

Summary of “Truth about the Annexation of Korea after One Hundred Years Criticism over Japan’s Annexation of Korea Is Totally Ungrounded”

There is still, 100 years after annexation of Korea with Japan, palpable political and social tension between Korea and Japan. Despite the passage of time, Japanese as well as Koreans continue to have distorted historical views, not only of that era, but also of Korean circumstances long before annexation. The lack of historical accuracy has allowed both North and South Koreans to play upon the Japanese sense of remorse, which itself is historically groundless, over the annexation era.

Commentator Ko Bunyu (Huang Wenxing) points out that political unions between nation-states were and still are created worldwide for the purpose of fulfilling the economic and political needs of all citizens. Unions were common particularly during the early part of the twentieth century. Given the instability of neighboring China and militarily powerful Imperial Russia, annexation between Korea and Japan at the time made perfect strategic sense. Today’s Koreans, however, view the 36 years of “Imperial Rule” as an era of “misery”.

Lost to the Koreans however, is the fact that prior to annexation and prior to the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Korea was a Chinese vassal state. The Treaty freed Korea from its 1,000-year status as a vassal and opened the way for modernization of the Korean Peninsula. Prior to this, the Korean *liang pan* elite, who fashioned themselves after the ruling Chinese, exerted total social, economic and political control over Korea. Their grip was broken only after Korea’s independence was recognized in 1895. Furthermore, up until then the Korean people were denied by their own elite the right use *Hangul*, the native writing system.

Also lost to Koreans as well as to the Japanese, is that Japan introduced universal education, to bring Koreans into the modern era, and heavily invested in extensive construction projects. Japan also dramatically improved Korean agriculture, such that imported Korean rice threatened the market for domestic Japanese rice. In addition, Japan also improved the health of Koreans – with an increase in food supply and general health, the number of Koreans more than doubled during the era of “misery”. Who was paying for the modernization of Korea and for the well-being of Koreans? The Japanese were: up to 20% of Korea’s budget was funded by Japanese tax monies. On this point, there has been little if any gratitude expressed to the Japanese taxpayer from any Korean.

Mr. Ko describes in detail the seven commonly claimed “deprivations” that were heaped upon the Koreans during the “Imperial Japanese” era: loss of their king, sovereignty, human life, land, resources, national language and personal name. Rather, Mr. Ko points out that the Japanese restored Korean sovereignty, instituted a cultural revival and vastly improved infrastructure – setting the stage for the Republic of Korea’s spectacular industrial growth and cultural pride. A more fraternal relationship should exist between Koreans and Japanese and not the baseless disparaging and remorse that currently exists.