

World History: *Lesson on Japanese Occupation of Korea: 1910-1945*
(Mary Connor, National Korean Studies Seminar)

California History-Social Science Standards

Unit – Students analyze patterns of global change in the era of New Imperialism.

Standard 10.4 (2) Discuss the locations of the colonial rule of such nations as England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Portugal, and the United States

Standard 10.4 (3) Explain imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule.

Standard 10.4 (4) Discuss the independence struggles of the colonized regions of the world, including the roles of leaders such as Sun Yat-sen in China, and the roles of ideology and religion (Students could study the role of Syngman Rhee and Ahn Chang-ho in the Korean Independence Movement.)

Background: In the late 19th century, the West made forays into East Asia to benefit from new trade. Japan imitated the industry and military of Western powers and was eager to copy their expansionism. In 1876, Japan forced commercial relations on Korea. After acquiring the Philippines in the Spanish American War (1898), the United States was concerned about its ability to protect this newly acquired possession. In the secret Taft-Katsura Agreement (1905), Japan recognized U.S. control over the Philippines and in return the United States approved Japan's supremacy over Korea.

English Language Arts Standards – History/Social Studies Grades 9-10

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5 Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8 Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

English Language Arts Standards – History/Social Studies Grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Text Preparation for the Lesson (Source: *Asia in Focus: The Koreas (ABC-CLIO Publishers 2009)* Mary E. Connor, Editor

The Colonial Period (1910–1945)

What happened between 1910 and 1945 is crucial for understanding the post-WWII attitudes toward the Japanese. The Japanese were convinced that Korea was vital to their strategic and economic well being. Their plan was to destroy the spirit of the people and to make them loyal subjects of the Japanese empire.

The First Phase of Japanese Rule (1910–1919)

Koreans were controlled by a police system that deprived them of basic freedoms. Newspapers were suspended, political parties abolished, and public gatherings disallowed. Authority was invested in the Governor-General who was appointed by the Emperor and controlled the military and civil police forces, made all laws, and had fiscal independence and total control of all appointments. The police was the ruling agency in politics, education, religion, morals, health and public welfare, and tax collection.

The first decade of Japanese administration has been called the dark period because of the extensive repression of political and cultural life. The occupiers created an educational system to train a labor force to serve the homeland's economy. Their goal was also to educate the population in Japanese customs, culture and language to the point of creating loyal, useful, and obedient subjects of the emperor. Japanese was spoken and Korean was taught only as a second language.

The colonists consolidated their position in communications, public services, and economic activities throughout the peninsula. Railroads were particularly vital for strategic and economic reasons. Japan was then free to exploit Korea's gold, silver, iron, tungsten, and coal. A law was passed requiring approval for the formation of public or private corporations. Few Koreans received such approval. Japanese banks dominated the economy, and Korean businessmen had to depend on them for capital.

In this first phase of colonial rule, the oppressive rule forced a growing number of Koreans who expressed opposition to colonial rule to resettle in Manchuria and Russia. Some became contract laborers in Hawaii, others settled in California. After 1914 the major powers were consumed by the World War. Koreans tried to get the attention of other nations without success.

The Second Phase of Colonial Rule (1919–1931)

President Woodrow Wilson raised the hopes of colonized peoples around the globe with his commitment to self-determination of peoples. Korean activists planned a nationwide demonstration for independence on March 1, 1919. It was to be a non-violent expression of their desire to be free and independent from Japan. Rumors that the Japanese were involved in the death of the former Korean emperor led to widespread demonstrations throughout the country. The Japanese were caught by surprise and the police responded with thousands of arrests, beatings, and the destruction of homes,

churches, and even entire villages.

Many nationalists were forced to flee their homeland and join compatriots in Shanghai and elsewhere. In 1919, nationalists in Shanghai established the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in exile and elected Dr. Syngman Rhee its first president. Other nationalists were attracted to communism because of the Russian Revolution and the emergence of a Soviet Union as the champion of oppressed peoples everywhere. Ultimately, the differing ideologies seriously divided the movement, and no group was able to gather mass national support. In the twenty-first century both North and South Korea continue to be influenced significantly by the class and ideological conflicts that developed during and after the period of colonial rule.

The Third Phase of Japanese Occupation and World War II (1931–1945)

As a result of the worldwide depression, Japan realized that its new industrial economy was overextended beyond what the small empire could support. Japan seized Manchuria in 1931, made it a puppet state, utilized its rich natural resources, and developed its industry. Korea was now to serve as the base for Japan's Asian plan. Newly instituted policies emphasized rural self-sufficiency and increased industrial production. As industry expanded, thousands of peasants took factory jobs. Some resistance to the Japanese continued. Korean communists in the north organized underground peasant brigades that attacked their landlords and the police. One was led by Kim Il-Sung.

By 1934 the Japanese began to be bolder, forcing the Koreans into the cultural and political life of the empire with the objective of eliminating all differences between them. Educational policies included a new curriculum that emphasized Japanese language instruction, ethics, and history. Although Japanese and Korean children originally attended separate schools, all now attended school together. These new policies also included a pledge to the emperor, forced attendance at Shinto ceremonies, and the elimination of the study and use of the Korean language altogether.

In 1939, the Japanese struck at the most cherished source of family identity by forcing Koreans to adopt Japanese names. In a nation where reverence for ancestors and family lineage had been a way of life for thousands of years, this policy could only create a deep and lasting resentment on the part of the people. The Japanese believed that their survival depended on their subjects acting and thinking as they did.

After the United States entered the war in the Pacific, there were even greater hardships. Koreans now had to work in mines and factories in Manchuria and Japan, guard prison camps, build military facilities, and serve the troops in various capacities. The Japanese organized the entire colony into groups that were responsible for providing labor and security, while rationing their own goods.

People were forced to donate gold and silver jewelry, brass and other metals to the war effort. School hours were reduced so children could work as factory laborers or in the fields. One of the most shameful developments was the so-called Comfort Corps, made up of between 100,000 and 200,000 young Korean women who were forced to serve the sexual needs of Japanese troops. Thousands of Korean men served in the military, and approximately 16 percent of the population, lived outside the country or worked in factories and mines in Manchuria, northern Korea, and Japan (including Hiroshima).

When the Emperor of Japan surrendered unofficially on August 15, 1945, it was a

day of jubilation for Koreans. It seemed that now for the first time since early in the 20th century they could shape their own destiny; however, the country was soon to be divided after being unified for nearly 1,300 years.

Were there any positive outcomes from the Japanese Colonial Period?

Despite the harshness of colonial educational policy, there were some positive outcomes in the long run. Public education was established regardless of social status and gender, and educational facilities were constructed. Administratively, it was a uniform system of mass education to bring everyone up to a certain level. However, at the end of occupation, less than five percent of the adult population had more than an elementary school education. There was only one university, and most of the students were Japanese. The colonizers did contribute to the beginnings of economic development, but they were the primary beneficiaries. By 1936, more than half of all farm output was shipped to Japan. Three family-owned conglomerates (Samsung, Lucky, and Hyundai) did begin during occupation.

The Legacy of the Japanese Occupation:

- (1) Koreans still maintain that Japan has not repented.
- (2) Japanese politicians continue to visit a controversial WWII memorial,
- (3) Information about occupation/WWII is omitted in Japanese textbooks.
- (4) Memories of Japanese brutality linger.
- (5) Comfort women have come forward to reveal their horrifying past.
- (6) Japanese continue to discriminate against Koreans.
- (7) Korea considers Dokdo Island as legitimate Korean territory and a few Koreans actually reside on the small island. A Japanese teacher manual states that Dokdo Island belongs to Japan. Koreans consider Japanese claims to be absurd.
- (8) In 2014 Japan considered reexamining historical evidence that was used in its 1993 apology to wartime sex slaves.

Highly Recommended Sources: (Note: National Korean Studies Seminar PowerPoint Lecture on the Japanese Colonial Period)

Eckert, Carter J. *Korea Old and New* (the standard text for Korean Studies classes)
Kang, Hildi. *Under the Black Umbrella* (trustworthy collection of oral histories of the colonial period)
Kim, Richard. *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood* (grades 8-12) Historical fiction, well-written, accurate, and very memorable,
Park, Linda Sue. *When My Name was Keoko* (grades 6-8) Historical fiction. Engaging and accurate.

Bringing Korea into the Curriculum:

The Japanese Occupation of Korea and Its Legacy

Document Based Question for World History Classes

In the late 19th and early 20th century, foreign powers began to take increased interest in the Korean peninsula. During this period, lacking the capital and modern technology, Korea continued to grant many concessions to foreign powers in developing its modern industries, including mining, forestry, fisheries and railroad construction. Among these powers, Russia and Japan were the most aggressive in expanding their interests in Korea.

Following the lead of Western powers, Japan began using military force to gain territory and foreign markets. After defeating China in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japan moved quickly to take over Korea. Beginning with establishing it as a protectorate in 1905, followed by annexation in 1910, the Japanese ultimately controlled virtually every aspect of Korean life until defeated in 1945.

Inspired by President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points Declaration together with intense animosity against occupation, Koreans attempted to challenge the oppressive rule of the Japanese; however, issues related to occupation live on to the present day.

Assess the validity of the above statement by incorporating information about the Japanese occupation of Korea from available sources (student textbook, article providing background information on Japanese Occupation and a PowerPoint lecture on the National Korean Studies website).

Document A

Source: Korean Declaration of Independence, March 1, 1919

“We hereby declare that Korea is an independent state and that Koreans are a self-governing people. We proclaim it to the nations of the world in affirmation of the principle of the quality of all nations, and we proclaim it to our posterity, preserving in perpetuity the right of national survival. We make this declaration on the strength of five thousand years of history as an expression of the devotion and loyalty of twenty million people. We claim independence in the interest of eternal and free development of our people and in accordance with the great movement for world reform based upon the awakening conscience of mankind....”

Document B

Source: Schirokauer, Conrad. *A Brief History of Japanese Civilization*. Harcourt College Publishers, New York, 1993.

“Korea, by contrast [to Taiwan], boasted a culture older than that of Japan and a tradition of fierce independence. It also contained an old hereditary elite resentful of Japanese intrusion, and after 1895, a small but dedicated group of nationalists....Beginning March 1 of that year [1919], there were massive nationalist demonstrations appealing, as did those in Beijing [Peking] on

May 4, to the Wilson doctrine of national self-determination. The protests spread throughout Korea and before it was over some two million people participated. The Japanese repression was ferocious.”

Document C

Source: The Korean Overseas Information Service. *Handbook of Korea*. JungMoonSa Printing. Seoul, Korea, 2003.

“Expansion of Japanese colonial capital during the 1920s resulted in increased poverty and depression for Koreans, and it caused the strengthening of the resistance struggle....The exiled Provisional Government of Korea made efforts to appear before the great powers at the League of Nations Conference in Geneva in 1932, but leading countries with colonies of their own refused to discuss the Korean problem.”

Document D



Source: Association of Korean History Teachers. *Korea through the Ages, Volume II*. Center for Information on Korean Culture. Academy of Korean Studies, South Korea, 2005

Yu Gwansun (1904-1920) staged demonstrations in Seoul on March 1, 1919 and organized follow-up movements. She was arrested by the Japanese police during a demonstration. Yu faced her trial in a dignified way after being brutally tortured. Even when she was imprisoned, she shouted the slogan of the movement, “Long live an independent Korea” to encourage her fellow compatriots. She later died in prison at age sixteen.

Document E

Source: Park, Linda Sue. *When My Name was Keoko*. Random House, New York, 2002.

“All our lessons were in Japanese. We studied Japanese language, culture and history. Schools were not allowed to teach Korean history or language. Hardly any books or newspapers were published in Korean. People weren’t even supposed to tell old Korean folktales....We still spoke Korean at home, but on the streets we always had to speak Japanese. You never knew who might be listening, and the military guards could punish anyone they heard speaking Korean.”

Document F

Source: Kim, Richard E. *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988.

“Then, we moved on along the line of people standing in the snow. Some shake hands with my father; most of them merely bow, without words. We are outside the gate. There, too, a long line has formed and is still forming, all the way down the hill, past the gray stucco Methodist church, and I am thinking...We lost our names; I lost my name; and these people are all going to lose their names too, when they walk into the police station....”

Document G

Source: Park, Linda Sue. *When My Name was Keoko*. Random House, New York, 2002.

“That was what Tomo had been talking about. He’d been warning me that our metal things were about to be taken away. Maybe he thought that if we knew in advance, we could hide some things before it happened. But telling me straight out would have made him a traitor to the Japanese, his own people. He’d been telling me the only way he could – and I hadn’t understood.”

Document H

Source: [Cumings, Bruce]. *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History*. W.W. Norton, New York, 1997.

Among Koreans today, North and South, the mere mention of the idea that Japan somehow “modernized” Korea calls forth indignant denials, raw emotions, and the sense of mayhem having just been, or about to be committed....Koreans have always thought that the benefits of this growth went entirely to Japan and that Korea would have developed rapidly without Japanese help anyway.”

Document I

Source: Lee, Ka-baik. *A New History of Korea*. Ilchokak Publishers, Seoul, Korea, 1984.

“Under the political protection of Japanese imperialism, Japanese capital investment in a wide range of industries in Korea was growing apace. War related industry in particular was established in Korea by the great *zaibatsu* of Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Noguchi, hand in hand with Japan’s war ministry.”

CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES BY NATIONALITY, 1938				
INDUSTRY	PAID-UP CAPITAL (and percentage)		AVERAGE CAPITAL PER COMPANY	
	Korean Companies	Japanese Companies	Korean Companies	Japanese Companies
Textile	6,075 (20.8)	23,103 (79.2)	164	593
Metal and Machinery	1,852 (7.3)	23,654 (92.7)	32	249
Brewing	12,054 (46.7)	13,772 (51.3)	38	107
Pharmaceutical	1,676 (64.2)	934 (35.8)	51	37
Ceramic	432 (2.7)	15,791 (97.3)	36	395
Flour and Rice Cleaning	2,526 (2004)	9,860 (79.6)	27	141
Processed Food	217 (2.2)	9,621 (97.8)	13	128
Lumber and Woodworking	594 (5.3)	10,553 (94.7)	31	129
Printing	625 (30.0)	1,461 (70.0)	14	35
Chemical	2,954 (2.8)	100,736 (97.2)	80	1,340
Others	1,193 (18.6)	5,220 (81.4)	18	39
Total	30,198 (12.3)	214,705 (87.7)	41	267

Document J

Source: The Korean Herald and Hyun-Jin Park. *Insight into Dokdo: Historical, Political and Legal Perspectives on Korea's Sovereignty*. Pages 70-71. Jimoondang Publishers, Seoul, Korea, 2009.

“In February 1904 when the Russo-Japanese War started, Japan planned to construct a watchtower on Dokdo to keep an eye on the movement of the Russian Vladivostok fleet that began to harass Japanese transports. It was in February 1905 that Japan attempted to seize Dokdo clandestinely, keeping it from the knowledge of the Korean government and people. Japan simply ignored the fact that Dokdo had been an inherent part of Korean territory ever since 512 A.D., claiming it as a *terra nullius*, and annexed the island into its territory of Shimane Prefecture. In August 1945 when Korea was freed from Japanese occupation, the Supreme allied Powers GHQ issued SCAPIN No. 677 for Governmental and Administrative Separation of Certain Outlying Areas from Japan and restored Dokdo to Korea on January 29, 1946.”

Document K

Source: Los Angeles Times. “South Koreans rethink aid to earthquake-stricken Japan,” April 26, 2011.

“South Korea was the first country to send a rescue team to the disaster area. The Korean Red Cross had raised \$40 million, one of the largest non-governmental contributions to Japan after the earthquake....Then came a pair of thunderbolts out of Tokyo: On April 1, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs related its Diplomatic Bluebook 2011 detailing developments in Japan's foreign relations – a release that came just two days after the central government approved new school textbook content. Both reiterated Japan's claims to the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima islands.”

Document L

Source: Photograph of the Peace Girl Statue. KoreaHerald.com 2014.



A new controversial statue brought friction over World War II comfort women to Glendale, California. A statue of one of the Korean “comfort women” who were forced into sexual slavery by Japan during World War II sits in front of a library in Glendale, California.

Document M

Source: New York Times, March 1, 2014 “Japan to Revisit Apology to Wartime Sex Slaves: Review to Focus on Basis of 1993 Statement”

“Japan will re-examine a landmark apology it made two decades ago to women forced to work in Japanese wartime military brothels, a government spokesman said on Friday, in a move that could further outrage South Korea many of the women came from.”

Document N

Source: New York Times International, March 23, 2014, “U.S. Emerges As Central Stage in Asian Rivalry”

“As the issues mount, the United States, which has labored to remain an impartial friend to both nations, has found itself in the middle of a fight between its two main Asian allies at a time when it wants their cooperation to face resurgent China and a nuclear-armed North Korea....Experts say that this internationalization of what had been bilateral disputes reflects the shifting balance of power in a region where a wealthier South Korea is challenging Japan’s century-long dominance. At the same time, Japan is showing more willingness to push back under the leadership of [Prime Minister] Abe who has argued in the past that Japan’s wartime history has been depicted too negatively.”