Chapter Four

COLONIAL MODERNITY, ASSIMILATION, AND WAR
1930–1945

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THE YEARS BETWEEN the collapse of the United Front in the fall of 1931 and the outbreak of the war with China in 1937 brought colonial Korea's ironies and contradictions into sharp focus. While the fall of the United Front meant the collapse of overt nationalist resistance, what emerged in its place was a more violent anti-Japanese movement represented by the guerrilla movement in Manchuria and the Red Peasant Unions in the far northeast of the peninsula. Japan's seizure of Manchuria in 1931 altered Korea's position in the empire, for Korea then became a middleman in the empire's development of northeast China's vast untapped resources. The subsequent, seemingly anomalous industrialization of North Korea provided new jobs for peasants, but at the price of dislocating them from the densely populated south and moving them to the north; furthermore, Korea's industrial labor force expanded simultaneously with the deepening immiseration of the Korean countryside. Finally this period witnessed the flowering of a capitalist mass culture in Korea's cities, a popular culture providing the façade of a modernity that had evolved unevenly in the colony. The alluring consumer culture and glittering nightlife in the cities contrasted with abject poverty in the countryside, symbolizing each end of the economic spectrum of a dual economy—dual in the sense that parts of Seoul were as modern as anything in Tokyo, yet in rural backwaters profound poverty and wretched material conditions remained unchanged from the nineteenth century.

The addition of Manchuria caused large-scale shifts within the Japanese Empire. Increasingly isolated in world affairs and threatened by economic isolation as trading nations erected tariff barriers to protect their own economies, Japan began to create an autarkic economy formed around its colonies. The main axis of this system ran from Japan proper through Korea and Manchuria, with Taiwan playing an important, but less crucial role. Because Korea was more firmly integrated politically, had a more developed infrastructure, and was labor rich—not to mention its being geographically central—Japan began to industrialize Korea in order to exploit the raw materials of Manchuria. The state-led industrialization of Korea in the 1930s was an anomaly in colonial history. No colony had ever before been industrialized to the level of Japan's Korea colony, a process that shifted labor

from the densely populated south to the sites of huge new factories in northern Korea and Manchuria and spurred urban growth as well.

The increasing economic importance of Korea within the empire motivated Japan to intensify its efforts to spread Japanese values, language, and institutions within the colony. By the mid-1930s Japanese authorities were demanding active Korean participation in Shinto ceremonies, stepping up the pressure within the education system to spread Japanese language use, and trying to eliminate the last differences in legal and administrative practices that distinguished the Japanese *naichi* (inner lands) from the colonial *gaichi* (outer lands). The goal in the minds of colonial officials was a seamless cultural, legal, and administrative assimilation of Korea, and where this could not be accomplished in reality, cosmetic fiction would do. This was especially true in the dark years of the Pacific War (1941–1945), when the Japanese assimilation policies became increasingly hysterical and unrealistic.

By the end of the colonial period in 1945, Korean society was suffering under a cripplingly harsh mobilization for total war. It was no consolation that the Japanese Diet had recommended the complete elimination of the distinction between *naichi* and *gaichi,* or true Japanese from their imperial subjects on the periphery. Becoming assimilated meant that Koreans would be allowed the same privileges to sacrifice for the emperor granted the citizenry of the main islands—namely, to be conscripted for the military and labor forces, to render their rice and precious metals to the imperial treasury, and to be forcefully moved wherever manpower was needed. Of course while distinctions disappeared in theory, Koreans and other colonials still carried identity cards designating their ethnicity.

Colonial Modernity

The material, structural, and intellectual underpinnings of what is normally thought of as modernity was inextricably bound up with imperialism in the non-Western world. Since the expansion of the global capitalist market system often required the use of force, the colonial system had emerged as the political superstructure of market expansion. East Asians fought against inclusion in the new global political-economic system of capitalism, but ultimately their societies were joined to the international system whether willingly or not. Market opening began the process of technology transfer, creation of trade circuits, as well as the importation of Western ideas and values. Ultimately political control (indirect control in the case of China) cemented the connections between these "less-developed" economies and the West. In Korea's case, its opening and later domination at the hands of the Japanese began their drama of social and economic transformation similar to that of other colonies around the globe.

After 1910 the direct and massive Japanese colonial intervention in Korea speeded the process of change in unique ways and created a form of modern-

ization in which the process may be usefully termed "colonial modernization" and the state of being "colonial modernity." These terms help us distinguish the modernity of the Korean colony from that of the West, or of Japan for that matter. The usual elements of the modern are manifest, but in a highly skewed form. Most importantly, colonial modernity is one in which the modern sector is dominated by the political control of the colonizers. The presence of colonial domination adds ethnic power relations to the usual formation of class difference and competition. Finally, the association of the modern sector of colonial society with the dominant culture of the colonizers creates an added element of complexity. To be part of modernity will therefore mean adopting the culture of the ethnically distinct and advantaged colonizer community. This engenders cultural hybridity because it forces the colonized to adopt the colonizers' language and values if they want to participate in the new modernity.

Japan used the most advanced technology of the times in fashioning their colonial state. They also had the advantage of followership, that is, they were able to learn from the mistakes and successes of older colonial regimes like the English and French (Pyle, 1974). As a consequence, Japan not only forced Korea into contact with the global market and the attendant influences that began the transformation of traditional Korea, but its colonial state also took an active role in shaping and accelerating this transformation. It began by penetrating the countryside with railroads, telegraph, and telephone lines. Later motor roads began to creep out from the new administrative centers to link smaller periodic markets to the larger county and provincial centers. The new communications infrastructure tied together the military and police control apparatus. Within a few years of annexation, police substations with phone lines radiating out from its modern façade and a new motorcar parked in front put the trappings of modern culture directly in the view of a peasantry who lived in an entirely different material universe. The brutal reality of Japanese rule, the tumult of changing laws and regulations, new administrative procedures, health inspections, market regulators, and all the appurtenances of modern colonial administration brought with them the additional shock of the modern.

Colonial modernity describes the striking contradictions inherent in a juxtaposition of the modern and the backward, the developed and the undeveloped. Indeed, this binary in the minds of the colonialists justified their controlling presence. It appeared to them as a temporary contradiction that placed the latest technology and consumer objects next to what might be considered the traditional and primitive. Certainly one feature of this modernity was the sense of time warp encountered when moving from the modernizing cities to the still unchanged rural countryside. Even in the post-colonial 1960s, travelers could still feel a backward movement in time the further they traveled into Korean's rural hinterland, leaving behind the comforts and conveniences of modern life and encountering a material world of another century. Such a feeling, of course, assumes that what

is left behind in the city is a present progressively moving toward the future, and what is encountered in the hinterland is a past as yet unchanged.

The shock of the modern must have been even more acute in the 1930s. The Japanese used this play on time and their domination of the modern to legitimate their rule. Wielding still and movie cameras, Japanese anthropologists had fanned out into the countryside from the early moments of colonial rule; to know and record the past as represented in Korea's present backward (and "natural") state was an important part of justifying Japanese rule—just as it was in the entire colonial world. By the 1930s legions of Japanese and foreign tourists consumed this backwardness, moving back and forth in time from modern hotels to the sites of the "traditional past." They could buy in any hotel postcards that documented the quaint rural customs and costumes of their colonial subjects, or they could choose to send images of Seoul's Honmachi, the main Japanese shopping district, and one that was virtually identical to any modern Tokyo street.

Colonial modernity was also defined by an ethnic bifurcation between the modern (Japanese) and the backward (Korean), a bifurcation enforced by Japanese economic and political ascendancy. And the large population of Japanese who lived and worked in Korea enhanced this split. By 1940 over 800,000 Japanese residents clustered in the urban centers. The lifestyle of this large expatriated enclave defined modern living. They were colonial bureaucrats, intellectuals, teachers, and businessmen whose residences and the service economy that supported them represented islands of Japanese modernity surrounded by a developing Korea.

Honmachi, center of the Japanese quarter in Seoul, 1930s. Source: The Norman Thorpe Collection.

To enter Japanese enclaves was to enter a different cultural zone, making explicit the colonial modernity's hybrid predicament. For the socially and economically ambitious Koreans, working for or playing within the modern sectors of Korea's new cities meant participating in a blend of Korean and Japanese cultures. Colonial modernity privileged Japanese cultural and material influence in Korea and skewed its reception by Koreans because of the power realities that it only lightly masked. In the end, the attraction of the modern explains in part how the Japanese successfully established a stable hegemony in Korea after 1920 (Gi-Wook Shin, "Colonial Corporatism," 1999). By including (and implicating) Korea's ambitious middle class in the burgeoning modernity of the colony, the Japanese served their long-term interests of gaining this key social class's compliance, or at least passive acceptance, of the colonial order.

Modernity in Korea also contained elements of potential liberation within its cultural and intellectual matrix. Development created different occupations and introduced new avenues of mobility. Liberation from traditional ways of being did not mean life would necessarily be easier, but movement to the cities, working in industrial settings, and even leaving the country to seek employment in Manchuria or the metropole itself changed peoples' consciousness of life's possibilities. The expansion of the educational system, however its message was twisted to justify imperial rule, brought literacy, new skills, and a widened consciousness to the hundreds of thousands of Koreans who heretofore had no access to even a rudimentary education. Educating women was particularly revolutionary. The old taboo against educating women had been broken at the turn of the century, and by the 1920s entire journals were devoted to discourse on the modern women *(sinyŏsŏng).* Educated young women challenged traditional roles by appearing in public wearing Western clothes and engaging in activities previously the monopoly of men. At least among the middle-class women of the cities, the evolution of colonial modernity had opened a space for them, by creating new roles and styles and asserting rights for women. Finally, within the visual and aural representations of cinema and popular song, an entirely new dreamworld emerged that created a whole new set of longings and desires in everyone from the poorest rural peasants to the urban scions of the wealthy new commercial class.

Economic Growth and Developmental Colonialism

After 1920 the economic policy in Korea continued to encourage increases in agricultural production through selective investment in irrigation, introduction of chemical fertilizers, and the spread of modern farming technology. Because of demand for Korean rice from the metropolitan markets and increasing rice prices, Korean agriculture faired well during the decade. Landowners increased their holdings and large landlords in particular received a windfall in rents. While twenty years earlier the only obvious investment of profits from rents was in more

land, by the 1920s landlords began to funnel their profits into modern enterprises. The Japanese stimulated this move by removing formal restrictions against incorporation by Koreans with its new Company Law of 1920. More Koreans began to participate as entrepreneurs or stockholders in commercial enterprises, and a select group of very successful capitalists emerged.

Indeed, by 1920 there was a pent-up demand among wealthy Koreans to profit from the growing colonial economy. The governor general recognized this demand and knew that to continue to restrict Korean investment would work against Japanese long-term interests for control and pacification of the colony. Just as the Cultural Policy provisions within the cultural sphere had worked to provide an outlet for repressed intellectual energy and deflect it away from resistance to Japanese rule, so too changing the economic policy, they believed, would allow them to use to their advantage their perception that political instability also worried Korean economic elites. These elites would be included in the colonial economy under the new banner of Japanese-Korean harmony *(nissen yūwa).*

In 1921 the colonial government convened an industrial commission of businessmen and Japanese officials to discuss the shape of economic policy in the post-World War I era. At the commission both Japanese and Korean businessmen beseeched the GGK to moderate restrictions to investment in the colony. Japanese investors had chafed under earlier obstacles to investment from Japan, but they were now worried that the GGK was getting ready to provide advantages to Korean entrepreneurs at their expense. In the end, the colonial economy was opened to more Japanese businessmen, and subsidies were given to a select group of Korean businessmen (Eckert, *Offspring of Empire,* 1991).

The Korean economy remained dependent on Japanese capitalism, but a space for Korean participation had been opened. And while colonial economic policy continued under the slogan of agriculture first in the 1920s, commercial and manufacturing sectors in Korea began to develop more quickly. Although this anticipated future industrial growth, the unique government-led economic development would only come in the 1930s. Still, the distribution of economic activity had changed significantly by 1930. Korean businessmen were important players in the new service and manufacturing sectors. Most notably, Kyŏngsŏng Spinning and Weaving Corporation, directed by Kim Sŏngsu and his brother Yŏnsu, established itself as the largest Korean-owned company in the colony. By the 1930s the Kims' company was poised to take advantage of opportunities in Manchuria and China, and during the war Japanese procurement swelled its profits (Eckert, *Offspring of Empire,* 1991). In trading and retail, several Koreans also established large business empires. Pak Hŭngsik built a retailing empire from a modest trading company. His ultra-modern, six-story Hwasin department store on Chongno in downtown Seoul anchored a unique chain of stores that successfully competed with Japanese retail giants such as Mitsukoshi and Chōjiya.

In spite of increased Korean participation, however, the economy remained

dominated by Japanese. After 1935 and the promulgation of the Export Association Law, some investment flowed into the colony from the large Japanese business combines known as *zaibatsu.*[1] Mitsui, Sumitomo, Yasuda, and Mitsubishi all had stakes in the colony by the late 1920s, and even more notably there were the so-called new *zaibatsu,* large combines that had emerged after World War I, which specialized in joint ventures with the GGK that were financed by bank loans and special subsidies from the Bank of Chōsen. Such was the case of the businessman Noguchi Jun, who in the early 1930s began a series of large projects in Korea that ultimately included the world's largest nitrogen-fertilizer plant. In the mid-1920s Noguchi had met with Governor General Saitō to help with planning the expansion of Korea's hydroelectric sources, and a decade later their planning bore fruit in the completion of enormous dams on the Yalu River that provided abundant, inexpensive power for the industrial boom of the war years. The pattern of close ties between private entrepreneurs and capital, state-run banks, and the economic and strategic planning of the GGK came into focus by the late 1920s. Thus the contours of a unique developmental colonialism, a product of Japan's strategic and economic interests in Northeast Asia, were already apparent in the years just before the Great Depression (Cumings, "Northeast Asian Political Economy," 1984).

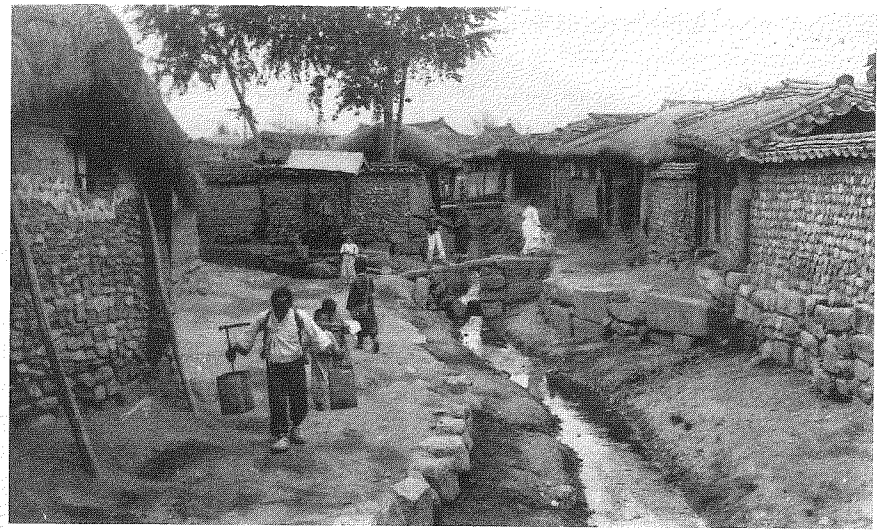
The Great Depression: Rising Tenancy and Rural Misery

The global depression after 1929 hit the Korean countryside very hard. It signaled an end to the relatively good times of the 1920s and steady or increasing rice prices. The program to increase rice production had been moderately effective, but the increased production had generally found its way into the export market, enriching landlords and rice merchants but not the ordinary peasants themselves. Perversely, as rice production increased, Korean peasants consumed less rice in favor of cheaper grains such as barley and millet so they could market the more valuable rice for cash, thus further degrading their caloric intake. The fall in rice prices caused by the Great Depression, as well as by protectionist pressure from Japanese rice growers, exacerbated negative trends within the land-tenure system that were already apparent in the 1920s, namely, rising rents, increased concentration of landownership, and higher percentages of tenancy. During the Depression, the situation in rural Korea worsened. A rapid increase in the Korean population after 1920 compounded market forces that were increasing the rate of tenancy. Between 1910 and 1940 tenancy steadily increased with a tremendous spike during the Great Depression and war years. Because of the intense pressure on available land resources, landowners raised rents almost at will, further exacerbating peasant distress. Large numbers of peasants were forced off the land in search of jobs as casual laborers or as workers in the service sector or in small urban factories.

Another indicator of rural distress was the rising number of landless peasants

who were resorting to upland slash-and-burn agriculture, the so-called fire-field people *(hwajŏn).* In 1936 over 300,000 families were engaged in such marginal farming, a 300 percent increase over the number in 1916. Increases in landowner-tenant disputes also marked the deterioration of life in rural Korea. Disputes recorded by the GGK increased from 667 in 1931 to 7,544 in 1934; a year later they had tripled to 25,834. By 1933 the situation was so grave that the GGK revised its tenancy and arbitration laws in order to provide some relief for peasants caught in the spiral of rising rents (Shin, *Peasant Protest,* 1996). In 1934 Governor General Ugaki formally ended the rice production program under pressure from Japanese agricultural interests who were demanding relief from the downward pressure on prices caused by the continuing flow of cheap Korean rice into Japan. Ostensibly to meet the food problems in the colony, Ugaki now instituted a self-regeneration campaign to encourage rural self-sufficiency and frugality, a campaign that anticipated a similar move in the 1970s—Pak Chung Hee's New Village Movement—which was also intended to help spur economic growth.

In spite of GGK efforts to ameliorate the worsening conditions in the countryside, landownership concentration continued to increase and became one of liberated Korea's major problems in 1945. As the number of absentee landlords increased, more tenants came under the supervision of agents, who often worked under an incentive system that tied their income to the amount of rents collected. In addition, the system further depersonalized owner-tenant relations already strained by the impersonal market. An increase in Japanese investment in Korean



A Korean village in the 1930s, from a postcard series entitled "Korean Customs." Source: The Norman Thorpe Collection.

land in the 1930s had the same deleterious effect; although relatively few in number, Japanese made up a good proportion of the largest landowners in the colony. Still, the majority of landlords were Korean, and the real tragedy of the colonial land-system was that it served landowners' interests so well. Throughout the colonial period, the landowning strata continued, in general, to profit from secure investments in land. By 1945 the overall tenancy rate (including partial tenants) in Korea was 69.1 percent, but in some areas of the southwest Cholla provinces the rate approached 80 percent.

The Seizure of Manchuria and Colonial Industrialization

On September 18, 1931, the Kwantung Army created a pretext that led to the invasion and seizure of Manchuria, and the puppet state of Manchukuo was established a year later. This act was the logical outcome of Japan's long-term strategic effort to control Manchuria, the rise of radical military influences within domestic Japanese politics, and what heretofore had been the implicit emergence of a yen-bloc economy embracing Japan's colonies. The seizure of Manchuria solidified linkages with Korea's growing economy that the GGK had been promoting for years. Now the Japanese could refer explicitly to Korea as a supply base for their Kwantung Army stationed in China; after 1931 Manchuria was quickly integrated into Japan's economic and strategic policy to create a self-sustaining regional economy that would counter the effects of increasing diplomatic and economic isolation in the world. The GGK coordinated Japanese private and public investment in Manchuria, with the Bank of Chōsen and the Chōsen Industrial Bank playing a primary role in capitalizing Manchurian industrial projects. Korean entrepreneurs also moved into Manchuria. The governors general of Korea, all military men, had long understood the strategic importance of Manchuria to the defense and welfare of Japan. In the mid-1930s Governor General Minami described Japan as the "torso" *(dōtai)*, Korea the "arm" *(ude)*, and Manchuria as the fist *(kobushi)* when he characterized the integration of Northeast Asia under Japanese control (Eckert, *Offspring of Empire*, 1991, p. 115). Such thinking anticipated the subsequent invasion of China, but at least a decade before the colonial government in Korea had started developing the economic links between Korea and Manchuria in the service of the empire's greater good.

The inclusion of Manchuria into the empire accelerated the industrialization of Korea in the 1930s. This industrialization was accomplished by a state-private sector cooperation that anticipated similar arrangements characteristic of what is now referred to as the developmentalist state. Already begun in the 1920s, Korea's hydroelectric capacity was increased to provide power for the new factories. Cheap power, in particular, was a prime motivation for Noguchi Jun to develop his chemical manufacturing empire in Hamhŭng. Japan Steel Corporation established plants to exploit high-grade iron-ore deposits in Manchuria and newly

discovered ones in north Korea. This formed the core of an expanding metals industry. By 1940 Korea, still an impoverished colony in most respects, boasted a disproportionately developed manufacturing sector (chemical, tools, metals, and textile industries) that accounted for 40 percent of Korea's entire economic output, a figure up from a 17.7 percent in 1931. The increased economic output was tightly bound to Japan, where 95 percent of all Korean exports went. For its part, Korea was, by 1939, absorbing fully 34 percent of all Japanese exports. A further dimension of this development was the participation of Korea-based Japanese companies, Korean entrepreneurs, and Korean labor in Manchuria. With Japanese political control and the infrastructure they had already developed, capital and labor flowed freely over the Korean-Manchuria border. By the outbreak of the war in China, the close economic linkage between Japan, Korea, and Manchuria envisioned a decade earlier by GGK bureaucrats and businessmen had become an accomplished fact.

The economic development of Korea during the 1930s, featuring its characteristic combination of overdevelopment and underdevelopment, had a profound effect on the Korean population. As industry expanded, hundreds of thousands of peasants found themselves in factory jobs. The factory work force in Korea doubled in the 1930s and increased further after the outbreak of the Pacific War, from 384,951 in 1932 to 1,321,713 in 1943, a 343 percent increase (Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War*, 1981). If the mining industry and transportation sectors are added, the increase is even more dramatic. Moreover, this does not count the tens of thousands of Koreans working in plants in Manchuria by 1945. The expansion of the manufacturing economy not only pulled peasants off the land and into the alien factory labor, it also displaced large numbers of Koreans from their home regions. Recruitment generally moved labor from the populous south to north. Before 1937, private industry had to recruit its own labor, but their task was simplified by the increasingly desperate situation in the Korean countryside. Recruitment by the market alone, however, was insufficient after the outbreak of the war in China. After 1937, government labor conscription moved even larger numbers of Koreans throughout the empire to fill the various needs of war production (see Table 4.1).

Just as Korean entrepreneurs were handicapped in competition with Japanese capitalists in the area of large-scale industry; similarly, Koreans found themselves largely relegated to secondary jobs in an ethnically demarcated workplace. Koreans occupied the bottom of the labor hierarchy, and before the war only a small percentage rose into leadership or technical positions. The foremen of most factories were Japanese, and the skilled trades were dominated by Japanese labor. The few Koreans who rose into management were restricted to middle levels of authority or to clerical positions. With the coming of the war and the draining away of Japanese personnel through army conscription, Koreans were able to advance to higher positions on the factory floor and in offices, yet the numbers were still

Table 4.1 GROWTH OF THE WORKING CLASS: 1933–1943

Type of Worker	1933 N of Workers	1943 N of Workers	% 1943 Workforce
Factory workers	99,400	390,000	22.3
Mine workers	70,700	280,000	16.0
Transportation workers	n/a	170,000	9.7
Construction workers	43,600	380,000	21.7
Miscellaneous workers	n/a	530,000	30.3

Source: 1933 Shokusan Bank Monthly Survey Report; 1943 Imperial Diet Summary Report; in Soon-Won Park (1999, p. 29).

meager and the phenomenon of too short a duration to have a meaningful effect in labor training by the end of the war (Park, 1999).

Anti-Japanese Resistance in the 1930s

While the overt nationalist movement within the colony faded after the fall of the Sin'ganhoe in 1931, Japan's seizure of Manchuria helped to revive the exile movement. The increased presence of the Japanese in Manchuria galvanized Korean exiles in China proper to create a common cause with the Nationalist Chinese government (KMT) in Nanking. A new group led by Kim Ku, the Korean Independence Party, inherited the legacy of the now defunct Korean Provisional Government. This party staged a series of successful terrorist attacks, bombings and assassinations, on Japanese targets in China. Another more powerful group coalesced around the leftist Korean National Revolutionary Party headed by Kim Wŏnbong. Although these two groups tried to create a unified front, personal and doctrinal differences and fickle KMT support prevented any successful union. Only in 1944 did the two groups merge to revive the Korean Provisional Government and receive Chiang Kai-shek's imprimatur as the de facto Korean government in exile. The group ultimately received support for the formation of a Korean Restoration Army. Numbering 3,600 in 1943, the army languished in rear areas, but they did participate in limited propaganda, intelligence, and guerrilla operations.

In the period before 1937, most Korean Communists who had been working within the various nationalist parties in China proper moved their operations to Yenan and Manchuria. In Manchuria, they waged a protracted guerrilla war harassing the Japanese. Between 1931 and 1935 an estimated 200,000 guerrillas composed of bands of all sizes and levels of discipline and organization were fighting in Manchuria. Koreans represented the largest percentage of guerrillas

in proportion to population of any other ethnic group (Cumings, *Korea's Place,* 1997; 160). A protracted and bloody anti-insurgency campaign reduced the levels of opposition, but guerrilla bands, some numbering in the thousands, were still operating in 1935.

The most successful guerrilla groups were part of the Chinese Communist military units that operated in loose coordination under the banner of the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army. Korean detachments within this army carried out a desperate and ultimately losing battle against the Japanese pacification campaigns. Most effective among them was a group led by Kim Il Sung, the future "great leader" of North Korea. Kim's detachment made a number of raids in Manchuria as well as Korea in the 1935–1940 period. The Japanese at one point created a special counterinsurgency unit that enlisted Korean Communist defectors from other groups to hunt him down. His group was small, numbering between 50 and 300, and it maintained itself on forced contributions from wealthy farmers. Eventually, Japanese pressure forced Kim, with his last followers, to cross into the Kabarovsk area of the Soviet Union to wait out the war in Soviet training camps with other retreating Korean partisans.

After Liberation, Kim Il Sung and his loyal partisans dominated the leadership of what became North Korea. Over time, the significance of his guerrilla activities became grotesquely distorted within the fantastic claims of the personality cult woven around the person of the Great Leader. Indeed, the portrayal of Kim's single-handed defeat of the Japanese remains central to North Korea's legitimacy claims as the true leader of the Korean people. Official South Korean histories have tried to write Kim completely out of the record. The fact remains that Kim was one of the last resistance fighters standing in Manchuria in the 1930s; while his accomplishments were considerably more modest than is claimed in North Korean lore, he was, according to Japanese sources, a formidable enemy who had gained the support of the Korean peasantry in Manchuria. (Suh Dae-Sook, *Kim Il Sung,* 1988) And Kim as well as his guerrilla loyalists ended up leading postwar North Korea until the mid-1990s.

Origins and Maturation of a New Mass Culture

For decades after Liberation, Korean nationalist historians ignored important cultural developments that had taken place during the colonial period. This was an understandable backlash against Japanese cultural repression during the forced assimilation campaigns of the late 1930s and war years. Nevertheless, in recent years there has been a considerable effort to exhume the full picture of Korea's early modern mass culture in order to understand the antecedents of contemporary Korean modernity. As noted earlier, modernity began to evolve on the peninsula in the late nineteenth century and matured in Korea's urban space under Japanese rule. It was necessarily linked to the modern mass culture of the metro-

pole, a hybrid phenomenon shaped by the transnational forces of global capitalism, technology transfer, and blended forms of cultural expression. Most important, new mediums of cultural expression and new styles of cultural consumption that were brought into Korea not only introduced foreign culture, they also began transforming traditional Korean culture within these new styles and new media.

Mechanical reproduction of musical and visual culture changed how people consumed entertainment. Modern mass culture is characterized by the passive consumption of culture rather than its active production. Traditionally people were responsible for their own entertainment. In a traditional village setting in Korea for example, villagers performed for each other as entertainment. While some might specialize or form special groups within the village, dance, song, drama depended on villagers for its production. Within the leisure world of the upper class, performance by professionals mixed with the elites' own production of arts and culture. It has been noted that certain forms of Korean cultural expression had already begun the process of professionalization in the mid-nineteenth century. Itinerant performers of song, *p'ansori* for example, earned their living collecting fees on the market circuit where the elite and an emerging class of merchants had the means to buy such entertainments (Pihl, 1994). The expansion of market forces accelerated this trend, and by 1900 there were many more opportunities to consume the services of hired entertainers. Thus the transition from local performance on the village common *(madang)* to performance on a stage requiring admission fees had already appeared in the late nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, Western-style theaters opened in Seoul, speeding the movement of entertainment from *madang* to stage to the silver screen and, ultimately, into the ether via radio waves in the next several decades.

What became the content of mass popular culture in colonial Korea was necessarily a mixing of traditional Korean culture with Chinese, Japanese, and Western cultural forms; given the increasing interconnectedness of the world even in the early twentieth century, it is hard, if not impossible, to find any "pure" national culture. That Japanese influences were prominent in this mix is not surprising, given the power realities of colonialism. We cannot, however, dismiss this cultural production as somehow not truly Korean culture because of its colonial origins. On the contrary, it is just as easy to see the adaptation of Korean folk culture into the new media as something that preserved kernels of the tradition within the corrosive assault, at least as perceived by colonial intellectuals, of modernity during this period of modern transformation.

Print capitalism was an important part of this transformation. Even before Korea's opening in 1876, reading patterns had already begun to change. In the late eighteenth century publishers expurgated old-style, didactic novels written in classical Chinese to create the popular, plot-driven "new novels" *(sinsosŏl)* for wider distribution among the lower classes. Ironically, by the early twentieth century Japanese publishers were taking advantage of the demand for these new novels,

while Korean publishers ignored this market in favor or publishing more modern Western-style newspapers and intellectual journals. The revolution in vernacular language use after 1890 had spurred the production of newspapers, journals, and books, and after 1920 the print market expanded rapidly with the revival of Korean daily newspapers. By the 1930s publishing was truly a creature of the market; niche magazines, the equivalent of dime novels, newspapers, pamphlets, consumer guides, sheet music, genealogies, and broadsheets all competed for a share. Nationalist intellectuals worried that commercialization of the press reduced its political commitment and debased its cultural value, but nevertheless it encouraged standardization and expanded the use of the Korean vernacular, whatever message it might convey (Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism,* 1988). Print capitalism also inaugurated and spread the use of line art, photographs, and their combination in advertisement. By the 1930s this, together with film, another powerful visual medium, became an important stimulant of material desires and style.

Korean traditional music was forever transformed by the importation of Western music and instruments in the 1880s and by devices for the mechanical reproduction of music in the early 1900s. Song and dance had already begun to move onto the stage in the nineteenth century, and by 1900 variety shows in theaters created for audiences a new spectacle that would become a staple of popular culture throughout the twentieth century. Western music did not replace Korean music so much as it augmented the musicality of an already rich tradition. While interest in traditional court music had sunk to an all-time low, Western-style songs and new hybrid song forms captured the imagination of Koreans of all classes. With the arrival of phonographs Western classical music, traditional folk songs, "new" folk songs *(sinminyo),* and the Western/Japanese/Korean hybrid popular song genre *(yŭhaengga)* all became staples of a rapidly expanding consumer music market. By the 1930s and the advent of radio broadcasting in Korea, the recording industry produced an amazing array of music for a relatively mass audience. Even peasants in the countryside who never dreamed of owning a radio or phonograph could recite lists of the top recordings and tell stories of the fabulous and scandalous lifestyles of major recording artists.

In the 1930s mass culture had progressed to the point where all the new trends in entertainment had combined in the now-familiar tightly woven nexus of capitalist production, marketing, and consumption. Newspapers were full of ads for variety performances that featured the latest star performers; record releases were timed to coordinate with these performances; and radio programming was similarly timed to produce the maximum play for new material. A hit record would sell 50,000 copies in the colony alone, and Korean hits also sold well in Japan. In fact, Korean singers were in demand for tours in Japan and forged an important link to the more cosmopolitan popular culture of the empire itself. Postwar critics in Korea are quite ambivalent about the musical legacy of the colonial period. Some insist that popular songs were a major covert source of anti-Japanese resistance

while others dismiss them as simply a debased form imported directly from Japan. Ironically, post-colonial nationalists have celebrated a similar, but more intense, outpouring of popular cultural exports—the so-called Korean Wave or Hallyu—to Japan and the rest of East Asia since the late 1990s as proof of Korea's creativity and cultural dynamism (see Epilogue). Whatever their political meaning or lack thereof, popular songs were an important part of the new modernity and played a role in reshaping Korean imaginations and sensibilities at the time.

Colonial Mass Culture and National Identity

The emerging mass culture was a double threat to those who had placed themselves in the position of protecting or reviving traditional Korean cultural forms. The new media and mediums of cultural construction, dominated as they were by Japanese and Western modalities, appeared as a juggernaut of cultural destruction as it crushed any feeble attempt to protect or revive traditional ways and hurtled into the modern world of consumption and leisure. Both the foreignness of the modern mass culture and its "baseness" plagued the self-appointed cultural standards police of the nationalist movement.

For example, in the mid-1930s programmers for JDOK, the Korean-language radio station, struggled to preserve and maintain traditional Korean art forms while simultaneously providing entertainment to a mass audience.[2] Korean intellectuals considered radio a didactic medium for elevating public culture, and they took a keen interest in the content of programming. They encouraged high-toned fare such as Western classical music, traditional Korean instrumental music featuring the *kayagŭm* (twelve-string zither), or formal court music. Programmers, however, were caught between their own cultural pretensions and public demand for more popular music. Nationalist intellectuals disparaged the popular song genre *(yŭhaengga)* as vulgar and saw no redeeming cultural value in its focus on the trials of love or the melodrama of emotion in general. Ironically, postwar nationalists have resuscitated this genre, reading them as allegories of national resistance. A compromise was eventually struck by increasing playtime for popular songs, but at the same time introducing more Korean folk songs and the so-called "new folk songs" *(sinminyo)*, arrangements of old folk songs that used new instrumentation and experimental combinations of Western and Korean tonalities.

Radio, while tightly controlled, became a medium of both experimentation and preservation for Korean traditional culture and by doing so undercut GGK cultural assimilation programs. In their search for broadcast content, Korean programmers worked with artists to recast traditional forms of music and drama into forms suitable for radio. By any measure this was preservation of cultural identity; that it was implicitly supported by a GGK subsidy of broadcasting put in place for completely different reasons was another irony of colonial modernity. The Japanese had to allow significant airtime for entertainment programming in order to

spread the use of radio among the population, but in doing so they inadvertently provided a cultural space that challenged their own assimilation policies. Radio broadcast was a major stimulus to the continued evolution of the Seoul dialect as the standard pronunciation for the language generally. Linguistics lectures and Korean language lessons (featured in the popular children's hour entitled "Radio hakkyo") continued on air into the late 1930s concurrent with the increased prohibition of Korean language use in public institutions and schools.

Modern Women

Modernity in Korea meant changes for the position of women in colonial society. Within the general reforms sought by nationalists beginning in the 1890s was an emphasis on elevating the position of women. The Christian church brought men and women together for public worship; it established schools for women; and it encouraged the organization of emergence of women's groups devoted to practical reform issues. Women had participated in the early nationalist movement, and their patriotic associations had been instrumental in the movement to repay the national debt and other nationalist projects at the end of the Chosŏn period. Indeed, early women's activities were quickly absorbed into the larger national struggle, setting a precedent that continued to link women's liberation with national liberation. Educating women was a particularly important goal and by all measures it was succeeding; and long before the 1930s, uniformed girls commuting to schools in Korean cities had become a common sight.

By the 1930s the women's movement split between a smaller and more radical feminist movement and the majority reformists who urged a moderate reform program that focused on education and enlightenment of Korea's women. One reason more radical feminism failed to take hold was that the general goals of the more conservative women's groups coincided with formal colonial programs to educate a new generation of wives and mothers in scientific methods of child rearing, hygiene, nutrition and food preparation, and other women's arts. Such education changed only the content and not the social role of women in Korean society. For the colonial authorities, such reforms were for the benefit of raising a new generation of strong and healthy subjects. For the less radical mainstream women's movement, it was to become better mothers for their children. This also jibed with the role of modern women—at least urban middle-class women—as the most important consumers in the expanding commodity markets. How to manage the household budget and make the right consumption decisions was a frequent subject of articles in women's journals and newspaper features.

But while a more radical idea of female liberation may have been subordinated to a reformist agenda within the mainstream women's movement, or, in the case of the socialist women's movement, taken a back seat to the primacy of class liberation, women leaders in general pushed anti-traditional life choices with their

own behaviors. Many leaders in the women's movement chose to remain single, cut their hair short, refused to follow restrictive clothing traditions, and became public figures. In the 1920s and 1930s these were still radical choices and drew social disapprobation, even ostracism. Such was the case with Na Hyesŏk, feminist, writer, and painter, who was much in the public eye in the 1920s. Na wrote one of Korea's significant feminist short stories, "Kyŏnghui," won awards for her painting, spent time in jail for political activism in the March First Movement and in association with the anarchist group, the Ŭiryŏldan, and she published an early women's journal. But as a very public figure Na's unconventional lifestyle and outspoken commitment to female autonomy made her a target of the conventional press and an object of scorn and gossip. After an affair in Europe that became public, she was divorced by her husband in 1929 and thereafter effectively ostracized. She died destitute in 1948.

Finally, the rise of women entertainers in the public spotlight of the new mass culture decisively changed perceptions about women's roles in society and broadened the spectrum of possible action and identity. It was during the 1920s and 1930s that the modern girl appeared. Wearing Western fashion in public and confidently cruising the byways of the modern city, the modern girl became a symbol of change and an inspiration to young girls. Much of this was a construction of the popular press, which used the characteristics attributed to the modern girl for sensational and prurient content in order to sell publications. And, indeed, the number of women who could afford such display was still small. To see and be seen in the new department stores, tearooms, or at the public cinema or theater challenged hundreds of years of custom that restricted women to the home precincts. The voices of women announcers on the Korean radio network, the songs of female entertainers *(kisaeng)* heretofore unheard in public, the images of Korean actresses in the cinema, and the pictures, records, and news stories of the first generation of Korean popular song stars all created a different world of images, roles, and imagined possibilities for Korean women.[3]

The End of Colonial Rule: Forced Assimilation and War Mobilization

The gradual, but ultimately complete cultural assimilation of Korea by Japan had been a guiding principle of colonial policy from annexation onward. This principle flowed from a colonialist construction of racial, cultural, and historical kinship between the Korean and Japanese people. The Japanese treated Koreans as distant, poor kinsman. Their theory asserted that Japan had followed a different, more beneficial path of evolution and had now turned to help lift up its backward cousins. The GGK devoted tremendous resources to the study of Korean history, archeology, and folk culture. In part this stemmed from the seemingly universal curatorial impulse of all colonialists—the impulse that produced much

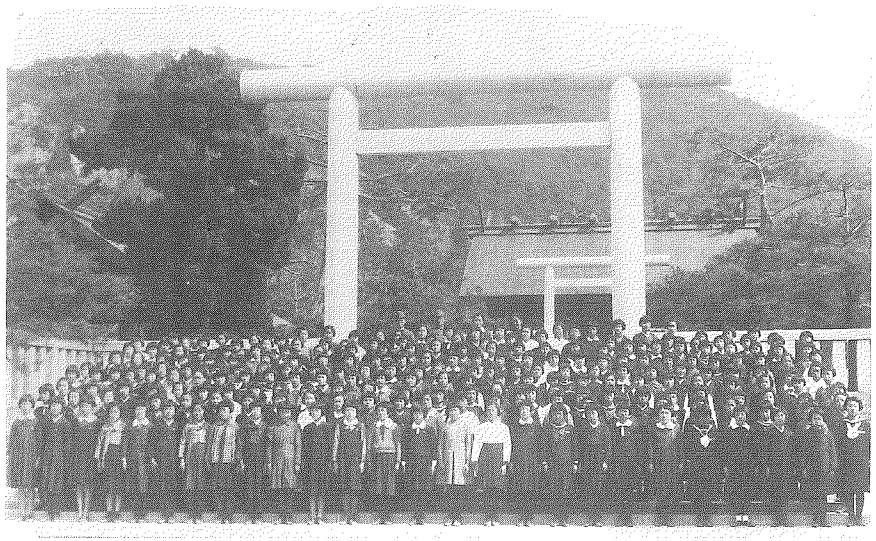
of our knowledge about the non-Western world up to that time. This knowledge was always filtered through the lens of the colonialists' perceived superior culture. But there was a twist to the Japanese obsession with Korean culture; the Japanese were bent on producing knowledge that proved a link between Japan and Korea in order to legitimate Japan's benevolent task of ruling Korea. Concurrently, however, much of the ethnography of Korea produced at this time emphasized Korea's premodernity and difference from Japan. Thus the assimilation discourse was laden with contradictions: it was an anthropological salvage operation, a source for demonstrating how Korea and Japan were one body (Naisen ittai), nostalgia for the pure/primitive culture of the past rapidly disappearing in Japan, and simultaneously a denial of mature equality.

Between 1910 and 1930 assimilation remained largely an unrealized theory whose practical implementation lay far behind the year-to-year exigencies of ruling Korea. The addition of Manchuria to the empire in 1931 and the new emphasis on Korea's increased economic and strategic importance led to an acceleration of assimilation programs in the mid-1930s. The intention was to create subjects who would actively support imperial goals, not merely comply passively. Forced assimilation can be dated from the policy debates over education and the new reg-

"Modern girls" and "modern boys" at Ŭlmildae in P'yŏngyang in the 1930s. Source: The Norman Thorpe Collection.

ulations regarding charters for schools in December 1934. Only a month later, in January 1935, Governor General Ugaki Kazashige promulgated a policy of obligatory worship at Shinto shrines, which required Korean attendance at shrines on all occasions of national importance. This meant all school students and members of Japanese organizations (official and private) were required to attend formal ceremonies organized by group leaders. Such "forced worship" was deeply offensive to all Koreans, but they precipitated a particular crisis within the large Christian community (Clark, 2003). Each church had to decide whether to obey or defy the order as a religious matter; some refused, others found ways to comply. The GGK only applied real pressure for compliance after the outbreak of war. Between 1935 and 1940 the Japanese closed 200 churches, revoked the charters of all Presbyterian schools, and arrested 2,000 Christians who continued to resist on religious grounds.

Formal assimilation programs began in earnest in October 1937 when the new Governor General Minami Jirō (1936–1942) ordered recitation of the "Oath as Subjects of the Imperial Nation" at all public gatherings and by students at the beginning of every school day. Minami was a former commander of the Kwantung Army, a major power within the Japanese high command, and a leading member of the "control faction" within the Japanese military that by 1939 dominated the home government. He brought to his post a reputation as a hard-liner and alliance with expansionists and ultranationalist elements at the highest rungs of power



High school matriculation ceremony at the Chōsen Shrine in Seoul, 1943. Source: The Norman Thorpe Collection.

in Tokyo. What came to be known as the Movement to Create Imperial Citizens (Kōminka undō) emerged under his hand, and the gloves were off. Only a year later Japan was at war with China, and Minami intensified the campaigns; by 1937 Saitō's and Ugaki's relatively "soft" approach to assimilation was a memory, and preparations for total war waited in the wings.

Another pillar of assimilation was language use. Japanese had become the "national language" *(kokugo)* of the colony in 1910. Surprisingly, the dissemination of Japanese skills in Korea remained tied to the public education system and its use was voluntary until the 1930s. The GGK appears to have tacitly framed language policy as a program of attraction rather than coercion. In the 1930s, Korean language classes continued in the schools, and the language movement successfully mounted programs in the countryside and established night schools in the cities to spread Korean literacy. It was clear, however, to any ambitious Korean that success in the modern sector of the colony required Japanese fluency, and a high percentage of colonial intellectuals were bilingual. In 1938, however, Japanese became the language of instruction for all subjects in the colonial schools, and Korean language study was formally removed from the curriculum in 1942. In the same year the GGK arrested the entire leadership of the Korean Language Movement and seized the manuscript of the comprehensive Korean dictionary, then nearing completion. Unlike Japan's language policies in Taiwan, formal Japanese outreach programs in Korea were only begun in 1938, and the movement to establish a registry of "National Language Families" that had been very successful in Taiwan failed in Korea. In 1944, even by the overly optimistic GGK estimates, barely 12 percent of the Korean population had functional Japanese. The corollary to forced use of Japanese was censorship of the printed word. Censorship of all Korean publications increased with the coming of the war; by 1940 the Japanese had closed the independent Korean-run daily newspapers and many of the monthly journals.

In retrospect the language programs within the assimilation project failed. It was clear by 1945 that the Japanese had not even begun to stamp out Korean language use. The symbolic abomination of required Japanese use affected mostly middle- and upper-class Koreans—or those Koreans enmeshed in Japanese organizations, companies, bureaucracies, and schools. But Koreans in these institutions were already using Japanese by necessity. The language policies were a classic example of the GGK trying to do by instant fiat what their own experts had already told them would take a century or more. Even as the GGK made preparations for repressing the Korean Language Society, the totally Japanese-controlled broadcasting system was still airing Korean classes, and pronunciation purification programs on the Korean language station were silenced only in 1944.

Perhaps the most galling program was the notorious decision to change Korean names that Minami announced on February 11, 1940. The formal term for the process was *sōshi kaimei* (to change family names). The ostensible reason was reform

of the Household Registration Law, for the new regulations would bring colonial practice in line with Japanese norms with regard to head of household, registration of births and deaths, and family law in general. Noting that Korean names were based on lineage *(sei)*, not family *(shi)*, as in Japan, the GGK announced that the emperor had graciously allowed his Korean subjects to bring their names into accord with the system in Japan. Within the six-month deadline established by the February order, over 3.17 million households or 75 percent of the population had registered new names.

This policy struck at the most personal and perhaps the most cherished source of Korean identity. The heartrending spectacle of family heads abandoning ancient names became a daily event at the local registry offices, and the memory has been recorded in novels, short stories, and memoirs. Richard Kim's well-known novella *Lost Names* offers a vivid account of the psychological trauma and cruelty of the campaign; more of the insensitivity and hypocrisy inherent in this preposterous policy is eloquently traced from the point of view of a Japanese protagonist in Kajiyama Toshiyuki's short story, "The Clan Records" (Richard Kim, 1998; Kajiyama, 1995). And in spite of their changed names, Koreans continued to carry identity cards that signified their ethnicity (Chōsenjin), lest the established colonial ethnic hierarchy be challenged.

Assimilation also had implications for Korean participation in the Japanese military. Military training had become a part of the curriculum in all colonial schools in 1934, and select Korean youth had been accepted at the Japanese Military Academy before 1937. With the opening of the Manchurian Military Academy in 1937, more opportunities were available to Koreans for participation in the military. In February 1938, the "Laws Concerning Army Special Volunteers" created a system to recruit more Koreans into the military. While the Japanese boasted that there was a "flood" of applicants, actual acceptance was circumscribed by high educational and physical requirements. After 1941 and the widening of the war, standards fell as the need for manpower rose. By 1943 general conscription was a fact. Most conscripted Koreans ended up in noncombatant roles, over 200,000 in the army and 20,000 in the imperial navy.

Between 1940 and 1945 the increasing cultural pressure to assimilate—to participate, not just to acquiesce—transformed into a full-scale mobilization of the entire population in the total war effort. In 1940 the Japanese organized the entire colony into 350,000 Neighborhood Patriotic Associations, each consisting of ten households. These were the basic units for a variety of government programs for extracting labor, forced contributions in cash or materials (precious metals, etc.), rice "donations," internal security, and rationing. The GGK organized all professions into "All Chōsen Leagues" of artists, writers, journalists, filmmakers, actors, musicians; in short, all identifiable occupational or interest groups were centrally organized. Cultural organizations sponsored patriotic contests of all sorts: song writing, short stories, art fairs, and poster art, and so forth. Famous Korean writers, intellectuals, businessmen, and the socially prominent were cajoled or forced to give patriotic speeches urging Koreans to "give the ultimate sacrifice" in prosecution of the war.

In short, the last five years of colonial rule plunged Korea into a morass of contradictions. With its cultural memory assaulted from above, its population uprooted, and the war industry booming, life for Koreans became a whirl of mobilization. They were mobilized in the name of an imperium in which they remained, at best, second-class citizens, at worst, draft labor, cannon fodder, or sexual slaves. To object or resist meant prison and disgrace for their families. Compliance among the prominent meant later denunciation as collaborators or, worse yet, assassination.

Labor Mobilization, Comfort Women: Korea's Population Hemorrhage

One of the most appalling incidences among the many Japanese cruelties during the Pacific War was the recruitment of Korean women to work in Japanese military brothels. While the exact number will probably never be known, between 100,000 and 200,000 women, mostly Korean (Chinese, Filipina, and some Western women also served in these units) were recruited either by deception or force into units euphemistically termed the "comfort corps" *(wianfu)*. These unfortunate women found themselves attached to garrisons in the far-flung Japanese military from northern China to as far away as Southeast Asia and Indonesia, where they endured servicing the sexual needs of Japanese soldiers and officers. Under such horrible conditions many of the women died. Some were disfigured and rendered infertile, and most were abandoned in their camps abroad after the war. Those who managed to return came home to lives forever altered by the experience. Because of the moral and social stigma attached to prostitution, many were unable to marry. They had to endure the unwarranted shame for having been prostitutes no matter under what circumstances, one of the uglier aspects of Korean patriarchal attitudes. Only in the late 1980s did the first few courageous survivors step forward and tell their shocking stories publicly (Choi Chungmoo 1992; Howard, 1995). These survivor stories galvanized others to come forward and eventually led to a movement that united women in Korea, Japan, China, and Southeast Asia to demand an accounting, reparations, and a formal apology from the Japanese government.[4]

The comfort women made up only a tiny fraction of the Koreans who were uprooted during the Pacific War. Hundreds of thousands of Korean men found themselves serving all over Asia in the Japanese military, but by far the greater Korean contribution to the war effort was made by ordinary Koreans mobilized to work in factories and mines in Manchuria, northern Korea, and Japan. The number of laborers who were uprooted was staggering. In what has been called

a "population hemorrhage," perhaps as many as 4 million people, an astonishing 11.6 percent of the population, were living and working outside of Korea by 1944 (Cumings, 1981, p. 53). And this does not include those moved from the southern provinces to work in the industrializing north. The drainage of manpower into the Japanese army had created desperate labor shortages in Japan. To fill the gap, Koreans, particularly from the southeast Kyŏngsang provinces, were recruited to go to Japan to work in menial positions. Some of the most arduous labor duty was in the mines, where tens of thousands of Koreans labored under the most brutal conditions throughout the war. And at the end of the war, somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 such Korean laborers in Hiroshima and Nagasaki perished in the atomic bombings.[5]

The internal and external migration of Korean labor during the war years left a bitter legacy. The urban population of Korea increased from 3 to 10 percent between 1930 and 1945. The mass movement raised the political and social consciousness of the population. When the formerly rural population of Korea was shaken up, dispersed, and then brought back together in the space of a decade, it had a politicizing effect, particularly for rural Koreans who returned to missing families, lost land, unemployment, and crowded conditions in the cities. Expectations for life chances and the perception of class differences were irrevocably altered. And beneath the accumulated psychological trauma lurked a deepening resentment of the Japanese and their Korean collaborators. Such resentments fueled major riots and instability in South Korea in the period after Liberation. Indeed, as Bruce Cumings has pointed out, the most unstable areas in South Korea after Liberation were precisely those that had the most population turnover (*Origins of the Korean War,* 1981).

In addition, the war effort had developed Korean industry in curious ways. The chemical industry in the north had become a prime source of munitions and ordnance for the Japanese army. Textile companies profited from the inexhaustible demand to fill the needs of the Japanese army. From a meager beginning, a sophisticated tool and machinery industry emerged to manufacture a host of war-related parts. Korea and Manchuria were spared Allied bombing during the war, and so the Japanese shifted the production of many industrial and manufacturing needs to these safe havens. Understandably, the war also brought opportunities to some Korean industrialists. Indeed, Korean entrepreneurs had ready networks for labor recruitment, and the wartime economy provided them additional access to the capital resources needed to expand production facilities. Those in a position to take advantage of Japanese procurement policies thus profited enormously, to the disgust of their countrymen after the war.

In summary, the last years of Japanese rule were certainly the worst of times for Korea. Society reeled under the weight of the war mobilization and political repression. With almost any act defined as a crime against the state, from linguistic scholarship to sabotage, the prisons of the colony overflowed with political prisoners. By even modest estimates millions of Koreans had been uprooted from their homes and sent to work abroad or in the northern provinces. Households buried their rice to prevent its seizure, and families sent their sons into hiding in the countryside to avoid conscription. War-related shortages made life unbearable; the state rationed dwindling food supplies, melted down personal effects for war production, and apparently even destroyed every film print it could gather—the entire creative product of the early Korean film industry—for its silver, Korean-language publications all but disappeared. As the Korean people waited impatiently for the end of the war, the increasingly bizarre demands of their Japanese overlords doubtless was a signal to some of the growing desperation of the imperial cause.