

Truth about the Annexation of Korea after One Hundred Years

—Criticism over Japan’s Annexation of Korea Is Totally Ungrounded—

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When it comes to this matter, both Japan and Korea eagerly bring up such terms as “invasion” and “colonial rule”. But these are not true. We should not be dazzled by the ingenious fabrication the Koreans have made with their marvelous talent to distort history and by opinions catering to such fabrication.

It was the Japanese people that were exploited

This year, 2010, marks the one hundredth anniversary of Japan’s annexation of Korea. If you divide the 100 years into two periods, namely, “36 years of Imperial Japanese rule” as the Koreans fondly refer to on one hand, and roughly 60 years after World War II on the other, and then compare the two, you will get completely opposite views. During the postwar years, Korean historians have developed or fabricated the so-called “36 years of Imperial Japan’s rule”, which refers to the period when the Office of the Governor-General of Korea, established after Japan’s annexation of Korea, was fully in charge of the Korean military and administration. The history claimed by the Koreans of these 36 years is utterly different from the actual one. I believe it is a major and proper task to ponder why such false history has come to be told as the truth on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Japanese-Korean annexation. But arguing with Korean historians over this subject poses extreme difficulties.

As I myself have often experienced, Korean scholars easily lose their tempers. When I tell them my views, they angrily argue back, hollering, “Look, you Taiwanese are sheer barbarians. How dare you meddle in matters between Japan and Korea? That’s none of your business,” and then abruptly leave the room. If you read what Korean scholars write, you’ll find entire pages filled with self-assertions without a shred of objective argument. Contradictions abound in the same book. Particularly, figures are just a mess and make no sense at all. I must say that Koreans are utterly indifferent to statistics.

It seems that such shortcomings were not newly acquired after the War. They were always like this long before the War. Lee Gwang-zhu, who is referred to as the Father of Korean literature, describes the Koreans as follows: “The Korean people are false, love only imagination and empty argument, are lazy and idle, lack mutual trust and loyalty, show no courage in challenging, are selfish without spirit of public service, lack solidarity power, and are extremely poor...”

What is most remarkable about Korean views of modern and contemporary history is that they attribute everything to bilateral conflicts—the perpetrators and the victims, or the exploiters and

the exploited. This is not a historical view, but a political one.

They assert that Korea was invaded by Japan, exploited under Imperial Japanese rule of 36 years and prevented from achieving national prosperity, and that therefore they rightly demand an apology and sincere self-reflection of Japan. However, apology and self-reflection should belong to the political arena, and not to history. Political matters should be dealt with among politicians. As long as historical facts are concerned, there is neither reflecting nor apologizing.

Moreover, speaking of the exploiters and the exploited, it was not the Koreans but rather the Japanese people who were exploited. The Office of the Governor-General of Korea annually spent 18% to 20% of the tax money which Japanese nationals paid, investing it in establishing Korean infrastructure. While the Taiwanese achieved their own economic self-reliance in ten years, Koreans remained dependent on financial support from Japan for 36 years during the Governor-General's administration. It is a vital fact that the Japanese were the exploited.

The "36 years of Imperial Japan's rule" is an ingenious invention of the Koreans who are experts at distorting history. Like the Korean-style dramas that are popular in Japan, it is another Korean "hit product". The Korean dramas are now beginning to become a phenomenon of the past. Likewise, the Japanese people should be well aware that the theory of the "36 year-long Imperial Japanese rule" has by now become unfashionable.

Annexation was a trend of the time

Some argue that Japan invaded the Korean Peninsula. In the first place, the term "invasion" had by no means shed its negative connotation from the time of Napoleon up until the colonialist and imperialist period. Napoleon himself said boastfully, "I am greatly fond of invasions." At the time, the term merely implied a positive value, indicating something of an enterprising spirit.

Even "colonies" had a positive meaning. The colonialist idea was an ideal which humans sought after, just as the Marxist did in the twentieth century. Colonies were a dream and symbol of pride at the time. Regardless of being right or wrong, this was the standard way of thinking at that time.

Some say that from the Comintern era onward, the term "invasion" began to have a negative implication. Influenced by the Marxist idea of equality, terms like invasion and colony came to bear negative and wrong images.

It is a known fact that the standard of values changes as time passes. This is a historical fact.

Both Korean countries, the ROK and DPRK, must bear in mind that one should not interpret past values and the esprit of the time according to current standards and condemn them as totally wrong.

It was also a natural trend for multiple countries to form an "annexed state" as a way of

modern nation, not only in the case of Japan with Korea, but world-wide, such as the French Empire and the French Republic, Norway and Sweden and Norway and Denmark in the past. Like Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, almost all of the European countries assumed a form of annexed states. The British Empire was a united kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

In the sixties, after World War II, Egypt and Syria, Jordan and Iraq, and Singapore and Malaysia respectively established annexed states, though only briefly. Other examples further in the past were the Chinese Qing and the Russian Empire.

If one views history from a global standpoint of how modern nations emerged and developed in those days, and also based on the values of the time, one will quickly realize that it is not right to treat Japan as a unique exception. Naturally, Ryukyu, Taiwan and Korea became a modern nation state in the form of Imperial Japan.

Exceptionally, among the Korean people, the privileged class called *liang pan* eagerly sought to assume Chinese nationality. The *liang pan* Koreans wanted to be great nationals or citizens of a great nation. However, no matter how hard Korean *liang pan* studied Chinese classics such as *The Analects of Confucius* and *Four Books and Five Canons*, they were never allowed to be Chinese.

Then, after the Sino-Japanese War, as Japan became a powerful nation, not a few Koreans aspired to be united with Japan. Though proud *liang pan* Koreans looked down on Japan as a tiny country, at that time not all the Koreans were anti-Japanese and there were those who thought it was a good idea to unite with Japan and to become a big nation.

Korea was a subject state of the lowest rank

Chinese rule over Korea had been utterly devastating. However loudly contemporary Koreans assert that they had never been a subjugated state, the fact is that they were in the lowest status among subject states, with even the Ryukyus ranking higher than Korea. While an envoy from Ryukyu was allowed to enter the Chinese court aboard a palanquin, a Korean envoy was prohibited from riding one. The Koreans were not allowed to use their own name of the era and obliged to use the Chinese era name.

Moreover, according to the rules of “seven shrines for kings and five shrines for local lords” regulated in the Chinese book *Lichi*, they were not able to enshrine their own deity. Official diplomatic messages sent to the Qing Emperor had to follow the most strict format and terminology, and a slip of the pen, even a single letter, was unsparingly punished. A Korean king outraged the Chinese Emperor for his conduct, only to be deprived of the right to mint their own coins.

They were also obliged to report on Japanese situations and to ask for permission when

sending messengers to Japan. When they dedicated candlesticks to the Toshogu Shrine in Nikko, they had to acquire permission to do so from China. Such historical facts are countless. Korea had no choice but to humbly accept such humiliating conditions.

Lee Dynasty Korea designated the doctrines of Chu-tzu as their national religion in order to show loyalty to Great China, and not only did they enshrine Confucius as the holiest deity, but also enshrined Tai-zu of the Ming Dynasty, who had granted Lee Sung-kye the name of country, Emperor Shen-zong of Ming, Yi-zong, and Li Bei of Shuhan. Finally, figures such as Zhang Fei, Zhuge Kung-Ming and Guanyu, who appear in the Chinese novel of *Sanguozhi Yanyi* or *Popular History of Three Countries*, became enshrined. Thus, the Great Chinese had come to be worshipped as deities in the Korean Peninsula.

In the postwar years, however, Korean scholars assert that originally Korea had been an independent country, and had never been a Chinese subject state. If Korea had never been a subject state, I wonder how one would explain why it was clearly stated that Korea shall be independent in the first article of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which was concluded after the Sino-Japanese War.

Korean historians are so often inclined to distort and change historical sources like treaty articles in order to make their points and then loudly quote such distorted facts.

Moreover, postwar Korean scholars suffer a major shortcoming: they cannot read articles written in Chinese. They have hardly read any of the China-related books I often quote from, and they are simply dumbfounded to read my quotes.

For example, when a battle called “Bingzi Huluan” broke out in 1636 in Korea in which the Qing, after destroying the Ming Dynasty, breached into Korea and conquered it, more than five hundred thousand Koreans or about half the Korean population were forcibly taken by Manchurians and Mongols of the Qing Army to the then city of Shengjing(Shenyang), where they were traded at slave markets. Sources and records of the incident remain available now, but they don’t have the ability to read and understand them. They cannot translate them into Korean, either. They cannot reveal everything that had happened without deleting parts that were inconvenient to the Koreans for fear that if all were told as it was, they might be accused as traitors.

Let daylight into those sources and change the paradigm set up in Korea after the War, otherwise it is virtually impossible to discuss the one-hundredth anniversary of Japanese-Korean union fairly with Korean people.

Set free from the one-thousand-year-long subject state status

It was not until the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which clearly stated that Korea shall be independent, that Korea became a modern nation, named the Empire of Korea. But for the

Sino-Japanese War, or had Japan been defeated in the war, Korea would have had no choice but to become just another Chinese province called “Korea”. In any case, neither China nor Korea had a clear concept of a “modern nation” at that time.

Ever since the period of the united Sinra (Silla) Dynasty in the seventh century, Korea had been a one-thousand-year-old tributary of China. The Chinese concept was that China reigned at the center, surrounded by barbaric foreigners. Those barbaric foreign countries paid tribute to the Chinese emperor and were bestowed peerage in exchange and allowed to use the Chinese name of the year or calendar, gladly accepting Chinese reign. This was what is called chronological ruling by time. During the Korean Lee Dynasty, their country name and throne were granted by China (Ming). This is Chinese “ruling over everything under the Heavens”. The idea is not just of a state, but of everything under the Heavens. It was not until the dawn of the twentieth century that the Chinese began to think of what a “state” was for the first time. Not as a ruler of everything under the Heavens, but as a state, they finally came to ponder over how they should fare.

And Korea was finally liberated from the status of a thousand-year-long subject state by the Treaty of Shimonoseki, and with King Kaotsung being enthroned as Emperor of the Korean Empire, Korea became independent. That is why it might not be too much to say that Korea was made a nation because of Japan.

In spite of all of these events, seeming to have totally forgotten that they had accepted for so long Chinese tributary status almost with pride, the Koreans began to repeatedly claim that throughout their entire history, Korea lost its independence only briefly for 36 years under the Imperial Japanese rule after the annexation of Korea by Japan. They continue to say, “Before that short period of time, we had always been an independent sovereign state.” And they ardently keep speaking ill of Japanese reign.

And this is not all. They referred to the seven benefits they had received from Japan as the “seven deprivations”, and keep demanding an apology and compensation from Japan. The 36 years of the Imperial Japanese rule was not a tragedy unprecedented in history as they have always claimed, but they were the beginnings of happy days for the Korean people when they were finally freed from the sufferings and hardships during the Lee Dynasty and were able to enjoy a rich and modern life. And without doubt, all that was made possible by the Japanese efforts.

Far from “seven deprivations”, Japan gave “seven benefits”

Koreans claim that Japan deprived Korea of seven vital things and list the seven deprivations as follows: 1. king, 2. sovereignty, 3. human life, 4. land, 5. resources, 6. national language and 7. personal name.

I would mention that these are yet another example of Korean originality, as they often claim that “white is black”. On the contrary, these were things that Japan gave to Korea. Far from seven “deprivations,” they were rather seven offerings or favors and Korea should feel grateful toward Japan, rather than demanding an apology. I will go over them one by one and explain why this is so, using historical facts.

1. Japan saved the Korean king

As previously mentioned, Japan and Korea established an annexed state. That was Imperial Japan. Each had a head of state, Emperor Meiji, and Korean King Kaotsung, but when it came to deciding who should represent the country as the head of state, it would have been a natural judgment that Emperor should be the one.

Some may argue that it was not an equal annexation on this ground. It is historical common sense that an annexed state cannot be founded on a totally equal basis.

In the first place, Kaotsung was enthroned king of an independent state according to the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Since its earliest history, this was the first time that Korea called itself “empire,” but it was not equipped with financial and fiscal systems suitable for a modern state, and there was no clear distinction between the Imperial Household expenses and state finances. The Imperial Household Agency went bankrupt and the country was on the verge of national bankruptcy. There were no efficient Korean personnel available for badly needed financial reforms. That is, Korea was not sufficiently organized as a state should be.

It was Japan that saved Korea from national crisis.

The Office of the Governor-General of Korea expelled certain do-nothing officials inside the Imperial Court, which had become the den of corrupt politics carried over from the Lee Dynasty, and reconstructed the financial system, appropriating ¥1.5 million yen as an annual budget to the King and Royal Family. The status of the King during the Lee Dynasty was below those of generals and ministers from Mongolia and Tibet, and even lower than governor-general, who was equivalent to the local military head of each province. Nevertheless, Kaotsung was given the title of His Majesty the King Emeritus Yi of Korea (Tokujukyu Ritaio) and got the same honorable treatment as the Japanese Imperial Family did. Competent high officials and those with great service achievements joined the nobility. This was a far cry from the fearful predicament under the violent rule of Yuan Shi-kai, who was sent to Korea by the Qing Emperor during the period when Korea was a tributary of the Qing. The King and these officials could have been expelled or even destroyed under other circumstances, but they were lucky enough to have been entitled to such honorable treatment.

2. Sovereignty was established

Thanks to the annexation with Japan, Korea was freed from the status of being a subject state of the Qing, and as a modern nation state, was granted sovereignty for the first time in its entire history. During the era of the Lee Dynasty, state and diplomatic affairs of Korea were totally decided by the Qing government. No nation recognized sovereignty of Lee Dynasty Korea. Sovereignty did not exist in the first place, and clearly nobody will deny that the claim of “deprived sovereignty” is a groundless, random remark.

3. Japan saved many Korean lives

It is a sheer lie that Koreans were deprived of their lives by Japan. Macroscopically looking at the history of the Korean Peninsula, the major causes that claimed Korean lives have been perpetual famines and epidemics. It is said that Seoul had been the filthiest city in the world before “Imperial Japanese rule”. Japan made great efforts to establish and promote a modern medical system in Korea, and greatly contributed to securing longer and better lives and promoting prosperity over the peninsula by improving living conditions and the environment along with exterminating epidemics. With the help of successful agricultural reform, during the 36 years of the “Imperial Japanese” rule, remarkably, the Korean population doubled.

In 1753 during the Lee Dynasty, the population was 7.3 million. A hundred years later, in 1850, it was 7.5 million, a slight increase of 200,000. After the Russo-Japanese War, Korea became a protected nation of Japan and in 1906, its population was 9.8 million. In 1912, after the union of Korea with Japan, it jumped to 14 million and kept increasing until it reached 18.66 million in 1926 and 24 million in 1938.

Let’s look at the case of the British Empire, where the population of Ireland plummeted to one-third after it was united with England. In marked contrast, Korea experienced a population upsurge of 2.4-fold. If Imperial Japan had exploited Korea, sending people into the miserable depths of poverty or even committed massacres, as the Koreans often assert, how, then, would they possibly explain these dramatic population increases?

4. Their land was made richer

A story the Koreans are fond of often telling goes like this: A Japanese went up to the top of a hill and, overlooking the land below, he pointed to good fields here and there, and instantly made them his property. This story should actually apply to the Korean *liang pan* who used to seize other people’s land during their heydays. Usurping other men’s land has been a Korean specialty.

Immediately following the War, in Japan, where the land was totally scorched, Koreans were “third party nationals,” neither occupied nor occupiers, and took possession of land after land in big cities in the midst of the chaos. More recently, however, very few Japanese seem to

remember this. I should point out that the same thing is now happening around the island of Takeshima.

As I mentioned before, the entire Korean Peninsula suffered from chronic famines. On the other hand, when the Japanese started to reclaim barren land which Korean farmers had up to now totally neglected, they turned deserted, remote land into rich fields, making Korea a fertile agricultural country.

The Office of the Governor-General of Korea conducted a large-scale land survey in order to establish land management and tax systems, and also implemented several reforms. Korean farmers had been so thoroughly discouraged by dire exploitation from the Korean *liang pan* and merciless officials that it became an urgent task to awaken their self-motivation. Emphasizing the three slogans “love labor, become self-independent, and express gratitude,” they made ardent efforts to revitalize farming villages.

As part of agricultural policy and land reform, farmers were well supported with grants to encourage farming, and the quality and quantity of farm products were stabilized. As a result, Korea succeeded in doubling its rice crop, an unprecedented level.

Up until that time, the rice crop in the Peninsula had never exceeded 10 million *Koku* (one *Koku* is roughly equivalent to 180 liters), but in the 1930s, twenty years after the union of Japan and Korea, the rice crop consistently exceeded 20 million *Koku*. The amount of Korean rice exported to Japan was 110,000 *Koku* at the time of the annexation, but 18 years later, in 1928, the amount reached 7.06 million *Koku*. From then on, the amount of rice export continued to increase, until the amount threatened domestic Japanese rice farmers.

Thanks to those efforts made by Japan, Korea became far richer with a population increase of 2.4-fold. How would it have been possible to raise more children and support a family if they had been poverty-stricken and very little food was available?

5. Japan invested in developing resources

At the time, the Office of the Governor-General of Korea faced a devastated forestry all over the Peninsula. Most of the mountains were bare, without any trees. Koreans attribute this barrenness to the random lumbering and depletion of their forest resources over a period of 36 years by Imperial Japan. You will find that this is a sheer lie if you read the travel account entitled *Traveling in Korea* by P. M. Jetrochevich, who traveled on foot across the Peninsula in 1885. He writes: “Everywhere I went, land was covered with bare mountains and red earth. Scarce grass was cut to burn for fuel. Mountains were bald and hardly any clay land existed. No trees were found and they use straw and grass for fuel.”

Jetrochevich described the scenery around ten years prior to the start of the Sino-Japanese War. How, then, would it have been possible to randomly lumber and usurp forestry resources

when the land was already barren?

The Office of the Governor-General of Korea set up a forestry agency and started reforestation and recovering devastated forests and fields. Effective policy measures, one after another, were implemented: a decree to protect forests, the care of saplings, subsidies to privately-owned forests, the elimination of insects and diseases that caused injury and damage, a subsidy to forestry unions, the establishment of forestry laboratories, increase of local official staff and so on.

In order to promote a love of forests among the Korean people, planting festivals were held every year, and when launching forest and river conservation projects, the old abusive practice of forced labor, which had been exercised since the era of the Lee Dynasty, was abolished, and Korean workers were paid daily. This was an unprecedented breakthrough in the history of the Peninsula, and, thus, liberation from slave status imposed during the Lee Dynasty was virtually accomplished.

Huge hydroelectric plants, with capacities of 170,000-kilowatts and 200,000-kilowatts, which were not to be found even in Japan proper, were constructed. This was because the amount of local coal to generate electricity was insufficient. The Peninsula's mineral resources were not as abundant as had been expected. Businesses that mined mineral resources suffered huge deficits and the Japanese government was obliged to spend a large sum of money to subsidize them. Thus, development of mineral resources was entirely financed with Japanese tax money.

Nevertheless, due to urgent military needs following the out-break of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Office of the Governor-General of Korea issued a "decree for the expansion of Korean mineral production" and mineral production sharply increased. Consequently, Korean industry made rapid progress. Infrastructure for modernization was completed at exceptionally high speed.

Japan constructed railroads, roads, ports, and airports on the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan in a surprisingly fast and efficient manner. In as little as "36 years", Korea possessed the second finest transportation infrastructure, after Japan, in Asia.

The annual budget for Korea increased sevenfold from ¥46 million to ¥3.1 billion over a period of 36 years. Eighty percent of the total was invested in railroads, roads, ports, salterns, coal mines, tobacco production, erosion arrestment, river conservation, electrical power development, land improvement, civil engineering works, mining, telegraph and telephone facilities, private railroad acquisition and so forth. In other words, the money was spent as an investment in industrial development of the Korean Peninsula. Financial assistance from the Japanese government covered grants to encourage steel and coal production, and the Korean Peninsula was totally dependent on Japan for its growth.

General financial support reached the total of some ¥430 million by 1944. Ever since the

Office of the Governor-General of Korea was established, the Japanese central government continued to supplement 15% to 20% of Korea's budget.

These figures clearly show that Japan did help Korea, quite contrary to the Korean accusation that Japan depleted the resources of the Peninsula.

6. Japan revived the Korean national language

Far from depriving the Koreans of their national language, Japan spread the *Hankul* alphabet, protected the unique Korean culture and introduced education for modernization. It was in fact the Koreans and *Chosuns* that discarded their own mother tongue.

The unique *Hankul* alphabet was finally invented in Korea by Shizong (who reigned from 1418 to 1450) of the Lee Dynasty, about five hundred years behind the other East Asian countries. But the newly-born *Hankul* alphabet was harshly suppressed by the Korean *liang pan*, who regarded Chinese characters as the only and best method of communication. One of those opposed *Hankul*, Choe Man-li, protested, "Japan, Mongolia and Tibet have their own alphabet because they are barbaric countries. If we were to have our own letters, we would certainly be reduced to barbarians like them. Furthermore, inventing a new alphabet would mean a rebellion against our sovereign state of China and induce their fearful fury."

Certainly, it was absolutely necessary to acquire permission from China to use a new alphabet in Korea. Partly because of this difficulty, during the ensuing Zhongzong Era, the *Hankul* alphabet was totally abolished, and it was not until the period of the "36 years of Imperial Japan", nearly 400 years later, at the close of the 19th century, that the *Hankul* alphabet came into being again.

Japan implemented policy after policy to realize the urgently-needed modernization of Korea, and teaching the mother tongue was among the most important of measures. Fukuzawa Yukichi proposed a mixed sentence system using both Chinese and *Hankul* characters. After the annexation of Japan and Korea in 1910, the newly-devised alphabet was introduced into the educational curriculum and taught to the entire population -- finally it came into popular usage.

In the first place, Korea was behind the other East Asian countries in creating its own alphabet, and what is more, the Korean people themselves discarded their new creation in flattery and awe of Qing China. It was only after Korea became independent as the Republic of Korea that Korea encouraged its people to study Korean classics, literature and the *Hankul* alphabet, in order to separate themselves from Qing Chinese culture and to obtain its own national identity.

Moreover, it was Japanese scholars, led by Drs. Kanazawa Shozaburo and Ogura Shimpei, who scientifically systematized the description of the modern Korean language and perfected it as a language.

“That is not true,” some may refute. “We were forced to use the Japanese language.” However, as Japan and Korea formed a union, it would not have been unreasonable to designate Japanese as the official national language. Conflicts may sometimes occur when deciding which language to adopt as the official national language in multi-lingual nations. But it is necessary to encourage the use of a common national language when establishing a modern state.

Though the English people prohibited the Irish language, the Office of the Governor-General of Korea never tried to eliminate the Korean language. In the Korean community during the Imperial Japanese Era, the spread of the Japanese language didn’t reach 20% of the population, which is extremely low, compared with the 70% spread in Taiwan at the time of Japanese control. Moreover, those 20% Japanese-speaking Koreans were bilingual, in that they also spoke Korean, and Japanese children in Korea also learned Korean in elementary, junior and senior high schools. Japanese officials, too, were encouraged to learn Korean. All these facts clearly indicate that it was an utterly false claim that Japan tried to eliminate Korean.

We now know that the Manchurians, who are a minor ethnic group in China, have been totally deprived of their language and alphabet. On the contrary, how lucky the Koreans should feel, who have learned modern culture through the Japanese language and at the same time nurtured their own ethnic culture with the *Hankul* alphabet!

7. The entire Korean population was given names

The Koreans blame the Japanese for depriving them of their names by instituting the act of “creating surnames and changing personal names”. In sympathy with this Korean accusation, some “conscientious” Japanese bark up the wrong tree. So what was the actual situation? It is estimated that more than 80% of all the Korean census-registered families changed to Japanese-style surnames and about 10% of the entire population bore Japanese personal names.

However, the practice of creating and altering names was done upon self-registration, and it was originally regarded as a kind of privilege. This was because the practice meant that the ruled class could be on equal terms with the class that ruled, namely, the Japanese people. The Japanese at that time attracted much admiration among those Asian peoples under colonial rule. That is why more than 80% of the population in Korea applied for name-changing.

History of the creation and alteration of names

After all, this was not the first time that the Koreans willingly took to changing their names. When Sinra united the Peninsula with the help of the Tang Empire, the Koreans were given Han Chinese surnames. Hitherto, the Koreans bore multi-lettered surnames, but they unflinchingly abandoned their time-honored ancestral surnames to acquire one-lettered surnames in the style

of the Tangs. At first, the practice of name changing was limited to the aristocratic class, but gradually, out of admiration toward the Chinese, common Koreans also obtained Chinese-style surnames.

Afterwards, when the Mongols established Yuan and controlled the Peninsula, the aristocrats of the Koryo Dynasty took to using Mongolian surnames as a form of flattery. However, when Yuan was destroyed by Ming, they quickly abandoned the Mongolian surnames and resumed the Han names in no time.

The policy of following the strong, which is a most characteristically Korean trait, once again made them change their target of admiration from China to Japan. It was as simple as that.

Of course, there were those who were displeased with the name changing, but they were never punished for disagreement. As popularly known by the work of the late Mr. Yamamoto Shichihei, some Imperial Japanese Army personnel like Lieutenant General Hong Si-yi did not change their names until the end.

In a way, the changing of surnames and personal names during the Imperial Japanese Era brought Koreans a fundamental benefit, to be regarded as being free from slavery.

At that time, more than half of the Korean population were an outcaste, including the humbly ruled servant class. Figures may vary according to statistics, but in general, about 40% of the population consisted of the privileged *liang pan* class, middle-class and ordinary class. The remaining 60% were of the outcaste. It was a social structure very similar to the caste system of India. The outcaste was further divided into servants, actors, doctors, maiden shrine servants, laborers, etc. In any case, they had no surnames.

When Korea became a modern state by the annexation with Japan, on the basis that all people are equal, they were allowed to have surnames. Even women came to have names. In Korea, women had no social status, and they had never been listed by name in pedigrees. After the Chinese manner, the *liang pan* women were referred to only as Lee-shi or Chang-shi, adding shi (surname) to the surname of the family to which they were born.

Giving surnames and personal names to women and the lowly in the name of equality for all, Japan liberated the underprivileged from discrimination.

By now, readers may clearly see how benevolent Japan had been toward Korea, far from imposing “seven deprivations”. That’s why I would rather call them “seven favors” or “seven offerings”. Contrary to the frequent Korean accusation of colonial confiscation, the management of the Peninsula by the Office of the Governor-General of Korea was favorably conducted, financially supporting Korea with Japanese tax money. They never committed oppression, exploitation or confiscation, but tried their best to help Korea become a mature modern nation, generously spending the Japanese people’s money in the process.

Nevertheless, though Korea could have never thanked Japan enough, completely reversing

the seven favors into “seven deprivations”, they loudly demand an apology and compensation from Japan. Not only were they totally dependent on precious tax money that the Japanese people paid, but they also cunningly confiscated all the facilities which had been constructed with Japanese capital and stole the Japanese people’s assets when Japan was finally defeated in the War. Furthermore, even after the joint communiqué issued by Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1998, Korea accepted \$3 billion in aid from Japan. And they are still asking for more and more, almost in the form of blackmail. How can such unreasonable demands be tolerated?

Japan constantly and repeatedly apologizes

Korea’s penchant for depending on other countries for money to maintain its national economy has never changed a bit even today, more than half a century after the War ended. From now on, it may be possible for Korea to get along on its own, for the foundation of independence was made secure during the 36 years of the era of “Imperial Japan”, and also through various means of assistance from Japan and the United States in postwar years. On its own, Korea could not have become a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Korea had been deeply in debt, and totally dependent on the United States and Japan for everything, which was exactly how Korea became a member of the OECD. In fact, though the Taiwanese economy had been more robust and had seen much better days than the Korean economy, Taiwan was not allowed to join the OECD.

In spite of all of the help Japan has rendered to Korea, Japan can never stand up to Korea and only repeats unnecessary apologies. Not only the Koreans but also the Japanese themselves have forgotten the seven favors done to Korea. I cannot help but wonder why this is.

French descriptive geographer Jacque Puzeau-Masabuo writes in his book *New Korean Situation*: “In the eyes of the present-day Koreans, the negative side of the Japanese colonial days looms very large as undeniable breach of the tradition and independence, but on other hand the foundation for remarkably growing the national economy of North and South Korea was established during this very period, and nobody can deny the great fruits borne consequently. In nearly forty years Japan rigorously changed the poor agricultural country, exposed to constant natural threats and without any effective means and equipment of engineering, into a well-balanced economic nation boasting scientific agriculture, various industries, and prosperous trades.”

If a Japanese were to write something like this, he would be instantly bashed so badly that he could never recover from the disgrace heaped upon him by furious Koreans (and many Japanese as well, I’m sure), who will hysterically demand that he should have the right historical perspective.

As Masabuo is a Frenchman, he had no need to falter and truckle to the anti-Japanese and

counter-Japanese views. Free from restraint, he discusses the 36 years of the Imperial Japanese Era with an extremely cool and objective perspective. Only a third party person can do this, whereas neither Japanese nor Koreans can.

The most important point is that we have to make a clear distinction between the Korean historical concept of the 60 postwar years and the actual Korean situation during the prewar years. As to the Chinese historical way of thinking, the Japanese academic historian is so stubbornly stuck with the fixed idea that it will take a long time to reconsider a fixed concept. In the case of Korea, however, the current historical view was only recently formed after the War, barely sixty-years old, and so it will be easier to make corrections. Japanese scholars should put aside such odd glasses that regard the left wing as equivalent to having a good conscience and review history from the bottom to gain the correct understanding.

Japan did only good things

From the Edo period to the prewar years, Japanese study of Korea had been more advanced than in Korea itself, let alone Chinese study of Korea. Up until the end of the Lee Dynasty, there were some scholars who commented on the ancient historic accounts and officials who recorded old history, but there were no modern historians to objectively examine and study history including those previously recorded. Instead, the Japanese took on the full scope of the task. In this respect alone, the Koreans should pay due appreciation and gratitude toward the Japanese who had greatly contributed to preserving Korean history on their behalf.

Korea-related historical sources collected and compiled by former Japanese-Korean friendship societies surpassed ten thousand pieces, all of which had been donated to the Far East Study Center of Gakushuin University. Though most of the Korea-related sources stored at various universities were destroyed by fires during the Great Kanto Earthquake, Waseda University Library still holds some seven thousand materials. As Japan has done a great job in the field of Korean historical study, it is truly necessary to compare the two historical concepts, namely, the prewar one and the postwar one, the latter being arbitrarily distorted by Korea.

Daunted, perhaps, by pressure from Korea, the established scholars have never come up with historical contentions that Japan should assert. On this occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the annexation of Japan and Korea, I would certainly hope for the advent of sharp and challenging young scholars.

The “36 Imperial Japanese years” has deprived the Koreans of nothing whatsoever. I can confidently say that the capital, technology and manpower that Japan had invested during the management of the Peninsula made it possible for Korea to become modernized, which otherwise would have been absolutely impossible, and that consequently Japan set Korea free from the one-thousand-year-long spell of being a tributary.

Let us reexamine history from the standpoint of the Japanese, apart from the complex politics. The Japanese people have done nothing wrong to the Koreans. Instead of thinking that Japan did some good things, we should certainly think that Japan did entirely good things.

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