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李承晚的獨立正義：基督教跟現代教育(1948-1960)

The In/dependent Spirit of Syngman Rhee:
Christianity and Education Policy (1948-1960)

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Abstract

This thesis discusses Syngman Rhee's nation-building theory to actualize the establishment of the Republic of Korea and aims to shed light on the definition of 'The Spirit of Independence' from Rhee's perspective, which is described in his nation-building theory: Christianity and education. Above all, Rhee believed in establishing Korea upon Christian values. Since biblical values strictly warned people against laziness and other unproductive characters, Rhee expected Christianity to awaken the patriotism and encourage his people to be educated. Specifically, I focused on Rhee's long-term plans to launch and promote general and higher education in South Korea. Since Rhee, himself, was the beneficiary of the early stage of modern, or Western, education in Korea, he knew the necessity of capacity building for Koreans. As the president, he had a clear vision that advancement of education policies would, in the long term, contribute to the enhancement of national economy, which, eventually, would enable him to achieve the unification of Korea. In particular, Rhee emphasized his desire to see Korea reborn as a Christian country. The thesis concludes that Rhee strongly believed that the spirit of Christianity and modern education would spur the independence of Korea



Chapter 1. Introduction

Over the period of five thousand years of Korean history, foreign powers continually invaded Korean peninsula because of its geopolitically strategic location for international trade.¹ Surrounded by seawater on three of its sides, Korea struggled as a powerless pawn shuffled between Mongolia, China, Japan, and Russia.² And during the last dynasty of Korea, Joseon suffered the most from Japan.

For five hundred years, Kingdom of Joseon was small and tenuous with prevalent political, economic, and educational problems. First, Emperor Gojong of Korea was overly dependent on foreign powers, aside from China, such as United Kingdom, Germany, Holland, and the United States. Without them, Joseon lacked a capability to defend itself or maintain its sovereignty.³ Politically, Joseon was in its tumultuous time when China became the central power of East Asia, but, as Western countries exerted influence to China from late nineteenth century, China's predominance over Joseon decreased. Russia and Japan had preponderant interests in Korea after First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. During First Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War, Russia wanted to conquer Manchuria, or Korea, to secure a warm-water port by attrition and bribery.⁴ Japanese annexation of Korea made Joseon nearly impossible to achieve further development not only economically but also politically.

¹ Rhee, *The Spirit of Independence*, trans. Han-Kyo Kim, 44-5.

² *Ibid.*, 123-4

³ *Ibid.*, 123-4

⁴ *Ibid.*, 133

Japan's continued imperialism resulted in its full control over Joseon for 35 years, leaving Koreans suffer.



With multiple shifts in suzerainty, Koreans struggled with preserving their sovereignty, history, and language. Under Japanese rule, educational system was intended to fulfil the purposes of the colonial power. Doing so, Koreans were forced to give up their native language. Japanese wanted to eradicate their national spirit. Korean students were forbidden from speaking or writing in their mother tongue and were forced to adopt Japanese. Japanese language was used at schools, and curricula were distorted to sustain its rule. As a result, 78 percent of Koreans were illiterate of Hangul, Korean alphabet.⁵ Also, school enrollments, especially at higher levels, consisted of a disproportionate number of its students.⁶

In the middle of the two most turbulent centuries -- Joseon dynasty and Japanese colonialism -- the first president of Republic of Korea, Syngman Rhee (이승만; April 18, 1875 - July 19, 1965) played an important role in Korean history because he lived in a period when Korea was undergoing revolutionary changes.⁷ While the national spirit of Joseon was declining, Rhee devised Christian-nation building theory in order to construct a strong and independent Korean nation. While he was imprisoned because of his leading role as a nationalist leader between 1905 and 1948,⁸ he wrote a book called *The Spirit of Independence: A Primer of*

⁵ C. Sorensen, *Success and Education in South Korea*, 16

⁶ See Han Young Rim, "Development of Higher Education in Korea During the Japanese Occupation, 1010-1946.

⁷ Chong-Sik Lee, *The Prison Years of a Young Radical*, xvii

⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi

Korean Modernization and Reform (독립정신), he outlined his Christian-nation building theory, incorporating biblical values and principles in general education curriculum to awaken the traditional and nationalistic values of Joseon. The main purpose of his theory was to transform Korea into a Christian nation.⁹ As a beneficiary of modern education and a Christian, he believed that the foundation of every state was Christian belief and education of its youth.

1.1 Research Purpose

Today R.O.K. is renowned as a 10th strongest nation in the world, the second largest missionary sending country in the world, and strong education system remains as the world best. As a beneficiary of Christian education, Rhee understood that Christianity and education are the most effective ways to build strong regime like, America. Instead of joining in an independence army, as a pacifist, Rhee pursued and retained his political moves as non-violence. Rhee selected Christianity as his foreign relations strategy to move America. Particularly, he vigilantly awaited an opportunity to gain support from the U.S. church community for the educational reconstruction. During his presidency, he worked hard to develop the educational system of R.O.K. to prepare the next generation to accomplish the reunification of Korea in future. The White House aided the rebuilding of Korea by offering the U.S.- ROK alliance, which is a solid relationship purposed U.S. to aid dominant Christian ethics and educational assistants.

Majority of Koreans, however, remember Rhee as the one who provoked the civil war for his political favor in order to gain popularity to continue his presidency. After Rhee, another

⁹ Rhee, *The Spirit of Independence*, trans. Han-Kyo Kim, 133

beneficiary of free religion and free compulsory education must cast a new light on his contributions on Korean regime and the way he adopted a healthy Christian spirit embodying characteristics, and accomplish the unification of Korea he had dreamt, rather than just focus on the mistakes that he made. This research paper investigates and examines Rhee's political strategies and tools and discuss why Rhee deserves a lot more credit from the people of Korea through his phenomenal achievements.

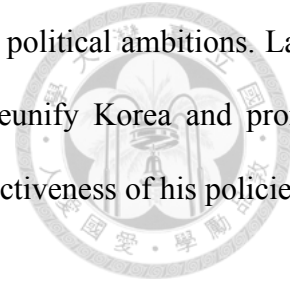
1.2 Explicit Research Questions

1. Was his Christian-nation building theory all about Christianity and education? And was it successful?
2. How did Rhee's Christian faith affect Korean education policy?
3. Was Rhee's education policy successful or not?

1.3 Methodology

This paper reviews documented data such as Syngman Rhee's diary and historical testimonies of his closest colleagues, then seeks to provide a fresh and accurate evaluation on him. In particular, this paper will examine the overseas academic journals published by Korean scholars to provide an objective evaluation. Such vivid historical testimonies of his closest colleagues and diplomatic document written from the third person point of view will set a point of agreement between the large differences in the historical evaluations of Rhee published in Korea and overseas. This paper will also look at the materials published by local and foreign

press, as well as books and journals published by Rhee to review his political ambitions. Lastly, this paper considers the historical context of Rhee's attempts to reunify Korea and promote nationalistic sentiments in order to understand the limitations and effectiveness of his policies.



1.4 Limitations

As this paper looks at reports released by both Korean and foreign press, it will be tackling completely different perspectives on Syngman Rhee, so individual sources may be biased. The evaluative reports from foreign press generally admired Rhee's political, economic, and social achievements as the founding father of the Republic of Korea. This paper assumes that Christianity became prevalent since Rhee's rule. His political motives has been controversial for more than 60 years after the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Japan Inside Out (The Spirit of Japanese Imperialism)



In the summer of 1941, Syngman Rhee warned the U.S. government on the possibility of the dissolution of U.S.-Japan alliance. In *Japan Inside Out*, Rhee warned that Japan would stab U.S. in the back by launching an airstrike.¹⁰ Rhee wanted to prevent Pacific War from breaking out between America and Japan because he was aware that it could ultimately affect U.S.'s foreign policy in East Asia. This insight came from Rhee's knowledge of world history and political science, and he was able to find historical evidence to support the fact that war psychology was the core value of Japanese Imperialism.¹¹

Japan knew long ago the value of mental power and has been busily engaged in training the nation's mind. Today she is far superior to any nation in the world, except Germany, in the development of a war psychology.¹²

Rhee knew that Japanese Empire wanted to become the ruler of Asia. Japanese people were talking about 'Japanese hegemony.' Occasionally, Japanese referred their country as 'Dai Dong Hap Bang,' meaning the United States of the Great East. While studying Japan, Rhee came across *Il Mi Chun Chang Mi Rai Ki (Japanese-American War in the Future)*, a book written by a Japanese naval officer. The author had an insight into the internal affairs of Japanese military. The book was describing a possible war between U.S and Japan in the future. As he researched the possibility of a war between the U.S. and Japan predicted in *Il Mi Chun Chang Mi*

¹⁰ Rhee, *Japan inside out*, 52

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 38-9

¹² *Ibid.*, 13

Rai Ki, Rhee discovered that Japanese believed they were the children of the Imperial Family of Japan, and Imperial Family came from heaven. Japanese people treated Imperial Family as they would worship a god, and the Imperial Family was considered the spiritual parents of all mankind. Japanese people believed that the League of Nation should agree to place Japan's Imperial Family as its leader. With strong faith and an "invincible" army and navy, they were determined to conquer the world.¹³

The Japan Advertiser printed the translation of an editorial in the Japanese vernacular newspaper *Niroku* on May 9, 1919:¹⁴ "To preserve the world's peace and promote the welfare of mankind is the mission of the Imperial Family of Japan. Heaven has invested in the Imperial Family with all the necessary qualifications to fulfill this mission. He who can fulfill this mission is one who is the object of Humanity's admiration and adoration, and holds the prerogative of administration forever."¹⁵

Rhee warned that Japan was already equipped with bombs, and wanted the *Pacific as their "back yard."* He alarmed Washington D.C. that Japan would never give up their quest to take over the world and emphasized Japanese traditional ambition for territorial expansion and their faith and loyalty to Imperial Family.¹⁶ As Japan adopted Western literature, philosophy, and weapons, Japan began its conquest to take over the world in their minds as the rising sun dawns on their islands.¹⁷ However, the U.S. government neither believed that Tokyo would ever declare war on them, nor did they want to believe that possibility because that would mean another war for them. Americans were not ready for another war, nor did they want the U.S. to be involved in

¹³ Rhee, *Japan inside out*, 14

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23

such complex and sensitive issues. American press did not report the possibility of war in fear of stirring up outrage amongst the public.¹⁸ Therefore, America turned a deaf ear in spite of Rhee's insistence. He pointed out the insensitive attitude of the White House in writing:

... public sentiment was so overwhelmingly pro-Japanese that no one would believe that these unfavorable statements about Japan could be true... Americans have been sleeping, while the totalitarian nations were preparing. If America insists on continuing with a false idea of peace, there will be no escape.¹⁹

In order to save democracy, the American people must face the world situation and act quickly, and co-operate with all the peoples of the world struggling to retain their liberty or to regain their lost freedom. The United States must take an active, leading part in all the great world issues which involve the peace and safety, not only of the Western Hemisphere, but of the world. There will be no peace and safety in the world so long as it remains half democratic and half totalitarian... The maintenance of democracy in the world depends upon how the American people act at this time.²⁰

Rhee was antagonistic about the fact that Japanese government seized the sovereignty of Joseon. Japanese government was not restricted in any way when it instigated aggressive acts toward Joseon. For Korean independence movement, Rhee wanted the U.S. government to support Koreans in their fight against Japan.

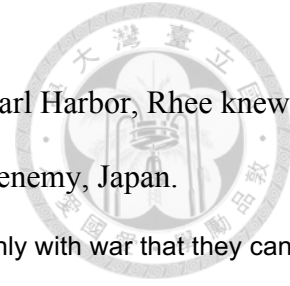
“Can you still believe the forest fire is far away? Can you still say, ‘Let the Koreans the Manchurians, and the Chinese fight their own fight; it is none of our business?’”²¹

¹⁸ Rhee, *Japan inside out*, 69, 81

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9, 13

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70

²¹ *Ibid.*, 10



In the morning of December 7th, 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Rhee knew that America would now support Korea because they now had a common enemy, Japan.

The Japanese army and navy want war because they believe it is only with war that they can achieve their purpose of becoming the dominant race in the Far East... To review the past is to preview the future. It should be borne in mind that when Japan was betraying her ally, Korea, by annexing her, in deliberate violation of her treaty covenants, she was not strong enough to go far in opposing the wishes of the United States and Great Britain. If these powers had stood firmly against her, she would never have gone so far as she did.²²

2.2 Nationalism and Religion

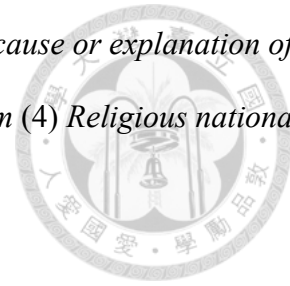
It is no surprise that there are often antithetical assertions about their relationship. For example, some say that nationalism is intrinsically secular, while others believe that it is intrinsically religious. Still, others state that nationalism had emerged from the decline of religion, whilst others believe instead that it had emerged in a period of intensified an analogous phenomenon.²³

Rogers Brubaker was an American sociologist who introduced highly selective study cases to study the relationship between religion and nationalism. He recently published his findings in *Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches* (2012). Rogers Brubaker's article studies the four logical categorizations of relations between religion and nationalism as follows: (1)

²² Rhee, *Japan inside out*, 70

²³ Rogers, *Religion and Nationalism*, 1

Religion and nationalism as analogous phenomena (2) *Religion as a cause or explanation of nationalism* (3) *Religion as imbricated or intertwined with nationalism* (4) *Religious nationalism as a distinctive kind of nationalism.*



This article is a compilation of literature to study the relationship between nationalism and religion. However, the author missed the case of Republic of Korea, which should have been studied earlier as it was the very first nation to be built upon Christian values. In the first section: *Religion and nationalism as analogous phenomena*, Brubaker says that characterizations of nationalism as a religion are such analogous phenomena. He adds that “Rather than characterize nationalism with terms drawn from the field of religion, as Hayes and to a certain extent Smith do - faith, reverence, liturgy, cult, God, salvation, scripture, sacred objects, and holy days - it may be useful to connect both phenomenon to more general social structures and processes.” (Brubaker 2012:3) He identifies that both religion and nationalism systems are formed within a given community and shares the same interests of political, economic or cultural values. The second section was *Religion as a cause or explanation of nationalism*, where the author tries to explain why religion is a cause of nationalism using Benedict Anderson’s reflection. According to Anderson, the cultural root of nationalism was an explanation to ‘print-capitalism’. This was when the publishers of religious tracts and other materials sought wider markets and assembled varied idiolects into smaller numbers of increasingly standardized ‘print languages’, which was later secularly and widely used in politics and nationalism.

Brubaker looks at how religion and nationalism are intertwined in the third approach:

Religion as imbricated or intertwined with nationalism. Firstly, Jewish nationalism and Sikh nationalism prove that in some circumstances, a particular religion can be the primary boundary of national identification. The second way in which they are intertwined is that religion does not necessarily define the boundaries of the nation, but it supplies myths, metaphors, and symbols that are central to the discursive or iconic representation of the nation. In the fourth approach: *Religious nationalism as a distinctive kind of nationalism*; he did not discuss only the parallels between nationalism and religion. Rather, Brubaker supported Friedland's argument by saying that “religion is a totalizing order capable of regulating every aspect of life,” although Friedland acknowledged that this was less true of Christianity, given its origins as a stateless faith.

In the second approach from Rogers Brubaker's *Religion and Nationalism, Religion as a cause or explanation of nationalism*, he explains one of the factors that affect the origins and development of nationalism. He suggests that the influence of the Protestant Reformation on nationalism was (1) constructing ‘social and political relationships’ (2) promoting and fostering literacy and (3) ‘bringing polity and culture’ into nationalism, more specifically, in politics. He says Christianity does not encompass a unified language like Islam does, but it has an important core value called Confessionalization. He adds that “Confessionalization substantially tightened the relation between political organizations, religious belief and practice. This provided a model the congruence between culture and policy to happen that is at the core of nationalism.” (Brubaker 2012:9) This argument is valid in the case of Korea. In contrast to Anderson's ‘print-capitalism,’ Rhee used such mass literacy for religious purposes to strengthen nationalism and bringing polity and culture into his new Korean government.

At the decline of Shamanism and the Joseon Empire, nationalism began to increase in Korean peninsula. The rise of nationalism in Korea was a movement of national spiritual mobilization. It was an administrative, political, and fiscal reformation of the nation. Joseon was a small, weak state, which had lost its sovereign independence in the stormy waters of international politics. But at the forefront of this dynamic reformation of modern Korean politics, economy, and history, there was Syngman Rhee (이승만; April 18, 1875 - July 19, 1965). Rhee was a passionate nationalist who wished to awaken his fellow compatriots to accept and support modernization and nation-building based on Western models.²⁴ He selected America and its predominant religion of Christianity as the role model of the R.O.K.²⁵

After years of studying the Bible, he realized that the honest and faithful characteristics of Americans stemmed from their Christian faith. Compared to American people, the people of Joseon were significantly less motivated and lazy.²⁶ Thus, he created the Christian nation-building theory, which emphasized the need for Joseon being reborn as a Christian country.

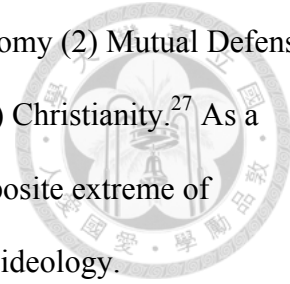
In the fourth approach: *Religious nationalism as a distinctive kind of nationalism*; Brubaker studies Friedland's acknowledgment that 'stateless faith is the origins of Christianity.' This approach is not necessarily true for Korea. Rhee accepted Christian faith in order to make Korea a powerful state. This helped Korea achieve independence from Japanese Imperialism and the Korean Unification during his presidency, which completely contrasted to Friedland's idea.

²⁴ Rhee and Kim, *The Spirit of Independence*, 274-5

²⁵ Rhee, *Hanguk gyohoe pipbak*, 173-81

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 141-43

Rhee's vision of an ideal Korea was characterized by (1) market economy (2) Mutual Defense Treaty Between the R.O.K. and the U.S. (3) liberal democracy and (4) Christianity.²⁷ As a footnote, he accepted anti-communism since communism was the opposite extreme of Christianity, and market economy, which was the closest to Christian ideology.



²⁷ Rhee and Kim, *The Spirit of Independence*, 240-44

Chapter 3. Rhee and His Political Career



3.1 His Early Life

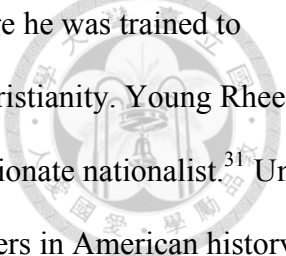
Syngman Rhee was born on March 26th, 1875, to a modest family in the province of Hwanghae (황해). He was the son of Rhee Kyong-sun (이경선), whose lineage could be traced back to Prince Hyoryeong, the second son of the third king of Joseon dynasty, King Taejong (June 13, 1367-May 30, 1422),²⁸ but his family were considered impoverished aristocratic (양반, *yangban*) by birthright from his father's generation.

His family was devoted to Buddhism, and he received a traditional Confucian education. Under the Confucian educational institution, he studied texts that were popular in that era; the Thousand Character Classic (千字文), Chinese classics, and Confucian classics. He studied passionately in order to rebuild his family's reputation, even taking the traditional civil service examination in hopes of becoming an official. However, he failed repeatedly. He eventually entered a Methodist school named Paichai School (or *Paichai Hackdang*; 배재학당).²⁹ He cut off his long hair as a symbolic gesture to declare his acceptance of the Western ways, and he mastered English within a short period of time. Surprisingly, he was able to start teaching English within six months.³⁰

²⁸ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 19

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 28-9

³⁰ Rhee and Kim, *The Spirit of Independence*, 1



Paichai Hackdang was more than a school to Rhee; it was where he was trained to become the future leader of Joseon and rebuild the nation based on Christianity. Young Rhee adopted such advanced Western values and notions and became a passionate nationalist.³¹ Under the influence of his teachers from Paichai, he read about the great leaders in American history like America's founding father George Washington (February 22, 1732 - December 14, 1799) and the well-known faithful Christian president, Abraham Lincoln (February 12, 1809 - April 15, 1865). He started to believe that Joseon needed to adopt democracy under the leadership of a powerful and sincere leader like George Washington or Abraham Lincoln.

Rhee never imagined himself becoming a Christian. When he first entered Paichai, he promised himself that he would never give up his mother's religion, Buddhism. In his autobiography, Rhee described his first experience in the mandatory chapel: "I chose one of the seats in the back row and curiously scrutinized everything in the room. A tall gentleman on the platform [Mr. Appenzeller] was speaking to the audience in Korean, which was more or less unintelligible to me. Of course, I did not attempt to listen to him, and if I listened to anything at all, it was in order to criticize it or to argue against it. The strange thing that struck me the most, however, was the question of how a man who died about nineteen hundred years ago could save my soul. *'How is it possible,'* I said to myself, *'that the people who are doing all these marvelous things, from I understand, really believe in such a foolish doctrine as this?'*" However, his five years and seven months in jail totally changed his mind and decided to adopt the Christian faith.

³¹ Rhee and Kim, *The Spirit of Independence*, 32-33

3.2 Transition from a Prisoner to an Independentist



After Syngman Rhee graduated from Paichai, Syngman and his friends continued on discussing the complex internal problems of Joseon that ranged from social welfare to economy in a public debate called People's Assembly.³² Emperor Gojong's officials joined the debate and heard Syngman giving a speech about the faults of the Emperor, mostly the issues of the toadyism and the collapsed political power of Joseon. The Emperor felt that this young Democrat threatened his regal power and declared Rhee to be a radical activist and national traitor.³³ On January 9, 1899, he was arrested.

In co-operation with many patriotic leaders, we succeeded in arousing a sufficient number of people to join with us in inaugurating a national defense program. Unfortunately for Korea, the government was unable to understand the situation and tried to suppress the nationalist movement... I soon found myself, together with many others, landed in jail, where I spent nearly seven years.³⁴

He was sentenced to 7-year imprisonment for attempting an impeachment propaganda against the Emperor. A week later, he attempted to escape from prison, only to be recaptured within hours and sentenced to a harsher penalty of life imprisonment. It began with months of torture, leaving permanent scars on his body. In his autobiography, he described his daily indignities in a statement: 'For seven months I wore around my neck the cangue, a wooden collar weighing about 20 pounds, and to add to my agony, I sat with my feet locked together and both

³² Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 40-41

³³ *Ibid.*, 41

³⁴ Rhee, *Japan Inside Out*, 8

hands handcuffed.³⁵ His time in prison helped him to shape his view of ego, state, and world in Christianity faith. Despite the heavy cangue (a kind of pillory worn about the neck) and manacles on his hands and feet, he managed to read and study a large number of books that his American friends, including foreign missionaries, were able to smuggle a large number of books into the prison to continue on his studying.³⁶ In order to ensure Syngman Rhee's safety, American missionaries considered sending him to America. One of the Presbyterian pastors, Lewis T. Hamlin helped Rhee to transfer to George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

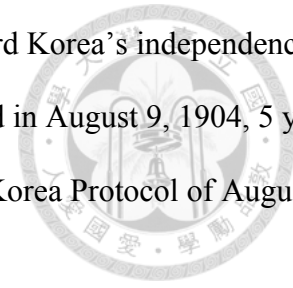
As their last resort, Emperor Gojong and his officials turned to America for intervention for preserving Korea's sovereignty. Based on the United States–Korea Treaty of 1882 (or *A Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation*; 조·미수호통상조약), Gojong expected American government to intervene in Japanese invasion. The treaty established mutual friendship and assistance in the case of attacks, and also addressed specific matters such as extraterritorial rights for American citizens in Korea, giving them significant trade privileges.³⁷ To successfully establish such relations with the Americans, Gojong needed a person who could speak perfect English and possessed a profound knowledge of international affairs. Two faithful subjects of Gojong, Min Young-hwan (민영환; Aug 07, 1861 - Nov 30, 1905) the minister of the Korean Empire and Han Kyu-seol (한규설; 1856-1930), were well aware of Rhee's fluency in English and his intelligence. Min and Han decided to ask Rhee for help just as he was about to leave for America. They convinced Gojong to release Rhee and send him on a secret mission as

³⁵ Ho Lee, *Hanim-ui Gijeog Daehanmingug Geongug I*, 47

³⁶ Rhee and Kim, *The Spirit of Independence*, 2

³⁷ Haswell, *Treaties and conventions concluded between the United States of America since July 4, 1776*, 216.

the King's emissary, to seek the favor of the United States to safeguard Korea's independence, at a peace conference to end the Russo-Japanese War.³⁸ He was released in August 9, 1904, 5 years and 7 months after his initial imprisonment -- it was after the Japan–Korea Protocol of August 1904 was signed.



It was in early November of 1904 when Rhee (at the age of 29 years old) fled to America to make an appeal for Korea's Independence to the 26th U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt (October 27, 1858–January 6, 1919) and the Secretary of State John Milton Hay (October 8, 1838 – July 1, 1905).³⁹ President Roosevelt's commitment to peace and freedom was exceptionally demonstrated during the negotiations.⁴⁰ By reminding Roosevelt of the United States–Korea Treaty, Rhee earnestly asked him for U.S. support to recover the monarch's dignity and autonomy from Japanese Imperialism. But the Treaty of Portsmouth had already been signed in August, so it was impossible for Rhee to attain the American aid that Korean Empire had wished for.⁴¹ Roosevelt had already made his mind to support Japan's colonial rule of Asian countries, including Joseon⁴² in hopes of creating a firm and vigilant democratic state that could fight against the Communist expansion of Russia and China.⁴³

With the denial of President Roosevelt and the fact that Americans were not aware of the grave extent to which the Japanese invasion had infringed the sovereignty of Joseon, Rhee

³⁸ Rhee and Kim, *The Spirit of Independence*, 2

³⁹ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 54-56

⁴⁰ Theodore Roosevelt was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution in the Portsmouth Peace Conference, which held negotiations from August 6 to August 30 at the Portsmouth City, Maine, in the United States.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 54-6

⁴² "1905 when President Theodore Roosevelt secretly made an agreement with Count Katsura and sold Korea to Japan, in an open violation of the treaty agreement." (Rhee 2015: 293-4)

⁴³ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 55

struggled with finding ways that he could continue Korean Independence Movement in America for a long time. Furthermore, because of pro-Japanese policy, even the prominent American politicians who knew about the violence under Japanese rule could do nothing for Korea. Through his Independence Movement in America (1904-1945), he learned that Koreans needed to build their own power in order to achieve sovereignty of their own country.

3.3 Christian Spirit in the Provisional Government of the ROK

During Japanese Occupation of Korea (1910–1945), Syngman Rhee was invited to be the first president of the Provincial Government of Korea in Exile in Shanghai, China.⁴⁴ The government was formed on April 13, 1919, and Rhee served for six years until 1925. The government's motto was "Long Live Korean Independence!" (대한독립만세!). Since it was a government-in-exile outside Japanese rule, the allied nations who had signed a peace treaty with Japan did not recognize Rhee's government as a formal governing body.

On the surface, there was nothing unusual about Korean government besides the fact that it was a government-in-exile. However, the constitution and the lyrics of the national anthem (Aegukga; 애국가) have unique Christian spirit embedded by Syngman Rhee and his Christian leadership like Howard Leigh (이중혁), Sang-jae Yi (이상재), and Kuk-son An (안국선). Including Rhee, seventy percent of the Korean activists and the key members who founded Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea were also devoted pastors, elders, and deacons

⁴⁴ *Shanghai was the capital-in-exile in China (1919-1932), but was later moved to Chongqing (1940-1945).*

of Korean church community. A substantial portion of the funds that had been collected from Koreans in Hawaii and elsewhere in the United States was funneled to China.⁴⁵ One source estimates that over \$200,000 had been contributed by approximately 7,000 Koreans in the United States and Mexico for patriotic causes at this time, or roughly 30 dollars per person, one month's income.⁴⁶

The Provisional Constitution of the Korean Government in Exile was established:

[Provisional Constitution of the Korean Government in Exile]

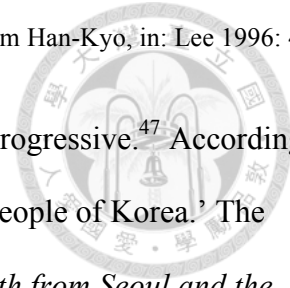
By the will of God, the people of Korea, both from Seoul and the provinces, have united in a peaceful declaration of the independence of the Korean capital, and for over a month have carried on their demonstrations in over three hundred districts. A provisional government, organized in complete accord with popular faith, proclaims a provisional constitution that the provisional council of state has adopted in order to pass on to our posterity the blessings of sovereign independence,

PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION OF THE KOREAN REPUBLIC

1. The Korean Republic shall be a democratic republic.
2. A provisional government shall govern the Korean Republic in accordance with the decision of a provisional legislative council (imsi Üijöngwön).
3. There shall be no class distinction among the citizens of the Korean Republic, and men and women, noble and common, rich and poor, shall have complete equality.
4. The citizens of the Korean Republic shall have personal and property rights including the freedoms of faith, speech, writing, publishing, association, assembly, and dwelling.
5. A citizen of the Korean Republic, unless disfranchised, shall have the right to vote or to be elected.
6. The citizens of the Korean Republic shall be subject to compulsory education, taxation, and military conscription.
7. The Korean Republic shall join the League of Nations in order to demonstrate to the world that its creation has been in accord with the will of God and also to make a contribution to world civilization and peace.

⁴⁵ Kim, *The Korean Independence Movement in the United States*, 5.

⁴⁶ Choy, *Koreans in America*, 158



The Provisional Constitution was essentially democratic and progressive.⁴⁷ According to the Constitution, the government existed due to 'will of God and the people of Korea.' The constitution begins with: *“By the will of God, the people of Korea, both from Seoul and the provinces, have united in a peaceful declaration of their independence in the Korean capital...”* According to Chapter 7, it was also by the will of God and in order to make allegiance for the world peace that the Korean government decided to join the League of Nations.

In April 22, 1919, the National Council of the Korean Government in Exile issued a statement to inform the world of the aim and purpose of this government. In this statement, once again, the founders of the government in exile mentioned that the Korean Government in Exile existed based on “the will of God,”

The world knows that Japan has violated the sworn treaties of the past and is robbing us of the right of existence. We, however, are not discussing the wrongs done us by the Japanese in the past, nor considering their accumulated sins; but, in order to guarantee our rights of existence, extend liberty and equality, safeguard righteousness and humanity, maintain the peace of the Orient, and respect the equitable welfare of the whole world, do claim the independence of Korea. This is truly the will of God, motivation of truth, just claim, and legitimate action. By this the world's verdict is to be won, and the repentance of Japan hastened.

The present Republic of Korea's Constitution of 1948, with Amendments from 1987,

⁴⁷ See McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, 305

says “*upholding the cause of the Provisional Republic of Korea Government born during the March First Independence Movement of 1919.*” Even the latest version of Korean national anthem, Aegukka (애국가) was influenced by Christian faith.



[Verse 1]

Until that day when Mt. Baekdu is worn away and the East Sea's waters run dry,
May God preserve our country, our long-living homeland!

Such use of words signifies that the members of the first National Assembly agreed that the Christian spirit of the founding members was fundamental in developing the Provisional Government. Here is the Preamble of the Constitution of R.O.K:

We the people of Korea, proud of a resplendent history and traditions dating from time immemorial, upholding the cause of the Provisional Republic of Korea Government born of the March First Independence Movement of 1919 and the democratic ideals of the April Nineteenth Uprising of 1960 against injustice, having assumed the mission of democratic reform and peaceful unification of our homeland and having determined to consolidate national unity with justice, humanitarianism and brotherly love...

3.4 Rhee as the First President of R.O.K.

Elected as a congressperson on May 10th, 1948, Rhee was appointed as the temporary chairperson of the opening ceremony of the Constitutional Assembly held on May 31st, 1948. Then, at such historical moment of Korean history, for the very first opening of constitutional assembly, Rhee requested Rev. Yun-young Lee to pray for the ceremony by the statement below.

On the podium, Rev. Lee recited a prayer, which is also recorded in the Republic of Korea's very first Congress stenographic records,

Today, we should be grateful to have been able to hold the very first Independent Democracy of Korea conference right here. Religion, ideology, whatever one may have, we certainly cannot boast that this was just the feat of men and therefore, it is only right to thank our lord.

As we take the very first step of history, thank you and may all glory be with you Lord for all our excitement and overwhelming cultural joy. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray, Amen.⁴⁸

In the conference followed by the prayer, Rhee received 188 votes out of 198 and was elected as the chairperson. Upon being elected, he said the following, highlighting the importance of being grateful to the God's graciousness.

The reasons of our existence today are God's graciousness firstly, sacrifices of our patriotic predecessors secondly, and last but not least the support from our allied nations such as America and Soviet Union. We can never thank them enough.⁴⁹

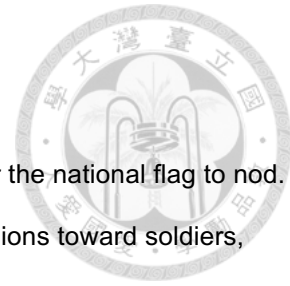
On the 24th of September, after two months, having emerged victorious with an overwhelming number of votes of 180 for the Presidential election held by the congress, Rhee took an oath in the name of God during the President and Vice-president inauguration ceremony, which took place soon after. Then, on the 15th of October, during the ceremony for the establishment of a governmental system of Republic of Korea, he recited, "In front of God and my fellow compatriots I solemnly swear that I will devote myself even further to fulfill my duties."

⁴⁸ *CNA Minutes No. 22* (31 May 1948)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*


In order to promote Christianity, he took following six steps:

1. The nation's main spirit was established upon Christian values.
2. Turned Christmas into a national holiday and changed the salute for the national flag to nod.
3. By introducing Chaplain system, opened the doors of Christian missions toward soldiers, students, patients, and prisoners.
4. Appointed many Christians for official positions in government and encouraged Christians to work for National Assembly. (Approximately 40 % of governmental posts ; approximately 25 % of National Assembly members were Christians.)
5. Supported the establishment of Christian newspapers and broadcasting stations, the establishment of Christian schools, seminaries, and activities of YMCA.
6. Provided preferential treatment to Christian missionaries in Korea. During and after Korean War, the government distributed donations and relief supplies from foreign countries (especially the United States) to individual churches, Korean pastors, and seminaries through the Christian Council of Korea.



3.5 Rhee for the White House

During the time Rhee represented Korean Independency in United States, he did not get along with fellow American counterparts. Not all of the U.S. decision makers supported him in spite of his positive impression. When they found out that Koreans wanted to nominate Rhee as their president, the State Department refused to issue his passport and approve his exit permit, preventing him from returning to Korea. Only when the commander of the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK), General John Reed Hodge urgently requested Rhee come back to deal the pending Korean issue, Rhee was able to leave the U.S.



From the day Rhee landed in Korea, he became the target of an assassination plot of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).⁵⁰ America's dislike for him intensified during Korean War. He did not want the U.N. force to continue with the ceasefire. He believed that South Korea should have the right to choose its own fate. Rhee took an independent action and moved forward to North without the UN's permission. When Rhee's troops continued to move north, the U.S. thought that it was necessary to have a contingency plan against Rhee. As a result, Americans planned to remove Rhee from his presidency.

On May 4th, Maxwell Davenport Taylor (Aug 26, 1901 - Apr 19, 1987), the commander of the Eighth United States Army, planned an operation to detain the civic leaders and build an interim government under UN-supervision. This operation was named Operation Plan Everready. It was an operation conducted in profound secrecy, as instructed by the U.S. Government. General Clark, who was behind this operation, had planned the assassination of the obstinate President Syngman Rhee. He wanted to establish a new provisional government in Korea.

VI. April 26–June 8, 1953: Progress at Panmunjom and the offer to negotiate a mutual security pact with the Republic of Korea:

- Communist and UNC Proposals at Panmunjom
- Rhee's Desire for a Mutual Security Pact and his Opposition to an Armistice
- NSC consideration of NSC 147
- Dulles–Nehru Discussions on Korea
- The FINAL UNC Proposal
- Consideration of Operation Plan EVERREADY

⁵⁰ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 217

- Decision not to Implement EVERREADY in Favor of a Mutual Security Pact
- Agreement on the Pow Question at Panmunjom



[United States Department of State / Foreign relations of the United States, 1952-1954. Korea (1952-1954)]

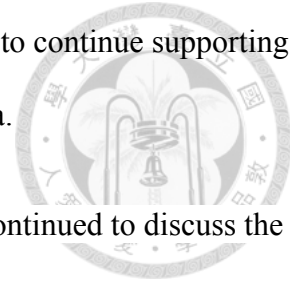
The United Nations, under the command of the White House attempted to support Chang Myon, Cho Pyong-ok, and Shin Ik-hui to lead a military coup d'état against Rhee. Chang Myon (장면; August 28, 1899 - June 4, 1966) was an ambassador of the United States and was the most popular South Korean politician among American politicians.⁵¹ Chang was a modernist with a fluency in English. “Chang Myon’s winning the election held by the National Assembly is probably our best hope,” said by the White House. (FRUS 1952-1954)

Rhee then challenged his opponents in the U.S. mission by ordering his Army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Lee Chong-chan, to remove two divisions from the Eighth Army operational control to enforce Martial Law under the military police... American diplomats then encouraged General Lee--who was an ally to Chang Myon, Cho Pyong-ok and Shin Ik-hui--to consider a coup. Not pleased with the possibility of the South Korean army fighting some of its own units, Van Fleet had his staff draft Operation Plan Everready, a set of contingency plans that assumed a second civil war between Rhee’s royalists and opponents. American diplomats wanted the plan to include removing Rhee, something neither the Truman administration nor United Nations Command was ready to risk.

The Operation Plan Eveready was not successful because the U.S. government failed to find a capable leader next to Rhee. The political capability of Chang Myon, Pyong-ok Cho (조병옥), and Ik-hui Shin (신익희) was rather dim compared with that of Rhee. As Rhee had the

⁵¹ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 213-8

strong support of the Korean people, the U.S. had no other option but to continue supporting Rhee and his plans. They could not risk offending the people of Korea.



After the outbreak of Korean War, the UN and Communists continued to discuss the war armistice agreement that lasted for a long time with the most complicated issue being the exchange of 35,400 Korean and Chinese anti-communist war prisoners.⁵² Next to it was the signing of the R.O.K.-U.S. Mutual Defense Pact. The two sides heavily debated whether to release the prisoners to where they were originally from, or where they wished to go. In June 1953, the U.S. and Soviet Union decided to send prisoners back to their country -- President Rhee was not even allowed to be a part of the truce negotiations because they were afraid that he would instead prolong the war in the name of reunification.⁵³

Under the instructions of General Francis Townsend Dodd (October 5, 1899 – 5 March 1973), the anti-communist war prisoners were sent to cities like Busan, Gwangju, Masan, and Daegu. Those war prisoners had organized a group named ‘Korean Young Men's Anti-Communism Association.’ They had written letters and sent dozens of letters to South Korean government and the United Nations Command. Rhee contended that the anti-communist prisoners must be repatriated to R.O.K. all at once. On June 18th, 1953, Rhee commanded his army to compromise the U.S. soldiers and release all the POWs. In total, 27,000 men were rescued. It was Rhee’s decision to act alone, and the decision was against the Agreed Framework between the U.S. and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. There were two specific

⁵² Lee, *God's Miracle, the Establishment of the Republic of Korea II*, 100-1

⁵³ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 208-13

reasons why Rhee had broken the truce.⁵⁴ Firstly, the identities of those prisoners had already been exposed to the North. It was certain that death was waiting for them. Those POWs (Prisoners of War) in the North would be sentenced to death and killed brutally by using hammers. Rhee argued that sending prisoners to return to communism was an act of murder. Also, North Koreans would force POWs to remain detained in North and make them serve in their army.

Dwight D. Eisenhower remembered that night as he penned down his thoughts in his book, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change*; “On the 17th of June, Rhee sent me a letter... This ink on this letter was barely dry when a bombshell exploded.” Rhee firmly believed that his decision was necessary in order to save his fellow countrymen that only history can judge him.⁵⁵ Francesca D. Rhee, Rhee’s wife, recorded which aspect of Rhee’s mindset led to such actions in her memoirs.

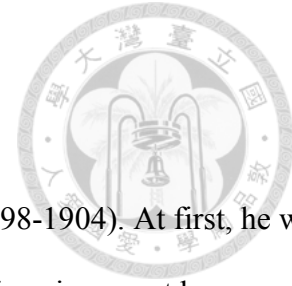
Some of the pro-Japanese politicians within the allied forces who had never known the sadness of a nation that has lost its country or been on the receiving end of contemptuous treatment at the hands of others, had once mocked Present Rhee for being ‘an old kook crazy about independence.’ I have heard that there are still some leaders of the allied nations that refer to the President as a ‘unification nut’ or ‘Sickman Rhee.’ I cannot but be pained at the thought that the Korean policy of these allied nations is being handled by such people. However, we have no choice but to deal with them wisely. The President has pledged that we will achieve unification regardless of any hardships or sacrifices we may encounter.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Lee, *God’s Miracle, the Establishment of the Republic of Korea II*, 103-8

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-8

⁵⁶ Donner Rhee, *The Korean War and Syngman Rhee: Francesca’s War Diary*, 424

Chapter 4. Rhee's Christian Faith



4.1 Rhee Converts to Christianity

Syngman was imprisoned for five years and seven months (1898-1904). At first, he was sentenced to death, but, upon retrial, his sentence was reduced to life imprisonment because American missionaries constantly petitioned the Joseon government on his behalf.⁵⁷ He was sent to the most notorious prison in Joseon called Hanseong prison infamous for imposing excessively harsh punishment. Within a few weeks, he attempted to escape, but was recaptured within hours and sentenced to an even harsher penalty. His life term then began with months of torture, leaving permanent scars on his body. During interrogation, he was brutally tortured using thirteen different techniques including a cangue (a kind of pillory worn around the neck) and manacles on his hands and feet. In his autobiography, he briefly described the daily indignities of his imprisonment, “For seven months I wore around my neck the cangue, a wooden collar weighing about 20 pounds, and to add to my agony, I sat with my feet locked in the stocks and both hands handcuffed.”⁵⁸

In order to endure the hardships of prison, he focused on reading. The foreign missionaries who had already recognized enormous potential of Rhee as a future leader of Korea smuggled in a large number of books so that he could continue to study even in jail. New Testament was one of the books that he read over and over. As he continued to read the Bible, he felt consoled by suffering of Jesus Christ. It was a kind of spiritual dynamism he had never

⁵⁷ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 45

⁵⁸ Lee, *Syngman Rhee*, 10

experienced prior to the degrading prison conditions. He confessed in his book that God was helping him endure his hard time in jail.

It is a religion which emanates from the thoughts of men and which plays a decisive role in forming their mindset. The religion of Anglo-Saxons, Christianity, boasts a teaching system that places great value on the struggle for freedom. Unlike the traditional religions of Joseon, and in particular Confucianism, Christianity is rooted in the principle that all men are equal under God, and reveals how men can become truly free by doing away with evil customs, foolish habits, and sin. The Confucian teaching system is based on the belief that a king should rule the state in a virtuous manner. Meanwhile, the people have no choice but to wait for providence in cases where the ruler rules in a manner that is devoid of virtue.⁵⁹

Presumably in the late January of 1899, Rhee converted to Christianity. His religious rebirth seems to have given him more than just a spiritual comfort, for the incarcerated reformer took on a new sense of mission with remarkable zeal.⁶⁰ As he wrote later in an unpublished autobiography, he remembered a sentence from a sermon he had heard in Pai Chai chapel: “If you repent your sins, God will forgive you even now.”⁶¹ In a moment of clarity, he prayed, “Oh God, save my country and save my soul.”⁶² He was to proclaim later in life, “I can never forget how thankful I was in that prison and I shall ever remain thankful for all the blessings which I received during the six and a years of my imprisonment.”⁶³ It is not surprising that he and the other Christian converts among cellmates chose to call Hansong Prison a “house of blessing.”⁶⁴ Consequently, Christianity became a foundation of concrete and powerful foundation and a true

⁵⁹ Rhee, *Persecution of the Korean church*, 78

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Lew, *The Making of the First Korean President*, 13

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 17

religion to Rhee. He understood and was rooted in the ‘change of heart’ and in the practice of ‘neighborly love’ that was made possible by this ‘change of heart.’⁶⁵

Those people who study the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, unconsciously begin to develop revolutionary thought. This is because the Bible teaches the truth and the truth is what sets a person’s mind free.⁶⁶

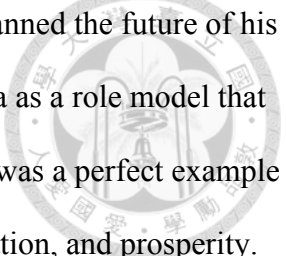
Including Rhee, most of the prisoners in Hanseong prison were pro-Western patriots. They were considered the most vicious national felons, since they supported the revolutionary mass movement against the regent Gojong and his conservative government. Rhee conducted a patriotic club and Bible classes to preach gospel to prisoners and officials in jail. All in all, Rhee’s considerable efforts converted some forty prison officials and educated inmates of the *yang-ban* class, including Yi Sang-jae (이상재; 1850-1929), Yu Song-jun (유성준; 1860-1934), and Kim Chong-sik (김종식; 1862-1937) -- an unprecedented feat in the history of Protestant proselytism in Korea until that time.⁶⁷ The vice-chief of the prison named Jungjin Lee (이중진; 1855-1918) was one of the converters, and he later became one of the supporters of Rhee’s national movement. He paid Rhee’s traveling expenses to America. Jungjin’s younger brother, Howard Leigh (이중혁), who greatly supported Rhee’s Korean independence movement in America also accompanied Rhee to the U.S. to support his Korean independence movement.

4.2 Theory of Christian-Nation Building

⁶⁵ Lee, *Syngman Rhee’s Vision and Reality*, 35

⁶⁶ Rhee, *Persecution of the Korean church*, 78

⁶⁷ Lew, *The Making of the First Korean President*, 14



Even under his life sentence, he dreamed of free Joseon and planned the future of his nation by studying other developed countries. He had selected America as a role model that Joseon should follow.⁶⁸ In prison, he concluded that the United States was a perfect example of a country that was part of the wave of great Christian revival, modernization, and prosperity. While he indicated the problem of Neo-Confucianism in the Joseon Dynasty, he pointed out how the stronghold of Christianity, America, had established the forward march of civilization by accepting the Christian faith.

Unlike the traditional religions of Joseon, and in particular Confucianism, Christianity is rooted in the principle that all men are equal under God, and reveals how men can become truly free by doing away with evil customs, foolish habits, and sin.⁶⁹

In order to encourage Koreans to accept Christianity and the open-door policy, at the age of 24, Syngman concentrated on writing his first book entitled “*The Spirit of Independence*” (Tongnip chongsin; 독립정신), in the context of Christianity and nationalism. Rhee passionately stressed that Korea’s salvation lied in Christianity as the foundation for a new Korea -- he named it Theory of Christian-Nation Building.⁷⁰ Like the U.S., Rhee believed that Christian faith could transform Korea into a strong and civilized country too. He wanted to learn and adopt the Christian principles, which had deeply taken place as the foundation of American society.

Those civilizations of the world who adopted Christianity as the foundation of their societies have seen a high level of morality be achieved even amongst their common classes. Our country is currently trying to rise up from its ashes and to sprout buds from rotten soil. However, even if we

⁶⁸ The United States of America had established the fundamental basis of the country in the form of the separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and a constitutional government, was a good example for other states to follow. (Lee 2011:36)

⁶⁹ Rhee, *Persecution of the Korean church*, 178

⁷⁰ Rhee, *The Spirit of Independence*, 274-5

interact with the entire world, we will never be able to achieve such goals if we do not adopt Christianity as the foundation of our society. As such, we should accept Christianity as the foundation for everything, and seek to become persons who work for others, rather than ourselves, and who strive to promote the common good of our country. We should do our best to raise our country to the level of the United States and Great Britain. (Rhee [1904] 1993:199)

Rhee wanted to learn the practice of Christian principles by observing American churches. He saw that Christian faith made people diligent, honorable, and relaxed in an expansive mood -- unlike the populous of Joseon at the time.⁷¹ He also noticed that American government was responsible and sincerely serving its own people, which was very different from the Emperor of Joseon.⁷² According to the Bible, laziness is a temptation for man and is considered sin. It also teaches that God could redeem not only men's souls, but also their daily lives from laziness. God ordained work for man to provide for his own family's needs through his labors -- "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Ephesians 4:28; *KJV*)⁷³ The Bible also warned people to avoid idleness, which could lead to poverty -- "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So, shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man." (Proverbs 24:33-34, *KJV*)⁷⁴ Even Jesus was a carpenter before he began his ministry. He said, "My Father is always working, and so am I" (John 5:17).

⁷¹ Rhee, *Persecution of the Korean Church*, 150-4

⁷² *Ibid.*, 147-9

⁷³ All Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, King James version unless otherwise noted, Brown Books Publishing, 2004.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

4.3 The Persecution of Christians in Korea



From 1910, as Japan formally annexed the Empire of Joseon, Japanese government began to threaten the sovereignty of Korea. While Korea was struggling for its existence, Korean Churches carried out an independence movement against Japanese coercion.⁷⁵ At that time, less than two percent of Korean population was Christian, an estimated 200,000 Christians out of thirteen million Koreans.⁷⁶ Although Christians were a minority, they built an extensive network for the independence movement. Also, missionaries like Homer Bezaleel Hulbert (January 26, 1863 – August 5, 1949), Henry Gerhard Appenzeller (February 6, 1858 – June 11, 1902), and George Heber Jones (14 August 1867 – 11 May 1919) impassionately supported and demonstrated the independence movement. With the aid of the missionaries, a wide network of insurgency developed across Korea with churches and Korean pastors as the centerpiece of the movement.⁷⁷ They also condemned Japanese rule over Korea by stoking the flames of patriotism among the youths -- particularly, they provided nationalistic education to Korean students in mission schools. Their influence alarmed the Japanese who were aware of the potential damage to their rule over Korea with the masses ready to strike on command.⁷⁸

As part of Japan's effort to contain Joseon, Japanese government seized missionaries and Korean church leaders. In spite of such acts of political discrimination and religious persecution imposed by Japanese government, the faith of Korean Christians continued to grow.⁷⁹ Historian

⁷⁵ Rhee, *Persecution of the Korean Church*, 201-3

⁷⁶ Yu, *American Missionaries and the Korean Independence Movement in the Early 20th Century*, 180

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 183

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 176

⁷⁹ Rhee, *Persecution of the Korean Church*, 215

Donald Clark in *Christianity in Modern Korea* writes:



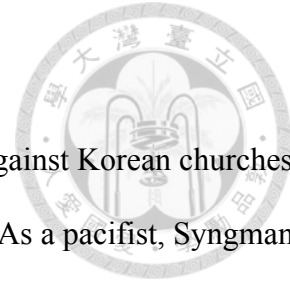
Whereas Christian missions and churches in other colonies were seen as part of the imperialist presence, in Korea the church was associated with a new nationalism. Christian leaders were prominent in societies organized to awaken Korean resistance to colonization. The church itself was seen by many as a refuge from Japanese rule. Its organization and networks posed political problems for the Japanese. Foreign missionaries wrote letters home with frank reports about Japanese oppression. They also taught about freedom and democracy. Thus, from the start, the Japanese were apprehensive about Christianity in Korea. They set out to neutralize the church and to co-opt the missionaries.

In Korea, unlike Japan, Christianity became the vehicle for preservation of national hopes in reaction against Japanese domination. Here was a situation where the Christian missions were independent of the colonizing power. The church was associated with a new nationalism. Hence, in Korea the fundamental conflict between the claims of Japanese Shinto nationalism and Christianity were naturally more serious than in Japan.

Through the ideals of Christianity, Japan's management of Korea was constantly impeded.

The religion the missionary preaches is diametrically opposed to the Nipponese national religions of Buddhism and Shintoism. All mankind should bow before the Mikado's shrines, for the Japanese rulers are direct descendants of divinity. Christians are unwilling to join in the shrine worship. The Tokyo government had much trouble in forcing missionaries and their followers in Japan and Korea to pay due respect to the portrait of the Emperor of Japan. Although some of them do it, it is done with reluctance. As the Japanese see it, the cause of much trouble lies in the

presence of the Christian missionaries, therefore they must go⁸⁰



A year after Japanese government adopted an intense policy against Korean churches, Rhee published a book called *The Oppression of the Korean Church*. As a pacifist, Syngman Rhee wanted to cooperate with American government in order to persuade Christians in America to rescue Churches in Korea from Japanese suppression and, furthermore, maintain democracy and liberty of the world within Korean peninsula in the midst of Japanese imperialism and totalitarianism.

We appeal to all the democratic and Christian people for active co-operation and support in our righteous determination and endeavor to maintain the independence and sovereignty of the Korean nation.⁸¹

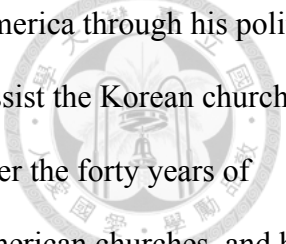
4.4 Rhee's Foreign Relations Strategy for America

American missionaries in Joseon, including the principal of Paichai, Henry Appenzeller wrote recommendation letters extolling Rhee's patriotism and Christian faith to the 26th President of the United States of America; Theodore Roosevelt as the key to Korean independence. Because of the letters, Rhee was able to meet the president. He told the president that as the powerhouse of the era, America must support Joseon government's efforts to free themselves from Japanese rule. In fact, it was not enough to break the U.S-Japan alliance and move the White House to backup Joseon itself⁸², and the U.S. had no interest in Joseon.

⁸⁰ Rhee, *Japan Inside Out*, 64

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 355

⁸² Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 54-6

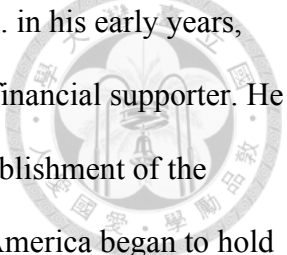


Rhee began to amass the support of Christian community in America through his political maneuvering. He argued that American churches urgently needed to assist the Korean churches persecuted by Japanese Imperialism.⁸³ He used his leadership skills over the forty years of Korean Independence Movement in America to gain the support of American churches, and he gave a series of lectures and sermons about the issues in Korea in schools, universities, and churches all across the United States. Between 1905 and 1907, he gave a hundred and ten speeches. Wherever he went, he always asked the same question to the audience, “Are you a real Christian?” -- which meant “If you are a Christian, how can you let Japanese Imperialists persecute your body of Christ in Korea?”⁸⁴ It was such a critical and challenging question for Christians in America. When they heard him say that churches and mission schools were on fire and pastors and Christians were locked in jail and killed brutally,⁸⁵ American Christians could not stay still – Rhee frequently reminded his audience that they were to love and care for their brothers and sisters using such texts as, “*Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*” (Hebrews 13:3; *KJV*) “*See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently*” (1 Peter 1:22; *KJV*) and “*Let brotherly love continue.*” (Hebrews 13:1; *KJV*).

⁸³ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 163

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 62

⁸⁵ 105-Man Incident (105 인 사건; October 1911) begun by “the Korean Independence Movement in 1919, the Conspiracy Trial signaled a pivotal change in the course of Korean history. With heightened tensions between Korean Christians and Japanese control, the Japanese Governor Count Terauchi grew suspicious of both the American missionary presence and steady growth of the Christian church in Korea. Convinced that the Korean Church was acting as an underground headquarter for revolutionary insurrection, the Japanese government reacted forcefully. On June 28, 1912, the Japanese government accused 123 Koreans of treason and assassination attempts against the Japanese Governor-General. During the time of detainment, defendants were tortured, and more than 600 others were arrested. Accounts of brutal beatings have been recorded, some resulting in death. One hundred and five men were convicted and sentenced to hard manual labor, and six sentenced to prison. In April 1913, the case was appealed on grounds of injustice and falsified evidence.” (Korean Conspiracy Case Records, 1910 – 1913, Columbia University)



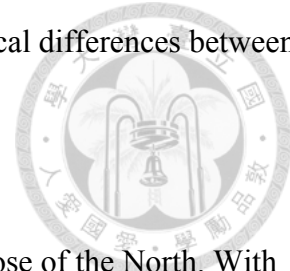
Because of Rhee's Korean Independence Movement in the U.S. in his early years, America was later able to become Korea's strongest military ally and financial supporter. He raised funds for supporting churches and schools in Korea and the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea. Also, churches in America began to hold special prayer meetings for the persecuted Christian Koreans voluntarily. Another passage often cited by Rhee is as follows:

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: 7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth. (3 John 5-8; KJV)

4.5 Rhee's Christian Friends

After thirty years of Syngman Rhee's independence movement in America, a new chapter of Rhee's political career began in his homeland. On July 20th, 1948, based on his Christian spirit, Rhee became the first president of the Republic of Korea. However, the greatest challenge of his political career began only after two years into his presidency. The clash between capitalism and communism resulted in three years of war and seventy years of ceasefire in Korean peninsula: Korean War (June 25, 1950 – July 27, 1953). This gruesome civil war had been a plan of the Red North and its communist allies (China and Russia) for a long time. After 1920, Soviet Russia organized a Korean communist party and applied its methods of propaganda, infiltration and agitation, among peasants and workers. Rhee was serious about this

war because he saw that it was a golden opportunity to unify ideological differences between North and South Korea.

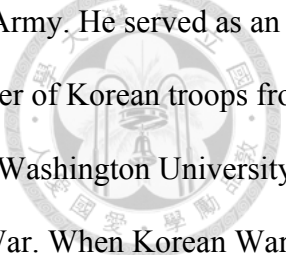


South Korean troops and weapons were incomparable with those of the North. With insufficient weapons to fight against the North Korean troops, the destruction of Han River bridge successfully inhibited North Korean troops from crossing the river and secure six days for the U.S. ground forces to be dispatched. Rhee was determined to initiate a high-level personal diplomacy in his own way – intensifying his pressure for the provision of military backup on his American friends who shared Christian faith: General Douglas MacArthur (26 January 1880 – 5 April 1964); General James Alward Van Fleet (March 19, 1892 – September 23, 1992); and the former U.S. Senator, John Foster Dulles (February 25, 1888 – May 24, 1959)⁸⁶.

Not many people know that MacArthur and Rhee were very close friends. Rhee met MacArthur during his Korean Independence Movement back in America. They used to discuss their shared values of Christian faith, anti-communism, and democracy.⁸⁷ Most importantly, they shared faith in anti-communism and putting an end to the division of the Korean peninsula. From the beginning of Korean War, White House asked MacArthur to disengage from Korea. However, he convinced the oval office by emphasizing that Korean War is not just a war in another country, but a war against communism and emphasized that America must protect its ally, Korea, to prevent Soviet power from increasing.

⁸⁶ Lee, *God's Miracle, the Establishment of the Republic of Korea II*, 62-7

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 62



General Van Fleet is known as the father of the South Korean Army. He served as an important supporter of the South Korean army and increased the number of Korean troops from 10 to 20 divisions. Senator Dulles was Rhee's old friend from George Washington University and Princeton University.⁸⁸ He played a decisive role during Korean War. When Korean War broke out, he was staying in Japan after visiting South Korea as the Secretary of the United States. He wrote a letter to President Truman asking him to send the U.S. troops to Korea. In August 1953, when he became Secretary of State, he signed the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States promising further protection and military, economic support. To this end, Syngman Rhee can be viewed as a leader who stopped the Bolshevization of South Korea and concretized diplomatic relations with the United States and other allies.

Rhee delved into his network of contacts in the United States and focused on the most politically powerful man he knew: Woodrow Wilson.⁸⁹ Rhee's closest friend, Dr. Robert T. Oliver witnessed that the 28th President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson introduced Rhee to strangers on occasion as "the future redeemer of Korean independence." In his book called *Syngman Rhee: the Man Behind the Myth* he added that seemed Wilson even liked and admired Rhee. During his time at Princeton University, he developed a close relationship with, namely, Wilson's family.⁹⁰ Even Wilson's wife, and his three daughters all took a great interest in him. Rhee was a regular guest at informal social gatherings the Wilsons held in their home; Wilson's

⁸⁸ Lee, *God's Miracle, the Establishment of the Republic of Korea II*, 64-5

⁸⁹ Lew, *The Making of the First Korean President*, 60

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 61

daughters played piano and sang to entertain Rhee.⁹¹ Aside from personal sympathy, Wilson's second daughter, Jessie expected a more intimate relationship with Rhee, but he turned away from her; he was more concentrated on Korean Independence and was married to a Korean lady named Park, who later passed away. They remained as good friends, and Jessie continued to help Rhee's work for Korean Independence and stopping Korean church persecution.

By forming a personal bond with Wilson without knowing his political staffs, he expected to convince Wilson to act on Korea's behalf against Japanese persecution. The future president had sponsored Rhee at Princeton, and Rhee remembered that Wilson's father had been a Presbyterian minister, which might prompt Wilson to act from an ethical standpoint rather than confine himself to the actions of political expediency.⁹² He asked Wilson to use his enormous personal prestige to issue a statement demanding that Japan immediately stop persecuting Korean Christians and guarantee them broad religious freedom.⁹³

⁹¹ Lew, *The Making of the First Korean President*, 33

⁹² *Ibid.*, 60-1

⁹³ See So Chong-ju, Yi Sung-man paksa chon, 243-45

Chapter 5. Rhee's Education Reform

5.1 Rhee as an Educator



Syngman Rhee wore many hats over the course of his checkered career such as a prominent journalist, and author of many books and poems, an internationally renowned diplomat, and a dynamic politician.⁹⁴ However, before he was elected as the president of Republic of Korea, he had made a significant achievement as an educator until 1945. He set up and run a school in Han-song Prison from 1902 to 1904, served as a principal of the Dang-dong Youth Institute for a month in late 1904, and acted as the principal of the YMCA school in Seoul from 1910 to 1912.⁹⁵ Even from his independence movement in America, he was devoted to the education of the young Korean immigrants.⁹⁶ Soon after Rhee arrived in Honolulu, he became the principal of Korean Boarding School for Boys, which was run by the Hawaii Methodist Episcopal Mission (HMEM) since 1906 under the supervision of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension (BHMCE) of the Methodist Episcopal Church based in Philadelphia.⁹⁷ He also founded Korean Christian Institute in Honolulu in 1918.

There were two specific reasons why Rhee was so focused on education development: (1) he asserted that both education and economic status were related to one another (2) he wanted to train patriots, and the primary reason was the Unification of Korea. He especially emphasized the awakening loyalty, patriotism, self-reliance, and anti-communism concepts in order to shape the

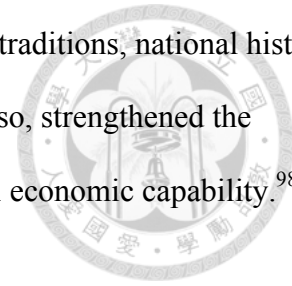
⁹⁴ Lew, *The Making of the First Korean President*, 70

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Out of the approximately 4,500 of Koreans living in Hawaii, most of them were laborers. Their children were left unattended, especially Rhee was angered and shocked by seeing young girls who were sold to Chinese and Americans. Because he believed that the emphasis on education is the key to changing their lives, just like it has changed his. (Jeon 2016:240-1)

⁹⁷ Lew, *The Making of the First Korean President*, 71

minds of the next generation. As he launched Korean lectures, ethnic traditions, national history, and democracy to plant national identity among young students, he also, strengthened the emphasis on developing science and technology to revive the national economic capability.⁹⁸



As he understood the benefits of education, he continued to stress the importance of spreading modern education in South Korea⁹⁹ when he was elected president. Education was one of his soft approaches towards the Korean unification.¹⁰⁰ He thought that developing competent young Korean talents would create opportunities that will ultimately benefit Korea in return. After Korean War, he rebuilt existing schools. Construction of new schools took priority over everything else for him. Even though Korea was facing a serious economic crisis in 1950s, about 600 students were sent abroad every year.¹⁰¹ To do so, he emphasized adopting American version of high-level education in Korea. He convinced American church members to support Korean education so that American-style democracy could be brought into Korea.

We number among our executive officers and the delegates to the Korean National Council, our representative legislative body, as many, if not more men graduated from recognized colleges and universities, than [any] other recognized Nation in the world. We do not say this in any boastful way. We repeat it as a fact. Our beliefs, our education, and our training all in accord with you and your form of government... We come to you in dire need of assistance, if by peaceable and persuasive means we are to secure justice and freedom for Korea.

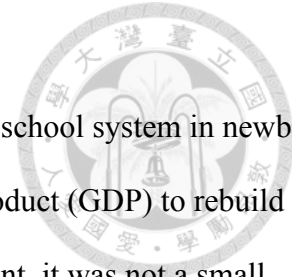
⁹⁸ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 229-35

⁹⁹ Lee, *God's Miracle, the Establishment of the Republic of Korea II*, 36-7

¹⁰⁰ Rhee, *The Spirit of Independence*, 251-2

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 240

5.2 Reform I: Constitutional Amendment of R.O.K.



President Rhee both politically and legally developed modern school system in newborn Korea. Korean government spent 4.5 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) to rebuild its education system. Compared to how the United States spent 7.5 percent, it was not a small amount of money since the population and national budget of Republic of Korea was incomparable to that of America. This data shows President Syngman Rhee's serious concerns about the quality and accessibility of the education of Korea.

In 1948, when Rhee became the president of South Korea, he renamed the Department of Education as the Ministry of Education.¹⁰² He also made amendments to Education Law to reconstruct the educational infrastructure in order to create new values and goals.¹⁰³ Rhee accomplished a widespread accessibility for education, not only in the primary level, but also the middle, high, and college education.¹⁰⁴ Even when Korean government was suffering from a serious lack of finance, Rhee Administration launched compulsory education system in Korea.¹⁰⁵ As stated in Article 31 of Educational Law, Rhee expanded the access to education into various aspects reflecting his belief that all Korean citizens shall enjoy the privilege of education for free.

CHAPTER II RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF CITIZENS

Article 31

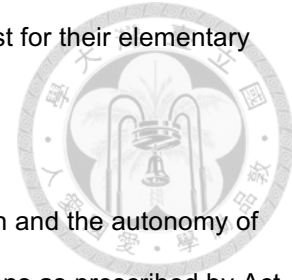
- All citizens shall have an equal right to receive an education corresponding to their abilities.

¹⁰² Adams, *Higher Education Reforms in the Republic of Korea*, 9

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 9-10

¹⁰⁴ Lee, *God's Miracle, the Establishment of the Republic of Korea II*, 38-9

¹⁰⁵ Jeon, *Wrath of Syngman Rhee*, 240



- All citizens who have children to support shall be responsible at least for their elementary education and other education as provided by Act.
- Compulsory education shall be free of charge.
- Independence, professionalism and political impartiality of education and the autonomy of institutions of higher learning shall be guaranteed under the conditions as prescribed by Act.
- The State shall promote lifelong education.
- Fundamental matters pertaining to the educational system, including in-school and lifelong education, administration, finance, and the status of teachers shall be determined by Act.

Rhee believed that a nation should leave the next generation with a literate population and provide at least a minimum of primary education in order to foster a higher level of education.¹⁰⁶ He decided to make amendments to the constitutional law to protect the educational right of children. Some parents did not send their students to school to prevent their children from receiving Japanese education, and others had their children earn money for their family. In other cases, parents were simply unaware of the significance of education. He wanted to bring children suffering from peasant labor and housework back to schools where they should be ensured with prosperity in the future and capacity to contribute to the development of South Korea.

5.3 Reform II: The Eradication of Illiteracy

Few months after Rhee's succession, the Korean Language Society designated October 9th as the Day of Hangul to emphasize the importance of the mother language for his people. The educational policy and planning of Rhee Administration emphasized reviving and strengthening

¹⁰⁶ Lee, *God's Miracle, the Establishment of the Republic of Korea II*, 39-41

moribund nationalistic spirit among Koreans by teaching Korean language, ethnic traditions, and national history. Especially, the eradication of illiteracy accomplished by Rhee Administration was a significant contribution.¹⁰⁷ President Rhee believed that if Korea could become an independent state, free from foreign powers, then South and North Korea will have a higher chance of achieving unification. To do so, he believed that Korea must become a fully literate society so that the government could educate his citizens and inspire them with national spirit.

The education fostered in Korea during Japanese occupation was specifically designed to serve the interest of the colonial power.¹⁰⁸ All levels of education were taught in Japanese; the school curriculum was biased toward Japanese needs, and school enrollments, especially at the higher levels, consisted of a disproportionate number of Japanese students.¹⁰⁹ As an aftermath of Japanese colonial rule, therefore, most tragic consequence was the loss of national spirit by forbidding Koreans to speak Korean. As a result, about eight out of ten Koreans did not know how to write their native language, Hangul at the end of Meiji Imperialism in Korea.

Such linguistic problems existed as a major obstacle in the higher education in Korea. As Japanese Empire banned Hangul in all schools, there were few scholarly materials written in Hangul.¹¹⁰ Such scarcity got worse because available materials were mostly Chinese and Japanese books. Rhee decided to remove those Japanese books, leaving just enough for Japanese colonialism studies. The language problem gradually improved as publishing companies in

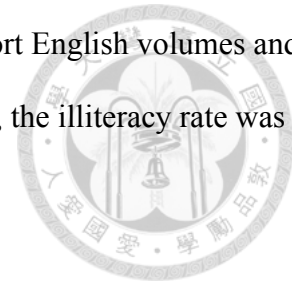
¹⁰⁷ Lee, *God's Miracle, the Establishment of the Republic of Korea II*, 41

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Adams, *Higher Education Reforms in the Republic of Korea*, 2

¹¹⁰ Adams, *Higher Education Reforms in the Republic of Korea*, 11

Korea grew rapidly. Also, higher education institutions began to import English volumes and translations of western works in Korean and English works. As result, the illiteracy rate was reduced to 22.1 percent in 1959.



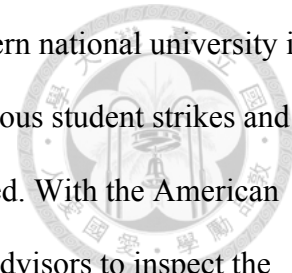
5.4 Studies on the Actual Condition of Higher Education

Korean War was a great obstacle for the development of early higher education. After three years of brutal war in Korea, students of higher education suffered greatly. Many young men left their universities for the military during the war, so the number of college student declined due to the need for the war effort. Since both United Nations troops and enemy forces used universities as infrastructure for billeting troops, approximately 40 percent of facilities of higher education were destroyed. And 50 percent of professors and school staffs died.

Another difficulty that the promotion of higher education faced was poverty and political disunity within the nation. Only 10 percent of higher educational institutions were so called modernized higher educational institutions. Therefore, the regional, wealth, age, and political gaps existed within the population. The political alignment and differences between students and faculties posed as a serious problem within campuses. Two main groups were the supporters of the Soviet-inspired "People's Republic of Korea" versus those of Syngman Rhee.¹¹¹ Student and faculty strikes became so severe that they resulted in a Military Government directive in March 1946, forbidding participation in political demonstrations and any dissemination of propaganda

¹¹¹ Adams, *Higher Education Reforms in the Republic of Korea*, 5

in schools.¹¹² Later on, situations became so severe that the first modern national university in Korea, Seoul National University became inoperative. Due to continuous student strikes and faculty absences, the campus had to close and students were suspended. With the American government as the center, Rhee received foreign support by sending advisors to inspect the educational development of Korea.



In the middle of Korean War, 1952, an educational survey team called United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA) Education Planning Mission stayed in South Korea for three months to carry on investigation for higher education of South Korea. According to the in-depth analysis of the Mission, major problems were (1) small population of universities (2) lack of school curriculum and (3) limited proper laboratory instruments and books in school libraries. The Ministry of Education (MOE) authorized the enrollment of higher education institution as 51,320, but there was only 32,000 in that year. The Mission also reported that greater amounts of college students were studying in college of liberal arts. In response, the team recommended that training highly skilled manpower take a higher priority.

- a. Improvement of facilities for teacher education, technical, and medical colleges
- b. Increased provisions for foreign study for Korean professors
- c. Establishment of conferences and seminars to improve methods of teaching, particularly in science
- d. Production of textbooks in the Korean language
- e. More extensive use of visiting foreign specialists in advisory capacities.¹¹³

¹¹² Adams, *Higher Education Reforms in the Republic of Korea*, 5

¹¹³ UNESCO-UNKRA Educational Planning Mission to Korea, *Rebuilding Education in the Republic of Korea*, 163

From 1948 to 1959, the United States Operations Mission to Korea (ICA/USOM), the largest American organization that stayed longest, assisted Ministry of Education of South Korea. In May 1960, the ICA/USOM published a factual survey on higher education institutions and recommendations in a book called the *Report on Survey of National Higher Education in the Republic of Korea*; in following categories: administration, organization and physical plant; agricultural sciences; engineering and science; health sciences; humanities and social sciences; teacher education.¹¹⁴ The report offered 15 suggestions:

1. Establishment of a Board of Regents in the Ministry of Education for the management, on a high-level policy basis, of all national universities and colleges.
2. Development of a centralized type of university internal organization together with the related short and long-range university, college and campus consolidations.
3. Substitution of a faculty consultation method for the existing secret ballot procedure in the appointment and promotion of members of the academic and administrative staffs.
4. Improvement of academic staff salaries.
5. Establishment of student and staff quotas on a college or university basis rather than on a departmental basis.
6. Changes in budget administrative procedures, particularly those involving retention of institutional income and appropriations to universities instead of to colleges.
7. Establishment of a staff improvement program including foreign study for Koreans and United States adviser assistance in the general field of administration, organization and physical plant.
8. Continuation of present improvement program, including both foreign study and adviser assistance in the fields of agriculture, health sciences, and engineering, with preference henceforth to the national universities and colleges other than Seoul National University. Priority in the field of agriculture to be given to the unification of agricultural extension and research with instruction in the national colleges of agriculture.
9. Continuation of teacher-training improvement program with emphasis on upgrading of normal schools.
10. Continuation of business administration improvement program with preference henceforth to one or possibly two national colleges of commerce.
11. Continuation of the public administration improvement program.
12. Extension of the improvement program to include such related natural sciences as

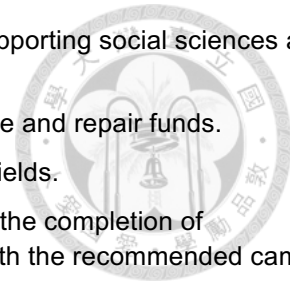
¹¹⁴ Adams, *Higher Education Reforms in the Republic of Korea*, 15

mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and geology, and such supporting social sciences as economics, psychology, sociology, political science and geography.

13. Provision of more adequate building and equipment maintenance and repair funds.

14. Provision of equipment and looks with preference to the above fields.

15. Provision of new construction and rehabilitation funds only after the completion of recommended building planning studies and only when in accord with the recommended campus changes.¹¹⁵



5.5 Early Efforts in Higher Education

From 1945 to 1949, the rapid expansion of higher education brought both economic and social demand for the development of South Korea. Between 1948 and 1960, main educational policies for higher education were expansion plans. After liberation, Korea's high school and college enrollment rate was 1 percent, same as the world's. Considering that Korean economy and political situation were in such a harsh environment for growth after the civil war, what Syngman Rhee achieved in education revolution can be seen as nothing short of a miracle. The number of higher education institutions of Korea in 1941 was 16; in total, 6 national, 2 publics, and 8 private universities. Higher education enrollments were 3,584.

Table 1. Selected data on higher educational institutions: Korea, 1941

[---indicate inapplicable]

Name, classification, and location	Years of study	Enrollment		
		Total	Japanese	Korean
National				
Kyongseong Law College, Seoul	3	248	94	154

¹¹⁵ U.S. International Cooperation Administration, *Report on Survey of National Higher Education in the Republic of Korea*, 211-2

Kyongseong Medical College, Seoul	4	331	258	73
Kyongseong Mining College, Seoul	3	275	158	117
Kyongseong Dental College, Seoul	4	478	257	221
Kyongseong Pharmaceutical College, Seoul	3	342	226	116
Kyongseong (Keijo) Imperial University, Seoul	-	545	335	210
Public				
Daegu Medical College, Daegu	4	270	182	94
Pyongyang Medical College, Pyongyang	4	304	182	122
Private				
Poseong college (now Korean University), Seoul	3	516	-	516
Severance Medical College, Seoul	4	229	-	229
Yonhi College (now Yonsei University), Seoul	4	474	-	474
Ewha College, Seoul	4	415	2	413
Hebwa College (now Dong Kuk University), Seoul	3	235	1	234
Kyongseong Women's Medical College, Seoul	4	241	44	197
Daedong College of Engineering, Pyongyang	3	229	22	207
Sukmuong Women's College, Seoul	3	287	80	207

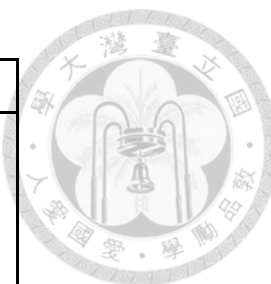
SOURCE: Korea, Mungyopu, Hakgyo Kwanri Kuk. Daehak Jeongi: Kvangwi wa Nunjejeow. (Reorganization of Higher Education: Its Development and Its Problems). Seoul: 1963. p. 55-56. Translated for the author by Jong Chol Kim. (Mimeographed).

Until 1947, 29 national and public educational institutions all over the country, were recognized by the government. Institutions included junior colleges, agricultural colleges, medical colleges, engineering colleges, teacher's colleges, a marine college, a fisheries college, and theological seminaries and colleges.¹¹⁶

Table 2. Higher Institutions Department of Education, financial support, and enrollment: 1947

¹¹⁶ Adams, *Higher Education Reforms in the Republic of Korea*, 5

[n.a.not available]



Institutions and financial support	Enrollment
National	
National Seoul National University	7,206
Daegu Agricultural College	256
Daegu Education College	480
Pusan College of Fisheries	n.a.
Kwanju Medical College	n.a.
Public (Provincial)	
Daegu College of Medicine	287
Iri Agricultural College	n.a.
Chuncheon College of Agriculture	120
Private	
Korea University	1,076
Central Women's College	319
Kukhak College	936
Dankuk Institute	n.a.
Chongju Commercial College	103
Daegu College of Liberal Arts and Science	335
Joseon Christian University	1,021
(Protestant Missions)	
Ewha Women's University	1,270
(Protestant Missions)	
Severance Union Medical College	468
(Protestant Missions)	
Dongkuk College (Buddhist)	1,654
Sungkyunkwen College (Confucian)	868



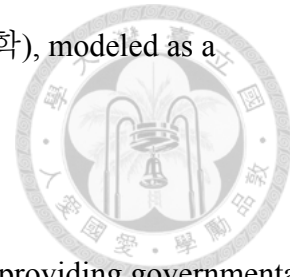
SOURCE: *South Korean Interim Government. South Korean Interim Government Activities, United States Military Government in Korea.* (No. 26, November 1947). Seoul. p. 226. (Mimeographed.)

Students of higher education were concentrated in the capital, Seoul, until the very first Rhee Administration (1949). Since 1945, the population of college student increased from 8,000 to 28,000. As an attempt to boost the level of education in Korea, President Rhee spread college students out so that more students could have access to higher education. As a result, over 30 national, public, and private colleges and universities were founded in Korea. In 1960, about 10,000 college students got to enjoy higher education in 63 different schools.

5.6 Science and Technology

After Rhee's succession, scientific and technical education received the attention of Korean government. During Korean War, Rhee and Korean-American immigrants established a private research university named Inha University (인하대학교) in the city of Incheon in 1953 for the development of engineering and physical sciences. Korean-American community donated after selling Korean Christian Institute in Hawaii, America, which was found by Rhee in 1914. The name Inha is a compound with "In" from Incheon and "Ha" from Hawaii -- it represents the first generation of Korean immigrants that came to Hawaii in January 13, 1903. MIT in America was the original model for this institution, to make it a world-class science institution. A year

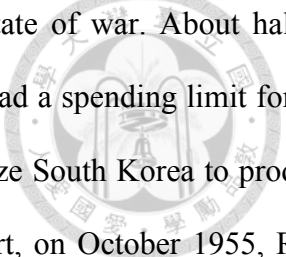
later, it was renamed after Inha Institute of Technology (인하공과대학), modeled as a polytechnic university.



The president encouraged young scientists to study abroad by providing governmental scholarships. Fifteen engineers and scientists, mostly in their late 20s and garbed in military uniforms, put their noses to the grindstone at weekend seminars on nuclear technology from 1955 onward. After the Silla Dynasty, it was the first time that such a large population of higher-caliber workforce left the Korean peninsula to receive education abroad. In total, from 1953 to 1960, about 20,000 students were able to study abroad with a government-funded scholarship.

When the U.S. Military Government (1945-1948) was governing Korea, very first foreign aid program began even before Rhee was elected as a president. More than \$500 millions of economic aid under GARIOA (Government Appropriations for Relief in Occupied Areas), which accompanied the Military Government came, mostly, in the form of consumer goods like food, fertilizer, clothing, and other commodities. This emergency program had three primary goals: 1) prevention of starvation and the spread of disease; 2) boosting of agricultural output; and 3) massive provision of important commodities to overcome the pervasive shortages of most types of consumer goods.¹¹⁷ However, the effect of GARIOA was limited. It barely prevented hunger and was not sufficient for economic reconstruction. Instead of consumer goods, President Rhee requested the U.S. for industrial goods to act as a catalyst for the reconstruction of Korean economy.

¹¹⁷ Mason et al., *Growing Greener: Putting Conservation into Local Plans and Ordinances*, 168

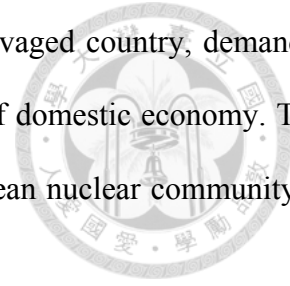


Since the armistice, divided Korea was still technically in state of war. About half of national budget was used for national defense. Rhee Administration had a spending limit for the economic development fund. As President Rhee wanted to industrialize South Korea to produce heavy machinery to boost the economy. With U.S. and UN's support, on October 1955, Rhee founded a fertilizer factory in Chung-ju City and built the cement plant in Mung-yeong City in September 1957. Yet, serious power shortage had to be overcome in order to run these factories effectively. In 1958, a well-noted American energy expert and business executive, Walker Lee Cisler, visited Korea to give advice on resolving the energy problem in Korea. Cisler offered the use of nuclear energy. He emphatically explained about producing nuclear-based electricity and training manpower to develop nuclear energy to the president. He added that many high-quality scientists and engineers would soon become pivotal technocrats for running the country. And he assured that Korea will start to reap its benefits in two decades.

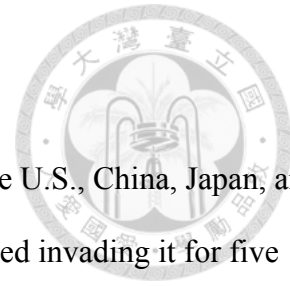
Very few colleges provided science and engineering degrees back then. Such shortage of professional manpower was the result of Japan's obscurant policy for the colonial Korea. Largely, prestigious topics such as natural science subjects were provided mostly to Japanese students. For about 10 years, Rhee sent young Korean scientists to study abroad, mostly to the United Kingdom through the governmental fund of Korea; especially for the nuclear research. It was a heavy burden on government funds -- about 6,000 USD was spent on per each student.

The main incubator was the Atoms for Peace program of U.S. government. Of the young trainees, 127, representing 57 percent of 237 total, college graduates were dispatched abroad to receive basic training in nuclear technologies, including radioisotope applications. This number

reflects the eagerness of Syngman Rhee's, the president of a war-ravaged country, demand for new technological sophistication as a solution for a swift recovery of domestic economy. These foreign-trained technical personnel later became the core of the Korean nuclear community and stressed the importance of nuclear technology throughout the country.



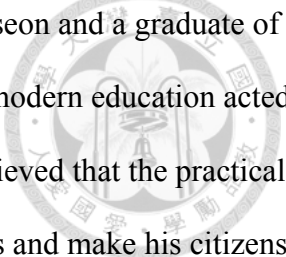
Chapter 6. Conclusion



Before the rise of nationalism in Korea, foreign powers like the U.S., China, Japan, and Russia saw the value in Korea's strategic location in Asia and continued invading it for five thousand years. Japan, especially, never stopped its attempts to colonize Korea. Shortly after the declaration of Korean Empire in 1897, the dynasty ended with Japanese annexation in 1910. Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) was often quite harsh in that it substantially violated the dignity of Koreans. When Protestant missionaries, who arrived at Joseon to disseminate gospel, witnessed the assassination of the Empress Min in 1895, they raised serious doubts about Japanese colonial rule. A handful of American missionaries stood against their government, church mission board, and Japanese government by questioning the legitimacy of Japanese occupation of Korea.¹¹⁸ American missionaries and teachers in mission schools tried to spark a strong patriotism among their students. By making students interested in political and nationalistic issues, they carefully and successfully prepared future Christian leaders for the independence of Joseon. Best example would be the immense influence of Pai Chai School had on the first president of R.O.K., Syngman Rhee.

In conclusion, while Rhee was reading the Bible and studying history of American politics during the six years in captivity, he decided to build a Christian regime in Korea. In Rhee's book, *The Spirit of Independence*, he introduced the blueprint of a new Korean regime called the 'Christian nation-building theory,' which emphasized on Christianity and modern

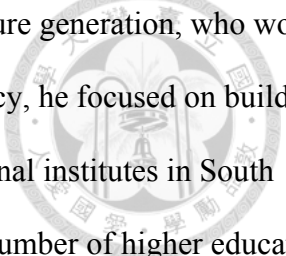
¹¹⁸ Yu, *American Missionaries and the Korean Independence Movement in the Early 20th Century*, 171



education. As a first-generation beneficiary of modern education in Joseon and a graduate of top-ranking universities in the U.S., he experienced how Christianity and modern education acted as important instruments for building a powerful Christian nation. He believed that the practical Christian lifestyle would be able to awaken the nationalistic sentiments and make his citizens moderate like Americans were enjoying liberty, and Korean government would take a full responsibility and serve the interests of its people.

During his incumbency, he propagated general education and established a higher education to prepare human resources to enhance the national economy and make Korea become a Christian nation. He was strongly determined to educate his people because he knew that it was a crucial step for attaining Korea's sovereignty, accomplishing the unification of Korea, and improving Korean economy.¹¹⁹ Rhee's books *Hanguk Gyohoe Pipbak* (1913) and *Japan Inside Out* (1942) acknowledge that the persecution of Korean church and Korean independency from a biblical viewpoint and induced church members in America to think that this issue was a matter belief. American missionaries and Korean churches in Hawaii raised funds to establish school buildings, provided books and laboratory instruments, and even sent manpower to support the higher education, science, and technology during postwar reconstruction period. With the great support of Christian communities in America, the newly-born nation with a small budget was able to provide a modern education during Korean War. In the aftermath of the war, he worked

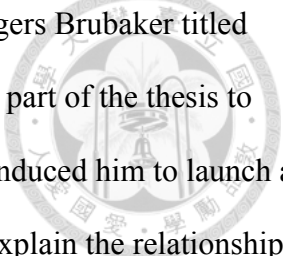
¹¹⁹ "This government has decided to foster international trade and industrial development in a manner that reflects the needs of our country. The ability to greatly improve the living standards of the Korean nation requires that we develop numerous industries, export our agricultural and industrial products to other countries, and import the products that we do not yet ourselves produce. As such, it is essential that factories, commerce, and labor develop in a joint manner. Managers must not focus on solely exploiting labor, and labor should not behave in a manner that is detrimental to capital" (Monthly Choson 2004:181-182).



so hard to develop the educational system of R.O.K. to prepare the future generation, who would accomplish the reunification of Korea. After Rhee succeeded presidency, he focused on building new public schools to make education more accessible; thus, educational institutes in South Korea increased steadily from 1948 to 1958. From 1945 to 1949, the number of higher education institutions grew from 19 to 63. Higher education enrollments rose from 7,800 to 97,000, increasing more than 12 times. Between 1950 to 1953, the number of students that enrolled in university rose from 11,000 to 38,000.

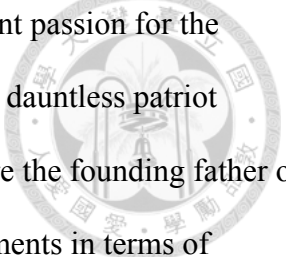
It is valid to say Rhee's Christian nation-building theory was successfully launched. Rhee's reformation of Korean education was successful, and it delivered significant benefits of making Koreans literate. Mass literacy, one of Rhee's remarkable reformation of modern education in Korea, was intended to promote Christianity, strengthen nationalism, and bring polity and culture into his new Korean government. His education reform was able to have a positive response from South Koreans because Koreans had a keen interest in education. Even the non-Christians were willing to send their children to mission schools and accept Christian culture. For Koreans, modern education was a stepping stone for solving poverty.

Since Rhee and other Koreans had different perspectives on Christianity, modern education, science, and technology, only a small number of Korean scholars are willing to study the relationship between Rhee's Christian faith and education policy. There were various theological principles and concepts with which Rhee approached the relationship between



religion and nationalism. In this paper, I have selected an article of Rogers Brubaker titled “*Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches*” to study the theoretical part of the thesis to explain how Rhee’s Christian faith affected his nationalism and what induced him to launch an educational reformation. The author uses four types of approaches to explain the relationship between religion and nationalism. In the third approach, *Religion as imbricated or intertwined with nationalism*, Brubaker mentions an important phrase, ‘nationalization of religion,’ which refers to how states have involved themselves in ‘church affairs, appointments, and property’ to develop their nationalist and institutional framework. In contrary to the third approach, Korean government was greatly supported by Korean and American churches. Brubaker’s fourth approach, *Religious nationalism as a distinctive kind of nationalism* is contrary to Rhee and R.O.K. For Rhee, protestant nationalism is an original form of Korean nationalism. The protestant mindset helped shaping his determination for establishing Korea into a liberal nation -- the Christian nation-building theory.

In the course of implementing his Christian nation-building theory, his contribution to the development of education in Korea is commendable. Regarding Rhee’s phenomenal achievements, he deserves a lot more credit from the people of Korea. Most Koreans, however, remember him as a national founding figure not worthy of respect. Such distaste was caused by his dishonorable resignation during the last chapter of his political career. Majority of Koreans remember Rhee as the one who provoked the civil war for his political favor in order to gain popularity to continue his presidency. Also, his diplomatic strategy against America remarked him as proxy army of the White House.



In the West, Rhee is remembered as a leader who had the fervent passion for the liberation of his native land. The West hailed him as a great leader and dauntless patriot deserving respect. Evaluative reports of the foreign press widely admire the founding father of the Republic of Korea. Rhee's political, economic, and social achievements in terms of establishing the first liberal democratic party of Korea came into the spotlight, and he was referred to as the 'George Washington of Korea' and the 'little Chiang Kai-shek.' Today, R.O.K. is renowned as a 10th strongest nation in the world. It is time to actualize Rhee's the very last dream on the earth, the reunification of Korea After Rhee, another beneficiaries of free religion and free compulsory education must cast a new light on Rhee's contributions on Korean regime and the way he adopted a healthy Christian spirit embodying characteristics, and accomplish the unification of Korea he had dreamt, rather than just focus on the mistakes that he made.

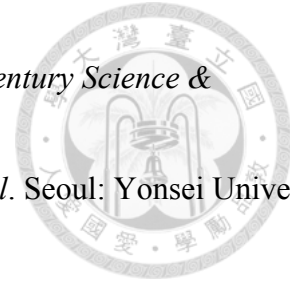
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