

The Rise and Fall of the New Right Movement and the Historical Wars in 2000s South Korea¹

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Abstract

The present article deals with one of the attempts by South Korea's privileged stratum to undermine the very basis for any criticisms against the colonial-age behaviour of its institutional—and in many cases familial—forefathers, namely the so-called New Right movement. Simultaneously an academic and political movement, it was launched in 2004 and had been acting as advocates of a new, post-nationalist neo-conservatism until its recent decline, more or less concurrent with the demise of Park Geun-hye (Pak Kûnhye) regime amidst the candlelight vigils and million-strong demonstrations in downtown Seoul in 2016–2017. On the academic plane, New Right aimed at shifting the axiological basis of South Korean nationalism from ethno-nation (*minjok*) discriminated and oppressed by the Japanese colonialists, to the capitalist 'civilization' which colonialism had supposedly helped to transplant onto Korean soil, and the South Korean statehood which allowed so many former members of the colonial-period elites to maintain their socio-economic positions. If the new order of priorities, with the market game rules, industrial growth and modern capitalist statehood put ahead of the traditional shibboleth of the ethno-nation (encompassing the majority of population which might not necessarily benefit, at least, immediately, from all these developments), was to be established, the defence of colonial-age collaboration would no longer be an onerous task. On the contrary, collaborators could be, in such a way, re-interpreted as patriots who had acted out of Korea's long-term interest in

‘civilizing’ itself with the Japanese ‘help’ rather than pure opportunism. However, New Right never succeeded in putting the conventional South Korean historical paradigm—based, eventually, on the vision of Korea ‘under-developed’ by the colonial capitalism and heavily influenced by various left-nationalistic interpretations of Marxism—upside down. The present article aims at exploring how the movement proceeded and finding out what could have been the decisive factors in its failure. Moreover, it will shed the light on the general tendencies in the development of South Korean historiography in the neo-liberal age, in an attempt to understand to which extent the elite interests may be still influencing the historiographical trends, even despite the downfall of the New Right movement.

Keywords: ethno-nationalism, collaboration, neo-liberalism, New Right, Park Geun-hye, historical revisionism.

Preface

During the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, school textbooks and other components of South Korea’s official history, alongside the mainstream historiography underpinning them, were typical of post-colonial history writing, in its more or less conservative version. Since the mid-1960s, the systematic refutation of the Japanese colonial view of Korean history was seen as one of the central tasks of South Korean historians. This mission was seen as particularly urgent since a similar job had been already done, to a very large extent, in the 1950s by Marxist historians under the aegis of the rival North Korean regime.² De-colonizing historiography did not, of course, imply any doubts about the modernist and largely Eurocentric basic premises of the Japanese colonialist views per se. It was more about minuses being replaced by pluses, with the basic teleological matrix of a pre-ordained march towards European-style modernity remaining largely unchanged. While the Japanese colonial historians saw Korea—in what we today would probably characterise as quintessentially Orientalist way—as a stagnant society unable to develop capitalism on its own, South Korean historians since the late 1960s have been following up on the colonial-era Marxist historians’ endeavour of rescuing the supposed sprouts of capitalism in pre-modern Korea from oblivion.³ While the Japanese colonial historians—again, in a typically Orientalist fashion—were striving to (mis)represent Korea as a weak peninsular victim of the perpetual struggle between China’s successive dynasties and Japan, South Korean historians were emphasizing both the pre-modern history of anti-foreign resistance and the anti-colonial movements of the pre-colonial and

colonial periods.⁴ There was, however, one obvious ideological taboo. Under the anti-communist military regimes, research on the history of Communist resistance were controlled and restrained, while the place of Communists in the official historical representations—and especially school textbooks—was kept to a bare minimum.⁵

Some important changes to the status quo of South Korean historiography came in the late 1980s and early 1990s, propelled by the general growth of a leftist milieu in history as well as in other disciplines,⁶ mostly underground or in the grey zone between what was prohibited and what was de facto tolerated.⁷ The liberalization that followed the re-introduction of institutional democracy in 1987 also brought significant changes. Research on the Communist movement of the colonial period became fashionable for a while, a phenomenon no doubt helped by the opening of Comintern archives after the Soviet collapse in 1991. In popular culture, such previously tabooed issues as the leftist guerrilla movement of the late 1940s–early 1950s were now widely used as a subject-matter. Good examples are such critically acclaimed and commercially successful masterpieces as *Nambugun* (南部軍 [North Korea's] Southern Army, 1990), a film treating leftist guerrillas in a largely sympathetic way,⁸ and *T'aebaek sanmaek* (太白山脈 *The T'aebaek Mountain Range*, 1989), the ten volumes roman-fleuve by Cho Ch'ongnae (b. 1943) presenting a left-nationalist revisionist account of late colonial and post-colonial history centred around the colourful lives of left-wing partisans.⁹ By the mid-1990s, yet another taboo was broken. The issue of colonial period collaboration with the colonizers by a large segment of the local patrician society, including landlords, incipient entrepreneurs and such key cultural figures as writer Yi Kwangsu (1892–1950) or composer and performer Hong Nanp'a (1898–1941), was approached by professional historians in a popular way that was sure to produce a strong response from the reading public.¹⁰ Books on colonial period collaborators (*ch'inilp'a*—‘the pro-Japanese faction,’ or more generally, ‘pro-Japanese collaborators’), typified by a three volume-long series, *Ch'inilp'a 99 In* (親日派 99人 *99 Pro-Japanese Collaborators*), written by the patriarch of South Korea's Marxist historiography, Kang Man'gil (b. 1933) and a number of his younger colleagues,¹¹ became a bestseller. This development signified serious problems for the shaky legitimacy of the South Korean ruling class, already undermined by the wide publicity around elite misdeeds under the dictatorial regimes.

It is a well-established fact that the nucleus of the modern Korean capitalist class formed during the colonial days, inside the web of close collaboration between the nascent Korean capitalists and Japanese authorities.¹² It is equally well-known that the officer corps of the South Korean military, the crucial power stakeholder during the dictatorship days, was initially recruited mostly from among Japanese

Imperial Army officers of Korean ethnicity. The biography of Japanese lieutenant-turned South Korean major general Park Chung Hee (Pak Chônghûi, 1917–1979), who ruled South Korea with an iron fist between 1961 and 1979, was possibly the best illustration for the thesis about colonial-to-postcolonial elite continuity.¹³ Indeed, the elites with colonial background kept some of their influence until the 1980s: Sin Hyônhwak (1920–2007), South Korea's Prime Minister in 1979–80 and one of the key managers of the Samsung (Samsông) business empire in the late 1980s, began his career at the wartime Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce of Imperial Japan.¹⁴ However, this fact, disastrous for the political legitimacy of the ruling elite in a postcolonial society where colonial victimhood and anti-colonial resistance were the official narratives (especially in view of the confrontation with North Korea, ruled by the veterans of the anti-Japanese guerrilla war with impeccable nationalist credentials), was kept out of public consciousness until the late 1980s to early 1990s. Those few scholars who attempted to work on the issue—such as Im Chongguk (1929–1989), known for his meticulous collections on the collaborating activities of writers and other colonial-era public figures—were excluded from academia and barely recognized by mainstream scholarship.¹⁵ Official history on the colonial period tended to omit the sensitive collaboration issue altogether, concentrating instead on the anti-colonial activities of exiled nationalists or the suppression of visible cultural figures, such as members of Korean Language Society, jailed in 1942–5.¹⁶ It is no wonder then that the stream of revelations in the 1990s about the colonial roots of the South Korean elite astonished the public. It called forth a very significant popular response and put the accused—the members of the blood-based and institutional lineages whose prominent members were now revealed to have been collaborators and, by extension, the established elites in general—on the defensive.

The present article deals with one of the attempts by South Korea's privileged stratum to undermine the very basis for any criticisms against the colonial period behaviour of its institutional—and in many cases familial—forefathers, namely the New Right movement. Simultaneously an academic and political movement, it was launched in 2004. Since then, it had been advocating a new, post-nationalist neo-conservatism until its recent decline, more or less concurrent with the demise of Park Geun-hye (Pak Kûnhye, b. 1952) amidst the candlelight vigils and million-strong demonstrations in downtown Seoul in 2016–2017. On the academic plane, the New Right aimed at shifting the axiological basis of South Korean nationalism from the ethno-nation (*minjok*) oppressed by the Japanese colonialists, to the capitalist “civilization” which colonialism supposedly helped to transplant onto Korean soil, and the South Korean statehood so well served by so many former members of the colonial-period elites. The New Right movement therefore wished

to establish a new order of historical priorities. In this new order, the rules of the market, industrial growth and modern capitalist statehood were to be put ahead of the ethno-nation (*minjok*) which encompassed the underprivileged majority who might not necessarily have benefitted from these developments. If such an order of historical priorities could only be cemented, the defence of colonial period collaboration would no longer be an onerous task. On the contrary, collaborators could be re-interpreted as patriots who had acted out of Korea's long-term interest in "civilizing" itself with Japanese "help" rather than pure opportunism.¹⁷

However, the New Right never succeeded in turning the conventional South Korean historical paradigm upside down, despite their popularity with certain sectors of the ruling elite. In a way, the New Right's version of South Korean political nationalism, with its emphasis on pride in the success of the export-driven South Korea economy conceptualized as an effect of the long-term globalization that began under Japanese rule, dovetailed nicely with South Korea's developmental trajectory. South Korean capitalist development was driven by a nation state which utilized statist nationalism for its purposes and simultaneously profited greatly from the international Cold War regime and both global and regional capital and technology flows. The Japanese connection, which the New Right was seeking to exonerate, was indeed crucial to the developmental state visions of the South Korean elites and their drive to take over the sunset industries from Japan in the 1960–80s.¹⁸ Seen from this perspective, the attempt by the New Right to vindicate South Korea's ruling class and its collusion with Japanese imperialism and colonialism in the name of South Korea's export-led economic success, embedded as it is in the logic of global and regional capitalism, is perhaps less self-contradictory than it looks at first sight. The present article aims to explore how this attempt proceeded and find out why it ultimately failed to win much support beyond elite circles. Moreover, it will shed light on the general tendencies of South Korean historiography in the neo-liberal age, in an attempt to understand the extent to which elite interests have been able to influence historiographical trends.

The "Collaboration Issue", Post-Nationalism and Neo-Conservatism

After the neo-liberal shift of 1997–8, the intellectual life of South Korea exhibited two important trends, mutually contradictory on the surface but in reality, simultaneously deeply interconnected. On the one hand, the drift from the neo-mercantilist accumulation regime of the pre-1997 years meant that official nationalism, with its emphasis on ethno-national belonging and the

time-honoured history of anti-foreign resistance, was no longer as desirable as before. The ethno-nation still had to be evoked in the context of the Sunshine Policy vis-à-vis North Korea, which was launched in 1998. After all, belonging to the same ethnic nation was the one thing the two states divided by their Cold War alliances had in common, despite the almost 20-fold difference in their per capita GNP.¹⁹ However, ethno-nationalism was more of an obstacle if one had to accept the reality of, say, foreign investors possessing around 64 percent of all the bank stocks on the South Korean market by 2004 and effectively dominating the country's banking industry.²⁰ While neo-liberalism as the new politico-economic orthodoxy stimulated the post-nationalist turn on the Right, the Left discovered the urgency of post-nativist approaches witnessing the rapidly changing composition of South Korea's population. International marriages, typically between South Korean men and Chinese, Vietnamese, or Filipina women, were increasing steadily as neo-liberal South Korea was integrated into the regional network of marriage agencies, amounting to 13.6 percent of all the marriages by 2006.²¹ At the same time more than half a million foreign manual workers were toiling for the profits of South Korea's small and medium-sized businesses.²² Altogether, both marriage and labour migrants represented a sort of internal colony of advanced industrialism, and a natural object for the Left's advocacy and solidarity efforts.²³ Such efforts, however, implied dethroning the ethno-nation from the privileged position this concept enjoyed during the democratization struggles of the 1980s. In a paradoxical way, post- or trans-nationalism came to be a common denominator for the leftist advocates of multi-ethnic Korea and the neo-liberal establishment in need of justification for the ways in which the trans-border capitalist marketplace was supposed to function.

On the other hand, the issue of the Korean elites' collaboration with the colonial authorities was now a part of the legal and legislative, rather than simply public, discussion. After all, South Korea's transition from neo-mercantilism to neo-liberalism was led by the former standard-bearers of democratization who were able to impose a deeply unpopular marketisation agenda because they commanded the loyalty of a significant part of organized labour and progressively-minded civil society. Kim Dae-jung (Kim Taejung, 1924–2009), the erstwhile pro-democracy movement leader and a proponent of essentially social democratic 'participatory economics'²⁴ who came to preside over the shift to neo-liberalism as South Korea's president in 1998–2003, had to offer some plausibly progressive and popular policies to his supporters disheartened by the realities of layoffs and the growth of non-permanent employment. The same applied to his successor, Roh Moo-hyun (No Muhyôn, 1946–2009), a former human rights lawyer who was South Korea's president in 2003–8. The Sunshine

Policy was one such landmark policy, designed both to facilitate South Korean businesses' penetration into North Korea and please the liberal public at home. Yet another highly popular policy was the 'settlement' (*ch'ôngsan*) of long-tabooed historical issues, including colonial period collaboration. Several presidential investigative committees were set up under Roh Moo-hyun, to deal with hitherto "unsettled" historical issues, and the Presidential Committee for the Inspection of Anti-National Pro-Japanese Collaboration Activities (親日反民族行爲真相糾明委員會 *Ch'inil Panminjok haengwi Chinsang Kyumyông Wiwônho*, 2005–9) was one of them. Its first chairman was Kang Man'gil, one of the authors of *Ch'inil'p'a 99 In* mentioned above. The public discussions that had taken place during the 1990s on the collaboration issue were now absorbed into state historical policy. The Committee presented to the national assembly a shortlist of 106 leading collaborators later expanded to 1005 personalities. At the same time, a group of left-nationalist historical activists brought together by the Institute of Ethno-national Issues (Minjok Munje Yôn'guso) named more than 4770 collaborators in its monumental *Bibliographical Dictionary of Pro-Japanese Collaborators* 親日人名辭典.²⁵ While being included in the *Bibliographical Dictionary* was not supposed to have any legal consequences, those listed by the Presidential Committee for the Inspection of Anti-National Collaborations were to be targeted by the Special Law to Redeem Pro-Japanese Anti-National Collaborators' Property (親日反民族行爲者財産의 國家歸屬에 關한 特別法 *Ch'inil Panminjok Haengwija Chaesan ūi Kukka Kwisok e gwanhan T'ŭkpyŏlpŏp*, 2005), which stipulated that the property acquired as remuneration for collaboration activities was to be confiscated from collaborators' descendants.²⁶

On the surface, the two developments in South Korea's intellectual and public life described above were mutually contradictory. On the one hand, books like the indictment of nationalism written and published in 1999 by one of South Korea's few experts on Polish history under the rather provocative title, *Nationalism is Treason*,²⁷ was avidly read by progressively-minded students on Seoul campuses. On the other hand, the same students were often likely to enthusiastically support the Roh Mu-hyun government's historical policies, despite the fact that the committee charged with investigating the collaboration issue had defined—even in its name—collaboration activities as both pro-Japanese and anti-(ethno-)national. In other words, the concept of ethno-nation could be accepted by a significant number of progressives when it was needed to be strategically deployed to promote inter-Korean reconciliation or to symbolically down-grade the position and prestige of the established elites by pointing to the "anti-national" misdeeds of its institutional or familial forefathers. The same concept, however, was to be shelved away when it came to the issue of immigration, in favour of

openness and a new, multi-ethnic Korea. However, this paradoxical parallelism in the development of a rather nationalistic movement for ‘historical settlement’ and at the same time post-nationalist criticism of ethno-nationalism is not necessarily inexplicable. Under the military dictatorships, the collaboration issue was largely tabooed. At the same time, the official nationalism, with its cults of supposedly sagacious King Sejong the Great (r. 1418–50) and illustrious admiral Yi Sunsin (1545–98) famed for his maritime victories during the Hideyoshi invasions of Korea (1592–8), and with its system of ‘national ethics’ (*kungmin yulli*) reminiscent of wartime Japanese Imperial ideology’s totalitarianism, was a sacred cow.²⁸ Now, with freedom of expression more or less entrenched in the public sphere, the old taboos could be subverted and the erstwhile sacred cows were no longer inviolable. Thus, both historical activists striving to document the collaborationist activities and name and shame the ‘anti-national’ patricians of the colonial age and the leftist intellectuals attempting to dissect the pre-existing ‘national’ mythoi could perhaps view themselves in strikingly similar ways, as the people able at last to dismantle the labyrinth of taboos, ideological prohibitions and deleted memories inherited from the authoritarian past.

However, the new public mood and the Roh Mu-hyun government’s legislative activities put some significant and important sections of the South Korean elite into an extremely awkward position. Their prestige and legitimacy, already compromised by their long history of cohesive ties with military governments, was being dealt a very painful blow. Those who were hit hardest included the famed Kim family from Koch’ang, who typified the landlords-turned-entrepreneurs of the colonial age. Its most prominent member, Waseda-educated businessman and educator Kim Sōngsu (1891–1955) known for having established one of the first Korean-owned textile factories of the colonial era, Kyōngsōng Spinning and Weaving Company (Kyōngbang, 1919) and the newspaper that is still an influential mouthpiece of Korea’s mainstream bourgeois opinion, *Tong’a Ilbo* (1919), was posthumously decorated in 1962 with the presidential Order of Merit for National Foundation (*Kōn’guk Hunjang*).²⁹ However, his name predictably was on the long list of collaborators (1005 persons) worked out by the Presidential Committee for the Inspection of Anti-National Collaborators. His assistance to the Japanese war effort was more than well-known. The legal challenge mounted by his descendants failed after almost a decade-long litigation, and in 2018, Kim Sōngsu was—again posthumously—deprived of his Order of Merit for National Foundation.³⁰ As a result, *Tong’a Ilbo* could no longer legitimately characterise itself as a nationalist paper (*minjokchi*). Its most important symbolic capital, the (highly exaggerated and in many ways factually untrue) story of anti-colonial resistance via journalism, was gravely undermined. *Tong’a Ilbo*’s long-term competitor, *Chosōn Ilbo*, used

to be the best-selling and most influential among the established conservative papers.³¹ However, it fared no better. Its proprietor and manager during 1933–50, Pang Ŭngmo (1883–1950), a mine owner-turned-newspaperman, ended up on the same collaborators' list—again, quite expectedly, since the assistance *Chosôn Ilbo* rendered to the Japanese war effort after the beginning of the full-scale invasion of China in 1937, was only too well-known.³² Of course, the symbolic politics of history hardly had an immediate effect on real life. Regardless of the validity of its nationalist credentials, *Chosôn Ilbo* has remained the South Korean daily with the highest circulation, even at the time of writing this article.³³ Still, even this largely symbolic attack from the progressive camp required a response. In addition, by the mid-2000s the conservatives—with *Tong'a Ilbo* and *Chosôn Ilbo* as their most representative media organs—felt themselves embattled. Roh Mu-hyun won the 2002 presidential elections, thus extending the liberals' mandate for a further five years, and his party dealt a convincing defeat to the conservatives in the 2004 parliamentary elections.³⁴ The conservative establishment needed new discourses, strategies and faces if it was to regain both the symbolic capital undermined by the collaboration controversy, and political power. The New Right movement was one of its chosen instruments.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that *Tong'a Ilbo* was the cradle of the New Right. It was there that some conservative pundits first started to question the conventional (that is, unabashedly negative) attitudes of the South Korean public towards the Japanese colonial period *per se*, a prelude to the wholesale legitimization of colonialism attempted by the New Right afterwards. Yu Sôkch'un (b. 1955), a professor at Seoul-based Yonsei University's Department of Sociology and one of the ideologues of South Korea's neo-conservatism, had already published on April 11, 2001, in the midst of the controversy over the Japanese ultra-conservatives' attempt to publish revisionist history textbooks, a column in *Tong'a Ilbo*, in which he suggested that the “bright sides” of the colonial period should be recognized.³⁵ Japan was obviously not a threat, from the neo-conservatives' viewpoint. As yet another pundit of the Right, Nam Siuk (b. 1938), a former editor-in-chief of *Tong'a Ilbo*, opined in his column in the same newspaper on January 23, 2003, South Korea was supposedly threatened by leftists who viewed North Korea's nationalist credentials as superior and disregarded South Korea as “anti-national and subservient to the US and Japan.”³⁶ It was now the Right's task to prove that it was indeed the collaboration with colonial rule rather than resistance to it (which symbolically empowered the rulers of North Korea) that, in the long run, benefitted Korea most.

Perhaps it was no accident that, when the New Right (Nyrurait'û) emerged as a coherent academic and political faction in 2004, most of the recognizable faces

among the New Right politicians were indeed the defectors from the leftist camp. The most representative among them was Sin Chiho (b. 1963), a radical student-turned-socialist labour activist of the 1980s who went to Japan to receive a PhD in political science at Keio University after his ‘thought conversion’ (*chõnhyang*) in 1992. While Sin Chiho belonged to the more orthodox Marxist-Leninist “PD” (People’s Democracy) faction,³⁷ the rest of the erstwhile leftists in the New Right camp were mostly former members of the “NL” (National Liberation) left nationalist wing of the anti-establishment movement of the 1980s, and some of them confessed to having once espoused North Korea’s *chuch’e* philosophy. Indeed, the Secretary General of the Liberty Union (Chayujuüi Yõndae), the first-ever New Right group founded in 2004, was Hong Chinp’o (b. 1963), a former activist of the Pan-National Alliance for Unification of the Motherland (Põmminryõn), an international NGO with close ties to Pyongyang whose South Korean members had been subjected to constant police repression.³⁸ Sin Chiho assumed the duties of the Liberty Union’s representative. At the same time, its Organizational Committee chief, Ch’oe Hongjae (b. 1968), was a former “NL” student leader with three stints in prison on his record.³⁹ The conservative press promoted the Liberty Union though its pages from its inception. It was obviously hoped that former leftist dissidents, so persuasive before in their attacks upon South Korea’s establishment, would be equally convincing in defending its legitimacy now.⁴⁰ As for the former socialists and *chuch’e* followers, the New Right movement was a good way of saving face while moving into the conservative mainstream of South Korean society. After all, the New Right was promising to establish a new, refreshing, and internationally respectable brand of conservatism. They were to focus on individual and economic freedom as well as human rights; of course, chiefly *North Korean* human rights rather than human rights issues at home. From the very beginning, however, the New Right started to demonstrate a rather problematic proclivity towards following the examples of the Japanese neo-nationalists, among all the possible foreign models. Sin Chiho, for example, was among the first to import and use the term ‘masochist view of history’ (自虐史觀 Kor. *chahak sagwan*, Jap. *jigyaku shikan*) so often used by the Japanese right-wing historical revisionists towards the critics of the Imperial Japanese Army’s wartime predations.⁴¹ In the jargon of the South Korean New Right, this term, naturally enough, was to be applied to any critics of the new, refurbished vision of South Korea’s triumphant and glorious post-colonial history.

South Korean New Right Academia: Domestic and International Contexts

Indeed, on the intellectual level, the impulses emanating from Japan were just as important in the formation of New Right discourse as Japanese capital and technology were for the success of South Korea's developmentalist drive in the 1960–80s. The intellectual leader of the New Right was a well-known and widely respected economic historian, An Pyôngjik (b. 1936) who strongly influenced the “NL” movement of the 1980s with his definition of South Korea's economy and society as neo-colonial and semi-feudal. Having accepted the main premises of dependency theory, An argued in the 1970s and 1980s that the only hope for South Korea was ‘de-linking’ from the world capitalist system and launching on a course of independent, nationally oriented development. At the end of the 1980s, however, An, who stayed at Tokyo University in 1986–7, came to accept the conclusion of more mainstream Japanese economic historians who saw South Korea as a successful example of ‘catch-up’ development based on technology and capital imports from the core capitalist states.⁴² Furthermore, he soon joined Kyoto University's Nakamura Tetsu and Hori Kazuō in their research on how the foundations of South Korea's post-colonial jump into the ranks of the ‘middle-developed’ (中進 Kor. *chungjin*) capitalist countries was supposedly based on the legacy of colonial period industrialization.⁴³ A large physical part of the colonial legacy, in the form of heavy and chemical industry plants etc. either ended up in what became North Korea after 1945 or was destroyed by the Korean War in 1950–3. The degree to which the colonial legacy might have indeed contributed to the process of post-colonial capital accumulation in South Korea is a subject of heated debates in international academia.⁴⁴ Even if such a contribution might have been substantial, such a conclusion does not necessarily translate into apology for colonial rule, with its political oppression and enormous social inequalities. Most economic historians agree that industrial growth in 1920–30s' Korea did not sufficiently benefit the poorer peasant majority.⁴⁵ However, An's conclusions were desperately needed by the New Right movement, for which he became the academic face after assuming the presidency of the New Right Foundation in 2006. After all, if colonial period economic development laid the foundations for South Korea's ‘miraculous’ growth then collaboration with the colonial authorities on behalf of the local entrepreneurial class by Kim Sôngsu and Pang Ūngmo⁴⁶ could be seen in a much more positive light.

Together with An, another major New Right theoretician was the economic historian, Yi Yônghun (b. 1951). In the field of late Chosŏn economic history—his original area of expertise—Yi was famous for his opposition to the idea of

internally developing ‘sprouts of capitalism’ in the Chosŏn economy and society, and idea which had dominated Marxism-influenced historical scholarship in Korea since the 1950s. In Yi’s view, late Chosŏn society of small cultivators, with its established patterns of primogeniture and familial farm management, represented a good potential basis for the transplantation of capitalism from outside. However, it could hardly, institutionally or technologically, develop any sort of modern capitalism on its own. While this argument per se seems to be grounded in thorough factual research, some of Yi’s judgements on late Chosŏn society appear to lack proper proof, being obviously designed to emphasize the supposed backwardness of pre-colonial Korea. A good example is his professed belief that Chosŏn did not develop a system of property ownership, as all land was supposed to be ultimately owned by the ruling dynasty.⁴⁷ Furthermore, drawing on pre-existing work, mostly by Japanese researchers, Yi highlighted the importance of the Japanese Government General’s Land Survey (1910–8) for the establishment of modern-style property rights in Korea. Yi’s rebuttals of the nationalist historians’ customary accusations that the Land Survey simply represented a “Japanese land grab” obviously do hold water to a certain degree. Indeed, in most cases the Land Survey simply reconfirmed the existing property-holding patterns.⁴⁸ However, Yi seems to be completely uninterested in the *social* consequences of the Land Survey, which, by establishing modern patterns of exclusive property rights, discarded the customary rights which tenants used to enjoy in Chosŏn society, and deepened inequalities in the countryside. The same applies to Yi’s rather triumphalist vision of the history of colonial Korea and post-colonial South Korea in general. Yi views what he (following, indeed, the time-honoured terminology of such colonial period Marxist theoreticians as Im Hwa, 1908–53) terms the ‘transplantation’ (*isik*) of capitalist institutions and internationally-oriented economic structures as an exclusively positive phenomenon, indeed, almost as a pre-ordained historical process with a Hegelian *telos*. At the same time, he appears to be, at best, oblivious about the *social* price of the triumphs of modernization, before and after de-colonization.⁴⁹ In fact, his unabashedly positive evaluations of the growth-first economic policies of the 1960–70s’ military dictatorship are reminiscent of the modernization theories of the early Cold War-age, with their acknowledgement of Third World authoritarianism as a ‘necessarily evil’ on the path towards successful ‘catch-up with the advanced countries.’⁵⁰

Long-standing connections with the Japanese historical scholarship, mostly of a mainstream conservative flavour, were instrumental in the quest by An and Yi for arguments against the established left-nationalist version of Korea’s early modern and colonial history. Indeed, this version could justifiably be accused of ideological

dogmatism. Unlike, say, the south-eastern coastal region of China or Bengal, late Chosŏn Korea definitely was *not* a world-wide manufacturing centre for which a sort of independent capitalist development could be postulated, even theoretically.⁵¹ It is also clearly undeniable that, while using their Korean colony for their own purposes, the Japanese authorities did indeed transplant the metropolitan institutional infrastructure to the colonial soil.⁵² The trouble with Yi and An's arguments was rather their ideological penchant towards ascribing exclusively positive historical significance to all these developments. That such a penchant could indeed lead the neo-conservatives away from any possibilities of gaining genuine popularity, was amply demonstrated by the 2005 'Han Sŭngjo Incident.' Han Sŭngjo (1930–2017), a Berkeley-educated and extremely conservative political scientist from Korea University, published a contribution in a Japanese right-wing monthly, *Seiron*, in which he characterised Japanese colonial rule as a "blessing" for Korea, and denounced the accusations against collaborators as supposedly "grounded in left-wing ideology." While that was hardly different from what Sin Chiho, Hong Chinp'yo, Ch'oe Hongjae, An Pyŏngjik or Yi Yŏnghun might have thought themselves, the blunt way in which Han expressed his belief in the salubriousness of 'colonial modernization' made it difficult even for many of the New Right to adopt his cause when extremely negative public reactions eventually forced Han out of his emeritus professorship at Korea University.⁵³ Open apologetics for Japanese colonial rule, in the style of Japanese neo-nationalists or such Korea-born writers as the Japanese Right's favourite middle-brow author, O Sŏnhwa (Oh Sonfa, b. 1956),⁵⁴ turned out to be an unsellable intellectual commodity in South Korea, not only for the general public but among much less nationalistic scholarly audiences as well. While both An and Yi obviously did their best to distinguish themselves from unabashedly pro-colonial rhetoric of Han's kind, their vision of colonial period modern development, as we will see below, came to be regarded as simply a slightly more sophisticated version of Han's.

The 'Han Sŭngjo Incident,' interestingly enough, temporarily overlapped with yet another landmark in the history of South Korea's New Right of the 2000s—namely, with the publication of the seminal *For Reconciliation* (和解를 爲해서 *Hwahaeh rŭl wihaesŏ*) by Pak Yuha (b. 1957), a Japan-educated South Korean academic.⁵⁵ The book—quickly translated into Japanese⁵⁶—was written in the then fashionable post-nationalist jargon. The author emphasized her willingness "to overcome the [obsession with] the state" and to criticize masculinist and nationalist oppression on all sides, including South Korea's own patriarchal society which, until the disclosure of the 'comfort women' atrocities by a former victim in 1991, tended to regard the victims of Japanese wartime 'comfort women' recruitment as 'fallen women.' After the disclosure, they were, as Pak suggests,

reclassified as ‘worthy victims’ representing the whole of the victimized Korean nation—their individualities, life histories and experiences being side-lined. Some of the criticisms made by Pak were certainly justified. Indeed, it is hard to deny that much of the gender- and class-based wartime victimization by the Japanese military and colonial authorities was absorbed into the South Korean national(ist) narrative as primary ‘national’ suffering, without due attention to the socio-economic circumstances or gender stereotypes which served as the background for the atrocities.⁵⁷ However, as such Zainichi (Japan-resident Korean) intellectuals as essayist Sō Kyōngsik (b. 1951) or feminist historian Kim Puja (b. 1958) were quick to point out, Pak’s own book was hardly free from the faults she (justifiably) found with the nationalist critique of colonial period atrocities. In prioritising ‘reconciliation’ between the nation states of Japan and South Korea, advocating friendlier ‘understanding’ of the modes of thinking and behaviour of Japan’s right-wing political mainstream and demonstrating an unusual willingness to ‘absolve’ Japan from guilt for its imperialist past, the book was playing to Japanese nationalism. At the same time, it obviously suited the interests of South Korea’s own ruling groups which saw improved relations with Japan as one of their priorities and were negative towards the ‘anti-collaborationist’ campaign of Roh Muhyun’s government.⁵⁸ Pak Yuha—soon (in 2007) awarded a prestigious Osaragi Jirō Prize by *Asahi*⁵⁹—become an important fellow-traveller for the New Right. As we will see below, less a decade after her first emergence as a public intellectual her hard-core revisionist stance would bring her into serious trouble which overlapped with the overall crisis of the New Right movement.

Back then, in 2005–6, however, the New Right and their allies were seen as representatives of an attractive new trend, distinctive from the old-fashioned ideological dogmatism on both Left and Right. Post-nationalism was riding a wave of popularity in rapidly internationalizing neoliberal South Korea, and the New Right was skilfully sailing along with the winning trend. Indeed, Sin Chiho even criticised the National Alliance of the New Right (Nyu Rait’ū Chōn’guk Yōnhap), the pan-national umbrella New Right group, for positioning itself too closely to the older, already discredited right-wingers, on the understanding that this tactic might inhibit the New Right’s own growth in popularity and public recognition.⁶⁰ On the intellectual front, the reputation of the New Rights was to be cemented by the huge, two-volume, *Re-interpretation of History Before and After Liberation* (解放前後史 再認識 *Haebang Chōnhusa Chaeinsik*, 2006). The book, edited by Yi Yōnghun and a well-known conservative scholar of Western history, Pak Chihyang (b. 1953), was a collection of contributions by both renowned and early-career South Korean, Japanese and American scholars, including such prominent names as Harvard’s Carter Eckert and University of Michigan’s Meredith Jung-En Woo.⁶¹ The book

represented a collaboration between the New Right, post-nationalists and Korea historians of different ideological persuasions in general. Many of the latter stood much to the left of the book's two editors. Yi Yŏnghun and Pak Chihyang, however, obviously wanted to selectively use the pre-existing—and not necessarily conservative—scholarship on colonial and postcolonial Korea in order to create a counterweight to the historical bible of the 1990s' left-nationalists, *Interpretation of History Before and After Liberation* (解放 前後史 認識 *Haebang Chŏnhusa Insik*, 1979–89), hence the telling title. The prodigiously large article collection did not include even a single piece on the history of anti-colonial resistance, or the colonial period workers' movement. However, at the same time a contribution on the colonial-period political participation by Koreans and its significance for Korea's post-Liberation history (by Namiki Masahito, Ferris Women's University) was visible.⁶² In attempt to make their collection representative, Yi Yŏnghun and Pak Chihyang even succeeded in including some of the authors of the original, *Interpretation of the History Before and After the Liberation* among their contributors: for example, Prof. Yi Wanbŏm, a known authority on post-Liberation political history and the Korean-American relationship, contributed chapters (on the trusteeship debates and the political struggles in the immediate post-Liberation years), written in an impeccably neutral, objectivist tone, to both collections in succession.⁶³ At this juncture, it looked as if the academic New Right, especially their representatives of Yi Yŏnghun's calibre, were going to acquire a sort of Gramscian hegemony over the modern history field in South Korea, buttressed by the general fascination with post-nationalist ideas and the authority of international academia (which at that point did not seem to distinguish between the New Right and their post-nationalist colleagues among its South Korean counterparts). However, the triumph, as we will see below, was short-lived.

The Textbook Revision Movement and the Downfall of the New Right

Already in 2006, a group of leading post-nationalist historians openly broke away from the New Rights. *Re-reading Modernity* (近代를 다시 읽는다 *Kūndae rŭl tasi Ingnūnda*, ed. Yun Haedong, 2006), a collective monograph representative of this group's thinking, emphatically questioned the absolutization of the modern capitalist state so essential in the logic of the New Right and suggested instead the necessity of finding the ways of overcoming the teleology of modernity's in historiography.⁶⁴ The problem for the New Right was, however, not only their Hegelian tendency to absolutize the supposedly 'civilized' modern statehood, be it colonial Japanese or Korean. A further problem was that the ways in which

they formulated and distributed for general consumption their ideas increasingly resembled the hackneyed formulae of South Korea's official historiography, or sometimes even Imperial Japan's history-writing. A good example is offered by the earliest in the series of New Right 'alternative textbooks,' the one dealing with modern and contemporary history and published by Textbook Forum (Kyokwasô P'orôm), a major New Right group, in 2008. Edited by Yi Yŏnghun, the textbook acknowledges the 'oppression' of the colonial time, but simultaneously evaluates the Japanese colonial period as the "time when Koreans learned modern civilization and accumulated their social abilities," in language reminiscent of the Japanese colonizers' own self-serving descriptions of their rule in Korea. Together with the Japanese colonizers, both Syngman Rhee (Yi Sŭngman, r. 1948–60) and Park Chong Hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi, r. 1961–79) received generally positive evaluations in the textbook, as rulers who "consolidated liberal democracy" in South Korea and produced the "success of the South Korean economic model" respectively. At the same time, the democratic revolution of April 1960 which toppled the Syngman Rhee dictatorship was degraded to a 'student movement.'⁶⁵ The book—while being labelled as a 'textbook'—was not a textbook in the proper sense of the word. It was not authorised for school use by the Ministry of Education, and its authors indeed never applied for such an authorisation. Still, it was heartily welcomed by the political conservatives as a sign that history descriptions for schoolchildren were shifting at last in their own preferred direction. Park Geun-hye (Pak Kŭnhye, b. 1952), daughter of Park Chong Hee and then the chairwoman of the conservative Grand National Party (Hannaradang), later to become South Korea's president (r. 2013–7), praised the book by saying that such a historical account caused her to worry less about schoolchildren learning the "distorted version of history."⁶⁶ This praise from conservative politicians was of serious practical importance to the New Right in the situation where, after 10 years of liberal rule, a conservative, 'business-friendly' president Lee Myung-bak (Yi Myŏngbak, r. 2008–13) was to assume power. However, in the end, collusive ties with the conservative governments proved to be the undoing of the New Right. The movement ended up falling together with its political backers.

The failure of the New Right, of course, was not simply a matter of politics. Post-nationalism, for example, still remains, in the time of the present writing, a serious force on the South Korean academic scene, and for a number of good reasons. One of them is the fact that, with the passage of time, the nationalistic historical myths created by the official historians of 1960–80s' neo-mercantilist developmentalist state, have the tendency to become history themselves, now ripe for critical academic analysis.⁶⁷ But, from a purely academic viewpoint of the post-developmental, post-authoritarian age, the historical accounts produced

by the New Right were suspiciously reminiscent of exactly these historical myths which the post-nationalists were so fond of publicly debunking. Was South Korea really a 'liberal democratic state' since its inception in 1948, as the New Right had been stubbornly claiming? Serious historians, armed with knowledge of the 'façade democracies' of inter-war Eastern Europe or, say, 'imitative democracy' in many post-Soviet states today, will find such a claim preposterous, regardless of the ostensible existence of supposedly 'liberal democratic' institutions in South Korea during the authoritarian developmentalist period.⁶⁸

In a similar vein, the positive appraisal of Japanese colonial modernity and its supposed 'rational bureaucratic rule' sound rather disharmonious in an age when the boundaries between 'premodern' and 'modern' are seen as fuzzy and blurred, and the 'rationality' of modern governance is being increasingly questioned. To be sure, modernity has multiple varieties, and even the state Shinto theocracy or, say, ample use of physical torture by the repressive apparatus would not disqualify Japanese colonial rule as essentially modern. But does the regimented colonial rule have to be ascribed an exclusively positive historical significance? South Korea's historical scholarship of the late 2000s–early 2010s produced a number of critical analyses of the New Right historical accounts which seriously questioned the overall frame of reference, with its highly ideological glorification of various unsavoury forms of modern statehood. The critics also found Yi Yŏnghun's belief in the absence of private land ownership in pre-colonial Korea, or in the inherently driven 'self-destruction' of the pre-colonial Chosŏn state to be deeply problematic.⁶⁹ By the beginning of the 2010s, the academic credibility of the New Rights was being seriously questioned. Hegemony in Korean academia, which seemed to be almost obtainable a few years before, was now out of their reach.

The New Right's lack of academic prestige was laid bare when the scholarly wing of the movement coalesced around the newly organized Association for the Study of Korean Contemporary history (Han'guk Hyŏndaesa Hakhoe) in 2011. An heir to the Textbook Forum, this new academic association was able to attract only around sixty members and only less than one-third of this number were professional historians. The rest were economists, political scientists or 'national ethics' (*kunghmin yulli*) experts. The latter speciality, as liberal critics alleged, represented the totalitarian ideology of 'pan-national consolidation' from the 1970s rather than the academic field of ethics studies.⁷⁰ Sponsored financially by the Federation of Korean Industries (Chŏn'gyŏngnyŏn), an influential business lobby group, this supposedly academic association has been seen by the majority of professional historians as hopelessly prejudiced ideologically and lacking in integrity. In fact, many of the historians who joined it were rather public intellectuals of the neo-conservative bent (such as Prof. Kwŏn Hŭiyŏng of the Academy of Korean Studies, or Prof. Hŏ

Tonghyōn of Kyunghee University) than purely academically-minded researchers. The Association did not produce either a scholarly journal or any recognizable academic publications.⁷¹ Generally speaking, research publishing was not the forte of the New Right. The lion's share of the several hundred books the New Right has published so far, mostly through ideologically loyal publishers, such as Kip'arang (owned by a veteran conservative journalist, An Pyōnghun, b. 1938) or Paengnyōn Tong'an, have consisted of popular works of journalism, middlebrow at best, either praising the 'achievements' of Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee or defending the colonial period businessmen and public figures accused of collaboration as the representatives of 'national capital' or 'national public life.' Few of these works have ever entered the bestsellers' list (traditionally dominated, in the field of history, by translated works, books by the liberally-inclined public intellectuals or apolitical historians of culture), and few were written professionally enough to be sympathetically reviewed by their peers in the historical field.⁷² By the early 2010s, New Right academics came to appear as a sect-like group, increasingly isolated inside the professional milieu. Their further actions only deepened this isolation.

With two successive conservative administrations in power in 2008–17, the New Right was relied more and more on their clout inside the corridors of power in order to force their agenda of textbook change. In that, they had one particularly strong ally. President Park Geun-hye came into the Blue House (the presidential residence in Seoul) with a self-defined mission to 'restore the honour' of her dictatorial father,⁷³ an aim which overlapped completely with the desires of the New Right. In the beginning, they attempted to utilise the existing institutional mechanisms. In 2013, one more New Right-authored textbook, this time covering Korea's history as whole and targeting high-school students, was published by one of the most prestigious textbook publishers, Kyohaksa. Criticized by a number of professional historians for glaring inaccuracies and fallacious descriptions, this textbook—which, notoriously, went as far as to describe the massacre of the pro-democracy protesters in Kwangju in May 1980 by the South Korean army as 'clashes'—was, however, authorized and allowed into use (with a minimum of required edits) by the Ministry of Education, obviously on orders from the higher echelons of power. However, the ambitions of the New Right and Park's administration remained unrealized. By the beginning of 2014, practically no schools had adopted the textbook. The few which attempted to do so had to rescind their decisions after protests by parents, students and teachers' bodies.⁷⁴ The established institutional mechanisms were evidently not conducive to the neo-conservative re-writing of public memory.

As the failure of the textbook revision drive became visible, the Blue House, with the full support of its New Right academic allies, took a more radical turn. It

became obvious that the existing, relatively liberal system of textbook approval by the Ministry of Education and schools' free choice among the approved textbooks did not serve well the grand presidential project of full rehabilitation of Park Chung Hee and other ethnic Korean bureaucrats, soldiers and entrepreneurs of the Japanese Empire who then moved on to form the backbone of South Korea's ruling class. Thus, in the thinking of the Park administration, it was the system that had to be changed. In October 2015, the Park Geun-hye government publicly announced the plan to which it had repeatedly been alluding for several months before that. Under the plan Korean history textbooks would be 'nationalized' (*kukchǒnghwa*) in the way that they used to be during the period 1974–2002, when one, state-produced textbook was to be used uniformly in all the schools across the whole country. Given that the switch to the textbook approval and free choice system in 2002 was regarded as an important step forward towards further democratization of South Korea's notoriously over-centralized educational system, this measure was immediately criticized as harking back to the dictatorial past. After all, the shift from the ministerial approval system to unitary textbooks in 1974 took place against the backdrop of the Yusin ("Revitalization") dictatorship which was at that time clearing away the remaining formally liberal institutions. Moreover, since the background of Park Geun-hye's textbook gamble was more than clear, the historical and educational communities, as well as the majority of the politically active citizenry, understood the 'nationalization' to be tantamount to promoting the New Right vision of colonial period collaborators as pioneers of modernity to the status of an orthodoxy. In this way, 'nationalization' was seen as a de facto 'privatization' of national history for the needs of Park Chung Hee's descendants who aspired to exonerate their father. It was bad enough that the state's history was now to be written by the state itself, and forced upon the (mostly unwilling) learners, especially for the generations that had become accustomed to a more balanced relationship between the state and civil society since the institutional democratization of the late 1980s. But the additional reduction of public history to the family narrative of the current ruler looked even worse to those people who used to see the distinction between public and private realms as the benchmark of rational, modern governance.⁷⁵

Hence, the backlash exceeded all the expectations. An absolute majority of professional Korean historians in South Korea (382 persons in more than 70 universities) refused to participate in writing what became popularly known as 'the New Right textbook.' That demonstrated once again just how weak the position of New Right was inside the professional academic community. Furthermore, around 97 percent of school history teachers were found to be critical of the project, as well as 77.7 percent of schoolteachers in general.⁷⁶ Unexpectedly, even conservative

educators and historians often took a public stance against the ‘nationalization.’ For many conservatives, the exoneration of colonialism and pro-colonial collaboration, even in the name of ‘modernization’, was too much to stomach. Even Han Yǒng’u (b. 1938), a veteran conservative historian who was once himself among the state-commissioned authors of 1970–80s history textbooks, voiced his objections to ‘nationalization.’⁷⁷ The New Rights agenda of discarding the narrative of national anti-colonial resistance in favour of a pro-colonialist version of modernization theory turned out to be too scandalous even for a sizeable part of South Korea’s traditional conservatives. While protest demonstrations and denunciations of the ‘nationalization’ project by various NGOs and civil groups were making the news, the government-run National Committee for History Compilation had no choice but to commission the new textbook from a motley group of mostly elderly historians headed by a retired specialist in Korea’s ancient past from Ewha Women’s University, Sin Hyǒngsik, who was 76 at the time of appointment. Among the six compilers of the most sensitive contemporary history part, four were either economic historians or political science experts with the views close to those of the New Right.⁷⁸ Since Sin and his co-authors—thirty-one in total—were to participate in a vastly unpopular endeavour which could forever tarnish their professional reputations among fellow academics, they were lavishly remunerated for their efforts. Sin, for example, pocketed a sum amounting to approximately 34,000 US dollars for his contribution, the highest-ever amount that the South Korean state ever paid to a textbook author.⁷⁹ By the end of January 2017, the new unitary textbook of Korean history, written in great haste, was ready. However, in less than two months, on March 10, 2017, the Constitutional Court of South Korea reconfirmed the impeachment of Park Geun-hye, on accusations of corruption and power abuse. Nine years of conservative domination over South Korean politics thus ended, amidst million-strong popular demonstrations in the centre of Seoul.⁸⁰ And the first thing the newly elected liberal president, Moon Jae-in (Mun Chaein, b. 1953) did after entering the Blue House, was to order the ‘nationalized’ textbook to be discarded and to restore the previous system of textbook approval.⁸¹ ‘New Right textbooks’ in the end failed to materialise and the New Right movement as a whole quietly disappeared from the forefront of South Korea’s academic and political life, being now strongly associated with the disgraced Park Geun-hye and her unpopular presidency. The New Right organizations have not dissolved themselves, but at the time of writing (May–October 2018) they appear to be keeping an intentionally low public profile. In the end, their exceedingly close association with the Park Geun-hye regime meant that the New Right was badly wounded by Park’s fall from grace.

Conclusion

In the wake of Park Geun-hye's downfall and the cancellation of the 'textbook nationalization' project, the New Right movement, by and large, failed to achieve its original objectives. The brand of intellectual and political conservatism which it had been developing may be referred to as "new" only with major caveats. Whereas claiming that pro-Japanese collaboration constituted a decisive contribution to Korea's modernization and that colonialism as a whole proved beneficial for Korea might have been relatively 'new' in the context of South Korean public space (but not necessarily internationally, if one takes the historical views of Japanese conservatives into consideration, for example), the New Right's laudatory views of South Korea's past authoritarian administrations were quite reminiscent of these administrations' own self-descriptions and pro-government propaganda, still fresh in the memory of older South Koreans. Their uncompromising hostility towards the DPRK was also hardly new, although the New Right did their best to dress it with the more fashionable discourse of modernity and individual human rights rather than the old-fashioned anticommunist formulae from South Korea's 1950s–80s. In the end, categorical and rather unnuanced denunciations of North Korea proved hard to reconcile with the discourse of inter-Korean peace and cooperation which currently enjoys relatively strong popularity among most South Koreans, including many self-described conservatives.⁸² Rationalizations of the South Korean authoritarian period did not fit well with the New Right's own avowed belief in individual rights and freedoms and proved unpopular, to say the least, with younger generations of South Koreans more accustomed to viewing procedural democracy and international human rights standards as important norms.

Apologetics for Japanese colonialism and its Korean accomplices failed to persuade the majority of South Koreans, socialized to regard the post-colonial master narrative of colonial period victimhood and the heroism of the anti-colonial resistance, about the validity of the national(ist) credentials of the collaborators' heirs. Both the New Right's vision of colonization as a part of capitalist globalization ultimately benefitting South Korea's economy and the shared view of the majority of ordinary South Koreans who commonly identify colonialism as the age of suffering for the colonized and pro-colonial collaboration as treason,⁸³ may be described as nationalistic in their own ways. However, the pro-globalist nationalism of the South Korean elites leaves little space for popular memories of colonial period suffering and resistance, and thus proved unable to win a popular following. It appears that South Korea's ruling class, with its colonial roots, will, for the time being, have to be content with the sort of 'managerial legitimation' that

it has been enjoying since the age of high-speed economic growth.⁸⁴ The majority of South Koreans do appreciate the relatively high living standards that were achieved under the domination of the country's present ruling stratum, but retain their scepticism concerning the historical legitimacy of the collaborators' heirs who have continuously occupied high-level positions in South Korean society.

The failure of the New Right project does not mean that ruling class interests do not, and will not influence the process of history-writing. They certainly will—as they do elsewhere—but in much less direct ways than those attempted by the New Right, with their crude apologetics for dictatorial rule and outdated modernization theories. For example, in the field of modern or contemporary history, the history of the middle classes, their consumption patterns, and the commercial mass culture they have been enjoying since the colonial days is represented much more strongly in today's South Korea than the history of the underprivileged, of their resistance, or of the social movements in general. However, even amidst the general turn towards a de-politicized history of “modernity” and/or “culture” (rather than that of capitalism and/or socio-political struggles),⁸⁵ direct apologetics for colonialism and dictatorship remain, and will most likely continue to remain, the unpopular view of an ultra-conservative minority.

Notes

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4. See Yun Haedong, *Kūndae Yōksahak ūi Hwanghon* (The Twilights of Modern Historiography) (Seoul: Ch'aek kwa Hamkke, 2010), 19–119.
5. See Han'guk Yōksa Yōn'guhoe 1930 nyōndae Yōn'guban, *Ilcheha Sahoejuūi Undongsa* (The History of the Socialist Movement under the Japanese Colonial Rule) (Seoul: Han'gilsa, 1991), 15–24.
6. On the leftist movements of the 1980s, see: Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007).
7. On the leftist movements of the 1980s, see: Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007).

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11. Kang Man'gil et al., *Ch'inil'p'a 99 In* (99 Pro-Japanese Collaborators) (Seoul: Tolpegae, 1993).
12. On the process of formation of Korea's nascent capitalist class during the colonial age, see O Miil, *Kûndae Han'guk üi Chabonka tül* (Korea's Modern Capitalists) (Seoul: P'urün Yöksa, 2014). On the make-up of the incipient modern bureaucratic elites under the Japanese rule, see: Kim Yôngmo, *Ilcheha Han'in Chibaech'üng Yôn'gu* (the Research on the Korean Ruling Class under the Japanese Rule) (Seoul: Kohôn, 2008), 125–176.
13. On the role of the former Japanese officers of Korean ethnicity in the building of South Korean army, see: Han Yongwôn, *Han'guk üi Kunbu Chôngch'i* (South Korea's Military Politics) (Seoul: Taewangsa, 1993), 128–138.
14. On Sin, see: Yun T'aegon, "'Yôngwônhan TK Taebu' Sin Hyônhwak i Han'guk Hyôngdaesa e namgin Chokchök" (The Imprint left by the 'Eternal Leader of the Taegu-Pusan Network', Sin Hyônhwak, on South Korea's Contemporary History), *Pressian*, March 26, 2007: <http://www.pressian.com/news/article.html?no=11726> Accessed on August 23, 2018.
15. See Im's recent critical biography: Chông Unhyôn, *Im Chongguk P'yôngjôn* (A Critical Biography of Im Chongguk) (Seoul: Sidae üi Ch'ang, 2006).
16. See, for example, the orthodox historical descriptions in Kuksa P'yônch'an Wiwônho, ed. *Han'guksa* (Korean History), vols. 50 and 51 (Seoul: T'amgudang, 2001), dealing with the late colonial period. "Collaboration" is occasionally named there only in the context of the "divide and rule" policies by the colonial authorities.
17. On the priorities of the New Right movement, see one of the earliest research works dealing specially with the Korean New Right: Chông Haegu, "Nyu Rait'ü Undong üi Hyônsil Insik e Taehan Pip'anjök Kômt'o" (A Critical Evaluation of New Right's Perceptions of the Realities) *Yöksa Pip'yông* 76 (2006: 215–237).
18. Bruce Cumings, "The origins and development of the Northeast Asian political economy: industrial sectors, product cycles, and political consequences" *International Organization* 38.1 (1984): 1–40.
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21. Yean-Ju Lee, Dong-Hoon Seol and Sung-Nam Cho, "International marriages in South Korea: The significance of nationality and ethnicity" *Journal of Population Research* 23.2 (2006): 165–182.
22. On the growing internationalization and ethnic fragmentation of the South Korean working class, see: Kwang-Yeong Shin, "Globalisation and the Working Class in South Korea: Contestation, Fragmentation and Renewal" *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 40 (2010): 211–229. According to the sources cited by Shin, by 2009 the foreign workers comprised more than 5 per cent of the total employees in the South Korean economy; their numbers doubled between 2002 and 2007.

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24. See his book in English: Dae Jung Kim. *Mass-participatory Economy: A Democratic Alternative for Korea* (Cambridge: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1985).
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