

# Revisiting Ahn Jung-geun's Treatise on Peace in East Asia: Critical Encounters with Kant's Perpetual Peace

YI Tae-jin, Seoul National University

*Journal of Northeast Asian History*

**Volume 6, Number 2 (December 2009), 5-30**

*Copyright © 2009 by Northeast Asian History Foundation. All Rights Reserved.*

*No portion of the contents may be reproduced in any form without  
written permission of Northeast Asian History Foundation.*

## Revisiting Ahn Jung-geun's Treatise on Peace in East Asia: Critical Encounters with Kant's Perpetual Peace

Relying on historical records, this paper has reviewed research work on the Historic Act of Patriot Ahn Jung-geun. In this paper, four points are particularly noteworthy. First, Ahn Jung-geun's vision for peace in East Asia has been more clearly examined since the discovery of his two works, *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia* and *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography*, in the 1970s (Ahn Eung-chil is Ahn Jung-geun's given name at birth). Second, studies on *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia* have flourished since photo-printed records of Ahn Jung-geun's interrogation, archived in the diplomatic records library of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were returned to Korea in the mid-1990s. In particular, the interrogation records contained under the Hearing Records, which were recorded when Ahn Jung-geun was interviewed by the head of a higher court in Lushun on February 17, 1910, clearly show the independence fighter's strategy to realize his vision for peace in East Asia. Part of his strategy included the establishment of a naval base for the three Asian countries of China, Japan, and Korea; a peace committee for East Asia's foundation of an Asian bank that would issue a united currency for East Asia; and the enrollment of Thailand, India, and other countries in the committee. Third, Ahn's treatise was for the first time compared to Kant's philosophy, with reference to *Kant and Other Philosophers' Thoughts* (Yang, 1959), thus proposing that his treatise might have been influenced by Kant's perpetual peace. Fourth and finally, Ahn's treatise has been proven to share crucial principles with the Declaration of Independence of 1919 and the platform of the Provisional Government of Korea.

**Keywords:** Ito Hirobumi, Kant, Treatise on Peace in East Asia, perpetual peace, monetary union

# Revisiting Ahn Jung-geun's Treatise on Peace in East Asia: Critical Encounters with Kant's Perpetual Peace

YI Tae-jin, Seoul National University

## I. Introduction: Review of Journals and Research Work

There is no doubt that the Heroic Act of Patriot Ahn Jung-geun in Harbin was a monumental event in the modern history of the anti-Japanese independence movement. It is, however, quite questionable whether historical research on Korean history bears fruit commensurate with his patriotic act. In celebrating the 100th anniversary of his patriotic act, we need to reflect deeply on our research work.

The Korean government erected a statue of Ahn Jung-geun in Namsan Park in March 1953, approximately ten years after the nation's liberation from Japan, which may well have been the first event to recognize Ahn at the national level. Then, on March First Independence Day in 1962, the Order of Merit for National Foundation was awarded to the nationalist, and the Ahn Jung-geun Memorial Hall was founded by the Association for the Commemoration of the Patriot Martyr Ahn Jung-geun in 1970. But Korean historians have hardly made any progress due to the lack of records. His two works—*Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography*, which was written in prison, and *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*, which

presented a new direction for China, Japan, and Korea—were unveiled during that time period. More specifically, the Japanese translation of *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography* was found by Choe Seo-myeon in the Old Book Street, Kanda, Tokyo in 1970. A Chinese omnibus edition of the two works was discovered in 1979 by Kim Jeong-myeong in Sichijo's records, archived in the Constitutional Record Center, National Diet Library, Japan (Kim Yeon-gap, 1984). It was thus from this period that research on Ahn Jung-geun based on crucial data began. In 1976, the National Institute of Korean History published Volumes 6 and 7 of the journal *Materials on Korean the Independence Movement*, which contained a collection of records of interrogations and public trials. Historically, the two pieces have been regarded as a stepping stone to evidence-based research. The photo-printed journal *Korea-Based Japanese Legation Documents*, published from 1988 to 1994, also helped to advance historical research. In 1995 the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs published a collection of materials titled *Ahn Jung-geun, the Most Righteous Activist of Asia*, whose contents included the records of Ito Hirobumi's trip to inspect Manchuria and various viewpoints from around the world about Ito's death, based on the materials obtained from the diplomatic records office of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was thus from that period that more advanced research began in earnest.

The archival resources show that Japan investigated the patriot's assassination of Ito Hirobumi in four ways: (i) a prosecutor of the Lushun district court interrogated Ahn Jung-geun more than ten times; (ii) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs collected materials from various consulates; (iii) the Resident-General of Korea sent policemen to Lushun to interrogate independent fighters charged with conspiracy; and (iv) under the control of the Army General Staff Office, two military police from the Military Police Headquarters under the Japanese Command Force were disguised as nuns and sent to Vladivostok and other areas to inspect the situation there. Of these four initiatives, the first involved the

investigation of Ahn's case in preparation for his trial, while the rest involved tracking the activists who masterminded Ahn's assassination of Ito Hirobumi (Kim Hyeon-yeong, 2009). Now the interrogation records, housed at the Residency-General, are contained in the journal *Materials on the Korean Independence Movement*, thus indicating that most records of interrogations and public trials are now archived in Korea.

At that time, Ahn's body was directly transported from the station in Harbin to the governing department Japan had established in China, owing to the concession of the Russian government, and Japan designated the Minister of Foreign Affairs as the general director of the matter, so the ministry exercised its authority to control the governing department. Here, Japan attempted to avoid the involvement of the judicial branch in Ahn's public trial since, if international law were applied, there was a possibility Ahn would be exempted from the death sentence because the case was strongly tied to certain political and military factors. This is why Japan tried to exclude the involvement of the judicial branch, instead placing his trial directly under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As such, the visit of an assistant minister to Lushun as a head controller on October 28 was in keeping with Japan's political strategy.

Taking the abovementioned points together, the records in Japan are largely divided into four types: the prosecutor's interrogation and the public trials, the Minister of Foreign Affairs' collection of information via consulates, the Residency-General's interrogation, and the army's collection of additional materials containing exchanged opinions. In particular, *Ahn Jung-geun, the Most Righteous Activist of Asia* (1995) is of great value to research because it provides crucial records such as Ito Hirobumi's inspection visit to Manchuria and viewpoints from around the world about Ito's death. Also, research on Ahn Jung-geun has flourished since the beginning of 2000, thanks to the collection of records.

As is made clear above, it is certain that a lot of research centers

have continued to publish articles and journals. Such a trend does not, however, live up to our expectations. More than anything else, it is hard to obtain materials from the Army General Staff Office or the Japan Commends Korea. In particular, as for *Ahn Jung-geun, the Most Righteous Activist of Asia* (1995), there is an urgent need to correct some editorial errors and misinformation which do not fit its original versions. Indexes, usage guidelines and useful explanations of records should be provided in a proper way. The investigation records also need to be put in order. Remember that Japan, angered by Ahn's assassination of Ito Hirobumi, ordered Ahn to be executed as a first-degree murderer. Their brutal act did not end there. Japan rounded up a large number of suspects and detained them (the case involving the detention of 105 nationalists and the Ahn Myeong-geun case), in what was certainly an act of retaliation against and suppression of independence fighters. At this point, it should not go ignored that Japan searched for the masterminds of Ito's assassination after scrutinizing documents related to the event. Records or materials on anti-Japanese independence movement organizations are, by implication, important as such. In this sense, it is urgent to put the relevant materials in order in the most systematic way.

It is very felicitous that scholars have been able to blaze a trail since the 1980s, thanks to the collection of records and the increase in their publication. But we have to admit that with so many materials out there, only a small portion of materials, such as the most readily understandable ones, have been used for research. Strictly speaking, more studies about historical figures and historic events need to be conducted. That is, we have not even clarified how much we should pay tribute to Ahn's patriotic act and how significant his treatise is in terms of modern history. Thus, to resolve these problems, putting all the information in order should be a top priority. In particular, this paper will provide an in-depth analysis of Ahn's *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*, by reflecting deeply on our past research work.

## II. Literature Review: A Treatise on Peace in East Asia

Independence nationalist Ahn Jung-geun assassinated the Japanese Resident-General of Korea Ito Hirobumi in the railway station in Harbin, Manchuria on October 26, 1909. He was arrested by Russian guards who handed him over to the Japanese Consul of Harbin, whereupon Lushun District Prosecutor Mijobujji went to Harbin to interrogate him. Then, Ahn was moved to Lushun prison one day later on November 3, after being held for one day in Changchun and leaving Harbin on November 1. However, Ahn was interrogated a further twelve times from November 26 to December 27 (the second time on November 27, the third on November 29, the fourth on December 1, the sixth on December 3, the seventh on December 4, the eighth on December 5, the tenth on December 9, the eleventh on December 11, the twelfth on December 27., Ijjimura, 1984). The following year, in January 1910, lawyers were assigned to defend Ahn and allowed to witness his interrogation. At a first glance, Japan seems to have conducted a fair trial and treated Ahn humanely. But that is merely the impression Japan wanted to convey. Rather, Japan had a plan in mind: Japan kept an eye on the movements of Korean independence activists, especially in certain key areas, and stepped up its efforts to prevent any resistance against Japan. Government officials secretly exchanged opinions and information about the issues surrounding his trial and his jail sentence. In the meantime, Korean fighters attempted to rescue Ahn and get him to Russia. So, in order to crack down on any movement to rescue Ahn, Japan forced the Lushun district court to declare that no foreigners should be assigned a lawyer for their defense. This implies that Ahn had to defend himself. He was, thus, sentenced to death on February 14, following the trial on February 7 and four series of subsequent trial proceedings, before he was finally executed on March 26, five months after assassinating Ito Hirobumi.

As is well known, Ahn Jung-geun left behind three works from his time in prison: *Ito Hirobumi's 15 Sins*, *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography*, and *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*. He wrote *Ito Hirobumi's 15 Sins* first, while waiting for the interrogation sessions, but as these continued well into December, he was not granted much time for writing. Then, he began to write the 30,000 Chinese characters of the autobiographical story *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography* some time in January 1910 and completed it around March 18. His final work, *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*, was, however, left unfinished because his execution date was set for just ten days after he started it. Most of the work written in prison can be dated to February and March.

Some records on peace in East Asia are found in his second work, *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography*. The following excerpt is what he left when he was back in prison after hearing that Higher Court Judge Manabe had sentenced him to death at the 4th set of trial proceedings, on February 14.

I assumed that I would be executed. At all times throughout history, many faithful nationalists have sacrificed their lives for their countries. To them, death symbolizes many things: they chose death to use it as a political strategy, to correct any corruption or any misdeeds, and to show their wrath. History always predicted the future accurately. Nothing was wrong! In this sense, our history shows that their sacrifices were a gain, not a loss. My life is no different from theirs. I have always worried about the future of the East and have done my utmost to hammer out a plan for our country, but to no avail! However, it will not be long before 40 million Japanese people shout out, "Ahn Jung-geun's Day." The peace in East Asia is breaking down now, so the region's ups and downs will last for the next 100 years. If the Japanese officials were even slightly intelligent, they would not execute me. Moreover, if the Japanese felt any guilt for their brutal act, they would never act like this.

Then, while interviewing Higher Court Head Hiraisi with the help of prison officer Gurihara, he roughly explained why passing the death sentence on him was wrong and talked about relations among the three countries of East Asia (China, Japan, and Korea), in terms of the regional order and peace arrangements. He also asked for a stay of execution of one month to allow him to finish his final work, *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*. In response, Hiraisi accepted Ahn's request and allowed the execution date to be delayed for another two or three months.

This excerpt from his work, *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography*, is an important record that shows the extent of Ahn's thoughts on peace in East Asia. However, more detailed content is lacking. In the middle of his autobiography, Ahn lamented the Japanese royal edict which led to the Russo-Japanese War, and criticized it for being false. The Japanese Emperor issued the edict, saying, "Japan has stood for peace in East Asia and firmly maintained Korea's right to sovereignty." Of course, the autobiography cannot determine more than the fact that Ahn's *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia* differed from the content of the Japanese edict above. The content of Ahn's treatise was not properly known even after a Japanese translation of his autobiography was found in 1970.

Rather more facts about Ahn's thesis came to light when a Chinese copy combining the two works, *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography* and *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*, was found. The latter was, however, left unfinished, and included only the introduction and retrospect parts, thus making it insufficient as a resource for research purposes. As such, the principle behind the treatise was not veiled enough. It gave accounts of the first Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, arguing that peace in East Asia depended on cooperation among the three countries in the region. In this regard, he made three points: First, Japan's invasion of Qing led Russia to station 110,000 soldiers in position with the base in Harbin across the border with Manchuria in the name of railway protection; Second, Japan won the war against Russia thanks to the U.S.'s peacemaking efforts, but failed to secure war reparations, possibly

because the US took the side of its western friend; Third, it was groundless and unreasonable to guarantee Japan's superiority over Korea during the war settlement. He wrote that the unfortunate situation in East Asia caused by Japan's invasion could have been fixed if Japan had renounced its political ambitions. Had he continued to write as planned, then his work would also have dealt with the joint forces of Korea, China, and Japan, which appeared in *Hearing Records*. Thus, papers dealing with Ahn's *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia* were, in terms of content, confined to the point that Ahn's patriotic act was committed for peace in East Asia even after 1979, when his uncompleted work was discovered.

In *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography* Ahn roughly explained why the ruling on his execution was wrong and talked about the relations among the three Asian countries in the regional order and peace arrangements to Higher Court Head Hiraisi on February 17, three days after he had been sentenced to death. The dialogue is recorded on 26 pieces of blue ruled paper under the title *Hearing Records of the Accused Murderer, Ahn Jung-geun*: It read "a clerk of the higher court in the governing department on February 17, 1909" at the end. This document was found in Article 2, Paragraph 5 of Ito Hirobumi's trip to inspect Manchuria, contained in the Japanese Diplomatic Archives, and also in *Ahn Jung-geun, the Most Righteous Activist of Asia* published in Korea in 1995.

*Hearing Records* starts with nine reasons why Ahn refuted the ruling passed by the Lushun district court. The following are his main reasons: First, the district court treated him as an ordinary murderer although he had "executed Ito Hirobumi, an evil-doer who had destroyed peace in East Asia, for the country"; Second, Ito Hirobumi, who led the conclusion of the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty (The Second Japan-Korean Agreement) of 1905 and the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty (The Third Japan-Korean Agreement) of 1907 using the threat of military force, provoked the rise of patriotic soldiers and was shot to death. Ahn said that accepting the court's decision was tantamount to agreeing to the

two treaties; Third, Japan should apply public international law (as when governing prisoners of war) rather than ordinary homicide law to him, to avoid being criticized as an uncivilized country by the West; Next, the Japanese Resident-General of Korea was responsible for Korea's annexation, although prosecutors believed that the murder of Ito Hirobumi, who had retired by that time, originated from a personal grudge. Ahn persistently argued that he did not shoot Ito as an individual, listing several sins committed by Ito while robbing Korea of its sovereignty. Ahn summed up by stating that Ito Hirobumi was accused of disrupting the peace in East Asia. Ahn added that he had devised certain policies to address the situation, should he have been in a position to enforce the above proposals. Higher Court Head Hiraishi, in response, ordered Ahn to present his ideas. Note that the ideas are the basic principles outlined in *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*. The main points are as follows:

- (1) Lushun would serve as a naval port for Japan, China, and Korea.
- (2) The representatives of each country would organize a peace committee to unify them.
- (3) The three countries would formally announce the establishment of the committee to the rest of the world. Returning Lushun to China and designating it as a headquarters of peace would be the best way to announce that Japan had renounced its political ambitions.
- (4) The return of Lushun would harm Japan on a temporary basis, but the world would also praise Japan, and the three countries would be happy and prosperous there. It would be a political gain for Japan.
- (5) The committee would draw its members from each country and collect one Korean Won per member as a membership fee. It would also issue a united currency with the membership fees collected from its hundreds of thousands of members. The branches of the committee and those of a United Asian Bank would be established. Convertible currency would be issued at the bank. Then, Japan's

- faltering finances and monetary system would be stabilized.
- (6) Japan would be allowed to anchor five warships in the harbor at Lushun. It would be the same as if Japan owned Lushun.
  - (7) Ahn army corps would be organized with healthy men from each country, and military personnel would learn two languages to improve their language skills and foster a sense of brotherhood.
  - (8) With the enrollment of Thailand, India and other Asian countries in the peace committee, Japan would easily control East Asia.
  - (9) The Emperors of Japan, China, and Korea would gain the trust of the people if they swore to cooperate, witnessed and crowned by the Pope.
  - (10) Japan would gain control over Korea, but Japan's compliance with the above guidelines would confer upon Korea great benefits.

Ahn emphasized that the ideas outlined above would ensure perpetual peace and happiness in East Asia. He also noted that learning two languages would promote a sense of belonging and of brotherhood. At first glance, it appears that Japan would lose control over Korea. But he emphasized that with this initiative, Japan would be regarded as a country of and for peace by international society, and would thus lose 'nothing'. Ahn would surely have gone into greater detail if he had been granted more time to write. Actually, Ahn was allowed to write his last work by Hiraisi, the head of the Higher Court, so he began to write it after completing his second work, *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography*, around March 18. But the high-ranking officials order to execute Ahn on March 26 left his final work unfinished. Only the table of contents—where such elements as order, introduction, episode, underplot, and Q&A are listed in sequential order—was completed in Sichijo's document.

Among historians, Ahn's treatise sparked much greater interest following the publication of *Ahn Jung-geun, the Most Righteous Man of Asia*, which contains his initiatives under *Hearing Records*. It was from that time that he began to attract attention as an ideologist.

### III. Two New Perspectives on *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*

The detailed contents of the *Hearing Records* disclosed Ahn's *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*. In particular, his creative ideas were quite different from a series of other similar ideas about the East Asian order and so attracted considerable attention. However, it is still questionable as to where the ideas originated from. That being the case, in this paper the two most recent perspectives have been examined.

Now, let us take a look at Hyeon Gwang-ho's paper (2003), in which he examined two theses: Asian Solidarity, of the 1980s, and Ito's Initiatives on Peace in East Asia (Ito's Initiatives), of the mid-1980s. The paper on Asian Solidarity by Hukujawa Yukichi asserts Japan's dominant role in East Asia and so denies Korea's sovereignty. In this situation, Ahn pointed out that enlightenment intellectuals such as Kim Ok-gyun and Park Yeong-hyo obeyed the thesis without noticing this point. Regarding Ito's Initiatives, Japan announced that the first Sino-Japanese War was fought for peace in the East, and for Korea's independence as a result of the removal of Qing's influence on Korea. But Hyeon strongly argues that this seemingly plausible statement hid Japan's real intention to seize the East. Japan was in confrontation with Qing after the first Sino-Japanese War, but, after the Triple Intervention (March 1895), Japan shifted its policy to build an alliance with Qing to defend itself from Russia, under the banner of 'confrontation between the white and yellow races.' Even Hukujawa Yukichi and Ito Hirobumi announced that Japan would welcome an alliance between Japan and Korea to Korean officials.

On the other hand, Korea, skeptical of Japan's intentions, proposed the "Cooperation among Three East Asian Countries" policy, which held that with equal power, the three countries acting as independent countries—should cooperate and brace themselves for the threat posed by Russia. Korean intellectuals (Yi Gi, Jang Ji-yeon and others) admitted the proposal because they had seen Russia take over Lushun and Dalian.

They even approved Ito's Initiatives on condition that Korea's sovereignty be maintained. In regard to this, Hyeon argued that Japan's announcement was false, claiming that Japan had displayed a seemingly conciliatory gesture, due to the "Cooperation among Three East Asian Countries" initiative. He also said that the editorial "Today I Raise a Wail of Sorrow" by Jang Ji-yeon, published in the Hwangseong newspaper, also claimed the same point.

In Hyeon's analysis (2003), Ahn's treatise was analyzed as a successor to the "Cooperation among Three East Asian Countries" based on Ahn's statements: First, the Koreans and Chinese had trusted, supported, and helped Japan in the Russo-Japan War; Second, the Russo-Japanese War was akin to a racial war fought between the white and yellow races; Three, it was urgent for Korea to secure Japan's help to enhance its economic prosperity and military capability. However, as shown in Hyeon's paper, Ahn shifted from its original stance to decry Japan at a time when Japan was encroaching upon Korea's sovereignty, and severely criticized Japan's fabricated theory of peace. His new initiatives emerged at that time. Hyeon analyzed Ahn's treatise in terms of its principles and historical background, as discussed below (Hyeon, 2003).

First, the idea that Japan should establish a peace committee in exchange for the transfer of national rights and the return of Lushun to China was drawn from the Convention for Pacific Settlement of International Disputes at International Peace Conferences, and also from the permanent court arbitration system—i.e., arbitration by a third party. The idea of forming joint forces composed of the three East Asian countries' armies also came from UN troops.

Second, Ahn claimed that people was not the one for enlightenment, but self-responsible 'active' agents. His viewpoint is clearly shown in his idea that the money for a united currency should be raised from the individual members of a peace committee, thus implying that citizens and peace are so strongly interconnected that they would eliminate racialism. This shows a significant divergence from the ideas of those enlightened

intellectuals who viewed citizens as “passive” agents.

Third, Ahn’s recognition of Korea as the one with self-revolutionary capability laid the groundwork for his criticism of Japan’s overreaching power in the East. For Ahn, self-reliance stands for “Korean citizens” who could, in his view, wage “a righteous army war.” But Ahn said that Koreans could partly lean on Japan on a temporary basis for fastest revolution. He also strongly accused Ito of committing crimes, saying that his acts were not designed to protect and prosper Korea, but to encroach upon other territories, all of which were his sins.

Fourth, Ahn, who placed considerable faith in international law, international organization, and international conferences, proposed a new vision for global peace: unification between East and West. From this point of view, the creation of the East Asian Union would open up a new era of world peace.

Hyeon proved that Ahn’s treatise contains significant differences from any regional proposals, based on crucial evidence. At this point, we might consider the possibility that such theses as *Japan’s Regional Solidarity*, *Ito’s Initiatives for Peace in East Asia*, and *Cooperation among the Three East Asian Countries in the mid-1890s* are the basis for Ahn’s *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*. Nevertheless, it still needs to be more carefully examined as to whether his large ideas originated solely from the needs of international law and international organizations as proposed in two rounds of International Peace Conferences. Moreover, it is not fully explained why enlightened intellectuals turned away from their original position and began to look at citizens as active agents, not the one for enlightenment.

It would also be noteworthy to look at the proposal made by Makino Eiji (a professor in the Department of Philosophy of Hosei University). He presented a paper about the relationship between Kant’s idea of perpetual peace and Ahn’s treatise at a conference held in commemoration of Ahn Jung-geun in Dairinji, Kuriharashi, Japan (Makino, 2008). Makino, a former president of the Japanese Kant

Association, mentioned two common points between the two ideologists: First, both accused the Western powers of colonizing the Asian region, thereby ultimately impeding the realization of peace in Asia and, furthermore, in the world; Second, both shared the opinion that educational philosophy is important in creating talented and ethical youths capable of working for world peace.

Pointing out that Kant's "perpetual peace" was the ideological basis for the League of Nations and the United Nations, Makino explained their shared viewpoints in terms of destiny, as follows: Kant held that perpetual peace is not a "hollow" concept but the historical mission given to us, just as Ahn stated that all the people came to recognize the concepts of Korean independence and peace in the East, and that all these exist beyond the scope of the Divine will. These are what Makijo claims to be 'the common points' between them. In addition, Makino raised the possibility that Ahn may have learned about Kant's philosophy from the French priest named Joseph Wilhelm who baptized Ahn, or from the great book, *War and Peace*, written by Tolstoy, the prominent writer and ideologist (note that Tolstoy read Kant's major works in French).

As Makino expected, had Ahn recognized Kant's philosophy of perceptual peace, then his thesis would not have been confined to Asia, in that his treatise would be the combined result of Eastern and Western theories. If this were so, his initiative would have pursued a sort of Pan-Asianism. Remember that Kant's perceptual peace is known to be the basis of the creation of the League of Nations in the 1920s, but Ahn's treatise was 10 years ahead of Kant's philosophy. So, it does not come as a surprise that Ahn's treatise is of the greatest value historically. In the final part of *Ahn Eung-chil's Autobiography*, Ahn wrote: "Evangelist priest Hong (Joseph Wilhelm's Korean name was Hong Seok-gu) was born in Paris, France and graduated from the Asian mission theological school, whereupon he became a priest by the sacrament of the Holy Orders. He is so talented and knowledgeable, and speaks many languages including English, French, German, Latin, and other ancient languages."

It is important as a piece of evidence which shows that Ahn knew of the priest's broad knowledge. As is also mentioned in his autobiographical story, Ahn learned French for "two or three months" from Hong. In the records of his interrogation, his knowledge was recorded as being sufficiently developed to have read *The Nine Chinese Classes*, an ancient Chinese history book, as well as having learned English and French, and a few words in Japanese and Russian, a factor which may lie at the root of his proposal that youths entering the joint forces should be trained to learn two other languages.

#### IV. Evaluation of the Influence of Kant's Perpetual Peace

There is no doubt that Makino's seemingly simple claim has many implications and thus would be a valuable piece in historical research. It would, however, be much more satisfactory if more detailed and in-depth analyses were conducted as regards the philosophical perspectives. In this sense, I would like to present my humble preliminary review of the interrelationship between Kant's philosophy and Ahn's treatise on peace. The book that gave me insight into Kant's philosophy was a Korean translation of *One Opportunity for Philosophy, Perceptual Peace* (Lee, 2008).

Kant (1724-1804) wrote *One Opportunity for Philosophy, Perceptual Peace* during 1775-1776. The book, written in the late days of his life was published 115 or 116 years before Ahn wrote his treatise on peace in East Asia. The Korean translation numbers 77 pages compared to only 43 pages in its original German-language version. But the book explores in detail the issue of why humans pursue peace, and examines what the preconditions for perpetual peace are. Kant lived his entire life in or around Königsberg, East Prussia. He lived through the Seven Years War and the early stages of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era, a period filled with war and violence. Such a turbulent

background may well have led him to make certain philosophical enquiries, like a sort of mission. However, he was not the only one to explore the idea of peace. Philosophers such as W. Penn, A. de St. Pierre, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau had already envisioned a future dedicated to the pursuit of peace ahead of him. Historically speaking, war had been either worshipped or designated as inevitable. Later, in various philosophers' works, however, the concept of "peace" began to emerge from the ocean little by little. The emergence of the idea of "peace" in the modern age signals that "war" has become an avoidable or deterrent entity in the human community (Lee Han-gu, 2008, p. 98).

At the heart of Kant's moral philosophy is the concept of orthodoxy. For him, morality is rooted in human freedom. His idea of freedom is represented by the statement that human acts should be restricted by the will of others, and thus to act autonomously is to act according to moral principles (Russell, 2000, p.918). The same principle is applied to human rights. In Appendix II, *Of the Harmony which the Transcendental Concept of Public Right Established between Morality and Politics*, he shows sufficiently profound knowledge to examine domestic law, international law, and civic law. The recognition of human dignity which dominates his philosophy appears to have directly succeeded the theory of natural law proposed by Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the "Father" of International Law. Ahn Jung-geun is no exception to this recognition: He placed considerable emphasis on international law, as is made clear in the part of his treatise on peace which states that the Emperors of China, Korea and Japan should swear to cooperate and be crowned by the Pope. In parallel, remember that after the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which settled the Thirty Years War, no subsequent treaty intended to settle an international dispute in Europe was processed without the Holy Roman Emperor's endorsement, for which reason we should give a more precise value to Ahn's *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*.

Grotius developed the concept of Natural Law rationalized by

Thomas Aquinas and applied it to the international community, placing its basis on rational creatures rather than on divinity. In particular, he defined the natural order that pertains to natural laws and paved the way for international law. So, Grotius, who had lived through many wars including the Thirty Years' War, tried to find a way to prevent wars, and finally hammered out the principles of international law, thereby establishing his stature as the Father of Natural Law. The same holds true for Ahn Jung-geun. Throughout his life, Ahn had witnessed numerous wars during a turbulent period when the Western Powers were heading towards the East with capitalism expanded outward, so this historically similar background may have led Ahn to apply the principles of Kant's perpetual peace to his own treatise.

In Article 2 of Section 1: *Concerning the Preliminary Articles for Perpetual Peace among States*, Kant stated that no independent state, be it large or small, should come under the dominance of another state by inheritance, exchange, purchase, or donation, based on the principle that no one else has any right to command or to dispose of a particular state (or society of men) except that state itself. This is consistent with Ahn's main initiative that the three Asian countries, namely Korea, China, and Japan, should form a unified community wherein each country's sovereignty would be respected. In his work, Ahn accused Japan of stealing Korea's sovereignty under the banner of peace in East Asia. He also added that Japan should return the two districts, Lushun and Dalian, acquired as a result of the Russo-Japanese War, to China, based on the principle that no one country should claim ownership of another's territory. All these proposals correspond to Kant's philosophy. Included among Ito Hirobumi's "15 sins" were the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty of 1905 (i.e., the Second Korean-Japan Protectorate Treaty, 1905), the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty of 1907 (i.e., the third Korean-Japan Protectorate Treaty), the murder of Empress Myeongseong, and Emperor Gojong's abdication from the throne. It is reminiscent of Article 5 of Kant's perpetual peace that no state should use force to interfere with the

constitution or government of another state.

In Section 2: *Definite Article for A Perpetual Peace*, Kant introduced two concepts, namely, a League of Peace (*Völkerbund* in German and *foeduc pacificum* in Latin), and a World Republic (*Völkerstaat* in German and *civitas gentium* in Latin). The former concept refers to a league of nations in which each country maintains and secures its own freedom and that of other member countries of the league. Kant made it clear that such a league would strive to put an end to all wars forever and lead the way to perpetual peace, unlike the various kinds of peace treaties which are generally drawn up to terminate only one war or to declare a ceasefire. The latter concept, i.e., that of a World Republic, however, concerns the idea of a single great, giant country that will ultimately unify all the nations of the world. Having advanced that idea, Kant also argued that no nation would ever wish for such a world community, and so would reject in practice what is correct in theory, because each nation would ultimately suppress or take away freedom for its own survival. Analogically put, the concept of a League of Peace is akin to that of “Cooperation among the Three East Asian Countries” or Ahn’s *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia*, while that of a World Republic resembles Ito’s *Initiatives for Peace in East Asia*. These are assumed to be evidence that Ahn had already recognized Kant’s perpetual peace. Kant explained the two notions in Supplement 1: *Of the Guarantee for Perpetual Peace*, as follows:

The idea of international law presupposes the separate existence of many independent but neighboring states. Although this condition is of itself a state of war (unless a federative union prevents the outbreak of hostilities), this is rationally preferable to the amalgamation of states under one superior power, as this would end in one universal monarchy, and laws always lose in vigor what government gains in extent; hence a soulless despotism falls into anarchy after stifling the seeds of the good (Lee, 2008, p. 55).

The above quote can be paraphrased as follows: under a “League of Nations”, the separation between countries would inherently lead to the outbreak of war, while a “World Republic” under one giant power would tend to destroy itself, so such a unification should be denied. It reminds us of Ahn’s message that Ito’s Initiative was so obviously false, thus leading to the collapse of Japan. Furthermore, in Article 3 of Appendix 2: *About the Law of World Citizenship*, Kant said, ‘Finally, false politics commit peccatillum or bagatelle, holding it to be only a trifle when a small state is swallowed up in order that a much larger one may thereby approach more nearly to an alleged greater good for the world as a whole’ (p.88). It is also reminiscent of Ito’s “15 sins.” Here, Kant’s ‘bagatelle’ has almost the same meaning as Ahn’s reference to “sins.”

Another notion that it is necessary to know is the idea of Joint Forces among China, Japan, and Korea, which is represented in *Hearing Records*. In Ahn’s initiative, four points are relevant here: First, Lushun would serve as a naval port of Japan, China, and Korea; Second, Japan would be allowed to anchor five warships in the harbor at Lushun, instead of paying its membership fee; Third, an army corps would be organized with healthy men from the three countries; Fourth, the military personnel would learn two languages to improve their language skills and foster a sense of brotherhood. What is clearly implied by the four proposals is the abolition of standing national armies. Note that it is almost identical to Kant’s idea. In Article 3 of Section 1: *Containing the Preliminary Articles for Perpetual Peace among States*, he stated that “standing armies should in time be totally abolished.” When comparing it to Ahn’s treatise, Ahn’s appears more informative and specific than Kant’s perpetual theory, although this part also leads us to assume that Ahn may have been influenced by Kant’s philosophy.

The next resemblance concerns the idea of establishing an Asian bank which would issue a united currency, traded freely in East Asia. In general, economic or monetary issues are rarely mentioned in Kant’s perceptual peace, except for the statement that “any national debts should

not be contracted with a view to the external friction of stress.” At first sight, it looks dissimilar to Ahn’s viewpoint. But Japan issued a large number of government bonds to raise money after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War and then forced Korea to use Japanese currency only. With such a cohesive measure, Japan attempted to bring the Korean financial market under its control. That being the case, we can easily imagine that Ahn might have been influenced by Kant’s philosophy. As regards Ito’s “15 sins,” two sins were also related to this distorted monetary union: Japan forced the Japanese currency to be traded everywhere while suppressing any resistance to its policy, eventually draining Korea’s financial market (Article 6); Japan passed 1.3 million Yuan of government debt onto Korea (Article 7). Throughout world history, it has been uncommon for a country to impose political, military, even monetary sanctions on any other countries. In general, currency unification leads to political unification. Thus, Ahn may have believed that a unified currency would provide a key to make Korea alive. Of course, this issue should be more carefully investigated but Ahn’s idea was, surely, ahead of its time. It was decades later that the EU was created.

It was Liang Qichao who introduced Kant’s philosophy to Korea in 1930s. In his book, *Kant’s and other Philosopher’s Thoughts*, the section titled “The Greatest Philosopher Kant’s Theory” mainly explains four points—the origin of Kant’s moral philosophy, the freedom originating from the human conscience, the relationship between freedom and national sovereignty, and the importance of international law in securing sovereignty. The Five Great Truths at the end of his book are shown below (Liang Qichao, 1959, p. 54).

- (1) No nation, large or small, should come under dominance of another nation by means of trade, exchange, or cession.
- (2) No nation should be allowed to have a standing army.
- (3) No nation should intervene in another country’s internal dispute.

- (4) Every nation should adopt Constitutionalism, which is most suitable to the “social contract.” Freedom, and the equality of every citizen, will be secured by the most advanced government.
- (5) Every independent nation must trust each other to form a giant country wherein every country cooperates under international law. Federal Congress will certify as an arbitration court as in the Swiss Federation Congress.

As is well known, Liang Qichao’s book was the one most often referred to by intellectuals in Ahn Jung-geun’s lifetime, which suggests that, as a civilized and intellectual citizen, Ahn must have read the book. Even Kant’s perpetual peace might satisfy his curiosity owing to priest B. Joseph. Moreover, the term, “trust for (world) citizens,” may have been quoted from Kant’s essay, in which democracy is treated as the most advanced system for ensuring the freedom of each citizen. Ahn’s recognition of a citizen as an active agent, an idea clearly represented in Heon’s paper, is equivalent to accepting Kant’s evaluation of a democratic system. As such, the story would go like this: Ahn Jung-geun accepted Kant’s modern political philosophy and recognized Kant’s perpetual peace as the decisive framework for maintaining and ensuring a democratic system. Some scholars might argue that this is an exaggerated interpretation, pointing out that the title of Ahn’s treatise refers to East Asia only. However, Ahn Jung-geun simply attempted to show that his current concern was East Asia, as the title *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia* denotes: It is certain that he had a total vision for peace in the world.

## **V. Conclusion: The Relationship between Ahn’s *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia* and the Spirit of Foundation of Korea**

Once, someone skeptical of Kant’s philosophy told Kant that his

perpetual peace was too ideal. Kant's response was that perpetual peace should not come about by force. Furthermore, he claimed that perpetual peace is possible only when the combination of good acts and wisdom spreads to bring us a bright future. The same holds true for Ahn's thesis. It is narrow-minded to say that Ahn's thesis is only ideal: it is highly valuable. His initiatives have greater value not necessarily for now, but certainly for the future. In reality, Kant and Ahn's dreams came true decades later with the creation of the League of Nations in 1920 and the United Nations in 1945.

Surely, we can say that Ahn's thesis, as a forward-looking initiative, has been practically proven in Korea. He once said that the coexistence of all nations securing the right to live independently laid the grounds for world peace. The notion of "the coexistence of all independent agents" has an identical meaning to such terms as "peace in the East," "world peace," and "the happiness of mankind" in the Provisional Korean Government's Declaration of Independence. The terms are also rephrased in such terms as "national equality," "equality among nations," and "mankind's equality" in the platform of the Provisional Government, which was formed in Beijing, China as a result of the March First Independent Movement. Of course, it is hardly possible to prove that the authors of the Declaration of Independence and those of the platform of the new government had already recognized Ahn's thesis, but they might, presumably, share common ground with Kant's thoughts on perpetual peace, human rights, and the rights of a democratic country. In this sense, Ahn's thesis may be said to be a prophetic theory to imagine Korea's future, as a result of the annexation of Japan.

The Constitution of Korea needs to be carefully examined together with this theory. The introduction reads as follows: "Upholding the cause of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea born of the March First Independence Movement of 1919, having assumed the mission of democratic reform and the peaceful unification of our homeland, and having determined to consolidate national unity with

justice, humanitarianism and brotherly love, we undertake to destroy all social vices and injustices, and to form a democratic system,” and continues with, “to contribute to lasting world peace and thereby ensure security, liberty and happiness for ourselves and our posterity forever, we hereby do take an oath.” Again, it is worth noting that the above recalls the ideas contained in Ahn’s thesis. As such, this shows that his *A Treatise on Peace in East Asia* has melt with the spirit of Korea’s foundation. From this perspective, it is very unfortunate that he has really only been remembered as the hero who killed Ito Hirobumi, a man who caused great harm to our people. This way of recognition might put another “guilty” into our minds. In celebrating the 100th anniversary of Ahn’s patriotic act, therefore, we have to re-evaluate Ahn Jung-geun’s role in history.

## REFERENCES

- Association for the Commemoration of Patriot Martyr Ahn Jung-geun [안중근의사 숭모회]. (1979). *The spirit of the Korean people: Ahn Jung-geun photo album* [민족의 얼, 안중근 의사 사진첩].
- Choe, Seo-myeon (Ed.) [최서면]. (2003). *Catalogue of historical materials on Japan-Korea relations, 1875-1945* [日本外務省外交史料館所藏 韓國關係史料目錄-1875~1945]. National Institute of Korean History.
- Hyeon, Gwang-ho [현광호]. (2003). Comparison between Yu Gil-jun's View and Ahn Jung-geun's View on East Asia [유길준과 안중근의 동아시아 인식 비교 - 중국과 일본에 대한 상이한 시선:]. *Asia yeongu* [아세아 연구; *Asia Research*], 113.
- Ichimura, Masaki [市村正明]. (1984). *Ahn Jung-geun and the history of Korea-Japan relations* [安重根と日韓關係史]. Tokyo, Japan: Hara Shobo.
- Kant, Immanuel. (2008). *Perpetual peace: A philosophical sketch*. (Lee Han-gu, Trans.) (2nd ed.). Korea: Seokwangsa
- Kim, Hyeon-yeong [김현영]. (2009). Materials related to records of Ahn Jung-geun's public trial [안중근 공판기록 관련 자료; Ahn Jung-geun gongpan girok gwallyeon jaryo]. *Time periods, figures, and social consciousness: Cultural approach to Korean history* [시대와 인물, 그리고 사회의식 - 문화로 보는 한국사; Sidae wa inmul, geurigo sahoe uisik-minhwa ro boneun Hanguksa] (Vol. 3). Korea: Thaeaksa.
- Kim, Yeon-gap [김연갑]. (1984). The Patriot Ahn Jung-geun's prison memoir and the whereabouts of the treatise on peace in East Asia. *Kwangjang*, [광장] 128.
- Liang, Qichao [梁啓超]. (1959). *Yinbingshiwenji* [飲水室文集] (Reprint ed.). Hong Kong: Universal Book Company [新興書局].
- Makino, Eiji [牧野英二]. Toward a new path for Japan-Korea history: Patriotic martyr Ahn Jung-geun and the remembrance of history [日韓 歴史의 새로운 발걸음을 위하여 - 安重根 義士와 歴史의 記憶].
- Russell, Bertrand. (2000). *Western history* (Han Cheol-ha, Trans.). Seoul: Book Development Department of Mirae-N Culture Publishing Company.
- Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf von Immanuel Kant. (1968). *Kants Werk Akademie-Textausgabe Band* (Vol. VIII). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co.