Americans and the

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 389. For details of these controversies, see folder 895.63OR4 of *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>12</sup> From Seoul (Neville) to FE, No. 992, 1934. 10. 2., 895.63OR4/43; from Seoul (Langdon) to Embassy at Tokyo, FE, 1934. 9. 25, 895.63OR4/44, *IAK, 1930-39*. The company, under pressure by government-general in Korea, was finally sold to a Japanese mine company in August 1939. Palmer notes that the Japanese in 1937-38 “showed themselves determined to expel foreign enterprise from Korea. They showed this by increasing annoyances and by placing various obstacles in the company’s path.” The company sold concession rights, plants, equipment, and supplies to the Nippon Mining Company, a Japanese government-supported company (Palmer, 389).

direct and indirect support of American missionaries. In most cases, American officials in Korea and neighboring posts were instructed to maintain an impartial and apolitical stance in the field. Nevertheless, like other Americans living in Korea, they were personally sympathetic toward the Korean people, exhibiting a modernist view as well as a sense of American exceptionalism. Their personal perspectives on specific cases, through their reports to Washington, were later recognized as a useful means of understanding Japan and the Pacific War, contributing, over the long term, to the making of U.S. policy in Far East. Torn between official directives to maintain impartiality and their own personal sympathies toward the local people, American officials faced the following dilemma: Should the U.S. consider Korea part of Japan or an independent entity?

The U.S. Consular Office was instructed to maintain neutrality in principle when dealing with issues related to Japan's policy in Korea or Koreans' continuous appeals for aid to the American government. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the most frequent foundation on which Korean nationalist leaders appealed to the U.S. government throughout Korea's colonial period was the "good offices" clause in the U.S.-Korean Treaty of 1882. Korean nationalist leaders and their American supporters almost always cited this clause to legitimate their appeals to the U.S. However, from the beginning, both parties of the treaty exhibited wide latitude in interpreting the clause. As Seung-young Kim's study shows, the good offices clause "did not imply any special obligation or commitment to maintain Korean independence,"<sup>13</sup> but was rather a moral obligation for the U.S. government. In the early stages of the U.S.-Korean relationship, Kim argues,

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<sup>13</sup> Kim, 15.



there were cases when the U.S. played its good offices role to some extent; for instance, when there was a confrontation between China and Japan in 1882 because of a Korean military trainee riot, the U.S. “deployed its gunboat to Korean waters with a view to facilitate its good offices role.”<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, from the beginning, there was a chasm between U.S. and Korean interpretations of the clause. When American Minister Lucius Foote had his first audience with King Kojong to exchange the ratification of the U.S.-Korean treaty in 1882, he said, “In this progressive age, there is a moral power more potent than standing armies, and the weakness of a nation is sometimes its strength.”<sup>15</sup> This statement with emphasis on non-aggression by the American Minister, on one hand, convinced the Korean King that the friendship between the two countries was firmly cemented and would be continuous.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the differentiation between moral power and military and political power in Foote’s statement implied that the “good offices” clause would be restricted to moral issues and matters not involved in military interventions. In short, while these several actions and comments by the U.S. at the time of the exchange of the U.S.-Korea Treaty heightened Korean expectations of American assistance, the U.S. government tried to make sure that its friendly gesture toward Korea was not with practical implications. In the actual case, the U.S. tried to “disengage itself from any kind of political involvement that might lead to military intervention.”<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, as soon as Japan formally claimed Korea as its colony, colonized Korea was no longer eligible to exercise sovereignty or any claims related to a treaty with

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “Foote Address,” Enclosures in Foote to Frelinghuysen, May 25, 1883, *FRUS: 1883*, 243, quoted from Kim, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Reply of the King to Mr. Foote, *FRUS, 1883*, 244, quoted from Kim, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Kim, 14.

foreign countries, and the American government judged that “good offices” clause null and void. This interpretation was clarified at crucial cases such as the March First Movement, which questioned whether the good offices clause was still in effect. The League of the Friends of Korea, a pro-Korean organization, asked for American diplomatic aid that was called for by the “good offices” clause on the occasion of the March First Movement. On this, the State Department replied, “a treaty between the two Governments is generally regarded as terminated by the absorption of one of the parties thereto into another nationality, and the consequent loss of power to perform its obligations under the treaty. Therefore, it would seem that any treaty rights or privileges which American citizens may have in Korea must be found in the existing treaties between the United States and Japan.”<sup>18</sup> In reply to the Friends of Korea, the State Department responded, “the Department of State knows of no responsibility attaching to the government of the United States with respect to Korea and Japan other than that of securing to American citizens the full enjoyment of the rights and privileges which they may have therein under treaty provisions or by the law of nations.”<sup>19</sup> This was confirmation that the U.S. government had already severed all official ties with Korea as a state, and thus considered the Treaty of 1882 inoperative.

The U.S. government firmly maintained that, as of 1910, Korea legally belonged to Japan. Whenever the White House received correspondence from the Provisional Government of Korea or the Korean Commission in Washington D.C. asking for recognition, the Secretary to the President requested advice from the State Department. In

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<sup>18</sup> From State Department (Colby) to Friends of Korea (S. A. Beck), Apr 20, 1920, 895.00/675, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

most cases, the State Department's advice was that "their receipt should not be acknowledged,"<sup>20</sup> since no good purpose would be served in acknowledging communication with the Korean representatives.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, when Fred Dolph and Henry Chung of the Korean Commission contacted the State Department and the White House in 1921, the State Department advised the White House not to acknowledge or meet with representatives from the Korean Commission. If the State Department or the White House received the representatives, the concern was that the reception would be interpreted as encouraging the movement by the Korean Commission.<sup>22</sup> The Department also recommended not relying on Fred Dolph's view, assuming that Dolph "would have difficulty in maintaining a position as a disinterested American friend of the Korean people," because he was an attorney for the Korean Commission.<sup>23</sup> The State Department emphasized: "This department has steadfastly refused to receive any representations from the Korean Commission and in view of our relations with Japan it would be inadvisable that such a representative should be received by the President at this time."<sup>24</sup> The position of the State Department about Korea's representation is clearly seen in the following short internal memo. In April 1921, an official of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs had a telephone communication with Henry C. Finkel, attorney of the Korean Commission. On the question of the extent to which the State Department could recognize a commissioner appointed by the Korean Provisional Government, the official responded,

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<sup>20</sup> From the White House to Acting Secretary of State (Polk), Jun 14, 1919; From State Department to Secretary to the President (Tumulty), Jun 16, 1919, 895.00/635, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>21</sup> From State Department to Secretary to the President (Christian), FE, May 16, 1921, 895.00/691, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>22</sup> From State Department (Hughes) to Secretary to the President, the White House (Christian), Jul 2, 1921, 895.00/693a, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>23</sup> FE Memo to Secretary of State, May 25, 1921, 895.00/693, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>24</sup> 895.00/693a.

“It would be impossible in view of the American diplomatic commitments to extend any recognition whatever to a Korean Commission of any kind; that the United States had had no diplomatic intercourse with Korea since 1905, and that since 1910, when the country had been annexed to the Empire of Japan, the United States had ceased to consider it a distinct political entity.” He advised Finkel that he was at liberty to leave papers regarding the commission’s claims, but “upon the distinct understanding that they were not in any sense official documents of which [the Department of State] could take any cognizance and that he could not expect to receive any answers to them.”<sup>25</sup> These communications between a representative of Korean nationalists in the U.S. and the State Department demonstrate that the U.S. government consistently maintained its principle of non-recognition of any person or group that represented Korean nationalists.

In maintaining a neutral position on political issues regarding Korea during its colonial period, the American Consular Office was concerned especially with American missionaries’ close relationship with Koreans, seemingly increasing the possibility of their involvement in political matters. The U.S. government was especially sensitive about this, as Japanese authorities had blamed American missionaries for inciting the March First Movement. In October 1919, half a year after the March First Movement, the Committee of the Federal Council of Protestant Evangelical Missions in Korea complained to the government-general in Korea about Japan’s harsh treatment of the Korean people. When an American Consular Officer reported this to the State Department, the Department showed concern about the political nature of the mission groups’ suggestion and instructed the Consular Office:

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<sup>25</sup> FE Memo, Apr 28, 1921, 895.01B11/0, *IAK, 1910-29*.

The greatest care should have been exercised with a view to avoiding the introduction of irrelevant suggestions, purely political in character, which might serve to foster in the minds of the Japanese a suspicion that the foreign missionaries in Korea are inclined to interfere in the political affairs of the country.<sup>26</sup>

On this and other occasions, the American government warned American missionaries not to interfere in the political affairs of Korea, showing “doubts as to the expediency of such communications,”<sup>27</sup> specifically regarding the mission board’s suggestion to the Government-general. The U.S. government and its officials in Korea were not to show any political consciousness of matters internal to Korea. Officials in the field had to be extremely cautious not to give any biased impressions to either Japanese authorities or Korean citizens, as any trace of political inclination could be harmful for U.S. relations with Japan.

On the other hand, the official attitude of impartiality and non-involvement could not prevent American officials from having personal opinions on the conditions they were witnessing. Throughout the colonial period, American officials who dealt with the Korean problem generally considered Korea culturally and ethnically distinct and independent from Japan. This was most obvious when officials showed personal sympathy toward the Korean people, especially during the March First Movement and the subsequent brutal oppression by Japanese troops in 1919.<sup>28</sup> But even after visible anti-Japanese activities had been silenced, American officials were aware of Koreans’ strong consciousness of “Koreanness.” Perception of their distinctiveness led Koreans to have a

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<sup>26</sup> “Situation in Chosen,” from Seoul (Bergholz) to Secretary of State, Oct 27, 1919; State Department (Wilbur J. Carr) to Seoul (Ransford S. Miller), Dec 26, 1919, 895.00/667, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>27</sup> From State Department to Seoul, Dec 26, 1919, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>28</sup> American officials in Korea reported cruelty of Japanese soldiers in treating Korean demonstrators and sent pictures of Korean people brutally beaten. From Seoul to State Department, Jul 17, 1919, 895.00/650, *IAK, 1910-29*.

negative outlook on Japan's permanent colonization of Korea. For example, at the time of the nationwide Movement in 1919, the American Consul General in Seoul, Bergholz, voluntarily reported to the State Department several cases of brutality by Japanese police and gendarmes, many of them witnessed by foreigners. In his report to the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, he emphasized the non-violence of the Koreans' demonstration [Italics added]:

In connection with the reports as to the attitude of the police and gendarmes towards Koreans whether actively participating in demonstrations or merely as spectators, *it must not be forgotten that in no case has it yet been asserted by the authorities that Koreans have been found with firearms of any description.* From the outset the demonstrations have been entirely pacific and such acts of violence on the part of Koreans as the throwing of stones and the smashing of windows have been caused by the unnecessary resort to force by the police.

The cases of violence by police and gendarmes, mentioned in the enclosures, will serve to show *the extreme provocation given the Koreans and their great self-control.*<sup>29</sup>

This indicates that American officials, like other foreign observers of the situation, were impressed by and sympathetic to the fact that the Korean demonstrators intended to avoid using violence for their cause.

In another report, Bergholz described the incident in which gendarmes entered the Severance Hospital, an American institution in Korea, and removed three Korean patients, who were suffering from serious gunshot wounds inflicted by police or gendarmes, to the police station against the protest of the surgeon in charge. Bergholz called the incident "a heartless disregard of the first principles of humanity."<sup>30</sup> His correspondence indicates that the Consul General voluntarily investigated who had given the order for the removal of the patients from the hospital. He said, in a critical tone [Italics added],

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<sup>29</sup> From Seoul (Bergholz) to Tokyo (Morris), Secretary of State, Apr 17, 1919, 895.00/628, IAK, 1910-29.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

So far, whenever I have had occasion to call the attention of the Government to what I have considered a disregard of the complete and constant protection and security which Americans should enjoy for their persons and property, I have invariably been met with the statement that the action of the authorities concerned was done in strict compliance with the law. With no intention of criticizing the Imperial Japanese Government or of reflecting in the slightest upon the local authorities *I cannot refrain from stating that, in case no law exists to cover a matter complained of, the Government General [sic] may make one overnight, as it has the power to do, to meet the exigency.*<sup>31</sup>

Despite his stated intention of not criticizing the Japanese government, Bergholz's personal criticism of their arbitrary use of laws for their efficient and high-handed rule, which may have violated the rights of American citizens, was clear. Although he was executing his rights as Consul General in order to protect American citizens on the surface, it was obvious that he intended to condemn the Japanese police's inhumane exercise of power over the Korean people. When transmitting the Government-general's report of the total number of criminal cases and clippings from the *Seoul Press*, the government-general's official organ, Bergholz commented, "They cannot be considered altogether reliable as the Government General naturally exaggerates the resistance of the Koreans, while minimizing, or altogether omitting, the brutalities of the police, gendarmes, and soldiers, in numerous instances."<sup>32</sup> Again, his depiction of the government-general's rule as despotic was plain.

By sending many other correspondences, American officials in Korea reported that Korean people were struggling with and suffering from the brutal control of the Japanese authorities, based on information gathered mainly from missionaries and local Korean sources. For example, they sent reports to Washington entitled "Photographs of

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> "Anti-Japanese Agitation," From Seoul (Bergholz) to Secretary of State, May 9, 1919, 895.00/629, *IAK*, 1910-29.

Korean victims of the brutal Japanese method in repressing the peaceful popular demonstration”; “ Photographs showing the result of beatings of Koreans by the police and court authorities”; “Brutal treatment of Koreans by police gendarmes and soldiers”; “The killing of 37 Koreans at Cheam by Japanese soldiers, and the destruction of the village” and so on.<sup>33</sup> These reports reveal that American officials felt sympathy toward the Koreans, as did many other American observers at that time. With inside stories and personal sympathy, American officials in Korea kept the State Department in Washington aware of the harsh and immoral aspects of Japanese rule. Even after the radical and visible activities of Korean nationalists stopped in the Korean peninsula, American officials in East Asia observed that Koreans were still generally against Japanese rule and that their cultural and ethnic identity was distinctly separate from that of Japan.

Yet, even American officials who personally sympathized with the struggling Koreans sympathized with Japan as the power, occupier, and colonizer than with the colonized. In particular, they were conscious that both Japanese and American observers frequently compared the Japanese relationship with Korea to the American relationship with the Philippines. Unlike in the 1910s, American observers in the 1920s and 30s viewed the racial conflicts within the Japanese empire as very historical and fundamental; Japan’s harsh treatment of Koreans from the March First Movement onward through the racial conflicts of the 1930s strengthened this view. In particular, American officials perceived American rule in the Philippines as benevolent and sympathized with Filipinos’ desire for ultimate independence; this benevolent rule was symbolized by the establishment of the elective National Assembly in 1907 and the passage of the Jones

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<sup>33</sup> From China to FE, May 17, 1919, 895.00/636; from Seoul, May 22, 1919, 895.00/639; From Seoul, May 19, 1919, 895.00/640; From Seoul to FE, May 12, 895.00/642; from USS (Harris) to FE, Jul 16, 1919, 895.00/644; From Seoul to FE, Jul 17, 1919, 895.00/650, *IAK, 1910-29*.



Law in 1916, “designed to give the Filipinos a larger degree of autonomy.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, negative images of Japanese imperial rule led American officials to differentiate it from American rule in the Philippines, thinking that the latter was benevolent and humanistic. The Military Attaché to the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, in his report to the Department of War and Department of State, said,

The difference between our position in the Philippines and Japan’s position in Korea may be well shown by the fact that in our dealings the doctrine of sympathy was fundamental, and in the case of Japan called obedience. The Koreans are suffering from the lack of sympathy, though fundamentally the Japanese problem is more difficult than ours has been.<sup>35</sup>

In their understanding, Japan’s rule in Korea and American rule in the Philippines both involved powerful countries taking on the responsibility of “developing” less powerful countries. The point at which these two rules conflicted was the matter of the ruler’s humanism, as seen in the Military Attaché’s statement.

## **2. Raising Voices in the Public Sphere**

### **(1) Korean Nationalist Leaders**

When Japan placed complete ban on nationalist activities within colonial Korea, many of the colony’s nationalist intellectuals were driven out of the country. Their emigration and exile to foreign countries fostered patriotic organizations in Korean expatriate communities including Japan, China, Russia, and the United States. The March First Movement was thus a turning point not only for American perceptions of Korea, but also for the Korean nationalist movement. Before the March First Movement,

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<sup>34</sup> Janice Stafford, “The Attitudes of the Philippine Newspapers, The Manila Times and the Philippines Herald, to the Independence Question, 1921-1927,” *South East Asian Monograph Series* 7 (1980): 12.

<sup>35</sup> From Tokyo to Secretary of State, May 9, 1919, 895.00/643, *IAK, 1910-29*.

independence movements were dispersed and intermittent in various regions. Within Korea, some nationalists formed secret nationalist movement societies, while others continued campaign of educating and cultivating abilities of Korean people. Still others protested against cadastral surveys and against tax increases, and led labor agitations. Because Japan more firmly oppressed Korean people's rights of assembly and speaking in the 1910s, many nationalist leaders were exiled to, and began to organize nationalist movement groups in, Russia, China, and the United States. The end of the Great War and news of the Paris Peace Conference caused Korean nationalists all over the world to anticipate for independence for Korea. In particular, the American president Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric on self-determination of peoples at the end of the war spurred Korean nationalist movement.<sup>36</sup> As Baldwin and Manela point out, Korean nationalists gladly adopted the Wilsonian vision of a new international order as an unprecedented opportunity for Korea to emerge as an independent and equal member of the community of nations. The Korean perception of Wilson and their hopes for his support "drew long-standing views of the United States as an exemplar of modern civilization and the power most sympathetic toward colonial aspirations for independence."<sup>37</sup> As we have examined in the last chapter, the idea of self-determination was one of the most obvious catalysts of the March First Movement. At the same time, Korean nationalists felt that they had to inform the great powers of their nationalist cause, so that those powers might advocate for Korea's independence at the Peace Conference.

In a series of petitions, Korean nationalist leaders in the United States played an active and leading role in alerting world powers and the U.S. president Woodrow Wilson,

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<sup>36</sup> Manela, 125-26.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-27; and Baldwin, 21.

the advocate of self-determination, of the atrocities taking place in Korea. In this early period, there were three main streams of the Korean independence movement: (1) an armed struggle led by Pak Yong-man, (2) self-strengthening and education movement led by An Ch'ang-ho, and (3) diplomacy line led by Syngman Rhee. Despite employing different methods to gain national independence, the movements did not seriously conflict with one another.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, almost all Korean nationalists in and out of Korea unanimously agreed on petitioning to great powers at the Paris Peace Conference and Washington Conference. After the March First Movement failed to achieve national independence, nationalists felt that a more centralized structure would be necessary to advance Korea's independence movement. As a result, different nationalist groups established over eight different Korean provisional governments in Seoul, Shanghai, Northeast China, and so on.<sup>39</sup> By September 1919, nationalist groups had agreed on having a united Korean Provisional Government (KPG), located in Shanghai, and drafted a Constitution based on republicanism and the separation of legal, administrative, and judicial powers. In November 1919, the KPG leaders announced the establishment of exiled government of Korea.

It is worth noting the broad range of support that Syngman Rhee received among Korean nationalists in 1919 and 1920. Each of the eight different Korean provisional governments suggested Rhee as the rank of prime minister or president in drafts of cabinet members' lists. This shows that Korean nationalists in Korea and China extensively supported Rhee, even though he was staying in the United States as of 1919.

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<sup>38</sup> Chông Pyông-chun argues that An and Rhee agreed with necessity of both self-strengthening of Koreans and diplomatic strategy (Chông Pyông-chun, 137-46).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 275-76.

Chông Pyông-chun explains that Rhee was popular because he possessed all the attributes that the Korean people sought in a leader. As Chông argues, the Korean people expected that a resolution would be passed at the Paris Peace Conference—based on President Wilson’s influence, Christian humanism, or even a more secular sense of international justice—that would gain their independence. Not only did Rhee possess a traditional Korean education, but he had also obtained a doctoral degree from Princeton University as a student under [soon-to-be president of the free world] Woodrow Wilson. Such diverse experiences and extraordinary personal connections, along with the fact that he was a Christian and a longtime nationalist leader, caused Koreans to view Rhee as ideally situated to convince the international society that their nationalist claims were justified.<sup>40</sup>

In August 1919, Syngman Rhee established the Korean Commission to America and Europe for the Republic of Korea (usually shortened as “Korean Commission”) in Washington D.C. Korean Commission represented the KPG in the U.S. The Commission had two goals: to represent the Korean people in diplomatic and propaganda activities, and to collect funds from Korean Americans.<sup>41</sup> Once the Korean Commission was set up, it sent many petitions to the American government on behalf of Korea—the White House, the State Department and Congress.<sup>42</sup> In the years of postwar conferences from the late 1910s to the early 1920s, Korean nationalist leaders pervasively hoped that appealing to the international society would ultimately result in national independence. It

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 277-78.

<sup>41</sup> Ko, 101-2. Ko explains that the Korean Commission used the relatively vague term ‘commission’ for its name, not delegation or embassy, because the American government did not recognize the existence of Republic of Korea (Ibid., 103). The Commission established its headquarter office in Washington D.C. and had several branches in Philadelphia, Chicago, Paris, London and Hawaii.

<sup>42</sup> “Appeal to Hughes to Recognize Korea, Soon Hyun, Accredited by the “Provisional Government,” Presents Plea,” *NYT*, May 12, 1921.

was also during these years when the American public responded to Korea's claims. Because the sensational news of Japan's cruel oppression of the Korean demonstrators, the Korean community in the United States could raise their nationalist voice toward the wider audience. Syngman Rhee's group took the lead in spreading Korean discourse to American audiences.<sup>43</sup> This study analyzes the relationship and interactions between Korean nationalist leaders and the American public and government, in other words, how Korean nationalists tried to represent the Korean problem and how Americans received their claims at this juncture. Therefore, it focuses on activities of Korean nationalist leaders, especially those of Rhee's group, who were in the United States and familiar with American audiences. In addition, as Rhee represented Korea's figurehead and would become the first president of the Republic of Korea in 1948, it is essential to see how his group's early activities influenced America's understanding of the Korean problem.<sup>44</sup>

Building on momentum surrounding the favorable attention on Korea around 1919, the Korean nationalist groups in the United States began to approach more aggressively to the American public. For the first time, Koreans spoke directly to the American public about their cause of national independence. Rhee and others contributed articles to American newspapers and journals and published books. By writing to the major American daily newspapers and magazines, the Korean leaders informed a wide range of American readers about the existence of Korean nationalist groups in the United States. These Korean writers from this period heavily resorted to Wilsonian language,

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<sup>43</sup> Leaders of this group with the strategy using diplomatic methods to gain national independence included Syngman Rhee, Henry Chung, Sô Chae-p'il, and P. K. Yoon (Yun Pyông-ku).

<sup>44</sup> Around 1919, Rhee became to have stronger political and intellectual connections with nationalist leaders within Korea. Among those were figures who had been jailed together with Rhee because of nationalist activities in the late nineteenth century and converted to Christianity in jail, such as Yun Ch'i-ho, who had been convicted in the Conspiracy Case, and Hugh Cynn (Sin Hông-u in Korean) of the YMCA. Those people led the reformist and self-government movement (Chông Pyông-chun, 302).

such as “self-determination” and “self-government.” Henry Chung, a colleague of Rhee and representative of the KNA, insisted in his letter to the *New York Times* that all the Korean people wanted at the March First Movement was a chance to prove their capacity for self-government. He criticized that a militaristic nation such as Japan should crush the aspirations people who were presumed to be incapable of governing themselves. If Americans sympathetic to Korea focused to blame Japan’s cruel actions, Korean activists tried to further burden the U.S. with the Korean problem. Chung commented that if the allied powers “permit Japan to keep on oppressing the Korean people on the presumption that the Koreans are incapable of self-government, then they are trampling under foot the very principles for which they fought” in the Great War.<sup>45</sup>

An opportunity where Syngman Rhee and Henry Chung were able to communicate their thought to American readers came when they debated the origins of the March First Movement in the *New York Times* with Yale University Professor George T. Ladd. Ladd, who had already shown his pro-Japanese view in earlier years as seen in Chapter 1, said in his full-page column on the *New York Times* that the March First Movement was the result of the propaganda of secret societies. He commented that those secret societies believed themselves as “patriotic,” but in others’ eyes, they were just “dangerous.” He also claimed that the *Ch’ôndogyo* group was disguising its dangerous revolutionary identity as if it was just a religious group. Without those groups’ instigation, he asserted, the majority of Korean people would have remained content and peaceful. He also sneered at the Korean group’s boasting that the country had been free in the past:

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<sup>45</sup> “Korea’s Appeal: Asks an Opportunity to Show Fitness for Self-Government,” *NYT*, Mar 21, 1919.

In none of the other cases is the political ignorance is so dense, or the long-continued submission to a Government intrinsically corrupt and disregarding of all the interests of its own subjects, and so really dominated by the lowest foreign influences (emanating from that inexhaustible fountain of political corruption, China,) as had been the case in Korea for 500 years prior to its occupation by the Japanese Protectorate under Prince Ito.<sup>46</sup>

As he did before, Ladd insisted that the Korean people were unfit for self-government.<sup>47</sup>

As a reply, Syngman Rhee accused Professor Ladd of being irresponsible by writing such a polemical column without having sufficiently researched Korean history, especially since Ladd was in an influential position with the American public. Rhee then pointed out that Ladd misinterpreted nature of the *Ch'ondogyo* and Korean nationalist organizations. He claimed that Koreans had never “boasted” about their past freedom, but had merely claimed that the country had once been free. He added, “it is not fair to compare old Korea with modernized Japan any more than to compare the old Japan with modernized Korea.”<sup>48</sup> Henry Chung, in another letter to the *New York Times*, complained that Ladd misstated facts regarding the Movement in Korea. Quoting American editors and missionaries who had witnessed the scenes in Korea, Chung said that the Movement was a wonderful passive resistance, and that foreigners marveled at the ability and thoroughness of Koreans’ organization. They had also witnessed Japanese soldiers burning villages to the ground and massacring their inhabitants. By not recognizing these irrefutable facts, Chung commented, Ladd had failed to see that the Korean uprising was not the work of a few “malcontents and rascals,” but the will of the entire Korean population. He then highlighted that the common people of Korea, regardless of sex,

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<sup>46</sup> George T. Ladd, “Causes of the Korean Uprising,” *NYT*, May 11, 1919.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Syngman Rhee, “Korea against Japan, A Reply to Professor Ladd’s Views on the Independence Movement,” *NYT*, May 18, 1919.

religion, or age, were “crying for the inalienable right of freedom from alien yoke and military oppression.”<sup>49</sup> Chung also stressed that Koreans planned the Movement in a peaceful and non-violent way.<sup>50</sup>

Responding to these criticisms, Ladd again wrote a letter to the *New York Times*, in which he said, “the acts of outrageous cruelty were not on one side only.” Here Ladd implied that the Korean demonstrators must have also used violence, and citing a story that some demonstrators were paid for the action. He outlined the causes for the troubles in Korea: discrimination against the natives; extreme red-tape in the civil administration; excessive oppression of freedom of speech; compulsory methods of naturalizing the natives; and the propagation of the idea of racial self-determination among the natives. He suggested that the more democratic Japanese government in Korea promised to reform these evils.<sup>51</sup>

Rhee again refuted Ladd’s argument and said that the Korean independence movement was did not represent the sentiments of a small but vocal minority, but the Korean people’s overwhelming refusal to submit to the militaristic autocracy of the Japanese rulers. Moreover, the Movement did not intend to disturb the friendly relations between the United States and Japan. Rather than asking America to go to war, Rhee said, the Koreans just hoped that the United States could apply the principles of self-determination to the Asiatic nations and set the Korean and Chinese people free without

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<sup>49</sup> Henry Chung, “Korean Independence, Not the Work of Agitators, but a Popular Movement,” *NYT*, May 21, 1919.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> George Ladd, “The Korean Revolt, Professor Ladd Replies to Critics of His Defense of the Japanese Position,” *NYT*, May 25, 1919.



resorting to arms.<sup>52</sup> This back-and-forth debate published in a nationwide newspaper presented Korea as a controversial issue in world politics and in American foreign policy. From then on, Korean nationalist leaders used every possible means to propagandize their movement toward the American public.

## (2) Korean Voice at Post–First World War Conferences

The first aggressive action that Korean nationalist groups in the U.S. took in the post-World War I years was to appeal to international conferences on the new world order. In the post-war mood of 1918 and with hope for a “more immediate and radical transformation of their status in international society,”<sup>53</sup> a Korean nationalist group, New Korea Youth Association in China, sent Kim Kyu-sik (also known as Kim Kuisic) to the Paris Peace Conference as Korean delegate. Kim, in petitions and addresses, asked the delegates to recognize the independence of Korea and proclaimed that “Koreans never could be ‘denationalized’ in spite of all the oppression and brutal force and cunning methods Japan employed to subject them to the military rule of the Asiatic Kaiser,” and that “the Korean people were determined to struggle till the end.” Kim warned that Japan would soon threaten world peace, as the country was planning to drive out the Western powers from East Asia.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, Syngman Rhee and Henry Chung applied in vain for passports from the U.S. to Paris, as the U.S. government rejected their application.

They sent a message about the peace conference to President Wilson, asking to represent

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<sup>52</sup> Syngman Rhee, and Henry Chung, “Far Eastern Questions, Japan’s Position Criticized in Regard to the Korean Independence Movement,” *NYT*, Jun 1, 1919.

<sup>53</sup> Manela, 5.

<sup>54</sup> Korean Delegation to the Peace Conference, *The Claim of the Korean People and Nation – For Liberation from Japan and for the Reconstitution of Korea as an Independent State*, Paris, Apr 1919; “Korean Banquet in Paris,” *Korea Review* I, no. 7 (Sep 1919): 9.

the 1.5 million expatriate Koreans living in America, Hawaii, Mexico, China, and Russia.<sup>55</sup>

Kim Kyu-sik later, as a delegate of the Provisional Government of Korea, sent a petition from the Korean people to President Wilson, although he could not participate in the conference as an official delegate.<sup>56</sup> The major point of the petition was requesting the peace conference to recognize the Provisional Government of Korea as the legitimate body representing the entire people of Korea. It declared,

This Provisional Government is the only Government which represents the will of the Korean people. From the date of Declaration of Independence any international agreement, engagement or contract which may be entered into by any other authority than that of this new Provisional Government, will not be recognized by the Korean people.<sup>57</sup>

After declaring that the suffering of Korea under Japanese rule was worse than that of Belgium under the Germans, Kim, in an interview with *The New York Times*, clarified that “substitution of a civil Governor for a military ruler in Korea would not improve conditions.”<sup>58</sup>

Meanwhile, the First Korean Congress held in Philadelphia from the 14th to the 16th April, 1919 symbolized the direction that Syngman Rhee and other leaders in the U.S. would take in their Korean independence movement. Main organizers of the event

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<sup>55</sup> Rhee et al. to Wilson, Nov 25 and Dec 22, 1918, *Woodrow Wilson Papers*, series 5b, reel 387, quoted in Manela, 126. However, Rhee and Chung failed to go to Paris, as the U.S. government rejected their application for passports. See the next section for details.

<sup>56</sup> Kim said that he had received many unofficial expressions of sympathy for the movement, and the propaganda work in Europe would be continued (“Japanese Assailed by Korean Envoys, Two of Delegates Sent to Peace Conference Arrive Here from Paris,” *NYT*, Aug 23, 1919).

<sup>57</sup> “Envoy Kim’s Letter to President Wilson Transmitting the Petition of the Korean People,” *Korea Review* I, no. 5 (Jul 1919): 9.

<sup>58</sup> “Japanese Assailed by Korean Envoys,” *NYT*, Aug 23, 1919.

were Syngman Rhee, Henry Chung, and Sô Chae-p'il (Philip Jaisohn in English name).<sup>59</sup> At the Korean Congress, nearly 200 delegates from Korean communities in North America gathered to “clarify and affirm their relationship” with the March First Movement<sup>60</sup> and celebrated the declaration of Korea’s independence. While the Congress is often seen as “the March First Movement occurring in the United States,”<sup>61</sup> the Korean Congress also clarified one of its unique aims, that is, accentuating public information about the Korean problem. Speakers included non-Korean academic and religious leaders as well as Korean nationalist leaders. Notably, speakers used English,<sup>62</sup> as if to emphasize that the Congress was addressed toward the audience in the United States and the world, rather than among Koreans only. The Congress expressed that “the Korean Provisional Government represented the authentic sovereign of the Korean nation, embodying the will and spirit of Koreans not only in the homeland but also abroad as well.”<sup>63</sup> The Congress chose several resolutions and drafted “An Appeal to America,” requesting American support and sympathy for Korea, because it is known that Americans love justice; have fought for their liberty and democracy; and stand for Christianity and humanity. The appeal also said, “Our cause is a just one before the laws of God and man.

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<sup>59</sup> “Invitation to the General Congress of Korean People,” *Sinhanminbo*, Mar 24, 1919.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Kim, “Diasporic Politics and the Globalizing of America: Korean Immigrant Nationalism and the 1919 Philadelphia Korean Congress,” In *Asian Diasporas, New Formations, New Conceptions, Congress*,” edited by Rhacel S. Parrenas and Lok C. D. Siu (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 205.

<sup>61</sup> Ko, 325.

<sup>62</sup> Speakers included Rev. Floyd W. Tomkins, Professor Hebert A. Miller, Professor Alfred J. G. Schadt, Jewish Rabbi Henry Berkowitz, and journalist George Benedict (*Proceeding of the First Korean Congress* [Philadelphia, 1919], 8).

<sup>63</sup> Richard Kim, 206.

Our aim is freedom from militaristic autocracy; our object is democracy for Asia; our hope is universal Christianity.”<sup>64</sup>

The Congress was concluded with a parade of all participants joining together, carrying both Korean and American flags, marching to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, the site of America’s Continental Congress. After Syngman Rhee read the Korean Declaration of Independence and announced the establishment of KPG, the assembly endorsed the Declaration and the new Korean government with three loud cheers for the Republic of Korea, followed by another three cheers for the United States.<sup>65</sup> As Manela points out, the ceremony expressed the unmistakable symbolism that “the Korean movement against colonial rule was akin to, and drew inspiration and legitimacy from, the history and ideas” of the U.S. struggle for independence.<sup>66</sup>

Korean nationalist leaders who propagandized toward the American public used public lectures, many of which were during church meetings and meetings of the pro-Korean organization, the League of the Friends of Korea. Publication of an English-language magazine, the *Korea Review*, by the Korean Students’ Leagues of America and the Korean Commission, was one of the ways of “awakening” the American public to Korea’s issues.<sup>67</sup> Editors reported updated news about activities of Korean nationalist groups and KPG, and published Korea-related articles in English.

The Washington Naval Conference, from November 1921 to February 1922, was seen as the last chance in the post-First World War years for Korean nationalist leaders to

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<sup>64</sup> “Proceeding of the First Korean Congress,” 29-30.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-82; Richard Kim., 206-7.

<sup>66</sup> Manela, 205.

<sup>67</sup> “Dr. Sô (Sô Chae-p’il) Publishing English Magazine, to Spread the News about Korea and Eastern Situations,” *Sinhanminbo*, Mar 13, 1919, 3.

make their voices heard in international society in expectation of the great powers' political and diplomatic action on behalf of Korea. The conference, which was called by American President Harding, aimed to disarm the naval powers in the post-First World War period, and demonstrated that the power balance in the Pacific and the Far East, including the issue of the future of China, was of critical importance to the world powers. In addition, by holding the conference, the United States could show that Americans still had an interest in world affairs, after their rejection of membership in the League of Nations.<sup>68</sup> Since the Paris Conference, leaders of the Korean Commission had eagerly anticipated firmer American leadership in the world.<sup>69</sup> The Washington Conference, which was called by the United States with American-Japanese relations as its major concern, could be the place where the U.S. showed its emerging leadership and, hopefully for the Korean leaders, initiative in solving the Korean problem. Korean nationalist groups paid close attention to the proceedings and conclusion of the conference.<sup>70</sup>

In the hope that the Washington Conference would deal with the Korean problem, the Korean nationalist groups launched a "Korean Mission" to the conference. In its editorial, *Korea Review*, the Korean Commission commented that while it was true that Americans could not extend a formal invitation to Korea or Russia for this conference dealing with issues of the Pacific and East Asia due to "the usual diplomatic obstacles,"

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<sup>68</sup> Robert D. Schulzinger, *U.S. Diplomacy since 1900*, Fifth Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 134-35.

<sup>69</sup> "The Allies Cannot Ignore America," *Korea Review* III, no. 3 (May 1921): 1.

<sup>70</sup> While the conference was held, the main topic of *Korea Review*, the English-language magazine published by the Korean Commission, was on the conference's purpose, the question of how the conference would impact the Korean problem, and news regarding Korean, American and British petitions to the delegations asking for help for Korea. It also featured biographies of delegation members who were from the United States and Japan.

these two countries still ought to be represented at the conference in some manner, even if by an unofficial delegate. The editor continued, “this is especially true in the case of Korea,” as “the world knows that Korea is a nation.” The main object of the conference was for permanent peace, and “*if Korea be left to her present fate there will be no permanent peace in the Orient* [Italics added].” The same article again appealed to President Harding to give Koreans a chance to present their case before the conference.<sup>71</sup>

The Korean Mission appealed to the American delegation to submit the case of Korean colonialism so that a Korean delegation could participate in the conference and present their case. However, the efforts on the part of the Korean Mission proved to be a failure. The State Department did not respond to the petition, thinking that Korea “had no international standing, and we [the United States] have had no diplomatic intercourse with that country since 1905.”<sup>72</sup> Being unable to attend the conference, the Korean Mission sent petitions directly to the Conference and open letters to the Japanese delegation, among others.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, American supporters helped Koreans by sending appeals to the State Department and the American delegation.<sup>74</sup> Without providing any

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<sup>71</sup> “President Harding Takes a Step in the Oriental Problems,” *Korea Review* III, no. 5 (Jul 1921): 1.

<sup>72</sup> “An Appeal from the Korean Mission to the Washington Conference,” *Korea Review*, vol. III, no. 8 (Oct 1921): 6-8; “Memorandum, Division of Far Eastern Affairs, Oct 13, 1921, *Department of State Records*, 895.01, quoted in Ko, 411-12.

<sup>73</sup> “What Korea Wants,” *Korea Review* III, no. 9 (Nov 1921): 1; “An Open Letter to the Japanese Delegates to the Conference on Limitation of Armaments,” *Korea Review* III, no. 9 (Nov 1921): 2-3; “Korea’s Appeal to Arms Conference,” *Korea Review* III, no. 10 (Dec 1921): 4-7; “Petition Presented to the Conference on Limitation of Armament and the Far East by the People of Korea,” *Korea Review* III, no. 11 (Jan 1922): 3-4; “Supplementary Appeal by Korean Mission,” *Korea Review* III, no. 12 (Feb 1922): 1-2.

<sup>74</sup> “Washington Residents Petition Secretary Hughes on Korea’s Behalf,” *Korea Review* III, no. 12 (Feb 1922): 5. The Korean petition to the disarmament conference was published in the *Congressional Record* and was printed as a Senate document, according to Senator Spencer’s proposal (*Congressional Record*, Dec 22, 1921, quoted in *Korea Review* III, no. 11 [Jan 1922]: 4).

chance for the Korean Mission to present, the Washington Conference ended with the great powers signing treaties amongst themselves.<sup>75</sup>

In fact, from the beginning, the Koreans' view of the Washington conference had not been very optimistic. Before the conference, in an editorial entitled "Will Washington Conference Duplicate That of Paris?," the *Korea Review* expressed anxiety that the international community was again to permit Japan's expansion in return for its willingness to reduce its armaments. It lamented, "the market value of idealism is now at a low ebb. One who talks of ideals or fundamental principles of right is looked upon as a crank or nuisance in society."<sup>76</sup> In another article in the same issue, a writer said that Koreans everywhere took the keenest interest in the Washington Conference and this was natural, for there were many valid reasons why the powers should change their attitude of indifference toward Korea. He asserted, "every power represented there has not only recognized Korea's sovereignty by formal treaties but has actually pledged to safeguard that sovereignty in case a third party attempts to impair it." Although a third party destroyed Korea as an independent state, "none of the powers so far have fulfilled the treaty obligations by a direct protest to the perpetrator of the international crime or by assisting the Koreans to regain their legitimate rights." Notably, the writer revealed a realistic observation of world diplomacy [Italics added]:

The Korean people must realize *that morality plays only a minor part in international dealings, and that international law is a live instrument only when both parties to a dispute possess the power to enforce it.* If one of the disputants has not the necessary power the instrument has no binding force upon the party who has. Is it right for the strong to impose his will upon the weak?...

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<sup>75</sup> The participating powers agreed with the fixed ratio of naval powers, agreed to respect one another's holdings in the Pacific, and sanctioned the territorial integrity of China (Schulzinger, 134-36).

<sup>76</sup> "Will Washington Conference Duplicate That of Paris?" *Korea Review* III, no. 9 (Nov 1921): 1.

Such conduct between individuals is strongly condemned in civilized communities and generally prevented by public opinion, but such procedures in dealings between nations are looked on with more or less indifference, because they are difficult to stop and public opinion is impotent in such matters. We are sure that what Japan has done to Korea, China and Siberia in recent years is much deplored and condemned by all those who understand the facts, but their condemnation does not deter Japan from doing what she believes to be to her interest...

*...America desires Japan to change her course and so do the other powers, but none of them are willing to force her.* The conference is nothing more than a friendly meeting to discuss different problems with the hope of relieving the present tension which exists in the Far East, but there is no apparent sign on the part of America or any of other powers to bring about a fundamental change in international policy or to revolutionize international morality.<sup>77</sup>

The article nevertheless clarified that Korean independence must be won through the efforts of its own people and therefore, “whatever the conference may do the Koreans must keep up the fight for righteousness and liberty,” and that “the success or failure of the conference ought not to alter in the slightest degree the determination of the Korean people to be free.”<sup>78</sup>

Watching the Washington Conference coming to an end, editors of the *Korea Review* wrote a general overview of the conference, admitting their disappointment when the Conference ignored the petitions filed by the Korean Mission. An editorial said, although it was believed that most of the American delegates felt that Korea had been wronged by Japan and they would have liked to see Korea given justice, they faced two obstacles which overbalanced their sense of fair play: 1) that America took a false step in 1904 in watching Japan ravish Korea without a word of protest, and 2) the current American policy of maintaining peace, with Japan in particular, almost at any cost. He commented that it was practical statesmanship of “the end justifies the means,” while it

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<sup>77</sup> “The World Helps Only Those Who Help Themselves,” *Korea Review* III, no. 9 (Nov 1921): 3-4.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



was not based upon the principle of Christianity.<sup>79</sup> Another editorial said, “the American people are not sufficiently interested in the Far East to risk a quarrel with any one which may entail some sacrifice on their part.”<sup>80</sup> The *Korea Review* quoted Frank H. Simonds’ review of the Conference. In part the reviewer said [*Italics added*],

You may think of the Washington Conference as a great outpouring of idealism; certainly it did call forth a great expression of idealist hopes. The same was equally true of Paris. But if you analyze either conference you must see that what was actually accomplished represented not idealistic experiments, but sound business transactions accompanied not by generous gestures, but by unmistakable bargaining.

[...] *The Washington Conference did not promote peace in the world—it only registered that desire for peace which already existed.* To do this was an exceedingly useful thing, but something far different from the notion generally held as to the present and future meaning of the first American international Conference.<sup>81</sup>

As seen, feelings of disappointment at the two international conferences for the postwar world order led the Korean nationalist movement leaders to raise a critical view on the ways great powers exercise foreign policy in the *realpolitik*.

### (3) The Right to Represent Oneself

As Koreans in the United States had intended to extend their nationalist activities since the end of the Great War, an issue appeared regarding Koreans living abroad or participating in international events was whether or not the Korean people were eligible to represent themselves, and, if so, which group of Koreans would represent them. The existence of Koreans abroad at times created an undefined space in the actual national representation of the people as well as an obligation on the part of the nation-state over its

<sup>79</sup> “Impressions of the Conference,” *Korea Review* IV, no. 1 (Mar 1922): 1-2.

<sup>80</sup> *Korea Review* III, no. 10 (Dec 1921): 1.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

citizens in foreign lands, because their legal status was assumed as Japanese subjects. As seen in the Hemet case, the Korean immigrant community in the U.S. during the colonial period considered the issue of representation as very sensitive, connecting it to their national identity.

The legal ambiguity of Koreans' status when abroad was revealed when Syngman Rhee and Henry Chung, two Korean nationalist activists residing in the U.S., applied for U.S. passports in order to participate in the Paris Peace Conference. Their application was declined, with the explanation that they, as Japanese subjects, needed to obtain passports from Japanese authorities.<sup>82</sup> Koreans' national status was also questioned at conferences or any other international events where Korean political or intellectual figures were to participate. Because of strict censorship by the Japanese authorities, Korean nationalist elites tried to use these events as opportunities to express their pursuit of national independence abroad. For instance, at the opening session of the Pan-Pacific Educational Conference held in 1921 in Honolulu, the Japanese delegate introduced Sin Hûng-u (Hugh Cynn), a Korean representative and director of the Korean Educational Association, while introducing the list of Japanese representatives at the conference. But Sin did not move when he was introduced. An American reporter observed that later Sin "calmly introduced himself as the delegate from Korea." Although there was "no comment on the Japanese leader's assumption that Korea was a part of Japan and Mr. Cynn's silent assertion of the integrity of the former 'hermit kingdom,'" <sup>83</sup> the report

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<sup>82</sup> "Korean Case Explained: Washington Cannot Issue Passports to Subjects of Japan," *NYT*, Mar 9, 1919; "Korean Representative's Appeal Was Denied? Diplomatic Ruled Did Not Allow Korean Participation in the Peace Conference," *Sinhanminbo*, Mar 22, 1919.

<sup>83</sup> C. F. Gessler, "Korea for independence, Delegate to Educational Conference Ignores Introduction by a Japanese," *The Bulletin* (1921), published in *Korea Review* III, no. 7 (Sep 1921): 11.

implied that the international audience fully observed in his statement the struggle to express the national consciousness of the Korean people.

A more vivid picture of the Korean elites' struggles for the right to represent their "nation" on the international stage can be found in the example of the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) conferences. IPR was one of the very first non-government organizations in the Asia-Pacific region that tried to institutionalize Wilsonian internationalism in the region. Although it was not a formal diplomatic organization, IPR provided political, economic, and cultural connections across nations and regions, especially in the 1920s, as the world powers after the First World War were showing interest in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>84</sup> Korean delegations participated in the IPR conference three times—in 1925, 1927, and 1931.

The liberalism of the IPR allowed colonies in Asia such as Korea and the Philippines to participate as members in its early stages, which provided them with a rare opportunity to voice anti-colonialism. However, Tomoko Akami argues that the great powers' "double standard" about liberal democracy at home and colonies in the non-Euro-American periphery<sup>85</sup> doomed the IPR to obscurity. In particular, considering the IPR's agenda and goals, its vision was distinctively American, pursuing American-led

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<sup>84</sup> The great world powers were key players in the making of the IPR organization. The Christian element was strong in the founding years, but it was soon replaced by new agendas, namely, the notion of a Pacific Community and a non-state agency. These agendas looked like "new and challenging elements to the dominant ideologies and institutions of international politics." The notion of the Pacific Community, led by the United States, challenged the Eurocentric view, and transformed the Pacific region from the periphery of Europe, i.e., the "Far East," to center stage in international politics. With the concept of the Pacific Community, the IPR founders also tried to achieve a more equal partnership between Euro-American powers and non-Euro-American powers in Asia, specifically Japan and China. They also tried to break the dominant perceptions of the power hierarchy between "East" and "West" (Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: the United States, Japan and the Institute of Pacific Relations in War and Peace, 1919-45* [London: Routledge, 2003], 10).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-3.

regional order in the Asia Pacific. This vision required the U.S. to negotiate with Japan,<sup>86</sup> which appeared as a threat not only to security but also to trade and investment in the Pacific region. As a consequence, the IPR worked as a novel framework in international relations, which set U.S.-Japanese relations as its center. This character of the IPR naturally limited the activities of Korean and Filipino representatives.<sup>87</sup>

Despite the limited space that IPR allowed Koreans, Korean nationalists had participated in the founding of the Korean Council of the IPR and hoped that they could use the IPR conferences to express their cause for independence to the global community.<sup>88</sup> From the beginning, Korean participation in the IPR was controversial. It was not exactly because Korea was a colony, given that the Philippines was also on the list, but because Japan and its supporters opposed their participation. The East Coast experts at the Yale Club meeting in February 1925 opposed separate Korean participation, “because they felt that it might harm ‘good’ U.S.-Japan relations,” which was assumed to be fundamental to the success of the IPR project.<sup>89</sup>

Korean representatives at the international IPR conferences appreciated the non-governmentality of the IPR, which allowed them to enjoy the status of a “racial group,”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> “Canadian Affairs,” *The Round Table*, vol. 1 (November 1910 to August 1911): 494.

<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, by the mid-1930s, key IPR figures wanted IPR operations to be more world-oriented and for the focus to be on the state rather than society. The global perspective and the state orientation of IPR operations were accentuated through the two major wars in the Pacific Asian region: the Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War.

<sup>88</sup> Participants in the Korean Council of the IPR were nationalist groups, including the YMCA, and a Korean independence movement group in the United States, which was competing with socialist groups for initiative in the independence movement. Among Koreans in the United States, Sin Hŭng-u, Helen Kim (Kim Hwal-ran in Korean), and Sô Chae-p’il participated in the IPR conferences.

<sup>89</sup> Masahide Shibusawa M., *Taiheiyō ni kakeru hashi: Shibusawa Eiichi no shōgai* (Bridge to the Pacific: the life of Shibusawa Eiichi) (Yomiuri shimbunsha, 1970).

<sup>90</sup> Miss Helen Kim, “Pacific Relations from the Viewpoint of the Korean Group,” *Problems of the Pacific, Proceeding of the Second Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 15 to 29, 1927* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1927), 34-37.

but their inclusion in the IPR organization continued to be controversial. The Japanese Council of the IPR objected to the Korean Council's separate representation. Some North American members showed sympathy toward Korean representation,<sup>91</sup> but most opposed Korean inclusion, prioritizing the U.S.-Japan relation.<sup>92</sup>

The problematic provisions of the IPR constitution regarding whether Korean representation could be included or not were Sections 2 and 3 of Article III as follows:

Section 2. A national unit ... shall be a National Council organized for the purpose of the Institute, or an organization of similar purposes, in any sovereign or autonomous state lying within or bordering the Pacific Ocean or having dominion, colonies, dependencies, territories, mandated or otherwise, in the Pacific area, subject to its being approved and admitted to membership by the Pacific Council as hereinafter constituted. Each constituent country shall have one National Council or equivalent organization, ... With the approval of the Pacific Council, independent Local Groups may be organized in an eligible country which has not created a National Council.

Section 3. To encourage at Conferences of the Institute the fullest self-expression of distinct racial or territorial groups existing within an eligible country as defined in Section 2 of this Article, the Pacific Council and the Secretariat may, with the assent of the National Council of such country, enter into direct relations with such groups in making arrangements for their representation and participation in Conferences.<sup>93</sup>

This relatively democratic element expressed here, opening membership to colonized countries, was unusual for international non-governmental organizations in the period.<sup>94</sup> It was still a limited opening on the side of the colonial countries, as local groups had to accept that they belonged to a nation-state/empire, and they needed their sovereign

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<sup>91</sup> Lawrence Woods, "Canada and the Institute of Pacific Relations: Lessons from an Earlier Voyage," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 6, no. 2 (1999): 122.

<sup>92</sup> Akami, 99.

<sup>93</sup> "Appendix III: Constitution of the IPR," In *Problems of the Pacific: Proceeding of the Second Conference of the Institute of the Pacific Relations, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 15 to 29, 1927*, edited by Condliffe (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1928), 607.

<sup>94</sup> Lyman C. White, *International Non-Governmental Organizations: Their Purpose, Methods, and Accomplishments* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1951), 220.

power's accord to join. The representation of a local group then had to be accepted by the Pacific Council, which was initially composed of representatives of "independent" countries.

Right before the Third IPR Conference in Kyoto, Japan, in 1929, the Korean group requested an amendment of the constitution, Article III, Section 2, to confer the status of a fully autonomous group upon district racial groups existing within the territory of a sovereign power having a National Council in the Institute.<sup>95</sup> The criticism raised by the Korean group was over the full potential of the original agenda of the IPR, that is, representation of non-official individuals. They also pursued the notion of "political equals" of the Pacific Community to an extent which questioned the colonial *status quo*.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, the Korean group highly criticized the lack of representation of colonies in the Pacific Council. Although the Korean group was invited to the conference, Koreans' request for amendment of the Constitution was rejected, and the Korean group was not eligible to deliver a statement or participate in roundtable discussions at the conference. The Pacific Council of the IPR instead amended Section 3 of Article III as follows.

To encourage at Conferences of the Institute the representation of distinct racial or territorial groups existing within or under the jurisdiction of a country having a National Council of the Institute, the Secretariat may be unanimous vote of the Pacific Council enter into direct relations with such groups in making arrangements for their representation and participation in Conferences.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> "Minutes of Meetings of the Pacific Council," In *Problems of the Pacific, 1929, Proceedings of the Third Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Nara and Kyoto, Japan, October 23 to November 9, 1929*, edited by J. B. Condliffe, D.Sc. (Chicago, 1930), 650-51.

<sup>96</sup> "If the IPR intended to remain a non-political organization for the purpose of study and understanding of the Pacific people, not to become another League of Nations, why [did] it set up an artificial standard of membership?" ("T. H. Yun et al. to Members of the Pacific Council," 19 Oct 1929, A-1/PC 1929, AUH).

<sup>97</sup> "Minutes of Meetings of the Pacific Council," *Problems of the Pacific, 1929*, 651.

The Korean request seemed to be rejected because it had significant implications for other colonial powers. In other words, the Pacific Council felt the pressure that the colonial framework should be protected. It was obvious that even some key members who agreed to support colonies' representatives viewed the representation within the colonial framework.<sup>98</sup> While the Philippine group accepted the framework, the Korean group finally decided to withdraw from the IPR in 1931, rejecting its framework, deeming it to support colonialism.

Because of its double-faced attitude toward colonial peoples, many Korean commentators criticized the IPR and their country's participation in it. *Sinhan minbo*, the Korean-language newspaper published in California, argued that if membership was limited to nation-states, the IPR would be degraded into a means for noble and imperialistic politics.<sup>99</sup> In the Korean peninsula, pro-socialist commentators criticized the nature of the IPR, calling it "imperialistic gangs."<sup>100</sup> As a result of the controversy, the Korean Council of the IPR was dissolved in 1931.

The Korean group in the IPR questioned the notions of the Institute, such as liberalism and liberal democracy, by proposing an amendment to the IPR's Constitution. However, its ultimate failure disclosed the limitations of the Korean nationalist group's so-called diplomatic way, strategy to use diplomatic relations in order to achieve national independence. Those international stages, such as the Paris Peace Conference and the IPR conferences, were founded upon the assumption that the imperialism and colonial rule of its key powers should be preserved. It proved too rosy for the Korean nationalist group to

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<sup>98</sup> Akami, 15.

<sup>99</sup> *Sinhanminbo*, Aug 18, 1927.

<sup>100</sup> "Foreword," *Pip'an* 6 (Oct 1931).

expect that public sympathy on the Korean situation would influence the international order at the official and diplomatic levels. Nonetheless, their indefatigable insistence on preserving their right to represent themselves outside of Korea contributed to the perception that Koreans were resisting the Japanese authorities and struggling for independence.<sup>101</sup>

#### (4) Arguments of Korean Leaders

While the Korean nationalist group in the United States sought various ways to appeal for their cause, they highlighted some points more than others, especially for the American audience. Above all, their foremost point was that, legally, Korea should be independent. They stressed that when King Kojong signed the protectorate and annexation treaties between Korea and Japan, in 1905 and 1910 respectively, he did so under duress and therefore the colonization of Korea was illegal and void. Moreover, the Korean group argued the annexation process was unjust because Japan had guaranteed Korea's independence in treaties with Korea and other great powers. They asserted that Korea "never voluntarily waived or surrendered any of [its] rights as an independent and sovereign nation."<sup>102</sup> By emphasizing the illegal and unethical actions that Japan had used

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<sup>101</sup> The American impression of the Korean plight can be deduced from a report that was for the confidential use of American members of the 1927 conference. Goodwin Watson's research studied the American attitude toward Asian peoples and questions. In a questionnaire for the research, the researcher asked "How do you feel about Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans?" with multiple choices. It is interesting to see how the choices were different depending on the country. For Japanese, the choices were 1) alert and progressive, 2) untrustworthy, 3) courteous, 4) ingenious, 5) conceited, and 6) politically ambitious. For Chinese, 1) laundry, 2) cruel, 3) strange, 4) highly cultured, 5) beauty-loving, and 6) dependable. For Koreans, 1) oppression, 2) need missionaries, 3) poverty, 4) struggling for independence, 5) dirty, and 6) most Christian country in Asia (Goodwin B. Watson, "Orient and Occident: A Preliminary Study of Opinions and Attitudes of Groups of Americans Regarding Oriental Peoples and Questions," Report Submitted to the Research Committee of the American Group of the IPR [Jun 1927]).

<sup>102</sup> "Proclaims Korea a Free Republic, 'President' Rhee Renounces Japanese Sovereignty and Asks for Recognition," *NYT*, Sep 1, 1919.



during the annexation process, Koreans sought to annul the colonization by pointing out that Japan was ineligible as a colonizing power.

After the March First Movement, the emotional appeal to humanitarianism began to catch public attention. As the sensational reports revealed how brutally the Korean demonstrators were treated by the Japanese police force, the Korean activists tried to extend the readers' attention to the more general unjust conditions for Korean people—for example, no free speech, no press nor assembly were permitted.<sup>103</sup> It was in the same context that the Korean activists pointed out that the Japanese authorities were trying to “extinguish the soul of Korea” by destroying collections of the works of Korean history and literature, and by employing Japanese as the official language in government and in schools.<sup>104</sup>

Another way of evoking humanistic attention to the Korean problem was to contrast the violent and unmerciful Japanese occupation and the non-violent and peaceful Korean demonstration for independence. In appealing to humanitarianism, it was often to highlight that Korean women were victimized by harsh Japanese rulers. The following pictures [Figures 13, 14, and 15] all showed scenes of Korean school girls, who were symbols of purity, innocence, and vulnerability, being arrested for desiring national independence. Their hands were tied with rope and their heads covered with prison hoods, images which surely provoked sympathetic feelings and doubts on the justice of Japanese authorities.

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<sup>103</sup> “The Situation in Korea: An Unprejudiced Narrative of Facts,” *Korea Review* I, no. 10 (Dec 1919): 11.

<sup>104</sup> Henry Chung, “Korea Today: A Korean View of Japan’s Colonial Policies,” *Asia, Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 19 (May 1919): 471-72. Syngman Rhee called Japan’s education policy a mixture of czarist Russia and Germany (Syngman Rhee, “The Case for Korea,” *The Public, A Journal of Democracy* 22 [May 17, 1919]: 516).



**Figure 13. The arrest of Korean school girls**  
Source: *Korea Review* II, no. 8 (Oct 1920): 11.

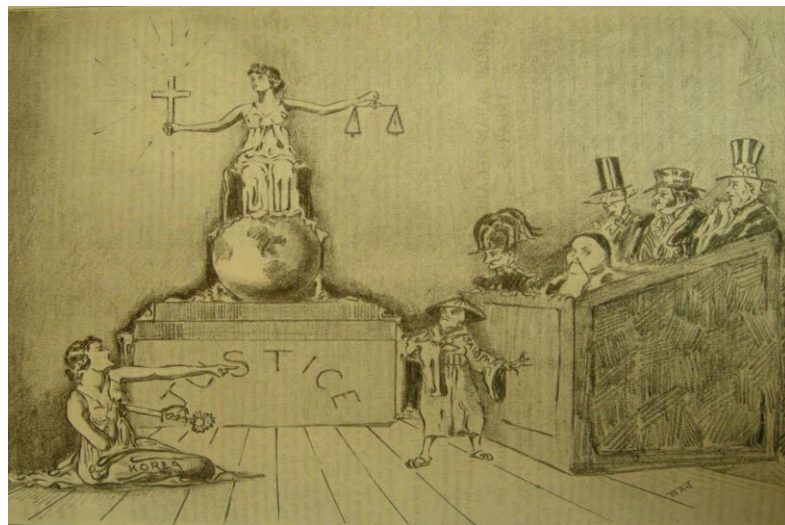


**Figure 14. The arrest of Korean school girls**  
Source: *Korea Review* II, no. 8 (Oct 1920): 11.



**Figure 15. The arrest of Korean school girls**  
Source: *Korea Review* II, no. 8 (Oct 1920): 11.

Appealing to humanism is also well portrayed in an illustration in the *Korea Review* [Figure 16]. Here Korea is again depicted and represented by a woman figure. Korea, a beauty in a western dress and hair, has collapsed on the floor of a courtroom, her heart pierced by a sword. Her hand points in accusation at Japan, which is represented by an ugly, short, and cunning-looking man in Japanese style clothing and hat. The jury includes foreign powers, such as the U.S. and China. The word “justice” is inscribed on the stand, upon which is a statue of a goddess symbolizing justice and humanism. The goddess of justice is carrying scales and a cross, instead of the sword that Lady Justice usually carries. It seems to imply that the victim, Korea, will ultimately win the trial based on justice and Christian value, in front of the world community.



**Figure 16. Will Civilization Listen to Her Plea? [original caption]**

Source: *Korea Review* III, no. 6 (Aug 1921): 3.

Related to the humanistic and emotional appeals, Korean nationalist opinion-makers in the United States intended to evoke American compassion for Koreans on the basis of Christian values. They continuously stressed that Korea was “largely Christian

and becoming rapidly more so,<sup>105</sup> that Christian churches in Korea have been “the center of a barbarous persecution,”<sup>106</sup> and that “methods of suppression have been especially rigorous in the case of Christians.”<sup>107</sup> As Richard Kim analyzes, by appealing to Christian sensibilities, the Korean nationalists sought to make the quest for Korean independence an issue based on “universal humanitarian values represented by Christian principles, thereby highlighting the congruities between American and Korean interests and goals.”<sup>108</sup> If Koreans used the so-called “good offices” phrase in the U.S.-Korean treaty of 1882 to make a legal and diplomatic request for aid from the U.S. government, they pointed to Christian persecution to evoke the moral and emotional indignation of the American public. One Korean author in a journal for missionaries asserted that under Japanese rule all forms of vice, such as opium smoking, were encouraged, and Koreans had fallen backward in their moral progress. He emphasized that the Japanese were reluctant to recognize Christian ministry among Koreans because of the religion’s potential effects of waking Korean people’s political and moral consciousness [Italics added]:

The Japanese know that *Christianity will stiffen Korea’s moral fiber, awaken the dormant intellectual life and revitalize the manhood of the dead nation.* The most progressive, self-reliant and efficient of all Koreans are the Christians...They submit to injustice, and they show how Christians can die for the sake of righteousness, but they will not deny their faith...

Japan has no prejudice against Christianity as a religion, but she does oppose the effects of it upon the Korean people—the awakening of

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<sup>105</sup> “Dr. Rhee’s Speaking Tour,” *Korea Review* I, no. 9 (Nov 1919): 9.

<sup>106</sup> This was a comment by Ahn Ch’ang-ho, the chairman of the Korean National Association (“Korean Appeal to America,” *Nation* 108 [Apr 19, 1919]: 228-29).

<sup>107</sup> “The Situation in Korea,” 11.

<sup>108</sup> Richard Kim, “the Globalizing of America,” 209.

national consciousness, the rapid growth of intellectual and moral life and building up of genuine manhood.

[An American writer said,] “It is not religious persecution of Christianity, but it is political persecution of the Church.”<sup>109</sup>

Many Korean nationalist authors in American media stressed that Christianity spread by American missionaries brought “a high ideal of life and the dignity of virtue,” a modern education system, and the rise of women’s status. They implied that these changes by Christianity constituted a “modernizing process,”<sup>110</sup> while denying that these improvements in Korean society were due to Japan’s efforts. After explaining how Christian churches in Korea were suffering from Japanese religious persecution, Ahn Ch’ang-ho in his appeal asked readers, “Can the Christian church in America stand passively by without even raising a voice in protest?”<sup>111</sup> In sum, Christianity provided moral justification for Korean independence to American observers,<sup>112</sup> and as was the Korean nationalists’ intention, appealing to Christian sensibility worked very effectively, drawing the immediate attention of an international audience.

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<sup>109</sup> A Korean in America, “A Korean View of Japan’s Policy in Korea,” *Missionary Review of the World* 36 (Jun 1913): 450-53.

<sup>110</sup> Yi Kwang Su, “What Christianity Has Done for Korea,” *Missionary Review of the World* 41 (Aug 1918): 607-8.

<sup>111</sup> “Korean Appeal to America,” 229.

<sup>112</sup> Richard Kim, 209.



**Figure 17. Ahn Ch'ang-ho was described as Director of the Labor Department of the Korean Provisional Government.**

Source: *Korea Review* II, no. 1 (Mar 1920): 12.

The next step for the Korean nationalists was to convince the American audience that the Korean people could govern themselves. Contrary to Japan's propaganda, they stressed that Korea had always been independent for over four thousand years before the annexation. Moreover, Korea had a proud history and a significant culture of thousands of years and it "is he who handed the torch of Asiatic civilization to his neighbor, the Japanese."<sup>113</sup> This was a refutation of the systematic propaganda long employed on the side of Japan, using history to justify Japan's annexation of Korea. The Korean voice did not deny that the old Korea right before the annexation had been in a bad condition in terms of its economy and governmental system, and that there had been improvements in some areas of the society since the Japanese rule began. However, it maintained that the improvements since 1910 were nominal, as most of the changes were intended to benefit only the Japanese. Henry Chung commented that the physical improvement of Korea

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<sup>113</sup> Henry Chung, "Korea Today," 471.

under Japanese rule could not “compensate for the loss of primary civil and political rights on the part of a people with a distinct history and civilization of its own.”<sup>114</sup> The historically independent Korean people, the Korean authors insisted, had a right to determine a future of their own, corresponding to Wilson’s self-determination principle.

Syngman Rhee declared:

We are told by Japanese propagandists that the Koreans are not fit for self-government. The answer is that we were fit enough to govern ourselves for over forty centuries, and maintained and organized a highly developed government while Japan was divided and subdivided into numerous petty states. If Japan itself is fit for self-government, Korea is even more fit. All we ask of Japan is that she let us alone, whether we are fit or unfit. We have found out that no other people can do our work for us better than we can. We ask the right of self-determination, which is the fundamental principle of world democracy.<sup>115</sup>

The Korean nationalists emphasized that the Korean people were capable of pursuing development on their own. In fact, many Koreans, both inside and outside the country, had already received a modern education, a necessary precursor to industrialization. Here again, it was stressed that modern education for Koreans was founded on Christian values.

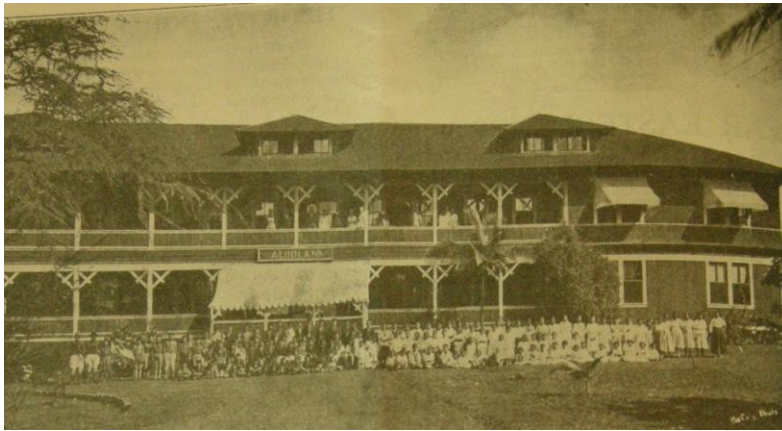
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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 468.

<sup>115</sup> Syngman Rhee, “The Case for Korea,” 516.



**Figure 18. Pupils learning woodworking trade at Industrial School of Benedictines, Seoul, Korea. The pulpit that adorns the Seoul Cathedral was made by native boys at this school [original caption].**  
Source: *Korea Review* II, vol. 3 (May 1920): 3.



**Figure 19. Korean Christian Institute of Honolulu, H. I.**  
Source: *Korea Review* III, no. 2 (Apr 1921): 10.

As their next point, as seen in Rhee's argument above, Korean nationalist opinion-makers overwhelmingly supported American ideals, including the Wilsonian idea of self-determination, which they felt would be exactly applicable to Korea. While they hoped that the international society would accept Korea's efforts to determine its own fate, the Korean nationalists acknowledged that they would likely need the assistance of a great world power like the United States to free Koreans from their yoke.



This belief that the United States was a strong but gentle helper of small nations led Korean nationalist activists to emphasize the cordial relationship between Korea and America when they spoke with or wrote to the American audience. For example, Syngman Rhee in his letter of notification from the government of the Republic of Korea to President Wilson reminded that individually many of the executives of the Korean Provisional Government, including himself, had graduated from Universities and Colleges in America.<sup>116</sup> In a communication to the U.S. Department of State, he mentioned, “our beliefs, our education and our training are all in accord with you and your form of government.”<sup>117</sup>



**Figure 20. Dr. Henry Chung’s Commencement at American University. The editors of *Korea Review* stressed that Chung is shown sitting to the left of Mrs. Harding and to her right was President Harding. They also mentioned that Ambassador Jusserand of France and Hon. N. W. Rowell of Canada, and Bishop Hamilton were seen in the group.**

Source: *Korea Review* III, no. 5 (Jul 1921): 3.

<sup>116</sup> “President Rhee’s Notification of the Organization of the Government of the Republic of Korea,” *Korea Review* I, no. 5 (Jul 1919): 8. It was also common that the Korean nationalist leaders in the United States were mostly Christian converts. Young Ick Lew points out that Korean participants in Korea’s First Congress in Philadelphia commonly: 1) had studied in the United States or in Britain, 2) had American ways of thinking as they had been in the United States since young ages, 3) were Christians and critical of Confucian traditions in Korea, 4) would go back to the liberated Korea and be appointed to crucial positions in the government of the Republic of Korea (Young Ick Lew, “Vision of the New Korea of Sô Chae-p’il after the March First Movement,” In *Sô Chae-p’il kwa kû sidae* [Sô Chae-p’il and the Period], edited by Sô Chae-p’il Memorial Institute [Seoul, Sô Chae-p’il Memorial Institute, 2003], 345-47).

<sup>117</sup> “Official Communication of President Rhee to the U.S. Department of State,” *Korea Review* I, no. 6 (Aug 1919): 9.

Korean groups emphasized that the new Korea's legal and political structures were modeled "as near as may be after" the American system.<sup>118</sup> Richard Kim argues, "the adoption and promotion of American democratic values became central rhetorical and political strategies" for the Korean nationalist leaders in the United States, particularly as America was beginning to show its leadership in global affairs after World War I.<sup>119</sup> Some outside observers found it surprising that KPG modeled after the American-styled democratic republic, rather than seeking to restore the old Korean monarchy. Although the Korean nationalist activists had rarely blamed the old Korean King Kojong for the nation's colonization, there was tacit agreement among different groups of nationalists that the new Korea should depart from the old political and social structure, including the monarchical system of old Chosôn. When Yô Un-hyông, a Korean independent movement leader, spoke on Koreans' movement in Japan, a Japanese man in the audience asked what kind of a government Korea would propose and whether a prince from the Old Korean royal family would be put on the throne when independence was recognized. Yô replied, "the Koreans will have a democracy fashioned on the most approved principles—a government of the people, for the people, by the people," not a monarchical system.<sup>120</sup> In this sense, the establishment of the KPG and the announcement

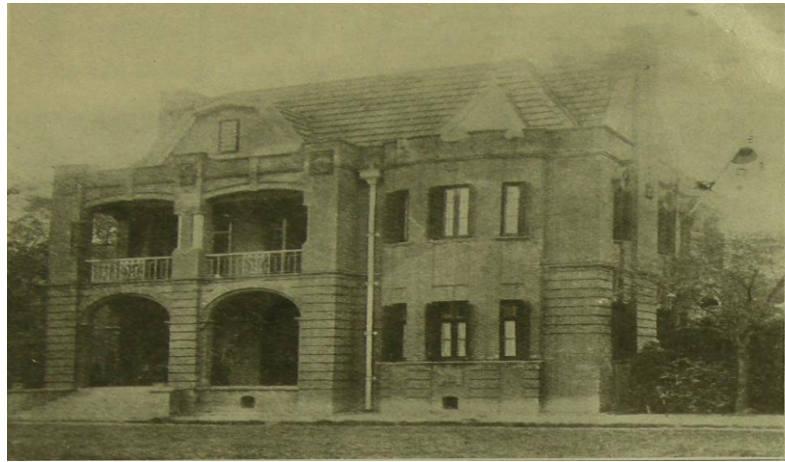
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<sup>118</sup> Fred A. Dolph, *Briefs for Korea* (Washington, 1919), 8. This document was written by Dolph, legal advisor and counselor to the Information Bureau, or Korean Commission, and presented to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives and the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate of the United States in 1919. The cardinal principles at Korea's First Congress also emphasized, "We propose to have a government modeled after that of America, as far as possible, consistent with the education of the masses" ("Korea's First Congress," quoted in Lew, "Vision of the New Korea of Sô," 372.)

<sup>119</sup> Kim comments that this phenomenon was displayed apparently in the Korean Congress in Philadelphia (Richard Kim, "The Globalizing of America," 207).

<sup>120</sup> "Korean Leader in Tokyo," *Korea Review* I, no. 12 (Feb 1920), 10, quoted from *Japan Advertiser* (Nov 27, 1919). Yô's address in front of a Japanese audience in Japan was possible, as some Japanese Christians in China invited him to visit Japan to inform the Japanese public of where the Koreans stood. According to the editors of the *Korea Review*, the event where Yô claimed complete independence for Korea and no

of the governmental structure and ideals symbolized by modern and Western democracy marked “a sharp departure in the political history of Korea.”<sup>121</sup> By disseminating the news of a “new Korea,” the Korean nationalist group sought to showcase the emergence of a new political consciousness among their people,<sup>122</sup> which they hoped would case the international society to recognized Korea’s legitimacy as a modern, civilized, and democratic nation-state.



**Figure 21. Temporary headquarters of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai [original caption]**

Source: *Korea Review* II, no. 1 (Mar 1920): 12.

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compromise from the side of the KPG “shattered the Japanese hope of conciliation,” and invoked an “indignant outburst of some of the leading Japanese newspapers” (“Korean Leader in Tokyo,” *Ibid.*, 11)

<sup>121</sup> Richard Kim, “The Globalizing of America,” 211.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 22. Members of the Korean Provisional Government**

Source: *Korea Review* III, no. 2 (Apr 1921): 10.

Pictures displayed the Korean Provisional Government as modern, civilized, and rational in both its system and in the appearance of its members, the exact opposite to the earlier image of Korean people reflected writings and pictures in the contemporary American periodicals: naïve, indifferent, and uncivilized. At the same time, Korean nationalists actively asserted that the model of this modern and civilized structure for the new nation-state of Korea was specifically an American one.<sup>123</sup> Sometimes, they even denounced critiques of the American government and society [*Italics added*]:

There seem to be many foreigners and some Americans who are dissatisfied with American institutions and the system under which they are living in this Republic. They may have the right to criticize them, and it is their privilege to contribute new and better ideas which will help to reconstruct the nation during this period, but they have no moral or legal right to advocate any theory or action that will create violence and destruction of the existing laws. They must recognize the fact, that after all is said and done *this country* [the United States] *is the only nation where the masses are enjoying the blessings of political, economic and religious freedom*, more than any other land in the world. If any one attempts to destroy the American

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<sup>123</sup> This is shown on many occasions when Korean nationalist activists expressed their plans for a new governmental system. For example, Sô Chae-p'il, in an address before a Chinese group, said that Japan's advantage over China and Korea was in the organization of its government. However, he suggested that China adopt the American model, not Japanese or European ones, saying, "If China's people realize the fact that they have the power and make use of it in the most moral and humane manner, after the method of the United States, she will be in a position to reform the whole world, so that it would really be safe for democracy" ("China and Korea," *Korea Review* I, no. 12 [Feb 1920]: 5-6).

institutions by violence or otherwise, either directly or indirectly, he is a fool who “kills the goose that lays the golden eggs.” Let us foreigners who are in this country give thanks to god for the privilege of living in this land of freedom and prosperity, and let us wholeheartedly support this government which rests upon the principles of democracy and Christian religion... *I trust the men and women of our Korean race, living under the Stars and Stripes will always be loyal to the laws and Government of the United States, and always beware of all irresponsible talk of radicalism, and any other doctrines that are not conceived of the spirit of humanity and justice.*<sup>124</sup>

Korean nationalists thus argued that Koreans had earned the right to govern themselves due to their compliance with, and support of, the American spirit of government.

Although some Korean independence movement groups in Korea and North China rejected America’s values as a model for Korea, groups in the United States remained loyal to the American ideals and nonviolent view. As a supplementary point, which had been argued for over a decade, Korean nationalists continued to stress that under the U.S.-Korean treaty of 1882, America was legally obliged to exert good offices to fight injustice or oppression by other powers.<sup>125</sup> Koreans’ strong belief in their special relationship with the U.S. is also evidenced by the fact that they had not invoked on the nearly identical “good offices” clause in their treaty with Great Britain.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> “Students’ Corner,” *Korea Review* I, no. 11 (Jan 1920): 16.

<sup>125</sup> “Conditions compel us to officially inform your Government that Korea, and the 20 million of Koreans that are citizens of our Nation, are being unjustly and oppressively dealt with by the government of the Empire of Japan, and pursuant to the Treaty of Amity and Commerce made by Korea with your country in good faith on May 22, 1882, we beseech the government of the United States to exert its good offices to bring about a cessation of this injustice and oppression” (“Official Communication of President Rhee,” 8). Syngman Rhee in his speaking tour to Trenton in 1919 explained that not only had the United States recognized the national independence of Korea in the 1882 treaty, but in the very first article had specifically agreed to protect Korea on being informed of any situation in which the country was dealt with unjustly or oppressively by other powers. He insisted that Koreans were clearly oppressed, and asked, “Korea has always kept her treaty obligations with the United States, and should not the United States now in our extremity do the same?” (“Dr. Rhee’s Speaking Tour,” *Korea Review* I, no. 9 [Nov 1919]: 9-10).

<sup>126</sup> The clause in the British-Korean treaty reads, “In case of differences arising between one of the High Contracting Parties and a third Power, the other High Contracting Party, if requested to do so, shall exert its good offices to bring about an amicable arrangement” (Article I. 2. of “Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, November 26, 1883,” quoted from *Korean Treaties*, compiled by Henry Chung [New York: H. S. Nichols, Inc, 919], 184).

As much as they stressed the friendship and closeness between the United States and Korea, Korean nationalist opinion-makers sought to portray Japan as a probable threat to the security and commercial interests of the United States, and to the order of the international community. Even from a financial perspective, the Korean Commission's legal advisor Fred Dolph, in his article on Japan's debits and credits, concluded that Japan had already spent her money, and that every dollar that Japan spent, invested, and would spend thereafter must be "borrowed money." While Japan spent her money in managing China and Korea at a loss, he predicted, "the whole turmoil must necessarily settle down in the Far East," which meant "an end to [Japan's] autocracy." He concluded, "It is inevitable that Japan must get out of China and that she must give back to Korea her independence, because she is operating in both countries at a loss, on 'Borrowed Money.'"<sup>127</sup> As such, opinion-makers for Korea's independence denounced Japan's imperial system as economically, legally, and morally corrupt. In other words, they sought to persuade readers that Japan was a threat to the world's peaceful and secure order.

In contrast, Korean nationalists in the U.S. tended to refrain from criticizing American social systems. Those Korean nationalist writers noted that the legislation excluding Japanese immigrants in California as a counterattack against Japanese authorities' discriminating policy toward Koreans under their jurisdiction. Since Japan had demanded equal rights for its people in the United States and Britain at the Paris Peace Conference, Henry Chung called this "an ironic inconsistency," suggesting that

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<sup>127</sup> Fred A. Dolph, "The Balance of Debit and Credit in the Far East," *Korea Review* II, no. 7 (Sep 1920): 1-6.

there was no racial discrimination in those countries.<sup>128</sup> In contrast to Japanese complaints about life in the United States, Korean-American leaders stressed that it was their duty “to uphold the honor, glory and welfare of Uncle Sam whenever he calls upon us to do our duty.”<sup>129</sup> They used similar logic to compare American colonial rule in the Philippines with Japanese rule in Korea. Japanese writers in their propaganda supporting colonial rule called it a parallel phenomenon to the American control of the Philippines, that is, an advanced country developing an under-modernized country. Korean nationalists, however, argued that these two colonial rules were in contrast. Frequently, Korean authors stated that Korea was ruled by a military and autocratic authority, while the secretaries of executive departments in the Philippines under U.S. rule were all Filipinos appointed by the Governor-General with the consent of the Senate. Such a thing as the franchise, enjoyed by the Filipinos, was unknown to the Koreans under Japanese rule.<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, the Korean nationalist writers warned American readers that Japan was a potential enemy in the Pacific. They especially predicted that war between the United States and Japan was imminent. As observed in the earlier chapters, American public had vague fear of the “yellow peril,” a growing perception of Japan as a militaristic and threatening power. While Japan’s governmental propagandists and pro-Japanese opinion-makers tried to appease the fear, Korean speakers tried to evoke anti-Japanese sentiments, hoping that the United States would confront with Japan.

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<sup>128</sup> Henry Chung, “Korea Today,” 473.

<sup>129</sup> This was a part of P. K. Yoon’s speech at the Sacramento meeting in 1920. He said that Koreans living in the country of their adoption must perform double duties. One was to be loyal to the United States and another was to help the land of their nativity, Korea. Part of his speech was published in the local newspaper, the *Sacramento Bee* (“Meeting in Sacramento,” from the *Sacramento Bee*, published in *Korea Review* II, no. 2 [Apr 1920]: 6-7).

<sup>130</sup> Chung, “Korea Today,” 473-74.

Use of this rhetoric stemmed from the Korean nationalist leaders' belief that, realistically, Korea could be only liberated when Japan was at a war with other powers. Kim Hôn-sik (also known as Seek Hun Kimm) of the Korean Patriotic Association of New York, in an interview right after the annexation of Korea in 1910, expressed his hope for a war between the United States and Japan, where Koreans abroad could participate and fight for Korea's independence.<sup>131</sup> Kim Kyu-sik, after the Paris Peace Conference, also predicted that the complete success of the Korean independence movement was many years off, unless Japan came into sharp conflict with other great powers so that war would follow. He added that he believed "it probable that there would be conflict and that eventually the Far East would be reconstituted, Korea would be reestablished as an independent State, and Japan would be confined to close limits of expansion."<sup>132</sup>

While American writers in the early period before the annexation showed their exceptionalistic view when discussing Korea and its problems, Korean nationalist leaders in the United States capitalized on the fact that, prior to the annexation, American writers had taken an exceptionalistic view when discussing Korea and its problems; invoking the same exceptionalism, they tried to convince the American public that their country had a moral obligation to assist the Korean people. The image of America as fighting for liberty

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<sup>131</sup> He said in his interview with the *New York Times*, "We believe that spark will be struck when the United States and Japan engage in war, and that the war will come within the next five years. All our reports agree in the sentiment that, at all events, we cannot stop fighting until we are utterly wiped out [...] more than 100,000 eager, able-bodied Koreans will return to the war from foreign lands...." ("Declares Koreans Are Fighting Japan; President of Korean Association Says 20,000 Men Are Opposing Mikado's Troops, Suppress News of Revolt, Japanese Have Strict Censorship - Koreans Hoping for War Between the United States and Japan," *NYT*, Aug 26, 1910).

<sup>132</sup> "Japanese Assailed by Korean Envoys, Says There Will Be War," *NYT*, Aug 23, 1919.



and democracy was commonly employed in Koreans' writings.<sup>133</sup> Symbolically, the *Korea Review*, the organ of the Korean Commission, declared on its back cover that the magazine stood for "moral leadership of the United States in the world"<sup>134</sup>: by saying this, they expected that the U.S., as the moral leader of the world, intervened in the Korean problem and help its national independence. Furthermore, Korean nationalist leaders tried to show that the Korean people participated in international organizations such as the Red Cross, thus showing their commitment to humanitarian virtues.



**Figure 23. Korean Red Cross ladies marching at Missionary Memorial Centennial Day, Honolulu.**

Source: *Korea Review* II, no. 4 (Jun 1920): 3.

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<sup>133</sup> "One of the noted features of these meetings [for the cause of Korean independence] was a large number of returned American doughboys, who were in the audience, and they rose up after the addresses and offered their services to the cause of Korean independence. They stated that they have fought for the liberty of Europe and are now willing to fight for the same cause for Asia. It was the typical American spirit which makes this nation the hope of mankind and protector of liberty everywhere" ("Mass Meetings for Korean Freedom in Fostoria and Tiffin, Ohio," *Korea Review* I, no. 6 [Aug 1919]: 5).

<sup>134</sup> The full text of the advertisement said, "truth Enlightens the World, *Korea Review* stands for Liberty of every nation under just laws, untrammled activities for propagation of Christianity, moral leadership of the United States in the world, material and economic improvement for all peoples, educational facilities for rich as well as poor, peace, but fight for civilization, if necessary" (*Korea Review* II, no. 12 [Feb 1921]).

These political maneuvers were to rely on American exceptionalism and idealized American-style democracy and Christianity. These maneuvers were strengthened by activities which converge into several leaders who shared a vision—Korea’s independence through war between Japan and the United States, and a new Korean government following the American model. Although their vision did not gain unanimous agreement among the various Korean nationalist groups, as a result of vigorous propaganda activities three major figures of so-called diplomatic group—Syngman Rhee, Henry Chung, and Sô Chae-p’il<sup>135</sup>—became the ambassadors of Korean nationalism to the American audience. They organized Korea’s First Congress in 1919 in Philadelphia and led the Korean Commission, which claimed to represent the Korean Provisional Government in the United States.

In sum, in these years right after the Great War and the March First Movement, Korean nationalist opinion-makers in the U.S. appealed to the American government and public for 1) America’s immediate and official intervention in the Korean problem, beyond a polite request to the Japanese authorities,<sup>136</sup> and 2) the complete independence, not partial or temporary reform, of Korea.<sup>137</sup> In appealing these points, the Korean nationalist leaders in the United States tended to use the Wilsonian ideas on the new international order, the growing anti-Japanese sentiment in American society, and the

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<sup>135</sup> Although the organizations or groups to which they belonged changed over time, the majority of Korean nationalists’ activities in the United States, especially when directed to the public via lectures, meetings, and mass media, were ultimately dominated by these three figures and their entourages.

<sup>136</sup> Sô Chae-p’il (Philip Jaishon) wrote, “I am compelled to doubt that a polite request from the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America to desist from inhuman treatment of the Koreans will have the desired effect” (Philip Jaisohn, “Sympathy of American Churches for Korea,” *Korea Review* I, no. 6 [Aug 1919]: 10).

<sup>137</sup> Although Rhee and Chung mentioned an alternative resolution in the early stage of petitions in late 1918 and early 1919, that is, the mandatory rule of Korea by the League of Nations, the main object of the petitions and activities of the Korean nationalists in the United States was complete Korean independence, especially in the wake of Korea’s First Congress.

traditional American exceptionalist perception of itself as the helper and protagonist spreading the values of democracy and moral justice.

The Korean nationalist opinion-makers, whose activities in the United States were represented by the Korean Commission and Syngman Rhee, prioritized their propaganda work, hoping to gain sympathy and diplomatic aid from the United States over other activities. This strategy heavily impacted on American views of East Asian order, especially when salient events occurred from outside, such as the March First Movement or the outbreak of the Pacific War. On the other hand, the same strategy restricted its longstanding effects. As recent scholarship has pointed out, once provocative news about Korea tricked to a stop, the American public's interest in the Korean situation decreased substantially and, despite the best efforts of the Korean Commission and Syngman Rhee's group, Korean nationalists were unable to garner further attention to their cause.<sup>138</sup> Another criticism about this strategy, as Richard Kim argues, is that "although globalization processes, led by U.S. power and influence, situated Korean immigrants at the forefront of the nationalist movement, the same processes also ironically subordinated Korean voices and agency to a hegemonic American subjectivity that envisioned a new postwar international order modeled in its own image."<sup>139</sup> American indifference in the interwar years was a result of this tendency.

Despite Korean nationalist leaders' great expectations for the American role in solving the Korean problem, the failure of the Korean Mission to present its case at the Washington Disarmament Conference in 1921-22 demanded a new strategy. Experience of the apathy by the great powers taught the Korean leaders a sense of *realpolitik* that

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<sup>138</sup> Ko, 386.

<sup>139</sup> Richard Kim, "Diasporic Politics and the Globalizing of America," 205.

politics among great powers were based on practical considerations, rather than moralistic premises. As evidenced by their writings at the end of the Washington Conference, the Korean Mission and its supporters had adopted more realistic rhetoric. Now the reason why the powers should not ignore, but resolve, the Korean problem was that the Japanese occupation would ultimately disturb Far Eastern peace<sup>140</sup>: an editorial in *Korean Review* insisted, “as long as Japan can use Korea as her military base there will be no peace in the Far East.”<sup>141</sup> The disappointment after the Paris and Washington Conferences, along with start of Japanese “Cultural Rule” in Korea in the 1920s, split Korean leaders on methods to gain national independence. Chapter 4 will detail the development of the Korean nationalist movement from the 1920s.

### 3. American Responses

While the sensation of the March First Movement had subsided by late 1919, the Movement and its aftermath heightened U.S. awareness of the situation in Korea, positioning it as a crucial issue in the East Asian region. Editors of the *Korean Review* believed that many Americans were beginning to listen.<sup>142</sup> If the initial response from the American public was temporary, now Americans who were interested in the Korean problem participated in church meetings and nonprofit organizations, listening lectures and discussing the issue. Many American organizations sent letters and resolutions that asked the U.S. Congress to help the Korean people oppressed by Japanese rule. That predominantly Christian groups responded to the Korean appeal—mostly mission boards,

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<sup>140</sup> “Petition Presented to the Conference on Limitation of Armament and the Far East by the People of Korea,” *Korea Review* III, no. 11 (Jan 1922): 3.

<sup>141</sup> “Korea and the Coming Conference,” *Korea Review* III, no. 7 (Sep 1921): 1.

<sup>142</sup> “Students’ Corner,” *Korea Review* I, no. 5 (Jul 1919): 16.

churches, and Christian student groups—was almost natural, given that the Korean opinion-makers heavily relied on the American people’s Christian compassion toward the situation in Korea. Although the religious character of those groups certainly motivated them to pass resolutions and release petitions, the contents of the petitions were not necessarily in religious color. For instance, members of the YWCA and YMCA of Pacific College, Newberg, Oregon, sent the following resolutions:

Inasmuch as the Japanese are jeopardizing the political and religious freedom of the Koreans, and,

Inasmuch as the Koreans are struggling for the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and,

Inasmuch as the United States entered into a treaty with Korea, in 1882, to give mutual aid and protection, in case her rights were infringed upon;

We, the members of the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. of Pacific College, Newberg, Oregon, in joint session, do respectfully request that the United States Government use its influence in behalf of Korean independence; We further believe that Korea is entitled to be free and independent, that Korea shall develop as a strong Christian democratic republic in the Far East.<sup>143</sup>

From 1919 to 1921, this was typical content of American people’s petitions to the U.S. government. The meetings and resolutions of church communities and other philanthropic organizations across the United States were reported in both American and Korean-American media outlets.<sup>144</sup> Philanthropic organizations such as the Korean Relief

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<sup>143</sup> “Letter from Members of Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A. to Henry Cabot Lodge, Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C.,” (Nov 7, 1919), published in *Korea Review* I, no. 10 (Dec 1919): 3.

<sup>144</sup> “Commemorating Exercises of the Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by the Korean Republic (in New York);” “Meeting in Sacramento,” *Sacramento Bee*; “Dinuba Meeting,” *Dinuba Sentinel*; published in *Korea Review* II, no. 2 (Apr 1920): 3-8; “Philadelphia Credits Men’s Association Act on Korea”; “Ministerial Union of Philadelphia Passed Resolutions on Korea,” *Korea Review*, *Ibid.*, 13; “Mass Meeting of the Citizens of Marion, O., in Behalf of Korea”; “Resolution Passed at a Meeting of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland,” *Korea Review* II, no. 12 (Feb 1921): 3, 11; “Christian Endeavor Convention and Korea,” *Korea Review* III, no. 6 (Aug 1921): 10.

Society and cultural societies such as the Korea Society of New York emerged in this period.<sup>145</sup> In addition, speakers for the Korean cause were invited to cultural societies and given opportunities to appeal to the broader American public, beyond the small group of Americans who actively supported independence for Korea.<sup>146</sup>

#### (1) The League of the Friends of Korea

The spread of sympathy among Americans for Koreans struggling under Japanese rule prompted the formation of the League of the Friends of Korea from 1919. In this and later years, several American organizations and campaigns emerged in support of the causes of other East Asian countries, such as Sidney Gulick's campaign against California's anti-Asian legislation and also from Henry Luce's so-called "China Lobby," which supported Chiang Kai-shek. In contrast to that American opinion makers organized those pro-Japanese and pro-Chinese movements, Korean nationalist leaders, rather than American supporters, had organized the Friends of Korea, an organization of pro-Korean Americans.<sup>147</sup> Korean nationalist leaders in the U.S. initiated to form the League of the Friends of Korea, thinking it as a part of their public activities toward Americans. Sô Chae-p'il initiated to form the first branch of the League of the Friends of Korea in May

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<sup>145</sup> The Korean Relief Society aimed to send money and materiel to the "suffering people of Korea through the local American committees of relief in that country," organized under honorary president William J. Bryan and president Mrs. Douglas P. Birnie in Washington D.C. The Korea Society of New York was established as a result of prominent speakers actively making addresses on behalf of the Korean cause. The organizer of the society was Mrs. A.G. Kimberland, Treasurer of the New York Society ("Korean Relief Society," *Korea Review* III, no. 1 [Mar 1921]: 9; "The Korea Society of New York," *Korea Review* III, no. 3 [May 1921]: 16).

<sup>146</sup> Homer B. Hulbert, "Chautauqua and Korea," *Korea Review* III, no. 8 (Oct 1921): 1-3.

<sup>147</sup> It seemed clear that the League of the Friends of Korea was an organization affiliated with the Korean Commission. One of the indications of this was that members of the League were supposed to subscribe to and receive the magazine *Korea Review*, the organ of the Korean Commission, with \$3 as membership payment.

1919 in Philadelphia, right after the Korean Congress held in the same city. Their headquarters was established in Washington D.C., and Rev. Stephen A. Beck, a former missionary in Korea, was assigned as the League's Executive Secretary.<sup>148</sup> As Ko explains in his book, local branches of the League were usually created by Korean students or Korean-Americans who would then hold their American pastors or college professors if they held a general interest meeting for those people who were interested in hearing about the situation in Korea. Speakers such as Syngman Rhee, Henry Chung, Sô Chae-p'il, and American supporters of Korea, such as Rev. S.A. Beck and Professor Homer Hulbert, would then deliver speeches at these gatherings, explaining the struggles of the Korean people. In many cases, a local league was formed after the meeting.<sup>149</sup> If a league was formed, the members would elect executive members, who would then be listed in *The Korea Review*, which functioned as the bulletin of the League of the Friends of Korea. The Korean-American newspaper in the Korean language, *Sinhanminbo*, also frequently reported activities of the League of the Friends of Korea.

Similar to the Korean nationalist groups of Rhee and others, the League sought to inform the American public of the real situation of Korea and the Korean people. As for the Korean nationalist petitioning activities, the League of the Friends of Korea subscribed to the idea of American exceptionalism. The Friends of Korea aimed to create public support among Americans for spreading Christianity and democracy throughout the Far East. The League accordingly declared to take "moral responsibility" for this cause with a special sympathy for the struggling Korean people, while saying that it did

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<sup>148</sup> Ko Chông-hyu, *Yi Sûng-man kwa han 'guk tongnip undong* (Syngman Rhee and the Korean Independence Movement) (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2004), 364-68.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 367-68.

not intend to intervene in political issues.<sup>150</sup> Organizers of the League stressed that Korea should gain national independence and if there was any man or country who ought to help, it was the United States, because of America's duty to right wrongs.<sup>151</sup> This particular aspect worked effectively in drawing public empathy. For example, their mission resonated with World War I veterans who attended a meeting of the Tiffin League in Ohio; they stated that they had fought for the liberty of Europe and were now willing to fight for the same cause in Asia. A reporter at the meeting commented, "It was the typical American spirit which makes this nation the hope of mankind and protector of liberty everywhere."<sup>152</sup>

As of December 1920, the branches and presidents of each branch of the League of the Friends of Korea were as follows:

President: Dr. T.J. Bryson, League of Alliance, Ohio  
 President: Dr. W.C. Rufus, League of Ann Arbor, Michigan  
 President: Dr. L.H. Murlin, League of Boston, Massachusetts  
 President: Senator J.J. Barbour, League of Chicago, Illinois  
 President: Dr. Wm Houston, League of Columbus, Ohio  
 President: Dr. W.W. Geyer, League of Findlay, Ohio  
 President: Dr. F.A. Wilber, League of Fostoria, Ohio  
 President: Dr. Grant A. Robbins, League of Kansas City, Mo  
 President: Rev. T.R. Hamilton, League of Lima, Ohio  
 President: Dr. R.E. Tullos, League of Mansfield, Ohio  
 President: Dr. Chas. E. Gilbson, League of Newberg, Oregon  
 President: Dr. Chas. J. Smith, League of New York  
 President: Floyd W. Tomkins, League of Philadelphia  
 President: Frank S. Livinggood, League of Reading, PA  
 President: Dr. L.A. McAfee, League of San Francisco, CA  
 President: Dr. A.C. Shuman, League of Tiffin, Ohio  
 President: Admiral J.C. Watson, League of Washington, D.C.

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<sup>150</sup> "Structure of the Friends of Korea and Resolutions," *Sinhanminbo*, May 27, 1919; "League of Friends of Korea," *Korea Review* I, no. 4 (Jun 1919), quoted in Ko, 364.

<sup>151</sup> "Addresses of Washington Meeting," *Korea Review* I, no. 5 (Jul 1919): 13.

<sup>152</sup> "Mass Meetings for Korean Freedom in Fostoria and Tiffin, Ohio," *Korea Review* I, no. 6 (Aug 1919): 5.



President: Rev. Calvin M. DeLong, League of Upper Perkiomen Valley, East Greenville, PA<sup>153</sup>

As Ko notes, the League's activities were concentrated in the central and eastern states, such as Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Massachusetts, and New York. The size of the League is believed to have been 10,000 members in 21 cities and counties of the United States.<sup>154</sup> As F. A. McKenzie's book, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, gained popularity in the United Kingdom, the Friends of Korea formed a London branch, comprised of mostly parliamentary members, at the end of 1920.<sup>155</sup>

The League of the Friends of Korea concentrated on sending petitions to the American government, but at times held mass meetings, all for the purpose of "enlightening" Americans about the Korean situation. Among the active members and supporters of the League were prominent and influential intellectuals, such as Dr. Lemuel H. Murlin, President of Boston University, and Senators Charles S. Thomas of Colorado and Sheldon P. Spencer of Missouri. This indicates that the Friends of Korea aimed to gain support among intellectuals, especially religious leaders, scholars, and influential politicians. This strategy contributed to the impression that the Korean issue was serious and critical for the United States. President Murlin of Boston University in his article on Japanese diplomacy criticized the country, saying "in her rapid rise to a world power the present government [of Japan] has not been guided by those ethical principles that ought to prevail in the world's future diplomacy," and "Prussianized Germany has been her

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<sup>153</sup> "Some Reasons Why You Should Join the League of the Friends of Korea," *Korea Review* II, no. 10 (Dec 1920), back cover.

<sup>154</sup> Ko, 365-67. For estimates of number of members in the League by the League and the Japanese authorities, see Ko, 370-71.

<sup>155</sup> Sir Robert Newman, Bart., M.P. was chairman of the advisory board of the British Friends of Korea ("Friends of Korea in the United Kingdom," *Korea Review* II, no. 10 [Dec 1920]: 6-9; "Friends of Korea in Great Britain," *Korea Review* II, no. 11 [Jan 1921]: 5-6).

[Japan's] ideal." He pointed out that it was difficult to find honorable and fair means by which Japan had gained control of Shantung, Manchuria, and inner Mongolia. In Korea, he commented, Japanese conduct belonged to the "diplomacy of exploitation and spoliation, wringing from Korea every advantage for Japan, and leaving Korea helplessly living on the crumbs that fall from Japan's table, loaded with supplies stolen from Korea." Saying that Japan was never for one moment in "sympathy" with her allies, he predicted, "such a government will betray her allies when it suits her advantage to do so."<sup>156</sup> At the commemoration of the declaration of independence of Korea in New York in March 1920, Murlin declared his support of the Korean people.<sup>157</sup>

Other passionate members exercised individual actions by informing friends about the Korean situation. Dr. Harry C. Whiting, who had been a medical missionary in Korea, informed the editors of the *Korea Review* that he was sending a circular to friends all over the country "in the hope that the American people will be ready to act when the time comes and demand that Japan should give up Korea." Explaining that Koreans demanded their liberty and had launched a well thought out plan of passive resistance at the March First Movement, Whiting said,

In this country and England societies of the Friends of Korea are springing up. In England a very strong society has been formed with an aggressive programme.

The New York City society is especially active and has established a speakers' bureau and will supply lecturers or speakers for churches or clubs, qualified to speak authoritatively on Korea... My own efforts for the past three months have taken me into Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and Iowa, and everywhere I found people eager to hear the truth about Korea. Many

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<sup>156</sup> Lemuel H. Murlin, "What a Friend of Japan Thinks of Present Japan," *Boston Sunday Advertiser*, Nov 9, 1919, published in *Korea Review* I, no. 11 (Jan 1920): 9-10.

<sup>157</sup> "Commemorating Exercises of the Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by the Korean Republic," *Korea Review* II, no. 2 (Apr 1920): 3-4.

colleges, high schools and clubs as well as churches have been opened to me, and I am receiving many letters telling of the deep interest in Korea.<sup>158</sup>

A letter from a reader in the *Korea Review* shows how the Friends of Korea attracted supporters among American public interested in the East Asian and Korean issue. This reader said that he had never been in Korea nor known about the Asian countries until recently. While he was in Bermuda for a vacation, he had found a copy of *The Korea Review* on the library table and became interested in Korea. When he returned to New York, he read in the newspapers that the Koreans were to hold a public meeting in the Town Hall. He immediately purchased a subscription to the *Korea Review* and attended the meeting out of curiosity. For the first time, he saw Koreans and heard them speak in public. He became really interested in Asia from that time on and had a fairly complete library on the subject of Korea and Japan. Then he tried to gather some first-hand information about Korea through mission boards, but failed, as “they all seemed reluctant to express their views.” His impression was that they were very cautious and afraid to say anything that might displease the Japanese. Later he heard from a friend who was very active in church work that the apparent indifference toward the suffering Christians of Korea on the part of American mission boards was due to their policy not to offend the Japanese, for fear that their missionaries might be driven out of Korea. After asking about the conditions of American missionaries in Korea, this man concluded his letter by saying that he believed in justice for all people, whether they are weak or strong. According to him, “Korea is not getting a fair deal from other nations now, but she will

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<sup>158</sup> “Communications,” *Korea Review* III, no. 5 (Jul 1921): 13-14.

when they know her story. Your journal has enlightened me on the subject and I have no doubt it has many others like myself.”<sup>159</sup>

## (2) Korean Issue in the U.S. Congress

With the spread of the realization about the Korean problem in the U.S., the issue reached to the doorstep of the U.S. Congress in 1919 and the early 1920s. The Korean Commission and Friends of Korea’s activities were effective in this process. During debate in the House and the Senate, Congressmen who actively argued for Korea’s case had a close and cooperative relationship with the Korean Commission and the League of the Friends of Korea. This was also a result of a shift in the focus of the debate about the postwar settlement and the corresponding shift in Korean leaders’ concentration from Paris to the U.S. Congress.<sup>160</sup> Senator Spencer, a Republican from Missouri, delivered several addresses at meetings of the Friends of Korea and contributed articles and book reviews on Korea. Spencer raised the issue of Korea in the Senate by submitting a resolution asking the State Department if the conditions between Japan and Korea warranted invocation of the treaty of 1882 between Korea and the United States.<sup>161</sup> He also presented a copy of a statement by Homer Hulbert and a copy of the “Brief for the Republic of Korea” prepared by the Korean Commission’s legal advisor Fred Dolph to

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<sup>159</sup> “Another New Friend for Korea,” *Korea Review* III, no. 7 (Sep 1921): 12.

<sup>160</sup> Ko, 372; and Manela, 211.

<sup>161</sup> “Korea and Fium in Senate, Resolutions by Spencer and Sherman Referred to Committee,” *NYT*, Jul 1, 1919; “Affairs in Korea,” *Congressional Record, 66th Journal of the Senate* (Jun 30, 1919): 105.

the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The Committee ordered the brief to be printed in the Congressional Record.<sup>162</sup>

Meanwhile, petitions by both Korean groups and American organizations and private citizens flowed into both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Congressional Record shows that the senders of these petitions ranged from the Women's Missionary Society and the Westminster Guild to churches in Girard, Kansas and Aberdeen, Washington, the Students' Liberty Club of Harvard University, the Tiffin League of the Friends of Korea in Ohio, and the citizens of Ann Arbor, Michigan and Nebraska. These petitions repudiated the persecution of missionaries in Korea,<sup>163</sup> protested Japanese acts of cruelty committed in Korea,<sup>164</sup> asked for Congress' help in the establishment of national autonomy for Korea or the withdrawal of the Japanese from Korea,<sup>165</sup> and sometimes asked the U.S. to extend aid to Korea.<sup>166</sup> Petitioners were not necessarily members of the Friends of Korea. At least, the fact that Americans who had not joined in the Friends of Korea also sent petitions demonstrates that the formation and activities of the organization functioned to spread knowledge and sympathy about Korea's situation to the American public, as the locations of the petitioners mostly corresponded to the geographical distribution of branches of the Friends of Korea. A

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<sup>162</sup> *66th Congress, Journal of the Senate* (Aug 18, 1919): 172; "Petitions and Memorials," *Congressional Record, 66th Congress, Journal of the Senate* (Sep 19, 1919): 206.

<sup>163</sup> "A Resolution of the Woman's Missionary Society and the Westminster Guild of the First Presbyterian Church of Girard, Kansas," *66th Journal of the Senate* (Jun 30, 1919): 119.

<sup>164</sup> "A Petition of the League for the Protection of Korea, Tiffin, Ohio," *66th Journal of the House of Representative* (Aug 1919): 410; "Resolution of Men's Association, First Baptist Church," *66th Journal of the House of Representatives* (Oct 1919): 520.

<sup>165</sup> "A Petition of Members of the United Brethren in Christ, of Beloit, Kansas," *66th Journal of the Senate*, (May 26, 1919): 27; "Petition of the First Methodist Church, of Aberdeen, Washington," *66th Journal of the Senate* (Sep 25, 1919): 214.

<sup>166</sup> "A Petition of Citizens of Ann Arbor, Michigan," *66th Journal of the Senate* (Mar 2, 1920): 165; "A Petition of Citizens of Ann Arbor, Michigan," *66th Journal of the Senate* (Mar 3, 1920): 168.

compilation of petitions for Korea to the U.S. Congress resulted in passage of a U.S. Senate resolution in October 1919. The resolution read, “the Senate of the United States express its sympathy with the aspiration of the Korean people for a government of their own choice.”<sup>167</sup>

Korea’s case came forth as one of the critical issues during the Congressional debates over the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations. Senators opposing the treaty and the League of Nations took the case of Korea, which was abandoned to Japanese rule, and the Shandong decision<sup>168</sup> as two examples of the inequity of the treaty. Senator George Norris, a Republican from Nebraska, used the Korean situation as evidence of Japan’s untrustworthiness; he stated that Japan could not be trusted to keep faith as to the privileges awarded her in Shandong, China “any more than she can be trusted in Korea.”<sup>169</sup> He argued that the concessions for Japan made in the treaty belied President Wilson’s claims to be fighting for world democracy, self-determination, and modern civilization.<sup>170</sup> As Manela assesses, “such condemnations of the wrongs done to Korea, like similar rhetoric attacking the Shandong decision or the British practices in Egypt and India, may have helped to defeat the treaty in the Senate.”<sup>171</sup> In 1920, Senator

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<sup>167</sup> “Government of Korea,” *66th Journal of the Senate, Congressional Record* (Oct 1, 1919): 221.

<sup>168</sup> At the Paris Peace Conference in May 1919, the U.S., Britain, and France accepted “their Japanese ally’s demand that imperial Germany’s economic and political concessions in China’s Shandong province be formally transferred to Japan—which had seized them by force in November 1914—rather than returned to China as the Chinese delegation requested. News of this decision unleashed a tsunami of patriotic fury in Peking that engulfed China, precipitated the rise of modern Chinese nationalism, and helped turn Chinese intellectuals away from Western liberalism” (Steven I. Levine, “Book Review: Bruce A. Elleman, *Wilson and China: A Revised History of the Shandong Question*,” *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 [Oct 2003]: 1113).

<sup>169</sup> “Face Longer Wait for Treaty Vote; Norris Renews Attack, Asserts That Wilson Repeated Shantung Misstatement—Denounces Korea Rule,” *NYT*, Oct 14, 1919.

<sup>170</sup> *Senate session, Congressional Record* (Oct 13, 1919): 6812-26; and Manela, 212.

<sup>171</sup> Manela, 212.

Norris played an active role in favor of the Korean nationalist movements by holding the vice presidency of the Washington D.C. League of the Friends of Korea, addressing mass meetings for Korea, and submitting petitions from the citizens of Nebraska for the Korean case to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.<sup>172</sup>

In March 1920, Senator Charles Thomas, a Republican from Colorado, at the Senate debate on the covenant of the League of Nations, offered an amendment to the reservation proposed by Senator Owen. The amendment read,

The United States further understands that in fulfillment and execution of the great principle of self-determination of peoples and equality of all Governments pervading and underlying the covenant of the League of Nations Great Britain and Japan, respectively, will forthwith recognize the existence and political independence of the republic of Ireland and the ancient kingdom of Korea, and agree that they become members of the League of Nations with equal representation accorded to all other sovereign and independent Governments.

Two days later, Thomas again offered an amendment to Senator Gerry's reservation on Ireland. The part concerning Korea in this amendment read,

And the United States, also adhering to the principle of self-determination, declares its sympathy with the grievances and aspirations of the people of Korea for the restoration of their ancient kingdom and its emancipation from the tyranny of Japan, and it further declares that when so consummated it should be promptly admitted as a member of the League of Nations.<sup>173</sup>

When submitting this amendment, Senator Thomas stated,

... Korea occupies a position peculiarly appealing to the national sense of fairness and of right. I say that without in the slightest degree of reflecting upon the equities of other peoples. Perhaps they may be superior to those of Korea. In my judgment, however, Korea appeals to us from a different and a more important standpoint than any other subject peoples; because we negotiated a treaty with Korea in 1882, if the nation were still an independent one that treaty would be in force. I call the attention of the

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<sup>172</sup> Ko, 375-76; *66th Journal of the Senate, Congressional Record* (Apr 8, 1920): 211.

<sup>173</sup> *Congressional Record, 66<sup>th</sup> Congress* (Mar 16, 1920).

Senate to its first article... That great American [President Roosevelt],... declined to exercise his good offices in behalf of that suffering kingdom [when Japan incorporated Korea into the Japanese Empire]... If, therefore, we are to indulge in reservations of this character, which I protest as wholly foreign to the treaty, we owe it to our sense of justice, to the facts, and in my judgment to our sense of obligation, to recognize the present efforts of the Korean people for independence, to extend to her that recognition which this reservation proposes as an element in the ratification of this treaty. It is chiefly for this reason that I am constrained again to offer this amendment.<sup>174</sup>

When the amendment was put to a vote, it was rejected by a vote of 34 to 46. The amendment was rejected not from lack of sympathy for Korea, but largely due to the fear that this and the Gerry reservation might complicate the treaty situation. However, the Gerry reservation, which expressed support of Ireland's independence, was adopted by a vote of 38 to 33. Interestingly, after the vote, Senator Borah of Idaho commented that the result was "a proposition of the U.S. Senate with nearly 20,000,000 people in the United States of Irish blood, just at the beginning of a political campaign, applying the great principle of self-government to no one except those who can vote." Then he asked,

...have we lost all self-respect and all sense of decency toward the world, that we shall withhold from the subject peoples who are oppressed and with whom we are to deal in the future under this league this great fundamental principle which has been a part of our faith for 150 years and placed there by the blood and suffering of our forbears? Why, if for no other reason on earth than that we are afraid to face the situation politically in the United States and deny to these people who have the vote that which we refuse to those who have not the vote?<sup>175</sup>

The similar implication that the U.S. Congress considered the issues of small populations in terms of domestic politics had already been disclosed one year earlier. After casting his vote against the resolution which expressed sympathy with Irish aspirations for independence, one senator asked [*Italics added*],

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<sup>174</sup> "Korea and Peace Treaty in U.S. Senate," *Korea Review* II, no. 2 (Apr 1920): 2-3.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



There are stories in the newspapers about Korea having national aspirations, but you have not yet introduced any resolution against Japan, providing for the independence of Korea, lately conquered and very much oppressed. Why? Because you know Great Britain will be good-humored with you and Japan will not be, and, *while there are a lot of Irish-American votes, there are no Korean votes in America.*<sup>176</sup>

Similarly, while commenting on the Irish resolution, Senator Thomas said of the Korean case, “Korea has been knocking at the doors of the senate, asking that we pass some resolution; they have been appealing to the American people to recognize and sympathize with their cause. Has anyone introduced a Korean resolution here?” At this question, Senator Williams responded, “There are no Korean-Americans, hyphenated Americans from Korea, with votes to re-elect senators and representatives.”<sup>177</sup> Senators Borah and Thomas’ comparison between Korea’s case and that of Ireland disclosed the limitation to the extent the U.S. Congress might have taken actions in regard to Korea’s case. Korea’s case before Congress was just one example of a “small people,” and any practical action Congress might take toward the Korean problem could have entangled the U.S. in foreign policy decisions for other small countries as well.

In sum, congressional debates about the Korean problem and their results clearly demonstrated the limitation of the pro-Korea independence movement in the U.S. Korean nationalists succeeded in attracting the attention of the American public, thus increasing the momentum of international interest in the March First Movement. In a sense, the congressional debate on Korea marked the peak of the pro-Korean independence movement in the U.S. before the Pacific War. Statements by American congressmen who favored Korean independence indicate that Korean nationalists effectively persuaded

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<sup>176</sup> “Heated Debate in Senate,” *NYT*, 10 June 1919.

<sup>177</sup> “Democrats Attack Foes of League,” *NYT*, 20 June 1919.

American intellectuals and politicians about the premises of their nationalist cause—America’s obligation to exercise “good offices” out of sense of justice, its special relationship with Korea, and so on. At the same time, congress’s rejection of resolutions for Korean independence disclosed the limitations of the pro-Korean nationalist movement in the American political sphere. A senator’s comment that there were “no Korean votes in America”<sup>178</sup> has a symbolic implication that pro-Korean movement in the U.S. had limitation. Although there was an increase in the number of Americans who supported Korea, the Korean problem remained an international issue whose influence could not exert political pressure on American society. Therefore, as long as there was no more sensational spark from outside, the U.S. Congress would not take any actual action more than expressing humanitarian sympathy toward the Korean people.

## **Conclusion**

Fred Dolph, legal advisor of the Korean Commission, prepared a report on the Commission’s two-year activities in October 1920. According to him, American newspapers were sympathetic to Koreans and this sympathy came only from a consciousness of justice. Between March 1919 and September 1, 1920, there were over 9,000 editorials and special reports dealing with the Korean problem in American newspapers and magazines. In contrast, Dolph assessed, there were about 50 articles that supported Japan. American people formed numerous organizations to investigate the Korean problem. Those organizations expressed sympathy toward the Korean people and passed resolutions for justice from their hearts. In Congress, two resolutions regarding

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<sup>178</sup> “Heated Debate in Senate,” *NYT*, 10 June 1919.

Korea were put forward in the Senate, and one resolution was put forward in the House of Representatives. The fact that the Korean issue was recorded in the *Congressional Record* as many as 64 times, showed that the American people had become inclined toward the problem of Korea, Dolph said. He concluded that, given that the ratio of Irish to Korean Americans was almost several thousand to one, this extensive attention toward the Korean problem was a source of hope and encouragement.<sup>179</sup>

The burgeoning American interest in the Korean problem, regardless of whether the interest came purely from a sense of justice and humanitarianism or was engaged with other issues, such as discussion of membership in the League of Nations or vigilance against the “yellow peril” of Japan, was phenomenal. Koreans in the United States had been known for their nationalistic and patriotic character from the early 1910s. The increase in interest in the Korean problem provided generous space and opportunities for Koreans themselves to voice their concerns. In contrast to Dolph’s hopeful outlook, however, the Korean nationalist leaders in the United States, centering around institutions such as the Korean Commission and Friends of Korea, failed influence American foreign policy toward Korea or Japan. In the 1920s Korea-related articles and pro-Korean movements in America gradually faded away. The failure was unavoidable in a sense, given that what Koreans were asking of the United States would have deeply involved the American government in the East Asian region, placing it in conflict with Japan, an unthinkable option in this interwar period. As seen in the section on the U.S.’ official position regarding colonial Korea, diplomatically and legally Korea was considered as being under Japanese jurisdiction. As long as the U.S. maintained a favorable relationship

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<sup>179</sup> “Dolph’s Report,” *Sinhanminbo*, Oct 21, 1920.

with Japan, American intervention in Korea was not a feasible option. At the same time, pro-Japanese propaganda movements promoted friendly relations between the U.S. and Japan even at non-official occasions, such as at Institute of Pacific Relations conferences. The decline of international attention on the Korean problem was partially attributed to the methods used by Korean nationalist leaders. Their strategy to rely on America's sense of justice and humanism provoked by scenes at the March First Movement worked very well until the Japanese authorities announced that they were making "cultural reforms" in Korea. Once Japan announced that it had put a stop to the harsh treatment of the Korean people, their American philanthropic interest in the Korean problem gradually decreased.

Nevertheless, the Korean independence movement in the United States after the March First Movement, along with other independence movements in China, Russia, and Korea, opened the era of Korea's modern nationalism.<sup>180</sup> At the same time, while Korean nationalist leaders succeeded in claiming Korean people's ethnic and national independence to the world, the logics of *realpolitik* denied their representation at postwar peace conferences or in American politics. Therefore, in the mid-1920s, they began to consider changing their strategy. These changes coincided with the emergence of conflicts between Japan and the U.S. on the issue of immigration and divisions among Korean nationalist groups. We will turn to these issues in the next two chapters.

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<sup>180</sup> Lee Chông-sik, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1963), 123-25.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### American Ambivalence, 1924-1936

#### Introduction

Since Koreans' representation on the post-World War I international stage was denied, the number of news reports about Korea and active pro-Korean movements in the United States decreased dramatically. To American viewers, the Korean nationalist movement seemed almost inactive prior to the outbreak of World War II. The interwar years, especially from 1924 through the mid-1930s, were the years when no special incident directly regarding colonial or nationalist issues was heard of from Korea. Nevertheless, American viewers experienced drastic changes in their relationship with Japan and, accordingly, with its colony Korea, during the interwar period.

Since the March First Movement of 1919, Japanese colonial authorities claimed a policy of cultural reform that lasted throughout the 1920s. "Cultural rule" (*bunka seiji* in Japanese, *Munhwa t'ongchi* in Korean) was seen as a huge shift from the precedent "military rule" of the 1910s, which resulted in the mass anti-Japanese movement by Koreans in 1919. Under the catch phrase of "cultural reform," a new civilian Governor-General, Saitō Makoto, was assigned and the gendarmerie was replaced with a police system. The new rule allowed limited freedoms of the press, publication, assembly, and even moderate activities by Koreans, "as far as they did not directly challenge the

colonial system.”<sup>1</sup> “Print capitalism,” that is, Korean newspapers and Korean language publications, achieved rapid growth in the 1920s. However, the cultural rule period meant the sophistication of a colonial structure for the colonized Korea, rather than hopeful anticipation for independence. The 1930s marked, in Korean historians’ classification, a period of “policy designed to obliterate Korean culture” (*Minjok malsal chôngch’aek* in Korean). Division between nationalist and communist groups was deepened in the 1930s and a radical assimilation policy, *Naisen ittai* (*naesôn ilch’e* in Korean, meaning “Japan (core) and Korea are one”), paved the road toward the war mobilization system in Korea in the 1940s.

During the 1920s and 1930s, as a consequence of the internal splits and Japan’s claim to new policy, Korean nationalist activities had no powerful impact on outside audiences. Still, inside information about colonial Korea served as a useful source for American observers to understand Japanese imperialism. Understanding the conditions of Japanese imperialism became more significant for the United States throughout the interwar years, as the relationship between the United States and Japan experienced dynamic changes during this period. Until the early 1920s, the two countries worked in a framework of international cooperation “embodied in the League of Nations and the Washington conference treaties and led by the United States and Great Britain.”<sup>2</sup> However, the so-called “racial equality” debate between Japan and other powers at debate for establishing the League of Nations became the first hint of upcoming confrontation. The Japanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference after World War I

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<sup>1</sup> Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 46.

<sup>2</sup> Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 2.

endeavored to secure recognition of the principle of racial equality in vain. The effort was brought out from the discrimination and humiliation that Japanese faced in the West, in relation to restricted immigration of Japanese to the United States and several other countries. The failure to insert the racial equality clause in the League of Nations Covenant became a turning point for Japan to move away from the international system initiated by the United States and Great Britain and their rhetoric of peace and international cooperation. Japanese writers reproached Western countries for not being humane, righteous, and honest. Shōji Fujii argued, “it is this feeling of disappointment and suspicion that has made the Japanese now more determined than ever to promote a Monroe Doctrine for East Asia.”<sup>3</sup> Even before 1919, the Japanese acknowledged that anti-Japanese immigration sentiment along the Pacific Coast regions in the United States was growing. This uncomfortable sentiment against Asian immigrants in the United States resulted in a series of decisions, including the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, under which Japan agreed to restrict further immigration of Japanese to the United States; the California Alien Land Law of 1913, which prohibited aliens from owning land or property; and the Immigration Act of 1924, which completely excluded immigration by people of Asian origin.<sup>4</sup> Japan’s disappointment with the international system and the following criticism of the Western powers confirmed Japanese commentators’ belief that Japan was the only hopeful, moral, and authorized leader for the East Asian region.

On the part of Americans, as Hirobe argues, Japan’s emergence as an imperial power coincided with the sudden increase of Japanese immigrants to North America and

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<sup>3</sup> Shōji Fujii, “Oriental Monroe Doctrine,” *The Japan Magazine* 10, no. 3 (Jul 1919): 102.

<sup>4</sup> For more about the anti-Japanese immigration movement in the United States, see Hirobe, *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice*.

led many to believe that there existed “a Japanese scheme to conquer the United States, or at least the Pacific Coast.”<sup>5</sup> These threatening images of Japan were combined to create the idea of “yellow peril.” The notion of “suspicious Japan” even provoked the U.S.’ governmental institutions to pay attention to Japanese activities in other parts of the Americas.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, as Iriye argues, beginning with the early 1930s, global interdependence and cooperation were no longer the prevailing rhetoric, as they had been in the years right after World War I.<sup>7</sup> Now, Japan was planning programs for economic development and population resettlement in Manchuria and north China, which were under its control, forming the “yen bloc.” It devised the pan-Asianist doctrine, which called for solidarity and cooperation among Asian peoples and resistance to Western imperialism.<sup>8</sup> Japan’s movements in 1931 were seen as a threat to China and the open door, against America’s desire to maintain integrity of China. In addition, a series of Japanese military expansionist moves in the continent—such as Japan’s attack on

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<sup>5</sup> Hirobe, 4-5. According to Tupper and McReynolds’ contemporary analysis of American public opinion about the Japanese immigration issue in the Pacific Coast, they observed that the press, labor groups, the American Legion, the sons of the Golden West, and other pro-American societies greatly favored exclusion. Only one fifth of the Pacific Coast newspapers spoke against it. “Throughout the country, the commercial group, those having humanitarian and religious interests, and many of the citizens of prominence were opposed to it, yet even these groups favored a quota plan” that would restrict the immigration of Japanese through legislation. The eastern US press, in general, sympathized with Japan and was opposed to the exclusion clause. In the central and southern regions, opinion was divided (Tupper and McReynolds, *Japan in American Public Opinion*, 442).

<sup>6</sup> State Department documents from this period include many folders regarding the military activities of Japan in the United States, Japan’s systematic propaganda activities in the United States, Japanese land purchases, and even names of suspected Japanese spies in the United States (to name a few, From the Navy Department to the State Department, Mar 26, 1925, 894.20211/67; From War Department, Dec 15, 1926, 894.20211/75; From the War Department to FE, State Department, Mar 21, 1928, 894.20211/76; Justice Department, Mar 29, 1928, 894.20211/79; FE (Neville), State Department, Oct 20, 1921, 894.20211/68; “Japanese Propaganda in the United States,” Apr 4, 1921, 894.20211/72; From Richard Warfield, Jan 17, 1913, 894.20211b/7, *IAJ*, 1910-29; Operations of Japanese Secret Military Agent in the United States,” From Nantes, France (Fisher) to the Secretary of State, Jul 12, 1926, 894.20211/73; From Samuel Heimlich to the Secretary of State [Lansing], Aug 23, 1917, 894.20211/48, *IAJ*, 1910-29).

<sup>7</sup> Iriye, 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-5.



Shanghai in February 1932, the attack of Manchuria in 1931 and the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932, and Japan's military attack on both North and central China beginning in 1937—also marked moments when American public opinion “blazed forth against Japan in a nation-wide manifestation of hostile sentiment,” according to a contemporary analysis.<sup>9</sup> The gradually escalating confrontation in the diplomatic, economic, and cultural relationship between the United States and Japan during the interwar years ultimately resulted in the emergence of the Second World War's Pacific theater, beginning in 1941.

For American public, colonial Korea provided insightful and inside information about the Japanese empire. Because of the power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in Korea and the changing relationship between the United States and Japan, colonial Korea could show two sides of the same coin: on the one hand, due to the fact that Korea officially belonged to the Japanese, American observers largely accepted the view of “the colonizer's insistence on difference[s] from the colonized, establishing a notion of the savage as *Other*, the antithesis of civilized value.”<sup>10</sup> The U.S. government repeatedly confirmed its impartial attitude in regards to the Korean problem, prioritizing friendly relations with Japan. On the other hand, as the United States began to take a suspicious look at Japan's moves during the early 1930s, Korea, which had been known as anti-Japanese, became a useful source for understanding the Japanese Empire, a soon-to-be enemy and threat to the United States. Emerging academic writings analyzed the

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<sup>9</sup> George H. Blakeslee, “Introduction,” in Tupper and McReynolds, xi. American influential periodicals, including the *Literary Digest*, *New York Times*, and *New York American* commonly found general condemnation of Japan for its “insane” imperialism and campaign of brutality in Japan's “undeclared war” on China (Tupper and McReynolds, 319-21).

<sup>10</sup> Spurr, 7.

Korean situation from sociological, historical, economic, and political perspectives, indicating this trend.

Beginning in the 1930s, American observers, and State Department officials in particular, concentrated on finding an answer to the question of whether Japanese imperialism was successful or not by looking at the Korean problem. Along with the increasing conflict between the United States and Japan, the growing attention on the part of the State Department indicates the increasing possibility that the United States would play a significant role in the end of Korea's colonization. Keeping this background in mind, this chapter examines changes in Japanese rule over Korea and how the American public and officials viewed these changes during the 1920s and 1930s, the period preceding the direct and full-scale confrontation between the United States and Japan in the Pacific.

## **1. Changes in Colonial Rule and Divisions in the Korean Nationalist Movement**

### (1) Cultural Rule and the Korean Nationalist Movement of the 1920s

The sensation of the March First Movement and foreign reproach about Japanese repression of the nationwide movement forced Japanese colonizers to seek a new policy for Korea. The New Governor-General Saitō claimed an imperial "cultural policy" as he took office in mid-1919. This new policy encouraged Koreans' "cultural movements," permitting relatively more relaxed restrictions on Koreans' freedom of speech and assembly to organize a variety of nationalist and political groups.<sup>11</sup> According to Saitō's statement, Japanese authorities insisted that these so-called cultural movements would

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<sup>11</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 156.

make the Korean people realize the “wrongness” of an independence movement and correspond to the “great spirit” of annexation between Japan and Korea.<sup>12</sup>

As Gi-Wook Shin argues, cultural rule was “a policy of incorporation designed to subsume moderate nationalists into the colonial system.”<sup>13</sup> This aspect is also reflected in the term that Korean scholars use to refer to the cultural rule period: “period of divide and rule (*minjok punyôl chôngch'aek ki* in Korean).”<sup>14</sup> It implies that Japan’s new policy in Korea was to conciliate moderate Korean elites, making them collaborators in colonial politics and cultural policies, while suppressing radical and communist activities. Japan’s reform policy, in effect, contributed to conflicts and splits within the Korean leadership.

As Cumings summarizes, the largest split in the Korean leadership was between liberal idealism and socialism, which “brought Korea into the mainstream of world history after World War I.”<sup>15</sup> After being disappointed with results of the March First Movement, the great powers’ indifference shown during the Washington Conference was a shock for Korean nationalists. Some nationalists turned to the idea of raising Korean people’s capacities to self-rule in the future, rather than working to pursue immediate and imprudent independence without appropriate capacities. The reformist and self-rule movements cooperated with Japanese authorities’ self-government policy. However, as critics predicted and Japan’s later policy of assimilation and war mobilization demonstrated, Japan’s claim of giving a self-government system to the Korean people

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<sup>12</sup> Saitō’s statement, quoted from Sô Chung-sôk, *Study of Modern Korean Nationalist Movement* (Seoul: Yôkpi, 1991), 65.

<sup>13</sup> Shin, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Sô Chung-sôk argues that Japanese colonizers used a “divide and rule” policy according to social classes, as racial or religious division was improbable in Korea’s case. In other words, Japanese authorities tried to conciliate the upper class, such as Korean landlords and bourgeois, as collaborators, and control the lower class (Sô, 64-65).

<sup>15</sup> Cumings, 159.

turned out to be nominal propaganda. While the liberal idealists were divided between critics and supporters of conciliation with Japan, socialists rapidly gained “a potentially large mass base” of Koreans.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the 1920s, despite the Japanese policies of strong police repression and censorship, socialist groups led the Korean resistance movement, planting “a deep core of Communist influence among the Korean people, particularly the students, youth groups, laborers and peasants.”<sup>17</sup>

The Korean Communist Party was founded in Korea in 1925, and other socialist groups were formed in the 1920s. Despite a short coalition between moderate nationalists and socialists with the formation of *Sin'ganhoe*, united Korean national independent front, in 1927, the gap between these two deepened in the 1930s. Meanwhile, Korean nationalists in the United States also experienced internal conflicts and the Korean Commission, the center of the Korean nationalist petitioning movement at the turn of the 1920s, was closed. Syngman Rhee was estranged from the Korean Provisional Government (KPG) after his failure at the Washington Conference and its debate about the organization and ultimate goal of the KPG.<sup>18</sup> Rhee stayed in Hawaii until his return to Washington, D.C. in April 1939, at which time he resumed leadership of the nationalist movement through the Korean-American Council.

## (2) Assimilation Policies of the 1930s

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>17</sup> Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 132.

<sup>18</sup> For details about the gap between Rhee and the KPG leaders in the 1920s and 1930s, see Chông Pyông-chun, *Study of Unam Syngman Rhee*, 137-209.

Since the Manchurian Incident in 1931, the Japanese forces' invasion of Manchuria, Japan clarified its plan to expand into Chinese territory. Japan aimed at intensifying its policy of "Japanization" in Korea, placing the colony in a significantly new position in the areas of communication, economy, and the defense of the Japanese Empire. The assimilation policies in Korea implemented during the 1930s can be understood as a part of Japanese preparations for the upcoming war. Japan's education policy in Korea had a declared aim to teach the Japanese language, Japanese history, myths, and customs, and to "completely destroy" Koreans' own characteristics, their ethnicity, and thoughts for national independence.<sup>19</sup> In other words, it was policy of changing Korean people into subjects of the Japanese empire.

The shrine issue is a symbolic example that showed the attitude of the Japanese policy toward Korea in this period. Though Shinto was the Japanese indigenous religion, beginning in 1932 the government-general in Korea required that all pupils and schoolteachers attend ceremonies at Shinto shrines and bow in homage to the spirits of Japanese national heroes. As Sung-Gun Kim argues, Japan needed not only the material resources and the strategic position of the Korean Peninsula, but also the "native manpower" for conscription. The need for loyalty and the devotion of the Korean people to the Japanese empire became more urgent than ever before. As a means of making Koreans loyal subjects, the Japanese administration attempted to bring about the cultural assimilation of Korea by urging the colonial people to revere the Japanese emperor and to offer obeisance at Shinto shrines.<sup>20</sup> As expected, the religiously involved shrine issue

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<sup>19</sup> "Editorial," *Tongailbo*, Apr 23, 1920.

<sup>20</sup> Sung-Gun Kim, "The Shinto Shrine Issue in Korean Christianity under Japanese Colonialism," *Journal of Church and State* 39 (1997): 503-4.

became controversial among American missionaries, giving a clue for American observers to trace the direction of Japanese imperialism.

The beginnings of war preparations presented as “cultural reforms” during the 1920s turned into instances of extreme control of political offenders in the 1930s. In response, there appeared a strong Korean guerrilla resistance that cooperated with the Chinese to fight together against Japanese imperialism beginning in 1931.<sup>21</sup> Kim Il Sung, the future leader of North Korea, emerged as one of the most important anti-Japanese guerrilla leaders by the mid-1930s.

## 2. American Journalistic and Scholarly Views

### (1) A Romantic Colony: Affirmation of Korea as a Colony

As we saw in Chapter 1, imperial Japan took steps to propagandize its modernization process, in particular in the spheres of economics and commerce, beginning in the early stage of its colonization of Korea. From the 1920s onward, Japanese propaganda efforts extended to the promotion of European and American tourism in Korea. Japan advertised the natural beauties of Korea and called Korea the “Switzerland of the East,” although visitors found the likeness was not striking.<sup>22</sup> At other times, the Japanese Tourist Bureau invited European and American journalists to Korea, selling the image of “the Hermit Kingdom.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> In the early 1930s, there were over 200,000 guerrillas fighting the Japanese. According to a Chinese source, “Koreans constituted a much higher percentage of resisters as a proportion of population than any other ethnic group, including Han Chinese” (Cumings, 160).

<sup>22</sup> Arnaldo Cipolla, “In the Land of Morning Calm,” *The Living Age* 321 (May 24, 1924): 998.

<sup>23</sup> Semman annai-jo, *Chōsen Manshū ryokō annai (Traveler’s Guide to Korea and Manchuria)* (Tokyo, 1932).

Resonating with Japan's efforts, European and American travel writings were prevalent in this period, as in the earlier years. Travelers' guides and pictures in travelers' journals such as *National Geographic* and *Travel* introduced the places and customs of Korea to readers. Western travelers' writings in the late nineteenth century disclosed bare curiosity about an exotic land from an Orientalist view; and writings in the 1910s were increasingly inclined toward political aspects. Writings by visitors to Korea in the 1920s and 1930s showed another perspective: the salient image of Korea as a "romantic colony." As David Spurr notes, articles about Third World countries in travel magazines such as *National Geographic* produced similar images, as if every article was the same article about the same country. Natives of the far-off lands "smile alluringly for the camera, and their attitude toward the writer is invariably genial."<sup>24</sup> Western visitors praised the convenient highways, leading "in every direction from the highway, so that an easy automobile-ride brings the traveler to the magnificent forests that clothe the slopes of the central range."<sup>25</sup> Here, Korea provides modern transportation and technology alongside natural scenes that Western visitors could enjoy and appreciate. The image of modern cities developed by Japan suggested the viewer's admiration for the colonizer's epochal modernization of the most underdeveloped regions. The caption of a picture of well-organized roads and modern buildings of Pusan [Figure 26] reads, "Korea is being modernized as rapidly as the apathy or opposition of the Koreans will permit. This view of the port of Fusan shows one of the city's new squares, one of the government

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<sup>24</sup> Spurr, 51.

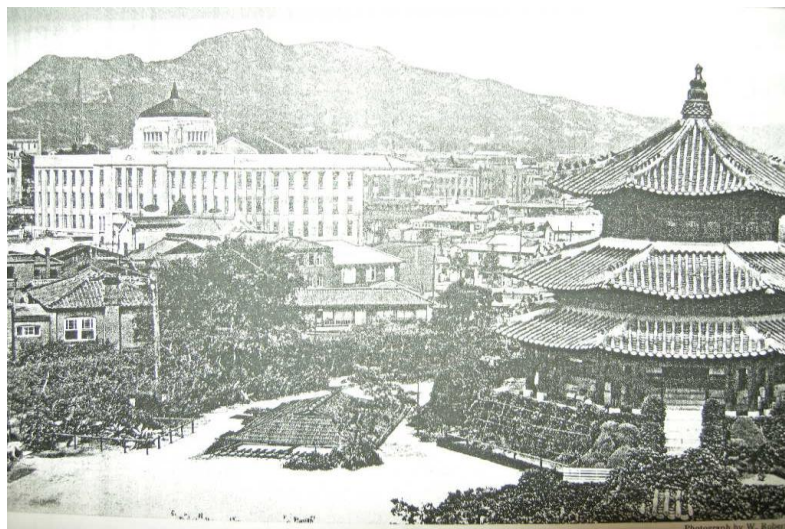
<sup>25</sup> Cipolla, 998.

buildings and the harbor in the background. Fusan is the nearest port to Japan and it has been claimed by that country since its armies first landed there centuries ago.”<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 24. Broad avenues have supplanted many narrow streets of Keijo (Seoul) [original caption] (photograph by W. Robert Moore)**

Source: Mabel Craft Deering, “Chosen—Land of Morning Calm,” *National Geographic* 64 (Oct 1933): 426.

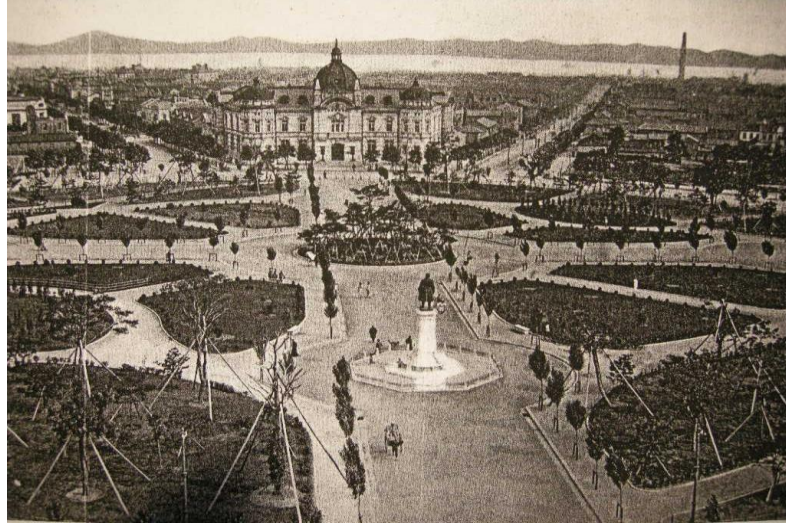


**Figure 25. Many centuries of progress—against a mountain backdrop [original caption] (photograph by W. Robert Moore)**

Source: Deering, “Chosen – Land of Morning Calm,” *National Geographic* 64 (Oct 1933): 427.

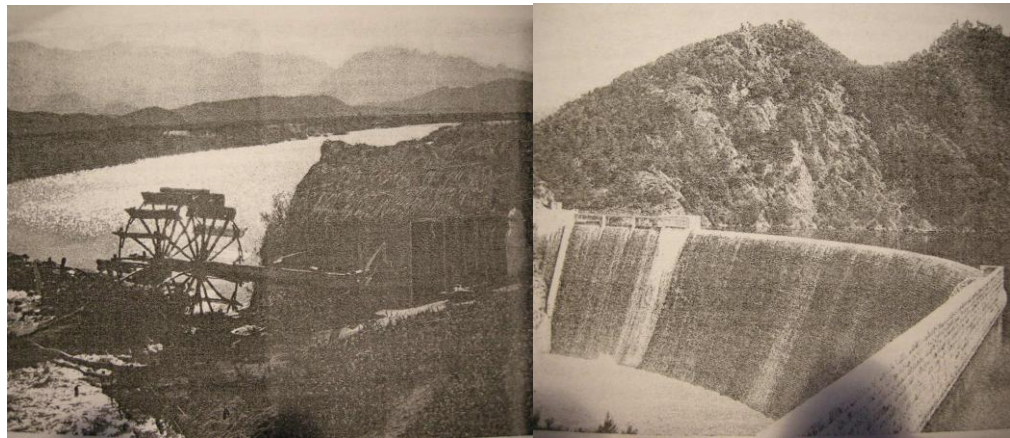
<sup>26</sup> Ralph Gates, “Land of Morning Calm,” *Travel* 65 (Aug 1935): 19.





**Figure 26. Korea's principal seaport [original caption]**

Source: Ralph Gates, "Land of Morning Calm," *Travel* 65 (Aug 1935): 19.



**Figure 27. The old rice mills of Korea, like this one (left) in the Diamond Mountains, were crude. In vivid contrast are the great modern public works by means of which 800,000 acres of waste land have already been made arable [original caption].**

Source: C. M. Wilbur, "Japan and the Korean Farmer," *Asia* 35 (Jul 1935): 394-5.



**Figure 28. On Seoul’s main street Japan advertised to visitors the “progress” she brought to Korea (credited by Frederick L. Hamilton from Three Lions)**

Source: Willard Price, “Jap Rule in the Hermit Nation,” *National Geographic Magazine* 88 (Oct 1945): 434.

The contrast between the old rice mill and modern dam seen in Figure 27, for example, represents the typical way that the Japanese colonial authorities advertised their modernizing process in Korea, as was examined in Chapter 1. As its caption clarified, the old construction was viewed as “crude,” and projected in contrast to “the great modern public works” constructed in the colony.

The contrast to this new modernity was the ingenuous and unspoiled nature of Korea. Main destinations for Western tourists were the Diamond Mountain (*Kûmgangsan* in Korean, *Kongo-san* in Japanese) and the White Head Mountain (*Paektusan* in Korean). One traveler introduced the pleasures of the *Kûmgangsan* tour, as quoted here [Italics added]:

The magnificence of this mountain [Kongo-san] group surpasses imagination and affords one of the most marvelous spectacles in the world. These mountains form a coronet of flame-colored basaltic peaks—a cloister of grand, weirdly carved pinnacles, a forest of enormous rock-spires with their points in the heavens and their bases buried in dense virgin forests, where the last survivors of the Korean tigers lurk...

Of late years[,] Kongo-San has become a favorite resort *for all Western couples in this part of the world and for Westernized Asiatics* on their honeymoon. Some of the monasteries have substituted comfortable American beds for their old-time sleeping-mats, and have engaged Chinese servants and cooks, who serve detestable imitations of European food. The tourist season is in the autumn...<sup>27</sup>

In this kind of traveler's writings, the prevalent images were those of peaceful contentment and a calm colony, beautiful scenery, the wonderful progress of modern cities, and happy and pure people.<sup>28</sup> The mode of the Western visitors of colonized Korea corresponded with that of the journalist-explorer to the Third World in nineteenth-century literature and journalistic discourse.

European and American travelers' depictions of Korean scenery conform to Mary Louise Pratt's identification of the three parts of the rhetorical convention of colonizing discourse. Pratt analyzes that the rhetorical convention is based on the sweeping visual mastery of a scene: the landscape is aestheticized, then it is invested with a density of meaning intended to convey its material and symbolic richness, and finally it is described so as to subordinate it to the power of the speaker.<sup>29</sup> By appreciating an ingenuous landscape, which was allegedly enabled by the establishment of modern transportation and accommodation of the modern colonizer, Japan, the view of Western travelers confirmed the power of the colonizer. The author of the above writing also plainly designated "all Western couples" and "Westernized Asiatics" on the scene as the

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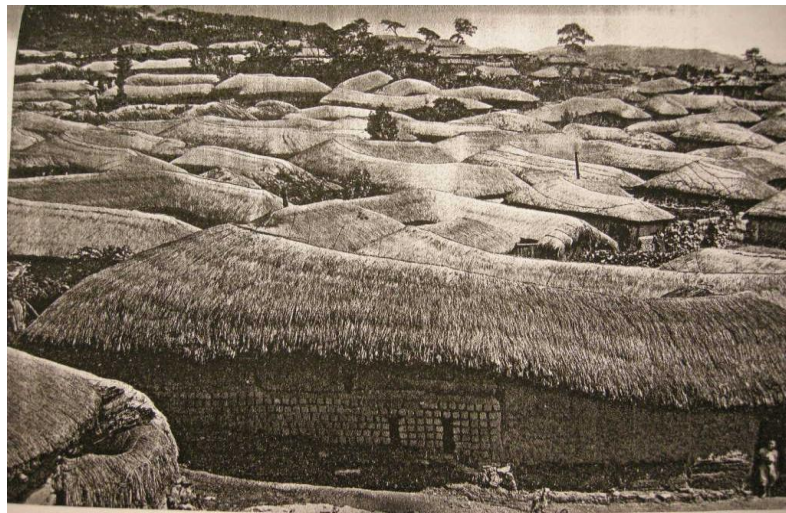
<sup>27</sup> Cipolla, 998-1000.

<sup>28</sup> Travel writers that showed these images include: H. A. Franck, "Opera-hatted Citizens of the Hermit Kingdom," *Travel* 41 (Sep 1923); H. A. Franck, "Chosen: Land of Morning Calm," *Travel* 41 (Oct 1923); H. A. Franck, "Summer Sojourn in Quaint Seoul," *Travel* 42 (Nov 1923); H. Levon, "Korea, Land of Contrasts," *Living Age* 320 (Jan 19, 1924); Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, "In the Diamond Mountains," *National Geographic* 48 (Oct 1924); R. C. Andrews, "Ends of the Earth," *The Saturday Evening Post* 202 (Oct 5, 1929); M. B. Ordun, "Mountain-Water Adventure in Korea," *Asia* 33 (Jun 1933); M. C. Deering, "Chosen, Land of Morning Calm," *National Geographic* 64 (Oct 1933); and R. Gates, "Land of Morning Calm," *Travel* 65 (Aug 1935).

<sup>29</sup> Pratt, 204.

surveyors of the Korean scene. By doing this, the author confirmed the power relationship between the surveying Western, or at least, Westernized people, and the surveyed people—backward, traditional, and non-Westernized. Art history writings highlighted the aesthetic aspects of historical and delicate Korean arts from the similar perspective.<sup>30</sup>

In inverse proportion to the admiration of developments in urban planning and transportation, the image of naïve and pure Korean people seen in the late nineteenth century was revived in the writings of the 1930s. Usually, the reflection of the Korean people was separate from the modern advancement of Korea, as if implying that the advancement did not belong to the colonized. In travelers' eyes, the native people continued to live in a traditional way in terms of residential circumstances, clothing, superstition, and so on. This was visualized most obviously in the form of photographs.



**Figure 29. Infinite variety of form marks village homes [credited by E. M. Newman]**

Source: Mabel Craft Deering, "Chosen – Land of Morning Calm," *National Geographic* 64 (Oct 1933): 439.

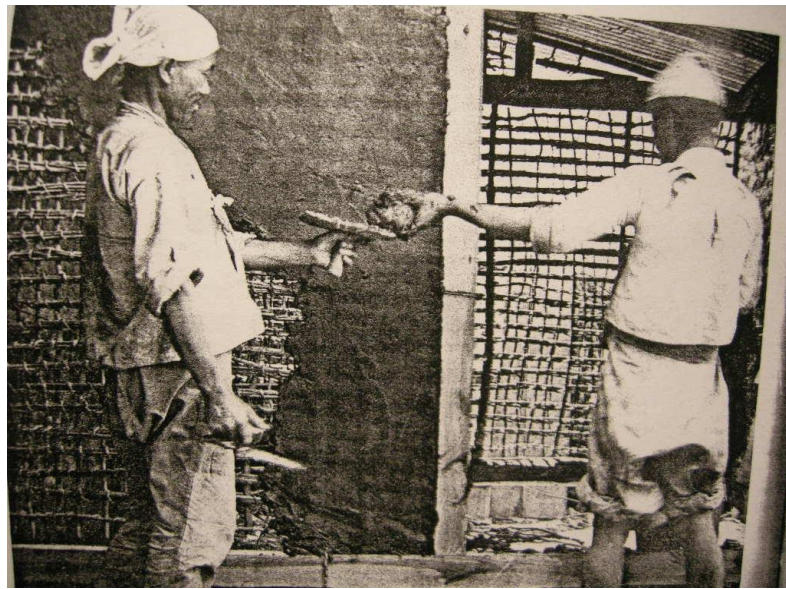
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<sup>30</sup> H. E. Fernald, "Rediscovered Glories of Korean Art," *Asia* 31 (Dec 1931).



**Figure 30. How to make ploughing difficult: One man inserts a long-handled shovel into the ground and two assistants pull it up and out by means of ropes attached to the blade. Whole rice fields are cultivated in this way [original caption].**

Source: H. A. Franck, "Opera-hatted Citizens of the Hermit Kingdom," *Travel* 41 (Sep 1923): 7.



**Figure 31. The little gray home of the East is bamboo and mud.**

Source: Mabel Craft Deering, "Chosen – Land of Morning Calm," *National Geographic* 64 (Oct 1933): 440.



**Figure 32. Instead of ironing, Korean women club their clothes to smoothness.**  
 Source: Mabel Craft Deering, "Chosen – Land of Morning Calm," *National Geographic* 64 (Oct 1933): 441.



**Figure 33. Freight train in Korea: human dray horses, the burden bearers of Korea carry merchandise and products of all kinds over the steep roads and narrow pathways of Korea. These fellows are laden with cargoes of crude Korean pottery piled high and secured with a network of rope [original caption].**

Source: Rose Beattie, "Human Dray Horses of Korea," *Travel* 71 (Aug 1938): 38.



**Figure 34. Homage to the spirits: The crudely carved images that stand near the entrances to some Korean towns are an indication of the persistence of ancient superstitions among the peasants. These figures of good spirits are supposed to prevent evil spirits from entering the town. In addition to primitive animistic beliefs, both Buddhism and Confucianism have influenced the Koreans [Original caption].**

Source: Source: Ralph Gates, "Land of Morning Calm," *Travel* 65 (Aug 1935): 21.

In spite of the amazingly rapid and extensive modernization of urban areas, Korean people were missing from the development. Rather, Koreans were seen as continuing to adhere to a traditional and underdeveloped way of living. As the pictures and captions reproduced here demonstrate, Koreans were observed as mysteriously unchanged, in spite of the dramatic changes of the surroundings. For example, the caption for Figure 30 read, "How to make ploughing difficult," implying the author's curiosity why the native people were still maintaining a traditional method of farming despite introduction of modern method. The caption for Figure 33, "human dray horses," depicts most Koreans as ignorant and uninformed.

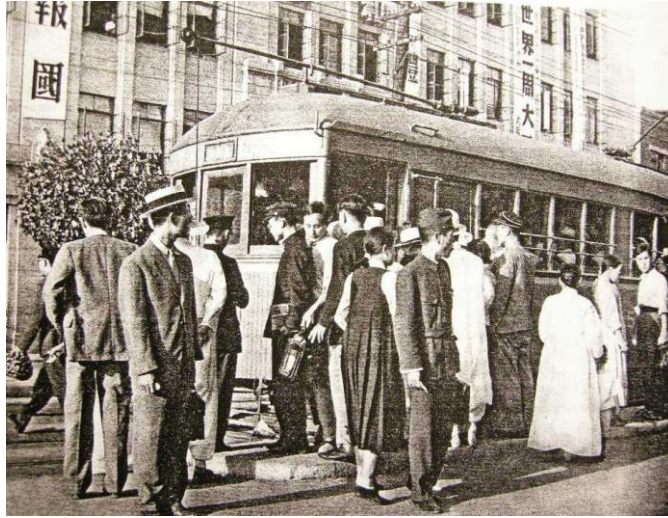


**Figure 35. Japanese soldiers were being landed with clock-like precision [original caption].**

Source: William Franklin Sands, "The End of an Empire: Memoirs of a Diplomat," *Forum* 84 (Aug, Sep 1930): 319.

Illustrations such as Figure 35 contrasted traditional and indifferent Korean people in traditional clothing to a "clock-like," and precise Japanese soldier in a modern, that is to say, Western, uniform. Abundant contrasting images between the modernized and backward, the colonizer and the colonized were common in this period. As in Figure 35, the contrasting view that strangers were successfully accomplishing the modernization of Korea without involving the native people's participation in the process was both implicit and explicit. It was not until 1944 when images of Korean people as modern citizens of urban cities who enjoy modern technologies and knowledge began to appear in pictures of Korea (see Figures 36 and 37).





**Figure 36. Seoul, the Korean capital, is a modern city [original caption].**  
 Source: Andrew J. Grajdanzev, "Problems of Korean Independence," *Asia* 44 (Sep 1944): 418.



**Figure 37. A modern doctor interviews two old-timers in Presbyterian hospital, Taikyu [original caption].**  
 Source: Willard Price, "Jap Rule in the Hermit Nation," *National Geographic* 88 (Oct 1945): 451.

These journalist-explorer writings seemed to be within the context of American visitors' views in the late nineteenth century. In addition, they indicate that, despite the scanty American attention paid to the Korean independence movement from the early 1920s, the American public's view maintained an imperialistic perspective of Korea. In short, the American journalistic and public view recognized the power relationship

between Japanese as modernizers and colonizers and the Koreans as passive and colonized.

## (2) The Emergence of Technocratic Ideas

Although the journalist-explorer writings persisted and news of political disturbance in Korea was now silenced, a new trend of looking at the Korean problem emerged from the 1920s onward: the analysis of Korean society from technocratic perspectives. Writers with attentive eyes on the Korean problem argued, “we must look beneath the surface if we would understand Korea or any land,” looking beyond picturesque and pleasing sights.<sup>31</sup> While earlier writings, those before the early 1920s, focused only on the occurrence and result of the presented Korean nationalist movements, such as the March First Movement, now the writings on Korea revealed more professionalized and deepened views held by academic scholars, missionaries, and diplomatic officers in colonial Korea. As in the earlier period, American missionaries, in particular, played a significant role in leading the American audience to look beyond the scenes that the Japanese colonizing power tried to show to viewers from outside by directly interacting with and providing channels for the Korean people to disclose ruptures within the Japanese Empire.

### On Economy and Agriculture

Concern about economic problems had not been a common topic in English-language articles on Korea before 1920. By the mid-1920s, however, many commentators

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<sup>31</sup> Delavan L. Pierson, “Building a New Korea: Glimpses of Progress and Forces at Work,” *Missionary Review of the World* 54 (Jun 1931): 24.

were considering Korea's problems as not political or religious, but instead fundamentally economic.<sup>32</sup> Economic problems seen in Korea during this period originated with Japan's colonial economic policies for the state. Japan began to organize colonial policies through the Company Law and the cadastral survey in the 1910s; in the 1920s, Japan intensified its exploitive intention for Korea through "the Program to Increase Rice Production," in order to turn the colony into its main rice supplier of rice. As Kim Yong-sop argues, beginning in the 1920s "Japanese landlords and capitalists invested in agriculture as well as in commerce and industry, aggressively engaging in land accumulation in order to manage their investments as an enterprise."<sup>33</sup> As a result, Japanese and Korean landlords purchased land and set up agricultural estates (*nongjang* in Korean) "solely for the purpose of exploitation."<sup>34</sup> Land accumulation was prevalent among landlords, and as a result, small to medium Korean landowners and peasants became petty landowners or landless peasants. The hardship faced by tenant farmers working to survive under the landlord system, which claimed to use capitalist management but was "in reality a system in which the tenant farmers were controlled and exploited as 'hired tenants' who were comparable to laborers," led to tenants' movements.<sup>35</sup> Tenant movements became a serious social problem in colonial Korea from the 1920s to the 1930s.

American researchers noted economic hardships and agricultural problems in Korea beginning in the mid-1920s. Clearly departing from the earlier American view that

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<sup>32</sup> Frank H. Hedges, "Changing Korea," *The Living Age* 332 (Feb 1, 1927).

<sup>33</sup> Yong-sop Kim, "The Landlord System and the Agricultural Economy during the Japanese Occupation Period," in *Landlords, Peasants and Intellectuals in Modern Korea*, ed. Pang Kie-Chung and Michael D. Shin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 2005), 135.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-67.

championed Japanese modernization and the progress Japan had achieved in Korea, most observers in the 1920s and 1930s agreed that the economic condition of the Korean people was worse than it had been before the Japanese annexation. They argued that, in spite of an increase of population and improvement in living conditions, the actual economic condition of the Korean people had grown worse. Willard Price, a traveler and journalist, wrote in his article, “the secret of Japan’s economic success in Asia is that she takes as much as she gives”; “Korea’s resources are made to order for Japan,” and Korea “is still in a pitiable plight,” which he expressed through his conversation with a Korean “abbess,” supposedly a Buddhist nun.<sup>36</sup> Missionary groups viewed Korea’s economic condition even more critically. Delavan Pierson pinpointed, “the material progress of Korea, with enlarged commerce and manufacture, reforestations and large irrigation schemes, [had] improved the country without directly benefiting Koreans.”<sup>37</sup>

The agricultural problem was even called a crisis. Regarding the hardships that Korean farmers were suffering, American observers understood that this was a result of the rapid change from a purely agricultural to a modern, industrial economy. Unprecedentedly, as regional studies on East Asia in American universities began to develop, academic scholars tried to determine who was responsible for the crisis, with more professional approaches. C. Martin Wilbur, a Chinese history professor, observed that the industrialization and the following changes in agriculture have “been too quick a step for the average Korean farmer.” He observed, while most of a farmer’s crops were grown for personal consumption two decades ago, today he was a small unit in the

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<sup>36</sup> W. Price, “Korea from a Nunnery Window,” *Fortnightly Review* 147 (May 1937): 529-39.

<sup>37</sup> D. L. Pierson, “Building a New Korea,” *Missionary Review of the World* 54 (Jun 1931): 26.

complex economic organization of the Japanese Empire.<sup>38</sup> As the outbreak of war neared in the late 1930s, observers pointed out that Japan continued to tax farmers “to raise money to pay out in large grants to industries, especially those industries which gird Japan for the coming test of war strength in the Far East.”<sup>39</sup>

As historians have demonstrated, the greatest problems of the Korean economy in the 1920s and 1930s were the alienation of the land and resulting tenancy disputes. Robert Speer, a Presbyterian leader and foreign missionary executive, observed in 1927 that the Japanese were slowly taking possession of the land and reducing Koreans to serfdom.<sup>40</sup> Harold Noble, a history professor of the University of California, paid attention to the phenomenon that much of the best Korean agricultural land had passed into the hands of the Japanese. According his reliable source, as of 1925, 15 percent of the arable land in Korea was owned by Japanese individuals or by the Japanese government. This figure did not include mortgaged land, the greater part of which was also in the control of the Japanese. He analyzed that the process of the alienation movement was done very rapidly in southern Korea because of the greater fertility of the soil and the more salubrious climate. In parts of that district, he observed, more than 60 percent of the arable land, the richest rice land in Korea, was owned by Japanese, mostly absentee landlords. As a result, “the rapidity with which the Koreans [were] changed into a landless tenant class [was] a matter of very serious concern to all thinking Koreans.”<sup>41</sup>

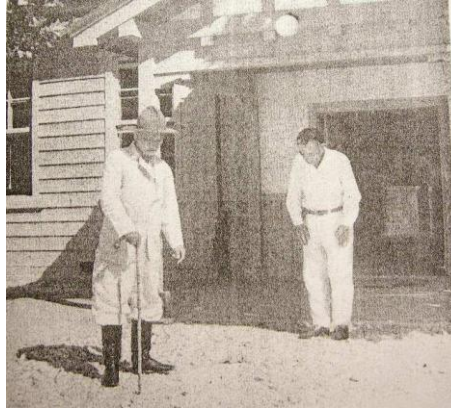
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<sup>38</sup> C. M. Wilbur, “Japan and the Korean Farmer,” *Asia* 35 (Jul 1935): 395.

<sup>39</sup> Price, 538.

<sup>40</sup> R. E. Speer, “Some Observations in Chosen,” *Missionary Review of the World* 50 (Apr 1927): 251.

<sup>41</sup> H. J. Noble, “Korea under Japanese Rule,” *Current History* 33 (Oct 1930): 80.



**Figure 38. Jap landlord - receives bow from his Korean overseer. Most farmland and industry in Korea is owned by Japs. Some 12,000,000 Koreans are employed in the Jap war effort [original caption].**

Source: "Korea," *Life* 17 (Sep 4, 1944): 66.

Noble also noticed the ambitious agricultural scheme of the Japanese government to increase Korean productivity through large-scale irrigation projects. As of 1930, Japan had to import 15 million bushels of foreign rice in addition to that imported from Korea. He argued, "Korea is the best and most logical place in the empire for the extension of rice cultivation so as to decrease foreign importation, and for this reason the government plans eventually to secure more than \$150,000,000 for the irrigation and improvement of Korean rice land."<sup>42</sup> He predicted that the project would result in great benefits for Korea, but its immediate effect was disastrous for Korean farmers because of the high rate of land taxes. Noble's rather pessimistic outlook for Koreans explains well of the irony of the colonial economy: "forced to pay the heavier taxes, he [the Korean farmer] mortgages his property or sells his holding and becomes the tenant of a Japanese individual or corporation with enough capital to wait until the improvement brings in greater returns. The Japanese Empire will undoubtedly profit by an increase in the production of rice, but the Korean farmer will suffer an even more rapid alienation of his land as the scheme

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

progresses.”<sup>43</sup> In similar fashion, Benjamin Weems, a scholar in Korean studies, said in 1941 that Japan’s project to increase Korean production made Korea the principal “rice bowl” of the Japanese empire.<sup>44</sup>

Ta Chen, a specialist in Asian labor and migration, analyzed Korean labor conditions. In a study conducted in 1930, he analyzed both the industrial and agricultural labor situations. His study predicted that the government-general in Korea would place more emphasis on the development of agriculture than industry for the present, at least. The reason was that Korea lacked technical experts, capital, and industrial experience. Labor disputes and labor unrest in recent years, he explained, partially originated from ill feelings between Japanese employers and Korean employees based on nationality. Chen considered that unsatisfactory economic and social conditions paved the way for manifestations of social unrest in sections of Korea.<sup>45</sup> Professional and academic studies paid attention to Korea’s economic problems more so than to other issues during this period. Those in-depth studies disclosed that a more professional and intellectual view replaced the earlier period’s broader public attention by Americans, since political disturbances were repressed in Korea. As examined, rather than the emphasis on material improvements that public and travel writings used to highlight, the professional view paid attention to the cracks and problems that plagued the Korean colonial economy.

### On Political and Ideological Issues

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>44</sup> Benjamin Weems, “Korea Must Speak No Korean,” *Asia* 41 (Jun 1941): 296.

<sup>45</sup> T. Chen, “The Labor Situation in Korea,” *Monthly Labor Review* 31 (Nov 1930): 26-36.

The general expectation among observers when the March First Movement ended with Japan's promise of reforms in Korea was optimism about the peaceful assimilation and friendly relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in the future, once the reforms succeeded. Nevertheless, differently from the optimistic expectation, Western writers on Korea in the mid-1920s and 1930s found that a pervasive anti-Japanese sentiment persisted among Koreans, even after the momentum of the radical nationalist movement in Korea had passed. For instance, Arnaldo Cipolla, an Italian journalist who visited Korea in 1924, found the Korean peasants and laborers he met in the streets expected him to "deliver a harangue against Japan."<sup>46</sup> He also met a Chinese man in Korea who assured him that "China would recover her unity, become the greatest military power in the world, and chase Japan out of Korea."<sup>47</sup> Sherwood Eddy, an American protestant missionary and one of the leaders of the YMCA, realized that the educated Koreans who passionately desired independence numbered almost 99 percent of the population, and that the remaining 1 percent were those who were receiving material benefits of office or profit under Japanese rule.<sup>48</sup> Kasimir Edschmid, a German writer, in his review of Younghill Kang's autobiographic novel *The Grass Roof* (*Das Grasdach* in German), wrote that the entire Korean nation was filled with national pride and hatred of Japan. He commented, "the yearning for freedom and the lofty, deep-rooted national feeling of the Koreans confront the fanatical national consciousness of the Japanese. But

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<sup>46</sup> Cipolla, 997.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 998.

<sup>48</sup> Eddy analyzed that the Koreans were making a threefold indictment against Japanese rule, that is, against the policy of assimilation or absorption of the Korean people; against the dictatorship and autocratic rule by an alien power; and against Japan's policy of economic discrimination (Sherwood Eddy, "Japan's Policy in Korea," *The World Tomorrow* 13 [Nov 1930]: 454-55).



no indication is given as to what the outcome of this conflict will be, for only history can decide that...<sup>49</sup>

It is remarkable that there were writers now who had positive and supportive views of the Korean people's desire for independence. L. T. Newland, an American missionary in Kwangju, Korea, did not believe that Korean independence was attainable. However, he assessed the Korean people's nationalistic desire as positive, because it inspired them to be awake and modern. Newland considered that the Koreans' hope for independence "galvanized the country into life," prompting the young Koreans to study modern nations and modern statecraft zealously.<sup>50</sup>

Sherwood Eddy, after explaining the Korean people's indictment against Japanese rule, commented,

Koreans should not be asked to abandon their hope of ultimate independence, nor should they be oppressed because of it. No self-respecting Korean, as no true Japanese, could hope for less. On the other hand, the Korean people should not hold themselves aloof and despise small beginnings. They can place no hope in the use of organized force against one of the strongest military powers in the world. They should, therefore, meet halfway every sincere effort on the part of the Japanese toward autonomy.<sup>51</sup>

Eddy remarked that a new day would come for both Japan and Korea, and he expected that the Philippines would gain its independence and India would win self-determination either within or without the British Empire. His outlook that a world of conscience against the exploitation of one people by another was being created led him to have an optimistic view of Korea's future. He also anticipated that a new and liberal Japan was

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<sup>49</sup> Edschmid's review in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was translated to English in an American journal, *The Living Age* (Kasmir Edschmid, "Korea Speaks," *The Living Age* 345 [Sep 1933], 68).

<sup>50</sup> "Even though her desires [for independence] may never be attained, the hope inspired and the preparations made will keep the land from ever sinking back into the dull, hopeless apathy of yesterday" (L. T. Newland, "Korea Awake," *Missionary Review of the World* 50 [Sep 1927]: 674).

<sup>51</sup> Eddy, 458.

arising, having already achieved “universal suffrage, the growth of organized labor, the probable development of proletarian parties, and the inculcation in the younger generation of ideals of economic justice and fair play,”<sup>52</sup> encouraging Korea’s hope for growing autonomy. Eddy suggested that Japanese authorities permit Koreans to write their own history, preserve their own language, protect the heritage of their own traditions, and have economic autonomy.<sup>53</sup> It is notable that he advised the Korean people to compromise on “small beginnings” and to meet the Japanese “halfway,” by accepting autonomy first in local, then provincial, and finally central administration.

In the early 1930s, the influence of anti-imperialism among American intellectuals was visible. In earlier period, American commentators who supported Korean nationalists were opposed to the Japan’s “immature” rule, rather than imperialism itself, as we have seen in writings by Homer Hulbert. However, by this time there appeared opinion makers who clarified their opposition against all of the imperialistic moves of the great powers. Take correspondence exchanged between editors of the *Tongailbo*, a Korean nationalist daily newspaper in Seoul, and *The Nation*, a liberal American weekly magazine, for example to show the possibility that Korean nationalists against Japanese imperialism and American liberal and anti-imperialist intellectuals were of the same mind. Oswald G. Villard, editor of *The Nation*, sent a letter of greeting and congratulations on *Tongailbo*’s tenth anniversary.<sup>54</sup> In this letter, Villard declared that

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 458.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Oswald Garrison Villard (1872-1949) was a journalist, author, and reformer. In 1896, he became a cub reporter for the *Philadelphia Press*, and in 1897 he joined *the New York Evening Post* and later worked as editor of *The Nation*. Both the *Evening Post* and *The Nation* editorialized against the expansionist tendencies of the United States that resulted in the Spanish-American War of 1898. Villard founded the American Anti-Imperialist League, which favored independence for the territories captured in the Spanish-American War. In 1909 and 1910, Villard joined W.E.B. Du Bois, the progressive African-American writer

*The Nation* devoted itself “to the liberties of minorities, the right of all peoples to their own way of life, and to opposition from whatever source.”<sup>55</sup> He emphasized that they had never faltered in their belief that “the Koreans were entitled to their own independent existence, precisely as we have violently opposed the imperialistic moves of our own country in Nicaragua, Haiti, and elsewhere.”<sup>56</sup> Expecting that the era of imperialism by the so-called superior races was approaching its end, Villard also predicted the imminent liberation of India and the American Congress’ unconditional grant of freedom to the Filipinos, which the editors of *The Nation* had been seeking since the beginning of the colonization of that country in 1898. He also pointed out that a newspaper, his grandfather, William L. Garrison, had founded, *The Liberator*, contributed to bringing about the freedom of the enslaved African Americans in the United States. Saying that Garrison’s struggle was harder than that of the Koreans but it succeeded, Villard encouraged the Koreans and the *Tongailbo* editors. He commented that these Korean and American periodicals shared “the great cause of democracy, peace among nations, and the establishment of the true social democracy within all nations.”<sup>57</sup> By comparing the Korean people’s struggle for freedom to that of the enslaved African-Americans in the

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and educator, to cofound the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He advocated amnesty for conscientious objectors, birth control, the cleaning up of corruption in city politics, independence for Ireland, laws against lynching, prison reform, anti-prohibition and anti-tariff measures, and sympathy for Soviet Russia—the tyranny of whose leaders, however, he was denouncing by 1925 (Robert L. Gale. "Villard, Oswald Garrison" *American National Biography Online* February 2000). <http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-01698.html> (April 8, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> “Correspondence: Freedom of the Press in Korea,” *The Nation* 30 (Jun 4, 1930): 652.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 653.

United States, Villard confirmed his position as an anti-imperialist and supporter of Korea's nationalist movement.<sup>58</sup>

In reply to Villard's letter, Hugh Cynn, president of *The Korean Nationalist Weekly* and leader of the Korean YMCA, wrote a letter published in *The Nation* informing Villard that the *Tongailbo* had been suspended indefinitely on April 15, 1930. The cause for the suspension was the congratulatory message that Villard sent to the paper. Cynn said, "the Japanese authorities contend that the message was inciting and for that reason suspension was ordered not only for the issue in which the message had appeared but for an indefinite period,"<sup>59</sup> implying there was censorship of the mass media. It was unfortunate that the Korean people could not read the message from the editors of *The Nation*, Cynn said, because the message "would have given them the moral support which cannot be expected from other quarters during these times of unspeakable atrocities and inexcusable oppression by the Japanese authorities."<sup>60</sup> *The Nation* also published a letter from a Korean in P'yŏngyang in its next issue. The author of the letter, with the initials of J. C., reported that the *Tongailbo* was punished twice, that one issue out of every four was suppressed and confiscated, and that both the president and the editor served prison terms during the ten years since the newspaper had been founded. He continued,

...Out of the fifty-seven issues of a native monthly magazine forty-three have been suppressed and confiscated... In Korea no one is allowed to speak in public

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<sup>58</sup> Villard, in his article in November 1945 after the liberation of Korea, argued for giving Koreans immediate independence. As the United States gave a fixed date to the Filipinos for their emancipation for American rule, he insisted, it "should do the same for the Koreans" and give them "the sacred right to govern themselves ... *now*" (Italics original) (Oswald G. Villard, "We Must Free Korea Now," *Asia* 45 [Nov 1945]: 521).

<sup>59</sup> "Correspondence: Freedom of the Press in Korea," 653.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 653.

unless he submits his speech to the local police and gets their approval beforehand.

...a magazine must submit all manuscripts to the censors for approval. The words "independence" and "revolution" are forbidden to be published in any connection, so we use two circles and two triangles respectively to express the meaning. Can anyone blame the Koreans if one day they become violent and use force to achieve their freedom?<sup>61</sup>

The exchange of correspondence between editors of *The Nation* and Korean leaders informed American readers that Japanese censorship of the press existed and that freedom of speech in Korea was still seriously restricted. Moreover, it is notable that there was now a group of liberal American intellectuals who were opposed to imperialistic moves both by Japan and the United States and who encouraged the Korean people's nationalist desires.

Other commentators, especially among the missionary group and American diplomatic officials, were concerned about the spread of communist ideas among Koreans. They thought that political exiles were fleeing to Siberia and northern China and bringing back communist ideas. Herbert Blair, a Presbyterian missionary in Taegu, Korea, observed that there was an organized effort uniting socialist Japanese, Korean, and Chinese people with Russian leaders who were eager to spread communist doctrines. He said,

The Korean jails are full of Socialists at times, and among these some Christian students often are found. In our church work we occasionally meet young socialistic inquirers. They want to know if Christianity can really solve their problem when it commands them to pray for the King, obey the powers that be, and turn the other cheek. They do not see much hope for the great eighty per cent of the poor tenant farmers of Japan, China or Korea ever attaining adequate living conditions or political liberty without a revolution.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> "Rule by Force in Korea," *The Nation* 131 (Jul 16, 1930): 68.

<sup>62</sup> Herbert E. Blair, "The Struggle of Korean Christians," *Missionary Review of the World* 54 (Jul 1931): 488.

These viewers tended to attribute the influence of communism among Korea's young generation to economic hardships and Japan's oppressive rule in Korea. This tendency was similar to that of State Department officials, whose views will be discussed in a later section.

### On Religion and Missionary Work

Missionary work and the growth of Christianity were a continuous, essential topic of writings on Korea since the country was opened to the West in the late nineteenth century. One of the outstanding changes in missionary work dating from the 1930s was the participation of native Koreans in evangelical missions. Missionaries in Korea reported that the localization of evangelical works was successful, as seen in Korean college students' preaching in rural areas during school vacations.<sup>63</sup> However, as explained earlier in this chapter, Christian missionaries and churches faced a new challenge, the shrine issue, a result of a new Japanese policy of spiritual assimilation.

Facing strong opposition from missionaries and Korean Christians, the Japanese authorities maintained that this act of obeisance was only a display of national patriotism, not a religious act. The shrine issue soon became a controversy among the various Christian churches and along denominational lines.<sup>64</sup> As a result, large numbers of

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<sup>63</sup> "Student Evangelism in Chosen," *Missionary Review of the World* 59 (Apr 1936): 165.

<sup>64</sup> The Methodist mission decided to comply with the government-general's edict on the basis of the assurance that the rite was only patriotic, while the Presbyterian mission voted to refuse compliance on the grounds that the ceremonies were religious and idolatrous. The Missionary Committee of the Presbyterian Church, South, with the unanimous ascent of their Korean Mission, took a stand that their mission schools could not comply and that they would therefore take steps to close these schools and withdraw from the field of secular education ("To Close Mission Schools in Korea," *The Missionary Review of the World* 60 [May 1937]: 228-29).

missionaries withdrew from Korea beginning in the late 1930s.<sup>65</sup> As this reaction attests, the missionary groups were critical of the Japanese policy. The negative view of the Japanese pressure on Christian missions and Japan's policies of sweeping reorganizations of religious institutions led many missionaries to feel that "it is hopeless to attempt Christian work in a non-Christian state which follows to a considerable degree the totalitarian pattern."<sup>66</sup>

Benjamin Weems, a scholar in Korean studies, viewed the shrine issue as part of the new Japanese program of "Spiritual Mobilization" in Korea and elsewhere in the Japanese empire. He noted that it had become especially noticeable in the schools, with mass gymnastics and military training. All of these programs, he understood, were "designed to stamp out every cultural institution, custom or idea of the Koreans which the government views as an obstacle in the way of the realization of its dream of a 'New Order in East Asia.'"<sup>67</sup> Weems also pointed out that the New Order was against the pouring in of foreign ideas and influences, and that it was because the Koreans were a subject people with long-standing causes for grievance that the government authorities feared would bear the fruit of rebellion if allowed to continue their contact with foreign and democratic agencies. He added that the evacuation of American missionaries from Korea was due not only to the Japanese restrictions but also to the advice of the U.S. Department of State, which advised that Americans in East Asia should leave.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> "How One Mission Works in Chosen," *Missionary Review of the World* 62 (Feb 1939); C. B. Sylvester, "Some Light Breaks," *The Christian Century* 57 (Dec 2, 1940); T. T. Brumbaugh, "Mission Forced to Leave Korea," *The Christian Century* 57 (4 Dec 1940); H. H. Underwood, "Mission Retreat in Korea," *The Christian Century* 58 (Feb 12, 1941).

<sup>66</sup> Underwood, "Mission Retreat in Korea," 223.

<sup>67</sup> Weems, "Korea Must Speak No Korean," 294-95.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

If opinions were divided over whether or not the Japanese were persecuting Christians with the Conspiracy Case in 1911 and the March First Movement as we examined in Chapter 2, the Shinto shrine issue and the following pressure on the missions led to the almost unanimous view among American missionaries and commentators that Japanese rule in Korea was restricting religious freedom and becoming more totalitarian.

### 3. Official U.S. Perspectives

#### (1) Race and the Japanese Empire

Racial issues were central both inside and outside the Japanese Empire, and were becoming increasingly serious in the 1920s and 1930s. American observers of conditions in Korea and the East Asian region naturally paid attention to the issue of race.<sup>69</sup> In particular, American diplomatic officials were relatively more attentive observers of racial issues in Korea and Japan than others, partly because the issue could be directly related to the American “domestic jurisdiction” and the Japanese immigrant issue, and also because it helped them determine to what extent Japan’s pan-Asianist doctrine was feasible.

The controversy over the restriction of Japanese immigrants in the United States in the early twentieth century almost obsessed the Japanese government. American government officials were critical of Japan’s claim for racial equality in connection with immigrant issue. In contrast to the Japanese, who believed they now belonged to the civilized world as much as the nations of Western Europe and the United States did, the

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<sup>69</sup> As Mae M. Ngai argues, the concept of race changed from one centered on physiognomic differences and hierarchy in the late nineteenth century to a view that linked race to both physiognomy and nationality in the twentieth century. She adds, “modern racial ideology depended increasingly on the idea of complex cultural, national, and physical *difference* more than on simple biological hierarchy” (Italics original) (Ngai, 8).



American view still considered the Japanese a part of the “yellow race.” It is clear in the following document that American officials had a completely different concept of race and equality than did the Japanese. An internal report prepared by Quincy Wright of the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1921 clarified that there should be a distinction between nationality and race and that “the discriminations about which the discussion of the Japanese proposal has centered, have been based on race, rather than nationality,” thus “racial equality” would be the proper term for the Japanese proposal.<sup>70</sup> It said, “bearing in mind that political lines, cultural lines, and racial lines never coincide, it will be seen that discriminations based on race, or even on nationality in the ethnic sense, cannot be regarded as an affront to any particular state or nation in the political sense.”<sup>71</sup> The report provided legal grounds for the justice of discrimination of rights and duties based on the varying capacities of races, peoples, and classes. It cited the League of Nations Covenant that certain peoples “are not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world,” and that “*the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations* [Italics added].”<sup>72</sup> For example, the East Indian subjects of the British Empire were not permitted to immigrate into all portions of the Empire; the nationals of the “unorganized” territories of the United States, such as Filipinos, could not enjoy all constitutional guarantees, and neither did tribal Indians.<sup>73</sup> The report concluded [Italics added],

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<sup>70</sup> “Racial Equality,” Oct 1921, 894.4016, *IAJ, 1910-29*, 1.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. Although Filipinos were colonial American subjects, those who lobbied for Filipino immigrant exclusion argued, “colonial status was not an issue because Filipinos were racially ineligible to citizenship and therefore excludable under the terms of the Johnson-Reed Act.” Ngai argues that the exclusionists became interested with Philippine independence “to free the United States of the Philippines,” and “the

This memorandum has attempted to show that in view of the diversity of civilizations and the capacities of peoples and races, *a general assertion of racial equality in rights, obligations, privileges or responsibilities cannot be scientifically or practically justified*, and that equality as defined by natural law, constitutional law, treaties, international law or the principles of the open door, does not bear witness to a general principle of racial equality, either recognized or gaining in acceptance, but rather to the necessity of adapting laws and institutions to the varying capacities of races and peoples, with a just appreciation of the equality in moral value of all human beings.<sup>74</sup>

The U.S. government's response to Japan's claim for racial equality demonstrates that America's fundamental view of the Japanese was not separated from its view of incapable "Oriental" peoples, in contrast to what Japan had expected. Furthermore, it confirmed the American perspective that peoples of "unorganized" societies needed the tutelage of advanced nations.

If the issue of racial equality at the Peace Conference disclosed the external dimension of the racial problem of Japan, the U.S. government officials also paid attention to two cases involving racial or ethnic conflicts within the Japanese empire. In both cases, Koreans were involved at the center of the conflicts. Koreans were generally regarded as being of the same race with the Japanese, the Mongolian race. However, as seen in travelers' writings from as early as the nineteenth century, outsiders saw racial distinctions between Koreans, Japanese, and Chinese. In other words, as much as Asian peoples distinguished among themselves, Western observers did not miss the distinguishing intra-racial ethnicities in terms of their physical, historical, and cultural

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Filipino problem" (Ngai, 116-17). The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 provided for independence for the Philippines on July 4, 1946. The act stripped Filipinos of their status as U.S. nationals and limited an annual immigration quota of 50. For details on Filipino migration to and exclusion from the United States, see Chapter 3 of Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*.

<sup>74</sup> "Racial Equality," 8.

aspects. American officials generally agreed on the groups' racial differentiation,<sup>75</sup> but sometimes put more stress on the historical hostility and sentimental distance, despite the groups ostensibly being "a kindred race" and of no difference in religions.<sup>76</sup>

One incident that stemmed from racial conflict within the Japanese sphere occurred during the days of the Japanese earthquake in 1923. The Great Kanto earthquake, magnitude 7.9, devastated the whole Kanto region, which encompassed Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba, and other prefectures. In the midst of the panic and chaos after the earthquake, false rumors emerged claiming that Koreans in Japan had looted Japanese homes and used violence on Japanese people. Some rumors were very specific: accusing Koreans of carrying bombs; marking places to throw bombs of choking gas; poisoning the drinking water in wells; and recording with codes their plans for violence, attacks, and arson to be visited on Japanese people and their homes.<sup>77</sup> Upon hearing these rumors, many Japanese people organized themselves into armed bands of vigilantes. Koreans were singled out as the object of persecution, or, in Ryang's words, for "extermination."<sup>78</sup> It is said that at least 6,000 Koreans were killed in Tokyo and Kanagawa alone.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> "Chosen: Its Government, People, Transportation Lines, and Leading Industries and Commerce," from Seoul (Bergholz) to the State Department, May 28, 1919, 895.00/641, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>76</sup> "The Situation in Chosen," from Seoul (Bergholz) to the Secretary of State, Oct 27, 1919, 895.00/667, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>77</sup> *Tongnipsinmun*, Dec 5, 1923; Kim In-tôk, "The Study about Suppression and Persecution in History of Korean Residents' in Japan during Colonized Era by Japan," *Kangwon inmun nonch'ong* 15 (2006), 215-16.

<sup>78</sup> Sonia Ryang, "The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Massacre of Koreans in 1923: Notes on Japan's Modern National Sovereignty," *Anthropological Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 732-33.

<sup>79</sup> In Sonia Ryang's analysis, this racist persecution of 1923 stemmed not merely from colonial racism but was also related to the emergence and maintenance of Japan's modern national sovereignty, which was closely connected with the exclusion of non-Japanese. In other words, Ryang argues that the Korean immigrants in Japan, as of the early 1920s, were cast in the position of outcasts for not having *koseki*. *Koseki*, a registry of one's place, and family, or origin, gave certificated membership to the Japanese people under the pure-most and direct-most descendent, the emperor. This is related to Ryang's argument that the rationality of Japan's modernity stemmed not from the emergence of individual citizens, but that of the Emperor's subjects (*Ibid.*).

The U.S. embassy in Tokyo reported about the incident in October 1923. American officials noted that no Korean was safe from the mob, and even persons who only resembled Koreans were afraid to be seen in Tokyo or Yokohama.<sup>80</sup> In fact, it was reported, “a number of Chinese were similarly killed in the confusion of the earthquake disaster.”<sup>81</sup> They analyzed that the persecution was an outcome of the old-time grudge that culminated into “a definite idea that either the Koreans were responsible in some way for the disaster and for the pillaging that was going on, or that if so many ‘good’ Japanese had been killed certainly no ‘bad’ Koreans were going to escape.”<sup>82</sup> The U.S. government officials also reported further racial conflicts following the incident. Hearing the news of killings of Koreans in Japan, the Japanese government reportedly tried to quiet the resentment aroused in Korea by distributing films of the earthquake depicting the considerate treatment of Koreans and their establishment in special camps where they were provided food and shelter as soon as the military authorities assumed control of the situation.<sup>83</sup> Other reports transmitted the situation in China, saying that anti-Japanese agitators there were using exaggerated reports of the incidents as weapons to attack Japan.<sup>84</sup> The League of the Friends of Korea in the United States quoted the statements of foreign eyewitnesses in Japan telling of the killings of Koreans and called for the State Department to investigate the claim that an official Japanese order was given to “kill as

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<sup>80</sup> From Tokyo (Woods) to the Secretary of State, Oct 18, 1923, 894.4016/1, *IAJ, 1910-29*.

<sup>81</sup> From Tokyo (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, Nov 14, 1923, 894.4016/2, *IAJ, 1910-29*.

<sup>82</sup> 894.4016/1, *IAJ, 1910-29*.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> 894.4016/2, *IAJ, 1910-29*.

many Koreans as possible.”<sup>85</sup> In reply to the Friends of Korea, the State Department simply stated that the information did not indicate that the Japanese government had ever issued or countenanced any order of that nature.<sup>86</sup>

Another case involving racial issues and the Japanese empire to which American officials in East Asia paid attention was the Manbosan incident of July 1931. Korean migration to Kando, in Manchuria, had increased since the 1909 Kando Treaty between China and Japan granted Koreans the right to reside and own property in Kando without becoming Chinese citizens. According to Hyun Ok Park’s study, the majority of Korean migrants were “landless peasants who wanted to escape poverty and debt”<sup>87</sup> in colonial Korea. By 1930, there were about one million Korean immigrants in Manchuria and in Kando, one part of the region, Koreans comprised more than two-thirds of the total population. Park argues that the Japanese, since the annexation of Korea, had hoped that these Korean migrants, as subjects of the Japanese empire, would neutralize Chinese resistance, “making possible a gradual diffusion of Japan’s power,” which she calls “the politics of osmosis.”<sup>88</sup> Japan used the presence of Koreans in Manchuria as an excuse to assign Japanese officials, police, and sometimes even troops to Manchuria in the name of protecting its subjects.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, although many Koreans left for Manchuria because they were opposed to Japanese rule and had nationalist considerations,<sup>90</sup> their migration

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<sup>85</sup> From the League of the Friends of Korea to the State Department, Nov 20, 1923, 894.4016/3, *IAJ, 1910-29*.

<sup>86</sup> From the State Department to the Friends of Korea (Tomkins), Dec 4, 1923, 894.4016/3, *IAJ, 1910-29*.

<sup>87</sup> Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution in Manchuria* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 43.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> From Seoul (Davis) to the State Department, Feb 9, 1931, 895.56, *IAK, 1930-39*; Park, 46.

<sup>90</sup> “Voluntary Report,” from Seoul (Dutko) to the State Department, Oct 17, 1930, 895.5595/13, *IAK, 1930-9*.

to Manchuria, ironically and unintentionally, expanded Japan's influence in terms of its claims to sovereignty in Manchuria. American officials reported that, since Japan had begun to construct the railroads in Korea going toward northern China in the 1930s, conflicts between Korean immigrants and resident Chinese had become more frequent. This was just as American officials had predicted, the Korean emigrants to Manchuria "play[ed] not a small role both in the general process of [the] colonization of Manchuria and [in] multiplying and bringing to their full growth the problems which now merely seem to show their heads."<sup>91</sup>

Manbosan (*Wanbaoshan* in Chinese) was a small town in Changchun, part of Kando in Manchuria. By 1931, over 100 Korean peasants had migrated and leased lands to cultivate in the town. On July 2, 1931, an incident began when Korean peasants came into conflict with Chinese peasants concerning a drainage construction project for rice fields. The Koreans had received unofficial permission from the Chinese landowners and governor, subleased through Japan, to construct drainage ditches, but the Chinese peasants in the area complained that the ditches would flood their land and demanded the evacuation of Korean peasants from the town. Soon, the Japanese police rushed to Manbosan and exchanged shots with a mob of Chinese farmers. The conflict led Chinese police and the Japanese consulate office to intervene, and finally developed to a diplomatic dispute between China and Japan. Local newspapers in Korea reported the incident with exaggerated casualty numbers of Koreans and emotional expressions, such as killing and injuring Koreans by Chinese, which had no foundation. The baseless reports incited Koreans to take revengeful attacks on Chinese immigrants and shops

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

owned by Chinese on the Korean peninsula. In particular, in Inchôn, a port city with the largest Chinatown in Korea, Chinese were damaged during the month of July 1931. On July 10, 1931, the American Consul General in Mukden, known as Shenyang, China today, transmitted the news that a total of 100 Chinese had been killed and 167 seriously wounded during Korean riots.<sup>92</sup> Much criticism was directed against the government-general in Korea and much speculation arose as to the reasons for the lack of proper protection given the Chinese in Korea.<sup>93</sup>

As Park sees, the Manbosan incident “reflected an imagined antagonism between the Koreans and Chinese that originated in conflicts between Japan and China.”<sup>94</sup> State Department reports show that American officials were well aware of the complex nature of the Korean presence in Manchuria. They reported that the Chinese feared that the mass migration of Korean laborers to Manchuria would be the prologue of “a Japanese plan of colonizing Manchuria with Koreans, Japanese subjects, which might be a step in deeper penetration of the country,” and considered Koreans to be “the vanguard of Japan coming in for economic conquest of Manchuria.”<sup>95</sup> When the Manbosan incident occurred, the Japanese government-general in Korea called both for resolving unjust Chinese exploitation of Korean immigrants and for the eradication of the Korean independence movement in Manchuria. From its part, China saw the events as part of Japan’s long-cherished and ever-dreamed plan for rule over China. Moreover, the Chinese government

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<sup>92</sup> From Mukden (Johnson) to the Secretary of State, Jul 10, 1931, 895.4016/7, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>93</sup> “The Riots in Korea,” from Japan (Neville) to the State Department, Aug 1, 1931, 895.4016/23, *IAK, 1930-39*. For American officials’ responses to the incident, see folders 895.554, “Immigrants of Japanese to Korea,” 895.56 “Immigrants of Korean to Japan,” 895.4016 “Chosôn Racial Problems, Disturbances and Massacre” of *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>94</sup> Park, 95.

<sup>95</sup> “Voluntary Report,” from Seoul (Dutko) to the State Department, Oct 17, 1930, 895.5595/13, *IAK, 1930-39*.

blamed Japanese authorities for failing to handle the matter properly, as it took ten days for Japanese authorities to suppress the Korean rioters against Chinese in Korea. While demanding an apology from Japan and compensation for damage to the Chinese in Korea, the Chinese government was also concerned with Japanese ambitions for expansion on the Chinese mainland.

International reports largely blamed the Japanese authorities in Korea for not preventing false reports on the incident. American officials in China and Japan saw the exaggerated reports of the Manbosan incident in the Japanese press in Korea as largely responsible for the riots,<sup>96</sup> and held that the Japanese police “seemed from the first unable or unwilling to take proper steps to prevent outrages committed by Koreans upon Chinese.”<sup>97</sup> American Consul General in Mukden argued, “The Japanese welcomed, if not encouraged, Korean expression and demonstration of anti-Chinese feeling as supporting their stand in Manchuria.”<sup>98</sup> The American Consul in Mukden questioned Japan’s exceptional action in sending police into strictly Chinese territory to defend Korean farmers during the conflict in Manbosan, an area well outside of the Japanese railway zone.<sup>99</sup>

American officials observed that “racial issues” occupied a central position among external and internal issues of the Japanese empire in the 1920s and 1930s. Those issues, they believed, did not stem from racial and physical differences, but rather from the historically entrenched ethnic identities of East Asian peoples. For American

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<sup>96</sup> 895.4016/7, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>97</sup> “The Riots in Korea,” 895.4016/23, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>98</sup> 895.4016/7, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>99</sup> From Mukden (Vincent) to the Secretary of State, Jul 13, 1931, 895.4016/21, *IAK, 1930-39*.



observers, the two cases of racial disturbances seen here were evidence of cracks and conflicts involving racial ethnicity inside the Japanese empire. This observation functioned as a counterpoint to the feasibility of Japan's attempts to assimilate Koreans and Chinese into the Japanese empire culturally under the motto of "Monroe Doctrine for Asia" or Pan-Asianism.

## (2) Koreans' Politics

Once the Korean people demonstrated their political activism with the March First Movement, State Department officials began to take note of the trends in Korean politics. Officials at the American Consulate Office in Korea, in particular, functioned as informants for the State Department to understand Koreans' political characteristics. Reading American officials' reports from Korea indicates that they had a dim idea of the Korean nationalist movement and its splits in the 1920s and 1930s, as much of the nationalist movement had gone underground or abroad as time passed. However, their understanding of the trend of Korean nationalism shows that they had a quite accurate understanding of Korean politics. Moreover, American officials began to disclose a clear preference regarding Koreans' politics.

American officials began to analyze Korean politics beginning in the years right after the March First Movement. American Consul General Miller, who was assigned to Korea in 1919 right after the Movement, learned about the new nationalist sentiment among the Korean people and prepared a report that expressed his personal view and outlook on the Korean problem after a thorough regimen of research among Koreans, Japanese, and foreigners, including businessmen, missionaries, government officials, and

colleagues. Miller confessed that he was surprised to see “the depth and strength of the new [independence] movement in Korea.”<sup>100</sup> While having expected to find a high tide of sentiment in certain segments of the Korean population, mainly students and educated circles, Miller discovered that the aroused feelings “had gone broad and deep into the lives of the people as a whole.”<sup>101</sup> He was also impressed by the degrees of organization among Koreans. In his understanding, there were two factions among the Korean leaders, one in favor of using forcible means of advancing their cause, and the other in favor of peaceable means. Miller saw that the latter were in control of the situation, which resulted in the peaceful nature of the March First Movement. He observed that the same line of cleavage ran through the whole movement abroad among Korean leaders in Shanghai, Vladivostok, the United States, and elsewhere in addition to Korea. He predicted that the continued prevalence of the peace party would depend upon the methods used by the government-general in dealing with the situation. In other words, if the promised reforms were promptly put into practice, and if the harshness of the police methods were ameliorated, the Koreans’ peace party would continue to hold the upper hand. He believed that the reform program had begun and was already making some progress based on the sincerity of purpose that the new Governor-general had shown.

Concerning the future of Korea, Miller expected that no program of reform that could be reasonably expected would satisfy a large section of the Korean people, arguing that “the most that can be hoped for is that the new administration [of government-general] may prove itself so enlightened that the peace party may continue to hold its present ascendancy and that things may be permitted to develop in a normal manner,”

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<sup>100</sup> From Seoul (Miller) to Tokyo (Morris), State Department, Dec 26, 1919, 895.00/673, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

such as treating Korean people with respect, giving justice, and granting a fair opportunity. Miller summed up, “many, of course, expect and will continue to demand more, nothing less than immediate political independence, but the above would form a basis upon which the other matters could be satisfactorily worked out. Less than this, however, will mean a resistance to the death on the part of a section of the Korean people.”<sup>102</sup> In short, Miller expressed his sympathy and positive impression of the Korean people’s peaceful demonstration against the military governing of the Japanese. He believed that the “peace party” of Korean movement leaders would continue to prevail over the opposition party favoring forcible methods. He preferred reforms by the government-general, as reforms would warrant the prevailing of the Korean “peace party.” Miller’s opinion demonstrates that American officials at the time viewed the Korean independence movement as being thorough and possibly ongoing until complete independence was accomplished. In this sense, they certainly agreed that the actual sentimental, cultural, and ethnic “independence” of Koreans continued to exist, despite the political colonization and Japan’s efforts to break the Koreans’ independence movements. However, by agreeing to the reforms by the government-general in order to guarantee the so-called peace party’s upper hand over the more radical party using violent means, the officials prioritized peaceful order in the colonial Korea as a result of reforms, over political autonomy, if not complete independence.

A long and detailed report by the American Consul General, Ransford S. Miller, analyzed Koreans’ politics as of 1925. Miller believed that the government-general’s many rigorous measures, such as the strengthening of the police force, “together with a

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

conciliatory policy of promoting education and other cultural enterprises and of improving industrial conditions,” had resulted in an established and secure “domestic peace in Chosen.” In his assessment, “the chief grounds and outward manifestations of ‘the divine discontent,’ which still unquestionably existed, have gradually shifted from the political to the economic and social spheres.”<sup>103</sup> As a result, Miller reported, Korean leaders realized the “utter futility of expecting to achieve their aim of political independence by force” and there were no radical and active political movements except occasional raids across the northern border. Instead, he observed that Korean leaders “gradually turned rather toward preparation for that high estate as a possible future event,” in indirect ways such as educating the young generation and encouraging people to do the best in their respective occupations.<sup>104</sup>

If the American officials considered the Korean people to be inclined toward passive and indirect resistance in the mid-1920s, they viewed average Koreans as “passively accepting”<sup>105</sup> the Japanese rule in the 1930s, along with the advancement of Japan’s assimilation and war mobilization policies. The American consul general, Marsh, in his report from March 1938 informed the State Department that a newly passed Japanese ordinance intended to make possible the entrance of Koreans into military service as subjects of the Japanese empire. During this time of war, Marsh assessed that the Japanese were definitely and openly endeavoring to make the Koreans over into an integral part of the Japanese population, and that this would be successful “with the passing of the older generation of Koreans.” However, he added, “the Japanese look upon

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<sup>103</sup> “Political and Social Conditions and Organizations in chosen – The Public Safety Act,” From Seoul (Miller) to FE, State Department, May 25, 1925, 895.00/705, *IAK*, 1910-29, 3.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>105</sup> From Seoul (Marsh) to FE, State Department, Mar 4, 1938, 895.20/1, *IAK*, 1930-39.

the Koreans as an inferior race, while the Koreans regard the Japanese as being of inferior culture, there being but little intermarriage between the two peoples.” He also commented, “the Japanese are strong, and the Koreans have definitely passed from active and even passive resistance to an attitude at least of passive acceptance.”<sup>106</sup>

Nevertheless, American officials felt that, on the whole, Koreans widely shared anti-Japanese sentiments. One small incident in 1936 showed American officials the dimension of this passive but widespread nationalist sentiment among Koreans. At the 1936 Berlin Olympics, a Korean marathoner, Son Ki-chông, participated under a Japanese name. Son won a gold medal and the news of his winning naturally became a sensation in Korea. *Tongailbo*, a Korean-language daily newspaper, published a picture of the medal ceremony for the Korean marathoner, but retouched the photo to remove Japan’s Rising Sun emblem on his uniform.<sup>107</sup> Edson of the American Consulate Office in Seoul commented,

In the opinion of most foreign observers, the action of the newspaper in retouching the photograph, though rather childish, is indicative of the undercurrent of racial antipathy still prevalent throughout Korea; while the disproportionately severe penalty imposed by the police was equally childish, and will inevitable increase that antipathy. It is possible that the police desired to impress the newly arrived Governor General with their efficiency in suppressing “dangerous thoughts,”...<sup>108</sup>

The spread of socialism among Koreans was another significant issue in the eyes of American officials. Since the late 1920s, Korean laborers and peasants had resisted

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> The newspaper’s publication was prohibited for an indefinite period. According to Edson, the Seoul Press, a government-general organ, editorially accused *Tongailbo* of minimizing the Olympic victories of the Japanese contestants and “approved the action of the police in suppressing the newspaper because of its ‘resistance to the national efforts... for the unification of Japan and Chosen and the mutual dependence of Chosen and Manchukuo, and the solidification of Japan and Manchukuo.’” (“Assumption of Duties by Governor-General Minami,” From Seoul [Edson] to Tokyo [Neville], FE, State Department, Sep 1, 1936, 895.001/23, *IAK*, 1930-39.)

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

against imperialism and class problems. As we examined earlier, the formation of Korean socialist groups was inseparable from the Korean anti-Japanese movement.<sup>109</sup> Socialism spread, as student movements were becoming active. The Chosôn government-general magnified the sphere of the Security Law, which deterred people's movements, while encouraging nationalist and pro-Japanese cultural movements. From the 1920s on, discussion of the “National United Front” among various Korean independence movement groups was embraced by both nationalist and socialist groups. While observing the persistent idea and hope for independence among the Korean people, American officials paid attention to the political division according to methods for gaining better conditions among Korean groups—whether they desired complete independence for the nation or not. As of 1925, American officials analyzed, “the ideas concerning the form of independence to be desired began to divide themselves into various groups according as their holders’ favored complete and absolute independence, a contingent independence corresponding to that of Canada and of the larger British colonies, or local self-government combined with representation in the Diet as an integral part of the Japanese Empire similar to the status of our [American] states and territories or to certain of the colonies of France.”<sup>110</sup>

Miller, of the American Consulate Office in Seoul, pointed out in 1925 that the political and social organizations in Korea were confined largely to the small number of intellectuals, the young generation, popular religious sects, and tenant farmers who were struggling on economic grounds. Examining about 30 political organizations, he

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<sup>109</sup> As Sô Chung-sôk notes, a majority of early Korean socialists had been nationalists before becoming socialists, or they joined socialist groups as a method of working to secure national independence (Sô, 96).

<sup>110</sup> “Political and Social Conditions and Organizations in Chosen—The “Public Safety Act,” from Seoul (Miller) to the State Department, May 25, 1925, 895.00/705, *IAK*, 1910-29.

concluded that there was a lack of cohesion and a pronounced tendency to “multiply by division”; that their existence was often ephemeral; and that inter-relation with various religious sects was still a prominent feature.<sup>111</sup> In the mid-1930s, American officials became more interested in splits among political Korean groups. In 1936, the American Vice Consul in Korea, Paul Dutko, divided Koreans into three groups according to their political tendencies. Although it is long and detailed, his grouping and analysis of the nature of each group is worth quoting, as it discloses the fundamental way that American officials viewed the political character of the Korean people in the last two decades of Korea’s colonial period.

According to his classification, the first group comprised the irreconcilables, or “die-hards,” who refused to cooperate in any manner with the government-general and who continued to agitate whenever possible for complete independence. This group viewed the proposed plan for local self-government as “nothing more than a scheme to advance the political and economic strength of the Japanese commercial and industrial interests in the peninsula.” He wrote that many of this group had sought refuge in China “from which they continue to fulminate against Japanese rule in Chosen.”<sup>112</sup> These émigrés were said to include men of ability and character, including writers, physicians, and educators. He added that many of the irreconcilables who remained in Korea were suspected of being influenced by Soviet political ideals, and by communism.

The second group consisted of those who acknowledged the loss of independence as an inevitable consequence of Korea’s weakness, but who were bitter in their

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> “The Plan for Extension of Local Self-Government in Chosen and Korean Attitude Thereto,” From Seoul (Dutko) to the State Department, Nov 5, 1930, 895.01/30, *IAK, 1930-39*.

opposition to the repressive and discriminatory measures of the government-general and believed that every opportunity offered by a gradual liberalization of administration in Korea should be seized upon to further the Korean people's interests. Dutko called them as "nationally-minded as the irreconcilables and although seeing in the proposed plan a direct advantage to the Japanese in Chosen, [they] are agreed that it should be utilized to the utmost advantage[,] for any actual participation of the Korean people in the political affairs of the Peninsula is not a matter of the near future."<sup>113</sup>

The third group was those who believed that union with Japan was the best way out of the situation in Korea in the twentieth century. This group of people, he said, in spite of administrative mistakes, felt that Koreans should cooperate with the government, making use of every possible opportunity to further Korean interests "as a unit of the empire." Dutko commented that criticisms of these men were largely pro-Japanese and, for some, this criticism was true. On the other hand, he said, a growing number were seeing an ultimate amalgamation of Koreans and Japanese as the desired ideal. In fact, among members of this group there were many who were ardent admirers of Japanese culture, character, and customs. Should the self-government plan go into effect, "it may be expected that Koreans accepted as officials and employees into government service as a consequence thereof will come almost entirely from this group."<sup>114</sup>

Due to the inherent traits of these groups, Dutko considered it extremely difficult to get any large group of Koreans to cooperate with another for long on any program. He alleged, "the tendency is rather to disagree even where comparative non-essentials are

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.



involved.”<sup>115</sup> In this broad classification of the Korean people, the first group may be taken as a resistant nationalist movement group, including socialists. The second and third groups would correspond to reformists and “assimilationists,” respectively.

American officials thought that the activities of Koreans who were willing to participate in colonial administration, that is, the second and third groups, would determine whether Korea could have its own political leadership or not. Langdon, of the Consulate Office in Seoul in 1935, noticed that the political influence of Koreans was growing gradually and observed that these groups were taking the issues of self-governing and enfranchisement seriously.<sup>116</sup> Officers predicted that the realization of a self-government system in the 1930s depended upon "the wisdom and capacity with which the Koreans take advantage of the opportunity to participate in a small way in the control of the country," and how the system would facilitate the administration of Korea under the Japanese empire.<sup>117</sup> The effectiveness of self-government was based on the condition of assimilation between Japan and Korea, along with the support of the Koreans who consented completely as “assimilationists” or who cooperated as reformists.

On the other hand, the first group, the irreconcilables, drew the special attention of American officials because of the anticipation of this group’s possibly radical methods for achieving complete independence. Although there were subdivisions within the group, American officials noticed that they represented a high ratio of the Koreans dissatisfied with the Japanese regime outside Korea. This idea had existed from the early years of colonial period and was based on views of the Japanese authorities. In 1914, the

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> From Seoul (Langdon) to FE, ACC, No. 68, Jul 31, 1935, 895.01/41, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>117</sup> “Extension in the System of Local Self-Government in Chosen and Its Significance,” from Seoul (Davis) to FE, 1931. 7. 30, 895.01/31, *IAK, 1930-39*.

American Consul General transmitted a publication of the Japanese government-general, entitled “Results of Three Years’ Administration of Chosen since Annexation,” and included a section on how dissatisfied Koreans living in the United States fomented agitation against the present regime in Korea.<sup>118</sup> The report circulated by the Japanese authorities said,

...there are some people labouring under misguided and bigoted ideas and unable to keep pace with the progress of the times who harbour hostile feelings against the Government. Many of these people, actuated either by selfish motives or sentiment, dream of recovering the independence of their county and from time to time indulge in seditious utterances or acts. Especially among Koreans living abroad are men to be found bitterly hating the new rulers of their native country; these men are mostly former officials and literati or their young relatives and living either in Vladivostok and vicinity, or Chientao or various places in the United States of America, have their organizations and constantly engage in fomenting seditious agitations, by publishing newspapers and magazines, in which they wantonly abuse the work of Japan in Chosen and insist on the recovery of Korean independence, as well as by maintaining secret communications with malcontents at home.... they are simply victims of a mistaken idea and are hostile to it on account of their ignorance of the trend of the times.<sup>119</sup>

Accepting the view of the Japanese authorities, American officials came to see Korean immigrant groups as mostly being hostile to the colonizer. By 1919, there were frequent reports that Koreans in China and Manchuria were politically active and easily involved in political demonstrations.<sup>120</sup> Even after the independence movement ceased to exist as an active force, several correspondences from other American embassies and consular offices reported that serious fighting between armed Koreans and Japanese troops had

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<sup>118</sup> “Japanese Administration in Chosen,” From Seoul to the State Department, Apr 22, 1914, 895.00/557, *IAK, 1910-29*.

<sup>119</sup> Government-General of Chosen, “Results of Three Years’ Administration of Chosen since Annexation,” (Jan 1914), 64-5, quoted from 895.00/557.

<sup>120</sup> In 1919, the American Consul General in Shanghai reported that Koreans were politically active in the French Concession in Shanghai. He said, “In all instances, where crowds have assembled and there have been demonstrations of a political nature, Koreans have been involved.” (“Political Relations – Activities of Koreans in Connection with Chinese Agitation at Shanghai,” From Shanghai [Sammons] to Peking [Reinsch], Jun 17, 1919, *IAK, 1910-29*).

taken place on the banks of the River Tumen, the boundary between Korea and Russia, or that “Koreans in Siberia and Manchuria were gathered on the Korean frontier for the purpose of creating a disturbance.”<sup>121</sup>

What especially interested American government officials was the possibility of communist influences among these dissatisfied Korean people, especially those who emigrated to China and Manchuria. For example, a report on the Kwangju student demonstration in 1930 prepared by Castle, of the U.S. Embassy in Japan, said that the recent demonstrations throughout Korea were reported to “indicate not only desire for independence but communist influence as well,” based on information gathered from American missionaries in Korea.<sup>122</sup> Although the immediate cause of the trouble was a trivial encounter between Korean and Japanese students, it was known that the government-general’s investigation revealed communists had instigated the disturbances through a secret student communist party. Castle transmitted, “communists then employed the Koshu disturbances, according to this report, to arouse students elsewhere.”<sup>123</sup> Although it was hard to confirm, missionaries in Korea were of the opinion that some details regarding the character of the trouble seemed to show a distinct communist influence. These missionaries also asserted that the students were, undoubtedly, encouraged by adults who were working for independence and who were using economic unrest, unemployment, and individual grievances against the Japanese as weapons to forward their ambitions. Some of these adults, according to the missionaries, were suspected of being in the employ of the Third International, the international

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<sup>121</sup> “The Situation in Chosen,” From Bergholz to the Secretary of State, Oct 27, 1919, 895.00/667, *IAK*, 1910-29.

<sup>122</sup> From Japan (Castle) to the State Department, Jan 27, 1930, 895.00/712, *IAK*, 1930-39.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

communist organization.<sup>124</sup> For other cases, American officials reported news that Korean communists rioted or had been arrested in Korea, China, Manchuria, and Japan.<sup>125</sup> They saw that some Koreans organized guerrilla groups and conducted attacks in a systematic way in these areas.

In the 1930s, the American consular office reported several incidents of Korean communists attacking Korean villages whose inhabitants had refused to share communist views and participate in their plans. American officials showed concern about the subversive element of these communist activities.

In Manchuria—and especially in the Chientao district—there have recently been several cases in which Korean communists have attacked and burned Korean villages whose inhabitants have refused to fall in with communistic views and plans, and reports are continually appearing in the press in Chosen purporting to describe various other communistic activities of Korean emigrants in that district. The greatest cause of anxiety to the Japanese authorities is, however, the subversive propaganda that has been and is being spread in Chosen itself by Korean tools of Soviet Russia, for, although but little news of it is permitted to reach the world, the amount of communistic propaganda being spread here is stated, by those in a position to know the facts, to be extensive.<sup>126</sup>

What is worth noting in this American official's analysis are the causes of the wide spread of communism among Korean emigrants. In general, American officials understood that the poverty and economic and political hardships that Korean people were suffering were major reasons to draw them to communist ideas. In 1931, an American consul official in Korea said [*Italics added*],

The reasons are not far to seek. The general prevalence of poverty, the overwhelming preponderance of the population consisting of tenant farmers whose lot at best is hard and unhappy, the recent economic depression and the

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> From Mukden to the State Department, Jul 9, 1930, 895.00/715; Mar 9, 1931, 895.00/716; to EE, Feb 17, 1930, 895.00B/3; "Re: Organization of Communistic Propaganda in Korea, China, Japan and the Islands," Dec 15, 1930, 895.00B/4, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>126</sup> From Seoul (Davis) to the State Department, Feb 9, 1931, 895.00B/5, *IAK, 1930-39*.

strong though generally invisible discontent under Japanese rule, all combine to constitute *the Korean masses a fertile and receptive field for the preachers of Utopia no matter how absurd and impractical their doctrines may be.*<sup>127</sup>

A similar view can be seen in a report prepared in 1934 by Langdon, the American Consul in Seoul. He informed the State Department of statistics and problems experienced by Korean immigrants to Japan. As in Davis's analysis, Langdon also perceived that the spread of communism among Koreans stemmed from their economic hardships:

Having no homes or relatives in Japan, the groups of homeless and unemployed Koreans gave rise to social problems of various kinds which were aggravated by the arrival of fresh immigrants from Korea. Moreover, as the wage scale of Korean laborers is lower than that of Japanese laborers, and as unemployment, ambition and other causes were diverting them into new fields of labor, Korean laborers began to constitute a menace to Japanese labor.<sup>128</sup>

Langdon quoted a Korean newspaper article, which said "communists arrested in Japan during the past six years numbered 53,424, including 7,285 Koreans."<sup>129</sup> Like other officials, Langdon pointed to the economic and social suffering of Koreans in Japan as origins of spread of communism among them. More importantly, American officials noted, some of the Korean emigrants imbued by communism were returning to Korea.<sup>130</sup> In general, American officials were concerned that these communist Koreans were being used by Soviet Russia as a tool for injecting communist ideas into the Japanese empire [Italics added].

Virtually all of the original agitators are Koreans who have been residing in Siberia or the Chientao district in Manchuria and who, although of course

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> "Korean Emigration to Japan," from Seoul (Langdon) to the State Department, June 6, 1934, 895.504/2, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>129</sup> *Chosôn ilbo*, Jun 5, 1934, quoted from 895.504/2.

<sup>130</sup> From Mukden (Langdon) to China (Johnson), no. 18, 1936. 9. 2, 8913.01 Manchuria/1302, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1936, vol. 4, The Far East, 278-80*.

ostensibly returning for other and legitimate reasons, have really come as *emissaries of Soviet Russia* or, to be technical, its alter ego the Third Internationale. Thus, the Korean emigrants instead of serving as instruments of Japanese imperialism in Siberia and northern Manchuria, are *being utilized as a bridge over which communism is endeavoring to penetrate into a vital part of the Japanese Empire.*

...it is seemingly safe to conclude that, be they what they may, one of the factors that will play a not inconsiderable part will be the large number of Koreans whom the pranks of fortune have pushed from their native land to seek new homes in Manchuria and Siberia.<sup>131</sup>

In this sense, Koreans residing abroad were the subjects of cautious observation by the U.S. government, as it assumed the emigrant Koreans were potentially subversive and ideologically dangerous.

Looking at internal documents of the State Department and American officials in the East Asian region from the mid-1920s to 1930s leads us to conclude that American officers, in general, agreed with the Japanese claim that Korean society had developed and been modernized only since the colonization. They believed that those who were taking charge of solving all of Korea's problems were the Japanese authorities, not the Koreans. Koreans were seen as a passive and incapable people, in spite of the strong nationalist consciousness they had displayed. It is notable that the American position, one of a great power and colonizer in the Pacific area, made the American officials more sympathetic with the position of the colonizer, the Japanese, than the colonized people, the Koreans. While pointing out some of Japan's discriminatory policies and cases of brutal treatment of Korean people, American officials were, on a basic level, more familiar with the position of the dominating country and supported reforms for better conditions in Korea.

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<sup>131</sup> From Seoul (Davis) to the State Department, Feb 9, 1931, 895.00B/5, IAK, 1930-39.

Different from conventional assumptions, it is also clear that American officials viewed Korean politics from an anti-communist perspective and cautioned against the influence of the socialist and communist movements in these early years, a few decades before the onset of the Cold War. Above all, what they worried about was socialism's effect on the public and the region. Officers agreed with the reformist views, assuming that socialism's threat would disappear if the economic situation improved and colonial oppression ended. There was a clear American point of view that saw socialist activities as wicked and deserving of suppression at every turn. Because of the diminished attention paid to the Korean nationalist movement and the silence on the part of Korean nationalist leaders who favored petitioning and diplomacy, the U.S. government lacked updated information about the Korean nationalist movement and the connections of its various groups. Nevertheless, official American documents from this period indicate that the State Department had a fairly accurate and macro view of Korean political groups and their splinters.

### (3) Was Japan's Rule a Success?

While observing the social and political issues of colonial Korea, American officials in the 1930s began to question whether Japanese rule in Korea was a success or not. They began to ask how well Japanese authorities were handling persistent complaints expressed directly and indirectly on the part of Koreans and took a closer look at the country's deepening social problems. Worsening relations between the United States and Japan since the mid-1920s and the clear increase in American society's anti-Japanese opinion since the Manchurian Incident of 1931 supported the officials' suspicious

perspective. Questions about the validity of Japanese rule profiting the colonized country arose from many fields. While reporting on the government-general's budget for Korea in 1935-36, American officials pointed out that most public funds were used for administration, material development, and for public works. In contrast, only a small amount was allotted for relief projects, experiment stations, education, sanitation, and similar social and cultural work for the colonial people.<sup>132</sup> Other reports made note of expanded budgets for Korea for the years 1936-37 to 1939-40, with the comment that the major purposes of the expansion were for the military defense of the Japanese empire, such as building additional railways and communication facilities, and the arrangement of police.<sup>133</sup> American official reports implied that Japan's control of Korea was not benefitting most Koreans in terms of economics, politics, or social aspects and that these policies would raise Korean people's dissatisfaction with their colonizers.

Concerning Korea's social problems, American officials noted the discriminatory policy of the government-general in Korea when dealing with Koreans and Japanese as one of the causes of Koreans' expression of complaints. When the Kwangju Students' Independence Movement occurred in 1929, American officials declared that the Japanese police's discriminatory treatment of Japanese and Korean students after a "trifling encounter" between the two groups, provoked Korean students' riots to expand to the whole country.<sup>134</sup> An American consular officer in Seoul, Langdon, mentioned these discriminatory policies when he reported on the Korean situation in 1936. He noted that

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<sup>132</sup> From Seoul (Langdon) to FE, State Department, Jun 12, 1935, 895.51/47, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>133</sup> From Seoul (Edson) to FE, Jul 30, 1935, 895.51/48; From Seoul (Marsh) to FE, Apr 15, 1937, 895.51/49; From Seoul (Marsh) to FE, Apr 15, 1938, 895.51/50; From Seoul (Marsh) to FE, State Department, Apr 5, 1939, 895.51/51, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>134</sup> From Japan (Castle) to FE, State Department, Jan 27, 1930, 895.00B/2, *IAK, 1930-39*.



the appointments of Koreans to high offices in the government-general were few (366 out of 2,031) and that the ratio of these appointments had declined since 1926. In addition, the compensation of Japanese officials was much higher than that of Koreans. Langdon said that the low representation of Korean people in the government was due to discrimination against or the incompetence of Koreans. “In view of the substantive equality of political rights of Japanese and Koreans as Japanese subjects and of the guarantee of impartial and fair treatment contained in the imperial rescript of 1919,” Langdon argued, the present form of government with “no provision for a central forum for the discussion of public matters and centralizing all law-making and administrative authority in the Executive” did not give effect to this theoretic equality.<sup>135</sup> Langdon saw this as was not especially heartbreaking for the Korean people, because they had not had any sort of representative government in their history. However, he pointed out the contradiction in Japan’s attitude toward Korean people, between slogans of assimilation between Japan and Korea and the actual, discriminatory policies of the Japanese. In this sense, Langdon concluded that the present form of government-general, in essence, was no different from the military rule established following the annexation.<sup>136</sup> Other reports pointed out discrimination in the matter of schools and educational opportunities as “a source of much irritation and of much bitterness to Koreans.”<sup>137</sup>

Beginning in the mid-1930s, American officials viewed self-government plans from a critical perspective. In 1933, Davis reported [*Italics added*],

The councilors will have the right to introduce bills for consideration, elect the Vice Speaker, et cetera. Thus, the provincial councils will, both in name and in

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<sup>135</sup> From Seoul (Langdon) to FE, State Department, Mar 16, 1936, 895.01/43, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> From Seoul (Dutko) to FE, Nov 5, 1930, 895.01/30, *IAK, 1930-39*.

competence, be the highest organs of local autonomy. However, owing to the large powers vested in the provincial Governors of veto and of virtually substituting executive orders for the decisions of the Provincial Councils, the reorganized Councils are, like their Township and Prefectural precursors, *in reality still merely advisory bodies*. This fact has not escaped the attention of the Koreans, and, so far as the strictly regulated Korean press has been allowed to criticize, has been pointed out with some degree of bitterness...

The most significant feature of the implementing of the Ordinance No. 15 of December 1, 1930, is that it has occurred much earlier than the Korean public seemingly anticipated. In fact, in the spring and summer of 1931 *it was apparently the general belief that this ordinance had been issued more as a gesture than with any genuine intention of putting it into effect*. It is probable that the trends of recent history in Manchuria and North China have played a considerable part in the decision to put it into effect earlier than was perhaps originally intended. For obvious reasons, when conducting a campaign of extension on the Asian mainland, it was highly desirable to keep quiet and contented the population of those territories already incorporated in the empire. Naturally *the giving to the more politically minded of the native population a larger outlet for their political aspirations*, is one of the best and most theatrical means towards this end.<sup>138</sup>

Provisions and the results of local council and prefectural elections, officials saw, also undermined the meaning of self-government. Because voting rights were based on tax payment qualifications, the Japanese enjoyed a safe majority in local and prefecture councils. In 1933, Davis commented, “there is but little chance of Korean sentiment and desire being able to translate themselves into accomplishment, even if the complete power of veto enjoyed by the administrative officials is not exercised.” Therefore, the new reorganization of the local government system meant “very little to the Korean desire to exercise some material degree of self-government in the immediate future through the local councils.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> From Seoul (Davis) to Japan, FE, ACC, Aug 29, 1933, 895.01/40, *IAK, 1930-39*.

<sup>139</sup> “Extension in the System of Local Self-Government in Chosen and Its Significance,” From Seoul (Davis) to the State Department, Jul 30, 1931, 895.01/31, *IAK, 1930-39*.

American officials found motivation for Japan's extension of local self-government plans in imperial Japanese expansionist plans for China: when conducting a campaign of extension on the Asian mainland, the Japanese aimed to keep quiet and mollify the population of Korea, whose territory was already incorporated in the Japanese Empire.<sup>140</sup> In sum, after several years of observation, American officials concluded that Japan's plan of self-government was not a plan for actual "self-governing" by Koreans, but rather a limited one motivated by political reasons and that Koreans were still in a disadvantageous political status under the new plan. For instance, the number of Korean representatives in the Diet and national suffrage were restricted, but local governments had no actual voting rights, only nominal consultative ones.<sup>141</sup> Due to these conditions, American officials now agreed with Koreans' cynicism over the self-government plan and the following reforms in the governmental system in the sense that the ultimate object of the reforms were far from wide autonomy for Koreans. As evidence of the Koreans' tepid reaction, an official report quoted an editorial by a local Korean newspaper, *Tongailbo*, characterizing the plan as "unworthy of comment" and "only an empty shell at best." The editor concluded, "in summing up, it is not going too far to say that the so-called revised local-self-government system is good in name but destitute in substance, and invites the mockery of the intelligent, and is nothing more than a scheme of the Government to delude the people."<sup>142</sup> Given that American officials had commented that Koreans needed to use self-government plan to participate in the colonial

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<sup>140</sup> From Seoul (Dutko) to FE, Nov 5, 1930, 895.01/30; "Extension in the System of Local Self-Government in Chosen and Its Significance," From Seoul (Davis) to FE, Jul 30, 1931, 895.01/31, *IAK*, 1930-39.

<sup>141</sup> From Seoul to Tokyo and FE, State Department, Aug 29, 1933, 895.00/40, *IAK*, 1930-39.

<sup>142</sup> From Seoul (Dutko) to FE, State Department, Nov 5, 1930, 895.00/30, *IAK*, 1930-39.

administration and to gain their own leadership in an earlier period, this new attitude of American officials shows a shift toward skepticism of the Japanese policy.

### **Conclusion**

From 1924 to the mid-1930s, the Korean nationalist voice was not heard as it had been in the United States during earlier years. Schisms inside Korean nationalist movement groups, Korean leaders' search for new strategies for the nationalist claim, and changes in Japanese policies in Korea all contributed to this silence. Despite the diminished incidence of Korean riots and emotional responses, however, this chapter has documented that the technocratic and official view of the American side paid careful attention to Korea during this period. Their more professional view of colonial Korea was, mostly related to and overdetermined by American inquiries about nature and direction of Japanese imperialism. Unofficial writings discovered cracks and ruptures in colonial Korean society while confirming the power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. In the 1930s, when the United States was moving toward a confrontation with Japan, there appeared a new synthesis of American perspectives coming from American officials in East Asia. That is, Japanese colonialism was a failure by American standards. Moreover, this chapter has demonstrated that the State Department had a somewhat vague but accurate picture of various Korean political groups.

Despite the decrease in direct interaction between Koreans and the American public after the 1924 Immigration Act and extending to the mid-1930s, both the Korean nationalist movement and the American view of Korean colonialism experienced critical

changes during these years. These changes came to the surface in the Pacific theater of World War II, an outgrowth of the American-Japanese conflict.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Impact of the Pacific War, 1937-1945

#### Introduction

The Second World War, which began in 1937, and the outbreak fighting in the Pacific in 1941 finally brought to bear Korean nationalist speakers' long-held predictions about war between Japan and the United States. Colonial Korea fell under Japan's war mobilization system beginning in 1937. For Korean nationalists abroad, news of the war demanded urgent preparation for the liberation of Korea and the building of a new country. Many Korean writers in the United States warned American readers about Japan's purposes in the war, arguing that the case of colonialism in Korea demonstrated Japan's immorality in ruling colonial countries.<sup>1</sup> Henry Chung and Robert Oliver asserted in 1943,

What Japan has done in Korea she will do in the Philippines, in Burma, in the East Indies, in China, and in India, if she wins this war. She will do it in the United States if she makes good the boast of the Jap admirals who say they will "dictate the peace terms in the White House in Washington...

Japan's most effective slogan in this war is that she is fighting for the freedom and prosperity of her Asiatic neighbors—"Asia for the Asiatics." Millions of people in India, Burma, and the East Indies may have believed this slogan. I bid

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<sup>1</sup> "Korea today is an object lesson to the world of what can happen to a nation that is conquered by Japan. Koreans, during the years of Japanese occupation, have been enslaved as no other people in the modern world" (Younghill Kang, "When the Japs March In," *American Magazine* 134 [Aug 1942]: 42).

them to look at Korea. [...] Her true purpose is “Slavery for Asiatics under Japanese masters,” and of that Korea is the living proof.<sup>2</sup>

As earlier chapters have demonstrated, throughout Korea’s colonial period, the Korean nationalist movement’s efforts concentrated on gaining the right to represent Korean people in international occasions and in obtaining recognition of this right by the U.S. government. Korean nationalist leaders’ approach to the U.S. government in the early colonial period was based on their belief and trust in the special and moral relationship between Korea and the United States, although the U.S. government employed a more practical and realistic view. Lessons in the earlier period and the urgency of wartime foreign relations required Korean nationalists to employ a new approach to the resolution of a postwar world order.

The war also changed American officials’ position toward the Korean problem, as Korean nationalist organizations could be useful to the U.S. government in the war against the Japanese. Based on the U.S. government’s information about colonial Korea and the history of Korea’s geopolitics, it became clear to American officials that status of Korea would be a significant issue in determining the security of the East Asian region after the war. The Cold War view emerged in the last phase of the war and also had an impact on the Americans’ view and resolution of Korean problem. This chapter explores how each side, the Korean nationalist leaders and the American officials, modified its position during the Pacific War years and what these changes implied for Korea’s post-colonial period.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Chung and Robert T. Oliver, “Korea: Neglected Ally,” *Asia, Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 43 (Mar 1943): 144-47.

## 1. Nationalist Interactions with the U.S. Government

In the Hollywood movie, *First Yank into Tokyo* (1945), the U.S. government assigns Major Steve Ross (played by Tom Neal) to undergo plastic surgery to appear Japanese so that he can infiltrate Japan and help to free an American prisoner of war (POW) during World War II. Before going to rescue the American POW, Ross is trained to act and speak perfectly as a Japanese person. Interestingly enough, the trainer for the main character is a Korean named Haan-soo (played by Keye Luke). The pervasive racial bias and anti-Japanese elements evident in depicting Japanese characters is interesting for a wartime movie, but what is more striking is Haan-soo's character. The movie's premise of a Korean trainer of an American spy charged with infiltrating Japan was credible because of the unique position Koreans held in the eyes of the American audience. The Korean community in the United States was considered a minority, but one that had characteristics distinct from the Japanese or other Asians: Koreans look like Japanese, could speak Japanese, and, as people colonized by Japan, were familiar with Japanese culture and behaviors but regardless of whether they lived in Korea, China, or even in the United States, they were also well-known as haters of Japan. If outsiders saw the Korean people of the March First Movement as oppressed, miserable, and peace-loving under Japanese rule, this new reflection of Koreans described them as clever, aggressive, and actively cooperative with the United States' plan against Japan. The new image of Koreans reflected changes in Americans' understanding of the Korean problem and the activities of Korean nationalist leaders in American society throughout the interwar years.

As such, outbreak of war in the Pacific provided another turning point for Americans' view of Koreans, and in particular that of Korean-Americans. Growing



concern about and suspicion of Japanese people in American society finally “nullified their citizenship, exclusively on grounds of racial difference.”<sup>3</sup> Although Koreans had been considered Japanese subjects and to be of the same Asian race, their continuous appeals of their hostility against Japanese colonialism in the previous decades astutely made the American audience recognize Korean-Americans’ loyalty to American values and ideals and differentiated them from the Japanese. Corresponding to these wartime changes, Korean nationalist groups resumed their active independence efforts and directed their attention toward U.S. government agencies. This section investigates changes in attitude of both sides, of Korean nationalist groups and the U.S. government during the war in the Pacific.

#### (1) A Useful Korea

Korean nationalist groups, including the Korean Provisional Government, Syngman Rhee and others, resumed their appeal for a cooperative relationship with the U.S. government once Japan entered war with China in 1937. Rhee, who had maintained several Korean-American organizations including *Tongjihoe* and Christian schools for Korean children in Hawaii, returned to Washington D.C. in April 1939. American officials perceived the Second World War, and especially the Pacific theater, as being close to the end of colonialism in Korea. The urgent need for a resumed active nationalist movement led various Korean-American organizations to unite as the “United Korean Committee” (*Chaemi hanjok yônhap wiwônhoe* in Korean).

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<sup>3</sup> Ngai, 175.

Based on the claim of “special relations” between the United States and Korea, Korean nationalists endeavored to persuade the American government of the strategic usefulness of the Korean people. In a 1941 letter prepared by the premier of Cabinet Council of the Korean Provisional Government, Kim Ku wrote that, while the diplomatic intercourse between the two states had been forcibly suspended in 1905, “the cordial, friendly spirit and good will existing between our two peoples has never been interrupted. Now the changed situation in the Far East warrants the restoration of that friendly relationship for mutual benefit.”<sup>4</sup> Syngman Rhee, in his letter to the State Department, argued that the situation had changed and that there was “every reason for the United States to treat the Koreans as a friendly people.”<sup>5</sup> Korean nationalists now implied that because the United States was now in a hostile relationship with Japan, it would be advantageous to cooperate with the Koreans, who were apparently determined to fight against the Japanese.

This notion of “strategically useful Koreans” was a new idea that Korean nationalists had synthesized in response to the failure to represent their cause at the Paris and Washington Conferences at the end of First World War. Earlier Korean-American nationalist activities, especially those of Syngman Rhee’s group, centered on lobbying efforts to gain diplomatic recognition and support for the Korean Provisional Government from the American government and public. Kilsoo Haan’s new strategy that he used in his contact with the U.S. government is noteworthy, as his activities contributed to the new idea of employing “strategically useful Koreans” to develop. Kilsoo Haan was a second generation Korean-American from Hawaii who had been the

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<sup>4</sup> From Kim Ku to President Roosevelt, Jun 6, 1941, 895.00/729, *IAK*, 1940-44.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Syngman Rhee, Dec 9, 1941, 895.01/60-2/26, *IAK*, 1940-44.

representative of the Sino-Korean People's League since 1932 and was known to work as a secret agent of the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence in the 1930s. By the early 1940s, Haan was considered a new rival to Syngman Rhee for leadership of the Korean-American community. Throughout the 1930s, Haan lobbied the U.S. government in order to gain American military support, declaring that "Koreans in Manchuria, Siberia, China, and the United States could be indispensable in aiding the United States against Japanese militarism."<sup>6</sup> In 1933, Haan submitted a document to the U.S. government on Japanese activities in Hawaii. In it, Haan warned American officials that there were espionage groups within the Japanese community in Hawaii who were working in conjunction with the Japanese military, and that they "could launch a surprise attack on Hawaii at any given moment."<sup>7</sup> As we saw in Chapter 4, concerns about Japanese espionage activities among U.S. officials and citizens were developing as early as the early 1930s. Under the circumstances, Haan's assertion about "suspicious Japanese" in Hawaii provoked the U.S. government to a greater level of concern.<sup>8</sup> In an interview with a Federal Bureau of Investigation special agent, Haan explained, "the Koreans being under Japanese domination are fearful lest the American authorities in the event of a war should consider

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<sup>6</sup> Richard S. Kim, "Managing the "Foreign" and "Domestic": Kilsoo Haan, Korean Diasporic Nationalism and the U.S. Liberal State, 1931-1945," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 19, no. 1 (December 2006): 15-16.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. National Archives, RG 165, Military Intelligence Division (MIC) 1766-S-146-2, "A Survey of Public Opinion among the Japanese in the Territory of Hawaii," 3, quoted in Richard S. Kim, 24-25.

<sup>8</sup> According to Kim's analysis, authorities in Hawaii requested that the Department of Justice in Washington D.C. conduct a formal investigation into Haan's allegations of organized espionage activity among the Hawaiian Japanese community. Although investigators concluded that statements in Haan's survey were false and inaccurate, it is notable that the allegations effectively functioned to raise serious concerns among the U.S. officials (Richard S. Kim, 36).

them alien enemies.”<sup>9</sup> In another document sent to the Secretary of War in April 1933, Haan assured military officials that a large-scale military conflict now directly endangered not only U.S. interests in East Asia, but perhaps more significantly the loss of American lives and property on U.S. soil, therefore, America faced “the same enemy as Korea and China [were] facing.”<sup>10</sup> In addition, Haan proposed that Koreans could play an indispensable role in the fight against Japan in activities including armed resistance, military training, espionage, and propaganda work.<sup>11</sup> As Richard S. Kim argues, Haan’s lobbying efforts show the development of a new tactic to position Korean-Americans in the Korean nationalist movement and U.S. domestic society. By emphasizing the loyalty of the Korean people to American political and social ideals, Kim argues, Haan conspicuously positioned Koreans in the United States as “ethnic Americans.”<sup>12</sup>

As was examined in Chapter 3, Korean immigrant community in the U.S. tried to give American public an impression of themselves as being favorable to American ideals and agreeing with America’s law-abiding spirit from the early 1920s onward. However, activities by Korean nationalist leaders such as Kilsoo Haan reflect that this idea developed into a more sophisticated form in the 1930s, corresponding to changes in American views on Japan and East Asia, and finally in a realistic and feasible notion at the outbreak of war between the United States and Japan in the 1940s. Haan’s rhetoric also reflected the notion that Korean-Americans should be considered separately from

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. National Archives, RG 165, MID 1766-S-146-5, J. P. MacFarland, “Report of Investigation in Hawaii – Survey of Public Opinion Among the Japanese in the Territory of Hawaii,” May 6, 1933, 20, quoted in Richard S. Kim, 36.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. National Archives, RG 165, MID 2657-H-392-2, “Korea’s Appeal,” April 20, 1933, quoted in Richard S. Kim, 26-28.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Japanese in the United States—both ethnically and legally—and that the U.S. government would finally recognize the Koreans as having an identity separate from the Japanese in 1942.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Korean nationalist leaders in the United States, including groups under Kilsoo Haan and Syngman Rhee, universally employed the new rhetoric of identifying Korean diasporic nationalism during wartime.

Once war began in the Pacific, Korean groups frequently appealed to the State Department, arguing that Koreans would be useful in the fight against the Japanese. Jerome Williams and John W. Staggers, advisors to and friends of Syngman Rhee, mentioned when they met with an officer of the Department of State in 1941; “it would be important to encourage Koreans to undertake activities detrimental to Japan and that encouragement of the part of the United States would accelerate such activities.”<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the U.S. government’s firm position of neutrality on the Korean problem in previous years, the conditions of war permitted American governmental agencies to consider the possibility of using Koreans.<sup>15</sup>

Beginning with the early 1940s, the Pacific War led the Korean nationalist movement groups around the world to reconfigure and assemble themselves into a more cooperative mood, in contrast to the divided activities of nationalists and socialists during the 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>16</sup> The Korean Provisional Government (KPG) was again at the center of these assembly efforts. In April 1940, the Korean Independence Party was formed, with Kim Ku as its chairperson. In September 1940, the Independence Army

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<sup>13</sup> This issue will be covered in the next section.

<sup>14</sup> FE Memo, “Korean Independence and Allied Questions,” Dec 23, 1941, 895.01/52-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> See Sô, 88-191 for more details about classification and divisions among Korean nationalist movements.

(*Kwangbokkun*) was established under the KPG. In 1942, the KPG embraced the leftists. Activist communist groups still existed in Manchuria and the Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup> If in the earlier period Korean groups in the United States had sought to use various channels such as public lectures, contributions to newspapers and journals, and formation of pro-Korean organizations, from the early 1940s they prioritized contact with American governmental agencies, considering the situation urgent. By now, it was obvious that these main agents trying to contact the U.S. government on behalf of the Korean people were KPG representatives and Korean groups in the United States; it is notable that, at that time, Korean groups in China, and especially the KPG, began to contact the U.S. government direct through the American Embassy in Chungking, China.

These groups called for America to take the initiative in solving the Korean problem, namely by liberating Korea from Japanese imperialism. Kim Ku, in the name of the President of the Central Committee of the Provisional Government, in a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt, said, “It is our sincere wish to continue our long ceased diplomatic relations with your Excellency’s Government and with your support and help to regain our independence and to establish a modern democratic nation. This not only will bring perpetual peace in the Far East but also will safeguard the interests of the United States.”<sup>18</sup> In this letter, Kim emphasized that, by helping Korea gain independence, America would benefit from secured peace in East Asia. Soon, Korean nationalist leaders began to petition for the U.S. government to include Koreans in the

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<sup>17</sup> According to Cumings, there were four aspects to Korean communism: the “domestic” group in Korea, activists in the Soviet Union, activists in China, and partisans in the Sino-Korean border region (Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. I, 33).

<sup>18</sup> From The Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea to President F. D. Roosevelt, Feb 25, 1941, 895.01/48, *IAK, 1940-44*.

war. Syngman Rhee insisted that it was the U.S. government's necessity, almost its obligation, to recognize and help Koreans. In his letter to the Secretary of State in 1943 he said, "We have, Mr. Secretary, a national existence of more than 40 centuries and we are compelled to supplicate the world's greatest Democracy and to receive, in nearly fifteen months of war against a common enemy no word of encouragement, no deed of assistance, no sign that America, save for one fleeting reference by President Roosevelt, was aware of our existence, sympathized with us, wished to help us, or even cared to receive our offers of assistance."<sup>19</sup> Added to this claim of a historically special relationship between Korea and America was the point of argument that Koreans had been in a "moral struggle."<sup>20</sup> American supporters, politicians, missionaries, and Christian groups again backed the Korean nationalists' voice by sending petitions to the government. Most of the American supporters in the 1940s were acquaintances of Syngman Rhee's group. Corresponding in many cases to Rhee group's claims, these American supporters tried to bring the U.S. government's attention to the matter of recognizing the independence of Korea in connection with the war against Japan.<sup>21</sup> Christian groups believed that Korea needed to be freed for evangelical reasons; they sought to stir American public opinion about Korea and ultimately influence American foreign policy to assist in Korea's liberation. A method frequently used to enlighten the government was petitioning senators and congressmen; for example, Paul F. Douglass, president of the pro-Korean organization The Christian Friends of Korea, wrote in a letter, "Christianity in the Orient needs a free Korea. Korea needs the immediate support

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<sup>19</sup> From Syngman Rhee to Hull (Secretary of State), Feb 16, 1943, 895.01/214, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>20</sup> "Korean Liberty," The Korean Liberty Conference, Mar 1, 1942, 895.01/83, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>21</sup> From Chas I. Faddis (Representative, PA) to Hull (Secretary of State), Dec 8, 1941, 895.01/49, *IAK, 1940-44*.

of American public opinion. You can help today. How? By writing or wiring your Senators and Congressmen. Ask them to support every program for the recognition of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in the interest of Christianity in the Orient.”<sup>22</sup>

Claims made by Korean nationalists and their supporters during this period frequently portrayed America as a savior rescuing Korea. In a letter to the U.S. High Commissioner in the Philippines, Edward Lim of the Korean Volunteer Corps in China mentioned that “the Koreans are still looking up the United States who will certainly come one day to rescue Korea, the once forsaken ally.”<sup>23</sup> Syngman Rhee also wrote to the State Department, “It is proverbial that the Koreans are loyal to the United States and hereditarily inimical to Japan.”<sup>24</sup> Another rhetorical use of “America as a savior” is seen in Homer B. Hulbert’s speech at the Korean Liberty Conference in February and March 1942.<sup>25</sup> As was demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, Hulbert once served as personal adviser and confidential envoy to Kojong, the former King of Chosôn Korea, and was one of a few foreign supporters of an independent Korea throughout Korea’s colonial period. After insisting that every government in treaty relations with Japan should have risen and prevented the annexation of Korea, he asked to the audience: “Am I right? You

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<sup>22</sup> Letter from P. F. Douglass, Feb. 9, 1943, 895.01/230, *IAK, 1940-44*. Paul Douglass was president of American University from 1941 to 1952. During the 1950s, he served as an adviser to Syngman Rhee during Rhee’s presidential years. Geraldine Fitch, a missionary and friend of Rhee, also sent a letter to friends asking for support for the Korean nationalist movement.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Edward Lim, Nov 7, 1941, 895.00/730, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Syngman Rhee, Dec 9, 1941, 895.01/60-2-26, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>25</sup> The Korean Liberty Conference was held at the Lafayette Hotel in Washington D.C. from Feb 27 to March 1, 1942. It was sponsored by the United Korean Committee in America and the Korean-American Council. Its main speakers included Yongjung Kim, George Fitch, Philip Jaisohn, Homer Hulbert, and James Cromwell. In the opening address, Syngman Rhee explained the purposes of the conference as celebrating the anniversary of the March First Movement, preparing a revolutionary plan for the future, asking the U.S. government to recognize the KPG, and demanding that Korean people’s rights be ensured in the UN constitution (“Korean Liberty Conference,” Mar 1, 1942, 895.01/83, *IAK, 1940-44*).



Koreans do not need to reply. I ask the People of the United States of America to answer.”<sup>26</sup> At the end of his speech, he said, “God needs no winged angels to work his will on earth. He uses men. *This messenger, charged with the duty of leading Korea out of the desert back into the family of free nations is The United States of America* [Italics added].”<sup>27</sup>

The view of looking at the United States as a model and moral country for Korea’s future improvement persisted as it did in earlier decades. Ilhan New, a Korean nationalist and businessman wrote in 1944,

When the Koreans take over their own country on the expulsion of the Japanese, they will seek help in machines, equipment and trained personnel. They will look to the United States, as a nation with no territorial ambitions, whose capital seeks profitable investment, whose technology and production methods are far advanced.<sup>28</sup>

Korean nationalists restored the comparison of Korea’s independence movement to America’s, which the Korean Congress in Philadelphia in 1919 had used. Cho So-ang (known as Tjosowang in State Department documents), Foreign Minister of the KPG, met with Clubb, of the American Embassy in Chungking, in November 1942; it was reported that Cho said the time was not yet ripe, but with the stimulation of hope and faith, a movement of revolt could be brought into being at the proper time. He also found similarities between the present situation of Koreans and that of the American colonies

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. The State Department’s internal report on this conference also paid attention to Hulbert’s conclusion that the United States was charged to help Korea (“Korean Liberty Conference,” Langdon Memo, Mar 2, 1942, 895.01/84, *IAC, 1940-44*).

<sup>28</sup> Ilhan New, “Do Business with Korea,” *Asia, Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 44 (Nov 1944): 518.

during the American Revolution and thought that aid to the Koreans now could achieve the same results as the French aid to the Colonies had then.<sup>29</sup>

As the war advanced, Korean nationalist groups' requests became more straightforward. The primary request was for recognition of the Korean Provisional Government; KPG leaders had frequent meetings with officers of the American Embassy in Chungking, China, and also sent petitions directly to the White House and the State Department.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Korean groups in China, both the KPG and the Korean Voluntary Corps, asked for technical cooperation, economic aid, and arms from the United States through the American Embassy in China, considering these more effective forms of aid to the Korean war for independence.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, the KPG asked the U.S. government to raise the question of Korean independence at the peace conference at the conclusion of the war and to see that KPG representatives were permitted to participate in all discussions.<sup>32</sup>

## (2) The Exemption of Koreans from the Category of "Enemy Aliens"

Since the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941, the U.S. government had imposed legal restriction on Japanese-Americans, which had a great impact on their daily lives. The legal decisions related to alien status in the United States show changes in the American view of Koreans, along with changes in the American perspective on Japan.

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<sup>29</sup> From Chungking (Gauss) to FE, Nov 25, 895.01/199, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>30</sup> Letter from The Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea to President Roosevelt, Feb 1941, 895.01/48; From KPG (Kim Ku) to President Roosevelt, Mar 10, 1942, 895.01/80, *IAK, 1940-44*. The issue of recognition the KPG will be dealt later in this chapter.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from KPG (Kim Ku) to President Roosevelt, Feb 25, 1941, 895.01/48; Letter from the Korean Volunteer Corps (Edward Lim) to U.S. High Commissioner, Manila (Sayre), Nov 7, 1941, 895.00/730, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from KPG to Roosevelt, 895.01/48.

These restrictions began to be prepared with the outbreak of the Second World War. On July 26, 1941, the assets of Japanese nationals in the United States were frozen by presidential order. General Order 5 prohibited Japanese people from owning firearms and other weapons, shortwave radios, and cameras. Classified as “enemy aliens,” Japanese-Americans were directed to carry the certificates issued to them under the Alien Registration Act of 1940.<sup>33</sup> Restrictions on Japanese-Americans reached their peak on February 19, 1942, when Franklin D. Roosevelt signed and issued Executive Order 9066, leading all people of Japanese ancestry to be excluded from the Pacific Coast and to internment camps. About 120,000 ethnic Japanese and their descendents living in the United States were held in camps until January 1945, when they were allowed to return to their homes.<sup>34</sup>

Koreans residing in the United States were counted as 8,515 as of early 1940.<sup>35</sup> In January 1942, the Department of Justice ruled to lift the official ban against individuals

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<sup>33</sup> The Alien Registration Act, also known as the Smith Act, was passed in Congress on June 29, 1940. It made it illegal for anyone in the United States to advocate, abet, or teach the desirability of overthrowing the government. It also required all alien residents in the United States over 14 years of age to register with the government (18 *U.S. Code* § 2385 (2000)). In Pennsylvania, every registered alien was required to carry an identification card, which he (she) must produce upon demand by any policy officer or agent of the Department of Labor. Provisions were also made to ensure that no alien would obtain a license to operate a motor vehicle unless he was registered. Failure to register and failure to carry or produce the identification card were punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both (“Aliens, Disability. Validity of State Alien Registration Act,” *Virginia Law Review* 26, no. 6 [Apr 1940]: 815-16). The Act is known for its use against political organizations and figures.

<sup>34</sup> Compared to other “enemy aliens,” German and Italian nationals, the U.S. government considered Japanese nationals to be more dangerous; the Justice Department arrested 2,192 Japanese; 1,393 Germans; and 264 Italian nationals during the wartime. Ngai argues that the U.S. government’s policy toward Japanese-Americans was differentiated from its views and treatment of persons of German and Italian descent, which was based on individual selection and investigation. It was presumed that “all Japanese in America ...[were] racially inclined to disloyalty” (Ngai, 175).

<sup>35</sup> According to reports by the State Department, in the United States as of April 1940, there were 8,515 persons of Korean descent, of whom more than 5,400 were American-born and therefore American citizens. Of the American-born, all but 939 resided in Hawaii, and of the 3,116 foreign-born, 2,391 resided in Hawaii. Among these Koreans, the Department analyzed, most of those who were politically-minded appeared to support the KPG and its representative in Washington, Syngman Rhee (“Korean Nationalist Movement,” Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*).

of Korean nationality in the United States and to abolish their status as enemy aliens, separately from Japanese in the U.S. Therefore, those who had registered as Koreans under the Alien Registration Act of 1940 thereafter “need[ed] not apply for certificates of identification unless they [had] voluntarily become German, Italian or Japanese citizens or subjects.”<sup>36</sup> In June 1942, Koreans, along with Austrian and Austro-Hungarian aliens in the United States, received permission to correct erroneous registrations as Germans, Italians or Japanese. With this change, Koreans who corrected their registration to “Korean” were exempted from travel restrictions and other controls aimed at enemy citizens.<sup>37</sup> The action of the Governor of Hawaii, in connection with Executive Order 8832 amending Executive Order 8389 (the “Freezing Order”), ameliorated the position of Korean aliens in Hawaii.<sup>38</sup>

For the Korean-American community, these legal and official decisions symbolized the U.S. government’s recognition of Koreans’ ethnic, cultural, and even political independence. When Korean nationalist groups complained to the U.S. government about being unwilling to help Koreans gain independence in early 1940s, the State Department also referred to these legal decisions as evidence that officers of the State Department and other governmental agencies had given and were continuing to give careful thought to questions related to Korea.<sup>39</sup> Looking at the elements that led to these decisions can help us see what influenced American officials’ decisions on issues of

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<sup>36</sup> “Korean Curbs Lifted by Ruling, Justice Department Action Ends Their Enemy Alien Status,” *Los Angeles Times (LAT)*, Jan 25, 1942; Department of Justice’s press release quoted in Letter from the Legal Adviser, Department of State, Jul 27, 1944, 895.01/7-1444, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>37</sup> “Changes in Alien Listings Ordered: Austrians and Koreans to Amend Registrations,” *LAT*, Jun 11, 1942; Letter from the Legal Adviser, 895.01/7-1444.

<sup>38</sup> From the State Department to Syngman Rhee, Mar 1, 1943, 895.01/214, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>39</sup> Correspondence exchanged between Syngman Rhee and the State Department, Feb 16, 1943 and Mar 1, 1943, 895.01/214, *IAK, 1940-44*.

Korea and East Asia, as well as American officials' interests in dealing with Korean nationalist groups in and out of the United States.

First, it is notable that the decisions to exempt Koreans from Japanese status were the first official recognition of Koreans' separate and independent status since the annexation of Korea, although they were limited to American territories. After long observation throughout Korea's colonial period, it was American officials' conclusion that hostile sentiment against Japan and hopes for national independence were pervasive among the Korean people, despite the fact that Koreans on the Korean peninsula had provided nominal and "skin-deep" cooperation with Japanese rulers. Langdon, of the State Department, wrote in his report on the Korean problem in 1942 that Koreans reflected their "enduring rancor toward the Japanese by unyielding resistance to assimilation."<sup>40</sup> Another report interpreted that, because of Koreans' "strong racial consciousness, their pride in their historic past and distinct culture, their resentment at being prevented from rising to any positions of importance in their own country, and the rough treatment to which they are not infrequently subjected," "the vast majority of Koreans would welcome independence."<sup>41</sup> As Chapter 4 demonstrated, both Japanese authorities and State Department officials regarded the majority of Koreans living abroad as bitterly hating the Japanese colonizers.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the Korean-American community had gained a reputation of being strongly antagonistic against the Japanese, since the Hemet Incident in 1913, that we examined in Chapter 2, and other nationalistic activities. Given the vast attention paid by Korean nationalist groups in the United States in the

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<sup>40</sup> "Some Aspects of the Question of Korean Independence," FE Memo, Feb 20, 1942, 895.01/79, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>41</sup> "Korean Nationalist Movement," Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>42</sup> See section 3 of Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of this issue.

early 1940s to the issue of whether international society admitted representation of Koreans and followed the promise of national independence, these legal decisions by the U.S. government regarding Korean-Americans' status must be seen as guidance toward a promising and favorable future for Korean independence.

Second, the legal exemption of Koreans from "enemy alien" restrictions was also a result of continuous petitions by Korean nationalist groups and their American supporters, rather than a decision made unilaterally by the U.S. government. In 1941, Syngman Rhee sent a communiqué to the State Department saying that he had received telegrams and telephone messages from Koreans in Los Angeles and Chicago complaining about the fact that the local government had ordered them to close their bank accounts and stop their business in accordance with the Fund Freezing Acts. Rhee asked the Department to send instructions to local officers and to let these Koreans continue their business.<sup>43</sup> Samuel W. King, a Representative from Hawaii and Governor of Hawaii in the 1950s, also supported Koreans' independent status in the United States in a letter to the State Department; he petitioned for the Korean nationals in America to be put into a category separate from Japanese nationals, and for the possibility of including them as one of the Governments-in-Exile.<sup>44</sup> A 1944 memo by the Legal Adviser of the Department of State demonstrates that Korean funds were actually frozen due to the Fund Freezing Acts, and that a general license was soon granted.<sup>45</sup> Based on circumstances that Koreans had been considered Japanese at first and that a correction was issued later after Koreans and pro-Korean Americans kept sending petitions, the 1942 decision was a

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<sup>43</sup> Letter from Syngman Rhee to the State Department, Dec 9, 1941, 895.01/60-2/26, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Samuel W. King to the Secretary of State (Cordell Hull), 895.01/63, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>45</sup> Memo by Legal Adviser, State Department, Aug 4, 1944, 895.01/7-1444, *IAK, 1940-44*.

resulted of interaction between the U.S. government and Koreans, rather than a unilateral policy of the U.S. government.

Lastly, it is also clear that the growing observation of the usefulness of Koreans in America's war against Japan gradually developed into a crucial, deciding factor for the U.S. government's policy toward Korea and Koreans. Korean nationalist groups expressed their willingness to cooperate with the Allies in military fighting against the Japanese as soon as the war on Japan was declared. In response, the State Department considered the possibility of utilizing Koreans in the war effort beginning with the early phases of the Pacific War. Until the 1920s, American officials had believed the Japanese assessment that Korean communities abroad were antagonistic against the Japanese and therefore potentially dangerous when it came to keeping order in the colonized Korea. However, because of these same Korean-Americans' strong antagonism against Japan, the Korean community in the United States was now seen as useful for American benefit during the War years. Langdon, of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs in the U.S. Department of State, wrote a long report on the conditions and outlook of Korea in August 1942. In this report, he proposed that the U.S. government might positively support the Korean independence movement, depending on a number of factors. One of the factors was "the capacity of the organization of united Free Koreans to work in positive ways for Korean independence and for the defeat of the enemy and *the actual extent of its positive war efforts* [Italics added]."<sup>46</sup> While discussing the possibility of recognizing the KPG as an exiled government of postcolonial Korea, an internal State

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<sup>46</sup> W. Langdon, "Some Aspect of the Question of Korean Independence," Feb 20, 1942, 895.01/79, *IAK, 1940-44*. Comments like this appeared frequently in internal State Department reports. In one such report, E. Jurkin of FE suggested that an international committee composed of several countries, presumably Allied powers, might study "the question of how the Koreans might be utilized most usefully in the war effort" ("Korea," Oct 10, 1942, 895.00/840, *IAK, 1940-44*).

Department report on the Korean nationalist movement mentioned that, if a substantial number of Koreans rose up against the Japanese, as the KPG leaders insisted, “then the advantages of recognition might well outweigh the disadvantages,” because the primary concern of the U.S. government was winning the war.<sup>47</sup> These and other governmental documents disclose that American officials had begun to assess the usefulness of Koreans in the war effort.

The fact that the U.S. government was inquiring into the specific possibility of using Koreans in military warfare is proven by records of incomplete plans made by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The OSS mobilized Korean-Americans, Korean POWs in the Pacific War, and the *Kwangbok* Army in China, and prepared plans to infiltrate the Korean peninsula. Syngman Rhee devised an idea of forming a Korean military legion, operating either as part of the U.S. military or independently, and suggested this to U.S. government agencies such as OSS, the War Department, the State Department, and the Lend-Lease Administration in early 1942. At that time, the plan failed, as the U.S. government was reluctant to give the impression that it was recognizing any one group of nationalist Koreans.<sup>48</sup> Later, beginning in early 1945, the OSS developed specific projects for

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<sup>47</sup> “Korean Nationalist Movement,” Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>48</sup> According to Smith, Rhee contacted the OSS through his close relationship with M. Preston Goodfellow, Deputy Director for Operations of the OSS. “Through Goodfellow’s intercession, the War Department accorded Rhee limited recognition as liaison with OSS in recruiting a group of young Koreans for behind-the-lines service in the Far East” (Richard Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972], 23). For more details about the relationship between Rhee and OSS projects, see Chông Yong-wook, 87-90; Ko Chông-hyu, *Yi Sâng-man kwa han’guk tongnip undong* (Syngman Rhee and the Korean Independence Movement) (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2004), 444-52; and Chông Pyông-chun, 241-57.



recruiting and training Koreans to be used in the war.<sup>49</sup> Internal State Department reports show that the U.S. government considered the possibility and probability of using resistance groups inside Korea, even before attempting to land in China, and infiltrating Korean personnel for the purposes of espionage, sabotage, and general support for armed activities to be conducted by U.S. task forces.<sup>50</sup> In these projects, the OSS was in charge of commanding operations and supplying arms and funds, while Korean personnel were in charge of infiltrating the Korean peninsula and gathering information.<sup>51</sup> Although these projects were never implemented,<sup>52</sup> they demonstrate that the usefulness of Koreans during wartime was intertwined with the Americans' understanding and recognition of a distinctive and strongly nationalistic identity of the Korean people.

### (3) Non-Recognition of the KPG

As we have seen, the majority of efforts on the side of Korean nationalist groups contacting the U.S. government during the Second World War years again centered on the issue of recognition of the KPG, petitions for which were in the context of their earlier calls for recognition of Korean representation from 1919 to 1922. As the Pacific War advanced, the State Department's main issue and source of information on Korea

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<sup>49</sup> The NAPKO project used Korean-Americans and Korean POWs in the Pacific area, and the Eagle Project used members of Kwangbok Army. Both projects had recruited and trained Koreans, but these projects were never used in the actual war. The North China Project was planned to recruit Koreans in Yan'an, China, but was never put into practice (Chông Yong-wook, 87-88).

<sup>50</sup> Assistant Secretary of State (Berle) Memo, Jul 21, 1944, 895.01/7-2144, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>51</sup> Chông Yong-wook, 88.

<sup>52</sup> Ko summarizes the reasons for the failure of these projects as following: first, because of changes in the U.S. military's strategy against Japan into one of cooperative operation with the U.S.S.R. in attacking Manchuria and Korean peninsula; second, the close relationship between Kwangbok Army and the Chinese government restrained active operational systems in these OSS projects; and third, because of Rhee and the Korean-American Council's hastening attitude in getting the American government's recognition of KPG utilizing these OSS projects (Ko, 452-54).

came from its contacts with the two main Korean nationalist groups: the Korean Commission of Syngman Rhee and the Sino-Korean Peoples League, led by Kilsoo Haan. As examined earlier, the U.S. government was willing to lend its active support as an opponent of the Axis powers and was “sympathetic to the plight of the Korean people under Japanese domination.”<sup>53</sup> However, the U.S. government also maintained its position of not recognizing any group, including the KPG, as representing the Korean people. The State Department repeatedly emphasized that it was “not contemplating ‘recognizing’ any organization of Koreans as the primary movement for Korean opposition to Japanese oppression or making any commitment as to future recognition of Korea.”<sup>54</sup> The State Department maintained that its reply to approaches from Koreans outside Korea “should be confined to assurance[s] of sympathy with effort[s] toward the realization of Korean aspiration for national freedom.”<sup>55</sup> According to this policy, when Syngman Rhee urged the U.S. government to recognize and cooperate with the Korean people during the war, the State Department responded by quoting an address by the Secretary of State on the general purpose of the American struggle in the war: that

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<sup>53</sup> From the State Department to the Embassy in London, Feb 10, 1942, 895.01/68A, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>54</sup> From the State Department to the Embassy in Chungking, Mar 12, 1942, 895.01/56, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>55</sup> This was the view of the British Foreign Office on the Korean problem. The State Department, in a cable to the American Embassy in Chungking, informed that the British government’s views as such coincided in general with those of the State Department (From the State Department to the Embassy in Chungking, Mar 12, 1942, 895.01/56, *IAK, 1940-44*). The State Department once considered (in 1942) issuing a general statement to the press expressing the interest of the U.S. government in the efforts of the Korean people to end Japanese oppression (Ibid.; From the State Department to the Embassy in London, Feb 10, 1942, 895.01/68A, *IAK, 1940-44*), but this idea was canceled after the Department concluded that it should not make any further statement with regard to the ultimate independence of Korea “until such time as a statement regarding Korea could be made either (1) as a part of a statement referring to certain other dependent Asiatic peoples or (2) as a result of significant concrete developments in the Korean independence movement” (From China [Gauss] to the State Department, Mar 28, 1942 and FE Memo, Apr 1, 1942, 895.01/88, *IAK, 1940-44*).

Americans were fighting for the preservation of their freedom and sought to encourage and aid all who aspired to freedom.<sup>56</sup>

This official position of the U.S. government on the issue of recognition was related with its way of comprehending the politics of Korean nationalist groups. In the early phases of the Pacific War, recognizing the KPG might have been sensitive for the United States, because any favorable actions toward the independence of Korea “might have [an] unfavorable reaction in Japan to the detriment of the welfare of American nationals” who were still in Japan and Japanese-occupied areas.<sup>57</sup> However, the issue developed to become the center of the U.S. government’s relationship with Korean nationalist leaders and to involve the government’s synthesized knowledge and perception throughout Korea’s colonial period. We can approach the U.S. government’s position on this matter from several different directions. Above all, the U.S. government’s biggest concern regarding Korean “representative” groups was that Korean nationalist groups were seen as being seriously factionalized. American officials’ understanding of Korean politics in the 1940s was in the same context of the State Department’s classification of political Koreans in the 1920s and 1930s. As seen in Chapter 4, State Department officials viewed Korean nationalists as being divided into two groups during the 1920s: a resistant movement group, including socialists, and a peaceful and reformist group. Officials understood this earlier division to persist into the

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<sup>56</sup> From Assistant Secretary of State (Berle) to Syngman Rhee, Mar 1, 1942, 895.01/214, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>57</sup> FE, “Korean Independence and Allied Questions,” Dec 23, 1941, 895.01/52-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

1940s. Furthermore, they saw Korean-Americans as also being divided into groups, those of Syngman Rhee and or Kilsoo Haan.<sup>58</sup>

State Department officials linked the direct-actionist and military group to the Korean Volunteer Corps of Kim Yak San (also known as Kim Wôn-pong), and the peaceful group to Kim Ku's KPG. As Korean nationalist groups in the United States had been actively contacting the U.S. government since 1941, the State Department discovered and summarized the connection of each to these rival groups among Koreans in China and Korea as follows: the direct-actionist groups were supported by Kilsoo Haan's Sino-Korean People's League in the United States, while the KPG was represented in the United States by Syngman Rhee's group and supported by the Korean National Association (*Kungminhoe*) and the Korean Comrades Association (*Tongjihoe*).

The U.S. government believed that the two viewpoints in ways of opposing Japanese colonialism had existed from the beginning of colonial period. The Coordinator of Information determined that these two groups had come into conflict over time because of disagreements over ways to achieve national independence: "One group operated underground, secretly planning to kill, sabotage, strike and destroy the Japanese on every available occasion. They were the direct-actionists, the Korean guerrillas. The other group hoped for a more peaceful fulfillment of their aims, and in about 1919 organized a refugee Provisional Government in Shanghai. Its main purpose was to enlist the support of other powers in resurrecting Korea. There was no conflict in the beginning

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<sup>58</sup> The division of Far Eastern Affairs understood that there were three organizations of Koreans in the United States, the Korean Council in Honolulu; the Korean Commission in Washington D.C., headed by Syngman Rhee; and the Sino-Korean Peoples League, represented by Kilsoo Haan. However, because they saw the Korean Council a non-political organization, they paid attention to differences between the Korean Commission and the Sino-Korean People's League (FE [Langdon] Memo, Dec 13, 1941, 895.01/52, IAK, 1940-44).

between those two groups; each was doing its part for Korea.”<sup>59</sup> They understood that although conflicts between the two had not been serious at first, when the provisional government was organized at Shanghai in 1919, unity “between the physically and ideologically separated groups [had] never been more than temporary and nominal.”<sup>60</sup>

Personal rivalries and differing policies since the 1920s, an internal report of the State Department noted, made for frictions and jealousies.<sup>61</sup> By the early 1940s, U.S. officials had witnessed many conflicts between the groups, both in China and in the United States.<sup>62</sup> American officials analyzed the main difference as follows,

There is apparently still a strong rivalry between the Provisional Government supporters and the Korean Volunteer Corps. The main differences are these: (1) In economic ideology, the Provisional Government is conservative and the Volunteer Corps is radical; (2) the Provisional Government is dominated by older men who hark back to the “old” Korean philosophy and way of life, and are still inclined to depend upon aid from abroad, whereas the Volunteer Corps is young and vigorous and has very little use for old Korean customs and still believes in direct action; (3) personal affiliations and loyalties which have been strong for many years likewise separate the two groups.<sup>63</sup>

In discussion with American diplomatic officials in the Embassy in Chungking, Kim Yak San stressed that the conservative groups supporting the Provisional Government hoped for a return to the old feudal order in Korea. In contrast, he added, the younger Koreans, who composed the Sino-Korean League and Korean National Front Federation, looked

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<sup>59</sup> Coordinator of Information, Research and Analysis Branch, Far Eastern Section, “Korean Independence Movement,” Report no. 41, Apr 25, 1942, 895.01/115, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>60</sup> The State Department, “Korean Nationalist Movement,” Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> State Department reports frequently used expressions such as “there was considerable disunity in the Korean ranks,” “they differed widely in their politics,” “factional differences,” (From the State Department to Embassy in Chungking, Mar 12, 1942, 895.01/56) and “lack of unity among Korean groups” (From the State Department to the Embassy in London, May 11, 1942, 895.01/113, *IAK, 1940-44*).

<sup>63</sup> 895.01/115, *IAK, 1940-44*, 4. The same report counted the total number of Koreans now fighting and training to fight with both the Provisional Government Army and the Volunteer Corps as about 35,000 men, with the number reportedly increasing rapidly. It added that there was also a great number of Koreans in various units of the Soviet Far Eastern Army, an unverified estimate being 40,000 men (*Ibid.*, 3).

for a more democratic society and for equitable land tenure.<sup>64</sup> Among those who supported the KPG in the United States, they were again divided into two groups: the Korean Comrades Association, and the Korean National Association. The difference between these two was that the former had personal and regional reconnections and stressed the importance of diplomacy, while the latter focused on self-improvement and the education of Korean leadership.<sup>65</sup>

While splits among various Korean groups obviously existed, American officials' perspective on the division was sometimes seen as simplistic and dichotomous. In a sense, the competitive activities of Syngman Rhee's and Kilsoo Haan's groups in the United States contributed to the impression of serious and incurable factionalism among Korean nationalists. As contact with Korean groups in the United States increased and they became critical informants, the State Department developed the impression that the groups' opinions and activities were, at times, unreliable and insincere due to their internally competitive relationship among Koreans. The State Department noticed that they denounced each other when giving advice. For example, figures such as Kilsoo Haan and Soon Kyo Hahn told State Department officials that so-called revolutionary Koreans had been active against Japan and that Syngman Rhee's branch had been passive. Soon Kyo Hahn argued in a meeting with Salisbury of the Far Eastern Affairs Division in March 1942 that the revolutionary leaders would become the leaders of a free Korea and that Syngman Rhee and his associates would be of little importance. He added that, although Rhee's group regarded the revolutionary party as communist, there were no

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<sup>64</sup> FE Memo, Jan 14, 1943, 895.01/198, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>65</sup> 895.01/115, 2.

more communists.<sup>66</sup> More importantly, Hahn stated that he thought the U.S. government “might be eventually embarrassed if it recognized Dr. Rhee’s group and then found at the end of the war that the revolutionary leaders were the real leaders of Korea,” and that “recognition of the Provisional Government at Chungking would very likely precipitate the establishment of a rival provisional government by the so-called revolutionary leaders.”<sup>67</sup> Hahn’s argument that recognition of the KPG would embarrass the U.S. government because of the possibility of a rival governmental organization provoked exactly the point U.S. officials had been concerned about. The condemnations worked effectively, making the U.S. government highly sensitive to the source and credence of information about the Korean problem. The fact that this rhetoric worked in solidifying the U.S. government’s policy of non-recognition of the KPG is demonstrated in the following report, prepared by Salisbury of the Far Eastern Affairs Division (FE) the day after his meeting with Soon Kyo Hahn [*Italics added*],

FE is of the opinion that the Department should not make any further statement with regard to the ultimate independence of Korea until such time as a statement regarding Korea could be made either (1) as a part of a statement referring to certain other dependent Asiatic peoples or (2) as a result of significant concrete developments in the Korean independence movement. FE also feels that the Department should take no action for the time being with regard to recognition of any Korean group as the “government” of Korea in view of (1) the present reluctance of the National Government of China to recognize the “Provisional Government of Korea” (2) *the fact that information available to the Department indicates that the recognition of one group by this Government might result in the establishment of a rival “government” of Korea* (see attached memorandum of conversation); and (3) the existing possibility that current efforts of certain Koreans might achieve unification of the various disunified Korean groups in the not distant future.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> FE Memo, “Recognition of Korea,” Mar 31, 1942, 895.01/49, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> FE Memo, Apr 1, 1942, 895.01/88, *IAK, 1940-44*.

Using the same expression as Hahn, Salisbury cited the rivalry among Korean groups as one of the important reasons the U.S. government should not recognize the KPG, or any group of Koreans, at the time.<sup>69</sup>

The State Department also received much information from Kilsoo Haan, of the “revolutionist group,” especially about the conditions of Korean nationalist groups in North China; meanwhile, it obtained other information showing suspicion about Haan’s credibility. The KPG’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cho So-ang, informed the American Embassy in Chungking that Kilsoo Haan, in the United States, and Kim Yak San’s group in Asia constituted only a small minority group of the Korean independence movement. The KPG informed the State Department that, because Haan had served as a Japanese agent in Hawaii for seven years before, he was not a person that other Koreans trusted. Cho stated that the KPG desired to unite all Korean groups and argued that Haan’s own aggrandizement manufactured a false impression of leading an opposition group and that Kim Yak San’s group was now technically part of the KPG.<sup>70</sup> In November 1942, Haan approached the State Department to request written assurance from the U.S. government that it would assist Koreans in setting up an independent government in Korea after the war, in order to encourage Korean agents in Japan and Korea. Regarding this request, the FE Division recommended not to comply with Mr. Haan’s request, “not only because of the various difficulties involved from the viewpoint of policy but also because of the likelihood that *Mr. Haan would make use of such assurance to gain prestige for himself*

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<sup>69</sup> Another internal report of the State Department showed the same concern. “Recognition of this group [KPG] might be resented by the so-called radical group and might as a result increase the existing frictions and jealousies among Koreans to the detriment of the war effort” (“Korean Nationalist Movement,” Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*).

<sup>70</sup> From Chungking (Gauss) to FE, Nov 24, 1942, 895.01/190, *IAK, 1940-44*.



*as a leader among Koreans* and because there is doubt as to whether Mr. Haan in fact has agents in Japan proper and in Korea [*Italics added*].”<sup>71</sup> This statement demonstrates that the U.S. government suspected Kilsoo Haan’s activities were more inclined to winning a power struggle than to uniting various groups.

Syngman Rhee’s group employed similar rhetoric to criticize Kilsoo Haan’s group. The State Department noticed in December 1942 that Rhee desired to make a public denunciation of Kilsoo Haan, accusing Haan of “undesirable character.”<sup>72</sup> In a meeting of the Rhee group and the Division of Japanese Affairs in April 1944, Rhee asserted that all Korean groups not affiliated with the KPG were insignificant. The rhetoric that the Rhee group often used in denouncing the opposed party was to call it communist. They also condemned Kilsoo Haan as “undesirable” on the grounds of his past association with the Communist party,<sup>73</sup> and stressed that they were strongly opposed to any compromise with radical Koreans.<sup>74</sup> On the grounds that the rivalry among Korean groups, especially those in the United States, was heating up and that exaggerated information about representation and ability was coming in, the State Department even censored internal cablegrams among Korean political leaders, including Syngman Rhee and Kilsoo Haan, to determine credibility of their words and deeds.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> FE Memo, Dec 4, 1942, 895.01/196, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>72</sup> “Korean Independence and Allied Questions,” Dec 23, 1941, 895.01/52-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> “Korean Nationalist Movement,” Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>75</sup> In May 1943, the Office of Censorship sent a letter to the State Department asking if the Department wanted it to continue to follow the traffic of Korean political figures, such as Kilsoo Haan, Syngman Rhee, and others. In reply, the FE Division asked for the continued interception of those figures’ correspondence, by saying, “FE has found the majority of the intercepts regarding Korean matters distinctly helpful to the work of the Division. These intercepts are the principal source of our information regarding activities of Koreans in the United States and are an important source of our information regarding activities of Koreans in Free China. FE would regret the discontinuance of the supplying of this Division with copies of such intercepts, as discontinuance would handicap the Division in its work concerning Korean matters” (FE

Although the State Department basically believed that fostering unity among Koreans in the United States was primarily the Koreans' own responsibility,<sup>76</sup> it made efforts to mediate unity between groups. For example, in May 1942, the FE Division supported the idea of mediating a meeting between Kilsoo Haan and Syngman Rhee in order to end their rivalry and to coordinate the efforts of Korean organizations in the United States.<sup>77</sup> The suggestion was not acted upon. In 1943, in support of the idea of two Koreans, J. Kyung Dunn and C. Ho Kim, travelled from the United States to Chungking to unify dissident Korean groups in the United States, the FE Division took "the position that every effort should be made to facilitate their travel."<sup>78</sup> However, the effort was a disappointment, as the Chinese Foreign Office expressed the opinion that "the visit of those two Koreans might lead to further dissension among Koreans in Chungking."<sup>79</sup> In 1944, the U.S. government learned that the KPG was reorganized to unite conservative and radical groups. Again, the U.S. government obtained information that the reorganization was a result of the Chinese government's threat to stop subsidies unless unity was reached, "but that same bickering continue[d] under [the] surface."<sup>80</sup> Five KPG members planned to visit the United States in 1944 in order to unite Koreans there, but this plan also turned out to be discouraging, as the group desiring to go to the United

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Memo, May 4, 1943; From the Office of Censorship to the State Department, May 1, 1943, 895.01/327, *IAK, 1940-44*).

<sup>76</sup> From the Advisor of Political Relations, State Department (Hiss), Jun 3, 1942, 895.01/134, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>77</sup> FE Memo, May 4, 1942, 895.01/125, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>78</sup> From the Assistant Secretary, State Department (Berle), Dec 17, 1942, 895.01/193, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>79</sup> FE, "Proposed Visit to Chungking of Messrs J. K. Dunn and C. Ho Kim," Jan 4, 1943, 895.01/202, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>80</sup> From Chungking (Gauss) to Secretary of State, May 4, 1944, 895.01/336, *IAK, 1940-44*.

States was not representing the KPG.<sup>81</sup> After observing a series of debates between Korean groups, the State Department concluded that the KPG did not represent all Korean people, but was only one of many political groups.<sup>82</sup> Noticing the KPG's division and rivalry with other political groups, it had less confidence in the KPG.

The second condition of interest to the U.S. government when considering the possibility of recognizing the KPG or other groups was how much these exiled groups could represent all Korean people, both in and out of Korea. Based on the U.S. government's knowledge from the 1920s and 1930s, officials knew that political and assembly activities were extremely restrained in Korea, and they therefore believed that, as long as Japan's successes in the war continued, "any formal declaration or recognition on the part of the U.S. or Britain would be unlikely to arouse a response on any effective scale among Koreans generally in areas under Japanese control."<sup>83</sup> American Consul General Johnson, in his report on conditions in Korea, which was written after his repatriation from Korea,<sup>84</sup> also predicted that "there [was] practically no possibility of effective Korean hostile activity against Japan until such a time as Japan suffer[ed] a

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*; FE Memo, Jun 5, 1944, 895.01/337, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>82</sup> "Among the Korean groups only the "Provisional Government" located at Chungking has requested this Government's recognition" ("Korean Nationalist Movement," Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*).

<sup>83</sup> This opinion originally came from the British Foreign Office, but the State Department noted that the U.S. government's views coincided with those of the British government (From the State Department to the Embassy in Chungking, Mar 12, 1942, 895.01/56, *IAK, 1940-44*).

<sup>84</sup> American and Canadian citizens from Japan, Korea, China, the Philippines, and other East Asian countries were repatriated to New York by the Swedish liner MS Gripsholm, which was chartered by the U.S. Department of State from 1942 to 1946. Officials from the American Consulate Office in Korea and the American Embassy in Japan were repatriated in the middle of 1942. According to the FE Division's suggestion, the State Department gained information about the knowledge and views of the Korean people toward Japan by surveying Americans returning on the Gripsholm. The survey was conducted by Consul General Quarton in Seoul and under the supervision of Ambassador Grew in Japan. Most of those who took the survey were American missionaries and American consulates general (FE Memo, Jul 23, 1942, 895.01/156A; Grew, "Report Prepared by Consul General Harold B. Quarton, American Consul General, Keijo, Chosen," Aug 21, 1942, 895.01/157-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*).

defeat by an outside power of such proportions as to necessitate a very material weakening of military and police forces in Korea.”<sup>85</sup> It implied that Korean nationalist groups outside of Korea had little association with the people in Korea.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the State Department noticed that the KPG was never in control of any part of Korea. State Department officials wondered, “how widely known this group [KPG] may be in Korea, what effective connections they have there, and how they are regarded there.”<sup>87</sup>

The U.S. government’s third question regarding recognition of the KPG was whether or not Korean leaders had the political ability to maintain self-government. Due to their perception of Korean leaders’ factionalist moves, U.S. officials concluded that the KPG lacked able men.<sup>88</sup> Chapter 4 demonstrated that American officials thought Koreans lacked political and administrative experience, as nationalist Koreans refused to collaborate with Japan to form a self-government policy in the 1920s and 1930s. American officials during the wartime considered the Korean nationalists’ lack of experience with self-government to be one of the factors key for the recognition of the KPG as the government of Korea. Officials at the American Embassy in Chungking called the KPG’s idea of government “most vague and unsatisfactory” and described its financial sources and possible military aid to Korean independence as “unenlightening.”<sup>89</sup> They interpreted the evasiveness and vagueness of KPG leaders as being “in part due to the absence of organization for and correlation of independence activities on the part of

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<sup>85</sup> U. Alexis Johnson, “Korean Reaction to Present War and Anti-Japanese Activities,” 895.01/157-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>86</sup> From the State Department to the Embassy in London, May 11, 1942, 895.01/113, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>87</sup> “Korean Nationalist Movement,” Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*, 6.

<sup>88</sup> FE, “Question of Recognition of “Provisional Government of Korea,” Feb 26, 1943, 895.01/219, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>89</sup> FE Memo, Mar 17, 1942, 895.01/81, *IAK, 1940-44*.

the Korean regime at Chungking, as well as to a seemingly basic inchoate condition of the Korean movement.”<sup>90</sup> American officials also suspected that the KPG usually exaggerated the Korean population numbers in Manchuria, China, Hawaii, and Siberia, and the KPG’s influence among Koreans abroad. In general, KPG leaders were seen as being somewhat out of touch with the real situation and lacking concrete organization and programmatic precision.<sup>91</sup> State Department officials also perceived that the KPG’s organization was dated and unrealistic, based on the fact that the average age of the nine KPG leaders was 62.

State Department officials confirmed the view of the Korean nationalists’ incompetence after observing the Korean Liberty Conference, which was held in Washington D.C. in February and March 1942.<sup>92</sup> The Department saw that the conference served, to some degree, to focus public attention on the question of Korean “recognition,”<sup>93</sup> but hardly anything more. Langdon, from the FE Division, had the following impression [*Italics added*]:

The Koreans in the audience gave a favorable impression from the point of view of physique, alertness and bearing. Outside of this feature, however, *there was little about the meeting to encourage hope of Korean independence. In the meeting under discussion not a word was said of plans or organization for resistance to Japan or for independence.* The meeting was well attended by professional publicists and by press representatives, and impressed one as a publicity stunt. As for the addresses, *they dealt with the past and showed no knowledge of the problems of the present and were totally lacking in constructiveness. Moreover, not a note of self-help was sounded.* In fact, there were many allusions to the opportunity which was now presented to the United States for “atoning” for its failure in 1905 to defend and save Korean independence. An objective stranger would have gathered *the impression from the*

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> See footnote 25 for further explanation about the conference. Hornbeck and Langdon from the FE Division of the State Department attended the conference.

<sup>93</sup> From the State Department to the Embassy in Chungking, Mar 12, 1942, 895.01/56, IAK, 1940-44.

*meeting that the independence of Korea is entirely an American problem and not one with regard to which Koreans need put forth concrete efforts to assist in winning the war and thereby gain independence for themselves.*<sup>94</sup>

Langdon observed that the conference was organized by major Korean nationalist figures, including Syngman Rhee and Sô Chae-p'il, yet failed to show a specific and constructive plan for Korean people to secure their national independence. In particular, he criticized that the organizers and speakers highlighted only the United States' role in solving the problem, rather than stressing Koreans' will to help themselves gain independence. This perception of Korean leaders as dependent on powerful countries also fit into the American perception of a weak and dependent Korean government right before Korea became a protectorate in 1905. American officials' view of Korean groups as factionalized, weak, and exceedingly dependent on the United States during wartime led them to avoid concurring with Koreans' request of "recognizing" the KPG.

The last factor contributing to the U.S. government's decision not to recognize the KPG was the response of other countries, in particular Britain and China, to the question of Korea—in part because Korea had historically been a subject of interest for several countries, and also because it was wartime, the Allies were fighting together against the Axis Powers. The FE Division was of the opinion that it should take into account China, Russia, Great Britain, and other wartime associates' attitudes toward Korean independence. It argued, "isolated action on our part might involve responsibilities which in the light of later events it might have been better for this Government not to have assumed."<sup>95</sup> Another FE report said, "recognition [of the KPG] might also, unless we have worked out arrangements with the Governments of China and the Soviet Union,

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<sup>94</sup> FE, "Korean Liberty Conference," Mar 3, 1942, 895.01/84, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>95</sup> FE Memo, Dec 20, 1941, 895.01/60-11/26, *IAK, 1940-44*.

cause displeasure to one or both of those governments.”<sup>96</sup> Were the Chinese government inclined to accord recognition, the position of the U.S. government would have been influenced by the fact.<sup>97</sup> However, the State Department had information that the Chinese government’s general attitude on the matter was not enthusiastic.<sup>98</sup> Chinese officials in London expressed the opinion that, until the factional differences of the Korean groups were ironed out, there could be no question of recognition of any sort of free Korean movement.<sup>99</sup> According to Department communications, the British government was also concerned about disunity among Koreans and took the position that the response to Koreans outside the Japanese area should be confined to “assurances of sympathy with attempts of Koreans to realize their aims for independence and national freedom.”<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, the British Foreign Office saw Korea’s case as an “extremely useful field for publicity,” presenting a long series of violations of Japanese assurances in Korea’s history under Japanese control. Korea’s case, it added, supplied “an excellent object lesson of what Japanese domination means.”<sup>101</sup>

In connection to the attitudes of other powers, the question of other Asian colonial peoples was another issue to consider. British Foreign Service officials suggested that an American statement on Korea with no indication of the American attitude regarding other Asian colonial peoples might be inopportune,<sup>102</sup> as Indian independence was in “an active

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<sup>96</sup> “Korean Nationalist Movement,” Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*, 6.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; From the State Department to the Embassy in London, May 11, 1942, 895.01/113, *IAK, 1940-44*, 2.

<sup>98</sup> From Chungking (Gauss) to the Secretary of State, Jan 3, 1942, 895.01/56, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>99</sup> From London to the State Department, Feb 28, 1942, 895.01/73, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> From Chungking (Gauss) to the State Department, Mar 28, 1942, 895.01/88, *IAK, 1940-44*.

state of flux,”<sup>103</sup> and the Chinese government seemed to be sympathetic toward it.<sup>104</sup> The issue of decolonizing Asian peoples became a significant factor of disagreement among powers during the discussion of postwar plans and trusteeship in later years.<sup>105</sup>

## 2. Plans for Post-colonial Korea

As the war was coming to a close, the great powers began to plan a postwar order. In particular, the disposition of former colonial areas became a central issue: for postwar Korea, a trusteeship idea appeared as a resolution. The idea, partly stemming from Franklin Roosevelt’s “transnational, incorporative and global” ideals,<sup>106</sup> guided the Americans’ postwar policy toward Korea until American officials realized the idea was no longer feasible, in early 1946. In the post-World War II years, the Korean problem was one of many issues to be resolved through the cooperation among Allied Powers. International conferences and subsequent declarations about Korea implied that the problem would be dealt with in the Allied Powers’ blueprint for a postwar world order, especially that of the United States. Still, relations among the group, the United States, Britain, China, and the Soviet Union, were crucial for shaping the direction of Korea’s fate. The United States, Britain, and China pledged support for Korean independence on December 1, 1943 at the Cairo Conference. The conference’s declaration said, “the aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that *in due course* Korea shall become free and independent [Italics

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<sup>103</sup> “Korean Nationalist Movement,” Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>104</sup> 895.01/88.

<sup>105</sup> The United States and Britain maintained traditionally friendly relations, but these two powers took different positions on the issue of colonies. Britain’s desire to maintain its empire was in conflict with the American position.

<sup>106</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War I*, 102.



added].”<sup>107</sup> This was the first official sign of support for Korea’s independence by the great powers since 1910. However, Korean nationalist groups complained about the phrase “in due course,” calling for a promise of immediate independence. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Roosevelt and Stalin informally agreed to a trusteeship plan for Korea. When FDR died in April 1945, Harry S. Truman ascended to the presidency. Although Truman kept the deal for trusteeship plan, he approached to the plan from a more anti-communistic view than Roosevelt.

Meanwhile, from early 1944 on, State Department planners “began to plan for a partial or full military occupation of Korea.”<sup>108</sup> Around February to April 1944, the State Department “envisioned an American occupation of Korea and noted the importance for American postwar aims of United States participation in whatever military operations took place in Korea.”<sup>109</sup> At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, the invasion of Manchuria and Korea was left entirely to Soviet military operations. The Soviet Union declared war against Japan on August 8, 1945. After the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan on August 6 and 9, Soviet forces engaged Japanese forces on the Asian mainland, and Japan finally surrendered. As soon as the war ended and Korea was liberated, Korea was divided at the 38th north latitude line into American and Soviet occupation zones.<sup>110</sup>

These two official decisions, the trusteeship plan and the U.S.-U.S.S.R. joint occupation of Korea, constituted the core of America’s wartime Korean policy. Both

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<sup>107</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1945 (Washington D.C., 1969), vol. 6, 1098.

<sup>108</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 113.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

decisions were essentially the opposite of what the Korean people and nationalist groups had hoped for. Many factors, such as relations among the great powers, different opinions within the U.S. government, and the emergence of the Cold War setting might have influenced these decisions. Rather than repeat the existing scholarship on how wartime strategies and discussions among the powers led to these decisions, the present section will concentrate on how Americans' perception and understanding of Korea throughout its colonial period and interaction with Korean groups interplayed with their idea of postwar order and resulted in decisions for trusteeship and the occupation of Korea.

#### (1) The Idea of Trusteeship

The idea of an international trusteeship for postcolonial Korea was first broached within the State Department in early 1942. Many studies on America's Korean policy of the 1940s have focused on the origins and background of the idea,<sup>111</sup> which, according to Cumings, "foundered almost from the first day it was broached in international discussions."<sup>112</sup> In a meeting between President Roosevelt and British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden in Washington on March 24, 1943, "Roosevelt mentioned Korea and Indochina as areas for which postwar trusteeships would be particularly appropriate," for the first time.<sup>113</sup> Although the British and the French governments were not positive about the implications of trusteeship for their colonial holdings, Roosevelt and the American planners proceeded to prepare proposals for postwar trusteeships.<sup>114</sup> According to

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.; Matray; Ko; and Chông Yong-wook.

<sup>112</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 104.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 105.

documents drafted in early 1943, the trustee powers would “prepare and educate” the “dependent peoples” for self-government. The powers would protect them from exploitation and “promote their economic development and social justice.” For Korea, the trustee powers would be China, the United States, and the Soviet Union.<sup>115</sup>

Since outbreak of war in the Pacific, contact between the U.S. government and Korean groups had increased dramatically, however government’s trust of information and outlooks on Korea provided by Korean groups declined as time went by for the same reasons that the U.S. government did not recognize the KPG as a governmental organization. For information about Korean society, the U.S. government turned to Americans in Korea and other parts of East Asia. One of important sources was the State Department’s survey of the Americans who were repatriated from Korea via the MS Gripsholm, in the middle of 1942. Officials from the Department believed that the survey would give the U.S. government an “idea of the current political thought and temper of the Koreans, both for our own war planning and for evaluating... claims of expatriated Korean national groups in this country and in China.”<sup>116</sup> American Consuls General and missionaries in Korea were the survey’s main respondents and their answers provided useful information, even these Americans had been almost entirely restricted from direct contact with Koreans since around 1939.<sup>117</sup> The survey of repatriated Americans from

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> FE Memo, Jul 23, 1942, 895.01/156A, *IAK, 1940-1944*.

<sup>117</sup> After the World War II encompassed the Pacific in December 1941, the American consulate general staff was held in their compound, moved to Japan, and then repatriated in 1942. E. W. Koons, a doctor, wrote that his contacts with Koreans grew fewer and fewer. He said, “I knew that anyone with whom I was known to have talked at any length was likely to be questioned by the policy, so that I purposely avoided asking leading questions on such matters.” Most of the respondents to the survey, including U. Alexis Johnson, American Vice Consul, stated that they had almost no Korean contacts because of strict censorship and the restriction of Americans’ movements (Harold B. Quarton, “Survey of Current Political Thought and Temper of the Korean People,” Aug 15, 1942, 895.01/157-1/2, *IAK, 1940-1944*).

Korea on the Gripsholm and internal State Department reports suggested that several conditions provided an empirical background for the initial idea of trusteeship for Korea in early 1942. Along with the Gripsholm survey, a report on Korea's conditions and future, prepared by William R. Langdon of the FE Division in February 1942, was one of the most important references for the idea.<sup>118</sup> Historians have regarded Langdon's memo, entitled "Some Aspects of the Question of Korean Independence," as a historical document that formed the basic structure of U.S. policy toward Korea during World War II,<sup>119</sup> as it suggested an idea of trusteeship for Korea and steps to take for making a new Korean government for the first time within the State Department.<sup>120</sup> Based on the Gripsholm survey and the Langdon's 1942 memo, this study suggests the following as major factors that led State Department officials to make a trusteeship plan for Korea.

One of the most obvious factors influencing the idea of trusteeship for Korea was the image of Korea as incapable of self-rule, and image that had remained intact since the

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<sup>118</sup> "Some Aspects of the Question of Korean Independence," Feb 20, 1942, 895.01/79, *IAK, 1940-44*. William Russell Langdon, the author of this report, was born in Smyrna, Turkey, to American parents on July 31, 1891. He was appointed as a clerk at American Consulate General in Constantinople in July 1911, and in Athens in July 1913. He served as an interpreter, vice consul, and consul in Yokohama, Tokyo beginning in 1914. He was assigned to Antung, Tsinan, Mukden, Dairen, Montreal, and Seoul between 1922 and 1936. He served in Seoul from 1933 to 1936. In the early 1940s, he worked at the Division of Far Eastern Affairs and the Subcommittee on Territorial Problems in the Advisory Committee on Post-war Foreign Policy. Later, in December 1945, he was appointed political adviser to General Hodge of the American military government in Seoul. After leaving Korea in 1948, he continued to do work related to East Asian affairs (*Register of Department of State*, 209-10). Because of his experience in Korea and other East Asian countries, he was one of the experts within the State Department who had thorough knowledge of the Korean problem.

<sup>119</sup> Ko, 493.

<sup>120</sup> Matray argues that President Roosevelt "undoubtedly was aware of the contents of Langdon's memorandum." In a radio address on February 23, 1942, the President referred to the Korean "experience of enslavement" under the Japanese and guaranteed that the promise of national self-determination applied to the whole world. Matray notes that Roosevelt's statement corresponded precisely to Langdon's memorandum that the United States, "until the situation becomes clearer, not go beyond referring... to the third principle," ... "our wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them" (Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Radio Address by the President of the United States on Washington's Birthday," U.S. Department of State, *Department of State Bulletin* 6 [Feb 28, 1942]: 188, quoted in Matray, 9).

nineteenth century. American officials saw factionalism, in particular, as evidence of Korean political instability. Johnson, the American Vice Consul in Seoul, wrote, “because of the notorious inability of Koreans to cooperate even in small groups, and the apparent lack of any potentially strong leadership it is my belief that the most serious consideration should be given to making unconditional promises of support for immediate Korean independence in the event of an Allied victory as a means of alleviating the present unhappy plight of that people.”<sup>121</sup> A premise of this evaluation of the “notorious inability of Koreans” was Americans’ negation of the old, pre-annexation Korea. American officials such as Arthur B. Emmons III, a Vice Consul in Seoul as of 1942, stated that “Korean self-government prior to 1905 was marked in general by misrule and chaos, engendered partly by interference and pressure from sources outside of the country, but perhaps to a greater degree by the inherent weakness and cupidity of the Korean leaders and aristocracy of the time, as well as by the great ignorance and poverty of the general mass of the Korean people.”<sup>122</sup> As was demonstrated in Chapter 1, in the late nineteenth century, the Western view conceived Korea as uncivilized, backward, and deserving of colonial rule by foreign powers. This view remained in the American perspective a half century later, given that American officials in Korea assumed that Korea, prior to the period of colonial rule, had no proper self-governing system or history of a politically sustainable system. At the same time, the American officials’ new view that Japan was not a proper and good colonizer, by American standards, as seen in Chapter 4, was also influential. American officials concluded that Japanese colonial rule

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<sup>121</sup> U. Alexis Johnson, “Korean Reaction to Present War and Anti-Japanese Activities,” 895.01/157-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>122</sup> Arthur B. Emmons, III, “Korean Nationalist Movement,” 895.01/157-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

could not develop a structure for Korean self-governance, while the United States could in the Philippines, for instance. As we would soon explore, only the negative aspects of Japanese colonial rule in Korea now stood out in wartime discussions, in contrast to the earlier American recognition and hopeful gaze of a civilized and developed Japan as an emerging power.

This view was demonstrated in American officials' usual comparison of Korea to the Philippines, especially when suggesting a trusteeship for Korea. President Franklin Roosevelt, in one address, "pointed to the Philippine experience as a model for the future development of small nations in Asia."<sup>123</sup> Conditions in Korea were compared to those in the Philippines before the American colonization, when the country was recognized as inexperienced in democracy and self-government. The parallel American views on Korea and on the Philippines had been displayed in a speech by Theodore Roosevelt in 1900, when he mentioned that much of the Filipino population was "utterly unfit for self-government," but that he believed the people might "in time become fit but at present can only take part in self-government under a wise supervision, at once firm and beneficent."<sup>124</sup> It is obvious that American officials and President Franklin Roosevelt perceived America's experience in the Philippines as successful in disciplining the Filipinos to the point of fitness for self-government and independence, and that a similar process would be proper for liberated Korea. As Matray noted, Roosevelt said that American policy toward the Philippines had been based on two important factors: the first was that "there be a period of preparation, through the dissemination of education and the recognition and fulfillment of physical and social and economic needs"; the

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<sup>123</sup> Matray, 15.

<sup>124</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life* (New York: Review of Reviews, 1910), 19.

second was that “there [had] be[en] a period of training for ultimate independence beginning with local government and passing on through various steps to complete statehood.”<sup>125</sup> Immediately after the Cairo Conference, Franklin Roosevelt, speaking to Stalin in Tehran, told him about the Cairo discussions. When mentioning the education of the people of the Far Eastern colonial areas in the arts of self-government, “he pointed with pride to the American record in helping the people of the Philippines to prepare themselves for independence.”<sup>126</sup> Again, at the Yalta Conference, during discussion of the length of trusteeship in Korea, Roosevelt said that, since the Philippines had required 50 years of tutelage, Korea should have a trusteeship of 20 to 30 years. On this point, Stalin argued that the shorter the period of trusteeship, the better.<sup>127</sup> These comments indicate that Roosevelt thought of a trusteeship for Korea as quasi-tutelage, or even colonialism with a paternalistic and benevolent approach, inspired by “his perception of fifty years of American benevolence toward Filipinos.”<sup>128</sup> In short, American officials felt that the Korean people had not been given the opportunity to learn to manage modern social conditions and to administrate political and governmental matters, not only during the colonial period but also before the annexation. Therefore, they concluded, outside powers, and especially the United States, should teach and train local people to fill the “empty” space with the capability to sustain independence.

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<sup>125</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Radio Address on the 7th Anniversary of the Philippines Commonwealth Government,” Nov 15, 1942,” *Public Papers, Roosevelt*, XI, 475, quoted in Matray, 15-16.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (1948; reprinted, New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), 777, quoted in Cumings, 108.

<sup>127</sup> *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, The Conferences of Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington D.C.: Department of State, 1955), 770.

<sup>128</sup> Cumings, 108.

Critical views of the harsh and discriminative Japanese rule in Korea were common among responders to the survey of Americans conducted on the Gripsholm and among State Department officials. Japan's rule was frequently contrasted to Koreans' persistent patriotism. Most repatriated Americans agreed that nationalism and hope for independence had always existed in Korea throughout the colonial period; Koreans' friendship with Japan seemed forced and superficial,<sup>129</sup> and the great mass, "at least 99 percent,"<sup>130</sup> of the Korean people "undoubtedly ha[d] an extreme dislike for the Japanese."<sup>131</sup> "Even the most cooperative Korean" to the Japanese authorities, it was predicted, "would welcome independence."<sup>132</sup> Most responders to the Gripsholm survey agreed that the nationalist spirit was always there and needed only to be rekindled along practical lines, such as war.<sup>133</sup>

At the same time, American observers during World War II saw that the Japanese administration, which did not allow Korean participation, produced inexperienced and unable Koreans in terms of politics, economy, and defense. Since the 1930s, American officials had accused Japanese authorities of creating bad conditions in Korean society and also indicted Koreans' lack of experience in every field of modern society. Korean inexperience with the modern system became the biggest reason for American officials to devise the trusteeship plan. American officials and missionaries residing in Korea witnessed Japanese control of food, commodity, and prices, in addition to overtaxation

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<sup>129</sup> Harold B. Quarton, "Survey of Current Political Thought and Temper of the Korean People," Aug 15, 1942, 895.01/157-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>130</sup> V. Rev. James W. Pardy, Catholic Missionary, enclosure to Quarton, "Survey," *ibid*.

<sup>131</sup> U. Alexis Johnson, "Korean Reaction to Present War and Anti-Japanese Activities," enclosure to Quarton, "Survey."

<sup>132</sup> Edward Adams, American Missionary; and Leo Walter Sweeney, Catholic missionary, enclosure to Quarton, "Survey."

<sup>133</sup> Quarton, "Survey."



during the war period, all of which caused widespread discontent among the Korean people.<sup>134</sup> Langdon, in his 1942 memo, concluded that the “Japanese excluded Koreans from all banking, big business, mechanical manufacturing, engineering, importing, exporting, wholesale distribution, and shipping, so that the Korean population has no training for [a] modern economy.” Furthermore, as the Korean economy became thoroughly integrated with the Japanese economy, he warned, “separation of [the] Korean from [the] Japanese economy and adjustment to competitive status would involve difficult and painful processes.”<sup>135</sup>

Politically, American residents in Korea felt, “the Japanese military authorities and the police in recent years have been so severe that these organizations cannot work to any degree openly in Korea.”<sup>136</sup> The number of arrests for “thought control” was very large, especially among prominent men.<sup>137</sup> Americans also observed that the Japanese police were very worried about “communist activities,” which included any kind of unrest or non-totalitarian and non-Japanese ideas.<sup>138</sup> Although it was known that Korean nationalist movement groups existed in Los Angeles, Honolulu, and Shanghai, as well as underground activities, secret societies, and hopeful plans,<sup>139</sup> Americans in Korea observed that Koreans had not been strongly organized and that the great majority of the population did not know the active leaders in any of the revolutionary centers.<sup>140</sup> The gap

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<sup>134</sup> Horace H. Underwood, American missionary, enclosure to Quarton, “Survey.”

<sup>135</sup> “Some Aspects of the Question of Korean Independence,” Feb 20, 1942, 895.01/79, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>136</sup> Quarton, “Survey,” 6.

<sup>137</sup> Horace Grant, American missionary, enclosure to Quarton, “Survey.”

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> F. W. Koon, enclosure to Quarton, “Survey.”

<sup>140</sup> Quarton, “Survey.”

between Koreans' hope for independence and their practical organization was huge, observers agreed. F. W. Koon mentioned:

“Readiness?” I think that thousands of men and women would jump at a chance to “engage in activity against Japan,” whether they knew it would be “effective” or not, if they had a chance and the needed means. “Capacity?” No Korean force could meet the Japanese Army, but given some reason for action, some hope that action would get a reward, and supplies, every tunnel and bridge in Korea—and they run into tens of thousands—would have to be heavily guarded by soldiers who might well be needed against Russia.<sup>141</sup>

Horace H. Underwood agreed that the strength of the Korean movement was not great. He commented that the readiness in terms of will was considerable, but very little had been done in terms of actual preparation: “neither arms, nor training nor any effective close knit and well led organization.”<sup>142</sup>

Langdon summarized that the Korean people had been politically “emasculated.”<sup>143</sup> “Long excluded from any participation in [the] administration of central and local government, diplomacy, justice, law, police, finance, banking, education, communications and shipping, they would have no experience in managing a state if given their independence.”<sup>144</sup> He pointed out that Koreans had never been allowed to perform military service or possess arms. During the colonial period, they had “no concept of or deep will to self-defense.”<sup>145</sup> He concluded [*Italics added*],

... because of [Korean people's] “political inexperience and defenselessness, the Korean people at first would neither know how to run their country nor be able to defend it from reconquest, and that *for a generation at least Korea would have to be protected, guided, and aided to modern statehood by the great powers*. It would seem to be no more than essential justice, however, that the Korean people

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<sup>141</sup> Koon, 3.

<sup>142</sup> Horace H. Underwood, enclosure to Quarton.

<sup>143</sup> “Some Aspects of the Question of Korean Independence,” 12.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

should be so protected, guided, and aided, and given opportunity they never really had to be independent and develop along their very distinctive cultural lines. The Koreans are intelligent, quick and willing to learn, progressive, and patriotic and it is believed that, given disinterested protection, guidance, and aid, they will in a generation be able to stand on their own feet and contribute to world prosperity and advancement [Italics added].<sup>146</sup>

In this conclusion of his 1942 memo, Langdon suggested the idea of putting Korea under the guidance of the great powers instead of admitting immediate independence for the first time. Regarding a specific procedure to exercise trusteeship and finally establish a new Korean government, Langdon proposed several steps: organization should be prepared with Koreans abroad in liaison with leaders within Korea. When it was ready and capable of helping itself and the cause of the United Nations in positive ways, “the sponsoring government might consult with the American, British, Chinese, and Soviet governments.” Following victory of the United Nations, the provisional government could be installed in Korea and “could administer the country with the aid of an international commission pending the adoption of a national constitution and the setting up a constitutional government. The sponsoring governments from the very beginning should make provision for the functioning of the international commission *until such time as they, and not the Koreans, might decide it to be no longer necessary* [Italics added].”<sup>147</sup>

Trusteeship was an alternative idea to colonialism. Because it was the issue of colonies that had brought about two world wars, American policy makers felt that the problem should be solved internationally, not nationally. In this sense, the U.S.

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 14-16. In a footnote, Langdon added on participating governments in forming an international commission, “if the Soviet Union should still be at peace with Japan, it would of course not wish to associate itself with the proclamation, in which case the proclamation would have to lack the Soviet Union’s signature” (Ibid., 15).

government devised a resolution for the Korean problem in the form of an international trusteeship from the outset, rather than a trusteeship solely by the United States, partly because of Roosevelt's inclination toward internationalism,<sup>148</sup> and partly because of divergent interests in Korea among the great powers. Moreover, the country had been "a battleground between [the] conflicting influences of China, Russia, and Japan."<sup>149</sup> The general understanding was that there was still considerable jealousy between the friendly influences of Russia and China. Quarton suggested that policy makers should carefully study the U.S. and British aims not to conflict with other powers.<sup>150</sup> Ko argues that, as the United States allied with the Soviet Union in attacking Japanese troops in mainland China from 1943 on, it intended to prevent Soviet domination of the Korean Peninsula after the war by suggesting an international trusteeship for Korea.<sup>151</sup>

As the great powers, and especially the United States and Britain, began to discuss an international trusteeship for Korea in diplomatic meetings beginning in March 1943, the KPG and other Korean groups publicly opposed proposals that Korea be put under any form of international or mandated control. The KPG opposed an international guardianship for Korea, reasoning that it did not accord with the Atlantic Charter;<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Cumings, 102-3.

<sup>149</sup> Quarton, "Survey," 7.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>151</sup> Ko, 452.

<sup>152</sup> A cable from the American Embassy in Chungking transmitted that the KPG had recently released a statement opposing proposals to put Korea under international or mandated control (FE Memo, Apr 22, 1943, 895.01/243). Cho So-ang, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the KPG, sent a telegram to President F. Roosevelt that stated, "representing the Korean Provisional Government and voicing the sentiment of the entire Korean people including all constituencies, I have the honor to state that *all Koreans desire absolute independence only* and therefore *are opposed to any understanding or suggestion concerning post-war international guardship* of Korea. Such does not accord with Atlantic Charter, is against the will of 30,000,000 Koreans and ever endangers peace in Eastern Asia [Italics added]" (From Chungking [Vincent] to the State Department, May 11, 1943, 895.01/251, IAK, 1940-44).

however, its opposition did not much affect the U.S. officials' decision-making process. Notably, American government officials had no worries that an international trusteeship for Korea would be incompatible with the Atlantic Charter's clause that all peoples have a right to self-determination, in contrast to what Korean nationalist leaders assumed. Rather, trusteeship was considered the embodiment of the UN declaration on national independence.<sup>153</sup> For example, Jurkin, of the FE Division, suggested that an international committee be set up to investigate problems in Korea and let the committee present conclusions to the Pacific War Council and the United Nations for consideration. Probable conclusions included: that it be declared that "the people of Korea should, when their native land is freed from Japan's oppression, be given opportunity to select freely their own government"; and "that it be declared that because the people of Korea had not since 1910 had experience in government processes... the United Nations would be prepared to cooperate with the Korean people in setting up and establishing a national government of Korea and for this purpose to assist in forming a temporary international trusteeship under which there would be given advice and technical assistance to the people and government of Korea."<sup>154</sup> In other words, American officials planned a trusteeship for Korea as an initial step toward the ultimate goal, namely absolute independence and self-government, rather than opposing the concept of independence. They believed that an international trusteeship would help the process for Korean people to choose and set up the form of a new, stable Korean government. In contrast, Korean nationalist leaders understood the concept of trusteeship as another form of colonialism.

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<sup>153</sup> Ku Tae-yôl, *Han'guk kukche kwan'gyesa yônku* (History of Korean Foreign Relations), vol. 2 (Seoul: Yôkbi, 1995), 248-50.

<sup>154</sup> "Korea," Oct 10, 1942, 895.00/840, *IAK, 1940-44*.

As Cumings points out, “what FDR failed to grasp was the mood of colonial peoples, especially those in Asia, as liberation beckoned.”<sup>155</sup> The chasm between American planners and the Korean people in understanding concept of trusteeship lingered from the outset until the U.S. government completely abandoned it in late 1947.

## (2) The Joint Occupation of Korea

After Japan surrendered to the Allies, Korea was finally liberated on August 15, 1945. However, it was soon divided into northern and southern zones and occupied by Soviet and American forces, respectively. As historians have examined, the initial decision to divide Korea at the 38th parallel was “wholly an American action, taken during a night-long session of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), on August 10-11, 1945.”<sup>156</sup> A partial or full military occupation of Korea began to be planned in early 1944, especially by territorial subcommittees of the State Department.<sup>157</sup> As Cumings argues, from this time, American policy makers considered Korea important to postwar American security concerns in East Asia and a Korea entirely in hostile hands was a threat to that security.<sup>158</sup> Studies have concluded that two changes at the last stage of the war led to the decision for a joint occupation of Korea in 1945. The first change was increased anti-communism among American policy makers since Truman’s assumption of the presidency after Roosevelt’s death in April 1945. Matray contrasts Roosevelt’s hope for postwar peace and security in Korea, which “depended entirely

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<sup>155</sup> Cumings, 108.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>157</sup> Cumings also notes that there were “officers who came to play important roles in Korean policy throughout the 1940s” in these subcommittees. They included Hugh Borton, John Carter Vincent, William R. Langdon, and H. Merrell Benninghoff (*Ibid.*, 113).

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

upon the maintenance of Allied cooperation and mutual trust,” to Truman’s preference of viewing “Soviet expansionism as an unchanging force” in Eastern Europe and Asia.<sup>159</sup>

The second change was that the war ended earlier than policy makers expected: Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, seven days after the Soviet Union entered the war. As the Americans left operations in Manchuria and Korea to the Soviets, American officials assumed that the Soviets would want territory in Manchuria, Korea, and possibly part of North China.<sup>160</sup> Matray argues, “Stalin’s decision to intervene prematurely in the Pacific war had ruined Truman’s strategy for excluding the Soviet Union entirely from participation in Korea’s reconstruction.” As a result, the United States had to settle “for half a loaf.”<sup>161</sup> With the joint occupation by these two competing powers in the new world order, Korea, along with a partitioned Germany, would become symbol of the upcoming Cold War.

There was another dimension to the decision-making process behind the joint occupation of Korea, related to how American officials had perceived the prospective influence of the Soviet Union or communists in Korea even before these two somewhat sudden changes occurred. Syngman Rhee’s comments about communism during the Pacific War period are notable in this sense; in a correspondence to the Secretary of State in February 1943, an appeal for American help and recognition of the KPG, he concluded by invoking “Russian aims to establish a Soviet Republic of Korea,” a warning he and American friends of Korea had already made more than a year prior. He stressed that

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<sup>159</sup> Matray, 31.

<sup>160</sup> This was General Douglas MacArthur’s prediction in February 1945 (Record of conversation with MacArthur, February 1945 in United States Department of Defense, *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War Against Japan: Military Plans, 1941-1945* (Washington, D.C., 1955), 51-52, quoted in Cumings, 118.

<sup>161</sup> Matray, 46.

American actions “spurning the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea—a government conceived in the ideals of Democracy—would result in the creation of a communist state.”<sup>162</sup> Rhee’s rhetoric provoking “red fear” among Americans was not an uncommon tactic in his attempts to persuade American officials to recognize and cooperate with the “democratic” KPG. In a letter to Gauss, the American Ambassador to Chungking, he mentioned that “Korean divisions trained and maintained under the Soviet government as a part of the Soviet Far Eastern Army will be used by Soviet Russia eventually to invade Korea and to set up a Soviet Republic there, affiliated with the USSR” and therefore urged recognition of the KPG.<sup>163</sup> State Department officials were well aware that Rhee’s group indicated that it was “strongly opposed to any compromise with radical Koreans.”<sup>164</sup>

Rhee’s anti-communist activities before the end of the war reached their peak at the Yalta Conference, where he campaigned against the conference, charging that Roosevelt and Stalin had divided Korea during their talks.<sup>165</sup> As Ko analyzes, Rhee’s campaign against the “secret agreement” at Yalta had no actual grounds; Rhee raised the possibility of a secret agreement on Korea out of fear for the Roosevelt Administration’s appeasement policy toward the Soviet Union. By raising the question through the American mass media and heightening American public attention to foreign relations, he intended to induce American policy in the direction of establishing a new Korean

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<sup>162</sup> From Rhee to the Secretary of State, Feb 16, 1943, 895.01/214, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>163</sup> Gauss, “The Future Status of Korea,” Dec 6, 1943, 895.01/705, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>164</sup> “Korean Nationalist Movement,” Aug 13, 1942, 895.01/98-1/2, *IAK, 1940-44*.

<sup>165</sup> Cumings, 523-24.



government based on Christianity and democracy, while restraining the influence of communist Korean groups in the Soviet Union, Manchuria, and North China.<sup>166</sup>

### **3. Langdon's Report (1945)**

On August 15, 1945, Korea was finally liberated from its 36-year colonial rule by Japan. The Korean people, overjoyed at the news of liberation, soon had to receive new occupying powers—the Soviet Union and the United States. The powers' armed forces arrived in and occupied the northern and southern zones of the Korean peninsula in August and September 1945, respectively. Furthermore, according to official occupation sources, the American occupation of Korea was “modeled upon the experience in enemy countries and on the usual instructions and training of an army in a hostile country,”<sup>167</sup> although Korea was a liberated, not defeated, nation.

Because of many unexpected factors, the American wartime plans for post-colonial Korea had no choice but to change. Those factors included: growing American fears of Soviet expansion and the emerging Cold War sentiment; the change in American policy from containing the Soviets and anticolonial nationalism through multilateral means to “a unilateral policy of a rushing troops into a peninsula”<sup>168</sup>; a gap between the State Department and American military government officials in viewing the conditions of Korea; and the Korean people's surprisingly strong desire to initiate the building of a new and immediately independent government, which a State Department official in

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<sup>166</sup> Ko, 454-68.

<sup>167</sup> USAMGIK, “History of the United States Army Military Government in Korea, Period of September 1945 to 30 June 1946” (Seoul, Office of Administrative Services, Statistical Research Division, 1946), vol. 3, 139.

<sup>168</sup> Cumings, 131.

Korea, H. Merrell Benninghoff, described as “a powder keg ready to explode at the application of a spark.”<sup>169</sup> The biggest change was the U.S. government’s discarding of the trusteeship plan for Korea. William Langdon’s report in late 1945 reveals a critical clue behind this change. Langdon, who had served as a consulate officer in Korea in the mid-1930s and was a member of territorial subcommittees in postwar planning agencies, returned to Seoul in October 1945, this time as a political adviser to the U.S. Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK)’s Commanding General John R. Hodge. Because of his long experience in Korea and Korea-related works, Langdon was one of the experts on Korean problem employed by the State Department. He was also the first official to propose a trusteeship idea for Korea. This section examines how Langdon, who had suggested a trusteeship for Korea in 1942, came to reverse his position into abandoning the trusteeship plan in 1945. To understand this critical change, we first need to examine the general conditions of post-liberation Korean politics.

Conditions in liberated Korea were somewhat different from what American officers of the military government in Korea had predicted before arriving in Seoul. Although American officials had known that socialism had gained popularity among some Korean people, the Korean leftists actually turned out to be much more systemic and popular than the rightists. The Korean People's Republic (KPR, *Chsôn inmin konghwaguk*) and the People's Committees (PC, *Inmin wiwônhoe*) and their leftist leadership emerged even before the American troops arrived, and this alerted American officials to the possibility of a communist regime in Korea. The Korean Democratic Party (KDP, *Han'guk minjudang*) and its rightist leadership was a much weaker organization

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<sup>169</sup> From Benninghoff to the Secretary of State, Sep 15, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, 1049-53.

and had fewer supporters than the leftist groups. According to USAMGIK's analysis, the leftists took the initiative to get political support because of many factors, including: the rapid formation of the KPR and PC; the socialists achieved leadership and support among Koreans through the underground anti-Japanese movement during the colonial period; the support from northern Korea and the trained communist cells; and the absence of prominent rightist leaders in the peninsula prior to the establishment of the USAMGIK.<sup>170</sup> The U.S. military government noted the leftists' activities, especially the "communist-looking" People's Committee activities from the outset. USAMGIK rejected any recognition of the KPR as the governmental body, with an announcement on October 10, 1945 that "there is only one government, USAMGIK, in southern Korea."<sup>171</sup>

The U.S. Military Government's policy in general aimed to curtail the Soviet Union's influence on Korea and to build a bulwark against communism. The military government was worried that, if the United States allowed free political activities, the leftists and the Soviet Union would link directly with one another and establish communism in Korea. For this reason, the military government's policy favored the rightists and restrained the leftists, all the while claiming a neutral position as early as October 1945. The employment policy of the USAMGIK, which was to fully but temporarily utilize local, regional, and national agencies of the government-general's administration and the Japanese officials of the colonial system, demonstrated the military government's political inclination. However, as this policy ran into strong

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<sup>170</sup> HQ, United States Armed Forces in Korea, *History of the United States Armed Forces in Korea (HUSAFIK)*, Part 2 (manuscript in the Office of the Chief of the Military History, Washington D.C., 1946), 102.

<sup>171</sup> *Maeilsinbo (Maeil Newspaper)*, Oct 11, 1945. 10. See *Chayusinmun (Freedom Newspaper)*, Oct 13, 1945 for public reactions.

opposition from Koreans, the dual officer system was set up, employing both American and Koreans in the same department from December 1945. The policy of employing Korean officers exposes the government's inclination more clearly. The requirements for Korean officers were the ability to speak English, a pro-American disposition that supported American democratic ideology, and no connection with any communists. Those who were qualified were pro-Japanese bureaucrats, former police and servicemen in the colonial system, and pro-American conservatives from the landlord stratum. As a result, the rightists, who supported the conservative KDP, came into power in the main as well as local offices of the USAMGIK, the Bureau of Judicial Affairs, prosecutorial authorities, and the police forces.

In December 1945, the foreign ministers of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union met at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers. Concerning Korea, they agreed to set up the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Commission. A provisional Korean government would be established, and the government as charged with consulting with the Joint Commission for the trusteeship of four countries, the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and China for up to five years. Cumings comments that the result of the Moscow Conference was "a compromise agreement that reversed the sequence of American wartime planning" in the sense that "now a Korean government would come before, not after, trusteeship."<sup>172</sup> Nevertheless, news of the agreement brought out a strong anti-trusteeship movement among Koreans, especially rightist groups.

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<sup>172</sup> Cumings, 217.

Furthermore, officials of the USAMGIK were already against the State Department's trusteeship idea for Korea.<sup>173</sup>

Meanwhile, Langdon wrote a report in November 1945. Although his opinion in the report was not met with wide agreement within the State Department at the time, the report forecasted the direction that the United States would take regarding Korea until the Republic of Korea government was established in 1948. The notable part of this report is that Langdon, now serving as a representative of the State Department, rejected the trusteeship plan, the State Department's official policy, which he had suggested for Korea for the first time in 1942 [*Italics added*]:

After one month's observation in liberated Korea and with background of earlier service in Korea, *I am unable to fit trusteeship to actual conditions here* or to be persuaded of its suitability from moral and practical standpoints, and therefore, believe *we should drop it*. It is thought wrong because the Korean people have always been a distinct nation except for 35 years of Jap rule and have high literacy, cultural and living standards judged by Asiatic and Middle Eastern standards. It is thought unpractical because it certainly will not be accepted by the Koreans and perhaps will have to be maintained by force [...] Out of the Department's recent press release concerning trusteeship for Korea, connoting that Koreans would continue to be somebody's wards after MG, agitate all literate elements beyond anything since the surrender. The fact seems to be that all Koreans want their country to themselves in their life time and will not have any form of foreign tutelage to attain an alien standard of nationhood. In the Korean people are certain bad traits that cannot be overcome except by actual experience of their evil consequences: Division, obsequiousness, inordinate self seeking, strong sectional rivalries and intolerance of opposition [...] A trusteeship would also have to repress these faults in order to function. True at the end of the trusteeship the natural process of self improvement would still lie before the Korean people as it does now. For the foregoing reasons *I favor another plan instead of trusteeship...*<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> For a discussion on the Moscow Conference and its aftermath in Korea, see *ibid.*, 215-27; and Chông Yong-wook, 146-200.

<sup>174</sup> From the Acting Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State, 1945. 11. 20, *FRUS, 1945*, 1130-33.

This was perhaps a surprising suggestion, given Langdon's history with the concept of trusteeship. Now, however, he believed that it would be difficult for the United States to lead the process if it negotiated with the Soviet Union for the international trusteeship plan or completely committed the process to the hands of the Koreans. Langdon's alternative to trusteeship was for the United States to intervene actively and establish a Korean government. The plan had six steps. First, the military government would direct Kim Ku to form a Governing Commission. Second, the Governing Commission would be integrated with the Military Government. Third, when the Governing Commission succeeded the Military Government as an interim government, the Commanding General would retain the power of veto and would continue to appoint American supervisors and advisors as he deemed necessary. Fourth, the Governing Commission would be provided with three other nations' supervisors and advisors. Fifth, the Governing Commission would conduct the election for the head of state. And sixth, the government formed by an elected head of state would receive approval from the United Nations. In addition, the more problematic part was the footnote [Italics added]:

Somewhere in the transition, perhaps between [the fourth] and [the fifth], negotiations [need] to be signed with Russia for mutual withdrawal of troops and extension to Russian zone of Governing Commission's authority. Russia should be informed in advance of above plan and invited to further it by allowing persons in Russian zone nominated to Governing Commission by council to proceed to Seoul, but *if Russian participation is not forthcoming the plan should be carried out for Korea south of 38th parallel.*<sup>175</sup>

As Cumings comments, in retrospect this procedure was embodied in the creation of Representative Democratic Council (*Minjuwiwôn*) in February 1946, the South Korean

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

Interim Government (*Namjosôn kwado chôngbu*) in 1947, and the eventual assumption of power by Syngman Rhee's separate government in the South in 1948, except that the United Nations was brought in at step five rather than at step six, when it was used to sanction the National Assembly elections of May 1948 and that the Rhee group, rather than Kim Ku's group, assumed leadership after all.<sup>176</sup> When the State Department criticized his plan, Langdon suggested another alternative idea in December 1945, "a US trusteeship for South Korea and a USSR trusteeship for North Korea, both under UNO [United Nations Organization], to end mutually with reciprocal withdrawal of troops and invitation to UNO membership say after 5 years," but he faced opposition again.<sup>177</sup>

Langdon's proposals for forming the Korean government in late 1945 show the characteristics of the U.S. policies regarding Korea not only at the time, but also for the coming years. First, he claimed that the United States needed to have a strong influence on solving the Korean problem. Studies have noted the fact that Langdon opposed trusteeship and suggested the separate governments plan only. However, to question only whether he supported or opposed the trusteeship plan itself may limit the meaning of his suggestion. A point to note is that he proposed the leading role of the United States in establishing a South Korean government and a divided trusteeship system. The plans that Langdon suggested were connected to the plan for separate governments. This idea of American initiative in solving the Korean problem had been American officials' views since the late 1930s, as we have examined earlier.

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<sup>176</sup> Cumings, 186.

<sup>177</sup> From the Acting Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon) to the Secretary of State, Dec 11, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, 1140-42.

Second, his ideas overlooked the Korean people's strong desire for autonomy. Langdon's report in November 1945 suggested that the United States had a veto and the authority to appoint American supervisors and advisers to the interim Korean government. This authority would be maintained until the United States (not Korea) decided it was no longer necessary.<sup>178</sup> Both Langdon and other State Department agencies' suggestion for a trusteeship in 1942, and Langdon's new proposal for a separate trusteeship in Korea in 1946, shared the same view. In this sense, even though Langdon and the Korean rightists did agree on the point of cancelling the trusteeship plan, they were not compatible in the essential aims behind the move.

The U.S. military government's civil policies from the early days reflected the procedure and intent of Langdon's ideas. The "Koreanization" of the USAMGIK, the Korean bureaucratic employment policy, economic policy, and especially policies regarding the land problem were not impromptu, but were rather carried out as premises in the establishment of a Korean government.<sup>179</sup> Also, there seemed to be a tacit agreement to Langdon's plans in the military government. For example, when Benninghoff, another political adviser to General Hodge, visited the United States and met officials of the State Department and the Department of the Army in late 1945, he emphasized that the plans in Langdon's report from 1945 should be considered as important. In short, Langdon's plan was not just a personal opinion, but instead a reflection of the fundamental perceptions of the American military government. This is

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<sup>178</sup> FE (Langdon), "Some Aspects of the Question of Korean Independence," Feb 20, 1942, 895.01/79, *IAK, 1940-44*; From the Secretary of State to the Political Adviser in Korea (Langdon), Apr 5, 1946, *FRUS, 1945*, 657-58.

<sup>179</sup> Concerning the land reform plans of each political group and the USAMGIK, see Hong Sông-ch'an, ed., *Nongji kaehyôk yôn'gu* (Studies on Land Reform) (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2001).



how the suggestions of Langdon and the military government affected the United States' formal policy thereafter.<sup>180</sup> When the Joint Commission finally ruptured in October 1947, so did the American plan to use moderate Korean groups to establish an interim government. The American policy toward Korea was concluded with the establishment of a separate government of Korea in South Korea, and the U.S. government referred the Korean problem to the United Nations in 1948.

### **Conclusion**

Korean nationalists thought that the outbreak of war in the Pacific was an inevitable result of the expansionist Japanese imperialism in the Asian region. For Koreans, while the war was a tragedy, it was also an auspicious sign for Korean national independence after the 36-year-long colonial rule. In line with Koreans' expectations, the Pacific War gave Korean nationalist groups another chance to interact actively with the U.S. government. If Korean nationalist activists in the 1920s appealed to Americans' moral sense and humanism in claiming to Korea's independence, Koreans during World War II had a more realistic view, assuming the United States to be the new great power of the postwar world order. Simply put, what constituted the main issue for American officials dealing with the Korean problem during the war was the extent to which the Korean people's representation should be recognized. Korean nationalists' strategy during the period successfully convinced American officials of the Korean problem's importance for postwar security and Koreans' ethnic national identity and will of national independence. During this process, Korean leaders expressed a strong confidence in

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<sup>180</sup> "Conference with General Lerch and Mr. Benninghoff on Korea," Dec 4, 1945, *Han'guk tongnip undongsa* (History of Korean Independence Movement), vol. 23, KPG, no. VIII, 345-47; *Chông Pyông-chun*, 479-84.

securing a diplomatic resolution of the Korean problem with the help of the U.S. government.

At the same time, a schism between Korean nationalist leaders' outlook and that of American officials was clear. Although Korean leaders expected to initiate the process of liberating their country and establishing a new government with help from the United States, the U.S. government positioned Korea in the broader postwar world order in its wartime planning based on the premise of its initiative of solving problems in the region. Differences between these two views existed from the earlier period and both directly and indirectly influenced America's official decisions on Korea during the war and persisted in Korea's post-liberation politics. Langdon's report in 1945 is critical evidence that an earlier schism between Koreans and Americans and misunderstandings on the both sides contributed to the making of Cold War politics on the Korean peninsula.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine how the perceptions of American observers of colonialism in Korea reflect the intertwined and interactive relationships among the U.S., Japan, and Korea. It contends that the development of a specific American policy towards Korea after 1945 cannot be discussed without looking at the making of American perceptions of Korea in the earlier decades. Despite the fact that the U.S. had no official policy about Korea or, superficially, any diplomatic relations with the colony of Japan, both private writings and State Department documents indicate that American attention to Korea did not cease throughout the colonial period of Korea (1910-1945). Korean diaspora groups, especially those in the U.S., worked as agents for Korea's nationalist claims. It is my contention that the belief of Korean nationalists in a "special friendship" in relations between Korea and the U.S. and reliance on American ideals in proclaiming their nationalist cause led the U.S. to disclose its unique position in foreign relations in the first half of the twentieth century—a moral and "exceptionalistic" perspective of itself as well as an imperial power.

This study has analyzed how the American view on Korea has changed from the late nineteenth century to the post-liberation period after 1945. In this process, different groups of American supporters of the Korean nationalist cause discovered different forms of hope in Korea's future—a hope in the peaceful way that Korean demonstrators used to resist the Japanese, a hope in the wide-spread Christianity among the Korean people, or a

hope in Korean-Americans who admired American-style democracy and were opposed to communism. By examining the rhetoric and means that Korean nationalist leaders used in appealing to the American public and government, this study also emphasizes that these different images resulted from interactions among American observers, Korean nationalists and Japanese authorities throughout the Korean colonial period. We have investigated that changes in American understanding of the Korean colonial period corresponded to the Japanese ruling style in Korea of each phase, roughly classified as the military rule (1910-1919), cultural rule (1919-1930) and war mobilization (1931-1945). American responses to the Korean problem began in the nineteenth century with a typical Western view on *the Other* spheres of the world. American commentators were in general indifferent towards Korea's nationalism and colonialism until the annexation of Korea in 1910. In 1919, when Japanese military rule in Korea reached a peak, the American response changed from indifferent into emotional, sympathetic and personal towards the Korean people. The March First Movement (1919) was a turning point that attracted American public attention to the Korean problem and provoked the formation of many Korean nationalist organizations, as well as pro-Korean activities in the U.S. As the Japanese authorities decided on a "cultural rule" in Korea in the 1920s, radical and violent conflicts between the colonizer and the colonized diminished considerably. American attention to the Korean problem decreased accordingly during this period. From the mid-1920's and in the 1930s, with the growing anti-Japanese sentiment of the American public due to the immigration issue and Japan's expansionist moves in the Chinese continent, American opinion makers and State Department officials found Korea's case as a counterpoint to Japanese imperialism. This increased attention to Korea

transformed into American interest in the Korean people for wartime use during the Second World War years (1937-1945).

As examined in Chapter 1, representing their “invisible” nation was a challenge for Korean nationalists from the beginning in the late nineteenth century. Since the Chosôn government lost its diplomatic sovereignty to Japan amidst a power game among the great powers, various ideas for reform and national independence for Korea were generated. These different voices of Koreans converged in the form of shouting for national independence and accusing Japanese colonial rule of being illegal and immoral during the March First Movement in 1919. From 1919, Korean nationalist leaders appealed to the moral values, humanitarianism and Christian values of American ideals in order to call for American aid for Korean independence. In particular, Syngman Rhee and others tried to enlighten the American public and intellectuals about the unfair conditions of the Korean people, seeking the U.S. government’s intervention in resolving the Korean problem. The present study has demonstrated that Korean leaders succeeded in claiming the Korean people’s distinctive and strong national identity and in provoking American interest in the Korean case of colonialism in the early 1920s. As foreigners, legally ineligible for citizenship, Koreans in the U.S. made lobbying efforts to appeal to the American public to support Korea’s independence. The Korean nationalist claim to independence was articulated in uses of the rhetoric of justice, humanitarianism, morality, and self-determination, whose virtues were alleged to be closely linked to American ideals. Nevertheless, Korean nationalists witnessed the fact that great-power politics, rather than international justice and morality towards small peoples dominated post-First World War discussions. Moreover, Syngman Rhee and others’ strategy mainly directed

towards sentimental and emotional provocation faced challenges when Japan's harsh oppression of Koreans decreased during its "cultural rule" of the 1920s. In a sense, Korean leaders failed to some extent in convincing American observers and policy-makers with opposition against colonialism per se, rather than against the failures of Japanese colonialism in fostering modernism in Korea. In addition, the controversy over Korean participation in the Institute of Pacific Relations in the 1920s and 1930s shows that Japanese lobbying activities to persuade of the importance of friendly U.S.-Japanese relations worked more powerfully than Korean nationalist claims on the international stage and at a private level as well.

Our observation of the American perception of the Korean problem has shown that there existed a gap between American and Korean views. On the one hand, for American observers, Korean colonialism was a result of conflict between the civilized and the uncivilized: Japan as the former and Korea the latter. On the other hand, for Korean nationalist leaders, especially for Syngman Rhee and others, being civilized meant being Westernized; especially being close to American ideals, such as democracy and morality based on Christianity. Therefore, they framed their nationalist movement as a struggle between the civilized, including Korea and the U.S., against the uncivilized, that is oppressive and immoral, Japan. The activities of American missionaries in Korea, evangelical and philanthropic activities and personal interactions with Koreans, contributed to the building of those Korean nationalist leaders' idea of a "special relationship" with the U.S. The fundamental gap between different views of Americans and Koreans lingered and came to the forefront at the end of Korean colonialism. During the wartime discussion about liberated Korea, American officials understood Korea as

still inexperienced, undeveloped, and unskilled in modern systems of self-rule. This idea served as the foundation of the American government's trusteeship plan for Korea. This was also a result of looking down upon Japan's colonial rule and imperial administration in Korea.

For American commentators and policy makers, geopolitical concern was usually the factor with the highest priority in determining the American official attitude regarding Korea. The relationship with Japan was especially essential here. For most of the time until the Pacific War broke out, American observers and government officials prioritized a friendly relationship with Japan over interest in any Korean nationalist claims. In the nineteenth century, the American view developed from an Orientalist and modernist view that Korea was backward and needed help from an outside power to develop. American observers described Korea as a far distant land, filled with strange customs and politically indifferent people, often contrasted with the fast and fulfilling modernization in Japan. Japan's propaganda efforts on its modernizing "mission" in Korea toward the English-reading international audience were effectively received. As Chapter 1 explored, the Japanese successfully convinced Western observers of the legitimacy and inevitability of Japan's annexation of Korea for security and peace in East Asia, as well as for an outlet for Japan's surplus population in 1910. In the 1910s, both Japan and the U.S. were highly sensitive to respecting each other's "domestic jurisdiction." This was the fundamental idea on which the U.S. justified its restriction of immigrants based on race. As Brawley argues, North Americans and Australians condoned Japan's expansion into East Asia due

to “guilt over the fact that Japan’s problems had been worsened by North American and Australasian exclusion.”<sup>1</sup>

From 1919, a rising Korean voice aimed at international society accusing the Japanese of a harsh rule in Korea changed these positive images of Japan’s new imperialism to a view that Japan’s way of controlling Korea should be reformed. Chapter 2 has shown that American missionaries functioned as personal agents in spreading hope for an optimistic future among Koreans and also in convincing an American audience in the U.S. that Korea was a hope for spread of evangelism in Asia during this period. The unique American view on foreign relations and American exceptionalism, which is a belief in America’s moral superiority with its exceptional ideals in politics, economics and religion, also contributed to a growing American sympathy for Korean people.

In the mid-1910s and the 1920s, a series of decisions to restrict Asian immigration to the United States increased the conflict between the U.S. and Japan. Just as Japan was almost obsessed with abolishing the extraterritoriality rights of European and American citizens in Japan, a symbol of the unequal treaties that Japan had with Western countries in the late nineteenth century, it struggled to achieve “racial equality” in terms of migration in this period. Japan felt insulted by the Immigration Act of 1924 and its implication that those excluded from immigration based on race were inferior. These worsened relations propelled Japan’s sophistication of its pan-Asian doctrine, as well as its proclamation of the Asian people’s war against the West. Along with a worsening U.S.-Japanese relationship during this period, American officials began to raise the question of whether Japanese colonial rule in Korea and other parts of the East Asian

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<sup>1</sup> Sean Brawley, *The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America, 1919-1978* (Sidney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995), 129.



region was a success and to understand the serious problems of colonial Korean society stemming from Japan's inefficient ruling system. In analyzing the serious economic and social problems of Korea, now American observers thought that the Korean people were victims of an immature and backward Japanese imperialism. Nevertheless, this view did not go as far as criticism of colonization of Korea, per se. Rather, their agreement was that Korea still deserved to be colonized, but Japan was not a qualified colonizer. Writing which admired material developments in urban cities and technologies in Korea in this period shows an admiration for the modernistic progress that the colonialism had achieved, in contrast to Japan's discriminative and ruthless control. As Krenn points out, American opinion makers came to see that the Japanese might be at the apex of the "Oriental racial variety of humanity, but that merely meant that they were the best of an inferior...race"<sup>2</sup> From the 1930s, American commentators did not equate themselves as being on the same level of colonizers as the Japanese. American diplomatic officials often contrasted harsh Japanese colonial rule to American colonizers who had paternalistic sympathy toward Filipinos.

From the late 1930s, Japan insisted on Japan's Monroe Doctrine for Asia and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, declaring an Asian block led by Japan and free of Western powers. For the Americans' part, although the racial issue was beneath the surface in the earlier years while the U.S. maintained a friendly relationship with Japan, once the Pacific War broke out, military conflict in the war soon entailed cultural and ethnic hatred towards Japanese people, as John Dower has pointed out.<sup>3</sup> Conflict between

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<sup>2</sup> Krenn, 60.

<sup>3</sup> John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986). Michael Krenn also has studied racial bias in the American view of Japan before and during the Second World War. In contrast Americans often resorted to personifying the German or Italian enemies in

the U.S. and Japan provided a space for Korean diasporic groups to emphasize their identity as being familiar but hostile to Japan and loyal to American ideals—democracy and Christianity—which was strategically useful and effective. In the 1940s during wartime, Korean activists gained some achievements, such as the U.S. Justice Department’s decision in 1942 to exempt Korean immigrants from the category of “enemy aliens” and the OSS’ plan to train and use Koreans in the war against Japan during the Pacific War. However, they failed to convince the U.S. government of Korean political leaders’ ability for self-rule. The factionalism and immature anti-communism that some nationalist groups displayed contributed to the creation of an image for the American officials that the absolute and immediate independence of Korea was premature. As the end of the Second World War was approaching, American policy makers again decided their official policy towards Korea in the context of geopolitics. During the wartime policy making, the notion that powers should “guide” Korea even after the liberation because of the Koreans’ lack of experience in self-rule became the basic idea of the international trusteeship plan for Korea.

Our examination of the course of American understanding related to Korea throughout its colonial period has shown that American policy from 1945 was in the context of action, reaction and interaction among different voices, especially those of American observers and Korean nationalist activists. The basic view of American observers about Korea was framed in Orientalism and modernism, closer to the

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the form of Hitler or Mussolini, Krenn observes, they “generally considered the Japanese en masse – a faceless, nameless horde lacking any sense of individuality. In addition, while some Americans thought that the German and Italian people had simply been misled by charismatic demagogues and that there might indeed be “good” and “bad” German and Italians, no such differentiation existed when the United States viewed the Japanese” (Krenn, 66-67).

colonizer's position, rather than to the colonized. Korean nationalists constantly challenged the colonialists' perspective, claiming fair treatment of the colonized people and to American aid to liberate the people based on universal humanism. Although a concern about geopolitics swayed American policy-making for the most of the time, these reactions made by Korean voices at times obscured the existing American view. Especially when there was a common enemy, the U.S. and Korean nationalists who believed in special relations with the U.S. could compromise and be in a cooperative relationship. The first case was when the U.S. came into confrontation with Japan from the mid-1930s, and the second case was when both the U.S. government and Korean rightists opposed communist influence on the Korean peninsula at the end of the Second World War. The main figure in the Korean nationalist group that tried to use diplomatic means based on the special relationship with the U.S. to achieve Korean independence was Syngman Rhee. After Korea was divided into Northern and Southern zones under the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. rules, the conditions in Korea compelled the U.S. policy makers to reconsider the feasible options. Officials of the U.S. military government felt that there was no room for Koreans to compromise on any type of trusteeship. From a realistic perspective, American officials in Seoul actually discarded the trusteeship plan from late 1945, much earlier than the State Department officially determined to give up trusteeship for Korea and to transfer the Korean issue to the United Nations in 1947. More importantly, officials in Korea witnessed that the leftists were more organized and had more supporters than the rightists in liberated Korea. Based on knowledge of communistic Korean groups during the 1930s in Manchuria and North China, they considered post-liberated Korea as being vulnerable to communist expansion. The

emerging Cold War sentiment and fear of communist expansion required American policy-makers to proceed with the immediate establishment of a Korean government, which would build a bulwark against communism in the East Asian region. When the U.S.-U.S.S.R Joint Commission came to an end with a rupture in 1947 and the U.S. military government failed to use moderate politicians in forming an interim government,<sup>4</sup> American officials in Seoul were left with a realistic choice: despite some disagreement, Rhee's past reputation as a nationalist activist, strong belief in American ideals and anti-communism demonstrated throughout the colonial period made the American authorities chose to cooperate with Rhee in establishing a Korean government in the South that was friendly to the American sphere in the Cold War competition. This dissertation has demonstrated that the Korean colonial years were an essential period when the American attitude towards Korea and East Asia was shaped and experienced significant changes. As opposed to conventional assumptions, this study proves that Korean nationalists' presentation of their desire for national independence actually had an influence in changing the American view of Korea. Moreover, unceasing interactions, including both common goals and ruptures, between American observers and Korean activists throughout Korea's colonial period determined the direction of the U.S. government's decision-making about post-colonial Korea after 1945.

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<sup>4</sup> For details about the U.S. military government's interim government idea and policy regarding the moderate groups, see Chapter 6 of Chông Yong-wook, *America's Korean Policy*.

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