

1930 - 1945 (General Overview)

There were a lot of questions in the discussion posts (for wednesday's readings) surrounding Japan's approach towards ruling over Korea.

"why did Japan execute such an inefficient ruling strategy for the first decade?" (i.e., why did Japan feel the need to fully integrate Korea into the homeland culturally, and very *gradually* aim for full assimilation, rather than blunt colonial rule)

So, I wanted to start off with a quick backdrop on the later stages of Korea's development as a colony of Japan, because it is easier to trace the motives of the Japanese colonials once it had some time to develop.

- First off, we have the United Front (Sin'ganhoe) dying out in 1931 (which was the united front of moderate nationalists, radicals, communists). As it died it, it led to violent anti-Japanese movements that took its place.
 - (there were guerilla movements in Manchuria)
 - Manchuria was later taken by Japan, causes shift to north, peasants new jobs, industrialization and new industries pop up in the north. South grows (relatively) economically weaker.
- Capitalism in Korea's big cities, immense poverty in rural areas
- Japan became economically isolated (due to imperial rule over a lot of colonies and general hostility); tariff barriers. Tried to sustain itself
 - Looked towards its colonies for sustenance
 - Korea became super important because of its location, and also politically integrated, and had lots of available labor.
 - (this is why it made a lot of sense for Japan to invest its culture deeply into Koreans -- fallback for economic growth)
 - Developing Korea allowed easier access to materials in Manchuria
 - Korea thus became super industrialized; no colony in history had been this industrialized before.
 - Korea became strongly influenced by Japanese values, language, and institutions
 - Japanese officials wanted seamless cultural and administrative assimilation
- In some ways, the Japanese were successful!
- By the end of 1945, Korea was very crippled from harsh mobilization for total war
 - Koreans had to be conscripted to military service by Japan when needed

In detail...

Colonial Modernity

- During this time, we also have a lot of East-Asian countries taking in capitalism from the Western world, leading to new technologies, new trade, and new Western ideas and values!
- Japanese colonial intervention objectively sped up modernization *whether Koreans want to call that a good thing or not*. We call that "colonial modernity"
- New technology -> new agriculture -> demand for Korean rice -> cycle to make more money. Agriculture became one of the biggest aspects to help develop Korean economy, and rice was a really famous Korean trade export.

But as a whole...

- Economy got better, though it remained dependent on Japanese capitalism.
- New literacy, new jobs, and a new presence of educated women. Finally, new roles and assertion of new rights for women.

Modern Women

- Christian churches established schools for women.
- Women in nationalist movements represented a new voice in a historically patriarchal country
- Also seen in more radio networks, actresses in cinema, news stories, entertainers (kisaeng), pop song stars

Forced Assimilation

- Also, Japanese language required to work in higher positions
- Colonial schools used Japanese language starting in 1938; became a necessity to be educated
- (not effective: only 12% of Koreans fluent in Japanese, 1944)
- Censorship of Korean also used. ALL independent Korean newspapers closed by 1940
- Korean names were changed through "soshi kaimei", as it was justified to put Korean families in line with the family system in Japan. (Koreans based on lineage, and Japanese based on family) 75% of population registered new names!
- Also Korea organized into mini "neighborhood patriotic associations" of 10 households each, to extract labor, contribute materials, "donate" rice, etc
- All jobs centralized, many intellectuals forced to give patriotic speeches to Koreans to join the war effort (1940-1945)

Comfort Women

- Women recruited to Japanese military brothels (100,000-200,000 women)
- Recruited by deception or force
- Many killed, many disfigured, many rendered infertile. Most abandoned in camps abroad all throughout East Asia and other parts of the world
- Many unable to marry due to the stigma, and shame, no matter what

- Appropriation of women was yet another aspect of exploitation, attacking at point of least resistance (young and uneducated women).

In summary, the last years leading up to 1945..

- Tons of people in all jobs (~11.6% of population) working out side of Korea
- Prisons overflowing with political prisoners

Discussion

In what ways did the Japanese manipulate women to become comfort women?

- Women were burdened to earn money for their families: many kisaeng were recruited from low levels of society, and so colonial authorities manipulated desperate korean women who had financial desperation.

Why did women not break their silence until much more recently?

- (Similar to the Me Too movement) the answer is social conservatism. Japanese knew that once women were convinced into comfort women lifestyle, they would not talk about it upon returning. There is a certain element of social stigma which would make women unable to marry in the future, and especially back then, women had to be "chaste" and "loyal". Also would bring shame to their families.

There is a comfort woman statue in front of the Japanese embassy in Korea.

Apparently Japan formally apologized back in 2015 to Korea for the incident, donating \$8.3 million USD to compensate the living survivors or the families of the deceased. In return, South Korea would "consider the issue settled" and remove the statue in front of the Japanese embassy.

This received fierce opposition from many activists who installed many new statues all around the country.

Later, January 8th 2018, current President Moon Jae-in declared the agreement was "defective as it not only goes against the principle of truth and justice, but did not reflect the view of the victims."

- What purpose do statues play in diplomatic relations, and what purpose did this specific statue play?
- (possibly) why would South Korea accept such an agreement?