The Memories of August 15 (Day of Liberation) Reflected in Korean Anniversaries and Memorial Halls

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In this article, I try to analyze the memory politics of August 15th since liberation in 1945. The memory politics include the ritualization of the Day of Liberation and the foundation, restoration, dismantling of buildings and places, and the representation of August 15th in ceremonial spaces.

The public's recollection of August 15th is fragmented because pride and joy for the liberation was soon counteracted by the following horrors of the Korean War, dictatorial regimes, and the democracy campaigns. It was during the 1980s that a systemized project to reestablish the population's memory of this historical event was made possible. This project is sometimes criticized because of overt state nationalism in terms of content or sheer authoritarianism in terms of spatial design.

Today's memory of August 15th is not limited to the memories of that sole day, but also includes all the collective memories of the other anniversaries of August 15th that followed the one in 1945, and the intensity of the strong memories regarding other subsequent anniversaries of August 15th may be the reason for our memories of the actual 15th of August in 1945 being so fragmented and vague. Finding an acceptable balance amongst all these different levels of memories, and freeing ourselves from feeling content upon having the simple, stereotyped image of August 15, 1945, should be a challenge waiting for us in the future when democracy is sufficiently integrated into society.

We should also not forget that the 15th of August was very much an issue with an international background. August 15, 1945, was the day when Koreans escaped colonial rule, but the day was also another landmark date for a new order of East Asian society. For the peaceful coexistence of the East Asian countries in the 21st century, the memories of August 15th should not be appropriated by the state, but shared among civilians for future exchanges among nations.

Keywords: Memory politics, representation, Day of Liberation, stereotyped image, independence, restoration.

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Searching for the Memory of August 15th

August 15th is usually referred to as the Day of Liberation ("Gwangbokjeol") in Korea, and is designated as a national holiday. This day symbolizes many concepts from our recent historical experience, like being liberated from Japanese occupation and regaining independence. Designating August 15th as a national holiday has allowed the Korean people to relive those experiences and sentimentalities every year since 1945. Thus, the day itself carries a very political and historical meaning. Also, the government of the Republic of Korea was founded on the same day, August 15, albeit three years later in 1948, so this day also marks the day on which the administrative body of our people was born. But unfortunately, this day also marks the beginning of a separated, divided status inside the Korean peninsula. Due to such status, many negotiations of which the prime objectives aimed at reunification, or several declarations issued as a result of the efforts of both the North and South Korean regimes have been held or declared on this day for many years. In that regard, we could say that August 15th is not a concept remaining in the past but a concept that is still being practiced, and an experience which is being relived constantly by the Korean people.

The experience of breaking free and being liberated from occupational rule, and the experience of creating a new nation for the people allowed people to rewrite their own colonial memories and recollections in a very new fashion. This "rewriting" results in reevaluating the national liberation efforts that continued during the occupation, and also results in producing certain obligatory sentiments regarding the need to "reward" the people who invested tremendous efforts in such movements or even whole-heartedly sacrificed themselves. Such reevaluation and obligatory sentiments usually call for appropriate administrative means or actions to support and sustain them. And such means and actions include designating new national holidays, or arranging new facilities for commemorations such as museums, memorial halls, or cemeteries. In the meantime, memorial facilities from the past are usually dismantled or rearranged as past events and experiences continue to be reevaluated, and they are ultimately replaced by new spaces of commemoration. Sometimes, memorial places that were dismantled early in the past are simply resurrected. Usually, the government regulates and oversees these tasks, so established facilities are in most cases managed by the government as public facilities.

Commemoration is a collective recollection of a past event. The act of commemoration itself usually needs the object of commemoration, the subject who

commemorates, and also the contents and formats of such commemoration. The concept of commemoration is firmly based on specific time periods and specific locality and is realized by certain ceremonial occasions in that the act itself usually appears on a specific day in a specific place with a specific gathering. Such has been established since the end of World War II and is still maintained today. The same event may be celebrated in significantly different manner.

In this article, we shall see how the Korean people have remembered and recollected the day August 15th since liberation in 1945. The meaning of that very date was so complex and multi-faceted that there have been many discussions regarding the proper ways of commemorating it and numerous memorial spaces newly established in honor of that day. The ritualization of the Day of Liberation, the foundation of Independence Hall, the restoration of Independence Park, and the dismantling of the old building of the Government-General in Joseon (OGGJ bldg.) are the most notable aspects related to the memory politics of August 15th that will be discussed here.[1] And ultimately, how August 15th is represented in such places will be examined as well.

August 15th as the Day of Liberation

To the Japanese people, August 15th 1945 is a shameful day of defeat, and they remember the day vividly as a day when people kneeled to the ground and grieved at the broadcast news service which delivered the Japanese Emperor's declaration of surrender[2]. Such scenes are very well covered in various photograph collections published in Japan. The picture of August 15th displayed at the Yushukan (遊就館) of the Yasukuni Shrine (靖國神社) (1987: 62) is a prime example. This picture, a second picture showing the arrival of the U.S. army, and a third picture of General MacArthur as the U.S. Army Commander in Chief of the Far East Command usually generate the image of the beginning of the post-war era.

If we look closer into certain memos or notes in which the memories of

1. There is also the History Hall honoring the War Comfort Girls recruited by the Japanese troops, or the Baekbeom (Kim Gu) Memorial Hall.
2. The broadcast of declaring surrender made by the Japanese Emperor is often referred to as the Royal Voice Broadcast but is only referred to as a live broadcast in Korea.

August 15th are mentioned, we can see that although the Japanese were feeling bitter at their defeat, they were also relieved by the fact that the war was finally over. The people who had been recruited to serve at the frontline were especially happy at the fact that they were going to return home. During the last phases of the war, the frontlines were continuously bombarded by U.S. bombers on almost a daily basis, and due to the Atomic bomb attack launched upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese themselves were already engulfed in severe pessimism in what they came to expect regarding the outcome of the war.

In China, the Soviet army was beginning to enter Manchuria, followed by what is known as the North Korean area today and then Sakhalin on August 9, 1945. Konishi, a professor serving in the Preparatory course at Keijo Imperial University, was temporarily staying in the Heungnam area of South Hamgyeong Province to recruit students. He later testified that although he did not hear anything on August 15th, he heard the Korean national anthem being played in the melody of a song then-called "Firefly" (螢の光) on the next day, August 16th, in a very celebratory mood. This song was originally sung to encourage people to serve king and country or to appreciate the sacrifice and support made by their mentors and teachers. It was the Scottish folksong, Aude Lang Syne.[3] The situation described in his testimony is confirmed in other kinds of memorandum as well. According to an article titled "The Document of the End of the Joseon War" written by Morita Yoshio, over 200 professors, staff members, and students of Keijo Imperial University gathered inside the campus, listened to the radio broadcast on August 15th, and sang the Japanese national anthem, *Kimigayo*, while agonizing over the defeat. Yet at the same time, Koreans were singing the Korean national anthem in the streets, and the song was carrying a melody very similar to that of the song "Firefly" (Morita Yoshio 1974: 84), just as mentioned by Konishi.

To Koreans, what would August 15th of 1945 really have meant at the time? It was almost 11 o'clock at night on the eve of liberation, August 14th 1945, when the Government-General in Joseon was notified of Japan's decision to surrender for the first time. The news was delivered through the Dongmaeng

3. It was 1881 when the Japanese made a new song called Firefly with new lyrics applied to the original melody of this song and inserted it in a musical textbook called *Sohak changgajib chopyeon*. What should be noted is that, in the song, a phrase showing Senjima and Okinawa, which was the epitome of Japanese imperial expansion of its territory, was included.

Tongshin-sa channel. After hearing the news, Vice Governor-General (Jeongmu Chonggam) Endo immediately had a meeting with Yeo Un Hyeong at Endo's house on August 15th, at 6 o'clock in the morning. Endo asked Yeo for cooperation in maintaining local order and security,[4] and Yeo agreed. Yeo also organized a Preparation Committee for Nation Foundation (Geonguk Junbi Wiwonhoe) that night, and in the morning of the next day (August 16th) he arranged for the release of political prisoners from Seodaemun Penitentiary. At 1 p.m. on that day, he held an organization ceremony for the Preparation Committee at Hwimun Middle School. Yeo declared that the day of liberation for the Joseon people had finally arrived, and the public gathered there, over 5,000 people, who all burst into huge cheers. The vice president of the committee, An Jae Hong, also broadcast an announcement at Gyeongseong Broadcasting Station at 3 o'clock on that same day, and appealed to the public to maintain order. Some of the released political prisoners gathered at Deokseong Female Technical School and held the Seoul Revolutionaries Convention.

Among the people who heard the declaration of surrender made by the Japanese Emperor on August 15th was a person named Go Jun Seok who was working at the editorial office of the *Gyeongseong Ilbo*. In his memoirs published in 1972, he described working for the official newspaper of the Government-General in Joseon and also expressed his regret about working for the Japanese. He also talked about the celebratory demonstrations which swept the Seoul area that day, and also about several incidents that occurred on August 16th at numerous workplaces everywhere involving both the Korean workers and pro-Japanese Korean staff members. According to him, the most important political happenings of that day were the organization of the Jang-an faction of the Joseon Communist Party and the announcement of early-stage general plans for the Korean Democratic Party (Go Jun Seok 1972: 27).

Koreans who heard the broadcast on August 15th all marched down the streets of Seoul and indulged themselves in celebrating the joy of liberation. The news spread throughout the city instantly. Nakane Takayuki authored a memoir dealing with the Japanese people's memory of August 15, 1945. In his book he displays a picture of Koreans cheering at Seoul Station Square (2004: 299), but

4. Right after the liberation, the Japanese troops tend to disregard the instructions of the Government-General in Joseon. Some of them committed suicide, while some of them assaulted the Koreans.

it is not certain whether the picture was actually taken on August 15th or not. The fact that the *Taegeukgi* (Korean national flag) was used on the occasion and the fact that those flags were actually re-colored Japanese national flags were at least true (2004: 295-296). He theorized that, at least at the unconscious level, the Japanese back then must have recognized the melody of the national anthem sung by the Koreans as the melody of the Japanese song "Firefly" (2004: 318).

One of the first things that the Korean youths who heard the news actually did was to attack and destroy the Shrine or Bonganjeon located in their community. To them, such facilities were the embodiment of Japanese imperial rule. Yet in the meantime, Koreans living in rural areas were not even aware of the advent of liberation, and it was not until the 16th or even the 17th that they were all informed of the news. For example, Lee Byeong Gi, a scholar of Korean literature who had retired to the Iksan area of the North Jeolla Province, wrote in the August 16th entry of his diary that "There is news that the Japanese Emperor declared surrender through a radio broadcast yesterday at noon" (Lee Byeong Gi 1976: 556).[5] And recruited soldiers and workers in the Hwasun, Jangheung, and Gwangyang areas of the South Jeolla Province who reported to their workplaces on the morning of August 15th[6] were all dismissed without any kind of explanation (Jung Keun-Sik 1990, 206). The market which opened once every five days effectively served in spreading the news to all corners of the rural areas. But compared to that, news in the city areas spread swiftly, which even led to organizations of independent bodies.

The fact that the public was actually welcoming the U.S. troops arriving in September shows us that the public was not only unanimously enjoying liberation but also believed that it was made possible thanks to the victory of the Allied forces. Through a formal process, the Japanese flag hoisted at the the Government-General in Joseon was removed by U.S. troops, and the U.S. flag, Stars and Stripes, was placed there instead. At the welcoming ceremony appreciating the advent of the Allied forces, the Taegeukgi, U.S.S.R.'s Red flag, and the Cheongcheon Baegilgi flag of China were all hoisted as well. The Koreans were definitely welcoming the Americans, but there were also inherent tensions and

5. This kind of situations was also found in the Jangheung gun which was surveyed by the author. According to the diary of an old man, we can see the situations of the rural areas on August 15th and 16th. On this matter, we can consult Jung Keun-Sik (1990, 206).
6. A photograph of evidence is inserted in Lee Gyeong Mo's collection (1998).

suspicions behind the scenes. Such an atmosphere appears very much evident when we see the pictures taken back then. Pictures of the guards at the ceremony, and pictures of the marching U.S. troops, all mirror such an atmosphere.

During the ending days of 1945, the public sentiments of joy and wonder diminished significantly due to the ever-increasing tension, and later those emotions were eventually replaced by public misunderstanding, social clashes and inevitable conflict. At the time, the trusteeship issue was emerging above the surface, especially in December 1945 and early 1946. This kind of confrontational atmosphere became pretty much apparent in the March 1st ceremony of 1946, which marked the beginning of a series of so-called "Clashes over Anniversaries." The delight of liberation was slowly becoming a mere, forgotten part of the past, not to mention an old concept, which was only going to be commemorated and celebrated through annual anniversary occasions.

The March 1st anniversary of the year 1946 was celebrated in an environment in which the Left-wing party was showing dominant status in the overall Right wing-Left wing confrontations (Kim Min Hwan 2000). On the other hand, the August 15th anniversary of the same year served as a catalyst for upcoming confrontations between the Left-wing party members and the U.S. military government authorities, and also confrontations that would be sparked between Koreans themselves. But still, most Koreans genuinely considered the 1st anniversary of the Liberation to be a very important one, indeed worthy of an undivided celebration, so many people supported the sentiment of urging that the anniversary should be held in a fully unified fashion, regardless of political party politics. For their own reasons, the U.S. military government also considered the occasion worthy of celebration, which would also be a celebration of the end of a global war and also the Allied forces' victory, so they prepared a celebration ceremony including all the Right and Left-wing party members, with no parties left out.

The meaning of August 15th in 1945 and 1946 was actually three-fold. Those three facets were no other than liberation, independence, and restoration. These concepts were apparent in demonstrations or anniversary celebrations after August 15th, and were very much interconnected in nature. Usually, August 15th of 1946 was referred to as the 1st anniversary of the Liberation, and was publicized by the government's issuing of commemorative stamps and postcards (*Chosun Ilbo* 1988: 204). The meaning of August 15th at the time was also mirrored in the songs and music. "The Song of Liberation" composed by Kim Sun Nam featured a lyric saying, "Listen! The people of Joseon, the sound of the

upcoming liberation!"[7] And the marching song for independence composed by Kim Seong Tae and written by Park Tae Won composed at this time had lyrics starting, "The night was long and painful..." The latter was usually regarded as the "Liberation song," but was heavily criticized by the Joseon Musicians' Alliance and also music critic Park Yeong Geun for using melodies too much reminiscent of those featured in Japanese army songs.[8] The "Day of Liberation" song, composed by Yun Yong Ha and written by Jeong In Bo in 1948, starting with lyrics saying, "We should touch the soil again...," which was later officially selected to be designated as the Day of Liberation song. Aside of these songs, there was also a liberation song sung on August 15th in the North Korean region. As we can see, even in the musical world, August 15th was labeled differently with numerous terms, which ranged from liberation, to independence, to restoration.

In the early days, these concepts were usually mingled in actual usage, and were not used discriminatively for different occasions, at least during the so-called time period of "the liberation zone" (1945-1948). Yet later, they started to be used discriminatively in numerous situations due to certain ideological reasons originating from the aforementioned "anniversary clashes." On October 19, 1945, the U.S. military government abolished Japanese anniversaries and established new anniversaries and official holidays, including the Fourth of July and also Christmas (Kim Gwang Un 2002).

At the time, establishing national anniversaries for the Korean people was a hot issue, delicate enough to encourage both Right- and Left-wing members to fight over hegemony with that issue. The fact that the March 1st celebration anniversary in 1946 was separately held, one in the Seoul Complex and one in Namsan Park, vividly shows us the intensity of the national separation that was in progress at the time, and also the fact that the issue of celebration or commemoration for a specific occasion was indeed a very important matter to the Joseon people, who were on the verge of founding a new nation for themselves.

The particular situation which involved August 15th of 1946 was a testimony

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7. This song can be found on the first page of the *Joseon haebang il-nyeon* (1946) published by the Joseon Minjung Sinmun Company.
8. This song is inside the Jungdeung Eumak Imshi Gyobon (Temporary textbook for the middle school students) edited by Park Yong Gu and published in May 1946. More details can be found in No Dong Eun (1989, 314-321).Later it lost its criticized tone, and became one of the most favorite songs for the progressive students in the1970s along with the Nongmin-ga song.

itself to the competitions and confrontations that were going on among the U.S. military government, the Korean nationalists, and the right and left-wing party members over the issue of hegemony and also the matter of legitimacy. The August 15th Liberation Ceremony Committee, organized by the U.S. military government, planned a celebration at Gyeongseong Station with 50,000 personnel marching, in front of a crowd over 300,000 . Then, when August 15th was not that far away, the Joseon Communist Party decided to create a left-wing political block as part of their new strategy, and made an official request to the U.S. military government to relinquish their control and transfer it completely to the Peoples Committee. At the same time, the Min-Jeon Alliance, which represented the Left-wing camp members at the time, declared total of five principles in an act of rejection to the U.S. military government. Eventually, they went on to hold an isolated celebration of their own. Considering the circumstances, in this case the Left-wing members were more responsible for those two separated celebrations. In the meantime, also mirroring such kind of confrontation, in the Gwangju area a conflict broke out between the U.S. military government personnel and the laborers working at the Hwasun Mine.

Around August 15th of 1947, the U.S. military government and the Right-wing camp members were launching full-scale attack upon Left-wing party members, and as a result the celebratory mood which should have preceded the second anniversary of liberation had practically gone. Naturally, separate celebrations were held here and there. In that kind of environment, the foundation of the South Korean government alone came on August 15, 1948. This day was actually the third anniversary of liberation, but the celebratory mood was yet again masked by the hoopla coming from the foundation of the government. The celebration and parades arranged for this day to honor the government's foundation added another layer of meaning to the August 15th anniversary, which later turned out to have affected the images of both the Legislation Anniversary on July 17th and August 15th of 1949 as well. August 15th in 1949 was regarded more as the 1st Anniversary of the Government's foundation, rather than as the fourth anniversary of liberation.

In Korea, there are four national holidays today: the March 1st anniversary, the Legislation Anniversary Day, the Day of Liberation, and the Day of the Country's Beginning. They were all legalized on October 1, 1949, by the "Law of National Holidays" enacted as Law No.53.

Among these holidays, the Day of the Country's Beginning is based upon the traditional theory regarding the origin of the Korean people, so it had already

been established as a national day for celebration even before the Japanese occupation of Korea started.

In the meantime, March 1st had been regarded as a memorable day for the Korean people since the 1920s, as the March 1st movement was a very memorable one for the Korean people who were suffering under Japanese occupation. This day was also considered worthy of celebration because it was regarded as a day symbolizing the establishment of the Korean people's very identity, the beginning of public struggle, the originating point of the foundation of the Korean provisional government, and the basis for the eventual foundation of the nation (Han Sang Do 2000: 114-126). Without a doubt, it was ultimately the most important anniversary for the national liberation movement during the Japanese occupation. And as a result, March 1st had been celebrated every year since the year 1920, as it was important for the Korean people not to forget the inspiration, drama, and resolution which literally awakened them on that very day. March 1st was truly a holy anniversary for the Korean people under colonial occupation.

On the other hand, August 29th was a negative anniversary for the Korean people as it was the day when the Japanese annexation of Korea was officially declared.[9] This was considered as a day on which the Korean people should take time to reflect upon the past and realize that they were foolish enough to lose their own sovereignty. This was considered to be a day on which the Koreans should strengthen their own resolution and aim to regain independence. It was indeed a shameful day, and was commemorated by the Joseon National Revolutionary Party and the Korean provisional government. Later, March 1st continued to be celebrated and was eventually established as a national holiday, but August 29th was ultimately abolished.

The Legislation Anniversary Day and the Day of Liberation were established only after 1948. In May 1949, the cabinet council re-established national holi-

9. Another negative anniversary is November 7th which was the day the treaty of the Eulsa treaty was signed in 1905. The provisional government designated this day as a day for collective commemoration honoring the ancestors who sacrificed themselves for the Korean people and arranged such gatherings every year. From 1963 till 1969 the Department of Protection and Support (Weonho-cheo) was in charge of the arrangements, but the day itself was excluded from being designated as a national holiday. In 1993 the association of the Surviving families Association requested it be designated as a national holiday but it was rejected because it was already being served by the Hyeonchung-il day on June 6th.

days and initially, August 15th was regarded as the "Anniversary of Independence." Following that decision, August 15th of 1949 was celebrated as the first anniversary of independence. But in a congress gathering held on September 21st, the independence anniversary day was decided to be renamed to Gwangbok-jeol, namely the Day of Liberation.[10] In 1949, August 15th of both 1945 and 1949 were all honorable and worthy days for commemoration. The former marked the Korean people's liberation from Japanese rule, and the latter was the day on which South Koreans founded a government of their own. It was a day that both South and North established governments of their own, ultimately bringing fixation to the divided status of the Korean peninsula, but the South Korean government had every reason to celebrate this day. Yet, the congress deliberately overrode the cabinet council's decision, and opted to rename it to Gwangbokjeol. This action must have been clearly mirroring the intentions of the congress members, but the nature of that intention still remains a mystery.

At the time, the word "restoration" was usually being used within the same context in which words like "liberation" or "independence" were being used. Under occupational rule, the word "restoration" was used totally regardless of any kind of ideological preferences or inclinations.[11] The meaning that the word "restoration" carried can be identified from the usages of that word by members of the Daehan Gwangbokhoe (which was organized after the Japanese annexation of Joseon), the Restoration Army headquarters located at the West Gando area (which was organized by discussions with the Korean provisional government in 1920), the Cheolhyeol Gwangbokdan group, the Joguk Gwangbokhoe group in 1936, and the phase-2 Restoration Army that was reorganized by the Provisional government in 1940.

Yet the most distinctive usage of the word "restoration" can be found from the very name of the Korean provisional government Army, which was named the Restoration Army, and the official bulletin of the army, which was also entitled The Restoration. *The Restoration* Army was organized in 1940, and the Gwangbok bulletin was first published by the Jeonghun office at the Restoration

10. The Legislation day was also proposed as a legalized holiday originally.
11. The most original thought about the concept of restoration (Gwangbok) emerged in the phrase (it will be reclaimed before long) which was written upon the Taegeukgi used by Uibyeong militia leader Go Gwang Sun who was in action in 1906 in the Guryae area of the South Jeolla Province. This flag is currently in display of the Exhibition Hall 2 of the Independence Memorial hall.

Army headquarters in 1941. The bulletin served as a media, which introduced the public to the missions and plans of the Restoration Army, or offered analyses of the accomplishments made by the troops' campaigns. The bulletin was also utilized in recruiting research and surveys regarding better ways of enhancing the Restoration Army's tactics and strategies, and also proposing public suggestions that coordinated efforts or even alliances with the Chinese army (such propositions were encouraged by the Chinese army's recent victories against the Japanese). The bulletin was published not only in the Korean language but also in Chinese. This shows that the publishers in charge were intent upon recruiting other Korean military groups, or garnering Chinese political parties' support and that of military units as well.

Rules or laws related to national holidays or anniversaries usually serve in shaping up the so-called model citizens expected in modern nations. On occasions like national holidays, official gatherings are usually arranged, and in most cases a silent prayer for heroic ancestors who sacrificed their lives for their people is required. Through this kind of process, the memories of the past tend to be molded into a somewhat standard format, and the public is molded into a certain model which would be considered "suitable" in a modern nation society as well. But unfortunately, the Day of Liberation and all its meaning did not develop in the way that it was hoped, and instead of all the historical meaning being properly appreciated, the day itself gradually turned into a simple ceremonial occasion. The Korean War only contributed to this kind of unfortunate transfer. In 1956, special amnesties in honor of the Day of Liberation were first initiated, and on the Day of Liberation in 1963, which was right after the military coup, major amnesties were issued as well. Eventually, this became a general practice. President Chun Doo Hwan also ordered a major amnesty on August 15th 1980, which was right after he seized control of the government.

The social organization, which was most supportive and protective of honoring August 15th, the Day of Liberation, would undoubtedly be the Restoration Association committee. The Restoration Association was organized in 1965 as a corporation aggregate, yet it actually originated pretty much earlier from the government's act of decorating 204 persons with Foundation Medals on March 1st 1962 for their meritorious actions conducted in their efforts for the Korean people's liberation and independence. And in April this year, the "Law of Special Support for Meritorious persons in Liberation efforts of Korea" was enacted. Based upon such efforts, the Restoration Association was formally organized and established.

Ceremonial events started to be arranged as official functions in 1970 at the National Central Theater, and the President's presence was also required. But the first lady was assassinated at a ceremony in 1974, and following such a tragic incident, the Prime Minister instead of the President was required to attend the ceremony in 1975 as guest of honor until 1980 when the guest of honor was again changed to the President. In the 1970s, the place usually arranged for the ceremony was the National Central Theater, but from 1978 till 1986 the event was arranged at the Sejong Cultural Hall, and from 1987 till 1994 the event was held at the newly constructed Independence Hall. The year 1995 was the 50th anniversary of Liberation, and more than 50 thousand men and women gathered at the Sejongno Square and celebrated the day.

Although the Korean peninsula has been divided for a long time, and the Day of Liberation has been becoming more of a routine anniversary instead of a day regarded with a much more substantial meaning, the day is still the only day that both South and North Korean people can enjoy and celebrate together. So, important dialogues between politicians of South and North, or crucial messages or monumental declarations, are often launched or issued on August 15th. The day literally meant the country itself to Korean people both South and North, and because of that, continuing to arrange political events on August 15th actually contributed to reproducing and strengthening such an image. After the Korean War, a competition in that sense between South and North was initiated in 1960 by the North Korean proposition of establishing a "transitionally federalized state" through a free election held in both the south and north regions of the Korean peninsula. South Korea's answer to that proposition was devised only later, in 1973. In his celebrating remarks on the Day of Liberation ceremony, president Park Chung Hee requested dialogue between South and North to be initiated, and also suggested that both South and North should request admission into the United Nations together. Later on, celebration remarks made on every anniversary of the Day of Liberation contained messages regarding the necessity and prospect of a peaceful reunification.

In 1990, August 15th became an even more memorable day representing the Korean people's hope and aspiration for reunification, and a day which would hopefully be celebrated more publicly in the future, as the "1st Convention of All the Korean people" was held on August 15th that year. From this point forward, August 15th became a day representing interchange between the South Korean and North Korean people, and the day itself came to be regarded as a day representing the Korean people's effort for reunification, instead of being regarded as

just an ordinary holiday celebrating the Korean people's liberation from Japanese rule or the foundation of the Korean government. This kind of change was made possible by the people who accepted the fact that Korea was indeed a divided state, and yet actually set out to rectify that problem.

The Concept of "Independence" Transferred to a Memorial Space

1. Construction of Independence Hall

In recent years, and for the past few decades, August 15th has been constantly relived and experienced by the public, and in the process several particular places were utilized. One such place is Independence Hall. Plans to construct Independence Hall were initiated in July 1982 when Koreans heard the news that Japanese authorities in charge of education decided to overlook or willfully insert distorted interpretations of historical facts in their textbooks. During the 1970s, Japanese politicians were continuously making ridiculous remarks regarding the past events that happened between Korea and Japan, and finally, the issue of false references and blatant distortions of facts detected inside Japanese textbooks became a major problem in July 1982. The National Institute of Korean History in Korea examined Japanese textbooks and later disclosed to the public the results of their own internal surveys regarding the distorted parts recognized inside. Public demonstrations criticizing the Japanese actions continued throughout mid-August, and discussions for founding a certain memorial hall began at the time as well.

The very first attempt at constructing a memorial hall honoring the independence of the Korean people after the Liberation in 1945 was launched on February 12, 1946. It was first proposed at the Preparation Committee for the National celebration of the March 1st Declaration, which was arranged in the Cheondogyo Conference Room. A few months later, on August 15th the same year, while celebrating the first anniversary of liberation, the *Dong-A Ilbo* announced plans to construct an Independence hall and called for the public's support. The efforts were mostly led by right-wing party members, yet in the end it turned out to be not that productive due to the ever-intensifying clashes and confrontations between the right- and left-wing members. Later, the efforts were discontinued completely in the wake of the Korean War.

Discussions for the construction of the Independence Hall were reopened

around 1974. The Park Chung Hee regime was trying to consolidate the authoritative, totalitarian nature of its regime and was in need of an ideological device which would tie the public together under the leadership of the regime. According to the general plan devised for constructing the "Museum for the Korean People," which was drafted by the staff members of the National Museum, the facility was going to be built as a permanent establishment at the Yeoui-do area, and to be equipped with 10 exhibition halls inside in a timetable set for a total of 10 years. This plan was later refined and modified, and resulted in the establishment of Regulations regarding the "Korean People Museum construction plan," General Presidential order No. 8228, which was announced on September 1st, 1975. Yet later, to make matters complicated, separate plans emerged in 1980 as there were dissensions over the matter of choosing the place which would house the facility. Some favored the Yeoui-do area, while others argued that the Changgyeongweon facility would be better.

The plan was heavily revised again in 1982, due to another incident involving Japanese textbooks. In August of that year, the Department of Culture and Information devised a plan to establish a Korean People Museum, and the Department of Culture and Tourism devised a plan to construct a Korean People Liberation Hall. And apart from the government's plans, representatives of other civilian committees in close touch with the government such as the Academy of Art, Restoration Association, Korean Newspaper Association, Korean Female Committee Alliance and the Korean Broadcast Association, all gathered and discussed the possibility of constructing an Independence hall, and also the matter of arranging an official convention to successfully launch the project. Later, on August 28th, representatives of 55 organizations gathered and declared the initiation of the project, and also announced that the project would be funded from voluntary donations of the public. Several media services led the campaign and collected donations (Dongnip Ginyeomgwan Geollipsa, 98-104).

According to the plans of the Preparation committee for the project, the objective for the project itself was referred to as "to found a memorial facility which would let the public remember and relive the sacrifices, efforts, abilities and resolution of their ancestors who fought against foreign aggressors and defended the country," and it was also mentioned that the project would continue "through the voluntary support of the public," in hope of ultimately "presenting this construction effort as an opportunity to demonstrate the Korean people's abilities, and presenting the facility to the public for its own education." It also indicated that this "historic monument demonstrating the capabilities of the

Korean people of the 1980s" "will be completed by 1986 with the help from the public's voluntary donations." The Preparation committee named An Chun Saeng, who had previously been head of the Restoration Association association, as head of the committee to lead the project. The place, which would sustain the facility, was decided to be the hill areas of the Heukseong Mountain located in the Mokcheon area of South Chungcheong Province, which was also the birth place of Yu Gwan Sun, the heroine of the March 1st Movement.

The official objective for the project was in fact very swiftly established, and general plans for the project were also established in a fairly quick fashion. It was all because that there were certain factors, which could not help but considerably contribute to speeding up the process. The Japanese actions of distorting historical facts in their interpretation of history, and even inserting them into their own textbooks was a powerful motive for the Koreans to respond, but it was not the only reason. It should be noted that the Chun Doo Hwan regime was also in desperate need to legitimize itself in the eyes of the public. Not only the ideas supposed for securing the needed amount of money, or the process in which the place to house the facility was decided, but also the deadline for the project itself were vivid testimonies to the government's intentions. The plan was to complete the project before the opening of the Asian Games scheduled to be held in 1986. 492 billion Korean Won was collected in just four years, between 1982 and 1986. The Chun Doo Hwan administration literally invested all their efforts into this project of establishing a memorial hall. And the project was able to go on smoothly because of all the help from the media, and the full cooperation from governmental branches. Yet, an unexpected fire broke out in 1986, and inevitably delayed the completion of the process, thus also delaying the grand opening of the facility.

Choosing a name for the facility was hard as well, and efforts to decide a proper title for the facility resulted in multiple public hearings. Titles like the "Independence Hall," "Liberation Memorial Hall," "History of Independence Hall" etc. were suggested, and eventually the "Independence Hall" was chosen. General plans for the Independence Hall and the Independence Park revealed that the word "Independence" here referred to concepts such as national independence, the foundation of an independent democratic country, and standing proud as an independent member of international society. And within the title, the "Independent Memorial" part referred to the facility's existence itself generating voluntary participation and producing active energy, which would make it possible to establish public understanding and collective sharing of the memo-

ries of Koreans regaining independence, and also possible to create a productive future based upon that (Dongnip Ginyeomgwan Geollipsa, 185).

What should be noted is how the symbolic features and the Memorial Square itself were arranged in the construction progress of Independence Hall, and how the display concepts were finalized. In January 1983, The Preparation Committee surveyed research related to similar facilities domestic and foreign, and completed outlining the general plans in March. At first, the display room was planned to house 15 permanent display sections with either regular or special themes, but later in March 1984 it was changed to 13 display sections and six display halls, and an additional hall to display items related to the post-liberation era. The additional hall was Exhibition Hall No. 7, and it was the Hall of "The Republic of Korea." The hall was designed to include three sub-sections displaying items that belonged to three particular themes: The Tragic Division of the Korean Peninsula, Economic Development, and The Strengthened Country with Renewed Resolution toward Reunification. The design process was overseen by professors Shin Yong-Ha and Jo Dong Geol. Other than these permanent exhibitions, a circular theater and outdoors sculptures and displays were included in the plans as well. The Independence Hall currently has a central structure called "The House of the Korean People," and a Square entitled "The Korean People's Ground," an exhibition center, a small mountain hill called "The Hope for Reunification" hill, a "Korean People's Pagoda," a stone statue, and also a space meant for people who wish to stand still for a second to cherish the memory of the past and their ancestors. "The House of the Korean people" is 126 meters in length, and 45 meters in height. This tile-roofed structure is the most central structure of Independence Hall.

On May 9th, 1986, the Law of Independence Hall was enacted and announced. An Chun Saeng, who had formerly served as a member of the Independence Army, was named to be the first director of the facility. Four years after construction began on August 15th in 1983, the facility was finally completed and opened to the public on August 15th 1987. A grand celebration was arranged for the event.[12] No entrance fee was required for the visitors for the first half month, and there were 380 million visitors. After the facility was opened,

12. Korean social movement for democracy was higher than ever around this time. The so-called June Struggle, and the laborer strike in July and August distracted the public from paying attention to the opening ceremony of the Independence Memorial hall.

the celebration events for the Gwangbokjeol holiday were held at the memorial hall from 1988 till 1994.[13]

The opening remarks for the opening ceremony of Independence Hall strongly mentioned and iterated the historical meaning of opening this facility, the nature of the facility which literally symbolizes the Korean people's resolution toward autonomy, the possibilities which would come from adequately recognizing our own proud tradition and history, general hopes for the facility to serve as a ground of live education for our people, the necessity to preserve and study text materials related to the independence movement, the task of establishing a basis for founding a nationally unified country, and finally, the act of participating in the world-wide anti-imperialist efforts and joining the world neighbors' strides toward mutual prosperity (480-483).

2) "The Independence Park" and the Restoration of the Seodaemun Penitentiary

One of the most important memorial facilities related to August 15th other than Independence Hall mentioned above should be the Independence Park at the Seodaemun area in Seoul, and also the historical exhibition facility placed on the site which was formerly the Seodaemun Penitentiary. The area in general has been a historical place since the Joseon dynasty period, and occupied a particularly important status during the 1890s, but was severely abused under the Japanese rule.

In November 1987, when the Seodaemun Penitentiary facility was moved to the Uiwang area of Gyeonggi Province, city authorities of the Seoul capital consulted the research team at Seoul Municipal University for suggestions and advice regarding the matter of how should they utilize the facility which was formerly a prison. They received an answer recommending the authorities to create a theme park. In 1988, the team, led by professor Shin Yong-Ha of Seoul National University, devised a design for the Seodaemun Independence Park which would, hopefully, successfully emphasize the historical meaning of the place. The plan for the park was to base the concept mainly upon the nearby Dongnipmun Monument, preserve parts of the Seodaemun Penitentiary facility,

13. In the beginning the number of staff members of the Independence Memorial hall was 180, but currently it is?reduced to 89.

and restore parts of the past Independence Hall and the "original" Independence Park. The plan was authorized to proceed and Independence Park was established in 1992, and the Dongnipgwan was restored in 1996.

Originally this place was where the Yeongeun Gate and Mohwa Hall, which were the symbols of the Joseon dynasty's submissive diplomatic policies, were standing. At this place, the Independence Club association started to erect the Dongnipmun in 1896 on the exact site where the Yeongeun Gate was dismantled. The Dongnipmun was built with money collected from citizens, and was completed in 1897. In the meantime, the closed-down Mohwagwan was also repaired and renamed as the Dongnipgwan, and right after that, the "original" Dongnip Park was established as well. This original version of the Dongnip/Independence Park, along with Pagoda Park, was one of the first modern parks ever constructed by the Koreans (Shin Yong-Ha 2001, 374).

As we can see, the Dongnipmun, the Dongnipgwan, and Dongnip/Independence Park were all established in 1897 and served as symbolic places or structures, generating the image of Koreans trying to build a civilized independent country of their own. Professor Shin Yong-Ha argues that these places were utilized or represented significance through the heroic actions of An Jung Geun, or during the March 1st Movement in 1919, and were also sung about by the soldiers of the Independence Army (2001: 394). Later, during the Japanese occupation, the Dongnipgwan was dismantled and the Independence Park was closed down and sold to civilians. Only the Dongnipmun was designated as a historically important place by the Gyeongseong district authorities in 1936. Later, in 1963, it was re-designated as such by the Seoul capital city authorities as well, yet due to road construction reasons, and after a series of heated discussions, the gate itself was moved 70 meters from its original location to its present location, in 1979.

Only some of the structures of the late Seodaemun Penitentiary that were considered to have some historical meaning were preserved following the instructions laid out by the general plans for establishing the "new" Independent Park, and the rest were dismantled. Originally, the Seodaemun Penitentiary was constructed in 1908 and called Gyeongseong Prison; the facility was established in order to incarcerate the ever-increasing captured or arrested Uibyeong militia members. In 1923 it became the Seodaemun Penitentiary, which later changed to the Gyeongseong Penitentiary in 1946, Seoul Penitentiary in 1950, then to Seoul Correctional Institution in 1961, Seoul Detention Facility in 1967, and finally moved to the Uiwang area of Gyeonggi Province in November 1987.

Before it was moved, the facility consisted of 15 sections. Among them, Section 10, 11, 12 which were constructed in 1915, section 13 which was constructed in 1923, and the security office structure, the execution ground, the walls, and section 9 constructed in 1929 were preserved. Aside from these, the Penitentiary for Lepers was preserved as well. The female quarters constructed in 1916 was actually used as an underground prison and was later abolished in 1934. It was referred to as the "Ryu Gwan Sun Cave" as well, and as it was considered historically important, it was decided to be restored as well.

On August 15th 1992, the Seodaemun Independence Park was opened. At the newly restored Independence Park, a commemoration pagoda honoring the ancestors who sacrificed themselves for the Korean people, and a commemoration pagoda honoring the memories of the March 1st Declaration of Independence were erected. The latter was erected inside Pagoda Park on August 15, 1963, with voluntary donations collected from the public by the People's Restoration Campaign headquarters. But it was later removed from there because Pagoda Park had to go through some repairs in 1963. It was practically abandoned at the time, but later it was found and finally moved to the new Independence Park in 1992.

Then in 1995, the local self-government policy was initiated, and the jurisdiction over Seodaemun Independence Park was transferred from the Seoul municipal authorities to Seodaemun-gu. The district office decided to remodel the late Seodaemun Penitentiary structure into a historical education center and established general plans to transform it into a holy place representing Korean sacrifice in September 1995. Finally, the place was opened as the Seodaemun Penitentiary History Hall in November 1998. The hall presented exhibitions of items, mostly sentence execution records and items from the victims who were incarcerated or executed there. After more than thirty sessions of council were arranged, the matter of what kind of exhibition themes should be selected and what kind of items should be displayed was finally resolved.

This History hall was a remodeled version of the late Security office structure. The building was designed to two floors above the ground and one underground. The first floor was constructed as an exhibition floor under the title of "The Place for Cherishing Memories of Our Ancestors." On the second floor, various sections named, the "Chamber of the Korean People's Resistance," the "Chamber of the History of the Penitentiary," and the "Chamber of Life in Prison" were opened. The underground floor was designed as a space for actually experiencing life in prison, with featured replicas of the temporary incarcera-

tion rooms and also torture chambers. There were also other rooms for experiencing the Seodaemun Penitentiary inside the later structure.

This historic hall displays the pictures and items related to the persons who were devoted to the National liberation movement and were also incarcerated in this penitentiary during the occupation. In other words, only the items of persons who actively joined the liberation movement before 1945 and had records of being incarcerated in this facility were considered eligible to be displayed here. For example, the display includes a picture of the prisoners released from Seodaemun Penitentiary cheering with joy on August 16th 1945, and a picture of four skinny prisoners released from the Okubo penitentiary of Kobe, Japan on October 10, 1945.

What should be considered interesting is how certain memories were chosen to be displayed. With the exception of the Dongnipmun, both the Dongnipgwan and Independence Park had been forgotten by the people for too long, so the public today almost regard this park as a newly constructed one. But researchers who participated in the planning process approached the matter of the park as "restoring" it.

Another thing to note is how the penitentiary is remembered by the people. The name "Seodaemun Penitentiary" is still one of the titles most vividly remembered by the public because the facility was a powerful representation of the Japanese occupation and colonial rule of Korea. Even after the Japanese occupation ended, the penitentiary continued to serve as a facility incarcerating Left-wing members imprisoned during the Cold-War era, and also for incarcerating persons who were imprisoned under the military dictatorial regimes for their dedication to bring democracy to the country. But the facility was only regarded as a symbol of repression and pain for its services maintained during the Japanese occupation period. Seodaemun Penitentiary was the most prominent incarceration facility in Korean from 1917 till 1987, yet when the History hall was opened inside that facility, it was designed as a museum displaying only facets of the National liberation movement that continued inside colonial Korea. Only the items or remains of persons who sacrificed themselves, and whose demises were directly related to this very penitentiary, were decided to be collected, gathered, and displayed here.

Displaying pictures or items of persons who were actually incarcerated in this facility resulted in leaving out certain aspects that should have been included in the exhibition, and also ended up causing some problems. First, it generated a question of how other penitentiary facilities maintained during the Japanese occupation should be addressed in the exhibition themes of this Seodaemun

facility. Second, the history after 1945 was completely dropped in the facility's general programming, and it raised an even bigger question of how the issue of incarcerated left-wing prisoners produced by the political situation that followed the Liberation, and the incarcerated persons who were involved in democratic campaigns afterward should be addressed or included in the exhibition's format and contents. Third, the actions of the socialist activists were also ignored. Fourth, the persons who were devoted to national liberation movements yet were incarcerated in other penitentiary facilities were left out as well. And fifth, other "general" criminals unrelated to political issues whatsoever yet incarcerated here anyway, were left out as well.

This kind of approach to deciding the concepts of the exhibition was in fact very different from those of other ordinary museums, or other commemoration halls or facilities dedicated to persons who were devoted in democratic campaigns or socialist movements. Current people in charge of the exhibition are only interested in searching for "unsung heroes" who must have been dedicated activists in the national liberation movement and lived before 1945, instead of trying to include historical persons and the history itself after the year 1945 in their displays and integrate them into the overall exhibition themes of the facility. They have held academic symposiums every year, from 1999 till 2003, concentrating on the efforts aimed at the former cause.

The main target of this facility is Korean youth who will undoubtedly benefit from this kind of historical education. In addition, a huge portion of the visitors are Japanese tourists, so the facility is also serving as a sort of diplomatic channel for our people. The facility is pretty much accessible to the public because it is located in the city and is a prime example for successfully utilizing the remnants of the vestige that it was based upon (the penitentiary). The facility was also praised for incorporating high-tech means to exhibit images of the time better than any other history museums. The facility is regarded as a public success and a daily count of visitors usually mounts to the average of 2,500, nothing short of that of Independence Hall. All this shows that, not only local accessibility, but also realism and historical quality were crucial in the facility's success.

The range of persons, and items that belonged to those persons, displayed here were in fact very limited during the 1990s, but as democracy continued to root itself in our society and also our in political structure, some of the socialists were included in the list of persons who should be "evaluated, commended, and rewarded." The concept of the so-called "Persons involved in national liberation movements or who were meritorious in efforts aimed for independence" is being

enlarged, and displayed objects are increasing accordingly. Yet, the problem of the history after 1945 being left out still remains. The plans to establish a commemoration facility for the Democracy campaigns, which are currently in the phase of discussion, are part of the intention to pick up on what the Seodaemun facility left out.

3) Dismantling of the Late Building of Government-General in Joseon

No discussion over a particular structure which needed to be decided, whether to preserve or dismantle, turned out to be more controversial than the case of the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon. There are several other structures from the Japanese occupation days such as the Seoul City hall building, the Korean Bank building and the Seoul Station structure, but the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon was the one which practically represented the past as a whole. Jeong Un Hyeon (1995: 26) referred to the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon as literally the "1st District of Japanese Imperial Residents," and argued that this structure was continuing to remind the Japanese of past glory and memories, while it was continuing to humiliate the Koreans as much as to show that they were still without any kind of commendable historical sense.

When the Japanese Imperial Authorities initiated Tonggam control in Joseon in 1905, they first used the Waeseongdae structure at the Nam Mountain as headquarters for the Japanese Residency-General in Korea. Then in 1912, two years later after Japan's annexation of Korea, they decided to construct a new building for the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon and arranged the entrance area of the Gyeongbok Palace to serve as the space which would house it. The Gyeongbok Palace was the central palace for both the Joseon dynasty and the Great Han Empire (Daehan Jeguk). The Government-General in Joseon asked Nomura, who designed the governor general office in Taiwan, to design it, and had him complete the design by 1914. When the completed design was delivered, first they started to tear down portions of the palace and organized an exhibition entitled Joseon Mulsan Gongjinhoe in 1915. The construction of the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon began in 1916 and was completed in 1926.[14] Along with the Governor-General

14) For details, please consult Son Jeong Mok (1989).

Office, the Gyeongseong district office was also completed in 1926, and office for the Governor-General himself started to be constructed in 1937 and was completed in 1939.

To the Korean people, the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon symbolizes many negative things. First, the structure blocked the Gyeongbok Palace in terms of location. Second, the structure itself featured the shape of the Chinese letter, *il* (日). As a result, the feature of the structure, combined with the feature of the Bukhan Mountain, which pretty much looks like the Chinese letter "*dae*" (大), and also with the feature of the Gyeongseong district office which resembles the shape of the Chinese letter "*bon*" (本), awkwardly emerged as part of a line of letters reading "*dae ilbon*" (大日本), which meant no less than "The Great Japan." The geographical direction which the supposed line "Great Japan" was showing was toward the Japanese Yasukuni Shrine on Namsan (or Nam Mountain). By this alone, it could be said that the structure was strongly symbolizing the Japanese rule of Joseon.

This structure was taken over by the U.S. military government in 1945 and was used as headquarters for them as well. In 1948, the celebration of the South Korean government's foundation was held here, and later it was used as the Central Hall by the Korean government. Then in 1950, most of the structure was destroyed or incinerated during the Korean War. The remains remained abandoned, then were restored by the Park Chung Hee regime in 1962, and again decided to be used as the central building for governmental branch offices. In 1982, when the government's central building was newly established in the Gwacheon area and many parts of the administrative branch were transferred there, the old central building was repaired for two years and started to be used as the National Museum. It served in that function after 1986.

Whether to preserve or dismantle this structure had become an issue pretty early on during the 1950s. President Syngman Rhee ordered to look into the matter of dismantling it, but budgetary matters got in the way and the discussions were put on hold. Later, the issue resurfaced during the early 1990s. In 1989, the government started to organize plans for dismantling the late Government-General in Joseon structure to restore the original feature of the Gyeongbok Palace, and news of the plans being organized certainly let the public be aware of the issue. On July 20th 1989, the Korean Policy Development Research Institute proposed the removing of the Government-General in Joseon and restoring Gyeongbok Palace in a symposium titled "Cultural options that would help us get rid of the remnants of the Japanese 36 years of colonial ruling

of Korea."[15] And on December 6th 1990, the Donga Ilbo recollected the history of the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon in an article entitled "Shall we sit and do nothing about the most prominent symbol of Japanese rule that ever existed?"

In January 1991, the government initiated its project of restoring the Gyeongbok Palace, but differences of opinion started to break out over the matter of how to deal with the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon itself, especially among scholars and media services. The opinions of the architectural society were collectively presented in May 1991 through the bulletin of the Korean Architectural Scholars Society, named "Architecture" (Vol. 35-3). Three options were suggested: dismantling, moving, or preserving. The location of the structure, the political meaning, and the architectural feature of the structure all became part of the issue, and the matter of restoring the Gyeongbok Palace was also discussed together.

Ju Nam Cheol argued that the structure should be dismantled as the Korean spirit should be fully restored through such act of poetic justice, but Kim Jeong Dong argued that the structure should be preserved as it had served as not only the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon but also the headquarters for the U.S. Military government and as the central hall for the Republic of Korea's government for a very long time, and therefore could serve as an educational feature for the public. In the meantime, Song Min Gu argued the necessity of transferring the facility somewhere else, also for educational reasons.

The Meiji Architecture Research Association of Japan made a request to the Korean government asking to preserve the structure because it featured the best design ever conceived and constructed throughout the entire East Asia region (*Hanguk Ilbo* 1991.6.3), and a person named Lee Jeong Deok also argued that the structure should be saved, for exactly the same reason (*Hanguk Ilbo* 1991.6.14). Jang Heung Gi (1991) also published an article opposing the dismantling. Yet on the other hand, Shin Yong-Ha (1991) criticized the opinions against the dismantling and other opinions arguing the potential usages of the existing structure, and strongly suggested that the structure should be dismantled. Then, all those discussions ran into a dead end again when the cost was

15. Professor Lee Hyeon Hee considered dismantling the OGGJ bldg. as an act of eliminating the most visible remains of Japanese colonial ruling, and Professor Yun Jang Seob argued the aesthetic qualities of the Gyeongbok Palace.

estimated to reach almost a trillion Korean Won. The discussions were rendered silent, again.

The issue received the spotlight in 1993 again. The Kim Young Sam administration which initiated its term that year tried to rekindle the issue of restoring legitimacy in terms of the affairs of the Korean people, and as part of their efforts the administration decided to dismantle the late the Government-General in Joseon. It was yet another version of their efforts to emphasize the legitimacy of the administration itself as well. The leading figures in these discussions were the staff members of Cheonghwadae (the Blue House). They needed to differentiate themselves from the past military regimes, and the project itself was labeled as one of the official prime objectives of the government honoring the 50th anniversary of liberation (1995) and the 600th anniversary of making Hanyang the capital. Some pro-dismantling scholars have a view that if that chance were lost, it would never have been possible to dismantle it at all. The expectation for the performance of the first Civilian government for a long time was that high.

A hearing was arranged on June 12th, and supposition was made to alter the title of the War Museum, which was currently in construction at the time, re-designating it as a new national museum and a possible candidate to house the relics and items. They also argued that it was totally inappropriate to display important relics of Korea inside the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon which had been the embodiment of Japanese oppression against Koreans. It was another critical turn upon the earlier decision to house the items there in the first place, a decision which was made by the Chun Doo Hwan regime in the 1980s.

Also, there were concerns regarding the sentiment of founding a war museum as being a totally out-of-date idea that would actually fit with the Cold War era. They argued that it is nearly an unfathomable idea to found a museum completely dedicated to exhibiting items related to warfare, and ultimately promote animosity and fear in a time when the Korean people were in dire and urgent need of preparing for reunification and investing efforts in bringing reconciliation to the Korean people (*Dong-A Ilbo*, June 16, 1993).[16] Democratic Liberal Party, the party which was in power at the time, initially accepted the proposal to

16. President Kim Young Sam strongly iterated in his inauguration speech that the country and its people should come first than ideological matters, and was in preparation for promoting a summit between the South and North.

re-designate the War Museum to a Museum for the Korean People (*Dong-A Ilbo* June 16, 1993), but immediately faced rejection from the Ministry of Defense and also many other military generals,[17] so the president quickly cancelled the entire plan on June 17th. In response, nine civilian associations, including the Korean National Movement History Association, issued a statement on July 9th requiring an immediate cease in devising plans for constructing the War Museum, immediate dismantling of that building, restoration of the Gyeongbok Palace, and moving the National Museum in hope of resurrecting the Korean spirit and restoring the relationship between South and North (*Hanguk Ilbo* July 10, 1993).

On August 13th 1993, two prior to the Day of Liberation, 11 civilian associations, including the Restoration Association, organized a promotion committee to promote the necessity of dismantling the building. It was a last ditch effort to persuade the president to do it in the wake of celebrating the Day of Liberation. It was the president who had the final say in this matter, and the head of the Restoration Association and professor Shin Yong-Ha were deeply involved in the matter. Finally, dismantling it was officially decided on August 15th 1993. Along with the Governor-General Office, the late office for the Governor-General himself located inside the Cheonghwadae was also decided to be dismantled.[18] An owner of a construction company offered to dismantle the office and relocate it to another place where it would be reassembled without charging the government, but the government ultimately declined (*Dong-A Ilbo* August 27, 1993).

Even after it was finally decided, the director of the National Museum expressed his opinion that the former Government-General in Joseon should not be dismantled before a new building for the National Museum was constructed. In order not to let such concern get in the way of dismantling the structure or even override the original decision, the promotion committee suggested collect-

17. The position of the military leadership on this matter is well mirrored in the July 9th 1993 volume of the *Gukbang soshik* (Defense Bulletin) published by the Ministry of Defense, which argued the necessity of the projects commemorating general warfare. According to this, it was 1964 when general plans for constructing the Warfare museum was first proposed, but budgetary reasons and difficulties occurred in searching for possible sites delayed the project, and the plans were reopened in 1988 when the military headquarters were decided to be relocated.
18. The *Yomiuri Newspaper* published an article titled "The Last Relic Representing the Japanese Rule of Joseon Has Disappeared on September 9, 1993."

ing voluntary donations from the public to fund the dismantling efforts. These people and the government started to search for a place which would temporarily house the would-be relocated relics and items. On October 27th, an open correspondence was delivered to Cheonghwadae requesting in "First, the construction of a new museum, and then the dismantling of the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon" with over 5,000 signatures. In response to this campaign, the promotion committee again issued a statement on November 1st requesting the immediate dismantling again, and also asking for detailed plans for the construction of a new national museum. On November 5th, the Department of Culture and Sports announced plans for temporarily relocating the National Museum, but two days later the Korean Archaeological Association issued a statement asking to construct a new museum before dismantling the Governor-General office, again.

Finally, the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon, which was the embodiment and ultimate representation of the Japanese oppression of Korea, was dismantled on August 15th 1995, in hope of finally eliminating all remaining residues of Japanese colonial rule, and resurrecting the Korean spirit. Parts of the dismantled structure were relocated to the exhibition park at Independence Hall and the display center inside Gyeongbok Palace for public exhibition. In 1998, The Independence Hall opened an exhibition called "Display of dismantled parts from the building," and erected a notice saying "The ground of one of our hard times in history." The basic concept adopted in displaying these objects was to display them in a particular fashion in which they could serve as educational texts, but also in a very "unflattering" fashion. The prime pagoda which was formerly placed at the highest place of the structure was buried five meters into the ground and placed at the west side of the main structure of the memorial hall, thus emphasizing the fact that the history of the Japanese occupation period was finally over, and the Koreans were well past it.[19]

There are plenty of things to notice in this dismantling project. First, this was a project that was regarded as literally wiping out the residues of Japanese colonial rule, a task which was delayed in Korean recent history. Second, the sense of "ultimate returning" emanating from the act of dismantling the structure and thus wiping out its very design was significantly apparent throughout the dura-

19. This line was quoted from a notification board of the Exhibition park of dismantled part inside the Independence Memorial hall. Choi Man Rin oversaw the design of this park.

tion of the project. And third, there were specific complications generated by the interconnected nature of the dismantling task due to the accompanying issues such as restoring Gyeongbok Palace and relocating the National Museum. After the liberation, when the matter of eliminating residues of the Japanese rule was discussed, it generally meant punishing "people" or "persons" who had been pro-Japanese and not loyal to their fellow Koreans, but this project was targeted at doing the same job by tearing down a symbolic building or structure instead. And another point worth comment on is that even though the building was used not only as the Governor-General Office, but also for the U.S. military government and as the Korean government's Central Hall, and ultimately the National Museum, when dismantling it became an issue, only the fact that it was used as the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon was iterated and reiterated as the reason. And in stark contrast, Gyeongbok Palace, even though it was the epitome of medieval, feudalistic rule in the past, it was redefined as a national treasure that should be preserved (De Ceuster 2000). Some might question why the dismantling of that building had to wait for nearly half a century. This delay shows that the tragic scars caused in those times were destined only to be healed when economic development showed certain progress and democracy was fully integrated, to some extent, in our society.

Re-Conceptualization of August 15 in Memorial Halls

What is the most vivid visual image that the Koreans usually have when they think of August 15th? In other words, what kind of image most dominantly represents August 15th in the Korean mind? Two big pictures hang at the inner walls of the hall of the Korean people inside the Independence Hall vividly show us the image of August 15th embedded in the Korean minds. They also serve as flashbacks leading Koreans to relive the experience and remember the past days every time they see those pictures. One is the picture of the prisoners previously incarcerated at Seodaemun Penitentiary being released on August 16th, 1945. They are cheering, and shouting while they were running out of the prison. The other one is a picture of the ceremony celebrating the foundation of the South Korean government on August 15th, 1948. These two pictures also represent the main concept or theme of the Independence Hall exhibitions. The former represents the image of liberation, while the latter represents the image of independence.

Another picture that contributed to the image of August 15th shows an image of liberation with pictures showing shouting and cheering people with pickets advertising the phrase "Liberated Joseon," and other pictures are of prisoners being released from Seodaemun Penitentiary. At the Seodaemun Penitentiary History Hall, the exhibition displays a picture of political offenders being released from the penitentiary on August 16th 1945, and also a picture of four prisoners taken at the Okubo penitentiary at the Kobe, Hyogo-ken area on October 10th 1945 to demonstrate and promote the image of liberation. This picture is entitled "liberated Joseon prisoners," and shows the accused in very bad shape (Aikawa Mitsuhiro et al. 1984: 127) which suggests their condition had worsened to the point of almost dying. Nevertheless, the pictures serve in strengthening the image of liberation.

In *August 15th of the Joseon People*, An Wu Sik catalogued the events and changes that happened during the time period between August 15, 1945, and the end of the year by displaying 13 pictures.[20] Included in the collection are pictures of Seoul citizens cheering at the news of the Japanese defeat,[21] the cheering political offenders liberated from the Seodaemun Penitentiary,[22] the scene of Governor-General Abe signing the surrender note after the U.S. troops arrived, the scene of retracting the Japanese flag from the Governor-General Office square, U.S. troops landing at Incheon, U.S. troops in front of the Government-General in Joseon building and cheering Seoul citizens, the Taegeukgi being placed at Nam Mountain, a public demonstration celebrating the liberation, the launch of the Joseon Preparation Committee for Nation Foundation, a picture of Yeo Un Hyeong, the return of Chairman Kim Gu, a welcoming ceremony for the staff members of the Korean Provisional government, and the 38th parallel which divided the Korean peninsula. Placards showing words or phrases like "Celebrate the liberation!" "Founding a Democratic Government!" or "Welcome!" (to the U.S. troops), and "The Joseon liberation!" were used for the demonstrations.

Inside the Independence Memorial Hall, Exhibition Hall was composed of the Hall of National Tradition, the Hall of Modern National Movement, the Hall

20. The original phrase can be found inside the *Yeoksa dokbon* (August, 1956).
21. According to notes, the picture is apparently taken on August 15th, and there is a placard showing letters Cheer for the liberation. But it is not certain whether it was taken on 1th or 16th.
22. This is explained as a picture taken on August 15th, but clearly it was taken on the 16th. So, the other picture mentioned above might have probably taken on the 16th as well.

of Japanese Invasion, the Hall of the March 1st Movement, the Hall of the War for Independence, the Hall of the Provisional Government, and the Hall of the Republic of Korea. Everything related to August 15th was displayed in Hall 7. The theme of Hall 7 included Liberation, and the separation of the Korean peninsula and displayed items such as the Instrument of Surrender, the preparation note for the welcoming ceremony for the Provisional Government staff members and the Allied forces, the detailed political principles of the Foundation Alliance, the warning note and leaflets issued by the Joseon Preparation Committee for Nation Foundation, and the formal Acknowledgement of the Korean Provisional government (Geonlibsa: 418), along with items related to the anti-trusteeship movement, and the foundation of the government.

Independence Memorial Hall is constantly updating its collection and displays. Receiving feedback from the visiting public, the facility is accepting change. Yet, the facility was criticized in the beginning for not including the history of the socialist movement and also for the fact that elements representing the present regime were displayed and thus opened up certain possibilities of propaganda for the government. As a result, major changes came with the "General plans of enhancing, changing, and upgrading the display" proposed in 1991.

These plans were intended to strengthen the original concepts of exhibition, and following the instructions issued by the plans, the combination of displayed items went through a series of changes, which began in 1994 and were completed in 2004. The aspects of the socialist movement or armed resistance efforts were also included in the exhibition's theme. Items related to the Northeast Allied forces against the Japanese, and the Joseon Uiyong-dae militia members were also added to the display composition in Hall 5.

A more important change was not even included in the general plans, and that can be identified by comparing the exhibition brochure issued in the year 2000 with the one issued in 2002. Hall 6 was the Hall of the Provisional Government, and Hall 7 was the Hall of the Republic of Korea, but after display compositions went through some changes, Hall 6 was renamed as the Hall of Social and Cultural Movements, and Hall 7 was designated to be the Hall of the Korean provisional government. As you can see, it was decided that aspects of the socialist movement under the Japanese occupation were emphasized in the rearranged display, and historical elements representing the periods after 1945 were removed from the exhibition theme entirely.

The exhibitions or displays of the Independence Hall exhibition are by nature bound to be embroiled in constant controversies sparked by certain issues such as the separated situation of Korea, the legitimacy conflicts between South and North, and the matter of evaluating former administrations' achievements and failures. We all know that the separated situation of the peninsula ultimately contributed to the situation of items related to the socialist movement or the current North Korean regime being excluded from the exhibition.[23] As such a situation narrowed the Hall's range of options in their dealing with the entirety of the national movement before 1945, it also became a problem for Hall 7 which was displaying items from the post-1945 era.

The issue of appropriateness over displaying elements of the present day was what changed Hall 7 from the "Hall of the Republic of Korea" to the "Hall of the Korean provisional government," even though the change was not intended or indicated in the aforementioned general plans for change and enhancement issued in 1991. Independence Hall was constructed during the term of the 5th Republic, and pictures of the Olympics from the early 1980s and also President Chun Doo Hwan were on display in Hall 7, yet during the late 1980s, when the aspiration for a democratic society was higher than ever, the visitors tended to damage the display. Also, displays of overly "recent" issues became a complication for the Kim Young Sam administration which was forced to face a dilemma in their dealing with the problem of properly displaying elements representing the previous administrations and presidents. Ultimately, the display team at the Independence Hall decided that history after 1945 was indeed contemporary history which was "still in progress," and it needed continuous historical research for proper understanding and evaluation. And in order to avoid any kind of political misinterpretation, it was decided to display such elements as infrequently as possible.

There were also subtle changes made to the display in Hall 7, the Hall of the Korean provisional government. A collection of beeswax mannequins of the major figures of the Provisional Government was a crucial part of the display in that hall. In the past, the mannequin of Rhee Syngman was positioned at the cen-

23. In June200, the team lead by Choi Jin Hyeok of the Institute of Social Science in North Korea had a tour inside the exhibition halls of the Independence Hall, and they criticized the facility for exhibiting or displaying only half of what should be presented. But the Revolution museum of North Korea has the same problem as well.

ter, but in later arrangements Kim Gu was placed there instead. The rotary press machine of the *Chosun Ilbo* Company, displayed in the Cultural Movement section, was removed. Due to recent efforts for establishing democracy throughout the society, discoveries regarding elements of our contemporary history are continuing, and evaluation and appreciation are also following, and being mirrored in the display. The history after August 15th of 1945 was limited to only the references to the Provisional Government staff members' activities in that period.

The sixth display in Exhibition Hall 7 was entitled, "The stormy road, the Korean provisional government and the liberation of the Korean people" and included a picture of the 38th parallel and a picture showing a demonstration with placards saying "the foundation of our government." The seventh display pictures included the scene of the U.S. receiving the instrument of surrender from Japan, the return of the Provisional Government staff members, the welcoming ceremony, and Kim Gu walking over the 38th parallel to attend the arranged negotiations between the South and North. The 8th display was entitled "The way to reunification, the unity of the Korean people and the foundation of a grand unified Korean community." We can see from the arrangement of these displays that elements related to the organization of the Preparation Committee for Nation Foundation, the August 15th anniversary ceremonies held in years after 1945, or scenes from the Korean War were all dropped from the exhibition. And also, there are very few pictures that describe the images of August 15th 1945 in detail among the items exhibited at Independence Hall. There were very few pictures taken in the first place, and historical evaluation was made very difficult due to all the ideological clashes.

Conclusion: Characteristics and Certain Limitations of Representing August 15

The public's recollection of August 15th is fragmented because the pride and joy for the liberation was soon counteracted by the following horror of the Korean War, dictatorial regimes, and the democracy campaigns. The memories only began to be reshaped during the 1980s, almost 40 years later after actual liberation. Independence Hall, constructed in 1987, served as a spatial basis, on which the memories of August 15th were firmly conceptualized with the image of Independence. During the 1990s, the building occupied by the Government-General in Joseon was dismantled, the Gyeongbok Palace was restored, and the

Independence Park was established. It was only during the 1980s that a systemized project to reestablish the population's memory of the historical event was made possible. Yet, residues of the Japanese occupation were still existent throughout East Asian society, and certain problems that should have been remedied a long time ago were not properly dealt with, so it was indeed necessary to an extent to recollect and remember the past experiences of struggles for independence and, relive them.

Absolute poverty, the aftermath of the Korean War, and also the separation of the Korean peninsula were what delayed this nation-wide project. Especially the divided nature of the peninsula, mostly the political aspects and tenses generated by that kind of situation, complicated the matter of properly honoring and recollecting the liberation movements and August 15th itself. The fact that official places for commemoration of the past which reproduced the image of independence and liberation were established during the 1980s often became the reason for criticizing them for intentionally or unintentionally representing the political agendas of overt state nationalism in terms of content or agendas of sheer authoritarianism in terms of spatial design. These facets, in terms of both format and contents, continued to be dropped as the democratic level of society continued to rise.

Images of August 15th presented by Independence Memorial hall are in fact very simple, demonstrated in some very typical pictures. Most of them were not actually taken on August 15th 1945, but instead on the 16th or 17th. The images are very much stereotyped, and some might say very vague as well, probably because of the fact that the liberation came more as a result of the Allied forces' victory than as a result of the Korean struggle itself, and also because of the fact that liberation was not followed with the foundation of an independent people's country but instead by the peninsula's separation into two political entities.[24] The philosophical background of Independence Hall and Dongnip/Independence Park was originated by the Independence Club Association and the construction of the Dongnipmun in the 1890s. August 15th is remembered as the day of Restoration, while the facilities commemorating August 15th are based upon the concept of Independence.

The fact that Liberation led to separated foundations of governments and the division of the peninsula itself forced August 15th to remain inside the realm of

24. Please consult Dongnip Ginyeom-gwan Shib-nyeon-sa (p. 9).

restriction, leaving it as a task that should be dealt with only in the future. Every anniversary of August 15th after 1945 was not simply as a day for celebrating liberation from the Japanese and commemorating the restoration, but also a specific time period to promote national issues which accommodated the international politics at the time and launching initiatives for South-North dialogue. Either it was a dismantling, relocation, or new construction of a certain place related to the national movements or to the memories of such movements; they were all often conducted or initiated on August 15th. August 15th is also the only day that is currently celebrated by both South and North. North Korea designated August 15th as the Anniversary of National Liberation and started to use the term restoration only recently.

Today's memory of August 15th is not limited to the memories of that sole day, but also includes all the collective memories of the other anniversaries of August 15th that followed that of 1945, and the intensity of the strong memories regarding the other subsequent anniversaries of August 15th may have been the reason for our memories of the actual August 15th in 1945 being so fragmented and vague. Finding an acceptable balance among all these different levels of memories, and freeing ourselves from feeling content upon having the simple, stereotyped image of August 15th 1945 should be a challenge waiting for us in the future when democracy is sufficiently integrated into society.

We should also not forget that August 15th was very much an issue with an international background. August 15th in 1945 was the day when Koreans escaped colonial rule, but the day was also another landmark date for the contemporary history of East Asian society. Korea, Taiwan, China, Sakhalin and Japan all went from being oppressed in an imperial/colonial international condition, to becoming members of a newly created Cold War period.

On the Korean peninsula it was 1948, and in China it was 1949, when such a new atmosphere became apparent and politically intense. This kind of situation and surrounding condition delayed a swift and proper resolution to the aforementioned matters, and in the wake of such confusion the memories of August 15th became isolated in many countries. The nearby countries did not have the opportunity to share each of their memories of the historical event. For the peaceful coexistence of the East Asian countries in the 21st century, the memories of August 15th should not be appropriated by the state, but shared among civilians for future exchanges among nations.

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