

# **Looking at the Economy and Society of Korea under Japanese Rule: Beyond the “Theory of Development” and “Theory of Exploitation”**

CHŎNG Chae-jŏng (CHUNG Jae-jeong)

## **1. Objective in Reporting on Research into the Socio-economic History of Korea under Japanese Rule**

I am grateful to be able to stand here today at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in front of my colleagues and seniors to lecture on the “Society and Economy of Korea under Japanese Rule.”

We have just heard from Professor Yun Kŏn-ch’a about the details of various aspects of Korea’s colonial period. His talk gave us much food for thought on what modernization is and on the overall problems wrought by modernization that South Korea is trying to overcome. I would like to discuss the socio-economic historical research on the colonial period that formed the basis of Dr. Yun’s talk and which is currently being conducted with regard to the colonial periods in South Korea, Japan, the U.S.A. and other countries in somewhat more concrete terms. The main goal of my lecture is to explore ways to overcome the view of socio-economic history of the colonial period with its contrasting “Theory of Development” and “Theory of Exploitation.”

Basically, it is best to speak about history in one’s own language. The reason for this is that there are many differences in nuances depending on the choice of words and methods of expression in relating history. However, due to various circumstances, I will speak to you using my poor Japanese today. I am a bit concerned about how much of what I wish to say can be communicated. I ask for your understanding in this matter.

## **2. Why Did the Colonial Modernization Theory Arise?**

### **Problem Awareness of the Colonial Modernization Theory**

I would now like to begin to address today’s topic. First of all, I would like to briefly introduce the reasons why the society and economy of Korea

during the colonial period have become an argument, or in other words, why disputes over the development and exploitation carried out under Japanese imperialism occur even now.

Actually, researches had been carried out in the U.S. and Japan since the 1970s, ahead of South Korea, into the various socio-economic changes in Korea under Japanese rule; especially in dealing with the progress of industrialization. It may be said that the research was one-sidedly highly evaluated concerning the changes brought forth in that period in society and economics, in particular with regard to industrialization. Researchers did not stop with simply clarifying the conditions of the economy and society in Korea under Japanese rule, but went so far as to purport that they formed the historical basis for the remarkable economic development and societal changes, which have taken place in South Korea since the 1960s.

Due to today's time constraints, I will not identify each of those researcher's names or accomplishments. However, I would like to point out that not all of what they have said can be converged towards the so-called Colonial Modernization Theory. There are fine differences between what each of them says. However, in order to clarify my point in this lecture, I will summarize their emphases within the concepts of the Colonial Modernization Theory and then proceed to discuss the various problems related to it.

The Colonial Modernization Theory emphasized by them differs from the conventional colonization philosophical logic in that the poverty and stagnation of Korea under colonization by the infiltration and exploitation of Japan was exacerbated by it. There have even been those who directly present opposing opinions. It is natural that opinions criticizing the Colonial Modernization Theory arose, and it may be said that in South Korea, arguments both for and against it have continued to this day.

Up until now, the mainstream of research, that is to say, the main branch of colonial period studies, regarding the colonial period by historical societies in South Korea has centered on anti-Japanese independence movement history. In the midst of this climate, the very appearance of the Colonial Modernization Theory, which views the societal and economic changes under colonial rule rather positively, can be said to have created a major stir, not only in the field of historical research,

but in public opinion as well.

### **The Historical Background of the Appearance of the Colonial Modernization Theory**

I would like to briefly explain why this type of research has begun to appear gradually in South Korea recently, and bring forth a few examples from its historical background.

First of all, the fact is that up through the first half of the 1980s, South Korea's capitalistic development, which was viewed as being slightly dangerous, went on overcoming various obstacles and progressed steadily. The analysis of the conditions and the tracking of the historical essence underlying them became an extremely important topic even in the field of history. This is the so-called NIEs topic. An economic history researcher explained the economic development of South Korea using the concept of the middle-level development of capitalism. He also appealed to public opinion, stating that a direct re-examination of the analysis regarding the development process of South Korea's economy and its historical background was necessary. I believe that this type of new climate emerged from both inside and outside the academic field of history.

In addition, at the same time during the 1980s, a tendency towards weariness emerged in South Korea's history discussions in the form of historical revisionism, or namely, loss of interest in the nationalistic history research, which had formed the mainstream of historical academics in South Korea up until that time. Further, questions were hurled at the internally-generated developmental theory, which emphasized the subjective evolution or the independent development of Korean history; as well as other mainstream research, such as the anti-imperialism theory, which emphasized the negative aspects of colonial rule. At the same time, there was also a trend toward new directions, accompanied by an increased tendency to challenge the academics of history. This is another point, which I would like to make.

The economic history research movement, which took on the stereotype expressions, such as invasion and resistance, discrimination and growth, development and exploitation, may be offered as a case in point.

In a way, this may be taken as an expression of independence and severance from the established historical theories. The new trend in

economic history research with the analysis of detailed data and the investigation of facts based on the economic growth theory emphasized scientific methodologies. The economic historical research that resulted from this, which allowed even South Korea to proceed to a higher level could be said to be a harvest which exceeded expectations.

In conjunction with it, the emergence of change even in South Korean nationalism cannot be ignored. Even now, in South Korea, discussions on the resistance nationalism that was formed from the battle with Japanese imperialism continue. However, this has faded slightly and a more open type of nationalism has come to be talked about in history and history education and within the midst of the prevailing consensus. This has caused the relationship between South Korea and Japan to be re-examined in part.

It is against this theoretical backdrop that I believe that a number of people who are mainly researching the sociological and economic history under Japanese rule have come to put forth the so-called Colonial Modernization Theory.

### **3. Content and Logic of the Colonial Modernization Theory**

#### **Industrial Development and Social Change**

Let us briefly examine and consider the content of the Colonial Modernization Theory and ponder its logical inference.

The first important point is to evaluate and to give weight to the so-called industrial development that was advanced in Korea during the colonial period and the very important changes it imparted to society. Proponents state that great changes in Korea's economy, or in other words, a surge of industrialization, occurred even during the period of colonization from the time around the end of the First World War in 1918; around the time of world panic in 1933; before and after the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937; and before and after the start of the Pacific War in 1941. Of course, it was mainly the resources from Japan that provided the major push for it. Proponents generally focus on this, however, it was not only this but the movement of the Koreans that was also important. The fact that



the Koreans actively rode the wave of industrialization while constructing factories and establishing companies, has become clear from statistics.

Proponents stress that there was not only the quantitative change and development of Korea's economy, but that there were qualitative changes as well. For example, before 1935, light industries, such as textiles, food and lumber, were the main industries, however, after 1935 the mainstay of the economy changed to the so-called heavy industries, such as chemicals, machinery, metals and gas. In particular, the chemical industry took center stage in the 1940s. In keeping with this, areas which were referred to as "industrial parks," were constructed in various areas even in Korea. Industrial parks for the heavy and chemical industry were constructed in places, such as Wŏnsan in Hamgyŏngnam-do, Ch'ŏngjin in Hamgyŏngbuk-do, Pyŏng'yang and Chinnamp'o in Pyŏng'annam-do. Industrial parks for the light industries were constructed in the south, in the vicinity of Seoul and Inch'ŏn. Of course, Seoul was the biggest industrial park with the largest marketplace. Even today light industries near the textile factories thrive in Taegu. Things such as those mentioned have been newly analyzed using statistical methods.

According to the Colonial Modernization Theory proponents, change occurred from within the Korean society of the colonial period and the economic structure changed while the legion of laborers grew both quantitatively and qualitatively. The growth of indigenous Korean industries occurred through the process. In short, the proponents pay great attention to the various socio-economic changes, which occurred in Korean society during the colonial period.

### **The Growth in Manpower and the Accumulation of Know-how**

The second point emphasized by the proponents is the growth in manpower, that is to say, its growth in numbers and in the increase in various forms of know-how. They posit that the overall workforce number and quality of Korean manpower greatly increased with the industrialization process. Many things can be said concerning Korean manpower. For example, engineers, entrepreneurs, management personnel, military personnel and others fall into this category in addition to manual laborers. Proponents say that Koreans advanced into various fields.

Of course, the qualitative growth was extremely weak compared to

the quantitative ratio accounted for in each field by the Koreans. However, proponents emphasize that the Koreans managed to somehow acquire experience and skills as they went along. There was also a slight increase in the number of so-called “skilled laborers.” Promotion to middle management class was also possible. With the aforementioned included, these changes are considered in the ceaseless self-advancement of the Koreans. A few Koreans advanced in business and the government as business managers and high ranking public officials, respectively. In this manner, Koreans accumulated experience in managing companies, running factories and executing the government. In the extreme, they say that even the laborers and conscripts during the war period who were forcibly taken had the opportunities to acquire discipline and skills. Emphasis on the growth of Korean manpower is one of the main arguments for the so-called Colonial Modernization Theory.

We normally think that the Koreans who were forcibly taken by the Japanese were subjected to pitiful circumstances during the colonial period, especially during the ten years after the Sino-Japanese War, however, subscribers to the Colonial Modernization Theory explain that even those events allowed Koreans to go overseas and accumulate various types of experience. For example, Professor Eckert of Harvard University rates this extremely highly, saying that among Koreans, there were those who advanced to the North China region, Southeast Asia, all the way to the Pacific Ocean and who acquired the ability to be active overseas.

### **Modern System and Improvement of Laws**

In addition, the third most important point under the Colonial Modernization Theory is the modern system and the improvement of laws. In short, it is an argument which is also related to the theory of colonial legacy, which takes into consideration the so-called construction of the modern system. The industrial growth and economic development have been mentioned not only on the material side, but also the growth in manpower and accumulation of know-how on the human side. However, putting in place of systems and laws also had great meaning in the societal development during the colonial period.

Recently, researches addressing this have slowly begun to appear. In

particular, some researchers are concentrating on the establishment of the modern financial system, taxation and public finance organization and other such topics. We have continued to state up until the present, that those were exploitative methods and tools for plundering from the Koreans. The Colonial Modernization Theory contends that although those mechanisms played negative roles, the institutions or systems had an important, indispensable meaning in the modernization of society. In addition, it highly regards the establishment of such systems during the colonial period as being a contributor to the development of Korea after its liberation from the Japanese occupation. For example, the introduction of land registration as a part of the land survey enterprise is stressed in the establishment of the modern land ownership system. As a result of this, the proponents argue, buying and selling of property now became possible, spurring on the commoditization of land property, and that this later formed the platform for economic development.

Of course, it cannot be denied that the modern systems and laws introduced by Japan were important tools for ruling and exploiting Korea. But, their stance emphasizes that if there had been no establishment of modern systems and organizations such as those, then the later economic development and societal changes would not have been possible.

### **Promulgation of Societal Indirect Assets and the Educational System**

In addition, some of the points, which are always brought up by some Japanese politicians when they speak about the colonial beautification theory, are the railways that were constructed, the harbors that were built, the dams which were erected, and other civil works. In an identical manner, the advocates of the Colonial Modernization Theory always rate these constructed societal indirect assets very highly.

If one visits South Korea today, it is evident that the railways built under Japanese rule are there, although perhaps not as they were originally built, but they are still being operated after being heavily modified, so in a way it is not entirely strange that an ordinary person looking at this constructed indirect societal asset from the colonial period might think that it played a useful role in the socio-economic development of present South Korea. However, the proponents of the Colonial Modernization Theory do not think within that dimension, but rather include the view that the

domestic markets were closely linked by their construction during the colonial period, and the linkage between the deployment of industries and overseas markets as well. In the name of academics, they state that these played an extremely important role in the socio-economic development of Korea not only during that period, but even today as well.

In addition, the diffusion of the educational system and schools are also given much importance. Actually, in Korea, mandatory elementary education had been in place since the time of Japanese rule up to the time of release from it in 1946. Entrance into the elementary schools increased rapidly thereafter. Right before liberation, namely at the end of the colonial period, about 45 percent of school age children attended school. This rate was very low compared to the close to 100 percent enjoyed by the Japanese, however, advocates of the Colonial Modernization Theory point to this as a very high rate. This is because in 1930 the elementary attendance rate was only 15 percent but by 1945 it had suddenly increased to about 45 percent. This is interpreted as having led to the cultivation of good quality manpower. The economic development of the colonial period is said to have occurred in pace with the promulgation of education.

Of course, in the eyes of the mainstream historical research conducted up to now, the popularization of education itself was the most important method used for imperial assimilation policies. The actual education provided during the colonial period was extremely limited. For example, the rate of intermediate school graduates in 1945 was a mere two percent of all Koreans. Conversely, this may be taken as evidence of the inadequacy of colonial period education. However, proponents point to the increase in elementary school graduates as an important example and propose the Colonial Modernization Theory.

The Colonial Modernization Theory research analyzes statistics in detail and deftly uses the methods of the Economic Development Theory. In addition, proponents are very skilled in the use of computers, so they can produce magnificent graphs and charts at will. They are able to depict quantitative changes clearly using numbers and charts so it is somewhat easier for the average person to accept them. I believe that this is the reason why the influence of the Colonial Modernization Theory will continue to spread even in the future.

I believe that what I have laid out here today constitutes the major content of the Colonial Modernization Theory. For those who desire further concrete figures and points at issue, I ask that you refer to my resume which was handed out earlier. I have also appended a bibliography to it and hope that it proves to be of use to you.

Of course, not all are included in the bibliography because of an emphasis on the Colonial Modernization Theory. It is just that the bibliography should help you understand the new research directions I have outlined.

#### **4. Stimulus Imparted to Historical Research by the Colonial Modernization Theory**

##### **Presentation of Koreans and the Active Form of Korean Society**

In the past I have also presented my opinion on the significance of the Colonial Modernization Theory in many papers. However, I would again like to present my opinions on the meaning, which the Colonial Modernization Theory holds for Korea's modern history research as well as to examine criticisms against it and to state the topics, which need to be overcome in the Colonial Modernization Theory from here on.

First of all, I would like to affirm the aspects of the Colonial Modernization Theory, which should be evaluated in light of the ripples they have generated in history studies. The Colonial Modernization Theory has stimulated historical research. Up until now, historical research into the colonial period has been prone to be concentrated on Japanese Imperialism, with Korea and the Koreans always being ruled under it and exploited by it in a passive fashion. If this were not so, then from the opposite stance, it would be a historical depiction of Korea and Koreans squarely resisting Japanese Imperialism in a national liberation struggle. Both systems of historical research have made the structure of the meeting of Japanese Imperialism and the Koreans clear. This is definitely a very important research result. However, the history of Koreans and Korea under Japanese rule cannot be explained adequately by this alone.

By the way, new research, such as the Colonial Modernization Theory, has exposed a new form of history, which has made the Koreans who lived during Japanese imperial rule the main actors. For example, how did the

Koreans under colonial rule receive education and how did they grow? That is to say, how did they advance themselves as laborers, administrators, farmers, company managers and the like? What were their thoughts as they went along and what did they accomplish? In groping my way through the various forms presented in Colonial Modernization Theory research, I see a need to take another look at the fixed images put forth up until now of repression and resistance, exploitation and poverty, etc. I think that it is through those images that we can see the energetic forms of Koreans actively working and seeking a path with all their might and making a further contribution.

I believe that the colonial period historical image of Koreans as the main actors, and the connecting of the concepts of colonial modernization, such as those presented by Dr. Yun earlier, will be the subjects of research from here on. The controversy raised by the Colonial Modernization Theory may be even said to have been the lure for it.

### **Consecutive Comprehension of Modern Korean History**

Another point is a problem related to the manner in which we look at the history. The Colonial Modernization Theory provides a stimulating aspect in the space of about a hundred years within the long span of history in the very wide view of world history, or in short, the historical viewpoint of where to place the colonial period within the modern history of Korea.

The reason for this is the extremely disconnected way we have become used to looking at Korean history studies, especially with the research conducted on the modern period. Just as those who specialize in modern history have come to understand, in the case of the society and economy which appear to have developed greatly during Chosŏn Dynasty's latter period, this form suddenly becomes very weak when the "Open-port period" is reached. Let us look at the movement of the modernization projects in the "Open-port period" and see the form, which its continuation took after entering the colonial period. How were the various businesses conducted by Koreans during the colonial period continued right before and after liberation? In short, it may be said that the research conducted into modern Korean history is very weak when it comes to skillful methodology for grasping the continuity of history. The



Colonial Modernization Theory was proposed to address the point at issue as a way of looking at Korean modern history in the long view. I evaluate this as being significant.

### **Attempting to View the Past from a Modern Perspective**

In addition, history is a discipline, which is strongly dependent on the extremely realistic demand of looking at the past from the present. This is a problem, which historians who naturally study the relationship between the past and present must handle with extreme caution in conducting research. Proponents of the Colonial Modernization Theory must track back over their histories to determine where their sources lie when considering the so-called NIEs.

I believe that for history studies, the awareness of linking the facts and the past is basically good. Keeping in mind that up until now history studies have tended to depart from the facts and lean towards abstract arguments, it should be an important task for them to take up actual problems and to elucidate them by providing a historical background shored up with concrete facts. In particular, I think that there are methods, which should be valued in economics history research, such as the Colonial Modernization Theory, especially in the manner in which it uses figures to present things.

## **5. Criticisms and Proposals regarding the Colonial Modernization Theory**

### **Overrating of Industrialization and Socio-economic Changes**

However, there are several criticisms, which arise regarding the arguments in the Colonial Modernization Theory. The first is that the Colonial Modernization Theory overrates the colonial industrialization and the socio-economic changes, which occurred during that time.

Proponents of economic history, which embraces the Colonial Modernization Theory, point to the fact that in 1938, the agricultural production value surpassed the industrial production value, with the industrial production comprising 40 percent of the overall production value, as evidence that Korea became a capitalist society from that point onwards. A certain researcher has even stated that the economic development level of Japan at the time of the Russo-Japanese War had been reached in Korea



in 1938. However, looking at the numbers of workers on an industry by industry basis for the same year shows that the numbers engaged in agriculture exceeded 80 percent.

From this fact, it can be said that Korea had not yet gone beyond an agrarian society after all. I believe that significance should not be attached to the meaning of the economic development and societal changes without looking at everything within the overall framework.

I could go on to criticize the various individual studies one by one with actual data, however, I will avoid getting into the details here.

### **Questions concerning the Linkage of Korea's Economic Development with the Material Assets of the Colonial Period**

Another problem lies in directly connecting the societal change and economic development of the colonial period to the so-called NIEs, such as South Korea in the years after the 1960s. Almost no experimental studies have been conducted with regard to this. Rather, in looking at those recently begun since the 1950s, it can be said that those dealing with the changes occurring in South Korean society and the economic development and changes in the 1950s and from the 1960s onwards bear the most relevance with regard to the current development of South Korea.

For example, the problem dealing with the evaluation of the material assets left behind by Japan has been dealt with under the name of "returned enemy properties after the liberation," which were returned to South Korea. No mention is made of those belonging to North Korea. In the 1950s South Korea received support from the U.S., which was comparable with the value of the returned properties. In brief, there was support which exceeded three billion dollars. The large influence this had on the South Korean society and economy in the 1950s should be first investigated in detail.

In the case of South Korea, the fact of the matter is that Korea was divided soon after its liberation from Japanese colonial rule into the North and South. This in itself was an extremely important event in stipulating the rules of South Korean modern history. The historical importance of this is just as Dr. Yun mentioned earlier in detail in his talk. The separation of North and South was in itself, in a manner of speaking, the largest colonial asset left by Japan, however, let us restrict our discussion here to the

material assets.

The conclusion of it is that the division of North and South meant that the material assets left by Japan were reduced to less than half. The reason for this is that the main stage of the industrialization of the colonial period in the Colonial Modernization Theory was in the North or in what is today North Korea. Material assets there suddenly lost their link to South Korea by the North-South division. Most of the heavy chemical facilities and hydroelectric plants were in North Korea. After the division into North and South, the North refused to supply electricity and the South was plunged into a state of darkness. It is because of this that there are sections that should be critically considered with regard to the succession of material assets from the colonial period to South Korean society after liberation.

In addition, after the North and South division, an internal war raged between the North and South for a period of about five years and many colonial material assets were destroyed in it. Even those, which were lucky enough to have survived, could not be used in the condition they were in. After economic relations were disconnected with Japan, the raw materials, capital, technology and such could not be used in the majority of cases. On the one side, there was political chaos and there were many such cases in which the so-called returned properties could not be made to function properly.

The Korean War continued for more than three years after that. Keeping in mind that more than half of the material assets were destroyed in it, I do not believe that the material assets of the colonial period could be connected in full to the period after liberation. If the material assets had really formed the base of South Korea's economic development, then it would stand to reason that North Korea would be enjoying more economic development than South Korea today. However, this is definitely not the case. What does this mean? I believe that more important factors, which form the roots of the current economic development, can be found in the economic policies as well as in the modernization projects selected by each society, the North and South.

### **The Need to Be Aware of the Scarcity of Manpower and Accumulated Know-how**

A certain amount of criticism can also be directed at the second point of

human assets: manpower and the accumulation of know-how. The reason for this is the meager manpower in terms of engineers, skilled laborers, managers and such that was left behind in South Korea.

I earlier mentioned several points concerning education. Note that up until 1946, when elementary education became compulsory, there were only two percent of Koreans who were graduates of middle and high school. This is why I feel that the Colonial Modernization Theory attributes too much weight to the effectiveness of education during the colonial era.

The start of the development of Korea's current technology was due to the establishment of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, currently known as KAIST, in South Korea around 1966. I believe that South Korea's current science and technology originated from then onward. President Pak Chōng-hŭi strongly advocated and promoted the country's active invitation of the leading overseas Korean names in science and had them conduct vanguard research.

Those who had received their education from Japan during the colonial period, for example, the majority of those military men, businessmen and university professors who took over the important posts held by the Japanese after liberation, went to study in the U.S. in 1950. They were re-educated there and then returned to work at their posts. I believe that the human asset question should be revisited to include these points.

### **More Attention Should Be Paid to the System and Laws**

I think that if one is to venture to speak of colonial assets, then one needs to look at the relationship that the system and laws had on the people's customs, which exerted a far stronger influence than the material and human assets. The economic system and various laws established during the colonial period persisted for quite a long time after liberation.

Most of the system and laws of the colonial period were in use until a coup d'état was executed by General Pak Chōng-hŭi in 1961. Changes were made in keeping with the actual condition of South Korea. Actually, after the stabilization of the Pak Chōng-hŭi administration, central government agencies known as the Korea Ministry of Government Legislation were established in South Korea, and new laws were

aggressively created there. Thus, since the 1960s onwards, the laws created during the colonial period have been revised and enacted to meet the actual conditions in South Korea. It follows that, if one is to speak of colonial assets, then it can be said that the system, laws and customs exerted influence over a long period of time.

Of course, there are many points that this should be supplemented with. The reason for this is that in the case of South Korea, over three billion dollars of support was received from the U.S. during the period from 1945 to 1960. Together with this, there was a strong influence from the new American economic system as well as the world system. I think that it is necessary to take these points into account when considering the colonial assets.

## **6. Towards the Balanced Establishment of the South Korean Modern History Image**

I have stated my opinion on the inadequacies and weaknesses of the Colonial Modernization Theory and the affirmative stimulus it provides for research on the colonial period, and provided a number of examples. Based on this, I would like to suggest some topics, which I feel deserve more attention in the field of socio-economic historical research in the colonial period.

### **Focusing on the Socio-economic Changes in Korea before the Colonial Period**

First of all, in spite of the Colonial Modernization Theory being said to cover a long span of history, it can be evaluated to have little continuity between the history prior to the colonial period and that of the colonial period. If anything, there is a discontinuity. It suggests that development and changes occurred suddenly in the colonial period. Proponents of the Colonial Modernization Theory deny the internal development of the Chosŏn Dynasty period and the Open-port period, so this is not surprising.

However, I do not agree with this. The reason why is that there must have been a certain amount of things created in the period before the colonial period, which form the basis for such rapid industrialization and societal changes in the period. This seems to be obvious, and there were

various attempts for reform during the latter Korean period and the Open-port period. This is true even if you discount the successes and failures.

I think that the process wherein Korea was made a colony of Japan dramatically differs from the process by which other countries were colonized in world history. Koreans pushed forward various modernization projects in their own unique way. In addition, they strongly resisted the Japanese invasion. Japan either crushed this movement or used it to make Korea a colony. I believe that it is necessary to clearly differentiate these facts. Based on this I would like to say that overall, looking at history over the long span is important.

### **A Microscopic Historical Approach as Told by Those Who Lived Then**

The second thing, which can be asked, is the question of what colonial modernization is. One aspect is most certainly that pointed out by Dr. Yun—that it is Japanization. What kind of people were they, who were active in seeking a way during the colonial period? They were those who achieved self-growth while fully using the colonial system. What were the final stages of their self-growth? In the end, it was probably their Japanification. The pro-Japanese faction problem, the Japanese collaborators, as well as the many contradictory ethnic problems which arose and the question of what significance they hold in Korean modern history all the way up to their negative legacy, should be kept in mind.

However, such things will repulse the Colonial Modernization Theory advocates. This is because I would be bringing political theory into a discussion of economic history. They would say that my “grammar” is different. With that, further talks together would not proceed even a single step.

In dealing with the questions concerning the colonial period, even these types of negative aspects should be adequately kept in view. I think that one method of doing this might be to include the so-called “detailed histories” mentioned by Dr. Yun. The farmers, laborers, government officials, military personnel and others who lived during that period should be each offered as case examples and given the chance to relate how they themselves saw the period. They should tell us what they thought the

modernization during the period they lived through was. They should also tell us what significance they felt the economic development of the colonial period had for them. I think that history studies should include more of this kind of research in the future. Recently, various interviews and diaries have been introduced and attention has begun to be paid to these detailed histories and I strongly expect that we will be able to see an overall view of the colonial period as the research accumulates.

### **Universality and Particularity of the Colony**

At the same time, it is also important to consider the universality and particularity of colonial rule in more detail. Colonial modernization has been discussed by comparing Western to non-Western colonial rule as the important axis. In this case, what was the colonial rule carried out by the West? I think that it is important to conduct a concrete comparative research on Japan's rule over Korea as a colony.

Even in South Korea recently, comparative research on subaltern into the period when England ruled over India has begun. There have been various other attempts as well, and I am hopeful that as these types of research advance, the Korean colonial modernization within the framework of worldwide civil rights can be better explained. However, there is still quite a way to go in the future.

In addition, we need to rethink what "modern" means. Japan ruled Korea extremely methodically. From the administrative standpoint, they ruled with very tight control, positioning Japanese all the way through to the local office levels. It is probably because they were able to carry out the exploitation more effectively in this way of ruling. Because of this, the modernization and exploitation by Japan should be understood by linking them together.

Recently, the freedoms of speech and learning have been secured in South Korea. We can write whatever we feel like writing even in history research. When I visited a bookstore in Kyoto city yesterday, I found a book called *Shinnichi-ha no tame no benmei* [A Defense of the Pro-Japan Faction] stacked high in the store. It might well be that this book is selling more copies in Japan than in South Korea. Those types of books have begun to sell gradually even in South Korea. A book written by a Japanese

criticizing South Korea is becoming a best seller. This kind of climate prevails only because it is now much easier to freely discuss history in South Korea. As a result, it has become possible to have thorough dialogues with Japan on any issue.

However, I think that research, which seriously examines what the real meaning of “what a colony is,” is still inadequate in South Korea. No matter how much we discuss society and economics, in the end it must be said that the forceful invasion and rule of independent Korea, a neighboring country, was an abnormal event. But a more accurate recognition of the discrimination and oppression caused by it, as well as knowledge of the mechanism that made it possible was, is necessary. Without it, arguments such as those, which occurred in March 2001 when an uproar broke out over the official approval of the so-called *Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho* [New History Textbook], are apt to occur. I think that history scholars need always maintain a cautious attitude toward such aspects when researching the colonial period.

In order to do this, it is necessary to make efforts to more accurately understand historical facts. In addition, it is necessary to positively check one's stance and perception in understanding the events occurred. Comparative research into other colonies is also helpful in the process.

In addition, the behavior of those who lived in the colony should be understood from diverse viewpoints. It is also necessary to maintain a balanced sense in studying the basic powers, which drove history during the period.

### **Socio-economic Developments in Today's South Korea as Achievements of South Koreans**

Linking the history of the colonial period to today's South Korean society can take attention away from the obvious truth; that the current history is created by those living in that particular period and not by those who had lived there in the past.

To state this even more clearly, the history of Korea after 1945 was created by those who lived during that period. No matter how much is said about what the Japanese colonial rule left behind, none of it could of itself make history. The people who skillfully used it and spurred economic



development were the Koreans who lived during the period, and those Koreans who were liberated from Japanese rule after the war and who then created their own new society and economy while actively adapting to the new changes in the world arrangement. For this reason, I think that if the history after 1945 is to be properly researched, the so-called relationship between the current NIEs and the society and economy of the colonial period can be better illuminated. If the disparities between the history of such period are ignored and only intuition is used in commenting, then it does not make history proper. It becomes simple fabrication.

Recently in South Korea, there has been a movement to re-evaluate the history of the 1950s. Normally, under the view of history up until now, the 1950s were referred to as the “lost ten years.” This is the same as the expression being used recently in Japan regarding the 1990s. However, when the history of that period is examined, we can see that there was extremely active economic growth then exceeding five percent per year. Even during the division between North and South, there were international economic exchanges in various fields. Although still meager, all-out efforts were being devoted to expanding economy. For example, efforts to expand the railways were undertaken right away after 1945. I have specialized in railway history. Soon after liberation, a railway in the T’aebaek Mountains was established and coal could be mined from there. Extremely determined efforts could be seen in this feat. Efforts such as these laid the base for the economic growth in the latter half of the 1960s and beyond. The Economic Planning Board was created to lead the way, and it established the economic plans. It is necessary to keep this in perspective when deploying the so-called NIEs Theory.

### **Continuing the Discussion of History While Understanding Each Other’s Suffering**

I believe that all of you have been able to understand the state of the Colonial Modernization Theory under Japanese rule though what I have said here. In South Korea recently, young scholars of history have been actively and fervently researching the colonial period. The Koreans who are present here today are all quite young and flexible in their thinking. I am hopeful that they will continue discussions on history and conduct cooperative research with those in Japan and unearth new facts while

creating a new historical image. If this occurs, I think that a higher level of historical theory can be achieved as the many misunderstandings of the Colonial Modernization Theory undergo revisions.

Last year, when the Japanese history textbook problem occurred, among people involved in the making of *Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho* [the New History Textbook] and those concerned with it, there were those wondered why there was criticism against Japan when there were even some Koreans who rated the colonial rule affirmatively such as the Colonial Modernization Theory in Korea. However, the Colonial Modernization Theory spoken about by the Koreans is not so simple. Their argument is one, which evolved from their suffering in an attempt to take another look at their unfortunate history and includes self-reflective meaning. They are attempting to face the colonial period directly with a stance that will allow them to incorporate it in their historical research in their own way.

There are cases in which some Japanese completely ignore Korean's heavy suffering and pick up single sentences from conclusions and theses, saying that this is exactly the same thing that they are saying. I am apprehensive that this kind of approach will become a hindrance to the development of historical research on the Korean colonial period. What is important is that both Korean and Japanese researchers encourage each other in a climate that is conducive to research while more rigorously ascertaining the Colonial Modernization Theory.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Eckert, Carter J. *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism 1876–1945*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1991.
- An Pyöng-jik et al. eds. *Kūndae Chosŏn kong'ŏphwaüi yŏn'gu—1930–1945* [A Study of Industrialization of Modern Korea, 1930–1945], Ilchogak, 1993.
- Nakamura Tetsu. *Higashi Ajia shihonshugi no keisei* [Formation of East Asian Capitalism], Aoki Shoten, 1994.
- Hori Kazuo. *Chōsen kōgyōka no shiteki bunseki* [Historical Analysis of Korean Industrialization], Yūhikaku Publishing Co., Ltd., 1995.

Chông Chae-jông. *Han'gugŭi nollŭ—Chônghan'giŭi yöksagyoyukkwa Ilboninshik* [Korean Discourses: Historical Education and Understanding on Japan in the Transitional Period], Hyônŭmsa, 1998.

Yi Tae-gŭn. *Haebanghu 1950 nyôndaeŭi kyôngje—Kong'ôphwaŭi sajök paegyông yôn'gu* [Economy in Post-liberation, 1950s: A Study on Industrialization in Historical Perspective], Samsung Kyôngje Yôn'guso (SERI), 2002.

Chông Chae-jông. "Shokuminchi o dō miru ka? Kankoku kingendaishi-kan no sōkoku" [How to View Colony?: Conflicts in Perspectives on Korean Modern and Contemporary History], *Sekai*, no. 606, 1995.

Hō Su-yōl. "Kaealgwa sut'allon pip'an" [Criticism on the "Development and Exploitation" Theory], *Yōksa pip'yōng*, no.48, 1999.

## Summary

### Looking at the Economy and Society of Korea under Japanese Rule: Beyond the “Theory of Development” and “Theory of Exploitation”

A group of Korean scholars recently introduced the “Colonial Modernization Theory” to the Korean academic world, a theory by which they argue that the Japanese colonial authorities led Korea to the sudden rise of its modern industries, development of its workforce, accumulation of industrial know-how, institutional reform and the expansion of the SOC, thereby contributing to the rapid transformation of Korean society into one based on a capitalist structure. The theory involves discussions on where and how Korea’s economic development originated, inevitably confronting the conventional theories that characterize the colonial period with words generating negative images such as exploitation, poverty, oppression, resistance, discrimination and stagnation.

According to the Colonial Modernization Theory, the Korean people actively participated in the “industrialization” process during the Japanese colonial period to achieve economic growth by itself. The supporters of the theory highlight the Korean people as the protagonists of their history, but their viewpoint runs directly up against the prevalent view that the colonial period was a period of national struggle to liberate the Korean people from the harsh colonial rule. The newly emergent theory has in fact been widely criticized by the proponents of the latter, who believe that the Korean elites who actively cooperated with the Japanese industrialization effort in the colonial period were nothing but “imperialist collaborators” and “traitors” who inflicted fatal damage on the identity of the Korean people.

The controversy over Korean society and economy under Japanese colonial rule is directly related with the question of systematizing the knowledge of Korea’s modern history. This lecture provides an overview of the “Colonial Modernization Theory” along with criticisms and suggestions, and focuses on the historic significance of the social and economic changes brought to Korean society during the period of Japanese colonial rule.