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Developing Land in Korea, and the  
Korean Reactions in 1904**

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## The Nagamori Proposal for Developing Land in Korea, and the Korean Reactions in 1904

The Japanese proposal for developing land in Korea during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) attempted to bring all uncultivated land in Korea under cultivation so as to increase agricultural production and to effect a large scale immigration of Japanese farmers. But the proposal was seen by Koreans as an aggressive venture to seize a chunk of Korean territory, thus provoked the vehement opposition movement among Koreans, conservative and progressive alike. Korean nationalist historians have highlighted the opposition as an earliest incidence of mass nationalist movement. However, the movement was led by the conservative elements in terms of leadership and ideology, though it was fully supported the progressives like the nationalist press. While the conservative elite had a moral obligation to defend the land bequeathed by the ancestors even at maximum cost, the progressive elite valued the land as a national resource to be developed for building economic foundation of an independent nation. Therefore, this study brings to light an ideological distinction in the movement, hitherto obscured by an inclusive definition based on the unity of Korean resistance.

# The Nagamori Proposal for Developing Land in Korea, and the Korean Reactions in 1904

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## Introduction

This study explores the Korean reactions against the Japanese demand for land under the so called the Nagamori proposal for developing all uncultivated land in Korea during the middle of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). The ambitious proposal offered by a former Japanese high-ranking official, Nagamori Fujiyoshirō 長森藤吉郎, and actively supported by the Japanese government, intended to lease all Korean “wasteland 荒蕪地” to bring it under cultivation using Japanese capital and technologies for the next fifty years. The Nagamori proposal precipitated an intense opposition by Koreans, conservatives and progressives alike, because the proposal was feared as an aggressive Japanese venture to seize a chunk of Korean territory for the sake of Japanese immigrants under the name of land development.

The previous studies on the topic tend to emphasize an aggressive nature of the Japanese demand and an intensity of patriotic reactions against it on the part of Koreans. Awed by the patriotic zeal expressed by Korean protests, in particular the opposing demonstrations led by the Poan-hoe 輔安會 (Preservation Society) of conservative literati, these studies highlight the opposition movement as an early exemplar of Korean nationalist mass movement (Yun Pyöngsöök 1964, 71; Sin Yongha 1994, 77-79).<sup>1</sup> While it is

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Yun Pyöngsöök sees the movement as “a mass movement to save the country.” Sin

beyond question that the movement as a whole fervently supported a patriotic cause to defend Korean territory from the anticipated Japanese encroachment, there existed a difference between the conservative and progressive protesters in term of their ideological orientation.

It is no doubt that both parties demonstrated the unity in denouncing the proposal as an aggressive act of the greedy and untrustworthy neighbor, as has been emphasized by the Korean nationalist scholars. Still, this study highlights an ideological difference between the two groups of protesters, obscured hitherto by the weight of the unity so much valued by the Korean nationalist scholars. In rejecting the proposal, the conservatives represented by Confucian memorialists had a traditional sense of moral obligation to defend the land bequeathed by their ancestors at maximum cost, while the progressives represented by the new press were concerned with the indigenous development of the land to build an economic foundation of a strong and independent nation. Thus, this study takes a comparative approach to identify an ideological difference within the opposition movement, rather than subsuming it under the unity of the opposition. And the study is organized accordingly; the conservative reaction vis à vis the progressive reaction. Yet, an explanation about the proposal provocative of such reactions is in order.

### **1. Nagamori Proposal for Developing Land in Korea**

On May 31 of 1904 in the early month of the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese cabinet decided key policies to be pursued with Korea in order to establish firmer political and economic control in the peninsula, thus eventually establishing a protectorate. The decision called for the defense operation in the peninsula, the supervision of foreign affairs, the management of financial administration, the control over railway lines and telegraph network, and the development of primary industries like agriculture, forestry, mining and fishing. The cabinet made it clear that the purpose of the agri-

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Yongha defines the movement as a precursor to the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement of the succeeding years.

cultural development in Korea was to increase grain production for supply to Japan as well as to secure the agricultural colony for emigration of Japanese farmers (*Nihon gaikō bunsho* 日本外交文書 [Diplomatic Documents of Japan] 37-1: 351-56. Hereafter it will be referred as NGB).

To promote agricultural migration and agricultural development in Korea, both the Japanese government and private firms were eager to publicize the highly optimistic view on the potentials of Korean agricultural growth. One agricultural survey delegation in March 1904 from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce presented a report about the land usage in Korea. In it, the total area of more than 1.4 million chō - 33 percent of the total arable land - was estimated as easily reclaimable land for new cultivation, which in the future could support an additional population of seven millions. (*Chuhan Ilbon kongsagwan kirok* 駐韓日本公事官記録 [Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea] 22: 97-101. Hereafter it will be referred as CIKK). And the report asserted that as the population density in Korea was far below those of Japan and China, the influx of seven million immigrants would not cause any land shortage for individual cultivators as long as the above vast tract of untilled land was to be opened fully to cultivation.

Furthermore, the climate and the terrain of Korea were similar to Japan, hence Japanese immigrants would have little difficulty in adjusting to the new environment. With regard to human advantages, the Japanese were superior to Koreans in terms of health, intelligence and capital equipment, therefore they would be in position to command Koreans' obedience and diligence. The annual land tax from newly reclaimed land was projected to increase by 8 million yen, the amount equal to the current total revenue of the Korean government. To the ordinary Koreans, the export of grains and raw materials would create effective demand for manufactured products of Japan (CIKK 22: 98-9).

By June 6, 1904, the Japanese government's intention to develop Korean agriculture and to encourage agricultural migration was conveyed officially to the Korean government through the proposal initiated by Nagamori Fujiyoshirō, a former Ministry of Finance official (Kimijima 1979, 269-70). Nagamori had been active in negotiating a concession to reclaim all Korean wasteland with Korean court officials since his retirement from the

Ministry of Finance post in December 1903. His land developing proposal together with the suggestion to monopolize several commodities like wine, tobacco, ginseng, etc, had been delivered to the close officials of Kojong 高宗 as a means to increase the revenue of the royal treasury. Nagamori approached such influential court officials as Yi Chaesun first and Kwŏn Chungśŏk later to persuade a land development plan under which the right to develop all Korean wasteland not owned by the government and private individuals would be granted to a Japanese national, presumably Nagamori himself. Nagamori asserted that he drew out a favorable response from Korean side including Kojong and was about to sign an agreement with the Ministry of Royal Household on March 18. But its Minister, Min Pyŏngśŏk maintained that the ownership of land after development should be articulated in the contract, and further than that the importance of the whole issue demanded review and decision by the State Council. Nagamori then asked for counsel from Minister Hayashi Gonsuke in the Japanese legation in Seoul (NGB 37-1: 573-77).

In its formation, the Nagamori proposal was a cooperative work involving the Japanese minister in Seoul, Hayashi and high-ranking officials in Tokyo like Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 and Foreign Minister Komura Jūtarō 小村壽太郎 (Kimijima 1979, 275-78). In late March when Ito visited Korea, Minister Hayashi presented a private paper listing the economic concessions such as construction of railways and building cable and postal networks as well as the rights for costal and inland shipping, fishing and mining, that should be exclusively managed by Japan to implement successfully the goals of the Korea-Japan Protocol a month ago. Included in it was the right for land development and usage. Hayashi cited the growing voice of the Japanese immigrants to lift the current treaty ban on foreign land ownership beyond 10 Korean *ri* (about 2.5 miles) from the treaty ports. But he was worried that the revision of the treaty regulation not only put the Korean government in trouble, but also allowed the other foreign investors to accumulate profit (by claiming the most favored nation clause). To circumvent these difficulties he suggested the Japanese individual farmers be given cultivation and usufruct rights for them to increase production by applying advanced agricultural skills, or one private concessionaire be given the right

to develop wasteland in Korea, so that he might sublet his land concession to general farmers under the guidance of the Japanese government (*NGB 37-1: 283-84*). Thus, the Korean land development idea was consulted with Itō prior to its adoption among the key Japanese policies toward Korea at the Japanese cabinet decision in the end of May.

On April 8, Minister Hayashi reported to Foreign Minister Komura the past negotiations between Nagamori and Korean court officials for the first time, and he asked for the Japanese government's initiative in future negotiations with Korean part. Hayashi seems to decide that the political circumstances were favorable for the official approach, as the Japanese military power was felt among the Koreans and the Korean government became increasingly pro-Japanese, as was shown by the Korean government's announcement to repeal all treaties with Russia on May 18 (*Kojong sillok 44: 42a*). Komura showed keen interest in the proposal by suggesting extension of the lease beyond original twenty-five years and succession of the lease by the original contractor's successors or heirs as well as by demanding Hayashi's support for Nagamori's effort (*NGB 37-1: 579-80*). There is little doubt that the agricultural development adopted in the May 1904 cabinet decision was based on the Nagamori proposal.

The Nagamori proposal presented to the Korean government on June 6 as a draft contract between Minister of Royal Household and Nagamori contained following terms. All uncultivated land, forest, and meadow not clearly under private or government ownership and at the same time not reserved for graveyards, shrine sites, and forbidden forests by the court were to be exclusively entrusted to Nagamori for reclamation, rearrangement, improvement, and settlement. The Korean government continued to hold the ownership of the above wasteland. It was the duty of Nagamori not the Korean government to provide capital for the project. Nagamori would possess the right to use the land for a variety of profitable purposes such as growing grains, planting trees and fruits, grazing, fishing and hunting. The taxation of the land was to be suspended for the first five years after its development. The contract was to be valid for fifty years, and could be extended under mutual agreement. At the termination of the contract, the Korean government would be obligated to reimburse all capital invested in the land as well

as the interest of 5 percent annum for the investment. The right and duty of the contract could be passed to Nagamori's heir or trustee (*Ku Hanguk oegyo munsŏ* 舊韓國外交文書 [Diplomatic Documents of Old Korea] 7: # 8107, 119-120, hereafter *KHOM*).

In the proposal, the ownership of developed land by the Korean government was included because of the Korean officials' demand, but the extension of lease period to fifty years and beyond in accordance with the Japanese foreign minister's suggestion as well as the compensation duty for the whole investment made the future Korean government's claim for ownership a distant and costly business. In short, the Nagamori proposal intended to control a vast tract of Korean uncultivated land permanently in the name of land development.

## 2. Opposition Move by the Conservatives

The opposition movement to the Nagamori proposal was led by the conservative literati and former officials who, at first, following the traditional format of presenting memorials to the throne, pressured the government to reject the proposal, but later staged mass rallies to that end. The opposition was one instance in the ongoing anti-Japanese and anti-reform protests by the conservative elements reactivated in the aftermath of e Queen Min's assassination in October 1895. Although the 1896 righteous armies were subdued, conservative groups continued to stage protests against Japanese inroads and modern reforms. A number of local literati and former officials set up sit-in centers in Seoul for presenting memorials to the throne and sending circulars enlisting sympathizers to oppose the major events of Japanese inroad as well as Korean reform endeavors such as the Independence Club activities in 1898, the circulation of Japanese bank note in 1903, the conclusion of Korea-Japan Protocol and the Nagamori proposal for developing land in 1904, and finally the protectorate treaty of 1905, the last event touching off another righteous army uprisings led by conservative elements (Sŏ 1992, 39-62).

After the Nagamori proposal was presented to the Korean government, and put under review of the State Council, its content was revealed to the

public, though its secret negotiation had been agreed upon by Korean and Japanese authorities. The new press like the *Hwangšōng sinmun* 皇城新聞 (Imperial Capital News) and the *Cheguk sinmun* 帝國新聞 (Empire News) were especially active in reporting the proceedings within the government as well as the opposing outcry outside the government. The *Hwangšōng sinmun* in particular spread the opposition sentiment through writing its vehement editorials and publishing the memorials and letters denouncing the proposal.

### *Kim Kiu's Incidence*

From mid-June, the opposition move was begun by conservative literati and ex-officials. The Japanese minister in Seoul strongly demanded the Korean government's investigation and punishment of those twenty three cosigners of a circular (*t'ongmun* 通文) condemning unceasing Japanese requests for economic concessions including vast uncultivated land, as they were arousing anti-Japanese feeling at the critical time when Japan engaged in the war to secure peace in Asia and independence of Korea (*KHOM* 7: # 8143, 146-47).

Kim Kiu 金箕祐 who identified his profession as a Confucian wrote the circular in point with his colleague, Yi Kiha, and tried to get consent from a reputed high official, Hō Wi 許蔦, then a judge at the Highest Court, before spreading the circular throughout the country to convene sympathizers in front of the Japanese legation. Hō Wi dissuaded Kim, as no decision had been made as to the Nagamori proposal yet. Kim Kiu delivered his circular to the *Hwangšōng sinmun*, which held publishing it fearing the Japanese pressure. But the circular was anyhow obtained by a Japanese local newspaper, the *Daitō sinbun* 大東新聞, to be published for general readers. Shortly, Kim Kiu, Hō Wi and a few of his colleagues were summoned by the Japanese chargé d'affaires, Hagiwara Moriichi 秋原守一, for questions (*CIKK* 24: 82-4).

As to Hagiwara's question on what motivated issuing the circular, Kim replied; "All Koreans had felt deep indignation against Japanese pursuit of profit in railway construction and fishing with a host of evil consequences [to Korean people]. Now Japan wanted forests, rivers and lakes, and uncul-

tivated lands, causing agitations among Koreans. With unending Japanese demands like these, all territory of Korea is bound to be at Japanese hands. Facing this situation, how can one sit calm waiting for death without uttering a word" (*CIKK* 24: 83). Kim insisted that his action was solely out of his own indignation, as to Hagiwara's quest for any director behind the affair. Hagiwara transferred Kim and his colleagues to the Korean police asking for further interrogation and punishment to discipline conservative literati's actions of arousing ill-feeling against Japan.

The Korean police chief, Sin T'aehyu, questioned about Kim's design to incite the people's feeling for political purpose. Kim responded that he had no reason to be outspoken, if the government was able to protect the people and the territory, but "conceding to foreign demands had become an order of the day to the government" (*CIKK* 24: 84). Therefore, upon facing this critical situation, he could tolerate no speech or no action. Thus, the report on Kim Kiu shows his antipathy toward compromising Korean officials was as deep as that against Japanese demanders.

Shortly after the interrogation by the Korean police, Kim Kiu was released. Hagiwara directed a strong warning to the Korean government that its tolerance with anti-Japanese elements like Kim actually encouraged them to spread anti-Japanese sentiment, thus leading to growing restiveness among the populace, and harming mutual cooperation much needed at this critical moment of the war. He warned of the policing intervention with the situation to restore order, if the Korean government remained neutral (*KHOM* 7: #8212, 216). Yet, apparently avoiding political risk in punishing the protesters, the Korean foreign minister informed the Japanese minister that Kim had been released, because he had no intention to arouse ill-feeling against Japan among the people, and that gatherings of literati for national petitions had hardly constituted a crime in conventional Korean politics (*KHOM* 7: # 8252, 251).

#### *Conservative Memorialists' Argument*

As the local Korean and Japanese newspapers from mid-June began to report on the content of the Nagamori proposal and Korean reactions against it, there came a flood of memorials, circulars, letters, editorials in newspapers,

either individually or collectively, to deny the Nagamori proposal and to present countermeasures to frustrate it. It was the occasion when a foreign demand producing a national crisis was brought into public arena for discussion and judgment. The occasion was unfortunate for those facing a national crisis, but provides an effective opportunity for us to know how they legitimized their opposition.

All protesters defined the Nagamori plan as the illegitimate attempt to occupy the land under public or private ownership by the powerful and greedy outsider. And all protesters were motivated by the zeal to defend their territory in jeopardy. They were, to be sure, important activists in the resistance against Japanese imperial aggression. Yet, this study is more interested in the content rather than the weight of their resistance. To describe their protests as being uniformly motivated by "patriotic" or "national" sentiment, one stops short of comprehending difference in ideas and values that informed their resistance. As this study distinguishes conservative and progressive elements in their protest, their thoughts and actions are described separately.

The conservative memorialists like their progressive colleagues decided not to be persuaded by the Nagamori proposal of land development, as they saw it as still another incidence of foreigners' unsatisfied desire to take economic resources from their country. So far, the rights to coastal fishing, lumbering, mining, and railway construction were given to them. All were threatening the livelihood of the people, but the Japanese demand for all uncultivated land posed the gravest threat to the country, because it was concerned not only with the economic well-being and community life of the common people but with the moral obligation of the ruling elite.

Many worried that the Japanese enclosing of forests, fields, and waterways would strip the residents there of extra necessities for their daily living like firewood, grass, fishes, and so on. A conservative memorialist, Pak Ŭihyŏn with the senior third rank, paid heed to the helpless fate of those with no landed properties, eking out a living by tilling, grazing, and foraging in mountain valleys and wild fields:

"Even though forest, flat land, fallow and barren land, [and rivers and lakes]

look like uncared-for, they were indispensable resources for the people's daily use. Out of them the people get materials for clothes, make utensils, get valuables to sell. In deep mountain valleys and open wild fields, our people who barely eke out a living by tilling, grazing, foraging, and gathering firewood were proportionately eight or nine [sic] out of ten. Once granted to the Japanese, every mountain and stream will all belong to their boundary. Then our people with no place to appeal to cannot regain dwelling place, cut off from food and clothes, and stripped of valued resources" (*Hwangšǒng sinmun*, June 28, 1904).

Another fear for the Nagamori project was its social repercussions in villages where mixed settlement (*chapkō* 雜居) of Japanese immigrant farmers among Korean peasants would be bound to produce a host of problems between them, causing a great disruption in the Korean countryside. Many anticipated that Korean peasants would suffer from dislocation and persecution at the intrusion of their Japanese neighbors in villages, because they were no match to the Japanese in terms of agricultural skills and available power. Yi Kōnha with the junior first rank feared for the mass of Korean peasants to be uprooted as a result of penetrating Japanese settlers equipped with superior skills in land cultivation (*Hwangšǒng sinmun*, June 27, 1904)

In the memories of the conservative memorialists, no recommendable relationships had existed in the contacts between two nationals. Thus, it was a foregone conclusion that their encounters in village settings would be violent as well as unequal. The memorial by Hō Sik and other literati predicted:

"Between the two, the strong and the weak are too obvious. We have suffered long their oppression and insult. Slightly provoked in road encounters, the Japanese were used to insulting or even killing Korean victims, while Koreans never dared to touch even their hair. Once allowed the mixed settlement in field, cultivating, fertilizing, and irrigating, they will outdo us in skills, and push us away. No one will stand their vehemence" (*Hwangšǒng sinmun*, June 29, 1904).

The memorialists were certain that the fifty-year lease was a virtual surren-

der of a chunk of Korean territory to the Japanese, because the weak and poor Koreans would stand little chance to redeem the land, when the scheming Japanese were intending to occupy it permanently. The seizure of land by foreigners should be fought against at maximum cost, because no nation had been established without territory, and no people had survived without land resources. Furthermore, the current king and subjects, in particular those privileged by the state, were admonished to have acute sense of moral obligation to preserve such a territory as had been handed down to them through scrupulous care of the former kings, since King T'aejo 太祖 (Yi Sönggye) had created the nation with utmost hardship. The memorial by Hō Sik, Yi Sūngu, and other literati made that point clear:

“T'aejo, braving wind and rain afield, painstakingly had established our country's territory. The later kings in succession inherited and defended it to hand down to our current emperor in perfect state like stainless golden urn. Who in the government are not the descendants of former meritorious subjects? When the emperor minding T'aejo's hardship in establishing [our country] and the later kings' toil in defending it, and when the government officials minding their ancestors' sincerity in assisting their monarchs, how could they give away even one inch of the territory to outsiders. Such action is to betray the intention of ancestral kings and to incur the censure from later generations, defaming ancestors by being betrayers to the country” (*Hwangsöng sinmun*, June 29, 1904).

In addition to the resolute denial, even at maximum cost, of what was deemed as the land occupation design under the name of land development, the memorialists pressed the government to proceed ahead with measures for reclaiming fallow and wasteland to frustrate the demand in preemptive way. Yi Kōnha, who estimated the area covered by the proposal at as large as two thirds of entire Korean territory, maintained that no arable land be left untilled to discourage otherwise covetous demand from outside. He pointed out that the neglect on the part of landowners to reclaim fallow and wasteland caused by flood and drought had led to shrinking of tilled land to a half of that from the beginning of the dynasty. The reason behind this deplorable state had been the seizure of land by palaces and the powerful at the expense

of small peasants, forcing them to disperse, therefore leaving no available hands for reclaiming. He proposed for the establishment of a special bureau in the government to care for reclaiming businesses, supplying techniques and tools as well as more rigorously engaging peasants in agricultural works. Then, in near future there would be no idle land to grant to foreigners so as to support their settlement" (*Hwangšong sinmun*, June 27, 1904).

As this study is to distinguish conservative and progressive (or innovative) elements in the Korean reactions to the foreign economic demand, so it is proper to illustrate why these memorialists' response to the Japanese land demand is understood as having conservative characteristics. First of all, in the Chosŏn state, land was never perceived simply as a means of production, but had moral significance. Inherited land was recognized as a token of ancestral achievement. Hence it should be preserved with scrupulous care and passed down to next generations. Likewise the whole land of the country was regarded as a patrimony writ large. The monarchs with support from their subjects had moral obligation to preserve and pass it down to their heirs. When the memorialists urged Kojong and his officials to reject the Japanese demand for land at maximum cost, they in fact reminded them of the moral duty any thing but unknown to them.

Second, their suggestion for more commitment to land reclamation on the part of the government can be interpreted in light of a conventional way to claim landownership. Apart from legal possession of land, the active use of land was highly appreciated as a token of its ownership in cases of landownership disputes in the Chosŏn era. In typical Chosŏn courts of landownership disputes, the plaintiff's claim for land in dispute proved to be definitive, when it was supported by two means; First, the plaintiff was supposed to produce the evidences of legitimate acquirement, say, through inheritance, purchase, or gift. Second, the former claim was to be corroborated by the evidences that the disputed land was under actual control of the plaintiff by ways of cultivation, residence, or forest protection. The second claim was not legal obligation. But legal practice dictated it, as the public were aware of the fact that the land uncared by owners might weaken their ownership claim over time despite the clear legal stipulation that guaranteed against it (Pak Pyŏnggho 1974, 176-95). Thus, more rigorous use of land

urged by Yi Kōnha and others represented a conventional measure to control land in active way so as to make its ownership securer than otherwise. They assumed that the active reclamation of land so far left untilled would provide no excuse for the Japanese to seek for it, as the practice had been demonstrated as one positive aspect of possession of land in dispute.

Third, the memorialists' fear for land encroachment by Japanese immigrants in interior land was predictable considering the conventional knowledge that the weaker parties in power structure in villages had been vulnerable to aggressive pursuits of landed properties by the powerful ones. There had been a general consensus among the reformers in the later Chosŏn era, conservative or progressive, that the landed wealth had been progressively in the hands of the powerful who had been advantaged in their access to the power of governmental authorities as well as to economic means than their less fortunate neighbors. In the penetration of Japanese immigrant farmers far superior in power background and agricultural skills, Korean peasants were believed to be predicted losers in contests for land seizure. In short, the conservative memorialists' countermeasures against the Japanese land demand were inspired by conventional norms, practice, and problems concerned with land.

### 3. Hagiwara's Vindication for the Nagamori Proposal

On June 27, the State Council decided to turn down the Nagamori proposal, criticizing Foreign Minister for bringing the issue that he should have rejected from the beginning, and thus responded the protesters' indictment against those officials for neglecting their official duty by accepting the proposal as the topic of negotiation. (*NGB 37-1: 586; Hwangšōng sinmun*, July 4, 1904) On June 29 Foreign Minister delivered the official rejection of the Korean government for following four reasons; First, the proposal was in conflict with the objectives of Ōgongwŏn 御供院 (Office of Royal Supplies) lately established to engage in reclamation work. Second, since so called wasteland had been already under taxation by the state, and large part of it had been under private ownership, its unscrupulous development would cause great disruptions. Third, if excluding land of official or private owner-

ship as indicated in the proposal, there left no other type of land in the country. Fourth, it was wrong for the state to go against the mind of the general public (*minsim* 民心), who became highly agitated by and restive against the proposal deeply concerned with their lot (*CIKK* 22: 117).

Immediately, the Korean government received a humiliating exhortation from Japanese charge d'affaires (Hagiwara Moriichi), who charged that the Korean government with no will and means to implement land development project was pitifully swayed by short-sighted opinions of some ignorant people. Refuting the reasons provided by the Korean government as weak pretext, Hagiwara warned Korean officials against losing the best opportunity for national strength and wealth out of their suspicion and misunderstanding of the proposal (*KHOM* 7: # 8168, 172-5).

To Hagiwara, the aim of Ŏgongwŏn (Office of Royal Supplies) to develop sources of national wealth sounded quite right, but it was unbelievable that the Korean government was able to bring out huge capital and advanced skills needed for such a massive enterprise. With respect to the Korean government's claim that even wasteland had been under taxation, he retorted under what kind of law it had been taxed, and who in the world would have accepted that Korea had such an immense tax base. And Hagiwara classified land in Korea according to "universal" three instead of two categories of owners - state, government's institutions, and private individuals, the land under state's ownership being the target of the project. Against the Korean government's concern about the growing voice of opposition, he demanded that knowledgeable officials in charge resolutely pursue with the long-term project of national importance, disregarding expectable voices of dissenters who blindly followed each other with little expertise in the matter. Hagiwara's message was explicit. He not only had little consideration for the argument of the conservative protesters, but also had little confidence in the Korean government's ability to carry out the project.

Even though Hagiwara declared to the Korean government that his government's policy to develop Korean land resources would never be affected by its rejection of the Nagamori proposal, he felt the need to moderate the speed in pursuing with the proposal. He reported to Foreign Minister Komura that as he worried about inciting the opposition and losing

three or four high-ranking officials in favor of the proposal, he would not expedite the process. He chose to persuade opposers, and expected the protests to calm down soon, as had been always the case with Korean protests which had a tendency to lose intensity so quickly (*NGB 37-1*: # 660, 586).

Accordingly, a detailed explanation for purposes and benefits of the Nagamori plan was composed, and distributed to Kojong and his high officials. (*NGB 37-1*: # 662, 587-8) The document titled “Hwangmuji kaegan’an pyŏnmang 荒蕪地開墾案辨妄” (Vindication for Developing Wasteland) was a defense of the proposal against the arguments of Korean conservatives who deemed it as little more than a land acquisition scheme to bring Japanese immigrants en masse as well as to exploit Korean agricultural resources (*NGB 37-1*: # 663, 588-90).

The vindication said the intentions of the proposal were mistaken by Koreans in four points, and gave explanation to them; First, the ownership of reclaimed land should belong to the Korean state as stipulated in the draft agreement, so the worry about the seizure of Korean land was groundless; Second, it went without saying that forest land under definite private ownership for the purposes of securing firewood, logs, and graveyard should not be included in the definition of wasteland. Furthermore, the agreement was ready to preclude those types land whose ownership had been unclear, yet commonly used by village communities for gathering firewood and cutting logs; Third, with regard to the issue of massive Japanese immigration, the labor demand in Japan now undergoing intense industrialization — all the more so after the Russo-Japanese War — would deter agricultural immigration to overseas including Korea. Moreover, high cost involved in immigration and living overseas would discourage Japanese farmers from moving to Korea and competing their Korean neighbors. Therefore, the reclaimed land would be in the hands of Korean peasants instead of Japanese immigrants. To ensure this point, the agreement was ready to include a stipulation that majority of workforce for the project should consist of Korean peasants, like the one in the Agreement of Seoul-Pusan Railway Construction; Fourth, that large population of Japanese in Korea would cause security problems in countryside was also groundless. Because wage level for Japanese laborers

was higher than that of Koreans, and prospect of profits to individual immigrant farmer was uncertain, there would come only limited numbers of Japanese like technicians and managers, who were to stay at defined area under strict regulations.

And then, the vindication told the benefits to be gained by Korean side; The bulk of development capital would eventually flow into pockets of Korean laborers who would make up almost all of workforce; As most of reclaimed land would belong to the Korean peasantry, they could find either base for living or mean for increasing their wealth; Regarding the size of increased arable land, even conservative estimate put it at the same size as current arable land, leading to doubling of both rice export and land tax.; There would be double increase in the amount of custom duty for rice to be exported; The growth of crop cultivation would facilitate the development of related industries in agricultural tools, transportation, and so on; In addition, the land development project would generate tutoring effects on the Korean peasantry in their farming; Thus, no other way than this project would bring greater benefits to Korean agriculture, and guarantee firmer base of Korean finance.

The vindication included the Japanese need for the project as well as its management; The recent shift of agricultural population to growing industrial sector as well as the exit of quality grain in Japan required for grain import from Korea; Due to the uncertainty of profit returns on this project, the Japanese government would provide favorable conditions to induces private investors, whose monopoly of profits, nonetheless, would be prohibited by joint authorities of Japan and Korea.

Compared with the June 6 draft contract as officially presented to the Korean government, the vindication carried a major compromise on the part of the Japanese, namely, the exclusion from the definition of wasteland of forest land which had been used communally for gathering firewood, cutting logs, apparently considering a reason for Korean rejection (Kimijima 1979, 282-3). The contents of the vindication was publicized by the Japanese legation, yet the effects of this appeal to Korean audience were dubious, as the opposition movement was further gaining its momentum as we will see in the next developments.

#### 4. The Agriculture and Mining Company

Some Korean high officials like Kim Chonghan and Yi Tojae submitted the plan to establish a joint-stock company for reclaiming wasteland, building irrigation networks, planting trees and cutting timber as well as for mining operations. The company named “Nonggwang hoesa, 農鑛會社” (Agriculture and Mining Company) was to be capitalized at 10 million won, and to be owned and run exclusively by Korean nationals. Apparently, to allow no share to foreigner (i.e. Japanese), the company regulations restricted the transfer of stocks by selling and pawing to close relatives only, the violation of which would incur forfeiture and penalty against the stock. Foreigners could join the company only as hired engineers and technicians (*CIKK* 22: 135-6; *NGB* 37-1: 595-6).

The minister of royal household granted the establishment of the company on July 11, referring mining operations to the review of the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry. Since there emerged a growing consensus both inside and outside of the government on developing land and other natural resources by Koreans themselves, the Korean government officials in charge had no reason to reject the plan. Furthermore, the plan could be used as an excuse for rejecting the Nagamori plan, thus pacifying public opposition against it, as Hagiwara pointed out (*NGB* 37-1: # 669, 592; # 670, 593).

Hagiwara charged that the Korean government gave permission to the company which totally lacked the capability to carry out the project requiring huge capital and advanced technology simply to secure an excuse for ignoring the sincere Japanese advice to build national wealth of Korea (*KHOM* 7: # 8197, 201-2; # 8203, 207-8). He rallied support from British and Italian ministers interested in Korean mining concessions to exert further pressure to Kojong and his officials. On July 16, Kojong ordered the abolition of Ŏgongwŏn (Office of Royal Supplies) which granted the company charter, thus nullifying it (*NGB* 37-1: # 674 & # 675, 597).

## 5. The Poan-hoe 輔安會 Demonstration Led by the Conservatives

The Poan-hoe-led demonstration against the Nagamori plan have received several scholarly attentions, because the event has been marked as a rare success in frustrating an imperial aggression through Korean struggle, however temporary as it might be. Yun Pyongsök defines the demonstrations as “the mass movement to save the country” as it enlisted the participation of both the government officials above and the general citizens below in its rank (Yun 1964, 71). Yun empathizes the unity of social classes in defiance of the aggressive economic demand, which was deemed as serious threat to the very survival of the country. Yun’s definition is too an obvious one to provide further insights into the nature of the movement.

Kimijima Kazuhini sees the movement as “anti-imperial as well as anti-feudal struggle” (Kimijima 1979, 288). His definition is based on the targets of the struggle, as he sees Korean mass stood up against the imperial economic aggression of Japan, and against the Korean government suspected of making compromises with foreign demands. But the target of struggle often has nothing to do with nature or characteristics of that struggle.

Sin Yongha sees the demonstrations as “the anti-Japanese nationalist movement” which frustrated the Japanese demand for uncultivated fields, and sees the Poan-hoe as a precursor to the following social associations, which led what has been referred as the patriotic enlightenment movement. Sin regards the struggle against imperial aggression as prime virtue of nationalist movement, and he fails to see the conservative orientation in the Poan-hoe leaders (Sin 1994, 77).

Although above three authors present very well-documented account of the Korean struggle against the Nagamori plan, their definition of the movement was either too obvious in the case of Yun’s or dependent upon its opponent in the cases of Kimijima and Sin, still all see the movement as united in a national cause to defend the territory. Without downplaying the patriotic activism brought into light by above three scholars, the current study emphasizes conservative attitude of its leadership, thus contrasting it with progressive or nationalist voices of new intellectuals. For this purpose, it is proper to begin with one conservative memorial by Yi Sunböm 李舜範,

because the sympathizers of the memorial formed the core leadership of the Poan-hoe Society, and the government persecution against its author triggered a collective action on the part of its sympathizers.

On July 7, 1904, a senior official at Pongsangsa (Office of Sacrificial Rites), Yi Sunbŏm together with dozens of literati presented a memorial to the throne, denouncing the Nagamori's plan to open Korea's wasteland to cultivation as a scheme for outright seizure of Korean territory. Yi had agonized over the unfulfilled revenge on the Japanese assassination of Queen Min in 1895. The Japanese, far from making an apology, say, by delivering the murderers, were even more contemptuous toward Koreans and making even harsher demands over time. Now they desired to turn over almost nine tenths of Korean territory to their possession in the name of developing wasteland. The people deprived of the sources of natural and agricultural products would be bound to disperse, leaving the king no one to support him. Yi lamented the neglect of the monarch in preserving the territory passed down by Heaven and former kings, and in protecting the people living on it.

Yi offered an active and full usage of land as a preemptive way to frustrate Japan's desire for land. As we have seen in his conservative colleagues' memorials, this solution was inspired by the traditional practice to demonstrate the actual holding of land by active usage by its claimant. Despite Yi's legitimate warning that Japan's intention lay in the massive immigration of its farmers to Korea's interior, his measures to counter this unprecedented national crisis were not anything beyond traditional agricultural guidelines. Yi believed the Japanese greed for land could be frustrated by nurturing the solid peasantry who were to be carefully guided with such conventional means of agricultural management; to let plants and fishes grow by selecting the time for their exploitation, to lose no time for crops, to reduce spending, to work diligently enough not to leave land fallow, and so on.

Anything but innovative in defending the land perceived to be lost, Yi's memorial was intended more for the moral indictment against the Japanese who tried to take the sovereign land of the neighboring nation whose political independence and territorial integrity they had promised to uphold as well as their servile Korean collaborators. Hence, he urged the king to take

resolute action in rejecting the Japanese proposal to open wasteland and in punishing Korean traitors who were to sell their country to foreigners. He also insisted that Korean government request the Japanese government to punish its minister to Korea for his harming friendly relationship between two nations by arousing hostile feeling among Korean populace (*Kojong sillok* 44: 48b-50a).

Yi Sunbŏm presented the emotion-charged memorial with fifty cosigners, and had daily gathering at *soch'ŏng* 疏廳 (sit-in place for memorialists), at the house of one cosigner, waiting for the monarch's reply. Meanwhile, he was taken to the Japanese police bureau for interrogation. Yi stated there that he could not tolerate leasing such a large tract of land to Japan, as it was gravely concerned with national sovereignty (*CIKK* 22, 125-6). Later Yi surrendered himself at P'yŏngniwon 平理院 (the court under the Law Ministry) to be imprisoned, as *Kojong* accepted the State Council's offer to punish him on the charge of extreme expressions addressed to the monarch and the foreign diplomat (*Kojong sillok* 44: 50a; *Hwangŏng sinmun*, July 12, 1904). Simultaneously, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yi Hayŏng tendered resignation, as he saw growing criticism against him by memorialists including Yi Sunbŏm (*Hwangŏng sinmun*, July 13, 1904; *CIKK* 23: # 448, 289).

Song Suman 宋秀萬, who would become a leader of the Poan-hoe, had been an active protester against the Japanese policies to Korea, and now was one of cosigners of the memorial by Yi Sun-pŏm. After the arrest of the chief memorialist (i.e. Yi Sunbŏm), Song and other cosigners also surrendered themselves at the court, soliciting equal punishment. The law official replied that as the punishment had been already meted out to the chief memorialist by the order of the royal court, there would be no further arrest for the rest of signatories. In defiance of the order of dismissal, they gathered at a guild house at the Chongno Street 鍾路 on July 13 and called their gathering the Poan-hoe (the Preservation Society). The officers from the Korean police visited the site and demanded an immediate dismissal, as it was inappropriate for Confucian literati to convene at a guild house voicing their opinion instead of at their individual home (*Hwangŏng sinmun*, August 1, 1904, Song's kong'an 供案 (Confession)). But, there they gave talks to audience, and issued the circular to government officials to enlist sympathizers. The

circular defined the issue as the national crisis with the life and death of both nation and country at stake. Therefore, all subjects of Korea should come and join the gathering to build a broad consensus in rejecting the Japanese demand (*Hwangsŏng sinmun*, July 16, 1904, *chappo* 雜報 (Miscellanea)). Thus, Song and his colleagues wanted their gathering under the name of the Poan-hoe at the Chongno Street to be the center of the legitimate public opinion (*kongron* 公論) calling for preservation of the nation's territory, disregarding any debate going on within the government or the court (*Hwangsŏng sinmun*, August 1, 1904, Song's kong'an).

Because Song Suman and his colleagues wanted to create an alternative center of public opinion apart from the institutionally established one (i.e. the state council meeting) within the government, his notion of public opinion should shed some light on the characteristics of the protest movement initiated by him. The debate shortly after the arrest between Song Suman and Kuniwake Shiyōtarō 國分象太郎, a secretary of the Japanese legation on the topic of public opinion is suggestive for understanding how they thought public opinion should be formed in a nation.

Kuniwake dismissed the opposition as blank opinion (*kongron* 空論) with no practical value, confined to the unproductive class of people. Song argued that in establishing the current public opinion his colleagues correctly followed the convention under which critical issues of the state had been determined by the opinion of Confucian literati (*saron* 士論). Moreover, since the current opposition was strongly supported by ordinary people, as had been demonstrated lately by the large crowd on the Chongno Street, Song maintained that it surely merited public opinion:

Song: In our country, when controversial issues were under debate, opinion of literati class had been adopted in determining the fundamental policies of the state for five hundred years. In Western countries, the people's rights (*minkwŏn* 民權) decide the fundamental policies. Hence, the opinion of literati class is equivalent to people's right in the West. ... With regard to the current issue even ignorant men and women know its unacceptability. Therefore, the opposition is sure to be the public opinion of the entire nation.

Kuniwake: This cannot be public opinion.

Song: What constitutes public opinion?

Kuniwake: In case there exists the general opinion by men of considerable wealth and reputation, it can be called as public opinion.

Kuniwake admonished that even though the opposition seemed like the public opinion of the whole nation, it was unwise to follow it, because there could have been no progress in Japan's wealth if the prevalent objection against modernization had not been overcome by the insightful minds in the government. But Song insisted that Korean opponents against the opening of the country had been all upright and insightful minds (*Hwangšōng sinmun*, August 1 & 2, 1904, Song's *kong'an*).

The debate clearly shows that the public opinion Song Suman wanted to build was anything but what is formed through democratic process of public debate. Instead, Song believed that public opinion should be led by Confucian literati class. Song implied that the opinion of those Confucian literati who objected to the opening of Korea should have been adopted as the public opinion of Korea. It is true that he wanted broader participation of ordinary people in his opposition movement. Nevertheless, it did not occur to him that there should be a certain methods to represent opinions of ordinary people in building the broad public opinion to cope with the national crisis precipitated by the Japanese demand for land.

The Korean government called the voices of the opposition inclusively as popular opinion (*yōron* 輿論), and cited it as one key reason to turn down the Nagamori proposal, because the government should not run against the popular opinion in its high tide, lest it should lose people's mind (*minsim*, 民心) (*KHOM* 7: # 8191, 197). Though upset by the strength of the protest movement, the Japanese authorities were hardly impressed by it. They relegated the protestors as "disorderly crowd" (*nanmin* 亂民) inimical to Korea-Japan alliance at the critical time of war emergency. And they judged that the movement was led by conservative literati who were unable to entertain the concept of national economic development (*KHOM* 7: # 8236, 237-9).

It was Japanese authorities that first took action to suppress the protest rallies held daily on the street. On July 16, the acting president, Song Suman

and his aide, Song Insŏp were taken with much ado to the Japanese legation for interrogation (*Hwangŏng sinmun*, July 18, *chappo*). The Korean government protested to the Japanese legation that the Japanese authority had no right to persecute Korean nationals and demanded immediate release of two men (*KHOM* 7: # 8210, 213). The Japanese legation expressed the deep concern about the growing anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans stirred by the literati's recent circulars and broadsides, and requested for the Korean government's pledge to suppress the anti-Japanese actions like the Poan-hoe demonstrations before delivering the two instigators to Korean authorities (*KHOM* 7: # 8211, 213-4; # 8215, 218). The Korean government agreed, and two men were transferred to the Korean police for persecution afterwards (*KHOM* 7: # 8231, 231). The arrest of two leaders hardly subsided the protest rallies. Rather, it incited the public to join the rallies to outcry the release of two leaders, as an English newspaper published in Seoul predicted.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, the Poan-hoe, dispatching their representatives to the State Council and the Foreign Ministry, pressed the government hard to publicize its rejection of the Nagamori proposal. Upon repeated edicts commanding dismissal, the new acting president, Wŏn Sesŏng replied that they would not retreat even under capital punishment, until the Japanese should turn down the proposal, or at least the government should explicitly announce its rejection (*Hwangŏng sinmun*, July 20, 1904).

On July 21, Minister Hayashi who had just returned from Tokyo noticed the Korean government that the Japanese army command in Korea would deploy its soldiers in Seoul area to keep order at the recent agitations there, because the security of Korean peninsula was vital to the ongoing military operations (*KHOM* 7: # 8226, 226). On the next day, July 22, the biggest protest of reportedly 2,000 crowd took place, since July 13 when the protest had begun on the Chongno Street. The peddlers from all parts of the country and those who styled themselves as Catholics were the most con-

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<sup>2</sup> On July 27, the *Hwangŏng sinmun* quoted in Korean translation the editorial of the *Korea Daily News*, which criticized the Japanese intervention with the protest and the arrest of two literati who received much respect from the Korean public.

spicuous. The Korean police failed to disperse them, and they would not listen to the repeated edicts from Kojong. In the late afternoon the Japanese military police (*kenpei* 憲兵) finally intervened, capturing several protesters including the acting president, Wŏn Sesŏng. Then, the protest turned violent, causing physical damages. It was not until midnight that the Japanese *kenpei* with firing managed to bring order. Thus, the Poan-hoe incident provided an opportunity and pretext for the Japanese military to take full control of policing task in Korea.

Alarmed by the growing crowd and their clashes with Japanese soldiers, the Korean government tried to pacify the public outcry by admitting its failure in dealing with the wasteland management. On July 23, the government placed public notice throughout Seoul to the effect that leaving the land waste also meant misgovernment, from now on the government would be able to carry out the reclamation plan, therefore there should be no negotiation of conceding even one inch of land to foreigners, as had been already made clear to them. Meanwhile, all high-ranking officials under charges from memorialists decided to tender resignation (*Hwangŏng sinmun*, July 25, 1904, *chappo*).

On August 1, Foreign Minister Yi Hayŏng and State Councilor Sim Sanghun visited Minister Hayashi, and requested for the withdrawal of the Nagamori proposal, conveying Kojong's order. Hayashi recommended to Komura that the proposal be put off not to incite further the Korean public and to save the collapsing Korean cabinet (*NGB 37-1: # 682, 691-3*). Apparently, considering still uncertain progress of the war with Russia, further antagonizing Koreans by pushing for the plan would lead to the political risks that outdid the economic benefits to Japan. On September 29, the Japanese government ordered the suspension of further negotiation of the plan (*NGB 37-1: # 688, 607*). But it was never dead, as its objectives were to be revived in the Oriental Development Company in 1908.

The primary concern of a Korean nationalist historian, Yun Pyŏngsŏk in his article on the Nagamori proposal is to emphasize the aggressive nature of the Nagamori plan and the determined opposition by Koreans, which succeeded in killing it, albeit for a few years. Yun does not attempt to clarify the elements which might help us understand the nature of the opposition either

as traditional reaction against foreign aggression or as modern nationalist reaction. He summarizes the reasons for the rejection expressed in various protest documents in four points; Firstly, the Japanese were intent on seizing whole Korean territory in the end, starting from the wasteland; Secondly, the Japanese settlers would come Korea en masse under the slogan of agricultural development, but were bound to distress Korean peasants to dispersion; Thirdly, their mixed residency among Koreans severely would disrupt the civil order of the country, as had been clearly shown by the unlawful behaviors of the Japanese railway workers; In the fourth, those Koreans who lived on exploiting natural resources like fire-woods, timbers, grasses, fish, wild animals, and so on would lose their means of living (Yun 1964, 51-3).

In a sense, Yun's four points comes from all in Confucian minds intent on defending people's livelihood at the threat of foreign encroachment. Yun maintains that the initial protest took the form of conventional political remonstrance by central officials and local yangban through presenting memorials and distributing circulars. But as the Japanese were ever determined to push forward with the plan, the opponents set up the Poan-hoe under the slogan of "poguk anmin 輔國安民" (supporting the state and stabilizing the people). The Poan-hoe provided a rallying point for the general public including high-ranking officials as well as ordinary citizens. Thus, Yun argues that the traditional form of protest developed into "the mass movement to save the country" (*kuguk minjung undong* 救國民衆運動) for which he does not explain in light of either continuity with or departure from traditional form of popular movement. Yun highlights the participation of ordinary men united in their opposition with their social seniors (Yun 1964, 70-1).

Yet, the movement's broader base per se does not necessarily indicate any change in the nature of the movement, unless one proves the presence of new set of people with unconventional ideological orientation. From the beginning, the recruiting effort of the Poan-hoe was directed to government official sympathetic to its cause rather than the general public. Among ordinary participants, the most conspicuous was the peddlers who were mobilized by their guild leaders who had always felt their economic interests

had been threatened by the advance of the Japanese immigrants<sup>3</sup> (CIKK 22: 150). Their conservatism was well known especially after they had become instrumental in suppressing the Independence Club activities in 1898. There is no indication that some new intellectuals from modern schools or enlightened elements active in the Independence Club activities joined the Poan-hoe demonstrations.

To nationalist historians including Yun, what they value is the unity and the strength of Korean resistance against the weight of Japanese imperialism rather than analytical concept useful to understand it. In figurative language, what matters is the size of whale, not whether it is fish or animal. Unless it did not occur to the leadership that the energy of the mass demonstration could be translated into popular enthusiasm to open new land thereby increasing economic resources of the nation, there was no clue for the movement to depart from traditional type of protests calling for preservation of the territory for depending livelihood and fulfilling moral obligation.

## 6. Nationalist Discourse on Developing Wasteland

Though united in their objection to the Nagamori plan, the underlying rationales for the objection were not uniform. To put differing voices of the objection under any inclusive category, therefore, does disservice to clarifying them. As the arguments of the conservatives has been surveyed, now we will be look at those of the progressives, even though there was no chronological sequence in happenings of them. One memorial by a progressive politician and the editorials of Hwangsöng sinmun are chosen to represent the nationalist argument with regard to the Nagamori plan.

### *Hong Künsöps's Proposal for Developing Wasteland*

As was mentioned earlier, a conservative official, Yi Sunböm's memorial drew many conservative sympathizers, but elicited the government's perse-

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<sup>3</sup> The Japanese legation report shows that at least two prominent guild leaders were actively involved in the Poan-hoe demonstration.

cution due to its severe expressions addressed to the monarch as well as the Japanese diplomat. Yet, with respect to his agricultural proposal marked by more vigorous adaptation to agricultural cycles, there was little which might sound innovative to the contemporaries. Far programmatic and innovative than Yi's proposal was that offered by the former councilor (*ŭigwan* 議官) of Chungch'uwŏn 中樞院 (Privy Council), Hong Kŭngsŏp 洪肯燮. Hong had been a member of the Independence Club in 1898, and later became a founding member of the Yusin-hoe 維新會 (Renovation Society), forerunner of the Ilchin-hoe 一進會. His suggestion was based on realistic evaluation of general human propensities and current practices on land. In essence, Hong's suggestion was that since the presence of untilled lands aroused the desire of foreigners to grab them, the government should encourage the reclamation through distributing cultivation rights (not ownership rights) among private parties, in fact, private corporations, which were to prevent foreigners' land occupation by preemption.

Hong worried that as railway lines were going to reach every corner of the interior, mixed residency (*chapgŏ* 雜居) and colonization (*singmin* 植民) would be soon the order of the day. The lands and houses around railway stations as well as uncultivated lands were to be increasingly in the hands of foreigners (i.e., the Japanese). The problem of land seizure became worse, as the dishonest and the ignorant sold out their plots for immediate profits (*Hwangsŏng sinmun*, June 25, 1904, *chappo*).

As to the reason for the poverty of the Korean peasantry, an interesting congruity of opinion between Hong and contemporary Western observers was that the lack of protection for private properties in Korea stifled individual peasant's zeal for productive pursuits (Bishop 1970, 236). Despite peasants' natural tendency to open new land in pursuit of benefit, their enthusiasm died down, as soon as a host of landlords such as palaces, government agencies, military units, powerful families, and local big shots took away their products of hard toil.

Hong recommended the government had to take systematic approach to get rid of the poverty of the peasantry instead of occasional punishing of corrupt officials. Thus, All uncultivated land or wasteland should be placed under the control of the government not the court, thus from the Office of

Royal Supplies (Ögongwön 御供院) to the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry (Nongsanggong-pu 農商工部). The rights to open, to construct dams and dikes, and to cultivate crops and plants were to be granted to the corporations consisting of local residents.

The uncultivated land or wasteland was to be placed under permanent joint ownership of the government and the people, hence no sale or transfer of the land would be allowed to either the Ministry or the corporations. Instead, the Ministry possessed merely the rights for administration and taxation, while the corporations got the right to cultivate and the duty to pay taxes; the corporations operated through the capital and labor contributed by local residents took initiatives in how to utilize the land growing corps, vegetables, plants, mulberry trees, or opening mines. The local or the ministry officials dispatched were subjected to punishment in case they forcibly transferred the established rights of corporations to other parties. The corporations in turn were prohibited from secretly selling or transferring their rights. The Ministry were to make manuals and tools for cultivators to use. Foreign technicians and tools might be introduced; As the first step of work, an umbrella organization was to be set up in Seoul in order to guide would-be local corporations how to organize themselves and how to start the enterprise as well as to guarantee the payment of taxes (*Hwangšöng sinmun*, June 27, 1904, *chappo*).

*Editorials of the Hwangšöng sinmun for Developing Wasteland*

As all the protesters were united in denouncing the Nagamori plan as a territorial aggression by the greedy and untrustworthy neighbor, the *Hwangšöng sinmun*, the most widely read new press at the time, published the conservatives' memorials, and supported their demonstrations. The editorial board of the *Hwangšöng sinmun* shared the criticism of the conservatives against the Japanese territorial aggression, the Korean government's inaction, and the neglected development of uncultivated land. Nonetheless, in the editorials of the press, progressive perspectives and ideas than those of the conservative protesters can be discernable, hence treated separately here. The most striking feature in the agricultural proposal by the editors is the creation of patriotic peasantry awakened to the harsh reality of the compet-

ing world and armed with patriotic zeal to achieve land development for the purpose of building nation's economic foundation. Here, the editorials are rearranged under three major topics according to their direction of speech; charges against the Japanese intention, charges against the government officials, and appeal to the general public.

Charges against the Japanese Intention. The editor was grieved not only by Japan's continued extortion of economic benefits, but also by the loss of opportunities to produce them for Korean themselves. So far, the Japanese had forced the Korean government to grant the rights for timber cutting, fishing, and railway construction to them. Now they demanded the lease of all Korean wasteland for reclamation and development. By taking all Korean natural resources including mines, forests, seas, rivers, lakes, and bottom lands in their permanent possession, the Japanese not only deprived the Koreans of their basic means for living, but also of the chances for them to develop sources of national wealth in the future when their administration would be renovated and their intelligence enhanced. The real motivation of the Japanese in these instances were solely for gaining profits from Korea and had nothing to do with the protection of Korean independence and territorial integrity, which had always been pledged in the agreements between Korea and Japan (*Hwangŏng sinmun* June 25 & 27, 1904, *nonsŏl* 論說).

The Japanese reasoning that Koreans did not realize the needs of developing natural resources, therefore the neglected task should be undertaken by them sounded apologetic and superfluous to the editorialist. The Japanese, instead of forcefully taking the rights of Koreans to develop their own natural resources, confined their role to showing examples by furnishing Koreans with technical and personnel assistance. He asserted that if Japan had genuine intention to advice reform in Korea's administration — the professed commitment by the Japanese — it should foster the engagement of Koreans in order to effect such reform (*Hwangŏng sinmun*. June 28, *nonsŏl*).

The editor hardly trusted the goodwill of Japan expressed in the Japanese charge d'affaires, Higiwara's vindication for the Nagamori proposal, emphasizing that what had been actually done by the Japanese immi-

grants and their authorities in Korea betrayed the professed intention of Japan (*Hwangsŏng sinmun*, July 8 & 9, 1904, *nonsŏl*). The editor argued that massive immigration of Japanese farm workers would be inevitable, because the scale of project would require investors to mobilize a large workforce. To him, one major source of anti-Japanese sentiment among the populace was unlawful actions of Japanese railway coolies who assaulted local officials and commoners, extorted villagers' properties, and tore up grave grounds, yet were unchecked by their railway company managers. Likewise, much larger population of Japanese farm workers would create major social disruptions across the Korean countryside, contrary to the Japanese prospect. To the editor, illegal and widespread purchases of land in southern coastal areas and along the Seoul-Pusan Railway were a sure sign that the Japanese would persist in purchasing land under the name of land development even by unlawful means of transactions.

Although the current Japanese proposal called for the uncultivated land not under governmental or private ownership, there would be no question that the Japanese settlers, once permitted to reside interior land, were very likely to acquire private land by any means, as had been shown along the Seoul-Pusan railway line as well as in coastal areas in the south and the west. And aggressive Japanese cultivators were bound to create violent conflicts with Korean farmers eventually bringing in Japanese soldiers in the name of protecting their citizens, yet nobody knew what would happen next. Such a sequence was the order of these days in incidents precipitated by Japanese railway workers. The current request for all Korean wasteland was still another example of Japan's breach of faith such a short while after it had promised the integrity of Korean territory immediately after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. Therefore, the editor could not place any trust upon the promises and intentions offered in the Hagiwara's vindication for the Nagamori proposal.

Charges against the Government Officials. After a series of concession rights handed over to Japan, Korea came closer to the loss of national sovereignty with vast tract of the nation's territory at peril of foreign possession. The State Council should turn down the Nagamori proposal instantly upon receipt. If the high officials had been resolute in their rejection, the cur-

rent humiliation could have been avoided. Unless they engaged in serious self-criticism (*pansöng* 反省) about the duty they neglected and devoted themselves to the task of self-strengthening, the same humiliation as experienced would follow in succession (*Hwangstöng sinmun*, June 30, *nonsöl*).

Appeal to the General Public. The editor reminded the readers of the paper's lengthy treatise on improvement of Korean agriculture, in which it contended that the first priority should have been placed on the return of fallow land to cultivation to increase national income as well as to counteract foreigners' demand for it.<sup>4</sup> More importantly, he cited himself as asserting the task was as much "the duty of society and individuals as that of government officials." Men of means (*chabon'ga* 資本家) should have set up corporations to invest in land development. After the attempt to grasp wasteland had already made by the Japanese, people circulated letters and presented memorials to stop it, however this sort of reactions "hardly effectuated the patriotic project [of land development]" (*Hwangstöng sinmun*, July 4, 1904, *nonsöl*).

The editor saw the whole issue in Social Darwinist perspective, and demanded awaking to realities of the competitive world:

"Alas, our fellow countrymen! In general, the way to protect sovereign rights and to preserve nation's territory lies only in just enforcement of laws and heartfelt enthusiasm of the people [for those goals]. Confronted with this world of competition wherein the superior prevail, while the inferior perish, if our politics and people's intelligence are not yet enlightened, how can we expect to protect sovereign rights and to preserve the territory of our nation. Of late, our Korea, its power waning and its fate being perilous, has been not only caught in widespread troubles within, but also beset with humiliations and threats without. As foreigners' infringement upon our sovereignty for independence as well as their extortion of the nation's profits are ever growing day after day and year after year, what can be left after their exhaustive demands? Alas, upon inquiring into how this has come about, we realize that this is surely due to the igno-

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<sup>4</sup> The essay titled "Nongöp kaeryang ch'aek" [Strategies to Improve Agriculture] appeared in series from April 11 through 23, 1904 at the editorial section of the *Hwangstöng sinmun*.

rance of our government and people. Thus, we cannot but tolerate humiliations of foreign people and invite covetous attentions of foreign nations. Is this not deplorable and grieving?" (*Hwangsŏng sinmun*, July 19, 1904, *nonsŏl*).

Then, the editor appealed to the self-respect of the people for them to take the land development task in their own hands, instead of being outdone by the Japanese:

"The current issue of [the Japanese request for] the forest and riverside areas has the same origin. If our government did keep the fairness of laws and our people did have patriotic zeal, taking it our prime duty to protect national sovereignty and achieving mental and physical unit to preserve our territory, how could there be such demand and threat from foreigners? ... Oh our fellow countrymen! In what reason do you take the humiliation granted as if there were something inferior to Japan in our land and people? [Rather than accepting it], the humiliation should be the source to censure and to urge each individual. With the awakening of our intelligence and the growth of national power, there will be no more humiliation like this. At this humiliation, all should feel common indignation, and instead of being overwhelmed by the lament for our weakness, all should fully exert mind and spirit to accomplish the unity for the great task of safeguarding national independence and territory. With no halt on this course, there will be sure chance for it" (*Hwangsŏng sinmun*, July 19, 1904, *nonsŏl*).

To the nationalist editor, the responsibility to keep national sovereignty was no longer the task confined to the ruling elite of the society. The Korean mass were also to have duty and ability for such task. Yet, the mass were not deemed to form such consciousness. Therefore, they should be aroused and educated to awaken to a political consciousness that their action would play key role in consolidating their nation's sovereignty. In reclaiming the country's waste or neglected lands, ordinary peasants were encouraged to have patriotic zeal that their endeavor would contribute to building the economic foundation of the nation. In the past, Korean peasants had engaged in reclaiming wasteland in order to expand their economic base. And the gov-

ernment had encouraged their enterprises by suspending taxation or granting ownership of reclaimed land. But the reclamation of land had been motivated by economic reasons on part of peasants who had anticipated the increase of income and private holding. For the government, the reclamation had been welcomed as a way to guarantee additional source of revenue as well as the well-being of the peasantry. Neither the peasantry nor the government had felt the need to have patriotic motivation in their reclamation attempts.

We are very curious about how this politically motivated nationalistic agriculturalist whom the editor offered as an ideal might behave under economically unfeasible circumstances. Nevertheless, whether real or imagined, such attribute bestowed on the ideal agriculturalist by nationalist intellectuals served as a critical standard to distinguish him from the rest of peasants, who lacked such qualification, thus were considered as "ignorant." Therefore, to nationalist intellectuals, the peasants who worked on fields or by extension those who engaged in economic activities were required first of all to have clear political consciousness that what they were doing was for the consolidation of the nation's economic foundation.

The patriotic zeal for agricultural development which the editorial board of the *Hwangšōng sinmun* were eager to foster among Korean populace were not given its concrete working plan. In other words, the editors did not present any economic program which could translate the patriotic energy into a feasible enterprise. Their program was mainly intellectual engineering. Still, their idea was an important precursor of economic nationalism that economic activities of individual were closely associated with political objectives of nation.

It was not until 1907 that Korean economic nationalism found its expression in the masses. Then, Korean nationalists launched a nationalistic campaign for material contributions based on individual's patriotic concern for the nation's economic progress. In 1907, the new Korean press circle launched a nationwide campaign to collect contributions from individuals in order to repay foreign debts owed mostly to the Japanese government, appealing to patriotic minds for eliminating the economic cause of foreign dependency, thus paving the road for economic self-development.

In the present study, the interest is not about the lack of concrete working plan for developing wasteland at the editorial board of the *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, but about the idea that the progress in national economy can be achieved through mobilizing voluntary contribution of patriotic masses, the idea shared by the organizers of the national debt redemption campaign in 1907 and the Korean production movement of 1923-24. The editorialists thought that patriotism could function as moving force behind the growth of national agricultural production unlike Confucian economists who saw the best chance for it in the sturdy peasantry whose minds were not swayed by any concerns other than agricultural pursuits.

According to the definition of nationalism adopted in this study, it involves political awakening to the role of individuals in the achievement of nation's goals — the nation's wealth and strength in case of this study. The origin of modern nationalism in Korea dated from the moment when a certain group of the established elite began to feel the need to tell the ordinary people to have new consciousness that they should contribute something for the development of their nation.

## Conclusion

The Japanese had a firm belief that agricultural land in Korea was underdeveloped. The Japanese government demanded the lease of entire uncultivated land in Korea for agricultural development for the next fifty years. The ultimate aim of this ambitious project was to settle a large population of Japanese agricultural immigrants — as large as seven millions by one estimate. The Nagamori proposal was known to the public in early June of 1904, and it was met by a strong opposition from conservative literati. Those who spearheaded the movement were conservative minds. The conservative literati expressed their deeply held conviction that the integrity of Korean territory should be preserved even at maximum cost.

Over time the protest took the form of mass movement, and there was an eruption of debate for the usage of land. In the central or national level of the response, there emerged new intellectual elite and political groups who had acquired new attitudes about handling economic resources of the

nation. They began to see them as the economic foundation of a modern and independent nation. Thus, their idea about the nation's economic resources was not far from that of the Japanese nationalists. But the Korean counterpart insisted on the preemptive development and usage of economic resources for the nation's political objectives, going beyond the conventional call to preserve the land from foreign infringement on economic and moral grounds. The new intellectuals had a changing attitude to the mass in that they felt a sense of mission to teach the mass (i.e. the peasantry) how important their role was in building the state. The mass were told to realize their role in developing agriculture into one of major industry of the nation. Thus, to the progressive minds, the land did not remain simply as an inalienable inheritance to be defended by the moral descendants. Further than that, the land should be transformed into an economic foundation of a modern and independent nation, to be developed by the awakened patriotic mass of peasants.

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