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The Meanings of America in Modern Korea:

A Study of Korean Diplomatic, Cultural, and Intellectual Engagements with America,

1852-1945

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Hanmee Na Kim

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Meanings of America in Modern Korea:  
A Study of Korean Diplomatic, Cultural, and Intellectual Engagements with America,  
1852-1945

by

Hanmee Na Kim

Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor John B. Duncan, Chair

The scholarship on the history of Korea-U.S. interactions (1866 onwards) remains limited from 1905 to 1945. As the Japanese protectorate ended Korea-U.S. diplomatic relations, scholars have often focused on the interactions up to 1905 and after 1945. In doing so, the literature occluded non-diplomatic interactions that continued throughout the colonial period and their significance to post-1945 relations and to Korean society generally. This dissertation redresses this issue by exploring pre-1945 Korean diplomatic, cultural, and intellectual engagements with America—with a focus on “Americanism” during the colonial period—and their significance to Korean society.

This dissertation argues that these engagements with America were significant to Korea’s modern experience in two ways. First, within the contexts of colonialism and the

global rise of the U.S. and “Americanism” post-WWI, a significant group of Koreans articulated America as the source of political and cultural solutions for Korea’s colonial situation and upheld American institutions and developments as models. This articulation of America, in turn, had direct links to the adoption of American models in certain reform and development efforts in South Korea. Second, America became a significant vantage point for the contradictions of capitalist modernity and a specific reference point for articulating Korea’s particularity.

This study asserts global dynamics as an inseparable dimension to Korea’s engagement with America. The Koreans’ discourse on America is explored in relation to the post-WWI rise of the U.S. and Europe’s and East Asia’s discourse on America in the 1920s and 1930s. This project’s contributions are two-fold. First, by revealing the often overlooked significances of America in Korea during the colonial period, the project offers a way to historicize and better understand the discourses and patterns that govern post-1945 relations. Second, it highlights the temporal simultaneity and resemblances in Americanism in Korea with that of other parts of the world, and roots them in capitalism that allowed for forms of Americanisms to rise globally at the same time and make them gain currency in each region. Through this global framework and emphasis in the roots in capitalism, the project rethinks the tendency in Korean historiography to privilege Japanese mediation of Western civilization when examining the origins of modern Korea.

The dissertation of Hanmee Na Kim is approved.

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2014

This dissertation is dedicated to

My mother for praying for me,

My father for inspiring me,

and most of all,

Sam, without whose endless encouragement and support,

this dissertation would not be possible.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In 1965, the United States Information Agency conducted a survey in which it asked 500 residents of Seoul to name their favorite nation. 68% of those surveyed replied that it was the United States.<sup>1</sup> Various opinion polls throughout the 1960s and 1970s produced similar results and through the high percentage, revealed that the United States continued to figure prominently in the minds of South Koreans. Perhaps what is of greater significance is the manner in which America loomed in the imagination of South Korean society. A survey conducted in 1973 showed that the majority of those surveyed liked the United States because of the images they had of the United States—images that echoed exactly those circulated during the colonial period and as early as the late-nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, only 13% said that they liked the United States for its military and economic aid, which suggests that the contemporary presence of the United States in South Korea was not the most important factor for those surveyed, but rather, long-standing historical images and understandings of America.<sup>3</sup>

The question then arises, how did these images of America that held greater significance than the contemporary American presence in Korea come into being? The prevalence of these enduring notions of America in post-1945 Korea indicates the need to

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<sup>1</sup> Yŏnjin Kim, “‘Ch’inmi’ wa ‘panmi’ sai esŏ: Han’guk ŏllon ūl t’onghae pon Miguk ūi imiji wa Migukhwa tamron,” in *Americanization: Haebang ihu Hanguk esŏ ūi Migukhwa*, eds. Tŏkko Kim and Yongjin Wŏn (Seoul: Purŭn Yŏksa, 2008), 258-259.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 409.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Some examples of the images of America cited in the survey that were circulated pre-1945 as well include: America as the land of opportunity, democratic nation where justice and freedom are realized in addition to the land of science and technology, sexual immorality, egotism, insincere friendship, and racial discrimination against African-Americans within South Korean society post-1945.

study pre-1945 Korean engagements with America and the significance of these exchanges. However, this question has not been adequately explored in the existing scholarship. As will be further discussed in this chapter, the colonial period requires further examination due to the manner in which the literature on Korean-American relations and Korean historiography has been shaped over the past few decades.

This dissertation redresses this issue in the scholarship by taking the aforementioned question as its starting point. It explores pre-1945 Korean diplomatic, cultural, and intellectual engagements with America, and more specifically, it traces the various meanings of America that arose out of these engagements—meanings that were shaped by both global and local contexts in the late-nineteenth century and thereafter. This study pays special attention to the often overlooked colonial period. During this period, discussions of America flourished in the Korean press and “America” as both a physical and imagined site took on various meanings within Korea against the backdrop of colonialism, the rise of leftist movements, and new global dynamics following World War I. These new global dynamics included the predominance of America. The end of World War I—from which the United States emerged as a leading nation with great economic, military, and cultural power—ushered in an era of the global rise of America in the 1920s and a phenomenon that contemporaries from various parts of the world referred to as Americanism.<sup>4</sup> Aesthetics, culture, institutions, and technological

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<sup>4</sup> The term, “Americanism” was defined differently by various people, and its meanings were constantly shifting and contested over (particularly in the United States) by various actors through different time periods and contexts. Often, it was used to refer to that which is distinctively “American,” whether it be the United States’ institutions, values, practices, ideals, or culture. In the United States, it was sometimes defined as loyalty to the United States or a defense of American political ideals while abroad, Americanism was often used in a critical tone to refer to blind or excessive emulation, admiration, and/or acceptance of culture, institutions, ideals, and practices recognized as being American. This chapter uses Americanism in a more neutral tone and more broadly to refer to the acceptance and emulation of cultural practices, institutions, and developments recognized as being American.



developments that were viewed as American rose up simultaneously in various parts of the world. A critical component of these new global dynamics was the expansion of capitalism that facilitated the flow of forms of Americanism globally as well as rendered them relevant and meaningful in each region. Within this global context, parts of “America” also circulated widely in Korea in a very similar manner to other countries, and the colonial period came to be a time in which Koreans engaged with “America” in new ways and earnestly articulated its images and significances.

In exploring the various ways that Koreans engaged with America in the colonial period, this dissertation argues that these engagements were significant to Korea’s modern experience in two ways. Firstly, within the specific context of Japanese colonialism and the global rise of the United States and “Americanism” post-WWI, a significant group of Koreans articulated America as the source of political and cultural solutions for Korea’s colonial situation and upheld American institutions, developments, and ways of life as models. Specifically, America came to be articulated in relation to two neologisms in particular—“modern [*modŏn*]” and “new civilization [*sin munmyŏng*].” Although these two concepts were neither synonymous nor conflatable with each other at this time, both connoted the newest and necessary component to rising in the global capitalist structure. Thus, “modern” America that embodied “new civilization” became relevant and desirable for Koreans at this historically specific moment, and seemed to offer Koreans a way to improve their standing in the global capitalist order. Moreover, some of these articulations of America as the source of solutions materialized and had direct links to the adoption of American models in certain reform and development efforts in Korea during the colonial period and in South Korea

post-liberation. In this way, this discursive engagement with America not only provided many Korean writers the opportunity to imagine how they would construct an independent and modern nation-state, but it also helped shape the specific ways in which Koreans sought to construct their nation-state.

Secondly, America became a vantage point for the contradictions of capitalist modernity and a reference point for thinking about and articulating Korea's particularity. More specifically, at the same time Korean writers hailed America as the model for capitalist modernity, they also denounced America for this very reason. This dissertation argues that such criticism of America and contradictory discussions of America were rooted in the contradictory effects of capitalism in which the articulation of opposing categories are interrelated moments. At the same time that American institutions, developments, society, and even culture were articulated as the means by which Korea would gain parity to other nations in the global capitalist order, they were also articulated as being a source of increasing disparity and rendering Koreans more deeply into a subordinate place. They were both the solution and cause to Korea's situation. The contradictory discussions of America were further evidenced by the anxiety expressed by Korean intellectuals with what they observed were homogenizing and universalizing effects of "Americanization." This "modern" and "universal" America then ended up becoming the reference point through which to articulate a "traditional" and "particular" Korea. In short, this discursive engagement with "America" became a means by which Korean intellectuals grappled with the contradictions of capitalist modernity and Korea's particularity.

In these discussions, “America” functioned as both a physical state on the other side of the world as well as an imagined site onto which Korean writers inscribed many meanings. To elaborate on the latter, discussions of America were often more about the Korean writers and their representations and projections of American civilization than about actual conditions in the United States. It was an imagined external reference point used to construct Korea as an internal and particular site. However, America the physical site and “America” the imagined site were not unrelated as they played off of and shaped each other. The writers themselves conflated both of these concepts and they were strongly interrelated as shown particularly in Chapter Two.

This project’s contributions are two-fold. By revealing the often overlooked significances of America in Korea during the colonial period, the project offers a means by which to historicize and better understand the discourses and patterns that govern post-1945 relations between South Korea and the United States. Moreover, it highlights the temporal simultaneity and resemblances in Americanism in Korea with that of other parts of the world, and roots them in capitalism that allowed for forms of Americanisms to rise globally and make them relevant and meaningful in each region. Through this global framework and emphasis in the roots in capitalism, the project rethinks the tendency in Korean historiography to privilege Japanese mediation of Western civilization when examining the origins of modern Korea. However, in order to properly contextualize the project’s contributions to the scholarship, a discussion of the existing scholarship is first in order.

## Literature Review

Studies of political, cultural, and intellectual engagements between Korea and America have been largely carried out in studies of Korean-American relations. The first comprehensive work on Korean-American relations is Fred Harvey Harrington's *God, Mammon and the Japanese: Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905* which was published in 1944. Although some books and articles dealing with this subject followed, comprehensive and deeper analyses of Korea-U.S. relations were not largely pursued until the 1970s. There were several factors behind the emergence of studies on Korean-American relations. However, one of the most important factors was the rise of "revisionist" works in American academia. More specifically, the academic climate was such that following William Appleman Williams' 1959 work, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, many scholars began following his lead in questioning previous understandings of the past that had been shaped by Cold War politics. Williams had challenged the then dominant belief that the United States was the victim of the Cold War. He argued that the American foreign policy was based on the Open Door Policy, which in turn, encompassed "the firm conviction, even dogmatic belief, that America's *domestic* well-being depends upon ... ever-increasing overseas economic expansion."<sup>5</sup> Coupled with this belief was the conviction that what was good for the American economy was also good for the world. It was the pursuit of this "ideology" by Harry S. Truman and his advisors that made the Cold War inevitable. Therefore, America needed to rethink the notion that America had always been anti-imperialist and needed to reexamine America's view of itself. With this harsh critique of American foreign policy and of the

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<sup>5</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell, 1972 [1959]), 206, 15.

conventional view of the Cold War, Williams radically changed the way scholars approached American diplomatic history and spurred on many “revisionist” works that grew against the backdrop of the anti-Vietnam War movement. Generally speaking, they “focused on issues of exploitation, domination, and oppression” and “argued that existing patterns of domination are not natural or immutable, but rather have historical origins.”<sup>6</sup>

One such work exemplary of this revisionist trend is Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.’s “The Missionary Enterprise and Theories of Imperialism.” Schlesinger wrote this chapter in an edited volume at a time when many American scholars were questioning the American growth, development, and involvement in other parts of the world in light of the Vietnam War. In his chapter, he argued that the American Protestant missionary enterprise in China (and elsewhere in Asia) was cultural imperialist, and that it was this “missionary legacy” that can also be seen in the American involvement in Vietnam.<sup>7</sup> As Schlesinger’s influential work demonstrates, the political and academic climate during this time led to rethinking American foreign policy, the role of the United States in the breakdown of peace in post-World War II, and the American presence in Asia. In this way, the stage was set for the emergence of serious studies on Korean-American relations. Against this backdrop, the implementation of the Nixon Doctrine in 1969, South Korea’s economic development, the adoption of a new American policy towards China after 1972, the subsequent changing international environment, and the centennial anniversary of Korean-American relations in 1982 further fueled the need for examinations of Korea-

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<sup>6</sup> Jonathan M. Wiener, “Radical Historians and the Crisis in American History, 1959-1980,” *The Journal of American History* 76:2 (1989), 399.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “The Missionary Enterprise and Theories of Imperialism,” in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 373.

U.S. relations among scholars.<sup>8</sup> It was within this context that English-language studies on Korea-U.S. relations emerged in the 1970s and grew in the 1980s.

In South Korea as well as the United States, Bruce Cumings' *The Origins of the Korean War*, a prominent revisionist work on the Korean War, hit a chord with many scholars as it emerged in Korea at the same time that the *minjung*, democratization, reunification, and anti-American movements were growing with unprecedented fervor in the aftermath of the 1980 Kwangju Uprising. South Korea's general view of the United States had changed decisively when, much to their surprise and deep disappointment, the United States did not intervene on behalf of the Kwangju people during the Uprising. As Namhee Lee writes,

Given the privileged place of the United States on the cognitive map of South Koreans, not only the U.S. failure to intervene on behalf of the people but also its deep involvement in the suppression was a rude awakening...the Gwangju Uprising proved decisively that the United States had not only been deeply involved in Korea but also had shared responsibility for the ugliness of Korean history, for its authoritarianism, military dictatorship, and political terror. Furthermore, the United States promoted its own military and economic gains. This critical perception of the United States was the beginning of the crumbling of the once seemingly invincible cold-war ideology."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, Cumings' work became an intellectual endorsement of what was already underway politically in South Korea. It was in this context that scholars in Korea felt the need to reevaluate the role and significance of the United States in Korea post-1945, and Korea-U.S. relations in general.

These political and intellectual contexts not only led scholars to reexamine Korea-U.S. relations in general, but they helped guide and shape the contents of their studies. Specifically, the contexts shaped the contents in two ways: 1) Scholars turned a much

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew C. Nahm, ed., *The United States and Korea: American-Korean Relations, 1866-1976* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1979), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 51.

more critical eye towards the relationship and depicted Korea-U.S. relations to be unequal and asymmetric; and, 2) Scholars wrote on Korea-U.S. relations along the diplomatic relations. To elaborate on the first point, there were variances and differences between the scholarship in the United States and in South Korea respectively, but one dominant theme that stands out in both the English and Korean literature is the tendency to characterize Korea-U.S. relations as one of inequality and asymmetry. As Yu Yong'ik (Lew Young Ick) points out, scholars generally depicted the relationship between Korea and the United States post-1945 as a “patron-client relationship.”<sup>10</sup> They wrote that in the 1950s, South Korea came to rely on the United States politically, militarily, economically, and essentially, became a peripheral, subordinate, dependent, neo-colonial dependency of the United States, and a new capitalist market for the profit-seeking United States. These scholars stressed that the relationship between these two countries was a one-sided, aggressor-victim relationship.<sup>11</sup>

Within the aforementioned context, this perspective was not limited to studies of post-1945 Korea-U.S. relations, but also informed studies on the early relations (1866-1910). For instance, in *Diplomacy of Asymmetry*, one of the most prominent works in English on early Korea-U.S. relations, Jongsuk Chay argues for the asymmetric nature of the relationship through analyses of seven factors (economics, missionary interests, security interests, historical circumstances, geographical considerations, cultural influences, and the image factor). He argues that there was an “imbalance” between

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<sup>10</sup> Yu Yǒng'ik (Lew Young Ick), “Kǒsijǒk ūro pon 1950 nyǒndae ūi yǒksa—Namhan ūi pyǒnhwa rŭl chungsim ūro,” in *Haebang chǒnhusa ūi chaeinsik 2*, by Pak Chihyang et al. (Seoul: Ch'aeksesang, 2006), 437.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

American interests and the expectations that Koreans had of Americans.<sup>12</sup> This argument and stress on the “one-sided” and “asymmetrical” nature of the relationship are echoed by many other scholars such as the contributors to *Korean-American Relations, 1866-1997*.

In most of these studies, this characterization of the relationship as unequal and asymmetric goes alongside the implication that the relationship was a failure. After all, it seems only natural that such an imbalanced, unequal, one-sided relationship would end in failure. As Chay stresses, it was this asymmetric nature and the imbalance between American interests and the Koreans’ expectations that caused an estrangement between the two sides, and that ultimately led to the demise of the relationship. In much the same way, the scholars contributing to *Korean-American Relations, 1866-1997* point to the nature of the relationship to explain why diplomatic relations ended abruptly in 1905 and why the United States did not come to Korea’s aid when Korea appealed to the United States for help. In other words, they point to the dominance and duality that marked the relationship to explain “[w]hy and how American policy, which had begun on a friendly and forward basis, became disinterested and uncaring.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Jongsuk Chay, *Diplomacy of Asymmetry* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 1.

<sup>13</sup> By dominance, they refer to the notion that due to the “naiveté” of the Koreans and their inexperience with diplomatic relations with the West, a pattern of dominance emerged in which Koreans were always reacting to American signals. By duality, they refer to the fact that the United States often spoke with two voices—one from the government that did not care too greatly about its relationship with Korea, and the other from diplomats and missionaries who disagreed with the official American policy and either championed the case of Korea or in the case of Horace Allen, took advantage of the Koreans’ “naiveté” and trust in America to gain concessions, franchises, and benefits. Whatever the case was, however, in the end, this duality gave Koreans false hope, made them overly reliant on the United States, and “helps explain why the Koreans unrealistically continued to believe that the United States was prepared to take active measures to safeguard the independence of Korea.” Likewise, works like Young Ick Lew’s “American Advisers in Korea, 1885-1894: Anatomy of Failure,” William Watts’ “The United States and Korea: Perception vs. Reality,” and Kwang-rin Lee’s “Early Relations: Conflicting Images” further highlight the unequal nature of the relationship that led to its failure. Wayne Patterson and Hilary Conroy, “Duality and Dominance: An Overview of Korean-American Relations, 1866-1997,” in *Korean-American Relations: 1866-1997*, ed. Yur-Bok Lee and Wayne Patterson. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 3.



Another way in which the political and intellectual contexts helped shape the contents of the studies on Korean-American relations in the 1970s was that scholars focused on diplomatic relations. In both American and Korean academia, scholars focused on political and socioeconomic histories. The “cultural turn” in history, as Alan Taylor puts it, that made cultural history popular did not come about until the 1980s and 1990s in the United States and somewhat later in Korea. Moreover, the issues that concerned scholars when looking at contemporary Korean-American relations or American foreign relations in general were political and economic issues. Thus, it was not surprising that many scholars embarking on studies of Korea-U.S. relations during this time focused on diplomatic relations and the political and economic dimensions of the relationship.

Although many studies on Korean-American relations emerging in the 1990s and beyond have been more diverse in their approaches, most have still been within the confines of previous frameworks and assumptions that funnel them into narratives of failure and certain periodizations. For instance, even when analyzing how perceptions and images played into the relationship, scholars emphasized the lack of knowledge the United States had of Korea or the negative images the Americans had of Korea to show how perceptions and images negatively impacted the American dealings with Korea. Underlying such studies are the same previous assumptions that the United States behaved poorly, and that the relationship was unbalanced and one of failure. While I do not want to dismiss the contributions these previous studies have made to the study of Korean-American relations, these frameworks and assumptions have also led to limiting approaches to the study of this topic. Within the narrative of unequal relations (as true as

this characterization may be) and failure, the studies—whether it is one that explores the political or cultural dimension of the relationship—tend to focus on ways in which the relationship was negatively impacted.<sup>14</sup> Important questions on non-negative influences and implications to each side are overlooked in such narratives. Moreover and importantly, the lasting impacts of these interactions are left out of these narratives as the narratives end with the conclusion of failure.

Writing on the relationship along the diplomatic relations has also had the effect of dividing the relationship into two different periods: Korea-U.S. relations before the colonial period from 1866 to 1910 and relations after the colonial period from 1945 to the present. As Korea and the United States did not have any formal diplomatic relations during the colonial period, these demarcations appear justifiable and almost natural. However, drawing these demarcations along the lines of diplomatic relations poses a few issues to the study of Korea-U.S. relations. First, such demarcations have the effect of overlooking the relationship altogether during the colonial period. Second, with a few exceptions, the relations before 1910 and after 1945 are treated as two distinct areas of study and this has had the effect of overlooking any possible connections between Korea-U.S. relations before the colonial period and Korea-U.S. relations after the colonial period. To put it a different way, there is not much effort to see if post-1945 Korea-U.S. relations were informed at all by the early relations and the post-1945 relationship is depicted as being shaped by only the immediate context of Cold War politics and the events surrounding liberation.

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<sup>14</sup> Good examples include Lee Kwang-rin's work on conflicting mutual images between the United States and Korea, William Watts' "The United States and Korea: Perception and Reality," as well as Jongsuk Chay's work that considers a wide-range of factors that played into the relationship to see how they all contributed to creating a relationship of "asymmetry" and thereby to failure.

This dissertation suggests that some of these previous assumptions should be put aside to rethink some of the larger implications of Korean-American interactions. It moves away from dismissing and closing the door to many aspects of the early relationship on grounds that the diplomatic relations ended with Japanese colonialism or marking it as merely an unequal relationship that was doomed to fail. Rather, this study proposes an alternative perspective of exploring the continuing cultural and intellectual engagements beginning in the late-nineteenth century and tracing them through the colonial period in order to shed light on the colonial period, explore some of the continuing and deeper influences and implications of the relationship, and finding linkages from the early relations up to post-1945 relations.<sup>15</sup> In examining the colonial period, this project does align itself with some of the new studies on Korean engagements with America during the colonial period found in disciplines outside of history and political science. This includes Sun-Young Yoo's work on Americanism which explores the various ways Koreans materially embraced Americanism in order to physically embody "modernity." There are also various works emerging that cover Hollywood films in colonial Korea such as *Korea's Occupied Cinemas, 1893-1948: The Untold History of the Film Industry* by Brian Yecies and Ae-Gyung Shim and *Korean Perceptions of the United States: A History of Their Origins and Formation*, a relatively recent edited volume on Korean-American engagements which takes a more thorough look at the colonial period.<sup>16</sup> These works have done much to shed light on aspects of the colonial

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<sup>15</sup> To this end, I seek to build upon the works of Young Ick Lew's edited volume, *Korean Perceptions of the United States: A History of Their Origins and Formation* and Sun-young Yoo's "Embodiment of American modernity in colonial Korea" which have taken the initial steps towards this new direction.

<sup>16</sup> Ho-min Yang, "The Perception of the United States during the Japanese Colonial Period," in *Korean Perceptions of the United States: A History of their Origins and Formation*, trans. Michael Finch (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2006), 209-306.

period that have been overlooked in the past decades. This dissertation is situated among these attempts but it seeks to go further by not only looking at the colonial period but exploring the linkages, continuities, and changes between the engagements of this period with those before and after this period. By doing so, the project proposes a means by which to historicize and better understand the discourses and patterns that govern post-1945 Korean-American relations, which in turn allows us to see that post-1945 Korea-U.S. relations were not only shaped by events surrounding liberation and Cold War politics, but also by diverse, on-going cultural interactions and pre-liberation Korean discourses on America.

This project also addresses another reservation I have on Korean historiography in general. Many studies on the colonial period have been caught up in seeing Japanese colonialism as a significant interlocutor for Koreans and modernity. To be more specific, scholars exploring post-colonial studies (as a discipline and analytical framework), “colonial modernization” and “colonial modernity” have asserted colonialism as an indispensable part of any discussion of modernity in Korea. Thus, they turned to the colonial period to explain aspects of the post-1945 Korean experience such as economic development, nationalism, and more generally, Korean modernity in terms of the colonial experience. While the contributions of this scholarship have been great, this, in turn, has also led to a tendency in Korean historiography to privilege and focus exclusively on Japan and the Japanese mediation of Western civilization in thinking about modernity in Korea. In this vein, it is quite common when discussing Korean engagement with the West and Western ideas for Japan’s role to be highlighted “as the primary mediator through which Korean writers learned about the West and its supposed universal

civilization.”<sup>17</sup> In fact, it is quite common to see characterizations such as those of Kim Chinsong when he writes that Koreans in colonial Korea came to read about the latest scientific theories, physics, scientific phenomena, and principles of matter that included explanations of electricity, radio waves, and X-rays through translations of Japanese texts.<sup>18</sup> Wŏn Yongjin also asserts that before liberation, Koreans came into contact with America through Japan, and it was only after liberation that there was “direct and active” contact between Korea and America.<sup>19</sup>

This dissertation does not deny the importance of the colonial experience to Korea’s modern experience nor does it deny that Japan often played a significant mediating role in Korea’s grapple with “America.” However, it does seek to complicate somewhat this notion of Japanese mediation. This study partly does so by shedding light on Koreans’ direct engagements with American material culture, ideas and developments particularly through a study of Korean students in the United States, but the primary way in which it adds complexity to the notion of Japanese mediation is by reframing Korean engagements with America altogether. The project highlights the timing and resemblances in Korea’s engagement with “America” and its significance to Korea’s modern experience, with those of other parts of the world. It roots them in capitalism which facilitated the rise of “Americanism” globally. Through this global framework and emphasis in the roots in capitalism, the project challenges the exclusivity of the Japanese

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<sup>17</sup> Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1911*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 110.

<sup>18</sup> Chinsong Kim, *Sŏul e ttansŭhol ūl hŏhara* (Seoul: Hyŏnsil Munhwa Yŏngu, 1999), 87.

<sup>19</sup> Yongjin Wŏn, “Han’guk taejung munhwa, Miguk kwa hamkke hogŭn ttaro,” in *Americanization: Haebang ihu Hanguk esŏ ūi Migukhwa*, eds. Tŏkko Kim and Yongjin Wŏn (Seoul: Purŭn Yŏksa, 2008), 173.

mediation narrative as the lens by which to examine Korea's modern experience, and suggests an alternate way to think about Korean modernity.

## **Framework**

In order to pursue this alternate approach, this dissertation asserts global dynamics as an inseparable dimension to Korea's engagements with America during the colonial period. To elaborate, this study roots the Korean writers' cultural and intellectual engagements with "America" during the colonial period—which this study explores largely through discussions of "Americanism" in Korea—in the global dynamics of the 1920s and 1930s. These dynamics included the global expansion of capitalism which was expressed through contemporaneous and interlinked phenomena such as the emergence of a stronger world market, imperial expansion, new communication and infrastructural technologies as well as new technologies and methods in production, new forms of organization such as corporations, and new credit systems. These phenomena restructured the global space economically, politically, and socially, and brought countries into "a single, increasingly interdependent, and hierarchically organized global space-time."<sup>20</sup> Alongside this restructuring of the global space, the United States rose to a predominant position in the world in the aftermath of World War I, and began a program of insistent expansionism economically, politically, and culturally. These outward projections on the part of the United States circulated widely and gained currency around the world as witnessed by the unprecedented circulation of American goods, institutions, ideas, aesthetics and culture globally. As will be further explored in Chapter Three, the

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<sup>20</sup> Manu Goswami, "Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44:4 (2002): 788.

structures of capitalism allowed for this. For instance, it was the structures of capitalism that rendered categories like scientific and technological developments, new methods of production (such as Fordism), new consumption practices, new gender norms, and new notions of domesticity surrounding the gendered divide between domestic versus value-producing labor as meaningful responses and projects in each region. Thus, America and “Americanism” which offered and exemplified these latest and most “modern” scientific, technological, and social developments to the world were not only relevant but also deemed necessary within this setting—allowing them to gain influence simultaneously across various regions at this specific time. This project explores the circulation of and engagement with things America in colonial Korea within this context.

Moreover, this study highlights the way in which Korea’s Americanism was similar to the Americanisms of other places. More specifically, it emphasizes the similarly contradictory discussions with the same language and patterns embedded therein, and the ways in which “America” served as a reference point to articulate particularities in each region. As discussed further in Chapter Four, these resemblances were also rooted in capitalism. The internal contradictions of capitalism are such that it continually generates and produces contradictions, dual forms, and new kinds of disparity sociospatially and socioculturally as capital develops unevenly across time and space.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, at the same time that capital has universalizing, unifying, homogenizing dynamics, it also has particularizing, differentiating, and hierarchical effects as shown by the formation of global space-time that is fraught with dialectical, doubled, uneven, and

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<sup>21</sup> Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 40.

contradictory effects.<sup>22</sup> These contradictory dynamics give rise to dual forms; for example, nations that are the ultimate expressions of particularity on the one hand and are universal on the other hand as they only make sense among and against a global community of other bounded and mutually exclusive nation-states.<sup>23</sup> In fact, their very existence as bounded and mutually exclusive regional and national spaces depend on dynamic and overlapping interrelations with one another.<sup>24</sup> I explain the contradictory patterns in Americanisms of the world through these contradictory forms that are inherently interrelated within capitalism. The seemingly universal “Americanism” with its seemingly homogenizing effects had precisely this effect from the 1920s onwards throughout the world. At the same time that it had a homogenizing effect that seemed to seamlessly diffuse into different cultures to produce one material culture, it served as a reference point by which each nation more strongly articulated its particularity—a particularity that was altogether dependent on and intertwined with Americanism’s universality.

By situating Korea’s engagements with America within this framework and pointing to the timing and similarities of these engagements with those of other places such as European countries and Japan, the project contextualizes Korea’s Americanism as part of a larger global trend. The project thereby avoids the narrative of Korea’s Americanism as imitative or derivative of what was going on in Japan, or the Japanese mediation of Americanism.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Korea’s engagement with “America” during this

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form,” 785.

<sup>24</sup> Goswami, *Producing India*. 36.

<sup>25</sup> Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form,” 788.



time which included Koreans' encounter with capitalist modernity and articulations of particularity—a few markers of Korea's modern experience—can be considered from a perspective that is different from the narrative of Japanese mediation.

### **Overview of Chapters**

In order to show the earliest engagements with America and their significance to Korea's modern experience during the colonial period, the next chapter, “‘America’ as a Site of Hope: The Emergence of ‘America’ in Korea in the Late-Nineteenth Century,” gives the historical background necessary to contextualize these discussions. Namely, it discusses the early relations between Korea and the United States that began with initial encounters in the 1850s both physically and discursively. Through continual engagement that became more significant with the start of diplomatic relations in 1882, “America” came to be projected among Koreans as a site that was fraught with various meanings—meanings that were intricately tied to Korea's context and navigation through the global capitalistic structure. The chapter argues that one of the most significant meanings of America to emerge during this time was that of America as a source of hope for Koreans. King Kojong as well as many Korean elites held onto the hope that the United States could and would come to Korea's aid at a time when Korea continually felt its sovereignty threatened in the midst of conflicts among China, Japan, and Russia. As this chapter emphasizes, many factors went into Koreans' relentless projection of such an image onto the United States. Such factors included initial understandings of America formed through Chinese and Japanese texts that spread certain ideas of the United States, Koreans' interpretation of the diplomatic treaty, and Korea's precarious political situation

at the time. Moreover, particularly critical to the maintenance and reinforcement of this projection of America was the Koreans' engagements with Americans residing in Korea and their unofficial representations of America which contrasted sharply with the official American stance. I show how the diplomatic relations were increasingly shaped to be one in which Koreans placed hope in the United States given these factors. Korea's participation in the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, which has often been overlooked in the narrative of Korea-U.S. relations, is highlighted here as a specific snapshot and lens by which to explore how the rhetoric of hope and reliance towards America became a critical part of Korean engagement with the United States. Moreover, this projection of America would last throughout the colonial period as evidenced by Korean appeals for American aid in its independence efforts.

Chapter Three, "Americanism in Colonial Korea: The Articulation of 'America' as the Source of Solutions for Korea," moves on to the colonial period during which Koreans began to engage with America in a new way—that is, with its mass culture. It argues that within the contexts of Japanese colonialism, the global rise of the United States and the rise of Americanism worldwide in the 1920s and 1930s. Korean writers attributed new meaning to America and articulated it as the sole face of the previously broader "West" and the previously more open definition of "civilization." America was articulated alongside and in relation to two neologisms of the time—"modern" and "new civilization"—that symbolized the newest and necessary component to rising in the global capitalist structure. In fact, Korean writers constructed America as the privileged embodiment of these two notions— notions from which they made a point to disassociate Europe and Japan. Thus, America was rendered relevant and desirable for Koreans at this

historically specific moment, and it seemed to offer them a way to improve their standing in the global capitalist order. American institutions, developments, society, and even culture, then, were evoked by Korean writers as models and the solutions to the many problems plaguing Korean society. This articulation of America as the source of solutions, in turn, materialized in several ways and had direct linkages to the adoption of American models in certain reform and development efforts in South Korea. This chapter includes an extensive discussion of the rise of the United States post-WWI and Americanism in other parts of the world (with a focus on Europe and Japan) in order to properly contextualize the circulation of “America” in Korea as part of a larger, simultaneous global trend.

Chapter Four, “Anti-Americanism in Colonial Korea: ‘America’ as a Vantage Point for Capitalist Modernity,” emphasizes that America as the source of solutions was not the only notion of America that was articulated during the colonial period. At the same time that America was imagined as the model, hope, and solution for Korea, severe criticism of America and Americanism arose in the Korean press (across a diverse ideological spectrum) in the early 1920s and intensified in the mid-1920s following the “failure” at the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference, with the rise of leftist thought, and the Great Depression. I argue that such criticism of America and contradictory Americanism and anti-Americanism discussions were rooted in the contradictory effects of capitalism in which the articulation of the universal and particular are interrelated moments. At the heart of this contradictory discussion was the tension between the desire and need for “America” as a way to pursue capitalist modernity and partake in the universal, but its homogenizing and universalizing effects caused concern among

Koreans. Thus, I argue that this “modern” and “universal” America became the reference point by which to articulate a “traditional” and “particular” Korea, which as the chapter explores, was a universal tendency itself. The interrelatedness and dependency between the particular and the universal are explored in detail in this chapter. This chapter also situates the Korean anti-American discussions alongside anti-American discussions that emerged in other countries at the same time, and highlights the similarities in these discussions around the world. By showing the ways in which discussions of Americanism and anti-Americanism in each region resembled one another, I demonstrate their roots in capitalism and thereby avoid the narrative that Korea’s Americanism and anti-Americanism was merely a derivative of what was occurring elsewhere.

Chapter Five which serves as the conclusion of this dissertation briefly highlights the connections between Koreans’ articulations of America during the colonial period and post-1945 Korean society. It points to the lasting effects and importance of pre-1945 Korean engagements with America and how they shaped and continue to shape not only post-1945 engagements, but Korea’s modern experience as well. This chapter also considers how approaching Korean engagement with America within a global framework complicates the notion of some sort of exclusive Japanese mediation. To that end, I discuss how adopting this global framework allows for a different look at some of the conventional narratives in Korean historiography. I take, for example, discussions on the *hyŏnmo yangch’ŏ* (wise mother and good wife) within Korea that is often associated with the colonial gender ideology, *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife and wise mother). In this chapter, this narrative is recast within a global framework to suggest an alternate way to explore Korea’s modern experience.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “America” as a Site of Hope: The Emergence of “America” in Korea in the Late-Nineteenth Century

#### Introduction

When American sailors first started to enter Korea in the 1850s, Koreans displayed a vague and limited understanding of America and Americans. They referred to Americans as people from *Myōrigye* [“America”] or *Hwagiguk* [“Country of the Flower Flag”], and described them as “*tokkaebi*” [goblins] who looked “antiquated and strange.”<sup>1</sup> However, by virtue of both physical and discursive engagement throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, the vague and limited understandings of America initially held by Koreans developed into concrete and specific notions and projections of America which were intricately tied to Korea’s context and navigation through the emerging global capitalistic structure.

This chapter explores this process of the emergence of “America” in Korea by examining Korean-American engagements of the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In doing so, it argues that one of the most concrete meanings of America to emerge during this period was that of America as a site of hope for Koreans. King Kojong as well as many Korean elites held onto the hope that the United States could and would come to Korea’s aid at a time when Korea continually felt its sovereignty threatened in the midst of the growing threats from China, Japan, and Russia. What is remarkable is that Korea held on to this sense of hope even after Korea’s many appeals to the United States for

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<sup>1</sup> Young Ick Lew, “A Historical Overview of Korean Perceptions of the United States: Five Major Stereotypes,” in *Korean Perceptions of the United States: A History of their Origins and Formation*, ed. Young Ick Lew. (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2006), 7.

assistance went unanswered and Korea was eventually colonized by Japan. This chapter shows that many factors went into Korea's relentless projection of this image onto the United States. Such factors included initial understandings of America formed through Chinese and Japanese texts, Korea's political situation at the time, and direct engagements between Koreans and Americans. Particularly critical to the maintenance and reinforcement of this image of America were the engagements between Koreans and Americans in Korea and the unofficial representations of America conveyed by these Americans that sharply contrasted the official American stance. These factors all served to shape this notion of America as a source of hope, which lasted through the colonial period and even after liberation.

This chapter explores the emergence of America as a site of hope for Korea by examining the first encounters between Koreans and Americans which began in 1852. These encounters, notably the 1871 Low-Rodgers Expedition, led Koreans to have negative views of America, but at the same time that these negative images were developing, Koreans were exposed to favorable notions of America in Chinese and Japanese texts that introduced America to Korean elites and King Kojong. This chapter discusses these texts and their impact, the Koreans' interpretation of the 1882 Korean-American treaty, and Korea's precarious political situation at the time in order to show how the notion of America as a source of hope began forming in Korea. This chapter then shows how this understanding of America became an integral part of Korean-American diplomatic relations. It examines Korea's participation in the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, which has often been overlooked in the narrative of Korea-U.S. relations, as a case study and lens by which to explore how the rhetoric of hope and

reliance towards America became a critical part of Korean engagement with the United States. The chapter then analyzes the question of *why* Korea repeatedly turned to the United States even after the United States consistently and officially turned its requests down by exploring the unofficial voices and actions of Americans in Korea that countered the official American stance and reinforced the idea of America as a site of hope. This chapter then concludes with a discussion of Korea's reliance on America even after Korea was colonized by Japan (and Korea's many appeals to the United States for assistance in resisting this colonization went unanswered) to show how the notion of America as a source of hope, which was first formulated in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was enduring and would go on to lend itself to other articulations of America in the colonial period.

### **Initial Direct Contact**

The first direct contact between Korea and America occurred in 1852-1853 when an American whaling ship came near Pusan. Between the second point of contact in 1855 and the 1866 *General Sherman* incident in which Koreans burned down an American merchant ship on the Taedong River, shipwrecked American whaling and merchant ships arrived on Korean shores five times and each encounter was peaceful.<sup>2</sup> Koreans cared for

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<sup>2</sup> The second direct contact occurred in 1855 in which four Americans presumed to be shipwreck survivors of the ship, *Two Brothers*, arrived on the coast along the Kangwŏn Province. They were treated well in Korea. In the summer of 1865, another ship with three American seamen came onto Korea's east coast. They too were treated well before being sent to Beijing. In the spring of 1866, an American ship which had been trading with Nagasaki came near Pusan due to the winds. The Americans requested trade at this time which Koreans refused, but Koreans nevertheless supplied the ship with supplies that they needed before sending them on their way. Later in the spring in 1866, an American vessel by the name of *Surprise* also ended up by the Korean coast through heavy winds and the vessel ended up sinking. Five Americans and two Chinese crewmen from the ship arrived in the Ch'ŏlsan district and during the twenty-four days that they stayed there, they were well cared for with food, tobacco, medicine, clothes, and gifts before they were escorted to the American consul in Beijing.

the shipwrecked or lost Americans before sending them on their way. Throughout these initial encounters, Koreans expressed fascination with Americans and although they denied an American ship's request to trade in 1866 (prior to the *General Sherman*), Koreans did not display any hostility toward Americans.

However, it was later in the summer of 1866 that a hostile encounter occurred between the two countries and slightly more substantial understandings of America emerged. The *General Sherman*, an armed American merchant vessel that had three Americans (owner W.B. Preston, Captain Page, and Chief Mate Wilson), two British citizens (a British Protestant missionary by the name of Robert J. Thomas who served as the interpreter and the supercargo Hogarth), and nineteen Chinese and Malays, entered Korean waters seeking trade.<sup>3</sup> The vessel sought trade at a time when the Taewŏn'gun (r. 1864-1873) was determined to seclude Korea. It was a time of great wariness toward foreigners and foreign elements, and the Taewŏn'gun believed that if Catholicism was not suppressed, Korea will see a repeat of Jehol.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Catholicism came under fire,

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Jongsuk Chay, *Diplomacy of Asymmetry: Korean-American Relations to 1910* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 17-18; Fred Harvey Harrington, "An American View of Korea-American Relations, 1866-1905," in *Korean-American Relations, 1866-1997*, eds. Yur-Bok Lee and Wayne Patterson. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 169; Kim Wŏnmo, *Han-Mi oegyo kwan'gye 100 nyŏnsa* (Seoul: Ch'ŏrhak kwa Hyŏnsilsa, 2002), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Kim, *Han-Mi oegyo kwan'gye 100 nyŏnsa*, 44; Chay, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Jehol referred to how the Qing emperor Xianfeng had to flee to Jehol in 1860 due to the British and French allied attack and occupation of Beijing. As James Palais points out, Catholicism and foreign military force were intricately tied in the minds of many Koreans at this time. Byong-kie Song, "The Perception of the United States during the Period of National Seclusion," in *Korean Perceptions of the United States: A History of their Origins and Formation*, ed. Young Ick Lew. (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2006), 70; James B. Palais, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1991), 178.



and the Taewŏn'gun began a purge that included the execution of nine French missionaries and many Korean converts from 1866 to 1871.<sup>5</sup>

Even after being warned of this situation in Korea, the *General Sherman* proceeded up the Taedong River to P'yŏngyang. The ship stopped by the Hwangju district where Chŏng Taesik, the local magistrate, asked which country the ship was from and its purpose.<sup>6</sup> The men aboard revealed that they sought trade and although the magistrate replied that trade and entry into this waterway was prohibited, the *General Sherman* ignored the magistrate's response. Moreover, the men on the ship asked questions regarding P'yŏngyang, whether there are treasures in the area, and French missionaries' executions among other questions that further alarmed the local magistrates regarding the objective of the ship.<sup>7</sup> Once the ship came to shore near P'yŏngyang, Pak Kyusu, the governor of the province, also became involved and sent the mayor to speak further with the crewmen. Conversations were similar to previous conversations, but local Koreans still cared for the crewmen and fulfilled their requests for food and supplies. As the supplies dwindled for the *General Sherman* however, the crew began to steal food from the locals, and the tension rapidly escalated when the crew seized a small Korean boat, kidnapped Colonel Yi Hyŏn'ik and two officials, then demanded rice, gold, silver, ginseng, and more in exchange for the hostages.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Preston and Page allowed Thomas to preach, pass out Bible texts, and interact with Korean Catholic converts even though they were aware of the prohibition on these things and the recent execution of

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<sup>5</sup> Palais, 178, 292; Harrington, 37.

<sup>6</sup> Chay, 19.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Kim, *Han-Mi oegyo kwan'gye 100 nyŏnsa*, 45; Chay, 20.

French missionaries.<sup>9</sup> It was then that Koreans demanded the return of the hostages and hostilities arose. The Koreans began to throw stones and shoot arrows towards a boat of the *General Sherman* that was trying to obtain drinking water up the river.<sup>10</sup> The exchanges further escalated when the ship's crew stole supplies and in the process, seven Koreans were killed and five were wounded.<sup>11</sup> At this point, under Pak's direction, Koreans set the *General Sherman* on fire completely destroying the vessel as well as killing everyone on board.

This caused a small uproar in the United States, and even though Admiral John Rodgers admitted himself that "the errand of the *General Sherman* was probably illegal," the American government decided to take retaliatory action and use the incident as a way to open Korea to trade.<sup>12</sup> Thus, two fact-finding missions followed in 1867 (led by Captain Robert W. Shufeldt) and 1868 (led by Captain John C. Febiger), and thereafter, Frederick F. Low, the American minister to China, and Rodgers embarked on the Low-Rodgers expedition [*Sinmi yangyo*] in 1871 which led to further conflict between Korea and the United States.

Five ships in total (*Colorado*, *Alaska*, *Benecia*, *Monocacy*, and *Palos*) carrying 85 guns and 1,135 men came into Korean waters with the main objective of concluding a treaty that would protect shipwrecked sailors and open trade.<sup>13</sup> The initial written and

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<sup>9</sup> Harrington, 37.

<sup>10</sup> Chay, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Consul General George F. Seward especially was critical in the notion of concluding a treaty with Korea through the *General Sherman* incident. Harrington, 38; Chay, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Chay, 27, 28.

verbal exchanges between the Koreans and the ships began peacefully. However, when the *Monocacy* and the *Palos* as well as four accompanying small boats went to survey areas near Inch'ŏn and Sondolmok and the nearby forts of Kwangsŏng, Tŏkpo, and Tŏkchin, the forts fired upon the American ships and the American vessels responded by opening fire themselves.<sup>14</sup> Sondolmok was a sensitive place as it was the very same place that had caused similar trouble during the French Disturbance [*Pyŏng'in yangyo*] in 1866.<sup>15</sup> The following days consisted of written exchanges between Koreans and Americans regarding who was at fault for the incident. Koreans cited Americans' prohibited entry into Korean territory and the Americans cited Koreans' "unprovoked...attack."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Koreans stressed that there was no need for a treaty because Koreans had always cared for shipwrecked sailors who had come ashore and that trade relations would not be beneficial for either side.<sup>17</sup> These exchanges did not result in a peaceful conclusion but rather, culminated in the Americans' demand for an apology and trade, and the Koreans' refusal to both. Thus, Low decided that punitive action was necessary and American forces destroyed the forts killing at least 250 Koreans and capturing nine Koreans whereas three Americans were killed and nine were wounded.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Kim, *Han-Mi oegyŏ kwan'gye 100 nyŏnsa*, 75.

<sup>15</sup> The French Disturbance refers to the French punitive action on Korea in response to the execution of nine French missionaries in Korea. In October of 1866, a French armada seized the administrative center of Kanghwa Island and pillaged it. The French took documents, weapons, and cultural artifacts from the island. A French force also attempted to go up the Han River to Seoul, but was rebuffed by Korean troops. Furthermore, the French also failed in attacking the fortifications at the southern end of Kanghwa, after which the French withdrew from Korea.

<sup>16</sup> Chay, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Harrington, 38-9; Chay, 30-31.

The *General Sherman* Incident was not as strongly associated with America because at the time of the incident, Korean officials understood it to be a British vessel. On the other hand, the 1871 Low-Rodgers Expedition made a strong impression about America on Koreans as it was understood clearly to be American and also due to the timing of the conflict. It occurred in the context of intensifying anti-foreign sentiments due to not only the *General Sherman* Incident, but also the 1866 French Disturbance and the attempt of the German trader, Ernest J. Oppert, in 1868 to excavate the tomb of the Namyŏn'gun, the Taewŏn'gun's father, in order to leverage Koreans into opening trade. The 1871 conflict then merely strengthened the idea to “uphold orthodoxy and reject heterodoxy” [*wijŏng ch'ŏksa*], and its impact was significant to the point that the Korean elites who opposed a treaty between Korea and the United States in 1882 cited this very expedition as the basis for their objection.<sup>19</sup> Yet, a Korean-American treaty was ultimately ratified in 1883 relatively smoothly. This was due largely in part by China's desire for the treaty because it served China's interests. China believed that bringing in the United States would check Japan and fend off Russian encroachment, thereby preserving China's position in Korea. For this reason, the Korean-American Treaty was negotiated and put together by Viceroy of China Li Hongzhang and Commodore Shufeldt outside Korea and without Koreans. However, the relative ease with which the treaty was concluded was due also in large part to the belief of King Kojong and many Korean elites that a treaty with America was unavoidable and moreover, desirable. To this end, it is important to note that direct encounters and incidents between Korea and the United States were not the only means by which Koreans came to learn of and understand America. Another important avenue was the Korean elites' encounter with America

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<sup>19</sup> Song, , 76-77; Chay, 26, 33; Harrington, 39.

through Chinese and Japanese texts. Alongside Li's maneuvers to push for a treaty between Korea and the United States, these texts (and one text in particular—Huang Zunxian's *Chaoxian ce lue* [*Chosŏn Ch'aengnyak*]) played a pivotal role in fostering a desire for relations with America among the Korean elites.

### **Encountering America through China and Japan**

In the aftermath of the first Opium War (1839-1842), more texts that dealt with improving coastal defenses and that sought greater knowledge of the West emerged among Chinese elites. Two influential texts that emerged within this context were Wei Yuan (1794-1857)'s *Haiguo Tuzhi* [海國圖志 *An Illustrated Treatise of Countries Overseas*] which came out in 1844 and Xu Jiyu (1795-1873)'s *Yinghuan Zhilue* [瀛環志略 *A Brief Record of the Maritime Circuit*] which was published in 1848. The *Haiguo Tuzhi* was circulated among Korean elites within one year of its publication, and the *Yinghuan Zhilue* was also read by the elites from 1850 on.<sup>20</sup> The influence of these texts for Korean elites can be found in the fact that Pak Kyusu (1807-1876) and Nam Pyŏngch'ŏl (1817-1863) relied on texts such as the *Haiguo Tuzhi* and the *Yinghuan Zhiluei* to understand the larger world around them.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, we can see the reach of these texts in the 1850s by the fact that Ch'oe Han'gi (1803-1877) relied on them heavily when he prepared his own manuscript, *Chigu Chŏnyo* [地球典要 "A Brief Text on the

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<sup>20</sup> Lew, 11.

<sup>21</sup> No Taehwan, "Chosŏn hugi Sŏyang seryŏk ūi chŏpkŭn kwa haeyanggwan ūi pyŏnhwa [The Approach of Western Powers and Changes in Views of the Ocean in the Late Chosŏn Period]," *Han'guksa Yŏn'gu* 123 (2003): 364.

Earth”], in 1857.<sup>22</sup> In addition, in the aftermath of the 1871 Low-Rodgers Expedition when the Korean government was discussing the United States, Chief State Councilor Kim Pyŏnghak (1821-1879) cited from the *Haiguo Tuzhi*.<sup>23</sup>

It was through these initial texts that Korean elites came to learn and understand more of the West and America in particular. Moreover, these texts conveyed images that were mostly favorable to the United States.<sup>24</sup> The *Haiguo Tuzhi* in particular had chapters on America whose main source was a text written in Chinese by an American missionary named Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801-1861).<sup>25</sup> The use of this source for the sections on America resulted in not only a detailed description of the United States in Wei’s text that included discussions of American history, geography, system of government, and descriptions of each of the union’s twenty-six states, but it also led to a favorable portrayal of the United States.<sup>26</sup> Bridgman was a missionary who had been banned from teaching Christianity in China but still wanted to leave China with a favorable view of Christianity. As such, Bridgman’s writing “highlight[t]ed the ‘God-inspired humanitarianism’ of the American people.”<sup>27</sup> By looking to Bridgman’s text, Wei’s text

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<sup>22</sup> This text included a map of the United States and depictions of the American political system, customs, geography, products, social relations and issues, (brief) history, and etc. It also portrayed America as territorially large, abundant and prosperous, as well as developed.

Lew, 11; Myŏn’u Yi, “‘Chigu Chŏnyo’ rŭl t’onghae pon Ch’oe Han’gi ŭi segye insik,” *Kwahak sasang* 30 (1999.8): 120; Sŏngsun Pak, “Ch’oe Han’gi ŭi tae sŏyang insik,” *Han’guksa hakbo* 8 (200.3): 112.

<sup>23</sup> Song, 79.

<sup>24</sup> However, there were instances in which these texts were cited to support negative images of the United States particularly after the 1871 Low-Rodgers Expedition when anti-Western sentiments were strong among the elites.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel V. Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 261; Kim Ŭigyŏng, “Wiwŏn (魏源) ŭi ‘Haeguk Toji’ e nat’anan Sŏyang insik,” *Chungguksa Yŏn’gu* 5 (1999): 143-144.

<sup>26</sup> Botsman, 120.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

similarly contain favorable portrayals of the United States by discussing various American institutions and efforts inspired by Christian benevolence such as care for the poor and disabled, temperance, and prison reform.<sup>28</sup>

Korean elites also encountered favorable images of America in texts from Japan. Following the opening of Japan by the United States in 1853 and in the midst of rapid and deliberate Westernizing efforts that marked the Meiji period, texts focusing on the West emerged. Particularly influential for Korean elites were the writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) whose *Seiyō jijō* [*Conditions of the West*] and *Bunmei-ron no gairyaku* [*Outline of Civilization*] that were published in 1866 and 1875 respectively. Several Korean elites studied with Fukuzawa including Yu Kilchun, and Yu's own later work completed in 1889 and published in Japan in 1895, *Sōyu Kyōnmun* [*Observations on a Journey to the West*], would demonstrate the impact of Fukuzawa's *Seiyō jijō*. Yu's work was based on not only his own observations of the United States, but it was also significantly influenced by *Seiyō jijō* as seen in the shared conceptual vocabulary and content.<sup>29</sup>

In fact, as recounted by various young elites associated with the *kaehwadang* [Enlightenment Party], they learned much about the United States and the West through books from China and Japan.<sup>30</sup> There is a specific mention of these elites reading books

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 111. For a brief comparison between the *Seiyō Jijō* and the *Sōyu Kyōnmun*, see Yi Kwangnin, *Tach'in sahoe e toñjin ch'unggyoŏk* (Seoul: Tonga Ilbosa, 1992), 75-78.

<sup>30</sup> The core members associated with this group include Kim Okkyun, Yu Kilchun, Yun Ch'ihō, Sō Chaep'il, and Pak Yōnghyo.

on the West that they obtained through Yi Tong'in who had gone to Japan in 1879.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, in an American article written by Haddo Gordon (most likely a pseudonym), the author claimed that Sō Kwangbōm told him he learned of the West and the United States through texts written by Christians and from China.<sup>32</sup> After coming across such a book in the mid-1870s, Sō supposedly introduced his friend Kim Okkyun to the book, and together, they found more such books about the West.

These books they treasured up as if they were so much gold, and passed them from hand to hand, for by this time they had formed a secret society, and quite a number of their friends among the young men had joined them. Their means of obtaining books soon became much easier, as they enlisted into their service some trusty servants and by their aid managed to smuggle the books into the country from China. From these they learned of the United States, of her strange form of government, her railroads and telegraphs, which had a powerful influence in after-years in making the United States the favorite foreign nation among the Koreans.<sup>33</sup>

These various texts that depicted the United States favorably raised the image of the United States for some Korean elites. For instance, this was demonstrated in the content of Ch'oe Han'gi's work (which was based on the *Haiguo Tuzhi* and the *Yinghuan Zhilue* as previously mentioned) that favorably depicted America's abundance in products, transportation system, trade, and industrial technology among other things.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Pak Kyusu who held favorable views of the United States and believed that Korea should begin relations with the United States, engaged deeply with the *Haiguo Tuzhi* and seemed to have been influenced by it.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lew, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Although there are certain aspects of this piece that are questionable, the reference made to Korean elites learning about the West from texts are also confirmed in other accounts, so I have decided to bring up this article here.

<sup>33</sup> Haddo Gordon, "A Young Korean Rebel," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine: A Popular Journal of General Literature, Science, and Politics* 55 (1895): 663.

<sup>34</sup> Lew, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Son Hyōngbu, *Pak Kyusu ūi kaehwa sasang yōn'gu*. Seoul: Ilchogak, 1997, 133.



However, none were more influential in countering the impressions left by the 1871 incident and facilitating Korean-American diplomatic relations along than Huang Zunxian's text, *Chaoxian ce lue*, [*Chosŏn Ch'aengnyak*; *A Strategy for Korea*]. In the latter half of the 1870s, the Chinese government began to feel uneasy about Japan's and especially Russia's interests in Korea. Therefore, following the proposal made by the British ambassador in Beijing, Sir Thomas F. Wade and Chinese official Ting Jihch'ang, the Chinese government decided to encourage Korea to enter into treaties with various Western powers in an effort to fend off Japanese and Russian interests and protect China's interests.<sup>36</sup> Viceroy Li Hongzhang who had been in correspondence with Yi Yuwŏn (1814-1888), an influential official who was trusted by King Kojong at the time, was instructed by his government to convey this idea to Korea through Yi. Li not only conveyed this idea in 1879, but he also ended up spearheading and actively mediating the Korea-U.S. Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1882. Li's advice did not have an immediate effect as his letter came at a time when Yi had been forced to the countryside. However, many scholars point to an expanded, more articulated version of this idea, *Chosŏn Ch'aengnyak*, as one of the most significant factors in changing the attitudes of the king and many of his ministers towards the West. These new attitudes were evidenced by King Kojong's swift dispatches of secret missions after he and his advisers read the text.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Martina Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys: The Opening of Korea, 1875-1885*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 86-87.

<sup>37</sup> See Kim Key-Hiuk, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 297-8; Chay 48; Yur-Bok Lee, "A Korean View of Korean-American Relations, 1882-1910," in *Korean-American Relations, 1866-1997*, eds. Yur-Bok Lee and Wayne Patterson. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 12; Deuchler, 116; Song, 89.

This text written by Huang, a Chinese legation counselor in Tokyo, made its way to Korea through Kim Hongjip (1842-1896) who led a mission to Japan in 1880 to obtain an agreement on tariffs. While in Tokyo, he met two Chinese diplomats, Ho Juchang and Huang, more than six times.<sup>38</sup> In these meetings, Ho and Huang stressed that the largest threat to Korea was Russia and encouraged Korea to make an alliance with the United States, “the only Western power that has never sought selfish gains,” for a balance-of-power strategy to keep the Russians at bay.<sup>39</sup> Huang also gave Kim a copy of his text. After returning to Korea, Kim presented the text to King Kojong who approved of the strategy in the text and had copies circulated among the elites.<sup>40</sup>

The text’s main point can be summed up in the following strategy—“intimate relations with China, association with Japan, and alliance with America [*Ch’in-Chungguk, kyŏl-Ilbon, yŏn-Miguk*].” According to Huang, Russia’s expansionist ambitions posed the most significant danger to Korea which “occupie[d] an important strategic position” and with this strategy, Korea could fend off Russia.<sup>41</sup> It was important to be on intimate terms with China because “China alone is conterminous with Russia on the east, west, and north...and the whole world believes that she alone is able effectually to restrain Russia. And China loves no other country as she loves Corea.”<sup>42</sup> Seclusion was no longer possible for Korea, and under these circumstances, it was important to put aside “petty

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<sup>38</sup> Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, 293.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 295.

<sup>40</sup> Deuchler, 104; Lew, 19.

<sup>41</sup> Huang Zunxian, “The True Policy for Corea: A Private Memorandum by Huang Tsun-hsien, Secretary of the Chinese Legation in Japan,” in *Anglo-American Diplomatic Materials Relating to Korea, 1866-1886*, Enclosure 2 in No. 47, September 1880, ed. Park Il-Keun (Seoul: Shin Mun Dang Publishing Company, 1982), 105.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

feelings of dislike” and to associate with Japan for Japan and Korea are “bound together by the closest community of interests.”<sup>43</sup> According to Huang, Korea also needed to find an ally in the West. To defend against Russia, it was important to enter into alliance with England, France Germany, and Italy, but most importantly, Korea needed to enter into an alliance with the United States. He cited several reasons for advocating this alliance. The first reason he cited was that due to America’s own history of fighting for independence,

Americans have founded their polity on courtesy and justice. They covet neither territory nor populations which do not belong to them, nor do they interfere in the domestic affairs of other States....The Constitution of the United States is democratic and republican, and therefore the Americans do not covet the property of others; while on the other hand, as it was the indignation excited by the harsh and oppressive acts of the English Government that was the cause of their country being founded, they are always disposed to be friendly towards Asia while entertaining feelings of aversion for Europe. At the same time, they are of the same race as the Europeans, while the power of their country is so great that they have no difficulty in holding their own with the Great Powers of Europe in any part of the globe. This enables them to help the weak, and, by upholding just principles, to prevent Europeans from giving a loose rein to their overbearing disposition...They are desirous, moreover, that the States of Eastern Asia should each and all maintain their independence, and continue in the enjoyment of peace and tranquility.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to stressing the ideals of America which were characterized by “good faith and love of justice,” Huang also emphasized the United States’ wealth and the idea that they have neither need nor desire for additional territory—deeming them altogether safe for Korea.<sup>45</sup>

America consists of separate States independently administered, and the whole thirty-seven in combination form the United States, which are all under one President. Consequently, they would not extend their area, even if it was in their power to obtain more land. Close to the southern part of the States is a country called Hawaii, which wished for incorporation, but they refused to admit it. They possess plenty of unoccupied land, their soil yields large quantities of both gold and silver, and their people are skillful merchants and artisans, so that they are the richest among nations. No increase of territory could add to their wealth, and that they covet neither the soil nor the subjects of others is well known to the whole world.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 106-107.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

These characterizations of the United States were influential not only in facilitating the treaty process along, but also shaping the nature of Korean-American diplomatic relations. It is important to note here that not every Korean elite readily accepted the arguments in the *Chosŏn Ch'aengnyak*, as can be seen in the Confucian literati who called to “Uphold Orthodoxy and Reject Heterodoxy.” They evoked the 1871 Incident and asserted that the United States was no different from countries like Russia who had imperialistic designs. These elites—who were perturbed by the opening of more ports to the Japanese, Korean engagement with Huang’s text which in their view contained Christian ideas and concepts, and various reforms—submitted memorials beginning in the fall of 1880. They harshly chastised Yi Yuwŏn and Kim Hongjip for their roles in bringing heterodox doctrines and ideas, and their objections culminated in the *Yŏngnam maninso* [Memorial of the Ten Thousand Men of Yŏngnam].<sup>47</sup> This spurred on more memorials in various provinces until the government harshly cracked down on them with the most extreme punishment being the beheading of Hong Chaehak.<sup>48</sup> However, in general, strongly embedded in the minds of many others including Kojong were the notions of America as introduced by Chinese texts in the latter half of the nineteenth century that presented positive images of America as benevolent, wealthy, powerful, lacking any ambition for territorial expansion, and supportive of the independence efforts of other places in the world given its own history of fighting for independence. Reinforcing these notions of America even more and thereby fostering hope in the United States was the Korean-American Treaty.

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<sup>47</sup> Deuchler, 104.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 106.

## **“America” as Constructed through Diplomatic Relations**

### *The Korean Interpretation of the 1882 Treaty of Amity and Commerce*

One article, in particular, caught the Koreans’ attention in the Korea-U.S. Treaty of Amity and Commerce. This was Article I, and it said, “There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the President of the United States and the King of Chosen and the citizens and subjects of their respective Governments. If other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either Government, the other will exert their good offices on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable arrangement, thus showing their friendly feelings.”<sup>49</sup> For the American government, the most important aspect of this treaty concerned opening trade and the protection of American sailors. The United States government did not attach much importance to the “good offices” provision. As has been much discussed by scholars working on Korean-American relations, to the United States, this was more of a generic article indicating friendship but in no way, did the government intend for it to be a specific obligation or commitment to protect Korea’s sovereignty. Koreans, on the other hand, who encountered the “good offices” clause for the first time with this treaty, understood it to mean as a promise to maintain the “territorial integrity and political independence of Korea by taking sides with Korea in cases of foreign aggression or oppression. They sincerely believed that the American ‘guarantee’ was not only a legal but a moral commitment.”<sup>50</sup> The “good offices” clause seems to have been understood within the context of and in relation to the ideas of the United States evoked

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<sup>49</sup> Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce, and Navigation between Korea and the United States (May 22, 1882).

[http://photos.state.gov/libraries/korea/49271/June\\_2012/1-1822%20Treaty.pdf](http://photos.state.gov/libraries/korea/49271/June_2012/1-1822%20Treaty.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Lee, “A Korean View of Korean-American Relations, 1882-1910,” 18.

in the *Chosŏn Ch'aengnyak* as a nation eager to help the weak, uphold justice, and most importantly, “desirous that the States of Eastern Asia should each and all maintain their independence.”<sup>51</sup> Jongsuk Chay, a scholar on Korean-American relations, points out that by the 1900s, “it is doubtful that the Koreans did not understand the legal meaning of the good offices concept after more than twenty years of diplomatic transactions with the Western powers, as some authors suggest,” yet Chay admits that even with a more sobering view of the United States later on, Koreans held onto the hope that the United States would feel some type of moral obligation to come to Korea’s aid.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, some Koreans genuinely seemed to believe in the clause. Even as late as 1904 when the Russo-Japanese War broke out, Frederick Arthur McKenzie, a Canadian correspondent for the *Daily Mail*, was struck by Minister Yi Yŏng’ik’s belief in America’s “promise” to aid Korea as stated in the treaty. McKenzie wrote,

I urged on him the necessity of reform, if Korea was to save herself from extinction. Yi quickly retorted that Korea was safe, for her independence was guaranteed by America and Europe. "Don't you understand," I urged, "that treaties not backed by power are useless. If you wish the treaties to be respected, you must live up to them. You must reform or perish."

"It does not matter what the other nations are doing," declared the Minister. "We have this day sent out a statement that we are neutral and asking for our neutrality to be respected."

"Why should they protect you, if you do not protect yourself?" I asked.

"We have the promise of America. She will be our friend whatever happens," the Minister insisted. From that position he would not budge.<sup>53</sup>

The lasting and powerful effect of this clause is demonstrated not only by Yi’s stance but also by the fact that whether the “good offices” wording was taken literally by the

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<sup>51</sup> Huang, 107.

<sup>52</sup> Chay, 150.

<sup>53</sup> F.A. McKenzie, *Korea’s Fight for Freedom* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920), 77-78.

Koreans, it was evoked over and over again in attempts to muster up a sense of moral obligation on the part of Americans.

For instance, when the British occupied Kōmundo (Port Hamilton) amidst strained relations in 1885 between Russia and Great Britain stemming from the Afghanistan boundary, the United States Navy Ensign George C. Foulk wrote to Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard that “the good offices of the United States Government, as in mediation, are asked for by the Korean Government, under Article I, of the treaty between Korea and the United States, to effect the release of Port Hamilton now occupied by a British Naval Force acting under the orders of the home government of Great Britain.”<sup>54</sup> Although the Korean government ultimately recalled this letter “at the request of” the British Consul General, it is worth noting that Korea sought American aid through the “good offices” clause when it felt that it was being threatened by other powers.<sup>55</sup> There are numerous other examples of this pattern. For instance, during the Sino-Japanese War, the Korean government repeatedly requested America’s “good offices” when Japan further encroached upon Korea. The prominence of this clause is further demonstrated by the fact that it was remembered even after the end of diplomatic relations (during the colonial period) and mentioned in criticisms of America as not fulfilling its obligation.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> George C. Foulk, letter to Thomas F. Bayard, No. 189, June 29, 1885, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume 1: The Initial Period, 1883-1886*, eds. George M. McCune and John A. Harrison (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951), 80.

<sup>55</sup> George C. Foulk, letter to Thomas F. Bayard, No. 196, July 6, 1885, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume 1*, 83.

<sup>56</sup> An example includes C.C. Hahn, “The Good and Bad Elements of American Civilization,” *Urak’i* 2 (1926): 12.

Even when not evoking the “good offices” clause specifically, Kojong repeatedly displayed an attitude of reliance on and hope in the United States that underlay the Korean evocation of the clause. Beginning with the very first American minister in Korea, Lucius H. Foote who arrived in Korea in May 1883 as the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States, Kojong kept the Americans in Korea especially close to him and constantly sought their advice. For instance, when Foote arrived in Seoul, Kojong is not only said to have “danced with joy” at the minister’s arrival, but soon sought his advice.<sup>57</sup> In a private audience that Foote as well as several other American officials and missionaries often enjoyed, Kojong said to Foote, “I wish always, to rely especially, upon the advice and assistance of Your Government.”<sup>58</sup> Then he went on to ask for Foote’s advice regarding the forthcoming treaty negotiations with the British and the Germans as well as advice on a Chinese official who was soon to arrive in Korea. He also asked for American help in efforts to enter into a treaty with Russia and France. Moreover, he asked for an American official who could write in Chinese to “act in an advisory capacity in [the] Office of Foreign Affairs” as well as an American military officer who would instruct and drill Korean troops.<sup>59</sup> Kojong hoped to replace Chinese advisers with disinterested American advisers in the Korean Foreign Office and Army during a time of increasing Chinese influence and interference in Korea (1882-1894).

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<sup>57</sup> George M. McCune and John A. Harrison, ed., *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume 1*, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Lucius H. Foote, letter to Secretary of State, No. 32, October 19, 1883, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume 1*, 53.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*



In fact, the issue of a military officer would be a persistent issue for several years. Kojong repeatedly asked for a military officer from the United States even when other nations showed eagerness to fill the position with an officer of their own, and the American government continually showed no interest in fulfilling the request to the point where Foote vented that the lack of reply from Washington for nearly one year on this matter “has both embarrassed and mystified” him.<sup>60</sup> Foulk who succeeded Foote also made the same request to the American government at the urgent and frequent requests of Kojong and he too was “embarrassed” at the lack of response from Washington to these requests. In fact, Kojong’s urgent requests were repeated many times by W.W. Rockhill who served briefly as American charge d’affaires between December 1886 and April 1887 and American Minister Hugh A. Dinsmore who came to Korea in 1887. Dinsmore wrote to the Secretary of State on April 25, 1887,

I beg to impress upon you the great persistent anxiety of the Koreans upon this subject. I have been spoken to on the subject several times already since my arrival. They urge that the American Secretary of State promised assistance of this kind to their embassy three years ago. When the Russian government offered to furnish instructors they declined on the ground that the United States government had been requested to furnish them, and they continued to hold the Russians off hoping to get them from our government.<sup>61</sup>

After years of relentless requests, American military instructors finally arrived in Korea in April 1888 although issues did not end there as many problems arose between the American instructors and the Korean government.

It was generally known that Kojong paid special attention to American officials in Korea especially in comparison to members of other nations’ legations. However, the

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<sup>60</sup> Lucius H. Foote, letter to Secretary of State, No.105, September 3, 1884, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume 1*, 54.

<sup>61</sup> Hugh A. Dinsmore, letter to Secretary of State, No. 11, April 25, 1887, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume II: The period of growing influence, 1887-1895*, ed. Spencer J. Palmer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 142.

reliance and trust he placed on Americans was especially highlighted by his “urgent” call for American help following the murder of Queen Min. For nearly seven weeks afterwards, one or two American missionaries were asked to be at the palace every night for “moral support” for the king and for his safety.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Kojong, who feared that he would be poisoned, sought food only from sealed cans or eggs cooked in shells, but he trusted and ate food that was prepared alternately by Lillias Horton Underwood (the wife of American missionary Horace Underwood) and a European legation, which was then carried to the palace by Horace Underwood in a tin box that was sealed with a Yale lock.<sup>63</sup> The United States always figured prominently in Kojong’s attempts to balance the various powers within Korea. However, the Korean approach to the United States went beyond America being one of many powers in the balancing act. There was more reliance involved. The Korean king repeatedly turned to Americans at times when he feared the growing interests and power of other nations in Korea and when he feared for his safety. A strong snapshot of this pattern that was embedded in Korean engagement with the United States can be found in Korea’s participation in the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition which is discussed below.

### *Korean Participation in the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition*

The 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition opened on May 1, 1893. Hosted by the United States and taking place in Chicago, the fair celebrated the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

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<sup>62</sup> John M. B. Sill, letter to Secretary of State, No. 177, December 3, 1895, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume II*, 138; Horace Underwood, *Fifteen Years among the Top-Knots or Life in Korea* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1904), 156.

<sup>63</sup> Underwood, 155-6.

Christopher Columbus' discovery of America.<sup>64</sup> Korea sent an exhibit, three commissioners (chief commissioner Chōng Kyōngwōn, attendant Ch'oe Munhyōn, attendant An Kisōn), and the royal band consisting of ten members to the fair.<sup>65</sup> This marked the first time that Korea officially participated in a world's exposition. What a close examination of Kojong's decision to participate reveals is that this event, which has often been overlooked in the narrative of the early diplomatic relations between Korea and the United States, actually serves as a snapshot of Korea's approach to diplomatic relations with the United States and its hope in America to come to Korea's aid.<sup>66</sup>

As this was a time when nationalistic rivalries and imperialistic ambitions were running high, most of the eighty-seven nations, colonies, and principalities attending the fair sought to show off their latest economic, technological, and cultural advancements and thereby project the image of a "civilized" nation to the rest of the world. To present themselves as such, nations not only brought goods to display their economic and industrial strength, but also fine arts pieces that would demonstrate a sense of rich tradition and civilization. Exhibits were the means by which nations projected these images, and for this reason, nations such as Great Britain, France and Germany fought for

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<sup>64</sup> Tae Keun Sin and Sam Dae Ja Kim, *The Korean Participation in the Chicago EXPO* (Taejon: The Taejon International Exposition Organizing Committee, 1993), 9.

<sup>65</sup> In addition, PakYonggyu, Sō Pyōnggyu, Allen, Yi Ch'aeyōn, Yi Sūngsu, Yi Hyōnjik, Chang Ponghwan helped at some point in the preparation and/or managing of the exhibit during the duration of the fair. Yi Minsik, *Kūndaesa ūi han changmyōn: Columbia segye pangnamhoe wa Han'guk* (Seoul: Paeksan charyowōn, 2006), 92.

<sup>66</sup> Daniel Kane in his "Korea in the White City: Korean Participation in the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893," *TRANSACTIONS Of the Royal Asiatic Society-Korea Branch* 77 (2002): 1-58, has also argued that a political and diplomatic factor was behind Korea's participation in the exposition. Moreover, Kim Wōnmo included a brief account of this event in his *Han-Mi Oegyo Kwan'gye 100nyōnsa*. However, this is a significant event that has often been overlooked in the narrative of early Korea-U.S. relations.

more space than was allotted to them.<sup>67</sup> The atmosphere of this fair can be further seen in the grandiose scale and extravagance of the host, the United States, also eager to display its burgeoning economic and industrial power and prove that it was worthy of becoming a leading global power. The United States spared no expenses in preparing for and hosting the exposition. The fair cost more than \$28 million dollars and covered more than 686 acres. Moreover, the main fairgrounds, called the “White City,” had massive all-white structures including the Manufactures building, which was the largest roofed structure to be erected at the time.<sup>68</sup>

Unlike the grandiose approach of America and other countries to the fair, Korea’s exhibit was one of the smallest at the fair. In fact, it was small enough so that it could all be contained in one building. (A full list of the items brought over from Korea is included in the appendix). A Korean house with a tiled roof of roughly 466 square feet was built on the fairgrounds, and all of Korea’s objects were housed in this single structure. This stood in contrast to the customary approach of other nations to divide their exhibits among different buildings each dedicated to a specific category. Moreover, although Korea’s exhibit was comprehensive in that it had items ranging in categories from Agriculture, Horticulture, Fish and Fisheries, Transportation, Liberal Arts, Forestry and Forest products, to Manufactures, noticeably missing were the latest technological innovations and finest arts. Korea did not bring anything worthy of display at the Fine Arts Building or Transportation, Machinery, or Electricity Building at a time when

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<sup>67</sup> R. Reid Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World’s Columbian Exposition and American Culture* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), 76-77.

<sup>68</sup> Stanley Applebaum, *The Chicago World’s Fair of 1893: A Photographic Record* (New York: Dover Publications, 1980), 106; David. F. Burg, *Chicago’s White City of 1893* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 97.

“Machinery and technology did represent the largest displays at the exposition.”<sup>69</sup> In short, Korea did not play into the logic and dynamics of the World’s Fair—logic that had as its key locus of producing symbolic power, the power of representation of the “nation” as both a modern nation-state (an agent of “progress”) and a nation with a civilized cultural history.

There are several potential explanations for why Korea did not follow the approach of most other countries to the World’s Fair. One explanation is that this was Korea’s first official attendance at an international exposition, and it could have been unfamiliar with the dynamics of these events. Alternatively, with Horace Allen overseeing the exhibit, there is the possibility that he was interested in sending objects for educational purposes or for promoting trade as Daniel Kane suggests, rather than the purposes that most of the other countries had. Also, Korea may not have had enough time to prepare. When official invitations to the exposition were sent out in 1890, Korea did not respond right away. Gustavus Goward, one of the many fair representatives that went to various parts of the world to solicit active participation from the world, visited Korea as well. To this, Korea expressed interest but Allen claims that it was not until 1892 when Allen applied for a leave for absence for six months from the American government to attend the fair that Kojong officially decided to participate and actively prepared for the fair.<sup>70</sup> Lastly and perhaps most importantly, Korea was facing great financial difficulties

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<sup>69</sup> Robert Muccigrosso, *Celebrating the New World: Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993), 94.

<sup>70</sup> Horace Allen, letter to F.F. Ellinwood, October 24, 1892, in *Allen ūisa ūi sŏn'gyo, w oegyo p'yŏnji: 1884-1905*, ed. In Soo Kim (Insu Kim) (Seoul: K'umlan ch'ulp'ansa, 2007), 911.

and lacked the funds needed to send an elaborate exhibit, an issue which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Although many of these explanations help explain Korea's limited participation in the exposition, another explanation, and perhaps the one of greatest significance, is that the exhibit was not Korea's primary concern in attending this event. As Royal Commissioner Chǒng explained, Korea's aim in attending the exposition did not lie with "compet[ing] with the grandeur of its exhibit."<sup>71</sup> Chǒng's message was further supported and clarified by the letter he brought from King Kojong to President Cleveland. The letter read,

His Majesty, the King of Great Chosŏn, says: It is now ten years since we sent our embassy to America to ratify our treaty, which was the first treaty we ever made with Western nations. Since that time our relations have been very friendly. Now, having heard that America will celebrate the Four Hundredth Anniversary of its discovery by holding the World's Columbian Exposition, to which, with other treaty powers, we have been invited: I hereby appoint my loyal subject Chǒng Kyǒng Wŏn, the Vice President of the Home Office, to represent Korea on this occasion, as Royal Commissioner, and to strengthen and increase our friendship and commercial relations between our two countries.<sup>72</sup>

This letter portrayed the exposition not as a world's fair in a series of world expositions, but rather, as a special celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. It evoked the diplomatic relations that tied Korea and the United States together, and implied that the Korean participation was more of a symbolic gesture of good will as a friend of the United States to help celebrate a momentous occasion of the United States, rather than participation in an international event of which the United States was merely the host. The last line of the letter describing Korean attendance being a way to "strengthen and increase our friendship and commercial relations" between Korea and the

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<sup>71</sup> Kane, 36.

<sup>72</sup> Kane, 17-18. From Grover Cleveland Papers, series 3, reel 138.

United States further stressed the nature of this attendance that in fact revolved around the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Support for the view that Korea attended the fair to strengthen the relationship between Korea and the United States can also be found in Korea's decision to send its ten royal band members to the fair. Despite the fact that the participation was a venture that Korea could not afford at the time, Kojong made it a point to commission ten royal band members—an addition that was costly—to accompany the Korean exhibit. This would also mark the first time that the royal band would play overseas.<sup>73</sup> The purpose of the royal band members was publicly clarified by Yi Ch'aeyŏn, the Korean Minister to the United States. He said that “the 10 musicians are not here for purposes of revenue, but merely to add to the dignity of the Korean commissioners and to attend the official exercises that may be indulged in under Korean sponsorship/patronage.”<sup>74</sup> Sŏ Pyŏnggyu also reiterated that the band was not there for entertainment purposes. Rather, as he asked Allen to relay in the process of obtaining attendance permission for the band members, they came due to special orders from the king and were provided for the president of the United States in honor of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in America.<sup>75</sup>

The band was indeed presented to the president on the opening day of the fair. President Cleveland visited the Manufactures Building where Director-General George R. Davis presented him to each member of the foreign delegation in front of their respective exhibits.<sup>76</sup> President Cleveland had something to say to each one of the distinguished

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<sup>73</sup> Yi, *Kūndaesa ūi han changmyŏn: Columbia segye pangnamhoe wa Han'guk*, 169.

<sup>74</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, May 1, 1893, 2.

<sup>75</sup> Yi, *Kūndaesa ūi han changmyŏn: Columbia segye pangnamhoe wa Han'guk*, 144.

<sup>76</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1893, 6.

assemblage and continued all along the line, with nothing occurring to break it until the President was presented to the Korean embassy.<sup>77</sup> There, unlike any other embassy, he was greeted by the Korean commissioners and the members of the royal band who saluted him by playing on traditional Korean instruments.<sup>78</sup> The importance and prestige Korea considered it was offering to the United States with the bringing of the royal band was further demonstrated by the way in which the Koreans assumed that the band was to have front seats and a place in the official program of the fair's opening day services due to their importance. Such was not the case, and Allen was reported as saying that "the Koreans feel very keenly the humiliation that has been thrust upon them with the discovery that there is no place for their Royal Band on the official program."<sup>79</sup> In the end, the band members were sent back to Korea much earlier than the rest of the commission on May 3<sup>rd</sup> (having arrived in Chicago on April 28<sup>th</sup>) as there were not enough funds and the members had to endure discomfort by staying in one room.<sup>80</sup> Despite these circumstances, the fact that these members were sent to the United States shows the care that Korea put into bestowing honor to the American president and thereby strengthening personal and diplomatic relations with Americans.

Further support for the argument that Korea attended the fair to strengthen relations with the United States can be found in the lavish buffet that the Korean commission hosted for the World's Fair Commissioners and representatives of other nations in honor of Kojong's birthday on September 5, 1893 at the luxurious Auditorium

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Yi, *Kūndaesa ūi han changmyōn: Columbia segye pangnamhoe wa Han'guk*, 157.



Hotel in downtown Chicago. Daniel Kane discusses newspaper articles that described Thomas Palmer, President of the Commission for the World's Columbian Exposition toasting Kojong at the dinner, and Chǒng responding with a toast of his own wherein he said that:

For about ten years has Korea, formerly known as the Hermit nation, been open to the world. His Majesty was greatly honored by this invitation of the President of the United States to participate in the World's Columbian Exposition. Never before has Korea taken part in any international exposition, but in response to the urgent request of America, the great friend of Korea, his Majesty has sent his first official exhibit abroad, to make complete the representations of nations. Our small and humble exhibit has its place in the Department of Manufactures. It is simply for representation and is not offered in comparison with the exhibits of the earth, but is honored in forming a part of those combined exhibits which make the greatest exposition the world has ever seen. We recognize at this exposition the lessons of fraternal union in language, literature, religion, science, art, and the civil institutions of different peoples; and our administration for the educational system of imparting knowledge in all departments is very great indeed. We are sure this exposition will tend to the judicial arbitration as the supreme law of international relations. We have learned many things from all the various nations from for this exposition, and we have already determined to introduce into our country many of those beneficial improvements; and we hope that you also will take back to your country pleasant impressions of Korea...<sup>81</sup>

As was the case in the letter from King Kojong to President Cleveland, here, once again, Chǒng evoked the relationship between Korea and the United States as the primary reason for Korea attending the fair by stating that America is “a great friend of Korea” and that as such, Korea has participated “in response to the urgent request of America” even though Korea had never participated in the event previously. Moreover, Chǒng pointed out that he was certain that “this exposition will tend to the judicial arbitration as the supreme law of international relations” further hinting at what Kane characterized as “a political and diplomatic salvo on the part of Korea” at a time when Korea feared for its loss of sovereignty.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Kane, 35.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 36.

Korea went to great lengths to present itself well to American leaders and to strengthen diplomatic ties between the two countries. For example, Korea hosted the banquet and sent the royal band even though these were both actions that Korea could not afford at the time. On the subject of the last-minute addition of the royal band to the exhibit, American minister Augustine Heard said that this was something that Korea could not afford at that time. The banquet for roughly 100 people also seemed to have been a significant financial stretch for Korea. In fact, it was possible only because Korea sent additional money to the Korean commission at the fair. A reporter by the name of John Cockerill later asserted in the *New York Herald* that the Korean commission was in a dire financial situation. In the article, he asserted that they had a severe lack of cash, that the revered royal band played at a saloon in exchange for food, and that Chŏng barely managed to get home aided by acquaintances.<sup>83</sup> Whether Cockerill's account is indeed true remains in question, but some elements may be true given the fact that funds were indeed very limited on this trip. This is revealed through many aspects, one of which is that the commissioner tried to save costs by staying in a cheaper room and preparing his own meals instead of paying to eat at the place of board.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, although most of the Korean exhibit was donated to American museums and schools to serve educational purposes, some were sold by Chŏng which suggests the commission lacked adequate funds.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> John Cockerill, "Scenes from the Hermit Kingdom." *New York Herald*, December 22, 1895.

<sup>84</sup> Yi, *Kūndaesa ūi han changmyŏn: Columbia segye pangnamhoe wa Han 'guk*, 106-107.

<sup>85</sup> *Kojong Sillok*, November 9, 1893; It should be noted here, however, that other nations such as Japan also sold parts of their exhibits.

In going through the archives and finding dinner invitations from other nations, it seems to have been the case that other commission teams also bestowed dinner for the fair organizers and other national representatives at the fair. In that sense, Koreans were partaking in a ceremonious affair that was in some ways, something that many displayed as proper etiquette. Yet, at the same time, one cannot discount the fact that this was something that was very costly and something that Koreans could not well afford. The fact that the Korean delegation would go to such lengths to honor the fair officials and President Cleveland by throwing a lavish banquet and by bringing the royal band all come together to show the Korean delegation's eagerness to present itself well to American leaders and to strengthen good diplomatic ties. At the time of the fair, Korea felt that its sovereignty was under threat from Japan and Russia, and it looked to the United States as its source of hope in preserving its sovereignty—thus, Korea participated in the exposition. In fact, this concern proved to have been valid and would culminate a year later in the Sino-Japanese War that would be fought on Korean soil and over Korea.

*The Discrepancy between the Official and Unofficial American Voices*

In short, the trajectory with which diplomatic relations with America began in the first place—relations that began in hopes that the United States would fend off other nations with interests in Korea and this hope that was based on the supposed ideals of the United States—continued throughout Korean engagement with the United States throughout the late-nineteenth century and even through the early twentieth century. What is remarkable, however, is how Korea repeatedly turned to the United States even when the official American policy towards Korea was one of strict non-intervention, and

the American government repeatedly turned down Korea's requests for help. Although it can be argued that Korea, in its fragile state at the turn of the twentieth century, turned to the United States out of desperation, it seems more plausible given the evidence that Korea had good reason to hope in America. As Yur-Bok Lee and Wayne Patterson point out, "the Americans spoke with two voices, not one, which began the duality that characterizes the relationship."<sup>86</sup> Reinforcing the aforementioned notions of America as shaped by the *Chosŏn Ch'aengnyak* and the treaty, as misleading as some of those things may have been, were the unofficial voices and advice of American missionaries, diplomats, and ministers who spoke to Kojong and Korean officials with messages of assurance that countered the United States' official stance of disinterest and neutrality towards Korea.

There are numerous examples of this pattern, one of which is shown by Kojong's request to American Minister Heard for American forces to come for his protection in light of the Queen Dowager's death in 1890.<sup>87</sup> At Heard's reply that "His Majesty was laboring under a great error [for Heard] had no such instructions" and that he "was only authorized to call for men in case they were needed for the protection of American lives or property," Kojong "seemed much taken aback by this" as he had assumed that American troops would be sent in case of trouble.<sup>88</sup> Kojong could have been operating under his interpretation of "good offices" and the previous interactions with American

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<sup>86</sup> Wayne Patterson and Hilary Conroy, "Duality and Dominance: An Overview of Korea-American Relations, 1866-1997," in *Korean-American Relations, 1866-1997*, eds. Yur-Bok Lee and Wayne Patterson. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>87</sup> Augustine Heard, letter to Secretary of State, No. 13, June 7, 1890, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume II*, 124.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 125.

officials and missionaries who had reassured him of American goodness, or there is also the strong possibility that Kojong utilized this rhetoric and the previous duality in the American voice for his own purposes. Whatever the case may have been, rather than accepting replies like Heard's, Kojong persistently steered American ministers in a different direction and constantly "reminded" new American officials coming to Korea of this special relationship between Korea and the United States. From this meeting, Heard went on to explain to the American Secretary of State that Kojong "had always looked upon an American as a true friend, on whom he could rely in an emergency."<sup>89</sup> Kojong ended up requesting forces again and when the next morning, Heard replied to the Korean official who came by that he had not heard any reply from Captain Cooper in Chemulpo [Inch'ŏn] in the Asiatic station, Heard "was astonished to find he still believed, or pretended to believe, that I was going to send the men to the Palace."<sup>90</sup> In the end, even though Heard did not seem to have had the authority to do so, he had Captain Cooper and fifty men come to Seoul.<sup>91</sup> In yet another display of the discrepancy in the American stance, Heard assured Kojong "that the interest felt by the United States in Korea was sincere and deep" followed by a promise that Heard will bring up the issue of increasing the American navy presence in Korean waters to the American government.<sup>92</sup> As was often the case, many of the American officials and missionaries did indeed fear

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 126.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Augustine Heard, letter to Secretary of State, No. 413, June 28, 1893, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume II*, 134.

for the safety of the king or believed in the importance of protecting American interests in the midst of competing powers. Thus, they acted accordingly.

Perhaps even more revealing of the dual nature of the American voice are the reprimands that came from Washington, D.C. Most of the reprimands to the American officials in Korea came with one message—that they were not adhering to the official policy of non-intervention. In regards to Foulk’s engagement with Japanese and Chinese representatives, Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard chastised him saying that “The Government of the United States has no concern in these matters beyond that of a friendly State which has treated with Core[a] as independent and Sovereign and hopes to see her position as such among nations assured,” and thus advised him to adhere strictly to non-interference.<sup>93</sup> This was a repeated pattern in the exchanges between the American officials in Korea and Washington, D.C. as can be clearly seen through warnings that came to American minister and consul general to Korea (1894-1897), John M. B. Sill. Upon hearing from the Secretary of the Navy in the Asiatic Station that Sill had given permission to Kojong to store “valuable packages” in the American legation, Edwin F. Uhl admonished him saying that this was “outside of [Sill’s] representative functions or prerogatives.”<sup>94</sup> Moreover, following the murder of Queen Min, Sill, who sheltered Korean officials opposing Japan, was given another warning with Secretary of State Richard Olney saying, “The Department sees with disfavor your disposition to forget that you are not to interfere with local concerns and politics of Korea but are to limit yourself

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<sup>93</sup> T. F. Bayard, letter to George C. Foulk, No. 59, August 18, 1885, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume I*, 130.

<sup>94</sup> Edwin F. Uhl, letter to John M. B. Sill, No. 60, February 26, 1895, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume II*, 136.

strictly to the care of American interests.”<sup>95</sup> Sill, who had fought to maintain American interests in Korea, disagreed with the Cleveland administration—which was intent on maintaining good relations with Japan—over what should be the American stance on Japan’s encroachment into Korea. This internal conflict only ended when, on January 11, 1896, Olney sent a telegram to Sill that read, “Your course in continued intermeddling with Korean political affairs in violation of repeated instructions noted with astonishment and emphatic disapproval. Cable briefly any explanation you have to make also answer whether you intend to comply with instructions given”<sup>96</sup> To this strongly-worded telegram, Sill responded on the 13<sup>th</sup> that he “will act according to instructions scrupulously.”<sup>97</sup>

Even if it was the case that Kojong pretended at times to believe in America “good offices” and merely used it for his interests, it also seems to have been the case that he often displayed genuine faith in several American officials and missionaries. Kojong who was not privy to many of the discrepancies between Washington, D.C. and the American officials in Korea (or, for that matter, even amongst the American officials in Korea), often took his cues from the American officials around him. He had several American missionaries and officials around him to whom he turned for information and advice on even minor matters.<sup>98</sup> Allen was an American missionary, physician, and later,

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<sup>95</sup> Richard Olney, telegram to John M. B. Sill, December 2, 1895, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume II* Telegram, 140.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Olney, telegram to John M. B. Sill, January 11, 1896, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume II* Telegram, 140.

<sup>97</sup> John M. B. Sill, telegram to Richard Olney, January 13, 1896, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume II* Telegram, 141.

<sup>98</sup> Lucius H. Foote, letter to Secretary of State, No. 17, July 19, 1883, in *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, Volume I*, 31.

American minister who Kojong especially trusted and kept close. When Kojong asked what Korea could do to “interest the U.S. Government in Korea, and secure...help in keeping off China,” Allen told him to give the gold mining to an American company.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, when asked how Korea could strengthen ties between Korea and the United States, Allen deceived Kojong into granting “an emigration franchise to a friend to pay off a political debt” by having Kojong believe that his friend was an official in the American government.<sup>100</sup> In 1903, with Japan quickly encroaching upon Korea, Allen again told Kojong that “the United States was his friend, and that [Americans] were the only people who could speak a strong and disinterested word for him.”<sup>101</sup> Although it may be true that many Americans in Seoul did what they could to change their government’s stance on Korea, the fact of the matter was that these assurances and advice were not in line with the United States government’s policy on Korea. Nevertheless, Kojong trusted them as they came from those whom he trusted and believed spoke with authority on the American government.<sup>102</sup> Further adding to the confusion for Kojong was that many of the people with whom he held these private and unofficial conversations were those who held official positions such as Allen, who may have started out as a missionary and doctor but went on to become the secretary of the American legation and then minister. It was sometimes difficult to distinguish the blurred line between their official and unofficial stances. What all these exchanges between Kojong and the American officials and missionaries in Korea highlight are that the images of

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<sup>99</sup> Harrington, 46.

<sup>100</sup> Patterson and Conroy, 4.

<sup>101</sup> Harrington, 46-7.

<sup>102</sup> For a brief discussion of some of the things that Americans in Seoul did to change their government’s policy, see Harrington, 47.



America as introduced by the *Chosŏn Ch'aengnyak* and the treaty were all too reinforced by these exchanges, and that Korea turned to America for assistance to its situations in the late-nineteenth century, hoping with good reason that the United States would come to its aid.

### **The Hope in America for Independence Efforts**

In the end, when the Japanese protectorate was forced onto Korea in 1905, the United States was the first to pack up its legation and leave Korea. As has been widely discussed by many scholars, with the secret agreement made between Japan and the United States in the Taft-Katsura memorandum on July 29, 1905, the United States was more than fine to pack up and leave Korea.<sup>103</sup> Not only did the United States close its legation, but also sold each of the American enterprises in Korea to the Japanese after 1905. In fact, by 1909, the only American enterprise left in Korea was mining.<sup>104</sup> As can be expected, the closing of the American legation sparked much anger from both Koreans and American residents in Korea, and Koreans appealed to the United States several times before November 1905 even attempting to appeal to President Theodore Roosevelt directly. Their appeals were based on both legal and moral grounds. Koreans believed that they could move the United States into action if Americans knew that the Japanese had used force during the negotiation process. Not yet knowing of the Japanese-American agreement and the United States' stance on the Japanese intentions on Korea,

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<sup>103</sup> The agreement was made between the American Secretary of War William Howard Taft and Prime Minister Katsura Taro of Japan, and consisted of the United States recognizing Japanese control over Korea in exchange for Japan's recognition of American interests in the Philippines.

<sup>104</sup> Chay, 168.

Koreans made these appeals in vain. In the end, even the fourth and last mission which consisted of Emperor Kojong giving Allen and two businessmen \$10,000 to hire an international lawyer so that he may present the Korean case to President Roosevelt failed.<sup>105</sup>

Even so, a segment of the Korean population continued to turn to the United States with expectations after 1905. Of particular interest to many Koreans were talks and rumors of an impending war between the United States and Japan. Newspapers such as the *Taehan Maeil Sinbo*, *Kongnip Sinbo*, and the *Sinhan Minbo* began writing on the possibility of this war more noticeably from 1906 onwards. For its causes, the papers cited the tensions that arose between the two nations from Roosevelt's support of the Russians at the Portsmouth Peace Conference that led to the Japanese not being paid indemnities. Moreover, the anti-Japanese sentiments in the United States that called for the exclusion of Japanese workers in the United States and Japanese students from attending public schools in San Francisco were also escalating these tensions. Lastly, the papers also discussed the Japanese interest in the Philippines and Hawaii which they claimed were all leading to an "inevitable" war. The papers reprinted editorials and articles from American newspapers full of anti-Japanese sentiments and the possibility of war with the Japanese to further highlight this impending war. Central to these discussions and most critical to Koreans was the hope that Korea may become independent through this war. In fact, an editorial in the September 6, 1907 issue of the *Kongnip Sinbo* called this anticipated war the "opportunity to recover Korea's

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 153.

independence.”<sup>106</sup> This war never occurred, and Japan and the United States ended up fighting on the same side in World War I.

Even when the war did not materialize, a segment of the Korean population did not abandon this hope in the United States to help solve their situation throughout the colonial period. As has been narrated by many scholars, Koreans were greatly inspired by Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points and the right to self-determination in 1918. Thus, they made several efforts to appeal to the United States for their independence. Excited by the right to self-determination, Koreans struggling for independence in Shanghai and the United States put together a plan to send a delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. Syngman Rhee, Chōng Han’gyōng, and Min Ch’anho were thus chosen by the Korean National Association [*Taehanin kungminhoe*] of the Koreans in America to attend the Paris Peace Conference, but were unable to go because they were denied passports by the United States. In general, numerous petitions emerged around this time to appeal to the United States through the Paris Peace Conference. From Shanghai, Yō Unhyōng and Chang Tōksu addressed a petition for Korea’s independence to Wilson in November of 1918 to be delivered to Charles Richard Crane, a member of the American Section of the Paris Peace Conference, who was in Shanghai at the time.<sup>107</sup> Then, in February of 1919, they formed the New Korea Youth Party [*Sinhan ch’ōngnyōndang*] and dispatched Kim Kyusik who was able to go from Shanghai with the Chinese delegation to Paris on March 13, 1919, around the same time as the March First Movement and the establishment of the Korean Provisional Government which followed in April. He took advantage of the

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<sup>106</sup> Chaegwan Chōng, “Mi-II chōnjaeng i Han’uk ūi kihoe,” *Kongnip Sinbo*, September 6, 1907, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Chōn Sangsuk “Che 1ch’a segyedaejōn ihu kukchejilsō ūi chaep’yōn kwa minjok chidosa tūl ūi taewoe insik,” *Han’guk Chōnch’i Oegyosa Nonch’ong* 26:1 (2005): 321.

attention that the March First Movement was garnering and established an embassy in Paris.<sup>108</sup> Then, as the ambassador plenipotentiary, he petitioned for Korea's independence to the Allied nations. Numerous other petitions followed that included Syngman Rhee and Chŏng Han'gyŏng's on behalf of the Korean National Association in America, a group of Christian ministers' that included Son Pyŏnghŭi as a member, while "A Letter Addressed to the Paris Conference by the Confucians" was also presented by Kwak Chongsŏk, Kim Pokhan, and 137 others. Moreover, the "Female Students' Letter to the Paris Peace Conference" was also a petition for Korean independence that appealed to President Wilson saying, "President Wilson of the United States of America, we look upon you as our father. Please accept our declaration of independence and announce it to all the countries of the world."<sup>109</sup> All these petitions were submitted in the belief and hope that Wilson and the United States would apply the "right to self-determination" to the Korean context and help Koreans gain independence from Japan. As has been revealed in the coverage of several newspapers of the war scare between Japan and the United States, Koreans believed that the United States was much more powerful than Japan, and had the power to make a drastic change in their situation.

For this reason, Koreans continued their efforts to appeal to the United States. For instance, Koreans in the United States actively sought to gain the attention of the United States and gain its assistance as shown by the First Korean Freedom Congress that was held in Philadelpia from April 14-16, 1919. Its aim, as stated by Sŏ Chaep'il, was to

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 321; Yun Taewŏn, "Ilche sigi ch'inmi oegyoron kwa taemi insik," *Naeil ūl yŏn'ŭn yŏksa* 12 (2003.6), 34, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Journal/ArticleDetail/484231>; Ho-min Yang, "The Perception of the United States during the Japanese Colonial Period," in *Korean Perceptions of the United States: A History of their Origins and Formation*, trans. Michael Finch (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2006), 235

<sup>109</sup> Yun, 33; Translated by Finch.

bring awareness in the United States of Korea's plight under Japan. At the Congress, Syngman Rhee also drafted a resolution titled "Appeal to America" whose title is telling of the hope and emphasis that the Congress placed on the United States in its aim to achieve independence.

As scholars on Korean-American relations have narrated, it is true that Koreans came to be disillusioned over the realization that Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points was not intended to be applicable to them. What is often overlooked in this narrative is the fact that the hope that was placed on the United States continued and was expressed periodically throughout the colonial period. Around the same time that disappointment over and harsh denouncement of Wilson's Fourteen Points was printed in Korean publications, hope in America was being expressed as well. For instance, on April 27 and 28, 1920, a *Tonga Ilbo* editorial denounced Wilson's call for right to self-determination and accused America of adhering to the Monroe Doctrine, racial prejudice, and parading righteousness and humanitarianism around as a façade for its real ambition for domination.<sup>110</sup> A mere four months later in the same newspaper, articles expressed hope in America as a party of American congressmen and their family members stopped by Korea and Japan in August, 1920 after visiting the Philippines, China, and Manchuria on a fact-finding mission.<sup>111</sup> In one of many articles that discussed the congressmen's visit in the *Tonga Ilbo*, an article's title, "We Welcome the Party of American Congressmen," was very telling of the tone of the article. Here, the *Tonga Ilbo* profusely complimented

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<sup>110</sup> "Chŏnjaeng ūi chongsik ūn hasi e chaehano, che 2 hoe," *Tonga Ilbo*, April 28, 1920.

<sup>111</sup> "Mi ūiwŏn Sanghae robot'ŏ Manju rŭl kyŏngyu hayŏ toIl hal ch'ongsu sipsam myŏng, kajok ūl haphayŏ samsip ch'il myŏng," *Tonga Ilbo*, August 11, 1920; "Mi ūiwŏndan yŏjŏng, sipo il cho Kyŏngsŏng e iphal yejŏng," *Tonga Ilbo*, August 11, 1920.

the United States calling it “the light of the world and the protector of humanity” and welcomed this group of Americans. The editorial was also quick to point out,

America was originally a place of refuge for those who were suffering and a place of liberation for the oppressed. How many of you Americans once found liberty in the wide open spaces of nature away from the restraints on your conscience placed on you in Europe, and how many of you have found freedom among your citizens... What have you gentlemen observed since entering Korea? Have you seen cramped houses, ugly streets, dangerous roads, and desolate mountains and streams? Through this you can imagine what cruel treatment the Korean people received in the past and how much their life is being stifled in the present...

The editorial continued on, telling the American Congressmen that Koreans want democracy and implored in Christian language the seriousness of their desire to pursue democracy and asked the Congressmen to convey their hopes to their American “brothers in the United States.”<sup>112</sup> The editorial also added a short but noticeable reminder that the United States and Korea had previously signed a treaty of amity implying the United States’ responsibility in this case. In this way, this editorial implored the United States’ assistance and sought to appeal to and evoke the United States’ sympathy by bringing up their advocacy of democracy, importance placed on the Christian faith, as well as highlighting their commonality to America’s past. In fact, it is important to note that many of these appeals demonstrated patterns and rhetoric similar to those of the late-nineteenth century.

Although this article was addressed to the group of congressmen, it demonstrated the hope that some Koreans placed in America, and built onto the image of America as a site of hope. If this was not enough to convey this sentiment, the following *Chosŏn Ilbo* article sealed it by depicting these congressmen as having gone to great lengths to enter Korea “despite the current epidemic” [cholera] and therefore demonstrated an

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<sup>112</sup> “Miguk üiwöndan ül hwangyöng hanora,” *Tonga Ilbo*, August 24, 1920. Translated by Finch in Yang, 252-254.

“undoubted determination” and “sense of purpose” in this trip. The article went on to say that “for ordinary Koreans their arrival is like rain after a drought or like being given water after being thirsty.”<sup>113</sup> Much hope was placed on this trip as this editorial demonstrates, and as is further revealed by the attempt made by Yang Kit’ak, then editorial director of the *Tonga Ilbo*, to deliver a petition for independence to the American congressmen before getting caught. Moreover, Yŏ Unhyŏng and An Ch’angho appealed to these same congressmen while they were in Shanghai and accompanied them all the way to Beijing in order to plead their case.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, according to Yun Ch’iho’s diary, an entertainment committee of fifteen people (that was formed by Sin Hŭngu, the director of YMCA, and included Yun) was formed to plan the reception for the American congressmen, and at this reception, the supposed plan was to deliver to them a written petition regarding Korea’s plight, shout “manse” and have Koreans have a “great wailing when the party arrives at the Seoul Station.”<sup>115</sup> This reception was swiftly put down, however, by Japanese authorities. Regarding this crackdown on the reception and demonstration, the *Chosŏn Ilbo* editorial further expressed its hope in America by writing the following:

The Americans will not keep their lips sealed once they have returned to the safety of their own country. It is only natural that once people have heard and become conscious of these things they will react. The party of American congressmen have seen and heard the actions of our people with their own eyes and ears, and once they have returned home, they will not just forget about them. May this create a big problem!<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Yang, 234. As Yang points out, this article was censored and led to the *Chosŏn Ilbo*’s suspension.

<sup>114</sup> Kim, *HanMi Oegyo kwan’gye 100nyŏnsa*, 444; Chŏn, 332.

<sup>115</sup> Yun Ch’iho ilgi, August 17, 1920.

<sup>116</sup> Yang, 255.

Nothing came of these efforts regarding the congressmen's visit, but Koreans continued to place their hope in America with the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference (Pacific Conference) that began on November 12, 1921 and ended on February 6, 1922. The Korean Provincial Government formed the "Association of supporters for Diplomacy at the Pacific Conference" [*T'aep'yŏngyang hoeŭi oegyo huwŏnhoe*] to appeal for Korean independence while the Association of Koreans [*Han'gukin hyŏphoe*] in Washington submitted a petition for Korean independence that had 367 signatures.<sup>117</sup> Meanwhile, the *Tonga Ilbo* closely followed the conference as it had done the congressmen's visit. After the lack of results from the Washington Conference, leftist critiques of America (which will be discussed in Chapter Four) became more prominent. However, there still remained a glimmer of hope in America throughout the colonial period that showed itself through discussions of America as the "modern" and "new civilization," and subsequently, their solution to improve their situation. Moreover, in the latter half of the 1930s, around the time of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Kim Ku, the president of the Korean Provincial Government, advocated diplomacy with the United States once again revealing the continual understanding of the United States as the one who could restore Korean independence.<sup>118</sup>

## **Conclusion**

It is important to note that there were of course, voices of concern and skepticism in regards to reliance on America throughout this period of early diplomatic relations. Yu

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<sup>117</sup> Chŏn, 323.

<sup>118</sup> Yun, 35-36.



Kilchun, for one, who had joined the mission [*pobingsa*] to the United States in 1883 and who remained to study in the United States in the Governor Dummer Academy until 1885, accurately discerned that America did not have any special ties to Korea and that its rhetoric of goodwill was merely that—rhetoric. He wrote that in reality, America would not come to Korea’s aid in times of trouble.<sup>119</sup> Yun Ch’iho, another elite who studied in the United States from 1888 to 1893 during which he carefully observed American political and social institutions, religion, and customs, also had a more sobering view of the United States. In reference to the European and American lack of aiding foreign patriots, he wrote in his diary that “Time hasn’t come yet when one nation shall rise up in its strength to help the weak against the oppressor for the sake of justice and freedom.”<sup>120</sup> Moreover, he stressed in reference to the hypocrisy that he felt was amongst Americans as they espoused the “inalienable right of man” while exercising harsh racial prejudice that what dictates the reality in America is not so much the notion of the “inalienable right of man” or justice as so many people talk about, but rather, it is might.<sup>121</sup> In other words, inalienable right and justice applied only to those who have *might* as shown by how stronger nations and races deal with weaker nations and races.<sup>122</sup> He further clarified this by saying, “Let theorists, speculators, orators and fools say what they may, the principle that practically and actually rules this world is not *right* but *might*.”

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<sup>119</sup> Yu Kilchun *Yu Kilchun chōnsō IV*, ed. Yu Kilchun chōnsō p’yōnch’an wiwōnhoe (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1971), 323.

<sup>120</sup> Yun Ch’iho ilgi, February 12, 1893.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, February 14, 1890.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, May 6, 1890.

‘Might is Right’ is the god of this world.”<sup>123</sup> His acceptance of this notion of Herbert Spencer when read within the context of the rest of his diaries point to Yun’s deep skepticism regarding American aid for Korea.

Moreover, there were also voices such as An Ch’angho who opposed the appeal to President Wilson for recognition of Korean independence following his “Fourteen Points” statement, saying with much skepticism, “Is the American-Japanese war going to happen as a result of our negotiations with President Wilson solely for the sake of the independence of Korea without any reason other than the American virtue of benevolence?”<sup>124</sup> The critical discussions on America would come pouring forth especially in the mid-1920s following the “failure” at the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference and within the rise of leftist thought in Korea as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

However, as discussed in this chapter, the official diplomatic relations that Kojong carried out with the United States operated under the assumption that did believe in or at the very least, relied on and utilized the rhetoric of American benevolence. Taking its cues from the ideas of America as espoused in the *Chosŏn Ch’aengnyak*, as interpreted from the 1882 Treaty of Amity and Commerce, and as reinforced by the unofficial voices and actions of American officials and missionaries, Korea established a trajectory in its diplomatic relations with America that was shaped by hopes that the United States would fend off other nations with interests in Korea. As seen by the effects of this trajectory even throughout the colonial period, the notion of America as a site of hope for Korea that was constructed throughout the late-nineteenth century would prove

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid, February 14, 1890.

<sup>124</sup> Yang, 234.

to be a significant and lasting meaning of America for Koreans. Reinforcing this meaning even more were the various articulations of America as the model and source of solutions for Korea, and this is the topic of discussion in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Americanism in Colonial Korea: The Articulation of “America” as the Source of Solutions for Korea

#### Introduction

The colonial period was a time in which “jazz,” “urban,” “mechanism,” “high heel,” “low heel,” “walking,” “drive,” “sports,” and countless other English words peppered the pages of Korean publications, while Hollywood stars were prominent enough to be used as adjectives—the John Barrymore hairstyle, the Lillian Gish smile, the Gary Cooper height, and the Greta Garbo face. The end of World War I—from which the United States emerged as a leading nation with evident economic, military, and cultural power—ushered in an era of the global rise of America in the 1920s and a phenomenon that contemporaries from various parts of the world referred to as Americanism.<sup>1</sup> Aesthetics, culture, institutions, and technological developments that were seen as being American rose up simultaneously in various parts of the world. Within the context of the global expansion of capitalism that helped circulate these forms globally as well as made them relevant and desirable, parts of “America” also circulated in Korea similarly as in other countries. In the midst of this circulation, Korean writers articulated “America,” its images and significances.

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<sup>1</sup> The term, “Americanism” was defined differently by various people, and its meanings were constantly shifting and contested over (particularly in the United States) by various actors through different time periods and contexts. Often, it was used to refer to that which is distinctively “American,” whether it be the United States’ institutions, values, practices, ideals, or culture. In the United States, it was sometimes defined as loyalty to the United States or a defense of American political ideals while abroad, Americanism was often used in a critical tone to refer to blind or excessive emulation, admiration, and/or acceptance of culture, institutions, ideals, and practices recognized as being American. This chapter uses Americanism in a more neutral tone and more broadly to refer to the acceptance and emulation of cultural practices, institutions, and developments recognized as being American.

America came to mean a diverse number of things to Koreans in the colonial period as will be discussed in the next chapter. However, this chapter argues that one of the major notions of America that emerged during this time was that of America as the source of solutions for colonized Koreans. Within the global and colonial contexts, America came to be articulated in relation to two terms in particular—“modern [*modŏn*]” and “new civilization [*sinmunmyŏng*].” Although these two terms were neither synonymous nor able to be conflated with each other at this time, both connoted the newest and necessary component to rising in the global capitalist structure. Thus, America came to be relevant and desirable for Koreans at this historically specific moment, and seemed to offer them a guide to improve their standing in the global capitalist order. American institutions, developments, society, and even culture, then, were evoked by Korean writers as models and the answers to the many problems plaguing Korean society. Further perpetuating this notion of America as the source of solutions were understandings of America as a site of hope as discussed in the previous chapter, and Korean independence efforts that continued to place hope in America.

In exploring the articulation of America as the source of solutions in this chapter, I first lay out the context for this articulation. To that end, I discuss the circulation of American goods, culture, and symbols in the world and in colonial Korea to portray the prominence of these circulations of “America” beginning in the 1920s as well as to properly contextualize the circulation of “America” in Korea as part of a larger, simultaneous global trend due to the global expansion of capitalism. Then, I will explore how the terms, “modern” and “new civilization,” became an important part of the articulation of America, and as such, played into the construction of “America” as the

source of solutions for Korea. I will then discuss the ways in which Korean writers evoked America as the solution for Korea, and point to some of the ways in which this evocation materialized later in South Korea in order to show the lasting effect of this articulation of America.

### **Circulation of “America” in the World and in Colonial Korea**

Before exploring the ways in which “America” was constructed and what it meant in colonial Korea, it is important to note that Koreans’ engagement with and discussions of aspects of America such as American cinema, jazz, institutions, ways of life, and technological developments were, in fact, not particular to Korea. The Koreans’ engagement and discussions were taking place in relation to and within the context of the global rise of the United States and “Americanism” in the 1920s.

To elaborate on the United States’ global rise, various countries in Europe and Asia had started to notice the United States’ rising power as early as the latter half of the nineteenth century, and discussions on America emerged. However, it was post-World War I when the global rise of America began in earnest. The United States emerged from the war as a leading nation, having proven its economic, military, and cultural power. A sense of “national exceptionalism” and moral power out of the belief that it had been critical in bringing peace and victory to Europe pervaded the United States, and these beliefs brought on insistent expansionism culturally, economically, and politically after 1919.<sup>2</sup> The United States continued its earlier efforts to search for more markets and investment opportunities worldwide as well as to be the moral voice to the world, but

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<sup>2</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 155, 160.

post-1919, pursued them much more vigorously and in a more hegemonic manner. For instance, the United States actively sought to help settle postwar issues of war debts and reparations, and one of the things it pushed for was Europe's adoption of the international gold standard which may have improved international business but also strengthened the United States' large gold reserve.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the American Relief Administration promoted "America and its way of life [as] an integral part of their operation" and its director, Herbert Hoover, saw to it that the relief recipients knew that their aid was from the benevolent America.<sup>4</sup>

American efforts towards outward projection were most prominent in the film industry. American films which had been rather insignificant outside of the United States before World War I rose to prominence not only due to the French being preoccupied with wartime and post-war efforts, but in large part to the Webb-Pomerance Act (1918) that endorsed discrete trade practices abroad—such as block booking systems for American movies—while banning these practices in the United States.<sup>5</sup> In fact, Hollywood was eager to protect and grow its film market abroad since domestic revenues covered production costs at most, and success in foreign markets was essential for profit.<sup>6</sup> So even after Britain, Germany and France attempted to restrict the number of American films and increase their respective domestic production after 1925, Americans found

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<sup>3</sup> Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 19.

<sup>4</sup> The American Relief Administration was an organization that was established in 1919 as a relief mission to Europe in the aftermath of World War I. It was established by the United States Congress, and Herbert Hoover who would later become president, served as its director. Its aim was to offer food and relief supplies to the various countries of Europe. Ibid, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Tyrrell, 160.

<sup>6</sup> Costigliola, 176.

ways to get around the restrictions set against them by investing in and collaborating on projects with European film companies, bringing in European directors and actors, and producing multilingual productions so much that by 1931, Americans were able to recover 90 percent of their 1927 market in England and Germany.<sup>7</sup>

Tariff policies of the 1920s such as the Fordney-McCumber Act of 1922 further showed practices of encouraging outward projection but guarding the United States by establishing duties that protected domestic industries from foreign competition.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the World League against Alcoholism that began in Washington, D.C. in 1919, worked in different capacities in over 100 countries to advocate prohibition as practiced in the United States at the time and to protect against foreign countries smuggling alcohol into the United States.<sup>9</sup> “Fordism,” or Ford’s assembly-line mass production, was also exported initially through branches of American manufacturing companies in Canada, Australia, and Europe, but had the effect of local manufacturers “Fordiz[ing] their own plants” “simply to survive the cheaper competition” of American manufacturing companies.<sup>10</sup> Forms of American cultural and economic “expansionism” such as those discussed here laid the groundwork for the rise of Americanism in various parts of the world.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 177.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 160-161.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 161; David W. Ellwood, “American Myth, American Model, and the Quest for a British Modernity,” in *The American Century in Europe*, eds. Laurence Moore and Maurizio Vaudagna (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 136. Moreover, in Germany, smaller businesses that did not have mass assembly lines objected to German industrialists’ adoption of Fordism which threatened their survival and well-being. Costigliola, 178.



Such efforts on the part of the United States seemed to be effective as this period witnessed an unprecedented circulation of American institutions, practices, ideas, aesthetics and culture globally. Moreover, in the aftermath of “a total, unstoppable slaughter with devastating social and cultural consequences” that was World War I, people around the world were disillusioned with the European powers and their “principles and values” that had shaped the old order and led to war.<sup>11</sup> Thus, many regions welcomed a new era that America seemed to promise. However, America’s unilateral efforts and the disillusionment with Europe alone cannot fully explain the wide circulation of things American and for the remarkable ways in which they gained currency and people engaged with them deeply and meaningfully in different parts of the world. What is perhaps even more remarkable was how Americanism played out in similar ways in each region. These resemblances and the way in which American things gained such currency, in turn, were possible only within the specific context of the countries’ location in “a single, increasingly interdependent, and hierarchically organized global space-time” under the global expansion of capitalism.<sup>12</sup>

The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries witnessed contemporaneous and interlinked phenomena such as the emergence of a stronger world market, imperial expansions, new communication and infrastructural technologies as well as new technologies and methods in production, new forms of organization such as corporations,

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<sup>11</sup> Walter LaFeber, “The United States and Europe in an Age of American Unilateralism,” in *The American Century in Europe*, eds. Laurence Moore and Maurizio Vaudagna (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 32; Frederico Romero, “Democracy and Power: The Interactive Nature of the American Century,” in *The American Century in Europe*, eds. Laurence Moore and Maurizio Vaudagna (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 51.

<sup>12</sup> Manu Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44:4 (2002): 788.

and new credit systems that restructured the global space economically, politically, and socially. Moreover, “the spatial widening and deepening of the world economy along with colonial territorial expansion yoked together diverse communities, regions, and places into a complex space of coexistence and interdependence.”<sup>13</sup> As Marx explains, embedded in the concept of capital is this very universalizing tendency, and the creation of this new global space of “coexistence and interdependence” was an expression of the capital’s universalizing drive.<sup>14</sup> The structures of capitalism, then, aided in the mobility and flow of American goods, institutions, practices, and aesthetics globally as well as made them meaningful. For instance, it was the structures of capitalism that rendered categories like scientific and technological developments, new methods of production (such as Fordism), new consumption practices, new gender norms, and new ideas of domesticity surrounding the gendered divide between domestic versus value-producing labor as meaningful responses and projects in each region. Thus, America and “Americanism” which offered and exemplified these latest and most modern scientific, technological, and social developments to the world were not only relevant but also deemed necessary within this setting—allowing them to gain currency in each region simultaneously at this specific time.

One of the most prominent traces of America was Hollywood films which dominated the markets of various regions. By 1925, American films comprised 95 percent of total films shown in Great Britain, 95 percent in Australia and New Zealand,

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<sup>13</sup> Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 41.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

70 percent in France, 65 percent in Italy, and 60 percent in Germany.<sup>15</sup> Even as late as the late-1930s, more than 50 percent of the sound films in the Netherlands were American films.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, in the 1920s, 75 percent of France's most stylish theaters were American-owned, and Germany's number of cinemas increased 35 percent between 1920 and 1929 while the number of German films produced drastically decreased from 646 to 175. Such figures are telling of the prominence of the American film industry in 1920s Europe.<sup>17</sup>

In the same way, American films became popular in colonial Korea. Movies were introduced to a small segment of the population in Korea in June of 1903, but even in the beginning of the 1920s, the few movie theaters that existed at the time were still limited to larger cities like Seoul and Pyöngyang, and many people were still unfamiliar with movies.<sup>18</sup> This changed in the mid-1920s with the global rise of American films. Pak Myöngjin writes that American films which began coming into Korea around 1923 were imported in earnest from 1925 as seen by the more than twenty articles that appeared in the *Tonga Ilbo* in 1925 on American films, and the advertisements for these films that appeared daily in newspapers.<sup>19</sup> The rise in popularity of films is also evidenced by the fact that movie theaters which numbered 11 in 1916 rose to 25 in 1924, 43 in 1934, and

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<sup>15</sup> Costigliola, 176.

<sup>16</sup> Rob Kroes and Maarten van Rossem, eds., *Anti-Americanism in Europe* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1986), 55.

<sup>17</sup> Costigliola, 176.

<sup>18</sup> T'aesu Kim. *Kkotkach'i p'io maehokke hara*, (Seoul: Hwangso Chari, 2005), 154-55; Sun-Young Yoo (Sönyöng Yu), "Hwangsaeik sikminji üi munhwa chöngch'esöng: Americanized modernity," *Öllon kwa Sahoe* 18 (1997): 109.

<sup>19</sup> Pak Myöngjin, "Han'guk yönghwa san'öp e issösö Miguk yönghwa üi yöngnyang" in *Miguk ün uri ege muötina* (Seoul: Han'guk Pangsong Saöpdan, 1989), 236-237; Yoo, 109.

74 in 1942.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the *Tonga Ilbo* reported that there were 3,000 regular moviegoers in Kyōngsōng (Seoul) in 1925, and according to the Japanese Government General records, there were 5,870,000 spectators in 1932, 11,196,000 spectators in 1937, and 26,400,000 in 1942.<sup>21</sup> The major American studios—Paramount, Universal, United Artist, First National, MGM, FBO, Fox, Metro, and PKO—all distributed films in colonial Korea, and with American movies making up roughly 95% of the imported movies in the 1920s and even in the 1930s, making up 60-70% of the movie market in Korea, American cinema came to have a dominant cultural presence in Korea.<sup>22</sup>

The popularity of American films can be further witnessed by the fact that when *Way Down East* starring Lillian Gish was first imported into Korea, various theaters fought over who would show the film first to the extent that it eventually led to a lawsuit among the theaters.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Koreans competed over the distribution of *The Black Pirate* (1926) by going directly to Tokyo (before it could get into the middlemen's hands) with victory going to whoever paid the highest film tax.<sup>24</sup> After the outbreak of war with China, in 1937, a writer for *Chogwang* discussed the Koreans' significant disappointment over the colonial government's ban on foreign movies, and their "addiction" to these films.<sup>25</sup> Although the writer was critical of this film culture in Korea, his disparagement

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>22</sup> Sun-Young Yoo (Sōnyōng Yu), "Embodiment of American Modernity in Colonial Korea," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2:3 (2001): 429.

<sup>23</sup> "Kūkchang mandam," *Pyōlgōngon* 5 (1927.3.1): 94.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> *Chogwang* [The Light of Korea] was a monthly journal published by the *Chosōn ilbo*. It was published from November 1, 1935 to June 1, 1945. It was issued again on March 25, 1946, and republished from June 10, 1948 to May 31, 1949. Its editors were Ham Taehun and Kim Naesōng. The journal's character

of Koreans' knowledge of Robert Taylor, Clark Gable's shoes, Shirley Temple's weekly salary, how many times Joan Crawford has been married, and if they are of the Cooper "faction" or Astaire "faction" speaks to the prevalence and prominence of American films in Korea.<sup>26</sup>

As can be glimpsed in this discussion, accompanying the popularity of American films was the stardom of American actor and actresses. Film stars such as Charlie Chaplin and Clara Bow became popular worldwide. In Korea, Lillian Gish and Charlie Chaplin were serious stars even as early as the mid-1920s while Shirley Temple in particular was popular in the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> In fact, there were articles in the late 1930s lamenting the fan culture in which female students and even elementary students became ardent fans of Shirley Temple and Deanna Durbin.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, numerous Korean newspapers and journals faithfully reported on various American film stars' activities, personal lives, specific salaries and various anecdotes on them. For instance, it became quite common to see articles like the one in *Man'guk Puin* detailing Chaplin's legal battle at the time and delving into specifics of his personal life.<sup>29</sup>

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changed around 1940 as Japan cracked down on Korean publications and intensified its messages of war mobilization in the press. The content of this journal changed accordingly and led the journal to be seen as pro-Japanese in the 1940s.

For more on *Chogwang*, see Suil Ch'oe, "Chapchi 'Chogwang' ūi mokch'a, tokpöp, segyegwan," *Sanghō hakbo* 40 (2014.2): 113-145; Yumi Moon, "Modern Utopia or 'Animal Society'?: The American Imaginaries in Wartime Colonial Korea, 1931-45." *Korean Histories* 3.2 (2013): 16-33.

<sup>26</sup> Haso, "Yōnghwa ka peakmyōnsang," *Chogwang* (1937.12): 231-241.

<sup>27</sup> Yoo, "Hwangsae sikminji ūi munhwa chōngch'esōng," 111.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> "Chōn puin ūl sangdaero pōpchōng e sōn Chaplin," *Manguk Puin* (1932. 10.1): 69.

*Man'guk Puin* was planned as a monthly women's magazine that poet/writer/journalist/publisher Kim Tonghwan (who also published *Samch'ōlli*) published on October, 1932. It was short-lived as only the inaugural issue was published due to financial difficulties. However, its aim was to highlight the activities of women around the world and promote "new women" in Korea. For more on this magazine, see Kilman

With the rising popularity of these films and film stars came the trend of emulating their fashion, gestures, and actions. Many fans emulated their styles and mannerisms in Europe.<sup>30</sup> In Japan as well, Nii Itaru wrote in 1929 that young people were eager to emulate the fashion that they saw in Hollywood films whether it be in hairstyle, makeup, or clothing.<sup>31</sup> It is quite telling of the influence of these Hollywood films that William Harrison Hays, the first president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, saw these films as the “silent salesmen of American goods” in that spectators sought to have the products they saw in movies. In fact, “Greek appliance wholesalers and Brazilian furniture dealers found that their customers demanded goods like those pictured in the American movies.”<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, Harold Lloyd’s glasses and hat, Charlie Chaplin’s moustache, Gary Cooper’s overcoat, George Montgomery’s necktie, and William Powell’s pants became popular in Korea with movies, and the desire for such fashion was discussed by many writers. A writer for the *Chosŏn Ilbo*, for instance, echoed the words of many other writers when he bitterly but humorously complained that these films greatly influenced Korea’s many trends and that “[Rudolph] Valentino’s sideburns made Chosŏn youths tack on goat fur on their cheeks, Buster Keaton’s hat put cattle dung on the heads of Chosŏn youths, and cowboys’ leather pants from American Western films put bell-

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Pu, “P’ain palhaeng ūi ‘Samch’ŏlli munhak’ kwa ‘Man’guk Puin’ yŏn’gu,” *Ch’ulp’an chapchi yŏn’gu* 9.1 (2001): 79-95.

<sup>30</sup> Costigliola, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Shunya Yoshimi, “Consuming American, Producing Japan,” in *The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West*, eds. Sheldon M. Garon and Patricia L. MacLachlan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 65.

<sup>32</sup> Costigliola, 177.

bottomed pants on the Chosŏn youths.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, many other writers chastised the social and cultural influence of American films in Korean society. One writer attributed the emergence of “delinquent boys and girls with bad habits” as well as the modern girls’ and boys’ “speech, action, clothing, make-up, and desire” to American films.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, writer Yi Sŏnhŭi wrote of her own experience of the desire to go to cafes after watching films, and subsequently, drinking coffee and “eating cake with a fork” which gave her the “pleasant sensation” that to do so is “more cultured than eating kimch’i with chopsticks.”<sup>35</sup> Another writer, Yi Sŏgu, depicted young women’s new way of walking—wide steps and marching around, indicative of a certain “type” (as opposed to the “women in the past” who took small steps that were “limited to below their knees”) and the accompanying dynamic moving of her eyes in step with her pace that displayed vibrant senses. He attributed this “trend” as being borne out of the “jazz age.” Yi asserted that overall, these young women’s morality was becoming too “jazz-ized [*jazz-hwa*]” which, in turn, was “mostly due to films.”<sup>36</sup> Moreover, he accused movies of teaching students silly ways of dating and mocked the ways in which young people complimented one another of their “eyes that are like Valentino” and “John Barrymore hairstyle,” as

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<sup>33</sup> “Kasang sogyŏn (2): Modŏn ppoi ūi sanbo,” *Chosŏn Ilbo* (1928.2.7).

<sup>34</sup> Sun-Young Yoo, “Yukch’e ūi keundaehwa: Hollywood Modernity ūi kak’in,” *Munhwa Kwahak* 24 (2000.12): 242.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 245.

<sup>36</sup> Yi Sŏgu, “Kyŏngsŏng ūi cchassŭ, Sŏul (Seoul) mat, Sŏul chŏngjo,” *Pyŏlgŏngon*, September 27, 1929: 33, 34.

The term “jazz” was used in Korean publications to not only refer to jazz music from the United States, but it was also used as an adjective and a general term to refer to the latest culture of consumption and enjoyment associated with a stereotyped American culture. Some writers also implied immorality with the use of this term as it included men and women freely mixing in company to dance, drink, and play. In this article, the writer defined the sentiment of jazz in a critical tone as the pursuit of what is stylish, or, *mŏt*.

well as referring to a girl's charm as having something of a "Colleen Moore" to her.<sup>37</sup> Laments such as these shed light on the circulation of American cultural images and symbols.

Aside from films, American products in general were in wide circulation at this time. Figures such as that provided by Bob de Graaff when he points out that in between the two World Wars, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom "had the highest per capital consumption of American products," suggest the wide circulation of American products internationally.<sup>38</sup> In Korea as well, American imports such as "Standard Oil Company kerosene, Richmod Gem cigarettes, California fruit and wine, Eagle Brand milk, Armour's canned meats, Crosse & Blackwell canned foods, flour, mining machinery, cotton, railway goods, and clothing" increased gradually from the late-nineteenth century through the 1920s, making American imports second of all imports in colonial Korea after those from Japan.<sup>39</sup> Advertisements of American products appeared everywhere in Korean publications whether people could afford them or not. Some advertisements, such as a Ford car advertisement, attached an article introducing the figure of Henry Ford to the readers and thus allowed the readers to learn more about the product as well as American figures, developments, and society.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 33-34

<sup>38</sup> Bob de Graaff, "Bogey or Saviour? The Image of the United States in the Netherlands during the Interwar Period," in *Anti-Americanism in Europe*, eds. Rob Kroes and Maarten van Rossem (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1986), 58-59.

<sup>39</sup> Sun-Young Yoo, "TaeHan cheguk kŭrigo Ilje singminjibae sigi Migukhwa," in *Americanization: Haebang ihu Hanguk esŏ ūi Migukhwa*, eds. Tŏkko Kim and Yongjin Wŏn (Seoul: Purŭn Yŏksa, 2008), 64; Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 132.

<sup>40</sup> Kim, *Kkotkach'i p'io maehokke hara*, 177.



There were also many other aspects of American culture that circulated globally. In France, John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* "caused a sensation" in 1928 and was followed by numerous other translations of American novels, leading the 1930s to be referred to as the "age of the American novel," while jazz, American bars, American food, hockey games, and boxing matches—things identified as being American—became widely popular.<sup>41</sup> According to the National Geographic Society in 1928,

Travel where you will you can't escape American customs and fashions. Berlin flocks to its first elaborate soda fountain for nut sundaes, served by snappy soda "jerkers." American movies, automobiles, dental schools, typewriters, phonographs, and even its prize fights lead in spreading American fashions and customs throughout the world. American automobiles have spread the gospel of mass production...Typewriters have pioneered the way for a whole battalion of office equipment devices which have converted many people to doing business according to American methods...young men, white, yellow, brown, black, or red...equip themselves with the necessary "gym" shoes from the "land of champions."<sup>42</sup>

In Japan as well, art historian Andō Kōsei remarked on the prevalence of things American in 1931 by saying:

It is Americanism that dominates Ginza today. If you look at pedestrians on the sidewalks, you find at once that their styles and behaviors are completely imitated from American movies... The majority of restaurants in Ginza do not serve French dinner with wine, but American lunch with beer. You can hear American jazz in every café... Instead of French taste, Ginza is filled with the Americanism of big capital, speed, and the movies. Today, most Japanese want to understand the world only through America.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, in Japan, it became fashionable to "work in an American-style building, watch a baseball game, go driving on Sunday afternoon, or spend the evening going dancing or to the cinema"—all quintessentially "American" activities.<sup>44</sup> Articles on the urban café

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<sup>41</sup> Louis Menand, "The Promise of Freedom, the Friend of Authority: American Culture in Postwar France," in *Americanism: New Perspectives on the History of an Ideal*, eds. Michael Kazin and Joseph A. McCartin (The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 208-9; Costigliola, 173.

<sup>42</sup> Costigliola, 140.

<sup>43</sup> Yoshimi, 66.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

culture that depicted Koreans listening to “jazz [cchaesŭ],” dancing the “Charleston [ch’walsŭt’on],” the “blues [ppurŭsŭ]” and the “foxtrot [p’oksŭt’ŭrŭt’ŭ]” while drinking “cocktails [k’akt’eil]” show the circulation in Korea of things seen as being American as well. “Sports” became another interest, and publications like the *Tonga Ilbo* reported on the Giants in the World Series as well as American boxing matches and the fighters.

Such imported elements of America felt overwhelming to the people in each region to the point that novelist Luigi Pirandello remarked, “Americanism is swamping us” while in 1930, Paul Claudel who was the ambassador from France said that American “movies and talkies have soaked the French mind in American life, methods, and manners. American gasoline and American ideas have circulated throughout France, bringing a new vision of power and a new tempo of life.”<sup>45</sup> Europeans portrayed “Americanization” as seeping in deeply and altering the very core of their societies including their very ways of life and tempo. Meanwhile, *Shinsei* editor Murobuse Takanobu wrote in 1929, “Where could you find a Japan not Americanized? How could Japan exist without America? And where could we go to escape Americanization? I dare to declare that America has become the world; Japan is nothing but America today”<sup>46</sup>

In general, it was the era of circulation of “America” (circulation of both physical American goods as well as images and representations of America). Within Korea, there were many other articles on America, its politics, news, and society during this time that demonstrated attempts to both grasp and construct American society and its people. An

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<sup>45</sup> Costigliola, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Robert J. Antonio and Alessandro Bonanno, “A New Global Capitalism? From ‘Americanism and Fordism’ to ‘Americanization-Globalization,’” *American Studies* 41:2/3 (2000): 33; Yoshimi, 64. Murobuse wrote this in his book *Amerika: sono keizai to bunmei* [America: Economy and Civilization] that came out in 1929.

article that was published in the journal *Kaebiyŏk*, for one, covered President Warren G. Harding and his family's daily life. It detailed his daily schedule, the time his day starts, what he reads first thing in the morning, and so forth to give readers a glimpse of the inner life in the White House.<sup>47</sup> These “inside” looks into the lives of famous American figures (predominantly, film stars) and American society in general were common as seen by the publication of many first-hand portrayals and depictions of what America is like. One example was the series of travelogues produced by No Chŏngil, a Korean student in America, with depictions of America and his experiences there that were published in *Kaebiyŏk* throughout volumes 19 to 26. In line with attempts to take more of a closer look at America, there were also more visual images of America that emerged such as in the *Chosŏn Ilbo* that printed a picture of New York's brightly lit skyline and a caption that read, “This is the view from a high apartment in Central Park overlooking New York, a city that never sleeps. Merely looking at these buildings with each window brilliantly lit is like being in a dreamland.”<sup>48</sup> As seen from this caption, it is interesting to note that these attempts which take close and first-hand looks at the United States in fact perpetuated the image of America as a fantasy and played into constructing America as a *mélange* of representations—much like Americanism itself.

It is important to note here that these discussions of America, then, were more about the Korean writers and their representations and projections of American civilization than about actual conditions in the United States. Americanism was also more than the physical circulation of American goods in Korea especially since the embrace of

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<sup>47</sup> “Kunbi chehanhoe ūi palūija Mi taet’ongryŏng ‘Harding’ ssi ūi ilsang kwa kŭ kajŏng,” *Kaebiyŏk* 14 (1921.8.1): 64-67.

<sup>48</sup> “Miguk,” *Chosŏn Ilbo* (1940.3.6).

American goods and cultural forms were largely limited to elites in Seoul and other urban areas (the vast majority of the population in the Korean countryside remained untouched and was not a part of the film culture as well as other cultural trends occurring in the urban centers). However, as seen in the discussions above, Americanism also included the circulation of images and representations of America which did reach beyond the urban centers through publications to various parts of Korea. It was this wide circulation of American goods, images, representations, and symbols in the world including Korea that served as an important context for specific articulations of America in Korea.

**America's Linkages to *Modŏn* and *Sinmunmyŏng***  
*America as "modŏn"*

As glimpsed from the previous section's discussion, within the context of the rise of Americanism both globally and locally, Korean writers actively took part in the process of articulating this "America." In the midst of these efforts, two terms in particular—"modern" and "new civilization"—became a significant part of its articulation. These terms were still in the process of being defined themselves during this time, and although they were not synonymous, both were coming to mean the newest and signify a critical component of global capitalism. In other parts of the world, America was linked to these terms ("modern" in particular) as well. However, in the colonial Korean context, the notions of "modern" and "new civilization" became especially relevant and desirable more than in other parts of the world as they seemed to offer Koreans a way to break free of their colonial standing in the global capitalist order.

To elaborate, America became closely intertwined with the neologism, "modern," in many publications. The term was used somewhat before the 1920s in Korea, but it was

not until around 1927 that the media frequently discussed and explored the term at length, and it became a fashionable term to use.<sup>49</sup> The fact that this term was unclear and still in the process of definition is revealed through an article in *Sinmin* (1930) that clarified that even though the term “modern” had received some bad press because of its attachment to “modern boys” and “modern girls,” it was not necessarily a negative term in and of itself.<sup>50</sup> It seemed necessary to this writer to point out the term’s lack of clarity as well as openness in definition at this time. Moreover, articles emerged that expressed the difficulty of defining this term and concept despite the fact that (as one writer pointed out), “modern” was being attached freely to anything and everything to the extent that “everything was ‘modern.’”<sup>51</sup> This article pointed out that when asked what “modern” is, people cannot answer. The writer went on to say that this shows that its meaning is difficult to explain or even grasp. It is “like a phantom [*tokkaebi*] and riddle [*susukkekki*].”<sup>52</sup> Writers attempted to grasp the meaning of this term, and in the midst of these efforts, what the writers seemed to agree on was that this notion of “modern” was something that was historically specific to them. As the aforementioned writer pointed out, “modern” can and is defined as “the present/contemporary [*hyöndae*].” However, as he elaborated, the term *hyöndae* was merely a “common noun” that had been used by seventeenth-century people to refer to the seventeenth century, eighteenth-century people

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<sup>49</sup> Kim, Chinsong. “*Soŭl e ddansuŭhol eul hoŭhara* (Seoul: Hyönsil Munhwa Yöngu, 1999), 23-4.

<sup>50</sup> “Modön’ö sajön,” *Sinmin* (1930.9).

“Modern boys” and “modern girls” were cultural constructs, media representations, and the means by which many writers articulated their anxieties of capitalist modernity and Americanism. Therefore, articles regarding these figures were mainly critical in nature. In fact, many writers played off the pronunciation of “*modön köŭl*” and “*modön poi*” to nickname them “*mottoen köŭl* [bad girl]” and “*mottoen poi* [bad boy].”

<sup>51</sup> Im Insaeng, “Modönissüm,” *Pyölgöngon* 25 (1930.1.1): 136-140.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

to refer to the eighteenth century, and nineteenth-century people to refer to the nineteenth century. He went on to say that the way the term, *hyōndae*, was used in the past was not the same way in which “modern” was being used in his time. “Modern” was a “*proper noun*” that could only be used for that precise moment—1930 [italics added]. The reason, as he revealed in the following statement, was because it was a concept borne out of capitalism.

Modern capitalism, or Americanism, has two forms—urbanism and mechanism on the one hand, and modernism on the other. Mechanism refers to the production side that is represented by industrialists, technicians, and laborers, while modernism refers to the consumption side that is represented by businessmen, the rentier, petit bourgeois, and salaried men. Therefore, modern capitalism, or Americanism, can be divided into [production and consumption], and for this reason, it would be appropriate to say that modernism which originated from Americanism, is the consumer class’ cultural mode of life that emerged in this world.<sup>53</sup>

“Modernism” as defined here was about consumption and the consumer culture that emerged in a very historically specific moment, or, within capitalism, and originated from Americanism. In fact, modern capitalism was made synonymous with Americanism itself. Here, the notions of modernity, “capitalism,” and “Americanism” became intricately linked as their definitions would not allow them to exist without one another. The linkage made here among these three terms was reiterated in discussions of “modern boy” and “modern girl”—terms that perhaps most frequently employed the word “modern.” In an article that discussed and defined modern boys and girls, the writer described them saying, “The constituents of modernism are modern boys and modern girls. Their way consists of jazz, dance, speed, and sports” whose place of origin is the “Yankee country.” He further elaborated that the modern boys and modern girls were based in the leisured and capitalist class, their environment consisted of “machine

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

civilization,” their “guiding principle” was “Americanism,” and their “utopia” was America.<sup>54</sup> Although this article was very critical of modern girls and modern boys, the impact of the article was that the term and concept of “modern” was rooted in capitalism and its expressions. Moreover, it was intricately tied to America as America was constructed as being the birthplace of and model for these “modern” people. Likewise, other writers who defined “modern” linked it to America and their historically specific moment by writing that “modern” referred to a world of new and different sensibility, clothing, language, action/behavior, and way of thinking that were clearly set apart from those who were not “modernized” and these expressions and manifestations were “American” modes and trends of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>55</sup> The close linkage made here between America and their historically specific moment of capitalism was further reinforced by America’s linkage to “new civilization.”

*America as “Sin Munmyōng”*

*The Role of Korean Students in America in this Articulation*

At the same time, America was becoming closely intertwined with another term—*sin munmyōng*. Korean students studying in America, in particular, played a critical role in this articulation through their main mouthpiece, the *Urak’i* [The Rocky]. To give a brief background, the *Urak’i* (1925-1936) was a journal written by Korean students in the United States, and more specifically, members of the Korean Student Federation of North

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<sup>54</sup> O Sōkch’ōn, “Modōnijūm huiron,” *Sinmin* 67 (1931.6.1).

<sup>55</sup> Pak P’alyang, “Modōn ppoi ch’on’gam, modōn kkōl modōn ppoi taenonp’yōng,” *Pyōlgōngon* 10 (1927.12.20): 116.

America [北美朝鮮學生總會] which was founded on January 1, 1919.<sup>56</sup> The journal consisted of seven extensive volumes, and was published intermittently from 1925 to 1936. The contributors and editors of *Urak'i* consisted of students studying in the United States and occasionally, leaders in the Korean-American community, as well as a few American professors such as Frederick Starr and Edmund de S. Brunner.<sup>57</sup> Although the journal was written and edited in the United States, its writers and editors made it a point to write it for Koreans in colonial Korea. They revealed this intention by dedicating the journal to their “parents, brothers...sisters,” and “compatriots of their homeland” as well as by the ways they addressed many of their articles to Koreans residing in Korea such as future students hoping to come to the United States for their studies.<sup>58</sup> However, the clearest demonstration of their intention to write for people in their homeland lay in the fact that they made a point to publish and circulate the journal in Korea despite the many challenges this posed for the editors and contributors.<sup>59</sup> The *Urak'i* appears to have been read in literary circles and by prospective students, its writers also often contributed to other journals based in Korea, and the journal was referenced and mentioned in other

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<sup>56</sup> This organization also went by the names, 북미학생회, 북미조선유학생회, 북미대한인유학생총회, and 留美朝鮮學生總會. Kim Hüigon, “Pungmi yuhaksaeng chapchi ‘Urak’i’ yŏn’gu,” *Kyŏngbuk sahak* 21 (1998): 2.

<sup>57</sup> Other prominent contributors included Syngman Rhee, Yun Ch’iho, Sŏ Chaep’il, O Ch’ŏnsŏk, Kim Toyŏn, Pak Indŏk, Kim Maria, Kim Hwallan, Chu Yosŏp, Chang Riuk, Paek Nakchun, Yi Hun’gu, and Han Sŭng’in.

<sup>58</sup> “I kananhan kŏdum ŭl kohyang ŭi tongp’o ege tŭlimyŏnsŏ,” *Urak’i* 1 (1925): 1.

<sup>59</sup> In publishing this journal in Korea, the editors faced not only financial difficulties, but also challenges posed by Japanese censorship regulations. To give an example, the first volume was sent to Korea in February of 1925, but it was not given permission to print by the censors until July of 1925. The journal was finally published in September of 1925, seven months after the volume was received in Korea. Moreover, in 1933, the paper was confiscated by Japanese officials because censored material was published. The editors then made arrangements to take out the censored portion so that they may circulate the issue. “Urak’i apsu myŏngryŏng,” *Sinhan Minbo* (1933.6.15):.1; Kim, “Pungmi yuhaksaeng chapchi ‘Urak’i’ yŏn’gu,” 12.



publications such as the *Tonga Ilbo*, *Samch'ŏlli*, *Tonggwang*, and *Pyŏlgŏngon*. It partook in and actively contributed to the discussions on America within colonial Korea.

Alongside some literary pieces and funny anecdotes arising from cultural differences and linguistic misunderstandings, the journal included many articles that discussed different facets of American civilization ranging widely from American education, history, academia, technology, scientific developments, industries, medicine, sports, beauty, cinema, literature, women, to etiquette. Although the topics and perspectives varied, the basic premise for most of the writers was that following World War I, America had emerged as the strongest nation in the world and as the center of a restructured global capitalist order. As a matter of fact, when the contributor Sin Kijun wrote that America had become “the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world” as well as the center of capitalism following the war, he echoed the starting point of countless articles in the *Urak'i*.<sup>60</sup> The writers explored the question of how the United States was able to rise to this position, and they tackled this question with detailed depictions of everything America, citing them as the reasons behind as well as the proof of the United States’ newfound centrality in the capitalist order.

The way in which the writers of the *Urak'i* readily accepted, engaged with, and admired these things America is not surprising given their backgrounds. These students were comprised by those who had studied in missionary schools in Korea, and students who sought more after their studies in Japan. Thus, they represented the segment of the population in Korea who strongly believed in the need to learn from Western civilization,

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<sup>60</sup> Sin Kijun, “Miguk ūi ch’eyukkye,” *Urak'i* 2 (1926 ): 122; Other examples include Yi Pyŏngdu, “Kwahak ūi kach’i,” *Urak'i* 1 (1925): 92-96; Hwang Ch’angha, “Miguk yŏnhap chunbi ūnhaeng chedo yaksul,” *Urak'i* 2 (1926 ): 101.

and overcame many hardships to do so in the United States. Until the easing of the colonial government's restrictions on studying abroad after the March First Movement, many of these students had to go to the United States illegally without passports by way of China, Manchuria, Siberia, and Europe.<sup>61</sup> The difficulties this imposed on students heading to America for their studies is partly demonstrated by Song Ch'öl who had to wait ten months in Shanghai for space on a United States-bound ship due to his lack of proper travel documents.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, due to their status and lack of funds, their hardships did not end once they entered America either. Even in the 1920s when Korean students were allowed to go to the United States legally, they faced immense obstacles such as difficulties with the English language, lack of academic preparation for studying in American colleges, and funding for their studies and living expenses (which were three or four times the expenses needed for studying in Japan).<sup>63</sup> This forced many students to work as farm laborers or domestic workers during the summer and winter breaks. These students' dedication to studying in the United States despite such hardship reveals that they took their belief in the need to learn about developments from there very seriously. Moreover, these students were studying within American academia at a time of the

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<sup>61</sup> Hong Sönp'yo, "Iljeha Miguk yuhak yön'gu," *Kuksagwan nonch'ong* 96 (2001): 157; Korean students were allowed to study in the United States beginning with the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Peace between Korea and the United States in 1882. In 1883, Yu Kilchun became the first Korean student to study in the United States and between 1884 and 1910, somewhere between 60 to 70 students studied in the United States, with most of them being in political exile. (Hong, 154) The number of students increased in the 1910s with Hong projecting that roughly 150 might have gone to the United States to study. (Hong, 159) Due to the restrictions on studying abroad placed on Koreans by the colonial government, many of them went to the United States illegally to study. In the 1920s, the number of students increased more as the colonial government loosened its policies after the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement which included measures previously taken against studying abroad. Hong projects the number of students to be somewhere between 350 and 400 in the 1920s. (Hong, 167).

<sup>62</sup> Hong, 157.

<sup>63</sup> Hong, "Iljeha Miguk yuhak yön'gu," 179.

prominence of the “national exceptionalism” rhetoric which further reinforced their already America-centric views. The enthusiastic depictions of American civilization throughout the *Urak'i* and the significance that these discussions on America came to have on the writers must be situated and examined within this context. It is this context that lent itself to the particular way that “America” came to be constructed by these students as the sole linkage to the term and concept, *munmyǒng* [civilization] and a space of direct access to this *munmyǒng*.

#### *America as the Locus of “Sin mummyǒng”*

With the rise of the United States as the premise and starting point for the writers, discussions of *munmyǒng kaehwa* [civilization and enlightenment] and Western civilization that had circulated in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries Korea converged in this journal with America as the concrete and almost exclusive face of the previously broader “West” and the previously more open definition of “*munmyǒng*.” The association of America to this term and concept was in fact, not new as this was repeatedly seen throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The writers of *The Independent* had constantly made these connections and as Andre Schmid points out, the center of civilization for Korean intellectuals had shifted from China to the West, but with no sizeable Korean community in Europe, the United States was often highlighted.<sup>64</sup> Korean-Americans were seen as being more “civilized” just by virtue of being in the United States.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the linkage between *munmyǒng* and America was

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<sup>64</sup> Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires: 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press), 242.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

not remarkable per se, but what is noteworthy about this linkage in the *Urak'i* was the way in which the United States had become the sole and exclusive face of *munmyǒng* as opposed to the more open definition of *munmyǒng* seen in some other publications.

The writers of this journal used the term “*sin munmyǒng*” to refer to American civilization, and more specifically, material and scientific developments of the United States. Through the usage of this term, they not only situated their writings on America within the extensive and on-going discussions of *munmyǒng* from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries Korea, but also funneled this notion into their definition by presenting American civilization as its culmination. Relatedly, their emphasis on the “new” implied a break from an older *munmyǒng*, a break that allowed a privileged and singular position for American civilization. Although it is true that this was a period when the word “new” was a very fashionable prefix (*sin chisik* [new knowledge], *sin hangmun* [new learning], *sin sosŏl* [new novel], etc.), there is a sense that the writers tried to highlight American material developments as truly distinct and the latest much like the neologism “modern.” Such exclusive linkage of “*sin munmyǒng*” to America can be seen in writer Yi Pyǒngdu’s article in which he defined it as something that takes science as its foundation and makes people’s lives convenient.<sup>66</sup> Other authors such as Han Ch’ijjin shared in the same definition, adding that in short, *munmyǒng* means “material *munmyǒng*,” which is “scientific” and consists of utilizing the environment to improve the actual lives of people.<sup>67</sup> In short, they were defining it as material developments associated with capitalist modernity. According to Yi, its foundation lay in extending a

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<sup>66</sup> Yi, “Kwahak ūi kach’i,” 103.

<sup>67</sup> Han Ch’ijjin, “Sōyang munmyǒng ūi t’ūksaek ūl nonhayō: Chosōnin ūi changrae ūi kŭpham,” *Urak’i* 3 (1928): 12-13.

refined way of life to everyone, and this *munmyǒng* may have started out in Europe with Johannes Gutenberg's invention that made books available to the masses and paved the way for contemporary inventions, but the exemplification of today's *munmyǒng* rested with America which was the most powerful and wealthy nation in the world.<sup>68</sup> Here, Yi displaced this new *munmyǒng* from Europe by downgrading Europe as merely the starting point, but no longer the locus. This kind of sentiment was repeated several times, exemplified by an article on Pragmatism. Here, the writer characterized Pragmatism as a "unique Yankee philosophy" that emphasized truth and successful results.<sup>69</sup> It was a philosophy that had foundations in the natural sciences and, as the writer praised, sometimes, one could not tell if this was science or philosophy.<sup>70</sup> For this author, that American philosophy had become scientific was precisely the reason why the field of philosophy in the United States had become the most advanced in the world, surpassing that of even Europe starting in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>71</sup> Not only was Europe distanced from this *sin munmyǒng*, but the East was also disassociated from it as Yi wrote that even though the "yellow race" had over 6,000 years of history, it lagged behind in terms of today's *munmyǒng* because America, with only 200 years of history, had pursued education based on science while the East had taken literature as its foundation.<sup>72</sup> In other words, the East had become anachronistic in a scientific world. Material *munmyǒng*, in turn, was equated very clearly with American material developments throughout the

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<sup>68</sup> Yi, "Kwahak ūi kach'i," 106.

<sup>69</sup> Yi Ch'ōlwŏn, "Miguk munmyǒng kaegwan: Miguk ūi ch'ōlhakgye," *Urak'i* 4 (1930): 39.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>72</sup> Yi, "Kwahak ūi kach'i," 104.

journal. The linkage between America and *munmyŏng* was further stressed in another article that located the beginning of Korea's encounter with the "*sin munmyŏng*" to the beginning of Korea-US relations in 1882.<sup>73</sup>

Included in this definition of *sin munmyŏng* that had America as its locus was a subtle distancing of *munmyŏng* not only from Europe and the general East, but also specifically from Japan whose claims to *munmyŏng* served as a significant rhetorical basis for colonialism. Japanese colonial censorship regulations applied to the *Urak'i* once it was published in colonial Korea, and as a matter of fact, the journal experienced censorship throughout its years of publication.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the writers exercised caution as shown by the ways in which they made allusive remarks to refer to Japanese colonialism that starkly contrasted uncensored Korean-American publications' blatant critiques of colonialism and name-calling of the Japanese such as calling them the enemy and *Ilbonnom* ("Japanese bastards").<sup>75</sup> The contrast is more noticeable when considering the fact that there was considerable overlap of writers and content between the *Urak'i* and other Korean-American publications such as the *Sinhan Minbo* [The New Korea]. The discussions of *munmyŏng* in the *Urak'i* seen within this context showed subtle tactics to exclude Japan from their definition of *munmyŏng*.

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<sup>73</sup> "Miju yuhaksaeng kŭp yuhaksaenghoeryaksa," *Urak'i* 1 (1925): 164.

<sup>74</sup> Some examples of censorship in the *Urak'i* included: Kim Ryangsu, "Yŏsiagwan," *Urak'i* 3 (1928): 29-39. This article was taken out in its entirety. The editors made a note in the empty space saying that the authorities censored it. Some examples of partial censorship included: Frederick Starr, "Kowŏl Yi Sangjae ong," *Urak'i* 3 (1928): 50; "Urak'i chujang: Chosŏn ch'ŏngnyŏn e taehan Urak'i chujang," *Urak'i* 3 (1928): 52-53; Kim Song'ŭn, "Kidokkyo e taehan ohae," *Urak'i* 4 (1930): 24-25; In Sŏ Chaep'il, "Chosŏn ũi changrae," *Urak'i* 4 (1930): 16. Sŏ alluded to censorship and expressed his displeasure about it. For more discussion on censorship policies in the colonial period, see Robinson, Michael Edson Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 51-52 and Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984).

<sup>75</sup> Schmid, 248.

In one of the first articles written in the *Urak'i*, the writer explained that Korea initially acquired the “superior knowledge and skills of the West” through Japan and China due to geographic proximity and easiness of the language.<sup>76</sup> However, as the Koreans’ zeal for education reached new heights, they went abroad. Since then, they have been in the midst of “*directly*” acquiring the current American culture which will “once again foster and widen the knowledge that has become remote in a closed country and courage that has been oppressed under an autocracy” to bring about “new knowledge and new courage” which in turn, will eventually lead to fulfilling Heaven’s principle and the happiness of the Korean people.<sup>77</sup> Embedded in this writing was a hierarchical structure in approaching and achieving the “superior knowledge and skills of the West.” Subtly distancing Japan from *munmyōng*, this hierarchical structure was based upon the assumption that “direct” acquirement of Western knowledge and skills was superior to their acquirement via indirect channels of Japan and China since the indirect channels were insufficient for a higher zeal for education and more importantly, knowledge gained via Japan and China had led to outdated knowledge and lack of courage that currently required revitalization. Moreover, Japan and China were unable to provide the “new knowledge and new courage” as they themselves did not have them, and this new knowledge and new courage” could be acquired only by going to the source of “superior knowledge and skills”—the West, and in particular, America, the subject at hand of this article.

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<sup>76</sup> Kim Yōsik, “Miguktaehak kwa yuhakjunbi e taehayō” *Urak'i* 1 (1925): 6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 6-7.

The notion that Japan did not have this superior Western civilization and that Korea needed a direct channel to it was more directly emphasized by contributor C.C. Hahn who “quoted” a supposedly prevalent saying that “The Japanese Civilization is nothing but an ingenious copy of the Western Civilization” and that Korean students in Japan were getting “Japanese Orientalized Western Civilization” as opposed to Korean students in the United States who were accessing the authentic Western civilization.<sup>78</sup> This emphasis on a direct line of knowledge and skill acquisition from America was brought up again in discussing the need for Korean-English dictionaries. One writer shared an anecdote in which he was mistaken for a Japanese person because he was carrying around a Japanese-English dictionary.<sup>79</sup> His severe embarrassment over the incident seemed to have been embarrassment over the lack of direct access to English and having to go through the Japanese language to access English which led to the mistaken identity—as a Japanese person no less! In his indignation, the writer went on to chastise the Korean-American student organization for not taking on the dictionary project. This emphasis on a direct access to English can be further seen in an interesting article that taught Koreans how to pronounce English words in the most authentic way possible. Contributor Cho Ŭngch’ŏn included a compilation of common mistakes in pronunciation as a reference for the readers. Examples included instructing the readers that “law” is not pronounced the same way as “low,” and that “called” is not pronounced the same way as “cold.” Numerous other examples included instructing the readers on “boy” as “m-ppo’i [ㅁ뽀이]” and not “ppo’i [뽀이],” “bob” as “m-ppa m-pp [ㅁ뽤 ㅁ뽤]” and not “ppaps

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<sup>78</sup> C.C. Hahn, “Students from Japan or America?” *Korean Student Bulletin* 4 (1926): 3; 4.

<sup>79</sup>“Urak’i chujang: Chosŏn ch’ŏngnyŏn e taehan Urak’i chujang,” *Urak’i* 3 (1928): 56.



[꺄],” “due” as “n-ttyu [ㄴ ㄸ유]” and not “ttyu [ㄸ유],” and “and” as “aen-n-dŭ [앤 ㄴ 드]” and not “aendŭ [앤 드].”<sup>80</sup> Noting that “the Chinese speak Chinese-English, the Japanese speak Japanese-English, and Koreans speak Korean-English,” the writer put forth these instructions in hopes of getting Korean students to speak English in the most unmediated manner possible.<sup>81</sup>

Some writers also disassociated Japan from *munmyŏng* by using Japan as a counterpoint to the United States. In an article discussing the superiority of the American diet and customs, Japan was included with Korea as the juxtaposition to America’s superiority. Going further, the writer depicted Japan as being worse than Korea. She wrote that Korea’s diet was lacking when compared to that of the United States in nutrition content, but more superior than that of Japan.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Korean and Japanese ways of sitting was evoked as being inferior to that of America, but on this front as well, Japan was worse than Korea.<sup>83</sup> Another article lauded the American education system, and within this article, Japan was used as the reference point by which the best and superior elements of the American system were highlighted.<sup>84</sup> In yet another article, the writer pointed out that students studying abroad in Japan should be differentiated from students studying abroad in America as they have different characteristics, influences,

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<sup>80</sup>The “m” and “n” sounds were added here to soften the first syllable and to remind readers not to make an accentuated and tense sound [*toen sori*] that is usually made with “ㄱ,” “ㄷ,” “ㅃ,” “ㄸ,” “ㅆ.” Cho Ŭngch’ŏn, “Chaemiguk yŏng’ŏ palŭm ũi sinyŏn’gu,” *Urak’i* 4 (1930): 35.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Song Poksin, “Injong ch’ai wa sŏngjang,” *Urak’i* 4 (1930): 23.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> O Ch’ŏnsŏk, “Miguk munmyŏng kaegwan: Miguk ũi kyoyukgye,” *Urak’i* 4 (1930): 65.

and tendencies.<sup>85</sup> All such ways of stressing direct and unmediated access to American civilization and distancing themselves from Japan came together to create an understanding that these students' pursuit of *munmyǒng* was a project that did not include and was independent of Japan or Japanese mediation. In other words, "America" was constructed as a site by this group of Korean Americans in which these writers believed they could directly and independently access *munmyǒng* that was superior to what Japan could offer.

The projection of America as being a direct and better way to access the latest developments and trends is also touched upon by Sun-Young Yoo, a cultural studies scholar who studies Americanism. She explores Americanism's role on the "modernization of the individual" or "bodily modernization" in Korea, and looks at the ways in which America, and American culture in particular, emerged as a "textbook for modernity" to which colonized Koreans turned to in order to physically embody modernity.<sup>86</sup> Here, she asserts that in the colonial setting, the colonized body, as "an undeniable stigma of derision and inferiority of the colonized subject under the gaze of the colonizer," served as a means by which the person could temporarily overcome the stigma by covering oneself with "modernity" and modern appearances—or, American clothing, gestures, expressions, body movements, and poises and accents. She writes that this became an important way of compensation in regards to both the Japanese, the

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<sup>85</sup> "Miguk yuhaksaeng ch'ulsin ūl öttötke ponūnga," *Urak'i* 2 (1926): 7-15.

<sup>86</sup> Yoo's use of the term, "modern," differs from how I use this term as I treat the term as a neologism whose definition was still open and was very much in the process of articulation during this time, while she treats it as a self-evident category. However, her works are very illuminating in seeing colonial Korea's consumption of American culture, and they are in dialogue with my work in seeing the emergence of America as the *symbol* of modernity.

colonizers, as well as vis-à-vis other Koreans.<sup>87</sup> Yoo points to a censored illustration from the *Tonga Ilbo*'s 1924.12.2 issue in which a giant (about four times the size of the Japanese) American is pointing guns at the Japanese who are huddled together as mini-people shouting "Objection!" in front of the American to demonstrate a way in which America was perceived as looming larger than Japan.<sup>88</sup> The illustration, I suggest, also points to the fact that the articulation of America in Korea took place in relation to Japan and in the context of Korea's colonial situation. Just as the articulation of America as a site of hope came about in the context of foreign powers' encroachment upon Korea during the late-nineteenth century, this emphasis placed on America as a superior and powerful site due to Japanese colonialism was an important context to the emphasis on America as the locus of "modern" and "new civilization," and the subsequent articulation of America as the source of solutions for Korea.

### **America as the Source of Solutions for Korea**

#### *America as the Model*

America, then, had emerged as the privileged symbol of the "modern" and "new civilization"—both of which were articulated as critical components of capitalism and their historically specific moment—and as such, America was evoked as the model to emulate in order to avoid being anachronistic as well as rising in the new capitalist order. This was not new as the United States had often been evoked as the model even as early as the nineteenth century. For instance, after the Korean Special Mission to the United

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<sup>87</sup> Yoo, "Embodiment of American modernity in colonial Korea," 425.

<sup>88</sup> Yoo, "TaeHan cheguk kŭrigo Ilje singminjibae sigi Migukhwa," 50.

States, or the Reciprocity Mission [*pobingsa*] to the United States in 1883 which included observations of the United States for two months, its members came back to Korea impressed with what they had seen in the United States.<sup>89</sup> Although some members such as Min Yŏng'ik did not believe in whole and un-appropriated adoptions of Western models and developments, there were some members who were enthusiastic about learning from the United States. Hong Yŏngsik, for one, who had taken an interest in the modern postal system during the mission to Japan in 1881, was thoroughly impressed with the postal system he observed in the United States and afterwards, proposed the adoption of the American postal system.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, he also strongly advocated to Kojong the need to learn from the American education system and to adopt its teaching methods in Korea.<sup>91</sup>

Elites associated with the *Tongnip hyŏphoe* [Independence Club] and the *Tongnip sinmun* [*The Independent*] also often evoked America as the model for reform movements. In a speech during the cornerstone-laying ceremony of Seoul's Independence Gate, Yi Wanyong made a speech on the future of Korea in which he juxtaposed two directions towards which Korea could go—America the independent and most powerful and wealthy nation, or the partitioned Poland. Here, he emphasized that he hoped that Korea would be like the model of independence, wealth and power—America.<sup>92</sup> In fact, the *Tongnip sinmun* often evoked America as the model for Korea

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<sup>89</sup> The mission included Min Yŏng'ik, Hong Yŏngsik, Sŏ Kwangbŏm, Yu Kilchun, Ko Yŏngch'ŏl, Pyŏn Su (Penn Su), Ch'oe Kyŏngsŏk, and Hyŏn Hŭngt'aek.

<sup>90</sup> Chang Kyusik, "Kaehang hu Miguk sahaeng kwa Sŏgu suyong ūi ch'ui," *Chung'angaron* 24 (2006): 71.

<sup>91</sup> Han Ch'ŏrho, "Kaehwagi kwallyo chisigin ūi Miguk insik—ChuMi kongsa kwanwŏn ūl chungsim ūro," *Yŏksa wa Hyŏnsil* 58 (2005): 39.

<sup>92</sup> *Tongnip sinmun*, 1:100 (1896.11.24): 1, 4.

and a reference point for its future, citing its independence, democracy, institutions, and even culture which were depicted as being “civilized.”

However, what is important to point out regarding these discussions on America is the fact that while it is true that America was often singled out by these elites as the model for Korea as they sought reform efforts, America still remained *one* of the various nations of the West during the late-nineteenth century. In other words, while the contributors to the *Tongnip sinmun* clearly admired America the most (especially given the fact that its main contributors, Sō Chaep’il and Yun Ch’iho, spent considerable time studying in the United States), America was merely one of several reference points when thinking about the larger Western civilization with which they were trying to engage. This is more clearly seen in Yu Kilchun’s *Sōyu kyōnmun* [*Observations on a Journey to the West*]. This was a text that was completed in 1889 and published in Japan in 1895, and was the first widely circulated work introducing the West to Korea.<sup>93</sup>

What this prominent text on the West reveals is that America was not a privileged reference point for engaging with Western civilization. Yu explores the British tax system and taxes in order to shed light on the various taxes of Western nations, upholds the French for their “indirect taxes” (taxes that are already included in the prices of goods) as he believes it is an efficient method of collecting taxes without burdening the

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<sup>93</sup> One thousand copies were published, which Yu promptly distributed to King Kojong, reform-seeking elites, and high government officials. It was a highly influential text that many elites relied upon to learn about the West and to engage with Western civilization. Its influence is evidenced by the fact that the *Sōyu kyōnmun* was often used as a reference text to explain new, Western conceptual vocabulary, and as the basis for later editorials and essays. Parts of the *Sōyu kyōnmun* were also used as textbooks in schools (the *Sōyu kyōnmun* was one of the books that the Korean government sent out as a textbook when requested), and reformers often took passages from it and reprinted them verbatim in newspapers. Examples of this can be found in the *Hwangšōng sinmun* and the *Tongnip sinmun*. *Hwangšōng sinmun* (1898.11.05); Hō Kyōngjin, *Sōyu kyōnmun: Chosōn Chisik’in Yu Kilchun, Sōyang ūl pōnyōk hada* (Seoul: Sōhae munjip, 2004); Schmid, 111; 302.

people, admires German universities while thinking about the scholarship in the West, evokes London as a “prosperous and the greatest city in all the world of all ages” while he describes Paris as a city whose “cleanliness and fineness of its roads as well as the grandeur and magnificence of its houses are the best under heaven” to which even London and New York do not compare.<sup>94</sup> If anything, Yu seems to have most admired the British model for various institutions as shown by the many discussions such as the one on its institutions of relieving the poor.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, regarding Great Britain’s constitutional monarchy, he wrote that “the system of constitutional monarchy has the fairest institutions” and is the type of government that honors the wishes of the people. It is “able to protect the rights of the people and to prevent abuses by rulers and officials.”<sup>96</sup> He further wrote, “When we compare the various systems of government, it becomes clear that constitutional monarchy is far superior to the others. The system of Great Britain is considered to be the best in the world.”<sup>97</sup>

Therefore, although the America-as-a model rhetoric was already circulating and very prominent during the late-nineteenth century, America was not the sole face of the West nor was it the most privileged locus of Western civilization. However, during the colonial period, this rhetoric intensified amidst the wider cultural circulation of “America” among a larger audience as well as the articulations of America as the locus of the “modern” and “new civilization.” Within this context, specific American institutions,

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<sup>94</sup> Yu Kilchun. *Sōyu kyōnmun*. In *Yu Kilchun chōnsō*, eds. Yu Kilchun chōnsō p’yōnch’an wiwōnhoe. Vol. 1. (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1996), Chapters 6, 7, 19, and 20.

<sup>95</sup> Yu, *Sōyu kyōnmun*, Chapter 6.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

industries, practices, developments, and education were often evoked as the model and more importantly, solution for Korea by a significant segment of elites. For instance, American industries and stores such as Hartford A&P were cited as the most developed in the world and exemplary icons of *munmyŏng* and models from which Korean retail businesses could learn organization and methods of operation at a time when large retail businesses in Korea were in foreign hands.<sup>98</sup> Here, by juxtaposing Korea's situation in which it lacked control of its businesses to burgeoning American businesses, the writer implied very clearly that Koreans should look towards the American model for its solution. The juxtaposing continued in the discussion on the field of American medical science that was hailed as superior while Chinese medicine (*hanbang*) was deemed "irrational" and irrelevant in this "scientific era."<sup>99</sup> Even American sports such as baseball, soccer, golf, the various leagues as well as the development of the American Sports Council could serve as models for Koreans as they were cited as the reason behind the United States being "the wealthiest and strongest nation following World War I."<sup>100</sup>

However, out of the various aspects of American civilization, none were more highlighted than the United States' scientific and technological developments since as previously discussed, many of the writers established that the basis of the *sin munmyŏng* and key to America achieving this material *munmyŏng* and capitalist modernity was science. There were many efforts during this time to emphasize the importance of science in general. For instance, a new journal named *Science Korea* [*Kwahak Chosŏn*] was

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<sup>98</sup> Han Sŭng'in, "Miguk munmyŏng kaegwan: Miguk ūi silŏpgye (t'ŭkhi somaesang'ŏp e taehayŏ)," *Urak'i* 4 (1930): 50-51.

<sup>99</sup> Yi Yongsŏl, "Ŭihak kwa minjung," *Urak'i* 2 (1926): 85.

<sup>100</sup> Sin, "Miguk ūi ch'eyukgye," 122-125; O Hanyŏng, "Miguk ūi undonggye," *Urak'i* 1 (1925): 114-118.

founded in 1933 and published intermittently until 1944 and was devoted to sharing knowledge about global scientific developments and strongly advocating the need for Koreans to study science.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, in other more mainstream publications as well, articles introducing important figures in science such as Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton were published while numerous other articles came out that explained the history and science behind x-rays, dry ice, sound waves, medicine, neon signs, and so forth. However, as seen in the *Urak'i*, many of these discussions funneled back to the notion that America served as the model of these developments. In the case of the *Urak'i*, its writers devoted the most energy and space in their journal to introduce the readers to the basics in mathematics, chemistry, physics, and biology as well as to discuss the latest developments in the United States within different fields of science such as wireless technology, astronomy, and medical science to name a few—to the point that the writer and editor Chang Seun remarked that it would be more fitting for the *Urak'i* to be called a science journal.<sup>102</sup>

The writers tied these developments to the fate of the nation itself by deeming them necessary to “preserving Chosŏn’s existence.”<sup>103</sup> They were offered as the solution

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<sup>101</sup> The central figures behind this journal were Kim Yonggwon, Kim Chongsa, Chu Yohan, Yi In, and Yi Ŭnsang.

<sup>102</sup> Chang Se’un, “Surihak ūi kich’ojŏk kaenyŏm ūi hyŏndae hyŏkmyŏng,” *Urak'i* 3 (1928): 59. Chang Kyusik asserts that this emphasis on science could be said to be one of the distinguishable features of Korean students in America. He argues that Korean students were very influenced by American academia which was feeling the effects of pragmatism at this time, and thus stressed natural sciences in the social sciences. Within this context, “science” and “pragmatism” became intellectual keywords for Korean students studying in America. This emphasis on science can further be seen by the fact that roughly 35% of the Korean students studying in the United States in the 1920s majored in the natural sciences (10.7%), engineering (14.4%), and medical science (10.2%).<sup>102</sup> This number was quite significant especially when seen against the fact only 6.3% of Korean students studying in Japan majored in the natural sciences and engineering in 1930.

<sup>103</sup> “*Urak'i* chujang: Chosŏn ch’ŏngnyŏn e taehan *Urak'i* chujang,” 53-54.



to Korea's most urgent problems. According to Kim Toyŏn, at a time when Korea was losing its commercial rights and power, developing Korea's industry was the most urgent endeavor to gaining freedom and the people's happiness, and to that end, Taylorism was the solution.<sup>104</sup> Kim introduced the readers to Frederick Winslow Taylor's "scientific management" and upheld it as the way to greatly raise production efficiency and to achieve industrial success like the United States. In another attempt to link the fate of Korea with "scientific" developments, Yi Pyŏngdu wrote that the number one problem out of the various reasons behind "Korea's current troubles," or colonialism, was the denial of scientific knowledge and development.<sup>105</sup> Writers tied science to the issue of Japanese colonialism, and asserted that until Koreans embrace science, they would not be able to "take control of their fate and ensure the safety of their future."<sup>106</sup>

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It should also be noted here that the linkage between reforms and the fate of the nation was not new to the colonial period. The *Sŏyu kyŏnmun*, for example, draws some very clear linkages between these ideas and institutions of the West with civilization and enlightenment as well as a nation's sovereignty. To take an example, in discussing the Western education system, Yu Kilchun repeatedly points out that this education system and new education lead to the enlightenment of the people who are then able to protect their individual rights as well as the rights of the state, and thereby defend both the self and the nation properly. In this manner, he links the new education to civilization and enlightenment, prosperity and sovereignty of the nation. It is not only education, but also the pursuit of human rights, industry, technologies, better treatment of women, and etc. are associated with the preservation of Korea's sovereignty and other such previously unlinked notions and issues. In other words, he standardizes and naturalizes the notion that these reforms are the means by which to attain civilization and enlightenment, and to maintain the independence of Korea. What is new here is the prominence of evocations of the American models specifically for Korean sovereignty.

<sup>104</sup> Kim Toyŏn, "San'ŏp ūi kwahakjŏk kyŏngyŏng e taehan koch'al," *Urak'i* 1 (1925): 97-102.

<sup>105</sup> Yi, "Kwahak ūi kach'i," 94.

<sup>106</sup> "Urak'i chujang: Chosŏn ch'ŏngnyŏn e taehan Urak'i chujang," 54.

The emphases on science continued with Yi and Yun Ch'ih'o's<sup>107</sup> pleas for Koreans to study science. Yi shared that when he originally went to the United States to study in hopes of working for the future of Korea, he entered the humanities, but upon graduation, he felt that the humanities were useless for his life and livelihood. He had not realized the importance of science, but upon this realization, he took three more years to study engineering and he encouraged current and future Korean students to do the same. Yun also reiterated this message in his contribution, expressing his disapproval of Korean students studying philosophy, theology, literature, and other subjects in the humanities. He made a clear implication that such a focus had led to the colonial situation, and encouraged the students to study the sciences and non-humanities subjects even if this meant a compromise of their personal interests. In calling on students to pursue training in science and technical skills for the sake of the future of the Korean nation, it is true that there were other more practical factors such as the issue of lack of jobs for graduates who had studied subjects in the humanities. The *Korean Student Bulletin*, for instance, published a letter from the Chosen Christian College urging students to learn technical skills given the issue of unemployment for many students returning from the United States.<sup>108</sup> However, for many of these writers such as Yi and Yun who tied science to the issue of Japanese colonialism in Korea, science went beyond just practical benefits of

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<sup>107</sup> Due to the support and assistance he provided for the Japanese colonial government during the 1940's, Yun Ch'ih'o has been labeled a "collaborator." However, as president of the Independence Club, editor of the *Tongnip sinmun*, and engagement in activities to bring reform to Korea in the late-nineteenth century, he was one of the most prominent early "nationalist" leaders and a great proponent of Westernizing and Americanizing reforms in his earlier activities.

<sup>108</sup> "Unemployment Question at Home," *Korean Student Bulletin* 6:2 (1928): 1,4. *The Korean Student Bulletin* (1922-1940) was an English-language journal published by the Korean Student Federation of North America. It was one of the two lasting and significant publications of the organization along with the *Urak'i*. It was written in English as its original purpose was to teach Americans about Korea. However, over time, it became a publication that was largely read by and written for the Korean student community in the United States.

maintaining a livelihood. Science was portrayed as an imperative solution to the Koreans' situation. As many writers implied, these developments had allowed the United States to rise to the top of the capitalist structure, and were the means by which countries could rise in this structure and become more powerful and wealthier globally. Thus, it could change Korea's situation and position as well. The allure of science lay in the fact that it could allow for the locus of *munmyǒng* to shift (as was the case for the United States which had just now climbed to the top because of its material developments—a point that many writers made) and thereby restructure the global order. There were writings that hinted that with more scientific development, Korea could surpass even the United States.<sup>109</sup>

Based on these premises on science, the writers of the *Urak'i* constantly told readers and future students to study the sciences and that science had to be incorporated into everything. “A teacher [had to incorporate it] into his/her teaching, a student into his/her studies, a business person into his/her business, an activist into his/her activity, a social worker into his/her society, a politician into politics, a mother into her child—science must be incorporated into all work and professions.”<sup>110</sup> That would be the way for the nation and society.<sup>111</sup> In other words, like the United States had supposedly done in its ascendance, Korea had to embrace science thoroughly in all aspects of life and in all

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<sup>109</sup> Paek Ilgyu wrote that in the past, Korea had been more developed as exemplified by their superior skills in making bells, but they lost it. Embedded in this discussion was the hope that with new skills, Korea could regain its previous superior position. In another discussion that linked American food with physical superiority, the writer wrote that with the addition of butter or milk, Korean food could become even more nutritious than American food as it had a better foundation. “Chosǒn kong’ǒp ūi yǒksajǒk yǒn’gu,” *Urak'i* 1 (1925): 45-53; Song, “Injong ch’ai wa sǒngjang,” 23.

<sup>110</sup> *Urak'i chujang*: Chosǒn ch’ǒngnyǒn e taehan *Urak'i chujang*,” 54.

<sup>111</sup> Yi, “Kwahak ūi kach’i,” 95.

aspects of society—this was a national issue and this was the solution for Korea’s colonial situation.

### *Materialization of Articulations of America*

These discussions that linked America and the path that Korea should take in this historically specific context went on to produce some legacies that demonstrated that these articulations were lasting. As many of these students in the United States went back to Korea after their studies, some materialized the very discussions that they had so ardently espoused during this period. One of the clearest examples of such materialization lies in the pursuit of New Education [*sin kyoyuk*] in the latter half of the 1940s and throughout the 1950s. The New Education emphasized Pragmatism, experiential education, democratic education, and child-centered education that had roots in the colonial discussions of America explored in this study. John Dewey himself worked closely with several Korean students, with the most representative figures being O Ch’önsök, Kim Hwallan, Cho Pyöng’uk, and Chang Yiuk.<sup>112</sup> Dewey was also on the advisory board for the Korean Student Federation of North America, and he contributed to the establishment of the Korean Cultural Center within Columbia University in 1931.<sup>113</sup> These Korean students were the very figures who introduced the field of American education to Koreans through their articles in Korean publications during the colonial period and evoked it as the model for Korea. O, in particular, played a vital role

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<sup>112</sup> Chang, “Iljeha Miguk yuhaksaeng üi kündae chisik suyong kwa kungminkukka kusang,” 133; Yi Kwangho, “Migunjöng üi kyoyuk chöngch’aek,” in *Haebang chönhusa üi insik* (P’aju: Han’gilsa, 1985), 589.

<sup>113</sup> Chang, “Iljeha Miguk yuhaksaeng üi kündae chisik suyong kwa kungminkukka kusang,” 132.

in advocating the incorporation of Dewey's methods in Korea. He wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on "Education as an Instrument of National Assimilation: A Study of the Educational Policy of Japan in Korea" at Columbia University. He was influenced by Dewey and wrote several articles on the American education system and education in general for the *Ura*k*'i* that reflected his influence. Post-1945, along with some other Korean students who had studied in the United States such as Kim Hwallan, Paek Nakchun, Yi Myomuk, Ha Kyöngdök, and Yu Yongch'ae, O went on to become one of the core members and one of the most influential people of the Korean Committee on Education [*Chosön Kyoyuk Wiwönhoe*] and The Korean Committee on Educational Planning [*Kyoyuk Simüihoe*] that sought to build a new education system for Korea. He also later became a leader in the Education Department of the United States Army Military Government in Korea.<sup>114</sup> He is attributed with bringing about the pursuit of New Education, and its contents echoed exactly the ideas he espoused in the *Ura*k*'i* while discussing the American education system.<sup>115</sup> O also tried to further introduce Dewey's works by translating half of Dewey's *Democracy and Education* into Korean in 1948 and translating the work in its entirety with Im Hanyöng in 1953. He continually put the ideas of education that he developed during his time in the United States into practice through his later chair positions and as Minister of Education in the Second Republic.

In other ways, American institutions served as models for women. An example can be seen through Pak Indök's discussion on the importance of women being financially independent through careers of their own. Upholding Western women

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<sup>114</sup>Yi, "Migunjöng üi kyoyuk chöngch'aek," 567.

<sup>115</sup> Pak Pongmok, "Han'guk kyoyuk e t'uyöngdoen Dyui [Dewey] chaep'yöngga wa ch'ön'guk O Ch'önsök üi chari," *Kyoyuk Ch'ölhak [Philosophy of Education]* 11(1993): 110; Yi, "Migunjöng üi kyoyuk chöngch'aek," 577; "Miguk munmyöng kaegwan: Miguk üi kyoyukgye," 63-72.

generally and American women specifically who were active in jobs suited to their talent and vocation, Pak urged the Korean women readers to obtain jobs so to ensure their financial independence. This was an idea that she reiterated in a roundtable four years later in 1932, and an idea that she materialized with the establishment of the Working Women Association [*Chigŏp puin hyŏphoe*] upon her return to Korea, and the establishment of the vocational school Indŏk College [*Indŏk Taehakkyo*] in 1961 that was modeled after the Berea College in Kentucky that she had toured.<sup>116</sup> These are just a few of several examples of the materialization of these discussions from the colonial period. Nevertheless, they point to the fact that the projection of America as a model and source of solutions for Korea were significant images of America that would prove to be lasting. This segment of the wide-ranging discourse on America, in particular, was able to materialize and find expression in South Korea as many of its writers were Korean students in the United States during the colonial period. As such, many found governmental and leadership positions in South Korea post-1945 through their English abilities and connections to leaders in the United States Army Military Government in Korea.<sup>117</sup> Many others emerged as educators and leaders in diverse sectors where they were able to materialize their ideas that they engaged in during their student years, and

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<sup>116</sup> Kim Sŏng'un. "Pak Indŏk ūi sahoeŭisik kwa sahoehwaldong: 1920 nyŏndae mal~1930nyŏndae rŭl chungsim ũro," *Yŏksa wa kyŏnggye* 76 (2010): 196, 203.

<sup>117</sup> For instance, some of these writers included Syngman Rhee, O Ch'ŏnsŏk, Kim Toyŏn, Pak Indŏk, Kim Maria, Kim Hwallan, Chu Yosŏp, Chang Riuk, Paek Nakchun, Yi Hun'gu, Sŏ Chaep'il, and Han Sŭng'in. Several of these writers were later accused of pro-Japanese stances in the last part of the colonial period. Although their activities in the last part of the colonial period complicate their earlier assertion that reforms based on American models are separate from and superior to Japanese models, what is important to remember is that the discourse they produced on America—America as the model and source of solutions for Korea; America as the superior and unmediated access to *munmyŏng*—was lasting regardless of the later stances of some of its authors.

continue to play a role in producing and reproducing articulations of America in South Korea.

## **Conclusion**

American goods, symbols, and images circulated widely in colonial Korea, and new articulations of America emerged that were shaped by previous understandings of America, the global context, and the colonial context. Namely, America was articulated alongside two neologisms, “modern” and “new civilization,” which were both being defined as critical components of capitalism. As such, America was evoked as the model to emulate in order to not only adapt to but rise in the new capitalist order. Building on the image of America as the hope for Korea’s political independence as discussed in the previous chapter, America was further articulated in the colonial period by a significant segment of Koreans as the source of solutions to colonial Korea. These meanings of America that were formed in the colonial period help explain some of the images and understandings of America that emerged in post-liberation Korean society that labeled the United States as “the land of science and technology” and made Koreans rely on and desire after America as will be further discussed in Chapter Five.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, it helps explain some of the American models of education, development, and institutions that were adopted and incorporated into Korean society. There were direct linkages between the discourse on America as the source of solutions and Koreans’ long process of struggling with how to and what it means to construct itself into a modern nation-state.

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<sup>118</sup> Yŏnjin Kim, “‘Ch’inmi’ wa ‘panmi’ sai esŏ: Han’guk ōllon ūl t’onghae pon Miguk ūi imiji wa Migukhwa tamron,” in *Americanization: Haebang ihu Hanguk esŏ ūi Migukhwa*, eds. Tŏkko Kim and Yongjin Wŏn (Seoul: Purŭn Yŏksa, 2008), 409.

However, it is important to note that the meanings of America as discussed in this study were not the only images of America that were formulated in the colonial period. There were also many ambivalent and negative perceptions of the United States. At the same time that America was imagined as the model, hope, and solution for Korea, severe criticism of America and Americanism began to rise in the Korean press in the late 1920s and intensified in the 1930s following the Great Depression and the rise of leftist movements in Korea. It is to these discussions that I turn now.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Anti-Americanism in Colonial Korea: “America” as a Vantage Point for Capitalist Modernity**

#### **Introduction**

According to historian Louis Menand who studied Americanism in postwar France, “The concept of Americanism is not meaningful without the concept of anti-Americanism...Americanism and anti-Americanism are names for two sides of one coin.”<sup>1</sup> As this chapter shows, this dual form of Americanism held true not only for Europe and Japan in-between the two World Wars, but also for colonial Korea. At the same time that America was imagined as the model, hope, and source of solutions for Korea, severe criticism of America and Americanism began to rise in the Korean press in the early 1920s and intensified in the mid-1920s following the “failure” at the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference and within the rise of leftist thought in Korea. More specifically, America, the projected epitome of capitalist modernity, was evoked as the model for new skills, industries, technological advancements, and overall material developments, while it was also harshly criticized for these same material developments through critiques and anxiety about materialism, the disparities between the rich and poor, and Americans’ “dollar is everything attitude.”<sup>2</sup>

I argue that such criticism of America and contradictory Americanism-Anti-Americanism discussions were rooted in the contradictory effects of capitalism in which the articulation of opposing categories are interrelated moments. At the same time that

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Menand, “The Promise of Freedom, the Friend of Authority: American Culture in Postwar France,” in *Americanism: New Perspectives on the History of an Ideal*, eds. Michael Kazin and Joseph A. McCartin (The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 205.

<sup>2</sup> C.C. Hahn, “The Good and Bad Elements of American Civilization,” *Urak'i* 2 (1926): 10.

American methods and developments recognized as capitalist modernity were articulated as the solution that offered Koreans a way to even themselves out in relation to other nations in the global capitalist order, they were also articulated as the cause that brought on increasing unevenness and rendered Koreans more deeply into a subordinate place. That discussions of America were contradictory based on the contradictions of capitalism were also evidenced by the fact that “Americanization” caused anxiety among Koreans (across the ideological spectrum) as they started to feel threatened by its universalizing and homogenizing effects. This “modern” and “universal” America then went on to become a reference point through which to articulate a “traditional” and “particular” Korea. Discussions of “America” thus embodied contradictory discussions and meanings—at once leveling and differentiating, at once universalizing and bringing particularity—and in short, “America” became the vantage point for the contradictions of capitalist modernity.

In exploring these articulations, I will first explore the historical background in which criticism of America emerged in Korea. I will do so by first looking at the resembling criticism and anxiety regarding America from various parts of the world, and the ways in which America became a reference point for articulating particularity in different regions. As laid out in the previous chapter, Americanism (of which anti-Americanism is a critical component) was a phenomenon that was not particular to Korea but took place within the context and in relation to the global rise of the United States and the simultaneous rise of Americanism globally. Moreover, Americanism had very noticeable resemblances around the world. The simultaneous rise and resemblances, in turn, were possible only within capitalism. By showing the ways in which discussions of

Americanism in each region resembled one another and rose up simultaneously, I demonstrate their roots in capitalism and thereby avoid the narrative that Korea's Americanism/anti-Americanism was merely a derivative of what was occurring in Japan. I explore this global background, the unsatisfactory conclusion of the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference in 1922, and the Great Depression that paved the road for anxiety-ridden discussions on America to emerge in Korea. I then explore the specific criticisms of America as articulated by Koreans, and how they were tied to Koreans' uneasiness over the way Americanism's increasingly uneven effects applied to themselves. I then study Koreans' further anxiety over Americanism that was rooted in discomfort with its universalizing tendencies, and see the subsequent ways in which "America" became one reference point for articulating Korea's particularity. By asserting that "America" was one of the sites in which Korean writers grappled with capitalist modernity and that it played into the articulation of Korean particularity, I show that "America" was significant to people across the ideological spectrum in Korea.

### **America as a Global "Reference Point" for the Articulation of Particularity**

As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, one of the most remarkable characteristics of Americanism was the resemblance among its various forms throughout the world. Similar contradictory discussions on Americanism emerged simultaneously in the 1920s in various regions. To elaborate, at the same time that things identified as American had mass appeal, were evoked as models to emulate, and stirred excitement among various peoples as things that signaled the "modern" and the future, they also created acute anxiety and writers severely criticized the very same material developments

and aesthetics that others, and sometimes even they themselves evoked as models. Menand puts it well when he writes that embedded in the notion of Americanism was anti-Americanism, and in fact, the meaning of Americanism absolutely relies on anti-Americanism.<sup>3</sup> They are interrelated. I argue that what was at the heart of the dual form of Americanism is the interrelated universalizing and particularizing moments within the doubling and contradictory effects of capitalism. That these contradictory discussions of Americanism were rooted in the contradictory effects of capitalism can explain how very similar discussions—with similar language and patterns—arose simultaneously in each region.

As previously discussed, the global expansion of capitalism brought countries into “a single, increasingly interdependent, and hierarchically organized global space-time” that was marked by societies of multiple spatial scales and fields becoming more intricately interrelated.<sup>4</sup> However, as Manu Goswami is quick to point out, this did not mean the creation of a unified and homogenous global space-time. The internal contradictions of capitalism are such that it continually generates and produces contradictions, dual forms, and new forms of unevenness sociospatially and socioculturally as capital develops unevenly across time and space.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, at the same time that capital has universalizing, unifying, homogenizing dynamics, it also has particularizing, differentiating, and hierarchical effects. The formation of global space-time is also a part of this dynamic and is thus dialectical, doubled, and contradictory in

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<sup>3</sup> Menand, 205.

<sup>4</sup> Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 39, 41; Manu Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44:4 (2002): 788.

<sup>5</sup> Goswami, *Producing India*, 40.

nature.<sup>6</sup> Global space-time, then, consists of forms of interdependence among “multiple spatial scales (e.g., local, regional, imperial) and temporalities (e.g., the multiple temporalities of everyday life, the different temporalities of capital accumulation, including short-term financial, medium-term industrial, and long-term infrastructural)” and whose multiple spaces and temporalities do not negate one another, but rather, intersect and impose on one another to create a complex, differentiated, hierarchical, as well as economically, culturally, spatially, and temporally uneven space-time.<sup>7</sup> These contradictory dynamics give rise to dual forms such as the nation form that is on the one hand the ultimate expression of particularity but on the other hand universal because nation forms *only* make sense among and against other bounded and mutually exclusive nation-states.<sup>8</sup> Goswami writes that such contradictory forms and categories are “intrinsically interrelated moments” within capitalism.<sup>9</sup>

It was this very contradictory effect that was behind the Americanisms in the world. The wide embrace of Americanism occurred at the same time as expression of considerable anxiety on Americanism with fears that it would threaten each region’s particularity. Europeans, for instance, were afraid that American films would threaten their national identities.<sup>10</sup> The British feared that along with American films would come “American domination in the development of national character or characteristics” while

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>8</sup> Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form,” 785.

<sup>9</sup> Goswami, *Producing India*, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 177.

a Frenchman went as far as to liken the influence of American cinema to colonialism and thereby implying its threat to the nation.<sup>11</sup> In Japan as well, Murobuse Takanobu, editor of *Shinsei*, wrote in 1929 that “America has become the world; Japan is nothing but America today,” and his anxiety came out clearly as he posed, “How could Japan exist without America? And where could we go to escape Americanization?”<sup>12</sup> His concern rested with the fact that America had become the new universal, and to be Americanized meant that Japan would also be universal with no particularity. This concern was reminiscent of Japanese painter Kishida Ryūsei’s sentiment in 1927 as he depicted some of the women out and about in Tokyo, walking quickly, and dressed in flapper-style dresses with short haircuts and dark make-up. These women were “different to the girls of only a decade ago” and “her type of beauty is based on a ‘Western-style’ beauty” which is a “modern beauty” and “a busy beauty, a beauty for a quick glance.”<sup>13</sup> This may be a beauty that catches your attention, but as Kishida pointed out, it is an “evened out” beauty, and in other words, a homogenous, rationalized, and universal beauty.<sup>14</sup> He lamented the “traditional” beauty that is on the verge of being lost—a beauty that has “depth and substance” as opposed to the new beauty that is “shallow and sweet,” but

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Shunya Yoshimi, “Consuming American, Producing Japan,” in *The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West*, eds. Sheldon M. Garon and Patricia L. MacLachlan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 64.

<sup>13</sup> Kishida Ryūsei, “*Modaanjo* - Short-Haired Missy,” in *Modern Boy Modern Girl: Modernity in Japanese Art, 1910-1935*, ed. Jackie Menzies (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1998), 121, 122.

<sup>14</sup> William Marotti, lecture, February 12, 2009.

more importantly, a beauty that is distinctive, individual, and holds the possibility of difference in a world of sameness.<sup>15</sup>

As Kishida's discussion demonstrates, his articulation of the "modern," "evened out," and homogenous beauty was the same moment in which to articulate a "traditional," particular and different beauty. The articulation of the universal and particular were interrelated and interdependent in this way. This was indeed the similar way in which Americanism functioned in each region. In fact, the term "reference point" is a term that various scholars studying Americanism in different parts of the world often use to understand the meaning of Americanism in each region. To elaborate, within their particular contexts and within the global context of the Great Depression, intellectuals from each region discussed in critical tones aspects of American civilization that caused them uneasiness. Commonly evoked images of America in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s were "lack of culture," excessive materialism, and as Nietzsche put it, "idol [of] the dollar," and "striving for gold."<sup>16</sup> The first two images of the United States had existed as early as the nineteenth century in Europe, but became more pronounced in the 1920s and even more so in the 1930s within the context of the Great Depression that brought on harsh criticism of the United States and its policies in each region. German writer Carl Zuckmayer listed off the 1930s clichés of America, depicting it as:

A country of fantastic standardization, one-dimensional materialism, of soulless mechanics. A country without tradition, without culture, without craving for beauty or form, without metaphysics, without fine wines, a country of chemical fertilizers and can-openers, without grace, without manure heaps, without class and without sloppiness, without Melos,

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<sup>15</sup> Kishida, 122; William Marotti, lecture, February 12, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Wagner, "The Europeans' Image of America," in *America and Western Europe: Problems and Prospects*, eds. Karl Kaiser and Hans-Peter Schwarz, (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1977), 24.

without Apollo, without Dionysos... tyranny of the dollar, of business, advertising and brutal indiscretion.<sup>17</sup>

These were commonly evoked images of America in Europe, and the fact that very similar rhetoric and images of America were shared across the globe in the 1920s and 1930s is further shown by the criticism of America in Japan. It consisted of “mindless materialism, a dearth of history and tradition, and the triviality of popular culture” while in Korea, it was also “materialism,” “idol of the dollar,” “money-worshipping,” and the notion that there was nothing to America but “the grinding sound of machinery.”<sup>18</sup>

Such criticism of America, in turn, was used as the counterpoint and reference point by which to articulate particularity. For instance, Rob Kroes describes the prevalent discourse in France that set the soulless, machine-dominated, materialistic, lacking-in-culture America as the counterpoint to France, and America was thereby used to define France as embodying “spiritual, esthetic values” and high culture. Elsewhere in Germany, Americanism became the reference point by which to articulate *Volk* [people/nation] and *Kultur* [culture], while Roudometof and Robertson write that Americanism became the “reference point” for nation-building in general in Europe.<sup>19</sup> To detail more specifically

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Jun Furuya, “Japanese Intellectuals Define America from the 1920s through World War II,” in *Americanism: New Perspectives on the History of an Ideal*, eds. Michael Kazin and Joseph A. McCartin (The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 193; Chu Yosöp. “Miguk munmyöng üi ch’üngmyöngwan,” *Chosön Ilbo*, February 6, 1930. [Translation by Michael Finch in Ho-min Yang, “The Perception of the United States during the Japanese Colonial Period,” in *Korean Perceptions of the United States: A History of their Origins and Formation*, trans. Michael Finch (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2006), 295].

<sup>19</sup> Rob Kroes, “French Views of American Modernity: From Text to Subtext,” in *Americanism: New Perspectives on the History of an Idea*, eds. Michael Kazin and Joseph A. McCartin, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 222; Victor Roudometof and Roland Robertson, “The Space between the Boudnaries: Globalization and Americanization,” in *American Culture in Europe: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mike-Frank G. Epitropoulos and Victor Roudometof (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 188. “Volk” and “kultur” were both terms and concepts that referred to and highlighted German uniqueness and its virtues.



how America served as such a reference point, I will briefly discuss Japan's and Germany's cases here.

Anti-American sentiments soared in Japan against the backdrop of the California Alien Land Law of 1913 and 1920 that prohibited “aliens” from owning land in the United States, but more specifically, targeted Japanese immigrants. Within this context, Japanese intellectuals began to voice their concerns over America. During this time, their critiques of the American republican founding principles were articulated not only alongside but also in relation to “the discovery of Japan’s unique ‘national polity’ (*kokutai*) and its ‘state founding spirit.’”<sup>20</sup> As criticism of America increased in the 1930s within the contexts of the Great Depression and the Manchurian Incident in 1931 after which the United States and Japan solidified their opposing trajectories, Japanese leaders and intellectuals increasingly discussed America as a nation of “mindless materialism” and “entirely lack[ing] the deep spirituality and long traditions of Japan.”<sup>21</sup> As shown here and in the earlier example of the criticism of American republican founding principles, negative images of America were set as the counterpoint to Japan and the point by which Japan could articulate its difference. In fact, Jun Furuya notes that “the image of Japan’s polity was refined and elevated partly to create a false contrast with all things American.”<sup>22</sup> The juxtaposition of Japan to America continued in many ways as shown by philosopher and cultural historian Watsuji Tetsuro’s 1943 article on the “American national character.” He used images of America to articulate Japanese

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<sup>20</sup> Furuya, 194.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 197.

particularity—Japan’s virtues were in collectivity as opposed to American individuality, spirituality as opposed to American materialism, and loyalty rather than American personal fulfillment.<sup>23</sup> In short, Furuya writes that for Japan, Americanism was “a crucial reference point...for Japanese thinkers and officials in their attempts to conceive of their nation’s unique, significant place in the world. The idea of Japanese exceptionalism was framed, in part, by the need to grapple with what seemed distinctive about America.”<sup>24</sup> In fact, it is no surprise that America was evoked in the “Overcoming Modernity [*kindai no chōkoku*]” symposium that took place in Tokyo in 1942 and embroiled in a rhetoric of anxiety as being threatening to Japanese cultural identity.

Likewise, in the case of Germany, *Amerikanisierung*, or Americanization, had been “an intellectual concern” from as early as the 1840s in Germany, as America was both embraced then dropped as the symbol and hope of the future by German intellectuals such as the Young Hegelians of the 1840s and the Nietzscheans of the 1890s.<sup>25</sup> As Americanization came to symbolize a hindrance to the socialist project, the Young Hegelians’ initial enthusiasm for America waned while Nietzsche’s slogan in the 1880s became “No American future!” and echoed the prevailing sentiment in Europe that was contemptuous of the United States’ “hypocritical legalism and slavery,” and most importantly, “philistine” and “low” American culture that contrasted with “high” European culture rich with tradition.<sup>26</sup> American popular culture which was articulated as

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Bergmann, “The Specter of *Amerikanisierung*, 1840-1990,” in *American Culture in Europe: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mike-Frank G. Epitropoulos and Victor Roudometof (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 67-68.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 67-68, 72.

“all-too-easy, accessible, and self-infatuated” was used as the counterpoint by which to articulate European art as high art that was difficult and distant.<sup>27</sup> With the onset of German and American imperialistic ambitions that clashed over Samoa and the Philippines, Latin American markets, and the Spanish-American War, “*Amerikanisierung* became a more immediate economic and geopolitical ‘danger’” and the perception that America is a “direct threat to German prospects” pervaded within Germany.<sup>28</sup> Hitler was less successful in reviving this rhetoric post-World War I, and his voice was marginalized after the Dawes Plan of 1924 improved Germany’s situation. However, as Hitler continued in his attempts to debunk the positive images of America, Americanization became central to the articulation of Nazi Germany as the rallying point for Europe against America. In fact, following the Great Depression and the subsequent disillusionment with the American model, anti-Americanism “became the ideological cement of the Nazi-Soviet Pact” and Hitler actively targeted American culture, or the “complete lack of culture” in America, citing the Hollywood star culture, female boxing and so forth, and actively perpetuated the notion that to Americanize would be the same as “de-Germaniz[ing].”<sup>29</sup> Americanism, then, became a crucial reference point for German political discourse and was central to the articulation of particular Nazi Germany.

### **The Local Context for Critical Discussions of America**

In Korea as well, increasing criticism and similar contradictory discussions of America emerged within this global context, and further fueling the criticism of America

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 78, 79.

were more specific factors, one of which was the rise of socialist thought in Korea. Socialist thought had begun to rise among Koreans in exile after 1919 (particularly in Shanghai and among Korean students in Japan) following the Russian Revolution in 1917. The success of the Bolshevik revolution, the following rise of the Soviet Union, and the revolutionary call to the oppressed resonated with many intellectuals in Korea at a time when the atrocities of World War I made many question a world led by the Allied powers, and more importantly, the failure to achieve independence through pacifist means during the March First Movement led intellectuals to more deeply consider alternative means of change in Korea. Within this context, Korean intellectuals began forming leftist organizations with Yi Tonghwi establishing the first Korean Socialist party [*Han'in sahoedang*] in Khabarovsk and Nam Manch'un starting the Korean section of the Communist party in Irkutsk in 1918.<sup>30</sup> There was no monolithic political and intellectual leftist line in colonial Korea, but as Michael Robinson points out, traces of socialist thought among various publications became increasingly prevalent beginning with the publication of *Sinsaenghwal* in 1922. Critiques of America based on the acceptance of ideas of historical materialism and class conflict emerged within this intellectual and political milieu.

The unsatisfactory conclusion of the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference in 1922 further fueled leftist critique on America. After this conference, increasingly critical attitude towards the United States in Korea became noticeably prominent. The lack of results from the Washington conference which did not even raise the issue of Korean independence as many Koreans had hoped for all lent themselves to increasing

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<sup>30</sup> Michael Edson Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 109.

leftist critiques of the United States.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the Comintern's First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East in Moscow convened in January of 1922 within the context of severe denouncement of the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference in which America was accused of imperialism in the Philippines and China, and of being a part of the "four blood-sucking nations" (along with Great Britain, France and Japan) who "expressed their solidarity with the rapacious policy of Japanese imperialism."<sup>32</sup>

Within this context, criticism of America began flowing out in the 1920s in Korean publications—actively in the *Chosŏn Ilbo* and even in publications relatively sympathetic towards the United States such as the *Tonga Ilbo* and the *Urak'i*. Scholar Ho-min Yang writes that in general, the tone in discussions of America changed from portrayals such as "a nation of 'righteousness' and 'humanitarianism'" to that of an "economic (or capitalist) imperialist" from the period following the Washington Conference to the Japanese encroachment on Manchuria in 1931.<sup>33</sup> It was within this context that articles harshly criticizing American policies and politics emerged accusing America of touting false humanitarianism and righteousness, pursuing a policy of "America-first-ism" that translated into "economic imperialism" and "global application of the Monroe Doctrine."<sup>34</sup> The image of America as economic imperialists extended to

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 107-9; Ho-min Yang, "The Perception of the United States during the Japanese Colonial Period," in *Korean Perceptions of the United States: A History of their Origins and Formation*, trans. Michael Finch (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2006), 257.

<sup>32</sup> Yang, 257, 259. From *Kominteru shiryoshu* [Collected materials on the Comintern], vol. 2 (Tokyo: Dainichi shoten, 1979), 137-138.

<sup>33</sup> Yang, 270. Yang points to several articles in the *Kaebŏk*, *Chosŏn Ilbo*, and *Sidae Ilbo* for examples. See pgs. 282-285. Yun Taewŏn also discusses this shift in image for the United States. Yun Taewŏn, "Ilche sigi ch'inmi woegyeron kwa taemi insik," *Naeil ūl yŏnŭn yŏksa* 12 (2003.6), 42-43, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Journal/ArticleDetail/484231>.

<sup>34</sup> An Chaehong, "The World this year—A Personal View of America." *Chosŏn Ilbo*, January 4, 1925.

even American missionaries in Korea who came under attack within this atmosphere and were labeled as being representative of America and its characteristics by coming from affluent backgrounds, touting false humanitarianism and wielding the power of money.<sup>35</sup> These criticisms of American missionaries were compounded by a 1926 incident in the Tongdaemun Women's Hospital in which a Korean nurse committed suicide after the American director expelled her for causing a burn on a young child's arm by having water that was too hot.<sup>36</sup> Many Koreans were outraged by the incident, and American missionaries were further criticized for their racial prejudice, contempt towards Koreans, and wielding around their "power of 'possessions.'"<sup>37</sup> The image of America as imperialist went as far as to bring forth an article that openly and blatantly likened the United States in the Philippines with Japan in Korea.<sup>38</sup>

Critical articles on America increased even more after the Great Depression that began after the 1928 stock market crash in the United States. America's cultural, political, and economic dominance faltered worldwide in the 1930s due to the Depression. Although there are divergent views on the causes of the Depression, there is a widespread consensus on the fact that a major cause was the sudden decrease in American foreign loans after 1928 and imports after 1930 (the Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930 set a high tariff against imported goods in order to protect American jobs and industries) which brought on deflation in various countries and a dramatic reduction in international trade

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<sup>35</sup> "Nosöin kwa Migugin." *Chosön Ilbo*, February 17, 1926.

<sup>36</sup> Sung Samdang, "Tongdaemun Puin Pyöngwön chasal sakön e taehayö." *Tonga Ilbo*, January 31, 1926, 3; Yang, 279.

<sup>37</sup> Yang, 279. From "Chosön kwa kidokkyo—Tongdaemun puin pyöngwön sakön e kamhayö." *Chosön Ilbo*, March 7, 1926.

<sup>38</sup> "Miin kwa Ilin üi chöngch'ijök kinüng." *Tonga Ilbo*, August 24, 1926, 1.

in general.<sup>39</sup> The cutbacks escalated and exacerbated the fall in raw material prices and general world income.<sup>40</sup> In colonial Korea's case, the Depression brought forth a peak in bankruptcy and unemployment rates.<sup>41</sup> The Depression made many disillusioned with the Americanism that had previously seemed to offer them prosperity and material advancements.<sup>42</sup> It also made many question and blame the American postwar efforts and policies regarding war debts, reparations, and world economy that many believed were structured to favor American interests. The Depression was an important context behind the general turn on Americanism around the globe, and Korea's case was no exception.

### **Koreans' Criticism of America**

Within these contexts, even the journal that was most enthusiastic about America such as the *Urak'i* joined many other publications critical of aspects of American civilization to produce some tension-filled discussions on America.<sup>43</sup> In an article in which eighteen Korean students in America were surveyed on their perceptions of

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<sup>39</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 172; Costigliola, 220.

<sup>40</sup> Costigliola, 220.

<sup>41</sup> Soon-Won Park, "Colonial Industrial Growth and the Emergence of the Korean Working Class," in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, eds. Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 133.

<sup>42</sup> Costigliola, 23.

<sup>43</sup> However, this is not to say that the tone of the *Urak'i* changed entirely. Even after the Great Depression, the journal still remained mostly a great proponent of American civilization and Americanism. It is true that anxiety towards American civilization increased closer to and throughout the 1930's within the contexts of the Great Depression and the rise of intellectuals turning to the Leninist doctrine of national liberation after their disillusionment with the March First Movement. However, as Chang Kyusik emphasizes, their criticism on American materialism and leftist tendencies such as the push for proletarian literature in the journal, and the formation of the Korean Academy of Social Science (*Sahoe kwahak yŏn'guhoe*, 1931) in Chicago that researched socialism, were never significant enough to change these students' prevailing critical attitude towards socialism and understanding of American civilization as a model and solution for them. Chang Kyusik, "Iljeha Miguk yuhaksaeng ūi kŭndae chisik suyong kwa kungminkukka kusang," *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndaesa yŏn'gu* 34 (2005):149-153.

America, many cited “material *munmyōng* [civilization]” as the best feature of America at the same time that they cited its flip side, “materialism,” as the worst feature—all in the same breath.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, industrial developments and material products like automobiles were cited as the best and most commendable features at the same time that capitalism which “mechanize[d] production, deskill[ed] workers” and was the very system that brought on these developments was cited as the worst.<sup>45</sup> Discussions on America were full of such contradictions. Despite the very clear message found in journals like the *Ura*k*'i* that *munmyōng* rested with America and its material developments were to be praised, there was considerable anxiety regarding the accompanying features of these very developments and their implications for the Koreans themselves. As will be evidenced by the following discussion, it is important to note that anxiety and critique towards America came from writers across the ideological spectrum. Although it is true that critiques of America based in critiques of capitalism came most strongly from moderate and far left intellectuals, similar anxiety towards America from right-leaning intellectuals further speaks to the nature of critical discussions on America in the colonial period as more than ideological expressions, but rather, expressions of the larger contradictions of capitalist modernity.

To take a closer look, I will explore this tension in the *Ura*k*'i* which in many ways exemplified “Americanism” as its general tone displayed great enthusiasm for America and advocated the adoption of American material developments as the model for developments in Korea. Yet, alongside such advocacy were articles such as the one by

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<sup>44</sup> “Miguk yuhaksaeng ūi Miguk munmyōng e taehan kamsang,” *Ura*k*'i* 3 (1928), 1-11.

<sup>45</sup> Robert J. Antonio and Alessandro Bonanno, “A New Global Capitalism? From ‘Americanism and Fordism’ to ‘Americanization-Globalization,’” *American Studies* 41:2/3 (2000): 34.



contributor C.C. Hahn who harshly criticized materialism in America, calling it an American “ideal” in which people “put money making above all other phases of life.”<sup>46</sup> He wrote that American materialism specifically refers to the ““dollar is everything”” mentality which he believed was a “grievous mistake.”<sup>47</sup> In fact, he went as far to say that this materialism is the root of everything bad in America as it is that “from which such elements as exploitation, racial prejudice and so on are developed.”<sup>48</sup> Other writers joined in the criticism on the value placed on “money-making” in America with one contributor condescendingly retelling a story of an American woman who had lost her left ear and thus placed an advertisement saying that she wanted to buy one and to the surprise of the Korean writer, got many responses. He remarked that this was something that could be seen only in America where money was so valued.<sup>49</sup> Chu Yosöp also reiterated such criticism of America by saying that “If there is one really powerful religion in America, it is the religion of money worship...It is truly difficult to find anyone who is not crazy about money.”<sup>50</sup> He wrote that the problem with money-worshipping was so severe that it infiltrated all aspects of American civilization as even

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<sup>46</sup> C.C. Hahn, “The Good and Bad Elements of American Civilization,” *Urak’i* 2 (1926): 10.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>49</sup> “Miguksö tütko pogo,” *Urak’i* 3 (1928): 132.

<sup>50</sup> Chu Yosöp (1902-1972) was a famous writer (poet, novelist, and essayist) and editor of the journal, *Sindong’a*. He studied briefly in Japan (青山學院), and several years in China (滬江大學) where he received his university degree in 1927. In 1928, he left for the United States to obtain a Master’s degree in Education at Stanford University. He is perhaps most remembered for his literary piece, “Sarang sonnim kwa ömöni” [Mama and the Boarder], which was published in 1935 in the journal *Chogwang*. Chu Yosöp, “Miguk munmyöng üi ch’üngmyöngwan.” *Chosön Ilbo*, February 11, 1930. [Translation by Michael Finch in Ho-min Yang, “The Perception of the United States during the Japanese Colonial Period,” in *Korean Perceptions of the United States: A History of their Origins and Formation*, trans. Michael Finch (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2006), 297.

“their philosophy smells of money, and their literature smells of money.”<sup>51</sup> Other writers criticized what they felt was the commodification of everything in America. Sports players became “slaves” and commodities, their homeruns and strikes came to have monetary value through bets, and in another article, the writer reported that at a charity ball in the city of Buffalo, pretty ladies’ kisses were sold for money.<sup>52</sup>

Concerns over materialism extended to criticism over extravagance in America as well. At the same time that production in America was hailed, its flip side, consumption and what the writers perceived to be excessive consumption was criticized. Hahn wrote, “Extravagance, in connection to materialism, has become another element of American life. No other people on earth, to my knowledge, spend such a gigantic amount of money and energy for fashion luxuries than the people of the United States.”<sup>53</sup> Yet another writer, Chang Söng’uk, expressed his shock over the extravagance in Hollywood. He wrote about the actress Colleen Moore and wrote detailed descriptions of her luxurious life in which she got paid very well, was pampered, and had a cook as well as a limousine. The writer found it incredulous how much actors, producers, and directors got paid and in general, how much of an “enormous fortune” there was within Hollywood.<sup>54</sup> In fact, many writers from all types of publications criticized the salaries of American film stars, remarking on how Mae West got paid \$500,000 a year and Bing Crosby was paid

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Söng’il, “Radio, sports, kinema,” *Pyölgöngon*. (1926.1); “Modön haengjingok,” *Tonggwang* 25 (1931.9.4): 40.

<sup>53</sup> Hahn, 11.

<sup>54</sup> Chang Söng’uk, “Miguk yönghwagye,” *Urak’i* 3 (1928): 115.

\$135,000 for starring in *Rhythm on the Range* (1936).<sup>55</sup> Several writers also found preposterous the fact that boxers Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey took home \$1,000,000 and \$500,000 respectively for one hour of boxing in 1927. The writer calculated how that comes out to \$16,000 and \$8,000 per minute while remarking dryly that the American president got paid a mere 75,000 *wŏn* per year for working 365 days a week.<sup>56</sup>

Another writer remarked on extravagance and how American people love to spend money saying that their constant objective is to have a “good time.”<sup>57</sup> In fact, “hedonism” was often cited as one of the worst features of America, and it was linked to materialism and extravagance. It was a result of “an abundance of material goods” and it was named as the cause of loss of morality in America.<sup>58</sup> As Chu elaborated, “This mania for pleasure is ultimately ruining the American family system completely” because out of “conflicts arising from an excessive desire for enjoyment” came a high divorce rate of “60%”—a figure that was not close to the truth by any means, but helped in emphasizing the ills of hedonism.<sup>59</sup>

The anxiety with extravagance for these writers lay in the fact that it was occurring and growing alongside its opposite extreme. Hahn juxtaposed extravagance with “women and children [who] are starving” throughout the world to which “the

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<sup>55</sup> Haso, “Yŏnghwa kwa Peakmyŏnsang,” *Chogwang*, (1937.12): 239.

<sup>56</sup> “Miguksŏ tŭtko pogo,” 131.

<sup>57</sup> “Nae nun e pitch’in Yankee,” *Urak’i* 3 (1928): 42.

<sup>58</sup> Chu, “Miguk munmyŏng ūi ch’ŭngmyŏngwan.” *Chosŏn Ilbo*, February 14, 1930. [Translation by Michael Finch in Ho-min Yang, “The Perception of the United States during the Japanese Colonial Period,” 297].

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Many others criticized America of its increasing divorce rate. One article pointed to the high divorce and remarriage rates in the United States, and called America a place for exchanging wives. Miguksŏ tŭtko pogo,” *Urak’i* 3 (1928):133. For other examples, see “Modŏn haengjingok,” *Tonggwang* 25 (1931.9.4): 40; C.C. Hahn, “The Good and Bad Elements of American Civilization,” *Urak’i* 2 (1926).

Americans seem to be blind, in their extravagance.”<sup>60</sup> The increasing disparity and unevenness brought on by capitalist developments were constantly a source of the criticism and concern over America as expressed by contributor Ch’oe Kyōngsik who lamented the increasing gap between the “bourgeois and laborers” in the United States in terms of lifestyle and the neighborhood in which they live.<sup>61</sup> Chu also wrote that “the gap between the rich and the poor is worse in America than anywhere else in the world (except for China).”<sup>62</sup> In another article, the writer stressed the increasing financial, educational, and overall lifestyle gaps between American large landowners in the countryside and tenant farmers which he wrote was “the inevitable result of the capitalist system.”<sup>63</sup> Within this system, the gaps increased as the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. In discussing American actor Lon Chaney’s salary, the writer was incredulous over how far his one week’s worth of salary could go in Korea, and demanded “how is it” that the difference between the two countries could be like “heaven and earth.”<sup>64</sup>

Underlying all the criticism of materialism in America was the writers’ discomfort with the implications of this materialism on themselves. In his discussion, Hahn linked all these discussions of materialism with “economic exploitation of the weak,” including towards immigrants and “racial prejudice”—both of which many

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<sup>60</sup> Hahn, 11.

<sup>61</sup> Ch’oe Kyōngsik, “Miguk munmyōng kaegwan: Miguk ūi sahoegye t’ŭkhi tosisaenghwal e tachayō”, *Urak’i* 4 (1930): 61.

<sup>62</sup> Chu, February 11, 1930.

<sup>63</sup> Ch’oe Kyōngsik, “Soetoe toenŭn Miguk ūi nongch’on,” *Urak’i* 3 (1928): 85.

<sup>64</sup> Sŭng’il, “Radio, sports, kinema,” *Pyōlgōngon*. (1926.1).

Korean students in America were subjected to as shown by the many accounts of students' hardship due to racial prejudice and economic status.<sup>65</sup> Hahn asserted that "American materialism" was the driving force behind these things and emphasized this point by giving the example of the exclusion of Chinese laborers. He wrote:

That this radical prejudice is mainly the outgrowth of American materialism more than any other trait can best [be] illustrated by the following fact: The same class of people who demanded the exclusion of Chinese labor on the Pacific coast a few years ago were in 1918 and 1920 when under stress of a shortage of labor, asking the Chinese laborers be admitted for stipulated period of time, or so long as they have economic value to America.<sup>66</sup>

According to Hahn, this "economic value" played into the treatment of people in the United States, and was thus behind "economic exploitation of the weak" as well. Other writers showed uneasiness over the power of money to govern the treatment of people as well as to dictate people socially. One contributor evoked his personal experience and wrote bitterly that "in America, money is the best, and money is the king" and to this person, it meant that people could buy their way into first class on a ship for twenty days and be treated differently from the rest of the passengers, and more generally, that money had the power to dictate even a person's social standing with no regard for "noble" or "low."<sup>67</sup> The writer expressed considerable anxiety regarding the power of money to restructure the previously established social order.

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<sup>65</sup> Hahn, 11; "Urak'i chujang: Chosŏn ch'ŏngnyŏn e taehan Urak'i chujang," 56; Yŏm Kwangsŏp, "Chaemi Chosŏn haksae ūi hyŏnsang kŭp changrae," *Urak'i* 1 (1925): 21. Aside from these articles in the *Urak'i*, the following articles describe how the students struggled with financial hardship and racism. Kim Sŏng'ŭn, "1920~1930nyŏndae yŏja Miguk yuhaksaeng ūi silt'ae wa insik," *Yŏksa wa Kyŏnggye* 72 (2009): 183-238; Kim Kyŏng'il, "Singminji sigi sinyosŏng ūi Miguk ch'ehŏm kwa munhwa suyong," *Han'guk munhwa yŏn'gu* [*The Korean Cultural Studies*] 11 (2006): 45-91; Chang Kyusik, "Kaehanggi kaehwajisikin ūi sŏgu ch'egŏm kwa kŭndae insik: Miguk yuhaksaeng ūl chungsik ūro," *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndaesa yŏn'gu* 28 (2004): 7-34.

<sup>66</sup> Hahn, 11.

<sup>67</sup> "Nae nun e pitch'in Yankee," 41.

However, the uneasiness expressed here could be linked to more than the Korean American writers' unhappiness over their lot in the United States as foreigners, immigrants, and the economically "weak." More specifically, their criticism could be extended and linked to what this "materialism" meant for Korea as well. Hahn in fact made the linkage himself when he linked this materialism to Theodore Roosevelt's acceptance of Japanese encroachment in Korea "in spite of the fact that the United States was bound by a solemn treaty obligation with Korea to help her in case a third power would usurp Korea."<sup>68</sup> Embedded in the writers' criticism of materialism then was the concern over how it affected Korea's plight—in other words, its effects as the driving force behind the increasing gap between the haves and have-nots, restructuring of an established order, and Korea's colonial situation. Material developments that were so espoused under the call for "*sin munmyōng* [new civilization]" as the source of solutions for Korea's situation (as it could have a leveling effect and allow Korea to rise in the global capitalist order) had a flip side that was the cause of Korea's colonial status as it brought on unevenness that was ever-growing and rendered Korea more deeply into a subordinate place. It was a moment of recognition that capitalism and colonialism as well as homogenization and differentiation were interrelated moments within capitalist modernity.

### **Towards Particularity**

The criticism of American materialism also extended to Koreans who seemed to be emulating and displaying such behavior by consuming American products, fashion,

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<sup>68</sup> Hahn, 12.

and trends.<sup>69</sup> Although there was a wide range of harsh words and satirical comics that mocked such Koreans, and they differed on what grounds their criticism was based, the similarity that many of these articles shared was their concern with Korea's particularity. To give a few examples, three cartoons from An Sŏg'yŏng, who was a popular satire cartoonist for the *Chosŏn Ilbo* presented and mocked specific images of homogeneity in 1928, 1931, and 1930 respectively.<sup>70</sup>

In the first picture, there is a row of "female students and so-called new women" all dressed homogeneously—wearing the same clothes, watches, and rings, and carrying the same clutches—standing exactly the same way inside a streetcar. The cartoon mocks the materialistic "contemporary" women who find it "shameful" if they do not possess gold watches and jeweled rings and seek to parade them around in streetcars.<sup>71</sup> In the second picture, the drawing pokes fun at the women walking in-sync with one another, dressed similarly in Western style, with the same hairstyles, and all adorned with fur. The writer notes that with the onset of winter, women have turned "hairy [*t'ŏlbo*]" by wearing fur on their necks, not caring what kind of fur it is as long as it is fur. The writer sarcastically wonders if snakes had fur, would women wrap snake leather around their necks.<sup>72</sup> The third picture portrays a row of couples in boats along the Han River in the

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<sup>69</sup> Here, I incorporate some general Western trends in my discussion of American trends because these Western trends mentioned here were intricately linked to the notion of Americanism in other parts of the publications.

<sup>70</sup> Although these three images do not mention "America" specifically, they presented images of consumption, dressing, and behavioral trends that were intricately linked to the notion of Americanism during this time. An himself also linked these trends specifically to Americanism in other articles and comics.

<sup>71</sup> An Sŏg'yŏng, "Kasang sogyŏn (1): Mo-dŏn kkŏl ūi changsin undong." *Chosŏn Ilbo*, February 5, 1928.

<sup>72</sup> An, "Kadu p'unggyŏng: T'ŏlsidae." *Chosŏn Ilbo*, November 24, 1931.

same poses and same embraces. The image was mocking the new trend of “dating”—one of the most representative ills of Americanism and American films.<sup>73</sup>

It was no coincidence that each of these pictures highlighted and mocked the image of homogeneity. This was a specific homogeneity that was being highlighted. All these people were portrayed as being indistinguishable from one another due to their same appearances, poses, and actions. However, what was of concern here was not only that they were indistinguishable from one another, but that they were also seemingly indistinguishable from others around the world. It would not be a concern if all these women were wearing “traditional” Korean clothing. Rather, this homogeneity was a concern because it was a homogeneity caused by capitalist modernity—through new consumption practices and trends and emulation of new ways of behaviors that were associated with the notion of “modern”—which made them look universal. In an article discussed in the previous chapter in which “modern capitalism” was made synonymous with “Americanism,” and “Americanism” was articulated as the origin of “modernism,” the writer commented that everybody is “modern.” “America is so, the various countries of Europe are so, Shanghai is so, Japan is so, and Chosŏn is so.”<sup>74</sup> “Modern capitalism” then was making everyone in the world the same way, and it was this universalism brought on by capitalist modernity that was at the heart of concern over homogeneity. This criticism of homogeneity was, in fact, reminiscent of concerns that were expressed in other parts of the world such as by Kishida who expressed anxiety over an “evened out” beauty, and in other words, a homogenous, rationalized, and universal beauty. The

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<sup>73</sup> An, “Ch’oha p’unggyŏng.” *Chosŏn Ilbo*, May 21, 1930.

<sup>74</sup> Im Insaeng, “Modŏnissŭm,” *Pyŏlgŏngon* 25 (January 1, 1930): 136-140.



illustrations here were also concerned with the fact that in their emulation of American trends, the Korean people were looking identical, rationalized, and standardized, and most alarmingly, universal. They were increasingly becoming a part of a uniform world that did not leave room for distinctiveness, difference and particularity.

That such emulation of American trends was directly linked to uneasiness over homogeneity and Korean particularity was shown through An's criticism in 1932 in which he criticized "modern girls and modern boys" saying, "[They] style themselves after the Yankee stars' fashion that does not even fit their figures as if they want to look like they are not Korean."<sup>75</sup> The emulation of American fashion was a concern for An because it would not only mask the Korean people's Koreanness which itself was a problem, but underlying this criticism was also a concern that these people might not even *want* to look Korean which could be an even bigger threat to Korean particularity. Likewise, as another writer articulated, wearing dress shoes instead of straw shoes, and Western skirts instead of more "traditional" skirts was concerning not only because it meant that love for Korea had disappeared, but that the very notion of "loving what is ours" itself had disappeared.<sup>76</sup> The linkage between discomfort with American trends and Korean particularity was also shown through an article accompanying a drawing of a "trendy" [referring to emulation of Western trends] Korean woman wearing fur. Here, the writer lamented that "it is the case that in order to see the face of that country, one looks at the faces of women who are the mothers of that country. However, is Chosŏn's face in

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<sup>75</sup> Sin Pömsun, *Han'guk hyöndaesi üi t'oep'ye wa chakün chuch'e* (Seoul: Singu munhwasa, 1998), 21.

<sup>76</sup> Yu Hyönggi. "Yuhaeng! Sinnyön sae yuhaeng! Hüimanghanün yuhaeng-yesanghanün yuhaeng," *Pyölgöngon* 18 (1929): 104.

the face of the modern girl, *kisaeng*, or the café waitress?”<sup>77</sup> By evoking the three images of women who were portrayed as embodiments of Americanism by wearing make-up, dressing, dating, dancing, and drinking like American movie stars, and in this case, wearing fur, the writer showed that the problem was that he could not see the Korean “face.” All he saw were Americanization that seemed to mask the distinct Korean face. Likewise, another writer complained that in looking at the *kisaeng* in Korea, they had nothing “Korean [*Chosŏn mat*]” about them. They wore wadded socks [*som pŏsŏn*], sang Japanese songs, and danced like Americans, so appeared to be neither Japanese *kisaeng* nor American *kisaeng*. In fact, by embracing Japanese and American cultural elements, their “identity” was altogether undecipherable.<sup>78</sup> This was of concern because these women did not seem to have anything particular about them at all. They seemed not only *not* Korean, but also did not seem to be of any nationality. Causing discomfort for the writer here was precisely this lack of particularity.

Amidst such uneasiness, Korean writers began to articulate their difference. An’s aforementioned criticism offers a look into one of the ways in which they began to articulate that difference and distance themselves from what is “American.” They criticized Koreans’ emulation of American things on grounds that they were simply ill-fitting to Koreans and the Korean context. An wrote that American stars’ styles did not fit Koreans’ figures. Likewise, other writers criticized the way women styled themselves in the new fashion saying that these “clothes are not fitting for [their] figures” and

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<sup>77</sup> An, “Manch’u punggyŏng (5): Hogwi ūi ch’ulmul.” *Chosŏn Ilbo*, October 25, 1933.

<sup>78</sup> Yi Sŏgu, “Yuhaeng! Sinnyŏn sae yuhaeng! Hŭimanghanŭn yuhaeng-yesanghanŭn yuhaeng,” *Pyŏlgŏngon* 18 (1929): 104.

“permanents [perms] do not go with their faces.”<sup>79</sup> Yet another writer referred to these trends as “dress and behavior that do not go with [Koreans]” and free dating as something that “[Koreans] are incapable of doing” while another writer held in disdain Koreans “ill-fittingly taking pains...to pursue the Yankee fashion of the 20s and 30s” which is altogether “extreme” and removed from reality.<sup>80</sup> In fact, many complained that Koreans were wearing things that “do not go with or even fit” them by emulating such fashion.<sup>81</sup> The implication in these criticisms was that Koreans were trying to embrace that is not natural to them, and they articulated their difference from the universalizing American trends by saying that Koreans are simply not conducive to American fashion and ways.

Not only were American ways not conducive for Koreans’ bodies, but they were also not fitting for the Korean context in general. In one article, the writer implied how out of place it was for Koreans to style themselves in Harold Lloyd’s glasses, Rudolph Valentino’s sideburns, and Buster Keaton’s hat and wondered if they really could feel as if they are a part of that foreign scenery by emulating such fashion and strolling around when all around them in Korea were collapsing thatched houses.<sup>82</sup> The writer wrote that people could go to America, France, Germany, and England for such desired experiences, but that they could not be found in Korea. The Korean context, in other words, was not fitting for such trends. Another article scorned the image of a woman “coming out of a collapsing thatched house that looks like it would collapse at the mere sound of a cart’s

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<sup>79</sup> “Hyöndae yösöng ūi akch’wimi,” *Samch’ölli* 10:8 (1938): 155.

<sup>80</sup> Ch’oe Haksong, “Tek’adan [Decadent] ūi sangjing, mo-dön kköl mo-dön ppo-i taenonp’yön,” *Pyölgöngon*. 10 (1927): 118-120; Pak Roa, *Simnyön twi yuhaeng*,” *Pyölgöngon* 25 (1930): 106.

<sup>81</sup> Yi Süngman, “Yuhaeng! Sinnyön sae yuhaeng! Hüimanghanün yuhaeng-yesanghanün yuhaeng.” *Pyölgöngon* 18 (1929): 101.

<sup>82</sup> An, “Kasang sogyön (2): Modön ppoi ūi sanbo.” *Chosön Ilbo*, February 7, 1928.

wheels passing by.”<sup>83</sup> What the image was scorning was the fact that she was in Western dress that cost “several times as much as the house” she walked out of and was parading around in this way among “starving people dressed in rags.”<sup>84</sup> Likewise, women’s consumption of skirts, socks, rings, hair adornments, make-up, and hair styling were severely criticized for taking place in the midst of impoverished and unemployed people in Korea.<sup>85</sup> The articles were highlighting how out-of-place such trends were and questioning the appropriateness of embracing these trends within the Korean context.

Emulation of America was not only deemed inappropriate, but also altogether meaningless. A satire on “Americanized” Koreans who had spent time in the United States portrayed a scene where two overweight Korean men who returned from the United States (presumably after studying there) were eating in a Western restaurant. They ate gluttonously, made eyes at women, burped loudly after their large meal, and in short, acted crassly and obnoxiously. Although they had told students in Korea otherwise, the two men shared with each other of their real lives in America that consisted of washing windows in New York, getting drunk and spending the night with a woman on a park bench only to be discovered and beaten by a policeman in San Francisco. Throughout the whole meal, they mixed in English words and spoke incoherently. Their dialogue consisted of the following:

“Yes! Pretty! Very Pretty!”  
“No—no—very ugly”  
“No—no—very nice girl!”  
“No—girl! She is madame!”

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<sup>83</sup> An, “Kasang sogyōn: Kkori p’inūn kongjak.” *Chosŏn Ilbo*, February 9, 1928.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> An, “Ilililhwa: Ōdisō kū ton i saenggilka.” *Chosŏn Ilbo*, April 8, 1930.

“No—no—*k'in'gasŭresŭ*, and *p'ip'ŭsŭtwik*”  
“All right, thank you, *mench'wip'ol* and—oyako tomburi banana—”  
“Yes, yes! O—yes heroism, and *mutSORini...*”<sup>86</sup>

As can be seen from this excerpt, Korean and Japanese words were mixed in, and the English thrown into the conversation was limited—leading the whole conversation to be incoherent and utterly devoid of meaning. The article was mocking people’s (and more specifically, people returning from the United States) fake and so-called Americanization that was both empty and contemptuous.

The notion that Americanism is meaningless was also brought up by writers who portrayed modern girls and modern boys’ emulation of American styles as empty, futile, and merely trying to be “modern” for the sake of being modern. Novelist Ch’oe Haksong chastised people indiscriminately emulating the new trends saying that what he has a problem with is not that these people are trying out new things, but that there is no “meaning” or deeper intention behind it.<sup>87</sup> It was merely superficial emulation for the sake of emulation. Likewise, another writer called out modern girls and modern boys for their “Americanism” and their “Yankee culture” and mocked them saying that they go around laughing and saying, “nonsense! Nonsense!” when in reality, what they were doing itself was “nonsense.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> An, “Manhwa sanchaek (2): Yankee toelbŏn taek—‘Orait’ nara saram manse.” *Chosŏn Ilbo*, October 11, 1928.

<sup>87</sup> Ch’oe Haksong, 120.

<sup>88</sup> O Sŏkch’ŏn, “Modŏnijŭm huirŏn,” *Sinmin* 67 (1931). The word, “nonsense,” here was often used in conjunction with “erotic” and “grotesque” (like the “*erogurunansensu*” in Japan) in the 1930s. The three terms were used to refer to new trends and cultural elements of the time, and more specifically, new cultural forms arising out of capitalist modernity. They were often linked to Americanism, and Korean writers often used them in critical tones to criticize capitalist modernity.

By deeming “American” elements as ill-fitting, inappropriate, and meaningless for Koreans, Korean writers distanced themselves from the universalizing Americanism and asserted their difference. In emphasizing this difference, Korean writers were taking part in the process of articulating their particularity. In some cases, they took it farther than merely stating that they were different and as was the case in other parts of the world, used “America/American” as the reference point by which to more specifically construct their distinctiveness. In an article that discussed modern/contemporary [*hyöndaee*] beauty, writer Yöm Sangsöp articulated Korean beauty as “un-modern/contemporary,” and in other words, its opposite.<sup>89</sup> Modern beauty is “rational rather than emotional, dynamic rather than still, coquettish rather than lady-like, jazz-ish rather than neat and proper.” It followed then that “emotional, “still,” “lady-like,” “neat,” and “proper” captured the essences and beauty of the Korean woman. Yöm pointed to another parallel that he felt would help capture this binary better. Where the *ch’un’aengmu* is “classic,” the Charleston is “modern,” and “the standard for beauty would also follow this [binary].”<sup>90</sup> By determining a Korean dance as “classic” whereas an American dance was fixed as “modern,” Yöm went on to construct that which is Korean as “traditional.” Likewise, while depicting the new style of too much vibrant colors, writer Yi Süngman (李承萬), also used juxtaposition to imply that Korean make-up and clothing colors stand in stark contrast and are “simple and plain.”<sup>91</sup> Interestingly enough, as will be seen in the examples that follow, these articulations of particularity constituted a universalizing

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<sup>89</sup> Here, Yöm was not talking specifically about “America,” but he evoked the Charleston, jazz and other descriptions often linked with Americanism, so I take the liberty to link it with Americanism here.

<sup>90</sup> Yöm Sangsöp. “Hyöndaee miin kwan, munhak kwa miin” *Samch’ölli* 5 (1930): 44-45.

<sup>91</sup> Yi Süngman, 101.

tendency in themselves. These articulations homogenized and rationalized the diversities within Korean society to construct an essentialized and “particular” Korea. Moreover, the act of expressing these “particularities” were universal itself as the very act as well as the particularities meant anything and made sense only within and against a global system that was made up of other particularities. This interrelatedness of the universal and the particular can be seen in the following examples.

In an interesting article that attempted to articulate Korean particularity, the writer pondered over American film stars in general and discussed Colleen Moore specifically at length. On the one hand, she had a fully (“100%”) “American nature” as shown by her expressions and actions in which she will tell a man she loves that she loves him without even a hint of embarrassment.<sup>92</sup> However, the most significant factor behind her popularity, in his opinion, did not lay in this “American nature” or her ability to command it gracefully, purely, and beautifully, but rather it was due to her face and appearance. More specifically, “her black hair, round face, flat nose, chestnut-like eyes and petite height” are “Korean [*Chosŏn-sik*]” and reminiscent of Korean women, and this element, in turn, was what made her beautiful and popular to everyone.<sup>93</sup> He then pointed to a few other American actresses who also have this beauty. By labeling these features as Korean, he not only constructed Korean beauty, but there was also a subtle attempt to portray Korean particularity as having universal appeal itself. By depicting this beauty as what was appealing about her to American audiences as well, the writer elevated Korean beauty and particularity, and made this particularity seem like the

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<sup>92</sup> Chang Sŏng’uk, 116.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 118-119.

universal within Korea and in the world. The writer evoked the interrelatedness of and dynamic nature between the particular and the universal.

In another article, American music was also used as a reference point to articulate Korean particularity. After a trip to America, Pak Sögyun discussed the particularity of Chosön that he realized on his trip. Although he thoroughly enjoyed music abroad and found that they evoked a pleasant sensation and curiosity within him, he found them utterly lacking in their “ability to seep in through [his] very bones to evoke a type of boundless deep emotions.”<sup>94</sup> He figured that was in part because Korean people were not accustomed to such music, but mainly because music is something that “arises within [that country’s] historical context and develops in accordance with the *minjok*’s emotions. That is the reason why even if it is a beautiful melody or a famous piece, it cannot become the music that directly seeps into my bones [touches me to the core].”<sup>95</sup> The music that he had encountered abroad became the reference point by which to say that there was something fundamentally different and so rooted in the local context about Korean music that was specifically designed for and catering to the essence of the Korean people. He then went on to describe a bit more specifically what that Korean sound is. Rather than the sound of the piano or the violin, “the sound that suits our emotions and touches our hearts” are “sounds that arise from metal, stone, bamboo, strings, wood, and leather.”<sup>96</sup> This was constructed as the Korean sound.

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<sup>94</sup> Pak Sögyun. “Oeguk e gasö saenggaknadün Chosöngöt—Saram ũrosöüi Chosön ũmak ũroüi Chosön.” *Pyölgöngon* 12-13 (1928): 145.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.



In general, the active promotion of embracing what is “Korean” became more of a prevalent theme from about 1928 onwards in criticisms of America. This pattern was in line with global patterns of critique of America, but it also took place against the backdrop of the Japanese colonial rule re-tightening its control over political and cultural life in Korea beginning around 1926 and pursuing stronger policies toward assimilation by 1930.<sup>97</sup> In the article that had lamented on *kisaeng* not being Korean enough, the writer stressed that Korea has its own songs and dances too, and hoped that their embrace would mark a return to “purely Korean” Korean *kisaeng*.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, he hoped that on Korean holidays, people would turn to “traditional wrestling matches [*ssirŭm*], tugs of war [*chuldarigi*], swings,” and such “traditional” activities.<sup>99</sup> Likewise, in the article that had lamented the embrace of American products rather than Korean products, he advocated the promotion of Korean goods. However, when he said “promotion of Chosŏn goods,” it was not necessarily Korean-produced goods like the Korean Production Movement of 1923-24 had promoted, but rather, he was advocating the embrace of things that were “traditional” and “Korean” such as (according to him) straw shoes. Through these discussions, the writers were taking part in the process of articulating and constructing the “traditional” and “Korean.” Things that were previously a part of mundane daily life were revamped into capturing the essence of who they are, given new meaning as their particularity, and made to be “national” in the face of “universal,” “modern,” and “America.” In one article that juxtaposed Korean youths to American

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<sup>97</sup> This begs the question of whether critiques of America were means by which to talk about the nation at a time when intellectuals could not talk about the nation.

<sup>98</sup> Yi Sŏgu. 104.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

youths and called for the people to “raise sound Korean [*Chosŏn-jŏk*] character,” the writer depicted this “sound Korean character” as being “constructed from taking as the foundation all types of superb habits and taking xxxxx [censored], spirit, tradition, hereditary, and way of life as its materials.”<sup>100</sup> Here, too, these categories were revamped to imagine something inherent and essential about Koreans and constructed as key ingredients to the construction of a “Korean” character.

It is important to note here that the discourse on America was not always polarizing and consisting of only Americanism and anti-Americanism. There were also many “middle ground” discussions that struggled with the issue of adopting and appropriating American models to the Korean context. From the mid-1920s onwards, publications like the *Tonga Ilbo* and the *Chosŏn Ilbo* displayed many attempts to negotiate Western and American civilization into the Korean context in their writings on the West generally and America specifically.<sup>101</sup> The *Urak’i* also displayed this trend in its inaugural issue with a call for partial adoption of developments from Western civilization. As the writer explained, it is important to live with and maintain a “Korean mind [*chŏngsin*].”<sup>102</sup> Even American contributors such as Professors Frederick Starr and Edmund de S. Brunner pitched in with Brunner pointing out that Koreans cannot adopt wholesale what they learn in America as it may not be suitable for Korea. Rather,

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<sup>100</sup> “Urak’i Chujang: Chosŏn ch’ŏngnyŏn e taehan Urak’i chujang.” *Urak’i* 3 (1928): 52.

<sup>101</sup> Many of these discussions were reminiscent of the *tongdo sŏgi* [“Eastern Way, Western Technology”] idea in the late-nineteenth century that was in line with China’s self-strengthening movement following the 1860s. It espoused a selective adoption of Western models—namely, adoption of only technological, industrial, and military skills and material developments, but maintaining the Eastern “way,” or its moral traditions.

<sup>102</sup> Kim Yŏsik, “Miguktaehak kwa yuhakjunbi e taehayŏ” *Urak’i* 1 (1925): 14.

Koreans must figure out Korea's needs and what its problems ask for.<sup>103</sup> Starr also warned Korean youths against complete Americanization, and reminded them to know and be proud of their culture and heritage.<sup>104</sup> The reminder to consider the Korean context and needs was quite a prevalent saying even if it was added as a final caveat, afterthought, or justification to the writers' call for adoption of American models. Pak Indök, for instance, discussed American women's financial independence and noted in the end that "this is not to say that we need to adopt this wholly right away," and justified her espousal of modeling after American women by saying that Koreans need to think of how possible this is for them and how it is a matter of convenience (bringing convenience to Korean society) and not a matter of copying.<sup>105</sup> Many other discussions displayed more moderate approaches to America. However, even within these more moderate views, what can be seen is that "America" continued to be a significant part of articulating Korean particularity whether it be to consider carefully the notion of the Korean "spirit" and "mind" that were embroiled in these discussions, or whether it be to consider what is unique about the Korean context when considered against American civilization. Even in these discussions then, America served as that external reference point.

## Conclusion

As discussed in Chapter Three, the discussions of America as the source of solutions for Korea continued in various ways throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The rise of critical discussions of America did not signal the end of "Americanism," but rather,

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<sup>103</sup> Edmund de S. Brunner, "Nongch'on chinhüng undongja ka cheil p'ilyo," *Urak'i* 4 (1930): 13.

<sup>104</sup> Frederick Starr, "Chosön hwamun [munhwa] rür pojön hayöra," *Urak'i* 1 (1925): 42.

<sup>105</sup> Pak Indök, "Chosön yōja wa chilk'öp munje," *Urak'i* 3 (1928): 48.

they continued hand-in-hand to create an increasingly tension-filled discussion on America. The *Tonga Ilbo* featured an article in 1927 that was titled, “Ways to Make Ugly Eyes [*pogi hyunghan*] Beautiful.” Next to a comparison picture between a woman with no double eyelids [*ssangkköpul*] and one with double eyelids, the writer discussed the new option of getting surgery to obtain double eyelids. This article was sharing with its readers ways to go from “Asian” eyes to “Western” eyes. Kim Chinsong also observes that while *Samch’ölli*’s 1929 cover in the inaugural issue featured a Korean-looking woman dressed in *hanbok*, the images in this magazine as well as in other publications gradually changed more pronouncedly in the 1930s. Women’s figures were elongated, faces were made more oval, they were dressed in Western attire, and the very features of their faces became more and more Western.<sup>106</sup> He also brings up an article that was published in *Yösöng* in 1936 that said that the standard of female beauty consists of narrow shoulders, a tiny waist, wide buttocks, large thighs, and straight legs. The writer wrote that “Western women relatively possess these requirements, but Asian women do not...[so] there is no fun in having Chosön women model and drawing them.” However, with mothers who are more conscious and will put more consideration into their daughters’ physiques with clothing, exercise, knowledge, and so forth to make “ideal types,” the writer hoped that one would be able to find more women with beautiful physiques in Korea in the future.<sup>107</sup> As Yoo Sun-Young also describes, the physiques and

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<sup>106</sup> Chinsong Kim, “*Soŭl e ddansuhol eul hoŭara*. Seoul: Hyönsil Munhwa Yöngu, 1999, 306-7.

<sup>107</sup> Chinsong Kim, 307. From: Yongjun Kim, “Model kwa yösöng ūi mi,” *Yösöng* (1936.9).

physical features of Hollywood stars were evoked constantly in publications as enviable and ideal features.<sup>108</sup>

It follows from these articles then that from the mid-1920s through the 1930s, articulations of Western/American beauty and attempts by Korean women to “naturalize” their features through surgery, clothing, exercise, and learning continued alongside attempts to differentiate from these features and articulate “Korean” beauty and its virtues. These contradictory discussions on beauty were a part of the overall discussions on “America” that were embroiled in contradictory discussions and meanings—at once homogenizing and differentiating, at once universalizing and bringing particularity—that were reflective of the contradictory dynamics within capitalism. It is this tension in the discussions on America rising from contradictory effects of capitalism that reveals “America” to be a significant vantage point by which Korean writers grappled with capitalist modernity, and in fact, it is for this reason that criticisms of America often collapsed into criticisms of capitalist modernity itself. Moreover, as an important reference point that helped shape Korea’s particularity, “America” became significant to Korea’s modern experience.

This tendency to use “America” as a way to articulate the particular continued throughout the post-liberation period. A small example can be seen in Pak Kyōngwōn’s 1958 song titled, “The Number One Man” (the lyrics were written by Pan Yawōl). This song used images of an Americanized man and woman as juxtaposition to the “number one” (best) man and woman. The song posed the question of whether studying abroad, speaking English, and having the title of “doctor” are what characterize a man, and

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<sup>108</sup> Sun-Young Yoo, “Embodiment of American Modernity in Colonial Korea,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2:3 (2001): 431.

whether going to cafes, watching movies, and being able to social dance characterize a woman. The song went on to say that what actually characterizes the “number one” man are kindness and humility, while what characterizes the “number one” woman is carrying out frugal housekeeping for not only her poor household but also the nation.<sup>109</sup> Wŏn Yongjin points out that the song evoked features associated with Americanization at the time and that their juxtaposed and counterpart features were articulated in this song as “Korean.”<sup>110</sup> In ways like these, “American” continued to serve as a reference point to articulate “Korean” after the colonial period. Furthermore, the specific images of America that emerged in the critical and ambivalent discussions of America during the colonial period were also undercurrent in South Korea (as pointed out in the next chapter)—further pointing to the continuations of these articulations and meanings of America long after the colonial period.

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<sup>109</sup> Yongjin Wŏn, “Han’guk taejung munhwa, Miguk kwa hamkke hok ūn ttaro,” in *Americanization: Haebang ihu Hanguk esŏ ūi Migukhwa*, eds. Tŏkho Kim and Yongjin Wŏn (Seoul: Purŭn Yŏksa, 2008), 160-161.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

Scholar Kim Tökho who studied Americanization in post-1945 Korea describes the time period from 1945 to 1960 as being fraught with the “‘Give-me-chocolate’ ethos.” He refers to the image of American soldiers passing out chocolate and caramel to ecstatic Koreans and brings up an interview with a person who recalls this scene where Koreans shouted, “Give me chocolate!” to American soldiers.<sup>1</sup> Here, the interviewee mentions that they would take the chocolate, hide it, and sometimes eat it when they were sick.<sup>2</sup> Kim points out that there was a sense of reliance, envy, and desire for America, and as I would like to add on, the interview suggests that there was also a fantastical, hyperbolizing image of America and the hope that an American product held more than what meets the eye. In the case of this specific American product, it was treated with wonder as if it had healing capabilities when in reality, it was merely a candy bar. The articulations of America that began in the latter half of the nineteenth century that not only continued but also intensified in various ways during the colonial period offer a way to historicize this and other images and understandings of America prevalent after liberation.

In fact, prevalent perceptions of the United States in South Korea after liberation—which included seeing the United States as the land of science and

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<sup>1</sup> Tökho Kim, “Han’guk esō ūi ilsang saenghwal kwa sobi ūi Migukhwa munje,” in *Americanization: Haebang ihu Hanguk esō ūi Migukhwa*, eds. Tökho Kim and Yongjin Wön (Seoul: Purūn Yōksa, 2008), 126-127.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 126.

technology, opportunity, and democracy; where justice and freedom are realized; where pragmatism, materialism, sexual immorality, egotism, insincere friendship, and racial discrimination against African-Americans prevailed—all resonated with discussions of America from before 1945.<sup>3</sup> In North Korea as well, criticism of America that filled its main publication, the *Nodong sinmun*, depicted America as imperialistic as well as full of injustice, exploitation, socio-economic inequality, and racial discrimination. These depictions in turn, also echoed discussions of America from the colonial period.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in depicting the first phase of the post-1945 relations between South Korea and the United States, scholar Robert T. Oliver points to the disappointment on the part of Koreans over the United States Army Military Government in Korea's (USAMGIK) refusal to recognize Korean organizations, reform efforts, and overall efforts to build an independent and united Korea as the Occupation focused on obstructing leftist elements.<sup>5</sup> This keen disappointment detailed by Oliver further demonstrates that many Koreans had expectations and previous understandings of the United States—which the USAMGIK did not meet—that made the American actions and policies so disappointing. Oliver's discussion, prevalent images of the United States in post-1945 Korea, and the “‘give-me-chocolate’ ethos” all point to the prominence of notions of the United States formed prior to liberation.

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<sup>3</sup> KimYŏnjin, “‘Ch’inmi’ wa ‘panmi’ sai esŏ: Han’guk ŏllon ūl t’onghae pon Miguk ūi imiji wa Migukhwa tamron,” in *Americanization: Haebang ihu Hanguk esŏ ūi Migukhwa*, eds. Tŏkko Kim and Yongjin Wŏn (Seoul: Purŭn Yŏksa, 2008), 409.

<sup>4</sup> In-Young Chun, “North Korea’s Foreign Policy Behavior Toward the United States,” *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 1.1 (January, 1981): 68; Young C. Kim, “North Korea in 1974,” *Asian Survey* 15.1 (1975): 45.

<sup>5</sup> Robert T. Oliver, “Transition and Continuity in Korea-American Relations in the Postwar Period,” in *Korean-American Relations, 1866-1997*, eds. Yur-Bok Lee and Wayne Patterson. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 67-82.



This dissertation sheds light on the formation of these pre-1945 articulations of America by exploring Korean diplomatic, cultural, and intellectual engagements with America from the nineteenth century onwards. More specifically, it traces the various meanings of America that arose out of these engagements—meanings that were shaped by both global and local contexts. In doing so, this project pays particular attention to the often overlooked discursive engagements in the colonial period. As it turns out, the colonial period was a time when discussions of America flourished in the Korean press and “America” as both a physical and imagined site took on various significances within Korea against the backdrops of colonialism, new global dynamics following World War I, and the rise of leftist movements. The end of World War I ushered in an era of the global rise of America in the 1920s and a phenomenon that contemporaries from various parts of the world referred to as Americanism. Within this global context, parts of “America” also circulated widely in Korea in a similar way as in other countries, and thus, the colonial period was a time in which Koreans actively engaged with “America” in new ways and earnestly articulated its images and significances.

In exploring the various ways that Koreans engaged with America during the colonial period, this dissertation not only sheds light on these engagements but also argues that they were significant to Korea’s modern experience in two ways. First, beginning in the nineteenth century, engaging more deeply with Western civilization and new ideas from the West often served as an impetus and the means by which many Korean elites of this period viewed themselves, called for reform, and made sense of their place in a new international order. America, in particular, often served as an important reference point as Korean elites sought reform efforts and grappled with how to model

itself as a modern nation-state.<sup>6</sup> However, as discussed in Chapter Two, Westernizing reform efforts during the nineteenth century show that America was a prominent reference point, but still remained *one* of various reference points for larger Western civilization. It was not until the colonial period that a segment of the Korean population greatly elevated America in Korean discourse as discussed in Chapter Three. Within the specific historical contexts of this period, a significant group of Koreans articulated America as the source of political and cultural solutions for Korea's colonial situation, and upheld American institutions, developments, and ways of life as the model. America came to be articulated in relation to two terms in particular—"modern [*modŏn*]" and "new civilization [*sinmunmyŏng*]." Although these two terms were neither synonymous nor able to be conflated with each other at this time, both connoted the newest and

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<sup>6</sup> A small example of this can be seen in the efforts of Yun Ch'ihŏ and Sŏ Chaep'il who stressed education reforms in Korea and worked to bring about "modern" education to Koreans through their activities in the Paejae School, the Independence Club, and their writings in the *Tongnip sinmun*. Therefore, building upon the debate society [*Hyŏpsŏnghoe*] that was formed in the Paejae School on November 28, 1896, Sŏ and Yun decided to open up the debates to the larger public with debates on issues concerning Korea. Thus, the Debate Society [*t'oronhoe*] came to be on August 29, 1897, and until December 3, 1898, held thirty-four debate sessions on a wide range of topics that were wildly popular with as many as five hundred people gathering in and around the Independence Hall in order to hear them. This debate society had its roots in Yun and Sŏ's educational experience in the United States. To elaborate, as detailed carefully year after year in his diaries, one of the things that Yun had greatly appreciated while studying in the United States was public debating. He was an active member of the debate society while a student and he admired the way debates brought out both sides of the argument and allowed for better understanding of the issue. He tried to do the same in Korea and wrote that he would try "to introduce debates into all the schools in Seoul." For this reason, one of the things that Yun actively pushed for was to organize a debate society in which people could learn about various issues and thus, turn the Independence Club "into some sort of useful institution." Yun also hoped that the Independence Club would have more of an educational value to it by introducing "a series of lectures" to be given by both Korean intellectuals and foreigners. Moreover, he wanted to also establish a library and a museum through the Club in order to better educate the people. These were all things he came to believe were important during his stay in the United States. What all this points to is that after his stay in the United States, Yun came to implement many of the vehicles of education he witnessed in the United States. In other words, his educational experience in the United States and the American education system and methods came to be a strong reference point for Yun as he grappled with how to implement a "modern" education system in Korea.

Vipin Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea: Enlightenment and the Independence Club* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1988): 118-120; Yun Ch'ihŏ *ilgi*, August 8, 1897, August 25, 1897.

necessary component to rising in the global capitalist structure. Thus, America came to be relevant and desirable for Koreans and seemed to offer them a means by which to improve their standing in the global capitalist order. Evocations of America as the model, then, provided the opportunity for many Korean writers to imagine how they would construct an independent and modern nation-state. Moreover, as shown in Chapter Three, articulations of America as the source of solutions proved to be lasting as some of these discussions materialized and had direct linkages to the adoption of American models in certain reform and development efforts in post-liberation South Korea. This segment of the wide-ranging discourse on America, in particular, materialized as many of its writers who were students in the United States during the colonial period emerged as political leaders, educators, and leaders in diverse sectors in post-WWII South Korea (often) with the support of the USAMGIK.

Second, as Chapter Four explores, America became a significant vantage point for Korean intellectuals to grapple with the contradictions of capitalist modernity and a reference point by which to think about and articulate Korea's particularity. To elaborate, at the same time that Korean writers hailed America as the model for capitalist modernity, they also denounced America for this very reason. I argue that such criticism of America and contradictory discussions of America were rooted in contradictory effects of capitalism in which the articulation of opposing categories are interrelated moments. The contradictory discussions of America were further evidenced by the anxiety expressed by Korean intellectuals with what they observed were homogenizing and universalizing effects of "Americanization." This much-praised and emulated "modern" and "universal" America then ended up becoming the reference point through which to articulate a

“traditional” and “particular” Korea. Even with discussions that expressed more ambivalence towards America, America became a reference point for thinking about and articulating Korea’s particularity.

### **Exploring Korean Engagement with America in a Global Framework**

By revealing the significances of America in Korea during the late-nineteenth century and especially during the colonial period, this project offers a way to historicize and better understand the discourses and patterns that govern post-1945 relations between South Korea and the United States. However, one of the other aims of this work is to explore Korean engagements with America in a global framework. This dissertation does not deny the importance of the colonial experience to Korea’s modern experience, nor does it deny that Japan often played a significant mediating role in Korea’s grapple with Western civilization and “America.” After all, Japanese colonialism was a critical context for the Korean articulation of “America.” However, this study does seek to complicate this notion of Japanese mediation. This study partly does so by shedding light on Koreans’ direct engagements with American material culture, ideas and developments particularly through a study of Korean students in the United States. However, the primary way in which it adds complexity to the notion of Japanese mediation is by reframing Korean engagements with America altogether. The project highlights the timing and resemblances in Korea’s engagement with “America” and its significance to Korea’s modern experience, with those of other parts of the world. Moreover, it roots them in capitalism which facilitated the rise of “Americanism” globally. Through this global framework and emphasis in the roots in capitalism, the project challenges the

exclusivity of the Japanese mediation narrative as the lens by which to examine Korea's modern experience, and suggests an alternate way to think about Korean modernity.

Adopting this global framework allows for a different look at some of the conventional narratives in Korean historiography. To take a small example, many of the Korean writers' discussions on American civilization, and in particular, discussions on women and the home, showed striking similarities with discussions on *hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ* [wise mother and good wife] within Korea. Both discussions emphasized "the role of women as 'mothers' raising healthy children...and as 'managers of the household' for saving and judicious consumption."<sup>7</sup> Women were to "be equipped with scientific knowledge that would contribute to effective child rearing, promote good hygiene in her family, and bring about *suwit'ŭ hom* (sweet home)."<sup>8</sup> In "Wise Mother, Good Wife': A Transcultural Discursive Construct in Modern Korea," Hyaeweol Choi cites both the role of American Protestant women missionaries in Korea as well as the colonial gender ideology, *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife and wise mother), in shaping the idea of *hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ* in Korea. However, with the exception of Choi, much of the scholarship treats this idea as being shaped generally by Western ideas of domesticity, but most significantly by the idea of *ryōsai kenbo* from Meiji Japan. Therefore, these notions of "scientific" methods to housekeeping and "modern" constructs of gender in Korea have often been associated with the Japanese mediation of Western modernity.

However, what is interesting about the discussions on women and the home in the *Urak'i* was that they arose directly from the students' observations in the United States

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<sup>7</sup> Hyaeweol Choi, "'Wise Mother, Good Wife': A Transcultural Discursive Construct in Modern Korea," *The Journal of Korean Studies* 14:1 (2009), 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

and their studies. In writing about their observations of America, many writers like Son Chinsil highlighted American homes that are managed “scientifically,” and American housekeeping that is “scientific.”<sup>9</sup> For instance, Americans set up weekly, monthly, and annual budgets and spend money accordingly. Therefore, they are able to save money even in cases of smaller incomes through careful budgeting. In terms of food, they not only buy food that is healthy for the family, but also focus on presentation. This, according to the writer, is scientific because what is aesthetically pleasing also enhances the taste. In all things regarding the home, Americans consider hygiene, practicality, and ways to give the family members peace and comfort in their hearts. In regards to raising children, American mothers get regular physical check-ups for their children with doctors, and consult the doctor first before giving even a drop of breastmilk or water to their baby. Moreover, babies are not given milk or held every time they cry so as to not foster bad habits. Instead, they are fed on schedule and allowed to cry when they are falling asleep. All such ways of doing things in the home were “scientific” and worthy of emulation.<sup>10</sup>

These writers then called Korean women to adopt these very same “scientific” methods of running their home as well. As writer Song Poksin put it, if they wanted to have children who are healthy, tall, and have healthy complexions like American children instead of malnourished Korean children, then mothers must provide the type of nutrition that Americans provide for their children.<sup>11</sup> Song went on to teach the readers about protein, carbohydrates, vitamin B, fat, and minerals. According to her, Chosŏn’s

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<sup>9</sup> Son Chinsil, “Miguk kajŏng esŏ paeul kŏt myŏtkaji,” *Urak ’i* 3 (1928), 110-111.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 108-112.

<sup>11</sup> Song Poksin, “Adong ūi yŏngyang pujok kwa kŭ wŏnin,” 94-99.

diet lacks protein and vitamins [*pait'ŭmaen* or *saengsodung*], and to address this deficiency, she advocated incorporating “a food called ‘cheese’ that is commonly used in daily food in America.”<sup>12</sup> These American “science” and “scientific” methods were the proper and correct way to “love” their children.<sup>13</sup>

These discussions on the superiority of American customs, diet, and home arose directly from the writers’ observations of American homes and customs as well as their studies. For instance, Song Poksŏn, the first Korean woman to receive a Ph.D. in public health in 1929, conducted an experiment during her doctorate studies at the University of Michigan from which she wrote her dissertation titled, “Difference of Growth in Different Races.” She conducted the experiment to see if race was behind the differences in development among Americans, Koreans, and the Japanese.<sup>14</sup> Using albino rats, she concluded that race did not matter, but rather, diet and customs were the significant factors to growth and development.<sup>15</sup> It was from this study that her ideas such as using scientific knowledge to raise healthy children and specific ways to do so as mentioned above (ideas that are at least superficially similar to features of *hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ*) arose. What Song’s discussions suggest is that American academia was also an important context in which various ideas that we associate with Korea’s modern experience (in this case, new constructs of gender and new forms of domesticity) were articulated. Taking this a step further, what all of this points to is the fact that calls for women to use

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 98.

<sup>13</sup> Son, 111.

<sup>14</sup> Kim Sŏng'ŭn. “Pak Indŏk ŭi sahoeŭisik kwa sahoehwaldong: 1920nyŏndae mal~1920nyŏndae rŭl chungsikŭro,” *Yŏksa wa Kyŏnggye* 76 (2010): 193.

<sup>15</sup> Song Poksŏn, “Injong ch'ai wa sŏngjang,” *Urak'i* 4 (1930): 20-23.

scientific knowledge to pursue effective and hygienic child rearing and become efficient household managers were discussions that were prevalent and prominent in both the United States and Japan during this time. In fact, they were prevalent in various places in the world because they were discussions that were relevant and meaningful within the structures of capitalism that had made categories like scientific and technological developments, new consumption practices and new ideas of domesticity meaningful responses. When situating these discussions in a larger global context, we can complicate the notion of Japanese mediation and explore Korea's modern experience as a part of a global phenomenon. Korean writers were partaking in these discussions due to and within the context of the fact that these discussions had become relevant and meaningful around the world due to the expansion of capitalism.

### **Final Remarks**

The United States still remains a significant power politically, economically, culturally, and even intellectually in South Korea. Scholars within this decade still express concern over “excessive Americanization” and “total Americanization” that they feel encompass all aspects of South Korean society, and the entity and notion of “America” continually remains an important topic to explore in Korean history as well as contemporary South Korean society.<sup>16</sup> This dissertation sheds light on a segment of this long and continuing Korean engagement with “America.” Although this dissertation is a brief overview of the engagements in the late-nineteenth century and the colonial period, it nevertheless is a contribution to this necessary area of study and will hopefully

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<sup>16</sup> Nuri Kim, “Ch’ongch’echök Migukhwa wa Yuröpchök kach’i,” *Togil öñö munhak* 58 (2012.12): 417 (footnote. 1).



encourage more studies to emerge that further explore engagements in the colonial period and the connections between pre- and post-1945 engagements.<sup>17</sup> This dissertation shows that the meanings of America in Korea were constantly building upon one another and reproduced. As Chapter Two points out, the projection of America as a site of hope continued on even after Japan's annexation of Korea with appeals for American aid in independence efforts. Moreover, the notions of America formulated during the nineteenth century carried over to the colonial period and helped in shaping the articulation of America as the model and source of solutions. The various meanings of America from the colonial period, in turn, had some clear connections with the period following liberation as shown by Chapter Three. Therefore, understanding these previous and enduring meanings and engagements with the United States will not only shed light on contemporary meanings of and engagements with America, but it is the hope of this study that it will also aid in further reflecting on how to guide and better future engagements.

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<sup>17</sup> Noticeably missing in this work are discussions of the role of missionaries and missionary schools to the formation of meanings in America. I will incorporate this important aspect as I continue to work on this project by exploring the meanings of America that arose from Koreans' engagement with missionaries and their publications as well as the Paejae School and the Chosen Christian College.

## APPENDIX I

Below is a complete list of all objects sent by Korea for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

From: Handy, Moses P. *The Official Directory of the World's Columbian Exposition: May 1<sup>st</sup> to October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1893: A Reference Book* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, 1893), 190-192.

<b><i>Department</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
A (Agriculture)	Wheat, corn, rice, millet and rape seed
	Jar of white honey
	Peas and beans
	a) Box of red pepper b) Tobacco leaves c) Samples of tobacco
	Hemp yarn
	Tiger bones and deer horns
	a) Jar of salad oil b) Wax candles
B (Horticulture)	Jar "sachin" wine
	a) Chestnuts, white nuts, walnuts, pine nuts, and hard walnuts b) Dried prunes, dates and chestnuts
	Large vases of fruit
	Box of Garlic
	Lettuce seeds
D (Fish and Fisheries)	Shrimps, dried
	Dried fishes
E (Mines and Mining)	Minerals, crystals, gold and silver
	Coal
	Ironing stone and ironing sticks, ink stone, and blue stone.
	Soap stone; white stone
	Sulfur
	a) Cast-iron b) Steel
	Copper ore and wire
	Lead
G (Transportation)	a) Pack frame for man rake, one wheeled chair, sedan chair b) Saddle, bridle, and whip
H (Manufactures)	a) White alum b) Ginseng, bear gall medicine, ginger, etc.

	c) Small metal for medicine d) Musk
	a) Paper b) Writing paper and envelopes c) Oil paper d) Ivory tablet
	a) Official chair b) Dining table c) Embroidered and painted silk picture and bamboo window shades d) Inlaid and laquered cabinets, book case, ink-stone case, brass candle stick and bamboo box e) Embroidered arm rest, screen pillow, cushions and design
	a) Stone rice pot, yellow and green soapstone tobacco boxes b) Porcelain dinner set, rest of 3 bottles, jars
	Brass dinner set, fire pot, brass wash basin, brass vessel, spittoon, ashes tray and tobacco pipe, tinkling bell and ancient armour
	a) Silver wine pot b) Silver spoon and chop sticks c) Silver figured iron tobacco box
	Ladies' silver rings, silver hair pin and dragon headed hair pin; jade ornament for court uniforms
	a) Colored silk yarn b) Figured silks, quilted silks, colored silks c) Silk gauze
	a) Hemp yarn, fine hemp cloth b) Grass and hemp cloth, white grass cloth, grass and silk mixture, embroidered mat, bamboo, reed and figured mats
	Raw cotton, cotton cloth and yarn, cotton bed cover
	Red and gold official belt and silk court belt
	a) Gentleman's dress b) Official military uniforms, red court dress, dress (8 <sup>th</sup> rank), dress (below 3 <sup>rd</sup> rank) c) Military official, gilded court and silk hat, official cap, head band and attachments d) Ladies' and gentlemen's boots and shoes, court boots, peasant straw sandals, hemp sandals and men's sabots
	Lady's palace dress
	a) Large round fans and opening fans b) Men's silver hair pin
	Combs
	a) Embroidered pouch b) Hat boxes c) Fancy box
	Chess board, chess men, game board. Chips for game, kite and

	roller
	Cowhide, leopard, deer, martin, sable, fox, moose, otter and tiger skins
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ancient matchlock, musket and bullet</li> <li>b) Ancient iron mortar gun, long brass cannon and bullet, shot, etc</li> <li>c) Sword and spear</li> <li>d) Bow and arrow, quiver and arrows for military uniform</li> </ul>
	Copper lanterns and silk covers
	Flags and staffs
L (Liberal Arts)	Coins
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Drums</li> <li>b) Harp, zither and guitar</li> <li>c) Violin</li> <li>d) Flute</li> <li>e) Bugle</li> </ul>
N (Forestry and forest products)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Kasaar oak, red oak, shade tree, chai, soft wood, odong; chestnut, pine wood</li> <li>b) Pear wood, walnut wood figured, tanmok, wild apricot, and lemon tree wood</li> <li>c) Lichen</li> <li>d) Dried mushrooms, persimmons, etc.</li> <li>e) Ginseng</li> <li>f) Colored basket</li> <li>g) Bamboo blind</li> </ul>

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*The Korean Student Bulletin*

*Man 'guk Puin*

*Pyŏlgŏngon*

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*Sinmin*

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