

# Korea's Modern History Wars: March 1st 1919 and the Double Project of Modernity

Jae-Jung Suh

**Abstract:** *Korea's modern historiography is characterized by a series of debates, "history wars," since the colonial period. One of the central questions that has animated the debates is how to define the subject of Korea's history. Colonial historiography characterized Koreans as a passive nation lacking an agency of its own, against which the first generation nationalist historians wrote to narrate a history of a nation that has staged a perpetual struggle for independence against foreign invasion and domination throughout time. After 1945, conservative nationalist historians continued a nationalist narrative but confined their historical imaginative space to the capitalist order within which the nation was defined. Critical nationalist historians grew in number and influence from the 1980s as they challenged the conservative historiography's narrow confinement to expand Korea's historical space. The critical nationalist historiography began to diversify in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, leading to a multiplicity of historical narratives, including those critical of nationalist historiography. To understand the history of modern Korean historiography is, therefore, to appreciate the formidable challenges posed by modernity and the indefatigable struggles made by the Korean people, including Korean historians.*

**Keywords:** *history war, Korean historiography, colonial historiography, nationalist historiography, modernity*

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 marked a watershed in Korean history and, some argue, in world history.<sup>1</sup> Nine years after Korea was annexed by Japan, millions of Koreans took to the streets throughout the then colonized peninsula to declare *manse* (Long Live Korean Independence).<sup>2</sup> Timed to coincide with the funeral of King Kojong to maximize popular participation, the demonstrations brought together people ostensibly to send off the deceased king but they also ended up bidding farewell to the kingship for good. Never again would the royal house, which ruled for five hundred years and, under different royal families, much longer, reign. Some individuals, notably Syngman Rhee [1875-1965], sought to refurbish their credentials with their royal lineage and others, most notably Park Chung-Hee [1917-1979] and his daughter Geun-Hye, sought to mimic dynastic succession, but ultimately without success. A new era opened. The independence struggle was to define the Korean nation for decades to come. Independence was not immediately accomplished. Rather Japanese colonial rule remained in place for a quarter of a century. But commoners emerged at this time as a new political force, just as the bourgeoisie rose to replace aristocrats as new subjects in Europe. In subsequent decades, Korea would experience colonization, war and division: an age of development that, albeit from a slow and distorted start, would fundamentally transform the economic life of the peninsula, although, after 1945, in different forms in south and north. 1919 was a moment pregnant with yet unfulfilled double projects of completing modernity and overcoming it at the same time.

Korea after March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 would never be the same.

As that day in 1919 ushered in many historical transformations, so too did many historiographies develop to narrate them, their causes and consequences. The most prominent are nationalist historiographies that focus on the nationwide, and overseas, independence movements and their culmination in the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea. Their prominence is perhaps not surprising, given that the current Republic of Korea traces its lineage to the Provisional Government of 1919 and that many independence movements of the following years also grew out of the failure of the *mansei* movement to gain independence. While most historians agree on the centrality of the 1919 movement as a watershed, they diverge in their evaluation of the Provisional Government. Some, particularly progressive historians who grew stronger in the late 1970s and 1980s, give prominence to workers' strikes, tenant farmers' struggles, and armed independence movements inside and outside Korea. The official historiography of North Korea emphasizes that the movement failed because it lacked the means of violence with which to fight back against the police and military of the Japanese empire, thus legitimizing the armed independence fight led by Kim Il Sung. Thus the national division has also created a corresponding division of the historiography, together with multiple fractions within South Korea's historiography.

The year 2019, the centennial of the March 1st, 1919, witnessed the culmination of the historical scholarship assessing the complex set of events. Among a flood of conferences and publications that ensued, one group of scholars stood out for its attempts to stand above a nationalist historiography and situate March 1<sup>st</sup> 1919 within a regional and global time. Its scholarship was unique in highlighting the *sui generis* nature of Koreans' historical

experiences without falling into the trap of nationalist historiography while bringing to relief common challenges shared by the world during the modern period. It did so by tying 2018 to 1919. To its eyes, the "candlelight revolution" of 2018 and the "March 1<sup>st</sup> Revolution of 1919" were part and parcel of a *longue durée* revolution that confronted what Paik Nak-chung once called the "double project of modernity" - the project of adapting to and overcoming modernity.<sup>3</sup> Koreans were going through a capitalist revolution while at the same time struggling to find an alternative that would resolve many of its contradictions. This special issue of the Asia-Pacific Journal presents three articles representative of this historiography.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Inverted Terrain of Korea's Historiography**

Korea's historiographical terrain defies the conventional, and naïve, binary political categorization of historiographies.<sup>5</sup> While in the West nationalist historiography is commonly associated with the rise of authoritarian polities that constrain individual liberty internally and give rise to aggression externally, in Korea it is prized by progressives (in general) for bringing colonized (and neo-colonized) people together to form a new subject who fought for national liberation and democratization. Its main, although certainly not only, critics are conservatives who find troubling its critical stance that challenges the legitimacy of the Republic of Korea and the capitalist system headed by the U.S. The history wars in South Korea have been fought primarily between the two camps, with many others joining, along multiple and widening frontlines. In recent years, "New Right" scholars have joined the conservatives as they criticize the universalizing narratives of the nationalist historiography that erase complexities and multiplicity in historical experiences. They thus

adopt postcolonial scholarship's critique of nationalist historiography to attack Korea's progressive historians, inverting Korea's historiographical terrain once more.

The debate questions such issues as whether Japanese colonial rule contributed to Korea's economic development, when the Korean state was founded, how Presidents Syngman Rhee and Park Chung-Hee should be evaluated, and, more recently, whether "comfort women" are genuine victims. In recent years many progressives have been on the defensive about nationalist historiography as most conservatives wield a liberal or leftist historiographical outlook to attack the progressives. The centenary of the March 1<sup>st</sup> movement last year only widened and deepened the war that was being fought on the inverted historiographical terrain.

Korea's modern historiographical terrain was defined by what might be called the first history war between colonialist and nationalist historiography on Korea during the colonial period, with both groups intertwined as what historian Henry Em called "coauthors of nation" for Korea as well as Japan.<sup>6</sup> An imperial imaginary of the two nations was produced by historians who suggested that Korea's history had always been shaped by external forces such as Japan or China or that Korea's pre-modern society and economy had been stagnant, setting the stage for Japan as a modern and civilized nation to lead the premodern and uncivilized Korea into salvation.

In his article on Korea's economic history published in 1915, "*Kankoku no keizai soshiki to keizai tani*," for example, Fukuda Tokuzo compared the late nineteenth century Chosŏn to 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>-century Japan, highlighting Korea's stagnancy as the most salient characteristic.<sup>7</sup> Hayashi Taisuke argued in his *Chōsen shi* (*Korean History*) published in 1892, that the southern part of Korea had been ruled by *Mimana*, a Japanese colony while the northern

part by China.<sup>8</sup> He followed up with a sequel, *Chōsen kinseishi*, several years later to more explicitly advocate Japan's control of Korea by portraying it as a Japanese return to the land they once ruled.<sup>9</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi wrote to the *Jiji shimpō* in 1885 an article titled "Congratulations on Korea's Demise for the Sake of the Koreans", claiming that because the Korean government offered no hope, it would be better for the Koreans if they were protected by a powerful civilized state.<sup>10</sup> *Kokushigan*, published 1890 and reprinted in 1901, was perhaps the most authoritative and influential history written by Shigeno Yasutsugu, Hoshino Hisashi and Kume Kunitake, all leading historians of Tokyo Imperial University who were known for their critical readings of historical sources.<sup>11</sup> In it they narrated, without methodically exercising the evidential historiography (*kōshō shigaku*) for which they were known, that Susano-O ruled Korea or that Inahino Mikoto was Silla's king.<sup>12</sup> Hoshino clearly believed that since "[the] Imperial Family used to rule the peninsula," it was "therefore natural for the peninsula to be embraced once again as the territory of the Imperial Family," according to Oguma.<sup>13</sup> It was through this kind of historical imagery that the Japanese framed their own national identity as well as that of Koreans in modern times and embraced Japan's colonization of Korea as the restoration of the ancient relationship.<sup>14</sup>

It was precisely against this kind of colonial historiography that such historians as Sin Ch'aeho and Pak Ŭnsik presented their accounts of Korean history as a form of liberation struggle. One of their common narrative strategies was to extoll the virtues of national heroes. In an explicit attempt to promote a role model for Koreans Sin, for example, published *Ulchimundŏkjŏn* (*Biography of Ulchimundŏk*) calling the Kokuryŏ general who fought off the invasion by China's Sui dynasty forces in the 7<sup>th</sup> century "the greatest hero in the four thousand year history of the

great Eastern country". More challenging, and ultimately more consequential, was the task of establishing a framework of history that would integrate these heroic stories into a coherent narrative. Eventually, a historiography developed that conceptualized the Korean nation, *minjok*, as the embodiment of a subjectivity that transcended the state and the territorial space to resist and fight oppression. Writing in 1908 after the Korean state had become a Japanese protectorate and the peninsula subject to the Japanese rule, Sin produced his history of the Korean nation, *Doksasillon (A New Reading of History)*, as an alternative to what he called the history of the state and the history of territory. By positing as the subject of his history the Korean nation that had maintained a bloodline from its progenitor, Tan'gun, for thousands of years, Sin founded a new historiography that could survive Korea's loss of control of the state and territory. Sin's historiographical maneuver thus "created an autonomy for a nation squeezed by two empires, simultaneously decentering Korea away from China in the past and offering a version of the nation that enabled a particular form of resistance to Japan in the present."<sup>15</sup> Sin laid an intellectual ground on which the Korean people could come together in opposition to Japanese colonial rule regardless of their geographical, social or political location, as they did in 1910. His nationalist historiography was an outgrowth of his effort to "create a political entity worth identifying with" and his return to Tan'gun a product of his search for a historical subject who would fight imperialism and oppression.<sup>16</sup> That Sin did not turn to Tan'gun out of an ethno-nationalism but out of his zeal to identify a subject who fights all forms of oppression is well reflected in the fact that he subsequently moved on to further the progressive potential of his nationalist historiography, collaborating with anarchists from China, Taiwan, and elsewhere for Asian peoples' liberation, before dying an anarchist in a Manchukuo prison in 1936.<sup>17</sup> For Sin, nationalist historiography represented a

starting point of liberation struggle, in contrast with others, such as Ch'oe Namsŏn, who sought to re-discover and embrace Korea's glorious past.<sup>18</sup> In the Korean nation, he discovered a historical subject who would carry out at least one of the "double project of modernity": to challenge the imperialism of his time, the most violent form of the capitalist system.

Like many historians and writers after Sin, Pak Ŭnsik emulated his narrative strategy of highlighting the national subject as a freedom fighter in his *Han'guk t'ongsa (Painful History of Korea)* in 1915 and *Han'guk tongnipundong jihyŏlsa (The Bloody History of the Korean Independence Movement)* in 1920. Believing—like Sin—that a nation would not perish so long as its national history was not lost, Pak detailed in the former work Korea's descent into a Japanese colony from 1864 to 1911, prefacing this "painful history" with a chapter on a long unbroken national pedigree going back to Tan'gun. He repeated the same narrative strategy in the latter work tracing the origin of the Korean "spirit of independence" to the "glorious history of 4,300 years" where the Koreans maintained their blood lineage fighting off many invasions by "foreign nations."<sup>19</sup> Pak thus explicitly and vividly tied what was left abstract and implicit by Sin to the contemporary, evoking pain at the loss of Koreans' independence and describing their struggles against subjugation. He added tears and blood to the concept of the nation in his historical accounts, and gave the spirit of independence a body by serving as the second President of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai in 1925. No longer a mere exercise of a scholarly imagination in an isolated room, the nationalist historiography of the time endowed the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement and subsequent activities with a historical foundation that had spanned thousands of years and a purpose that transcended the colonization of Korea. What was at stake for these historians was answers to the critical questions of the time: was it



possible to fight the Empire of Japan for emancipation and who was the subject that would carry out that struggle against subjugation?

While it is difficult to gauge the success of the first generation of nationalist historians in fanning resistance to Japan's colonial rule in their writings, they certainly challenged colonialist historiography and likely complicated colonial governmentality.

The colonial government took note of their dangerous potential. Terauchi Masatake, the first Governor-General of Korea, took the initiative to "collect" historical materials: the police, military police, and colonial officials were mobilized to forcefully confiscate historical records, including biographies of Korean national heroes such as Sin's *Ulchimundŏkjŏn*, banning the publication or possession of such, and even burning at least some of them.<sup>20</sup> His successor established *Chōsenshihenshukai* (the Society for the Compilation of Korean History) in 1925, six years after the nationwide March 1<sup>st</sup> movement, in response to the nationalist historiography. The official body to compile Korean history had to be founded because, it noted in a later report, "there were no correct and succinct historical accounts in Korea," insisting that existing historical accounts were not correct or trustworthy and implicitly delegitimizing all the historical records kept and maintained by the Koreans.<sup>21</sup> To the extent that there were historical writings, it suggested that they could be categorized into two kinds, both of which were problematic. One was "those of the independent period that was not relevant to the modern period," meaning the period when Korea was an independent entity was not relevant to the contemporary colonial period. The other was the "toxic" kind. Pak Ŭnsik's *Han'guk t'ongsa* (*Painful History of Korea*) was an example that "made false claims" and "deluded the public." Having identified these Korean histories as incorrect, the colonial

authorities decided that the most effective way to fight these dangerous historical writings was not to ban them or burn them but to produce what would be promoted as "the fair and accurate historical account."<sup>22</sup> That "fair and accurate" history was to bring to light, they hoped, the irrelevance of Korea's past independence and the dangers of Koreans' contemporary independence movements, eclipsing the nationalist historiography promoted by Sin, Pak, and others critical of the imperial Japan.

The "fair and accurate" historical accounts took two main forms as Japan's colonial gaze was projected backward to Korea's past to cast a long, naturalizing shadow on its future. The two narratives drew on different approaches to the study of history yet they converged on narrating a nation that had taken the historical journey hand-in-hand with an outside master throughout time and would find its home in the colonized peninsula. They differed only over who was the master: one argued it was the Japanese, the other the Chinese. By characterizing the history of Korean relationships with others as an unequal one in which they had always been subjected to an outsider's rule, both narratives deprived the Koreans of the emancipatory potential, the power of a historical subject to resist invaders, colonizers and oppressors and liberate the invaded, colonized and oppressed. Both were united in constituting a Korean subjectivity in a way opposite to the nationalist historiography of Sin and Park. What was at stake was the very identity of the Koreans and the safety of the Empire of Japan—as well as the preservation of the modern capitalist system as a natural order.

One of these two narratives—one with a longer genealogy and more staying power—was a group of historical and linguistic studies that supported or drew on *nissen dōsoren*, the theory that the Japanese and the Koreans shared a common ancestry and the former had

ruled the latter in at least a southern part of the peninsula, a historical framework that could be traced back to the writings by the likes of Hayashi Taisuke and further back to *kokugaku* of the Edo period. Korea's annexation served as a moment of vindication for this theory as Japanese newspapers and magazines rushed to publish articles written by leading scholars of the time that popularized the *nissen dōsoren* theory. Kita Sadakichi was a leader of this group. He wrote in 1910 that Korea's annexation was a restoration of the Japanese-Korean relationship to the ancient state and, after the March 1<sup>st</sup> movement of 1919, mobilized diverse archeological, documentary, linguistic, and cultural evidence to lend support to *nissen dōsoren* and criticize Koreans' independence struggles.<sup>23</sup> The expression *nissen dōsoren* was used—and thus established as a scholarly expression—as the title of a linguistic study by Kanazawa Shōzaburō who argued that the Korean language was a branch of Japanese.<sup>24</sup>

If the *nissen dōsoren* approach experienced a resurgence after the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement in 1919, a different historiography grew more prominent as the Empire of Japan increased its influence over Manchuria, especially after it defeated Russia in 1905. The new historiography, commonly known as *mansenshi* (history of Manchuria and Korea), was literally a product of the Empire of Japan as its works were produced mainly by historians at *Mansen rekishi chiri chōsashitsu* (the Manchuria-Korea History Geography Research Office) established and funded by the South Manchuria Railway. These historians at the Mansen Research Office shared a critique of *nissen dōsoren*, arguing that it relied too uncritically on Japanese myths, just as Shiratori Kurakichi, their intellectual leader and one of the founders of East Asian historiography, was critical of *Kokushigan*. They developed as an alternative a derivative of East Asian history that viewed Korea and Manchuria as a historical unit in which Korea remained under strong influences

of Manchuria. Not only did their narratives dovetail neatly with the expansion of the Japanese Empire into Manchuria but they shared ironically with the *nissen dōsoren* scholars an orientalism that the Koreans had been passive actors, lacking in agency, and ruled by outsiders, whether Japanese or Manchus. More damaging to Korean national historiography was their dismissal of the Tan'gun story as a baseless myth.<sup>25</sup> Inaba Iwakichi, perhaps the most prolific of the *mansenshi* historians, worked in the Society for the Compilation of Korean History as a central figure who had started the work since 1922 when the Society's predecessor was established, and made sure the Tan'gun story was not included in its official *Chōsenshi*, thus beheading the beginning of the Korean nation.<sup>26</sup> By keeping Tan'gun outside the boundary of the historical knowledge, Inaba, and colonialist historians, effectively denied the Korean nationalist historiography its beginning; and by framing the nationalist account as a myth, they deprived it of its emancipatory potential.

### Historiography after Liberation (in South Korea)

After 1945 when Korea was liberated from Japanese rule, Korean historians were confronted with a critical question: what kind of historiography were they going to develop to narrate Korean history under the changed circumstances? Most agreed on the imperative to decolonize the colonial historiography that had permeated the Korean mind and to adapt earlier nationalist historiography to the postcolonial realities to unleash its emancipatory potential to fight colonial and feudal legacies. The question was how to do so in the emerging cold war. In the end, the structural constraints proved decisive as Korea's division and war shaped what kind of historiography would be tolerated in either half of the peninsula. In South Korea, leftist

historians, who were a dominant voice during the immediate post-liberation period, became all but extinct as most fled to the North or the few who did not were marginalized. Filling and indeed saturating the vacuum left by their exodus was a particular kind of nationalist historiography that legitimized the state in the South and its place in the American world order. It would be decades before this historiography was challenged by a second, and more progressive, wave of nationalist historiography.

Reflecting the inverted nature of the intellectual terrain of the postcolonial post-war South Korea, Yi Pyongdo emerged as the leading nationalist historian after the Korean War.<sup>27</sup> Had it not been the division or the war, his career could have suffered from a couple of connections he had with Japanese colonial rule. First, he was closely associated with Tsuda Sōkichi, his mentor at Waseda who had adopted the *mansenshi* perspective in the 1910s and 1920. If it did not damage his credentials as a nationalist historian that he had studied under one of the leading historians who delegitimized Korean nationalist historiography as a myth, it must have been devastating that after Japan's defeat, his mentor defended the Emperor in public as "the living symbol of the national spirit."<sup>28</sup> Second, Yi himself had been directly involved in the colonial authority's efforts to re-write Korean history from a colonial perspective. For several years, he worked as an assistant historiographer (修史官補) of the *Chōsenshihenshukai* (Society for the Compilation of Korean History) established and funded by the office of the Governor-General of Korea to counter "toxic" nationalist historiography, as explained above. These colonial connections did not fetter Yi, or many former collaborators, as he rose to prominence in the academia and politics in postliberation South Korea.<sup>29</sup> Yi and members of the Chindan Society quickly established themselves as mainstream historians in the South and

developed a postliberation nationalist historiography.<sup>30</sup> *Han'guksa* (*History of Korea*), the seven volume study sponsored by the Chindan Society and financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, was hailed as a new standard Korean history that synthesized the state of the art in the field.<sup>31</sup> It took intellectual acrobatics, backed by the power of the South Korean state, for them to become the standard-bearing nationalist historians because it was they who "had helped produce colonial narratives under the banner of academic rigor" under the colonial government.<sup>32</sup>

The acrobatic nature of their nationalist historiography was made more pronounced by the National Institute of Korean History, a research institute affiliated with the Ministry of Education that produced *Taehanmin'guksa* (*History of the Republic of Korea*). If the Chindan Society's *Hanguksa* stopped its history at the year 1910, conveniently leaving out the colonial period, *Taehanmin'guksa* included the period in its historical coverage but practiced what De Ceuster characterizes as an intellectual "exorcism": it left out most of pro-Japanese collaborators, including Yi himself, from its historical account of the colonial period and presented only a miniscule subset of them as an "aberration" in the nation's long independent history.<sup>33</sup> The aberration was further contrasted with the nationwide March First Movement of 1919 and the establishment of the Provisional Government in Shanghai as an outgrowth of the mass movement in order to highlight the continuity of the nation throughout the colonial period. The account of the heroic national struggle - that excluded most of the resistance movements led by leftists - culminated in the founding of the Republic of Korea that claimed its legitimacy as the successor of the Provisional Government. The nationalist account could end on the triumphant note, furthermore, by glossing over the U.S. Military Government's employment of former collaborators in the immediate postliberation years or the First Republic's

failure to bring them to justice. An intellectual exorcism, in other words, had to be performed to establish the legitimacy of the Republic in the nationalist independence movement and to forge national cohesion around it. Nothing short of an exorcism would have been able to present as a nationalist government the postliberation state in the South where many politicians, officials, and intellectuals in leadership positions had enjoyed a successful career under the colonial government or supported, whether or not voluntarily, Japan's colonial rule.

The state then took this inverted nationalist historiography and ran with it. Through the 1960s and 1970s, it played an active role in fostering it through not only the publication of the official national history but also the education of the population. Its authorities drew on the nationalist history to paint themselves as continuing the timeless national struggle for survival and preach nationalism as a priceless civic virtue for which the public must sacrifice itself. The military *coup d'état* of 1961 was presented as a heroic act of national salvation, *Yushin* authoritarianism as a democratic system with Korean characteristics, and the economic development that was the hallmark of the Park regime as an essential requirement for national survival and the path to prosperity. The conservative nationalist historiography grew hand in hand with modernization narratives that remained critical of Japanese colonial rule while accentuating Korea's economic development as an accomplishment of the conservatives with American support. The conservative historians recast themselves as nationalist historians who sought to recover the Korean nation from the colonial historiography by situating the nation in the global narrative of developmentalism. It was only in the late 1970s and 1980s that they were criticized by progressive counter-narratives critical of the conservative, pro-authoritarian, and pro-American orientation of the conservative historiography. No sooner did

the National Institute of Korean History complete the conservative nationalist historiography with an ambitious 23 volumes series, *Han'guksa (History of Korea)*, in 1984 than a critical historiography began to challenge it.<sup>34</sup>

The hegemonic power of conservative nationalist historiography could be seen in that it took Im Chongguk, a literary critic, not a historian, to break the silence over former collaborators, including some of the most celebrated novelists in the South such as Kim Tongin, Lee Kwangsu and Ch'oe Namsŏn. His *Ch'inilmunhangnon (A Study of Pro-Japanese Literature)*, with its potential to create wide social repercussions, received a cold reception, and he was consigned to the margins of, or beyond, academia and mainstream intellectual circles until his death in 1991.<sup>35</sup> In his study on writings and activities of Korean literary figures that supported or rationalized colonial rule, Im adopted the positivist method of the official nationalist historiography but undermined its narrative from within by transgressing its boundary to painstakingly document the pro-colonial activities of the South's leading intellectuals, including such powerful figures as Yu Chino.<sup>36</sup> He did so with a conviction that the nation must squarely confront its past, including even the darkest chapters, if it was to survive the wars of the twentieth century. He described Japan's colonization of Korea as an invasion (*ch'imnyak*) on multiple fronts including ideology, religion, and culture as well as economy and military, and exposed the ugly truth of collaborators who aided the invasion from within.<sup>37</sup> He thus challenged the official historiography that glossed over the pro-Japanese past of many of South Korea's leaders while at the same time drawing on the nationalist historiography that upheld the nation an absolute and unproblematic category against which individuals are measured.<sup>38</sup> He was critical of the collaborators as a local embodiment of imperialism and post-liberation



authoritarianism from which the nation must be rescued, articulating a binary narrative. His was thus a fusion of critical and nationalistic historiography. It was the critical nature of his historiography that attracted the attention of dissident intellectuals and democracy activists in the late 1970s and the following decades.

The critical accounts of pro-Japanese collaborators, by Im, Kim Samung and Chŏng Unhyŏn, together with others' re-examination of the postliberation period, grew into democratic nationalist historiography in the 1980s.<sup>39</sup> In 1979 when Kim Ōnho published the edited volume, *Haebang chŏnhusaŭi insik* (*A Consideration of Korean History before and after Liberation*), that boldly brought together intellectuals critical of the conservative historiography to challenge the reigning orthodoxy of the South, it was no coincidence that it included Im's chapter, "Reality of Pro-Japanese Collaborators toward the end of Japanese Empire."<sup>40</sup> The volume as a whole went far beyond his exclusive focus on collaborators. In the lead chapter, Song Kŏnho, a former journalist, set the tone of the volume by raising a soul-searching question about the nature of the 1945 liberation: was it a true liberation if the Koreans people (*minjung*) then suffered from a national division imposed by foreigners as well as an authoritarian rule perpetuated by former collaborators?<sup>41</sup> He thus projected the Korean people—not the "nationalist" elites as presented by the conservative nationalist historiography—as the subject of history, a nation that was mortally wounded by the division imposed by outsiders and internal collaborators, a nation that could rise up again and squarely confront the double project of modernity only if the people as the bearer of the nation liberated themselves from foreign domination and internal dictatorship. The chapters in the volume dug deeper into the inverted terrain than Im, as they brought to light the roles played by the U.S. and Soviet governments in frustrating political struggles to form a united national government that

would complete indigenous socioeconomic reforms. The chapters on such national leaders as Kim Ku and Yŏ Unhyŏng accentuated their efforts to prevent the impending division and to complete democratic reforms, presenting the contemporary democracy movement as a continuation of the earlier struggle for liberation. The timing of its publication was fortuitous, as the Gwangju Democracy Movement of 1980—and the South Korean military's massacre of unarmed citizens during the confrontation as well as the U.S. government's acquiescence in the massacre—prompted many historians, and many more citizens, to re-examine Korea's modern history in order to situate the massacre in a historical context and link the resistance to a longer lineage of national struggle. *Haebang chŏnhusaŭi insik* grew to a six volumes series in 10 years, both helping satisfy the growing thirst for an alternative democratic historiography and generating a demand for more research as the democracy movement gained momentum through the 1980s.

The series was organized by Kim Ōnho, president of Han'gilsa Publishing Company, bringing together contributors from various disciplines and backgrounds. Despite the diversity in their political and ideological orientations, they, together with many historians of a younger generation, coalesced around what might be called a critical nationalist historiography that challenged the conservatism of the dominant nationalist historiography and highlighted the fault lines between states and the masses as the primary agents of national history. The series was a watershed. A younger generation of historians extended its critical inquiry to issues that had been erased from conservative historiography, including cases of state violence against civilians. Their work, together with efforts by the victims and survivors of the state violence, put pressure on the government to establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Republic of Korea in 2005 to investigate state

violence whose existence itself had until then been ignored or denied.<sup>42</sup> Also they broke silence over American complicity in not only dividing the peninsula in 1945 but also committing civilian massacres before, during and after the Korean War.<sup>43</sup> Their critical nationalist historiography, which began outside academia, matured as viable contender to the conservative historiography by the end of the century. Many of its proponents came to occupy academic or government posts.

As their number grew from the 1990s, their voices and perspectives diversified in line with society's democratization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. National fault lines no longer remained their primary focus as they deepened their understanding of how various groups and individuals differently experienced coloniality and postcoloniality. More ideologically committed studies brought to relief class struggles. Others turned their attention to a gender divide. Studies on "comfort women," which initially overlapped with the critical nationalist historiography, added a gender perspective that could not be reduced to nationalism. Some feminist scholars approached the issue from a perspective critical of the nationalist historiography while others started to frame the issue in terms of sexual slavery during wartime. Yet other scholars brought to light the lives of subalterns in Korea as they found resonance in subaltern studies of other societies. Yet others sought to move beyond the empire-colony binary by examining transnationality. With many overlaps, postcolonial and postmodern studies too made inroads in the study of Korean history.<sup>44</sup> It was representative of this expansion of critical nationalist historiography beyond nationalist confines that some historians and history educators of this camp made conscious efforts to develop together with their counterparts in Japan and China a common history textbook that would narrate the three nations' histories from a more integrated and interactive, perhaps not

transnational but certainly non-nationalist, perspective. The critical nationalist historiography, in other words, matured as pluralistic, with many historical works openly challenging its nationalist orientation as being antithetical to its democratic commitment. It became more democratic thanks to these challenges that helped loosen up, or make holes in, the straightjacket of the nation to make possible discoveries of other identities as well as investigations of variable processes of nation-making. The critical nationalist historiography, in short, culminated in democratic diversification, resuscitating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the emancipatory potential of the nationalist historiography of the colonial period in ways that had not hitherto been anticipated.

Also it must be noted that this expansion was accompanied by the blurring of the critical focus on the workings of power as the core object of historical inquiry, and its diversification thanks to the weakening of the cohesion with which diverse approaches had been held together under the democratic nationalist historiography. It was in this milieu that this historiography was met with a conservative backlash, which grew more powerful under the conservative restoration during the Lee Myong-Bak and Park Geun-Hye presidencies. Groups of conservative historians and other scholars, some of whom had previously been affiliated with the democracy movement, then began their critique of the democratic nationalist historiography for denigrating the legitimacy of the Republic of Korea.<sup>45</sup> Riding on the crest of the rising postmodern and postcolonial studies in Korea, a new generation of Korean conservative historians, the "New Right," found useful for its purpose the concepts and theories developed by Western leftist intellectuals to critique, among other things, the right-wing nationalist historiography in the West. By a feat of intellectual acrobatics, Korean conservatives, the New Right, appropriated leftist vocabulary and theories to attack Korean leftist

historiography. The work most celebrated by the conservative media, although not necessarily highly appraised among historians, is *Haebang chŏnhusaŭi chaeinsik* (A Reconsideration of Korean History before and after Liberation) edited by postcolonial scholars, Pak Chihyang and Kim Ch'öl, together with "New Right" scholars Kim Ilyŏng and I Yŏnghun. As the title indicated, the editors specifically singled out *Haebang chŏnhusaŭi insik* for their critique that the series promoted "the exclusionary and violent ideology of nationalism and people's revolution."<sup>46</sup> The tactical collaboration between the two groups did not last long as the New Right moved on with its own agenda. I Yŏnghun teamed up with other New Right scholars to advance his critique and even coined a neologism *panilchongjokchuŭi* (Anti-Japan Tribalism, 反日種族主義) to criticize Korean nationalism as a form of "tribalism."<sup>47</sup> Collectively the New Right's work perhaps represented another attempt to invert the intellectual terrain in favor of the power of the market and the state, the second time as farce, following the earlier one that was accompanied by tragic consequences for decades.<sup>48</sup>

### Global, Regional, and Local Times in Korean History

As the above brief survey of modern Korean historiography in South Korea shows, historians have grappled with queries of who to construe as the subject of history and how to narrate identity constitution. These questions have been intertwined with struggles to define and respond to the present as they ponder its relationship with the past and future. For at least the past century, the concept of the nation has animated intense debate—or what might be called history wars—as historians of various methodological and political orientations seek to summon, deny, or complicate the nation as the central subject of Korean history. Given the

momentous impacts that the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement has created in framing this war, therefore, it is fitting that its centennial prompted an explosion of publications and conferences that reflected on the movement 100 years ago and its legacies today.

One volume stands out for its approach that sought to critically examine how the Korean nation has dealt with the dual challenges of adapting to modernization and overcoming it. Edited by Baik Youngseo (白永瑞), a historian of Chinese modern history who was editor in chief of the quarterly *Changbi* for many years, *Paengnyŏnŭi pyŏnhyŏk* (100 Years of Revolutionary Change, 百年の变革) brought together leading Korean historians to reflect upon the significance of the March 1<sup>st</sup> "Revolution" from the vantage point of the recent "candlelight revolution" as well as to shed light on the contemporary changes as part of the century-old and still unfolding revolution. I Chiwŏn foregrounded the contemporary feminist movement, for example, by arguing in her contribution that Korean women emerged through their participation in the 1919 revolution as a new modern subject who embodied a positive conception of peace.<sup>49</sup> Chŏng Hŏnmok developed I's argument further, noting that the candlelight demonstrations were succeeded by a series of actions such as the "Me Too" movement that sought to bring about substantive changes in everyday life.<sup>50</sup> The contributors engaged in dialogue between past and present to interrogate modernity as manifested in the Korean peninsula. Also their dialogue was an exploration of how Korea was forcibly inducted to the global capitalist system, how her induction was mediated by the historical contingencies of East Asia, and what Koreans themselves made of these.

What follows are three chapters drawn from the volume. While all of them discuss the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement directly and the dual challenges of modernity, each highlights a different time: Cumings situates the event in

the context of global time; Baik in the context of regional time; and Paik in sui generis Korean time.

Cumings is no outsider to the history wars. His tome, *The Origins of the Korean War* Volume 1 published in 1981, fired one of the first shots at conservative nationalist historiography by “undermin[ing] the South Korean foundation myth” in his detailed narration of how Koreans’ postliberation revolutionary fervor was frustrated by the establishment of two separate regimes in the peninsula.<sup>51</sup> He showed how official nationalist historiography thrived in the crevice opened up between Japan’s regional order and the U.S. global order as he situated the origins of the Korean War in the global context in which the U.S. destroyed the Japanese Empire to reach the helm of the global capitalist system and carved up Korea in collaboration with such “nationalists” as Rhee Syngman and former pro-Japan collaborators. In the following article too, he situates the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement in global time by characterizing Korea as “a unique colony,” one of the last to be colonized (1910) but among the first to rebel in the immediate aftermath of World War I.

Baik is a leading Korean proponent of an East Asia discourse (東アジア論) who has sought to transcend national boundaries in twentieth century East Asian historiography without repeating the errors of Japan’s earlier East Asia History school. In this English version of his original Chinese publication, he analyzes commonalities and differences between the March First and May Fourth movements to raise questions about how China and Korea have simultaneously tackled “the dual challenge” of completing the modern state-building project and overcoming its shortcomings.<sup>52</sup> He highlights particularly the regional context as he notes how China, Korea, and Japan occupied different geopolitical spaces at the turn of the century and how differently they responded to “the dual

challenges” from their respective positions. Beginning with the March First and May Fourth movements of 1919, he seeks a way forward to a regional approach to East Asia over the next century.

Paik, commonly praised or criticized for promoting nationalist historiography, is known for the concept of the “division system” that he developed both to explain the politics of the peninsula and to accentuate the imperative to overcome it, just as the historian Kang Man’gil called the postliberation period the “age of division” in the same spirit.<sup>53</sup> While Paik points to the national division as a salient structural feature that shapes many aspects of life on the peninsula, he situates the division system not only in specific Korean characteristics but also in the global capitalist system in the era of American hegemony. Paik is, in other words, not so much animated by nationalist fever that Korea must be one because Koreans are one nation, as driven to analyze the world system that gave rise to the cold war in East Asia as well as multiple wars in the global South.<sup>54</sup> Reunification is, therefore, called for not just to complete a modern project to construct the nation-state, a project that was frustrated by the division in 1945, but also to overcome the division system that is inextricably intertwined with the world system from its birth. Given that even a reunified Korea cannot escape from the world system, the task of reunification is to overcome deficiencies of modernity in Korea and to contribute to transforming the world system into a more democratic and egalitarian one. In the following article, Paik notes that “the March 1<sup>st</sup>”<sup>55</sup> sought to construct a modern state as one of its ultimate goals and that the goal remains uncompleted until such unification is achieved. The candlelight revolution of 2016-17 must be seen, according to him, as part of the *longue durée* revolution in which Koreans have struggled to adapt to modernity and overcome it at the same time.

March 1<sup>st</sup> 1919 was a watershed moment in



Korean history when Koreans rose up to protest Japan's colonial rule and call for independence. What they thus started was a long process of revolution that began with efforts to break with the *ancien régime* of hereditary monarchy and the feudal system of the Korean nobility. Unlike France, they had to contend with the Empire of Japan and then U.S. hegemony on their path to establish a modern state that would represent and govern the nation. After 1945, while pursuing the modern project of nation-state building, they also adapted to the world system of capitalism although in opposite ways across the DMZ. While the southern half has successively moved from a periphery to a semi-periphery and possibly to the core in recent years, the northern half has chosen—or been

forced—to delink from the world capitalist system. With each half riddled with successes and failures of its own, their unification would face challenges of overcoming the deficiencies of each path and fully realizing the emancipatory potential that was explosively released 100 years ago and that has sustained the revolution thereafter. The dual task of adapting to and overcoming modernity is yet to be completed. To understand the history of modern Korean historiography is, therefore, to appreciate the formidable challenges posed by modernity and the indefatigable struggles made by the Korean people, including Korean historians.

This article is a part of **The Special Issue: A *Longue Durée* Revolution in Korea: March 1st, 1919 to the Candlelight Revolution in 2018**. Please see [the Table of Contents](#).

**Jae-Jung Suh** is professor of political science and international relations at the International Christian University in Tokyo and an *Asia-Pacific Journal* Contributing editor. His publications include *Origins of North Korea's Juche*, [Power, Interest and Identity in Military Alliances](#), ["From Singapore to Hanoi and Beyond: How \(Not\) to Build Peace between the U.S. and North Korea,"](#) and ["Missile Defense and the Security Dilemma: THAAD, Japan's 'Proactive Peace,' and the Arms Race in Northeast Asia"](#).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wells observes that the movement is regarded a milestone in Korean history because it remains the only large protest organized under Japan's rule and a rare case of unity that "at once stands as a reproach to disunity and serves as inspiration to overcome that disunity." Wells, Kenneth M. "Background to the March First Movement: Koreans in Japan, 1905—1919." *Korean Studies* 13 (1989): 5-21. Baldwin adds that "Koreans glimpse in the March First Movement the national unity and continued sacrifices required to establish Korea as a united and independent country." Frank Prentiss Baldwin, Jr. *The March First Movement: Korean challenge and Japanese response* (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1999), 223.

<sup>2</sup> Baldwin reports several estimates that range from a half million to two million demonstrators before he picks one million as "a tentative hypothesis." Baldwin, *op. cit.*, 231.

<sup>3</sup> Capitalist modernity presents many late capitalist developers such as South Korea, most of whom have experienced colonial and/or neocolonial exploitation with challenges of both adapting to capitalism and overcoming its contradictions. Paik Nak-chung, “The Double Project of Modernity,” *New Left Review* 95, September/October 2015, 65–66.

<sup>4</sup> They are selected from an anthology, *Paengnyŏnŭi pyŏnhyŏk: 3.1esŏ ch’otbulkkaji (One Hundred Years of Change 百年の变革: From 3/1 to the Candlelight)*, edited by Paek Yŏngsŏ (Baik Youngseo), (Seoul: Ch’angbi, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> This article discusses Korean modern historiography since the colonial period and limits itself to historical works produced in South Korea afterward.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Em, *The Great Enterprise: Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 102.

<sup>7</sup> 旗田巍, *日本人の朝鮮観* (東京: 勁草書房, 1969), pp. 34-5.

<sup>8</sup> Hayashi Taisuke. *Chōsen shi* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Hanshichi, Meiji 25 [1892]). For an overview of the dispute over Mimana, see Atkins, E. Taylor. *Primitive Selves: Koreana in the Japanese Colonial Gaze, 1910-1945*. 1st ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 114-117.

<sup>9</sup> Hayashi Taisuke, *Chōsen kinseishi*. (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Hanshichi, Meiji 33 [1900]).

<sup>10</sup> *時事新報*, August 13, Meiji 18 (1885). Quoted in 杵淵信雄, *福沢諭吉と朝鮮: 時事新報社説を中心に* (東京: 彩流社, 1997), pp. 124-5. See also 安川寿之輔, *福沢諭吉のアジア認識: 日本近代史像をとらえ返す* (東京: 高文研, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Shigeno founded a school of evidential history in Japan along the lines of Rankean historiography. *Kokushigan*, long used as a college textbook, left a long lasting impact on Japanese historical views. *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writings*, edited by Kelly Boyd (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1089-90.

<sup>12</sup> The *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* describe Susano-O as the son of the god Izanagi and the younger brother of Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun, and of Tsukuyomi, the god of the moon. Inahino Mikoto is one of Emperor Jinmu’s three older brothers, according to these records.

<sup>13</sup> In his own writing, Hoshino characterized Japan’s loss of Korea in ancient times as “most grievous and unfortunate” and “highly praised the military feat of arms” of Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea. Eiji Oguma, translated by David Askew, *A genealogy of 'Japanese' self-images* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002), 68. 小熊英二, *単一民族神話の起源: 「日本人」の自画像の系譜* (東京: 新曜社, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> 旗田, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Robinson, “National Identity and the Thought of Sin Ch'aeho: *Sadaejuŭi* and *Chuch'e* in History and Politics,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 5 (1984), 128.

<sup>17</sup> Sin collaborated with anarchists from China, Taiwan, India, and Vietnam to establish in 1927 the All East Asia Anarchist League which expanded in 1929 to the Eastern Anarchism League with representatives participating from not only China, Taiwan, and Korea, but also Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, etc. In his anarchist manifesto, *The Declaration of Joseon Revolution*, he advocated overthrowing not only Japanese rule but also the privileged classes. For his intellectual journey from nationalist historiography to anarchism and post-nationalism,

see Henry Em, "Nationalism, Post-Nationalism, and Shin Ch'ae-ho," *Korea Journal* Vol.39 No.2 (1999), 283-317.

<sup>18</sup> Ch'oe Namsŏn, for example, wrote extensively about the Tan'gun story not only to establish it as a symbol of Korea's indigenous cultural and historical heritage but also to "depict Korea as a central nation in world history, placed higher than Japan or China" (803). Chizuko A. Allen, "Northeast Asia Centered around Korea: Ch'oe Namsŏn's View of History," *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol 49, no. 4 (1990), 787-806.

<sup>19</sup> 朴殷植; 姜徳相訳注, *朝鮮独立運動の血史1* (電子ブック)b(平凡社, 1972, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> 李萬烈, "近現代韓日關係研究史—日本人の韓国史研究を中心に," *日韓歴史共同研究報告書* (第1期、2005年6月), 240.

<sup>21</sup> 朝鮮總督府 朝鮮史編修會, *朝鮮史編修會事業概要*, 1938.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Oguma, *op. cit.*, 81-90 & 95-109.

<sup>24</sup> 金澤庄三郎, *日鮮同祖論* (刀江書院, 1929).

<sup>25</sup> Inaba Iwakichi, who was representative of the new historians, vigorously promoted *mansenshi*, holding that the history of Korea must be understood as that of Manchuria-Korea, both subordinate to Japan. Also, he explicitly refuted the nationalist historiography that the Korean nation had maintained a distinctive pedigree that could be traced to Tan'gun, the core of Sin's nationalist historiography. 旗田, *op. cit.*, 41 and 180-198.

<sup>26</sup> I Manyŏl argues that the Society "ignored Koreans' unique historical stories or episodes that would highlight their independence or cultural richness" in order to justify Korea's colonization. 李萬烈, *op. cit.*, 242-246.

<sup>27</sup> He was a leading intellectual in the post-liberation South Korea until his death in 1989, having taught a next generation of historians as a history professor at Seoul National University until 1961 before serving as Minister of Education briefly and the President of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Korea for 21 years.

<sup>28</sup> He was known to have taken a skeptical look at Records of Ancient Matters and Chronicles of Japan, and while he did not endorse the *nissen dōsoren* that was used to legitimize the colonization of Korea, he participated in the *mansenshi* group developing another historiography that delegitimized Korean nationalist historiography and legitimated the colonization of Korea. Oguma, 300-301.

<sup>29</sup> 서중석, 김덕련, *서중석의 현대사 이야기 1* (서울: 오월의봄, 2015). John Merrill, *Korea: The Peninsular Origins of the War* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), 98-129.

<sup>30</sup> The Chindan Society, formed in 1934 to compete with Japan's official history writings in terms of academic rigor, included members with diverse inclinations such as nationalism and Marxism but, after Korea's liberation, became dominated by those who promoted positivism, "fair and accurate" history, as the colonial government had. 정병준. "식민지 관제 역사학과근대 학문으로서의 한국역사학의 태동 - 진단학회를 중심으로" *사회와역사* no.110(2016) : 105-162.

<sup>31</sup> Edwin G. Beal, K.T. Wu, and Key P. Yang, "China and Korea," *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1960), pp. 95-103. The original plan was to publish five volumes.

<sup>32</sup> Em, *op. cit.*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> De Ceuster, Koen. "The Nation Exorcised: The Historiography of Collaboration in South Korea." *Korean Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2001, 207-242.

<sup>34</sup> National History Compilation Committee started *Han'guksa*, an ambitious 23 volumes

history project in 1970 to, among other goals, establish “the correct national history” and highlight the nation as a historical subject that has developed according to its own internal dynamic. *Han’guksa 1* (Seoul: National History Compilation Committee, 1973). *Han’guksa* follows, more or less, the narrative strategy established by its predecessors. It, for example, treats the Tan’gun story as a myth that nonetheless offers an important window into the life of the pre-historic Korea (Volume 2) and highlights non-communist movements of the 1920s and 1930s as a national struggle for independence while minimizing labor strikes or armed struggles led by leftists (Volume 21 and 22).

<sup>35</sup> 林鍾国. *親日文学論* (서울: 평화출판사, 1966) [Im Chong’guk, *Ch’inilmunhangnon* (Seoul: P’yongwhach’ulp’ansa, 1966)]; 林鍾国 大村益夫. *親日文学論* (東京: 高麗書林, 1976). It took 13 years to sell the 1,500 copies of the first print with 1,000 of them sold in Japan, according to Hō Ch’angsōng, President of the publisher. It went into the second print after Park Chung-Hee’s assassination in 1979 and had 8 prints by 1993, reflecting the transition to democracy and the deepening of the critical discourses on the colonial period. 정운현, 임종국 *평전* (서울: 시대의 창, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> He was known for his uncompromising style to the point of including his own father in the list of pro-Japanese collaborators.

<sup>37</sup> 林鍾国, *日帝侵略과 親日派* (서울: 청사, 1982) [Im Chong’guk, *Ilchech’imnyakkwa ch’inilp’a* (Seoul: Ch’ ōngsa, 1982)].

<sup>38</sup> De Ceuster, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Kim and Chōng, both journalists, published and edited numerous books about collaborators and independence fighters. They were as prolific as Im. See, for example, the first volume of their co-edited three volume study on pro-Japanese collaborators, Kim Samung, Yi Hōnjong, and Chōng Unhyōn, *Ch’inilp’a: Kū in’gan’gwa nollli* (Seoul: Hangminsa, 1990). 김삼웅, 이현종, 정운현, *친일파: 그 인간과 논리* (서울: 학민사, 1990).

<sup>40</sup> *Haebang chonhusaui insik 1* (Seoul: Han’gilsa, 1979). While his chapter was omitted in a revised edition due to censorship until 1989 after Korea’s democratization, it inspired or at least was followed by an explosive growth of critical nationalist historiography in the 1980s. 정운현, 임종국 *평전* (서울: 시대의 창, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Historian Kang Man’gil coined the expression “the age of division” to highlight the national division as the most salient characteristic of Korean history in the post-liberation period. He made clear that the division system must be overcome and historians had the contemporary task to develop a historiography that would help overcome the division 姜萬吉, *分断時代の 歴史認識: 姜萬吉 史論集* (서울: 創作과批評社, 1978). He contributed the framing first chapter “A Direction for Understanding Postliberation History” to the second volume of *Haebang chōnhusaui insik*. *해방전후사의 인식 2* (서울: 한길사, 1985). Even though historian Henry Em characterizes Kang, together with Kim Yong-sōp, as “closet Marxists,” they were in a sense trying to resurrect the emancipatory potential of the nationalist historiography by highlighting the frustrated, unfinished state of the nationalist projects that sought to liberate the masses, *minjung*, from imperialism and oppression. Henry Em, “Historians and Historical Writing in Modern Korea,” *The Oxford History of Historical Writing Volume 5: Historical Writing since 1945*, ed. by Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 668.

<sup>42</sup> See Jae-Jung Suh, ed., *Truth and Reconciliation in South Korea: Between the Present and*



*Future of the Korean Wars*, (Armonk, NY: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>43</sup> AP reporters drew international attention to the civilian killings by U.S. soldiers during the Korean War although Korean survivors and reporters had written about them before. Lee Jai-eui, translated by Kap Su Seol and Nick Mamatas, *Kwangju Diary: Beyond Death, Beyond the Darkness of the Age* (Los Angeles, Calif.: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 1999).

Charles J. Hanley, Sang-hun Choe and Martha Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001). Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation, ed., *The Jeju 4.3 Mass Killing: Atrocity, Justice, and Reconciliation* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2018).

<sup>44</sup> Gi-Wook Shin, Michael Edson Robinson, eds., *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> *Chayujuŭiyŏndae* (Solidarity for Liberalism) was launched in 2004 to pursue, among other goals, a reform that focuses more on the construction of the future rather than the eradication of past injustice, rejecting revisiting the issues of pro-Japan collaboration or state violence committed during the authoritarian past. *Kyogwasŏp'orŏm* (Textbook Forum), another new right organization that some compared to *Tsukurukai* (Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform), published an alternative history textbook that consciously included positive contributions made by Japan's colonial rule (the modern civilization was learned) and the authoritarian rule (the military *coup d'état* of 1960 was called the "May 16<sup>th</sup> Revolution"), as part of an effort to correct what it viewed as a leftist bias in Korean history textbooks.

<sup>46</sup> 박지향, 김철, 김일영, 이영훈, 엮음, *해방 전후사의 재인식 1, 2* (서울: 책세상, 2006). It is notable that new right scholars made a tactical collaboration with postcolonial, and sometimes feminist, scholars as they criticized nationalism in Korea. It is almost as if Japan's neonationalists were misappropriating a postcolonial outlook to criticize the historical work that took a self-reflexive look at Japan's imperial past.

<sup>47</sup> 이영훈, 김낙년, 김용삼, 주익중, 정안기, 이우연, *반일 종족주의: 대한민국 위기의 근원* (서울: 미래사, 2019); 李榮薰編著 *反日種族主義: 日韓危機の根源* (文藝春秋, 2019). 이영훈, 김낙년, 차명수, 김용삼, 주익중, 정안기, 이우연, 박상후, *반일 종족주의와의 투쟁: 한국인의 중세적 환상과 광신을 격파한다* (서울: 미래사, 2020). 金東椿, 佐相洋子, and 李泳采, *韓國現代史의深層: 「反日種族主義」 といふ虚構を衝く* (梨の木舎, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> For an analysis of Korea's "new right", see Jamie Doucette & Se-Woong Koo, "Pursuing Post-democratisation: The Resilience of Politics by Public Security in Contemporary South Korea," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* (2016) 46:2, 198-221.

<sup>49</sup> The revolution, for example, brought about such fundamental changes in the male-female relationship that the Provisional Declaration declared "the people of the Korean Republic are all equal without male-female distinction or rich-poor class." I Chiwŏn, "3.1undong, Chendŏ, P'yŏnghwa [March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement, Gender, and Peace]," in *Paengnyŏnŭi pyŏnhyŏk*, 199-226.

<sup>50</sup> Chŏng Hŏnmok, "Miwanŭi, hokŭn chinhaeng chungin hyŏngmyŏng [Incomplete, or "in progress" Revolution]," in *Paengnyŏnŭi pyŏnhyŏk*, 354-375.

<sup>51</sup> De Ceuster, *op. cit.*, 218. Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War Volume 1* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

<sup>52</sup> 白永瑞, 「活力東亞的1919: 爲革命起點的“五四”與“三一”」 *探索與爭鳴* 2019年5期.

<sup>53</sup> See also Yu Chaekŏn, "Hanbando pundanch'ejeŭi tokt'ŭksŏnggwa 6.15shidae [The Uniqueness of the Korean Division System and the 6.15 Period]," in *Paengnyŏnŭi pyŏnhyŏk*,

325-353.

<sup>54</sup> He calls the event “the March 1<sup>st</sup>” without naming it a revolution or a movement in his attempt to remind readers of the imperative to continue the movement.