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Song Kue-Jin
Korea University

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After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Governor-General Minami Jirō proposed the Military Logistics Base Policy and increased the significance of Joseon as a supply base for Japan's war in China. As supply to China grew, the Joseon-Manchuria Liaison, which handled economic exchanges between Joseon and Manchuria, came to include China by expanding into the Continental Liaison, thus highlighting the importance of exports to China. Around the same time, the Joseon Trade Association established branch offices in a number of places across China, and organized sample fairs, often to develop trade promotion measures. In addition to economic matters, the association concurrently discussed military pacification work and morale-boosting support for the Japanese Army. Joseon's exports to China maintained a trend of steady quantitative growth thanks to continuous policy developments to meet with the objective of supporting Japan's mainland invasion. This was only possible because it drove the Joseon people into hardship through the control of supplies to them.

Keywords: Second Sino-Japanese War, Military Logistics Base (兵站基地), the Idea of Unity in Joseon and Manchuria (鮮滿一如論), Joseon Trade Association (朝鮮貿易協會), the Joseon Trade Association's Report (朝鮮貿易協會通報), Joseon East Asia Trade Company (朝鮮東亞貿易株式會社), Joseon's exports to China

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1. Introduction

Following the Manchurian Incident, the Japanese military separated Manchuria from the rest of China and established Manchukuo. As the Japanese government diplomatically recognized Manchukuo, the League of Nations decided to impose sanctions against Japan, leading to its withdrawal from the League. The Ottawa conference of British colonies and autonomous dominions also aggravated competition between rival economic blocs. In particular, major countries failed to narrow their differences at the International Economic Conference of 1933. Accordingly, each country focused on its own self-sufficiency and raised trade barriers by increasing tariffs and constricting import quotas, import licensing systems, and foreign exchange management, thus darkening prospects for Japan's international trade.¹

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¹ Preferential treatment for the United Kingdom and the British colonies was further strengthened at the "British Empire Economic Conference," held in Ottawa, Canada, for one month from July

In the midst of fierce competition between rival economic blocs, Japan embarked on the Second Sino-Japanese War. A quick occupation of northern China was followed by the occupation of Nanjing and Shanghai in December 1937, signaling victory for Japan. However, the situation reached a deadlock and more sanctions were imposed. Facing added political and economic pressure, Japan went on to launch the Pacific War by bombing Pearl Harbor.²

Affected by the Second Sino-Japanese War, Joseon underwent significant changes in all aspects of daily life.³ Since the war began, Japan formulated the policy of turning Joseon into an “advanced frontline military logistics base” (大陸前進兵站基地). Suzuki Takeo, a professor of Keijo Imperial University, argued that this policy of turning Joseon into a military logistics base would enhance the status of Joseon’s economy and lead to its growth.⁴ Nonetheless, as Japan was using Joseon as a stepping-stone to occupy China and conduct a war, its interests focused on how to obtain and deliver the necessary supplies.⁵ To this end,

21, 1932. This meeting sparked the “tariff war,” in which each country continuously increased their tariff rates thereafter. See Song Kue-jin, “Segye gyeongje gonghwang jeonhu ‘Yeongjegug gyeongje hoeui’ wa Joseon ui dae ‘Yeongjeguggwon’ muyeog” [The ‘British Empire Economic Conference’ and Joseon’s Trade with ‘British Empire Territories’ before and after the Great Depression], *Yeoksa wa damnon* 56 (2010): 565-594.

² See Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

³ See Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Janis Mimura, *Planning for Empire: Reform Bureaucrats and the Japanese Wartime State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

⁴ Suzuki Takeo, *Chōsen no keizai* [The Economy of Joseon] (Tokyo: Nippon Hyōronsha, 1941), 274-310.

⁵ See Pang Kie-chung, “1940 nyeon jeonhu Joseonchongdogbu ui ‘Sincheje’ insig gwa byeongcham giji ganghwa jeongchaeg—Chongdogbu gyeongje jibae siseutem ui teugjil gwa gwanlyeon hayeo” [The Understanding of Japanese Government-General in Korea on the ‘New System’ around 1940 and the Policy to Reinforce Military Logistics Bases—In Relation to the Characteristics of the Government-General’s Economic Control System], *Dongbang hakji* 138 (2007): 97-152.

the Japanese Government-General of Joseon (hereafter, the Government-General) made the smooth supply of war resources the goal of Joseon's trade and implemented trade control policies to achieve this goal.⁶

Meanwhile, Japan recruited collaborators and set up a puppet regime in the occupied territory. The puppet regime consulted with customs tax advisors and induced an agreement to separate the Tianjin Tax Authority from the Chinese government and to make the customs advisors report directly to the puppet regime. This led to the lessening of import duties; the export tax also dropped gradually. It also prompted the revision of import duty rates on January 22, 1938, and on June 2 the introduction of a minimal or zero import duty for daily necessities.⁷ This favorably affected Joseon's exports to China, achieving significant growth in trade with China irrespective of the realities of the Joseon economy.

Although China, like Japan, was a major trading partner for Joseon during the colonial period, there has been little research in Korean academia into Joseon's trade with China.⁸ Chinese studies have made

⁶ Song Kue-jin, *Ilje ha ui Joseon muyeog yeongu* [Study on Joseon's Trade under Japanese Occupation] (Seoul: Goryeo daehakgyo Minjok munhwa yeonguwon, 2001), 177-193.

⁷ Song Kue-jin, "Ilje ha dongbuga gwanse munje wa Joseon ui dae 'Junggug' muyeog" [Customs Duties in North East Asia and Joseon's Trade with 'China' during the Japanese Imperial Era], *Hanguksa yeongu* 160 (March 2013): 198.

⁸ See Song Kue-jin, "Ilje ha gwanse jeongchaeg ui byeonhwa ga Joseon ui dae Junggug muyeog e kkichin yeonghyang" [The Change of Tariff Policy of Empire Japan and Its Effect on Trade between Korea and China], *Asea yeongu* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 243-281; Song Kue-jin, "Ilje ha Joseon gwa Manjugug ui muyeog e gwanhan yeongu" [A Study on Choson's Trade with Manchukuo under the Rule of Japanese Imperialism], *Jungguk hakbo* 52 (December 2005): 351-375; Song Kue-jin, "1930 nyeondae ihu Joseon ui dae Junggug muyeog" [Choson's Trade with China since the 1930s], *Dongyonghak* 39 (February 2006): 93-116; Kang Jin-a, "Sigminji Daeman gwa Joseon ui dae Jung muyeog gujo bigyo" [The Comparative Studies about Sino-Taiwan and Sino-Korean Trade during the Colonial Period under the Japanese Rule], *Daegu sahak* 81 (November 2005): 123-163. The author has previously analyzed Joseon's trade during the colonial period with China, including Manchukuo and Kwantung Province. In this article, China, after the establishment of Manchukuo in 1932, refers to the mainland excluding Manchuria. After the Sino-Japanese War, the trade between Joseon and China took place mainly in the areas occupied by the Japanese Army and ruled by the puppet government.

only limited references to the subject as Sino-Joseon trade did not occupy a substantial portion among China's trade volume with other countries.⁹ In particular, there have been few studies on the period following the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, when the Logistics Base Policy resulted in the transformation of Joseon into a supply base and the promotion of Sino-Joseon trade. This research aims to fill this lacuna, and to illustrate how food and other products were supplied during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

2. The Advancement of a Military Logistics Base Theory and the Deployment of Supply Provision Policies

After the Manchurian Incident, the Kwantung Army conceived the concept of local procurement and developed a five-year plan for Manchurian industries.¹⁰ Minami Jirō, the Governor-General of Joseon, presented the “idea of unity in Joseon and Manchuria” (鮮滿一如論) upon his inauguration in order to strengthen Joseon's political and economic cooperation with Manchuria.¹¹ He promoted the idea of operating “military logistics bases for continental advancement” and tried to solidify

⁹ See Zheng Youkui, *Zhongguo de duiwai maoyi he gongye fazhan* [Foreign Trade and Industrial Development of China] (Shanghai: Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 1984); Sun Yuqin, eds., *Zhongguo duiwai maoyishi* [History of Chinese Foreign Trade], vol. 2 (Beijing: Duiwai Jingji Maoyi Daxue Chubanshe, 2004).

¹⁰ See Kobayashi Hideo, *'Daitō A kyōeiken' no keisei to hōkai* [The Development and Collapse of the 'Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere'] (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobō, 1975), 66-78.

¹¹ Applying the framework of “cooperation” to fully grasp the circumstances of the time would be insufficient, considering the conflicting interests that existed between Japan (the Department of Commerce and Industry and the military) and the Government-Generals of Japanese colonies, not to mention those between Joseon and Manchukuo, as well. Nevertheless, the author has chosen to delve into aspects of cooperation rather than conflict through this paper. See Song Kue-jin, “Iljeha 'Seon Man gwangye' wa 'Seon Man illyeo ron'” [The Relationship between Chosun and Manchuria under the Japanese Imperialism and the Idea of 'the Unity in Chosun and Manchuria'], *Hanguksa yeongu* 146 (September 2009): 245-278.

the relationship between Japan and Joseon in order to invade the mainland. The supply lines connecting the homeland defense base to the field forces and supply bases were originally premised upon the idea that the homeland bases bore responsibility for logistics. In this case, the main supply base moved from the Japanese “homeland” to the “mainland” Joseon.¹²

The idea of operating “military logistics bases for continental advancement” was a sophisticated strategy that went beyond the concept of local procurement employed after the occupation of Manchuria. At first, it was developed as a means to support a “broad sense of national defense” (廣義國防) and to enable smooth logistics, not only during the war, but also in times of peace. However, the term “advancement” was added to differentiate Joseon from Manchukuo, and to emphasize the significance of Joseon as the supply base for the Japanese invasion of the mainland.¹³

The term “military logistics base” was first officially used by Minami at the Rotary Convention and general meeting of the Japan-Manchukuo Industries Association (日滿實業協會) in May 1938. However, Minami did not clearly explain at the time the reason for using this term. It was in August 1938 at the “Conference of the Heads of the Departments of Industry” (産業部長會議), held after the Department of Industry established subdivisions in each province, that he clearly explained the importance of Joseon as a supply base for the Second Sino-Japanese War.¹⁴

First of all, we need to clearly understand the role of Joseon as the advanced frontline supply base of the Empire. Joseon is making

¹² Suzuki, *Chōsen no keizai*, 296-297.

¹³ Zenkoku keizai chōsa kikan rengōkai Chōsen shibu, *Chōsen keizai nenpō* [Annual Report of the Joseon Economy] (Tokyo: Kaizōsha, 1939), 402.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 403.

achievements in the smooth logistic supply of a significant volume of military supplies, such as food and general merchandise, in the Sino-Japanese War. We need to diversify Joseon's industries, especially its defense industries, so that it can continue to supply on its own in the event that the situation escalates and the maritime supply route from Japan is cut off.

In fact, Manchukuo could have been a more appropriate site as a supply base for military operation in that "unity in Joseon and Manchuria" could be promoted to integrate the Sino-Japanese Economic Bloc into a single entity. However, in his descriptions of supply bases for the Empire's continental advancement, Minami only mentioned Joseon. His suggestion was criticized for focusing on Joseon's circumstances that uniquely appealed to Japan and thus not properly taking into account Joseon's place in Japan's relations with China and Manchukuo.¹⁵ An economic staff member of the Joseon Army argued as below at a round table of the Japan-Manchukuo Economic Cooperation (日滿經濟提携座談會), which was jointly organized by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in May 1938.¹⁶

We say that Joseon, Manchukuo, and Japan are one entity. However, each has unique issues. From the viewpoint of military supply, there is no doubt that northern China and Manchukuo are more appropriate, since a supply base should be located close to the military operation. However, there is no industry established there. The right industry needs to take root in the right place with enough potential to grow

¹⁵ Ibid., 403. Manchukuo and Joseon were rivals in claiming a status within the Japanese Empire. Those who professed the significance of Manchukuo would deprecate Joseon. Through editorials, Suzuki Takeo, a prominent theorist based in Joseon, criticized views that discounted Joseon and instead underlined its importance.

¹⁶ Ibid., 405.

economically (...). As the only territory that is a part of the Empire on the mainland, Joseon maintains public order and serves the Empire wholeheartedly. Furthermore, light industries are developing smoothly and Joseon's own needs are inducing various heavy industries to develop rapidly.

Although Manchuria was the closest within Japan's sphere of influence in terms of military operations, it was unstable and undeveloped, whereas a wide range of economic power in agriculture, commerce, fisheries, industry, mining, and others areas, alongside retaining public order and cooperation with Japan, made Joseon a more advantageous option. In fact, the most important supply available from Joseon was food, including rice. The volume of rice exported to China and Manchukuo quickly increased after the Second Sino-Japanese War. In Tianjin, not only importers, but also people at the Japanese consulate, Bank of Chosun, Tianjin Bank, and even Army agencies, cooperated for the import of Joseon rice. This was because rice from Joseon was closely related to the military operations.¹⁷

Minami turned the idea of military logistics bases into a policy and organized the "taskforce team of the Government-General" (朝鮮總督府時局對策調査會) in September 1938. This taskforce aimed to invite leaders in politics, government, military, and business from Joseon, Japan, and Manchukuo to explore various alternatives in order to overcome pending economic issues and to restructure Joseon's industries.¹⁸ In the opening address, Minami stressed the importance of Joseon as a supply base as follows.

Assuming the future state of affairs, if Joseon implements continental

¹⁷ Song, "1930 nyeondae ihu Joseon ui dae Junggug muyeog," 110.

¹⁸ Pang Kie-chung, "1930 nyeondae Joseon nonggong byeongjin jeongchaeg gwa gyeongje tongje" [Policy for the Uniform Advancement of Agriculture and Industry and Economic Regulation in the 1930s], *Dongbang hakji* 120 (June 2003): 113.

politics, we must perceive that we have a significant responsibility over Joseon in peacetime and wartime, as it is our empire's only foothold and has a special mission as a supply base (...) We therefore request deliberation on all matters.¹⁹

Minami asked for a review of all areas but maintained his emphasis on food, industry, and mining issues involved with supplies.²⁰ The council's conclusions were presented in its report titled "Advisory Report by the Taskforce Team of the Government-General of Joseon" (朝鮮總督府時局對策調査會諮問答申書). In this report highlighting the agenda of the supply base Minami was promoting and its implementation, the issues regarding food, industry, and mining were described as "an increase in rice production," "an expansion of the defense industry," and "an aggressive development of underground resources."²¹

In this meeting, the representatives from the Government-General and the Joseon capitalists emphasized the need for Joseon's economic development as a supply base and demanded active support from the Japanese government. The taskforce team of the Government-General sought to use policy briefings for investment promotion, while the number of invitees from the business sector increased sharply. Despite critical views expressed on the proposition to expand Joseon's defense industry by Japanese government officials and attendees from Manchukuo who were advocates of a Manchuria-centered development, the meeting ended in an overall accommodation of the Government-General's position.²²

¹⁹ Chōsen sōtokufu, *Chōsen sōtokufu jikyoku taisaku chōsakai kaigiroku* [Meeting Minutes of the Government-General of Joseon's Taskforce Team] (Keijō: Chōsen sōtokufu, 1938), 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

²¹ See Chōsen sōtokufu, *Chōsen sōtokufu jikyoku taisaku chōsakai jimon tōshinsho* [Advisory Report by the Taskforce Team of the Government-General of Joseon] (Keijō: Chōsen sōtokufu, 1938).

²² Pang Kie-chung argues that this was because, while the Japanese government had been working

After this meeting, the military logistics base policy was put into practice by expanding the supply of materials to China. The Joseon and Manchukuo governments often held liaison meetings for cooperation. Such meetings were later expanded into mainland liaison meetings (大陸連絡會議) that included China to explore concrete action plans for turning Joseon into a supply base during the Second Sino-Japanese War. In particular, the mainland liaison meeting held in April 1942 after the Pacific War began attempted to develop close economic links between Chinese regions, particularly for material exchange, in order to contribute to the Pacific War effort.²³

3. Measures to Promote Exports to China

In order to supply materials smoothly to China while still following the trade control policy imposed from after the Second Sino-Japanese War began, exports to China had to be actively undertaken. Export promotion was a critical element in economic development: the Government-General had emphasized exports to China even before the war. As such, the Government-General actively supported the Joseon Trade Association (朝鮮貿易協會) by setting up branches in major Chinese cities, introducing and advertising goods from Joseon, and brokering trade. The Joseon Trade Association surveyed the regional economy of northern China and reported the results to traders. The association also dispatched its staff to the region and conducted the Northern China Economic Survey (北支經濟

on a Manchuria-centric economic bloc and policies to expand production capacity, it was nonetheless difficult to reject the idea behind the Military Logistics theory, even though the government was “uncomfortable” with Minami’s production expansion plan. Pang Kie-chung, *Ilje pasijeum jibae jeongchaek gwa minjung saenghwal* [Imperial Japan’s Fascist Policies of Colonial Rule and the Life of the People] (Seoul: Hyeon, 2004), 115.

²³ Kawai Akitake, “Senman ichijo yori tairiku ichinyo e” [From ‘Unity in Joseon and Manchuria’ to ‘Continental Unity’], *Chōsen gyōsei* 21, no. 6 (June 1942): 7.

調査).²⁴ It often organized sample fairs where product samples were displayed to introduce, advertise, and promote mass trade in northern China. In 1936, the sample fairs exceeded expectations by tripling what they had achieved the previous year, much to the excitement of the association members.²⁵

Immediately after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Joseon Trade Association set up an office in Tianjin to conduct trade research, gather information, advertise Joseon news, and introduce and broker goods from Joseon.²⁶ The office was also to organize sample fairs. The Government-General organized round-table meetings for those who had returned from attending sample fairs in Tianjin. Such meetings were also held in China as well for those engaging in trade between Joseon and China.²⁷ In March 1939, the Joseon Trade Association organized a Trade Survey and Research Conference to systemize trade with China. This was attended by representatives from a wide range of organizations, including the Government-General, the Central Laboratory (中央試験所), the Office of Trade and Industry Promotion (商工奨励館), representatives of Gyeonggi Province, the Japan-Manchukuo Industrial Association (日滿實業協會), Bank of Chosun, Mitsui Corporation, and the Joseon Postal Boat Company (朝鮮郵船會社). Under the Joseon Trade Association's advisement, the conference held discussions on urgent matters in trade promotion related to the association's operation plan for 1939, and arrived at the decision to focus on exhibiting Joseon supplies in China.²⁸

²⁴ “Senden, shōkai, chōsa oyobi assen jōkyō” [State of Promotion, Referral, Survey and Intercession], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 2, May 1936, 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁶ “Hokushi Chōsen bussan shutchōsha hōkoku zadankai” [Round Table for Reports on the Trade of Joseon Goods in Northern China], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 20, November 1937, 43-57.

²⁷ “Zai Hokushi Chōsen kankeisha zadankai” [Round Table for Those Involved in Trade between Northern China and Joseon], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 24, March 1938, 14-30.

²⁸ “Bōeki chōsa kenkyūkai no kaisai” [Trade Survey and Research Conference Held], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 36, March 1939, 52.

In September 1939, the Government-General jointly organized sample fairs in central and northern China with the Joseon Trade Association and the Joseon Chamber of Commerce (朝鮮商工會議所) to promote Joseon goods. Officially, the sample fair was being held for economic purposes including trade, but facilitating Japan in its war efforts was also one of the fair's important objectives. This can be confirmed by the fact that the Joseon Trade Association's own description of the sample fair's objectives not only mentioned the promotion of trade with China and survey of the local economy, but also cooperation on military pacification work and boosting the local Japanese military's morale.²⁹

As trade with China increased, pressing issues were urgently raised on maintaining and repairing ports in Joseon, using sea routes, and increasing regular sea routes. Prior to the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese Empire had already been repairing sea routes to China to promote trade. The few existing sea routes were self-supporting but insufficient, prompting the Government-General to add subsidized routes. Running along subsidized routes prior to the Second Sino-Japanese War were a 1,159 ton ship called the *Jangsanhwan* operating between Tianjin and Incheon as well as a 1,010 ton ship named *Hoeryeonghwan* by the Joseon Postal Boat Company traveling as far as Tsingtao. Most trade exchanges had been conducted in the form of transit trade through Dalian, which utilized a railroad system with stops at Fungtian and Shanhaiguan.³⁰ Sea routes using ports at Tianjin and Tsingtao were advantageous in terms of freight charge, but the high-tariff policy China operated served as a constraint.

²⁹ “Chōsen butsan Chūshi oyobi Hokusi mihonichi sokubaikai kaisaini kansuru uchiaikai [Meeting to Organize Sample Fairs of Joseon Goods in Northern and Central China],” *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 42, September 1939, 53.

³⁰ Shibuya Reiji, “Chōsen bōeki to kinjō to sono jochō hattensaku” [Trends in Joseon's Trade and Trade Promotion Plan], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 34, January 1939, 5.

After the Second Sino-Japanese War, a pro-Japanese government was installed in northern China. This government lowered the tariff rate, thus making sea routes to Tianjin and Tsingtao favorable. The result was increased trade for Joseon using the sea routes.³¹ Joseon was able to increase further its trade with Tianjin, Chefoo and Qingdao as the status of Dalian became weak with the transfer of the railway system's head office and major operations respectively to Fungtian and Xinjing.³² Consequently, the Government-General increased or extended the existing routes in 1938 and 1939. When the Government-General also established a company to specifically focus on sea routes and oversee Joseon's shipping operations in trade with China, the issue of assuring the safety of ship operations and their appropriate control surfaced, all of which ultimately depended on port expansion.³³

From April 1941 onward, the Government-General stepped up its effort to improve the facilities of the sea routes from Joseon to northern and central China.³⁴ From June 1941, the North China Transit launched a shipping service, as did the Joseon Postal Boat Company with another that connected the above route with the Joseon railway system. For this, three steamers by the names of *Busanhwan*, *Pyeonganhwan*, and *Gyeonganhwan* shuttled between Tsingtao and Incheon six times a month.³⁵ As large-scale ships became scarce due to the impact of the war

³¹ Kudō Sanjirō, “Chōsen no bōeki to sono shōrai” [Joseon's Trade and Its Outlook], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 22, January 1938, 9.

³² “Bōeki chōsa kenkyū zadankai [Round Table for Trade Survey and Research],” *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 25, April 1938, 21.

³³ Chōsen ginkō chōsaka, *Chōsen no tai-Sasō bōeki ni tsuite* [On Joseon's Trade with China] (Keijō: Chōsen ginkō, 1939), 36-37.

³⁴ Chōsen sōtokufu, *Chōsen sōtokufu teikoku gikai setsumei shiryō* [The Report by the Government-General of Joseon for the Imperial Congress], vol. 6 (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1994), 282.

³⁵ “Kahoku kōtsūsen to Chōsen yūsen to no renraku” [Communication among Ferries Connecting Joseon and Northern China], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 64, July 1941, 28.

in 1942, commercial ships began to transport major supplies.³⁶

In November 1942, stakeholders of trade between Joseon and Chefoo held a meeting in Seoul to review comprehensively for the first time the overall trade between Joseon and northern China. Major traders who dealt with Joseon or Chefoo and large northern China trading houses in Seoul were invited to this Joseon-Chefoo trade conference. The conference aimed for the economic development of northern China by closely integrating its economy with that of Joseon through trade. The conference participants attempted to provide adequate supplies for the Japanese military stationed in China.³⁷

At that time, representatives from Chefoo argued that transportation was not the fundamental problem. They pointed out that, since regular steamers between Chefoo and Incheon were already in service, logistic matters could be resolved by exploiting the existing routes without having to develop a new route for material exchanges with various parts of Joseon. This argument was partly based on the increase they saw in different sea transportation routes after the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out, but was also due to Chefoo's confidence during the early phase of the Pacific War when Japan emerged triumphant.³⁸

The Joseon East Asia Trade Company (朝鮮東亞貿易株式會社) organized the Joseon-Shandong Trade Conference (朝鮮對山東貿易懇談會) held on February 8-9, 1943, to discuss trade and shipping-related issues. Representatives from Shandong strongly demanded that Joseon deliver general merchandise, including food, and even presented a timetable.³⁹ This cemented Joseon's role as a supply base for the Second Sino-

³⁶ "Minsen no tai-Chōsen kō no gutaika" [Reification of Civilian Vessels' Travel to Joseon], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 76, July 1942, 24.

³⁷ Chōsen tōa bōeki kabushiki kaisha, *Chōsen bōeki* 2, February 1943, 51-55; Chōsen tōa bōeki kabushiki kaisha, *Chōsen bōeki* 3, March 1943, 37-42.

³⁸ *Chōsen bōeki* 2, 51-52.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

Japanese War, with the Joseon economy's most important function being the supply of food (mostly agricultural and fishery products) to the Japanese army dispatched to Shanghai in China, so measures were taken to relieve the limitations on material movement, thus easing demand while maintaining key supplies.⁴⁰

In addition, the Government-General organized trade round-tables and sample fairs of Joseon products in Dalian, Qingdao, Jinan, Nanjing, and Shanghai for 22 days from February 15 to March 8, 1943, to “promote the orderly management and mutual exchange of industry culture.” For a further boost in trade, they organized in each region meetings with local government officers and private sector representatives as well as sample fairs to introduce and promote Joseon's products. Under the prevailing circumstances of limited supplies and controlled bilateral trading, they tried to focus on resolving the bottleneck caused by controlled trading. They had the Joseon East Asia Trade Company present a small selection of samples among goods that could be supplied without causing trouble.⁴¹ The Shandong economy became increasingly dependent upon Joseon in trying to overcome various difficulties the escalating war was causing. They felt that profit-seeking free trade alone would not be enough for bilateral trade between the two countries to withstand the entangling circumstances of the northern Chinese economy, and called for a special measure.

4. Expectations, Concerns and the Reality of Trade with China

After the Second Sino-Japanese War, rosy expectations were dominant with the prospect of a Chinese market of 400 million people, which

⁴⁰ Chōsen tōa bōeki kabushiki kaisha, *Chōsen bōeki* 4, April 1943, 227.

⁴¹ *Chōsen bōeki* 3, 125.

looked much more attractive than that of Manchukuo alone.⁴² Arguments were being made that trade with China was more important than with Manchukuo.⁴³ However, because Joseon was primarily an agricultural country trading with another of the same kind, it would face a multitude of limitations. The Joseon Trade Association emphasized trading with northern China, but the actual volume of trade was far from substantial since products supplied from Joseon were only military related goods.⁴⁴

This mix of expectation and concern was not necessarily contradictory, as was pointed out in the editorial by Kudō Sanjirō, managing director of the Joseon Trade Association. Kudō raised concerns that China was still an agricultural country in terms of its industrial development cycle and that Joseon, despite its rapid industrialization, could not yet be defined as an industrial state, either. Both countries shared problems of having a lack of capital and an excess of labor. The absence of financial interdependence made it even more difficult for them to promote trade. Nevertheless, since production bases in central and northern China had been destroyed by the Second Sino-Japanese War and caused a growth in demand for reconstruction and supplies for the Japanese Army, Joseon would need to be responsible for the supply of goods, resulting in a growth in its trade with China.⁴⁵

⁴² Shibuya Reiji, “Chōsen bōeki no shinsei-zei to hatten taisaku” [Trade Growth Measures for Joseon under Newly Developing Circumstances], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 46, January 1940, 5.

⁴³ The integration with the Manchuria economy was further emphasized by actively exporting Joseon goods to northeast Manchuria. Suzuki Takeo criticized the view that stressed the importance of China. He categorized Manchukuo as northern Manchuria, southern Manchuria, and Joseon. See “Bōeki chōsa kenkyū zadankai” [Round Table for Trade Survey and Research], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 25, April 1938.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁵ Kudō Sanjirō, “Jihen-go no Chū-hokushi keizai to Chōsen bōeki no shōrai—Jihen-go no Chū-hokushi shisatsu no kansō” [The Future of Joseon Trade between Central and Northern China after the Sino-Japanese War—Central and Northern China’s Appreciation for the Inspection since the Sino-Japanese War], in *Chōsen bōeki no shinkō mondai to Chū-hokushi keizai no dōkō* [The Development Issues of Joseon Trade, and the Trends of Central and Northern China’s Economy] (Keijō: Chōsen bōeki kyōkai, 1938), 111-112.

Table 1. Trends of Joseon's Trade with China during the Sino-Japanese War

	Exports		Imports		Balance	Total	
	Value	Index	Value	Index	Value	Value	Index
1937	4,842	100	10,368	100	-5,526	15,210	100
1938	22,155	458	12,217	118	9,938	34,372	226
1939	33,566	693	10,334	100	23,232	43,900	289
1940	39,160	809	17,454	168	21,706	56,614	372
1941	42,145	870	38,833	375	3,312	80,978	532
1942	42,405	876	29,257	282	13,148	71,662	471
1943	47,646	984	37,800	365	9,846	85,446	562
1944	35,020	723	26,555	256	8,465	61,575	405

Sources: Chōsen sōtokufu, *Chōsen bōeki nenpyō* [The Year Book of Joseon Trade]; Research Department of the Bank of Chosun, *Chōsen keizai nenpō* [Annual Economic Review of Korea] 3 (1948), 44-45.

Trade between Joseon and China grew more than sevenfold between 1937 and 1944. Joseon's trade deficit of 5.5 million yen in 1937 crossed over to a surplus of 9.9 million yen in 1938, thanks to rapid growth in exports. In 1939, the trade surplus amounted to 23 million yen.

Japanese scholars who have studied the Joseon economy in that period have postulated that Joseon attained a status equal to Japan through emancipation from its dependent position following the Manchurian Incident and the Second Sino-Japanese War, which brought fundamental changes that enabled Joseon to contribute to completing the Manchuria-Japan Economic Bloc, and thus affected Joseon trade.⁴⁶ However, Joseon's trade dependency on Japan deepened even after the Second Sino-Japanese War and Joseon's role in the colonial trade system, as the supplier of food and raw materials and buyer of finished goods, remained unchanged.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See Suzuki Masabumi, *Chōsen keizai no gendankai* [The Current Phase of the Joseon Economy] (Keijō: Teikoku chihō gyōsei gakkai Chōsen honbu, 1939); Suzuki, *Chōsen no keizai*.

⁴⁷ See Song, *Ilje ha ui Joseon muyeog yeongu*.

Table 2. Top 10 Export Products to China (year 1939)

	Product	Value (yen)	Ratio
1	Rice	13,336,965	39.67%
2	Minerals	3,246,194	9.65%
3	Flour	1,944,427	5.78%
4	Fruit	1,907,618	5.67%
5	Ginseng	1,570,997	4.67%
6	Liquor	1,230,531	3.66%
7	Tobacco	1,147,604	3.41%
8	Fisheries	1,134,904	3.38%
9	Timber	887,894	2.64%
10	Grains	752,210	2.24%

Source: Chōsen sōtokufu [Government-General of Joseon], *Chōsen bōeki nenpyō* [The Year Book of Joseon Trade] (1939).

This is well illustrated in the table above, which shows that foods comprised more than 50% of the total value of Joseon’s exports to China. In particular, the Chinese demand for Korean rice grew, and rice accounted for almost 40% of the total export value to China in 1939. This was because the demand for rice rapidly increased in proportion to the Japanese expatriate population in China.⁴⁸ Yet, this rice was not only for Japanese people. As the taste preference among the Chinese changed, Chinese interest in Joseon rice increased to the extent that rice exports to China were expected to grow even higher.⁴⁹ According to Table 3, Joseon rice comprised only 0.74% of total imports in terms of volume. However,

⁴⁸ Suzuki Masabumi said the proportion Joseon rice occupied among military supplies had increased with the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and anticipated it to continue to grow due to the advantages rice from Joseon had over those from Japan or Taiwan. Joseon was considered advantageous compared to Manchukuo, northern China, or even Japan, where the intensive cultivation methods on agricultural land had reached saturation point. Suzuki, *Chōsen keizai no gendankai*, 524.

⁴⁹ “Hokushi oyobi Chūnanshi ni okeru beikoku no shōhi narabi ni yu inyū jōkyō” [Grain Consumption in Northern, Central and Southern China and the State of Grain Import and Export], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 31, October 1938, 18.

Table 3. Quantity and Value of Rice Imports in Tianjin Maritime Customs (January-April 1938)

	Quantity		Value		A/B
	A (100 tons)	Percentage	B (1,000 yuan)	Percentage	
French Indo-China	41,207	11.02%	264,467	10.89%	6.42
India	33,382	8.92%	189,341	7.80%	5.67
Japan	55,160	14.75%	449,806	18.52%	8.15
Joseon	2,760	0.74%	27,692	1.14%	10.03
Hong Kong	10,801	2.89%	65,879	2.71%	6.1
Thailand	220,468	58.94%	1,351,495	55.66%	6.13
Singapore, Straits, Etc.	5,080	1.36%	32,767	1.35%	6.45
Kwantung Leased	4,992	1.33%	44,932	1.85%	9
Territory					
Others	215	0.06%	1,880	0.08%	8.74
Total	374,065	100.00%	2,428,259	100.00%	6.49

Source: Chōsen bōeki kyōkai [The Joseon Trade Association], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* [The Joseon Trade Association's Report] 31, October 1938, 15.

it comprised 1.14% in terms of value. This was because the price of Joseon rice was high. Of all the rice imported to China, the price of rice from Joseon per 100 tons was the most expensive.

Since Chinese people preferred Joseon rice despite its high price, Japan decided that Joseon rice was to be provided to the Japanese in principle and set up the Beijing Joseon Rice Exporters and Importers Union (北京鮮米輸入業者組合).⁵⁰ Upon the request of Joseon rice importers in Tianjin, the Tianjin branch of the Joseon Trade Association arranged a meeting between representatives from the Japanese Consulate, the Army Special Force, Bank of Chosun, and Tianjin Bank to facilitate mutual cooperation for rice imports from Joseon. The fact that political and economic organizations participated, not to mention a military

⁵⁰ “Pekin senmai toriatsukai gyōsha no kaigō hōkoku” [Report on the Meeting of Grain Traders in Beijing], *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 37, April 1938, 24-31.

agency, as well, shows Joseon rice had a direct relevance to the Second Sino-Japanese War.⁵¹ The reason rice started to be exported from Gunsan port to Tsingtao port was to supply it to the Japanese Army occupying Shandong.⁵²

Exports of flour, fruit, ginseng, liquor, and grains also increased rapidly.⁵³ This was closely related to Japan's policy to supply food to China. In the case of flour, records indicate that domestic demand for Joseon flour increased rapidly as the policy of restricting exports to the Yen Bloc came into effect after September 1939.⁵⁴ The fact that flour exports to China in 1939 increased so much may mean that China had been excluded from such export controls on flour. Ginseng was an important export item to China, enough to have been placed in a standalone category independent from food or general merchandise among other export items.⁵⁵ Fisheries decreased in 1938, but experienced resurgence in 1939. Most of the apples that Shanghai imported from September to December 1942 were from Joseon.⁵⁶ Tobacco increased in price but decreased in volume. Mixed grains were imported to Joseon as a replacement for rice as its rice was exported to China, but Joseon's simultaneous increase in grain exports suggest that much of this was lost

⁵¹ Song, "1930 nyeondae ihu Joseon ui dae Junggug muyeog," 110.

⁵² Kim Tae-woong, "Ilje ha Gunsanbu hwagyo ui jonjae hyeongtae wa hwaldong yangsang" [The Presence and Activities of the Overseas Chinese in Gunsan under Japanese Colonial Rule], *Jibangsa wa jibang munhwa* 13, no. 2 (November 2010): 429.

⁵³ Joseon flour only targeted Manchukuo and did not allot attention to entering the market of northern China due to production capacity issues. However, once the Second Sino-Japanese War began, sales by Joseon were restricted and the destination of exports was shifted to northern China. *Chōsen no tai-Sasō bōeki ni tsuite*, 18.

⁵⁴ Kawai Akitake, *Chōsen kōgyō no gendankai* [Current Status of Joseon Industries] (Keijō: Tōyō keizai shinpōsha Keijō Shikyoku, 1943), 302.

⁵⁵ "Nakasina Chōsen yunyū haikyū kumiai setsuritsu ni kansuru ken [On the Establishment of a Distribution Association of Imported Joseon Goods in Central China]," *Chōsen bōeki kyōkai tsūhō* 58, January 1941, 19.

⁵⁶ Chōsen tōa bōeki kabushiki kaisha, *Chōsen bōeki* 1, January 1943, 27.

to further sale and export and did not reach the Joseon people. As for exporting minerals and timber, while their prices increased sharply, the growth of their volume was not as significant compared to that of food.

The Second Sino-Japanese War inevitably and significantly influenced Joseon's exports to China. After the beginning of the war, supplies of food and raw materials were insufficient even for domestic consumption. In order to continue exporting to China, Joseon had to cut down on its consumption. Consequently, rationing was implemented. The following quotation vividly illustrates the circumstances of the time.

If the demand for rice [in Joseon] before Japan joined World War II was 1/5 of Japan, the ration distributed in Joseon during the war was so insufficient that people had to suffer hunger. I heard many times that the first word a baby learned, and the final word an old man would say, was "Haiku" (ration). Rice (to be exact, rice-replacements, such as corn or sorghum) distributed by ration coupons did not last any longer than two weeks. Fish, eggs, and other foods were provided only to the Japanese. (...) In Seoul, it was not unusual to spot people who were sallow due to malnutrition.⁵⁷

Per-capita food consumption of the Joseon people under Japanese occupation continued to decrease. Prior to the Second Sino-Japanese War, this was mainly due to exports to Japan. After the war, exports to China were another factor contributing to the decrease of per-capita food consumption by the Joseon people. Statistics covering the years between 1910 and 1945 indicate that food consumption dropped by more than one-half by the end of that period. Hence, the increase of trade with China

⁵⁷ Fanja Isaakovna Šabšina, *Singminji Joseon eseo eoneu Reosia jiseong i sseun yeoksa hyeonjang girok* [A Record of Historical Scenes in Colonial Joseon Written by a Russian Intellectual], trans. Kim Myung-Ho (Seoul: Hanul, 1996), 179-181.

meant even greater hardship for the people of Joseon.⁵⁸

5. Conclusion

After the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Governor-General Minami Jirō implemented the Military Logistics Base Policy and increased the significance of Joseon as a supply base for Japan's war in China. The Governor-General of Joseon took various export promotion measures to enable Joseon to fulfill this role, and these measures succeeded in dramatically increasing exports to China, despite difficult circumstances.

Unlike the Kwantung Army's position after the Manchurian Incident, Governor-General Minami advanced the idea of Joseon-Manchuria Unity. This theory emphasizing the importance of Joseon faced some criticism in Japan but gained acceptance as the war continued. Minami organized a taskforce team under the Government-General for the restructuring of Joseon's industries and particularly focused on the sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, and mining. Minami's intention to attract investment through this meeting gained a degree of acceptance. As supply to China grew, the Joseon-Manchuria Liaison, which handled economic exchanges between them, expanded into the Continental Liaison that included China, thus highlighting the importance of exports to China.

After the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Joseon Trade Association

⁵⁸ Song, *Ilje ha ui Joseon muyeog yeongu*, 220. No consensus exists among scholars on whether the living standards of Joseon people had improved during the Japanese colonial rule. The author's research indicates that the volume of food consumption by an absolute majority of Joseon people had steadily dropped from the inception of colonial rule and plummeted drastically during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Kimura Mitsuhiro has launched full-fledged research on the living standards of Joseon people during the colonial period. See Kimura Mitsuhiro, "Standards of Living in Colonial Korea: Did the Masses Become Worse Off or Better Off Under Japanese Rule?," *The Journal of Economic History* 53, no. 3 (September 1993): 629-652.

established branches in a number of locations across China, and often organized sample fairs and round-table talks, all to boost Joseon's trade to China. In addition to economic issues, the association simultaneously discussed military pacification work and morale-boosting support for the Japanese Army. Exports to China were used as a means to execute war. The rise in material exchange raised the issue of increasing regular shipping services, so the Government-General chose to focus on developing subsidized sea routes, more so than self-supporting ones. Many discussions also took place on expanding ports. As large ships had become scarce since the Pacific War, commercial ships were used to transport critical military supplies. To administer exports to northern China in a comprehensive manner, a round-table meeting was held in Seoul for those involved in trade between Joseon and China. Also discussed at this meeting were various measures to provide conveniences for the Japanese Army. At the Joseon-Shandong Trade Conference held in 1943, Joseon faced strong requests to provide food and general merchandise. Around that time, the Japanese Army was reorganizing its system for critical supplies and removing certain restrictions that had been previously imposed upon moving critical supplies in an effort to ensure the smooth provision of resources to China.

After the Second Sino-Japanese War, a mix of expectations and concerns were voiced regarding trade with China, and the two were not contradictory. Kudō Sanjirō was concerned that there would be difficulties in increasing exports with the trade structure remaining unchanged. At the same time, however, he hoped for a growth in exports to China as the country was in need of supplies. This expectation materialized into a more than sevenfold increase in exports between 1937 and 1944. Scarce as it was in Joseon, food, including rice, comprised the majority (rice alone comprised almost 40%) of exports to China. Flour, fruit, ginseng, liquor, fisheries, and grains were all listed among the top ten most exported items. Of course, some raw materials, such as minerals and timber, were exported, as well, but the main export items to China

were food, which Joseon itself lacked.

The effort to promote exports through trade policy without making qualitative changes to the industrial structure of Joseon met with intrinsic limitations. Still, Joseon's exports to China maintained a trend of steady quantitative growth thanks to continuous policy developments to meet the objective of supporting Japan's invasion of the mainland. This was only possible because it drove the Joseon people into hardship through the control of supplies to them.

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