

**Nation, State, and People:
Colonialism and the Formation of Divided Nation-States in Korea**

by

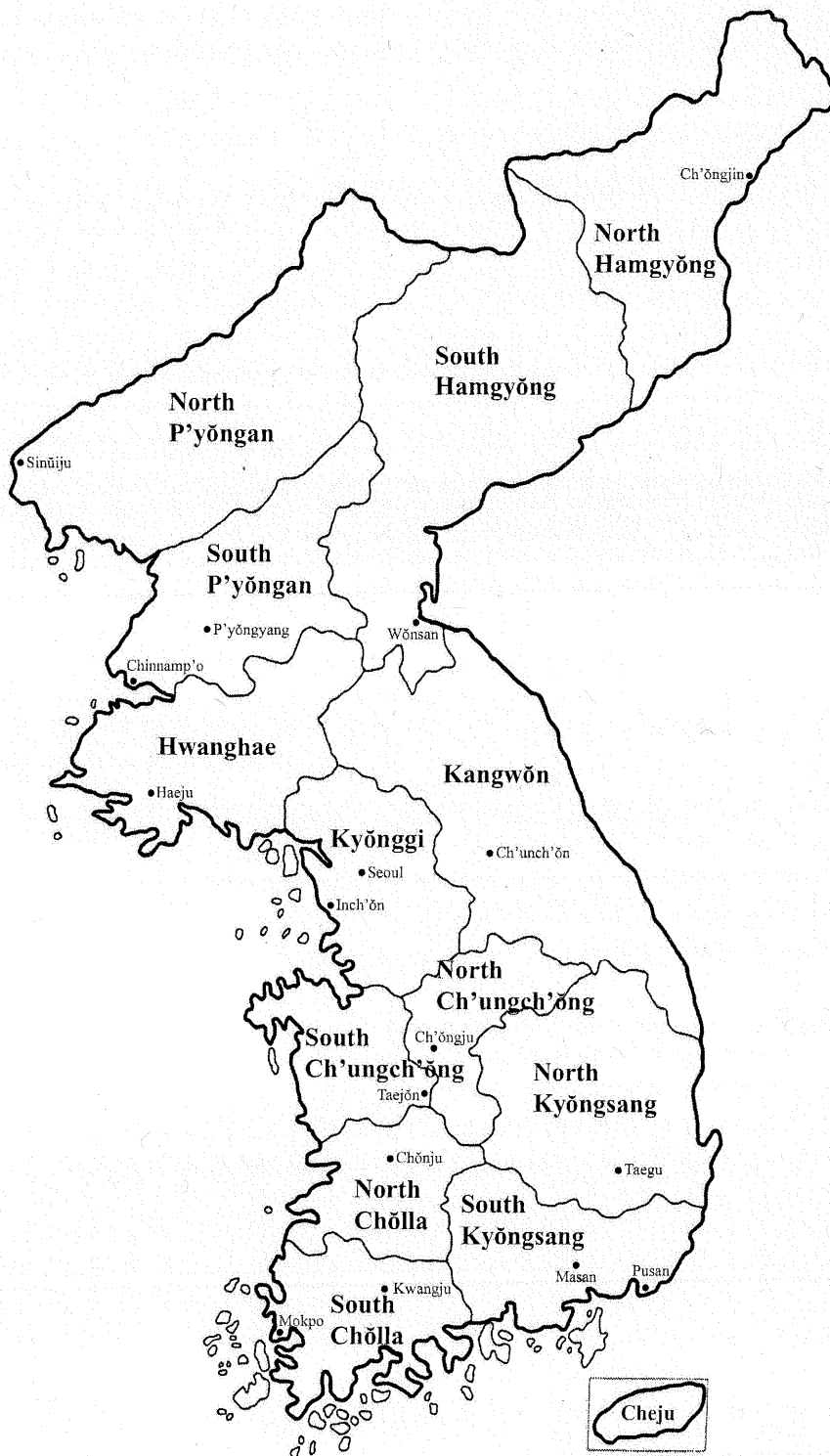
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Map 1: Korea circa 1910



Map 2: Korea circa 1950
 Source: Cumings (1990).

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to account for the influence of colonialism upon postcolonial societal trajectories. Focusing on the years leading up to Korea's liberation and then partition into North and South, it examines the nature of Japanese colonial rule from 1910 through 1945, its relationship to the brief but decisive period of American military occupation from the fall of 1945 to 1948, and the impact of both on postcolonial conflict and South Korea's separate nation-state formation. The study elaborates the mechanism through which internal conflicts among Koreans were formulated and intensified through a sequential process of colonial and occupation regimes, culminating in the divided nation-state formation in South Korea.

The study, which draws on primary and secondary historical data, advances three central arguments. First, building on earlier work that critiques standard dichotomized models, which treat the colonizers and colonized in isolation from each other, it demonstrates that we need to attend more closely to the interactions and evolving dynamics that shape their encounter. This perspective highlights what I believe is the key to understanding the Japanese colonial rule: the ways in which their imperial governance

sowed the seeds of internal differentiation among the Korean people, which undermined a sense of national identity and sparked continued internal conflicts.

Second, this work analyzes how the continuity from colonial to postcolonial was realized only through the historical process of liberation and the American occupation periods in South Korea. The important argument of this process-centered approach is that while the historical experience of colonialism exerts a profound influence upon emergent postcolonial societies, colonial legacies are not passed on in precisely the same way; rather, they are contingent on particular historical processes.

Third, this study highlights the *social* consequences of colonial experience by examining how internal conflicts that were created and rearticulated through Japanese colonial rule and then American military occupation played a pivotal role in formulating the historically shifting meaning of membership in the national community, thus providing the historical and social basis for separate nation-state formation in South Korea. It demonstrates one of the most important consequences of the colonial regime: its capacity to produce and reshape sources of internal conflict, whether religious, ethnic, or class-based, among the colonized, and how such conflict in turn plays a pivotal role in shaping a particular state form and political trajectory for postcolonial societies.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historical Narrative

Prominent historical phenomena that characterized the twentieth century include the unprecedented expansion of colonial rule and the reconstruction of postcolonial nation-states. While different forms of imperial and colonial rule had certainly existed in previous historical eras, colonial practices were predominant in the early twentieth century. By 1914, more than eighty percent of the world's territory was under European colonial rule (Fieldhouse 1973: 3), most of which was decolonized and transformed into postcolonial societies and sovereign nation-states in the post-War period. When these former colonial societies reconstructed their own political communities in the postcolonial period, they attempted to remove colonial legacies and they generally underwent disruptive political changes. Yet, the political and state structures of the colonial period were largely reproduced in the postcolonial period, thus shaping postcolonial structures and pathways. Why then did many postcolonial societies, in spite of their efforts to overcome colonial legacies, eventually reproduce key features of the colonial structure? How does the historical experience of colonial rule shape a society's emergence into the modern, postcolonial world?

Taking up this general question of the transition from colonial to postcolonial periods, this study develops a case study of Korea to illuminate colonial legacies in

postcolonial politics and state formation. To reformulate the originating question in Korea's own specific historical context, a brief historical narrative is necessary. Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 in the aftermath of Russo-Japanese War. Upon annexation in 1910, Korea was officially colonized by Japan and the Japanese dominance on the Korean peninsula lasted until 1945. Although decolonization in Korea resulted from the Japanese defeat in World War II, not from an indigenous anti-colonial movement, the coercive Japanese colonial rule led to strong anti-Japanese sentiment among the Korean people. Thus the most important task in the aftermath of Japanese colonialism in Korea was to reconstruct an independent nation-state by abolishing colonial legacies. When two occupation forces subsequently entered Korea (the U.S. in the south and the Soviet Union in the north), however, the political effort to reconstruct a national community in the liberation phase had to face yet another form of foreign intervention by these external powers.

To the extent that terminating the coercive Japanese colonial rule escalated political and social aspirations for an independent state, and that the existence of the American Military Government could impede the establishment of a sovereign nation-state, one might have expected the emergence of a national movement in the south against the U.S. occupation power. In fact, Koreans previously experienced the mobilization of a nation-wide independence movement in 1919 against the Japanese under the coercive military rule in the 1910s. Surprisingly, however, no major national movements arose against U.S. military rule. Rather, the American occupation period saw constant internal conflicts and struggles among Koreans. When a popular protest occurred in 1946, the largest social movement during the U.S. occupation period,

Koreans tended to engage in violent collective actions against their fellow Koreans, particularly police officers, bureaucrats, and wealthy landlords. Why did Koreans, who organized a nation-wide anti-colonial movement against Japan in 1919, fail to do so against the Americans, instead choosing to struggle against each other rather than the occupation power? What explains their different response to Japanese colonial rule in 1919 and the American occupation in 1946? And, what implications does the internal conflict among Koreans under American occupation have upon the influence of colonial legacies on postcolonial politics and state formation in South Korea?

By answering these questions, this study intends to elaborate the mechanism through which internal conflicts among Koreans that were formulated and intensified through a sequential process of colonial and occupation regimes provide a pivotal historical and social basis for the divided nation-state formation in South Korea in 1948. In doing so, it aims to highlight the critical effect of Japanese colonial rule in the partition of Korea, which remains relatively under-examined due to the focus on the geopolitical factors of the post-War period. To be sure, the occupation forces of the U.S. in the south and the U.S.S.R in the north under the emergent Cold War context played an essential role in the formation of separate nation-states in Korea. Yet, the account of national division in Korea that is given only through the lens of external factors fails to explain the historically embedded sources that led the changing international circumstances to successfully penetrate into the Korean context. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding, therefore, it is equally important to consider the internal historical sources that made it possible for geopolitical factors to shape and condition the path that postcolonial Korea followed.

Why Korea?

The history of colonial Korea and postcolonial South Korea provides a particularly interesting case study for explaining colonial legacies in postcolonial politics. While making significant theoretical contributions by uncovering histories of non-Western societies and the reciprocal relationship between imperial and colonial societies, initial studies tended to focus on histories of Western colonies. This led to a shift in theorizing based on the experiences of Western European countries to those of their “Others” in (post) colonial studies. Given that Japan was a non-Western colonial power, Japanese colonial rule was generally considered an “anomaly” (Peattie 1984: 6-15), and consequently histories of Japanese colonies such as Korea were doubly underrepresented, although recent studies have begun to fill this gap.

Focusing on the largely neglected case of Japanese colonial rule and its legacies in postcolonial politics in South Korea, this work highlights both the peculiar and general characteristics that Japanese colonialism exhibited. Indeed, Japanese colonial rule represents something of a hybrid regime that was at once Western in its imperial goals yet distinctly non-Western in its method of colonial domination. Having narrowly escaped being reduced to the status of a Western colony through a state-led modernization project, Japan followed its own imperial project and launched colonializing efforts to protect its sovereign status from Western imperial powers, thereby developing the defensive nature of Japanese imperialism (Cumings 1981: 6; Gann 1984: 502-03). Compared to Western imperial powers, Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan and Korea developed distinctive temporal and spatial characteristics both as a “late comer” and as having “contiguous” colonies (Cumings 1984: 482), which are chiefly responsible for the particular traits of

Japanese rule, such as the method of rule, institutional arrangements, and colonial practices. By understanding Japanese colonial rule in Korea, therefore, we can explain how the common goal of colonial domination could be pursued in divergent ways by different kinds of imperial regimes.

If we accept that colonial rule by Western countries is divergent, not uniform, and that there is no essential characteristic of Western colonial domination, then Japanese colonialism can be seen as one of the various forms of colonial domination rather than as an exceptional case. In this vein, it would be more constructive to examine colonial practice in its particular historical context and to compare similarities and differences among diverse practices of colonialism. By developing a case study of Japanese colonialism in Korea, this study seeks to broaden the empirical context of existing research and lays the groundwork for subsequent comparative historical studies.

In addition, the Korean case elucidates the impact of colonial rule upon a national community. Compared to other pre-colonial societies, Korea maintained a culturally homogeneous society.¹ Indeed, the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) exhibited characteristics of what Anthony Smith (1986) calls an “ethnic community,” including a collective name, common myth of descent, shared history, distinctive culture, association with a specific territory, and sense of solidarity, which can be hardly found in other pre-colonial contexts.² This cultural and ethnic homogeneity differentiates Korea not only

¹ It should be noted that the term “homogeneity” here primarily refers to ethnic and cultural dimensions. Therefore, highlighting the homogeneous character of Korea in the pre-colonial period does not suggest that traditional Korea had existed as an essentially harmonious collective entity without any social conflict. In fact, the Chosŏn dynasty had maintained a hierarchical social status system in which each individual belonged to a different social category. In this sense, I do not share the nationalistic assumption that traditional society had existed as an undivided and essential entity (see Prakash 1995: 388-91).

² Smith rejects both modernists who argue that the nation is a purely modern phenomenon, and perennialists who contend that nations and nationalism have always existed throughout history. To

from Western colonies but also from Taiwan, another Japanese colony.

As Japanese colonial rule was followed by the American occupation in South Korea, however, Koreans developed significant internal conflict among themselves. Of particular importance is contestation regarding the issue of collaboration with the colonial power. Those who worked for or benefited from the Japanese during the colonial period were often criticized and accused of being “collaborators” and even “traitors” on both the national and local levels. When Koreans began to mobilize to reconstruct their political community during the liberation phase, a brief intervening stage between the colonial and occupation periods, a policy was announced that such “collaborators” would not be considered members of the national community. Although this collaboration issue remained mainly symbolic during the liberation phase, those who were or could be charged as collaborators with the Japanese began to make another alliance with the occupation power with the arrival of the U.S., which in turn significantly intensified internal struggles among Koreans. This suggests that Japanese rule scattered seeds of social and political contention among Koreans. By contrasting national solidarity in the pre-colonial with fragmentation in the postcolonial periods, we can see more clearly the effects of colonial rule upon an already existing national community.

Finally, the Korean case can illuminate both the continuities and discontinuities of different forms of foreign rule. After all, Korea was first colonized by Japan, a non-Western power, and after the brief liberation phase, South Korea became occupied by the U.S., a Western power, which played a significant role in shaping the structure of the

overcome the two perspectives, he takes the middle ground and suggests some continuity between traditional and modern eras through the concept of ethnic or ethnic community. Thus, the existence of a sense of solidarity in the Chosŏn dynasty does not necessarily mean that Koreans had developed a modern form of nationalism in the pre-colonial period.

subsequent postcolonial South Korea. This suggests that neither Japanese colonialism nor the U.S. occupation alone can provide an adequate account of postcolonial politics in South Korea; rather, it is the sequence of both super-imposed foreign regimes that must be at the center of an analysis of postcolonial politics in Korea. Through the exploration of this temporal sequence of Japanese colonial rule and American military occupation, and its influence upon postcolonial politics in South Korea, we can extend the spatial and sequential scope of existing studies, and construct a preliminary foundation for comparative studies of colonialism and postcolonialism.

Theories of Colonial Legacies in Postcolonial Politics and State Formation

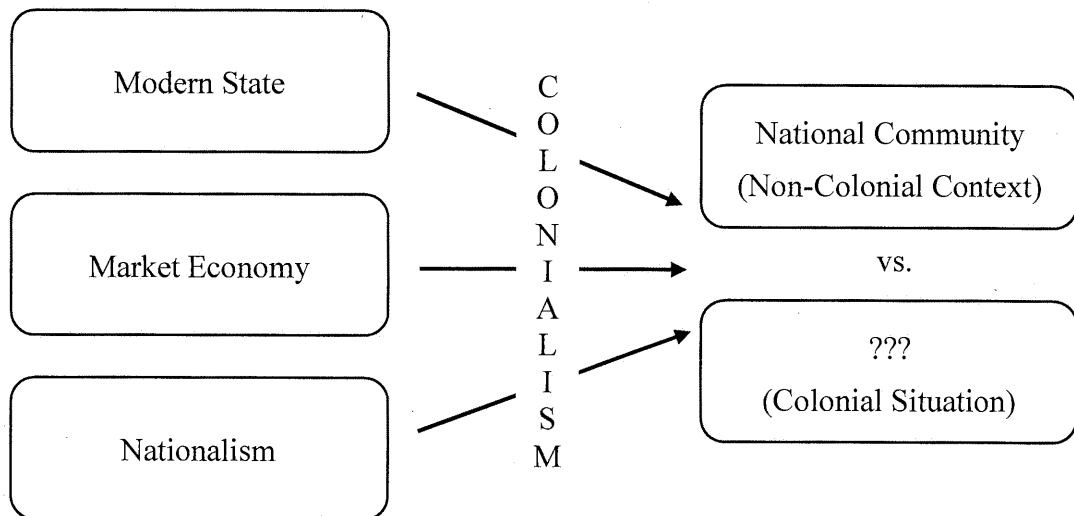
Since the resurgence of historical sociology, scholars have examined the divergent trajectories of different societies into the modern world and their distinctive characteristics. Tracing the genealogy of this body of literature enables us to see theoretical and methodological changes in historical sociology (see Adams, Clemens, and Orloff 2005). Despite the existence of diverse topics in this literature, we can see that the formation of modern society has been explored in three broad analytic dimensions: the formation of a modern state in the political sphere; the rise and expansion of a market economy in the economic realm; and, the development of nationalist discourses in the cultural arena.

While this rich body of work has illuminated the dynamic historical mechanisms of diverse modernization trajectories, it has paid relatively little attention to, or at best treated as an abnormal case, one of the most prominent historical phenomena: modernization through colonialism. What is particularly interesting is that while many

parts of Western Europe and North America provided scholars with empirical and historical contexts for research, the colonial rules that imperial powers implemented abroad had been largely ignored. As a consequence, colonial and imperial practices, which constitute a critical part of the historical changes in imperial contexts as well as in colonial societies, had been more or less underestimated in theorizing.

A similar pattern of series of changes that have been identified in the history of imperial powers, however, can be found in the colonial situation as well. Although colonial rule took diverse forms in different contexts, it normally generated a modern form of a bureaucratic state, integrated colonial societies into the world market, and promoted nationalist discourses in indigenous societies. Here arises a question. If the combination and convergence of these changes in the three analytic dimensions brings about the formulation of a national political community in a non-colonial context, what consequences does it generate in colonial society?

Figure 1: Pathways into the Modern World through Colonialism



Before examining previous studies of colonial and postcolonial changes, it is necessary to briefly mention the conceptual issues regarding two important terms in the study, “colonial” and “postcolonial.” Jürgen Osterhammel ([1995] 2002: 16) defines colonialism as a “relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders” and classifies its evolution in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into three stages: colonial rule (formal empire), quasi-colonial control (informal empire), and non-colonial ‘determinant’ influence (2002: 20-21). In addition, placing colonialism and imperialism into a broader historical context of empire, George Steinmetz (2006: 141-49) classifies four types of empire: non-modern empire, modern territorial empire, colonialism as a third form of territorial empire, and modern imperialism as a non-territorial form of empire.

Another key term is “postcolonial” and its meaning has been more contested than that of “colonial.” Scholars have noted the conceptual and theoretical problems of the term “postcolonial.” Among others, Anne McClintock (1992) and Ella Shohat (1992) point out that the concept obscures the spatial and temporal specificities of different societies and that the “post” in “postcolonial” makes it difficult to consider the continuous influences of colonial legacies as well as informal forms of colonialism such as neo-colonialism. Furthermore, they argue that “post” can lead to a unilateral and developmental historical point of view, thus reproducing ahistorical and apolitical perspectives (see also Young 2001: 60).

However, others have also noted the relevance of the term in that the notion of “postcolonial” nonetheless enables us to trace sequential processes and to distinguish changes of social reorganization in the aftermath of colonial rule from those under the

colonial rule. Stuart Hall (1996), for example, advocates the usefulness of the “postcolonial” concept. While Hall is not necessarily opposed to critiques of the term, he suggests that we need to properly use the term to refer to the “process of disengagement from colonialism,” rather than reject the term itself. In a similar vein, Boatcă and Costa (2010: 14-15) claim that “contrary to the assumption that it only accounts for the temporal positioning of societies within colonial history, the term ‘postcolonial’ also refers to the *reconfiguration* of economic, social, and political relationships which colonialism triggered in former colonies and metropolises, as well as to the tension between power and knowledge in the context of imperial relationships” (emphasis added).

Considering the lack of any alternative concept, the way of resolving the concerns raised by both perspectives seems to lie in the question of how to use the postcolonial concept, instead of abandoning the term altogether. While it is certainly possible that the concept of “postcolonial” may lead us to overemphasize disjunction from the colonial period and to reproduce a problematic historical perspective of unilateral development, it is equally important not only to attend to the process of the reformulation of colonial settings but also to differentiate the status of the political community from colonial foreign rule. In order to address both the continuities and discontinuities of the colonial to the postcolonial context, therefore, the postcolonial concept will be used in this study. To avoid any confusion, however, the brief intervening period between Japanese colonial rule and U.S. occupation will be referred to as the liberation phase.

Below, I examine, first, how previous studies have explained postcolonial politics and state formation in relationship with colonial legacies. Then, I discuss how

these studies have generated other theoretical issues and how this study intends to resolve these issues for further development. Finally, I suggest that we need to develop a more integrative social approach to account for colonial and postcolonial changes.

Colonial Legacies in Postcolonial Politics and State Formation

As social scientists have become more interested in colonialism, scholarly attention has been directed to the study of colonial legacies in postcolonial societies. To review this rich body of literature, I will divide it along the three analytic dimensions of the political, economic, and cultural, and focus on how scholars have explained the impact of the colonial state, market economy, and nationalist discourses during the colonial period on postcolonial politics and state formation.

First, scholars have attended to how the institutional arrangements of the colonial state left imprints upon political changes and state formation in postcolonial societies. One critical issue has been how different methods of colonial domination--in the form of direct or indirect rule--fostered particular forms of political change during postcolonial periods. Among others, Matthew Lange (2004: 906-08) argues that while the colonial state under direct rule tends to base its political domination upon a centralized administrative structure, thus promoting the rule of law, indirect rule usually consolidates the institutional and substantial power of chiefs as local intermediaries between the colonial administration and indigenous people, hence generating the tendency for despotism.

These contrasting institutional legacies can be seen, for example, by comparing political changes in postcolonial India and Africa. Through the British colonial rule, India developed a popular political culture as well as the infrastructural power of the state and

consequently followed a democratic trajectory (Young 1994: 272-75). In contrast, more coercive and extractive colonial rules in Africa gave rise to clientelism and tribalism that largely hindered political participation of the masses in postcolonial Africa (Davidson 1992; Mamdani 1996, 2003; Young 1994).

Mahmood Mamdani (1996) further elaborates the political legacy of indirect rule in the context of colonial and postcolonial Africa. Mamdani shows how the British and French imperial powers utilized the native authorities in the local state for effective colonial rule and generated “decentralized despotism” by providing the chieftdom with omnipotent power encompassing the judicial, legislative, executive, and administrative realms. Characterizing the colonial state as a “bifurcated state,” Mamdani stresses that colonial rule produced a civic-communitarian division through which white settlers and a few Africans had been endowed with freedom and rights as citizens while most Africans remained as tribal subjects in the realm of rural communities.

The essence of Mamdani’s argument is that indirect rule implanted by the Western imperial powers in Africa consolidated the political power of tribal authorities, which is chiefly responsible for the development of ethnic conflicts and authoritarianism in the postcolonial period. Thus Mamdani (1996: 25) ultimately claims that the most important institutional legacy of colonial rule in Africa lies in the continent’s inherited impediments to democratization. By illuminating the historical continuity between institutional political settings in the colonial period and political structures in postcolonial Africa, Mamdani’s work enhances our understanding of the colonial legacy.

In addition to colonial state formation and its development, scholars have also examined the ways in which the introduction of a market economy and the integration of

colonial societies into the world market influence state formation and political changes in a postcolonial context (e.g. Bratton 1994; Boone 1994; Lange 2003; Migdal 1988; Young 1994; see Berman and Lonsdale 1992: Part II and III).³ Joel S. Migdal (1988), for example, offers an insightful theoretical framework. Through case studies of five different former colonial countries (i.e. Egypt, India, Israel, Mexico, and Sierra Leone), he accounts for the existence of divergent forms of state power and capacity in Third World countries. Migdal directs attention to the expansion of the world economy, and the establishment and maintenance of political hegemony through colonialism as two sets of forces that determine the structure of the society and the relationship between the state and local leaders, what he calls “strongmen,” including chiefs and landlords. To consider these two forces, he focuses on Great Britain which exerted significant influence upon all of his cases, except for Mexico.

In particular, Sierra Leone and Palestine, two former British colonies, are explained as prototypically weak and strong states in their postcolonial periods. In Migdal’s account, the British strategy of fragmenting social control in Sierra Leone led the postcolonial state to remain weak, while the creation of Jewish agency and the consolidation of resources into a centralized state in Palestine consequently produced the strong state of Israel. In this vein, Migdal’s work makes an important contribution by exploring the historical reformulation of the relationship between the state and society during the colonial period and its consequences upon the postcolonial state.

Finally, the formation and development of nationalist discourses is seen as a

³ Dependency theory, for instance, shows that one of the most significant legacies of colonialism lies in the fact that the colonization of Asia, Africa, and Latin America by European imperial powers tends to consolidate underdevelopment in the colonial societies, a pattern that continues to be maintained in the form of neocolonialism in postcolonial periods.

critical cultural legacy of colonial rule. Scholars have examined how nationalist discourses are (re)articulated against colonial and imperial ideologies within a particular colonial context and how they in turn become reformulated through postcolonial state formation during decolonization processes and liberation periods (e.g. Chakrabarty 2007; Chatterjee 1986, 1993; Hussain 2001; Norval 2003; Smith 1981). Among others, Partha Chatterjee (1993) provides an important theoretical framework. In order to grasp the distinctive characteristics of a colonial situation, he draws on the existence of two separate domains: the outer/material and inner/spiritual domains. For Chatterjee, the former is primarily related to the colonial state, economy, and technology, while the latter bears the essential marks of cultural identity in a colonial context. Anti-colonial nationalism emerges in the inner/spiritual domain, Chatterjee argues, in order to protect and maintain the cultural distinctness of indigenous people from the colonial power and it is this domain that is declared sovereign. Thus, while colonial power is predominant in the outer/material domain, any effort by the colonial state to interfere with cultural identity in the inner/spiritual domain is resisted through anti-colonial nationalism.

When anticolonial movements enter the material domain, however, they construct an identity based on the image of the Western liberal state and, on the grounds of same-ness, demand inclusion in the public sphere. It is here that a lasting contradiction arises: the liberal state is based on the public/private divide and gains its legitimacy by ignoring differences among private citizens. Yet the spiritual/material divide of anticolonial movements demands that differences be normalized rather than ignored. The crucial problem in the postcolonial period is that forms of state overwhelm forms of community. To overcome this problem, Chatterjee argues, we must consider community

and the state together. Chatterjee ultimately contends that because old nationalist historiography chiefly focused on the state, whereas subaltern historiography mainly concentrated on community, we need to reconsider how they are mutually interconnected in order to conceive new forms of each.

Chatterjee's work has significantly enhanced our understanding of colonialism/postcolonialism. It offers a powerful critique of Anderson's Eurocentric notion of modular nationalism ([1983] 2006), in which colonial nationalism is subjected to the European language of nation, state, and nationalism. Criticizing Anderson's concept of modular nationalism for colonizing even the imagination of indigenous people, Chatterjee emphasizes that nationalism in a colonial situation reflects the distinctive cultural character of indigenous people, and is not a mere imitation of European nationalism.⁴ Anti-colonial nationalism, he argues, is explicitly constructed based on differences from a colonial power, rather than identity with it. Thus he seeks to recuperate the cultural autonomy of colonized people from the colonial state. Moreover, Chatterjee broadens our theoretical framework by reconsidering the state and culture simultaneously (see Steinmetz 1999). If we approach the postcolonial state not only as an institutionalized political form but as a community, as he suggests, it would be possible to explain the historical continuity from colonial to postcolonial periods with respect to the reproduction of cultural and social changes as well as of institutional settings.

⁴ There have been indeed several critiques of Anderson's concept of "modular nationalism." Among others, Craig Calhoun (1997), albeit from a different theoretical perspective from Chatterjee, notes that Anderson's concept of "modularity" is based on the inadequate assumption that international discourses are transplanted into a local context without any substantial change (see Eley and Suny 1996: 13).

Unresolved Issues

As has been shown, scholars have examined how the historical experience of colonial rule exerts profound effects on state formation and subsequent political changes in postcolonial periods. Analyzing colonial dynamics and legacies through diverse analytic dimensions and empirical contexts, these previous studies have made significant contributions by showing the historical continuities between the colonial and postcolonial eras in one way or another. However, they also generated important conceptual and theoretical issues that led to controversies and thus need to be addressed.

First, initial studies produced conceptual dichotomies such as colonizer vs. colonized, civilized vs. primitive, and imperial citizen vs. colonial subject. While exploring relations between the colonial power and the indigenous population, they reinforced these binary concepts by primarily focusing on the distinction between colonizer and colonized. Chatterjee's work, for instance, makes a clear distinction between the outer/material and inner/spiritual domains, which represent autonomous spheres for colonizer and colonized, respectively. Highlighting the cultural difference of indigenous people from the imperial power, this bifurcated conceptualization strengthens the identification of the colonized people as a homogeneous group who stand against their common enemy in the form of the colonial power.

To be sure, the difference and conflict between colonizer and colonized is one of the central characteristics of colonial society and thus it is critical to understand that anti-colonial nationalism normally develops as an antagonistic relationship between the indigenous people and the colonial state. The distinction between colonizer and colonized indeed provided an important conceptual tool and had a positive impact on the initial

development of colonial studies. As scholars have noted, however, the dichotomy between colonizer and colonized became a hindrance rather than a helpful tool for subsequent studies (Prakash 1995; Stoler and Cooper 1997; Young 1995). In the distinction between structural and cultural domains, once the former is presumed as the area over which the colonial state exerts absolute control and the latter as an untainted cultural sphere of indigenous people, it becomes difficult to consider the ways in which colonial culture is constructed not merely by resisting the imperial power but also through constant interactions with it in changing institutional settings (Stoler and Cooper 1997: 36), thus generating the coexistence of contraries, contradictions, and ambiguities (see Cohn and Dirks 1988: 228).

In addition, the overemphasis on this binary conceptual frame tends to homogenize colonizer and colonized, which in turn restricts the examination of diverse engagements and contestations between the colonial power and the indigenous population. By exclusively focusing on differences, the dichotomy between colonizer and colonized underscores the conflicting aspect of their relationship and, in doing so, obscures how various social groups within the indigenous people respond to and interact with the colonial state in significantly different ways (see Isaacman and Isaacman 1977). Yet, just as colonial power takes divergent forms in different empirical contexts and consists of multiple groups, colonized people have their own heterogeneous characteristics.⁵ Indeed, various social groups can develop different strategies within the available opportunities and existing constraints under the colonial rule. For example, varying degrees of

⁵ Uchida (2005), for example, shows the distinctive characteristics and roles of Japanese settlers who resided in Korea in the dynamics of encounters between the Japanese and Koreans during the colonial period. The multiplicity of each group and their interactions seems to be chiefly responsible for the fact that even when the same imperial power establishes the colonial state in different empirical contexts, it adopts diverse, sometimes considerably contrasting ruling methods (see Steinmetz 2007).

collaboration from the indigenous people is indispensable for the colonial state to maintain its political rule. By utilizing the divide-and-rule strategy, the colonial power tends to support collaborators over resistant groups.

This was certainly the case in colonial Korea. The coercive military rule of the Japanese colonial state in the 1910s led to the nation-wide anticolonial movement in 1919. This suggests that the distinction between colonizer and colonized was well maintained at this stage. When the colonial state transformed its oppressive form of colonial dominance into the moderate form of what has been known as cultural rule in the 1920s and introduced various institutional changes, however, different forms of social movements such as peasant and labor disputes became prevalent. In order to prevent any large scale nationalist movement from arising, the colonial state relied on the divide-and-rule strategy and tended to intensify internal conflicts among the Korean people. The colonial power provided a few selective groups such as landlords, bureaucrats, and intellectuals with economic and political support, while exacerbating the social conditions of the peasants and workers, which in turn led to the development of social movements in the 1920s and early 1930s. This clearly indicates that a colonial situation can lead to the development of dynamic relations among the colonized people themselves, and that the binary distinction between colonizer and colonized is insufficient for explaining these complicated political processes.

Moreover, in considering nationalist discourses, the binary between colonizer and colonized can lead us to assume that anti-colonialism has a unitary and essential form in colonial situations. However, it is problematic to presume that an indigenous people can be defined by a set of consistent characteristics that reproduce the same identity

(Goswami 2004: 24-25). Thus, in this framework, it becomes difficult to consider the possibility of the coexistence of different forms of nationalism through which various groups of people construct different collective identities. Even though the imposition of colonial rule tends to promote anti-colonial nationalism and facilitate political mobilization of an anti-colonial movement, it is crucial to consider that different social groups interact with a colonial power in different ways. Even when anti-colonial nationalism is mobilized, various social groups may construct different forms of anti-colonial nationalism. In fact, a colonial situation can lead to internal conflict *within* nationalist groups, since the nationalist elites need to engage in political struggles not only against a colonial state power but also with other indigenous nationalists to claim a hegemonic position. In a colonial situation, the “nationalist elite is fighting on two fronts: against the imperial power and against other local groups striving to replace it” (Smith 1981: 120), thus developing “conflicting interests within the nationalist movement” (Wallerstein 1970: 414).

As we will see later, Japanese colonial rule in Korea gave rise to a strong anti-colonial nationalism. Yet, nationalists developed several different forms of anti-colonial discourses by combining such contrasting ideologies as liberalism and socialism. As each nationalist group adhered to competing political ideologies and utilized different strategies for popular mobilization and hegemony for different political goals, they developed contentious relations with each other, rather than developing a unitary anti-colonial nationalist group. To elucidate the existence of these divergent nationalist groups among the indigenous people themselves and the dynamics of their relations, nationalism in a colonial context needs to be seen as a product within a particular political context

(Brubaker 1996; see Calhoun 1997), instead of being assumed to have a unitary form and homogeneous character against the colonial power.

Second, the ways in which colonial legacies influence postcolonial politics remains contested. Frederick Cooper (2005: 18, 51-2), for example, criticizes Mamdani for ignoring the pivotal role of sequential processes in explaining political changes in postcolonial Africa. The problem of Mamdani's account, Cooper claims, lies in the fact that it makes a direct causal connection between forms of colonial rule during the 1920s and 1930s, on the one hand, and the postcolonial era of the 1980s and 1990s, on the other, while neglecting the important political developments in the intervening period. To fill this gap, Cooper underscores the existence of the effective mobilization of Africans for making claims to citizenship in the late 1940s and 1950s. Examining labor movements in the postwar period in French Africa, he shows how the Africans appropriated the languages of equality, citizenship, and claims-making within the imperial system, which in turn propelled the ousting of French colonialism and the opening of sources of political conflicts in the postcolonial era. In doing so, Cooper demonstrates that "the *process* of decolonization, not just the heritage of colonialism, shaped the patterns of postcolonial politics" (2005: 230, emphasis in original).

As the debate over Mamdani's work clearly shows, Mamdani and Cooper have developed contrasting, seemingly irreconcilable arguments about the politics of postcolonial Africa. Yet, that they have different foci does not necessarily mean that we need to choose one argument over the other. Rather, it is necessary to integrate both points of view to the extent that the reproduction of the colonial legacy itself is a product of political processes in postcolonial periods. It might be possible to combine Mamdani's

and Cooper's arguments by explaining why and how institutional and political structures that were formed in a colonial situation remained largely intact in spite of the existence of popular efforts to democratize politics during postcolonial periods.

In fact, the assumption that institutional settings directly determine postcolonial politics is inadequate for explaining political processes in Korea. Regarding postcolonial Korea, the strongly centralized state structure and state-directed economic management were normally traced to the historical experience of Japanese colonial rule. The similar pattern of rapid economic growth under the leadership of the colonial state during the 1930s and the developmental state in the 1970s and 1980s has been particularly noted (see Evans 1995; Kohli 1994, 2004).⁶ In this regard, Mamdani's argument that institutional political settings, especially state structure, continue to be influential and to shape the postcolonial society seems to be supported in the account of the influence of Japanese colonial rule upon state formation and the political-economic developmental trajectory in postcolonial South Korea.

As Cooper maintains, however, colonial legacy does not immediately determine postcolonial politics. In Korea, there existed political movements and efforts to remove the colonial inheritance. Throughout the liberation period, one of the most important issues was to reconstruct the state and nation by eliminating Japanese colonial legacies in all aspects. It should also be noted that it was not until the 1960s that the developmental state came to emerge in Korea, and that the Yi regime in the 1950s can be characterized as "predatory rather than developmental" (Evans 1995: 52). This demonstrates that just as both colonial settings and decolonization processes shaped postcolonial politics in Africa,

⁶ For the relationship between colonialism and developmental pathways in other colonial contexts, see Lange (2003), Lange, Mahoney, and Hau (2006), and Mahoney (2010).

Japanese colonial legacies were mediated through the processes of liberation and the U.S. occupation period, rather than immediately determining postcolonial politics in South Korea. Thus, in order to integrate the theoretical implications of Mamdani's and Cooper's accounts, and to supplement the previous explanations of the relationship between Japanese colonialism and the developmental state in South Korea, it is crucial to empirically examine why colonial heritages had been reproduced in spite of the existence of a strong popular demand for removing colonial legacies and constructing democratic politics.

Finally, geopolitical factors require more attention for explaining state formation and political changes in postcolonial societies. In Migdal's account, for example, Sierra Leone and Israel represent a weak and strong state model, respectively. Migdal properly shows how the lineage of British colonial rule as a historically pivotal factor shaped the contrasting state capacities in the two countries. However, he does not sufficiently take external geopolitical influences into account by neglecting the fact that U.S. financial and military aid provided Israel with crucial sources to enhance state power (Bradshaw 1990: 1062).

It is worth emphasizing that most postcolonial societies transform themselves not only through colonial heritages but under a certain geopolitical context. In particular, the Cold War circumstances need to be reconsidered to the extent that many colonial societies became decolonized in the aftermath of World War II, in which growing international tension was played out in the ideological struggle between East and West. This international situation influenced many postcolonial societies when they conducted political and social reforms in that the political turmoil that many postcolonial societies

underwent in the process of postcolonial state-building was a result of the rearticulation of existing conflicts through a newly emerging Cold War context. Thus, we need to attend more to the impact of particular geopolitical factors on postcolonial societies.

The international context and geopolitical factors are especially important for explaining the Korean case. The termination of Japanese colonial rule gave rise to the brief liberation period which in turn was followed by the U.S. occupation in the south and the U.S.S.R. in the north. Consequently, Korea had to conduct its social and political reforms not only by engaging with Japanese colonial legacies but under another external foreign power in shifting geopolitical circumstances. Indeed, the American occupation played a pivotal role in reproducing and consolidating Japanese colonial legacies, thus reshaping postcolonial South Korea. During the liberation phase, Koreans had developed political organizations and social associations at the national and local levels right after the decolonization from Japan and before the U.S. came to South Korea. What is crucial is that these organizations and associations were supported by the majority of the population and therefore were considered legitimate. Thus the cooperation with these organizations and people could have enabled the U.S. to launch democratic political reform efficiently, which it claimed to do.

Yet the occupation regime tended to oppress those organizations and activists that were most influenced by leftist activists, and instead supported those who worked for the Japanese during the colonial period and who were targets of popular hatred in the liberation phase. Without considering international tensions in the emerging Cold War context, it is difficult to explain these political processes during the occupation period. To the extent that the U.S. occupation regime played a key role in the transition from

colonial to postcolonial periods and largely shaped the subsequent political changes in Korea, it is important to properly understand the occupation period with particular attention paid to the Cold War context.

Resolving the Issues

Uncovering the histories of “Others” and developing frameworks of colonial and postcolonial theories, the previous studies generated a number of unresolved conceptual and theoretical issues: the bifurcated conceptual frame of colonizer and colonized; insufficient attention to decolonization processes due to emphasis on the reproduction of colonial institutions; and insufficient attention to geopolitical influences. This study attempts to resolve each of these issues as follows. First, it shifts the theoretical focus from the relationship between colonizer and colonized to the rise and reformulation of internal conflicts among the colonized people. In particular, it examines the ways in which institutional settings implanted by the colonial power reconstruct colonial societies and reformulate political practices, social relationships, and cultural identities, thus rearticulating conflicts among the Korea people. In doing so, this study highlights the dynamic relational changes among diverse indigenous groups as well as between the colonial power and Koreans. After all, people lived *through*, not merely under, colonial rule.

Second, it pays particular attention to the process in which colonial legacies shape and condition postcolonial structure. It should be noted that Korea had some distinctive characteristics of decolonization. While many colonial societies became decolonized through various forms of anti-colonial nationalist movements, the decolonization from Japan resulted from the Japanese defeat in World War II. In this

sense, it is possible to consider that, unlike many other colonial societies in which the decolonization existed as a process, Korea experienced it as a comparatively unexpected event. Yet, Japanese colonial legacies in Korea continued to be contested, rearticulated, and reproduced through the process of the liberation phase followed by the U.S. occupation period. To properly grasp the mechanism through which colonial arrangements were reproduced in postcolonial South Korea, therefore, this study attends to the pivotal role of the liberation phase and the U.S. occupation period in the reproduction of colonial institutions.

Third, the study takes changing international circumstances more seriously. This is not only due to the critical influence of the emerging Cold War context on the two occupation forces in Korea but also because of the geopolitical effects on Japanese colonial rule. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, when the world underwent critical changes in economic and political settings through the Great Depression and declining liberal ideologies, for example, Japan began to take a more aggressive stance on foreign policy and sought to expand its imperial rule in China. As we will see later, this shifting geopolitical context brought about several important changes in colonial Korea. To explain changes during both the Japanese colonial and U.S. occupation periods, therefore, the study is attuned to the international and geopolitical context and its influence on colonial and postcolonial changes.

By resolving the remaining issues of previous studies in this way, this study ultimately intends to incorporate the existing theoretical frameworks of colonial and postcolonial studies into a more integrative social approach.

Toward an Integrative Social Approach

The resemblance of the institutional arrangements and state apparatuses between colonial and postcolonial periods has received much scholarly attention in explaining postcolonial state formation. One of the essential problems in postcolonial politics, however, lies in the fact that the state form, which is embedded in a colonial structure, clashes with a community form that is based on cultural identity of the indigenous population. As a result, the sources of political disorder in the process of postcolonial state formation stem not only from political hegemony or economic interest, but also from conflicts among various social groups aspiring to different types of political community. In this regard, as Chatterjee (1993) argues, we need to consider political community and the state together in order to understand how they are mutually interconnected with each other.

This study proposes to consider the process of postcolonial state formation as the reconstruction of political community. Once we approach the postcolonial state not only as an institutionalized form of government but as a political community, it becomes possible to explain the historical continuity between the colonial and postcolonial periods with respect to social and cultural changes as well as institutional structures. What this study is particularly concerned with is the reformulation of people's perception of collective membership and belonging in the national community as a social consequence of colonial rule and its impact on postcolonial struggles and state formation. It is from the interest in the issue of collective membership and its historically shifting nature that the study intends to develop an integrative social approach for understanding changes from colonial to postcolonial periods.

The issues of collective membership and belonging in the national political community have been studied widely in its relationship to changes in the economic, political, and cultural realms. Scholars have examined how the expansion of a market economy could be accompanied by the extension of legal status (e.g. Marshall [1949] 1992; Barbalet 1988). The modern state, in the form of the nation-state, has also been a central topic as an institutionalized form of political community, especially its relations to a particular meaning of collective membership in a given historical context (e.g. Mann 1986b, 1987; Tilly 1990, 1998, 1999). In addition, nationalism has been seen as a critical source for the development of the sense of national belonging in that it provides a shared identity among members of a nation-state (e.g. Brubaker 1992, 1996). Examining how these various institutional and cultural changes play different roles in developing community membership and belonging in a given society, these studies have developed the claim that they are a product of continuous processes in a particular historical context, and are not a universal “given.”

It should be noted the important role of the nation-state in extending collective membership and belonging in a given society. It is from this assumption of the existence of institutionalized political organization that Hannah Arendt raises questions about a fundamental condition of human rights and community membership. Examining the plight of stateless people (ethnic minorities and refugees) who were generated from the Minority Treaties in the aftermath of World War I, Arendt ([1951] 1973: 293-94) contends that “the stateless” means nothing but “the rightless” because of the loss of home as well as government protection. For such rightless people, Arendt argues, the problem is not merely equality before the law but the absence of any community to which

they can belong and the nonexistence of a law by which they can be judged. Thus, she formulates an alternative concept of “the right to have rights,” which means “a right to live in a framework where one is judged by one’s actions and opinions and a right to belong to some kind of organized community” (1973: 296-97).

The crucial implication of Arendt’s work is that we need to reconsider the presumed assumption of natural human rights under the liberal approach and the significance of community membership.⁷ Margaret Somers (2008), for example, examines the relationship of “markets, statelessness, and the right to have rights.” Elaborating Arendt’s conceptual framework, she argues that more socially inclusive rights should be protected against market fundamentalism. This in turn confirms the universal feature of humanity in Arendt’s account, which is to have a right to be recognized as a member of an organized human community (Benhabib 2004: 57).

Arendt’s analysis invokes the reconsideration of the significance of the state as an institutionalized political community. The nation, according to Arendt, is based on ethnicity and exhibits the power of cultural identity, while the state is grounded on the rule of law. It is when the nation was separated from the state and national interest achieved priority over law, Arendt claims, that rightless people began to emerge (Arendt 1973: 275). This implies that one of the essential roles of the state lies in providing members with a right of membership under law.⁸ In this regard, “political rights, the

⁷ Karl Marx ([1843] 1972) forcefully argues the fundamental limits of the liberal notion of human rights. For Marx, the Rights of Man, which are assumed to enshrine liberty, security, equality, and property rights for individuals, cannot insure the emancipation of individuals precisely because they are based on the separation between the communal as the realm of species-being and civil society as the realm of private property, which, in effect, represents the alienation of humanity from itself.

⁸ It is argued that despite the emphasis on the state, the concept of the nation-state remains largely underdeveloped in Arendt’s work (Grosse 2006: 4-5).

actual granting and conditions of equal citizenship, were the true basis for a recognition and definition of 'human rights,' to begin with the most elementary ones concerning survival, bare life" (Balibar 2004: 119). Therefore, human rights are "constructions," not "pre-given moral truth to be discovered" (Habermas 2001: 122), and can be protected and promoted only within viable communities (Turner 2006: 44; see Turner 1993).

If we accept the proposition that the nation-state plays a crucial role in shaping a political community, and that "stateless" can be identified with "rightless," as Arendt's work suggests, the issue of membership becomes an especially contested concept in the colonial context. While the colonial state shares some of the important characteristics of the enhanced infrastructural power of the modern state, such as a centralized power structure and the monopoly of legitimate means of physical violence (Mann 1986a), it normally exists as an antithesis to the native nation in a colonial situation. Indeed, one of the theoretically challenging issues that a colonial situation raises is the tension between the colonial state as an institutionalized political system and the national community as an indigenous cultural arena. The contentious aspect of the relationship between political institution and cultural community led scholars to characterize the political rule of the colonial state as "rule of difference" (Chatterjee 1993), "state without nation" (Comaroff 1998), or "dominance without hegemony" (Guha 1997).⁹ In this regard, a colonial situation or the colonial state could be placed somewhere between a politically organized sovereign nation-state and statelessness. It is this hybrid nature of colonialism that needs to be addressed in order to explain how people sought to achieve their collective

⁹ As these studies indicate, the distinctive characteristics of the colonial state or empire from the nation-state have been widely examined in colonial and postcolonial studies. Some studies suggest, however, that there are significant similarities between them (see Kumar 2010).

membership and rights under a colonial situation.

However, the problem of collective membership and rights was previously understudied in colonial studies. The lack of systematic examination of the relationship between colonialism and collective membership or belonging, which have been a central topic in the context of nation-state has resulted from theoretical issues present in each literature. On the one hand, the definition of membership in a nation-state as a legal status (Marshall 1992; Bendix [1964] 2005) made it difficult to consider a colonial situation to the extent that the colonial state existed as a super-imposed political institution, not as a political institution that can promote a sense of collective belonging. On the other hand, the focus on the tension between colonizer and colonized in colonial studies hindered the examination of the multifaceted relationship of indigenous groups with the colonial state. Consequently, as Cooper (2005: 16) notes, the “ownership of notions like human rights and citizenship is conceded to Europe--only to be subjected to ironic dismissal for their association with European imperialism.”

The difference between colonial and non-colonial contexts should be empirically examined, rather than assumed, to the extent that the development of collective membership in the nation-state is a result of continuous struggles even within the European states (Tilly 1998; Wallerstein 2003), and that various indigenous groups seek their rights through a bargaining process with the colonial state as well. If we consider the substantial meaning of community membership, it opens up the possibility of examining membership issues in many different historical contexts beyond the familiar setting of the nation-state, including the largely neglected colonial situation.

Reflecting growing interests in colonial studies, scholars have drawn attention to

such important issues of rights and freedom in a colonial context (e.g. Cooper 2005, 2006; Dubois 2004; Gorman 2006; Holt 2000; Mamdani 1996; Scott 2005; Stoler 2006; Thompson 2000). Examining reciprocal relations between imperial powers and colonial societies, they have shown how liberalism and republicanism face their own problems and contradictions. In particular, they enhance our understanding of how ideas of human rights and freedom within the imperial domain had been influenced not only by internal factors, such as emergent nationalism and class struggles, but also by external conditions, such as relationships with colonial societies. What is crucial in these studies is that they show that the idea and meaning of membership and rights were not directly super-imposed through the political rule of colonial power but that they continued to be reconstructed through the historical practices of struggles over rights. As a result, liberalism and republicanism as imperial ideologies were sometimes challenged and sometimes appropriated by colonized insurgents.¹⁰

Elizabeth Thompson (2000) offers one of a few works that explicitly integrates the concept of citizenship into the account of colonial societies. In examining the construction of states and citizens in French Syria and Lebanon, Thompson defines the colonial civic order as a broad arena where states and citizens interact with each other, and suggests that we need “to view Syrians and Lebanese living under the French mandate as colonial citizens, rather than as passive subjects, in law and insofar as they actively engaged in the definition of their civil status” (2000: 2).

Although Thompson properly points out that indigenous people engage in active participation and political negotiation in a colonial system, her framework does not

¹⁰ Examining the colonial Caribbean, Laurent Dubois (2004), for instance, shows how the Republican political ideas, including rights, equality, and freedom were transformed through colonial practice.

sufficiently explain the fundamental constraints stemming from colonial contexts.

Thompson applies theoretical concepts such as civil, political, and social rights for explaining political contentions without reconsidering the substantial meanings of these notions. In explaining the rise of social rights, for instance, Thompson (2000: 7) conceptualizes a colonial welfare state because colonial citizens demanded “rights to social benefits directly from the state.” Yet, it is not obvious whether and to what extent we can directly identify the demands for benefits from the colonial state with claims of social rights in a colonial context to the extent that the substantial meaning of social rights signifies membership rights in the nation-state as a political and cultural community. The fact that indigenous people demanded social benefits from the colonial state does not necessarily mean that they shared political and cultural identities with the colonial state. The rise of these demands then can be interpreted as an inevitable result of colonial rule rather than as evidence of sharing cultural and social identities with colonial power. After all, “the common good it [the colonial state] claimed to represent was not that of the political structure over which it presided, but that of the empire” (Osterhammel 2002: 58).

In integrating a colonial context into theoretical frame, therefore, it seems more fruitful to focus on the substantial meaning of collective membership and belonging to investigate how people’s perception of social relationships and membership in their national community change through the interaction with the colonial state. Understanding the process of formation and reconstruction of national membership for the colonial period is especially important for explaining the colonial legacy in postcolonial society to the degree that shifts of relational boundaries and political practices that were formed

during the colonial period play a critical role in shaping political changes in the postcolonial period.

The case of Korea clearly shows the importance of this community membership issue. Like many other postcolonial societies, South Korea saw a revival of a colonial state apparatus, especially a coercive police force, through the process of postcolonial state formation, although one of the strongest popular demands for reconstructing postcolonial society was the abolishment of colonial legacies. The resemblance of the colonial and postcolonial state forms was precipitated by the process of popular struggles in which Koreans attacked one another, particularly those who served the Japanese during the colonial period. Although the problem of collaboration with the Japanese contained a symbolic meaning of the national attempt to remove colonial legacies during the liberation phase, continuous internal struggles among Koreans under the U.S. occupation led to the critiques of “pro-Japanese” and “collaborators” as “national traitors.” And, in a reaction to popular social movements, centralized and coercive state power was reorganized in a stronger form. This suggests that various social groups pursued their rights through different types of political community, and national identity and community membership themselves became a crucial source of internal conflicts. To better understand the process of postcolonial state formation, therefore, it is necessary to consider not merely institutional reproduction but perhaps more importantly the role of relational changes in social boundaries and identities in reconstructing the political community of postcolonial societies.

Methodological Strategy

This study aims to develop a historical and culturally sensitive analysis of colonial and postcolonial changes. To this end, it adopts two methodological strategies: relational and process-centered approaches. First, the study employs a relational approach as an alternative to a variable or categorical analysis. A relational approach is suggested to disaggregate complex social realities and their historicity, rather than considering society as “a thing.” Against the tendency of traditional sociological research methods to consider society as a wholly integrated unit, some sociologists ironically have refused to use the term “society.” Michael Mann (1986b), for example, highlights the fact that societies are the constitution of “multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power.” In a similar vein, Somers (1994: 626) replaces the term “society” with a “relational setting” and argues that “a relational setting is a pattern of relationships among institutions, public narratives, and social practices. As such it is a relational matrix, a social network. Identity-formation takes shape within these relational settings of contested but patterned relations among narratives, people, and institutions.”

A relational approach is based on the idea that “belief in the causal power of unobservables--such as states, markets, or social classes--does not depend on the rationality or truth of any given theory but upon practical evidence of its causal impact on the relationships in which it is embedded” (Somers 1998: 743-44). In particular, Charles Tilly (1999, 2005) proposes “relational analyses of political processes” that are closely related to “citizenship, democracy, nationalism, and changes in contentious repertoires.” At the core of the relational explanation lies the claim that “the crucial causal work occurs in social interaction” (Tilly 1999: 410) which encompasses “a set of relations

within and across the boundary and a set of stories about the boundary and the relations” (Tilly 2005: 209).

The relational perspective has significant implications for examining social changes in a colonial situation not only because it makes it possible to see the dialectical relationship between a colonial power and indigenous people, but more importantly it enables us to examine divergent patterns of interactions among colonized people. Thus it can overcome the problematic dichotomy between colonizer and colonized by illuminating how various groups interact with the colonial state in different ways and how their relationships with one another are altered. By employing relational analysis, this project seeks to empirically show how Japanese colonial rule produced and transformed internal boundaries among the indigenous people and how this in turn played a critical role in the transformation of postcolonial politics in Korea.

The problem with focusing on the difference between colonizer and colonized is clearly revealed in the case of South Korea. The puzzling situation in South Korea under American occupation can be seen through the existence of intensive and continuous internal struggles. As the distinction between colonizer and colonized implies, if the Korean people had maintained the same collective interests and identity throughout the Japanese colonial period, they would have engaged in national integration, whether against or with the help of the American Military Government, to achieve the national goal of an independent sovereign nation-state. The fact that political disputes among Koreans in the aftermath of Japanese colonial rule were often about the meaning of “collaboration” with the Japanese, however, indicates that a major source of internal conflicts stemmed from the relationship with the Japanese colonial power. This suggests

that the historical experience of Japanese colonial domination drew boundaries not only between colonizer and colonized but also among the colonized people themselves. Therefore, it is critical to examine why and how internal boundaries among the Korean people, which were reformulated with the mediation of the colonial state, played an important role in the process of postcolonial state formation.

To resolve these issues through the integration of a relational approach, this study shifts its focus from the conflict between colonizer and colonized to relational changes among the indigenous people in order to explain the way in which the colonial rule formulates and rearticulates internal conflicts, which ultimately fueled the struggles for identity and membership in the national community in the aftermath of colonial rule. In doing so, this study incorporates the concept of “boundary.” According to Tilly (2005: 209), there are four elements of identities: 1) a boundary separating me from you or us from them; 2) a set of relations within the boundary; 3) a set of relations across the boundary; and 4) a set of stories about the boundary and the relations. To the extent that membership in any form of groups or communities is essentially related to the problem of inclusion and exclusion, and that the meaning and boundary of membership continue to shift through historical processes rather than to stay as given or fixed, “the notion of boundaries is crucial for analyzing how social actors construct groups as similar and different and how it shapes their understanding of their responsibilities toward such groups” (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 187). In this sense, using the boundary concept for relational analysis is to bring the relations of social actors as a “strategic pivot” (Kimeldorf 1988) to the center of analysis.

The use of the boundary concept, however, should not lead us to assume that

there always exist clear cut demarcations among various social groups or identities. Rather, “distinctions may be fuzzy and boundaries soft, with unclear demarcations and few social consequences, allowing individuals to maintain membership in several categories or switch identities situationally” (Wimmer 2008: 976). Yet, precisely because of its fuzziness, multiplicity, and its overlapping nature, the boundary concept enables us to explain the shifting and fluctuating characteristics of relational changes in historical and social processes. If “social and communal construction of boundaries among people, [...] whether social, psychological, or legal, do not exist naturally; [if] they are invented and reinvented by people in formal and informal ways” (Minow 1986/1987: 1883), then we need to understand how the experience of colonial rule produces and reformulates internal boundaries among indigenous people, rather than assuming that the colonized people exist as a homogeneous group consistently over time.

In addition to reconsidering internal boundaries through a relational analysis, this study advances a process-centered approach (Migdal 2001). In explaining historical changes, it is essential to consider how social structures are continuously shaped and rearranged in a particular conjuncture (Mann 1994: 47). But standardized research methods tended to assume unilateral social change and trans-historical processes (Abbott 1988, 1990; Sewell 2005: 100-01). To take historicity more seriously, scholars thus have developed various strategies, including sequential narrative, conjunctural circumstances, and contingent events (Abbott 1992, 1995; Aminzade 1992; Griffin 1993; Haydu 1998, 2010; Mahoney 2000; Sewell 2005).¹¹ In spite of different foci, the crux of their

¹¹ Methodological details that each of these studies constructs often share key components and premises. It should not be underestimated, however, that they sometimes produce contentious claims. The analysis of path dependency (Mahoney 2000), for example, is suggested to integrate such core concepts as contingency and conjunctures into the historical account. While endorsing the advantages of path dependency, Jeffrey

arguments lies in the claim that it is crucial to incorporate temporal and spatial contexts into causal explanations to make it possible for social theories to fully account for historical process, not just its outcomes.

A more process-centered approach is critical for elucidating historical continuities or discontinuities from colonial to postcolonial changes. While the historical experience of colonial rule exerts a profound influence upon emergent postcolonial societies, colonial legacies are not passed on in precisely the same way; rather, they are contingent on particular historical processes. There existed nonetheless a tendency to make a causal connection about the resemblance of political-economic structures or institutional arrangements between colonial and postcolonial periods. In spite of the importance of continuity of colonial structure, when the focus is only placed on the resultant outcomes, the process of reproduction can be neglected or underestimated. This is the problem of what Cooper (2005: 17) calls “leapfrogging legacies,” which results from making a causal argument between two extended historical eras without sufficient attention to the intervening period.

Indeed, the Korean case can reveal the essential problem of underestimating a process-centered view of colonial to postcolonial changes. Like many other postcolonial societies, South Korea exhibits numerous colonial legacies. Among others, the resemblance of state structure and government-led economic development has been treated as particularly important continuities from the experience of Japanese colonial rule. The account of colonial influence without sufficient consideration of the liberation

Haydu points out its limitation in dealing with two historical periods, not two independent cases, thus suggesting “reiterated problem solving” as an alternative model that “treats successive periods as contrasting solutions for recurrent problems” (2010: 25).

phase and American occupation period, however, is handicapped in its inability to thoroughly explain not only “why” but also “how” colonial structure was revived.

What is important to note is that multiple causal relations can be traced out in a process-centered approach. Andreas Wimmer (2008: 972-73), for instance, proposes a “multilevel process theory” that focuses on “how social forms are generated and transformed over time.” His work is particularly relevant for this study in that it shows a combination of the relational and process-centered approach. Wimmer argues that “ethnic boundaries are the outcome of the classificatory struggles and negotiations between actors situated in a social field” (2008: 970) and suggests that the change of ethnic boundaries needs to be traced to multiple levels, including a subjective sense of belonging and institutional levels. Thus, changes of ethnic boundaries in this frame are seen as the result of “the convergence of multiple causal sequences” (Haydu 2010: 45; see Sewell 2005: Ch. 9).

In examining relational changes among Koreans through the colonial and occupation periods, this study draws on multiple causal relations through sequential processes both for the colonial period and for its connection with the later occupation period. Regarding the colonial period, it does so by addressing how internal conflicts among Koreans are nurtured on the political, economic, and ideological levels. In examining the creation and reproduction of multiple forms of internal boundaries among the Korean people during the colonial period, of particular importance is to understand the development of two seemingly contrasting and yet closely related phenomena: anti-Japanese sentiment and internal conflict among Koreans. While the Japanese dominance strengthened anti-colonialism, its continuous evolution also gave rise to different forms

of intra-Korean tension throughout the colonial period, hence the coexistence of contradictory paths.

Considering the liberation phase and occupation period, this study highlights the reformulation and convergence of diverse forms of internal conflicts. Once the colonial government as the representation of the national enemy was ousted, strong anti-colonialism became redirected to those who had cooperated with and benefitted from the Japanese, especially after they made another alliance with the U.S. military regime. In this sense, the causal mechanism that this study seeks to identify stems from the combination of the accounts of both long term continual change from the Japanese colonial era through the U.S. occupation period, and the rearrangement of structural conjuncture.

Main Arguments and Organization

This study accounts for the influence of colonialism upon postcolonial trajectories. Focusing on the years leading up to Korea's liberation and then partition into North and South, it examines the nature of Japanese colonial rule from 1910 through 1945, its relationship to the brief but decisive period of American military occupation from the fall of 1945 to 1948, and the impact of both on postcolonial conflict and South Korea's separate nation-state formation. In doing so, it advances the following arguments, which are in turn related to the theoretical, methodological, and empirical implications of the study.

First of all, building on earlier work that critiques standard dichotomized models, which treat the colonizers and colonized in isolation from each other, I demonstrate that

we need to attend more closely to the interactions and evolving dynamics that shape their encounter. This perspective highlights what I believe is the key to understanding the Japanese colonial rule: the ways in which their imperial governance sowed the seeds of internal differentiation among the Korean people, which undermined a sense of national identity and sparked continued internal conflicts. This in turn leads to what I highlight as the *social* consequence of colonial rule in that internal conflicts, which were created and rearticulated through Japanese colonial rule and then American military occupation, played a pivotal role in formulating historically shifting meaning of membership in the national community.

Second, employing a process-centered approach, the study analyzes how the continuity from colonial to postcolonial was realized through the historical process of liberation and the American occupation periods in South Korea. The crucial implication of this methodological strategy is that while the historical experience of colonial rule wields a critical impact upon emergent postcolonial societies, colonial legacies are contingent on and mediated by particular historical processes.

Finally, the study sheds light on a historical and social basis of the particular form and characteristics of postcolonial state and politics that is deeply embedded in colonial rule. To the extent that one of the most important consequences of the colonial regimes lies in its capacity to produce and reshape sources of internal conflict, whether religious, ethnic, or class-based, among the colonized, and such conflict in turn plays a pivotal role in shaping a particular state formation and political trajectory for postcolonial societies, colonial legacies need to be approached not only through institutional reproduction but also through the way in which colonial rule formulates sources of

political struggles among the indigenous people in the postcolonial period. Indeed, both the dynamics of political struggles among Koreans and the continuous evolvement of institutional settings under the American occupation rule stemmed from the colonial period. In this vein, the formation of a separate nation-state as well as the mechanism of exclusion that developed within state-society relations in postcolonial Korea cannot be adequately addressed without sufficient consideration of the colonial legacies.

The study is organized as follows. The next three chapters, which are concerned with the Japanese colonial rule in Korea, examine the formulation of internal conflicts among Koreans in the political, economic, and ideological spheres, especially through the intervention of the Japanese colonial state's divide-and-rule strategy and through the interaction of social groups with the colonial state and among themselves. Although the colonial rule in the first decade of 1910s is briefly explained in chapter two, the three chapters on the colonial period particularly focus on the formulation and development of intra-Korean tensions through their relationship with the colonial power during the 1920s and 1930s.

In Chapter Two, I analyze how the introduction of the colonial government system brought about political tension among Koreans. Of particular importance is the introduction and reorganization of the local administration and self-government system. In an attempt to enhance the colonial penetration into rural areas, the Japanese continued to rearrange political institutions. In doing so, they provided a small section of Koreans with an opportunity to participate in institutionalized political processes, while a majority of the population remained excluded from these processes. This contrasting access to political opportunity in turn precipitated the tension not only between the colonial state

and nation but also among Koreans themselves, as the more people endeavored to achieve their political rights in the colonial system, the more they became vulnerable to critiques of political cooperation with the colonial state.

In Chapter Three, I investigate how the economic policies of the Japanese colonial state eroded traditional local communities and reformulated economic conflicts between landlords and peasants. After the Government-General introduced principles of market economy in colonial Korea, peasants lost the traditionally acknowledged rights which were based on their membership in local communities. Responding to the loss of their rights and their exacerbated economic hardship, they began to engage in tenant disputes with landlords and indeed the majority of tenant disputes during the colonial period were between Korean landlords and tenants. Highlighting the process in which Japanese colonial rule gave rise to newly formulated rural conflict between landlords and peasants, this chapter develops the argument that economic reorganization during the colonial period brought about not only economic exploitation by the Japanese but also critical changes in social relations within the native community.

Focusing on the development of nationalist discourses, I explore in Chapter Four the mechanism through which various forms of anti-colonial nationalist discourses arose and formulated ideological conflicts among Koreans. In doing so, it directs special attention to both the way in which the international discourses of liberalism and socialism were integrated into nationalist frameworks in colonial Korea, and how the meaning of the nation and a sense of belonging became significantly altered through the dynamics of diverse nationalist discourses. By showing that as the competition of nationalist groups over political hegemony increased, they adhered to different nationalist discourses and

developed ideological conflicts among themselves, I argue that the evolution of nationalism in the Japanese colonial context produced the incongruence of national and political communities in Korea, rather than the consolidation of national integration.

I explain in Chapter Five how these various forms of internal conflicts which were constructed and reformulated during the Japanese colonial period became rearticulated and significantly intensified through the brief liberation phase and U.S. occupation period, and how they provided a pivotal source for the divided nation-state formation in South Korea in 1948. Upon arrival in the south, the American military regime largely revived the colonial system and reappointed Koreans who served the Japanese. The U.S. occupation thus provided both an opportunity for and threat to different social groups among Koreans. On the one hand, it was an opportunity for those who had a strong interest in maintaining the existing colonial structure, including dominant economic groups and former colonial officials to work for its continuance. On the other hand, it represented a critical threat for those who attempted to remove colonial legacies and construct their own independent nation-state. Consequently, various groups interacted with the U.S. differently, as they did during the colonial period, which in turn exacerbated internal conflicts that culminated in the 1946 uprisings.

Through the uprisings, the coercive state apparatus such as the police force, which were nurtured for the colonial period and were already utilized for the occupation rule, were significantly revived and further developed to oppress popular social and political organizations. Furthermore, by severely oppressing the uprisings under the aegis of the U.S., the conservatives successfully removed leftist power from the institutionalized political field, and paved the way for a separate nation-state in South

Korea. After the Yi regime was constructed in 1948 against the popular demand for a unified nation-state in Korea, therefore, it had to confront public critiques related to its incorporation of collaborators with the Japanese that became a critical legitimacy problem for the regime. Having embedded in the Japanese colonial legacies in this way, the postcolonial state developed an exclusive rather than inclusive political structure.

In the Conclusion, after a brief summary of the main empirical findings and theoretical arguments of the study, I discuss its broader implications and general lessons for understanding other postcolonial societies by highlighting the formulation of internal conflicts as a crucial consequence of colonial regimes and its pivotal role in shaping a particular state form and political trajectory for postcolonial societies.

CHAPTER II

THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM AND SOCIAL PENETRATION

Introduction

One of the distinctive characteristics of the modern state is related to the rise of systematic direct governance by the state. The formation of a nation-state thus involves the transformation of indirect rule through local magnates into direct rule by local officials and police forces with the help of the monopolization of legitimate violence (Tilly 1990, 1998). This shift from indirect rule to direct rule in turn generates a significant change in the relationship between the state and individuals. While the state following the methods of indirect rule tends to endow only a small number of people with privileged rights, the modern state directly engages in and grants rights and obligations to a whole population particularly due to the rise of mass national armies and a direct taxation system. In a direct rule system, therefore, everyone has citizenship rights as a “full-fledged member of a given state” at least in principle. By identifying state sovereignty with the aggregate of individuals’ rights, the state’s penetration into individuals’ lives leads to the social legitimacy of state intervention and a “reciprocal belonging of the mass of individuals (the *population* rather than the *people*)” (Balibar 2004: 144).

The ways in which the nation-state, as a representative form of the modern state, is formed and citizenship rights are developed in the process of state formation are

neither unitary nor evolutionary. Through a comparative historical analysis, Michael Mann (1987), for example, examines the ways in which traditional regimes interacted with and responded to the forces of social class, and he shows the existence of divergent pathways of modern state formation: liberal, reformist, authoritarian monarchist, fascist, and authoritarian socialist strategies. Mann's theoretical frame confirms that the form of citizenship that is developed in a liberal democratic context is one of several options of configuring citizenship, and is not the only structure even within European countries. Mann's historical analysis enables us to see how the forms and contents of citizenship rights could vary in different types of regimes. In the contexts of fascism in Nazi Germany and authoritarian socialism in the Soviet Union, for example, Mann shows that in spite of the relative underdevelopment of civil and political rights in both regimes, they had the most developed form of social citizenship (1987: 349).¹²

Furthermore, the development of citizenship rights is not an immediate result of direct state penetration into society. It is normally connected to ongoing social struggles. Tilly (1998: 63), for example, critiques theoretical frameworks that tend to regard the development of citizenship rights as a gradual and evolutionary process (e.g. Bendix 2005, Marshall 1992, see Moore 1966), since they reinforce the assumption that "the same sequence of inclusion appeared everywhere that enlightenment spread." Tilly argues instead that the rise and development of citizenship is nothing but a historical process of struggles and bargaining between state expansion and popular resistance, which generates

¹² Despite the important theoretical contribution of Mann's work, critiques were presented, especially regarding the notion of citizenship as an outcome of ruling class strategy. Turner (1990: 197), for instance, argues that by exclusively focusing on class relationships, Mann neglects important non-class related issues such as race, ethnicity, and nationalism, which are closely related to the state and citizenship formation. Moreover, he raises a question about Mann's top-down approach by stating that "Mann can only conceive of citizenship being handed down from above (for example by the state) such that rights are passive." (1990: 199). See also Barbalet (1988).

the different forms and contents of citizenship in different contexts.

Thus, an important question arises from considering a colonial situation. What if a colonial state, rather than a nation-state, replaces the traditional regime? This becomes intriguing especially when we consider the fact that the colonial state shares some of the important characteristics of a nation-state, such as the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a demarcated territorial boundary. In this vein, Tilly's conceptual distinction between the national state and nation-state can perhaps provide a useful tool in that the former focuses on the institutional aspects, whereas the latter includes cultural features such as a common language and tradition (1990: 4-6). Once the colonial state consolidates its direct rule and penetration into indigenous society, thus establishing itself as the national state as opposed to the nation-state, what social consequences would this have for the native society?

The answer might be confined to the familiar dichotomy of political oppression by the colonial state and anti-colonial struggle of the indigenous people, to the degree that we direct our attention only to the nature of the colonial state as an antithesis to the native nation. To be sure, the fundamental lack of political legitimacy is an important characteristic of the colonial regime as a super-imposed political power. The exclusive focus on anti-colonial resistance, however, tends to obscure the fact that colonial rule relies on not merely despotic power but also a certain degree of collaboration from the native people (Robinson 1972). The colonial government can create specific institutional arrangements that provide certain indigenous groups with previously unavailable political opportunities, which in turn reformulate the political dynamics of the native people themselves. The increasing social penetration of the colonial state through its enhanced

infrastructural power may further diversify, rather than consolidate, the political interests of various indigenous groups in their relationship with the colonial power.

Indeed, the historical evolution of Japanese colonial rule in Korea led to an important relational shift among Koreans. Upon the annexation of Korea in 1910, the Japanese confronted strong anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans. As a response, the colonial regime relied heavily on despotic power and extensively utilized the military police to establish its colonial dominance on the Korean peninsula, a form of governance that has been termed “military rule.” As the coercive rule in the early colonial period led to a nation-wide anti-colonial struggle among Koreans, the Government-General largely shifted its ruling policy to what has been known as “cultural rule.” The colonial regime introduced a local self-government system and began to actively integrate indigenous groups into the colonial system to disaggregate the anti-colonialism prevalent among Koreans. The colonial state further consolidated its social penetration into local regions in the 1930s through a series of rural control policies. In doing so, Japanese colonial rule brought about an unprecedented level of social penetration by the state into local communities. As a result of this continued evolution of Japanese rule, Koreans developed not only anti-Japanese sentiment but also political fragmentation among themselves.

In this chapter, I examine how Japanese colonial rule transformed a system of indirect rule in the pre-colonial period into a direct rule system with significantly enhanced infrastructural power through a series of institutional changes, and how this in turn provided different groups among the Korean people with diverse political opportunities. In doing so, I highlight that Koreans did not remain passive subjects as a whole; they rather actively utilized and participated in an institutionalized political field.

The increasing penetration of colonial government and its corresponding interaction with Koreans, however, largely led to a tension between national and political identities, which became one of the important sources of internal conflicts among Koreans in the aftermath of Japanese colonial rule.

“Military Rule” in the 1910s

Before Korea became a Japanese colony, the Chosŏn dynasty had maintained the central government and bureaucratic system. The existence of centralized political institutions indeed differentiates the Chosŏn dynasty from many other pre-colonial societies. Its relatively weak political and economic power, however, prevented it from managing effective social control. The balance of power between the central government and dominant literary groups (*yangban*) made it difficult for the state to monopolize political power (Palais 1975). The chronic deficit of financial resources also obstructed effective governance of local communities and political reform of the state. In spite of the existence of an administrative system, through which local areas were supposed to be connected to and controlled by the central government, the underdevelopment of the infrastructural power of the state and limited state capacity largely hindered direct control of each village and individuals under the Chosŏn dynasty.

The relatively weak penetration by the state enabled local villages to maintain significant autonomy from the central government. They performed tasks of collective governance and existed largely as self-sufficient units. There existed various forms of voluntary organizations (e.g. *hyanghoe* or *tonggye*) within each local village to undertake the management of and planning for the local community. These organizations usually

consisted of the head of each household in a given village, and each organization raised its financial sources through the collective labor among members. Its main activities included mutual aid, organization of town hall meetings, education and maintenance of public morals, purchase of farm implements for collective use, and maintenance of public goods such as roads, embankments, and bridges. Due to the nature of such collective activities and their important role in the rural economy, these organizations were primarily governed by the principles of equality and community rather than by formalistic and hierarchical ideologies (Kim Kyōng-il 1984: 173, 176).

This should not lead us to assume that all Koreans had equal rights within their local community in the pre-colonial period. The Chosŏn dynasty indeed had been governed by a strict social status system, which provided a basis for social inequality. Although the status system began to gradually wane in the late Chosŏn dynasty era, it continued to shape and maintain a hierarchical order, which was coupled with a dominant Confucian world view in pre-colonial Korea. In this regard, the importance of autonomous local villages and the existence of voluntary organizations lay in the fact that they played an important role in promoting the principles of mutual and reciprocal relationships, rather than reinforcing a predominant unilateral hierarchical social status system.

The fragmented political system under the Chosŏn dynasty became significantly restructured by the Japanese. As Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905, the Residency-General was established in Korea and took over substantive governmental roles. One of the first tasks that the Residency-General launched in Korea was to reorganize the governmental administrative system to centralize political power in the

state. When the Japanese officially undertook all responsibilities of political governance in Korea with the annexation of Korea in 1910, the Government-General further precipitated the reorganization of government institutions. The foremost task was to consolidate the political power of the colonial state by developing the systematic reorganization of government institutions. To this end, political and administrative institutions were largely rearranged and the autonomy of local villages became largely constrained.

In 1914, the colonial state introduced a local self-government system by establishing a city (*pu*) council in major cities as an advisory organization for the Government-General. The Governor-General held the power of selecting the mayors and the members of the councils were appointed by the provincial governor in a given region. In addition, a township (*myŏn*) system was established in 1917. The head of each township office became responsible for managing township properties in 1912, and the township system was fully implemented in 1917 to integrate villages under the direct control of each township head. 23 out of 2,512 *myŏns* became “designated *myŏns*,” especially where the Japanese residential population was relatively high. Like city councils, *myŏn* councils performed as advisory organizations and council members were appointed by provincial governors.

To establish a more effective administrative management system, the colonial government merged the existing villages and townships. While there were 71,852 villages and 4,408 townships in 1909 before Japanese annexation, the number declined to 28,238 villages and 2,512 townships in 1917 (Kim Kyŏng-il 1984: 192). Under this system, townships came to serve as a basic unit both for connecting the county and village levels,

and for managing local finances more effectively. By enacting the township system when the land cadastral survey was almost completed, the Government-General shifted the responsibility of local management from villages to the township (Ch'oe 1994). As each village was integrated into a township as a subordinate administrative unit, the colonial state began to establish an institutional basis for enhancing its social penetration.

As a result of this series of administrative reforms, the Japanese accomplished the reconstruction of a strongly centralized state structure and administrative system in Korea in the 1910s. Considering the existence of the central government under the Chosŏn dynasty, the establishment of the central bureaucratic system itself in the colonial period was not a new phenomenon in Korea. What the colonial state created in Korea with its enhanced infrastructural power and state capacity was an unprecedented degree of social penetration. The colonial regime was able to complete political reform in a relatively short time period in Korea, in part because of the existence of a large number of Japanese bureaucrats. Compared to its European imperial counterparts whose colonies were often located in remote places, Japan colonized Korea, its closest neighboring country. The geographic proximity of Korea and Japan made it possible for the colonial power to bring large numbers of Japanese bureaucrats into colonial Korea. The ratio of Japanese colonial officials to the Korean population (1: 420) was more than ten times higher than those of Western imperial powers such as British India (1: 28,000), French West Africa (1: 27,000), and French Nigeria (1: 54,000) (Osterhammel 2002: 63). The availability of large numbers of Japanese officials in Korea enabled the colonial state to achieve intensive penetration into Korean society without the significant incorporation of Koreans into the main positions of the newly established government bureaucratic system.

Another reason that the colonial government could efficiently accomplish several large scale reform projects in the 1910s lay in the fact that the Japanese heavily relied on a coercive state apparatus to support colonial rule. Since the prevalent anti-colonial sentiment among Koreans could hinder the effectiveness of government activities, the colonial state adopted a coercive method of rule by utilizing the military police force. This oppressive form of colonial dominance that characterized the first decade of Japanese colonial rule in Korea has been known as “military rule.”

Under the military rule, the Government-General monopolized political power and prohibited any political activities by Koreans. The Governor-General was endowed with administrative, legislative, and judicial powers in colonial Korea and no one could constrain his powers other than the Japanese Emperor. Having omnipotent power in colonial Korea, Terauchi Masatake, the first Governor-General, extensively utilized the military police to found the colonial system against the predominant anti-Japanese sentiment in the 1910s. The Government-General denied political freedoms or rights to Koreans by disbanding existing organizations. The Terauchi administration also enacted a strict publication law to ban private newspapers and magazines by Koreans. To be sure, some Korean aristocrats and political elites were integrated into the organizations of the Government-General and were able to maintain their status.¹³ The primary purpose of the colonial state, however, was to sustain the formality of the political status of traditional Korean elites, not to enable them to participate in governmental tasks.

In particular, the military police were endowed with extensive power for the effective management of its various responsibilities in the administrative and judicial

¹³ When the Japanese offered high government officials and bureaucrats among Koreans with stipends of \$10,000 per year upon annexation, eighty-four accepted and only eight refused (Henderson 1968: 77).

realms. In addition to its regular task of criminal investigation, the military police had many new and different duties, including the dissemination of the Japanese language, summary judgments for crimes, and flogging. The regulation of summary judgment on crime was enacted in 1910, which provided the police with the right to make summary judgments without a formal trial for crimes that carried a punishment of less than three months of imprisonment or a fine of less than one hundred yen. The regulation for the penalty of offences in 1912 further empowered the police by enabling them to punish those who violated any of the broadly coded eighty-seven offences provided by the regulation. With the introduction of the flogging ordinance in 1912, the police obtained another judicial task and another measure with which to oppress colonial subjects in that only Koreans were subject to flogging (see Son 1992: 96-107; Baker 1979).

Empowered by this series of legal enactments, the police proceeded to pave the way for coercive colonial control in Koreans' everyday lives. Of particular importance is their arbitrary use of judicial power. Of the eighty-seven offences prohibited by the regulation, for example, the violation of orders from the police forces was included. Because it included no specific details about which police orders this was in reference to, it enabled the police to oppress anyone who refused to obey any police orders. As the military police wielded its extensive administrative and judicial powers, the number of prisoners significantly increased. Under the Residency-General, the number of prisoners was about 400 in 1907, which expanded after annexation to 18,100 in 1911 and then 82,021 in 1918 (Hyōndaesa charyo 25: 12). The number of summary judgments and floggings also continued to increase, while only a limited number of criminal cases were resolved through formal trial throughout the 1910s.

Table 1: Summary Judgments, Floggings, and Formal Trials, 1911-1919

Year	Summary Judgment	Flogging	Formal Trial
1911	21,388	1,391	34
1912	13,806	2,219	27
1913	46,175	2,682	39
1914	50,099	3,481	47
1915	60,371	4,352	24
1916	82,121	6,782	33
1917	92,842	8,708	54
1918	94,640	8,696	45
1919	71,939	-	25

Source: Chōsen sōtokufu (*Chōsen sōtokufu tōkei nenpō*, 1910-1919).

Although there were a large number of Japanese military police available, the colonial regime integrated a significant number of Koreans into the military police force. Indeed, the police force exhibited the most extensive employment of Koreans among government institutions. In 1910, there were 5,881 police officers, of which 2,388 were Japanese and 3,493 were Koreans. The majority of Korean officials (3,131) had the lowest position in the rank of assistant patrolman (*Chōsen sōtokufu, Chōsen sōtokufu tōkei nenpō*, 1910). By employing Korean police officers, the colonial government sought to resolve the problems that the Japanese forces had, including the lack of language skills and knowledge of local situations. The inclusion of ex-insurgents who had participated in anti-colonial movements in the police force particularly helped the Japanese with detecting and controlling anti-colonial activists.

In contrast, the incorporation of Koreans in other governmental institutions remained largely limited. Most central and upper positions in the state bureaucracy were occupied by Japanese officials and Koreans tended to be placed at lower levels, often with discriminating conditions. While less than ten percent of the central government's officials (38 out of 538) consisted of Koreans, they occupied the majority of local administrative positions (5,907 out of 6,838) (Pak 1999: 47). In spite of some changes in

a later period, this pattern of the predominance of the Japanese and the restricted integration of Koreans in the central government positions did not change throughout the colonial era.

Due to extensive use of the military police, the Government-General managed to accomplish major colonial projects without facing significant popular resistance. The important large scale colonial projects in the 1910s included the establishment of the centralized state apparatus and the completion of the land cadastral survey, which formed the institutional basis of colonial rule in the political and economic realms, respectively. Yet, the coercive military rule ultimately generated a nation-wide anti-colonial struggle, the March First Movement in 1919, which was the largest popular movement during the colonial period. The movement began on March 1, 1919 when the Declaration of National Independence was proclaimed by thirty-three national representatives who exhibited a wide diversity in their religious, intellectual, and political orientations and yet shared the national demand for political independence from imperial Japan.

The nationalists' declaration, in turn, fanned the flame of national aspiration among the population and gave rise to popular protests. In many local regions, movement participants, especially peasants, attacked government offices, such as township or county offices and police stations, and they took part in violent struggles. While about twenty-two percent (41 of 183) of the demonstrations in early March exhibited violent characteristics, nearly half of the demonstrations in early April (173 of 372) was organized into forceful uprisings (Chŏng et al. 1989: 246). This confirms that as more people joined the movement in local regions, the violent traits of the movement also increased. Despite some regional and temporal variations, all the provinces on the Korean

peninsula saw the rise of uprisings against the Japanese, and the movement continued until December of that year. A colonial government document reports how Koreans expressed their prevalent anti-Japanese sentiment through the uprisings in local regions as follows (Mabuchi 1984: 75):

From late March through early April, popular sentiment in Korea became considerably exacerbated and the lack of security guards led [the movement] to gradually spread to remote rural areas. [Movement participants] were so violent and outraged that they used such deadly weapons as cudgels, scythes, and bamboo spears to attack, destroy, and set fire to police stations, government offices, and schools. They also invaded Japanese stores and police officers' houses and even murdered police officers, who suppressed demonstrations, often in brutal and atrocious ways.

As the movement in rural areas developed into a more violent form, the colonial government took offensive measures and the movement was brutally subdued by military force. Regarding the movement statistics, different sources indicate varying results. While the official Government-General documents indicate about one million participants (Chōsen sōtokufu shomubu 1924: 102), another Korean source suggests that the total number of participants in the movement exceeded two million people, organizing more than 1,500 incidents in varying degrees of scale and resulting in more than 7,500 casualties and about 16,000 wounded (Pak 1946: 96).

The March First Movement failed to achieve its intended goal of political independence from Japanese colonial rule. By manifesting continued anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans, the movement nonetheless led the Japanese to realize that coercion alone could not secure the stability of colonial rule. The movement offered in microcosm a view of colonial Korea with the strong resistance of Koreans against the Japanese and oppressive control by the military police. Indeed, different groups of Koreans, including peasants, landlords, intellectuals, students, and even some

government officials were mobilized around a demand for political independence. As the March First Movement demonstrates, the contentious relationship between the colonizer and colonized remained a dominant form of conflict throughout the first decade of colonial rule.

In short, Japanese colonial dominance on the Korean peninsula in the 1910s was primarily based on the coercive measures of political control by the military police. This so-called military rule was effectively utilized by the colonial government to implement various institutional changes in the political, economic, and judicial realms by largely preventing native resistance during the process of reforms. By bringing a large number of Japanese bureaucrats and officials to Korea, the colonial state also minimized the integration of Koreans into its government positions, with the major exception of the police forces. Based on the Japanese model, the Government-General was able to complete the reorganization of centralized government institutions and the Land Cadastral Survey throughout the 1910s. The oppressive colonial rule, however, eventually gave rise to a nation-wide anti-colonial movement in 1919, crystallizing the major form of political conflict between the Japanese colonial power and Koreans in the 1910s.

“Cultural Rule” and the Local Self-Government System in the 1920s

The March First Movement demonstrated the limits of the coercive methods of Japanese colonial rule in the 1910s. The movement revealed that while the colonial government could ostensibly secure political control by primarily relying on the military police, the military rule turned out to significantly exacerbate the already existing

antagonism toward the Japanese, thereby further threatening political security. After all, coercive colonial rule without the cooperation of the indigenous population was not suitable for colonial rule in Korea in the long term. It was in this political context that the Saitō regime, which replaced the Terauchi administration after the March First Movement, shifted the principle of colonial policy from “military rule” to what has been referred to as “cultural rule.”

The primary purpose of cultural rule was to mitigate anti-Japanese sentiment among the Korean people in order to stabilize colonial rule. To this end, the Government-General directed its attention to the integration of Koreans into the colonial system. When Saitō Makoto came to Korea as the new Governor-General in 1919, an influential bureaucrat and his close friend wrote to him (August 14, 1919; cited in Kang 1980: 22):

Regarding the rule of colonial Korea, there are two important things to remember. First, the Korean people have their own five-thousand year history, and even if we count only since the Chosŏn dynasty, it is already about five hundred years, and this is with a population of twenty million, a temperate and large territory, an independent national language, and distinctive traditions. Second, [...] *what is most important for the colonial rule in Korea is to win the hearts of the Korean people.* If we fail to do so, Koreans would further develop antagonism [against the Japanese] and seek independence whenever they have a chance, thus constantly making problems internally and externally (emphasis added).

To facilitate the assimilation policy and the integration of Koreans into the colonial system, therefore, the Saitō administration began to launch various reform projects. Some of the important changes in the political sphere that resulted from these reforms in 1920 include the transformation of the military police into a regular police force, the abolishment of flogging, and the implementation of a local government system. On the surface, these changes appear to show that the colonial government loosened its oppressive rule. What it ultimately intended, however, was to promote a more effective

colonial rule. In fact, the number of summary judgments by the police continued to increase throughout the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴ The police force was rather strengthened in order to manage public order and local control, and the number of police stations increased from 753 to 1,819 through the political reforms in 1920 (Chōsen sōtokufu keimukyoku 1935: Appendix table: 3). This suggests that the disintegration of the military and police forces did not alleviate the degree of coercion; it rather strengthened the power of control of the police.

One of the important goals of the Government-General through this series of political reforms was to enhance the Japanese penetration into the local regions, especially rural areas. This reflects a critical lesson learned from the March First Movement. Throughout the movement, political mobilizations in major cities fell under the control of the colonial power relatively soon, whereas uprisings in rural areas not only took a more violent form against the colonial officials and bureaucrats but also continued to emerge in different regions for an extended period until December. This revealed both the strong and widespread antagonism against the Japanese officials, and the relative weakness and vulnerability of colonial control in rural areas. The colonial regime reorganized the local administrative system itself, but it was not able to fully develop local penetration yet, especially because it largely focused on the consolidation of the central government system in the 1910s.

To reach the local regions with its tight control, the colonial government reorganized the local government system that was implemented by the Terauchi

¹⁴ The number of summary judgments by the police in 1921 was 61,835, which increased to 83,214 in 1925, 82,592 in 1930, and 92,428 in 1934 (Chōsen sōtokufu keimukyoku 1935: Appendix table: 73). Given the fact that the number of summary judgments in 1919 was 71,939, we can see that despite police reform, the arbitrariness of police power was not removed or constrained in the 1920s and 1930s.

administration. One of the important changes in 1920 was that the Saitō administration introduced an election system for selecting members of the local advisory councils in major cities and designated townships.¹⁵ It was claimed that the primary goal of the introduction of the election system was to reflect the popular will. The members of city councils and designated township councils began to be elected by popular vote, rather than being appointed by the Government-General. Koreans also began to have the right to vote for or to be elected as council members. While there was no restriction based on nationality, electoral eligibility and voting rights were limited to males who were more than twenty-five years old and who paid more than five yen in local taxes.¹⁶ During the 1920s, the elections were held four times in 1920, 1923, 1926, and 1929.

A secret colonial government document reveals that the purpose of the tax restriction was as follows (Kang 1980: 333):

Korea was undergoing an ideologically unstable period. While old people were mainly conservative, younger generations tended to lean toward radical ideas. There was a concern that unless there had been a tax restriction, young Koreans might dominate local councils. The tax restriction was thus necessary in order for moderate Koreans to be elected as council members. [...] Being able to control the administration of major cities was the most important factor for improving the power of colonial rule in Korea. If Koreans occupied the majority of council members, councils could become a battlefield. Due to its potential effect, therefore, more than half of members should be Japanese at least in the early

¹⁵ In 1920, there were twelve *pu's* (city areas) in total, including Kyōngsōng, Inch'ōn, Mokp'o, Taegu, Pusan, Masan, P'yōngyang, Chinnamp'o, Sinūiju, Wōnsan, and Ch'ōngjin.

¹⁶ In contrast to colonial Korea where tax limit for voting rights continued to exist, popular suffrage was institutionalized in Japan in 1925. This resulted from the growing popular social movements that were organized around the demand for universal suffrage and the development of democracy. While the establishment of popular suffrage in Japan had its own limitations in that only male adults were endowed with voting rights, it paved the way for the institutionalization of the right to popular political participation. Indeed, the first general election after popular suffrage saw the competition of multiple political parties such as the Labor Farmer Party, the Japan Labor-Farmer Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the Japan Farmers' Party (Duus 1968: 110). Although the state largely controlled the activities of these popular political parties, what is crucial is that the existence of popular suffrage and political parties came to be utilized as a channel through which popular demands could be presented in an institutionalized political field, thus transforming political dynamics.

stage of this system.

This suggests that while introducing an election system, the colonial power sought to secure the Japanese control of local administrations with two regulating devices. On the one hand, tax restrictions for voting rights and for the eligibility of council members were intended to prevent any radical changes. By confining the political opportunity to participate in the institutionalized political field to those who had a certain amount of economic property and presumably moderate thoughts, the colonial regime tried to consolidate the colonial order without excluding the integration of Koreans. On the other hand, local councils could not exert any substantive power or influence on political decision since they remained as advisory organizations and the opinions of council members could be dismissed at any time. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the reorganization of the local government system, including the introduction of elections for city and township council members, hardly generated any substantive changes.

Critiquing the fundamental limits of the local government system, an editorial in *Tonga ilbo* on August 1, 1920, entitled “For the improvement of the local self-government system,” stated:

The fact that the local self-government system took such an incomplete form results from the distrust of the colonial government about Koreans. This non-confidence indicates that the government suspects the political capability of Koreans and the difference of thoughts between Koreans and the government. Therefore, the colonial officials monopolize local power and the consideration of public opinion remains only nominal. It is not clear whether this is a spirit of impartiality or a selfish attitude in order to insist on the government’s intentions and to suppress public opinion. If [the colonial government] takes the same attitude after the implementation of the local government system, however, those advisory organizations would not only become a deceptive form with no use but this would also bring about social harm such as the interference and enticement in election affairs. [...] This means sowing *the seeds of corruption and depravity*

in the Korean nation who have awoken to a spirit of modernity (emphasis added).

Koreans indeed tended to take an indifferent attitude toward the elections of local council members. Given the fact that only a small number of people had the right to vote, it is understandable that the majority of the population did not care much about elections. Even those who had the right to vote were not actively involved with or participate in the election. The indifferent attitude toward the elections is well reflected in the results of the first general election in 1920. According to a Government-General document (Chōsen sōtokufu naimukyoku 1922: 19-20), the Japanese who were elected in 1920 were mostly influential and famous in their given regions. Regarding the elected Koreans, the document reported that while it was hard to find Koreans who were popular or respected among Koreans, those elected Koreans had political skills, insight into the present era, moderate thoughts, and interest in the local administration. This suggests that Koreans who were respected and held influential positions in their local areas were reluctant, despite their electoral eligibility, to be involved with elections. Due to the lack of popular interest, elections often became an opportunity for the rich to take advantage of their economic power. It was reported after the election in 1926 that “most of the elected exerted their financial power to appeal to each electorate with food” (*Tonga ilbo*, November 24, 1926).

Outside the major cities, the regulation of the tax restrictions on the voting rights and eligibility for council members had to be modified, especially for electing township council members. Since the overall economic condition of rural villages and townships was lower than in the major cities, it was hard to find Koreans who paid more than five yen as local taxes. Indeed, in 1920, only 576 (23 percent of total) townships could apply

the five yen tax restriction for selecting council members without modification, and the remaining 1,907 townships had to lower the amount (Chōsen sōtokufu naimukyoku 1922: 4-5).¹⁷ The fact that about ten percent of townships lowered the amount in the early 1930s (Chōsen sōtokufu naimukyoku 1932: 83) is an indication that the economic poverty in local regions continued to be reproduced in the 1930s. Of township council members, sixty percent came from the traditional literati (*yangban*) and forty percent from the lower social status (*sangmin*) (Chōsen sōtokufu naimukyoku 1922: 34-35).

The existence of strong and prevalent anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans seems chiefly responsible for the unpopularity of elections among Koreans, including those who held voting rights. As far as local councils existed as an advisory organization for the Government-General, they were perceived as ultimately serving the maintenance of Japanese colonial rule. Running for a council member position or even participating in the election process could be viewed as taboo among Koreans, especially in the early 1920s after the anti-colonial movement. A colonial government document notes that one of the reasons that Koreans who had voting rights did not actively take part in elections was a threat from activists involved in the independence movement (Chōsen sōtokufu naimukyoku 1932: 10-11).

Indeed, attacks on pro-Japanese Koreans began to be noticeable in the aftermath of the March First Movement. Several county governors, for instance, were assassinated by members of the Organization for Korean Independence (*Taehan tongniptan*) in 1920 and Min Wōn-sik, a chairman of a prominent pro-Japanese organization (*Kungmin hyōphoe*) was killed by a Korean student in Japan in 1921. The New Korea Independence

¹⁷ While those who paid more than three yen became eligible for council members in many townships, the amount in some areas was lowered to even less than one yen.

Party (*Sinhan tongniptang*), another political independence movement organization, investigated pro-Japanese Koreans in each region through its local branches and reported 7,254 pro-Japanese Koreans, including police officers, secret agents, and chiefs or officials of township offices (*Tonga ilbo*, March 14, 1923). Once accused of being pro-Japanese, they became a target of physical attacks which were often perpetrated in brutal and atrocious ways. When independence movement activists showed up in a village in Kanggye County in the North Pyöngan Province, for example, a Korean member of a Japanese organization was hit and his tongue was cut (*Chosön ilbo*, May 31, 1924).

To be sure, attacks against pro-Japanese Koreans did not develop into popular protests during the colonial period. Compared to the March First Movement that occurred nation-wide with the general participation of Koreans, such physical assaults toward pro-Japanese Koreans were normally organized by independence movement activists and many incidents occurred in border areas, where political activists went to avoid surveillance by the colonial regime. For instance, about sixty police officers and pro-Japanese were killed by members of an independence movement organization in areas in Manchuria (*Chosön ilbo*, November 22, 1924).¹⁸

This does not necessarily mean, however, that the general public did not share the antagonism towards the pro-Japanese with independence movement activists. Rather, it seems that working for the Japanese and the colonial regime itself was at significant odds with anti-Japanese sentiment in the early 1920s. A Korean provincial governor in North Chölla in 1920 reported about people's attitudes toward Korean officers and servants in lower positions as follows (Kang 1980: 270). "People tend to be reluctant to

¹⁸ For other similar cases of attacks on the pro-Japanese by independence movement activists in border areas, see *Chosön ilbo* (April 26, 1923; July 8, 1923; November 29, 1928).

be close with government and public officials and keep them at distance. For instance, if a Korean public servant happens to visit his friend's house and sees some guys gathering, they stop talking and treat him with an exclusionary manner. The Korean official who feels uncomfortable and unpleasant has to get out of the house with a sigh."

In particular, police officers normally became the target of popular animosity. Since the annexation, the Japanese actively incorporated a large number of Koreans into the police forces. Because the role of policemen covered not only the securing of political order but also engagement with practically any administrative, judicial, and even educational work in a local region, most Koreans had more frequent contacts with police officers than civil servants. It was, after all, bureaucrats and policemen in lower positions who directly involved with and penetrated into people's daily lives. Furthermore, it was also the police forces that played a leading role in suppressing nationalist activists and movements. In this regard, it is not surprising that Korean police officers were considered as the representative group of pro-Japanese.

For example, Kim T'ae-sök, a police officer in the Kyōnggi Province, played an important role in arresting Kang U-kyu who attempted to assassinate the newly appointed Governor-General in 1919. After being dismissed from the police department, he said (*Chosŏn ilbo*, December 2, 1924) that "no matter what, it is only Koreans who always suffer from hardships. Neither being anti-Japanese nor pro-Japanese is a way for living. Koreans cannot but die. Colleagues hated me whether I worked hard or not. I will probably be fired. No, I'm going to resign in a few days. The Korean people are resentful of me, and if the government would hate me, I won't be able to survive."

For those Koreans who became government employees, the problem was that

they were not only subject to unequal treatment by the Japanese but they also were excluded by their fellow Koreans. The following statement by a Korean who was a high-government official shows their position between the Japanese and other Koreans

(*Chosŏn ilbo*, June 7, 1927):

As a Korean official, I can't disagree with a Japanese manager and, if I do, it would be the end [of my career, thus], I'm swallowing my anger. For Koreans, a [county] governor position is the maximum limit of the gateway for success. Even so, it requires visiting a shrine one hundred times back and forth, or obeying a subordinate colleague. Even if [Koreans] become government officials, [they] cannot be very successful. Because they are treated as dissenters by other Koreans, they exist like being in mid-air.

In addition to the establishment of the local self-government system, the colonial government implemented rural control policies in an attempt to enhance its penetration into local areas. For the Government-General, the main purpose of the rural control policies was two-fold. On the one hand, it was intended to enhance state penetration into each local village, thus consolidating political control of rural areas. Once the institutional arrangement connecting the central state to local government was founded, the main task was to make sure that the local administrative system worked effectively under the control of the Government-General. On the other hand, it was designed to promote colonial economic projects, since one of the main economic interests of imperial Japan in Korea was to improve agricultural productivity, especially of rice, to resolve food problems in Japan. As early as 1920, the Government-General indeed embarked on the Project for the Improvement of Rice Production. By implementing rural control policies, the colonial regime thus sought to enhance the effective management of economic projects as well.

One of the representative rural control policies in the 1920s was the Model

Village Policy. The idea behind the policy was to develop a group of selected villages with government subsidies to encourage other villages to follow them. There were some important criteria for a village to be selected as a model village, including the location of the village in close proximity to government offices, the existence of “central figures” who were cooperative with Japanese colonial policies, and the lack of socialist influence, tenant disputes or peasant movements (Yi 1998: 147). The colonial government began to carry out the policy in the early 1920s, but it did not produce any substantive outcome at the time. The fact that the local administrative structure was still in its initial phase and had not been consolidated yet seems chiefly responsible for the ineffectiveness of the policy. Once the local self-government offices were stabilized in the mid-1920s, however, the policy began to be implemented more systemically. By 1930, 257 villages were chosen as model villages and they were placed under the guidance of county and township offices, a financial co-operative, and police. From 1927 to 1931, the Government-General endowed 166 villages with official commendations and subsidies in the amount of about 45,000 yen (Yi 1998: 150).

The expansion of the model village policy was also related to the changing political and economic circumstances in the mid-1920s. As the Project for the Improvement of Rice Production did not accomplish the original goal of the increase of rice production, the colonial regime revised the project in 1926 with the expansion of governmental financial investment. To carry out the revised project more effectively, it was critical for the colonial state to develop the close management and cooperation of rural areas as a basic unit of rice production. Yet, the relationship between landlords and peasants in the exacerbated economic conditions led to increasing tenant disputes in rural

areas. Furthermore, emergent leftist ideologies and activists that stimulated political mobilization posed a serious threat to the colonial regime. An important task for the colonial government in this condition was to obstruct further instability by preventing radical activists from exerting their influence on rural areas.

In implementing the model village policy, the colonial government promoted “central figures” (*chūshin jinbutsu* in Japanese and *chungsim inmul* in Korean) in each village. Although government officials played a leading role in performing the various management tasks of the policy, the active involvement and participation of village people was indispensable for the successful completion of specific activities, such as encouraging saving and participating in public works. To this end, the colonial government tried to cultivate capable officers who could effectively manage government works and to integrate the Koreans, especially those who were influential and respected by people in a village, into the project. The majority of central figures nevertheless came from current and previous government officials. A study that examined available information about central figures suggests that more than sixty percent of central figures had served as government officials (Kim 1996: 171-72). Moreover, current or previous heads of township offices or township council members also actively served as central figures for the model village policy. Although the study was based on a limited number of cases and thus it is difficult to generalize the results, considering the nature of the model village policy and the role of local government offices in its implementation, it seems reasonable to assume that those who were involved with the local administrative system, such as heads of villages and township council members, played an active role in the model village policy.

Despite active involvement and encouragement by the colonial government, the outcome of the model village policy turned out to be quite unsatisfactory. It brought about neither the significant economic growth of model villages nor the particular improvement of colonial penetration. In some cases, the policy even worsened the living conditions of residents. For instance, after a village in Unsan County in the North P'yŏngan Province was selected as a model village, about twenty households left the village due to an excessive village expense account (*Tonga ilbo*, August 15, 1931) and about thirty percent of households of another model village in Sunch'ŏn County in the South Chŏlla Province were left deserted (*Tonga ilbo*, May 9, 1933). As such, the model village policy became another source of economic burden in some cases. As the economic conditions became exacerbated in some of the model villages themselves, the intended goal of setting an example for other villages could hardly be achieved.

A government employee pointed out the problem of the model village policy in 1934 as follows (cited in Kim 2003: 55-56):

Model villages were set up to control each village as a whole without considering the capability of individuals. All they were provided with was assistance and encouragement at best. Since many of them tended to exhibit the characteristics of government-led model villages, they seemingly appeared to be well organized and rehabilitated. Yet, each household that should be the basis [of the model village] had no self-strength or faith [in the goals of the policy], and thus they tended to rely solely on government instructions. As governmental leadership withered away, therefore, many cases of [model] villages went back to their previous condition.

One of the problems of the model village policy in the 1920s was that it continued to be carried out mainly as a government-directed policy without sufficient integration of village people into the program. Even though the ultimate goal of the policy was to stimulate and expand collective endeavors for the improvement of villages

from model villages to others, as the statement quoted above shows, the colonial government was not able to consolidate its guidance even in model villages themselves. To the extent that there were various forms of voluntary organizations within each village that had performed collective activities, it could have utilized these informal organizations to improve local penetration. The lack of integration of such local organizations, however, resulted in the mainly top-down implementation of the policy. As a result, the Japanese colonial regime could develop only limited penetration into local areas.

In short, responding to the anti-colonial independence movement in 1919, the colonial government sought to deepen its colonial penetration into Korean society, especially in local areas, in the 1920s. Both the introduction of the local self-government system and implementation of rural control policies by the Saitō administration were intended to enhance societal integration into the colonial system. While they played an important role in founding an institutional basis for the ensuing assimilation policies, the Japanese intention of further assimilation of Koreans into the colonial system was accomplished only to a limited degree. On the one hand, the formation of local councils did not fundamentally alter the political activities of Koreans, not only because the majority of Koreans were not endowed with the right to participate but also due to its lack of substantive power as an advisory organization. On the other hand, in implementing rural control policies, the colonial regime did not develop specific guidelines to provoke voluntary and bottom-up initiatives at the local level. These institutional rearrangements and continual attempts of the Government-General to enhance its penetration into local villages nonetheless began to generate political fragmentation among Koreans, which

increased with deepening social penetration of the colonial state in the 1930s.

The Consolidation of Social Penetration in the 1930s

The stability of Japanese colonial rule in Korea became increasingly vulnerable in the late 1920s and early 1930s. With the repercussions of the agrarian depression and the Great Depression, the economic conditions, especially in rural areas, worsened to the extent that many tenant farmers, who consisted of the majority of population, faced significant food shortages and potential starvation.¹⁹ In addition to the poor economic situation, the rapid growth of nationalist and leftist social organizations led to the development of social movements, hence further threatening the political security of the Japanese colonial rule.

Of particular importance are the radical social movements that emerged under the leadership of the leftists. The increasing sense of popular grievances under the exacerbated economic situation gave fertile soil for leftists to expand their popular basis. Through their growing hegemonic power and organizational basis, leftists began to mobilize peasants and workers into radical social movements against Japanese imperial power. For the colonial power, the rise of radical social movements as a result of the combination of economic and ideological conditions in colonial Korea posed a critical threat to its colonial rule. The fact that leftists expanded their influence in rural villages also reflected the relative weakness of the Japanese penetration into rural areas. It was in this context that the Government-General enacted another series of political reforms and

¹⁹ Despite the overall consequences of the depressions, the effect of economic changes varied among Koreans, especially due to the growing economic polarization in the country. Unlike tenant farmers, a group of large landowners and capitalists had an opportunity to enhance their economic power with the expansion of the market that the Manchurian Incident in 1931 gave rise to. For the exacerbation of the economic situation for tenant farmers, see Chapter Three.

rural control policies in the 1930s in order to enhance state penetration into the local regions and to alleviate economic conditions, thus preventing the further development of anti-colonial movements organized by leftist activists.

As soon as Saitō replaced Yamanashi Hanzō who served as Governor-General from 1927 to 1929, the Saitō administration faced strong demands for political and social reform from both colonial Korea and Japan. As it did in 1920, the Saitō regime attempted to stabilize its colonial rule through a political reform to the local self-government system in 1930. Since the introduction of the local government system in 1920, its problems and limits had been raised. Among others, the existence of local councils as an advisory organization was regarded as especially problematic. Indeed, as early as 1922, city council members criticized the limitations of local councils and urged the transformation of local councils into legislative organizations (*Tonga ilbo*, August 9, 1922). Furthermore, with a growing concern with the need for further assimilation, there were discourses on expanding suffrage to Koreans both in Korea and Japan. Through the reform of the local self-government system in 1930 conducted by the Saitō administration, therefore, local councils were transformed from advisory to legislative organizations.

According to a colonial government document (Chōsen sōtokufu naimukyoku 1932: 342-43), there emerged a new trend in the 1930s when people began to recognize the importance of elections and influential people tended to run for local council positions. The report may exaggerate the impact of the reform in that it was unlikely that the reform of the local government system immediately changed people's attitude toward the colonial system, especially because the majority of population were still denied the right to vote. Notwithstanding this, it seems possible that the reform of the local self-

government system in 1930 improved interest and participation in the local government system among Koreans to the extent that local councils began to have legislative power and a substantive influence on administrative decision making processes. For example, while about thirty percent of city council members were Koreans in 1920, the number gradually increased until it reached fifty percent as much as the Japanese in 1939 (Chōsen sōtokufu naimukyoku 1932: 383-84; Son 1992: 270).

The total number of Koreans who were elected to different local governing bodies in 1931 was 23,561 and the majority of them came from the agricultural sector. While representatives of city councils included people from industries and business more than from the agricultural sectors, more than ninety percent of representatives at the lower level of township councils engaged in agriculture. These representatives reported different amounts of property and by no means formed a unitary group. Yet, the fact that they had electoral eligibility means that they paid more than five yen in local taxes which in turn implies that they owned at least 1.5-2 chōngbo (Chi 1989: 45; see Chang 1988: 229).²⁰ As Table 2 shows, most of the lower level council members among Koreans came from agricultural backgrounds with less than 5,000 yen in property, which indicates that they were mainly local landlords. To better understand the changes in local councils after the reform in 1930, therefore, it is critical to contextualize it under the rural control policy that the colonial government implemented in the 1930s.

²⁰ One chōngbo equals about 2.45 acres.

Table 2: Characteristics of Local Council Members, 1931

		Pu (14)		Ŭp (41)		Myŏn (2,423)		Total	
		Jap.	Kor.	Jap.	Kor.	Jap.	Kor.	Jap.	Kor.
Total		257	157	247	259	1,149	23,145	1,653	23,561
A	60+	34	2	23	2	82	2,821	139	2,825
g	51-59	112	12	80	34	351	5,535	543	5,581
e	41-50	81	70	120	98	506	7,876	710	8,044
	-40	27	72	24	106	201	5,962	252	6,140
J	Agriculture	13	24	22	77	395	21,211	430	21,313
o	Industry	14	6	12	6	35	81	61	93
b	Commerce	125	61	114	89	425	1,169	664	1,319
	Official	11	6	18	4	125	183	154	193
	Misc.	94	60	81	83	169	501	344	644
P	-5000	23	37	31	76	312	15,162	366	15,275
r	-9999	55	34	41	50	312	4,935	408	5,019
o	-49,999	101	59	121	90	394	2,571	616	2,720
p	-99,999	37	14	30	25	94	342	161	381
e	-199,999	19	7	20	12	27	103	66	122
r	-499,999	20	5	3	5	8	22	31	32
t	-999,999	1	0	1	0	2	7	4	7
y	1,000,000+	1	1	0	1	0	3	1	5

Source: Chŏsen sŏtokufu naimukyoku (1932: 286-87).

After Ugaki Kazushige became the new Governor-General in 1931, the Ugaki administration launched the Rural Revitalization Campaign. The campaign refers to a series of government-led agricultural projects in the 1930s, most notably the Project for the Cultivation of Independent Farmers, the Tenancy Arbitration Ordinance, and the Project for the Rehabilitation of Agricultural Households that went into effect in 1932. The colonial government proclaimed that the campaign was intended to improve rural economic conditions and highlighted the three main goals of the project: securing food, balancing the cash flow, and the eradication of debt. The Governor-General stressed that the cooperation of the private sector would be indispensable for the successful result of the campaign and thus the whole population should devote themselves to the project (*Tonga ilbo*, October 21, 1932). In doing so, the colonial state sought to alleviate the poor economic situation in rural areas and enhance state penetration into the local regions,

thereby obstructing leftists' hegemony and securing overall political stability.

One of the important characteristics of the Rural Revitalization Campaign was that the colonial government developed more penetrative and control power in local regions. This is indeed a distinctive trait from the rural control policies of the 1920s. Since rural policies in the 1920s were mainly carried out at administrative units such as the village or county levels, the governmental penetration hardly reached into individual households. In the model village policy, for example, a village as a whole became a basic unit for government policy and thus the management of specific activities within the village remained as the task of the village people, and were not under the control of the central government. In contrast, the Rural Revitalization Campaign in the 1930s was undertaken in an improved administrative system that linked the central state through each administrative unit.

The Government-General indeed established the Councils for Rural Revitalization not only in the central government but also through each administrative level of the province, county, township, and village. The heads of each administrative organization became the chairman of councils and government officials were responsible for managing the tasks of the campaign within the unit. By 1940, Councils for Rural Revitalization were established in more than eighty percent of villages in colonial Korea (Kim 2003: 86). Even though the Councils for Rural Revitalization were generally constructed under the compulsion of the head of the township or village offices and police officers (*Sinsaenghwal*, June 1932: 3), the establishment of the top-down hierarchical government system connecting the central bureaucratic unit of the Government-General through the local administration offices and even to each household

in local areas founded an important institutional basis for the effective management of the rural control policies in the 1930s.

Another distinctive trait of the Rural Revitalization Campaign was that the colonial government tried to integrate prominent Koreans in each local area, rather than solely relying on government institutions. In particular, it aimed to incorporate those who were old enough to control a village, had a prestigious family background and credibility within the village, had sufficient living conditions, had experience in agriculture that was needed for guiding other people, and had enthusiasm for leading rural rehabilitation (Chi 1984: 138). In addition, the colonial state also developed the systematic training of leading figures through the school system in an attempt to cultivate the younger generation who received a colonial education to work for the colonial government.²¹ While training students for agricultural improvement projects was carried out in merely two percent of schools (43 out of 1,428) in 1928, more than sixty percent of schools (1,326 of 2,133) in 1934 were involved with that training (Chōsen sōtokufu, *Chōsa geppō*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1935: 30).

By promoting the participation of local residents, the colonial state developed village organizations. As Table 3 shows, 29,383 organizations that included more than one million members were established at the village level by 1933. Considering that the Rural Revitalization Campaign began to be in effect at the end of 1932, it seems that a significant part of local villages fell under the direct guidance and control of the colonial government through the campaign within a year. The project of village organization could

²¹ For the colonial government, training students for the colonial project could also be effective for controlling student movements, which rapidly developed in the late 1920s. Indeed, eighty-three school strikes broke out in 1928 (Chōsen sōtokufu keimukyoku 1934: 91) and as the Kwangju Student Movement in 1929 indicated, student movements, coupled with other social movements, were a political threat for the colonial power.

be carried out quite effectively, because the colonial government actively utilized existing village organizations. Unlike the Model Village Policy in the 1920s that remained as a government-led rural control policy, the Rural Revitalization Campaign was largely focused on developing the voluntary participation of local people and the integration of various traditional associations. The existing village organizations were either combined into local councils for rural revitalizations or encouraged to cooperate with them.

Table 3: Village Organizations through the Rural Revitalization Campaign, 1933

Province	Villages	Members	Organizations
Kyōnggi	2,730	257,861	7,069
North Ch'ungch'ōng	1,504	55,362	1,807
South Ch'ungch'ōng	2,263	179,638	2,303
North Chōlla	1,813	11,482	204
South Chōlla	3,101	25,838	955
North Kyōngsang	3,228	348,000	5,310
South Kyōngsang	2,590	143,271	1,375
Hwanghae	2,067	156,410	4,717
South P'yōngan	1,938	11,749	177
North P'yōngan	1,480	54,698	786
Kangwōn	1,971	15,265	3,267
South Hamgyōng	2,941	-	1,042
North Hamgyōng	710	46,713	371
Total	28,336	1,036,287	29,383

Source: Chi (1984: 133).

The way in which the colonial government sought to mitigate rural poverty through the Rural Revitalization Campaign, however, remained largely conservative. The Government-General tended to attribute the rural economic conditions to the problems of peasant farmers, such as their obsession with materialism, lack of initiatives for agricultural improvement, and abuse of usury without an appropriate re-payment plan (Chōsen sōtokufu 1933: 41). To resolve these problems, the colonial government supported an increase of working hours and economy in consumption by recommending peasant farmers to stop drinking and smoking. In doing so, the colonial government

ignored the fact that such structural factors as colonial economic extraction and agricultural depression were chiefly responsible for the poverty of many tenant farmers in colonial Korea. Instead, it nurtured the ideology that by working hard and saving money, tenant farmers could solve their financial problems and even become independent farmers.

While the government projects did not result in any immediate improvement of rural economic conditions, they did foster political confrontation among Koreans. This is exemplified by the varied responses to the government approach to rural poverty. While landlords and national reformists supported and actively participated in the campaign, leftists strongly criticized both the colonial regime and those Koreans who cooperated with the Japanese. It was nonsense, according to leftists, to demand that tenant farmers save in the current economic condition in which they were near starvation due to the Great Depression and the expansion of colonial economic extraction (*Tonggwang*, April 1931: 57; see *Sin'gyedan*, March 1933: 19). In contrast, national reformists and dominant economic groups tended to advocate for and played a leading role in government projects. When the Rural Revitalization Project began to take effect in 1932, *Tonga ilbo* organized a public meeting for the relief of the poor by inviting prominent intellectuals, capitalists, and landlords. *Chosŏn nongminsŏ*, a representative peasant organization under the leadership of national reformists, publicly proposed cooperating with the colonial government and its agricultural campaign (*Sinin'gan*, May 1935: 5-7).

Despite the lack of initiatives in structural reform to reduce the economic burden on peasant farmers, the colonial government enacted legal procedures that could be used for alleviating tenant farmers' economic condition. Since tenant disputes that resulted

from the worsened economic situation of tenant farmers became a critical social issue in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the colonial state introduced protective legal measures for tenant farmers through the Rural Revitalization Campaign and sought to prevent tenant disputes from developing into radical political movements. The Tenancy Arbitration Ordinance, for example, was enacted in 1932 to resolve tenant disputes and the Government-General established a total of 150 tenancy arbitration committees in 1933. Most committee members (765 out of 984) came from government officials and the rest (219 members) were influential people in local areas, mainly landlords (Chōsen sōtokufu nōrinkyoku 1938: 89).²² Upon the enactment of the Land Ordinance in 1934, the tenancy arbitration committees became official organs and they increased to 234.

Table 4: Tenancy Arbitration Committees, 1934-1941

Year	Number of Arbitration	Number of Involved Participants	Land Size related to Arbitration
1934	1,701	4,487	1,312
1935	7,444	633	841
1936	9,220	248	78
1937	10,899	24,802	7,073
1938	11,069	25,880	6,891
1939	8,253	18,823	4,234
1940	7,546	16,969	4,210
1941	4,851	10,401	2,568

Source: Chōsen sōtokufu (*Chōsa geppō*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1942: 41).

Before the enactment of the Tenancy Arbitration Ordinance, the relationship between landlords and tenant farmers had normally been considered as a private economic contract. With the formation of tenancy arbitration committees, however,

²² The composition of tenancy committees is distinctive from those in Japan where tenant farmers were also endowed with the right to participate in the organizations. Indeed, the tenancy arbitration committees of 1934 in Japan were voluntary organizations, consisting of landlords (36.2%), landed farmers (25.1%), and tenants (20.4%) (Chōng 1990: 245; see *Tonggwang*, September 1932: 4). Though landlords composed a larger proportion in the committees than others, the point is that tenant farmers were also able to engage with the process of arbitration and to represent themselves in Japan.

economic trouble between landlords and tenant farmers was mediated and resolved by the colonial legal system. By encouraging the resolution of tenancy issues, which had been causes of tenancy disputes and rural instability, through the mediation of tenancy arbitration committees, the Government-General sought to develop a self-control mechanism in rural areas. It is thus understandable that people began to protect their economic interests through their involvement with the government institutions, especially when we consider the fact that land remained a basic economic asset in colonial Korea and tenancy was a primary source of economic profit.

This in turn led to the increasing power of government officials and bureaucrats. In the 1920s, local government officials performed assigned tasks given by the central government and members of local councils did not have substantive power and capacity due to the nature of the local councils as an advisory organization. As the local councils became a legislative organization in the 1930s, however, government employees and council members were able to exert their influence on the management of relationships between landlords and tenant farmers, and on other important economic decisions such as the distribution of arable lands within a village. After the enactment of the Land Ordinance in 1934, for instance, the Councils for Rural Revitalization began to perform the various roles of managing tenancy farms and encouraging the cooperation of tenant farmers and landlords. The chair of the councils or the head of village could replace a supervisor of a tenant farm and play the role himself (Kim 2003: 124-25).

The problem was that government officials and local council members also began to seek their own economic interests. Tax reduction, for example, was one of the ways that they utilized their official positions for economic profit. A Korean who served

as the head of a township office (Sin 1993: 233) recalls that “anyone who paid a certain amount of local tax had voting rights. Because it was to elect money not people, even an illiterate could be elected. [...] When the members of the township council had a meeting for house tax mediation [...] no one even mentioned house rates for the village people. They were interested only in their own tax rates.” This should not lead us to presume that all local council members were preoccupied with increasing their own economic and political power altogether. But it seems that such cases were certainly not rare. Indeed, an editorial in *Tonga ilbo* (March 2, 1931) lamented that the majority of local council members took an opportunistic attitude by obeying governmental goals and directions to increase their own wealth, rather than trying to improve the rights and interests of local people in general. This shows that serving in the colonial government or holding local office became a way of improving economic interest and political power in the 1930s. Local peasant farmers indeed tended to consider “the councils of rural revitalization as the organization for tax collection and flag-raising” (*Sinsaenghwal*, June 1932: 4).

The Councils of Rural Revitalization, however, did not always work for the interest of landowners or government officials. They sometimes made an alliance with and involved themselves in collective activities to enhance the conditions of peasant farmers. In 1933, for instance, the local council of rural revitalization in Chuksan made a collective demand for the deduction of rent that continued to cause the impoverishment of tenant farmers. In response, the police office claimed that this was not an appropriate behavior for the committees since it was a private matter for individuals, and they thus obstructed the collective movement (*Chosŏn ilbo*, January 18, 1933). Sometimes, councils of rural revitalization cooperated with local township councils to accomplish

collective demands for the local community such as for the reduction of tax rates (Kim 2003: 99). In this way, the councils of rural revitalization also played a role in mobilizing political demands in local areas.

It is noteworthy that while dominant economic groups, notably landlords in local areas, had access to local councils due to the tax restriction of voting rights, lower economic groups also had developed their own ways of infiltrating official positions by initially serving the Japanese as an assistant patrolman or as a spy for the colonial police and then achieving higher positions through promotion. For example, there were 1,040 county governors in total until 1939. Since central government positions were mainly filled with the Japanese, county governors were normally the highest position in a local area that Koreans could be promoted to. While most governors of the 1910s came from Korean bureaucrats in the pre-colonial period, the 1930s saw the significant increase of governors who were recruited by the Government-General during the colonial period. Indeed, the promotion rate of those who began to be in government service to governor position was less than three percent in the 1910s and increased to about twenty-eight percent in the 1920s and seventy in the 1930s (Pak 1999: 117-22). This indicates that serving the Japanese became a way to obtain social mobility for some Koreans who had traditionally been excluded from the political processes due to their lower status.

As a result of the reform to the local self-government system and the rural control policies in the 1930s, therefore, the colonial regime largely improved its penetration into the local regions. It remains controversial whether and to what extent these changes contributed to the improvement of rural economic conditions.²³ Yet, the

²³ For example, Han (1986: 276) argues that the Rural Revitalization Campaign intensified not only the extractive nature of Japanese colonial rule but also economic conflict between landlords and peasant

colonial government achieved a more fruitful outcome in the further development of political fragmentation among Koreans. Those who served and worked for the Japanese, whether they were traditional elites or members of the new group recruited by the colonial government, were easily seen as pro-Japanese collaborators. Furthermore, the increasing conflict in political groups that had a popular organizational basis also nurtured political splits among Koreans.

For the colonial government, political conflict among Koreans, whether it was between dominant political and ideological groups or was antagonism against government officials or bureaucrats, was a critical opportunity to consolidate the Japanese rule. To achieve this goal, the Government-General significantly reinforced its political control toward leftist activists who criticized Japanese rule and organized radical social movements, while trying to integrate the rest of the population under the colonial system. In fact, in promoting government-directed local organizations, the colonial state led to the dissolution of some of the existing peasant organizations, especially those with strong leftist ideological characteristics. Ninety-four organizations, for example, were disbanded by the colonial government in 1933 (Han 1986: 240). As a response, leftist activists in turn began to utilize emergent village and peasant organizations in given local regions to spread leftist ideologies and to mobilize radical peasant movements. Some of the Councils for Rural Revitalization came under leftist leadership, as communist activists organized a red peasant union in various places in the North Kyöngsang Province, such as Andong, Yöngju, and Ponghwa, and attempted to seize the power in the already existing organizations (*Tonga ilbo*, July 15, 1933). Although leftists were able to

farmers. Shin and Han (1999: 92), however, claim that the campaign played a key role in improving rural economic and social welfare.

develop anti-colonial movements by utilizing their organizations, they were eventually subdued and the Japanese colonial rule was consolidated.

Conclusion

Japanese colonial rule brought about the establishment of a centralized government system in Korea. Compared to the Chosŏn dynasty in the pre-colonial period, the colonial state significantly enhanced state power and capacity. Yet, the development of colonial penetration into local areas was rather the outcome of the continuous evolution of colonial rule, rather than an immediate product of institutional changes in the early colonial period. Indeed, in the first decade of colonial rule, the Japanese largely reorganized political institutional settings by primarily relying on a coercive state apparatus, especially the military police forces. The oppressive colonial dominance in the 1910s eventually gave rise to an unexpected nation-wide anti-colonial nationalist movement. It was in the aftermath of the March First Movement that the colonial regime realized the need for incorporating Koreans into the colonial system.

The introduction of the local self-government system in 1920 indicates that the colonial regime began to direct its attention to colonial penetration into local areas. The newly implanted election system provided some Koreans with an opportunity to participate in the institutionalized political process. Furthermore, the colonial government began to carry out rural control policies, which were intended to precipitate both effective economic extraction and political governance in local regions. The local self-government system and rural control policies in the 1920s shared and exhibited critical limits in that they could not generate the active and voluntary participation of a majority of Korean

population. Despite the limited outcome, they nonetheless founded an important institutional basis for the political incorporation of Koreans into the colonial system, which further developed in the later period.

The colonial government accomplished an unprecedented level of social penetration into the local regions in Korea in the 1930s. The Government-General not only transformed local councils from an advisory organization to an institution with legislative power but also implemented a series of new rural control policies, which has been known as the Rural Revitalization Campaign, through a systematic reorganization of institutional settings connecting the colonial government to each administrative unit and household. One of the important changes was the fact that the involvement with the local government and administration could be used as a means to secure and enhance one's economic condition. To be sure, it was certainly possible for some Koreans to cooperate with the Japanese to increase their economic and political power. Yet, there was also social stigmatization attached to collaboration with the Japanese. With the formal institutional changes in the 1930s, it became critical and to some extent inevitable to utilize the colonial system.

The expansion of colonial penetration into the local regions led to the integration of a broad range of Koreans into the colonial system. Although the colonial government largely incorporated Koreans from dominant economic groups into the political system by providing them with a chance to maintain and enhance their economic and political privileges, it also offered other Koreans an opportunity for social mobility that was not available to them in the pre-colonial period. For example, it is well recognized that many Korean police positions were filled with people from the lower classes. In this regard,

despite the uneven political opportunity available for Koreans and the significant overlap between political and economic inequality, it is important to consider the fact that people who were denied the right to vote also actively engaged in the changing political circumstances.

What is worth emphasizing here is the different outcomes of the establishment of a modern political system. It promoted the formation of a political community in non-colonial contexts as people achieved their membership and political rights. In contrast, however, it gave rise to significant political fragmentation in colonial Korea to the degree that working for the colonial state or actively participating in the political system undermined the political integration in Korea. On the one hand, the social status of traditional elite groups became significantly tainted. This was not simply because of those who actively supported the Japanese colonial rule. Even if some aristocrats avoided involvement with the Japanese as their method of passive resistance to the colonial power, this could be seen as evidence of their political impotency in the eyes of Koreans. On the other hand, many Koreans in lower government positions or the police force tended to be oppressive against other Koreans, not only to compensate for their structurally vulnerable positions, but also to prove to their colonial masters their capability to control Koreans. Examining colonial Africa, Immanuel Wallerstein (1970: 410) noted that “the more he cut himself off from the customs of his African rural community, the greater was likely to be his reward in the bureaucracy.” The same principle applied in colonial Korea as well.

As a result, the formation and consolidation of a centralized colonial government in Korea led to the tension between national and political identity. As Mamdani (2001: 652) noted, political identities that emerge from the process of state formation have

distinctive characteristics from both economic and cultural identities. While political conflict was closely related to economic and ideological conflict among Koreans, as we will see in the next two chapters, and thus it is important to see their connection, the distinctive character of each dimension should be properly understood.

CHAPTER III

COLONIAL ECONOMY AND AGRARIAN RELATIONAL SHIFT

Introduction

One of the important purposes of colonial rule is to meet the economic demands of the imperial power. To this end, the colonial state brings about significant economic reorganization in indigenous societies, albeit to a varying degree and in divergent forms. The colonized people, in turn, are forced to largely restructure their livelihood accordingly. What are the social and cultural consequences of the process of economic rationalization by the imperial power in colonial societies? The answer seems to require more than a simplistic narrative, in which the whole population of indigenous people immediately and completely lose their economic rights and equally suffer from colonial exploitation, thus transforming themselves into national warriors against the colonial power. For, in spite of the extractive nature of colonial economic changes, the indigenous people can respond to them in various ways.

This was certainly the case in Korea under Japanese colonial rule. Upon the annexation of Korea in 1910, the colonial government launched a series of economic projects and institutional changes. In particular, the Land Cadastral Survey and tax reform, which were implemented by the Government-General in the 1910s, uprooted the traditionally practiced communal rights and reinforced a modern form of individual land ownership. Furthermore, as the colonial state actively engaged with the management of

agrarian production in order to meet the increasing demand for rice from Japan in the 1920s, semi-tenant farmers and independent landowners lost their land and became pure tenants. When the economic depression hit the world in the late 1920s and early 1930s, many tenant farmers experienced severe economic conditions and suffered from a shortage of food.

Considering the strong anti-Japanese sentiment already present among Koreans, one might have expected that these economic changes would provoke an anti-colonial movement. Indeed, Koreans demonstrated their collective resistance through a nationwide independence movement in 1919 by mobilizing diverse social groups including peasants, landlords, and intellectuals even under the coercive military rule in the 1910s. The institutional changes and colonial economic projects in the later period, however, led to the intensification of economic conflicts among Koreans, especially between landlords and peasants. Once the traditionally acknowledged communal rights in customary laws became invalidated under the colonial system, tenant farmers and landowners no longer shared common economic interests and therefore modified their socioeconomic practices. Landowners began to deny the tenancy rights that tenant farmers had previously maintained and they in turn sought to regain their rights against the landlords.

As economic conflicts between landlords and peasants became prevalent, most tenant disputes targeted Korean landlords rather than the colonial government or Japanese landlords. Indeed, as we see later, a majority--more than eighty to ninety percent--of tenant disputes in the early 1930s occurred between Korean landlords and peasants.²⁴

²⁴ This does not mean that all peasant movements during the colonial period solely stemmed from economic concerns. Indeed, there existed peasant movement that exhibited anti-colonial political characteristics, most notably the "red peasant union movement" influenced by leftist ideologies. Unlike tenant disputes that took place ubiquitously in all provinces throughout the colonial period, however,

Through tenant disputes, peasants demanded their right to live and exhibited moral blame and collective condemnation against the “evil landlords” who sought their own economic interests at the expense of their fellow countrymen’s ability to subsist. Landowners in turn tightened their control of peasants so that they could maintain their dominant position in an increasingly competitive economic structure and thus would not fall into a lower position such as that of a pure tenant or semi-tenant. As landlords and peasants sought to achieve their own economic rights within the colonial legal structure, therefore, they became enemies against each other for their own survival or economic profit, while seeking political protection from the colonial state that they had collectively resisted before. What is crucial in this process is that, as economic conflict between peasants and landlords became intensified, each group proceeded to pursue their economic rights and their protections within the colonial system and the colonial state began to take the position of “an arbiter of internal boundaries” (Benton 2002: 23) rather than simply acting as a super-imposed colonial power.

How can we explain that economic conflict among the indigenous people became intensified through the development of colonial projects that were intended to promote economic extraction from the colony? To answer this question, this chapter examines how the Government-General rationalized and rearranged the economic realm through legal and institutional changes and how this in turn altered socioeconomic practices, thereby reformulating economic conflict among Koreans. By exploring the shifting internal boundaries among Koreans produced by economic reorganization by the

radical peasant movements broke out intensively in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In this regard, tenant disputes can be regarded as a representative form of movement that peasants mainly engaged in their every life throughout the colonial era.

Japanese, it aims to illuminate the social and cultural consequences of colonial rule in conjunction with the corresponding economic and institutional changes.

In examining the critical effects of integration into the capitalist world economy through colonial rule, Karl Polany ([1949] 2001: 164) once forcefully noted that “not economic exploitation, as often assumed, but the disintegration of the cultural environment of the victim is then the cause of the degradation [of an indigenous society].” In a similar vein, highlighting the contradiction between the modern economic system implemented by the French colonial government and the traditional system in Algeria, Bourdieu and Sayad (2004: 472) claim that “colonization has taken more than his land from the Algerian peasant; it has stripped him of a good that cannot be magically restored or assigned to him and that he must not only remake but make: his culture.” Further developing these insights with the interweaving of economic structural and cultural realms, I argue that the integration of the Korean colonial economy into the Japanese imperial system resulted in not merely widespread economic exploitation but, perhaps more importantly, the reformulation of people’s perceptions of their mutual relationships in a local community.

The Consolidation of Private Landownership

Upon annexation of Korea in 1910, the Government-General implemented a series of legal changes. Among other changes in law, the Chosŏn Civil Case Ordinance that was enacted in 1912 founded a legal basis to regulate the relationship between landlords and tenant farmers. The ordinance included regulations covering such specific terms as the characteristics and period of tenancy, amount of rents, cultivation methods,

the responsibility of rent transportation, and renewal or cancellation of tenancy (Chōng 1994: 89-101). Of particular importance is that the ordinance prioritized ownership rights over other customary rights such as tenancy rights and, in doing so, it provided landlords with the right to terminate tenancy terms. By endowing tenants with rights to rent reduction when they harvested less than the amount of rents, however, the ordinance also left room for incorporating customary practices. Thus the ordinance did not immediately bring about significant changes in the relationship between landlords and tenants. It was in the 1920s that the effect of the ordinance became clear upon the completion of the Land Cadastral Survey in the 1910s.

The land cadastral survey was one of the most important projects that the colonial government launched in Korea in the 1910s. As soon as Korea became officially colonized by Japan, the Government-General implemented the survey in 1910, which was completed in 1918. Through the survey, the colonial government gathered basic information about each parcel of land, especially its ownership, price, and agricultural productivity. The three main activities carried out through the cadastral survey include the investigation of the actual condition of each piece of land, the determination of land ownership, and the compilation of the land register (Gragert 1982: 174). Although the Chosŏn dynasty conducted the land survey, its extensive scope and cost made it difficult to update the information on a regular basis, which became a source of prevalent corruption among government officials and continued the financial deficit of the central government in the pre-colonial era. With improved financial and infrastructural resources, the colonial government was able to conclude the survey in full-scale for a decade. Upon the completion of the survey, the Government-General took ownership of the land that

was either previously under the control of the Chosŏn dynasty or where no ownership report was submitted.²⁵

For the colonial regime, the main purpose of the survey was to secure financial revenue for the colonial rule. After the termination of the land survey, the colonial state could identify taxable lands that were previously omitted and indeed the land tax levied area increased about eighty percent. While the tax levied area was about 2.4 million chŏngbo in 1910, it expanded to around 4.3 million chŏngbo in 1918 when the survey was finished (*Chōsen sōtokufu, Chōsen sōtokufu tōkei nenpō*, 1910: 171; 1918: 124). Moreover, once multiple forms of ownership and rights attached to land became unified into one exclusive private landownership system through the survey, the number of land trades increased, which in turn led the Government-General to enforce more effectively the real estate registration system that was introduced in 1912. From 1917 to 1920, the number of land ownership acquisitions through sale increased fifty-six percent and the amount of registration tax increased sixty-two percent.²⁶ As a result, the colonial state could significantly increase financial resources through the land survey.

While carrying out the land survey, the Government-General also conducted tax reform since the expansion of taxable lands and the identification of landownership could not significantly increase government revenue within the existing tax system. In the pre-colonial period, the central state levied a collective tax on a given local community and

²⁵ Although Japanese-owned land more than doubled during the survey, it remains controversial whether and how extensively the colonial government purposely utilized the survey as a means for land extortion. While some scholars (Sin 2006: Ch. 7) contend that the colonial government appropriated a significant amount of land, others (Kim et al. 1997) argue that the survey served the purpose of identifying landownership rather than expropriating, thus paving the way for agricultural capitalism.

²⁶ At the same time, the trading price of land escalated more than three times for the same period (*Kaebŏk*, August 1922: 16).

members of a village had collective responsibility for the state tax. Under this collective tax system, both landlords and peasants could maintain the same interest to the state tax (Kim 2007: 217). Thus peasant movements in the Chosŏn dynasty normally targeted corrupt officials who practiced extortion and bribery, rather than landlords (Palais 1975: 66). For the colonial regime, the collective tax system had a critical problem not only because it could intensify anti-colonialism but also because it did not provide stable tax revenue. To replace the traditional collective tax system with a modern individual tax form, the colonial government enforced the Chosŏn Land Tax Ordinance, which was enacted in 1914 and revised in 1918, with the completion of the land survey. Through this change, individual landowners that were identified through the survey became chiefly responsible for the land tax and the traditional corporative tax system became invalidated (Pae 2002: 193-94; Yi 1997). In this way, the indirect rule of the Chosŏn dynasty was shifted to direct rule by the Government-General of Korea, hence paving the way for economic rationalization by the colonial government.

As private landownership became an exclusive right to land through the survey, the multiple rights attached to land that were previously practiced in the pre-colonial period, especially the tenancy rights that peasants traditionally held, became largely invalidated. In the Chosŏn dynasty, peasant farmers could maintain tenancy rights for an extended period or even permanently, as far as they paid their rent regularly. Tenants could lease, inherit, or sell their tenancy rights and they continued to hold their tenancy regardless of landownership changes (Chōsen sōtokufu 1932: 447-51). While the price of tenancy rights varied in different regions, when they were sold, the average value of tenancy rights was equivalent with about one-third of the price of land or half the value of

the landlord's ownership (Sin 1982: 60). The fact that tenancy rights could even be traded indicates that they were recognized as having real value comparable to landownership. While such traditional customary rights to land as common landownership by a local community and permanent tenancy rights for peasants were primarily based on and defined by social membership in a local community in the pre-colonial period, newly imposed property rights by the colonial state no longer required community support. As such, traditional rights received no recognition or protection in a changed colonial legal system that considered private landownership as an exclusive right to land (Lee 1936: 142-43).²⁷

This series of institutional and legal reforms by the colonial government brought about a significant relational change among Korean landlords and tenant farmers. While landlords tended to consider their relationships with tenants as personal and paternalistic in the pre-colonial period, they began to perceive the relationship as more legal and contractual after the institutional changes (Chōsen sōtokufu 1932: 419). That the relationship between landlords and tenants was connected through paternalism in traditional Korea does not mean that it existed as an essentially harmonious collective entity without any social conflict. The Chosŏn dynasty had maintained a hierarchical status system in which each individual belonged to a certain social category, which was responsible for establishing and reproducing different social status and position. The relationship of tenant farmers with landlords thus normally contained a hierarchical nature due to their difference in social status. What is important, however, is that mutual reciprocity was socially recognized as a principle governing their relationship. In this

²⁷ See Colson (1971) for comparable social changes in other colonies such as Africa and South East Asia.

regard, it was hard for an individual landlord to arbitrarily control tenant farmers and constrain their rights.

A Government-General document (Chōsen sōtokufu 1930: 377) explains how the tenancy practice in the pre-colonial period changed through the Japanese rule as follows:

[During the Chosŏn dynasty] the tenancy contract was made by oral agreement and tenancy terms were not normally specified. Since tenancy terms remained valid permanently as far as there were no betrayals or misdeeds by tenants, landlords did not withdraw tenancy rights like these days. [...] Tenancy rights were acknowledged and landlords needed tenants to cultivate the lands. Furthermore, while landlords requested a land tax of tenants, they did not charge rents. [...] After annexation, however, the tenancy system has seen changes including the use of documents for making tenancy contracts which in turn stimulated specifying the tenancy period.

The emergence of written contracts signifies an important change in the relationship between landlords and tenant farmers. While tenancy relations were established through informal oral contracts in the previous era, the institutional changes under the colonial rule precipitated the use of formal documentation. It should be noted that written contracts did not immediately replace oral contracts, which remained as the main form until the later period. By 1930, less than thirty percent of rent contracts were in written form (Grajdanzev 1944: 124). What it significantly represents, however, is the changing nature of rural relationships. Unlike the pre-colonial period, in which landlords and tenants were connected to each other through paternalism and thus their relationships had more social and interdependent characteristics, the institutional and subsequent changes of economic conditions in the colonial period led their relationships to become more economic and contractual in nature.

The idea of free competition and individualism, which was introduced with Japanese colonial rule, also pushed the relationship between landlords and tenants to a

stronger contractual basis (*Kaebiyōk*, August 1925: 47). As private ownership became institutionalized as the exclusive right attached to land, landlords became reluctant to acknowledge customary rights and began to prohibit tenancy subleases and to replace tenants with those who were willing to pay higher rents (Chōsen sōtokufu 1932: 447, 470, 608). As a consequence, perceptions and attitudes toward landlords began to shift from a “person who rented his lands to us [tenant farmers], and our family can continue to survive thanks to him. He’s our savior” into a “person who illegally misappropriates communal property [land] that was given by heaven” and a “parasite who contributes absolutely nothing to society and sucks up tenants’ flesh and blood” (*Kaebiyōk*, October 1923: 65).²⁸

To be sure, this should not lead us to ignore the existence of individual variations in landlords’ behavior and reaction to colonial changes. Nor should we assume that the traditional social status and perception of landlords was completely replaced by such antagonistic blame by peasant farmers. The focus should rather be placed upon how the institutional rearrangement by the colonial government led to the change in the pattern of socioeconomic practices and relationships among the indigenous population. As we will see later, the antagonism against those landlords pursuing economic benefit became further intensified through the intervention of the colonial government.

In short, a series of colonial projects and institutional changes, notably the Land Cadastral Survey and tax reform, during the first decade of Japanese colonial rule generated several important changes in colonial Korea. Regarding the state-society

²⁸ It seems likely that the growing influence of leftist ideologies in the 1920s also played an important role in the emergence and development of such antagonistic perceptions of landlords who tried to maximize their economic profit without consideration of tenant farmers’ livelihood.

relationship, the indirect rule of the Chosŏn dynasty was replaced by the direct rule of the colonial government with an enhanced infrastructural power. While the traditional land tax system made the central government confront each local community as a collective in the pre-colonial era, the newly implemented individual land tax system enabled the colonial state to govern individuals, rather than a local community. Second, the land survey and subsequent tax reform institutionalized the privatization of landownership, which facilitated the commercialization of land and agricultural products. The enforcement of the principle of a market economy in turn precipitated the disintegration of rural communities. Third, as private ownership became synonymous with the exclusive right to land, the principle governing the relationship between landlords and peasants changed from communal relations into competitive ones. As the colonial state implemented another agricultural project in the 1920s, these changes brought about important social consequences in the form of peasant dispossession and economic polarization.

Peasant Dispossession and Economic Polarization

In the aftermath of World War I, Japan underwent a precipitous inflationary phase and the price of rice became a major economic issue, which culminated in the rice riots in 1918. As the riots developed into more violent forms, which involved more than two million participants in attacks against government offices, thus threatening political order, Japan began to import more rice to alleviate the situation. While the rice imports from foreign countries helped the Japanese government meet the increasing demand for rice, it posed another problem of the balance of payments. To avoid further financial

problems, Japan proceeded to extract more rice from its colonies, especially from Taiwan and Korea, since they were already integrated into the Japanese economic system through the establishment of the Japanese tariff system. In doing so, the colonial government launched another major economic project in colonial Korea in the 1920s, the Project for the Improvement of Rice Production (*sanmai zōshoku keikaku* in Japanese or *sanmi chŭngsik kyehoek* in Korean), which was implemented in 1920 and revised in 1926. Although the colonial government announced that the purpose of the campaign was to improve agricultural economy and to prepare increasing demands for rice in Korea (Kawai 1983: 377), it is in this context of Japanese crisis from which this campaign stemmed from.

The primary purpose of the project was to increase rice production through land and farming improvement. For the effective implementation and management of the project, the Government-General established new departments within the Bureau of Agriculture and Forests to carry out the program and actively promoted various methods to improve agricultural productivity. While state institutions directly managed each construction and improvement plan through government-owned companies, most notably the Oriental Development Company, they also encouraged private companies and individuals to participate in the program by providing government subsidies and loans with low interest. The governmental support was directed to not only such large scale projects as the expansion of reclamation and the reclassification of land, but also the replacement of traditional rice with superior strains of rice, and the dissemination of chemical fertilizer and farm equipment.

Even though the project did not sufficiently meet the colonial government's

expectation, rice production increased throughout the 1920s. More important than the actual increase of rice production in general, however, is the fact that the amount of rice sent to Japan exceeded the increase in rice production. While rice production increased from 14.7 million sŏk in the early 1920s into 17.1 million sŏk in the early 1930s, the influx of Korean rice to Japan increased even more, from about 3 million sŏk to 7.2 million sŏk (Kawai 1983: 388).²⁹ This indicates that about twenty percent of the total rice production in colonial Korea was sent out to Japan in the early 1920s, and the number increased to about forty-two percent in the early 1930s. In spite of the overall increase of rice production, therefore, rice consumption per individual in Korea dropped from 0.77 sŏk in 1912 to 0.4 sŏk in 1932 (*Kaebŏk*, October 1923: 65). In this way, the economic project by the Government-General precipitated “starvation exports, a classic example of imperialism—sacrificing the livelihood of colonized people for the imperial interest” in colonial Korea (Kimura 1995: 559; see Kang 1987).

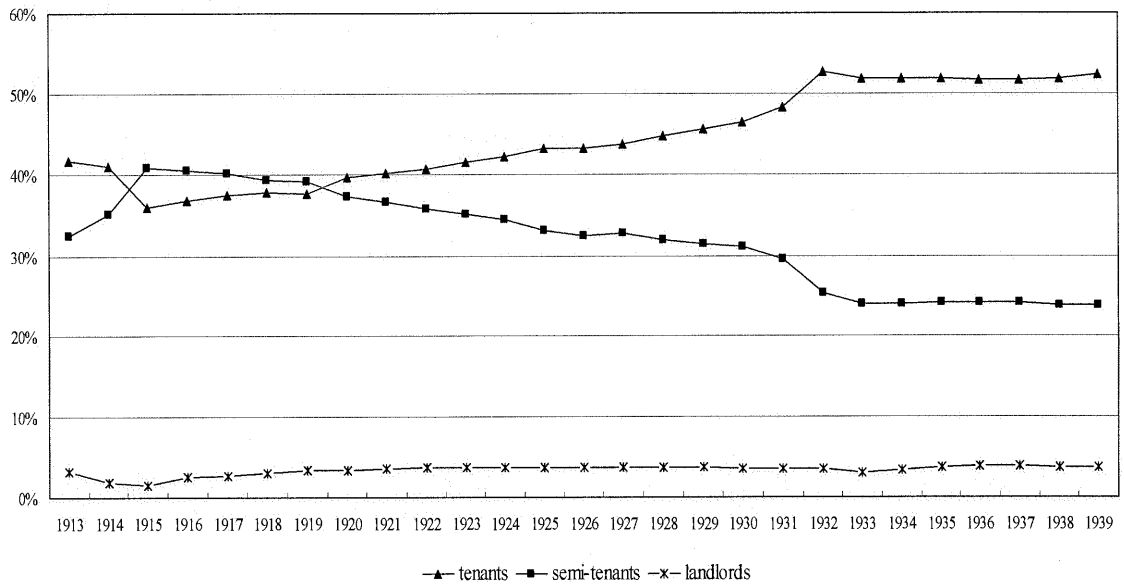
The development of irrigation systems was one of the most important aspects of the project. The total number of 122 irrigation associations, covering about 12.7 million chŏngbo, had been established until 1931, of which 7.9 million chŏngbo was owned by 62,460 Korean landlords and 4.8 million chŏngbo was owned by the Japanese (*Chosŏn ilbo*, January 30, 1932). Due to the immense scale of the project, irrigation associations significantly increased land amalgamation. Once an irrigation association was established, the association fees and related taxes added to the existing rents burdened people who owned a small amount of land and tenants with no land. When association fees became an unbearable hardship, some people petitioned the government, which in turn reduced

²⁹ One sŏk equals about 47.65 gallons.

the fees in some cases. When the governmental aid proved to be insufficient, however, they sold their lands or moved to another region. Peasants who lost tenancy and could not find another source of living began to choose to emigrate to places such as Manchuria in the early 1920s (*Kaebŏk*, February 1922: 47; see *Chosŏn ilbo*, December 12, 1932).

Furthermore, the colonial state facilitated the process of large scale landownership by devising a systematic support system of large landlords. The colonial state provided governmental subsidies and loans with low interest for land improvement. There existed a policy that restricted these benefits to a group of people who met a certain economic criterion. The colonial government provided subsidies only those who owned more than ten chŏngbo for land reclamation, more than thirty chŏngbo for irrigation improvement or land reclassification, and more than five thousand yen for construction expenses (*Chōsen sōtokufu nōrinkyoku* 1929: 31; Kawai 1983: 397). Due to this policy, most of the government subsidies and benefits were offered to either big companies such as the Oriental Development Company or landowners who owned enough land to satisfy those criteria, and therefore a majority of farmers with no land was largely excluded from the governmental financial aid. As a result, independent farmers and semi-tenants who owned small amounts of land tended to lose their land and became tenant farmers. In this way, the project for the improvement of rice production played a crucial role in the process of peasant dispossession and economic polarization in colonial Korea.

Figure 2: Change of Rural Household, 1913-1939



Source: Chōsen sōtokufu (*Nōgyō tōkeihyō*, 1937: 7-8; *Chōsa geppō*, vol. 12, no. 10, 1941: 28).

The number of semi-tenant farmers gradually decreased during the 1920s when the project was being carried out, whereas the number of tenant farmers proportionately increased. The process of peasant dispossession peaked in the economic situation of the Great Depression in the early 1930s. In contrast, the number of landlords did not significantly change throughout the colonial era. This indicates that the colonial economic project had varied effects on different social groups, largely facilitating peasant dispossession while consolidating large landownership.³⁰ To be sure, some Korean landlords lost their lands and the amount of Japanese landownership increased, whether by governmental funded organizations or private landowners. The fact that the number of landlords who owned more than 50 chōngbo and thus qualified as big landowners was

³⁰ Although Figure 2 does not provide the household ratio in the 1940s, another government source shows that there were only slight changes in the number of tenants, semi-tenants, and landed farmers from 1940 to 1942 (Chōsen sōtokufu 1943: 22). Therefore, it seems that the outbreak of the Pacific War did not result in any significant changes in the general trend shown in the figure.

2,832 in 1930, and about eighty percent of them were Koreans (Chang 1988: 232), however, indicates that Japanese colonial rule did not fundamentally create a large scale disruption of Korean landownership.

As peasant dispossession and economic polarization became intensified in the 1920s and 1930s, economic conflict between landlords and tenants further developed. Since the results of increased products from agricultural improvement went mostly to Japan and were not reinvested in colonial Korea to facilitate economic development, it was difficult for landlords to find alternative avenues to invest their profit. The underdevelopment of other industries thus led them to intensify economic control of peasant farmers. They tended to transfer the economic burden to tenants by increasing rent, depriving tenancy rights, or requesting tenants to pay the land tax, even though the land tax reform led landlords to carry the primary responsibility for land taxes. The tendency to transfer land tax responsibility to tenant farmers was prevalent particularly among Korean landlords.

Table 5: Tenant Disputes in South Chōlla Province, 1920-1921

Tenant Disputes		Tenancy	Rent	Land Tax	Etc.	Total
Korean Landlords	Frequency	1,004 (17.6)	3,404 (59.8)	1,269 (22.3)	15	5,692
	Participants	1050	4795	1349	15	7,209
Japanese Landlords	Frequency	30 (3.6)	794 (94.6)	5 (0.01)	10	839
	Participants	34	1624	5	10	1,673
Total	Frequency	1,034	4,198	1,274	25	6,531
	Participants	1,084	6,419	1,354	25	8,882

Source: Zenra nandō naimubu (1923: 112-13).

Table 5 shows the causes of tenant disputes in the South Chōlla Province in 1920 and 1921, where a significant number of Japanese landowners resided. Of 6,531 total tenant disputes in the region, 5,692 disputes occurred against Korean landlords and 839 against Japanese landowners. Most disputes, whether they were against Japanese or

Korean landlords, were related to rent issues (i.e. demanding rent deduction or opposing rent increases). Regarding the land tax and tenancy rights, however, the difference is significant. While thirty tenant disputes occurred because of tenancy rights against the Japanese, more than a thousand disputes related to tenancy took place against Koreans. Moreover, the issue of the land tax caused five tenant disputes against the Japanese, while it led to 1,269 disputes against Korean landlords, in which peasants demanded land tax payment be made by landlords.

With intensified economic pressure by landlords, the most severe economic burden was borne by tenant farmers. When landlords increased rents, some tenant farmers paid all or even more than what they produced (*Chosŏn ilbo*, March 28, 1931). The number of pure tenants increased in part because independent farmers and semi-tenants lost their lands through the colonial project and fell into a pure tenant position, in part due to the rapid population growth. The existence of a surplus rural population made it possible for landlords to arbitrarily shift land tenancy, thus accelerating the competition for tenancy among tenant farmers.³¹ As a result, the economic condition of tenants became exacerbated through the colonial economic project and landlords' control, while more lands became concentrated in the hands of a small number of big landlords.

While economic inequality among Koreans and the increasing poverty of peasants occurred as a general phenomenon throughout colonial Korea, regional variation to a certain degree also existed. In northern areas, social welfare was relatively equally distributed, for which the evolution of the small family, as opposed to the extended family system in southern regions, was partly responsible. In contrast, southern areas saw

³¹ The competition for tenancy became so intense that it sometimes brought about physical violence among tenant farmers themselves (*Tonga ilbo*, March 5, 1931).

the emergence of divisions between a few wealthy families and a large number of poor people. The different economic conditions of peasant farmers in the two places led to the fact that the immigration of the poor to Manchuria and other places took place in southern regions, especially the Kyōngsang provinces, in spite of the geographical distance (*Kaebŷök*, February 1922: 47; see also *Kaebŷök*, November 1922: 39). Furthermore, compared to northern regions where many independent farmers engaged with dry-field farming, southern areas, in which the majority of population was involved in rice production, saw a relatively intensive concentration of land ownership and economic inequality among Koreans (*Samch'ōlli*, January 1933: 66).

In sum, the agricultural economy in colonial Korea was largely reorganized through the intervention of the colonial government. Although the project for the improvement of rice production stimulated the development of agricultural production, it mainly served imperial interests by supplementing the dearth of provisions in Japan, hence generating “agricultural growth without development” in colonial Korea (Shin 1996: 43; see Suh 1978). Nevertheless, some Koreans, especially those with large scale land ownership, could accumulate wealth through the governmental subsidies and support, while a majority of Koreans experienced poverty and hunger. The increase of agricultural productivity without corresponding industrial development, therefore, led to a zero-sum relationship between landlords and peasants in colonial Korea in that the more colonial rural control became extractive, the more intense the internal conflict among Koreans. What is crucial in this process is that landlords and peasants came to no longer share the same economic interests against the colonial power, and they thus began to develop struggles against each other.

The Intensification of Tenant Disputes

Once the major institutional changes through the land cadastral survey and the revision of the land tax system in the 1910s began to be in effect in the 1920s, economic polarization and conflict between landlords and tenant farmers among Koreans began to emerge in the form of tenant disputes. Both the frequency and number of participants in tenant disputes, despite some fluctuation, generally increased throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Unlike radical peasant movements that exhibited a strong political characteristic under the leadership of leftists and radical nationalists, most tenant disputes stemmed from the economic demands by tenant farmers such as rent reduction, tenancy rights, and the transferred burden of land taxes and water fees by landlords. In particular, the issue of tenancy rights continued to be a major concern in tenant disputes throughout the period.

Table 6: Characteristics of Tenant Disputes, 1920-1939

Year	Frequency	Number of Participants	Participants per Dispute	Land Size per Dispute
1920	15	4,040	269.3	-
1921	27	2,967	109.9	-
1922	24	2,539	105.8	-
1923	176	9,063	51.5	-
1924	164	6,929	42.3	-
1925	204	4,002	19.6	-
1926	198	2,745	13.9	-
1927	275	3,973	14.4	93.6
1928	1,590	4,863	3.1	29.3
1929	423	5,419	12.8	192.0
1930	726	13,012	17.9	145.8
1931	667	10,282	15.4	92.0
1932	300	4,687	15.6	97.9
1933	1,975	10,337	5.3	28.2
1934	7,544	22,454	2.9	12.6
1935	25,834	58,019	2.0	6.2
1936	29,975	72,453	2.4	5.1
1937	31,799	77,515	2.4	6.5
1938	22,596	51,535	2.3	5.5
1939	16,452	37,017	2.3	5.5

Source: Chōsen sōtokufu nōrinkyoku (1940: 26-29).

Table 7: Causes of Tenant Disputes, 1920-1939

Year	Tenancy	Rent	Miscellaneous	Total
1920	1 (6.7%)	8 (53.3)	6 (40.0)	15 (100)
1921	4 (14.8)	16 (59.3)	7 (25.9)	27 (100)
1922	9 (37.5)	6 (25.0)	9 (37.5)	24 (100)
1923	117 (66.5)	37 (21.0)	22 (12.5)	176 (100)
1924	126 (76.8)	26 (15.9)	12 (7.3)	164 (100)
1925	-	-	-	204 (100)
1926	-	-	-	198 (100)
1927	219 (79.6)	51 (18.5)	5 (1.8)	275 (100)
1928	533 (33.5)	995 (62.6)	62 (3.9)	1,590 (100)
1929	330 (78.0)	70 (16.5)	23 (5.4)	423 (100)
1930	489 (67.4)	208 (28.7)	29 (4.0)	726 (100)
1931	281 (42.1)	265 (39.7)	121 (18.1)	667 (100)
1932	216 (72.0)	59 (19.7)	25 (8.3)	300 (100)
1933	1,480 (74.9)	389 (19.7)	106 (5.4)	1,975 (100)
1934	5,518 (73.1)	1,734 (23.0)	292 (3.9)	7,544 (100)
1935	20,877 (80.8)	4,307 (16.7)	650 (2.5)	25,834 (100)
1936	23,619 (78.8)	5,660 (18.9)	696 (2.3)	29,975 (100)
1937	26,469 (83.2)	4,821 (15.2)	509 (1.6)	31,799 (100)
1938	18,888 (83.6)	3,598 (15.9)	110 (0.5)	22,596 (100)
1939	13,281 (80.7)	2,974 (18.1)	197 (1.2)	16,452 (100)

Source: Chōsen sōtokufu keimukyoku (1933: 158); Chōsen sōtokufu nōrinkyoku (1940: 21-23).

To better understand the characteristics of tenant disputes, it is important to consider why the issue of tenant rights remained prevalent throughout the colonial period. As landlords treated their relationship with tenants as being more economic and contractual in nature after the implementation of private landownership, they tended to replace tenant farmers with those who were able to and willing to pay more rent. For tenant farmers in colonial Korea, where alternate employment opportunities in non-agricultural sectors were largely constrained, the confiscation of tenancy rights was considered as the “*deprivation of the right to live and a death sentence*” and therefore peasant problems were treated as a “*problem of human rights*” (*Kaebiyōk*, September 1921: 30; October 1924: 51-52; August 1925: 56, emphasis added). In this regard, tenant disputes related to tenancy rights can be seen as peasants’ desperate demand for their subsistence and right to live.

To be sure, it is possible for peasants to organize collective action in an attempt to increase their economic interests. If we consider the way in which tenant farmers viewed peasant movements and what it meant for them to participate in tenant disputes in colonial Korea at the time, however, we can see that several obstacles existed for tenant farmers to develop such an offensive mobilization. Traditional customs and ideas, especially those related to Confucianism that underscored the maintenance of the existing social order, as well as the political control by the colonial government, obstructed the effective mobilization of peasant movements. Although peasant movements certainly existed in the pre-colonial period, they broke out sporadically and mainly against corrupt government officials.

Furthermore, the unequal power relationship of tenant farmers with landlords made it difficult for tenants to stand against them. An article published in 1932 (*Pip'an*, February 1932: 63) describes the general view of tenant farmers on peasant movements through their psychological perspective as follows:

If rent is reduced and tenancy rights are guaranteed, there would be nothing better. But, the other party is landlords. Does it make sense for us who have no money to struggle against wealthy landlords? There is no doubt that they will defeat us. If it is so easy for a whole village or township to be united to fight against landlords, why do we [still] have this kind of life? Even if our village would develop such a struggle, what if people come from other villages and take our tenancy rights?

Considering the importance of tenancy as a primary source of family support, and that it was under the control of landlords, it is understandable that peasants considered tenant disputes against landlords as a last resort for the protection of their living condition. Seen from the tenant farmers' view, the cost of participating in peasant movements far exceeded its uncertain benefits in that they had to risk the source of

subsistence of their family. In this case, it seems plausible to regard the participation in peasant movements, especially tenant disputes related to tenancy rights, as an attempt to protect peasants' livelihood, rather than to promote further economic improvement.

The economic conditions are primarily responsible for the emergence of tenant disputes and yet the establishment of various social organizations also played a critical role in mobilizing peasant movements. While peasant organizations tended to exhibit mainly conservative characteristics in the early 1920s, they were gradually radicalized with the help of nationalists and leftists activists.³² One of the first organizations that promoted peasant movements was the National Labor Mutual Aid Association (*Chosŏn nodong kongjehoe*), which was established in 1920. Based on social reformism, the organization focused on activities for the enlightenment of farmers and the improvement of the relationship between landlords and tenants. After the dissolution of the association, nationalists mobilized peasants mainly through the Korean Peasant Society (*Chosŏn nongminsŏ*), which was formed in 1925. Developing more than 3,000 organizations with about 200,000 members until 1933, the society concentrated their activities on the enlightenment of peasants by publishing journals and constructing night-schools (Cho 1979: 169-83).

Along with nationalists, socialists began to mobilize the peasants and they established another nation-wide organization, the United Coalition of Peasants and Workers in Korea (*Chosŏn nonong ch'ong tongmaeng*) in 1924, which was divided into the United Coalition of Korean Peasants (*Chosŏn nongmin ch'ong tongmeang*) and the

³² The Korean Tenants' Mutual Aid Association (*Chosŏn sojagin sangjohoe*), for example, is one of the conservative peasant organizations in the early 1920s. It was established in 1920 by a Korean landlord, Song Pyŏng-jun, to promote the cooperative relationship of tenant farmers not only with landlords but also with the colonial regime.

United Coalition of Korean Workers (*Chosŏn nodong ch'ong tongmeang*) in 1927.

Influenced by socialist and communist ideologies, these organizations highlighted class struggles. Unlike moderate nationalists who emphasized a cooperative relationship between landlords and tenant farmers, leftists were actively involved in mobilizing peasants and workers into social movements to achieve their rights. Through peasant movements, for example, they tried to resolve tenancy issues by organizing more specific demands such as the guarantee of tenancy rights, maximum thirty percent of harvest as rent, and the abolition of arbitrary exploitation.

Contrary to the organizations for peasants and workers, in which nationalist and socialist activists played a leading role, the organizations for landlords were developed through the active involvement of the Government-General. In fact, the colonial state began to establish landlord associations (*chijuhoe*) in local regions as early as the 1910s. County chiefs became the representatives of landlord associations and people who owned more than ten chŏngbo could become eligible for membership. By 1920, 124 landlord associations were set up with about 93,000 members (Mun 1961: 38). Though the colonial state could enhance the organizational capacity of landlords, its coercive rule failed to penetrate into local societies and to promote active participation from general members. This led the Government-General to found agricultural associations (*nonghoe*) in 1919 by integrating existing organizations, including the associations for landlords, in order to enhance effective governance of rural areas. Further, it began to hold various forms of meetings with landlords including large scale official meetings, in which the colonial governor met with landlords, and small informal gatherings to promote landlords' support for governmental activities. The colonial state's effort to integrate

landlords into the colonial system and to reorganize agricultural societies culminated in the enactment of the Agricultural Association Ordinance (*Chosŏn nonghoeryŏng*) in 1926.

The establishment of agricultural associations by the colonial government in Korea was based on the Japanese model, but there was a critical difference. While the associations in Japan were organized at the township level and incorporated peasant organizations, those in colonial Korea were set up at the county level with top-down control. Furthermore, unlike Japan where board members for the associations were elected through the direct participation of members, the Government-General maintained the right to appoint executive officers in Korea (Hori 1983: 335). The Agricultural Association Ordinance was enacted in 1926 when the Project for the Improvement of Rice Production was revised. This demonstrates that the primary purpose of the agricultural associations in colonial Korea was to facilitate governmental projects with the help of local landlords. Although the membership of the association was extended to include independent farmers and tenants as well as landlords, government officials and landlords dominated the actual activities of the organization.

In addition to government-led organizations, informal organizations were constructed by landlords themselves. These private landlord societies shared similar characteristics with government-directed organizations in that the main goal of the organizations was to sustain effective rural control, especially over peasant farmers. What is critical in the formation of private landlord organizations is the fact that landlords began to voluntarily organize themselves in reaction to peasants' demands for tenancy issues. When tenant disputes occurred, landlords in a given local area built their association to collectively resist peasants' requests as represented in tenant disputes (Chi

1993: 81). In this way, peasant movements facilitated the organizations for landlords as well as those for peasants and each group collectively sought their conflicting economic interests.

Through their own organizations including associations for landlords and agricultural associations, landlords protected their interests and opposed peasant movements. They claimed that “tenant disputes are a kind of impulsive behavior which has to be forbidden in the current agricultural conditions of Korea. Tenants should never be allowed to lead an ideological development for peasant movements” (*Kaebyoŏk*, March 1923: 59). By organizing associations for landlords, they became connected to local government offices, which in turn provided them with political protection and financial aid. In addition, landlords in different regions were able to contact one another and to share important information through the landlord associations (Hong 1992: 58). Utilizing this organizational capacity, therefore, landlords could organize themselves against peasants in a more collective and effective way by devising methods to prevent tenant disputes and by building countermeasures when the disputes erupted.

The ways in which organizations for peasants and landlords developed show some significant differences. While peasants developed their own organizations with the help of nationalist and leftist activists, it was the colonial government that initiated and actively promoted landlord organizations. This implies more than the difference between top-down and bottom-up patterns of mobilization. More importantly, it suggests that the position of the colonial government regarding the relationship between peasants and landlords as a group became embedded in the organizational forms that developed. When peasant movements began and landlords responded by seeking organizational support,

peasants came to confront landlords along with the colonial state. In this way, the organizations for each group facilitated not only collective confrontation between peasants and landlords but also contrasting relationships with the colonial government.

In addition to the indirect assistance through the landlord's associations, the colonial government began to appear as a direct supporter of landlords against peasants through police intervention. In 1922, for instance, thirty-three tenants who were affiliated with the local branch of the National Labor Mutual Aid Association in Chinju County in the South Kyōngsang Province mobilized a tenant dispute, demanding that the landlord pay the land tax and lower tenancy rent. In response, the landlord insisted that the tenants should pay the same amount of rent as before and threatened them with the disposal of their tenancy rights. As the members of the association refused the request, the landlord appealed to the police and the dispute was concluded with the arrest of the tenants by the police (Chōsen sōtokufu kanbo bunshoka 1926: 23-24).

Through the revision of tax ordinances, the colonial government already shifted the collective tax responsibility to landlords who began to have exclusive private landownership. The tenants' demand for land tax payment by the landlord thus can be seen as their legitimate legal right under the colonial system. When the colonial police became involved with the dispute, however, they were judged by another legal measure that prohibited illegal collective behavior. In this regard, this case of a tenant dispute reveals the fact that while Koreans were subjected to the colonial state that was based on "the legalities of exclusion and the politics of difference" (Comaroff 1998: 343) between the Japanese and Koreans, the double standard of legal application and exclusionary politics also existed even among different groups of Korean along the lines of economic

and political status.

Another case illustrates the way in which tenant disputes provided an opportunity for peasants to recognize the cooperative relationship between landlords and the police force. In 1925, peasants in Chindo County of the South Chōlla Province mobilized a large scale protest against a small group of Korean landlords. Although the movement was initially sparked by the landlords' demand for higher rent, peasants also pointed out the responsibility of the Japanese colonial state for their miserable economic conditions. For the state's reform of private landownership made possible the landlords' unjust treatment of peasants which in turn put them in a vulnerable position. As a result, the peasants developed their criticism against the Japanese and at the same time claimed that "*Korean landlords are the same as the Japanese and we must exclude them*" (Chōsen sōtokufu kanbo bunshoka 1926: 30, emphasis added).

As peasant farmers stood together against the landlords for several months, police intervention followed the requests of the landlords. The police chief justified its intervening role by stating that "the government is the parent of the people and therefore we would not ask you to do something unreasonable," and he asked the tenants to pay all rents to the landlords as requested. When the tenants refused to do so because that payment would endanger the subsistence of their families, they faced physical attack by the police. The tenants were released from the police station only after they submitted a coerced written consent. People complained that "the police exist only for landlords, not for the people, and it was established by wealthy men, not by the government" (*Sidae ilbo*, January 28, 1925).

As this case of tenant disputes elucidates, what peasants experienced through the

process of tenant disputes was not simply conflicting economic interests with landlords. Even though they recognized that the colonial state was also responsible for their miserable economic conditions, when they faced Korean landlords cooperating with the colonial power to protect their economic interests at the expense of tenant farmers' subsistence, they came to identify Korean landlords with the Japanese and developed an exclusionary manner.

Indeed, an article published in *Kaebŷŏk* (February 1923: 49), a representative nationalist magazine in the 1920s, lamented the increasing social conflicts among Koreans by stating “[while] the enemy of the [national] movement exists mainly outside, social movements have their enemy both inside and outside [of the nation]. People, who share the same blood and use the same language, fight against each other through social movements.” Reflecting a growing concern with the shift of economic antagonism into national disintegration among Koreans, another article in the same magazine (*Kaebŷŏk*, April 1923: 70-71) noted:

In the South Kyŏngsang Province, where there is a great degree of economic inequality, a small number of rich people control the majority of people who are not satisfied with their tough lives anymore as they used to be before. They voluntarily organize anti-wealthy movements such as the tenant movement. The rich are somewhat feared and request the government authority to protect them. [...] This tendency to solicit the government power leads them to be pro-Japanese for themselves. Consequently, economic antagonism becomes intensified and *the majority of poor people consider a few wealthy people as if they are different nationals*” (emphasis added).

It should not be assumed, however, that tenant disputes always accompanied the intervention of the colonial power in favor of the landlords. As far as tenant disputes remained concerned with economic conflict, especially among Koreans, it was not necessary for the colonial government to intervene. The colonial state took action

particularly when the movements began to take a large scale and violent form. Moreover, the Government-General did not always support the landlords against the peasants, since its unconditional support for landlords could also stimulate the development of anti-colonialism among peasants. When the intervention of the colonial power in peasant movements occurred, therefore, it sought its own interest of political security.

One of the exemplary cases of how the colonial government attempted to take a mediating role to maintain political order can be found in the tenant movement on Amt'ae island. The tenant dispute on Amt'ae island in the South Chölla Province, one of the largest tenant disputes during the colonial period, took place in August 1923 when tenants organized their association in the region and demanded rent reduction from a Korean landlord. The landlord's denial was followed by the tenants' refusal to harvest and to pay rent. Not achieving their request until the next spring, the tenants continued to protest by making a collective condemnation of the landlord in a township meeting and by destroying even the commemorative monument of the landlord's father (*Tonga ilbo*, April 4, 1924). As the movement continued, the police force began to intervene, which led to a violent clash between the tenants and the police, and leaders of the tenants' association were arrested. The movement was not concluded until August 1924 when the landlord and tenants agreed with the forty percent of harvest as rent adjustment as originally requested by the tenants (*Tonga ilbo*, September 2, 1924).

The colonial government tended to oppress the movement when it was initially mobilized. As violent conflict with the colonial power for an extended period provoked a stronger reaction from the participants of the protest, the movement received nation-wide attention and support. When the leaders of the tenant association were put into prison, for

example; about four hundred tenants organized a movement for their release (*Tonga ilbo*, June 6, 1924) and sympathetic people in other regions supported the movement by sending money and rice for the tenant farmers and the leaders in prison (*Tonga ilbo*, July 19; August 7, 24, 26; September 20, 1924). Even though the tenant dispute broke out against a Korean landlord, the political control by the colonial government largely provoked nationalist support for the movement. In this condition, it became more important for the colonial state to resolve the issue and to terminate the movement as soon as possible in order to prevent it from further developing into a large scale political eruption of an anti-colonial movement than to protect the landlord's individual property. As a result, tenants could achieve their original demand from the landlord through the mediation of the colonial police.

Another important point to note in the peasant movement on Amt'ae island is that the peasants attacked their landlord through a collective denouncement in a mass meeting as well as through physical violence. Considering that using moral blame in a face-to-face agrarian local community is one of the most potent weapons held by peasants (Scott 1985), it is not surprising that tenant farmers relied on such a strategy, especially against Korean landlords. Indeed, such a phrase as "evil landlords" (*akchiju*) repeatedly appeared in newspapers and magazines reporting specific tenant disputes or the general condition of agricultural problems. In particular, those landlords were often characterized as "evil landlords," who made demands against peasants by excessively increasing rents or arbitrarily withdrawing their tenancy and some of them were considered as even worse than the Japanese (*Tonga ilbo*, April 28, 1925). When farmers' associations were organized, therefore, their resolutions tended to include making a list of

evil landlords and the investigation of their misdeeds (*Tonga ilbo*, October 6, 1925; October 29, 1928).³³

It is worth noting that the phrase “evil landlords” usually referred to Korean landlords and was rarely used in describing the Japanese. It is not clear if people also referred to the Japanese with the same terms and newspapers did not report such cases. Whether the Japanese were characterized as evil landlords or not, however, it would not be surprising that people criticized Japanese landlords who pursued their maximum profit against Korean peasants in the colonial situation. Rather, the point here lies in the fact that Korean landlords, who sought their own economic interests at the expense of the livelihood of peasants, were morally blamed and collectively resisted. Once landlords, who were traditionally considered as local leaders in a rural community in the pre-colonial period, began to pursue their profit without considering their tenant farmers, they were viewed as “evil landlords.” Although tenant farmers recognized the role and responsibility of colonial institutions for reorganizing economic principles in colonial Korea, landlords’ behavioral changes raised an immediate threat for their survival to the degree that they had to leave for another region such as Manchuria. In this sense, conflict between landlords and tenant farmers reflected not only their different economic position but also the social disintegration of local communities.

In short, as the nature of the relationship between landlords and tenants shifted toward a more contractual and zero-sum character within the colonial system, each group developed their own collective organizations. Responding to landlords’ demands for

³³ It is worth noting that the colonial state also made a black list of evil landlords and imposed governmental sanctions, especially after the exacerbated economic conditions became a critical issue in maintaining the colonial system (*Tonga ilbo*, April 20, 1931; February 27, 1935; April 17, 1940).

higher rent and replacement of tenancy rights, tenant farmers began to mobilize tenant disputes and developed collective resistance and methods of moral blame, especially against Korean landlords who sought their own economic interests at the expense of tenant farmers and received protection by the colonial government. While supporting landlords in general, the Government-General also sought its own political interest of maintaining colonial order. This mediating role of the colonial state in conflicts between landlords and peasants became officially institutionalized through another project for rural control in the 1930s.

The Colonial State as an Arbiter of Internal Boundaries

As the Great Depression extended around the world, the Japanese economic problems also became exacerbated in the late 1920s. When colonial economic policies were modified to protect the economy in imperial Japan from the international economic crisis, colonial Korea experienced another economic reorganization accordingly. Responding to the agricultural depression, Japan sought to reduce the grain influx from outside so as to alleviate the economic crisis in rural areas by enacting such legal amendments as the Ordinance for the Restriction of Foreign Rice Influx in 1928. The colonial regime enhanced agricultural productivity through the Project for the Improvement of Rice Production and a significant amount of rice went to Japan in the 1920s. As the large amount of rice and grain products that previously went to Japan began to accumulate in Korea, the price of agricultural products dropped significantly. Rice production in 1930, for instance, increased by approximately 5.5 million sŏk in 1930 (about forty percent) from the previous year (*Tonggwang*, June 1931: 3), and the price of

rice in 1930 was less than the half the price in 1926. The unit price of rice in 1926 was 30.07 chŏn, which decreased to 13.12 chŏn in 1930 (Chōsen sōtokufu, *Chōsa geppō*, vol. 2, no. 10, 1932: 61).

Table 8: Number of Land Tax Payment Obligators, 1928-1934

		1928	1930	1932	1934
More than 50 chŏngbo	Koreans	1,996	1,920	1,985	2,205
	Japanese	1,206	1,224	1,326	1,357
10-50 chŏngbo	Koreans	47,439	46,173	43,802	43,542
	Japanese	4,683	5,278	5,803	5,896
5-10 chŏngbo	Koreans	120,076	125,491	109,764	104,880
	Japanese	4,772	5,451	6,075	6,496
1-5 chŏngbo	Koreans	1,030,113	1,018,540	978,540	933,459
	Japanese	20,003	24,069	27,443	28,175
Less than 1 chŏngbo	Koreans	2,621,784	2,783,226	2,920,065	2,567,086
	Japanese	37,822	56,945	62,745	65,174
Total	Koreans	3,821,408	3,975,350	4,054,156	3,651,172
	Japanese	68,486	92,967	103,392	107,098
	Total	3,889,864	4,068,317	4,157,548	3,758,270

Source: Kobayakawa (1944: 215).

The consequences of agricultural depression in colonial Korea, however, differed not only by nationality but also by class status. Table 8 shows how the number of land tax payment obligators changed around the period of the agricultural depression, from which we can estimate the change of landownership by nationality. The difference between Japanese and Koreans in their landownership is that Japanese landownership increased regardless of land size, whereas Korean landownership expanded in a large and small size of lands (more than 50 chŏngbo and less than 1 chŏngbo) and declined in-between (1-50 chŏngbo).³⁴ The fact that Korean landlords, other than those who were able to accumulate more than 50 chŏngbo, also experienced the deprivation of land shows their

³⁴ One exception is that the number of small landlords increased between 1928 and 1930. Yet, it is also possible that the increase of small landlords reflected the division of big landlords, rather than the upward mobility of landed farmers. An article published in *Tonggwang* (April 1931: 24) notes that some landlords divided their lands through their children to escape various fees.

vulnerable economic position in the colonial period. The contrasting economic conditions of landlords and peasants is represented well in the fact that the average amount of rice for a landowner household was 62.29 sŏk, whereas semi-tenant and tenant households obtained 6.59 and 2.23 sŏk, respectively, in the early 1930s (Kawai 1983: 398).

Landlords reacted to this changing economic circumstance by intensifying their control of tenant farmers. The methods that they employed in the previous decade, such as the increase of rent, withdrawal of tenancy, and shift of land tax or utility bills, were largely reinforced. The number of tenancy withdrawals, for instance, was about 240,000 for only one year from October 1929 to September 1930 (Chōsen sŏtokufu 1932: 87). In 1930, about eighty percent of landlords shifted land tax responsibility to tenants in southern areas such as in Kyōngsang, North Ch'ungch'ōng, and North Chōlla provinces (Chōsen sŏtokufu 1932: 560). Moreover, an investigation conducted in 1930 indicates that about eighty percent of rent contracts had no fixed tenancy term, which in turn suggests that the landowner, if necessary, could evict the tenant at any time (Grajdanzev 1944: 124).

Such intense measures of tenant control were utilized by landlords in general. For small landowners, those methods were mainly defensive measures in that they relied on them so as not to fall into a semi or pure tenant position. In some cases, if landlords paid all expenses by themselves, including the land tax, water tax, household tax, and union dues, they would have had to spend most of their income. Indeed, some landlords, mostly small landholders, spent more than eighty percent of the rent they received from tenants for various taxes and expenses such as utility bills (*Tonggwang*, April 1931: 24). For large landowners, the same methods were used for the maximization of their profit.

For instance, Koch'ang Kims, one of the wealthiest landlords during the colonial period, relied on the maximization of rent from tenants as their farmland management strategy. The Kim family also took profit from tenant farmers by changing tenancy, by transferring their land taxes onto them, and by implementing a fixed rent system, rather than allowing sharecropping on its lands (Kim 1978: 81-118; Eckert 1991: 22). By increasing their profit through farmland management and government subsidies, the Kim family was able to develop the Kyöngsöng Spinning Company, one of the biggest Korean-owned companies under Japanese dominance.³⁵

To satisfy the landlords' demand of rent increase, tenants in turn relied on usury. If they failed to meet the rent increase, their tenancy rights would be withdrawn and the whole family would be left without any source of income. Thus they depended on usury and most peasants came to be buried under debt. More than seventy-five percent of agricultural households depended on usury due to financial deficit and the average farm household debt was more than six-fold of the annual income (*Kaebiyök*, October 1924: 51). In 1931, the total amount of private debt exceeded one hundred million yen. This estimation was solely based on private loans and if other transactions such as with banks and irrigation associations were included, the number would rise more than five times (*Tonga ilbo*, June 11, 1932). Even though both landlords and tenant farmers experienced debt, the reasons that they needed to loan money were different. While big landlords sought to gain financial sources to purchase more land and to carry out agricultural improvement, most peasant farmers had to depend on it to maintain their minimal

³⁵ The amount of government subsidies to the Kyöngsöng Spinning Company was 16,042 yen in 1923, 19,250 in 1924, and 28,000 in 1925, which exceeded ten percent of the total paid-in capital and continued until 1935 (Kim 1978: 126).

subsistence (Chōsen sōtokufu 1932: 143-44).

According to a colonial government document, which is based on the survey of the living condition in the South Chōlla Province in 1932, there were several main factors that exacerbated the poverty of the poor, such as land amalgamation and the problem of the tenancy system, increasing economic burden and debt of tenant farmers, flaws in the system of financial institutions, lack of arable land and its disproportion, and decrease of agricultural profits. What was more, financial institutions provided funds almost exclusively to landlords (3,000 households), independent farmers (10,160 households), and semi-tenant farmers (50,800 households). Consequently, tenant farmers (160,000 households) had to rely on usury (Kim 2003: 62-63). An article published in 1931 (*Samch'ōlli*, June 1931: 22) describes that debt payments for peasant farmers who were already under an economic deficit was like “squeezing water from dry trees” and lamented that increasing pressure for debt payment led to nighttime getaways and even suicides among peasants.

As a consequence, the economic condition of tenant farmers became more and more devastated, threatening their own subsistence. More than sixty percent of total tenant-farm households were short of even the minimum amount of food required for an adequate diet, thus almost leading to a condition of famine in the early 1930s. It was estimated that approximately forty-three kinds of wild grass were used by the Korean farmers to supplement their shortage of food (Suzuki 1938: 456). In fact, while 81 cases of illegally “felling forest trees by stealth” were brought into court in 1911, the number of cases increased to 5,570 in 1936 (Grajdanzev 1944: 254). This economic change is primarily responsible for the collapse of semi-tenant households and the considerable

increase of tenant disputes shown in Figure 2.

As the economic condition of peasants worsened, peasant organizations and movements escalated both in frequency and in their degree of violence. The number of peasant organizations increased more than ten times from 119 in 1926 to 1,759 in 1931 (Chōsen sōtokufu keimukyoku 1934: 168-69). Moreover, an aggressive and radical peasant movement began to develop in the late 1920s in the form of the Red Peasant Union (*chōksaek nongmin chohap*), which was largely mobilized by leftist activists. While tenant disputes were primarily based on economic issues and embraced moderate tactics in the form of petitions to the government, famine alliance, and compromise in the early 1920s, red peasant union movements directly opposed the Japanese colonial domination and attacked government offices and facilities, thus developing into a more violent and non-compromising movement (Nongrim sinmunsa 1949: 336).

The intensification of tenant disputes and the emergence of radical social movements posed a critical challenge to the colonial government, especially due to the possibility that they could develop into a large scale anti-colonial movement. To maintain political security, therefore, the colonial state suppressed radical leftist movements, while attempting to alleviate the economic conditions that caused tenant disputes, thus integrating rural areas into the colonial system. After all, the ultimate goal of the colonial state in its policy change lay in the effective control of colonial society, rather than exclusively securing the economic interests of either landlords or tenants.³⁶ To this end, the Government-General implemented the Rural Revitalization Campaign (*Nosōn shinkō undō* in Japanese and *Nongch'on chinhŭng undong* in Korean). Regarding the

³⁶ Shin and Han (1999) conceptualize the agrarian policies of the Government-General in the 1930s, represented by the Rural Revitalization Campaign, as “colonial corporatism.”

relationship of tenant farmers and landlords, of particular importance in the campaign are the Tenancy Arbitration Ordinance (*sojak chojŏngryŏng*) in 1932 and the Land Ordinance (*nongjiryŏng*) in 1934. The main purpose of the Tenancy Arbitration Ordinance was to resolve tenant disputes within the colonial legal system so that they did not develop into more radical political movements. With the enactment of the ordinance, the colonial regime established tenancy arbitration committees in local regions to resolve tenancy disputes.

The importance of the ordinance lies in the fact that the colonial government officially began to perform the role of mediator between landlords and tenant farmers. Given the fact that the primary purpose of the ordinance was to achieve rural stability, and that most tenant disputes occurred between Korean peasants and landlords, we can consider that the colonial regime became an arbiter of internal boundaries through the enactment of the ordinance. Although the intervention of the colonial government in tenant disputes occurred in the 1920s well before the ordinance was implemented, especially when they developed into a violent form, the relationship between landlords and tenants was viewed as a private matter and thus it was primarily governed by the civil code that prioritized private ownership over customary rights. In this context, peasants remained in a vulnerable position in their relationship with landlords who exclusively controlled tenancy conditions. Once the ordinance was enacted, however, their relationship became mediated by the colonial government, through which tenants could also seek governmental support and protection.

This becomes clear when we consider the specific regulations contained in the Land Ordinance that imposed certain restrictions on landlords' control of tenant farmers.

What is particularly significant is that the ordinance provided tenant farmers with legal protection of their tenancy rights. According to the ordinance, tenancy terms should last at least three years and landlords were obliged to renew them as far as tenants did not conduct any misdeeds such as sterilizing lands or deferring rent payment on purpose. Unless landlords informed tenants of the refusal of tenancy renewal at least three months before the tenancy term was expired, the tenancy had to be automatically renewed. Thus the arbitrary change of tenancy rights by landlords, which had been widespread and which seriously threatened tenant farmers' livelihood, became prohibited and tenancy rights became a "real" right with the enactment of the ordinance (*Chosŏn ilbo*, December 14, 1934).

Considering that these legal changes by the colonial government could be seen as the significant enhancement of the tenants' position in their relationship with landlords by providing tenants with the right to negotiate with them, it is not surprising that the landlords organized a national meeting and announced their collective opposition to the enactment of the Tenancy Arbitration Ordinance. In the current economic conditions, they claimed, it was too early to introduce such a legal change in colonial Korea that was not even implemented in Japan (*Chosŏn chungang ilbo*, November 22, 1933; *Kaebŷŏk*, December 1934: 40). Furthermore, landlords also came up with various countermeasures to mitigate the negative effect of the Land Ordinance on their interests. Since the ordinance did not regulate the maximum amount of rent, some landlords demanded even eighty to ninety percent of products as rent from their tenants with the reasoning that they became solely responsible for the land tax (*Chosŏn chungang ilbo*, October 24, 1934). In addition, after the enactment of the Land Ordinance, some landlords let trust companies

manage their lands to avoid direct confrontation with tenants and their disputes (*Tonga ilbo*, July 17, 1935). Also, landlords began to evade the law by demanding tenants evacuate their houses (*Chosŏn ilbo*, January 13, 1936). Since tenant farmers usually had to rent the house with the farm land from landlords, if the landlords requested them to move out of the house for any reason, they had no choice but to give up their place to live and tenancy rights as well. In this case, no legal measures existed to protect tenants.

The enactment of the legal measures itself for the protection of tenants' economic rights certainly signified a critical change. It is clear that the ordinances provided tenant farmers with previously unavailable legal sources to demand their rights. Indeed, tenant disputes significantly increased after the enactment of the ordinance. Once the Tenancy Arbitration Ordinance was enacted, the number of tenant disputes considerably escalated from 300 in 1932 to 1,975 in 1933 and after the enactment of the Land Ordinance, the number increased to 25,834 in 1934 (see Table 6). Of the tenancy disputes based on the Tenancy Arbitration Ordinance in 1935, about ninety percent of disputes were raised by tenants because of a tenancy issue, eighty percent of which were resolved by tenancy committees (*Chosŏn chungang ilbo*, April 1, 1936).

However, the economic condition of tenant farmers and their position in relationship with landlords could not be fundamentally altered by the ordinances. Though tenant farmers came to be guaranteed tenancy rights for three years at least, the ordinances included no regulation on other problems such as excessive rent increases and shifts of land tax responsibility or transfer of rent and transportation fees to tenants by landlords (Chŏng 1990: 255; Kim 1991: 300). Even if landlords abided by the ordinances, therefore, they were still able to shift the economic burden to their tenant farmers. Also

problematic was that the ordinance did not even completely obstruct the confiscation of tenancy rights. Landlords either ignored the ordinance by utilizing the fact that some tenants were not aware of the implementation of the Land Ordinance or they arbitrarily interpreted the article that landlords could withdraw tenancy in case of tenants' acts of betrayal. When tenants did not know the specific meaning of the Land Ordinance, they tended to accept the landlord's demand without any resistance (*Tonga ilbo*, January 19, 1935; February 27, 1935).

The fact that a majority (about eighty percent) of tenant disputes took place because of tenancy issues even after 1935 when the Land Ordinance began to be in effect indicates that landlords continued to arbitrarily change tenancy and tenant farmers in turn struggled for their rights by utilizing the available legal sources. The enactment of the ordinance was thus criticized as the simple legalization of the rights that landlords already had before. As an alternative, it was suggested that the ordinance should contain such specific guidelines and regulation for the official rate for maximum rent, payment in money, and the protection of the right for collective bargaining and the right to strike, and guarantee of tenancy rights for seven to eight years at least (*Tonggwang*, September 1932: 4-5).

What is important to note here is that tenant disputes between Korean landlords and tenant farmers not only comprised the most disputes but also gradually increased during the period. When the Tenancy Arbitrary Ordinance began to be in effect, tenant disputes among Koreans constituted about eighty percent in 1933, which increased into more than ninety percent in 1936.

Table 9: Tenant Disputes by Nationality, 1933-1936

Tenant Disputes	1933	1934	1935	1936
Between Japanese	12 (0.6%)	4 (0.1)	13 (0.1)	13 (0.1)
Between Koreans	1,584 (80.2)	6,360 (84.3)	22,810 (88.3)	28,008 (93.4)
Between Japanese and Koreans	379 (19.2)	1,178 (15.6)	2,997 (11.6)	1,948 (6.5)
Etc.	-	2 (0.0)	14 (0.0)	6 (0.0)
Total	1,975 (100)	7,544 (100)	25,834 (100)	29,975 (100)

Source: Chōsen sōtokufu nōrinkyoku (1938: 36).

This trend of tenant disputes signifies that the majority of Korean peasants mobilized their demands for the right to live in opposition to Korean landlords through the intervention of the colonial government. This leads us to reconsider the tendency to identify peasant movements in colonial Korea as simply anti-colonial struggle. The idea behind this perspective is that because Japanese landlords were nothing but the embodiment of the imperialist invasion and Korean landlords were a leading partner of the Government-General for its colonial rule, the struggles against these landlords inevitably developed into political movements against the Japanese imperial power (see Asada 1984: 37-38).

Certainly, there existed peasant movements in colonial Korea, which had a strong political characteristic of anti-colonial struggle, especially in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It is problematic, however, to assume that peasant movements necessarily led to anti-colonial political struggles, especially if we consider tenant disputes. By identifying Korean landlords in general as the supporter of imperial power, this perspective fails to explain the internal conflicts among the indigenous people. Just as with the bifurcated conceptual categories of colonizer and colonized, the binary distinction between the Japanese imperial power and anti-colonial Korean peasants obscures relational dynamics not only between landlords and peasants, but also among tenant farmers themselves. To

achieve a more comprehensive understanding of peasant movements and rural relational changes in colonial Korea, therefore, we need to consider how the internal conflicts among the Korean people themselves emerged, developed, and then became mediated by the colonial government, rather than simplifying agricultural conflict as taking place between the imperial power and indigenous peasants.

Another significant repercussion of the ordinances can be found in the individualization of tenant disputes. While tenant disputes in the 1920s usually took the form of collective movements, albeit to varying degrees, they were characterized by individual legal arbitration after the enactment of the ordinances in the 1930s. After the ordinances began to be in effect, for example, both the number of participants per dispute decreased from 15.4 in 1931 to 2 in 1935 and the amount of land declined from 92 chŏngbo to 6 chŏngbo for the same period (see Table 7). It is in this way that the colonial government could achieve its goal of preventing tenant disputes from developing into a large scale political movement, thus integrating rural societies into the colonial system.

With the outbreak of the Pacific War, the colonial regime significantly intensified rural control. Due to the Japanese demand for rice and labor for the war effort, the Government-General revised the existing legal measures and implemented a series of new programs of rural control and resource mobilization. The coercive grain collection program, which was introduced in 1939, for example, further exacerbated rural poverty. From 1939 to 1945, the colonial state collected about forty to sixty percent of total rice production and around fifteen to thirty-eight percent of grain production in Korea (Chŏng 1987: 862). As a consequence, economic conditions in Korea became aggravated under the war condition in the 1940s. Even though rural conflicts did not develop into large

scale social movements at the time in part because of the worsened economic conditions in general and in part due to the strong control by the colonial government, the rural relationships that were developed throughout the colonial period between Korean peasants and landlords became one of critical sources of internal conflict in the later U.S. occupation period.

Conclusion

The reorganization of the rural economy in colonial Korea occurred through the dynamic interaction between the colonial government and diverse indigenous groups. The Government-General implemented a series of legal changes and colonial economic projects to meet the demands of imperial Japan. In doing so, the colonial government certainly set economic rationalization into motion in Korea. However, the direction of change was not solely determined by the Japanese. As the legal enforcement of private ownership uprooted the previously practiced communal rights, both landlords and peasants sought their own economic rights and became enemies in opposition to each other for their own subsistence or economic profit, while seeking political support and protection from the colonial state that they had collectively resisted before. This in turn led the colonial state to take the position as an internal arbiter between them, rather than acting simply as a super-imposed government structure. Through the process of modifying its governing policies, the colonial regime attempted to integrate the indigenous society into the colonial system.

Whether colonial or not, the transition of an agrarian society into a market economic system is generally accompanied by social disruption and thus it is not a

peculiar characteristic of colonial society that people in socially vulnerable positions suffer from the burden of economic modernization processes (see Moore 1966; Polanyi 2001). In this regard, the relational change and subsequent economic conflict between landlords and peasants in colonial Korea may not be particularly surprising. What is rather crucial is the social and cultural consequences that these relational shifts generated. The fact that tenant farmers collectively blamed and considered Korean landlords who pursued only their benefits as “evil landlords,” “pro-Japanese,” or even worse than the Japanese reveals how economic conflict disrupted the common membership and identity they previously shared in the local community. This societal fragmentation through colonial economic extraction and mobilization is one aspect of the “social dislocation” that Korea experienced through the introduction of market economic principles during the Japanese colonial period.

The articulation and reconstruction of internal conflict among the Korean people thus leads us to reconsider the result of economic rationalization. Considering that the majority of the population engaged with agriculture throughout the colonial period, the development of internal conflict through colonial rural policy is important for understanding the everyday lived experience that Koreans underwent during the Japanese colonial period. To the extent that the relational changes were the product of both colonial policies and the interaction of different groups with the colonial government, examining the emergence and continuous evolution of internal conflict among Koreans enables us to overcome the usual sweeping generalizations about modernization or exploitation by the Japanese. The fact that the majority of tenant disputes occurred among Koreans, for example, suggests that what Koreans commonly experienced during the colonial period

was not merely the discrimination and suppression by the Japanese but also confrontation and contestation with other Koreans.

The political and economic conflict among Koreans that was nurtured under the colonial regime, however, could have been mitigated through the development of nationalism and anti-colonialism. For institutional changes led by the colonial state, after all, played an important role in shaping internal boundaries within the indigenous community. If anti-colonial nationalist discourses largely provoked collective identity formation and solidarity among Koreans by identifying the Japanese as the enemy of the nation, internal tension could have been alleviated and redirected to anti-colonial resistance. In the next chapter, it is examined why this was not the case in colonial Korea and instead how nationalist narratives further intensified ideological contention among Koreans.

CHAPTER IV

THE DYNAMICS OF NATIONALIST DISCOURSES

Introduction

Like many other colonial societies, Korea saw the significant development of nationalist discourses under Japanese colonial rule. Although the coercive political control of the colonial regime in the first decade of colonial rule largely obstructed the emergence of anti-colonial narratives in the public sphere, prominent intellectuals and political activists managed to provoke the public into taking part in anti-colonial political movements. When the March First Movement in 1919 occurred, it was indeed ignited by the Declaration of Independence that thirty-three national representatives drafted. In spite of their differences with respect to religious affiliations and political orientations, the nationalists cooperated with each other towards the goal of national liberation from Japanese colonial dominance.

Interestingly enough, however, the evolution of nationalist narratives in the subsequent colonial period paved the way for ideological and political conflict among Koreans. Once the Government-General allowed Koreans to have some limited freedom of publication in the aftermath of the March First Movement, nationalists of all stripes actively utilized the newly established public venue to develop nationalist discourses. The importance of political independence from imperial Japan as the ultimate goal of nationalism in colonial Korea was not questioned. As various forms of anti-colonialism

were developed through the integration of international discourses such as those of liberalism and socialism, however, ideological schisms among Korean nationalists began to emerge in the 1920s. When the contentious relationship among Korean nationalists reached its peak in the early 1930s, nationalists, such as the national reformists and leftists, critiqued each other as representing *the enemies of the nation*. Why did the development of anti-colonial nationalist discourses give rise to ideological and political conflict not only between Koreans and the Japanese colonial power but also among Koreans themselves? How can we explain the development of ideological antagonism among the colonized *through* the development of anti-colonial nationalist discourses?

The way in which nationalist discourses evolved in colonial Korea leads us to reconsider some theoretical assumptions and frameworks of nationalism and anti-colonialism. In particular, it raises a question about the exclusive focus on the contentious relationship between the indigenous nation and the colonial state in explaining nationalism in the colonial context. Initial studies of nationalism, which were largely based on non-colonial contexts, highlighted a critical role of nationalism in creating and reconstructing a shared identity and membership in a political community, most notably the community of the nation-state.³⁷ If we consider the colonial context, in which the colonial state normally exists as the antithesis of the indigenous nation, the relationship between nation and state shifts from a symbiotic and integrative relationship into one of conflict and contention. Indeed, scholars have characterized this peculiar characteristic of the colonial state that places it in tension with the indigenous nation as “rule of

³⁷ The importance of nationalism in the formation of a collective community is well represented in such conceptual and theoretical frameworks as “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson [1983] 2006), the “moral membership of a modern community” (Gellner 2003), the “equation of nation, state, and people” (Hobsbawm 1990), and the “cultural transformation of the character of membership from an ethnic to citizens” (Smith 1986: 166).

difference” (Chatterjee 1993), “state without nation” (Comaroff 1998), or “dominance without hegemony” (Guha 1997). In the case of colonial contexts, therefore, it is imperative to reconsider the understandings of the nation-state nexus that are based on models drawn from non-colonial settings.

If we focus exclusively on the contentious aspects of the relationship between the nation and the colonial state, however, this could be a hindrance rather than an aid in explaining the peculiar characteristics of nationalism in a colonial situation. To the extent that difference or conflict between the indigenous people and the colonial state is considered an essential element of the colonial situation, this idea can lead to the assumption of a uniform anti-colonial nationalism among the indigenous people, which presumes an internally-based form of solidarity opposed to an externally imposed colonial power. In highlighting the distinctive characteristics of the indigenous nation in relationship to the colonial power, therefore, studies of anti-colonial nationalism can ultimately reinforce the image of the nation as an “internally homogeneous and externally bounded group” (Brubaker 2002: 164) that was produced in earlier studies. As Brubaker (1996: 17) argues, however, “nationalism is not engendered by nations. It is produced – or better, it is induced – political fields of particular kinds. Its dynamics are governed by the properties of political fields, not by the properties of collectivities.”

The assumed existence of a clear and static boundary between the indigenous nation and the colonial state is problematic in that it makes it difficult to examine the continuous interactions and interpenetration between the native population and colonial power, which in turn produce the historically shifting dynamics of boundaries in a particular structural and conjunctural setting. To be sure, the colonial state exhibits

important characteristics that are distinguishable from those of the nation-state and which can be resisted by the colonized people through an anti-colonial movement. In this regard, it is problematic to ignore or underestimate the contentious relationship between the nation and the state. Yet it seems equally problematic to consider their boundary as being given and stable, since, in doing so, it fails to consider the fact that the colonizer and colonized, or the nation and the colonial state, constantly interact with each other and consequently their boundaries continue to shift.

Even when anti-colonial nationalism is mobilized, indigenous groups can construct diverse forms of anti-colonial nationalism and adopt different political strategies. In fact, a colonial situation can lead to internal conflict *within* nationalist groups, since the nationalist elites need to engage in political struggles not only against a colonial state power but also with other indigenous nationalists to achieve a hegemonic position. Highlighting the existence of multiple and often conflicting nationalist groups within the indigenous people, Tony Smith (1981: 120) states “it is, after all, a nationalist fairy tale that nationalism feeds on its own reversals, jumping up from the earth each time more powerful than before until the entire ‘people’ is united on that great day of liberation. In fact, as closer inspection of virtually any colonial situation will warrant, there is a variety of nationalist movements behind what to the casual observer may seem like a single wave of nationalism, and these diverse groups are frequently seriously at odds.” To consider the coexistence of the heterogeneous characteristics of and dynamic relations among nationalist groups in a colonial situation (Wallerstein 1970: 414), therefore, as Frederic Cooper (2003: 25) claims, “politics in a colony should not be reduced to anticolonial politics or to nationalism.”

To illuminate the mechanism through which various forms of anti-colonial discourses arose and generated ideological conflicts among colonized Koreans, this chapter examines how Korean nationalist groups, having come in contact with circulating discourses of liberalism and socialism, constructed diverse forms of anti-colonial narratives that adhered to different perceptual frameworks and political practices of nationhood to cope with Japanese colonial rule. In highlighting the important role of the interplay between international ideologies and local events in articulating nationalist discourses, this chapter directs particular attention to the way in which the notions of “nation” and “people” became integrated differently into competing nationalist frameworks.³⁸ Extending arguments that nationalism is a product of a particular political context (Brubaker 1996, 2002; Calhoun 1997), I demonstrate that Japanese colonial rule reshaped the meaning of the nation and a sense of belonging for Koreans, thus nurturing national fragmentation in Korea. In this regard, we need to attend more to the dynamics of nationalist narratives, instead of assuming the existence of a unitary form of anti-colonialism against the imperial power as an essential and omnipresent form of nationalism in the colonial context.

The Diversification of Nationalist Discourses

In the late nineteenth century, Korea saw the rapid development and transformation of its nationalist discourses, especially as the external threat of Western imperial power to East Asian countries became visibly influential. With the defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and its geopolitical vulnerability to Western

³⁸ Scholars have suggested, in this respect, that nationhood and nationalism need to be seen as “happenings” (Brubaker 1996: 21; Gorski 2000: 1462).

countries, Koreans began to search for an alternative path to modernization that avoided an ideological framework dominated by Confucianism, for which China had served as a model of civilization. Korea's main concerns began to shift from China to Japan and the West, and the meaning of civilization itself was significantly redefined (Pak 1992: Ch. 1; Schmid 2002: Ch. 2). As China's impact on Korea become attenuated, nationalist narratives in Korea were largely redirected to the construction of new knowledge about Korean history and national sovereignty.

After Korea became officially annexed by Japan in 1910, the advance of nationalist discourses in the public sphere was largely obstructed by the political control of the Terauchi administration and coercive colonial rule in the 1910s eventually led to an anti-colonial movement. On March 1, 1919, thirty-three national representatives, inspired by Wilsonian national self-determination, proclaimed the Declaration of National Independence. Having diverse intellectual and religious backgrounds, what the national representatives had in common was the belief in the legitimacy of Korea's independence from oppressive Japanese colonial rule. In particular, *Ch'öndogyo* (the religion of the Heavenly Way), which had advanced peasant organizations since the pre-colonial period, played an important role in mobilizing the movement.³⁹

In the 1920s, various forms of nationalist discourses began to emerge. There were several important factors that contributed to the rise and development of diverse anti-colonial narratives. First of all, the colonial state began to endow Koreans with the freedom of publication. Realizing the ineffectiveness of oppressive colonial rule in the long term, the colonial government began to place more emphasis on the integration of

³⁹ Ch'öndogyo also exerted a profound influence on the nation-wide peasant movement, the Tonghak Peasant Movement in 1894, through its ideological and organizational influence.

Koreans into the colonial system. When the Saitō administration seized power in colonial Korea in 1920, it revised the publication law to permit Korean newspapers and magazines that had been prohibited under the Terauchi regime. As a result, two Korean newspapers, *Tonga ilbo* and *Chosŏn ilbo*, and magazines such as *Kaebŏk* immediately began to be published in 1920.

To be sure, what the colonial government intended by permitting the Korean press to publish was not by any means extension of substantive freedoms to Koreans; rather, it sought to manage its political and ideological control more efficiently. For the colonial government, the Korean press was considered the “chimney” through which to discharge smoke, thus preventing any unexpected nationalist explosions such as the March First Movement (Chōsen gyōsei henshūkyoku 1937: 210). Notwithstanding this, the emergence of the Korean press provided, albeit in a limited manner, Koreans with a public sphere in which to discuss political events and ideological trends, which had not been available to them in the precious decade. It was through this public venue that various nationalist groups developed contentious ideological and political relationships.

In addition, the colonial government precipitated the diversification of nationalist discourses by developing political cooperation with a group of Korean nationalists. In an attempt to cultivate the moderate ideological forces and prevent the radical independence movement from developing further, the Government-General sought to compromise with such nationalists as Yi Kwang-su, Ch’oe Nam-sŏn, and Ch’oe Rin, all of whom played a critical role in the March First Independence Movement in 1919, either directly or indirectly. Yi Kwang-su was one of the leading participants in the formation of the Declaration of Independence by Korean students in Tokyo, Japan, in February 1919. He

subsequently became a chief editor of the *Independence Daily*, the official newspaper for the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai, which was formed by exile nationalists in the aftermath of the March First Movement. Ch'oe Nam-sŏn was one of the national representatives of the March First Movement and he drafted the Declaration of Independence. Ch'oe Rin engaged in anti-Japanese movements in the 1910s and played a leading role in the March First Independence Movement both as one of the national representatives and as a leader of *Ch'ŏndogyo*. Both Ch'oe Nam-sŏn and Ch'oe Rin were imprisoned due to their involvement with the anti-colonial movement.

With the policy shift, however, the colonial government persuaded Yi Kwang-su to return to Korea and released Ch'oe Nam-sŏn and Ch'oe Rin from prison in 1921. Yi became an editorial writer of *Tonga ilbo* in 1922, received three hundreds yen with the help of the colonial state. The Government-General provided financial support for Ch'oe Nam-sŏn to publish a monthly magazine, *Tongmyŏng*, which changed into a newspaper, *Sidae ilbo*, in 1924. It also encouraged Ch'oe Rin to promote self-rule ideology and principles of organization (Kang 1980: 393-95). All of this stemmed from the Japanese effort to alleviate anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans by cultivating a compromising rather than confrontational ideology. In this way, the intervention by the Government-General nurtured the diversification of nationalist discourses.

Third, the relationship of imperial Japan with other countries in the changing international circumstances also contributed to the diversification of nationalist discourses in the 1920s. Inspired by the independence movement, exile nationalists in China, Manchuria, Siberia, and the United States formed the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai in 1919. The antagonistic relationship between Japan

and Russia was primarily responsible for the fact that Russia was the only country responsive to the Korean nationalists' request for aid. By obtaining financial aid from Russia, Korean nationalists were able to organize political parties abroad such as the Korean People's Socialist party (*Hanin sahoedang*) in 1918, which changed its name to the Koryŏ Communist Party (*Koryŏ kongsandang*) in 1919 (Lee 1963: 147). From the early 1920s, it was obvious that a group of nationalists in colonial Korea had actively integrated leftist ideology into their anti-colonial discourses. Although the spread of Marxist ideas in colonial Korea was developed not only by activists from Russia but also by those who studied in Japan, the contentious relationship between Japan and Russia played a crucial role in providing the initial foundation for leftist hegemony in anti-colonialism in Korea.

As a result, nationalism in colonial Korea in the 1920s emerged in diverse forms, which can be divided into three broad groups.⁴⁰ First, a group of nationalists, the “national reformists” (*minjok kaeryangjuŭija*), advocated cultivating the power and the self-strengthening of Koreans in order to achieve political independence from Japanese colonial rule.⁴¹ In particular, the fact that Korea was under the rule of Japan, a non-Western power, led them to consider Western liberalism and capitalist economic development as a means of accomplishing the development of a new civilization and of overcoming Japanese rule (Lee 1963: 277). Underlying their conceptualization of nationalism was a view that “economics are the basis of politics and political rights are in

⁴⁰ These nationalist groups have been referred to as liberal, ethnic, and socialist nationalist groups (Chae 2006; Shin 2006). In this study, such terms as national reformists, non-compromising nationalists, and socialists are used as they were in the colonial period.

⁴¹ Because of their emphasis on a gradual approach to political independence and willingness to accept Japanese rule, they were also referred to as “compromising nationalists” (*t'ahyŏpchŏk minjokchuŭija*) or “moderate nationalists” (*on'gŏnjŏk minjokchuŭija*).

vain without economic competence” (*Tonga ilbo*, August 16, 1921). By highlighting the importance of economic power for maintaining political sovereignty, national reformists thus tended to prioritize the development of self-strength under the colonial system over the struggle for immediate political independence.

Second, “leftist nationalists” (*chwaik minjokchuŭija*) began to emerge as an influential political group. After witnessing the failure of the March First Movement, which was largely influenced by liberalist national self-determination, Korean nationalists began to search for alternative ideological sources for their anti-colonialism, including in socialist and communist ideology (*Kaebŏk*, July 1923: 7-8). In spite of the combination of the seemingly contradictory narratives of leftist ideology and nationalism, leftist ideas appealed to Koreans as primarily a way of achieving nationalist goals, especially because of its emphasis on anti-imperialism and human equality. The fact that peasants and workers, who comprised a majority of the population, faced considerable poverty and hunger due to the economic reorganization undertaken by the Government-General provided leftist nationalists and activists with a source of justification for their claims for social equity. Leftists placed a great deal of emphasis on the emerging economic inequality and tended to identify it as a national problem. For leftist nationalists, therefore, the popular struggle against Japanese colonial rule was viewed as having the same, if not higher, level of importance as class emancipation. It was ultimately a nationalistic vision that fueled the development of leftist ideologies in colonial Korea.

Finally, there were “non-compromising nationalists” (*pit’ahyŏpchŏk minjokchuŭija*).⁴² This group shared important political goals and orientations with both

⁴² Due to their strong opposition to colonial rule, they were also referred to as “radical nationalists (*kŭpchinŏk minjokchuŭija*).”

national reformists and leftists. On the one hand, like national reformists, they prioritized national integration and solidarity, rather than class struggle, to cope with the Japanese colonial power. On the other hand, consistent with the left, they advocated the importance of political representation and economic welfare of the masses. At the same time, however, non-compromising nationalists also faced discord with other groups. While they did not necessarily reject the idea of enhancing economic power for Koreans as the national reformists advocated, national independence from Japanese colonialism was seen as the foremost political goal and any political compromise with the Japanese was unacceptable for non-compromising nationalists. Also, unlike radical leftists, they tended to lean toward a gradual approach rather than toward the more confrontational methods of social movements. Due to their partial political affinity and disagreement with national reformists and leftists, as we will see later, the political position of non-compromising nationalists continued to fluctuate.

It is worth emphasizing that the classification of these nationalist groups should be seen as fluid, rather than fixed. Indeed, there existed significant ideological and political differences within each group and there were by no means clear cut lines among various nationalist camps. Non-compromising nationalists, for example, could make an alliance with communists against national reformists to claim for the priority of national independence over political cooperation with the colonial power. This does not mean, however, that they supported the importance of social movements over national integrity as leftist ideology implied. Even leftist activists who so fervently believed in ideological and organizational solidarity continued to suffer from factional divisions. The factional struggles among leftists continued to exist even after the establishment of the Korean

Communist Party (*Chosŏn kongsandang*) in 1925. In this regard, it is important to examine the dynamics of different nationalist groups, rather than considering each group as a solid political and ideological entity.

Developing Ideological Schism in the early 1920s

As intellectuals developed nationalist discourses, they began to engage with public debates on various issues in colonial Korea. Among others, two central problems, one economic and the other political, largely dominated public discourses for nationalist groups: increasing economic inequality and the relationship with the colonial government. While the importance of both the economic welfare of the masses and political liberation from colonial rule was generally acknowledged among different nationalist groups, the groups differed in the specific strategies used to achieve these goals, which thus generated ideological controversies. To comprehend the development of ideological conflict among Korean nationalists, therefore, it is important to understand the key issues at the center of debates in the early 1920s.

One of the important issues was related to the emergent economic inequality. As we saw in the previous chapter, the colonial projects instituted by the Government-General significantly reorganized economic conflict among Koreans, and the resultant economic conditions for peasants became a critical problem in colonial Korea. Despite the existence of general agreement among nationalist groups as to the importance of the rural economy, the groups advanced different approaches to the emergent inequality. While national reformists highlighted national cooperation, leftist nationalists turned their attention to social movements, especially labor and peasant movements. Their contrasting

perspectives are exemplified in the way they viewed emergent tenant disputes in the early 1920s. For national reformists, the propertied classes were seen as the leaders of agricultural development and tenant disputes were thus considered to be a harmful impediment for economic enhancement. The only solution for tenant disputes, they argued, was to prevent them in advance through cooperation between landlords and tenants. Their view on tenant problems was well articulated in an article in *Kaebiyŏk* (April 1922: 101), a representative nationalist magazine at the time:

The insecure condition of agricultural livelihood affected not merely tenants whose right to live became violated but also landlords and independent farmers. When people discuss agricultural problems these days, they neglect fundamental issues and only focus on the problem of distribution. The development of agricultural technology and peasants' self-consciousness became possible due to the effort of the propertied class and agricultural pioneers. The propertied class and pioneers are the landlord class. Without the landlord class, agricultural development is not even imaginable and independent farmers or tenants will be drawn into a more miserable condition.

The emphasis on the leadership of dominant economic groups and the importance of class cooperation for achieving nationalist goals put forth by moderate nationalists was, in part, a response to the emergent leftist activists and their mobilization of the public for popular social movements. Reacting to leftist critiques, moderate nationalists claimed that since Korea was under an unjust colonial rule, the ultimate solution to protect people's lives and freedom was to enhance political leadership for the development of the nationalist movement. Thus, leftists, according to moderate nationalists, should join the nationalist movement (*Tonga ilbo*, September 27, 1925).

On the contrary, leftist nationalists regarded peasant movements as representative of the just demands of tenant farmers who comprised a majority of the population of colonial Korea. While moderate nationalists supported a traditional paternalistic

relationship between landlords and peasants, leftist nationalists viewed the wealthy, especially landlords, as “an unforgivable moral offender against peasants” (*Kaebŷök*, March 1923: 64). By highlighting the notion of “rights,” leftists claimed that peasants demanded through their movements a reasonable claim of “the right to live,” not paternalistic protection from landlords (*Tonga ilbo*, March 24, 1921). The problem with the relationship between landlords and peasants in colonial Korea, according to leftists, was that it was based on the power relationship between master and servant, not on the principles of human equality, reciprocity, or a legal contract. Thus, leftists argued that since no one could live freely under the mercy of others, peasants had to achieve their own rights through social movements to create collective solidarity (*Kaebŷök*, September 1921: 35).

The unity that leftists foresaw through popular movements was not exactly the same collectivity that national reformists referred to. For leftists, “to be united in a collectivity does not mean to combine those who suck up others’ blood for their own wealth and those who are exploited and worry about one’s own subsistence. It means to develop solidarity for the exploited classes only” (*Kaebŷök*, March 1925: 11). The emphasis on the exploited people as a whole in turn led leftists to promote the cooperation of peasants and workers. Since both industrial laborers and tenant farmers were exploited classes, the cooperation between the labor and peasant movements in colonial Korea was not only necessary but inevitable in the view of leftists. Indeed, leftists tended to consider peasant movements as equivalent to labor movements in rural areas.⁴³ Underlying this assumption was the idea that although workers in cities and

⁴³ See a series of articles such as “Sojak undong kwa kü naeyong kõmgyu” [The examination of the tenant movement and its contents] by Yu Chin-hŷi in *Tonga ilbo* (March 21-29, 1921) and “Nongöp nodong

tenant farmers in rural areas may have contrasting interests, they could form a united front due to the fact that they were exploited by the propertied classes of capitalists or landlords. In the leftists' perspective, labor and tenant movements generally shared the same objective in colonial Korea in that one of the ultimate goals of both movements lay in the development of human equality.

One of the interesting points of leftists' claims in the 1920s is that they actively demanded the intervention of the colonial state in support of the exploited. Criticizing and lamenting the fact that the propertied owned money, power, status, and rights, and controlled all policies, while peasants had none of these, leftists sought to achieve the emancipation of the peasants through the mediation of the colonial government. They urged the state to endow peasants with human rights, land, economic rights, political rights, and cultural facilities. Specific demands that were often requested from the state by leftist nationalists included the legislation of a maximum amount of landownership to prevent further economic polarization, the legal protection of tenancy rights, the redistribution of land, the setting of official rates of tenancy rents, and the maintenance and promotion of landed farmers. Behind these demands was the leftists' view of the state as a protector of the people. An article from *Kaebyoŏk* (September 1921: 37) reads:

What kind of attitude should the state take to resolve the problems of the relationship between landlords and tenants, the strong and the weak? Under the condition of free competition, the strong will eat the meat of the weak. Based on the idea of justice, [therefore], there should be protection for the weak. If the state is an impartial state both for the strong and weak, it will certainly protect the weak. This is state's *raison d'être*.

The different views of national reformists and leftists regarding the economic

undong ūi kukchehwa" [The internationalization of agricultural labor movements] by Pyŏn Hŭi-yong in *Tonga ilbo* (December 19-26, 1921).

inequality among Koreans became particularly noticeable through the movement for the promotion of native products, which was one of the major campaigns of the so-called cultural movement.⁴⁴ The main goal of the movement was to support industrial development and economic self-reliance for Koreans. To this end, the Society for the Promotion of Native Production (*Mulsan changryōhoe*) was established in 1923 in order to encourage people to use Korean products instead of foreign goods, particularly those from imperial Japan. The fact that the first executive members of the society included not only moderate nationalists but also socialist activists and even some colonial officials (*Tonga ilbo*, March 30, 1923) clearly indicates that the movement was seen as a genuine nationalist attempt and thus it was able to appeal to intellectuals with diverse ideological orientations in its initial stage. Even though the movement invoked the participation of the general population in its early stage, it did not produce any significant economic outcomes, let alone its objective of economic self-strengthening, because people could not afford Korean products which were much more expensive than Japanese goods. As a consequence, the movement began to fade and its organization became dormant in the course of a year.

While the movement failed to achieve its economic goals, it generated intense ideological debates among Korean intellectuals. Leftists regarded the movement as primarily serving the interests of the rich, not the Korean people in general. They pointed out that the movement increased the demand for Korean products and the price of Korean goods went up, hence worsening the economic situation of the masses. The promotion of native products, therefore, was seen as a “selfish move” undertaken by capitalists and the

⁴⁴ It refers to various forms of nationalist movements in the early 1920s, such as the promotion of Korean universities, Korean vernacular, and native production (Robinson 1988: 78-79).

middle classes. The following article in *Tonga ilbo* (March 20, 1923) illustrates the strong criticism of the movement by leftists, which stimulated the subsequent debate on the movement:

Now, let's figure out the class interest behind the claim for purchasing Korean products. What is the purpose of the movement for the promotion of native production? Needless to say, it is to use our own products. In other words, it means excluding foreign capital. They allege that it aims to develop our productive machines, promote our industries, and achieve economic independence. In this regard, of course, no one would oppose the movement. But, its class boundary should be clear enough to indicate '*for whom*' the movement exists. In fact, the ideology of the movement contains political characteristics inspiring national or patriotic sentiment. This is intended for a small number of Korean capitalists and the middle class to [secure only their] economic and political rights, and to consolidate their dominant power. With these selfish motives, they came to follow a pattern of national political movement (emphasis added).

Insofar as the ultimate goal of the movement was to enhance the economic power of Korea, for leftist nationalists, the movement itself was not something to disagree with. The problem was that the economic interest of the bourgeoisie was being promoted in the name of the nation, while a majority of people who already faced severe economic hardship were asked to put up with further economic loss or handicap. To the extent that the movement did not alleviate the economic burden for Korean peasants and workers who comprised the core of the nation, it could not be conceived of as a national movement. There was no fundamental difference, in leftists' view, between exploitation by foreign capitalists and by the Korean bourgeoisie.

Responding to leftists' critiques, moderate nationalists continued to advocate the need and importance of the movement. For them, Koreans, whether they were bourgeoisie or proletariat, shared the same national interest against the Japanese in that they were all suppressed by colonial rule. It was thus critical to hold a sense of duty and

responsibility so as to enhance the integrity of the whole nation. There were clear differences between national and class interests, according to moderate nationalists, and the former should have priority over the latter. Criticizing leftists' opposition to the movement, an editorial in *Tonga ilbo* (March 31, 1923) called for the continuing support of the movement as follows:

What is the important task for the proletariat class in colonial Korea? Isn't it more urgent to improve the economic power of the Korean people first, rather than engaging in disintegrative class struggles? If the movement for the promotion of native products can contribute to the economic power of Korean people themselves, we cannot but devote ourselves to this movement, no matter what difficulties we may confront. And, why is it that this movement is profitable only for the propertied class and brings no benefits for the proletariat class? Even if we assume that most profits as a result of the movement go to the propertied class, as some people contend, isn't it possible that the concentration of wealth in some Koreans' hands will eventually facilitate the so-called general trend of revolutionary steps?

Backing up this view of the national reformists, another editorial in *Tonga ilbo* (April 13, 1923) claimed that "the Korean nation is an international proletariat class and the target of struggles does not yet exist within the national domain." What is interesting in these editorials is that national reformists did not directly oppose the leftist idea of social revolution. Rather, they justified their different focus on economic development by arguing that the accumulation of capital in Korean capitalists' hands is a necessary step toward such leftist revolution. This reveals that the hegemonic power of leftist ideologies in colonial Korea led even its opponents to construct their antithesis within the leftist frame.

Another critical issue among Korean nationalists in the early 1920s was the problem of the relationship with the colonial government. National reformists leaned toward the idea of political autonomy for Koreans within the colonial system. The failure

of the March First Movement led them to consider that it would be hard for Koreans to achieve immediate political independence from the Japanese and thus Koreans should face this political reality and seek more appropriate political strategies such as those of self-rule and of a suffrage movement. Since the early 1920s, national reformists formulated the idea that national development could be achieved without political independence. An editorial in *Tonga ilbo* on July 17, 1922 noted that the boundaries of nation and state in other countries were not necessarily the same and that the same nation was often divided into different states. The political implication of the editorial was that the common interest and happiness of the whole nation could be achieved within the colonial system.

This compromising nationalist view was further developed by Yi Kwang-su, a representative of the national reformists. In an article, "Minjok kaejoron" (A thesis of national reconstruction), which appeared in *Kaebiyŏk* in May of 1922, Yi critiqued the problems of traditional Korea and claimed national reconstruction as the foremost goal of the nationalist movement. Although the article did not explicitly support the colonial regime, it promoted the national reformists' apolitical view. Yi's elitist, apolitical, and compromising approach to the national movement was specified through a series of newspaper articles, entitled "Minjokchŏk kyŏngnyun" (National management) in *Tonga ilbo* (January 2-6, 1924). Yi claimed that the independence movement should be transformed into a self-rule movement, that education should focus on pragmatic, not political, matters, and should spread scientific knowledge, and that the movement for the promotion of native products should be encouraged.

Like leftists who demanded governmental regulation for the welfare of peasants

and workers, national reformists also explicitly demanded state intervention in the industrial development of colonial Korea. An editorial in *Tonga ilbo* on December 10, 1923 reads:

We demand thorough protection and encouragement from the government. First, [the state must] consider colonial Korea as one economic group and establish a protective tariff. Second, [it should] implement industrial policies for the Korean people. Industrial development can be achieved not only through protective tariffs but more importantly through active governmental support and encouragement. This will bring about financial conveniences for private industrialists. If they undergo a financial deficit, government subsidies should be provided.

It is important to note here that the Government-General played a critical role in obstructing the integration of the differing political orientations and ideological discourses by utilizing a divide-and-rule strategy. By supporting national reformists and their self-rule movement, the Saitō administration actively sought to incorporate moderate nationalists into the colonial system. The fact that when criticism of Yi Kwang-su's article appeared in *Sinsaenghwal*, the Government-General banned its publication (*Tonga ilbo*, May 30, 1922), for example, shows the emergent cooperative relationship between the colonial government and national reformists. The following letter to the Governor-General (December 15, 1926, cited in Kang 1980: 417) demonstrates the political purpose behind the support of national reformists by the colonial state.

[Korean nationalists] have maintained their solidarity by resisting the rule of the Government-General as the only principle and by labeling those who were opposed to them as betrayers and traitors, thus imposing social sanctions on them. With the change of circumstances, they began to turn from radical leftist tendencies to the political right, which weakened the only sanction to sustain solidarity and shifted revolutionary movements into [reformist] policy movements. [...] If you hold on to tight control for that movement in its initial stage, it is very likely that the movement will regain its original position. If you loosen control and encourage factions to emerge, however, they would mutually constrain and control each other, and therefore the government would be able to gain benefits without difficulties.

In fact, some national reformists, including Ch'oe Rin, Kim Sŏng-su, and Song Chin-u, formed an organization called *Yŏnjŏnghoe* in January 1924 with the support of the colonial government to facilitate the self-rule movement (Kang 1980: 414-29). Such pro-Japanese organizations as *Kungmin hyŏphoe* went even further by arguing for the Japanization of Koreans and demanded for the political rights of Koreans to participate in the Imperial Diet.⁴⁵ Even though national reformists tried to justify their position and claimed that the goal of self-rule and suffrage lay in Koreans' political freedom from the Japanese, their close cooperation with the colonial power was severely criticized by other nationalist groups. Non-compromising nationalists criticized their willingness to accept Japanese colonial rule and to cooperate with the colonial state. Leftists also castigated national reformists' self-rule and suffrage movements as reactionary movements to constrain the political hegemony of leftists (*Kaebŏk*, February 1924: 3). In this way, compromising activities by national reformists and outright pro-Japanese forces consolidated both anti-Japanese sentiment and antagonism against them (Yun [1924] 1973: 457-58), thus precipitating political and ideological conflict among nationalist groups.

The challenge for Korean nationalists was to find a way of pursuing practical strategies within the colonial system to avoid political control by the Japanese, and, at the same time, of resisting Japanese colonial rule to obtain political hegemony and to avoid the charge of being collaborators or "pro-Japanese" among Koreans. This posed a critical problem, especially for national reformists who took a gradualist approach to national independence. The fact that they prioritized the development of self-reliance and strength

⁴⁵ There were various kinds of pro-Japanese organizations throughout the colonial period. For details of their historical evolution and specific activities, especially in the 1920s, see Kang (1980: Ch. 2).

for the nation over immediate independence was easily seen by non-compromising nationalists and leftists as an unacceptable tactic, precisely because it assumed the maintenance of the colonial status quo.

In short, Korean nationalist groups in the early 1920s formulated diverse forms of anti-colonial nationalist discourses. They sought to develop strategies to mobilize national endeavors to resolve issues of economic inequality and the relationship with the colonial government that Korea faced under Japanese colonial rule. In doing so, they integrated the diverse international ideologies of socialism and liberalism since the former represented justice whereas the latter symbolized freedom in colonial Korea (*Kaebiyök*, September 1921: 36). Even though the ideological sources embedded in these contrasting international narratives were certainly important factors for explaining the emergent conflict among the nationalist groups, the intervention of the colonial state played a pivotal role in shaping their contentious relationships. To the extent that leftists placed great emphasis on the exploited “people” rather than the “nation,” and that the non-compromising nationalists agreed with the national reformists as to the importance of national economic development, it was certainly feasible for the non-compromising nationalists and national reformists to make a political alliance. However, the cooperation with the colonial government by the latter rather reinforced a close connection between non-compromising nationalists and leftists who did not hold the same nationalist vision and yet nonetheless shared anti-colonial sentiments against the Japanese. It was this anti-colonial component that gave rise to the National United Front in 1927, through which the dynamics of nationalist groups further developed.

The National United Front, 1927-1931

The changing circumstances in the mid-1920s led both non-compromising nationalists and leftists to seek political cooperation. On the one hand, national reformists began to organize a self-rule movement to obtain political autonomy within the colonial system. To obstruct the further development of the self-rule movement, therefore, non-compromising nationalists and leftists needed to form an alliance. On the other hand, the colonial government continued to intensify its surveillance and oppression, and this posed a critical obstacle, especially for leftists. The Maintenance of Public-Acts Order, which was enacted to control communists in Japan, for instance, began to be in effect in colonial Korea in 1925 when the Korean Communist Party was formed. The primary purpose of this law was to control those who organized or joined an association in order to overthrow the existing political system or to oppose the private property system.⁴⁶ As the colonial government tightened its political control over leftists and cooperated with national reformists, therefore, some leftists pushed for a “change of direction” as a strategy to cope with this challenging situation and they urged for the development of a new political movement by making a broad coalition with non-compromising nationalists.⁴⁷ As a result, *Sin’ganhoe*, the National United Front, was established in January of 1927.

The platform of *Sin’ganhoe* reads: “we shall promote the political and economic

⁴⁶ When the law was revised in 1928, the sentence regarding resistance to the political system changed from imprisonment for up to ten years to the death penalty or up to life imprisonment (Kim 1995: 137).

⁴⁷ The change of direction was largely provoked by the so-called Chŏnghoe Declaration in November of 1926. It was a critical response to the problem of the separation between activists and the masses on the one hand, and between the center and local regions. Through the declaration, leftists urged for the adoption of several strategies: terminating factionalism and unifying organizations; organizing the masses through education; shifting the focus of collective mobilization from economic into political struggles; and, cooperating with nationalists (see Yi 1993: 115-18).

awakening of the people, we shall consolidate solidarity, and we shall deny all opportunism” (*Tonga ilbo*, January 20, 1927). The platform did not explicitly declare its ultimate goal of political independence from Japanese colonial rule. It was rather general and vague at best in order to maintain the group’s legal status and to avoid political oppression by the Government-General. While the platform did not represent the group’s outright resistance to imperial Japan, it did express its strong opposition to “opportunism.” Behind the denouncement of opportunism was the idea that the Sin’ganhoe would resolutely disapprove of any ways in which particular individuals or groups among Koreans would take advantage of the colonial situations for their own benefit.

Although leftists played a leading role in establishing the Sin’ganhoe due to their far more developed organizational basis, nationalists tended to occupy prominent positions in order to avoid any charges of it being a leftist organization and to avoid political control by the colonial government. The influence of leftists and their political hegemony was more visible at the local level. Unlike the platform at the center, the resolution of local branches indicated more specific and radical goals, such as the abolition of colonial laws, notably the Maintenance of Public-Acts Order that banned the freedom of political activities, the implementation of industrial and educational policies for Koreans, the guarantee of rights for peasants and workers, and the abolishment of national discrimination (Kim 2006: 393). An Ch’öl-su, one of the representatives of the Sin’ganhoe in Ch’öngju, recalls (Yi 1993: 163):

I don’t know well about other local branches, but the representative election in the North Ch’ungch’öng Province was carried out under a very democratic procedure. *Since the representatives were appointed through secret election*, only those who earned the people’s faith and whose activities were well known to

other local branches could be elected as representatives. So, no matter how much communists wanted to be elected, it was beyond their control. Another important point is that as far as I know, there was no clear cut boundary between communism and nationalism among us. Even if someone became a member of a communist organization, it was hard for others to know that. You might say 'the way he talks should be a clue.' But, it would not be an exaggeration to say that everyone who was involved with the Sin'ganhoe back then was using communist terms (emphasis in original).

As the above statement indicates, leftists exerted hegemonic power and leadership and their active involvement was indeed chiefly responsible for the continuous development of the organizational capacity of Sin'ganhoe. The distinction between leftists and nationalists remained arbitrary, especially at the local level, but the popular organizations that leftists had developed in the early 1920s certainly provided an important membership base for the Sin'ganhoe. In fact, by May of 1931, the Sin'ganhoe had 39,410 members and 237 local branches, which were located in Japan as well as at the county level in all provinces in Korea (*Chosŏn ilbo*, May 18, 1931).⁴⁸ The fact that the members included 6,041 unskilled workers, 21,514 peasants, 2,783 factory workers, 447 company workers, 241 doctors, and 647 reporters (*Hyesŏng*, June 1931: 43; *Pip'an*, August 1932: 31) demonstrates that the Sin'ganhoe was not merely a political organization for intellectuals or activists.

The Sin'ganhoe evolved into an umbrella organization by playing a critical role in integrating various political and social organizations, including youth leagues, labor/tenant unions, and women's organizations at the local and national levels. Indeed,

⁴⁸ The number of local branches in each province is as follows: 45 in Kyŏngsang, 38 in Chŏlla, 24 in Ch'ungch'ŏng, 23 in Kyŏnggi, 14 in Hwanghae, 21 in Kangwŏn, 36 in P'yŏngan, 30 in Hamgyŏng, 4 in Japan (*Hyesŏng*, June 1931: 43). Other sources indicate different levels of membership in the Sin'ganhoe. Yi (1993: 260) notes that the Sin'ganhoe had 39,914 members when it was dissolved on May 15, 1931, whereas Scalapino and Lee (1972: 112) argue that "by 1930, the Sin'ganhoe claimed 386 branches and 76,939 members, although Japanese authorities reported that there were only 260 branches and 37,000 members." Since the latter does not indicate the original source, it is difficult to verify the exact numbers.

the establishment of Sin'ganhoe gave rise to the Diligent Friend Society (*Kūmuhoē*), the national organization for women which had a similar organizational structure in that both had local branches in Japan and Korea. The Sin'ganhoe also closely cooperated with youth organizations, especially the All Korean Youth Federation (*Chosŏn ch'ōngnyōn ch'ongdŏnmaeng*). As a result, the number of nationalist organizations significantly increased with the establishment of Sin'ganhoe in 1927, which in turn facilitated the development of social and political organizations in colonial Korea in general.

Table 10: Social and Political Organizations, 1920-1933

Year	Nationalist	Socialist	Labor	Farmer	Youth	Etc.	Total
1920	-	11	33	-	251	1	296
1921	-	18	90	3	446	14	571
1922	-	19	81	23	488	25	636
1923	-	55	111	107	584	43	900
1924	1	86	91	112	742	164	1,196
1925	1	83	128	126	847	226	1,411
1926	2	38	182	119	1,092	333	1,766
1927	104	85	352	160	1,127	397	2,225
1928	182	75	432	307	1,320	446	2,762
1929	214	56	465	564	1,433	528	3,260
1930	246	56	561	943	1,509	626	3,941
1931	175	35	511	1,759	1,482	639	4,601
1932	159	31	404	1,380	863	615	3,452
1933	108	42	374	1,301	1,004	554	3,383

Source: Chōsen sōtokufu keimukyoku (1934: 168-69).

The leftists mobilized political movements by utilizing such organizational power. When the Kwangju Student Movement occurred in 1929, for example, they sought to develop it further into a more general anti-colonial struggle. This illustrates that despite the lack of a large scale independence movement in the 1920s comparable to the March First Movement, political struggles continued to emerge, especially under the leadership of the leftists. As such, the increasing political hegemony of leftists posed a problem to national reformists as well as to the colonial regime. The Government-General reinforced its oppression toward leftists and national reformists also sought to constrain their

dominant position.⁴⁹ After many leaders were arrested due to their involvement in the Kwangju Student Movement in 1929 and subsequent acts of anti-colonial resistance, national reformists began to seize the leadership of the Sin'ganhoe.

Questions regarding the value of the Sin'ganhoe thus began to emerge, especially among leftists. To understand why leftists pushed for the dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe, it is important to consider both the international and domestic circumstances. Considering the international stimuli, of particular importance is the Comintern's September Theses, "The Tasks of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement in Korea" (Suh 1970: 283-90), which stemmed from the fifth Congress of the Profintern (August 15-30, 1930). The Theses urged communists in Korea to direct their attention to organizing the masses into left-wing unions. Since the Sin'ganhoe came under the leadership of national reformists, it was argued, "the left wing should systematically expose the opportunist and treacherous policy of the reformist leaders and win over the membership of the trade union organizations" (Suh 1970: 287).

More importantly, the domestic political conditions provided more practical reasons for leftists to seek an alternative vehicle to the Sin'ganhoe for their political movements. As the number of social and political organizations increased in the late 1920s, the colonial government tightened its political surveillance and control. Indeed, the number of public rallies that were prohibited or restricted by the Government-General in 1927 was 283 and 398, respectively, and this increased significantly to 1,087 and 1,274 in 1930 (Chōsen sōtokufu 1934: 167). Since leftists generally became the target of such

⁴⁹ The Sin'ganhoe leaders who were imprisoned due to their involvement in the movement included Hō Hōn, Yi Kwan-yong, Hong Myōng-hui, Yi Wan-hyōk, Cho Pyōng-ok, and Kim Tong-jun. Although the movement did not develop to an extent comparable to that of the March First Movement, it provoked a series of sympathy strikes in 194 schools that included about 54,000 students until March 1930 (Scalapino and Lee 1972: 115-16).

political control by the colonial state throughout the 1920s, it was hardly possible for leftists to organize an effective political movement through the Sin'ganhoe under such repression. Indeed, it was reported that more than five-thousand people violated the Maintenance of Public-Acts Order from 1925 through 1931 in colonial Korea, which exceeded three times the number of violations in Japan, and about one-third of the violations in Korea included those who were falsely accused (*Chosŏn ilbo*, May 19, 1931). This suggests that the colonial government arbitrarily and extensively applied the law for political purposes.

Furthermore, as national reformists' move toward more explicit cooperation with the colonial state became apparent, leftists had to consider the possibility that the Sin'ganhoe could be utilized for reactionary movements by national reformists. By dissolving the Sin'ganhoe and developing political movements through mass mobilization, therefore, leftists sought to integrate economic and political struggles and to prevent national reformists from gaining dominance within the popular movements. While leftists took the initiative in the dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe, national reformists also anticipated and prepared for it. An editorial in *Tonga ilbo* on January 1, 1931, entitled "Organization and Korea" reads:

A grand unity (*taedong tan'gyŏl*) does not mean putting all junk in the same container like a trash can. It means that only those who have the same ideology and plans stand together beyond their traditional and emotional differences. Therefore, the formation of grand unity accompanies some disintegration of the unity that included irrational sources and this would represent the dissolution for further integration. [...] the Sin'ganhoe would undergo some kind of disintegrating or purifying process to be reorganized.

The editorial clearly suggests that like leftists, national reformists began to pursue a different kind of political organization in the changing economic and political

circumstances in the early 1930s. It is noteworthy that while implicitly suggesting the dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe, the editorial highlighted the formation of the Commerce and Industry Association in Kyōngsōng and P'yōngyang as the representative organization for Korean merchants and industrialists who had not been actively involved with political activities and yet who they felt should be integrated into the political field under the changed circumstances. Here, we can see a clear difference between leftists and national reformists in their motivation for the dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe. Unlike leftists who sought to further develop popular mobilization for political movements, national reformists envisaged the enhancement of the political activism of merchants and capitalists.

In contrast to the leftists and national reformists who saw, albeit for different reasons, the need for the disintegration of the Sin'ganhoe, the non-compromising nationalists strongly criticized the idea and insisted on maintaining the existing organization. They viewed the dissolution of this national organization without any preparation as a purely destructive action, and considered neither the right wing opportunism nor the left wing extremism as a legitimate and appropriate reason for the deconstruction the Sin'ganhoe. Even though non-compromising nationalists did not support the cooperation of national reformists with the colonial state but shared the mass-orientated nationalism with leftists instead, they directed their criticism particularly to the leftists who had initiated and facilitated its dissolution. An Chae-hong, a prominent non-compromising nationalist, critiqued leftists for adhering to the abstract orthodox Marxist principles of class struggles without considering the actual political circumstances of Korea (*Hyesōng*, July 1931: 11; *Pip'an*, August 1932: 29-32).

Yi Chong-rin, another non-compromising nationalist, went even further to criticize the leftists. He pointed out that the meeting the leftists organized for the disintegration of Sin'ganhoe was against the rules of the organization, and stated that "the decision for dissolution is the result of three important trends: the extreme rightism of nationalists, the radical leftism of socialists, and the reaction to the colonial government's oppression. [...] The united front was destroyed and this offers a critical lesson for nationalists that *they should never allow themselves to be used by leftists again*" (*Chosŏn ilbo*, May 19, 1931, emphasis added). He argued that only those who opposed the Sin'ganhoe should withdraw.⁵⁰ This reveals that non-compromising nationalists developed strong feelings of betrayal toward leftists in the process of the dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe. The fact that they had formed a cooperative relationship against both the colonial regime and national reformists seems to be chiefly responsible for the stronger reaction of nationalists to the leftists' actions. Although those nationalists who opposed the dissolution strove to reconstruct the organization, their attempt did not bring about any significant outcome toward this end.

Responding to non-compromising nationalists' critiques, leftists contended that their demand for the disintegration of the Sin'ganhoe was not intended to deny the importance of the national movement. On the contrary, it was intended, they highlighted, to further develop anti-colonial movements. An article in a leftist magazine (*Pip'an*, August 1931: 26-27; see *Pip'an*, July 1931: 56-58) illustrates this perspective by stating that "since the national movement is considered as a movement of nationalists only, the

⁵⁰ The debate surrounding the dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe dominated public discourses in the early 1930s. For more details concerning critiques of the disintegration of the Sin'ganhoe, see *Samch'ŏlli* (February 1931: 7-19).

dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe has been interpreted as leftists' reversion to class struggle. But, the deconstruction of the Sin'ganhoe did not result from leftists' denial of the national movement. [It was rather intended] to enable leftists to take all responsibility for the national movement from a scientific perspective by excluding the solely ideological national movement led by the petit bourgeoisie."

To this end, leftists claimed that the Sin'ganhoe should be replaced by "a united front from below" through the cooperation of workers with peasants so as to launch anti-colonial and anti-feudalist movements (*Pip'an*, July 1931: 5-6). Some of the radical leftists went on to argue that even though non-compromising nationalists seemingly advocated for the welfare of the masses, they were opportunists and reformists in that they sought to utilize the organization for the interest of the petit bourgeoisie. Thus such radical activists considered non-compromising nationalists as more dangerous than national reformists (*Pip'an*, June 1931: 45-46). As a consequence, the relationship between non-compromising nationalists and leftists became largely antagonistic through the debates on the dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe.

In sum, the establishment of the Sin'ganhoe not only provided a critical opportunity for different nationalist groups that had begun to emerge in the early 1920s to develop cooperative relationship with each other, but it also played a crucial role in improving the organizational capacity of the nationalist movement in colonial Korea. Both the increasing political control by the colonial government and competition among nationalist groups for a hegemonic position, however, continued to nurture political and ideological conflict among nationalist groups and eventually brought the National United Front to an end. Of particular importance is that the relationship between non-

compromising nationalists and leftists, who shared an antagonism against the colonial government and national reformists, became largely contentious through the dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe. This relational change, coupled with the increasing political cooperation of the national reformists with the Japanese, largely precipitated the ideological polarization of the national reformists and leftist activists in the 1930s.

Ideological Polarization in the 1930s

After the dissolution of the Sin'ganhoe, the ideological split among Korean nationalist groups continued to develop in a more polarized form in the 1930s. While the breakup of the united front became a critical internal factor for the proliferation of ideological and political conflict, geopolitical circumstances also played an important role in changing the dynamics of nationalist groups. As the contradictions of liberalism were revealed through the Great Depression and as protectionism in the form of fascism and militarism arose to challenge it, Korean nationalists who adhered to Western liberalism as a source of national development began to search for an alternative.

In particular, the Japanese seizure of Manchuria in 1931 significantly reshaped the economic and political circumstances in colonial Korea and provided a new terrain for the continually evolving dynamics of nationalist groups. Economically, the establishment of Manchukuo opened a new market for the export of Korean goods. Upon the launch of industrialization projects by the Ugaki administration, Korean foreign trade indeed dramatically increased (see Eckert 1991: 160-70). Politically, the Japanese acquisition of Manchuria confirmed its undeniable imperial power and offered a critical juncture for the perception of the colonial state by Koreans. As the Chinese began to

perceive the Koreans in Manchuria as the spearhead of a Japanese imperial invasion and thus intensified their oppression toward Koreans, for example, the domestic media heralded the events and attacks against the Chinese began to develop in Korea. The ethnic conflict between the Chinese and Koreans in Manchuria led to the realization that Koreans were, after all, under the Japanese imperial polity and thus they had to be represented and protected by the Japanese.

Through the establishment of Manchukuo and the subsequent economic and political changes resulting from this, therefore, nationalists came to realize that the colonial state could be the official state for Koreans. Even though different nationalist groups, including leftist activists, sought to interact with the colonial state for the resolution of particular political and economic issues, one of the dominant ideas behind the nationalist discourses was the negation of the colonial state due to the lack of political legitimacy of colonial rule. The Japanese seizure of Manchuria and the subsequent series of events in the early 1930s, however, demonstrated the undeniable reality that Koreans were, whether legitimately or not, under the jurisdiction of the political institutions of the colonial state and thus simple denial of this fact would not provide them with any viable political tactics.

This series of events in the early 1930s exerted a significant influence on the dynamics of nationalist groups. Of particular importance is that ideological conversion began to increase, especially starting from 1931 (*Samch'ŏlli*, May 1938: 142-46). Some of the non-compromising nationalists shifted their strategy from unconditional resistance to Japanese colonial rule toward a more moderate form of engagement with the colonial state within the existing political system. Once unconditional resistance to the colonial

state proved to be unrealistic, they sought a rapprochement of sorts. While non-compromising nationalists did not deny the importance of the popular and anti-colonial movements that leftists advanced, they came to prioritize national survival within the context of the colonial system over political struggles aimed at immediate independence. They viewed the leftists' strategy of focusing on class struggles as destructive and harmful for the nation as a whole.

Leftist activists, however, remained critical of the fruitfulness of the legal movement that other nationalists began to promote. For them, the legal movement represented the acceptance of Japanese colonial rule in that by abiding by colonial law, the movement could only maintain and reproduce the colonial system rather than overthrow it. Thus, for leftists, the push for legal movements by the nationalists was interpreted as a sign of their opportunistic conversion to national reformists who manipulated the masses by using the rhetoric of national fascism for their own benefit. Furthermore, relying on orthodox Marxism, some radical leftists stressed that the distinction between legality and illegality stemmed from different class positions and power relations (*Samch'ŏlli*, January 1932: 2-9). Since the dominant classes oppressed the lower classes with the help of legal measures to maintain their privileged positions within the existing colonial structure, according to them, it was not feasible for the proletariat to improve their class interests by joining the legal movement. What needed to be done, in the leftists' view, was to achieve their rights by engaging in illegal actions through continuous struggles instead of being subordinated to the colonial legal system.

With the growing antagonism between non-compromising nationalists and leftists, the ideological and political conflict became largely polarized between national

reformists and leftists.⁵¹ This is not to say that non-compromising nationalists joined national reformism altogether. Despite the increasing attention of nationalists to the legal movement, many of them did not share the same perspective with national reformists and many continued to hold national independence as their utmost goal. But, they lacked a clear political strategy or popular organizational basis to mobilize a political movement. As the political involvement of non-compromising nationalists weakened, consequently, the contentious relationship between national reformists and leftists became significantly intensified.

The issues of leadership and political hegemony in popular movements became particularly controversial in the conflict between national reformists and leftists. Each group adhered to ideas outlining different directions for the nationalist movement. Their contrasting views were represented by the debate sparked by Yi Kwang-su's national reformist argument and apparent attack on leftists. In an article entitled "Three basic tasks for a national movement in Korea" (*Tonggwang*, January 1932: 13-15), Yi criticized leftist activists by arguing that "these days, there are some people who avoid the concept of nation. They are mostly Marxists. [...] Unlike a certain religion or ideology, the nation is an eternal reality. *Those who avoid and criticize the nation are the enemies of the nation*" (emphasis added). Yi contended that there were three tasks for a national movement in Korea: first, organizing intellectuals to develop theories of national movements, which did not yet need to include any political characteristics at all; second, enlightening peasants and workers and improving the productive force; and, finally,

⁵¹ One of the changes reflecting this ideological polarization is that most leftist magazines began to publish in the early 1930s, including *Hyesŏng* in March 1931, *Pip'an* in June 1931, and *Sin'gyedan* in October 1932.

mobilizing cooperative union movements.

The article clearly shows Yi's elitist and apolitical view of the national movement, which had been developed since the 1920s and which represented the national reformist perspective in general. One of the important differences between national reformists and leftists was their ideas about the characteristics and role of the masses. Unlike leftists' view of peasants and workers as a source of power and social changes, Yi considered them as people who did not have sufficient experience of social and political life beyond their family and therefore "they need solidarity training such as consumers' cooperation, sanitation, cultural, and physical education *which have nothing to do with politics*" (*Tonggwang*, January 1932: 15, emphasis added). The masses in the national reformists' perspective were the subjects of education under the leadership of intellectuals, not the masters of political movements and social changes as envisioned by leftists.

Criticizing Yi's notion of the nation, leftists highlighted the nation as a particular historical phenomenon, which had an indispensable relationship with the development of capitalism and which should be distinguished from race or ethnicity (see *Pip'an*, June 1932: 2-11). The "eternal reality" under capitalism, according to leftists, lay in the existence of class conflict and struggle between nations (*Pip'an*, April 1932: 4). For them, the cooperative union movement that Yi and other national reformists strongly advocated for was problematic since it was not meant to improve the living conditions of peasants and workers but to produce illusionary class cooperation. "Solidarity that has nothing to do with politics," as suggested by *Suyang tonguhoe*, an organization under the leadership of Yi Kwang-su and national reformists, a leftist claimed, succinctly signified the essence of their enlightenment movement (*Pip'an*, April 1932: 10).

The contrasting ideological views of national reformists and leftists led to increasing competition for the leadership of popular movements. Although the colonial government began to promote industrial development, most people continued to be engaged in the agricultural sector in colonial Korea and thus peasant organizations became a particularly important issue. The national reformist group promoted their organizational capacity by integrating peasant organizations under the leadership of Ch'öndogyo. As early as 1921, the colonial government already began to promote Ch'oe Rin, who was one of the leaders of Ch'öndogyo, into a cooperative nationalist group. As national reformists directed their attention to developing popular organizations to constrain the leftists in the late 1920s, they also started making their own effort to expand their organizational base. A secret police report in the Kyönggi Province in 1928 ([Overview of Public Security] May 1928, cited in Kim and Kim 1967: 52) indeed states that “people like Kim Söng-su ostensibly remained silent, while trying to expand their power basis. Since Ch'öndogyo was influential and maintained strong solidarity compared to other religious groups, they tried to contain peasants who comprised the majority of the population in Korea by organizing the Korean Peasant Society [*Chosön nongminsä*] through cooperation with Ch'oe Rin, Yi Kwang-su, and Song Chin-u.”

In an effort to undermine the leftists' hegemonic position in popular organizations, therefore, national reformists reorganized their peasant organization. When the Korean Peasant Society was initially formed in 1925, it gained support from radical leftists as well as nationalists. By bringing the organization under the control of the Youth Party of Ch'öndogyo (*Ch'öndogyo Ch'öngnyöndang*) in 1928, however, they began to

consolidate their dominant position within the peasant organization (Chi 1985).⁵² By constructing a stronger popular organization than that of leftists, national reformists aimed to check leftist power.

With the increasing conflict with leftists and the ideological polarization in the 1930s, national reformists explicitly demanded for their political hegemony in popular organizations and movements. In an article entitled “The problem of hegemony for the movements in Korea” (*Sinin’gan*, September 1932: 90-93), Cho Ki-gan, a leader of the Youth Party of Ch’öndogyo, for example, highlighted the problem of leadership as the most important issue in the current situation and argued that Ch’öndogyo should lead the movements in colonial Korea. According to him, Ch’öndogyo had developed the biggest peasant organization during its approximate one hundred years of existence, as the Tonghak Peasant Movement in 1894 exemplified. Cho argued that Ch’öndogyo should have leadership in colonial Korea because it was the only organization that satisfied all criteria for successful leadership, such as the existence of a sacrificing association, organizational capacity, and respectful leaders.

By containing peasant organizations under their ideological and political control, national reformists promoted the enlightenment of the masses. Regarding the agricultural problems that most peasant farmers suffered from, they acknowledged that Japanese colonial policies were, at least partly, responsible for the agricultural issues in colonial Korea. Just like the colonial government, however, they tended to attribute such issues as the increase of living expenses to natural disasters or even to the peasants’ extravagance and drinking (*Tonggwang*, April 1931: 51-53). Accordingly, they argued that “under the

⁵² Of 160 peasant organizations in 1927, about one-third (57) had relatively strong leftist characteristics and the rest were mostly based on nationalist and reformist thoughts (Chöng 1994: 133).

current circumstances, the goal of the economic movement lies in self-reliance by pursuing active saving” (*Tonggwang*, March 1932: 61). They viewed students, youth, and intellectuals as leaders of peasant movements and focused on organizing activities for educating peasants to improve rural conditions. Some newspapers and magazines that represented nationalist reformism such as *Tonga ilbo* (July 3-27, 1932) and *Tonggwang* (April 1931; September 1932) organized public forums and discussions to find solutions to help rural communities and peasants.

The reformist rural movements were strongly criticized by leftists. Just like the movement for the promotion of native products in the early 1920s, in leftists’ view, public forums in rural areas, which were organized by national reformists in an accordance with the rural control policies of the Government-General, were intended to pacify popular feelings without offering any specific solution for the problems peasants confronted. For leftists, the fact that most of the organizers and participants in such public meetings were from economically or politically dominant groups demonstrated the conservative and reactionary intentions of their movements to conceal class conflicts and subordinate poor peasants under their control (*Cheilsŏn*, December 1932: 6). It is important to note here the separation between the notions of “nation” (*minjok*) and “people” (*minjung*, *taejung*, or *inmin*). For leftists, the meaning of the masses was based on both class position and relationship with the colonial government. Since liberals were like the leaders of the bourgeoisie class, they claimed, they are not the “people” (*Sin’gyedan*, February 1933: 74, 76).

When *Tonga ilbo* organized a public symposium for the relief of the poor from July 3 to 27 in 1932 by inviting prominent and influential personnel in colonial Korea, for

example, leftists sarcastically pointed out its purpose by arguing that “most of the participants were either intellectuals and small capitalists, who had no idea about rural areas and peasants’ lives, or were landlords, who exploited tens or hundreds of farmers and were completely opposed to them. [...] by gathering the supporters and readers of the newspaper, they organized a public discussion for peasant exploitation” (*Pip’an*, October 1932: 35-36). Considering the poverty of the peasants who were near starvation as a result of the economic crisis of the Great Depression, leftists claimed, the demands for saving directed at peasants were nothing but the “demand for the poor people to kill themselves” (*Tonggwang*, April 1931: 57). What national reformists failed to consider, in the leftists’ view, was the fact that poor people’s drinking and smoking was the outcome of, not the cause of, their structural position. For example, a leftist claimed that “it should be clear who is engaging in harmful forms of consumption such as drinking and smoking, and why they are doing it. We should remember that there are people who cannot stop drinking and smoking due to their hardships of everyday life, the unemployed who have difficulty securing one meal a day, and poor peasants who smoke grass leaves instead of cigarettes” (*Sin’gyedan*, March 1933: 19).

Perhaps more importantly, the problem of the enlightenment movements in rural areas that were organized by national reformists was rooted in their political cooperation with the Japanese colonial power. The fact that the Government-General revised the local self-government system in 1930 and implemented a series of rural control policies also had to do with the increasing political split between national reformists and leftists (*Pip’an*, July 1931: 8). Highlighting the fact that participants of local tours included provincial and township officers, doctors, lawyers, local leaders, religious people, and

those who were related to financial institutions, leftists contended that the purpose of rural tours was to lure Koreans in the direction of the colonial government and national reformism. In the leftists' perspective, rural tours, in which those who advocated and worked for the Japanese spoke for the welfare of each local region, were nothing but propaganda aimed toward promoting cooperation with the Japanese as the only possible method of economic development (*Sin'gyedan*, January 1933: 25-26). For leftists, national reformists' approach to rural problems could not possibly be supported, not only because it concealed the economic conflict between different classes, but also because it encouraged cooperation with the Japanese policy for their own interest against other Koreans.

Leftists thus directed their attention to organizing radical social movements instead. Based on the strategy of forming a "united front from below," they mobilized the people into the so-called red peasant and workers union movements. To this end, leftists further developed the organizations for peasants and workers that they had established since the early 1920s. The fact that the number of peasant organizations almost doubled in only one year, from 943 in 1930 to 1,759 in 1931 (see Table 10), seems to reflect the active role of leftists in the organizational development. Considering that colonial Korea had 160 peasant organizations in 1927 when the Sin'ganhoe was formed (*Chōsen sōtokufu* 1934: 168-69), this shows a significant enhancement of organizational capacity. A colonial government document shows that the United Coalition of Korean Peasants, which had 32 affiliated organizations and 24,180 members, increased to 35 organizations and 33,897 members in 1933 (*Chōsen sōtokufu* 1933: 45).⁵³

⁵³ Another Korean source published in 1931 (*Tonggwang*, April 1931: 35), however, indicates that the organization included about two hundred affiliated organizations in 1927.

During the 1930s, about seventy red peasant unions were organized under the leadership of leftists on a county basis in every province with the only exception of the South Ch'ungch'ōng Province (Yoo 1974: 144; see Chi 1993). Given the fact that leftists were able to develop their active involvement and close connection with radical nationalists in local regions in the 1920s, especially through the Sin'ganhoe, it seems likely that red peasant and workers union movements were supported and developed by nationalists as well as leftists in each given region. A police document of the Government-General indeed indicates that the red peasant union movements were mobilized under the leadership of communists, local activists, and those who previously worked for legal peasant organizations (Chōsen sōtokufu 1933: 47-48).

By mobilizing radical social movements, leftists sought to combine economic and political struggles. The ultimate goal of the leftist movement was to abolish two fundamental problems that colonial Korea faced: national suppression caused by imperial domination and class oppression resulting from capitalist development. This is clearly represented by the platforms of leftist unions at the time. Political platforms (Suh 1970: 171-76) included the overthrow of Japanese imperialism and the complete independence of Korea, freedom for the organizational activities of workers and peasants, the immediate release of all political prisoners, and the abolition of oppressive laws against Koreans. Economic goals (Suh 1970: 183) called for the establishment of a maximum tenant fee, land reform on the basis of a farmer-centered system, abolition of private ownership of the land and free distribution of lands confiscated by the state, and opposition to Japanese immigration and reserving the right to use the land by Koreans only.

What is worth emphasizing is that national reformists were also regarded as an important target of red peasant union movements. The slogans of the Pukch'ŏng Red Peasants' League, written in December 1932, for example, reads (Suh 1970: 208):

Realizing these [class movement] developments, the Korean bourgeois nationalists feared more, joined and cooperated with the Japanese imperialists instead of opposing them, thus becoming their agents to oppress our proletarian class struggle. Comrades: Let us cautiously but strongly fight the Korean National Reformists, who deceive the revolutionary masses by exposing their deceptive and criminal policies to all the masses, and let us win over the masses who still suffer under *the National Reformists. They are our great enemies* (emphasis added).

The reason that leftists and national reformists criticized each other as being the enemy of the nation was not merely based on their economic backgrounds and conflicting class interests. Indeed, a majority of members of each nationalist group, including leftist activists, in colonial Korea came from dominant economic and political groups. More than fifty percent of leftists in the Korean Communist Party, for example, had upper class economic backgrounds and intellectual occupations (Scalapino and Lee 1972: 125). By the same token, support for radical political movements came from a broad range of the population, not merely from peasants or workers. When leftists formed an organization (*Chŏnnam undong hyŏpŭihoe*) and established red peasant unions in five counties--Kangjin, Haenam, Wando, Changhŭng, and Yŏngam--of the South Chŏlla Province in 1933, for instance, they formed various sub-sectors, including 53 rural groups, 28 night schools for peasants and workers, and 26 vigilance corps. Although the main leader himself was a landlord, the organization led to the significant increase of peasant movements in which nearly all demands of tenant farmers were accepted. Landlords, capitalists, and even some government officials such as township officers and police indeed supported and participated in communist activities (*Tonga ilbo*, September 10,

1934).

With the development of radical social movements, therefore, leftists' ideological critiques of national reformists became stronger. In early 1932, for example, national reformists proposed a collective effort for national integration. Some of the representative national reformist groups such as Suyang tonguhoe led by Yi Kwang-su, Mulsan changryŏhoe, and Ch'ŏndogyo and other religious groups demanded the termination of internal struggles as one of the mottos for the year through their magazines, including *Samch'ŏlli*, *Tonggwang*, and *Sindonga*. Responding to the national reformists' demand, radical leftists characterized Suyang tonguhoe and Ch'ŏndogyo as two leading organizations that promoted a fascist movement in colonial Korea (*Sin'gyedan*, January 1933: 88) and argued that those who advocated for the "termination of internal struggle" were rather the target of their struggle (*Sin'gyedan*, March 1933: 4).

The colonial government reinforced political disintegration among nationalist groups by strengthening the political oppression of leftists and their activities while supporting the national reformists. As a result, leftists had to face continuous suppression by the Government-General. From March 1931 to July 1932, for instance, about one thousand people were arrested due to their involvement with the red peasant movement, and in the Hamgyŏng Province alone, more than a thousand people were imprisoned in connection with the red peasant movement between 1935 and 1936 (Scalapino and Lee 1972: 200-01). In contrast, the colonial regime developed political cooperation with national reformists. When leftists planned a public meeting to critique national reformists, for instance, the police prohibited it (*Tonga ilbo*, December 25, 1932). As popular mobilization by leftists began to develop, the cooperation of national reformists with the

colonial power became increasingly apparent. Given that one of the main goals of the colonial projects was to isolate the masses from leftists for political security, the colonial government had much to gain by cooperating with national reformists not only because the existing organizations under their control could be utilized for the effective implementation of colonial projects in local regions but also because it could lead to the further disintegration of nationalist and activist groups.

In fact, national reformists paved the way for outright collaboration with the Japanese, while suggesting to other Koreans that nationalist groups should avoid internal discord among themselves and instead should focus on national integration. Chosŏn nongminsŏ, for example, under the leadership of a Ch'ŏndogyo group showed its support for the rural policy and projects of the Government-General. In a public meeting, Ch'oe Rin proposed making an active effort for cooperation with the Rural Revitalization Campaign that the colonial state implemented in the early 1930s (*Sinin'gan*, May 1935: 5-7). In particular, as colonial Korea faced war time conditions in the mid-1930s, ideological conversion significantly increased. National reformists no longer framed their discourses in a nationalist narrative. Instead, they overtly publicized their support for imperial Japan. Ch'oe Rin, for instance, stated that he was previously deceived by the principle of self-determination, which was formulated by Western imperial powers in order to put weak states under their domination. He went on to say that Koreans should develop patriotism, sacrifice themselves for the state, and therefore "die for imperial Japan" (*Samch'ŏlli*, January 1941: 24).

The leftist groups also saw the emergence of ideological conversion, for which the Government-General was mainly responsible. In fact, the colonial state formed

special committees and programs for “thought purification,” especially targeting leftists, offering them jobs in government offices and assisting financially those who converted. The fact that the number of political offenders was 3,659 in 1931 and that it gradually decreased to 2,310 in 1934, 1,678 in 1935, 2,641 in 1936 and 439 in 1937 (*Samch’ŏlli*, May 1938: 142-46) seems to reflect the effect of government control.⁵⁴ In Chŏng-sik, for instance, was an active participant in the communist movement in the 1920s. After getting released from prison in the late 1930s, however, he took part in activities that promoted Japanese imperial interests and argued that the “communist movement is impossible in the current political condition and the only path for the prosperity of East Asia, including the happiness of the Korean nation, is to cooperate with imperial Japan and fulfill our duties as imperial subjects. [...] Koreans are by no means pitiful colonial subjects. We should not forget that we are also members of imperial Japan, which proceeds to guide and dominate the entirety of East Asia” (*Samch’ŏlli*, November 1938: 56-59).

Nationalists’ active collaboration with the Japanese and leftists’ ideological conversion led to the significant decrease in political activities in colonial Korea under war time conditions. As national reformists supported colonial projects more directly and leftists’ activities were largely constrained by the Government-General, ideological and political conflict among nationalist groups became dormant. To be sure, the late colonial period was not a political vacuum. The fact that the number of convictions due to the violation of security laws was reported until the early 1940s (Chi 1993: 76) indicates that nationalists and leftist activists continued to engage in various forms of political activities.

⁵⁴ The colonial government had about 7,600 people on the blacklist for special inspection and 3,076 converted by October 1939 (Chŏn 1997: 76).

Nonetheless, they were largely constrained by colonial surveillance and political economic conditions, which obstructed their connection to popular movements developed in the previous period.

In short, the political split between national reformists and leftist activists significantly grew in the early 1930s. They developed contrasting nationalist frames and sought popular mobilization for different goals and methods. What significantly distinguished them from each other was not merely the difference between elitists and populist approaches or between top-down and bottom-up mobilization. At the center of their contentious relationship was the problem of redefining and politicizing the nation and rearticulating national belonging under the colonial rule. By selectively integrating the notion of “nation” and “people” into their ideological frameworks, national reformists and leftists developed their own interactions with the colonial government and rearticulated the boundary of inclusion and exclusion of the nation, thus becoming the enemy of the nation to each other.

Conclusion

The development of nationalist discourses in colonial Korea reveals the coexistence of multiple strands of nationalist discourses and the paradoxical effect of anti-colonialism upon deepening political and ideological antagonisms among Koreans. While sharing political independence from Japan as the ultimate goal, at least in the early colonial period, nationalist groups, such as national reformists, non-compromising nationalists, and leftists, formulated diverse nationalist narratives both by incorporating the international ideologies of liberalism and socialism, and by responding to changing

socioeconomic and political conditions in colonial Korea. In this sense, the evolution of nationalism in colonial Korea highlights the important role of the interplay between international ideologies and local events in articulating nationalist discourses.

To grasp the effect of the colonial context on the fragmentation of nationalism in Korea, we need to understand how the meaning of “nation,” “state,” and “people” were integrated into competing nationalist discourses in different ways. In spite of the strong sense of ethnic homogeneity and anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans, the relationship between the nation and the colonial state did not remain as a simple dichotomy between colonial suppression and native resistance. For, once the colonial system and institutions became an integral aspect of the shaping of colonial Korea, mere negation of the colonial state did not provide room for nationalists to construct specific political strategies to resolve existing social issues and to negotiate with the colonial regime.

The colonial state as a critical part of colonial Korea indeed led to somewhat contradictory views of the colonial state in the early 1920s. While articulating anti-colonial narratives, nationalist groups demanded that the colonial regime play an active role in promoting industrial development or protecting the economic welfare of peasants and workers. Unlike national reformists and leftists, however, non-compromising nationalists did not develop their own political strategy to deal with the colonial regime. Their resistant position, coupled with their lack of organizational basis, explains their political inactivity, which in turn led to the political polarization of the national reformists and leftists in the 1930s.

National reformists and leftists relied on the contrasting ideological frameworks

of liberalism and socialism, and therefore the inherent tension between these international narratives played an important role in shaping the initial conflict between these nationalist groups. The effect of international ideologies on nationalist discourses, however, did not directly determine the form and content of each nationalist framework. Rather, they continued to be filtered and accommodated in the context of colonial Korea. More important than the original doctrine of liberalism and socialism itself was the way in which each nationalist group developed interactions with the colonial regime, which had a strong interest in disaggregating national solidarity. On the one hand, the Government-General supported and cooperated with national reformists so that they would direct their political orientation for the maintenance of the colonial system. On the other hand, it held its tightest grip on radical nationalists and leftists due to their opposition to colonial rule and their mobilization of radical social movements.

As a consequence, the concept of “people,” rather than the “nation,” came to be frequently used by leftists who sought to accomplish national emancipation from below. The fact that leftist activists played a crucial role in mobilizing peasants and workers through radical social movements in the form of red peasants/labor union movements, which directly resisted the Japanese colonial rule, indicates that the question of national liberation was by no means completely abandoned by leftists throughout the colonial period. A critical consequence of this process of politicization of nationalism is that national reformists or moderate nationalists became excluded by radical nationalists and leftist activists precisely because they remained apolitical and even collaborated with the colonial state. In this sense, the colonial government was at the center of the growing antagonism between national reformists and leftists. Even though the political activities

of nationalists and leftists were significantly prohibited in the late colonial period, the boundary of nation and political community that continued to be redrawn through the dynamic relationship of nationalist groups with the colonial state became a pivotal source for internal conflict in the later liberation phase and U.S. occupation period.

CHAPTER V

JAPANESE COLONIAL LEGACIES UNDER U.S. OCCUPATION

Introduction

Unlike other colonial societies that achieved their political freedom from colonial dominance through anti-colonial struggles, Korea was endowed with its political independence from prolonged Japanese rule upon the surrender of the Japanese to the Allied Powers in August 1945, which gave rise to the liberation phase in Korea. Although decolonization happened quite unexpectedly for most Koreans, the newly liberated Korea did not face sudden political collapse and Koreans managed to maintain political order. The liberation phase indeed immediately begot the emergence of various forms of political organizations and voluntary social associations both at the national and local levels. The national effort towards postcolonial change was mobilized around the demand for overcoming colonial legacies and for the reconstruction of an independent nation-state.

Within less than a month, however, Koreans faced the rule of yet another foreign power in their territory. The arrival of the U.S. in the south and the U.S.S.R. in the north heralded the beginning of their separate occupation rule in Korea. In early September 1945, the American Military Government was established in the southern areas, which lasted until 1948. Koreans initially expected that the primary goal of American rule in the south lay in assisting and promoting national and political re-building. The occupation

forces, however, tended to obstruct such reformist moves that had been developed in the liberation phase. Rather, it revived colonial institutions and practices by conducting a series of political and economic institutional changes, thus aggravating the existing economic, political, and ideological problems in Korea. As the occupation rule turned out to be a hindrance to, rather than a source of support for, national reform, critical views of the U.S. occupation began to increase.

American military rule itself, however, did not become a primary target for national movements or popular struggles throughout the occupation period. In fact, struggles through which people directly attacked the military government comprised only about two percent of all social movements during the occupation period (Yi 1988: 231). Instead, Koreans tended to engage in struggles amongst themselves. Political leaders and activists criticized each other, while seeking to cooperate with the occupation forces. With popular mobilization, people conducted violent collective actions against their fellow Koreans, particularly police officers, bureaucrats, and wealthy landlords. People who once mobilized a nation-wide social movement in order to secure the national community from an external threat in the pre-colonial period and resisted the oppressive colonial domination in the Japanese colonial period struggled against each other under the U.S. military occupation. Why?

To be sure, Japanese colonial dominance on the Korean peninsula and American occupation in the south had significantly different historical contexts, and thus the ways in which they were viewed by the general public were also contrasting. Japan was perceived as an illegitimate appropriator of an existing national community, hence the strong resistance to its colonial rule even before its official launch in Korea. In contrast,

the U.S. military forces were enthusiastically welcomed and accepted by most people, including leftist activists, precisely because of the presumption that the U.S. forces would play a crucial role in bringing about political independence from Japanese colonial rule in Korea. For the Korean people, Japan appeared as a colonizer and oppressor, whereas the U.S. was seen as a liberator and ally, at least in the early occupation period.

This does not mean that the general public continued to hold these positive attitudes toward the U.S. throughout the occupation period. What most Korean people ultimately wanted from the U.S. occupation rule was its support and assistance for rebuilding an independent nation-state, not another case of foreign domination. As the U.S. military government revived colonial institutions and personnel, announced itself as the only legitimate government, crushed popular social and political organizations, and significantly exacerbated poor economic conditions, people came to perceive that “the liberators had become the oppressors” (Meade 1951: 62). Under these circumstances, it is understandable that strong acceptance could be converted into even stronger resistance against the American forces. Yet, the historical record is more complex and points instead to the intensification of the economic, political, and ideological struggles that divided the Korean people and ultimately fueled the opposition to their new “oppressors.” The intensification of internal conflicts among the Korean people under occupation rule, then, needs to be explained rather than taken for granted as an aspect of the occupation period.

This chapter analyzes the mechanism through which Japanese colonial legacies were reproduced during the brief liberation phase and U.S. occupation period, and how this reproduction of colonial legacies became a pivotal source for the divided nation-state formation in South Korea in 1948. To this end, it examines the way in which the existing

conflicts among Koreans that were nurtured through the colonial period were aggravated through the intervention of U.S. occupation policies. In doing so, it directs particular attention to the 1946 people's uprisings, the largest popular social movement during the U.S. occupation period, and traces why the primary target of the uprisings was not the foreign military government but rather other Koreans, and how the historical experience of Japanese colonial rule influenced the movement's choice of targets as well as its eventual failure. Through this historical analysis, I demonstrate that the internal conflicts that were created and rearticulated through Japanese colonial rule became critical sources of social and political struggles under the American occupation, the fundamental consequence of which lies in the creation of a pattern of internal exclusion that characterized South Korea's post-war political trajectory as well as separate nation-state formation.

Reconstructing the National Community in the Liberation Phase

On August 15, 1945, Japan's surrender to the Allied Forces gave rise to Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule. Decolonization took place as an abrupt event due to the lack of an indigenous anti-colonial movement, thus leaving plenty of room for confusion and disruption. It was clear, however, that the most important task at the time was to rebuild the national and political community that had suffered from the coercive Japanese rule for about four decades. The abolishment of all colonial legacies was seen as a prerequisite for reconstructing a sovereign nation-state. To accomplish this task, various political organizations and social associations emerged at the local as well as national level.

Indeed, the day that Japan's surrender to the Allied Forces and the termination of Japanese colonialism in Korea was officially announced, the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (*Chosŏn kŏn'guk chunbi wiwŏnhoe*, hereafter CPKI) was formed at the national level. The organization was established when the colonial power requested two prominent nationalists, Yŏ Un-hyŏng and An Chae-hong, to protect the Japanese and to maintain public order until the Allied Forces arrived. It was formed once the Japanese accepted the nationalists' five conditions: the immediate release of imprisoned political offenders; the guarantee of food provisions for three months from August to October; no intervention in any political activity for public security and state building; no intervention in organizing students and youths; and, no intervention in mobilizing farmers and workers for the construction of the nation-state (*Maeil sinbo*, August 17, 1946). In taking over the governmental roles from the Japanese, the CPKI highlighted the importance of maintaining political order and urged people to refrain from collective protests, including attacks against the Japanese.

At the center of CPKI were people from various political organizations, including the Korean Independence League (*Chosŏn kŏn'guk tongmeang*), Korean Communist Party (*Chosŏn kongsandang*, hereafter KCP) and New Korea Society (*Sin'ganhoe*), all of which played important roles in the anti-colonial movements during the colonial period (Hong 1985: 72-91; Sŏ 1991: 195-215). Even though the CPKI was initially organized in a top-down manner without the direct participation of the general public, it was able to obtain both the legitimate political status of a national organization and popular support primarily due to the fact that it consisted of anti-colonial activists, including nationalists and socialists, with the exception of some rightists who refused to

participate in the organization. In fact, one of the first actions of the CPKI was to release political offenders who were arrested by the Japanese. Due to strong antagonism against Japanese colonialism in the liberation context, personal experiences of participating in anti-colonial movements and of being oppressed by the Japanese became more or less equated with proof of being a genuine patriot.

Under the leadership of the CPKI, national endeavors were mobilized and were devoted to sustaining public order and preparing for the reconstruction of an independent state. A Korean witness (O 1952: 34) recalls the circumstances of the liberation phase and the public perception of the CPKI as follows. “People shared a genuine public sentiment altogether. There was no political party or desire for a government regime. Businessmen did not care about their self-interest and profit, and workers did not demand wages. [...] The spirit and characteristic of Kōnjun [the CPKI] represented the passionate desire for state-building that people commonly and primarily shared, covering all classes and statuses, whether leftist intellectuals or rightist students.”

The creation of the CPKI was immediately followed by the establishment of local branches. By the end of August 1945, the CPKI developed 145 branches throughout all thirteen provinces in Korea (Minjujuūi minjok chōnsōn, hereafter Minjōn 1946: 81). When the CPKI was succeeded by the formation of the Korean People’s Republic (*Chosōn inmin konghwaguk*, hereafter KPR) on September 6, 1945, most of CPKI local branches were replaced by people’s committees (*inmin wiwōnhoe*) down to the village level (Cumings 1981: 270). The common activities of people’s committees included: organizing various social groups, such as youth groups and organizations for peasants and workers; maintaining public order; and taking over and controlling lands, factories, and

property owned by Japanese nationals and the Government-General during the colonial era. In the context of the liberation phase, it was perceived as the right of peasants and workers, who comprised the majority of the population, to regain access to land and property, which had been exploited by the Japanese, and to participate in the political process.

The characteristics and political orientation of the CPKI and its successor, the KPR, were well represented by its platform and the twenty-seven points of its administrative policies (Minjŏn 1946: 83-85, 87-89). The KPR declared four main objectives: the establishment of an autonomous and independent state; adherence to the principles and ideals of democracy; a rapid elevation of the living standard of the people; and, cooperation with other democratic countries. Despite some generality and vagueness, these main objectives show the overall political orientation of the CPKI and KPR, which promoted a mass-oriented democratic order. In addition, the administrative policies of the KPR pointed toward more specific social, economic, and political changes for nation-state building. It is significant that these policies contained the substantial meaning of civil, political, and social rights as conceptualized by T.H. Marshall (1992): freedom of speech, publication, assembly, fraternity, and faith; the enfranchisement of all males and females above the age of eighteen; and, maintenance of the living standards in accordance with the average standard of living.⁵⁵ In particular, maintenance of minimum wages and the abolition of all exorbitant taxes and the usury system clearly indicate efforts to remove notorious colonial economic practices and to alleviate the economic

⁵⁵ In this sense, "maintenance of the living standards in accordance with the average standard of living," as indicated in the KPR's policies, can be interpreted as pertaining not merely to economic welfare, but also to the social rights of community membership.

burdens of peasants and workers.

Under these policies, all Koreans, regardless of their differences in class position, gender, and any other classification, were treated and endowed with equal national community membership. There existed, however, one critical exception to this, which was the exclusion of membership to those who collaborated with the Japanese during the colonial period. While promising fundamental freedoms and absolute equality among members of the national community, including the complete emancipation of women, these policies made it clear that those who had collaborated with the Japanese would not be considered national members and thus would not have equal rights. This suggests that Japanese dominance nurtured not merely anti-Japanese sentiment but that it also created antagonism against Koreans who cooperated with the Japanese, which in turn provided a crucial basis for specific political and economic policies in the liberation phase.

According to the policies, all property, including lands, factories, mines, railways, and communication utilities owned by the Japanese imperialists or those who collaborated with the colonial power were to be confiscated without any compensation, and were to be given to peasants and the state. Once collaborators became considered “national traitors” (*minjok panyŏkcha*), they were denied the right to vote as well. This clearly demonstrates that in the context of liberated Korea, “collaborators” with the Japanese were not considered members of the national community, and the loss of this membership in turn nullified their economic and political rights within the reconstructed political community. The following statement (O 1952: 60, emphasis added) points to some of the social forces, which arose out of the policies of the colonial period that led to the exclusionary treatment of collaborators.

It seems that the active offense of leftists and those of the middle-of-the-road (as it was named afterwards) became prevalent and a general trend. Most intellectuals and youths rejected monopolistic capitalism and those with huge properties. They had an immense revulsion of feeling against the uneven distribution of wealth. *During the thirty-six years of Japanese colonial rule, a dividing line had been drawn between those who cooperated with the Japanese and accumulated personal wealth, and those who endured poverty at the expense of adhering to the national spirit.* For those who chose the latter path, wealth became a kind of evil and sin. Therefore, it was considered the duty of cultured Koreans to deny monopolistic capitalism and the uneven distribution of wealth, and to advocate for the nationalization or equal distribution of all wealth that the Japanese left behind them.

Both the CPKI and KPR were guided by the active participation of nationalists and leftist activists who advocated political and economic reform for peasants and workers. It should be clear, however, that they did not exclusively adhere to orthodox communist and socialist ideologies. The economic redistribution and nationalization were suggested for properties previously owned by the Japanese and pro-Japanese collaborators. In this regard, the above statement should not lead us to presume that Koreans collectively shared an anti-capitalist and pro-socialist economic view. Rather, it points out an important aspect of the internal boundary among Koreans regarding their connection and relationship with Japanese colonial power. Property owned by pro-Japanese collaborators who pursued their own profit and interests at the expense of the majority of the poor population could be confiscated, just as that of Japanese nationals and the colonial government could, precisely because of their relationship with the Japanese. Thus, property owned by collaborators as well as the Japanese became subject to redistribution and nationalization, even though the right to private property was protected under the CPKI and KPR.

Reflecting this general attitude that the public held toward collaborators and the colonial power, incidents took place, targeting both the remaining Japanese and Korean

officials. Right after the liberation, for example, thirty-five Japanese were killed, injured, or attacked, while more than two hundred Koreans, mostly policemen and township officers, encountered similar opposition at the hands of their fellow Koreans (Morita and Osada 1979: 14-15). Since there had been strong antagonism against Japanese colonial dominance, it is not surprising that people attacked Japanese officials and nationals when the colonial regime was ousted. What is more remarkable is that people resented other Koreans who had actively served the colonial power more than they did the Japanese. Although the incidents against fellow Koreans occurred only sporadically and did not develop into any major political upheaval in the liberation phase, they clearly demonstrate the existence of internal conflicts generated under Japanese colonial rule, which became seeds for social and political contention in the liberation phase.

It should be noted that while antagonism toward collaborators was prevalent, the meaning of “collaborators” was by no means clearly defined or elucidated. Japanese colonial rule lasted for almost four decades with a considerable degree of social penetration by the colonial government into local villages and among individuals. Consequently, all individuals and social groups had to interact with the colonial regime in one way or another throughout the colonial period. In the liberation context, therefore, the term “collaborators” did not necessarily refer to anyone who served the Japanese during the colonial period. The fact that some Korean officials who worked for the colonial government played a leading role in people’s committees in a certain county or township in the liberation phase and early occupation period (Cumings 1981: 322) indicates that having a particular social and political position in the colonial period itself was not a sufficient criterion for defining collaborators. More important was whether and how they

benefited from the Japanese at the expense of fellow Koreans. The ambiguous meaning of “collaborators” became clarified when various forms of internal conflicts became intensified through the occupation period.

U.S. Occupation Policies and the Intensification of Internal Conflict

Since the early 1940s, Korea’s independence had been discussed among the Great Powers. The Cairo Declaration on December 1, 1943, indeed stated that “three great powers [the United States, the United Kingdom, and China], mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent” (United States Armed Forces in Korea, “History of the United States Armed Forces in Korea,” hereafter “HUSAFIK,” vol. 2, ch. 4: 56). The idea of trusteeship in Korea by the U.S., U.K., and Soviet Union was suggested at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, and was advanced a few months later at the Potsdam Conference with the inclusion of China. As a result, the military forces of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. arrived in the southern and northern areas of Korea after the Japanese defeat in the war.

Upon the initial landing in early September in the southern part of Korea, the U.S. military forces were welcomed and accepted by Koreans with tremendous enthusiasm, precisely because of their role in the termination of Japanese rule in Korea. To the extent that both Korea and the U.S. shared Japan as a common enemy, the U.S. was perceived as their liberator and close ally, although the Americans, in contrast, viewed Koreans as enemy nationals because they were represented by the Japanese. While American military forces continued to arrive until November and the arrangement of U.S. rule was not

completed until early 1946, the American Military Government (henceforth, AMG) was soon established with the initial arrival in September 1945. Koreans' enthusiasm toward the U.S. continued in the hope that they would assist Korea's nation and state building in the post-liberation period.

After the AMG took over the role of the government and began to carry out initial reform projects, however, it became evident that the direction of change initiated by the U.S. forces was not fully compatible with, indeed it was at significant odds with, the changes that Koreans had pursued in the liberation phase. The AMG not only resurrected the colonial administrative system and former government officials but also suppressed the activities of political organizations and social associations formed during the liberation phase. Through this process, various forms of internal conflicts that had been developed since the colonial era became intensified. In the following section, I examine how occupation policies and reform projects initiated by the occupation regime intensified internal tension among Koreans. In particular, I focus on the examination of the revival of colonial legacies and on the reformulation of intra-Korean conflict in the political, economic, and ideological realms.

Revival of Colonial Political System

The task of utmost importance for the AMG upon its entry to Korea was to rearrange the political and administrative system to take over governmental roles and activities. As we saw earlier, the KPR at the national level and people's committees in local regions largely seized political power and sought to initiate various reform projects to overcome any colonial imprints in the liberation phase. If the primary goal of the AMG was to effectively maintain political order, it certainly could have utilized the already

existing organizations and integrated activists who were committed to developing mass-oriented politics into their system. To the extent that these organizations and associations were supported and participated in by the majority of the population, cooperation with these organizations could have enabled the U.S. to launch democratic political reform more efficiently.

The basic policy of the AMG from the beginning, however, was to maintain the existing colonial system. The AMG was reluctant to recognize the political authority and the broad representation of the KPR or the people's committees. Instead, it revived the earlier colonial bureaucratic and legal system, filling any vacancies with those Koreans who served the Japanese before, in complete opposition to the direction of reform from the liberation phase. Although there was practically no specific guidance and instruction offered to the American army for its occupation rule in Korea, and although the AMG did not have clear policy goals, let alone any blueprint for Korea's political future, it was indeed instructed that the U.S. forces would utilize Japanese governmental machinery and officials until the development of Korean government system ("HUSAFIK," vol. 1, ch. 1: 63). Any regulations, ordinances, or announcements that had legal effect on August 9, 1945 continued to be valid under the AMG.

The fact that the AMG reproduced colonial institutions and reappointed former colonial officials and bureaucrats was one of the important differences between the south and the Russian occupation in the north. Unlike the Americans, the Russians largely supported reformists and assisted with removing any colonial remnants, including colonial personnel. It seems likely that both the contentious relationship that Russia and Japan had historically developed and the close connection that Korean leftists had with

the Soviet Union contributed to Russian support for those who advocated for the liquidation of the colonial system in the north. Unlike the AMG, which suffered from the lack of interpreters and officials, and relied on a few Korean exiles and former government officials who served the Japanese for their leadership, the Soviet Union had about thirty thousand Koreans who came from nearby Siberia and acted as a bridge between the Russians and Koreans (Lauterback 1947: 212). Even though the Soviet Union also exhibited significant unpreparedness for occupation rule in the north, the existence of Korean émigrés enabled Russian occupation forces to institute a new bureaucracy by replacing former Japanese and Korean officials, who were charged as being collaborators with the Japanese.

As the AMG denied the political authority of the KPR with the revival of the colonial system and its personnel, U.S. occupation rule itself became an unexpected challenge for those who initiated and advocated reform projects with popular support. The AMG rather provided other groups, especially conservatives, dominant economic groups, and former officials, with a chance to constrain such reformist movements through cooperation with the U.S. military regime. A former Japanese provincial police secretary wrote in October 1945 (Akira Sakamoto, *Report on State of Public Order*, October 30, 1945; cited in Meade 1951: 228):

Those persons who hold the real power of directing the public are those who have been convicted or were under surveillance on account of their nefarious ideas or abnormal tendencies under Japanese rule. That is to say, these people are those who have been rebelling or feeling dissatisfied with the Japanese government. However, the moderate public and the intelligent and wealthy classes felt uneasy and insecure about the present circumstances, and are hoping that normal democratic rule will be realized as soon as possible by the U.S. Military Government.

Attesting to the political hegemonic power that reformists and anti-colonial

forces held for the public since the liberation phase, the statement reveals that those Koreans who did not support anti-colonial policies hoped that the AMG would constrain such reformist moves. Indeed, the U.S. military regime formed a close partnership with a conservative party, the Korean Democratic Party (*Han'guk minjudang*, hereafter KDP), which consisted mainly of wealthy landlords, businessmen, and bureaucrats who were unwilling to discuss issues of collaboration with the Japanese (Sim 1984: 30, 32). The KDP was formed after the American armies began to arrive in Korea in September 1945. Since the KDP primarily consisted of dominant economic groups, its primary interest lay in maintaining the existing colonial system, just as with the AMG. The essential objective of the KDP was to counteract leftist organizations and their political hegemony. While the party had no specific policies or platforms regarding the construction of an independent nation-state, its manifesto made it clear that the foremost task of the KDP was to bring down the CPKI and the KPR (Cho 1959: 144). Negating popular organizations and leftist activists was KDP's *raison d'être* from the beginning.

As soon as the occupation regime was formed, the AMG appointed eleven prominent Koreans to an advisory council. Although the council included a few leading moderate leftists such as Yŏ Un-hyŏng, most members were conservatives and members of the KDP. The primary intention of the council was to help the occupation forces by providing relevant information and knowledge about Korea and thus the members of council were not endowed with any political capacity. The characteristics of council members nonetheless played an important role in directing the policies and goals of the military regime in the early occupation period. With the emergence of close cooperation between the Americans and conservatives through the advisory council, those who were

considered pro-Japanese collaborators or were susceptible to such a charge created their own power base. By the same token, reformist activities that were initiated in the liberation phase were largely constrained.

Under these circumstances, former government officials, bureaucrats, and police officers began to regain their positions under the AMG. Yu Ŏk-kyŏm, for example, who had participated in various nationalist movements and activities, including those related to the Sin'ganhoe, and yet who had cooperated with the Japanese by encouraging Korean youths through public speeches to sacrifice themselves for imperial Japan during the war in the late colonial period, became the head of the Department of Education. According to an American reporter who worked under the AMG at the time, the new alliance between the Americans and conservatives, as represented by the composition of the advisory council, "almost destroyed the confidence of the Korean people in Americans" (Lauterback 1947: 202).

As the conservatives, represented by the KDP, relationship with the occupation regime became closer, the KPR claimed that "traitors" were helping the U.S. forces and demanded that the KPR be recognized as the only legitimate government (Supreme Commander for the Allied Power, September-October 1945: 179). Considering that the primary interest of the AMG lay in sustaining the status quo, it was hard for them to support such reformist and leftist forces that the KPR and people's committees represented. Also important was that the KPR continued to insist on its political authority, in spite of the existence of the AMG. The fact that the People's Republic kept "republic" in its name, implying its governmental character, made its relationship with the AMG particularly contentious. Direct conflict between the AMG and the KPR began to emerge

when it was announced that the AMG was the only legitimate government in the south, thus undermining the political authority of the KPR (*Maeil sinbo*, October 11, 1945). Through its convention held in November 20-22, 1945, the People's Republic in turn proclaimed its legitimacy as the most representative and legitimate political organization, thereby insisting on keeping the moniker "republic."

Just as the AMG denied the political authority of the KPR, it also launched an initiative to dissolve people's committees at the local level. Since its inception in early September, the KPR was not able to complete the formation of its organizational system and in some areas there remained a political vacuum when the U.S. forces came. In some regions, therefore, people's committees were not thoroughly integrated into the KPR. Yet, the basic reform policy and orientation of the KPR were shared and various groups within the local population in a given area participated in people's committees. In order for the AMG to fully reach its governmental capacity and to place the entire southern part of Korea under its rule, therefore, it became critical not only to constrain the KPR but also to replace the people's committees with the U.S. military forces and their appointed Korean counterparts. It was, after all, people's committees that took over the task of local governance in given regions.

As the AMG began to replace people's committees with the U.S. military forces, conflicts began to arise between the occupation power and the local population in many areas. One of these large scale clashes is an incident in Namwŏn in November, 1945. In Namwŏn, a city of the North Chŏlla Province, the local people's committee took over property previously owned by the Japanese during the liberation phase. Upon its arrival in the region, the U.S. military forces demanded the property back from the people's

committee and nullified the committee's political authority in the area. When the people's committee refused to accept these demands, intervention by the Korean police promptly followed. Responding to the arrest of five committee leaders by the police, about seven-hundred to a thousand people marched into and attacked the police station. When American troops were sent to disperse the crowd, it resulted in three casualties and about fifty injuries (*Haebang ilbo*, November 25, 1945; United States Armed Forces in Korea, G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 10, November 11-18, 1945; see Ch'oe 1988: 112-13).⁵⁶

As the Namwŏn case indicates, the AMG relied on the police and military force in order to set up the military government system in local regions and to enforce its governmental functions, which led to the revival of the coercive state apparatus and political system of the colonial period. What is critical in this process is that internal conflicts that had developed during the colonial period became significantly intensified through the intervention of U.S. military forces, as those who were perceived to be pro-Japanese collaborators made another alliance with the occupation power. In particular, a strong connection between the conservative political parties, most notably the KDP, and the police force was created through this process. On December 27, 1945, the AMG enacted policies that required "the provincial governors to call on the police to keep order" in local regions ("HUSAFIK," vol. 3, ch. 4, pt. 1: 11). This policy facilitated the cooperation between the national police force and rightist political organizations to the degree that the members of the KDP already obtained official positions at the provincial and county levels with the help of the U.S. Indeed, seventeen out of twenty-one county

⁵⁶ While the G-2 Weekly Summary document states that about 700 to 1,000 people participated in the protest to demand the release of their leaders, *Haebang ilbo* indicates that approximately 14,000 to 15,000 people took part in the movement.

governors in the South Chōlla Province were KDP members (Cumings 1981: 155).

It was suggested that about eighty percent of all officials and bureaucrats of the AMG were related to the KDP (Sim 1984: 34). Both the Director of the National Police Department and the Chief of the Seoul Metropolitan Police came from the KDP, and by the end of 1946, more than eighty percent of the Korean police force came from those who had served the Japanese during the colonial period (An 1988: 215; Henderson 1968: 85). The police force was intensively utilized to oppress such organizations as people's committees, labor and peasant unions, and leftist political groups. It was Cho Pyōng-ok, Director of the National Police Department and a member of KDP, who suggested that the AMG should not recognize people's committees and the People's Republic, while tolerating the violence of rightist organizations. Regarding criticism of former police officers who had served the colonial regime, he advocated for the professional skills and experience that they had and the relevance of their reappointment in the National Police as follows (Cho 1959: 173-74):

I think we can distinguish two kinds of pro-Japanese collaborators during the colonial period in Korea: first, those who were professional pro-Japanese and second, those who chose to be police officers as a means to make and protect their families and lives. Therefore, many of our brothers are not *Pro JAP* but *Pro JOB*. Some of them served as police and some as officials or high employees of the Government-General. Yet, only a small minority of those people is pro-Japanese. [...] Our appointment policy is thus to hire those who had previous experience of working as police officers [under the colonial rule] by considering their past work as representing the Pro JOB type, except for those who obstructed national movements or killed national movement activists (emphasis added).

The resurgence of the colonial political system along with the appointments of former police and government officials increased surveillance and control of the existing reformist organizations and associations. Reporting police oppression against workers' and farmers' associations and the prevalent use of harsh Japanese methods for prisoner

treatment, the Department of Public Information of the AMG in July 1946 noted that “the apparent recent increase in police aggression and brutality has been carefully planned. The pass word is ‘*August 15 revenge*,’ the idea being to mete out vengeance to those who removed the Japanese police from office last August [in 1945]” (United States Armed Forces in Korea, “Civil Disturbance,” no. 2, [July 30, 1946] 1994: 187, emphasis added). Even though it is not clear whether and how systematically police aggression was planned, the police forces obviously played a leading role in destroying people’s organizations that had mushroomed since decolonization. What is important is that political oppression toward popular demands and organizations took place at local as well as institutional levels.

It is worth emphasizing that although political suppression of such organizations and activists was largely directed by the AMG, it was not merely the product of political commands from above. Police officers and government officials at the local level also had their own reasons and motivation for such control. They witnessed the precarious social position of pro-Japanese Koreans and some of them actually experienced harsh criticism and physical attacks due to their service for the Japanese in the liberation phase when popular organizations began to undertake tasks that the government and police used to control. In recognizing the negative social treatment and vulnerability of being labeled collaborators with the Japanese through a series of events in the liberation phase, they came to have their own reasons for opposing reformist moves. It seems, therefore, plausible that they sought to destroy popular organizations once they regained their positions under the AMG. Although the U.S. military regime played an important role in this process by bringing back colonial institutional settings and personnel in the political

field, the critical point is that the oppression was intensified by the active and voluntary intervention of police and rightist political organizations.

The resurrection of the colonial political system and former government officials in the early occupation period seriously aggravated internal conflicts among Koreans. It was not only because of the political oppression of existing popular organizations but also because they sought to maximize their own interests in the exacerbated economic conditions. As we see below, the economic policies of the military regime gave rise to a serious food acquisition problem and this in turn brought about the revival of a grain collection program that was practiced in the late colonial period to aid in the war effort. Through direct management and intervention of grain collection, government officials and police cooperated with dominant economic groups to enhance their economic power at the expense of the general public who consequently faced starvation. As the military government's documentation of public opinion indicates (G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 41, June 16-23, 1946), Koreans exhibited more hostility toward Korean officials than they did to the U.S. military government itself.

Free Market Policies and the Resurgence of the Rice Collection Program

One of the most important tasks in liberated Korea was to restore the national economy that had been reorganized to serve the interests of imperial Japan. Although the Ugaki administration, after the Manchurian incident, promoted industrialization in Korea in the 1930s, which indeed produced important economic changes, Korea remained largely an agricultural society.⁵⁷ When Korea was liberated from Japan, about eighty

⁵⁷ According to Osterhammel (2002: 79), Japan is the only imperial power which built industrial economy in its colony.

percent of the population was engaged in the agricultural sector and the majority of them were tenant farmers. Agricultural reform was thus of particular importance and issues related to tenancy gained special attention in the liberation phase. Indeed, the People's Republic enacted a policy that lands owned by Japanese nationals and the pro-Japanese would be confiscated and be reallocated to tenant farmers. The policy also included regulation on tenancy rent in the ratio of three to seven in favor of tenant farmers (Minjŏn 1946: 87). By regulating the agricultural economy in this way, the People's Republic sought to alleviate the economic inequality that had been intensified during the colonial period, to enhance people's welfare, thus ultimately recovering the national economy from the effects of colonial policy.

The basic economic policy of the AMG in the early occupation period, however, was to protect private property rights and to stimulate the market economy, rather than enforcing governmental intervention and regulation. On September 23, 1945, it announced that there would be no change of landownership and tax rates. Regarding enemy property, it made clear two days later that the U.S. military regime would take control of property owned by the Government-General, and would allow transactions related to the private property possessed by Japanese nationals. With this economic policy, pro-Japanese collaborators, whose property was to be confiscated under the People's Republic, were able to secure their lands and other assets. However, this gave rise to conflicts between the AMG and local organizations in many regions of Korea, because people's committees already had been playing a role in governmental activities, including taxation and the management of land and property since liberation.

The U.S. land policy was significantly different from land reform in the north

under the Russian rule. Just as the colonial political system and former officials were largely removed and replaced through political reform in the northern areas, the abolishment of colonial legacies in the rural economy that had been subjected to extensive extraction by imperial Japan was also sought. In accordance with the policy of the People's Republic, farm lands and properties of large landlords or those who were charged as being pro-Japanese were confiscated and distributed to tenant farmers with priority given to people who participated in anti-colonial activities during the colonial period. It was announced that as a result of land reform, almost one million chŏngbo was distributed free to 724,522 tenant farmers and laborers. To protect their property from this economic reform in the north, some Koreans chose to escape from the Russian rule. Indeed, about 800,000 people came to the south to avoid confiscation during the land reform (Lauterback 1947: 213-14).

The influx of big landowners from the north, coupled with large numbers of people returning from foreign countries, led to a significant increase in the population in the south. After liberation from Japanese colonial rule, about 860,000 people came from the northern area and more than 1.5 million people returned from other countries such as Manchuria, Japan, and Russia (Chosŏn ũnhaeng chosabu 1948: III-19). Without relevant economic reform, the increase in population in turn intensified the already existing economic inequality in the south under the AMG. Since the colonial period, the southern part had already developed a significant economic gap between a small number of large landlords or capitalists and majority of poor tenant farmers. Through both U.S. economic policy and social mobility, economic inequality became exacerbated. In late 1945 in the southern area, more than seventy percent of rural households remained as peasant farmers,

while Korean landlords who consisted of less than ten percent of households possessed more than eighty-four percent of farm lands (1,240,000 of 1,470,000 chŏngbo) (Chosŏn unhaeng chosabu 1948: I-29).

U.S. economic policies reinforced and aggravated this economic gap among Koreans. Unlike their Russian counterparts in the north, the Americans in the south constructed the New Korean Company and took over the lands that had been under the control of the Government-General and the Oriental Development Company during the colonial era. In an attempt to promote a market economy, the military government also enacted free market policies and issued "Free Market Rice" (General Notice, no. 1, October 5, 1945) and "Free Market" notices (General Notice, no. 2, October 20, 1945). These two notices were intended to remove all control and restriction on the market and the sale of all commodities with the only exception being products that had been previously owned and monopolized by the Japanese and the colonial government. In doing so, the military government aimed to prevent hoarding, increase production, and lower prices, thus stimulating trade and economic production.

The free market policies, however, led to the considerable deterioration of economic conditions in the south. Since Korea's economy had been guided by the close control and tight governmental direction from the colonial period, there had to be some intervening measures to make gradual changes. Yet, the occupation regime suddenly removed all government control and regulation altogether. Once the free market policies came into effect, both the consumption and hoarding of rice increased. The consequences of the free market policies thus were the emergence of tremendous inflation and the disappearance of rice in the open market. Within one year after the U.S. came to Korea,

the price of polished rice increased almost three hundred times and the average cost of food was one hundred times higher than in the pre-war period (“HUSAFIK,” vol. 4, ch. 6: 5, 27).

It should be noted that while the U.S. military regime was chiefly responsible for the occupation policies, dominant economic groups among Koreans, notably landlords and some prominent business men, also played a role in the policy-making process. As the food situation was exacerbated after the enactment of the free market policies, the AMG called for an informal gathering and about twenty large landlords were invited. In the meeting, a lieutenant colonel said (*Chosŏn ilbo*, January 10, 1946):

Although rice began to be sold in a free market *as you wanted from the outset*, you increased the price of rice. Even more, you don't put rice out on the market as the price control began to be in effect. The food problem became extremely exacerbated and we have even found secret stores of rice. Although we are willing to give you a last chance to put rice out on the market and regulate the price accordingly, if you keep pursuing your selfish interest only and continue to exert a harmful influence on Korean independence, we cannot but take coercive action” (emphasis added).

The statement indicates that landlords were directly involved with the AMG's free market policy-making process from the beginning and sought to maximize their interest by manipulating the economic situation. This is further evidenced by the statement of an economic advisor to the occupation regime on September 4, 1946 that “I think that we can admit frankly that we made a very grave mistake when we went into a free market for rice last year. We made that error partly because of the advice of Koreans” (Meade 1951: 196). In fact, upon the U.S. arrival, landlords began to actively request support from the newly established occupation regime to recover their economic and political power that was put in jeopardy during the liberation period. They also organized their own youth groups and sought to reorganize rightist power to counteract leftist

groups and people's committees (see Hong 1992: 278-80).

In contrast to the dominant economic groups that made close connections with the AMG, peasant organizations were established mainly under the leadership of leftist activists. The attempt to enhance popular economic conditions since the liberation phase led to the continuous development of mass organizations under the occupation regime. Indeed, the National Council of Korean Labor Unions (*Chosŏn nodong chohap chŏn'guk p'yŏngŭihoe*, henceforth Chŏnp'yŏng) and the National League of Peasant Unions (*Chŏn'guk nongmin chohap ch'ongyŏnmaeng*, henceforth Chŏnnong) were formed under the leadership of the Communist Party in November 1945. In particular, Chŏnnong had local branches in every province with more than two million members in total in the American occupation area. The formation of these unions reflects the continued effort of leftists to develop popular organizations. At the same time, however, it seems that they were established also as a response to the AMG and its policies in the early occupation period.

Table 11: Organizations and Members of Chŏnnong, November 1945

	Province	City and County	Township	Village	Member
South Chŏlla	1	14	110	3,019	369,414
North Chŏlla	1	12	103	2,075	301,645
South Kyŏngsang	1	15	182	1,877	459,759
North Kyŏngsang	1	17	127	2,598	275,913
South Ch'ungch'ŏng	1	12	97	1,890	122,563
North Ch'ungch'ŏng	1	6	57	1,750	116,978
Kyŏnggi	1	15	134	3,239	193,549
Kangwŏn	1	21	179	1,857	175,852
Hwanghae	1	17	227	981	204,277
South P'yŏngan	1	14	140	1,640	173,545
North P'yŏngan	1	19	178	1,600	279,424
South Hamgyŏng	1	15	135	1,979	450,746
North Hamgyŏng	1	11	76	783	199,532
Total	13	188	1,745	25,288	3,322,937

Source: Minjŏn (1946: 167).

The principles of Chōnnong resemble those of the People's Republic. Its economic aims included: the confiscation of all lands from Japanese nationals, collaborators, and national traitors and the redistribution of those lands to poor farmers; prohibition of the arbitrary change of tenancy rights by landlords and establishment of union bargaining and contract rights; deduction of rents into one-third of the crop; and, destruction of all usurious loan contracts. Its political goals included: participation of farmers' representatives in government organizations; appointment of executive, judicial, and other important officials through elections; and, supporting and forming close alliances with urban labor movements (Chōnnong 1946: 101-05).

As these economic and political objectives indicate, Chōnnong had a reformist rather than revolutionary character, in spite of the active involvement of the KCP. These objectives seem to reflect the view the general public held that the construction of an independent nation-state should be accomplished before any fundamental economic reforms were initiated. Indeed, when the AMG announced a plan for the sale of Japanese-owned land solely to tenants with payment in produce in March 1946, a majority of tenant farmers indicated through public opinion polls that the establishment of a "Korean" government should be prioritized over any land reform, and only fourteen percent of them favored an immediate act of land distribution by the AMG. Also, regarding the Korean-owned land, eighty percent of respondents agreed to its sale to tenant peasants rather than to free distribution (Robinson 1950: 85).

Facing a widespread shortage of rice and increasing unrest as a result of the free market policies, the AMG announced a "National Rice Collection" (Ordinance, no. 45, January 25, 1946) in order to secure food rations. Reviving the notorious grain collection

program, which had been practiced for the war effort in the 1940s during the Japanese colonial period, the ordinance mandated that each farmer deliver all excess rice except for 2.25 bushels per person in each household. As the total amount of the first rice collection reached a mere 13.6 percent of the originally intended amount, the military government issued the "National Food Regulation, no. 2" on August 12, 1946, and changed the method of rice collection. Unlike the preceding method, this regulation mandated that each farmer deliver a certain amount of an assigned quota to the government offices at a fixed price. Local boards, which consisted of police officials, village elders, businessmen, and large landowners, became responsible for allocation and collection.

The free market policies and grain collection program brought about contrasting consequences for different economic groups. While they resulted in extreme poverty and hunger, and threatened subsistence levels for many people, especially peasants, landlords were able to enhance their economic power. A U.S. military government document (G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 53, September 8-15, 1946) reports that big landlords and profiteers were making profits through the program, whereas farmers, who resisted the grain collection program, were confronted with physical attack by the police. They gave up their rice only because of fear and punishment, and their economic condition placed them near starvation levels. Describing the living conditions in the summer of 1946, another AMG document notes that "there are large numbers of people every day who come to the village office to ask for food. About 1,500 people are suffering from a growth on their skin, which is due to the shortage of food and many of them have died" (G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 43, June 30-July 7, 1946).

For most farmers, the economic situation that threatened their very subsistence

posed a serious problem. Also important, however, was that their economic condition worsened because of the manipulation and suppression by landlords and government officials through the revival of the notorious grain collection program of the colonial period. An article in *Minju ilbo* stated that “the citizens stand in line before the distributing store from early morning till night to get their food. We have never seen such a thing even under Japanese domination. [...] the unkindness of the distributing stores is such as we never experienced under Japanese domination. The stores plan for their own profit under this system” (cited in G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 54, September 15-22, 1946).

Indeed, unlike most farmers, landlords could escape heavy allocation through their close relationships with government employees. The fact that quota allocation was decided in local administrative offices seems to be chiefly responsible for the assignment of heavy allocation for farmers. Since the colonial period, landlords had played a central role in local administrative offices, and therefore they could shift proportionate allocation to farmers. When farmers submitted their rice to the government office, for example, Korean clerks gave them only half credit for the rice and assigned the remaining credit to the landlords. Landlords also actively used the situation to their benefit by lending money to farmers at higher interest rates than during the colonial period. While rural credit associations under Japanese colonial rule allowed farmers to borrow money at a rate of twenty-four percent a year, landlords requested rates as high as sixty percent (Gayn 1948: 414).

It should be mentioned that with the enactment of free market ordinances, the occupation regime also implemented a policy (Ordinance, no. 9, October 5, 1945) to limit the maximum rent to one-third of the crop to alleviate tenants' economic burden from the

demand for high rents by landlords. Due to the population influx after liberation, which resulted in considerable surplus labor, however, it also became possible for landlords to evade the ordinance, and force tenants to pay high rents as a condition of continuing their tenancy rights. The American rent policy was thus blamed for reinforcing landlords' landownership and enabling them to maintain their economic power, which began to more or less decline during the liberation phase (Chönnong 1946: 159).

As economic conflict among Koreans became significantly aggravated through a series of economic policies of the occupation regime, tenant disputes began to emerge. From 1946 through August of 1947, for example, there were 1,552 tenant disputes in the North Kyöngsang Province only, about eighty percent of which were related to demands for continued tenancy (*Kyöngbuk yön'gam* 1948: 206-07). In 1947, the number of tenant disputes increased to 1,934 by August, of which 1,552 were caused by tenancy issues. The economic problems, which had been produced and developed since the colonial period, including excessive rents, insecure tenancy, and usury, reappeared in an intensified form under American occupation.

Between Rightists and Leftists

Upon arrival, the Americans saw Koreans exhibiting a wide spectrum of ideologies ranging from extreme rightists, moderate rightists or leftists, through radical leftists. Unlike the Russian rule in the north that supported leftist initiatives for reform projects, the American occupation in the south led to the resurgence of rightists in the political scene. Rightist organizations in the early occupation period included the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea and the KDP. It is worth noting that although the former was established in the aftermath of the March First Movement in

1919 by exile nationalists, it came to represent the right under the AMG. Upon his return to Korea from the U.S. in October 1945, Yi Sŭng-man, the president of the Provisional Government, made a close connection with the KDP and began to receive financial support from the KDP and other pro-Japanese people (“HUSAFIK,” vol. 2, ch. 2: 56-57; Sŏ 1996: 85). In contrast, leftist organizations included the Korean People’s Party (*Chosŏn inmindang*) led by Yŏ Un-hyŏng, the Korean New Democratic Party (*Chosŏn sinmindang*) headed by Paek Nam-un, and the Korean Communist Party (*Chosŏn kongsandang*) led by Pak Hŏn-yŏng. In spite of variations in their ideological background and organizational foundation, the leftist organizations tended to support the Korean People’s Republic.

Although there was no clear demarcation between rightists and leftists, they differed in their views on some important issues, such as on the goals and specific methods of the socioeconomic and political reform projects (see “HUSAFIK,” vol. 2, ch. 2: 4-14). One of the contentious issues in the early occupation period was the problem of the pro-Japanese and collaborators. In particular, leftist groups actively utilized this charge against rightists who strongly aligned themselves with the U.S. military regime, especially the KDP. As early as October 1945, the People’s Republic announced (*Maeil sinbo*, October 14, 1945):

The sin of pro-Japanese collaborators and national traitors cannot be forgiven. As Japanese puppets, they consolidated the exploitation and suppression of Koreans by Japanese imperialists and drove Korean youth to the battleground by advocating the exploitive Japanese war as a holy war for the liberation of East Asia. Yet, they are about to oppress the people under the aegis of another foreign power. It is the shame of the Korean nation to allow the national traitors to exist. The tragedy approaching our nation stems from their obstruction to national unification as conspired by those people.

The rightists tended to avoid the issue by prioritizing the establishment of a

sovereign nation-state over the immediate punishment of pro-Japanese collaborators under the AMG. Yi Sŭng-man, for example, advanced such a rightist approach by stating that “national traitors and the pro-Japanese should of course be obliterated. But, we must first be united together to consolidate our strength. We do not wish that they be punished at the foreigners’ hands right now. Rather we believe that we should judge them after regaining our whole land of Korea” (*Maeil sinbo*, November 6, 1945). While evading the discussion of pro-Japanese collaborators on the grounds of national cooperation, the rightists, contradicting their own logic, chastised the left. On December 21, 1945, Yi declared that “Korea does not wish to have the KCP under the present circumstances [...] they [the Communists] have robbed the people of their property by the use of arms and placed the nation into chaos under the beautiful name of ‘Republic’” (“HUSAFIK,” vol. 2, ch. 2: 56).

While rightists gained prominent positions as government officials, leftists exerted a strong influence on various organizations, in part due to their commitment to popular demands for social equality and for the removal of Japanese colonial legacies, and in part because of their relatively well-developed organizational and mobilizing capacity, which they had strengthened throughout the colonial period. The KCP, for example, played an important role in creating the largest labor and peasant unions in the southern zone in November 1945. Although mass organizations in general had a close connection with leftists, whether they were radical communists or moderate nationalists, rightist organizations also proliferated during the occupation period. Just like the KDP, however, many rightist organizations were founded mainly in an attempt to constrain leftist hegemony and organizational development. Indeed, rightist labor and peasant

organizations emerged in 1946 and 1947 respectively and their primary goals and activities were focused on destroying their leftist counterparts and on developing an anti-communist movement.

The rise of the trusteeship issue provided a critical juncture for the rearrangement of rightist and leftist organizations and their relationships. The foreign ministers of the U.S., the Soviet Union, and the U.K. attended a conference in Moscow in late December of 1945 and determined that Korea would be under a joint trusteeship for up to five years and that a U.S.-Soviet Union Joint Commission would be formed to facilitate the formation of a Korean government. When the Moscow decision was initially reported in Korea on December 27, 1945, both rightists and leftists showed vehement opposition to and criticism of the decision, because the idea of trusteeship was regarded as another name for foreign rule. Japanese colonial dominance was, after all, preceded by a protectorate rule in Korea. Even if the trusteeship did not lead to another instance of foreign control, the resultant delay of the establishment of a Korean government was against the national desire for immediate independence.

Pak Hŏn-yŏng, a leader of the KCP, vigorously objected to trusteeship and a leftist newspaper made the claim that “traitors made trusteeship possible.” Upon returning from a visit to the north, however, he withdrew his previous opposition to trusteeship and turned to support for trusteeship.⁵⁸ From January 3, 1946 on, leftists began to support the idea of trusteeship. Advocating the Moscow decision, the KCP grounded their support on the claim that trusteeship by the four powers would promote the formation of a Korean government at least within five years. Furthermore, it was

⁵⁸ The Americans thus believed that the sudden and complete change of the leftist stance on trusteeship was ordered by the Russians in the north (“HUSAFIK,” vol. 2, ch. 4: 78).

argued, it would assist not only in constraining the power of emerging fascist forces such as the pro-Japanese and national traitors but would also provide the political and economic support that Korea needed (*Seoul sinmun*, January 8, 1946).

The rightists, who showed strong opposition to trusteeship, directed their critiques to the leftists and the Russians, not to the U.S. The conservative KDP, for example, proclaimed that “we must exclude them [the People’s Republic]. Let us tear down the People’s Republic, namely the Korean Communists” (G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 17, December 30, 1945-January 6, 1946). Yi Sŭng-man and Kim Ku who represented the Provisional Government in particular and the rightists in general also fiercely critiqued leftists’ consent to trusteeship. In critiquing leftists for their pro-trusteeship stance, the rightists primarily relied on national sentiment for immediate independence from foreign occupation and argued that anyone who shared the national will would join the anti-trusteeship forces. By the same token, leftists who were in support of trusteeship, rightists claimed, stood against the national hope. Despite leftists’ justification of their support for trusteeship, once the meaning of trusteeship became largely identified with a different form of foreign rule among the general public, it was hard for leftists to obtain public support for their pro-trusteeship stance. The rightists were thus able to gain substantial support by appealing to the national sentiment.

While the rightists justified the legitimacy of their anti-trusteeship stance in the name of the nation, the leftists drew on the notion of people. The People’s Republic proclaimed that “we have tried to unite with the so-called Provisional Government, but it was all in vain because of their stubbornness. We are now determined to eliminate the Fascist Provisional Government which is planning to divide the people, and we are

determined to make the utmost effort to bring about the *democratic unification of the people*” (G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 17, December 30-January 6, 1946, emphasis added). For leftists, the people included all Koreans with the exception of the pro-Japanese, national traitors, and the right who had betrayed the nation by collaborating with the Japanese and then with the AMG.

What is worth highlighting here is that the rightists began to appropriate the language of “national traitors” to criticize leftists. They greatly emphasized that leftists’ pro-trusteeship view obstructed immediate creation of a sovereign nation-state and pronounced that those who supported trusteeship were national traitors. It should be remembered that critiques of “pro-Japanese” and “national traitors” had been primarily used by leftists to castigate rightists in the liberation phase and early occupation period. This was chiefly responsible for the underdevelopment of popular support for and the perceived irrelevance of the political leadership of the right. Once the trusteeship issue began to emerge, however, the rightists charged those who supported the trusteeship idea, especially leftists, as being “national traitors” and suddenly transformed themselves into “patriots” (Sō 1991: 315-16). In this way, rightists attempted to erase their tainted past and recover political hegemony through the discourse on the trusteeship issue.

Another important result of the rise of the trusteeship issue lies in the realignment of organizations of the right and left. On the right, The Emergency National Assembly (*Pisang kungmin hoeŭi*) was formed on February 1, 1946, which in turn changed to the Representative Democratic Council of South Korea (*Nam chosŏn taehan kungmin taep’yo minju ūiwŏn*) on February 14, 1946, which served as an advisory council for the U.S. military regime. In addition, the National Association for the Rapid

Realization of Korean Independence (*Taehan tongnip ch'oksŏng kungminhoe*) was organized under the leadership of Yi Sŭng-man on February 8, 1946. On the left, the Korean Democratic People's Front (*Minjujuŭi minjok chŏnsŏn*, henceforth the KDPPF) was formed on February 15, 1946 with the participation of leftist and nationalist political parties. The KDPPF succeeded the KPR and included various popular organizations, such as labor and peasant unions, and youth associations. It was represented by a group of leftists and nationalists, such as Hŏ Hŏn, Kim Wŏn-bong, Paek Nam-un, Pak Hŏn-yŏng, and Yŏ Un-hyŏng (see Ch'oe 1987: 112-13).

Although the rearrangement of rightist and leftist organizations reflects the increasing ideological and political conflict between them, it should not lead us to assume the complete polarization or the lack of the so-called middle of the road sector. The number of moderate nationalists and leftists would have probably far exceeded those of extreme rightists or radical leftists. Yet, the problem was that they did not have a strong and popular organizational basis or a clear political strategy to integrate various political groups under the goal of national unification. Just as non-compromising nationalists during the colonial period had a strong desire for independence with a lack of specific political tactics or organizational power, those who were in the middle shared the fundamental goal of national cooperation and yet were not capable of bridging the gap between extreme rightists and radical leftists. Furthermore, making their own organization would add another factional group in the already fragmented political context. As a result, they tended to be included and represented by either the far right or far left. The representatives of the KDPPF, for example, thus included not only the leader of the KCP but also such moderate figures as Paek Nam-un and Yŏ Un-hyŏng.

Through the organizational rearrangement, both the rightists and leftists made claims as to their representation of the people and the nation, thus further intensifying their ideological and political conflict. On the one hand, Yi Sŭng-man, representing the right, claimed that “the Representative Council is a united organization of all parties with the exception of the Communists [...] those who continue to dispute and plot to divide the people will be considered traitors.” (see G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 21, January 27-February 3, 1946; no. 24, February 17-24, 1946). It was the leftists, according to Yi, who obstructed national independence. On the other hand, the leftists declared that “the KDPF is a unified organization, excluding the pro-Japanese, traitors, and fascists, who are dividing the people.” In response to the rightist charge that the KDPF was solely responsible for the continuous national division, the KDPF proclaimed as follows. “It is the desire of the people to abolish the 38-degree parallel [a dividing line between the north and south], because it interferes with the establishment of independence. However, it must not be abolished just to permit the pro-Japanese and traitors to commute freely between North and South Korea. [...] Only after the deportation of these people, who were the seeing-eye dogs of the Japanese Emperor, will the democratic united government be able to help the country and *the people establish a new nation*” (*Chosŏn inminbo*, March 6, 1946, cited in G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 26, March 3-10, 1946, emphasis added).⁵⁹ Unlike the rightists who sought to maintain the existing national boundary, what the leftist envisioned was a nation newly reconstructed by the people. As such, it represented a new national and political community with the exclusion of the pro-

⁵⁹ In particular, prominent rightist political party members and leaders such as Yi Sŭng-man and Kim Ku became the target of criticism. *Chungang sinmun* (February 19, 1946), a leftist newspaper, for instance, stated “Dr. Rhee [Yi Sŭng-man] and Kim Koo have completely abandoned the autonomous unification of our people and are scheming to gain political power by relying on foreign powers.”

Japanese collaborators.

The tension between the rightists and leftists evolved along with major economic issues as well. As the food problems continued to worsen through the implementation of the rice collection program in early 1946, rightists and leftists proposed contrasting methods to resolve the current economic problems. The conservative KDP claimed that the occupation forces ought to abolish price controls and assist the free transportation of rice. In contrast, representing the leftists, the KDPF demanded that the military government should continue to maintain the ceiling price, confiscate rice from landlords, profiteers, and merchants, and distribute rice through the people's committees and farmers' unions (G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 29, March 24-31, 1946). Moreover, when the issue of land reform emerged due to the news from the north about the free land distribution to the people, the KDP strongly opposed the free distribution of land against the leftists who supported such a progressive land reform (*Tonga ilbo*, October 12, 1946). Given the fact that the KDP was mainly composed of wealthy landlords and businessmen, the vehement objection of the KDP to the free land distribution that would destroy their own economic base is not surprising.

Facing the stalemate of increasing tension between the right and left, the U.S. military regime began to embrace the moderates more closely. In accordance with the Moscow decision, the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission was to be held and neither the extreme rightists nor radical leftists was considered the representative political force in the south. By establishing the Coalition Council, the AMG sought to develop an integrative political force in the south. To this end, it began to support such moderate figures as Kim Kyu-sik and Yō Un-Hyōng, representing the right and left, respectively.

Notwithstanding this attempt, the Coalition Council failed to drive the creation of a political coalition both within the south and with the north. This was in part because the Soviet Union refused to include the rightists who were opposed to trusteeship in particular and the Moscow decision in general. Since the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission was also a product of the Moscow Conference, the Russians argued, those who raised objection to trusteeship should not be included. The lack of effort by the far right and left was also responsible for the fact that the Coalition Council was not able to produce a satisfactory outcome.

That the extreme right and radical left continued to insist on their own political views is particularly well documented by their different proposals of conditions for the Interim Legislative Assembly. On June 29, 1946, the AMG announced that a legislative body would be established to assist with the enactment of ordinances as an effort to prepare for the establishment of the Korean government. Upon the announcement, the Coalition Council requested both the right and left to submit their proposals. The leftists took the initiative by publicizing five principles in the name of the KDPF as follows (*Seoul sinmun*, July 28, 1946): 1) the reconvening of the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission in support of the Moscow decision and the establishment of the interim government via direct communication with people's committees in the north; 2) implementation of land reform through the confiscation of lands with no compensation and the free distribution of such land, nationalization of important industries, enactment of labor laws and efforts directed at such basic tasks as working towards political freedom and the establishment of democracy; 3) the complete exclusion of pro-Japanese, national traitors, and fascist reactionary groups, prohibition of terror, and immediate release of imprisoned democratic

patriots; 4) efforts for immediate transfer of power from the military government to people's committees; and, 5) objection to the establishment of an advisory council or legislative organization for the occupation regime.

These conditions confirmed the leftists' insistence on the exclusion of the right and demonstrated their non-compromising attitude toward the military regime. The suggested methods of land reform and the nationalization of industries, for example, were in direct conflict with the economic principles of the right, and the demand for the complete exclusion of pro-Japanese and reactionary groups could be easily interpreted as leftists' refusal of rightist forces. Furthermore, leftists refused to acknowledge the U.S. military government and publicly demanded the right to rule. By demanding the transfer of the political power of the military government to people's committees under their leadership, the leftists made clear that they sought to replace the U.S. occupation regime, rather than just cooperate with it. By objecting to the formation of any advisory council or organization for the U.S. forces, the leftists eventually negated the purpose of their proposal, since it was intended to direct the formation of a legislative body under the AMG. In this regard, the proposal signified leftists' insistence on their own political hegemony against both the right and the U.S. occupation authority.

Three days later, the rightists announced their demands as follows (*Tonga ilbo*, July 31, 1946): 1) establishing an interim government through cooperation of the north and south; 2) reconvening of the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission; 3) resolving the trusteeship issue by institution of the interim government with the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission; 4) convening of the national representatives councils through election within six months after constructing the interim government; 5) establishing the Korean

government within three months after the foundation of a national representative council; 6) absolute guarantee of protecting freedom of speech, press, association, publication, etc. for the election; 7) enactment of all institutional and legal ordinances by the Representative Democratic Council of South Korea; and, 8) punishment of the pro-Japanese and national traitors after the establishment of the interim government.

The proposal from the right wing, compared to its leftist counterpart, was general and vague. It did not include any specific methods of land reform, or information on any economic issues for that matter, and it avoided the issue of the pro-Japanese and collaborators by postponing discussion of this issue until the interim government would be formed. The proposal nonetheless reveals rightists' attempts to secure their dominant positions in the institutionalized political field. To the extent that the rightists exerted a predominant influence on the Representative Democratic Council as an advisory organization for the AMG, the demand for the full responsibility of the Representative Democratic Council for enacting all legal ordinances was nothing but a claim of rightists' monopolization in legislative matters.

As the AMG directed its support to the moderates, while constraining both extreme rightists and radical leftists, this in turn precipitated their desperate turn to far more drastic tactics. The rightists began to publicize the formation of a separate government in the south as an option in the current political circumstances. Making claims for the dissolution of the KCP, the KDP suggested that "if the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission breaks down for a sustained period, our course would be to establish a government voluntarily and then demand the approval from the Great Powers" (*Tonga ilbo*, May 18, 1946), implying the possibility of constructing a divided state in the south.

Yi Süng-man went further by stating “[I am] looking forward to and am propagating the establishment of the Korean government, even if it is only in the south” (*Seoul sinmun*, June 8, 1946).

One of the primary reasons that the rightists so stubbornly opposed cooperation with the leftists and the Russians was related to the problem of pro-Japanese collaborators. In contrast to the American rule that resurrected the colonial system and personnel, the Russian rule in the northern zone supported the political effort to remove colonial legacies. The reform process regarding the pro-Japanese and their property in the north under the Russian military forces made clear to the far right in the south the treatment they would confront if an interim government were established with the engagement of the Russians. On June 15, 1946, an editorial in a conservative newspaper, *Hyöndaee ilbo*, stated that the existence of anti-Russian sentiment and the lack of anti-Americanism resulted from the fact that “the Russian policy of ‘driving out’ the pro-Japanese and traitors, whereas the Americans treated all Koreans alike; Koreans who had prayed for the Japanese defeat were naturally thankful to the Americans while the pro-Japanese elements were also glad that they were not punished” (G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 40, June 9-16, 1946). This suggests that the right wing tried to justify their pro-U.S. view by appealing to the impartiality of U.S. policies.

While constraining the extreme rightists, the AMG held its tightest grip on radical leftists and their organizations, notably the KCP. To be sure, the leftists, from the beginning, continued to have a contentious relationship with the occupation forces as well as with the rightists, especially due to the People’s Republic’s insistence on having governmental authority. The leftists nonetheless continued to be treated as one of the

major political forces in the south in part due to their extensive organizational power and in part because of the relationship with the Russians in the north. However, as the leftists continued to publicly and proactively request that political power be transferred from the AMG to the people's committees under their control, the AMG intensified its oppression and surveillance of the leftists.

Indeed, the KCP stated on April 2, 1946 in *Haebang ilbo* that "in South Korea, thousands of democratic patriots are now in prison and democratic patriotic organizations have been attacked frequently by terrorists and policemen. These events are [...] more unjust than Japanese imperialism." Especially after the KDPF submitted its conditions to the Coalition Council, the left wing made claims for the immediate transfer of power from the military government to people's committees. As a response, the Military Governor made a public statement proclaiming that the leftists were creating evil propaganda to manipulate the public and that the AMG would tolerate neither this leftist maneuver nor its instigation for demonstration and attacks against the police force (*Chosŏn ilbo*, September 1, 1946). A few days later, the military regime ordered the suspension of three leftist newspapers, *Chosŏn inminbo*, *Hyŏndae ilbo*, and *Chungang sinmun*, for an indefinite period, and the arrest of three prominent leftists, including Pak Hŏn-yŏng, a leader of the KCP.

Both increasing terror by the rightists and political suppression by the military regime significantly constrained leftists' activities. To the extent that the leftists refused to cooperate with the right wing on the Coalition Council and denied the political authority of the U.S. occupation forces, it became hard for them to find an effective political strategy for enhancing their hegemony within the American occupation system. This

generated factional conflicts, divisions, and mergers among diverse leftist political parties such as the KCP, the Korean People's Party, and the Korean New Democratic Party, which in turn led to the emergence of the Labor Party in South Korea and the Social Labor Party. Just as the extreme rightists began to move in a more radical direction through the claim for the formation of a separate nation-state in the south, the far leftists turned to the mobilization of radical social movements against both the right and the AMG.

In short, the American policies in the early occupation period significantly intensified the existing conflicts among Koreans that had been formulated during the colonial period. The AMG exhibited an anti-reformist character not only by resuscitating colonial institutions and practices--covering the administrative system, police forces, and legal measures--but also by reintegrating those who were perceived as being pro-Japanese collaborators. The American occupation rule raised a challenge for reformist movements that had begun during the liberation phase. At the same time, however, it offered conservatives a chance to obstruct such reformist moves and to regain their hegemony. The early U.S. occupation rule thus became both an opportunity for and threat to different social groups. On the one hand, it was an opportunity for those who had a strong interest in maintaining the existing colonial structure, including dominant economic groups and former colonial officials. On the other hand, it represented a critical threat for those who attempted to construct their own independent nation-state by abolishing colonial legacies. As a consequence, various groups had to develop their own strategies by interacting with the AMG differently, thus exacerbating internal conflicts that converged and culminated in the 1946 uprisings.

The 1946 People's Uprisings

On September 17, 1946, three thousand railroad workers in Seoul presented a petition to the Department of Transportation with six demands, including a wage increase and food rationing, and requested a response by September 21. Seven thousand workers in Pusan walked out on September 23 with the same demands, and railroad workers in the southern zone went on a general strike on September 24 (*Seoul sinmun*, September 25, 1946). More than 250,000 workers affiliated with Chŏnp'yŏng were mobilized for the general strike that subsequently developed into a popular movement. In Seoul, participants included not only about 30,000 factory workers, but also around 6,000 white collar workers, 16,000 students, and 300 professors; in Taegu, one-third of the local population joined the movement (*Chosŏn yŏn'gam* 1948: 257-58).

The general strike was followed by the outbreak of uprisings.⁶⁰ On October 1, Taegu, a city in the North Kyŏngsang Province, became the center of protest, where women and children went to the city hall to demand rice, and sympathetic union workers and students gathered at the railroad station. When the police fired into the crowd to disperse them and killed a protestor, it fanned the flames of anger. The next day, thousands of high school and college students carrying the dead body entered the police station, released prisoners, and took weapons. Protestors took over the police station and began to attack policemen and government officers. U.S. troops arrived to control the situation and accepted the students' demands: approval of the legitimacy of the strikes,

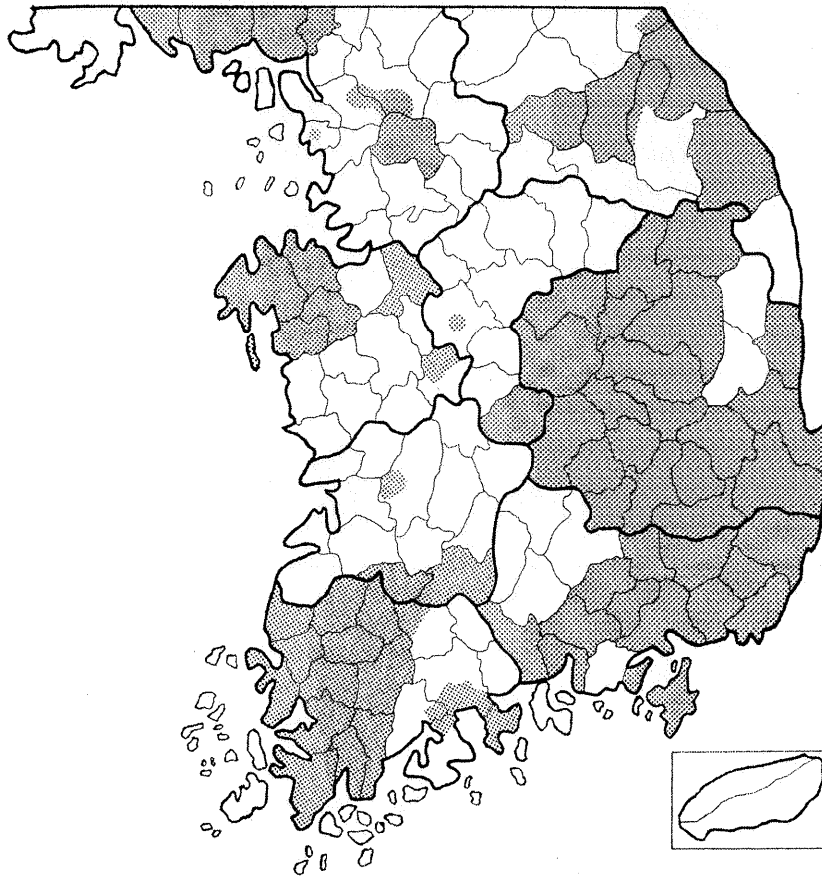
⁶⁰ The movement has been referred to in different ways, including autumn harvest uprisings (Cumings 1981), October people's uprisings (Chŏng 1988), Taegu October uprisings (Sim 1991), or peasant uprisings of 1946 (Shin 1994). To be sure, the Taegu incident played a leading role in precipitating subsequent uprisings and peasants constituted a major part of participants. In an attempt to highlight the broad nature of the movement that can be hardly reduced to a certain region or participants, however, I refer to the movement as the 1946 People's Uprisings.

immediate release of the arrested, and suspension of repressive tactics. The crowds dispersed and martial law was imposed.

Although the uprising in Taegu was soon brought under control by the military and police forces, it fueled subsequent movements in other regions. After the Taegu incident, thirty-seven towns in the North and South Kyōngsang provinces saw the outbreak of uprisings from the first to the tenth of October. The number of participants ranged from forty to tens of thousands (“HUSAFIK,” vol. 3, ch. 4, pt. 2: 7-8). The political upheaval in the Kyōngsang provinces was in turn followed by uprisings that took place sporadically in other regions covering all provinces in the southern zone under the control of the U.S. military forces until mid-December.

The uprisings were crushed especially by the police force and caused extensive damage and casualties. Once the uprising in Taegu broke out, for example, about 3,300 police officers in the North Kyōngsang Province, coupled with more than a thousand members of the police forces supplemented from other areas, were immediately placed to repress the movement (Chōng 1988: 153). It was reported that by the end of October, forty-four police officers died and forty-three civilian casualties occurred in the North Kyōngsang Province alone (*Chosŏn ilbo*, October 31, 1946). While there are no official government statistics about the extent of the uprising, reliable estimates from scholars suggest that about two million people participated in the general strike and subsequent uprisings, and that movement casualties for the entire period include more than two hundred policemen and about one thousand participants (Cumings 1981: 379).

Map 3: Incidents of Uprisings, September-December 1946



Source: Redrawn from maps of uprisings from Chŏng (1988: 190) and Cumings (1981: 353) with their permission. Shaded areas indicate at least one incident and black lines represent provincial boundaries.

Among the many studies of the 1946 uprisings (Chŏng 1988; Cumings 1981; Kim Nam-sik 1984; Kim 1998; Shin 1994; Sim 1991), Bruce Cumings (1981) provides one of the most thorough historical accounts of the mobilization in particular and of the American occupation period in general. Against the AMG's allegation of communist influences on the movement, he stresses the voluntary and spontaneous character of the uprisings and claims that the movement arose from below with the help of grass-roots associations, especially the people's committees in local regions. Some scholars, however, direct attention to the active involvement of leftist activists in the movement and contend

that the uprisings should be understood within the historical context of political and ideological conflicts. From this perspective, the uprisings are seen as the product of the prolonged contentious relationship between leftists, particularly the KCP on the one hand, and rightists and the AMG on the other (Kim Nam-sik 1984; Sim 1991). Integrating these different approaches, others argue that the uprisings were a result of a partial combination of peasants' economic problems and leftists' political interests (Kim 1998).

The previous studies have contributed significantly to our understanding of the 1946 uprisings. With close attention to the historical details, they have uncovered the actual processes, multiple characteristics, and the significance of the movement in its own historical context. In spite of this rich literature, however, a central question still remains: Why was the target of the movement not the AMG but fellow Koreans? One of the particular characteristics of the 1946 uprisings lies in the fact that the movement did not target the American occupiers but rather fellow Koreans, especially police officers, bureaucrats, and wealthy landlords. That people mainly attacked fellow Koreans is especially puzzling when we consider the active role of the AMG in exacerbating the economic and political situation during the early occupation period. Indeed, Koreans began to develop a critical view of the U.S. occupation forces. In a public poll conducted in May 1946, for example, fifty-three percent of Koreans indicated that they had an “*unfavorable impression of the Americans.*” Another poll showed that nearly half of residents in Seoul “*would have preferred the hated Japanese to the American*” (Lauterback 1947: 246-47, emphasis in original).⁶¹ Given the intensive casualties caused

⁶¹ Another survey of public opinion shows slightly different figures. After conducting a public poll in mid-1946 with the sample of about 8,500 people in all provinces of the southern zone, the Department of Public Information of the AMG reported that for the question concerning their attitude towards the AMG, twenty-eight percent responded as satisfied, thirty-eight percent as dissatisfied, and thirty-four percent as not

by the uprisings, it is surprising that not a single American official was attacked throughout the movement.⁶² As an American eyewitness reported, “it was amazing to recall again that despite our active involvement, no harm had come to a single American. [...] They were merely settling their scores with the men and forces which oppressed them under our rule, as they did under the Japanese” (Gayn 1948: 388-89).

Although people attacked police stations and government employees throughout the movement, American officials never became targets. When railroad workers organized a general strike in September and submitted a petition with their demands to the military governor of the AMG, it could have developed into an anti-AMG political movement to the degree that the employer was the Department of Transportation and the Military Governor announced that the strike was an illegal and self-destructive action. Instead, it caused a massive physical confrontation between strikers cooperating with union activists and rightist organizations, especially youth associations, backed by the police. It was reported that about one thousand union members were arrested (*Chosŏn ilbo*, October 2, 1946).

One might argue that attacks on police officers and bureaucrats were a result of the anti-government bent of the movement. To be sure, the positive attitudes toward the U.S. that the general public had held in the beginning turned critical against the AMG, and the 1946 uprisings took place as a consequence of the economic and political policies

knowing how they felt (G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 50, August 18-25, 1946).

⁶² Cumings (1981: 360) notes that a missionary was killed in Kigye, a village of Yŏngil County in the North Kyŏngsang Province, which was the only incident against non-Koreans throughout the uprisings. Chŏng (1988: 125), however, explains that rightist leaders and a Korean missionary, An Kang-bok, were assaulted and found dead at the same place. It is not clear whether the two missionaries are the same person or not. Yet, even if they were two different missionaries, and therefore there was a non-Korean casualty, the point seems to remain valid that there were no major incidents related to Americans during the uprisings and almost all attacks targeted fellow Koreans.

implemented by the AMG. That the movement was fueled by anti-U.S. resentment only, however, does not seem to sufficiently explain several stubborn historical facts: first, not a single American official was attacked throughout the uprisings; second, people who were not directly involved with the AMG, such as big landlords, also became targets of the movement; third, the degree of antagonism and violence that movement participants employed against fellow Koreans was too intense and ruthless to be considered an indirect expression of anti-U.S. sentiment.

Military government documents describe the brutal methods people used to attack fellow Koreans. In Taegu, for example, “faces and bodies of policemen were hacked by axes and knives. The hands of policemen were tied behind their backs and sharp-pointed slate rocks were then thrown at them until they fell to the ground from loss of blood. This was followed with dropping large boulders on their heads crushing them beyond recognition. In Waegwan, the police chief’s eyes and tongue were cut out with rice knives before he was beaten to death. And, in Sangju, five policemen were severely beaten and buried alive” (“HUSAFIK,” vol. 3, ch. 4, pt. 2: 23). Even hospitals in Taegu refused to treat wounded policemen (*Haebang hu sanyŏn kan ũi nambanbu inmin tulŭi kuguk t’ujaeng* 1949: 33). The Taegu Doctor’s Association demanded that the AMG “stop the police from shooting the citizens. We will refuse medical treatment to the police who shoot the citizens.” As doctors refused to treat the police, the hospital was taken over by the U.S. Army medical personnel (G-2 Weekly Summary, no. 60, October 27-November 3, 1946). If the AMG itself was the ultimate source of motivation for the movement, it seems unlikely that participants would have utilized such brutal methods against fellow Koreans. In short, anti-government tendencies alone cannot account for the movement’s

intense violence and choice of targets.

Rather, policies implemented by the AMG fueled the sources of people's grievances, which culminated in the uprisings. Economically, the AMG introduced a free market policy and revived the unpopular colonial practice of grain collection in spite of public outrage directed at these practices, thus exacerbating economic conditions enough to threaten subsistence levels for peasants, who comprised about eighty percent of population. Politically, the occupation regime supported conservative political groups and reincorporated those who actively served the Japanese colonial power whose political legitimacy had been significantly tainted, while suppressing progressive activists and voluntary social organizations.

Korean police officers and bureaucrats became the main targets throughout the uprisings not simply because they worked for the U.S. occupation forces, but more importantly due to their past conduct and relationships with other social groups since the colonial era. Pak Tu-p'o, who was a teacher in Ch'ilsŏng elementary school during the colonial period and a resident in Taegu in 1946 describes his observation of the uprising as follows (interview with author, May 7, 2008):

Later, I saw him [a police officer] sitting on the street. He was bleeding. It looked like he had been beaten. Tens of people were surrounding him, [they shouted], 'this guy has burdened us. He should be beaten to death, he shouldn't stay alive.' Whether men or women, they were cursing him. He was sitting on the street with his eyes closed. He was active in the conscription and draft for the war during the colonial period. [...] After liberation, collaborators [with the Japanese] like him ran away and looked for a mouse-hole to hide themselves. But, they occupied high-ranking government positions and police departments again after the U.S. came. Grudges kept growing and growing.

The statement reveals the mechanism through which popular antagonism against government officials and police officers developed since the colonial period. As we saw

earlier, in the context of the liberation phase, the most important task was to eliminate colonial legacies and reconstruct an independent national community. People's committees in many areas took governmental administrative roles, and those who worked for the Japanese and lost their people's faith were largely ousted. The fact that such pro-Japanese collaborators recovered their positions and power upon the inception of the American rule itself could be unsatisfactory and unacceptable to the people. Worse yet, those pro-Japanese suppressed popular associations and activities under the aegis of the AMG. Yi Il-jae, a labor movement activist affiliated with Chōnp'yōng and a participant in the 1946 uprisings in Taegu recalls (interview with author, May 22, 2008):

[During Japanese colonialism], there was a Korean chief at the township office in our village. When there were any kinds of disputes, he called for the police to break them up. [...] He exempted those people he knew well from the forced draft [for the war effort during the late colonial period] and instead forced others to go in order to increase his work performance. Right after liberation, people hit him in the head with shovels and threw him into a rice paddy. We thought that he was dead. But he then showed up in the town again and was reappointed by the AMG. Later, people attacked him during the uprisings.

Yi was a member of the KCP and one of the leading executive members of labor union in the North Kyōngsang Province. Yet, his statement highlights the voluntary and responsive characteristics of the people in the movement, rather than the active leadership of radical leftists. Although the leftists, especially those who became largely alienated and suppressed by the rightists and AMG, played an important role in mobilizing the movement, it seems unlikely that the leftist propaganda, as the AMG believed, was solely responsible for the emergence and development of uprisings throughout the period. It is more plausible that the leftists and the people shared their antagonism against pro-Japanese collaborators, including the far right, former police or government officials and bureaucrats, and wealthy landlords.

Yi's statement also exemplifies how the internal conflict which was produced during the colonial period in the form of the relationship between government officials and ordinary people was intensified through liberation and the later occupation period. In the liberation phase, popular antagonism against the Japanese was largely directed toward Korean officials. After the AMG was formed in the southern part, however, they returned to their positions seeking their own survival and reprisals, which in turn reinforced popular grievances and perceptions of injustice. Indeed, a leaflet found in Paekch'ŏn reads "it is our aim to remove the evil police who repress our true patriots, vicious bureaucrats who exploit excessive food, and *pro-Japanese national traitors who are behind them*" (Chŏng 1988: 217, emphasis added). In this regard, one of the important roles of the liberation phase can be found in the bridging of internal boundaries among Korean people from the colonial through U.S. occupation periods.

In addition to popular antagonism against government officials and bureaucrats, the exacerbated economic condition was also an important factor provoking the uprisings. After the implementation of the grain collection program by the AMG due to the failure of the market economic policy, the food situation became a serious problem, a problem large enough to cause starvation. Once the AMG began to gather summer grains to supplement the lack of rice, which were not collected even by the Japanese during the colonial period, it was recognized that the grain collection program under the AMG was even worse than that of the Japanese. The fact that large landlords and merchants sought their own interests through their close connection with government officials in this economic condition largely fueled the public sentiment of deprivation. Reflecting this economic condition, there occurred some incidents in which people resisted landlords

throughout the uprisings. When the protest took place in Yōngch'ōn in the North Kyōngsang Province, for instance, twenty landlords and twenty-four police officers or bureaucrats were killed, and about one hundred people severely wounded. Among the landlords, Yi In-sōk, the father of Yi Hwal, a leading member of the KDP, was brutally attacked (*Siwōl inmin hangjaeng* 1947: 46).

Clearly, landlords had not been the main target of attack throughout the uprisings, compared to bureaucrats and police officers. It is worth emphasizing, however, that the political and economic elite tended to overlap and thus it was not rare that a high bureaucrat and government official was a landlord. During the colonial period, some Koreans who enjoyed a dominant economic status worked for local governing bodies. In fact, representatives in the upper level administration included both landlords and wealthy businessmen, and more than ninety percent of people in the local offices at the village level were engaged in agriculture. Since the colonial government endowed electoral eligibility for local councils to people who paid more than five yen in local taxes for economic property, it is certainly plausible to consider most local representatives as landlords. By working closely with the colonial power, therefore, dominant economic groups, notably landlords, were able to maintain and expand their economic interests and political power. The economic and political elites by no means existed as a unitary group, and yet they were not completely disconnected either.

The cooperative relationship among landlords, bureaucrats, and the police was reinforced during the occupation period, especially in the process of grain collection. In fact, the Department of Public Information of the AMG reported two months before the outbreak of uprisings that village officials who were closely connected to large landlords

set grain quotas long before the harvest and worked with police officers. When farmers refused to submit or complained of unfair quotas to the local offices, they were jailed, whether they actually had grain or not, and received negative treatment from police. Local Farmers' Associations did not receive any rights of representation and were subject to police raids. For many, the police were perceived as being worse than the former Japanese police.

An American officer recalls his two-day observation of a police station as follows (Gayn 1948: 408). "I saw cops crack men's shins against sharp-edged wooden blocks. I saw cops put burning wooden slivers under men's nails. I saw more men than I care to remember get the water treatment. They just kept pouring water into a guy's mouth through a tube until he damned near drowned. I saw cops beat a man across the shoulders with a metal rod, and then hang him on a metal hook under his shoulder blades." Based on the investigation of the public opinion, the Department of Public Information indeed recommended to the AMG that "no one should hold high position in the police who has held any official position under the Japanese" and that "the Laborers' and Farmers' Association should be encouraged and frequently consulted officially on matters concerning labor and agriculture" (United States Armed Forces in Korea, "Civil Disturbance," no.2, [July 20, 1946] 1994: 187-88).

At that time, our living conditions were really bad because of inflation. After the Japanese defeat, it was said that it became our world, but an official who served the Japanese was still overbearing at the village office. That Korean official was like a devil of a man in terms of rice collection during the Japanese colonial period. If people did not meet the heavy allocation, the official made them kneel down when it was raining and robbed their grain. People didn't like that such a person was still holding the same position even after liberation. The official was a wealthy farmer at another village which was ten *ri* [about 2.5 miles] away from our village. Of course, he made a good fortune because he worked with the Japanese.

The above testimony (Yi 1965: 230-31) shows how the forced rice collection during the colonial period increased internal conflicts among the Koreans. Though the rice collection was implemented by the colonial state for its war effort, it provided some Koreans with a chance to expand economic and political power at the expense of their fellow countrymen. When the AMG revived the grain collection program, in which Korean government and police officers utilized extractive and brutal methods, the internal conflicts among Koreans reappeared in an intensified form. The following statement also illustrates a deep rooted antagonism against former colonial officials and provides a clue about the source of their anger. The animosity against former colonial officials is evident in this statement by Kang Ch'ang-dök, a low-ranking officer of the Department of Agricultural Economy at the provincial government office who participated in the protest in front of a police station in Taegu on October 1. Reflecting on the events that transpired the following day, he recalls (interview with author, May 7, 2008):

On my way from work, I saw a lot of stuff piled in the street and people surrounding it. It was a high-ranking government employee's house, who'd lost favor with the people since the Japanese colonial period. They searched his house and found a lot of rice, sugar, and cotton fabric. This kind of stuff was really precious back then. People didn't take the stuff for themselves, but put it in the street and shouted 'see this, now people are poorly clothed and suffering from hunger, and this son of bitch is living well against the people.' They cursed him and shouted he should be beaten to death.

The statement is based on an incident that took place in Taegu after the police station was taken over by the people. It testifies to how people expressed their collective grievances against government officials who served the Japanese during the colonial era and then the U.S. for the occupation period. Even though it was more or less a spontaneous invasion against colonial bureaucrats rather than an organized collective

action with clearly defined goals, it illustrates some of the sources of shared hostility toward government officers who collaborated with the Japanese colonial government and then the American military regime at the expense of fellow Koreans. Popular resentment stemmed from the fact that people who prospered and protected themselves under the aegis of Japanese power not only maintained their positions, but even increased their economic and political power under U.S. occupation while the standard of living for most people was on the edge of subsistence levels.

It seems that extortion by bureaucrats and police officers was indeed widespread. Noting that after the outbreak of uprisings in Taegu, an average of three sŏk (about 143 gallons) of rice was found in murdered policemen's houses, an American observer stated that "it was impossible that such a large amount could have been acquired legally. Obviously, there had been a large-scale police shakedown operating in the area" (Robinson 1950: 151). What is noteworthy is not only that officials had a large amount of food when most people were suffering from starvation, but also that movement participants did not take the food with them. As indicated in the above statement, even in an unorganized and impulsive collective action, people did not appropriate the officials' property. Rather, they directed their collective grievances and antagonisms towards those who they felt did not deserve their powerful positions and who prospered at the expense of fellow Koreans under the protection of the U.S. Though there is no doubt that a dearth of food provoked collective grievances, hunger alone does not seem to explain the deeper meaning and motivation of the uprisings.

To understand why people so vehemently protested against fellow Koreans throughout the uprisings, then, it is critical to consider the meaning of liberation. The

following statement (Yi 1965: 230-31) highlights what liberation meant for ordinary people.

After liberation, he [the colonial official] was maintaining the same living condition as he had during the Japanese colonial period. People considered going to the village office [during the uprisings] as a chance to revenge vicious grain collection. [...] They destroyed the village office and put documents in the fire. Staff at the office couldn't stop them. Police officers and other officials ran away. People got excited and went to the village where the target of their resentment, the vicious pro-Japanese official lived. His house and assets were wrecked and burnt down. People came back to the town after putting even his family treasure in the fire. That night was like a village feast for them. Having home-brewed wine and turning red-faced, they enjoyed their complete retaliation and triumph as if it had become a truly free world.

For most people, liberation from Japanese colonial rule meant the removal of colonial legacies and the reconstruction of their own political community. Under the American occupation, their desire for an independent nation-state was denied and pro-Japanese collaborators who were even considered national traitors rather enhanced their economic and political power. It was such government bureaucrats, police officers, and landlords that crushed their organizations and exerted brutal oppression for grain collection. It is thus understandable that people felt that they were finally liberated after attacking them. In this regard, the uprisings can be considered as a people's response to their negated right to livelihood, right to participate, and, most importantly, right to belong to their own community that they had longed for since the colonial period.

The problem lay partly in the fact that the nationalist aspiration of achieving an independent nation-state in a thorough reformist manner was viewed by the AMG simply as a communist orientation and the product of manipulative influence by the Russians in the north. The Americans saw that the leftists wielded pivotal influence on popular organizations, but they failed to grasp that it was their nationalist ambitions, which had

been developed historically since the colonial period, that leveraged popular support for the leftists. Perhaps more important is the fact that these nationalist demands and rights were based on the removal of colonial legacies. The experience of the liberation phase, albeit brief, underscored that pro-Japanese collaborators would not have economic, political, and social rights in a newly-reorganized political community. Although the meaning of collaborators remained relatively ambiguous and subject to interpretation during the liberation phase, what is crucial is that those who served or benefited from Japanese colonial rule, and then the AMG at the expense of other Koreans, suppressed the people's demands not simply because of the commands they received from the above, but for their own survival.

By examining the 1946 people's uprisings from the perspective of why the target of the movement was not the AMG but fellow Koreans--a question that has been largely neglected in previous studies--I have highlighted in this section the important role of colonial legacies in shaping and developing the uprisings. Without fully considering colonial legacies, it would be difficult to explain the strong animosity that Koreans exhibited against fellow Koreans throughout the movement. If internal conflicts among Koreans took the form of "life-and-death" struggles during the occupation period, as the 1946 uprisings indicated, this was due, I argue, to the internal exclusion that had been produced and redeployed since the colonial period. Integrating this important dimension of colonial continuities into our existing accounts provides a more comprehensive understanding of the uprisings.

In sum, the 1946 uprisings represent people's response to the early occupation policies of the American rule and internal conflicts among Koreans that had been

nurtured since Japanese colonial dominance on the Korean peninsula. Although internal boundaries had been developed in various forms in the political, economic, and ideological realms, they tended to coexist with each other and by no means generated clear demarcations during the colonial and liberation periods. When internal conflicts were intensified through the mediation of American military forces, however, the demarcation of boundaries began to emerge between those who endeavored to reproduce the existing colonial system, including dominant economic groups, former colonial officials, and the AMG on the one hand, and those who struggled against such attempts and strove to achieve their denied rights. The 1946 uprisings were generated when these different forms of conflict coalesced in a particular historical conjuncture. The significance of the uprisings thus lies in the fact that they were pivotal events through which internal boundaries that had been created during the colonial period became intensified and reclassified under the American occupation.

The Aftermath of Uprisings

The repercussions of the uprisings on the subsequent political landscape were far reaching. First of all, people lost their organizations and the revival of despotic colonial structure was in turn consolidated. Throughout the uprisings, voluntary social associations and political organizations, such as people's committees and farmers' and workers' unions, which had already been under political suppression since the early occupation period, were largely destroyed. Police stations and government offices were also attacked and destroyed throughout the uprisings, and yet the financial and organizational support of wealthy landlords, merchants, and rightist groups helped the

AMG with the prompt reorganization of the administrative system in local regions by the ousting of reformist forces (see Hong 1992: 285).

In this process, the coercive state apparatus that had been nurtured under Japanese colonialism, particularly the police force, reappeared in a new form and with even more strength. In fact, an additional budget was assigned to supplement and reinforce the police force during the uprisings in November of 1946, and the annual expenditure for the National Police Department increased about sixty percent in 1947 (Chosŏn ūnhaeng chosabu 1948: 267). As a result, the power of the police forces significantly increased. While Korean police officials numbered about 10,000 for the entire area of Korea in the late colonial period, they expanded in the aftermath of the uprisings in 1946 to approximately 25,000 in the southern areas only, then to 45,000 right before the establishment of a separate government in South Korea in 1948 (An 1988: 211). The enhanced police force, as we see below, continued to be brutally and effectively utilized for controlling subsequent popular struggles against the establishment of a separate state in the south.

Another significant impact of the uprisings on the subsequent political landscape is related to the fact that the rightists secured their positions in the institutionalized political field. To be sure, the rightists tended to dominate official positions and worked with the AMG more closely from the beginning than leftists, whether they were radical communists or moderate nationalists. Leftists, however, had maintained relatively developed organizations and popular memberships that they could more easily mobilize. When the first general election under the U.S. occupation was held for the Interim Legislative Assembly in late October of 1946, while the uprisings were taking place,

most of the prominent leftists were either already in prison or driven underground to escape political oppression. Consequently, among the forty-five members who were elected, only two members from the people's committee were elected from the island of Cheju Province, and a majority of the members were from rightist parties.

The leftists demanded from the AMG a re-election on the grounds that many pro-Japanese collaborators were elected as representatives (*Chosŏn ilbo*, October 22, 1946). In fact, the AMG announced that pro-Japanese collaborators would not be allowed to participate in the legislative organization before the election (*Tonga ilbo*, October 7, 1946). Thus, the fact that many pro-Japanese and national traitors were elected as representatives was illegal. Yi Sŭng-man, however, not only advocated in support of the results of election but also urged that even extreme pro-Japanese collaborators ought to be offered a chance to repent their sins (*Seoul sinmun*, November 12, 1946). Even though leftists continued to be more or less marginalized since the arrival of the U.S. army, the rightists secured and strengthened their positions by effectively expelling leftists from the institutionalized political field through the uprisings.

The significance of the election lay not merely in the underrepresentation of leftists but also in the fact that both the procedures and practices were far from democratic. Even though the principle of universal suffrage was announced, voices of individual voters could hardly be heard. Indeed, "in hundreds of cases, the village and county heads dispatched servants to the prospective voters, asking for the loan of their name seals, which were then stamped on ballots filled in by the officials" (Gayn 1948: 426). The Interim Legislative Assembly had a limited effect on the subsequent political landscape. However, the significance of its first election under the AMG was related to

the fact that it was based on the alienation of popular voices and the elimination of divergent ideological ideas from institutionalized political processes.

The extreme right wing was satisfied with the result of the election and yet it continued to promote its own political vision rather than cooperating with the Coalition Council. It was partly because relative balance between the right and left continued to be sought through the Coalition Council. While forty-five members were selected through the general election, the AMG appointed another forty-five members of the council, and these included members of the Coalition Council and moderate leftists as well as rightists (see *Chosŏn ilbo*, December 8, 1946). Thus extreme rightists still had to confront their opponents both in the left and the right. Kim Kyu-sik, for example, a moderate rightist and head of the Coalition Council requested a re-election from the Military Governor, because of the apparent right-wing deviation and the existence of pro-Japanese collaborators among the elected representatives. General Hodge indeed accepted the re-election in Seoul and the Kangwŏn Province (*Chosŏn ilbo*, November 4, 1946; November 26, 1946). The Korean Democratic Party in turn severely critiqued him for neglecting the popular will that was manifested through the election (see *Tonga ilbo*, November 10, 1946).

The contentious relationship between the KDP and the Coalition Council regarding specific political and economic issues was already exemplified when the latter announced the guidance of the legislative organ in early October when the uprisings began to emerge. By integrating the terms that the right and left wing submitted in July, the Coalition Council proposed seven principles (*Tonga ilbo*, October 8, 1946): 1) constructing a democratic transition government in accordance with the Moscow

decision; 2) the reconvening of the US-Soviet Joint Commission; 3) land redistribution with little or no compensation to the large land owners and nationalization of important industries; 4) punishment of the pro-Japanese and national traitors by the legislative organ acting on the recommendations proposed by the Coalition Council; 5) release of political prisoners and complete restraint of terror by the right and left; 6) active promotion of the legislative organ; and, 7) complete guarantee of freedom of speech, assembly, organization, etc.

The KDP confirmed its oppositional stance to the trusteeship issue and showed strong opposition to the method of land reform. Indeed, the land reform policy of the Coalition Council was almost the same as that of the KDPF, which was in tension with that of the right. The KDP argued that the free distribution of land would turn out to be a deceitful policy since it would cause a financial breakdown of the state, which in turn would try to resolve the problem by levying heavy land taxes on peasants (*Seoul sinmun*, October 9, 1946). In an attempt to maintain an ostensible relationship, the party elucidated its objection to the idea of land reform as proposed by the Coalition Council a few days later, but did not object to the council itself (*Seoul sinmun*, October 12, 1946). Its strong objection to the principles of the council nonetheless made clear the contrasting economic basis and orientation of the two groups.

Once the Interim Legislative Assembly was formed with the inclusion of members appointed by the AMG, furthermore, the far right also had to confront the pro-Japanese issue. On July 2, 1947, it enacted a special regulation on the punishment of national traitors and pro-Japanese collaborators (*Seoul sinmun*, July 4, 1947). A national traitor was defined as a person who harmed the state and nation or hindered an

independence movement by conspiring with Japan or other foreign countries. According to the regulation, a national traitor could receive the death penalty or imprisonment for up to ten years with confiscation of all or part of his property and deprivation of citizenship for up to fifteen years. Also, the regulation referred to a pro-Japanese collaborator as a person who harmed fellow Koreans by committing evil activities to cooperate with the Japanese during the colonial period. Based on the regulation, a pro-Japanese collaborator could be imprisoned for up to five years with confiscation of all or part of his property and deprivation of citizenship for up to ten years. The enactment of this regulation was the first legal measure created to deal with the pro-Japanese issue. Although it was not to be implemented under the AMG, the enactment itself could pose a critical threat to the far right.

The response of the extreme right was to advance the idea of the establishment of a separate government in the south, while consolidating its anti-leftist and anti-trusteeship stance. After the resolution of anti-trusteeship was proposed and passed in the Legislative Assembly in January 1947, the right furthered their opposition to trusteehip and continued to attack the leftist groups. To this end, they actively developed rightist organizations and cooperated with them. In particular, youth organizations were extensively used by both the police and the rightists for controlling the left wing. One of the most representative and notorious rightist youth organizations was Söbuk ch'öngnyöndan. Its close connection with the police was indicated by the fact that even if members were imprisoned, they were soon released. Cho Pyöng-ok, the Director of the National Police Department and a member of the KDP, often made announcements that rightist terror stemmed from the collective defense mechanism of the national patriotic

organizations (Sō 1991: 563). Under the auspice of the police, it devoted itself to terroristic activities against the leftists and their organizations.

Furthermore, the extreme right advanced the idea of the establishment of a separate government in the south. Yi Sŭng-man, for instance, while visiting the U.S., demanded immediate independence of the south from the U.S. Congress (*Seoul sinmun*, March 21, 1948). He even went further by proclaiming that the Interim Government in South Korea would be established within one or two months. The U.S. State Department had to explain that Yi's statement was based solely on his personal speculation (*Kyōnghyang sinmun*, March 23, 1947; April 15, 1947). It should be noted that the idea of creating a separate nation-state was severely criticized by the majority of other rightists as well. After all, the anti-trusteeship stance of the rightists was essentially based on a nationalist spirit and the notion of a divided state represented the exact opposite of that. The only political party that supported the notion of a separate government in the south was the KDP.

Responding to increasing terror by rightist groups and the intensified control by the American occupation forces, the leftists sought to achieve their political goals by organizing collective mobilization. After separate commemoration ceremonies of the March First Movement by the right and left led to a clash, the general strike occurred on March 22, 1947, which covered not only private companies, mines, and schools, but also government offices and institutions under the control of the AMG. The major demands of the strike included the complete objection to the suppression of all democratic organizations and to the use of the death penalty against those involved with the October uprisings, the immediate release of union leaders and workers, and a purge of pro-

Japanese collaborators and national traitors in the police, public administration, and legislative organization, with the conclusion of the immediate implementation of the Moscow decision and transfer of power to people's committees (*Chosŏn ilbo*, March 23, 1947). As these demands indicate, the strike revealed a stronger political characteristic compared to the general strike in September 1946 that exhibited mainly economic demands.

The general strike led to the massive arrest of leftists. About two-thousand leftists were imprisoned due to their involvement with the movement. By December 1946, after the people's uprisings, the number of prisoners already reached about 20,000, of which more than half was political offenders. As more leftists were apprehended after the strike, some of them were even placed in the private storage areas of the rightist organizations due to the lack of prisons. The prisoners in the southern zone were almost twice the highest number of convicts at any point during the Japanese colonial period (Robinson 1950: 160). A military government document noted "it seems that every effort has been made to find some excuse for arresting leftist leaders. The result has been that many people have jumped on the rightist bandwagon simply to protect themselves. The real leftist movement had been driven underground. [...] This disappearance of all leftist leaders would seem to constitute prime facie evidence of suppression" (United States Armed Forces in Korea, "Civil Disturbance" 1994: 184).

Meanwhile, the relationship between the U.S. and Soviet Union became contentious in the emergent Cold War circumstance in early 1947. With the announcement of the Truman Doctrine on March 12, 1947, the U.S. took steps toward a containment policy of Soviet expansion. No wonder that the U.S.-Soviet Union Joint

Commission held in May turned out to be in vain. Finding no solution for the Korea problem through the Joint Commission, they came up with different alternatives. While the U.S. requested that the U.N. take over the issue of the establishment of a Korean government, the Soviet Union made claims for the simultaneous withdrawal of both U.S. and Russian forces from Korea, thus leaving Koreans to solve their own problem. Notwithstanding the Russian argument, a resolution regarding the implementation of a general election for the formation of a Korean government under the observation of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea was made on November 14, 1947, which was followed by another resolution on February 27, 1948 of election only in the southern zone due to the objection of the Soviet Union ("HUSAFIK," vol. 3, ch. 4, pt. 3: 23). On March 1, 1948, General Hodge made an announcement that there would be a general election only in the south to facilitate the establishment of a Korean government. The road to national division was prepared.

The Formation of a Separate Nation-State in South Korea

The plan for general elections in the south brought about varied responses from political parties and groups among Koreans. The KDP was the only political party that supported the decision and urged the holding of elections as soon as possible (*Tonga ilbo*, March 13, 1948). While other rightist parties and organizations also exhibited their opposition to separate elections, it was the radical leftists who took their objection into the realm of collective struggles. As early as January 1948, the KDPF proclaimed the struggle for organizing the general election, covering both the north and south, after the Americans and Russians withdrew their military forces, as the Soviet Union had

suggested earlier. On February 7, 1948, the southern part of Korea saw a series of strikes, attacks on police stations and rightists, and demonstrations against the elections, in which the South Korean Labor Party and the KDPF played a leading role. From February 7 through 25, according to the Director of the National Police Department, there occurred fifty-five terroristic actions, more than one hundred demonstrations, and more than two-hundred fires, which resulted in 39 casualties and 132 injuries from the police, government officials, and protestors. For the period, the total of 8,479 was arrested (*Seoul sinmun*, February 26, 1948).

Protest against the separate elections continued to emerge in the later period. The movement on the island of Cheju in early April, which lasted a few years until the outbreak of Korean War (1950-1953), is representative of this trend. The island, like other regions, already saw popular demonstrations, strikes, and attacks on police stations in February. On April 3, 1948, an uprising broke out when about 1,500 people under the leadership of members of the South Korean Labor Party attacked police stations to show “their definite objection to separate elections and separate governments, and to achieve complete national liberation and independence.” The participants were referred to as a mob of rioters and the police forces were sent to suppress the uprising. A military government document (“HUSAFIK,” vol. 3, ch. 4, pt. 3: 22) notes the results of the uprising for the initial three months as follows. “There were 174 attacks on police by dissidents; five police boxes and 204 homes were burned. Police arrests in the period were noted as 795. Casualties were given as 27 police, 165 raiders, and 108 civilians killed, and 34, 15, 82, respectively, wounded. Eight police and 322 civilians were kidnapped. As of July 216 persons had been tried and sentenced, and 115 were being

held.”

The police and the AMG viewed these political struggles as the outcome of leftist manipulation of the public. Certainly, the leftist organizations, mainly the South Korean Labor Party and the KDPF, played a leading role in mobilizing the movements. Yet, the negative view of elections among the people should not be underestimated. A survey result shows widespread public opposition to elections in the south. On April 12, 1946, the National Association of Public Opinion conducted a public opinion poll on people's attitudes toward the general election in the south. Of 1,262 respondents in total, 934 people indicated that they had completed voter registration and the remaining 328 had not registered. Of the 934 who were registered, ninety-one percent (850 respondents) answered that they registered under coercion while only nine percent (84 respondents) replied that they registered voluntarily (*Chosŏn ilbo*, April 15, 1948). This result of a public opinion survey confirms the fact that people shared sentiments with and were not merely manipulated by, communists in the movements against separate elections.

The police forces were extensively mobilized not only for controlling popular protests against separate elections but also for enforcing the election. Even though the police force was largely expanded through the 1946 uprisings and subsequent protests, the National Police Department created a semi-police organization (*Hyangbodan*) by collecting nearly a million members to assist the police force with preparing for the general election (Cho 1959: 202-03). The fact that there was a general consensus in the police department about the need for further police expansion demonstrates that they also recognized the wide-spread unpopularity of the general election in the south and thus the need for executing the elections in a coercive manner.

As the police continued to forcefully intervene in the election process, the U.N. Commission requested a re-orientation of the police force as to their attitude toward a free atmosphere for elections. The KDP defended the police with the claim that it had played a crucial role in maintaining political order and that the Commission intended to slander the police (*Seoul sinmun*, February 8, 1948). The Director of the National Police Department also made a counter-critique by stating that “a few foreigners, who have no knowledge of Korea, suggest that South Korea has become a police state. Such unrealistic criticism has no basis in truth.” He concluded that the police would keep making an effort for a “democratic election” (*Chosŏn ilbo*, March 3, 1948).

The process of this “democratic election” revealed a quite contradictory result. Popular demonstrations and strikes continued to take place and anti-election sentiment was not alleviated. During the week of election from May 8 to 10, one hundred and thirty-four election offices and fifty-seven voting booths were attacked, and seven policemen and five election officials were killed. The total casualties from February 7 through May 14 were estimated as 334 killed (49 police officers and 261 rioters) and 330 wounded (128 police, 7 police families, 17 election officials, and 123 rioters) (“HUSAFIK,” vol. 3, ch. 4, pt. 3: 31; see *Seoul sinmun*, May 13, 1948).

On May 10, 1948, the elections were held to select the representatives of a National Assembly that was responsible for the establishment of the South Korean Government. About ninety-three percent of the registered voters actually participated in the elections and 197 members of the National Assembly were chosen. Having the active support and aid of the police and rightist organizations, the conservative parties won many seats, even though moderate nationalists also managed to obtain a good number of

seats. The Rapid Realization of Korean Independence led by Yi Sŭng-man gained 56 seats, the KDP got 29, and 83 indicated no affiliation with a certain political group (*Chosŏn ilbo*, May 14, 1948). When the presidential election was held in the National Assembly on July 20, 1948, Yi Sŭng-man became president in the south. The ceremony for the establishment of the Republic of Korea was held on August 15, 1948. Less than a month later, on September 9, 1948, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was formed in the north.

The Yi regime suffered from a legitimacy problem from the outset. By constructing the state in the south, it initiated the formation of a divided nation-state in Korea. The way in which the general election for the National Assembly was held under the control of police forces with the cooperation of rightist organizations reveals the significant lack of popular support for a separate state in the south that the Yi administration was based on. Indeed, the self-contradictory nature of the nationalist stance that Yi and extreme rightists shared was already embedded in the process of state formation itself. After all, people backed up their stubborn anti-trusteeship stance due to strong nationalist sentiment. People objected to trusteeship and further intervention of any foreign countries because of their desire for an independent nation-state, not because of anti-Russian or pro-American sentiment. While gaining popular support for anti-trusteeship by appealing to their nationalism, the formation of the Yi regime in the south that led to national division turned out to be the negation of the popular desire for national liberation. The fact that the Yi regime first took over the Police Department for the rearrangement of governmental institutions is indicative of this lack of popular support.

One of the issues that the Yi administration encountered was the punishment of pro-Japanese collaborators. Despite the enactment of the regulation on national traitors and pro-Japanese collaborators by the Interim Legislative Assembly in 1947, it had not actually been implemented under the AMG. The discussion of the issue began to arise in the National Assembly once the Yi regime was formed. It had been indeed Yi's argument that the resolution of the issue of the pro-Japanese would take place after the establishment of the Korean government, not while under a foreign power. After the formation of the government, however, Yi was still reluctant to launch the task. Having largely integrated those individuals who had experience of government officials since the colonial period into his administration, Yi had a reason to prevent the punishment of the pro-Japanese sector that could affect his own power basis. As the fact that collaborators with the Japanese came to hold important posts in the newly created government provoked public criticism (*Segye ilbo*, September 4, 1948), Yi stated that "we should not distract public sentiment with this kind of [pro-Japanese] issue now, since it will cause harmful effects in all respects, rather than resolve the problem at all. Those who want to help with the country ought to devote themselves to founding the authority of the government" (*Tonga ilbo*, September 4, 1948).

However, the pro-Japanese issue, a critical problem since the liberation period could not simply be ignored or postponed. In early August, an ordinance regarding the pro-Japanese collaborators was already submitted to the National Assembly. On September 22, 1948, the Ordinance for the Punishment of Anti-National Acts was proclaimed and the Special Committee on Examining Anti-National Acts was established on October 23, 1948. The activities of the Special Committee, however, were largely

hindered by the intervention and obstruction by the Yi administration, the police, and conservative members of the National Assembly (O 1979). Yi made a series of announcements to constrain the Special Committee and managed to lead the revision of the Ordinance. The police were especially active in limiting the Special Committee by manipulating demonstrations and by attacking the Special Committee.⁶³

Another problem that confronted the Yi regime was the continued political struggles against the establishment of separate nation-states. Antagonism against separate nation-states was prevalent and leftists were most active in putting it into actual mobilization. One of the most significant movements after the formation of the Yi regime was the so-called Yö-Sun incident. It took place on October 19 in Yösu, a city of South Chölla Province, as a few soldiers of the 14th Regiments refused to suppress the uprisings in Cheju that had continued since April. Instead, they took the unit over and were soon joined by other general soldiers and people. That day, about seventy people, rightists and their families, including those who were related to the police forces, landlords, and the KDP, were killed. The next day, the people's committee was resuscitated in Yösu and around two thousand people in Sunch'ön followed the move. Many police officers were killed.⁶⁴ Within a few days, other neighboring places such as Kurye, Kwangyang, and Posöng also underwent similar processes. Martial law was proclaimed.

The rebels were brutally subdued by the U.S. forces with the help of the Korean military and police forces, not the other way around. Cumings (1990: 266) summarizes the casualties as follows. "141 loyalist soldiers dead, 263 missing, and 391 having joined

⁶³ The police even directed a secret plan of assassinating members of the Special Committee (see O 1979: 124-27).

⁶⁴ Cumings (1990: 262) states that "as many as five hundred members of the KNP [Korean National Police] may have lost their lives, often through brutal atrocities."

the rebels; 821 rebels killed and 2,860 captured; a total of 3,700 rebels were said to have existed by this account, yet at least 1,000 remained in the hills, now functioning as guerrillas. Civilian casualty totals are unavailable, but American sources thought 500 civilians died in Sunch'ŏn alone, a higher number in Yŏsu. By the end of November 1,714 accused rebels had been tried in military courts, with 866 given the death sentence.” After the Yŏ-Sun incident was suppressed, Cheju saw another massacre by the police and military forces, which generated about 25,000-30,000 casualties (Sŏ 1996: 175).⁶⁵

The outbreak of the Yŏ-Sun incident precipitated the enactment of special regulation on rebellious activities, which had already been discussed in the National Assembly in September. After the incident, the ordinance began to be referred to as the National Security Law. Voices were heard from both members of the assembly and the public about critical problems that the law could potentially bring about. One of the main concerns was that the interpretation and application of the law was so vague that it could be arbitrarily utilized for political purpose (*Chosŏn ilbo*, November, 14, 1948). The problem of the pro-Japanese became a particularly controversial issue in that such a law could enable the pro-Japanese, who were still placed in many important positions in the Yi administration, especially in the police forces, to suppress innocent people as well as their political opponents. Resembling the characteristics of such notorious legal measures as the Maintenance of Public-Acts Order that was extensively used for controlling political activities during the Japanese colonial period, the National Security Law, it was argued, could also be utilized not only for punishing but also for creating political

⁶⁵ The exact number of casualties in Cheju uprisings remains controversial. Another source (Ko 1989: 304) indicates that more than 50,000 people were killed in less than a year.

offenders. In a response to such critiques, some members, notably those of the KDP, urged for the enactment of the law on the grounds that the Ordinance for the Punishment of Anti-National Acts was already in effect and thus the National Security Law would not be arbitrarily used by the pro-Japanese (Pak 1989: Part III, Ch. 1). The enactment of the National Security Law was passed in the National Assembly on November 20, 1948 and was promulgated on December 1, 1948.

As feared, the National Security Law became utilized for political purposes. Yi and conservative pro-Japanese forces indeed eliminated thirteen members of the National Assembly, including a vice chair-man, by applying the National Security Law in 1949. They were imprisoned due to the accusation concerning their connection with the South Korean Labor Party. After the removal of those progressive members who had actively demanded for the punishment of collaborators with the Japanese and worked for the Special Committee on Examining Anti-National Acts, the Ordinance for the Punishment of Anti-National Acts was revised and the Special Committee on Examining Anti-National Acts soon became inactivated. Consequently, the power of reformists in the National Assembly became largely constrained and the cooperation of the Yi administration and conservative pro-Japanese forces was further reinforced.

In the process of suppressing both the Yō-Su incident and the Special Committee on Examining Anti-National Acts, the Yi regime created and consolidated anti-communism as its political tactic. The demand for the punishment of pro-Japanese forces, whether it came from the public or other political groups, became identified with support for communism and thus was subjected to control. By cooperating with the pro-Japanese since the occupation period and by leading to the separate nation-state, the Yi regime

failed to fulfill the fundamental national desires of removing colonial legacies and liberating the national community. To compensate for the resultant lack of popular support and political legitimacy, it further strengthened coercive political control by the police forces and through the National Security Law, both of which were also embedded in Japanese colonial legacies. In doing so, it paved the way for an exclusionary mechanism that was even more intensified through the Korean War and which came to characterize the political structure in the south.

Conclusion

The historical experience of Japanese colonial rule played a critical role in shaping the process of political changes and state formation through the liberation phase and U.S. occupation period in Korea. Once coercive Japanese colonial rule was over, a national consensus was formed around the demand for the removal of colonial legacies in order to reconstruct the national community. The reason that the leftists came to have political hegemony in the liberation phase was mainly related to the fact that they played a leading role in mobilizing anti-colonial struggles against the Japanese. The primary goal of political and economic reform projects was also to reorganize institutional structures that had been arranged to serve the interest of imperial Japan. In doing so, people sought to regain their freedom and rights which had been negated under the extractive and coercive colonial power. In the liberation phase, therefore, all Koreans were endowed with equal rights and membership in a national community with the sole exception of pro-Japanese collaborators and national traitors.

The subsequent occupation by the U.S. in the south and Soviet Union in the north

zone gave rise to another disruption for Korea's political trajectory. In particular, the reformist attempt to remove colonial legacies became largely obstructed under the American rule. While generating a great disappointment among Koreans, the policy of maintaining the existing colonial structure provided those who were considered, whether actually or potentially, to be pro-Japanese collaborators with another chance to make an alliance with a foreign regime. They not only regained their positions and power but also sought their own reprisals against attacks and critiques that they encountered in the liberation phase. As a consequence, internal conflicts among Koreans that had been created during the colonial period became significantly intensified through a series of political and economic policies during the early occupation period. The outbreak of the 1946 people's uprisings can be seen as a result of the convergence of intra-Korean conflicts in a particular conjuncture.

The Cold War circumstances that began to emerge in early 1947 and resultant tension between the U.S. and Soviet Union produced fertile ground for further ideological and political splits among Koreans, thus ultimately leading to the formation of separate nation-states in Korea. The national division, however, was neither an intended consequence of the two occupation forces nor an outcome of external geopolitical influences alone. There was a chance for Koreans to avoid such separation by promoting national integration through the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission. Indeed, moderate nationalists and leftist activists shared a desire for political cooperation among Koreans. Compared to them, the radical right and left rather seemed to constitute minority groups. They nonetheless exerted significant influences on institutionalized fields and popular organizations, respectively, and shared political orientations with each of the occupation

regimes.

One of the most important factors in the political split between the far right and left was related to Japanese colonial rule. They had developed a contentious relationship since the colonial period to the extent that they criticized each other as being an enemy of the nation. For the left, the extreme right represented national traitors who cooperated with the Japanese and then the U.S. to seek their own economic profit and political power and thus who did not deserve any political representation. For the right who witnessed the reform projects that the left and Russians promoted to abolish colonial legacies, cooperation with the left meant that they had to give up their properties and membership in the newly constructed political community. It was, after all, Yi Sŭng-man who was supported by the pro-Japanese forces, notably the KDP, who began to make claims for a divided nation-state in the south.

If the ideological conflict between the right and left primarily shaped the central political structure, there also existed a local basis that reproduced such a split. The police forces, former government officials, wealthy landlords and rightist youth groups who were considered pro-Japanese shared with the rightists a reason to resist the leftists and the public who supported the removal of pro-Japanese forces. Both the policies that were implemented in the liberation phase and the reform process in the early occupation period under the Russians in the north already provided a preview of what kind of treatment they would have under the leadership of the leftists. Thus, groups like the local police forces, closely cooperating with rightist organizations, aggressively forced the public to participate in the general election not simply because of the commands from above, but also because they had their own motivation to do so.

Once the Yi regime was established in 1948, it became clear that it lacked both popular support and political legitimacy. It was not only because of the form of a divided nation-state but also due to its large-scale incorporation of pro-Japanese collaborators into the newly created administration and the existence of notorious police forces. Of particular importance is the way in which the Yi regime responded to popular protests against the formation of the separate government and how it treated progressive members of the National Assembly who undertook the task of punishment of pro-Japanese collaborators. With the help of the U.S. military forces as well as conservatives, such as members of the KDP, the Yi regime committed mass slaughter, and also removed reformist members by identifying criticism of the pro-Japanese and the government directly with support for communists. In this process, such notorious legal measures as the National Security Law were revived and the pro-Japanese could secure their positions. By consolidating colonial personnel and institutional settings, the Yi regime revived coercive political and state structures that had been developed since the Japanese colonial period.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study began with an empirical puzzle about the contrasting responses of Koreans as they were represented in popular movements against Japanese colonial rule in 1919 and the American occupation in 1946. In investigating this topic, it has examined the ways in which internal conflicts among Koreans, coupled with anti-colonial sentiment, were constructed through the mediation of the colonial government during the Japanese colonial era and then were rearticulated under U.S. occupation rule. Seen from this perspective, the continuous evolution of intra-Korean tensions during the American occupation period, including the 1946 People's uprisings, are a product of historical processes, in which national fragmentation in the form of internal conflicts among Koreans was articulated and intensified through these different forms of foreign rule. Examining this historical process reveals that Japanese colonial rule in Korea played a pivotal role in sowing the seeds of internal conflicts among the Korean people, which ultimately provided an important historical and social basis for the formation of a separate nation-state in South Korea in 1948.

Nation, State, and People

Highlighting the formation and continual reconstruction of internal conflicts among Koreans through the sequential process of the two different foreign rules of Japanese colonial dominance and American occupation, and its impact on postcolonial

state formation in South Korea, this study advances three main arguments. First, the interactions of the indigenous population with the colonial power and their evolving dynamics shape the heterogeneous characteristics of the colonial encounter. Second, the way in which colonial legacies are reproduced in the postcolonial period is contingent on a particular historical conjuncture. Third, the process of postcolonial state-building is accompanied by not only the rearrangement of political institutions that had been derived from the colonial period but it also embodies the reconstruction of a national and political community.

The first argument underscores the multifaceted interaction of the colonial power with various indigenous groups, which resists reduction to the binary frame of colonial suppression and native resistance. This is not to underestimate either the power of the colonial regime in manufacturing institutional settings or the role of anti-colonial struggles mobilized by the colonized people. Rather, it is to suggest that the contentious relationship between colonizer and colonized needs to be seen as one of a number of diverse aspects of their encounter. The heterogeneous characteristics of the colonial encounter are clearly manifested in the case of Japanese colonial rule in Korea. While Koreans managed to mobilize a nation-wide anti-colonial struggle against the coercive military rule of the Japanese in the first decade of colonial dominance, indigenous groups also developed various relationships with the colonial power, which were sometimes cooperative and sometimes negotiable, thereby mutually constraining each other. The binary frame of colonizer and colonized thus needs to be extended to integrate the complicated nature of such multifarious interactions in a colonial context.

The second claim is that the influence of colonial legacies on postcolonial

changes should be seen as constitutive rather than as deterministic. Since the postcolonial structure itself is embedded in colonial socioeconomic and political practices as well as institutional arrangements, colonial legacies are already a crucial part of postcolonial societies. Yet, colonial legacies are not passed on in precisely the same way in all postcolonial contexts. The way in which colonial legacies shape postcolonial changes depends on the particular historical context. Even when the indigenous people collectively negate colonial legacies in an attempt to overcome colonial imprints in the process of postcolonial reform, they, in many cases, confront another external constraint in the form of changing international circumstances. When Korea became decolonized after World War II, the national endeavor aimed at the eradication of colonial legacies was redirected by another foreign rule, that of the U.S. occupation. Despite the continued attempt of Koreans to eliminate colonial reproduction through political and popular struggles, colonial institutions and practices were largely replicated. Even though the colonial structure eventually reappeared, what is crucial to note is that its reproduction was a product of the process through the liberation phase and the U.S. occupation period in the emergent Cold War context, rather than being simply a priori determined.

Finally, in highlighting the social and cultural aspects of postcolonial state-building, this study demonstrates that the process of postcolonial state formation involves more than the regeneration of a state apparatus. It also symbolizes kinds of political community the indigenous people collectively promote. A critical problem lies in the fact that the indigenous population develops heterogeneous relationships among themselves through colonial rule with their differing economic interests, political identities, and ideological orientations. While sharing the need for national integration, they can pursue

the development of different forms and characteristics of a political community in the postcolonial era and this in turn becomes a critical source of political disorder in the process of postcolonial state formation. If we shift our focus in postcolonial studies to the contours of community and the agency of the indigenous population, we must then pay particular attention to the impact of changing internal boundaries on the incorporation of a political community within a colonial context.

The Formulation of Internal Boundaries through Japanese Colonial Rule

Japanese rule in Korea lasted for nearly four decades and continued to evolve throughout the colonial period. In doing so, the Japanese dominance reshaped virtually all aspects of Korea, ranging from its political institutions and economic structures through its cultural identities and social relationships. Responding to these changes, Koreans in turn not only developed a strong anti-Japanese sentiment but they also promoted various forms of internal conflict among themselves through their diverse forms of engagement with the Japanese colonial rule. Tracing out the ways in which Koreans interacted with the colonial power and formulated tensions among themselves thus enables us to elucidate the multifaceted characteristics of colonial encounters in Korea. After all, people lived *through*, not merely under, colonial rule.

During the first decade of colonial rule in the 1910s, the Government-General carried out major colonial projects in the political and economic spheres in order to establish an institutional foundation and to enhance infrastructural power for its colonial governance. In this process, the colonial state wielded despotic power by primarily relying on the coercive state apparatus, most notably the military police, to prevent anti-

colonialism among Koreans. Although the reorganization of government institutions and the economic system was completed quite effectively, the integration of Koreans into the colonial system remained largely limited. To be sure, the colonial government utilized a part of the indigenous population in the government institutions by providing a group of political elites in the pre-colonial period with political advisory positions and by filling lower official positions, especially the police force, with people from lower status groups. Under the oppressive military rule, however, neither group was allowed to exert any substantive influence on colonial policy because the Japanese almost totally monopolized political power. As the emergence of the nation-wide anti-colonial movement in 1919 represents, the major form of political conflict in the 1910s thus remained between the Japanese colonial power and a broad cross-section of Koreans.

It was in the 1920s through the mid-1930s that internal boundaries among Koreans, through the intervention of colonial government, emerged and developed. Even though those who worked for the colonial government became the target of criticism in the 1910s already, it was not until the 1920s that internal conflict emerged in full-fledged form. Once the colonial government revised its policy orientation from coercive political control to a more invasive and assimilatory rule, it promoted the integration of certain groups of Korean into the colonial system and at the same time largely utilized them for its divide-and-rule strategy. To see the resulting multi-layered characteristics of internal conflict, I divided my study along three different analytic dimensions: the political, economic, and ideological realms.

In the political sphere, the colonial power established the centralized political and administrative structure of the Government-General and introduced a local-self

government system. In doing so, the colonial government significantly increased its state power and capacity, thereby accomplishing deeper penetration into local regions in Korea. Due to the nature of colonial rule, however, the improvement of social penetration by the central government did not simultaneously promote the convergence of the nation and the state. Rather the increasing penetration of colonial power precipitated political fragmentation among Koreans in that people who worked for or actively cooperated with the Japanese began to be seen as pro-Japanese; indeed some of them became the target of physical attacks by independence movement activists. In colonial Korea, the more the colonial government enhanced its infrastructural and penetrative power, the more Koreans were institutionally integrated into the colonial system and the more they developed antagonism against both the colonial power and Koreans who collaborated with the Japanese.

In the economic domain, Japanese colonial rule introduced market economic principles which in turn rearticulated rural conflicts between landlords and peasants. As the economic extraction by the colonial state increased to meet economic demands from imperial Japan, Korean landlords tended to shift their economic burden to their tenant farmers, hence exacerbating their conflicting interests and relationship with tenant farmers. Responding to the loss of their rights and their exacerbated economic hardship, peasants began to engage in tenant disputes with landlords. What is crucial in the process of the development of tenant disputes is that as peasants and landlords sought to enhance their economic rights and interests through the mediation of the colonial government that was previously the target of the anti-colonial movement, it began to take the position of a mediator of economic conflicts among Koreans, rather than that of a super-imposed

political power.

In the ideological realm, nationalist groups formulated various forms of anti-colonial discourses by integrating influential international narratives such as liberalism and socialism into their frameworks. While all nationalists believed the utmost importance of national independence from Japanese colonial rule, they developed diverse strategies to engage with the colonial power, which in turn produced the various dynamics of relationships among nationalist groups themselves, which were sometimes cooperative and sometimes contentious. In particular, the conflictual relationship between moderate nationalists and socialist nationalists reveals a critical ideological schism amongst Korean nationalists. Even though the formation of the National United Front in the late 1920s offered a critical chance for nationalist groups to overcome factional divisions and to achieve political cooperation against the colonial power, both political oppression by the colonial government and growing competition over popular hegemony obstructed the construction of ideological and political unity among nationalist groups. After the dissolution of the National United Front, their contentious relationship became significantly intensified to the degree that nationalist groups criticized each other as being the enemy of the nation.

As the Japanese more actively engaged with the expansion of its imperial power from the mid-1930s and on, the Government-General in Korea significantly increased its political control to maintain the stability of colonial rule and intensified resource mobilization for the war effort. Although the various forms of social movements that had developed through the 1920s and early 1930s largely declined, forms of internal conflicts continued to evolve and became intensified under the war conditions. It powered the

assimilation ideology and nurtured the perception that collaboration with the Japanese was indispensable, not an option. Indeed some nationalists urged Koreans to go fight in the war as imperial Japanese subjects. Korean police officials and bureaucrats utilized forced labor and resource mobilization as a way of proving their capability of controlling their fellow Koreans.

In examining internal conflicts among Koreans during the Japanese colonial period, a few points are worth emphasizing. First, it is important to understand the diverse forms of internal conflicts among Koreans in the political, economic, and ideological realms both in relationship to one another and as separate forms taking place in each realm. Although intra-Korean tensions in the economic, political, and ideological realms were closely related to each other, the distinctive characteristics and logic of each form should not be overlooked. Local landlords, for example, who developed economic conflicts with tenant farmers had more opportunities to participate in the political processes offered by the colonial government. It is also possible that they supported the idea of class cooperation for the goal of national integration that was promoted by national reformists. This does not mean, however, that the boundary of class distinctions exactly matched with boundaries of political and ideological orientations. Indeed, a majority of the members of the Korean Communist Party during the colonial period came from upper class backgrounds. This suggests that while it is helpful to grasp the different forms of internal boundaries together, the perception of any direct and unitary link among them would be misleading.

In addition, we need to see internal conflicts among Koreans in relation to, rather than in opposition to, anti-Japanese sentiment. While this study has focused on the

formulation and development of internal conflict among Koreans during the colonial era, this should not lead us to presume that anti-colonial tendencies waned or withered away. Despite the lack of popular anti-colonial struggles after the March First Movement, antagonism against the Japanese colonial rule was by no means replaced by intra-Korean tensions. The fact that Koreans continued to exhibit a strong animosity against the Japanese after the colonial rule was over suggests that the effort of the colonial regime to transform Koreans into colonial subjects loyal to imperial Japan brought about neither the complete legitimacy of Japanese dominance on the Korean peninsula nor the successful abolishment of anti-colonial sentiment among Koreans. The construction of internal conflicts reveals rather the other side of anti-colonialism in that Koreans developed antagonism against both the Japanese and Koreans who cooperated with the colonial power structure. In this regard, anti-Japanese sentiment and internal conflicts are two seemingly contradictory and yet closely connected relational changes that developed during the Japanese colonial period.

Lastly, a particular characteristic of intra-Korean conflicts that is related to anti-colonialism is worth noting. Considering that any group or society, whether colonial or not, has its own internal tensions, albeit in different forms and to different degrees, the development of internal conflicts among Koreans under the Japanese colonial rule is not special or surprising. What is most crucial about their conflicts is that the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the national community shifted through these internal conflicts. Once the Japanese colonial rule was over and thus the clear demarcation of colonizer and colonized was removed, internal conflicts that were created through the colonial rule were largely reinforced and provided the boundaries of membership in the newly

established national and political community. This can be further elucidated by examining a series of changes that took place during the liberation and the U.S. occupation period.

Reproducing Colonial Legacies under the U.S. Occupation Rule

Japanese colonial rule nurtured strong anti-Japanese sentiment, but at the same time, it also redrew the symbolic boundary of the national community among Koreans. The fact that Koreans reacted strongly against pro-Japanese collaborators during the liberation phase indicates that Japanese colonial legacies were embedded not only in structural and institutional arrangements but, perhaps more importantly, in the relational changes that developed through the colonial period. When the national effort to reconstruct an independent and sovereign political community was mobilized in the brief liberation phase, the need for the removal of colonial legacies was recognized as an indispensable condition and this national consensus was reflected by the antagonism toward pro-Japanese collaborators and the deprivation of this group's economic, political, and social rights.

The exclusionary policy toward the pro-Japanese signifies that strong anti-colonialism was reinforced and was largely redirected into antagonism against collaborators with the Japanese. Koreans who cooperated with the Japanese and pursued their own benefit at the expense of fellow Koreans during the colonial era were considered to be national traitors, because of a collectively shared national identity and the anti-Japanese sentiment that had developed since the pre-colonial period. For the liberation phase, however, the task of reconstructing and integrating the national

community remained the task of utmost importance and thus the issue of collaboration with the colonial regime served mainly as a symbolic representation of this new political direction. Had it not been occupied by another foreign power after liberation, the internal boundaries among Koreans, which were organized around the issue of collaboration with the Japanese, might have been overcome and transcended by the consolidative power of national reconstruction in the liberation phase. It was under the U.S. occupation rule that the colonial legacy in the form of intra-Korean tensions was largely intensified again and provided a critical source of political struggles.

The arrival of the U.S. in the south and the U.S.S.R. in the north and their separate occupation rules in Korea created another critical juncture. Unlike the north, in which the Soviet Union supported the removal of colonial legacies, the AMG in the south resurrected and revived colonial institutions and practices. Of particular importance is that the U.S. occupation rule drove various forms of internal conflict among Koreans into two broad forces. As the AMG reappointed and supported those who served and benefited from the colonial rule, internal boundaries among Koreans that remained largely symbolic became significantly rearticulated in the political, economic, and ideological realms again. As a series of U.S. occupation policies negated the direction of reform characteristic of the liberation phase and resurrected the colonial system, internal boundaries in the various domains converged into contention between those who sought to maintain the existing colonial system and those who attempted to remove colonial legacies to reconstruct the national community.

The 1946 people's uprisings represent the convergence of different forms of conflicts in a particular historical conjuncture. The uprisings reveal the popular reactions

to both the early occupation policies of the AMG and the internal conflicts that had been constructed and reproduced since the colonial period. Peasants, workers, and leftists struggled to achieve their continually denied right to livelihood, right to participate in political activities, and right to belong to the national community against landlords, police officers, bureaucrats, and rightists who collaborated with the Japanese and then made another alliance with the AMG. Despite the existence of the diverse motivations of participants in the uprisings, they showed collective antagonism toward those who were viewed as pro-Japanese collaborators.

The ways in which the pro-Japanese issue was formulated and intensified through the Japanese colonial and U.S. occupation periods in Korea demonstrates the historically shifting meaning of membership in and the collective identity of the national community. Koreans exhibited strong national solidarity in the pre-colonial era and further politicized their national collectivity through the experience of colonial and occupation rules. While developing the boundary between the national community and foreign rulers, they also constructed internal boundaries among themselves, which in turn became a demarcation line for national inclusion and exclusion. The fact that collaborators with the Japanese colonial power were identified as “national traitors” and became the target of popular protests demonstrates how the meaning of social membership in a national community can be altered through the historical experience of colonial rule. In this regard, *the social consequences* of the colonial experience are among the most profound colonial legacies. The Korean case thus suggests that the notion of membership in the national community is an outcome of constant reconstruction in the historical process.

In this regard, a critical consequence of colonialism can be found not only in producing a structure of economic exploitation and political oppression, but perhaps more importantly in generating and amplifying internal boundaries among the indigenous people. What is worth emphasizing here is the role of these relational changes among Koreans in the reproduction of the colonial structure and the construction of the postcolonial state in South Korea. It was after all those who were considered pro-Japanese collaborators that reproduced, along with the AMG, the colonial system and even advocated for a separate nation-state in the south. Thus, we can see the mutually reinforcing causal processes of relational changes and institutional arrangements.

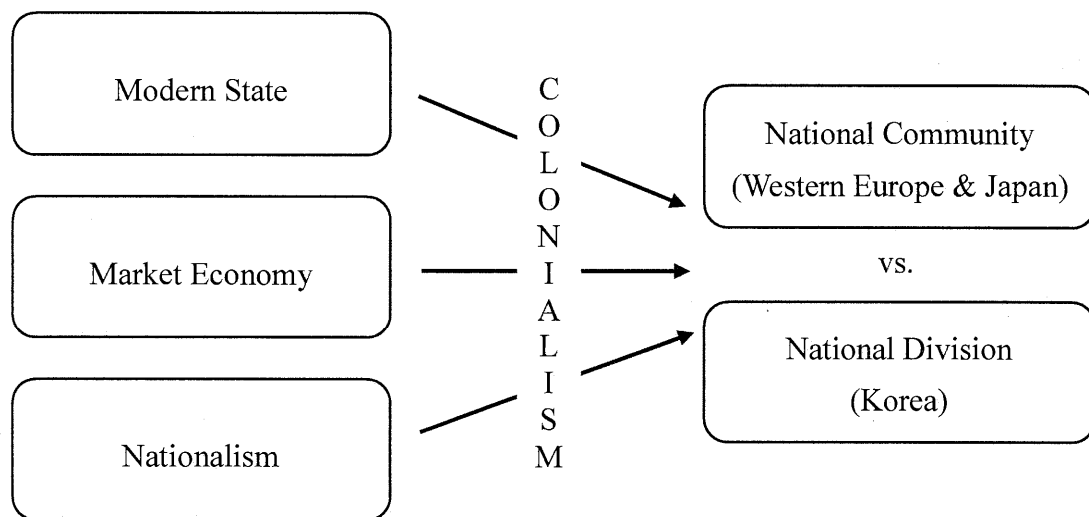
The formation of a separate nation-state in South Korea was deeply influenced by the historical experience of Japanese colonial rule, rather than being merely a by-product of geopolitical changes under the Cold War circumstances. To be sure, there is no doubt that the two occupation powers of the U.S. in the south and the U.S.S.R. in the north played a pivotal role in the division of the political system in Korea. Their contentious relationship in an emergent Cold War context exerted a particularly important impact on subsequent political changes in Korea. However, exclusively focusing on such an external factor fails to explain the existence of any historical continuities or discontinuities from Japanese colonial rule that cultivated the historical and social sources of the formation of separate nation-states in Korea.

Colonial Modernity

Understanding the establishment of separate nation-states in Korea through the sequential process of Japanese colonial rule and U.S. occupation leads us to reconsider a

scholarly debate regarding the effect of Japanese colonial rule on modernization in Korea. As the three analytic dimensions indicate, which this study has focused on in examining the Japanese colonial domination, Korea underwent a significant societal reorganization through the establishment of a centralized government with considerable penetrative power, the introduction of market economic principles, and the development of various nationalist discourses. Considering that each of these changes represents an important characteristic of modern society, we can see that both colonial oppression and modernization in Korea were two different aspects of Japanese colonial rule.

Figure 3: Pathways into the Modern World through Colonialism



The nationalist and modernist theses on the role of the Japanese in colonial oppression and modernization, respectively, therefore, should be seen as representing the mutually constitutive characteristics of Japanese colonial dominance. If we accept the simultaneous occurrence of colonialism and modernization during the Japanese rule, as the colonial modernity thesis contends, we then need to elucidate not only the forms of interdependence and interpenetration of empire and nation, and between the colonizer and colonized during the colonial period, but also their repercussions on subsequent

postcolonial changes.

In this study, I have particularly highlighted the mechanism through which the historical experience of Japanese colonial rule exerted a critical influence on the formation of separate nation-states in Korea. Of particular importance is that the modern institutional arrangements that the Japanese colonial power implanted in Korea were reproduced by the mediation of relational changes among the Korean people since the colonial period. If we consider the continuities from the colonial to postcolonial periods this way, we can identify the simultaneous processes of colonization and modernization since the Japanese colonial period, and this is one of the important roles of Japanese colonialism in shaping Korea's emergence into the postcolonial world.

Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial State Formation

For the first half of the twentieth century, Japanese colonialism and the American occupation played an essential role in shaping and conditioning Korea's postcolonial pathways. In particular, what I have called the "internal boundaries" among Koreans continued to be formulated and rearticulated through the sequential process of the two foreign rules, thus ultimately becoming a critical historical and social basis for the establishment of separate nation-states in Korea.

The centralized state structure that the Japanese colonial power introduced in Korea was reproduced in postcolonial South Korea. The colonial state structure, however, did not immediately determine the form and characteristics of the postcolonial state. The continuity from colonial to postcolonial was realized only through the historical process of liberation and the American occupation periods. In fact, the strongly centralized state

form could have been effectively used as an institutional resource for developing a postcolonial nation-state in Korea. The character of the postcolonial state, rather, hinged on who utilized the colonial state structure and for what ends. When conservative rightists, whose legitimacy was significantly tainted, utilized colonial structures against popular demands for economic and political reforms under the aegis of the AMG as another super-imposed foreign power, the coercive characteristics of the colonial structure were in turn revived in a more transparent form.

The way in which the colonial state structure was reproduced through postcolonial state formation in South Korea has important implications for the relationships between the state, society, and culture. By largely incorporating pro-Japanese collaborators into the administration, the Yi regime did not merely reinforced the colonial political structure and state apparatus, but it also consolidated state-society relations and the culture of rule that had been cultivated throughout the colonial period. To compensate for the regime's lack of popular support and political legitimacy that derived from its form as a divided nation-state and from the integration of the pro-Japanese, the Yi administration enacted legal measures comparable to those of notorious colonial laws and obstructed progressive political activities, especially the punishment of the pro-Japanese. In this sense, internal boundaries were resurrected, rendered more visible, and thus constituted powerful sources of political conflict, the important consequence of which lies in the pattern of internal exclusion that typified South Korea's post-war political trajectory.

Even though the ways in which Japanese colonialism influenced postcolonial state formation in South Korea should be understood in its particular historical context, it

provides a more general lesson for understanding other postcolonial societies. Like South Korea, most colonial societies underwent different forms of social and political conflicts in postcolonial periods. In South East Asia, for instance, India and Pakistan experienced a devastating civil war because of their dispute over the national border and religious conflicts. In many parts of Africa, tribal and ethnic divisions gave rise to serious political eruptions. The implication of this analysis of South Korea lies in the claim that it is crucial to examine how the historical experience of colonialism produces and reshapes sources of internal conflict, whether religious, ethnic, or class-based, among indigenous people, and how such conflict in turn plays a pivotal role in shaping the particular state form and political trajectory in postcolonial societies.

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