

General Summary

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I am pleased to be able to make this presentation on the important subjects and questions presented for today's meeting on Korea under the Japanese colonial rule, and I am going to focus my presentation on the methodologies related with the research of Korean history during the Japanese colonial period, and on the presentations of Prof. Yun Kŏn-ch'a and Prof. Chŏng Chae-jŏng, in particular, who delivered such impressive keynote lectures. While I wholly agree with many of the points included in their presentations, I should insist that there are views that I need to emphasize or that I feel require a clearer definition.

Professor Yun, for instance, said that some of the newly emerging issues concerning the study of history, such as post-modernity, transnationalism and post-nationalism, have begun to exert a strong influence on Korean history circles. It is true that there have been active discussions of the issues among some experts in the fields of literature and social science, but in the field of history, and among experts in Korean modern history in particular, the terms are still nothing more than suggestions for a critical viewpoint. There are surely elements that should be respected in the critical mindset of those who support the use of the terms, but I don't think that their discussions are firmly based upon specific research results.

I would like to point out the following two points in connection with the situation. Firstly, we cannot conclude that the discourse itself forms a historic fact. Professor Yun used the term *tamhwa* [i.e. "statement"], while Korean historians generally prefer the term *tamnon* (i.e. "discourse"). The latter, which is nothing but a methodology, needs to suggest a specific historic fact that can correspond to the historical realities experienced by

Korea under the Japanese colonial rule, if it can be plausible enough. Secondly, these methodologies tend to consider “macro-discourse” as something directly opposed to “micro-discourse,” but considering the current condition and the research level of the Korean academic world, we need to treat them not as opposites but as complements. I believe that the core factor for the perception of historical facts concerning Korea in the modern period should be found via the explication process for the issues of state, nation and social class. Similarly, we should be able to perceive various historical aspects in an organic relationship rather than highlight them as if they are details of an art work carved in relief.

I believe that one of the most serious problems facing today’s Korean historians is not the production of research that is overtly focused on “macro-discourses” but the great lack of research that presents systematic and far-reaching historical perspectives based on the discourses. That is why we Korean historians have not been able to make a clear definition of modernity, or colonial modernity in Korea, suffering a confusingly diverse range of opinions. I expect that there will follow many distinguished researches that can provide us systematic guidance on the nature and reality of colonial modernity in connection with the development of Korea’s modern history. I hope that such researches can effectively handle issues such as state, nation and social class even via conventional methods.

Now, I would like to make a comment about the colonial modernization theory that Professor Chŏng has dealt with in his research. The studies based on that theory should be treated as being on a different level from those of the post-modernity theory in that they have produced a considerable amount of research achievements, providing independent historical images of Korea in the modern period. Professor Chŏng criticized the colonial modernization theory by focusing on the research methodologies, but his criticism is somewhat mild, probably due to his gentle character, and I believe that his study needs to get over the issue of research methodology and make a clear definition of the historical perception and ideology.

As I mentioned earlier, I have only a very limited understanding of the researches conducted by Japanese scholars, largely because of my poor knowledge of the Japanese language. As for the researches by Korean scholars, I have to point out that the historical images of Korea in the

Japanese colonial period as being built on pure economic logic are, as it is clearly provided by the researchers, based on capitalist ideas and values. They often used Marxist terms, but their system of historical perception shares the traditions of historical school of economics, modern capitalist economics, and colonialist and modernist ideologies: One might consider this to be a natural consequence of their social ideology and historical perception; and as for the issues of the nation and the national division, they tend to maintain the “absorptive unification” theory which is thoroughly centered on South Korea. Their perception method is different from that of the traditional conservative anti-communist nationalism, but they ignore the objective reality in the South-North division which has been the basic current of Korean modern history, while maintaining the anti-communist and anti-North Korean standpoint. I think that it is a natural consequence of perception considering the historical perception of the colonial period.

There is one more thing that I want to point out in connection with the research method: that is, these researchers stress the importance of the positive analysis of economy based on the pure economic theory, while highlighting its specific aspects in a structural manner or extending it to a question of perceiving the entire history. A clear example can be found in the narrow perception of the “active appearance of Korean people.” Professor Chŏng concluded that the greatest achievement that the colonial modernization theory made for the academic world of Korea is the “discovery of the active appearance of Korean people,” but the discovery was largely made through Korean capitalists. I believe, however, that the active appearance, or activeness, of Korean people existed in a variety of ways during the colonial period. The proponents of the colonial modernization theory do not seem to regard the Koreans who resisted the colonial rule of Korea by Japanese imperialists as active, but the truth is that the “resistant activeness” was also part of the “active appearance of Korean people.” It was not just of the activeness of capitalists. There existed people of different social standings and backgrounds—for instance, farmers, intellectuals, artists and engineers—who led an active daily life even in the modern capitalist social system controlled by colonialists. In sum, Korean history in the colonial period can be better understood when we study the various aspects of the reality of this activeness along with its

structure and ideas in connection with the colonial rule of Korea by the Japanese imperialists.

What I would like to emphasize in this context is the importance of studying the history of thought. This is also my major field of study, and I have seen that many Korean scholars tend to regard the studies of nationalist movements and revolution as those of the history of thought. I believe that this tendency has been one of the major causes for the lack of, or limited, achievement we suffer in the studies of the history of thought and the nationalist movement. As I mentioned earlier, an important task for the studies of the nationalist movement should be found in reviewing the various aspects of activeness existing in the inner world of Korean people and the structure of their consciousness in connection with the policies of colonial rule that Professor Mizuno Naoki mentioned. Researches of this kind should involve a mutually organic review of the philosophical ideas exerting a strong influence upon Korea and Japan in the period and their relationship with the ideologies exploited by Japanese imperialists for their colonial rule and expansionist policies. I also believe that comparative studies in which Korean history is compared with the history of Korea's neighboring countries are equally important for making progress in the study of Korean history. Considering the lack of experience in the comparative studies of history, Korean history circles need to pursue more active participation in international joint research projects.