

Review Articles

Reappraisal of Introductory Books on Korean History in the U.S.: From Slave Society to Colonial Development*

Park Tae-gyun

1. Studies on Korean History in America

Recently, a Korean student staying in the United States has posted his opinions several times on webpages on Korean history studies. (www.koreanhistory.org and www.kistory.or.kr) In his writing, he shared his impressions about the Korean studies class at the institution he is now attending. He made a very detailed account of problems he found in the text books used at the institution without specifying the titles of such books. He was greatly agitated while pointing out that these books committed serious distortions regarding the relationships between Korea, Japan, and China.

His posting reveals the current status of Korean studies in the United States. In fact, it is only recently that Korean studies have attracted attention in the country. There are only a few professional researchers in the field of Korean studies and its importance is valued behind Chinese and Japanese studies.¹ In some cases, where an institution is

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1. Regarding the position of the Korean studies under the Chinese and Japanese studies, JaHyun Kim Haboush considers the phenomena as a 'hierarchy' in the academic field. JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Historical Scholarship of Chosŏn Korea in the United States," Unpublished Presentation Paper, The 10th Anniversary of the Korea Foundation: Korea's Interface with the World, December 13, 2001, 4.

lacking a specialist of Korean studies, professors specializing in Japanese or Chinese studies fill in the blank space, briefly covering subjects of Korean studies in their lectures on 'East Asian studies.' Thus, learning of Korea is currently structured to be peripheral to Chinese and Japanese studies. In this sense, Korean studies is quite limited in the United States.

Still, understanding Korean history is the central part of Korean studies along with the study of Korean language and literature. Unfortunately, there are only a few reference books regarding the whole Korean history. *A History of Korea* (translated by Warren W. Smith, Jr., and Benjamin H. Hazard, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Press, 1969), an English translation of Hatada (旗田巍)'s original text was the only reference book available for the basic reference on Korean history. Although some books were published covering the entire part of Korean history, these are nothing more than the English translation of works written by Korean senior scholars. For example, *The History of Korea* was published in 1971 as a translation of the Korean text written by Woo-keun Han (Translated by Kyong-shik Lee, edited by Grafton K. Mintz, Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1971). In 1984, *A New History of Korea* was published, whose original text was written by Gi Baik Lee. It came out as the result of a joint translation by Edward W. Wagner and Edward J. Shultz (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984). Since they are mere translation works, however, these books were devoid of perspectives of American scholars. The cause of this might be found in the fact that a substantial amount of researchers on Korean history did not appear prior to the 1960s.

I will examine two books covering the entire Korean history: *Korea, Old and New: A History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) and *Korea's Place In the Sun* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997) translated in Korean by Ch' angjakkwa Pip' yŏng (Creation and Criticism) in 2001. The former was co-authored by three American scholars and a Korean historian and is based on the frame of Gi Baik Lee's book, *A New History of Korea*, and the latter was written by the author of *Origins of Korean War*, Bruce Cumings. Since their publication in 1990 and 1997, respectively, these two books have become the most widely adopted text books in Korean history classes taught in English at both U. S. and Korean international schools.

These two books can be clearly distinguished from their precedents in two ways: First, they represent independent achievements by western scholars majoring in Korean history. Despite a substantial progress in the field of Korean history outside Korea, scholarly works by foreign scholars are not yet to be considered sufficient to cover the whole Korean history. Nevertheless, still, it is quite notable that these two books reflect perspectives and research of American and European scholars.

Secondly, these two books maintain consistency in their views on Korean history while attempting to move away from a mere accounting of historical facts. This reflects the unique nature of the academic circle of American scholars in this field. That is, since there are only a few scholars in the United States specializing in Korean history, most of them are closely connected to the early pioneers of this field in terms of their educational or institutional backgrounds. As result, scholars teaching at the institutions leading this field such as the University of Washington, Harvard University, the University of Chicago, UCLA, and Columbia University share the common institutional backgrounds with one another. The new generation of scholars in this field are also being trained as such.

2. The Meaning on the Changes of Dynasties

Issues covered by *Korea Old and New* do not greatly differ from the ones explored by Korean books covering entire Korean history. Each chapter is committed to an issue of each field such as politics, society, economics, culture and international relations. But such demarcation in terms of chapters or periods greatly differs from the books written by Korean scholars. For instance, the division of chapters does not corre-

2. In modern history, demarcation of the chapters is based on the events, namely people's uprisings between the regimes, policy changes in governments, and changes of ruling power and constitution. In the colonial period, chapters are divided into three, "The First Phase of Japanese Rule," "Nationalism and Social Revolution," and "Forced Assimilation, Mobilization, and War." After liberation from Japan, "Liberation, Division, and War," "Syng Man Rhee and the First Republic," "The April Revolution and the Second Republic," "The Park Chung Hee Era," "Opposition, Mutiny, Insurrection, and Coup," "The Fifth Republic of Chun Doo Hwan," and "The Sixth Republic and Prospects for Democracy."

spond to the change of dynasty.

In *Korea Old and New*, chapters are titled until the late 19th century as follows: “Aristocratic Societies Under Monarchical Rule” (Chapter 3), “The Fashioning of an Authoritarian Monarchy” (Chapter 4), “The Age of Powerful Gentry Families” (Chapter 5), “The Hereditary Aristocratic Order of Koryŏ” (Chapter 6), “Rule by the Military” (Chapter 7), “Emergence of the Literati” (Chapter 8), “The Creation of a Yangban Society” (Chapter 9), “The Rise of the Neo-Confucian Literati” (Chapter 10). Chapter 11, the period after the late 19th century, is not considered as one of the pre-modern eras, but rather as background of modern history.²

Each chapter is entitled after the name of a political system or ruling class instead of the name of a dynasty. The explanation of the premodern age might be due to this book’s faithfulness to *A New History of Korea*. In fact, the titles of the chapters covering the premodern age of these two books coincide with each other. The preface of the original Korean text of *A New History of Korea* manifests its principle that “each chapter corresponds to a change in the ruling class.”³

Description of premodern age with the focus on the ruling class reveals the historiography of *Korea Old and New* in understanding the premodern age.⁴ What is notable here is that it does not put much emphasis on the change of dynasties. Except for its positive evaluation of the unifications of the three kingdoms by Shilla and then by Koryŏ there are a few details on the transitions of the dynasties.⁵ The unifications are positively evaluated because they were the national unifications and the formations of a state, not because it brought about a change in social structures. More specifically, the shift from Koryŏ to

3. Gi Baik Lee, *Hanguksa Sinron* [A New Korean History] (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1980, revised version), iii.

4. Demarcation of chapters and titles in history books shows the authors’ historical perspective. For example, *Han’guk Yŏksa* [Korean History] edited by the Organization of Korean Historians (Seoul: Yŏksa Pip’yŏngsa, 1992) used titles, “Primitive Society,” “Ancient Society,” “Feudal Society,” and “Modern Society.” The reason why this book did not use the names of dynasties as titles is because changes in productive relations are considered as a crucial criterion for the demarcation of historical change.

5. In particular, unification by Shilla is stressed. The author regards the meaning of the unification as a historical event that prohibited the revival of the Han Chinese Commanderies after the collapse of Old Chosŏn, and as a foundation for independent development in the Korean Peninsula. This viewpoint follows Lee’s *A New History of Korea*, (70-71).

Chosŏn is not evaluated as a change or a progress in terms of the entire social system. For example, the commence of Chosŏn was dealt with in part under Chapter 8, which is committed to the emergence of the literati. No special meaning was attached to it, except that it simply stated that a new dynasty was established.

Such a perspective is based upon the view that the ruling class of Korea did not go through any fundamental change in terms of its nature during the period from Unified Shilla to Chosŏn. *Korea Old and New* views that the traditional ruling class of Korea first emerged as the six head-rank under the bone rank system of Shilla. This class took the central part in reforming Koryŏ's social and political systems. But despite the liberal nature of the ruling class of Koryŏ compared to its predecessors, access to power was allowed only within the strict boundary of a hereditary noble system (69).

It also insists that the *yangban* class of Chosŏn did not reveal any notable change of nature compared to the aristocrats of Koryŏ. It points out that though the components of *yangban* became more diverse (108), its closed system was still maintained as indicated by its custom of marriage. It is also paid attention to the fact that a strong regional discrimination existed—particularly against the ones from the Northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula—and that only seriously limited access to official positions was allowed for a number of *yangban*'s illegitimate lines of descent (109). Such evaluation of the *yangban* class deserves an attention since it is distinguished from those of Korean scholars.⁶

The book's evaluation of a closed and hereditary *yangban* system is supported by its account of the dual nature of official service examina-

6. In works on the hierarchy system in Chosŏn society by Korean historians, class is divided into two; *yang* (良) and *ch'ŏn* (賤). According to the works, the *yangban* class basically belongs to the *yang*, the privileged status supported by the hereditary and bureaucratic system. Accordingly, only the men in the *yang* could move upward in hierarchy through state examinations, although the emergence of *chung'in* in the late Chosŏn society was admitted by Korean historians. This is the reason why Chosŏn society has been considered as neither feudal nor modern, but as a 'early modern.' Han Yŏng-u, "Chosŏnch' ōgi sahoegyechŭng yon' gue taehan chaeron" (A Review of Existing Works on Societal Class in the Early Chosŏn Society), *Han' guksaron* 12 (1985): 305-358; Yu Sŭng-won, "The Status System in the Early Chosŏn Period," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 1 (1988): 69-99.
7. Edward Wagner, "The Ladder of Success in Yi Dynasty Korea," *Occasional Papers on Korea* 1 (1973): 1-8.

tions. Especially, it notes that while it is true that any commoner, or person of free status possessed the legal qualification to sit for the examinations, *yangban* virtually monopolized the test opportunities directly leading to the appointment as civil officers (113-114). At this point, it refers to the study of Wagner to show that 53% of the successful candidates for civil offices were from 36 clans and that 40% of them were from 21 most powerful clans.⁷

If the status of *yangban* does not differ from former ruling classes in terms of its nature as argued by this book, the change of dynasty would not have had any special implication. In other words, the change of a dynasty would be nothing more than a result of conflicts within the ruling class. Such argument sounds persuasive if the book's attitude of describing the premodern age, which is focused on the nature of hierarchy system, particularly, that of ruling classes, is granted as true.⁸

The evaluation of *yangban*'s nature is also closely connected with the evaluation on the description of factionalism.⁹ *Korea Old and New* views political factionalism and the literati purges during Chosŏn as mere struggles for political power. This perspective is based on the evaluation on the *sarim*; a status defined by certain political status and blood ties, rather than an attitude to confucianism and socio-economic forces (135-136). If so, the political or ideological conflicts among yangbans would mean nothing more than being a cover for their struggles for political hegemony (139). In this sense, a Korean scholar's attention on the ideological difference between political parties during the Chosŏn period are simply ignored. In other words, it regards the leaders of political factions as Seoul-centered core groups of Neo-Confucian literati who, in a large part, were members of the very same lineages with the so-called meritocratic elite (140). Further, it argues that political wars among different fractions survived almost to the point of being an endemic (142).

Such perspective on the premodern period has its basis on the

8. *Korea's Place in the Sun* holds that Koryŏ's composite elite system triggered a tradition of aristocratic continuity that lasted down to the modern era and defines its nature to be an 'agrarian bureaucracy,' which reached a fully developed stage in the subsequent Chosŏn period (40).
9. Generally, Korean historians consider political factional strife in Chosŏn as conflicts between meritocratic elites and new emerging literati. Moreover, from the socioeconomic viewpoint, the strife reflected struggles between big-size and middle size landowners.
10. Edward W. Wagner, *The Literati Purges: Political Conflict in Early Yi Korea* (Cambridge: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1974).

research by Wagner. He examined and analysed the social status of successful candidates from the civil service examinations with the help from vast clan genealogies of Korea preserved by Yenching Library at Harvard University. Based upon this research, he set up his perspective on the literati and political fractions of the Chosŏn Yi dynasty.¹⁰

On the other hand, the book's little emphasis on the transition from Koryŏ to Chosŏn appears to be reflective of Palais's perspective on Chosŏn. In his book published in 1997, an analysis of Yu Hyŏng-won's *Pangyesurok*, he asserted that the foundation of Chosŏn did not cause social changes following shift from the Song to Tang Dynasties in China.¹¹ 'What would be the meaning of the foundation of Chosŏn, granting there was no transformation from aristocratic system into bureaucratic system?'¹² It was one of the most critical questions raised by Palais, adopted faithfully by *Korea Old and New* as well. However, *Korea Old and New* does not deal with Duncan's recent dissimilar view on Chosŏn.¹³

3. Slave Society

Another notable point in the account of premodern era is their interest in the *nobi* system.¹⁴ The authors of *Korea Old and New* highlight

11. James B. Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions: Yu Hyŏngwon and the Late Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle and London: University of Washington, 1997).
12. Chung, Too-Hui, *Migukeseŏ Hanguksa Yŏn'gu* [Research of Korean History in America] (Seoul: Gukhakjaryowon, 1999), 46-47.
13. John B. Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000). Duncan argued that though transition to Chosŏn was not ultimately successful, it was one of the attempts to create a centralized bureaucratic system. Nevertheless, his evaluation on the ruling class in Chosŏn is not quite different from that of *Korea Old and New*. Deuchler also agreed with the continuity of the ruling class between Koryŏ and Chosŏn. Although she examines differences of the family system between two dynasties, no significant changes appeared until the 17th century. Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992).
14. In fact, there are many works on the *nobi* system in Korea. However, the system was not considered as a frame for defining the nature of the hierarchy system in Chosŏn. Han Hŭi-suk, "Yangch'ŏnjewa Sinbungujo Pyŏndong" [The Yang and Ch'ŏn System and Transformation of Hierarchy Structure]. In *Han'guky ksa Ipmun* [Introduction to Korean History] (Seoul: Pulbit, 1995).

the existence of *nobi* during the Chosŏn period. Though committing only a part of the entire coverage, it is asserted that the *nobi* system is the most crucial system reflecting the social structure of Chosŏn.

In Chosŏn society, too, beneath the freeman commoner class there was a large lowborn population, predominantly comprised of slaves. ... Their economic position, therefore, was little different from that of the tenant farmers, but their status by law was hereditary and they could be bought and sold at the whim of their masters. It is difficult to estimate the size of Chosŏn's slave population, but one oft-cited statistic, taken from contemporary government records, is that there were "well over 200,000" government slaves on the rosters of Seoul agencies alone in 1462. And since a child became a slave if either parent had slave status, it is clear that the slave population continued to grow during the first three centuries or so of the dynasty. It may be suggested, then, that for much of the Chosŏn period Korea in fact was a slave society, with perhaps close to one-third of its people legally classed as unfree. (121)

Thus, *Korea Old and New* defines Chosŏn society as a slave society. The 'slave society' argument is not only 'new' but also 'shocking' to the academic circle in Korea.

'Slave society' can be translated as '*nobi* society' But why is the term *slave* society adopted, rather than *nobi* society? Had the authors of *Korea Old and New* intended to mention '*nobi*,' who existed in a different way from slaves? They should have adopted '*nobi* society' instead. It is already an established rule in academia that one should transcribe a pronunciation of one unique historical concept by using the English alphabet instead of translating it into an English word. Despite this rule, the authors adopted 'slave' instead of '*nobi*.' This means they took *nobi* to be the same as the slaves found in western history. They also viewed *nobi* to be a mere private property of its owner, not a human being, that can be sold or bought at the owner's discretion.

The 'slave society' argument had not been openly discussed among American scholars even by 1990, when the first edition of *Korea Old*

and New was published. Since then, it has gained a great currency within American academic circles granted that *nobi* formed a considerable part of the entire population of Chosŏn and played basic roles as producers, such argument sounds more appealing.

Since *Korea Old and New* does not seriously commit itself to the discussion of such a view, it would be necessary to explore Palais' argument here who in his articles first asserted that Chosŏn was a slave society. "A Search for Korean Uniqueness" published in 1996 was his first article where he seriously developed such a view.¹⁵ In this article the author criticized widely accepted *regimes* among Korean historians regarding the Chosŏn period. In this article, he criticizes furiously the view that the Chosŏn period marked a great progress, almost as an equivalent to the one made in the middle ages of the western world, and that the capitalist sprouts were spontaneously budding by the late Chosŏn period. One essential part of his criticism was based upon his view of the *nobi* system.

He argues that *nobi* was a very unique system of the Chosŏn period, having no similar equivalents in other East Asian countries during the same period. According to him, the ownership and treatment of *nobi* was not one of the major issues, but 'the major' issue of Chosŏn society. He asserts that the great number of *nobi* among the entire population, which was 30%, marks almost the same size as that of slave system of ancient Greece or Rome. Then, how come it has evaded the attention of Korean and Japanese scholars so far? He answers that 'because it is an embarrassment.'¹⁶ In his argument, the uniqueness of the *nobi* system, like the unexistence of slave market, the diversity of the *nobi* class, difficulties to find purchase and sale of *nobi* except by heritage, and so on, is ignored.

In his article, Palais concludes that Chosŏn was the most inert and stagnant society in comparison to any other periods of Korean history.

15. James B. Palais, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55.2 (Dec 1997): 409-425.

16. One of interesting points in the article is that he tries to compare the existence of slaves in Chosŏn society with that in America before the Civil War. He points out that it is only one hundred fifty years ago that the U. S. relinquished the slave system. Does this mean that the existence of a slave system might not symbolize underdevelopment of the society? Unfortunately he does not add any explanation to that. Nevertheless, it is clear that no one cannot deny the co-existence of a slave system along with a capitalist system in America before the Civil War.

The unchanged and closed *yangban* system, mentioned earlier, and the *nobi* system that survived after its official abolishment by the “Japanese-sponsored” Kabo Reform function as the strongest basis for his argument. On the other hand, he intends to find out how each dynasty of Korea, especially, the Chosŏn Yi dynasty, survived so long.

Palais thinks the answer lies in the unique ‘aristocratic bureaucracy’ and in the closed, unchanged ‘class system’ of Korea. He notes that the privileged *yangban* class founded upon ‘the aristocratic bureaucracy’ had a great influence on the entire society. He views this as how the *nobi* system was maintained, which had no equivalent in the other typical aristocratic systems of East Asian region. He also concludes that the existence of the *yangban* group greatly hindered the emergence of a state paradigm with a centralized power system, which he deems to be the secret of longevity of the Yi dynasty that lasted for over 500 years.¹⁷

In *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, Cumings also poses the question of ‘how it [the Chosŏn Yi dynasty] could have lasted for five hundred years?’ Based upon Palais’ argument on the importance of *nobi* (pp. 53-54) and the limitations by aristocrats—he does not term it as ‘*yangban*’—to the royal power, (55) he concludes that “although the balance of power between the monarchy and the aristocracy was an asset for the maintenance of stability, ... but it was a liability when Korea faced with the need to expand central power to mobilize resources for defense and development” (76).

After all, Wagner set the basic stone for this view on the entire class system of the Chosŏn period ranging from *yangban* to *nobi* and the royal authority and aristocratic bureaucracy of Chosŏn. And it was Palais who constructed pillars upon this foundation. The two books explored here faithfully follow their views in understanding the pre-

17. Another secret of longevity of Korean dynasties is because of the protection from the Chinese empires. He expresses the nature of Korean dynasties as “semi-independent political entities.” In *Korea Old and New*, although dependency of Korean dynasties on the Chinese empires is not stressed compared to Palais, strong influences from the continent is emphasized (2, 10).
18. Duncan criticizes Palais’ understanding of Chosŏn society. It was Palais’ orientalism that defined Chosŏn society as a ‘stagnant society in marginal areas’ since there were a few radical transitions. He cited Fernand Braudel’s outstanding book, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, which is also often cited in *Korea’s Place in the Sun*.

modern era of Korea.¹⁸

4. Can the Traditions from Koryŏ be the Standard of 'Modernity' ?

Korea's Place in the Sun has posed a question regarding the concept of what is 'modern' or 'modernity.' This is a question of great significance, being a great issue for other studies as well as Korean studies. The 'modernization' and 'development' issues have been an interest for anthropologists and sociologists as well. It is quite notable that Cumings seriously explores these issues in an introductory book on Korean history.

In the preface of *Korea's Place in the Sun*, Cumings notes that a western concept of modern era cannot be a fixed standard for studying all other national histories and therefore, that a different standard is required for understanding Korean history.

The modern is not a sign of superiority but a mark, a point, on a rising and falling scale. Korea began the century near the bottom of that scale and ends it near the top. (10-11)

The question we posed, however, is a Western and a time bound one: Why didn't Koreans do what we did? It assumes an answer about how the West "did it," and asks a question about the East that is quickly becoming obsolescent. It is plausible that in a few decades from now the central question of historians may be, How did East Asia "do it," and what happened to "the West"? (84)

While delving into such questions, he brews a title 'Virtue. Two chapters of *Korea's Place in the Sun* are titled using the word 'Virtue': Chapter 1, covering the pre-modern era and Chapter 7, exploring the democratic movement of Korea. He holds that the great essence of Korea's tradition might be ignored if the perspectives of the western world such as individualism, modernization, and rationalization are to be adopted in studying Korean history (note: but what he means by

19. Cumings pays attention to 'the hongian legacy in contemporary Korean political culture' in order to explain students' and professors' demonstration in the period of the April Revolution in 1960 and 1961(487).

this 'essence' is not specified). In addition, he also notes that the western perspectives cannot fully account for the democratic movement of Korea from the 50s to 60s.¹⁹ That is why he titles the Chapter 7 as 'virtue II.' He believed that "it [the essence] was defined by virtue, and if the virtues may be in retreat in contemporary Korea, as they are everywhere else, they still animate Korean minds" (21).

However, the democratization of modern Korea cannot be explained solely in terms of traditional virtues of Korea. The spirit of democratization movement was also influenced by such western ideas as rationalism, modernization, and democracy. And it is obvious that Cumings himself was aware of this as well. At the same time, however, he appears to have been greatly impressed by the persistence and faithfulness of the movement. He terms it as a 'moral order' (338-339). By what intention does he conclude Virtue II by accounting the story of Kim Sŏn-myŏng, the long-time prisoner of conscience? He must have thought some traditional virtue unique to Korean tradition could be found in his case (382-393).

The criticism on modernization in *Korea's Place in the Sun* is also extended to the description of wars in Korean history. Cumings argues that while the Chosŏn and Koyrŏ periods went through only three big wars in 800 years—Mongol Invasion, Hideyoshi's War and Manchu Invasion—the 100 year modernization era of Korea has witnessed wars within the peninsula that lasted for 40 years and another war outside the peninsula that lasted for 20 years. This shows Cumings' view on the negative influence of 'modernization' on Korea (138).

As stated above, Cumings' view on the traditions of Korea has marked a departure from other typical efforts to account for the pre-modern era of Korean history in terms of western perspectives. It might be that he thus shows his affection for traditional ideas of Korea. On the other hand, by using his criticism of modernity, it is possible to restructure his own analysis of premodern society in *Korea's Place in the Sun* as well as *Korea Old and New*. That is because his belief that Chosŏn was a stagnant society, and that the Practical Learning was not progress but a mere movement faithful to the ancient Chinese confucianism, the argument shared by Palais, is definitely based upon the western 'modern' ideas. If a new Asian or Korean value were created, could it be evaluated from western eyes? The value might not be mea-

sured using the norm of westernized modernity, as Cumings noted. If it is accepted that not only capitalism but also socialism is one of the 'modern' ideas, should an Asian idea embracing socialism, anarchism, and national socialism be defined as mere conservative one?²⁰

The issue of 'modernity' eventually leads to the matter of 'Koreanization.'

Korea was never "Sinicized," although it came close in the period 1392-1910. Certainly it was not Sinicized at a time when walled mini-states contested for power on the peninsula. Second, is there no other significance to Korea than its "long-term" effects in conducting Chinese influence by remote control to Japan? was that influence exchanged by its passage through Korean hands? Did China exercise no "cultural influence" on Korea, but only on Japan? If not, why not? If so, shy emphasize and dwell upon Japan, and not Korea? (19)

Cumings comes to a conclusion that "Koreans made Confucius their own just as Renaissance thinkers made Plato and Aristotle their own" and "the real story is indigenous Korea and the unstinting Koreanization of foreign influence, not vice versa" (20). Further he kindly adds "when they [Koreans] say, "I think," they point to their chest" (21).

Cumings' view on the issue of 'modernity,' however, is faulted in some aspects. First, it should be noted that he argues the tradition and culture of the Koryŏ dynasty could be something uniquely Korean that can be valued against the negative influence of the 'modern era' (42-43). But why Koryŏ, and not Shilla or Chosŏn?

In fact, the Koryŏ period has been regarded as the most modernized and globalized period of Korean history from the perspective of western capitalism. The development of commerce reached its culmination and international trade reached deep into China, Japan, and even as distant as Arabia. In addition, there was considerable progress in science research, as indicated by Koryŏ ceramics. The power of monarchs

20. Kim notes that Palais has not yet basically raised questions on 'modernity.' JaHyun Kim Haboush, *op. cit.*, 7.

became stronger, but the centralization of power was achieved by relinquishing regional gentries during the early period of the dynasty. The idea of confucianism was introduced but yet to be established as the strong social order, as appeared in the Chosŏn period. Then, doesn't the fact that Cumings tries to brew new concept of modernity in Korea through traditions from Kory mean that he tries to establish another westernized modernity in Korean history ?

Secondly, he argues that the formation of 'the political system founded upon the centralization of power' was an important stage toward the introduction of the modern era in Korea, a view shared by *Korea Old and New*. As explained above, Palais concludes that a centralized state system that can efficiently utilize resources to protest invasion from outside and to modernize was absent in Korea. Then, why are American scholars so obsessed with this concept of a 'political system based upon the centralization of power' ?

The answer could be found in the 'Asian values' including the Japanese model. The Asian values asserted by outstanding political figures in East Asia focus on the centralization of the state, and people's reverence to authority in the Asian tradition.²¹ The values clearly are a norm or a regime to criticize and challenge the westerner's orientalism and modernization. Nevertheless, since the conceptualization process of the values was derived from the attempts to examine the astonishing economic successes, namely the successful modernization of East Asian countries from the western perspective, the process means another foundation of the modernized pattern by Asian voices.

This view is also shared by the so-called 'developmental state' model. The concept of 'developmental state' appears first in Johnson's study who intended to illuminate Japan's economic growth from a historical viewpoint,²² and has been systematically developed by sociologists and historians interested in the role of the nation state.²³ They argue 'a political system based upon the centralization of power' is

21. Alan Dupont, "Is There An 'Asian Way'?" *Survival* 38.2 (Summer): 16-17, 1996; "Asian Values Revisited," *The Economist* July 25th, 1998, 23-25.

22. Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle; The Growth of Industrial policy, 1925-1975* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1982).

23. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

required for the modernization process characterized by economic development that can efficiently mobilize the resources of the nation.

On the one hand, however, wouldn't it be possible to interpret Chosŏn's political system as one where the limited royal power functioned as a check on the despotism of monarchs though it hindered a state system from being formed that could efficiently mobilize the resources through out the country? Such positive evaluation would require an assumption that the ruling class of Korea was wise. On the other hand, the western idea of 'elite monarchs' should also be a prerequisite for a centralized political system to be most effective in the process of modernization. If the virtues are to be found in the traditions of Korea, rather than in terms of 'modernity,' could not the social system of Chosŏn itself be the 'virtues' ?

In this sense, it is almost inevitable that the authors of *Korea Old and New and Korea's Place in the Sun* coincided with each other in that they totally ignored the Kwangmu Reform. Similarly with the reforms made by Taewon' gun, the Kwangmu Reform was an effort to strengthen the central political system but at the same time, it was founded upon an idea to restore the ancient Confucian order in Korea. Accordingly, the Kwangmu Reform has been evaluated as a conservative restoration trend rather than a reform toward modernity. As already mentioned above, the Practical Learning was evaluated in a similar way.

In the meanwhile, the Kabo Reform is evaluated as a turning point for the modern era by introducing a modern system into the country for the first time in Korean history despite the fact that it was actually supported by the Japanese. *Korea Old and New* committed as many as 6 pages (223-228) to the evaluation of the Kabo Reform alone. Yu Young-ik,²⁴ who takes charge of the late Chosŏn period in this book, as a historian specializing in the Kabo Reform, appreciates that it contained lots of elements that contributed to the opening of the modern era in Korean history. In the book, evaluation of Kabo Reform is followed by the highlighted account of the Independence Club as a political movement seeking westernization.

24. The title of Yu's dissertation is "The Kabo reform movement: Korean and Japanese reform efforts in Korea, 1894" (Harvard University, 1972).

Considering the contents of the Kabo Reform alone, it is obvious that it reformed the social order based upon the Confucianism of the Chosŏn period and introduced a modernized legal system. However, given the absence of attention to the diplomatic efforts of the Great Han Empire and the Kwangmu Reform in the book, the sole emphasis on the Kabo Reform must have resulted from the eye of modernity.²⁵ *Korea's Place in the Sun* goes even further by evaluating the Kabo Reform as the title, "Birth of Modern Korea." Though the Kwangmu Reform was not successful, shouldn't it have been worth a line in the books given with its goal to achieve "a centralized political system?"

5. Colonial Legacy

As explained above, the condition of a centralized political system is required by an East-Asian model and also by the developmental state for economic development in a less developed country. If such models are to be a required and sufficient condition for 'modernization,' the colonial period and the military regime of Korea will automatically deserve attentions. These two periods produced the highest economic growth throughout the entire Korean history.

In particular, foreign scholars have emphasized the significance of the colonial period that gave birth to the developmental state. Although there has been a controversy over the colonial legacy, no scholar in the American academic circle has seriously opposed to a widely-accepted argument that Korea's experiences during the colonial period shaped the economic development model of Korea since the 1960s. This argument has been criticized in the Korean academic circle as 'colonial modernity' theory.

Common in both books is that they commit a considerable amount of pages to the positive effects of the colonial legacy. They argue that the legacy from the colonial period shaped the basic background of

25. In *Korea Old and New*, it is not difficult to find criticism to the Great Han Empire. The empire is described as "a wanton autocracy" while high ranked officials of the empire are described as "sycophantic opportunists," and Kojong as "a fickle ruler" (236).

26. Carter J. Eckert, *Offspring of Empire* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991).

modern Korean society. Eckert, who wrote the modern history part of *Korea Old and New*, is one of the outstanding scholars examining the colonial legacy that was formed through policies and bureaucrats of the Government General and Korean businessmen in the colonial period in his book.²⁶ Eckert notes and evaluates the centralization/industrialization policies of the Government-General to be the origin of the developmental state system in Korea. His assumption is based upon the criticism of Korean scholars' regime on a possibility of indigenous development and the existence of 'capitalist sprouts' in the late Chosŏn dynasty. That the Chosŏn period was stagnant is another important assumption here.

Having not mentioned the colonial legacy before *Korea's Place in the Sun*, Cumings pictured the 'architectonic capitalism' in his notable article explaining that a regional order centered on Japan in Northeast Asia after 1945 had in fact emerged since the colonial period.²⁷ Although he criticizes the Japanese colonial policy, his contention is consistent with 'colonial modernity' theory from the viewpoint that systems of the modern era in South Korea as well as in Northeast Asia had formed during the colonial period.

In *Korea Old and New*, the colonial legacy comprises the new economic structure, economic policies, and social infrastructure established by Japan such as railroads, motor road networks, and communication systems. *Korea Old and New* highlights the industrial development policies of Japan and the expansion and development of social overhead capital during colonial period (269-273, 309-312). In addition, it also provides for a detailed account of the general influence of Japan over the entire Korean society. For example, it argues that the political conflicts that have continued since liberation of Korea were originated from the splits and conflicts among political powers under the Government General (254-255). It also stressed that the introduction of

27. Bruce Cumings, "The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy," *International Organization* 38.7: 1-40, 1984.

28. Recently a book defining the colonial legacy as 'colonial modernity' was published. See Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson, ed., *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). The viewpoint of this book is somewhat different from those works which focus on a discourse of economic growth. This book deals with various fields of colonial Korean society.

modern ideas and products during the colonial period led the social and cultural changes of Chosŏn society, particularly by changing the consumption pattern of urban middle classes (313-314).²⁸

Such a positive attitude toward the colonial period is also reflected in the description of economic development since the liberation of Korea. The first sub-title of Chapter 18 covering the situations immediately following liberation and the Korean war is “The Colonial legacy and the Transfer of Power” (327). Also Chapter 20 covering economic development puts a strong emphasis on the colonial legacy.

Korea Old and New's description of the economic development of Korea begins with criticizing the argument that Chosŏn society developed along its own road toward modernization, but was distorted by colonization. That is, the author asserts that the development of Korean was achieved by its ‘special historical relationships’ with core capitalist countries—the United States and Japan (389). That is, the basic foundation was laid by Japan and the pillars were constructed thereupon by the United States, the economic assistance provider (390, 396). It also charges that the general attitudes of scholars to be ‘myopic’ stressing the importance of the relationship between Korea and the United States in understanding contemporary Korean history since its liberation while ignoring the relationship between Korea and Japan. Considering the economic development process, this point deserves attention. Since the normalization between Korea and Japan in 1965, trade including transition of advanced Japanese skills between two country has been gradually increased, while U.S. public loan has been reduced.

On the other hand, *Korea Old and New* responds to an argument that the colonial legacy should not be over-evaluated because of the huge barrier resulting from the Korean war that blocked the continuance of progress from the colonial period to the post-liberation period.²⁹ *Korea Old and New* holds that such infrastructure as railroads, the textile industries and major industrial facilities were not entirely destroyed during the war and rather, set the foundation for the export-led economic growth centering around textile industry during the 1960s. With

29. Stephan Haggard, David Kang, and Chung-In Moon, “Japanese Colonialism and Korean Development: A Critique,” *World Development* 25.9 (1997): 867-881.

regard to appearance of the new generation of politicians and bureaucrats after the liberation of Korea aggressively pushed ahead with economic development, this book notes that most of them were educated during the colonial period and their development strategy therefore was modeled after that of Japan. It also argues that some 'progressive segment' of landowners who were transformed into capitalists took the initiative in promoting capitalism along with the capitalists who already had been sprouting from the colonial period (329, 400).³⁰ In this sense, *Korea Old and New* concludes that the regime established by former president Park was the very reincarnation of the Japanese Government-General, which was an 'economically-oriented state' (404).

At this point, *Korea Old and New* puts an emphasis on the role of President Park, who was influenced by Japan. It notes that he had an insight to achieve the wealth and power of the state through economic growth unlike Syngman Rhee, who merely took political advantage from the colonial legacy (403). It evaluates that President Park's competence and insight for economic development reflected his experiences as an officer trained at the Japanese military academy. It also understands his monopolized decision-making process was influenced by his 'mentors' he was serving in Japan before 1945. Such positive evaluation of Park makes an interesting comparison with that of President Chun Du-hwan in the latter part of the book.³¹

Korea's Place in the Sun is no exception in that it explains the economic development of Korea during and since the colonial period with

30. The meaning of 'progressive' may be essential in understanding differentiation of evaluation on the colonial period between Korean and foreign scholars. As for the 'progressive segment' in *Korea Old and New*, 'progressive' in the colonial period means the capitalist direction to overcome stagnant or premodern society from the viewpoint of foreign scholars. Despite of some gaps among Korean scholars, 'progressive' means generally nationalist, social democratic, or socialist tendencies. So from the viewpoint of the Korean scholars, a segment of landowners who were successfully transformed into capitalist is not 'progressive', but 'conservative.'
31. In *Korea Old and New*, three points are paid attention to when comparing President Park with President Chun; 1) to control relatives, 2) to carry out a coup without bloodshed, and 3) to estimate situations properly compared to Chun who wanted to be another Park regardless of the changes in domestic as well as international affairs (377-378).
32. According to Cumings, the dual nature means that 'underdevelopment in Korean society as a whole' was going on along with 'overdevelopment' through colonial policy (175, 237).

a focus on the colonial legacy. Although Cumings admits that the colonial legacy has a dual nature (148),³² he assumes that the modern era of Korean history matured during the period from the Kabo Reform to the colonial period while much of what is reckoned as “Korean culture” or “Korean tradition” was shaped during the early Chosŏn period (48, 67).

Korea's Place in the Sun defines the policies of the Japanese Government-General as ‘Developmental Colonialism’ (162) and an early version of expert-led development strategy (163). He also compares its policies with Portugal’s colonial policies for Angola: he contends that Japan did not send ‘conquerors’ to Korea but ‘the civil service bureaucrats as the model overlord’ (150). He argues that by their guidance “new Korea was to play a part in the plans linking the metro-pole with hinterland economies” and Japan’s specific brand of ‘architectonic capitalism’ was formed (163).³³

Either statistically or empirically, it cannot be denied that Korean economic development was influenced by the policies of the Japanese Government-General during the colonial period. But the authors of these two books clearly have failed to notice one thing here. Granted that contemporary Korean history was greatly influenced by the legacy from the colonial period even after the liberation of Korea, the authors failed to notice that the situations of the colonial period were founded on the basis of traditional Korean society. They often argue that bad customs of present Korean society have originated from old traditional

33. In *Korea's Place in the Sun*, the author cites Woo and Eckert in order to explain details on economic policies in the colonial period. For example, he pays attention to the lack of bourgeoisie at the starting point of the modern era and the fact that the government controlled the financial system completely is considered as one of the key factors, as Woo stressed in her book (300-301). Jung-en Woo, *Race to the Swift* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 11, 159.

34. Evaluation on the role of confucianism deserves attention in *Korea Old and New*. Confucianism was regarded as a big obstacle to hinder the progress of capitalist productive relations by a lot of great scholars, like Max Weber, Lucian Pye, Samuel Huntington, etc. However, scholars reevaluate the role of Confucianism since the early 1980s when East Asian countries achieved astonishing economic growth. The reevaluation of Confucianism is closely related to the disputes of Asian Values or the Asian Way. But the most important question is that scholars arbitrarily conceptualize confucianism. Accordingly, the author of *Korea Old and New* sharply proposed that the tendency to understand the East Asian economic miracle by using Confucianism should be reexamined (409-410).

Korean society. The ills of the bureaucratic system (*Korea's Place in the Sun*, 54), political factionalism (*Korea Old and New*, 142), and the tendency to introduce foreign powers to settle domestic problems are typical examples of such bad customs.³⁴

However, no one would deny that a soil that can fully absorb colonial policies is required for their successful implementation. Such colonial policies could not be successfully carried out without appropriate foundations on the Korean Peninsula. Japanese rulers would often change their policies because of peculiarities of indigenoussness. It was one of the reasons why a number of Japanese politicians and journalists stressed the necessity of Korean autonomy during the 1920s.

Korea's Place in the Sun notes several natures of Korea as a colony such as that Seoul acted as the nerve center of the country (148), that bureaucratic-authoritarian system led to the industrialization (150), or that Korean landlords were barred from the web of connections to the political offices of the Seoul government, thus staying localized (151). However, all these are also closely related to the tradition of the Chosŏn period. It was during the Chosŏn period that the Seoul-centered-bureaucratic system was formed, and in addition, *yangban* secured strong bases in the local areas regardless of whether they served the central government or not. Had it not been for such tradition of Korean society, would the colonial policies have been successfully implemented? However, the author came to such a conclusion as follows:

The Meiji Restoration's success grew out of the agrarian and commercial changes of the Tokugawa period, it was "endogenous" to Japan's modern history; the colonial state, however, was exogenous, its source being the metropole, and so the distortions attendant to a strong role for the state in development were, of course, all the more acute in the Korean case. (150)

6. The Irreconcilable Left and Right Wings

One of the colonial legacies in politics is the policies of the Japanese Government-General encouraging the political factionalism among

Koreans. Both *Korea Old and New* and *Korea's Place in the Sun* highlight the confrontation between the right and left wings. They assert that such confrontation was formed by the March Movement in 1919, and that since the conflict was too deeply rooted in the society to be resolved, it eventually led to the partition of the Korean peninsula.

Such a point of view on the independence movement under the colonial regime was influenced by Robinson.³⁵ Robinson pointed out that a history of the independence movement of Korea was ill-conceived under the influence of confrontation between the communist North and the democratic South governments, for example, 'nationalism vs. anti-nationalism (= communism)' in the South and 'nationalism vs. pro-Japanese' in the North. He asserts that these ideologies should be precisely examined, and this is why he explored the liberation campaign since 1919.

At the same time, however, he himself fell into the dichotomy. He defined the national movement since 1919 as 'cultural nationalism' through the analysis of the nature of nationalist ideology, generally defined as rightist, and the examination of the criticisms of ideology by radical nationalist groups. Such analysis, however, leads to another dichotomy; 'cultural nationalism' vs. 'social revolution.'

In general, both *Korea Old and New* and *Korea's Place in the Sun* are faithful to such dichotomy. As result, the sub-chapter of *Korea Old and New* covering the liberation campaign since the 1920s is titled as, "Nationalism and Social Revolution: 1919-1931." While it shed relatively sufficient light on the socialist movement, it is more focused on cultural nationalism. For example, it argues that academia, literature and arts influenced by cultural nationalism in the 1920s were the very 'nucleus of modern, nationalistic culture,' promoting a nationalist sentiment in the Korean people through history and literary studies and artistic performances such as play, music, and movies (294).³⁶ From this viewpoint, there was no place for socialist and communist scholars and artists whose ideas were inclined to reflect the national identity.

35. Michael Edson Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988).

36. Activities by Yi Pyŏng-do and Choe Nam-sŏn classified as those of pro-Japanese in Korea, are also considered as one of the nationalist activities (295).

Cumings has resorted to dichotomy since his monumental writing of the first volume of *Origins of the Korean War*. In his writing, immediately after the liberation of Korea, political parties were divided into two opposing sides. One party is centered around 'the left = nationalism' and the other around 'the right = anti-nationalism and pro-Japanese.' In *Korea's Place in the Sun*, which was published 20 years later, he did not apply such dichotomized distinction as it was but his distinction of Korean political powers into the right and left was still maintained.

One of the problems here is that an emphasis on the continuance of confrontation between right and left from the colonial period hinders an understanding of political dynamics since the liberation of Korea. Though the three-year-period from the liberation to the establishment of the North and South governments was relatively short compared to the entire reign of the Japanese Government-General and the political interventions of the United States and the Soviet Union, it was when the strongest political dynamics appeared. During this period, diverse political leaders came back to Korea from foreign countries, being unified with or separated from domestic political groups. The Moscow Agreement was located in the center of such political dynamics. Although both these books mention the importance of the Moscow Agreement, they rarely cover the Anti-Trusteeship Movement that took place as the result of Moscow Agreement.

Without a full consideration of political dynamics since liberation, it is not possible to understand a lot of the political phenomena: 1) cooperation between radical nationalists led by the Provisional Government and pro-Japanese who chiefly belonged to the Korean Democratic Party, 2) secession of a faction from the Provisional Government and their coalition with the communist block, and 3) the Coalition Movement between the moderate right and left and the emergence of the middle road and its role before and after the establishment of separate governments in South and North. An analysis of each political group participating in the North and South governments shows a political map that cannot be explained by dichotomy from the ideological perspective. It was due to the process of unification and separation among different political leaders and parties since the Anti-Trusteeship Movement, which was quite different from the nature of confrontation

between the left and right during the colonial period.³⁷

Due to this kind of dichotomy, *Korea Old and New* and *Korea's Place in the Sun* do not pay much attention to the domestic political arena in the post-liberation period. They focus on the role and policies of the United States and Soviet Union who occupied the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, they make only brief account of domestic political situations while paying great attention to how great world powers intervened into the internal situations of the peninsula.

7. The Origin of *Juche* Ideology and Neo-Confucianism

While *Korea Old and New* focuses on the modernization process of Korea, *Korea's Place in the Sun* views that the modernization process of Korea has not been always successful. Rather, it shows that Korean modern history is “not with a smooth narrative of progress toward industrial mastery, however, but with a fractured, shattered twentieth-century history” (11). The author's view on the modern Korean history is clearly revealed in his account of the pains of the Korean people during the Korean War, participation in the Vietnam War, and the democratic movement under the dictatorship.

His views unfold throughout the book. His covering of the Korean War is particularly notable since he has completed a vast amount of research on this. The readers, if overwhelmed by the amount of information in volume 1 and 2 of *The Origins of the Korean War*, would gain more easy understanding of his views on the Korean war after reading Chapters 4 and 5. His research findings are clearly shown in various points in this book. For example, he does not view that the Korean war started on June 25, 1950, and instead makes a distinguished point: ‘civil wars do not start: they came’ (238). He also views that the direct cause of the Korean War lies in the withdrawal of the U.S. and Soviet armies from the Korean peninsula and in the

37. For Korean scholars the coalition movement between the left and the right is meaningful and realistic as an attempt to block the partition of the peninsula, while few foreign scholars paid attention to the movement. From the viewpoint that stressed continuous friction since the colonial period, the movement probably did not seem to be realistic.

Communists Revolution in China (239). He also pays attention to the moves of Syngman Rhee and the United States shortly before the breakout of the war (225), noting that the war that started on June 25, 1950, was not a full-fledged one but the one with limited scale using only half of the entire military forces of North Korea (262).³⁸

The description of the Korean War with an emphasis on its cause, or the analysis of the duration of war with focus on the slaughters of civilians, and attempts to use nuclear and chemical weapons by the United States clearly show the author's concern. (264, 271, 290-293). As a result, the overall description of the war is not to examine the circumstances or nature of the war in general. Still, his conclusion regarding questions about the Korean War is of such a gravity attributable to his being a specialist in this subject. For example, he notes that 'who started the Korean War? is the wrong question' (263), and concludes that 'the tragedy was that the war solved nothing' (298).

Meanwhile, the author has made a notable depiction of contemporary North Korean history. Not only does he include contemporary history of North Korea in the account of Korean history, but seeks to understand North Korea from the perspective of Korean traditional ideas and the North Korean people's mentality. He tries to account for North Korea with resort to 'corporatism.' (pp. 401-402). However, he ultimately accounts for the *Juche* ideology and the organization principle of North Korean society in terms of traditions of Korea represented by Neo-Confucianism.

He views that "the real meaning of *Juche* might be best be translated as putting Korean things first, always: it suggests a type of nationalism, in other words" and that "it is closer to Neo-Confucianism than to Marxism" (404).³⁹

38. Moreover, his argument on the reason of the North Korea's attack to South Korea deserves attention, although he tries to explain that without evidence. He stresses three significant situations; 1) failure of a guerilla strategy in South Korea by the Communist Party, 2) the return of Korean 'battle-hardened' soldiers after the Chinese civil war, and 3) the North Korean's fear of South Korea's preemptive attack.

39. It is not possible to understand completely North Korean society by using one or two perspectives. First of all, the experiences of the partisan movement during the colonial period and recovery after the Korean War as well as external influences, such as Mao's ideas and North Korea's relationship with China and the Soviet Union after the Korean War, should be examined. Moreover, influences of Christian and nationalist movements being derived from Kim's family also might be illuminated on to better understand the origin of *Juche* ideology.

It is Neo-Confucianism in a communist bottle, or Chu Hsi in a Mao jacket. (413)

One interesting point here is that in understanding North Korea he only refers to a few articles of Armstrong and JaHyun Kim along with articles from newspapers and a few other materials.⁴⁰ It is because he tries to understand North Korea through his personal experiences knowing there is a lack of comprehensive research on North Korea in the United States. That is why the author mentions 'Life on the Farm' in his covering of North Korean society, a topic not included in the account of South Korean society.

He emphasizes several times that understanding of North Korean society has been biased. More specifically, he points out that examination of the North Korean economy using a western perspective can be misleading. It is clearly revealed in his efforts to locate the origin of *Juche* ideology within Neo-Confucianism and traditions of Korea despite considerable difficulties.

8. Experiences of Modern Korean History

A book, *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* edited by Hagen Koo, describes relations between state system and society in South Korea and the thinking of general Korean citizens. This book contains various articles written by scholars who are grappling with the question of why the Korean government failed to control various social groups or social movements properly despite its strong state system characterized by an authoritarian regime. Their efforts are made in order to discern the nature of the Korean state system that cannot be explained merely by the simple concept of 'Development State.'⁴¹ This book argues that the social movements of Korea have been one impor-

40. Charles Armstrong, "The Origins of the North Korean State," Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1994; JaHyun Kim Haboush, *A Heritage of Kings: One Man's Monarchy in the Confucian World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

41. Hagen Koo, ed., *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993).

tant driving force of Korea's development, also functioning as a strong confrontation against the strong state system. For example, the book contains a number of important elements required for understanding of present Korean society such as Choi Jang-jip's analysis of change in the relationship between the state and social movement groups, Hagen Koo's analysis of relationship among the state, public and workers, and Echert's analysis of the *chaebol* which has been a huge driving force for developing Korean society but have gained only little public support.

To the contrary, *Korea Old and New* and *Korea's Place in the Sun* fail to include several important elements of contemporary Korean society such as the relationship between the state and society, the unique modernization process of Korea. These two books divide contemporary Korean history into two parts: the flow of democratization movements standing against the authoritarian regime, and economic development. Such division reflects typical understanding of contemporary Korean history. Most foreign scholars being interested in Korean studies tend to focus on the Korean War and the economic development of Korea. Accordingly, they fail to examine various aspects of Korean society more accurately.

Then, does it reflect a situation that there are not sufficient existing works on modern Korean society in the United States? There are several parts in *Korea Old and New* covering contemporary Korean history that cannot be accepted as the result of verified research results. Considering the fact that the authors of two books stayed in Korea for a long time as a member of the Peace Corps and as a field researcher, respectively, their personal experiences must have influenced their views on contemporary Korean history.⁴² As mentioned above, *Korea Old and New's* account of former President Park, and the evaluation of

42. For example, Cumings states that '[b]ecause the path backward to this extraordinary hierarchy has been so short, given Korea's recent industrialization, egalitarianism has often been an ideal falling on deaf ears in both halves of Korea' (54). However, there are a lot of foreigners who believe that egalitarianism is one of the notable characteristics of Korean people.

43. In pages 382-386 of *Korea's Place in the Sun*, the author describes anti-Americanism in South Korea after the Kwangju Democratic Movement in 1980. Although he pays attention to Korean people's image on America and their attitude to Americans, it is not easy to understand why he titles the part as "Anti-Americanism and Anti-Koreanism." He does not mention American's evaluation on Korea and the Korean people.

the uprising in 1987 and the June 29 Declaration are typical examples of this (383-384). *Korea's Place in the Sun* shares the same problem here: since it reorganizes contemporary history of Korea in accordance with his major concern, an overall picture of contemporary Korean history cannot be gained.⁴³

Nevertheless, it is notable that these two books reveal some historical facts that could have been dishonorable to Korean people. For example, they disclose the fact that a number of Korean intellectuals intended to modernize Korean society with the help from Japan even before the colonial period (*Korea's Place in the Sun*, 147), and that a great many pro-Japanese actually existed among the Korean people. All this is a definite truth and a glimpse into the dark sides of Korean society that we have wanted to hide. In fact, there were many intellectuals who, on the one hand, defined themselves as members of the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement and, on the other hand, argued prior to 1910 that the annexation of Korea with Japan would be more helpful for the development of the entire Korean society. It might be the proof of 'colonial modernity' pointed out by American scholars.

The argument that Korean people have a tendency to introduce external powers into the country in order to solve domestic problems shows another point that is not easily spotted by native Korean people (34). Such argument is supported by the historical facts that ancient Shilla asked military aids from China to invade Koguryŏ and Paekje. The author also related it with Chosŏn's request of military aids for Ming China during the Japanese Invasion in 1592 and to the Ching Dynasty to repress peasants uprisings within the country in the late Chosŏn period, and with the Korean government's request of military aid during the Korean War to the United States and to China. In fact, the foreign powers were not merely asked by Koreans, but they themselves were looking for an opportunity to intervene on the Korean peninsula, which is an important geo-political spot in the East Asian region, fully prepared to take advantage of an official aids request as a cover for their true intents. Still, such historical facts are easily adopted by foreign scholars as evidence supporting their argument on toadyism. No wonder that one book's coverage of economic policies of Syngman Rhee's regime is titled as "Working Uncle Sam."⁴⁴

It is also interesting that Cumings examines the late Chosŏn dynasty

mainly by directly quoting foreigners who went it through, especially, the missionaries (120-146). Since the author himself does not make direct researches on this period, such quotations could have been useful as vivid description of the Great Han Empire. Then, what were the observations of the Great Han Empire made by foreigners? Cumings nicely extracted the essence of the observations made by missionaries, though not an arcuate overall picture of the Korean society of the period.

9. Conclusion

In general, these two books make a simple and fine description of the entire Korean history. It would not be easy to find a book written even by Korean scholars that account for the entire Korean history based upon such a consistent systemic framework as these two books. Basically, these two books were written for lecturing but still, they are of great help for the understanding of Korean history. Especially for foreigners, they have been used as great textbooks for Korean history classes and will continue to be used as such in the future. The examination of Korean-Americans made in Chapter 9 of *Korea's Place in the Sun* clearly manifests the type of readers targeted by this book.⁴⁵

As mentioned above, however, there are a number of points in these books contrast with native Korean understanding of Korean history. Some of them are even subject to doubt 'how come this point of possible?' For example, 'the slave society' and 'colonial modernity' arguments would be quite shocking for native Korean people. It is clear that

44. *In Korea's Place in the Sun*, the evaluation on President Rhee is different from other books written by foreign scholars. Generally specialists on Korean economy consider the economic policies in Rhee's era as an import substitute industrialization strategy and the economic growth at that time as a important foundation for an export-led strategy in the 1960s in spite of the fact that Rhee's economic policy was not successful. However, Cumings describes that Rhee "extracted 'maximum rents' from the global hegemony," using the ROK's immense geopolitical leverage granted by the Cold War and his own inveterate skills as a tough poker player willing to cash in the whole game, knowing the United States had no one else to rely on but him" (430).

45. Cumings calls 'Korean Americans' as 'America's Korea.' He seems to explain that Koreans in America have obscure identities, nevertheless, try to maintain a Korean identity even though they live in American society.

these two theories are already widely accepted in the academic circle of American scholars.

Notably, these books share some important elements in common. First, they do not resort to research findings of Korean scholars. In case of *Korea Old and New*, being based upon *A New History of Korea*, it is closely related to the research made by one Korean scholar. Still, the overall perspective of this book on Korean history adopted that of American scholars only. That is why this book contains several criticisms on the trends of Korean scholars. It is shared by *Korea's Place in the Sun* as well. It might be reflective of the authors' intention to make it easy for American students to understand Korean history by indicating mainly references written in English. Still, it is regrettable that these two books did not refer to or list monumental works published by Korean scholars nor at least, some introductory Korean books that indicate major research trends of Korean scholars.

Secondly, these two books intensively refer to several scholars in examining each historical period, whose works are representative of the rest of the scholars on each subject. In fact, those scholars and their research referred to in each chapter of the two books are representing all the American scholars in the field of Korean studies. Since there are only limited number of American scholars and publications in this field, these two books reconstruct the essence of each publication into a whole argument. Accordingly, the spot unvisited by them are naturally left out by these two books too.⁴⁶

Thirdly, while examining Korean history, the authors frequently use a comparative method with Western, Japanese and Chinese history. Obviously, it is an advanced research method compared to the ones usually adopted by Korean scholars. Through this method, unique elements of Korean history can be more easily spotted. It was how Palais titles his thesis on Korean history "uniqueness" probably because of

46. *Korea's Place in the Sun* makes Korean readers embarrassed when a part where Hatada's book is cited is found. Moreover the part belongs to an explanation on the late 18th century that Korean scholars consider as the Renaissance (76). Hatada is criticized as one of the Japanese scholars who created colonial historiography under the Government-General.

47. For example, an article written by Eckert, "Exorcising Hegel's Ghosts: Toward a Postnationalist Historiography of Korea," in *Colonial Modernity*, shows foreign scholars' criticism of Korean scholars very well.

elements found in Korean history only, not in Chinese or Japanese history. Still, it should be noted that the comparative method should be adopted on the basis of exact understanding of Korean history itself. If the priority is set on the Chinese or Japanese History while conducting a research on Korean history, it would only lead to biased understanding.

The authors of the two books are not solely blamable. It is almost an inevitable outcome under the current environment in which American scholars of Korean history rarely interact with Korean scholars. Recently, I even got this impression that these two parties avoid each other. More recent research made by American scholars tends to criticize the perspectives of Korean scholars in a more aggressive tone.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Korean scholars attack the research work of American scholars such as the 'colonial modernity' argument. It appears that these two parties are shouting in vain without any official venue through which they can discuss the issues together.

*(The School of International and Area Studies,
Seoul National University)*