

# Japan's "Distorted" Memory of the Donghak Peasant Uprising and the Sino-Japanese War:

A Focus on the July 7, 1894 Incident

Japanese Military Possession of the Joseon Palace

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The purpose of this article is to elucidate the Japanese people's memory of Japanese plundering in Asia at the end of the nineteenth century that started the Donghak Peasant Uprising and Sino-Japanese War. Below, each of the total six sections of this essay will be summarized.

The first section presents the backdrop of the currently existing Japanese right-wing phenomenon that helped elect Ishihara Shintaro into office, and highlights how historical understanding becomes beautified and "distorted" with an in-depth analysis of the nineteenth century, when Japanese plunder in Asia sparked the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars.

The second section covers the distortions of Japanese historical textbooks as represented in the Saeroun yeoksa gyogwaseo (The New History Textbook), issued in 2001, and analyzes the related accounts between the rise of the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars and points out how this historical "distorted" memory actually gets reproduced in contemporary Japanese society.

The third section analyzes the deeply rooted history of Japanese distorted facts concerning the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars, starting with the "royal edict propaganda" of 1894, the government's first history textbook, official military histories, and clears up the facts of where the formation of Japanese "distorted" memory originated by looking at similar past textbooks, war history books, researchers, etc.

The fourth section clears up nothing less than the origin of the Japanese "distorted" memory of the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars - the facts about the first use of armed forces to "seize the Joseon Royal Palace incident" that started the Donghak War and related historical materials that were, from the outset, fabricated by the Japanese government administrators and militarists.

The fifth section studies the records left behind by the Donghak Peasant Army Leader, Jeon Bong-Jun, the Righteous Army Leader, Seo Sang-Cheol, and the former scholar official, Hwang Hyeon to see how the Joseon people undertook the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident." All of them understood that the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident" was clearly an act of plunder. Their kind of understanding at that time is diametrically opposed to that of the Japanese.

Lastly, the conclusion points out how, as the Japanese reproduce the "distorted" memory of history and beautify their aggressive war, the relationship between both Korea and Japan in a genuine era of exchange will continue be difficult.

*Keywords: Donghak Peasant Uprising, Sino-Japanese War, seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident, textbook, memory*

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## Introduction: The “Brilliant” Entry of Ishihara Shintaro, an In-Depth Analysis of This Phenomenon.

In Japan, on April 13, 2003, while a revival of a local election for unification was taking place, Ishihara Shintaro was also being re-elected to the Tokyo branch office (*Hangyeore*, April 14, 2003: 7; *Dongsinmun*, April 15, 2003: 10). So, who is this Ishihara Shintaro who received what was said to be 70% of the votes in the Tokyo branch election, the most ever won by one candidate in its history? Let’s briefly look over what happened over these few days in history.

In April 2004, Ishihara Shintaro was among a group of ultra-right wing political representatives pushing for a large-scale expulsion speaking about “third-world peoples”<sup>1</sup> as a domestic/foreign issue (*Sekai* 2001: 195-196). That most recent brilliant entry of this politician was for Japan a part of the latest phenomenal leaning towards the right (with an organization for a new militarized nation) who are angered by the advent of the revisionist history office (i.e., liberal historiographers), concerned with problems of distortion in history textbooks, etc., and the falling apart of supposedly indivisible governmental relations.

In present Japan, the historical understanding of right-wingers, including that of Ishihara Shintaro, is steadily reaching a dangerous stage. For instance, such people proclaim that the nineteenth-century Sino-Japanese War, that Joseon and China were aggressively involved in, was fought “in order to give foreigners a great new image; war was waged in order to make every Western nation recognize Japan’s new worth” (Nakatsuka Akira 1997: 155). Furthermore, in a Japan that has been recently tormented by the on-going recession after the collapse of the bubble economy, these people dream of reviving the “good old days,” back to the Meiji Era, when Japan had glorious victories in the Sino and Russo-Japanese Wars.

What makes this a grave problem is that the recent phenomenon of the right-wing Japanese election for Ishihara Shintaro is not a phenomenon that erupted

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1. On April 9, 2000, at a commemoration ceremony for the first division Land Defense Forces, Ishihara stated, “Looking from the white man’s perspective, although the Japanese are a colored race, they unexpectedly created a unique and respectable army. Because of that, Japan plans to dissolve the symbol of the greatly regarded United States’ distorted constitution [Japanese peace constitution, proclaimed in 1946; independent citation] and though it is regretful, expose today’s results and no one will be able to deny the truth. ... Looking back on Tokyo today and the illegal entry of tens of thousands from the three nations [this refers to the atrocious crime committed by foreigners] is reiterated.”

out of the blue. On August 15, 1945, with the unconditional surrender of the Japanese, the United States utilized ingenious tactics that resulted in a total command of the negotiation process in handing the treatment of postwar problems (Yosida Yutaka 1992) and succeeded in securing the emperor's immunity from facing war crimes against the Allied Nations. From then till now, the Japanese government has used their emperor's immunity from war crimes as their basis to not even once face their own country's war crime problems nor express their attitude "clearly" about such although Japanese aggression in war inflicted immense damage on Joseon, China and several other Asian countries (Nakatsuka Akira 1997: 233-234).<sup>2</sup> Because of this, the efforts by progressive historians and intellectuals' questions of what preceded 1945 in Japan have been disregarded. All the while, the recent attempt to restore the emperor's militarism in Japan has not yet occurred but the movement nonetheless still exists. In the backdrop of the ultra-right wing Ishihara Shintaro's "brilliant" entrance were rekindled residuals of a militaristic phenomenon, one of a supposed interspersed aggression. And, inside the minds of Japanese today, understanding of this "ill-wrought" history of aggression has been distorted to a more preferable "good era."

Through Ishihara Shintaro's election and within the present Japanese memory, this article will examine the roots that sprouted the erroneous memory of the Donghak Peasant Uprising and the Sino-Japanese War. To correct this error, first and most recently, the real facts behind today's Japanese distorted memories of the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars will be examined with the problematic of "meeting on making a new history textbook" that created serious distortions in their publication of *Atarashi Rekisi Kyokasho* (New History Textbook).<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the formation process of these Japanese distorted war memories will be studied to uncover what happened just after these wars ended, such as the ways in which history textbooks, war history archives, research cen-

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2. Since the unconditional surrender to the Allied Nations on August 15, 1945, Japan's attitude to abandon all war responsibilities was seen at an event on June 9, 1995 where a National Assembly formed a "50 years after the war resolution." Through the Japanese instigated aggressive wars (from the 1894 Sino-Japanese War to the 1941 Pacific War), over twenty million Asians were sacrificed. Not being deterred even by that fact, they were determined to state that this "50 years after the war resolution" began by colonially controlling and aggressively acting on Joseon and China and then spread throughout the rest of Asia while the West did the same with other nations throughout modern world history--so Japan should not be held particularly responsible.

3. This textbook was published by Tokyo's Fusyosa in June, 2001.

ters, etc. were revamped. Thirdly, the decisive moment in forming these distorted memories will be found based on facts that were discovered in the spring of 1994, in the Fukushima District Hyeonnip Library, Sato Collection (Nakatsuka Akira 1997: 2), that spoke to what instigated the start of the Sino-Japanese War—the fact that armed forces “seized the Joseon Royal Palace”—which, in August 2002, led to Joseon newspapers revealing this information to the public for the first time with the Ilcheong jeonsa choan (History Draft of the Sino-Japanese War) (*Sejeonbuk sinmun*, August 26, 2002: 1-3). Fourthly and finally, this article will look at how Joseon scholars and the masses understood the “seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace” in 1894 and how that knowledge was passed down, elucidating whether or not it came from memory.

### **The Emergence of the “Donghak Peasant Uprising and the Sino-Japanese War” in *Saeroun yeoksa gyogwaseo* (New History Textbook)**

As soon as the Japanese Ministry of Education gave official approval to publish *Atarasii Rekisi Kyokasyo* in June 2001, its serious distortions met heavy criticism from within and outside of Japan. This resulted in the amendment of over one million places in this textbook to narrowly pass approval with the Japanese Ministry of Education’s official curricula. But, this distorted textbook faced fierce opposition from the townspeople where a movement arose to rebel against adopting and applying such severe education, and the consequence of this produced what is confirmed to be that only 0.039 percent (521 volumes) of these books ceased to be published (Nakatsuka Akira 2003). The problem lies in the fact that, even with the extent to which the *Atarasii Rekisi Kyokasyo* contains severely distorted history, it still, along with other textbooks of its kind, met the Ministry of Education’s approval in 1996 and has been extant ever since 1997. With the entrance of the twenty-first century, contemporary Japanese historical understanding presents a case that can be thought of as largely backwards today. Take for instance, the topic of “military prostitutes” which first made its entry onto the textbook stage in 1997, yet starting with the *Saeroun yeoksa gyogwaseo*, history textbooks have continued to stealthily eliminate the topic almost entirely by 2001, so that all accounts of the topic of “coerced escorting of the Joseon people” are now erased (Tawara Yoshifumi 2000: 43-47). In a similar vein, the majority of accounts for the connection between the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese

Wars have either taken a big step backwards or appear in distorted accounts.

The back-step in the Japanese historical understanding is confirmed in the fact that, beginning in 1997, before the harm that was done by the entrance of the *Saeroun yeoksa gyogwaseo*, junior high school history textbooks (Chuugakkou Syakai Rekisi 1996) looked into accounts that referred to the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars.

## 1. The Sino-Japanese War

In order for the Japanese to widen their sphere of influence, they opposed the Joseon tributary state and confronted China. In 1894, to oppose Joseon's increasing despotic rulership and penetration by foreign powers, a peasant revolt arose in Nambu amidst Donghak believers (also known as The Gabo Peasant War). To match the Joseon government's request to the Chinese government to dispatch troops, Japan also dispatched their own troops in July of the same year, and that is when the Sino-Japanese War started. The war unfolded through the battlefields of Joseon and Southern Manchuria. The current twist on China is that they could not exhibit their fighting power so that the war ended in Japanese victory (Chuugakkou Syakai Rekisi 1996: 204-205).

If one was to look from the Korean standpoint, this above account is quite insufficient. The Sino-Japanese War is full of blindspots, entirely missing the horrific event that served as the catalyst: When military power was used to "seize the Joseon Royal Palace." This misses any concrete accounts of Japan's obstructive and aggressive acts that point to the great harm done to Joseon and China, etc. So then, how should the *Saeroun yeoksa gyogwaseo* describe the Donghak Peasant Uprising and Sino-Japanese War? Acknowledge the relationship between the two.

## 2. The Sino-Japanese War and the Cause for Japanese Victory

In 1894 (also known as Meiji year 27), a peasant riot called the Donghak Peasant Uprising (Gabo Peasant War) broke out in southern Joseon. The Donghak Party was a group that believed in a religion (called Donghak) that opposed Western Christianity (Western Learning). When these people saw a menacing predicament in the capital city of Hanseong (present-day Seoul) they made it their goal to expel foreigners and corrupted local government officials. Without sufficient military strength, Joseon requested China to dispatch troops

to suppress the conflict. Japan also dispatched troops by following China's actions after the resolution from the Gapsin (1884) coup d'état (the Treaty of Tianjin; author's note). When armies from both Japan and China collided, the Sino-Japanese War began. Outside of Joseon, the battlefield spread to Southern Manchuria, and in land combat as well as in at sea Japan won an overwhelming victory over China. If the cause for Japanese victory can be held on the points that they had a trained army, an orderly system, new weapons of war, and superior equipment, such a setting that the Japanese devoted themselves to developing their "nation" would be true (Atarasii Rekisi Kyokasyo 2001: 218.).

When the content of the two textbooks mentioned above are compared, the difference between the former and latter versions is clear. More than the former, the latter confirms a far more unjust account of what occurred with the Donghak and the Donghak Peasant Uprising. To illustrate, the latter uses expressions such as, "Donghak disturbance," "riot," etc. to describe the Donghak Peasant Uprising, while the former does not. In this kind of nomenclature, the significance of the Donghak Peasant Uprising is markedly belittled. And with the dispatch of Japanese troops, the latter states, "also following the mutual agreement with China after the Gapsin coup, Japan dispatched its troops accordingly," rattling on a long explanation to rationalize reasons for its dispatch in order to hide its intention to plunder as much as possible. Not only does the main reason for their victory in the Sino-Japanese War get described as, "the Japanese turned out devoting themselves to their 'nation,'" but it goes so far as to show their attitude that affirms the Japanese committing an aggressive war. Nowhere is there any mention that refers to the acts committed by the Japanese military that prompted skirmishes to provoke the Sino-Japanese War, nor even the truth of how they violated international law by illegally seizing the Joseon Royal Palace, nor the fact that the Japanese army illegally massacred tens of thousands of the Donghak Peasant Army in Nambu, Joseon, nor the fact that a surprise attack was made on a Chinese warship causing the ship to sink, leaving its sailors to drown in the open sea off of Asan, nor how they massacred a large number of Chinese civilians in the Yeosun Peninsula. Even as these types of accounts get pointed out, the Japanese right-wingers agree to remember the Sino-Japanese (and Russo-Japanese) War as "a good era" and to recognize and leave this distorted history as is. In this way, Japan is openly confronted with its past as one of committing wars of plunder with the publication of *Saeroun yeoksa gyogwaseo*, the long-standing criticism on the distortion in Japanese history textbooks, and the development of the opposition movement caused those such as Tawara

Yoshifumi to concretely point out as below:

First, the conclusion disregards the results of historiographical research as "unscientific research";

Second, basic educational law is violated according to the Japanese constitution

Third, the Japanese war to plunder Asia is camouflaged as a "defensive war"; an "Asian liberation war";

Fourth, Japan's denial of violence and war crimes such as the Nanjin Massacre etc.;

Fifth, affirms war itself;

Sixth, regards many Asian people with contempt and justifies colonial control;

Seventh, the purpose to plant a historical view of "a divine nation through a heavenly emperor";

Eighth, excessively stresses the superiority of the Japanese nation, the Japanese civilization. (Tawara Yoshifumi 2000: 28-34)

As Tawara pointed out, publishing the *Atarasi Rekisi Kyokasyo* is not simply a localized problem of an instance with a history textbook. It is at the same time deeply related to the phenomenon of the rightists that also read such books within Japan. The distorted memory of the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars that have continued on since 1894 is deeply related to the history that modern Japan cannot clear. Here, Prof. Nakatsuka Akira (中塚明) points out below:

After 1945, the surface of the Japanese government's new constitution cried for peace, democracy, and human rights, all the while being in a historical vacuum. It is a well-known fact that through an official textbook system to distribute history pedagogy, Japan made an effort and came up with a scheme to hide in various ways the historical fact that it plundered several Asian countries.

In this kind of setting since 1995, particularly from within the *Jiminto* (Japanese Liberal Democratic Party), along with external Liberal Democratic Parties and other conservative parties, there began an overt claim and move towards a "right-wing" direction. The Liberal Democratic Party created a history investigation committee that dutifully and at once published the *Daedonga jeonjaengui chonggwol* (A

Summary of the Great East Asian War, August 15, 1995). Under the Liberal Democratic Party, this investigation committee was created based on the “council to recompense for the war dead,” “council for bereaved families,” and the “gathering of the national assembly to jointly pay a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine” (a so-called name for a new group that is related to the Yasukuni Shrine). Seventy-six of the members from these committees held seats in the House of Representatives, twenty-nine in the House of Councillors, with a total of 105 of them towing the same line in government. The twenty meetings held by the investigation committee via “scholarly” lectures recently produced a history textbook by Fusyosya (the above mentioned *Saeroun yeoksa gyogwaseo*) and a civil textbook led in part by Nishio Kanji (西尾幹二), Nishibe Susumu (西部邁), and Takahashi Shiro (高橋史郎), etc. In summary, we will be able to say that, through the Liberal Democratic Party’s conservative politics aligned with the Japanese right-wing, from the investigation committee meeting that published *Daedonga jeonjaengui chonggwol*, a strategy to make a second generation of assembly members that one day will inherit this militaristic, heavenly emperor led phenomenon is well under way (Nakatsuka Akira, “Nihon no kyokasyo mondai ni tsuite” (About Japan’s Textbook Problem), *Jeonbuk ilbo* (Jeonbuk Daily News) interview materials, May 30, 2001).

Moreover, where are the origins for this Japanese mistaken historical understanding that is constantly reproduced by publicly forming a “distorted” memory of history? And where are the roots of that distorted memory? Through the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars, the root of modern Japan’s distorted memory of history, especially with the use of armed force at the very start of the Sino-Japanese War, this second part below considers the Japanese militarized “seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace” as the immediate moment of the Donghak Peasant Uprising.

## **The Japanese “Distorted” Memory of the Donghak Peasant Uprising and the Sino-Japanese War**

Fujimura Michio, a Sino-Japanese War researcher, assumes that there are three layers to situating the Sino-Japanese War (Fujimura Michio 1973). The first situ-

ation is China's militarized fight to exclude Joseon's suzerainty. The second is the great western powers' confrontation and competition with each other in a partitioned policy between Joseon and China. And the third is the suppression of the Joseon and Chinese people as a result of the Japanese invasion (Toriumi Yasusi 1999: 189). Within these three situations that Fujimura Michio points out, the Donghak Peasant Uprising can also be included.

Such closely examined research that maintained multi-layered facts of the Sino-Japanese War, at least in Japan up to 1945, were rigorously prohibited. Independent research projects on the Sino-Japanese War that were approved after 1945 were even examined for correction, and then taken as fact.

And now, the great majority of Japanese are remembering the Sino-Japanese war as, "a war fought to defend Joseon's independence." Our Chinese neighbours have a diametrically opposing understanding in recalling the Sino-Japanese War when they say, "the imperialist Japanese nation raised a war of plunder in order to seize Joseon."

Moreover, it is difficult to know for sure when Japanese used armed force at the start of the Sino-Japanese War for "Joseon's independence" if the Joseon army and Joseon Royal Palace were truly leaning on the Chinese army. Then, why did the Japanese only have a distorted memory about the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese War? And when did that distorted memory begin; from where did it originate? The origins come from a long and continually self-serving past. The cause stems from the outset of the Sino-Japanese War when the Japanese government and military authorities had organized to create abridged/distorted/forged historical facts. The Japanese government forged history while it was witnessed without any sort of criticism and the Japanese people received a one-sided propaganda of fabricated facts<sup>4</sup> through the Japanese press and journalists' mistaken historical understanding.

First off, the root of current Japanese distorted memory of the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese War can be traced back to the Japanese emperor's declaration of the Sino-Japanese War (宣戰詔勅) that was issued on August 1, 1894. In 1894, the emperor's royal edict stated that the purpose of the Sino-Japanese War was, "for the empire [i.e., Japan; author's note] to pioneer sovereignty for other nations, in which 'the position of Joseon' is held among their ranks. And, because of Chinese wrongful desires and disdain for a treaty that

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4. See Otani Tadasi 1994 for more information on the attitude of the Japanese media on the war.

indicated this sovereignty, despite our persistence, Japan could not but go into war.” This royal edict implies that Japan first kindled the Sino-Japanese War in order to defend Joseon’s independence. The roots to this distorted memory is secondly based on an August 26, 1894 affixed seal that claimed an “alliance” between the “Great Japan and Great Joseon.” The first clause of this alliance clearly stated, “to uphold this alliance, the Chinese army must evacuate to the outside perimeters of Joseon’s borders, announce Joseon’s sovereignty, and strive to benefit both Japan and Joseon,” and stressed that the Sino-Japanese War was “a war to defend Joseon’s independence,” and this fact contributed to the formation of Japanese distorted memory of the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, the Japanese that remember the Sino-Japanese War as, “fought for Joseon’s independence,” rightfully recall the use of armed forces that started the war with the Pungdo (豊島) naval battle on July 25, 1894. Of course, this kind of memory is distorted. Truthfully, more than the Chinese, Joseon was confronted by the Japanese instigated use of armed forces that started the Sino-Japanese War; it was the Joseon King’s Royal Palace, not the Chinese military, which was confronted. Such as it was, the Japanese wrongfully remember the first Japanese use of armed forces, not with the “seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace,” but rather, with the Pungdo naval battle. It is in this kind of background of historical distortion and invention that the deep-rooted history of Japan is situated. This is where history rooted in distorted memories look to pursue those represented in history textbooks, accounts of war history, and research centers.

### 1. Elementary School Japanese History (The First National Textbook)

In 1903, immediately after the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese Ministry of Education issued their first national textbook as a part of the curriculum for responsible education. Let’s see how the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese War histories suffered from these textbooks.

In Meiji year 27, a Donghak Party disturbance arose in Joseon. In order for the Chinese to maintain their influence, they said they were rescuing

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5. Because of this, Kim Gyo-Sin announced, one day through the shamanistic faith, that the fierce influence of Korea was backing him, and even Utzimura Kanzo went so far as to reason that the so-called ‘enlightenment war’ was protected from the Sino-Japanese War.

their tributary state from the disturbance and violated the Treaty of Tianjin by wantonly dispatching their troops to Asan. Our country (Japan; author's note) dispatched troops in order to protect our legation and our residents. In July of the same year, our battleships started a naval battle for the first time by ambush off of the open sea of Pungdo. Soon after, land forces fought in Cheongbyeong and Seonghwan (in Asan). Hence, in August, the emperor's publicly distributed royal edict finalized the subjugation under the Chinese military  
Through our victory in this war, our national prestige drastically increased, showing our nation's true worth to the West (Nakatsuka Akira 1997: 150-151).

There is utterly no reference to the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident" within this textbook's account. There is only a brief reference to the Pungdo naval battle. And nowhere in the curriculum of the Sino-Japanese war can accounts of the Japanese plunder of Joseon and China be found. They would rather account for how China first violated the treaty as if China was the first to provoke the war. Not only that, there is no reference to the peasant army's independent struggles. There are only praise accounts of the Sino-Japanese War being the first war where the Japanese national glory was won through the victorious plundering of a foreign country, giving them a new large international presence. According to Professor Nakatsuka (Nakatsuka Akira 1997: 152), although the textbook was first published nationally in 1903, it has since been revised and reissued five times and is entirely lacking in teaching the truth and is blind and dumb to Japan's wayward plunder and the crushed Joseon/Chinese people's independent national movements. It can be said that Japan's first national textbook provides evidence attesting to the Japanese "distorted" memory about the plunder that began the history of the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars. These Japanese history textbooks are rooted in ceaselessly reproducing the "distorted" origins from the past.

## 2. Meiji Year 27/28 History of the Sino-Japanese War (Section on Japanese Military Headquarters, 1904-1907)

In February, 1896, the year after the Sino-Japanese War ended, concrete discussions effectively began and the Japanese military headquarters took charge of this job from 1904 through 1907 and produced an enormous, eight-volume (with

two appended chart volume) compilation. This Meiji Year 27/28 History of the Sino-Japanese War (the official name of this war history) was enforced. Japan's first official war history of the Sino-Japanese War does have its merits. The first volume of this official history has a comparatively detailed account of the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident." Although it's a bit long, the core content will be outlined for its very pivotal meaning.

The latest situation was not very easy; they were suddenly drunk with a strong attitude to refuse Japan's requests and the Joseon people along with a volatile Chinese army arrived at the small gate of the capital and became increasingly arrogant thus, a brigade commander of the second battalion of the twenty-first regiment and a military engineer of the first platoon transferred the Royal Palace to a northern mountainous area, particularly to avoid the disturbance caused by the people. Before dawn of the twenty-third day (in July 1894; author's note) various armies broke into Gyeongseong and attacked. As soon as they passed the east side of the Royal Palace, they restrained the Joseon soldiers that were stationed at the palace garrison and its vicinity, and when our soldiers faced enemy fire, in defense, we immediately returned fire. Furthermore, had these disorderly Joseon soldiers refused to leave Gyeongseong, when or what kind of disaster would have rekindled is impossible to predict. Eventually, our soldiers risked the gunfire that ensued inside the Royal Palace and gradually chased them out of the city and defended the palace from all sides. Upon hearing the news of what was happening with the King inside of Onghwa Gate, Yamaguchi (山口), the battalion commander, ordered to hold our fire and looked for temporary quarters for the King. A low government official negotiated the disturbance within the gates and the king, with a tormented heart, pardoned his people's unexpected cause for the military clash between both countries. Furthermore, it speaks to nothing being higher than the protection of the King's body (*Myeongchi ishipchilpallyeon ilcheongjeonsa* 1904: 119-120).

This is the Japan-sided official interpretation of the accounts of their troops that were first employed in the militaristically forced "seizure of the Royal Palace" that instigated the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars as is recorded in the first volume from the above mentioned Meiji year 27/28. The gist of this account follows the progress of the negotiation<sup>6</sup> with the Joseon government

when the Japanese troops pitched camp on the back hills of the palace while it was being attacked - many Joseon soldiers were arranged in the outskirts of the palace and opened-fire on the Japanese soldiers when they confronted them. So, the Japanese army had no choice but to return fire. Not knowing when the soldiers would rise up again, the Japanese soldiers protected the palace on all sides and went into the palace to defend it. Moreover, in the national palace the Japanese government assured that they had no intention to plunder Joseon. The reason is because a diplomatic report (officially dispatched message at 8:10 on the morning of July 23, 1894) regarding supervising Joseon aligned with the contents of the official war history and the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident." Furthermore, it was because after this official war history was issued, all war history memoir accounts, textbooks, and researchers had to follow along the lines of this official war history account.

### 3. *Nisinseneki kokusaihouron* (Ariga Nagao. Unabridged Translation of the Sino-Japanese International Law Report. Japanese Military Staff College)

If that is so, how do Japanese scholars come to understand the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars? Lets look at what the Japanese military, immediately following the Sino-Japanese War, conveyed to European international law experts in French in Paris, France (afterwards, the Japanese translation was re-published), how they defended international laws in the course of the Sino-Japanese War, and how Ariga Nagao, in his *Nisinseneki kokusaihouron* (Unabridged Translation of the Sino-Japanese International Law Report), accounts for and describes the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident."

The diplomatic minister demanded to achieve the prestige of not being ashamed to love the Joseon government's national independence by first driving back the sub-par Chinese army from Asan, and out of the coun-

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6. Japanese troops that were illegally dispatched to Joseon by using the excuse of the Donghak Peasant Uprising of April 1894 (March by lunar calendar) lost its excuse for being stationed in Joseon after a pact was made between the Peasant Army and the Joseon government army. Japan, looking for an excuse to invade Qing China, proposed a 'Joseon domestic reform bill' which the Joseon government rejected by calling it a form of domestic intervention. The so-called negotiation here refers to the Joseon resident diplomatic minister, Ootori Keisuke, putting pressure on the Joseon government to accept the reform bill.

try. But, the indecisive Joseon government broke reply dates many times, pressing the Japanese diplomatic minister's decision to lead military forces into the Gyeongbok Palace. However, the Joseon military counter-attacked the Japanese forces and drove them back on July 23 (International Legal Theory Over Japan and China 1896: 31-32).

Ariga also has a distorted account of the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace." During the Sino-Japanese War, as an executive member of the Military Staff College, Ariga trained professional soldiers and made absolutely no truthful references to the incident of seizing the Joseon Royal Palace. If he had said that he did not know the detailed circumstances around how planned the execution was in the "siezing the Joseon Royal Palace incident," then he would also have taught false truths. The above can be thought of as a case where the content of Ariga's writing educated the top soldiers of the executive members and supports the fact that historical truths were never taught.

### **The Source of the Distorted Memory of the "Seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace Incident"— A Fabricated Case.**

In the curriculum of the Sino-Japanese War, the first use of armed forces that broadened the use of the Japanese military was not in order to fight a war with China per se. If Japan claimed they they fought to defend Joseon's sovereignty, then why would they errantly confront the Joseon King in his palace dwelling? In other words, why did the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident" arise?

In April 1894 (March by lunar calendar), the first Donghak Peasant Uprising was seen as a good opportunity to grasp the leadership of Joseon. And, not deterred by the Joseon government's defensive strength, the Donghak dispatched a large army of over eight thousand people to be stationed in Seoul.<sup>7</sup> According to the Treaty of Tianjin, it was said that, "to protect the Japanese residents from the threat of the peasant army... the Japanese army was jointly dis-

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7. On September 9, diplomatic minister Ootori spearheaded disembarking 420 Military Staff College students at Incheon. They traveled for six months through Incheon, Busan, and Weonsan until they reached Seoul while Brigadier General Oshima Yoshimasa (大島義昌) led a Japanese army of seven thousand of a mixed brigade, amassing a large military force of over eight thousand.

patched with China's in response to Joseon's emergency." But it goes without saying that even before and immediately after the Japanese army was dispatched and up until the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident," the peasant army did not find out about the Japanese attack or bloodshed.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, Japan's reasoning, that they dispatched their troops to protect their residents, can be seen as nothing more than an unreasonable excuse for an opportunistic dispatch.

Moreover, it is correct that when the Donghak peasant army seized the Jeonju regional office on May 31, it was the first time that both Chinese and Japanese armies were dispatched. And on June 10 (May 7 by lunar calendar), a peace treaty was signed with the government's army, and the troops at the Jeonju district office voluntarily withdrew and dissolved. This was followed by the peasant army's voluntary withdrawal, which naturally dissolved the "Joseon emergency" situation, the reason for the Chinese and Japanese armies to be stationed in Joseon. Then, if the Joseon government requested that Chinese and Japanese militaries were to be dispatched, it follows that before the Chinese military could accept the Joseon government's request, they had to first consult with the Japanese toward a co-dispatch measure. And yet, they say that the Chinese army defeated Joseon in the 1882 Imo Incident. Opposing evidence can be found by stepping a few years back in time to this Imo Incident. As Japan kept an eye on Joseon's grasp for leadership, they denied China's "joint dispatch measure." Moreover, the Japanese military arranged a long-standing excuse to wage war with China and proposed the pretense to the Chinese army that both countries would cooperate for Joseon to reform internally, creating the Joseon domestic reform measure. With Joseon's domestic reform proposal, not only Japan but western powers also consented to disregarding Joseon's sovereignty. And because they denied the traditional Joseon delegate relationship between China and Joseon, both China and Joseon obstinately refused this "Joseon reform measure." Because of these two governments' obstinate attitudes, Japan was stuck in a predicament and was compelled to plan an excuse for the Sino-Japanese War. The initiated incident to overcome this situation was the dawn of July 23 (June 21 by lunar calendar) when the Japanese armed forces headed for Gyeongbok Palace, resulting in the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace inci-

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8. References from documents from the Japanese legation in Korea and those published in Japan at the time of the Donghak Peasant Uprising and Sino-Japanese War, such as the *Tokyo Asahi shinbun* (東京朝日新聞) and other daily newspapers.

dent.”<sup>9</sup>

The Japanese armed seizure of the Joseon palace was an illegal act that clearly violated international law at that time. Acting in disregard of internal law, the Japanese government and militarists have been bent on concealing and inventing the truth of the matter ever since. Japanese speeches at that time, under the powerful control of government and militarists, came from already fabricated content that was simply reported and echoed as is. The fabricated facts of the “seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident” started on July 23, at 8:10a.m. when Otori Keisuke (大鳥圭介), the Joseon resident diplomatic minister, sent the Japanese foreign minister, Mutsu Munemitsu (陸奥宗光), an official telegram.

The Joseon government twice made demands for an explanation about the chief diplomatic minister’s telegram, who then made a very dissatisfactory reply and unavoidably, the preference was definitely to seize the Joseon King. On the morning of July 23, the chief diplomatic minister took this route and Joseon soldiers proceeded to fire on Japanese soldiers until both sides started bombarding each other with fire (*Nihon geikou bunsyo* 27(1): 419).

This telegram of 8:10a.m. on July 23, 1894 concerning the “seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident” was the very first official telegram that the Joseon resident diplomatic minister, Ootori Keisuke, presented to the Japanese foreign minister, Mutsu Munemitsu. It was just an extremely concise report. At five o’clock in the afternoon of the very same day, Ootori sent another telegram describing the situation in a little more detail. The telegram that was dispatched at 5 p.m. follows.

...Fire was continually exchanged for approximately fifteen minutes, but now peace has settled everywhere. The chief diplomatic minister, who

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9. Although the Japanese armed ‘seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident’ was described as the ‘Gabo disturbance,’ ‘Gyeongbok Palace occupation,’ and the ‘Gyeongbok coup d’etat,’ it was not until recently that the truth was accurately revealed. In 1997, Professor Nakatsuka Akira published *Rekishi no gizou o tadasu—senshi kara kesareta chyouosen oukyuu senryou* (Correcting the Forgeries of History--What War Histories and Others Have Done to the Seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace), in Japan. After his writing on the 1894 seizure of the Gyeongbok Palace History) topic is translated in this country, the truth of the affair will be accurately revealed.

came to uphold the King's order, requested the admission of the Japanese chief diplomatic minister into the inner quarters of the royal palace. When the chief diplomatic minister arrived at the palace, the Daewongun received him in person. The King said that he was in sole charge of government authority and reform and of all other personnel and informed him that he confers with all Japanese chief diplomatic ministers. The chief diplomatic minister sent a circular letter to his envoy representatives to let them know that they needed to march their military division, that was in Yongsan during the negotiation process, through Gyeongseong, to the capital city by approximately four o'clock in the morning and to go up the hill that is behind the palace, and to encamp at its south gate in order to advance into the palace. But, majority of the soldiers that were guarding the palace and posted on the streets started firing, so they could not but fire back. They entered the palace (the Japanese army substituted the Joseon army for the King; author's note) to defend it. Moreover, the Japanese government assured that they never had any intention to plunder (*Nihon gaikou bunsyo* 27(1): 421).

Next, two telegrams that the Joseon resident diplomatic minister sent to the Japanese foreign minister at that time regarding the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident" will be highlighted for their main points. Firstly, on what was announced from the Joseon soldiers' side, the clash between the two armies occurred accidentally. Secondly, this clash was very small and did not last for more than fifteen minutes. Thirdly, the palace seizure was to protect the palace and happened unavoidably during the course of the clash. Fourthly, Japan never had any intention to plunder. Most Joseon resident envoy representatives knew of the Japanese position.

For several months, the Joseon resident diplomatic minister conferred with his legation to create a scrupulous telegram about the Japanese "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident." Because it was capriciously planned and they broke international law in the process, Ootori fabricated the truth of the matter through an official telegram. The telegram's contents that told a fabricated story of the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident" was written up in all kinds of newspapers and war diaries at that time. In 1904, the Japanese military headquarters published what is seen as the official and fixed "Meiji Year 27/28 Sino-Japanese War History." After 1945, other war diaries were issued but even the latest Sino-Japanese War research follows that the old narrative remains intact.

The result is that today's Japanese remember it as a trivial incident in which "seizing the Joseon Royal Palace accidentally started with Joseon soldiers' fire, to which Japanese soldiers could only respond resulting in a small-scale clash where we entered the palace to protect it" (Nakatsuka Akira 1997: 1). The direct origin of the second Donghak Peasant Uprising that recruited several thousand Joseon people to fight, in fact, to the Japanese is nearly a lapse of historical memory in this seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident.

So then, were there no researchers at that time that questioned or were critical of this kind of Japanese official interpretation? On the contrary, this is not to say that there was no research that closely examined the facts of the seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace that started the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars. First of all, in the middle of the already noted new aspects of the Sino-Japanese War, Mutsu Munemitsu (陸奥宗光),<sup>10</sup> Shinobu Seizaburo (信夫清三郎),<sup>11</sup> Dabohashi Takeshi (田保橋潔),<sup>12</sup> and Fujimura Michio were all making efforts to closely examine the facts of this second aspect (Fujimura Michio 1973), namely on how the Japanese government and other world powers were competing to grasp leadership over Joseon and China. However, Japanese government authorities prohibited or restricted these close examination fact-finding efforts and most of what was uncovered on the Sino-Japanese War could not be relayed to the vast majority of Japanese.

Next, with regard to the third aspect of the Sino-Japanese War, it is not as if effort for close examination in an attempt to find the truth did not exist. The truth did exist, namely in the search for uncovering the suppression and massacre of the Joseon and Chinese people and of these people's independent opposition. Yamabe Kentaro (山邊建太郎),<sup>13</sup> Nakatsuka Akira,<sup>14</sup> Fujimura michio (1973),

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10. In 1894, the Japanese Foreign Minister Mutsu was a diplomat who was deployed to understand the increasingly powerful world economy. In 1895, he put out a copious and complete manuscript called *Kenkenroku* (蹇蹇錄), but like many others, he faced a publication prohibition. The reason the Japanese government officially sanctioned *Kenkenroku* was because the ban was claimed unconstitutional.

11. In 1934, although diplomatic action was taken to ban this publication, Shinobu nevertheless diagnosed the truth of the Sino-Japanese War in his authored *Nisin sensou* (The Sino-Japanese War).

12. Dabohashi's 1930 *Kindai nissen kankei no kenkyuu* (Research on the Modern Relationship Between Nippon and Joseon) and his 1940 *Kindai nissen kankei no kenkyuu* (Research on the Modern Nippon/Joseon Relationship) written achievements diagnosed the reality of the Sino-Japanese War. Although at that time, the researcher underwent Japanese governmental publication bans, after 1945, these books were published.

13. Yamabe's *Kousinjihen to Tougaku no ran* (The Gapsin Incident and the Donghak

Bak Jong-Geun (朴宗根 1982),<sup>15</sup> and Hiyama Yukio (檜山幸夫),<sup>16</sup> etc., came out elucidating this third aspect. Among these researchers, the first one to propose the full-scale problem on the facts surrounding the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident" was Bak Jong-Geun. In 1982, the following was pointed out to shed new light on the real facts in the foreground of the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident."

The Japanese army seized the Joseon palace for three motives. First, it was for the sake of blocking King Gojong's escape in order to keep him "captive". Secondly, it was for the sake of driving out the Chinese Army to obliterate them from the Joseon government. Thirdly, it was for the sake of overthrowing the Min clan power and conspiring to establish a pro-Japanese dummy government.<sup>17</sup>

After Bak Jong-Geun proposed these problems, Hiyama asserted that war was initiated between Japan and Joseon in order for the Japanese army to seize the Joseon palace, which he referred to as the Joseon-Japanese War (Hiyama Yukio 1990). He fully examined Joseon and Japan's diplomatic relationship problems before and after the Joseon-Japanese War.

However, the real historical facts that these researchers so diligently and closely examined could not come any closer to correcting the Japanese "distorted" memory of the Donghak Peasant Uprising and Sino-Japanese War. Donghak Education University Professor Ienaga Saburo (家永三郎) took this very incident, of symbolically displayed facts, and proposed a textbook lawsuit which the Japanese Supreme Court adjudicated. The account below refers to Professor

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Disturbance), written in 1961, *Chousen sihai o meguru nisin no shyoutotsu* (The Sino-Japanese Clash Around Joseon Control), written in 1966, and *Tougakuran to Nihonjin* (The Donghak Disturbance and the Japanese People), written in 1966, etc., mention the Japanese slaughter of the Joseon people in a general way.

14. Through Nakatsuka's 1968 *Nisin sensou no kenkyuu* (Research on the Sino-Japanese War) that deals with the Joseon problem, his 1993 *Kindai nihon no chosen ninsiki* (Joseon's Understanding of Modern Japan), and his 1997 *Rekisi no ginzou o tadasu* (Correcting Research Fabrications) etc., the reality of Joseon's understanding of Japan and the repression of the Joseon people are explained but come from concentrated effort.

15. See chapter 5.

16. Through Hiyama's *Nisinsensou* (The Sino-Japanese War), *Kindai nihon no keisei to nisinsensou* (The Formation of Modern Japan and the Sino-Japanese War), etc., a close examination is made of the Japanese slaughter of the Joseon and Formosan people.

17. See Bak Jong-geun 1982, chapter 2.

Ienaga's request to the Ministry of Education to officially approve the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars in a "New Japanese History" book in 1983.

The Sino-Japanese War started precisely in 1894 (Meiji year 27). The Japanese were continually victorious through the following year but the Joseon people often rose up in anti-Japanese resistance (Nakatsuka Akira 1997: 193). Here, the Ministry of Education, in charge of officially approving textbooks, did not want to know what was behind the expression, "anti-Japanese resistance that arose in Joseon," even when research centers made the content of this expression public and the matter was spread widely for mutual enlightenment. Thus, an order was given to eliminate what followed the statement, "Joseon became a battlefield." Professor Ienaga, being disobedient to the Ministry of Education's orders, made a third request for an official textbook lawsuit and the final adjudication was concluded through the Supreme Court on August 29, 1997. Looking at the Supreme Court adjudication, among the five judges, two showed that the Ministry of Education violated the law while the other three showed that the Ministry of Education side was just. Because of this majority support, in the end, the professor could not win his lawsuit. This kind of Supreme Court adjudication shows how Japanese understanding of the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars is still extremely insufficient in accuracy and facts. Since 1894, with the skilled "fabricated history" by Japanese government administrators, militarists, and media, etc., today's Japanese people prefer fabricated history to historical fact. And to say that they lead a life having complete faith in the construction of "distorted memories" is not an exaggeration.

### **Joseon People's Understanding of the "Seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace Incident"**

Then, how did the Joseon people come to understand the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident?" On July 23, 1894, violating international laws at the Joseon palace, Japan arbitrarily and illegally used armed force to take Gojong captive and threatened cabinet ministers. After arms were revoked from the Joseon government by the Japanese government, a pro-Japanese dummy government was forced to preside over the Daewongun. In this process, the Joseon military engaged the Japanese army from early dawn through late evening in fierce combat. However, the Joseon army had never encountered such a mighty fighting power as the Japanese with their modern tactical training and modern

weaponry equipment, thus they all surrendered late that day, which caused the Joseon government to fall under the absolute command of the Japanese army (Nakatsuka Akira 1997: Ch. 2). How did the Joseon people at that time recall the country-wide uprising concerning this incident? The next two points are examples of cases that represent the popular memory of the seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident. The first is the leader of the second Donghak Peasant Uprising Jeon Bong-Jun's last testimony.

The father country (Japan; author's note) called for enlightenment and it was said that from the start not a word was delivered to the people. Furthermore, no notice was posted when the army went into Seoul at midnight, raided the palace, and startled the King. Because of that the common people, filled with loyalty and patriotism in their hearts, angrily flocked together as righteous armies to fight against the Japanese (National History Compilation Committee Conference 1959: 529).

Jeon Bong-Jun's understanding of the facts that sparked the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident" is accurate. How the Japanese government administrators and militarists fabricated the truth about the palace seizure was confirmed with Jeon Bong-Jun's peasant army, where Japanese aggressors devastated Joseon's national rights and "loyalty and patriotism" was punished at the Japanese military's whim. Preparing for the Japanese "Joseon Palace seizure" the peasant army was moved to the northern boundary of Chungcheong Province, which was confirmed to be led by Choe Si-hyeong as the base for the religious body and the place of its greatest influence. Jeon Bong-Jun's October (September by lunar calendar) uprising can be better understood by looking at what happened in early August (July by lunar calendar) when the peasant army in Chungcheong Province started the "righteous army" in memory of the national crisis from the palace seizure. Let's look at the details more concretely.

On the second day of this month (July 2, 1894, or August 2 by solar calendar; author's note), upon hearing a rumor, several hundred Donghak followers gathered at a riverside in Goseung District's Sagak Town (currently known as Boun County's, Gojuk Town in the City of Tanbu) to confirm the truth of what they had heard. Meanwhile, the county magistrate also went in person to investigate the matter where he found people already gathered to discuss this rumor. With the disturbance at this time

(referring to the Japanese military seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident; author's note), the district office (官家, county magistrate; author's note) had already paid a visit to the justly called "righteous army" (倡義; righteous army rising up for the nation; author's note). The leader of the righteous army pleaded for things to pan out to which the county magistrate replied. (Saun Research Center 1996: 31-32)

Above is the very first known movement of the peasant army on the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident," and this is being confirmed to have occurred almost one month before the peasant army's leader Jeon Bong-Jun's move. It is true that the carefully observed activity of this so-called northern party (北接) is emerging. The facts prove that you can see a common understanding and confrontation regardless of whether it is coming from the northern or the southern party (南/北接) Donghak regards the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident."

Secondly, in September (July by lunar calendar), two months after the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident," in Andong, Gyeongsang Province, Seo Sang-Cheol (徐相轍) circulated a manifesto to incite upholding righteousness.

Seo Sang Cheol of Chungcheong province proclaims the righteous army and commoners of the eastern territory as particularly loyal and patriotic. If one was to go up a mountain and holler a shout in all directions everyone would act in concert, not because that sound was big and noble, but because there would be many people that would hear that sound. So, they sent word from door to door alerting everyone and went around everywhere looking over everything One month has passed since the *byeonran* (變亂 refers to the seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident) and yet, not even once, could the rumor be mentioned. Remaining in constant silence, how we say this is a result of over five hundred years of beautifully bringing our countrymen up as earnest people. Are you saying that of this entire country, in this village that wears a crown and a sash, there is not one person that possesses any strength? Although they say that they were upholding a treaty, we are the ones who have worked for our country so how can they rightfully reply with savagery? And threatening our report to the King, tightening around government officials, chasing out our guards, and plundering our arsenal is all too sad for us imperial sub-

jects to mention...<sup>18</sup>

The Japanese army said they were working for Joseon's independence while they attacked the palace on July 23. With former scholar official, Seo Sang-Cheol, Japan intended to commit an obvious plundering act. If among the ministers and local governments no one rebelled against it, it would be deplorable, and so the righteous armies arose.

With these two cases above, through the peasant army and righteous army, the memory of the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Place" is momentarily rescued and displayed. Through Jeon Bong-Jun, who represented the Donghak Peasant Army and the Gabo (a Korean terminology for 1894) righteous army's leader, Seo Sang-Cheol, the seized palace was understood as a crisis situation. So they took this "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace" as an immediate moment and, on behalf of the government, came out with an anti-Japanese struggle as the national restoration crisis. The Japanese people, through their government's administrators and militarists, fabricated facts that disposed of historical memories and constructed a "distorted memory" that was actually a burial of sorts; in contrast, the Joseon people, on behalf of a powerless government that faced outside pressure, raised an anti-Japanese struggle and vanguard for the people's restoration crisis.

On July 23, 1894, "the Joseon Royal Palace" was plundered by Japan, which started an uprising by the peasant army in order to expel the Japanese plunderers. Since then, a memory, full of life, held by several thousands, in an event where they wore yellow charms (*hwang hyeon*, 黃玃), continues to live on.

When Ootori Keisuke infringed on the Royal Court, exactly five hundred Pyeongyang soldiers were appointed to be on guard and their successive gun-fire rang out. Ootori went to the residence of the King and threatened the King by stating that, "the King's throat will be slit if anyone moves recklessly." All the soldiers lamented and escaped after destroying their weapons and tearing off their military uniforms. All of the encamped soldiers, further gathered together under mutual surveillance, swore to say-

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18. Seo Sang-Cheol's issued manifesto that stated, '호서충의서상철포고문' is anthologized in *Naamsurok* (Naamsu Archives) and *Chyuchyounihon koushikan kiroku* (Archives from the Japanese Resident Legation in Korea). Here, the National History Compilation Committee Conference issued *Hangeulbon juhanylbon gongsagwan girok* (Archives from the Japanese Resident Legation in Korea, Korean translation, vol 1. 1986) is used.

ing, “we belong to a humble rank of enlisted men but we are all utterly devoted to benefiting our nation.” The country’s current calamity is this situation where reports of what happened in the Royal Court cannot be known. If the truth that their (Japanese military; author’s note) command did not disband were to be known, certainly they would not be allowed to arbitrarily and boldly do as they wish. If this unexpectedly arose, they resolve to die together. So, they established cannons beside a wall for protection. If, in the future, the Japanese army were to seize this territory from the Royal Court, these colonizers would represent the territory.

Ootori got the King’s sanction to make the soldiers throw away their arms. All of the enraged soldiers in camp were shrieking and slashing out at the stones with their swords. Through their deafening wails, it seemed as if Machi Mountain would collapse. What the nation had come to accumulate over several hundred years was lost in one the span of one morning. And in there was not even one soldier left in Seoul (Hwang Hyeon 1955).

Living in the old customs of Jeolla Province, Hwang Hyeon left an archive entitled, *Maecheon yarok* (Apricot-Blossom Spring Journal) that looks over Gojong’s forty-seven year history from his inaugural year (1894) to the fourth year of *yunghui* (1910). There is a good possibility that this account is not from precise observations on the Japanese armed palace seizure or of other Joseon soldiers’ resistance. With this point in mind, it could contain some historical facts and other ideas on the features of these soldiers’ resistance. However, we can conclude that Hwang Hyeon’s record of the Joseon soldiers reaction at the start of the Japanese armed “seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace” - that the anger among Joseon scholars and countrymen that spread widely to every part of Joseon - is similar in fashion to the other accounts mentioned above. Moreover, From Hwang Hyeon’s *Maecheon yarok* accounts after 1894, it can be easily inferred that the Joseon people’s Donghak Peasant Uprising and the Sino-Japanese War are rooted in formed memory.

When we said that the Japanese illegally carried out the “seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident,” we included no mention of Jeon Bong-Jun, the Donghak Peasant Army, the former scholar officials, or the intellectuals and commoners; it was a constructed understanding, and the reply was one of sympathy, for which we should be elated? With similar logic, they say that the post-July 23, 1894 period that produced the source for the Joseon people’s anti-Japan struggle was understandable.

## **Conclusion: Can the common understanding of the Joseon and Japanese people's indeed open up?**

On the results of a local unification election that took effect on April 13 of last year, Professor Nakatsuka Akira stated in melancholic letter, "the whopping lies of the right-wing produce still more severe results." In the same letter, Professor Nakatsuka worried saying, "this kind of right-wing whopper, a cabal with the U.S., has created a strategy to make North Korea the core of the problem as an excuse to seize and pressure China. And this plan has been turned around their finger while it is well-known that they want to start a powerful war in East Asia for the second time." He stressed that this is a crucial point in the age of "Joseon/Japanese popular exchange."

Below, this phenomenon of right-wing Japan's close relationship to strengthening the past "distorted" memory will be considered. Namely, since the end of the Donghak Peasant Uprising and the Sino-Japanese War, Japanese government administrators, militarists, and the press, etc. continually and systematically fabricate and distort history so that historical facts are made into "distorted" memories that today's Japanese thoroughly believe while holding onto a "sickly" construed consciousness. Although Japanese scholars and historians continually make efforts and struggles to restore this "sickly" constructed consciousness, the government authorities and national assembly, press, and right-wing intellectuals disregard them and still repeat these Japanese historical distortions, ceaselessly reproducing "distorted" memories of the past for the vast majority of Japanese. The current situation here about Joseon, since the Donghak Peasant and Sino-Japanese Wars, can be seen as having derived from Japan documenting distorted historical facts as actuality and continually renewing their efforts. Such a case is representative of exactly what happened from the "seizure of the Joseon Royal Palace incident" that became the immediate moment for the start of the second Donghak Peasant Uprising and Sino-Japanese War.

It would not be exaggerated to say that, these days, it is clear that the people of both countries (Korea and Japan) that equality-driven historical truths both live within two different "memory constructions." The general situation in Korea is that through a close examination of historical facts a movement to restore existing imperfect and erroneous memories of the past is underway, which is contrary to Japan's situation where distortions and fabrications of history have solidified since the Sino-Japanese War, and this is where this magnificent reproduction movement constitutes the general situation. In this way, these

two different memories of history will not ever easily produce a common memory without its contradictions.

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