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Claremont McKenna College

**The Ghost of Modernity:
Normative Power of Modernity as Propaganda**

Submitted to
Professor Jennifer Taw

By
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For
Senior Thesis
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Abstract

This thesis explores how domestic factions and authoritarian regimes in Japan and Korea in the period from the 1850s to 1970s appropriated the concept of “modernity” to gain normative superiority over their competitors. The appropriating entity revised the concept of modernity to suit its own worldview. Across the case studies, the propaganda of modernity created a hierarchy that privileged those who are “more modern,” encouraged martial masculinity, and attached itself to existing domestic norms, such as ethno-nationalism. Under authoritarian regimes, modernity helped justify the mobilization of capital, manpower, and other critical resources in the name of nation-building or defense. Many factions and demagogues may have initially used the concept of modernity for domestic gains, but using this narrative later devolved into foreign conquests and imperialist expansion, for otherwise, their call for modernization would have become an empty promise in the eyes of the masses. This paper examines five cases along these dimensions, namely the rise of reformist samurais in feudal-era Japan, the failure of Joseon Korea’s ruling regime to adopt modernity in a timely manner, Imperial Japan’s colonial practices in Korea and Manchuria, the ideological divergences among factions in Colonial Korea, and a South Korean dictator’s attempts to gain legitimacy following a coup d’etat. Each case follows how domestic factions or individuals were motivated by an inferiority complex and how they produced their own version of modernity that favored their ascendance.

Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmothers.

My paternal grandmother, Kang Deokhee, did not get to go to college. She had three sons back when giving birth to a boy was considered a great honor for Korean women, but she secretly wished she had a daughter. She told me that, had I been born as her daughter, she would have done anything to get me an education in the United States. I am sad that my grandmother is no longer with us to see me graduate from Claremont McKenna College, but the belief she had in me continues to inspire me today.

My maternal grandmother, Jung Hyungsook, always had a love of learning and writing, but she had to forgo her study of literature and become a pharmacist to support her family. Today, she serves on the board of the Seoul Pharmacist Credit Union and provides scholarships to high-achieving students at her alma mater, Tongyeong Girls' High School. I am grateful to my grandmother for being such an inspiring role model and for always having so much faith in me.

I am so thankful to Professor Jenny Taw for her guidance as a mentor and as my reader. Professor Taw helped me redefine my research question into one that I was genuinely passionate and curious about. She pushed me to explore complex ideas while ensuring that I stayed true to my research question. I am immensely grateful to her for constantly reassuring me even at times when I doubted myself.

I would like to thank my friends at the Center for Writing and Public Discourse who helped prepare for my thesis defense and edit the final draft of my thesis. Professor Megan Gallagher, Professor Chrissy Crockett, and Lauren Morrison of Claremont Graduate University provided so much support (and delicious snacks!) for stressed seniors, and they taught me how to manage long-term writing projects like this thesis.

I would also like to thank Sean Cheng, my therapist from Monsour Counseling Services, for teaching me how to take care of my mental health and helping me regain happiness. This thesis would have been impossible without Sean's support.

I could not have completed this thesis and the past four years of college without my friends. I am lucky to have met friends who inspire me to become a better person and whom I know I can rely on for anything.

Last but not least, I am the most grateful to my role models and parents, EunRyung Chong and Kyeongdal Choi, and my best friend and brother, Hyeokjae Choi, for their unwavering love and support. Words cannot describe how thankful I am to have them in my life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lukes' Faces of Power

This paper examines five case studies in which domestic factions or authoritarian regimes struggle for power based on a modified framework of Steven Lukes' faces of power theory. Lukes, a political theorist, posited in *Power: A Radical View* that power has three faces.¹ This paper defines the three faces as the following: the first face of power consists of Realpolitik and physical power; the second face consists of rights, freedoms, and political gains or losses made within the institutional realm; and the third face consists of norms and values. An entity that gains dominance in the first face of power would have the necessary physical, military force to control others. An entity that gains dominance in the second face of power is one that can alter institutions and laws in its favor, such as by creating systems of education or healthcare. An entity that dominates the third face of power would create norms and values that favor or legitimize its own worldviews, or it may create a hierarchy in which its preferred norms would be considered superior and more appealing than other existing norms. This process may involve attaching the preferred norms to other existing norms that are already salient and popular with the masses, rather than simply denying or destroying all other existing norms.

An entity does not necessarily have to be dominant in the first or second faces to dominate the third face. Even the entities that are physically powerless can attempt to restructure the distribution of authority by creating values and ideologies that legitimize

¹ Steven Lukes. *Power: A Radical View*. 2nd ed. Studies in Sociology. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

their normative power. Such changes in the third face may lead to redistributions of power in the first or second faces, depending on how much of a real, physical authority the actor can gain.² If an entity that previously only had third-face power suddenly gains first-face power, then this entity may attempt to dominate the first and second faces of power as well.

Motivated Beliefs: Production and Consumption of High-Utility Beliefs

Entities that seek to dominate the third face of power do so by producing beliefs that the masses will be more willing to consume. Economists Roland Bénabou and Jean Tirole theorized that humans produce and consume beliefs that have affective or functional values. A belief that has an affective value “[makes] oneself or one’s future look better,”³ and a belief that has a functional value helps one achieve certain internal or external goals.⁴ The belief that one is a good student, for instance, has affective value in that it boosts the individual’s self-esteem. This belief can also have functional value if it makes the student more productive and efficient at studying. Some beliefs can have both affective and functional values, while others may only have either one. This paper analyzes opportunistic entities’ appropriation of modernity and the production of their own versions of modernity through this lens, examining how the entities attached affective and functional values to their propaganda and push for modernity. The beliefs in modernity had affective value for the masses because those who became “modern” could

² The changes in the first, second, and third faces of power are not necessarily sequential. Many of the appropriating entities in this paper started with the third face of power simply because they did not have the resources or power to influence the other faces. But the changes may happen in a completely different sequence or simultaneously.

³ Roland Bénabou and Jean Tirole. "Mindful Economics: The Production, Consumption, and Value of Beliefs†." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30, no. 3 (2016)., p.143.

⁴ Bénabou and Tirole (2016), p.143.

view themselves as superior to pre-modern individuals. The beliefs in modernity had a functional value for both the producer of the belief (an opportunistic entity, be it a political faction or a despot) and the consumer of the belief (the masses). On the one hand, the belief enabled quick and efficient mobilization of resources, manpower, and political support for the appropriating entity. On the other, the propaganda potentially had functional value for the consumers, i.e. the masses, in that it may have encouraged some of the subjects living in modern nation-states to become productive workers, maintain better hygiene by complying with the modern state's healthcare programs, or gain literacy at public schools built and funded by the state. However, the net effects of such ideologies on the consumers of the beliefs are not always positive. Bénabou and Tirole found in their study of the "just-world belief," such as the ideology of the American Dream, for example, that a belief in hard work and merit as a means to social mobility can have functional value for making the population in general more productive and can induce economic growth. However, at the same time, the net value of such beliefs "to the poor is much more ambiguous, since they receive less transfers and are more likely to be stigmatized."⁵ Likewise, the net value that beliefs of modernity had on the consumer side consists of a variety of factors. While the beliefs can have the functional value of motivating the masses to be productive members of a modern society, these same beliefs legitimized violence against the masses and mobilization of their labor for cheap wages.

The production and consumption of high-utility beliefs can distort reality.

Bénabou and Tirole note that consuming beliefs for their affective and functional values

⁵ Roland Bénabou and Jean Tirole. "Belief in a just World and Redistributive Politics." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 121, no. 2 (2006), p.735.

can create “some (usually implicit) tradeoff between accuracy and desirability” and that choosing to consume certain beliefs will lead to “not wanting to know, wishful thinking, and reality denial.”⁶ Those who wish to see themselves and their nation as “modern” may fail to take in real-life evidence that prove their state’s weaknesses, for instance. In fact, these beliefs will be the most attractive to individuals, factions, or nations suffering from an inferiority complex, or a sense that they are not worthy compared to other more powerful entities.

⁶ Bénabou and Tirole (2016), p.141-142.

INTRODUCTION

Definition of Modernity

The concept of “modernity” across the five case studies in this paper has three common characteristics. First, modernity created a hierarchy in which the faction that proved itself as “more modern” could pose itself as superior and therefore more deserving of popularity than other factions. Authoritarian regimes similarly used the propaganda of modernity to pose themselves as superior to other nations, and especially more superior to nations and peoples they planned to colonize. Second, the propaganda of modernity emphasized martial masculinity because it helped the mobilization of armed forces and legitimized a faction’s use of violence or an authoritarian regime’s territorial expansion. Lastly, the propaganda of modernity attached itself to existing norms, such as ethno-nationalistic symbols, to reinforce its appeal to the masses.

First, the propaganda of modernity created a hierarchy and reinforced the masses’ desire to raise themselves or their nation to a superior status. This notion of modernity also necessitates binary distinctions between those who are “more modern” and those who are “less modern.” What it meant to be “more modern” depended on which dominant group controlled the discourse on modernity. Prior to World War II, for instance, scholars and leaders in Western Europe and the United States (U.S.) used the narrative of “civilization” to define modernity. The Europeans and Americans were “civilized” and therefore “more modern,” whereas the colonized peoples of Latin America, Africa, and Asia were “uncivilized” and “less modern.” However, observing the atrocities that took place in Europe during World War II, many intellectuals in the colonized parts of the world realized that the Europeans and Americans were not

necessarily “civilized.” In turn, leaders in Western Europe and the U.S. saw the need to redefine the meaning of “modernity,” and the alternative to the civilization discourse was the development discourse. Many identify the origin of the development discourse, which focused on the need for technology and industrialization, in Harry S. Truman’s inaugural address on January 20th, 1949, in which he proposed that the U.S. “must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.”⁷ The factions and entities throughout this paper similarly appropriated the narrative of modernity, modifying existing definitions or creating their own meanings of what it meant to be modern, as it suited their best interests.

Second, the variations of modernity found in the case studies uniformly privileged martial masculinity. Although “each person lives gender in a different culture, body, language, and identity [and therefore] there is not one gendered experience of global politics,” given the diverse and intersectional nature of gender, many societies have developed rigid expectations regarding masculinity and femininity.⁸ The strict delineation between masculinity and femininity subsequently led to the prioritization of one over the other. Societies have assembled institutions in a manner that favors the so-called masculine traits and activities and breeds the excessively masculine behavior among the subjects. The idealization of martial masculinity within the discourse of modernity allowed for the mobilization of armed forces and the use of violence that was necessary

⁷ Harry S. Truman, "Truman's Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949." Accessed April 19, 2019, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm.

⁸ Sjoberg, Laura. "Gender, Structure, and War: What Waltz Couldn't See." *International Theory* 4, no. 1 (2012), p.9.

for competing factions' and authoritarian regimes' rise in power.

Lastly, in the process of appropriating the concept of modernity, the competing factions and regimes in this paper attached their own definition of modernity to existing domestic norms. The existing norms included ethno-nationalistic symbols, such as historical figures that represented a people's strength, or societal norms that helped the control and organization of the masses, such as Confucianism.

Definition of the Modern State

The modern state in this paper refers to a singular state, operated by a central government, that has effective and efficient control over its population and a monopoly over violence. The control over its population is effective in that it has authority over all three faces of power in the Lukesian sense. Its control is efficient in that the state maintains control over different ethnic groups, eliminates less productive or disruptive members of society, and mechanizes the use of labor. Here, "mechanize" does not necessarily mean the use of machines, but rather refers to the systematic nature of labor acquisition and deployment. Modernity justifies and accelerates the mobilization of capital, manpower, land, and other critical resources at times of national crises.

Use of "Western" as a Descriptor

This paper frequently uses the descriptor "Western," not because an East-West dichotomy truly exists, but to represent the point of view of the factions, dictators, intellectuals, and citizens who produced and consumed ideological beliefs in the case studies. The "Western" countries do not refer to nations that belonged to a certain geographical region. Rather, they are countries that intellectuals of Japan and Korea viewed as superior societies that they must aspire to resemble. The "Western" countries

included European nations that set out on colonial conquests and the United States, whose normative influences, such as texts by political philosophers and economists, and physical shows of strength, had reached Asia.

East Asian Entities' Agency in 'Creating' Modernity

The East Asian entities in this paper appropriated the concept of modernity and produced their own versions that furthered their own worldviews and political, economic gains. Modernity in East Asia, therefore, was not a concept that colonizers or foreign invaders simply imposed in a top-down approach. Instead, competing factions, intellectuals, and citizens constantly played tugs-of-war in which their differing versions and interpretations of modernity came into conflict and helped shape the national discourse on what modernity was and ought to be. It is important to carefully examine the use of terms like colonialism and modernity when describing Asian history because if used in the original, U.S.-centric context, the terms may “end up bearing little relation to local, anti-imperialist nationalist historiographies of the work of critical historians working in the regions in question, and against state-sponsored or crudely nationalist historiographies of their own.”⁹

Therefore, the term “modernity” throughout this paper denotes the ideological movement within East Asia, one that East Asian elites intentionally enabled, to imitate the West and its supposedly superior conventions. The use of the term ‘modern’ in describing Japan’s history as an active colonizer “almost always erases Japan’s own reproduction of imperialist behavior and instead signifies the introduction of Western

⁹ Tani E. Barlow, *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*. (Duke University Press, 1997) p.17.

thought and material goods.”¹⁰ It is important to be aware of the agency that the East Asian states – and their people – had in restructuring their institutions and carrying out, or being complicit in, organized atrocities against the “less modern” factions or populations.

Modernity and its Eventual Devolvement into Imperialistic Violence

The appropriation of modernity by an entity could culminate in mass violence if the entity were to gain first-face power. Zygmunt Bauman argues that the Holocaust was a culmination of modernity, and “not an antithesis of modern civilization and everything (or so we like to think) it stands for.”¹¹ Many observers prefer to believe that the Holocaust was an aberration, one that was due to a society’s failure to prevent atrocities. However, the systematic nature of killings and the goal to ‘cleanse’ an ethnicity closely resembled the systematic means of production and industrialization that defined modernity in Europe. The machine-like destruction and killing of Jews and other minorities “was structurally no different from organized German society as a whole.”¹² Bauman notes that while “modern civilization was not the Holocaust's sufficient condition,” it was “most certainly its necessary condition.”¹³ Likewise, some of the factions and regimes featured in this paper used the propaganda of modernity to legitimize the use of violence, the elimination of “less modern” ethnicities, and the expansion of their territories. However, such devolvement into large-scale violence was only possible for entities that had first-face power in addition to third-face power.

¹⁰ Deidre Lynch and William Beatty Warner. *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*. (Duke University Press, 1996) p.231

¹¹ Zygmunt Bauman. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013) p.7

¹² Bauman, p.9.

¹³ Bauman, p.31.

CASE STUDY 1: FACTIONAL CONFLICTS IN JAPAN

Introduction

This chapter explores the evolution of the modernity discourse in Japan in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The emergence of threats from the “West,” such as Commodore Perry’s opening of Japan, and internal instability due to inefficiencies of the feudal order led to calls for modernization by a group of samurais. Following the overthrow of the feudal government and establishment of the Japanese modern nation-state, also known as the Meiji Restoration, the ruling regime and pro-modernization intellectuals instituted second-face and third-face forms of control through language policy changes and the implementation of public education.

Following centuries of warring states, Japan had become a decentralized feudal state consisting of the *bakufu* and *daimyo* by the 17th century. The *bakufu* referred to the government of a *Shōgun*, and a *Shōgun* was a hereditary military commander. The *daimyo* were landholding military lords who used the *samurai* class to fight over territory for centuries, and each *daimyo* reigned over a domain. The Tokugawa family had brought hundreds of *daimyo* under control in 1603, and the *daimyo* gradually lost political power as the *bakufu* increased its control over the *daimyo* and their governance. By the time the Emperor abolished the *bakufu*, the *daimyo* were merely figureheads with little military or political power.

Emergence of Foreign Threats

The decentralized system of the *bakufu* and the *daimyo* brought about peace in Japan, as it reduced the number of internal conflicts, but it had not prepared Japan against foreign threats. The *Morrison* incident of 1837 was the first event that alerted the Japanese regarding the inefficiencies of their isolationist policy. The *Morrison*, an American vessel, arrived at “the

Tokugawa bakufu's very doorstep" in Edo Bay in the summer of 1837.¹⁴ The *bakufu* was able to drive away the vessel using gunfire, only to learn later that the vessel was attempting to repatriate shipwrecked Japanese citizens. Although the incident did not create major casualties, the Japanese ruling class began to worry that their defense capacities may not be sufficient against the European and American forces that frequently visited Asia for trade. These concerns materialized in 1843 when Great Britain signed the Treaty of Nanking with Qing China after the First Opium War, which granted the British the sovereignty over Hong Kong and greater rights to trade in China.

Instability Due to Famine and Mass Uprisings

The *bakufu* launched a series of Tempō reforms in the 1840s when famine brought about unrest across the country.¹⁵ Popular uprisings had become more frequent by the day across the country. In addition, the encounter with the *Morrison* and the news of Qing's defeat in the First Opium War brought to the Japanese ruling class's attention that the decentralized *bakufu-daimyo* system had left the country defenseless. The *bakufu* had restrained the *daimyo* by limiting their military capacity and installing a system in which the *daimyo* had to live at the *Shōgun's* residence in Edo (modern-day Tokyo) for several months of the year. The *daimyo* also had to participate in costly processions to and from Edo, which placed a significant financial burden on the *daimyo*.¹⁶ This system ensured domestic stability as the *daimyo* could not easily rebel against the *bakufu*, but it also meant that Japan as a state did not have the military capabilities to fight against foreign invaders.

¹⁴ Marius B. Jansen, *The Emergence of Meiji Japan*, (New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.10.

¹⁵ Jansen, p.10.

¹⁶ Constantine Nomikos Vaporis. *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan*. 1 online resource (xii, 318 pages) : illustrations, maps vols. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008) p.64.

The Tempō reforms were a set of economic, cultural, and religious policies intended to bring about stability in the face of famines and popular grievances. The *bakufu* not only implemented price controls, but it also banned the *Rangaku*, or Western Learning. The *daimyo* did not welcome these overreaches from the central government. In the 1840s, the *daimyo* replaced the *bakufu*'s main policymaker with a more passive official, who allowed the *daimyo* to maintain a decentralized system of power under the *Shōgun*. A decade later when Commodore Perry of the U.S. forced Japan to open its doors in 1853, Japan was without a central government at the expense of the *daimyo*'s local gains.¹⁷

Modernization of the Educational System and Japanese Identity in Meiji Japan

In the decades leading up to the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Tokugawa Japan saw an emergence of *Rangaku*, or Western Learning, which discussed theories of political economy and Western sciences such as medicine, physics, and geography. The proponents of Western Learning, such as Honda Toshiaki, believed that Japan must abandon its isolationist policies and strengthen national defense to keep pace with Western advancements in technology.¹⁸ In response, the Tokugawa *bakufu* tried to restrain the growing popularity of Western Learning by persecuting those who studied modern sciences or Western culture.

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 provided an opportunity to reshape the nature of education in Japan. The *samurai* class that facilitated the coup, court nobles, *daimyo*, and the Emperor himself struggled to create an interpretation of Meiji Restoration that would legitimize their status within the new order. The visions for education put forth by various stakeholders during the early Meiji era “reflected both the contest for political power and this larger struggle among

¹⁷ Jansen, p.48.

¹⁸ Jansen.p.117.

competing interpretations of the Restoration.”¹⁹ Those who advocated for Chinese education for the elites came into conflict with proponents of Western education or nativists wanting Shinto-style education.

Following the Restoration, many schools built during the Tokugawa era began to emphasize their devotion to the state, rather than to the local *daimyo*. The school in Matsumoto Domain, for instance, changed its mission statement to “expanding knowledge and fostering talent so that we may be of use to the state.”²⁰ The changing language at many domain schools signaled that a growing number of local authorities were acknowledging the inevitability of reintegration under the Meiji government and giving up their hopes of decentralization.

The Meiji government also implemented public schooling for the first time in Japan’s history. In 1869, the first modern elementary school opened as an experiment in Numazu. Nishi Amane, a scholar of Western Learning, played an active role in the opening of the elementary school. Nishi’s belief that the “government should ‘exercise jurisdiction over children’ by taking an active role in schooling” reflected his view of the modern state as an incubator for a strong, productive workforce – or potentially, an army.²¹ Although the Numazu elementary school ended up becoming a preparatory school for a nearby military academy, subsequent elementary schools that opened in Kyoto better embodied Nishi’s ideal, that schools should become a functioning part of the state apparatus. These Kyoto schools also served as “clinics for vaccination, stations for civil guards, and meeting places where governmental orders could be explained to the populace” and thereby became “a local arm of the machinery of government, one that integrated

¹⁹ Platt, Brian. *Burning and Building: Schooling and State Formation in Japan, 1750-1890*. Harvard East Asian Monographs ; 237. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004) p.101.

²⁰ Platt, p.110.

²¹ Platt, p.111-112.

the general population into the state and complemented its functions.”²²

Since the Heian era (794 AD – 1185 AD), Japanese people used *kanji*, or Chinese characters, as their classical form of writing. Mori Arinori, who was the first minister of education for the Meiji government, wrote in a letter to a Yale University linguist that Japan, as a “commercial nation,” must adopt English “in view of our rapidly increasing intercourse with the world at large.”²³ Here, Mori did not wish to abolish the Japanese language completely to have it replaced by English. Mori’s main intentions were to eradicate Chinese presence from the language and instead have English become the new language of the learned in Japan – just as Latin was in European countries – because he believed the Chinese language was a hindrance to Japan’s modernization efforts.²⁴

The Japanese debate on the script for its spoken language had only become fiercer by the fourth decade of the Meiji government (1897 – 1906). Scholars who were ardent nationalists and advocates of the imperial order, such as Inoue Tetsujirō, also called for the elimination of *kanji* and creation of a new written system unique to Japanese. Inoue lamented that the language and thought of Japanese people were under the control of China, an inferior country, but he was also unhappy that romanization “does not appeal to the sentiment of the Japanese.”²⁵ These efforts to free the Japanese language from foreign influences, and especially that of Chinese, were crucial to justifying the concept of *kokutai*, or Japan’s unique national identity. While the word *kokugo*, literally meaning “national language,” had long existed before the Meiji era, the connotation of *kokugo* as a superior antithesis to *kango* (“Chinese language”) was “a child of modernity born

²² Platt, p.112.

²³ Yōn-suk Yi, *The Ideology of Kokugo: Nationalizing Language in Modern Japan*. English-Language edition, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2010) p.305–310.

²⁴ Yi, p.11.

²⁵ Yi, p.33.

out of the intense determination of Meiji Japan.”²⁶ The Realpolitik of the First Sino-Japanese War and the fiercely nationalist campaign to redesign the Japanese language were mutually reinforcing. The hatred toward China continued to grow as a result of the military rivalry, and changes in the language helped reify an ideal of the unique and superior Japanese identity. The insistence on nationalizing the Japanese language later culminated in strict enforcement of *kokugo* in Korea and Manchuria, which will be further discussed in Case Study 3.

Conclusion

The nationalization of the Japanese language and implementation of public schooling not only reinforced the Meiji regime’s grip on second-face power, but it also reshaped the distribution of third-face, normative power. Through changes in the Japanese subjects’ view of themselves and their nation, the Meiji regime was able to propagate the idea of Imperial Japan as the superior nation, one that outclassed both the West and the Great Chinese Civilization. The production of these beliefs – and willing Japanese subjects’ consumption of such beliefs – set the path for Japan’s colonial conquests.

²⁶ Yi, p.54.

CASE STUDY 2: ORIGINS OF MODERNITY DISCOURSE IN JOSEON KOREA

Introduction

Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 under the Japan-Korea Treaty, also known as the Eulsa Treaty, and it later became a colony of Imperial Japan. This chapter seeks to refute the common myth that Imperial Japan, despite its injustices against the colonized Korean people, endowed them with the gift of modernity. Political elites and intellectuals in Joseon Korea had been inspired to adopt modernity as early as in the 18th century, when a group of envoys from the Joseon court traveled to Qing China. This chapter provides the history of pro- and anti-modernization factions in Joseon Korea and concludes that the pro-modernization faction's failure to obtain the necessary first-face power (i.e., military support from foreign allies) made Joseon Korea vulnerable to takeover by Imperial Japan. The competition among pro- and anti-modernization factions did not become resolved in a timely manner, and the Korean royalty failed to become a modern nation-state that could respond to domestic grievances and external threats.

From Foundation Myths to Northern Studies Faction: Evolution of Korean Ideologies

The foundation myths of Korea contain elements of filial piety, hierarchical authority, and importance of marital relations that are also essential in Confucianism.²⁷ The myths center around the Lord of Heaven, his son Hwanung, Hwanung's wife who transforms from a bear into a woman, and the subordinates who live under Hwanung's rule. These myths emphasized the relationships between father and son, husband and wife, ruler and subjects, which are among the five important tenets of Confucianism. It is likely that the native shamanistic myths later evolved to include Confucian ideals when the idea became popularized in ancient Korea.

²⁷ Grayson, James H. *Korea - A Religious History*. 1 online resource. (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013) p.48.

Confucianism first entered Korea during the Three Kingdoms Era (57 BC – 668 AD), which consisted of Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla vying for dominance on the peninsula. The kingdoms of Goguryeo and Baekje began to import Confucian ideas as they increasingly adopted Chinese commodities and culture in the fourth century.²⁸ James Grayson argues that during the Three Kingdoms Era, Confucianism only had a cultural influence on the Korean kingdoms rather than political or social. That is, the Korean people adopted the Chinese writing system to better study Confucian works and established a formal system of education, which is a key tenet of Confucianism, but Confucian ideas did not affect political institutions or societal norms and values.²⁹

It was only during the Goryeo Dynasty (917 AD – 1392 AD), which resulted from the unification of various Korean kingdoms, that Confucianism began to have a predominant influence on Korea's political institutions. Buddhism and Confucianism, both of which entered Korea through China, coexisted and complemented one another as they began to shape cultural, political, and social norms in Goryeo. Choe Seongno (927 – 89), who was a Confucian scholar of the Goryeo Dynasty, observed that Buddhism had a greater influence for education while Confucianism guided the practice of government.³⁰

Confucian ideals ensured a degree of transparency and accountability for government officials in the later Korean kingdoms. The Goryeo Dynasty and Joseon Dynasty (1392 AD – 1897 AD) were meritocratic bureaucracies that administered examinations for government positions, though kingship was still hereditary. In this paper, Neo-Confucianism (성리학; *Seonglihak*) refers to the branch of Confucianism that began in the 12th century. Neo-

²⁸ Grayson, p.49.

²⁹ Grayson, p.49.

³⁰ Grayson, p.84.

Confucianism emphasized familial relations and one's relationship with the state while denying the legitimacy of Daoism and Buddhism.

Confucian Realism (실학; *Silhak*) started in 17th century Joseon after many scholars acknowledged that Neo-Confucianism failed to provide realistic solutions to human life. Beginning in the 17th and 18th centuries, many farmers in Joseon had to leave their land or work as tenant farmers for wealthy landlords as the ownership of land began concentrating among the wealthy few. Confucian Realists varied in their stances on this issue as some defended the growth of the wealthy landholding class while others sought to help farmers who lost their land. Confucian Realism also actively incorporated some of the Western ideas that they encountered via China, such as mathematics, astronomy, and cartography. The concept of Western monotheism, like that of Catholicism, intrigued some Confucian Realists who saw the religion as complementing Confucianism rather than weakening it.

Korea's Adoption of Modernity and Qing China's Influence

The Korean state had already begun the process of modernization well before the Japanese declared Korea its protectorate in 1905 and officially annexed Korea in 1910. As a peninsula stuck between the vast continent of Asia and the Japanese isles, Korea had always been exposed to cultural, religious, and philosophical influences from other countries. The Korean response to these influences and ever-changing geopolitical dynamics of Northeast Asia was not a monolith. In fact, variations of and conflicts between different Korean responses triggered tugs-of-war among the Korean people, and competing sides sometimes exploited class-based grievances. In the late 19th century, these conflicts involved foreign armies as factions looked to the Qing or the Japanese for military support.

The Joseon royalty and many of the scholar-gentry looked down on the Qing dynasty as

barbarians who replaced the true Chinese civilization under the Ming dynasty. Some of the Joseon kings even organized royal rituals for the deceased Ming emperors, risking their diplomatic relations with the Qing court.³¹ These kings and scholars believed that Joseon had the duty to preserve the cultural and philosophical ideas of the Great Chinese Civilization and defy the Qing.

Only in the 18th century did elites who traveled to Qing as Joseon's envoys, such as Park Jega, argue that Joseon had much to learn from Qing. These scholars acknowledged that even within the Qing dynasty, there were traces of the Great Chinese Civilization. They observed that agricultural development and vitalization of trade and manufacture industries allowed for Qing's economic growth and improved their people's welfare.³² Park Jega made observations about agricultural practices, transportation, and the market economy in Beijing in 1778 and submitted his recommendations to the Joseon king in 1799.³³ These elites came to be known as the Northern Studies Faction (북학파; Bukhakpa), and they argued that Joseon should adopt the knowledge of the Qing Dynasty.

Attempts at Modernization Under Gojong

The official state-run efforts for modernization began roughly in the 1880s. The Korean state as an institution was an intricate hierarchy of various organs that oversaw executive, judicial, and administrative functions.³⁴ The legal codes decreed during Gojong's reign (1864 – 1907) showcase these transformations. The last revision to the Korean dynasty's legal code

³¹ Yeonsik Choi 최연식, "Jogongchejeui byeondonggwa joseonsidae junghwa-sadae gwannyeomui guljeol" 조공체제의 변동과 조선시대 중화-사대 관념의 굴절 [Changes of Tribute System and Development of 'Serving the Great Ideology in Chosŏn Dynasty] *Hanguk Jeongchi Hakhoebo* 한국정치학회보 41 no.1 (2007) p.111.

³² Jega Park 박제가 "Bukhakui" 북학의 [The Discussion of Northern Studies], trans. Jeongjoo Park 박정주, (Paju, South Korea: Seohaemunjip 서해문집, 2003) p.12.

³³ Park (2003), p.15.

³⁴ Park (2003), p.25.

during the Joseon dynasty, the *Daejeon hoetong* of 1865, did not show many deviations from the original dynastic code *Gyeongguk daejeon* from 1471.³⁵ The state institutions began to have significant changes in the 1880s, however, as the monarch established the *Tongni amun* agencies.

The *Tongni amun* agencies resembled the governmental agencies of the Qing dynasty and signaled to foreign states that Joseon was finally willing to open its doors to Western culture and trade goods. Modernization efforts had already begun in Korea before the Japanese began to tighten their control in 1905 and officially annexed the peninsula in 1910. These efforts for modernization took inspiration from Western and Japanese philosophies, and they were not quite successful or widespread in their implementation. Yet these efforts under the Korean royalty signaled a shift from the feudal rule of the Joseon era to a modernized monarchy, in which the state could hopefully respond to changes in the international order.

Ideological Conflicts Among Enlightenment Factions and Isolationists

Myeongseong and her relatives planned to gradually modernize Joseon in an admiration for the Qing, and historians today refer to their faction as the Moderate Enlightenment Faction. The pro-Japanese members of the Enlightenment Faction, on the other hand, constitute the Radical Enlightenment Faction. The pro-Japanese Radical Enlightenment Faction was able to crowd out the pro-Qing Moderate Enlightenment Faction under Myeongseong, largely because Japan had greater military might at the time. Power in the realist sense may ultimately determine who wins over the physical space, but the colonizer's efforts to control and encroach upon the thoughts and ideals of the colonized rely heavily on the existing norm dynamics. Some of the existing schools of thought aided the spread of colonial power, like the pro-Japanese elite faction had, but others vigorously challenged the colonial encroachment, as will be shown in the next

³⁵ Kyung Moon Hwang, *Rationalizing Korea: The Rise of the Modern State, 1894-1945*. 1 online resource: illustrations vols. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016) p.27.

section.

The power struggle among various factions within the Joseon court allowed the Qing and Japan to gradually expand their grasp over the Korean Peninsula. Daewongun, who was dethroned in 1873, still had communications with members of the Isolationist Faction, which resisted acknowledging Qing as a legitimate power. The Isolationists believed that even Qing and the Western countries consisted of barbarians and “animals,” while Joseon was the only remaining land for humanity and the descendants of the Great Chinese Civilization.³⁶

Daewongun and the Isolationist Faction strongly opposed opening doors to Western or Japanese influences. In contrast, elites from the Northern Studies Faction such as Park Gyu-su argued that Joseon must also begin adopting foreign ideas, and they formed the Enlightenment Faction, that called for civilizing and modernizing Joseon. The Enlightenment Faction of Joseon had accurately observed the changes in the geopolitical distribution of power when Great Britain defeated Qing in the First and Second Opium Wars. The humiliating defeat of Qing came as a shock for these scholars who believed the Qing military to have the most sophisticated technology in the world.³⁷

In 1882, Daewongun decided to exploit the grievances of soldiers who received defective rice (rice mixed with sand) in lieu of proper compensation. Daewongun promised the soldiers proper payment and mobilized them to attack the capital. The soldiers’ attempt to assassinate Myeongseong, who had taken over the throne after deposing her father-in-law Daewongun, failed as she escaped in time. Nonetheless, Gojong, who was Daewongun’s son and Myeongseong’s husband, had little choice but to accept Daewongun’s return to the throne.

³⁶ Jinsik Choi 최진식, “Gapsinjeongbyeoneul jeonhuhan gaehwapai oegyoinsingnon” 갑신정변을 전후한 개화파의 외교인식론 [Enlightenment Faction’s Ideas on Diplomacy Before and After Gapsin Coup] *Yeoksawa Gyeonggye* 역사와 경계 32 (1997) p.8.

³⁷ 최진식, p.6.

Guarded by a squad of 200 soldiers that participated in the uprising, Daewongun swiftly abolished the *Tongni amun* agencies. Myeongseong in her refuge requested military assistance from Qing. Although Japan had also sent in its own army, Qing troops outnumbered and outpaced the Japanese in their response to the uprising and removed Daewongun.

The Radical Enlightenment Faction organized the 1884 Gapsin Coup and killed several pro-Qing members of the court, who were mostly Myeongseong's relatives. Myeongseong, who again survived the uprising, called for help from the Qing and returned to her throne. The support for the Radical Enlightenment Faction was weak at the time, and the proponents mainly consisted of Confucian scholars and a handful of diplomats.

Donghak and Pro-Japanese Populist Collaborators

Donghak began in 1860 as a Neo-Confucian religion that combined Confucian ethics and Western monotheism with local traditional shamanism and spiritual beliefs. The name Donghak, meaning the study of the east, suggested that Donghak protected Joseon while Catholicism protected the West.³⁸ Donghak gave hope to many farmers and commoners who had growing grievances against the inequalities of the feudal system. The religion taught its people that Hanullim (한울님), or God, existed within every person and that every person deserved to be treated and respected like God.³⁹ Such calls for egalitarianism appealed to the powerless farming class while threatening the stability of the feudal ruling class, leading to executions of the religious leaders of Donghak.

The 1894 Donghak Uprising prompted the Joseon monarchy – ruled at the time by Myeongseong,⁴⁰ Joseon's queen, and her relatives – to request military assistance from Qing's

³⁸ Dong-Kwang Ra, "Donghak and Donghak Movement." *Donghak Yeongu* 동학연구 11 (2002) p.244.

³⁹ Ra, p.253.

⁴⁰ Today Myeongseong remains a controversial historical figure in South Korea. Those who intend to denounce her for causing the demise of Joseon refer to her as "Queen Min," while those who idolize her as a national heroine refer

Yuan Shikai. As Qing deployed troops, Japan rushed its troops to the peninsula. The rivalries between China and Japan intensified and culminated in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Ilchinhoe, a group of pro-Japanese collaborators, actively assisted Japan as it battled the Qing dynasty. The primary leaders of Donghak, who also happened to constitute the majority of pro-Japanese Ilchinhoe, believed that Koreans must look to Japan as an exemplar for modern development.

The pro-Japanese Ilchinhoe collaborators were populist, and they appealed to the masses by refusing to pay taxes.⁴¹ The Ilchinhoe drew a stark contrast from the collaborators under Yi Wang-yong, who were “privileged aristocrats within the pro-Japanese cabinet under the protectorate.”⁴² According to a 1904 survey of Ilchinhoe members, more than 50 percent had self-identified as former officials or literati, while the rest identified as lower-class. It is likely that these former officials and literati experienced alienation under the inefficient, corrupt bureaucracies of Joseon and decided to mobilize the masses in their protest against the monarchical establishment.⁴³ Ilchinhoe continued to put forth populist rhetoric until the Annexation in 1910, such as by calling for the redistribution of tenant rights and control of public lands.

Japan’s ambitions to modernize the Korean Peninsula and expand its control throughout Asia – based on a universalist perception of its own identity – were reinforced by the active support of populist Korean collaborators. Despite the one-dimensional depiction of these collaborators in today’s history as simply opportunistic and greedy, it appears that the elite

to her as “Empress Myeongseong.” The author uses the name “Myeongseong” in an effort to impartially analyze her role in Joseon Korea’s efforts to adopt and revise the concept of modernity.

⁴¹ Moon, Yumi. *Populist Collaborators: The Ilchinhoe and the Japanese Colonization of Korea, 1896-1910*. (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 2013) p.164.

⁴² Moon, p.164.

⁴³ Moon, p.196.

leaders of Ilchinhoe, the Enlightenment Faction, and Donghak did emphasize a message of egalitarianism and decried the corruption of the monarchical establishment. Although it is nearly impossible to gauge whether their egalitarian concerns for the people were authentic, it is important to note that the Korean masses' grievances against the unequal feudal structure had been brewing enough to the point that populist collaborators could exploit them.

Confrontations with Western Powers and Joseon Responses

Members of the Joseon court increasingly voiced their fears that Western powers could threaten Joseon's existence, as they watched Qing and Japan open doors to European forces and the U.S. in the late 19th century. Yet these fears failed to materialize into modernization policy, and the state merely repaired some of its old weaponry. Prior to 1866, when Joseon had its first military conflict with a European country, the royalty and elites of the Joseon court merely reported the occasional appearances of Western boats to Qing, and the perception that Joseon had to fundamentally change its diplomatic policies toward the West was largely absent.⁴⁴

The 1866 French attack on Korea and 1871 U.S. attack on Korea proved to a few concerned elites the urgent need for modernization, while Daewongun still refused to open Joseon's doors and improve its military capabilities. Daewongun had briefly considered forming diplomatic ties with France in 1860, given his wife's devout beliefs in Catholicism, but the diplomatic attempts dissipated as he quickly changed his mind. As European influence in Asia began to grow, Daewongun decided to persecute Catholics in Joseon and executed a French priest in 1866. France took this as an opportunity to invade Joseon, but the French had to retreat, in a rare instance of an agricultural pre-modern state defeating an industrialized nation in a

⁴⁴ Choi 최진식, p.7.

battle.⁴⁵

The United States army invaded Joseon in 1871 for numerous reasons, one of which was to further investigate why Joseon soldiers shot an American armed merchant steamer several years earlier. The U.S. was far better prepared than the French and succeeded in killing over 200 Korean troops with only a few American casualties. Nonetheless, Daewongun refused to open Joseon's doors to the U.S., and the American troops retreated. Although a few scholars like Park Gyu-su worried that Joseon needed to modernize and open its doors to the west if it were to survive, Daewongun falsely interpreted Joseon's "victories" in both incidents as proof of its military strength and continued the isolationist policies.

Proponents of *Dongdoseogiron* (Eastern Ideals and Western Technology Theory; 동도서기론), which emerged in the 1880s, argued that Joseon must simultaneously preserve the Confucian ideals of the Great Chinese Civilization and adopt the modern technological advancements of the West. Many scholars see *Dongdoseogiron* as an early form of the Enlightenment ideology because it signaled a radical departure from the ideas of *Wijeongcheoksaron* (Defending Joseon and Eradicating the Evil Theory; 위정척사론).⁴⁶ *Wijeongcheoksaron* was the idea that Joseon must protect Neo-Confucian ideals while eliminating the "evil studies (사학; 邪學)" of the West. The evil studies referred to any philosophical or cultural concepts brought in from the West, such as Catholicism.

Park Gyu-su began to defy the Confucian concept of binary delineation between the Chinese civilization (화; 華) and the barbarians (이; 夷) in the 1870s, after the 1871 U.S. attack

⁴⁵ Wonmo Kim 김원모, "Byeongin yangyo" 병인양요 [Byeongin Western Invasion] *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* 한국민족문화대백과사전, 1995. Accessed December 22, 2018. <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0023142>.

⁴⁶ Sin-jae Kim 金信在, "Bakgyusuui gachwasasangui seonggyeok" 박규수의 개화사상의 성격 [Character of the Enlightenment Idea of Park Gyu Su] *The Kyoung-ju Sahak* 경주사학 19 (2000) p.199-200.

on Korea. The Enlightenment Faction argued for adopting the ideology and norms of the Western states, while also implementing capitalistic means of production to strengthen Joseon militarily and ensure its prosperity.⁴⁷ One could categorize Park Gyu-su's openness to Western technology and deference to Confucian ideals as an embodiment of *Dongdoseogiron*.

Japan forced an unequal treaty with Joseon in 1876 through the Ganghwa Island Treaty. The treaty came at a time before the Enlightenment Faction had become popular with the masses, and Confucian scholars and the general population expressed opposition to opening Joseon's doors to Japan. Even Joseon's first official diplomat to Japan at the time doubted that Japan's rapid modernization efforts would be successful.⁴⁸

Japan's infiltration into Joseon through the 1876 Ganghwa Island Treaty shocked Hongzhang Li, the viceroy of Zhili province at the time. Li rushed to have Qing diplomats in Japan meet with Joseon's diplomat and persuade him to adopt the Theory of Diplomacy with the U.S (연미론; 聯美論). The theory called for "maintaining friendly relations with China, breaking ties with Japan, and developing diplomatic relations with the U.S. (친중국 결일본 연미국)" as a means to defend Joseon against the increasing threat of Russia.⁴⁹

Kang Wi, a Joseon poet and scholar who aided the state in negotiating the Ganghwa Island Treaty with Japan, revised this theory to better suit Joseon's unique security needs. Kang Wi believed that unlike Qing, Joseon could easily form diplomatic ties with Russia because Joseon did not face an imminent threat of attacks from Russia. Nonetheless, partly due to his belief that the U.S. was a land of equality and peace, Kang Wi ultimately concluded that an

⁴⁷ Sin-jae Kim, p.200.

⁴⁸ Jongwon Kim 김종원, "Jojungsangminsuryungmuyeokjangjeong" 조중상민수륙무역장정 [Treaty on Land and Maritime Trade Between Joseon and Qing China], *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* 한국민족문화대백과사전, 1996. Accessed December 21, 2018. http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Index?contents_id=E0052637.

⁴⁹ Kim 김종원, 1996, Accessed December 21, 2018.

alliance with the U.S. was strategically a better choice. He also correctly identified Americans' fear of a Russian hegemony in the Asia-Pacific and informed Gojong that the U.S. likely has a genuine interest in forming ties with Joseon.⁵⁰ Surely, less than a century later, the U.S. would go to war against the Soviet Union in the name of preventing a communist takeover of Asia.

Conclusion

The decision to modernize Joseon was on the basis of both Realpolitik and ideological commitments to the Great Chinese Civilization. The factions that prevented Joseon from properly responding to changes in the geopolitical power distribution – namely the modernization of Japan and the arrival of Western countries – had selfish interests in maintaining their political clout. In addition, Joseon Isolationists' stubborn adherence to Neo-Confucian ideology and superiority of the Great Chinese Civilization (中華) in a binary sense blinded Daewongun from properly responding to changes in the geopolitical power distribution. The obsession with the dichotomy between the civilized and the barbarians prevented the Joseon court from swiftly adapting to the changing times.

Both Japan and Korea had experienced popular uprisings that were largely provoked by the inefficiency of the state, in the 19th century. Yet the Japanese state responded by promptly undergoing the Meiji Restoration and establishing a centralized monarchy, approaching one step closer to the imperial military state that it became in the early 20th century. Korea, on the other hand, failed to modernize itself in time due to the power struggles among factions within the Joseon court and many elites' pious attachment to the Great Chinese Civilization.

⁵⁰ Heon-joo Lee 李憲柱, "1880nyeondae choban Gangwiui yeonmijagangnon" 1880년대 초반 姜瑋의 聯美自強論 [Kang Wi's Yeonmijagang-non in Early 1880's] *Journal of Korean Modern and Contemporary History* 한국근현대사연구 39 (2006) p.19-21.

CASE STUDY 3: JAPAN'S IMPERIAL CONQUESTS

Introduction

This chapter explores Japan's use of modernity as propaganda and its imperial pursuits in Korea and Manchuria. Japan's desire to become a "modern" state and expand its territory was rooted in its inferiority complex toward the West and the Great Chinese Civilization. In addition to reshaping the Japanese subjects' view of self and of their nation with language and education policies, as discussed in Case Study 1, the ruling regime of Japan sought to prove its superiority in the Asia-Pacific region by conquering Korea. It also launched the project of building a multiethnic utopia in Manchuria, which was a symbolic representation of Imperial Japan's power and generosity as the colonizer but was in fact fraught with colonial forms of oppression.

Inferiority Complex toward the West and China

Japan's colonial conquests are a response to its own inferiority complex, or the "deep-rooted anxiety/inferiority caused by the historical encounter with the Christian civilization."⁵¹ Japan during the Meiji Restoration period best exemplified collective learning, during which "political leaders and intellectuals aggressively copied institutional designs, lifestyles, and continental philosophies from Europe."⁵² At the same time, Japan's attempts to imitate the West were coupled with a desire to outperform China and overcome China's ideological superiority. In Japan's conception of self, the quest to become more "Western" had replaced Sinology, or an admiration for China's cultural and ideological authority.

Japan's continuing struggle to "present its in-between ambivalence towards the binary world of the Orient versus the Occidental" became apparent in its conquest of Manchuria, a

⁵¹ Zhiyu Shi, *Civilization, Nation and Modernity in East Asia*. Routledge Advances in Asia-Pacific Studies, 12. (London: Routledge, 2012) <http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017.12/366327>, p.7.

⁵² Shi, p.11

region that spans Northeast China and parts of Mongolia.⁵³ Japan attempted to redefine its identity as a state that is neither the East nor West but is able to bridge the civilizations. Yet this attempt relied on an assumption that “the East and West must be ontologically distinct from each other, necessarily remaining on opposite sides of the bridge.”⁵⁴ Therefore, in order to fulfill this perception of self, Japan had to create and reinforce a worldview in which all other Asian ethnicities were inferior to the Japanese and the superior West was within Japan’s reach.

Pan-Asianism and Ethnic Superiority as Foundation for Japan’s Colonial Conquests

The concept of Pan-Asianism emerged in the late 19th century and early 20th century in response to Japan’s first encounter with the West. In the 1920s, the perception of China as “not a state but merely a civilization” and a justification that since it is “merely a civilization, it has no clearly delineated political borders,” [made] inroads into Japanese logic to justify expansion and territorial conquest in China.”⁵⁵

The increasing clout of European countries and their diplomatic partnerships with Asian nations, such as Korea, threatened Japan’s ambition to attain hegemony in the region. The diplomatic partnerships that European countries formed with Korea were more of a tributary, hierarchical relationship that Korea had had for millennia with China than a mutually beneficial alliance. In response, Kōa-kai, the first official organization in Japan dedicated to the cause of Asianism, vowed to “promote cooperation among the various nations of Asia, starting first and foremost with China and Korea, and thereby reverse the decline, resist the West, and advance Asian interests.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Shi, p.57-58.

⁵⁴ Shi, p.58

⁵⁵ Sven Saaler and J. Victor Koschmann, *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, Regionalism and Borders*. Asia's Transformations. (London: Routledge, 2007) p.27.

⁵⁶ Saaler and Koschmann, p.36.

The Paris Peace Conference in January of 1919 marked the rise of a new great power – and the first non-European, non-American one at that – as Japan joined the Council of Ten as one of the key decision-making powers. Yet two months later, in March 1919, the terms of the Council were revised so that “the decision-making power had shifted to the Council of Four, which consisted of the political leaders of the four great powers [United States, Britain, Italy, and France], excluding Japan,” possibly due to Japan’s proposal to “insert a racial equality clause into the Covenant of the League of Nations.”⁵⁷

The Japanese leaders’ calls for racial equality within the League of Nations did not reflect a genuine concern for equal rights for all races and ethnicities. Japanese intellectuals, such as the likes of Ishibashi Tanzan, criticized the Japanese government for “wanting equal status with the [European and American] powers, but conducting discriminatory and imperial policies towards ‘other’ Asians.”⁵⁸ Yet, this was precisely why racial discrimination from the Euro-American powers was especially insulting for the Japanese leaders and public. The Japanese refused to be perceived as equal to the other, inferior Asians.

Colonial Policies in Okinawa

Alan Christy found the roots of Japanese colonialism in Japan’s early discriminatory policies toward Okinawans. The people of Okinawa, whom Japan decided to exclude from its newly defined national identity, “suffered the same ‘military invasion and occupation, political annexation, paternalistic enforcement of modernization, and compulsory cultural (especially linguistic) assimilation to Japan that were the hallmarks of Japanese colonial policy throughout Asia.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Tomoko Akami. *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan, and the Institute of Pacific Relations in War and Peace, 1919-45*. Routledge Studies in Asia's Transformations. (London: Routledge, 2003) p.22.

⁵⁸ Akami, p.25.

⁵⁹ Barlow, p.11

Japan's colonial treatment of Okinawan identity vis-à-vis the supposed "Japaneseness" mirrors that of Korean identity. During the Meiji era, the Japanese government successfully constructed "Japanese identity [...] as the sign of a progressive, non-Okinawan identity, while Okinawan identity was produced as a sign of being antimodern and non-Japanese."⁶⁰ Creating a dichotomy between a superior ethnicity and an inferior one legitimized discrimination against individuals who, according to the Japanese state, belonged to the inferior group. These early constructions of the Okinawan as the "antimodern" Other evolved into Japan's colonial policies in Korea and Manchuria.

Colonial Policies in Korea

Lee et al (2013) classified colonial spaces into three types, namely the Colonial Superstructural Space (CSuS), Colonial Functional Space (CFS), and the Colonial Social Space (CSS). CSuS refers to any space in which the colonizer attempts to establish its hegemony, and it need not be a physical entity. CSuS includes Imperial Japan's policy of requiring Koreans to use Japanese names and any bureaucracies that support such legal measures.⁶¹ CFS, on the other hand, involve actions or institutions that enable the economic exploitation of the colonized. The elements that belong to CFS are often directly imported from the colonizing country, such as modern educational and healthcare institutions. These seemingly benign institutions' main purpose is not to improve the well-being of the colonized; rather, it is to expedite and streamline the colonizer's exploitation of colonial resources.⁶² CSS, then, refers to the space that is least controlled by the colonizer, and often so because the minimal control is beneficial for the colonizer. For instance, the Japanese left the Korean traditional family structure intact because it

⁶⁰ Barlow, p.147

⁶¹ Lee, Hong Yung, Yong-ch'ul Ha, and Clark W. Sorensen. *Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea, 1910-1945*. 1 online resource (xi, 379 pages) : illustrations vols. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013. Chapter 1.

⁶² Lee, Ha, and Sorensen. Chapter 1.

allowed for easier management of the colonized people.

Imperial Japan sought to expand its hegemony with heavy policing of the colonized peoples, and it also actively promoted the idea of Japanese ethnic superiority via name changes. It also established public schooling where Korean children studied in the Japanese language, and hospitals and vaccination became widely implemented across the colony. Schools were a convenient tool for spreading the propaganda of Japanese ethnic superiority, and Japanese officials frequently emphasized the lack of modern healthcare in Colonial Korea to justify its occupation. Education and healthcare also helped create a strong, cheap labor force for Japanese businesses and the state. Lastly, Imperial Japan exploited the existing Confucian patriarchy and class-based social hierarchy to help with its recruitment of young men into the Japanese military and women as sex slaves for its troops. Imperial Japan did not attempt to remove these social traditions, which are a form of third-face power, because they helped further Japan's military hegemony and expedited its resource exploitation, which expanded its power in the first face.

Japan used militarization to gain physical control of the people and land and to expand its region even further. Japan used cultural domination to ascertain its normative and ideological control of the colonized. The militarization of colonial subjects, not only in Korea but in Taiwan, Manchuria, and Okinawa, supported Japan's ambitions to transcend borders and universalize its identity throughout Asia.

The Japanese residents who had moved into Korea in the early years of the protectorate had also strongly demanded for a consular police force. Japanese resident communities had developed in port cities such as Busan, Wonsan, and Incheon after Japan had Joseon sign an unequal treaty and open its ports to Japanese traders. The port cities like Busan were notorious for petty crimes like burglary, prostitution, and drug trafficking, and the Japanese Residents'

Association in Busan was the first to send a request to Tokyo for consular police forces.⁶³

Imperial Japan also established police forces throughout the Korean Peninsula years before it officially occupied the country in 1910. In fact, the consular police forces that it deployed in the years between 1902 and 1905 helped set the ground for its military control of not only Korea, but also of Manchuria and the China proper.⁶⁴

These consular police forces also helped establish hospitals that were open to all local residents, both Japanese and Korean, in the 1880s before Japan had even occupied the peninsula.⁶⁵ Such use of police forces for both maintaining public order and implementing modern healthcare shows that CSuS and CFS often overlap. Inoue Kaoru, who was Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1885, commented that year that the Korean people will be able to see the efficacy and superiority of modern Japanese medicine when they visit these port hospitals set up by the consular police.⁶⁶

The Deceitful Ideology of Utopian Manchukuo and Imperial Modernity

Imperial Japan created a fictitious utopian portrayal of Manchukuo, or the Republic of Manchuria, to justify its territorial expansion and colonial governance. Around the time of the Mukden Incident of 1931, which set the pretext for Japan's invasion of Manchuria, the Manchuria Youth Association put forth ideals of “harmonious cooperation of all ethnicities (민족협화)” and “the theory of kingly way (왕도주의)” as the basis for founding Manchukuo. The Manchuria Youth Association consisted of Japanese citizens living in Manchuria. These ideals were too vague in their essence and did not materialize into actual policies. Instead, these

⁶³ Esselstrom, p.14.

⁶⁴ Esselstrom, Erik. *Crossing Empire's Edge: Foreign Ministry Police and Japanese Expansionism in Northeast Asia*. 1 online resource (xii, 233 pages) : illustrations, maps. vols. The World of East Asia. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, p.13.

⁶⁵ Esselstrom, p.18.

⁶⁶ Esselstrom, 2009. p.18.

founding ideologies of Manchukuo legitimized Japan's expansionism and became the means for unifying the diverse peoples of Manchuria and obtaining their allegiance.⁶⁷

The messaging of the Manchuria Youth Association changed to the “harmonious cooperation of five ethnicities (오족협화),” which now centered around the Japanese ethnicity and placed other minorities at the periphery. This shift in narrative occurred shortly after the Mukden Incident because the Japanese army's victory quelled the Japanese-Manchurians' fear of Chinese dominance in the region.⁶⁸ The Japanese-Manchurians previously viewed themselves as one of many minority ethnicities in the region, under the threat of Qing, and thus argued for the harmonious, relatively egalitarian cooperation of all peoples. Following the Mukden Incident, however, they redefined their identity as the superior ethnicity and narrowed the terms of cooperation to the five primary ethnicities, namely the Japanese, Koreans, Han Chinese, Mongolians, and Manchurians.⁶⁹

Scholars Bruce Cumings and Carter Eckert viewed the role of Manchuria as that of the periphery, which provided raw materials and cheap labor for the core and the semi-periphery. The interpretation is based on Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory, which defines colonial relationships as a set of interactions among the core, the semi-periphery, and the periphery.⁷⁰ The core is generally the developed, fully industrialized nation that has the sophisticated technology for turning raw materials into commercial goods. The periphery usually constitutes colonies that supply an abundance of cheap labor and raw materials. The semi-

⁶⁷ Jina Ahn 안지나, “Manjuguk geonguk ideollogiui gyunyeolgwa byeonhyeong” 만주국 건국 이데올로기의 균열과 변형 [Fissures and transformations in Manchukuo's founding ideology] *Journal of Manchurian Studies* 만주연구 18 (2014) p.38.

⁶⁸ Ahn, p.41.

⁶⁹ Ahn, p.41-42.

⁷⁰ Wallerstein, Immanuel Maurice. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p.5.

periphery, then, refers to countries that are in the process of industrialization and provide both cheap labor and export goods. Cumings observed that “as Korean rice was shipped to Japan, millet was imported from Manchuria to feed Korean peasants in a classic core-semiperiphery-periphery relationship.”⁷¹ Eckert similarly viewed the founding of Manchukuo as “greatly [expanding] both the actual and potential periphery of Japan’s empire” and reaffirming “Korea’s role as a burgeoning semi-industrial country within the imperial system.”⁷² Whereas Korean workers in the peninsula provided unskilled or semi-skilled labor in the textile industry, migrant laborers in Manchuria procured raw materials, such as cotton and coal, according to Eckert’s findings.

The founding of Kenkoku University furthered Manchukuo’s function as the periphery and education as an essential part of the modern state apparatus. Kenkoku (meaning “founding of the nation”) University opened in Manchukuo in May of 1938 with the inaugural class of roughly 1300 students. The University took care to admit students of various ethnicities to practice its mission statement of “harmonious cooperation of the five ethnicities.” Among them, 90 students were ethnic Koreans, who constituted about 7% of the inaugural class. The University was founded with the mission of cultivating the best talents into the new leaders of Manchukuo, and many of its Korean graduates returned to the peninsula to become leading figures in the military, politics, business, and academia.⁷³ The tuition for the University was free, and several students had come from lower-class families or had criminal charges from

⁷¹ Bruce Cumings, “The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles, and Political Consequences.” *International Organization* 38, no. 1 (1984) p.13.

⁷² Carter J. Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch’ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945*. 1 online resource (431 pages) : illustrations. vols. Korean Studies of the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies. (Seattle, District of Columbia: University of Washington Press, 2014) Chapter 6.

⁷³ Jung hee Yi 이정희, “Manju geongukdachagui gyoyukgwa joseonin haksaeeng” ‘만주 건국대학’의 교육과 조선인 학생 [Education of Kenkoku University in Manchukuo and Korean Student], *Journal of Manchurian Studies* 만주연구 22 (2016) p.226.

demonstrating against Imperial Japan; a few others belonged to elite families whose relatives were members of the Japanese army.⁷⁴ Many Korean and Taiwanese graduates expressed their frustrations of growing up as colonial subjects, and they had applied to the University in hopes that discrimination would be less severe in Manchukuo.⁷⁵

Many scholars of Manchuria have questioned whether Manchukuo truly functioned as a periphery in the Wallerstein sense, as he focused on the ‘bubble’ of the Manchurian dream that Imperial Japan worked hard to create. The economic returns from Japan’s investment in Manchuria depended heavily on the Japanese and colonized people’s interest in the region. Newspapers in Colonial Korea ran stories about the hopeful future in the newly established Republic of Manchuria, and tens of thousands of merchants and students rushed to buy their train tickets in the first couple years of the Republic. Hundreds of women lined up for 20 job openings at a department store in Manchuria, and brokers recruited prostitutes and geishas on the streets of Busan.⁷⁶

However, despite the apparent fervor for the new frontier, not many enterprises from Colonial Korea relocated to Manchuria to take advantage of the cheap labor and raw materials, partly due to high tariffs.⁷⁷ Han observed that Manchukuo was an industrialized nation, rather than a provider of raw materials, as 51% of its gross production came from manufacturing. Most importantly, Manchukuo did not necessarily fall below Colonial Korea in terms of its developmental and ideological superiority. Although it was short-lived, Manchukuo was nonetheless an independent republic whereas the Korean peninsula was a colony under strict

⁷⁴ Yi 이정희, p.235-236.

⁷⁵ Yi 이정희, p.238.

⁷⁶ Suk-Jung Han 한석정, “Jiyeokchegyeyi heosil - 1930nyeondae joseongwa manjuui gwangye” 지역체계의 허실 - 1930년대 조선과 만주의 관계 [The Validity of the Regional System: The Relationship Between Korea and Manchuria in the 1930s], *Korean Journal of Sociology* 한국사회학 37 no.5 (2003) p.60-61.

⁷⁷ Han 한석정, p.61.

control of the imperial government. Unlike Koreans in the peninsula who did not have rights to self-expression, those in Manchuria lived under an ideal of multiethnic cooperation, even if it was a pretense.

Baek Seok,⁷⁸ a Korean poet and ardent critic of Imperial Japan, was among those who relocated to Manchukuo in the hopes of escaping colonial modernity. In 1939 when Baek Seok decided to relocate, the colonial suppression of cultural and literary expressions was at its worst. Following its victory at the Battle of Wuhan in 1938, Imperial Japan had become more confident than ever and intensified its control over colonial subjects. The project to completely eradicate the Korean language in schools and mass literature greatly distressed anticolonial writers at the time.⁷⁹ Baek Seok imagined Manchuria to be a pre-modern utopia where nomads maintained an ancient, primal lifestyle that Koreans had long abandoned thousands of years ago. Baek Seok had critiqued the defects of modernity for many years, and his 1940 poem “In the Northern Lands” reveals his fantasy of Manchuria as the pre-modern utopia as he regrets missing out on the beauties of nature.⁸⁰

However, upon arrival in Manchukuo, Baek Seok soon encountered the reality of ethnic discrimination despite its mission of multiethnic harmony. He decided to move completely out of Imperial Japan’s boundaries by becoming a farmer in rural Manchuria. There the poet formed a symbiotic relationship with a Chinese farmer, whom he describes as the historical resident of the northern lands and Manchuria’s rightful owner. This friendship was an intentional act of defiance against Imperial Japan’s colonial policies in Manchukuo, which privileged Koreans as

⁷⁸ Jae-yong Kim spelled the poet’s name as “Baik-Suk” in his English language abstract, but I used the Revised Romanization System of Korea and spelled it as “Baek Seok.”

⁷⁹ Jae-yong Kim 김재용, “Manju sijeorui baekseokgwa hyeondaeseong bipan” 만주 시절의 백석과 현대성 비판 [Baik-Suk’s Critique of Modernity in the Period of Manchuria], *Journal of Manchurian Studies* 만주연구 14 (2012) p.162-163.

⁸⁰ Kim 김재용, p.164-166.

“civilized” or “salvageable” and deemed the Chinese as barbarians.⁸¹ Therefore, Baek Seok’s perception of his Korean identity did not originate from a nationalistic pride, but rather he believed that solidarity among the colonized peoples could overcome historical grievances and linguistic differences, as he did with his Chinese farmer friend.

When he witnessed a series of trains carrying Manchurian timber to markets in Manchukuo and overseas, however, Baek Seok lamented that imperial modernity had infiltrated even the most rural and uninhabited corners of Manchuria. Baek Seok’s poetry and memoirs from Manchuria provide a poignant critique of imperial modernity, the divisions it created among the Asian ethnicities, and its destruction of the pastoral lifestyle and the environment.

Conclusion

For Imperial Japan, Manchuria represented the transcendence of physical barriers that was made possible by its militaristic modern state. Japan’s success in the invasion of Manchuria was further proof of its supposed ethnic and ideological superiority over Korea, Taiwan, and even the Great Chinese Civilization. The colonial policies in Korea helped mobilize normative support for Imperial Japan through language and education policies, and it also helped mobilize the necessary manpower and resources from Korea to Manchuria. The fictitious ideology that Imperial Japan created to legitimize and facilitate its expansion gave false hope to working-class Koreans, who found themselves in double marginalization – under the unequal social hierarchy that still remained from Joseon era, and also under the ethnic discrimination of the colonial government.⁸² These Koreans relocated in the hopes of cultivating a peaceful rural livelihood in the Manchurian utopia, but instead, they inadvertently reinforced Imperial Japan’s colonial

⁸¹ Kim 김재용, p.176-177.

⁸² Seung-cheon Lee 이성천, “Manjuguk gukchaeginyeomui munhakjeok tuyeong yangsange gwanhan nonui gochal” 만주국 국책이념의 문학적 투영 양상에 관한 논의 고찰 [A Study on Discussions of Literary Projection of the National Policy Ideology of Manchuria], *The Korean Poetics Studies 한국시학연구*, no. 40 (2014) p.133.

projects. As Cumings and Eckert pointed out, the Korean migrants in Manchuria provided the much-needed labor and allowed Imperial Japan to expand its periphery. In addition, by buying into Imperial Japan's deceitful ideology, the Koreans in Manchuria gave force to an otherwise empty rhetoric of "harmonious cooperation." Nonetheless, for a select number of elite university graduates, the Republic of Manchukuo represented a grey area between the colonizer and the colonized, where Koreans could attempt to realize their aspirations as equal citizens and never quite achieve it.

CASE STUDY 4: IDEOLOGICAL DIVERGENCES IN COLONIAL KOREA

Introduction

This chapter studies two vastly different interpretations of modernity that colonial intellectuals in Korea produced. Yi Gwangsu, a writer and intellectual who once fought for Korea's liberation, later argued that Koreans were a backward, barbarian people who needed to improve and modify their consciousness. Korean socialists like Kim Myeong-shik and Yoo Jinhui believed that socialism was the ideology that would liberate the Korean people from Imperial Japan. Both interpretations appropriated the "empty vessel" of modernity and used the rhetorical appeal of modernity to further their own worldviews.

Yi Gwangsu and the "Renovation of National Consciousness"

Yi Gwangsu was among the prominent independence activists who later conceded to Imperial Japan's ideology of modernization even at the expense of national liberation. Yi had been born into a lower-class peasant family, but he left Korea to study in Japan in 1905 as a member of a pro-Japan association named Ilchinhoe.

Yi's literary works from as early as 1909 exemplified his idealization of Japan as the model for modernization.⁸³ The short story that Yi published in 1909 in Japan, "Is This Love," tells the story of a male Joseon (Korean) student falling in love with a male Japanese student. While the story marks an important milestone in Korea's literary history with its portrayal of queer characters, critics have also interpreted the symbolism of the story as romanticization of Japan's recent success in modernization.

Despite such literary expressions of his admiration for Japan, in 1919, Yi authored the

⁸³ Taejeong Ahn 안태정, "Yi Gwangsu, bureujuajuii yongmangeul daebyeonhan singminji geundaehwaronja" 이광수, 부르주아지의 욕망을 대변한 식민지 근대화론자 [Yi Gwangsu, proponent of colonial modernization who represented the bourgeoisie's desires] Naeireul yeoneun yeoksa 내일을 여는 역사 8, no. 8 (2002) p.168.

February 8 Independence Declaration, which called on the United States and Britain, “the masters of world reform,” to condemn Imperial Japan’s subjugation of the Korean people.⁸⁴ Yi then defected to Shanghai and joined the Provisional Government, where he served as the editor-in-chief of *Independence Newspaper*. Tae-jeong Ahn interprets these activities as proof that Yi genuinely believed in the legitimacy of modernization under national autonomy during this period. It is also possible, however, that Yi was opportunistic in his decision to align himself with the liberation activists during this time, especially given the nationwide popular support that the 3.1 movement of 1919 had garnered.

Yi used his position as one of the better-known writers among the Korean masses to reshape the narrative regarding the liberation movement and privilege his own views as a proponent of modernization. After his abandonment of the Provisional Government, Yi even went on to deride the 3.1 movement as “the changes made without consciousness by an ignorant, barbaric people,” which was the very movement that he had helped catalyze by writing the February 8 Independence Declaration.⁸⁵ He adopted a rhetoric that closely resembled Imperial Japan’s justification for implementing repressive social policies. Yi advocated the ban on using the Korean language and argued that the Korean people’s “blood and flesh and bones must become Japanese” in an editorial written in September of 1940.⁸⁶ Imperial Japan had relied on such bans to restrict the political participation of the Korean people by repressing the oppressed group’s thought and speech, which constitutes manipulation of the second face of power. Yi was willing to sacrifice his own language if it had meant that the Korean people could finally escape their “barbaric” status and enhance themselves into productive members of society.

⁸⁴ Kyung Moon Hwang, “Opinion | The Birth of Korean Nationhood.” *The New York Times*, March 4, 2019, sec. Accessed March 3, 2019.

⁸⁵ Ahn 안태정, p.171.

⁸⁶ Ahn 안태정, p.173.

A common thread in Yi's ideology from the early 1900s until his death in 1951 was his belief that the bourgeoisie class ought to spearhead the process of modernization, regardless of whether this process requires cooperation with the colonizer. In his writing titled "My Confessions," which was released in 1949 and was an attempt at justifying his pro-Japanese actions, Yi argued that "Koreans in forced labor camps will learn manufacturing skills" and that "the more of our people receive industrial and military training, the greater our people's capacity will be."⁸⁷ Yi's writings and declarations constituted an effort to reshape the narrative on the legitimacy of Imperial Japan and the measures that it took to modernize Korea.

A close study of Yi Gwang-su's essay "Modifying the National Consciousness," published in the journal *Gaebyeok* in May, 1922 reveals his beliefs in modernity as a hierarchy between the developed ethnicities and underdeveloped, barbaric ethnicities. The original title of Yi's article is *Minjok gaejoron*, which roughly translates to "the theory on modifying the ethnicity." The Korean term *gaejo* can be translated into "renovation" or "modification." The Korean term *minjok* implies ethnic homogeneity. Because Korea was such a homogenous nation, this article translates Yi's use of the word in the article into "national consciousness." It is nonetheless important to note that using the term *minjok* implied certain ethnicities were inherently, and perhaps even biologically, superior to others. In fact, Yi describes in this article various characteristics associated with different ethnic groups, such as the independent and practical spirit of the Anglo-Saxon people and the intellectual and collective nature of the German people.⁸⁸ Here, Yi seems to conflate ethnic and racial categories with nationalities and assume that other nation-states are just as ethnically homogenous as Korea (or at least, what

⁸⁷ Ahn 안태정, p.170.

⁸⁸ Yikhyeon Choi, et al., trans. Joomyeong Yi 최익현 외 지음 이주명 편역, "Wonmun saryoro ingneun hanguk geundaesa" 원문 사료로 읽는 한국 근대사 [Korea's modern history read through original historical documents] (Seoul: Pilmaek 필맥, 2014) p.232.

liberated Korea would look like) and Japan. Despite such inaccuracies in Yi's understanding of ethnic distributions and the unreliable nature of his generalizations, such descriptions show that Yi believed the Korean people could improve such "ethnic" or "national consciousness" to become more modern in their disposition.

Yi emphasized the people's agency in the process of modifying the national consciousness. The newly found awareness exemplified in the Korean liberation movement was not an example of such agency. Yi argued that those changes are as natural as chemical reactions and compared them to "changes that an ignorant, barbaric people pursues without self-awareness."⁸⁹ Although Yi used metaphors to soften his criticisms of the Korean people, in essence he had called the Korean people a barbaric, premodern ethnicity. Yi believed that a true, meaningful modification of the national consciousness only came about as a result of collective, purposeful mobilization, and the Meiji Restoration was one of its successful examples that he cited.⁹⁰ Yi also praised the British Constitution as the epitome of practicality, and he argued that the British laws were superior to those of China because the Chinese laws were antiquated and not usable in the modern day.⁹¹ Yi therefore defined modernity as adaptability to changing times and practicality, and this definition of modernity legitimized colonization as a means to spread the practical spirit to premodern people. Yi even went on to praise Britain's colonization of Egypt and the Philippines as a mutually beneficial project that allowed freedoms to the colonized while bringing about material gains to the colonizer. Yi attributed such successes to the British people's character and their spirit of practicality and independence.⁹² As a collaborator with Imperial Japan, it was important for Yi to find the cause for the Korean people's sufferings in the

⁸⁹ Choi et al., p.218.

⁹⁰ Choi et al., p.224.

⁹¹ Choi et al., p.233.

⁹² Choi et al., p.235.

flawed consciousness of the Koreans, and not in Imperial Japan's colonization. Yi's conclusion that the Korean people's prosperity urgently requires the modification of national spirit, and not the liberation from Imperial Japan, thus served his personal interests as a collaborator. It also created a version of modernity that viewed certain ethnicities like the Japanese and the British as having better characters that allowed for their rise to political and military dominance. This view of modernity silenced the discourse on the injustices of the colonial system and even brought about genuine followers of Yi's theory, who saw it as the Korean intellectuals' priority to "save" the people by helping to modify the national spirit and modernize them. Former collaborators who later went on to become political leaders, like Park Chung-hee, adopted these seeds planted by Yi and set out developmental projects that would modify the South Korean people's spirit by making them motivated, productive members of society.

The History of Socialism in Korea

Socialism, which originated in 19th century Europe, first began to appear in the media and official records in the 1880s when newspapers such as *Hanseong Soonbo* wrote about European socialist parties. Socialism became one of the main political ideologies among colonized Koreans after the March 1st demonstration of 1919, which mobilized the masses by decrying the cruelties under Imperial Japan and the need for political mobilization.⁹³

Beginning in the late 1910s, many colonial Korean newspapers and periodicals, namely *The Dong-a Ilbo* and *Gaebyeok*,⁹⁴ extensively covered topics such as the Soviet revolutionary government and Lenin. New Asia Alliance Party, which consisted of Koreans studying abroad in Japan, China, and Vietnam, formed the Socialist Revolutionary Party in June of 1920,

⁹³ Sangdo Yi 이상두, ed. Myeonghyeok Jeon, "Sahoejuuiundong" 사회주의운동 [Socialist movement] Encyclopedia of Korean Culture 한국민족문화대백과사전, 2012. Accessed February 19, 2019. <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0026147>.

⁹⁴ "Gaebyeok" means "creation of the universe" in Korean.

demanding the abolition of classism, private property, and dictatorship of the proletariat. Koreans abroad in Khabarovsk, Russia had also formed the Korean People's Socialist Party in May of 1918. This party actively expanded in size by holding the Korean People's Socialist Party Leaders' Conference and including the left-wing faction of the New People's Association.⁹⁵ The Socialist Revolutionary Party began as a "book club" among a wide variety of interested members, all dedicated to the cause of liberating the Korean people from Imperial Japan. One faction within the SRP included students studying abroad in Japan who had formed the New Asia Alliance Party.

The Social Revolutionary Party and the Shanghai Faction of the Goryeo Communist Party found a consensus in that they prioritized the fight against Japanese imperialism.⁹⁶ The Socialist Revolutionary Party used the occasion of the Founding Conference of the Goryeo Communist Party to bring together liberation activist groups. The SRP dismissed the fact the Founding Conference was communist in nature when it decided to participate and transform itself into the Korean bureau of the GCP. The Shanghai Faction of the GCP did not seek to discuss or compromise differences among member groups, which later brought about harsh criticisms from other Korean communists and internal tension in the later years.⁹⁷

The Domestic Bureau of the Goryeo Communist Party used *The Dong-a Ilbo* and its editorial section as the medium for communicating its messages to the masses. The editorial section often directly represented the views of its editor-in-chief Jang Deok-soo. Jang Deok-

⁹⁵ Yi 이상두 (2012).

⁹⁶ Sun-woong Choi 최선웅. "1920nyeondae cho hangukgongsanjuuiundongui taljayujuuihwa gwajeong : sanghaepa goryeogongsandang gunnaejibureul jungsimeuro" [A study on the separation process of Korean communists and liberalists in early 1920's - focusing on the Korean bureau of the Shanghai Korean Communist Party] Journal for the Studies of Korean History 한국사학보 韓國史學報 no. 26 (2007) p.293.

⁹⁷ Sun-woong Choi 최선웅, p.293-294.

soo's staunch belief in New Liberalism⁹⁸ which he had maintained since his time as a student in Japan and a member of the Shin-a Alliance Party, led to his criticisms of capitalism and its structural flaws that require regulations and protections for the powerless.⁹⁹ Despite his opposition to the favoring of the powerful in capitalist systems, Jang did not believe in the elimination of private property and disagreed with Marxism in several aspects. Jang argued that the Korean people, who were the "powerless," should form a united front against Imperial Japan (the "powerful,") rather than brew class conflicts among Koreans as the Marxists suggested. The fight against Imperial Japan would require cooperation among laborers and management, among the bourgeoisie and proletariat.¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, even within the Domestic Bureau, several members such as Kim Myeong-shik and Yoo Jin-hui embraced Marxism. Kim was part of the group of new intellectuals who studied abroad in Japan, and Yoo was among the new intellectuals who received their education within Korea.¹⁰¹ Kim Myeong-shik initially showed New-Liberalist tendencies in the early 1920s but later became one of the prominent Marxist figures within the Goryeo Communist Party. Kim attributed the Soviet Union's fall to a dictatorship under Lenin not to an inherent flaw in Marxism, but rather to the "deformity of Russian capitalism."¹⁰² Yoo draw a parallel between the landowner-tenant farmer relationship and the capitalist-worker relationship, and he believed that the tenant farmers would gain a class consciousness and gradually make demands for their economic rights, which would ideally culminate in the

⁹⁸ "New Liberalism" in this context refers to the ideology that emerged in Great Britain in the early 20th century. Proponents of New Liberalism favored greater government intervention and believed that social problems of the poor could be solved by the cooperation of the government and model citizens. New Liberalism is therefore different from "neoliberalism." See Sun-woong Choi(최선웅)'s article above.

⁹⁹ Sun-woong Choi 최선웅, p.295.

¹⁰⁰ Sun-woong Choi 최선웅, p.299.

¹⁰¹ Sun-woong Choi 최선웅, p.299-300.

¹⁰² Choi 최선웅, p.300-301.

abolition of the tenant farming system and currencies.¹⁰³ Considering Yoo's unwavering stance against private property, the abolition of currency would have meant for Yoo the formation of a communist society. The Marxist elements within the Goryeo Communist Party believed that the pursuit for the modern capitalist civilization was inevitably a part of the Western imperialist agenda. This Western imperialist agenda, then, necessarily included Imperial Japan. As long as the Korean people operated within this system to bring about change, as New Liberals like Jang Deok-soo had wished, the paradox of having to conform to the imperialist agenda while demanding the political and economic liberation of the Korean people would persist.¹⁰⁴ Marxism therefore provided an avenue for pursuing total liberation from Imperial Japan without having to negotiate with the Japanese state like the New-Liberal moderates had suggested.

Conclusion

The conflicting interpretations of modernity by Yi Gwangsu and the socialist intellectuals of Colonial Korea reveal the flexibility in using modernity as propaganda. Factions across the political spectrum produced versions of modernity that best suited their worldview and that they believed would appeal to the Korean masses – and to Imperial Japan, in Yi's case. The norms and ideas created by these factions – especially that of Yi since the socialists did not gain first- or second-face political power in South Korea – proved transformative and continued to impact South Korean leaders' and intellectuals' discourse on modernity.

¹⁰³ Choi 최선웅, p.303-304.

¹⁰⁴ Choi 최선웅, p.305.

CASE STUDY 5: SOUTH KOREAN DICTATOR'S APPROPRIATION OF MODERNITY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the evolution of Park Chung-hee's expressions of modernity, from his military coup d'état in 1961 through the establishment of the Yushin regime in 1972 until his assassination in 1979. The Park regime had already begun using modernization as a propaganda tool in the 1960s and pushed for rapid industrialization, often at the expense of poorer rural provinces and low-income factory workers' basic rights. Park held a deep contempt and shame at South Korea's failure to develop and its history of defeats and colonization, which he sought to overcome with state-led modernization and development projects. Park then revised his narrative of modernity even further in the 1970s under his Yushin regime to deal with rising threats to his legitimacy. The need for appropriating modernity arose from Park's inferiority complex as a former collaborator and rising threats to his political legitimacy. He skillfully attached his new version of modernity to existing domestic norms that were becoming salient in the early 1970s. The new version of modernity served as a means for minimizing social volatility and subduing the increasing popularity of Western consumerism, lifestyles, and – to Park's greatest concern – the ideal of democracy. Moreover, Park's Yushin-era modernity became an end in itself as the dictator became fixated on defeating communism in the public's eyes and solidifying the U.S. alliance to justify the continuation of his dictatorial reign. Park envisioned the new Korea under his rule almost as a replica of Manchukuo, a self-reliant modern nation that will reign over the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, just as the designers of Imperial Japan had once dreamed.

The Legacy of Meiji Yushin and Manchuria

Park Chung-hee admired the Meiji Restoration and the overthrow of the feudal Tokugawa regime. In his memoir *The Country, the Revolution, and I*, Park remarked that after maintaining inflexible isolationist policies and a feudal lifestyle for two thousand years, Japan quickly rose as a superpower of the Far East within ten years of the Meiji revolution.¹⁰⁵ Park attributes the success of Japan's modernization to its foundation in the absolutist rule of the Emperor and a "nationalistic love for the country."¹⁰⁶ Thanks to this nationalistic foundation, Park argues, the agents of the Meiji revolution could "Japanize" the numerous ideologies flooding into the country from overseas.¹⁰⁷ Park similarly appropriated elements of Korean history and culture to further his discourse on modernization, as will be discussed in this chapter.

In Park's eyes, South Korea's history of poverty and destitution resembled Japan's history prior to the Meiji revolution. Park proudly declared in his 1976 speech to the leaders of Saemaul Undong, a government initiative that mobilized farmers and workers, that "the smudge of poverty that our country has worn for five thousand years is finally disappearing."¹⁰⁸ For Park, his takeover of the South Korean constitution in a self-coup was a revolution for the country, and its importance paralleled that of the Meiji Restoration. Park thus named his newly born regime "Yushin," which was the Korean pronunciation for the word *Ishin* (維新), or "Restoration" in Japanese. As Yeon Sik Choi had concluded, "Park Chung-hee's desire and obsession for

¹⁰⁵ Chung-hee Park 박정희, "Pyeongseol Gukgawa hyeongmyeonggwa na" 평설 국가와 혁명과 나 [The Country and the Revolution and I: Edited Version] Edited by Nam, Jeongwook 남정욱 and the Committee for 100-Year Anniversary of Park Chung-hee's Birth 박정희 탄생 100 돌 기념 사업 추진 위원회. (Seoul: Kiparang 기파랑, 2017) p.139

¹⁰⁶ Park 박정희, p.143.

¹⁰⁷ Park 박정희, p.143.

¹⁰⁸ Kim, Jongtae 김종태. "Bakjeonghui jeongbu sigi seonjingung damnonui busanggwa baljeonjuuijeok gukgajeongcheseongui hyeongseong: daetongnyeong yeonseolmungwa joseonilboreul jungsimeuro" [The Rise of the Seonjingung Discourse and the Formation of Developmental National Identity during the Park Chung-Hee Era: Analyzing Presidential Addresses and the Chosun Ilbo] Korean Journal of Sociology 한국사회학 韓國社會學 47, no. 1 (2013) p.81.

modernization originated from his deep-rooted hatred for our [Korean] history.”¹⁰⁹

Growing up under Imperial Japan’s rule of Korea, Park yearned to join the Japanese army and rise up the social ranks to become a loyal, equal member of the Empire. In 1939, Park Chung-hee had written a letter with his own blood, pleading to the Manchurian Military Academy to let him attend the school. *Manshu shinbun*, a Japanese-language newspaper published in Manchuria, featured the bizarre story of a passionate Korean man who pledged allegiance to Imperial Japan and the Emperor with blood, popularizing his story and even getting him a connection who helped admit him to the academy.¹¹⁰ Park later projected his early-life desires to become a Manchurian onto his modernization of South Korea, in which he created infeasible yet symbolic development projects and used nationalistic propaganda to motivate the working class.

Anti-Japanese Sentiments and Appropriation of Korean-ness

Threats to Park Chung-hee’s regime and its legitimacy originated from domestic anti-Japanese sentiments, class divisions and social disruption that emerged as a by-product of rapid industrialization in the 1960s, and security concerns from overseas.

First, the masses’ violent opposition to the Park regime’s normalization talks with Japan in 1965 demonstrated the vengeance that South Korean people still harbored against Japan.¹¹¹ The demonstration likely refueled Park’s fear that he may be seen as an illegitimate leader, for he had faced criticisms for his pro-Japanese tendencies. Historian Han Hong-gu recounts an anecdote from 1961, when the news of a military coup d’etat reached Japanese political elites.

¹⁰⁹ Kim 김종태, p.81.

¹¹⁰ Carter J. Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea: The Roots of Militarism, 1866-1945* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016) p.97-98.

¹¹¹ Won Kim. "The Race to appropriate “Koreanness”: National Restoration, Internal Development, and Traces of Popular Culture." *In Cultures of Yusin: South Korea in the 1970s*, edited by Ryu Youngju (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018) p.23.

Many Japanese politicians feared that the new South Korean regime would be anti-Japanese, like Rhee Syngman's had been. When they found out that the Japanese name of the new leader Park Chung-hee was *Dakaki Masao* (高木正雄), they recognized his name as the young man from Joseon who had attended the Manchurian Military Academy and Japanese Military Academy and sighed in relief.¹¹²

At the time of Park's formal inauguration as president in 1962, Ono Banboku, then-vice president of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party, praised Park as "a close acquaintance of mine, that I could even refer to our relationship as that of a father and a son" to the media in Tokyo.¹¹³ Opposition leaders of South Korea took this chance to criticize Park Chung-hee for letting Japan's politician refer to him condescendingly as a son and thereby damaging the dignity of South Korea.¹¹⁴ Ono was one of the most powerful members in Japanese politics at the time, and he was among the political elites in postwar Japan that still believed in the ideology of Imperial Japan. Ono had claimed in 1960 in a Japanese magazine that Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan should combine to form the United States of Japan and later add Southeast Asian countries to form an Asian federation, essentially calling for the resurrection of the Great East-Asia Prosperity Sphere.¹¹⁵ The opposition politicians and the media in South Korea could easily form this association between Park Chung-hee and right-wing, imperialistic elites in Japan, implying that Park also had allegiance to the bygone ideals of Imperial Japan.

Therefore, when the public carried out mass demonstrations against the 1965 Normalization Treaty with Japan, Park likely realized that he could not rely on his police forces

¹¹² Han, Hong-gu 한홍구 *Yushin: ojik han saram-eul wihan sidae* 유신: 오직 한 사람을 위한 시대 [Yushin: the era for only one man] (Seoul: Hankyoreh Chulpan 한겨레 출판, 2014) p.51.

¹¹³ Han 한홍구, p.51.

¹¹⁴ Han 한홍구, p.51.

¹¹⁵ Han 한홍구, p.52.

to eliminate the roots of his illegitimacy complex. His earlier narrative of modernity, which he had put forth as a national imperative and justification for his industrialization projects, needed additional support from domestic norms of nationalism and, especially, “Koreanness.”

The appropriation of “Koreanness (*minjokjeok-in geot*)” became popularized in the early 1970s, coincidentally around the same time as the Park regime sought to revise its notion of modernity by adding an element of national pride. Park Chung-hee initially took little interest in nationalism and even expressed contempt at the retrogressive tendencies in Korean history. Park believed, for instance, that the Korean history itself needed a reform because it mainly consisted of disputes among factions, subjugation under foreign powers, and lack of independence and willpower.¹¹⁶ The regime initiated their efforts to redefine and appropriate Koreanness by implementing cultural policies, such as the restoration of damaged historical sites and buildings and censorship of popular media, through three governmental agencies, namely the Ministry of Culture and Public Information, the Bureau of Cultural Heritage Management, and the Korean Culture and Arts Foundation.¹¹⁷ The government literally and metaphorically excavated figures from the past that could resonate with the public and help build an image of the Park regime as patriotic. In addition to discovering and repairing physical monuments, the government also commissioned the statue of Admiral Yi Sun-sin in 1968 with a personal inscription written by Park Chung-hee.¹¹⁸ Admiral Yi, who legendarily fought off Japan’s 1592 invasion of the Korean peninsula, continues to be one of revered historical figures in South Korea that serve as icons of charismatic leadership and patriotism.

The appropriation of Koreanness through cultural policies and commissioning of statues

¹¹⁶ Roh Young-koo. "Yi Sun-Shin, an Admiral Who Became a Myth." *The Review of Korean Studies* 7, no. 3 (2004) p.30.

¹¹⁷ Won Kim, p.25.

¹¹⁸ Won Kim, p.28.

served two functions. First, Park used this narrative to mobilize support for anti-communist propaganda and later for his state-led development projects. Park Chung-hee had revived the then-dormant reserve forces after North Korea's commando raid in 1968.¹¹⁹ By drawing a direct parallel between himself and Admiral Yi, who mobilized civilian militia to defend Joseon against Japan, Park persuaded South Korean citizens to join the revived Republic of Korea Reserve Forces, also known as the Hyangto Yebigun, and protect the country from North Korea and the threat of communism.¹²⁰ Park had also begun to integrate an image of Admiral Yi as a symbol of modernization by create an image of the admiral as a scientist who invented the Turtle Ship, a famous battleship used to thwart Japanese invasions, in his 1967 address.¹²¹ Second, Park also redefined his identity as a patriotic leader by indirectly likening himself to historical figures like Admiral Yi, deflecting criticisms that he had once pledged allegiance to Imperial Japan and continued to maintain close ties with conservative Japanese politicians.

Urban Middle Class as the Ideal Modern Citizen

Second, the rapid industrialization in the 1960s had created a new social group, the urban working class, and their grievances due to poor living and working conditions were growing and beginning to threaten the Park regime's stability and legitimacy. The regime responded by building an urban middle class that could, for one, prove to the public that living conditions under Park had indeed improved. In addition, the regime began to propagate carefully crafted propaganda that the urban middle class was a representation of the most admirable social norms and characteristics. This propaganda envisioned an urban middle class that was "modern" and superior to not only the working class but also the upper class, especially the upper-class women.

¹¹⁹ Won Kim p.28.

¹²⁰ Won Kim p.28.

¹²¹ Roh, p.31.

Despite the fact that most of South Korea's export revenues came from light industries such as textiles, Park Chung-hee turned to the heavy-chemical industries (HCI) in the 1970s as he "did not want to be known as the leader of a nation that flourished by exporting wigs, plywood, cotton fabrics, and knitwear."¹²² The drive to develop the HCIs therefore had a symbolic nature and reinforced Park's vision to build a South Korea that was a self-reliant, modern nation-state. Park's development plan involved privileging certain business groups, many of them *chaebols*, or massive family-owned business conglomerates, if they were willing to invest in HCIs. The state-directed development plans in turn produced a greater demand for salaried managers and engineers, and "the numbers of professional, managerial, and clerical workers (not including sales employees" increased from 6.7 percent to 16.6 percent of the workforce in the period between 1963 and 1983.¹²³ This emerging urban middle class could now own luxury items, such as televisions, washing machines, and refrigerators, that had previously been exclusive to the upper class.¹²⁴ High-rise apartments were also replacing traditional houses in Seoul to accommodate for the influx of rural migrants to cities. One observer in 1963 noted that apartments and their "gas, hot water, electricity, phones, and mannered neighbors" were a symbol for "culture and civilization," which was directly in contrast to "a traditional lifestyle in a house that has not been improved since the premodern period."¹²⁵ These romantic apartments were not open to all members of the urban population; the same observer who praised apartments as a symbol of culture and civilization found that "residents [of apartments] are usually so-called intellectuals, not factory workers or the poor."¹²⁶ The urban middle class therefore served as an

¹²² Myungji Yang, "The Making of the Urban Middle Class in South Korea (1961-1979): Nation-Building, Discipline, and the Birth of the Ideal National Subjects." *Sociological Inquiry* 82, no. 3 (2012) p.431.

¹²³ Yang, p.432.

¹²⁴ Yang, p.437.

¹²⁵ Yang, p.436.

¹²⁶ Yang, p.436.

example to the rest of the South Korean population not only of the great economic achievements made under the Park regime, but also what the new country ought to look like. This new vision did not include pre-modern ways of living and pushed the urban working class to continue working hard and aspire to join the middle class, regardless of whether that rise in socioeconomic hierarchy was feasible or not.

This normative shift was the second main function of the emerging urban middle class. Government agencies under the Park regime actively disseminated messages that portrayed the urban middle-class women as the ideal South Korean woman, while denouncing upper-class and working-class women for failing to dedicate themselves fully to the country's development. The middle-class women were automatically implied to be housewives, and these housewives represented "the frugal, disciplined, and self-reliant middle-class lifestyle."¹²⁷ Because these women worked hard to maintain a respectable household "without wasting money or cheating on her husband," the women's "salary man" or engineer husbands could work without concerns, thereby making the docile middle-class housewives an exemplar of patriotism.¹²⁸ Upper-class women, on the other hand, had endangered South Korea's economy by consuming Western luxury cosmetics and fashion items, according to the government propaganda.¹²⁹ The urban middle-class women therefore became a standard to which the government could compare other women and berate them for failing to help build a strong, modern nation-state. The idealization of middle-class women did not liberate them, but instead, it confined women to the stereotype of dedicated, self-effacing mothers and housewives. Any women who fell outside of the stereotype were subject to criticisms under the government's propaganda.

¹²⁷ Yang, p.438.

¹²⁸ Yang, p.435.

¹²⁹ Yang, p.433.

In addition to propping up the urban middle class as an exemplar for the regime's modernization project, Park sought to mobilize labor from the rural working class by allowing farmers and workers to view themselves in a favorable light under Park's Saemaul Undong, or the New Village Movement that launched in April of 1970. Under the initiative, Park emphasized his lineage as the son of a peasant and described himself as someone who understood the hardships of the working class.¹³⁰ At the same time, Park placed the blame for inequality in contemporary South Korea on traditional social structures and vowed to dedicate his regime's modernization project to doing away with such structures.¹³¹ Park extended this blame also to the "privileged consciousness" of elite groups, which included factions in universities, Buddhist establishments, and circles of acquaintances based on school and regional ties.¹³²

The Saemaul Undong also brought about the consent of the workers by remaking the identity of the working class, and especially the working-class women. Whereas the government propaganda in the cities highlighted the virtues of the frugal, docile middle-class woman, the Saemaul Undong offered recognition and social status for working-class women of villages, as well. One woman who served as the president of a women's association remarked that she "cannot forget the experience" in which "people recognized me as the president of a women's association of my village [and] I worked hard to fulfill the directives from the top."¹³³ Even the training camps for the Saemaul Undong, which the same woman had attended, created an experience for women to feel a sense of agency and recognition for her work, and the woman

¹³⁰ Byeong-ju Hwang, "The Ruling Discourse and Mass Politics of the Park Chung Hee Regime." *The Review of Korean Studies* 12, no. 3 (2009) p.12.

¹³¹ Hwang (2009) p.14.

¹³² Hwang (2009) p.14-15.

¹³³ Hwang (2009) p.26-27.

remembered the camp as “the most exciting time” of her life.¹³⁴ The Saemaul Undong provided an opportunity for the farmers and workers who were often at the bottom of the social ladder in South Korea to gain pride for their work and especially for their contributions to the nation’s betterment.

Farmers had become willing to take on a greater financial burden as a result of the Saemaul Undong, and the percentage of the farmers’ contributions to the supply of agricultural materials had increased from 43.9 percent in 1972 to 89.5 percent in 1979.¹³⁵ The movement also created a hierarchy in which the Saemaul Undong participants and those who were patriotic could see themselves as superior. One farmer remarked that he had “chosen this life to live a worthy life [...] fighting against the communist North Korea” and expressed contempt toward “those who prefer foreign wines over *takju* (another name for *makgeolli*, unrefined rice wine) and foreign cigarettes over Saemaul brand.”¹³⁶ This statement showcases the complex web of ideologies that the Park regime had appropriated to mobilize the working class, namely anti-communism, anti-elitism, and nationalism.

Dreams of Manchuria and the Construction of the Seoul-Busan Expressway

The building of the Seoul-Busan Expressway was meant to bring out the “Korean spirit,” the character of grit and independence that had been lost in history. Park Chung-hee hoped to rebuild the Korean spirit and boost the Korean people’s morale by successfully completing the Seoul-Busan Expressway.¹³⁷ In a press conference held on January 15th, 1968, Park Chung-hee introduced the term “the Second Economy” to refer to “the invisible aspect of our mentality, or

¹³⁴ Hwang (2009) p.27.

¹³⁵ Hwang (2009) p.21.

¹³⁶ Hwang (2009) p.28.

¹³⁷ Gwang-seung Choi 최광승, “Bakjeonghuineun eotteoke gyeongbugosokdororeul geonseolhayeonneunga” 박정희는 어떻게 경부고속도로를 건설하였는가 [How Park Chung-hee Constructed the Seoul-Busan Expressway] Korean Studies Quarterly 정신문화연구 精神文化研究 33, no. 4 (2010): p.183.

philosophical foundations that are necessary for our citizens' modernization, or such basis," where as "the First Economy" referred to traditional concepts in the study of economy such as "exports" or "increase in yield."¹³⁸ The industrialization and modernization projects launched under the Park regime with great haste were thus intended to not only boost the traditional metrics of economic development but, more importantly, to raise the level of the South Korean people's mentality to that of the first-world, developed nations' citizenry.

In fact, Park Chung-hee prioritized the boost of morale as the main goal for the construction project over its potential economic benefits, feasibility, or sustainability. Once the Park regime secured the funding for the project following heated debates in the National Assembly, Park decided to build the expressway with the philosophy of "build first, repair later," since South Korea could not yet afford to construct the expressway like the "developed countries" did. In the first ten years following the completion of the construction, the total costs for repair and maintenance had already exceeded the initial cost of construction, which was roughly 42 billion KRW.¹³⁹ Park's modernization projects paralleled Imperial Japan's territorial expansion to Manchuria in that both were expected to incur excessive costs and nonetheless were undertaken by the regime. Both projects were not merely economic in their core, but rather an extension of the regimes' desire to further the modernization of their people and reshape their consciousness as productive, docile subjects of the modern state.

Deployment to Vietnam: Combining Anti-Communism and Economic Development

The Park regime's deployment of troops to Vietnam allowed the regime to attach its narrative of modernity to historical symbols of ethnonationalism and martial masculinity. The appropriation of existing historical norms thereby helped mobilize young men for acquiring

¹³⁸ Choi (2010), p.184.

¹³⁹ Choi (2010), p.181.

foreign capital and portrayed Park as a patriotic, anti-communist defender of the nation. Park also hoped to prove his nation as a “‘sovereign, mature adult nation’ [that] was now in a position to help other nations rather than be helped, as it had been in the past” by deploying troops to Vietnam. This mirrors the modernist, imperialistic desires of Japan in the period leading up to World War II.¹⁴⁰ Park’s government organized public celebrations and farewells for the deployed troops that were “reminiscent of the ones performed during the Pacific War under the Japanese colonial rule.”¹⁴¹

The Park regime resurrected historical figures that symbolized the superiority of the Korean ethnicity and martial masculinity, which was supposedly an inherently Korean trait, to justify South Korea’s first overseas deployment of troops in its history. Park Chung-hee likened the deployed troops to “descendants of Hwarang” and called on them to “demonstrate the bravery of Korean manhood to the world.”¹⁴² The “Hwarang” were elite male fighters under the Silla dynasty, which was one of Korea’s premodern states. Park also appealed to the South Korean public’s fear of communist dominance, or “*Cho khwa t’ongil* (red reunification),” to justify the deployment of troops to Vietnam.¹⁴³ Park advocated the deployment of troops to Vietnam as imperative for South Korea’s own national security in its fight against communism. In addition to portraying the deployed soldiers as representative of the ideal Korean masculinity, Park described the soldiers as “‘crusaders of peace’ and ‘crusaders of freedom.’”¹⁴⁴ The regime had therefore imbued military service with the honor of representing the Korean people’s bravery and defending the nation from the communist threat.

¹⁴⁰ Lee, Jin-kyung. “Surrogate Military, Subimperialism, and Masculinity: South Korea in the Vietnam War, 1965-73.” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 17, no. 3 (December 1, 2009) p.659-660.

¹⁴¹ Lee, p.659

¹⁴² Lee, p.659

¹⁴³ Lee, p.658

¹⁴⁴ Lee, p.658.

In reality, these soldiers were a means for the Park regime to acquire foreign capital and secure its place under the U.S. security umbrella. South Korean journalist Chun-man Kang estimated that South Korea earned an average of \$200 million per year for nine years during its deployment in the Vietnam War.¹⁴⁵ Jin-kyung Lee noted that the funneling of low-income young men into military service represented “military proletarianization,” which is the process of assigning members of the working class to specific positions of labor and is often gendered and sexual in its nature.¹⁴⁶ The term refers to modern nation-states’ mobilization of their populations, in which the state may pressure young men to enlist as soldiers while recruiting young women as musical performers to entertain troops, secretaries, factory workers, or even as sex slaves.

Tom Nairn describes modern-day nationalism as “the modern Janus” that contains both a militaristic, repressive side and the development-focused, progressive side.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Park Chung-hee’s authoritarian regime incorporated the “twin banner of ‘construction’ (*ko ŋso ŧ*) and ‘national defense’ (*kukbang*).” The proletarianization of working-class young men to military service obtained foreign capital for the state’s exorbitant development projects and strengthened the dictator’s image in the public’s eyes as an anti-communist defender. The government had “widely popularized as a slogan, ‘Let us build our nation, as we fight,’” proving that “the dual axes of militarism and development” helped mobilize resources and political clout for an authoritarian regime, as Nairn had predicted.¹⁴⁸

Conclusion

Park’s inferiority complex as a former collaborator and a dictator required a ruling ideology that would legitimize his exorbitant developmental projects and mobilize the badly

¹⁴⁵ Lee, p.659.

¹⁴⁶ Lee, p.659.

¹⁴⁷ Nairn, Tom. *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, (London: NLB, 1977) p.20

¹⁴⁸ Lee, p.658

needed foreign capital. Park successfully attached his definition of modernity to existing historical symbols, such as Admiral Yi and the Hwarang warriors, to inspire patriotism and target working-class men for deployment to Vietnam. He also took advantage of the existing patriarchy to create propaganda that alienated and oppressed women for failing to become docile, “modern” housewives. Park had created a version of modernity that could realize his aspirations of building a South Korea that would resemble the Manchukuo utopia and bring about popular support for his unjustified authoritarian rule. His claim that the Korean people needed an improvement in character mirrored Yi Gwangsu’s theory of national modification, while his attempts to redefine “Koreanness” in the modernity discourse resembled Joseon Korea’s *Dongdoseogiron*, or the Eastern Ideals and Western Technology Theory.

CONCLUSION

Discussion

The groups and individuals vying for greater power in the five case studies appropriated the idea of modernity to legitimate their superiority over their competitors and their violent, repressive control of the masses. In Colonial Korea, factions competed with one another to draw the most appealing picture of future Korea as a modern, imperial force in order to win over the masses' hearts. Then, once the winning faction began to govern the modern state, the aspirations for imperialism, martial masculinity, and modernity helped effectively mobilize masses to further the state's expansion, as Park Chung-hee did during his military dictatorship.

The fulfilment of modernity also became an end in itself over time as the pride for one's own identity — as a Japanese man in the Meiji era, for instance — began to rely heavily on the status of the Japanese state in relation to neighboring civilizations. The use of modernity as propaganda, which was originally a means for legitimating the Meiji-era reforms and preparing Japan against Western threats, devolved into a project that was essential for the modern Japanese person's self-efficacy and dignity. Given the worldview that Meiji Japan had created to justify its expansion of power, Japan had to prove itself as the dominant civilization over the Great Chinese Civilization and the West. Unless Japan transcended borders and oceans to become an imperial hegemon, the Japanese person would be as powerless, barbarian, and inferior as the Okinawans and the Koreans were in their eyes.

Some of the factions and nation-states featured in this paper had control over not only the third face of power, but over the first and second faces as well. The pro-modernization faction in Meiji Japan gained enough physical resources and undertook effective military and political strategies to eventually gain physical and institutional dominance. In the first face of power,

using military force, Japan was able to occupy Korea and eventually Manchuria. In the second face, Japan created policies that excluded the ethnic “others,” namely Koreans and Okinawans, from the decision-making process. These policies ranged from explicit limitations on serving in political office to repressive language and education policies that relegated the Korean people to the status of second-class citizens. The modern institutions of public health, education, and languages set up under Imperial Japan were intended to create functional, productive members of society while also excluding the non-Japanese subjects from political participation. Even Kenkoku University, which intentionally accepted students of diverse ethnic backgrounds, did not provide opportunities for its non-Japanese graduates to gain equal standing in society as the Japanese elites.

Not all factions and interest groups discussed in this paper had enough resources, political savviness, or readiness to take over the first or second faces of power. In Joseon Korea, Myeongseong’s Moderate Enlightenment Faction admired the progress that Qing China had made and planned to similarly modernize in a gradual fashion. The modern institutions of public health and education under Gojong and Myeongseong served the normative function of persuading the masses that Myeongseong’s faction had the superior ideology, contrary to the backward, inferior isolationists. The eventual fall of Korea to Japanese Occupation was therefore mainly due to Korea’s weakness in the first face of power, rather than its ruling faction’s failures in the third face. The colonization of the Korean peninsula was a reality that was difficult to accept and one that wounded the ego of many Koreans, both elites and ordinary citizens. This paper then examined the narratives that factions and interest groups in Colonial Korea created to secure a more privileged, powerful position given such irreversible changes in the Realpolitik.

The specific conditions that are necessary for an interest group to dominate the first face

of power, such as military strategies, diplomatic maneuvers, or the second face of power, such as social and political institutions, are beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, this paper focused on the rhetorical tools and narratives that appropriating entities used to restructure the distribution of third-dimensional power to their advantage. The discussion of Kenkoku University, for instance, focused on the university's *normative* function in portraying Imperial Japan as generous and tolerant of ethnic diversity within the third face of power, rather than its function in furthering the institutional exclusion of non-Japanese others in the second face of power.

Application: Socialist Modernity in Vietnam

The framework for analyzing the appropriation of modernity under political factions and demagogues is not limited to the version of modernity found in this paper. The behavior of appropriating modernity and localizing the concept of modernity can be seen in societies that did not inherit Imperial Japan's or the West's versions of modernity.

The modernity in contemporary Vietnam shares the three common traits found in this paper's case studies, namely the creation of a hierarchy, aspiration for martial masculinity, and attachment to domestic norms. First, Vietnam's version of modernity privileges socialist states that are "more modern" and considers liberal democratic nations like the U.S. as "less modern." Second, the Vietnamese version of modernity celebrates Vietnam's military history and mythologizes its wartime efforts. Lastly, it resurrects historical symbols of ethnonationalism to reinforce its appeal to the masses.

Rebuilding Vietnam's identity as the modern, superior state was an important part of the decolonization process, and the Vietnamese government directed funding and manpower to the work of historical research via agencies such as the Research Committee and the Institute of History. The government orchestrated commemorative events and revised information in history

textbooks to ingrain a new sense of the past in the people's minds.¹⁴⁹ Especially as the possibility of a war with the United States grew increasingly likely, the Vietnamese historians focused their attention on the idea of national essence (*quốc túy*).¹⁵⁰ This process of defining a national essence involved the “[suppression of] the historical in favor of the mythical.”¹⁵¹ Following the U.S. air raids against the North, Vietnamese intellectual Trần Huy Liệu wrote in 1965, “All the progressive countries in the world have voiced support for our cause and day by day watch our sacred war unfold. . . . At no other moment has the history of our Ancestral Land known such glory.”¹⁵² This account of Vietnam as a mythical Ancestral Land and the U.S. invasion as a “mythical war” made the war itself more bearable and justifiable for the masses. Describing the Vietnam War in such mythological, ideal terms glorified “the ideal of collective sacrifice.”¹⁵³ In addition, the rendering of Vietnam and its allies as “the progressive countries in the world” indirectly placed the U.S. and Vietnam's enemies as the less progressive and less developed nations. The people's participation in the Vietnam War was now a part of Vietnam's long-time “tradition of resistance to foreign aggression” and proof of Vietnam's “sacred” superiority over its enemies. Such constructions of Vietnam's identity as a modern nation-state establishes a hierarchy in which Vietnam is superior to the U.S. and other non-socialist states, celebrates Vietnam's martial masculinity, and relies on historical symbols of ethnonationalism.

Conclusion

The versions of modernity appropriated and localized by factions and demagogues in this paper had long-lasting impact on the norms and values of each society. The imperialist vision of

¹⁴⁹ Pelley, Patricia M. *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past*. Asia-Pacific. (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002) p.6-7.

¹⁵⁰ Pelley, p.140.

¹⁵¹ Pelley, p.146.

¹⁵² Pelley, p.146.

¹⁵³ Pelley, p.146.

Japan's elites went on to inspire South Korea's dictator Park Chung-hee. The developmental projects and national propaganda from Park's era continue to shape South Korean constituents' political beliefs. Vietnam's version of modernity has likewise evolved into a global project that transcends not only borders and oceans, but time periods as well. Following the end of the Vietnam War, French-speaking Vietnamese professionals have worked as experts in other socialist post-colonies such as Algeria, Mozambique, and Angola, and their presence has diffused the norms and values of Vietnam's socialist modernity.¹⁵⁴ Vietnam is thus able to contribute to the "worldwide building of a socialist ideal" by "providing their expertise in Africa and other continents."¹⁵⁵ As seen in Imperial Japan's construction of Manchuria as a utopian ideal, Vietnam's version of modernity also grew into a transnational project, one that the communist countries hope to propagate to those who are not yet fully developed in their progress toward a communist utopia. The concept of modernity is therefore an empty vessel of hierarchies that any opportunistic entity – be it Korean or Vietnamese, neoliberal capitalist or socialist – may appropriate to reinforce their own worldview and legitimize the violence and coercion used in realizing that worldview.

¹⁵⁴ Raffin, Anne. "Postcolonial Vietnam: Hybrid Modernity." *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 3 (2008) p.339.

¹⁵⁵ Raffin, p.339.

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