

MODERN KOREA

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book was begun when there was still complete silence about Korea on the international scene. It has been completed at a time when Korea has come into the news. The heads of the American, British and Chinese Governments at their meeting in Cairo in November 1943 expressed their determination that "in due course" Korea would become free and independent. The day that happens this book, written about contemporary Korea, will become a book about her past; I will be the first to rejoice at this change.

In the meantime, however, the Japanese militarists are still supreme in Korea and some acquaintance with their deeds and methods there may be helpful to those who are taking an active part in the Pacific war and may have responsibilities in Japan's present colonies after her defeat.

I do not expect that all readers will agree with my conclusions at every point. In particular those who are easily impressed with the outward manifestations of "material progress" in Korea may feel that I have been too unsympathetic with Japan's achievements. Others who under the influence of wartime emotions, see the Japanese as sub-human monsters, may not appreciate the record of such development as has occurred in Korea under Japanese rule. I have tried to present the conclusions as they seem to me to emerge from the record of Japanese reports and statistics and the impressions of foreign observers in Korea. But in any case I have presented the facts; others who would draw different conclusions will have to take these facts into account.

I must express my sincere gratitude to J. M. Bernstein, Professor R. Haig, Mr. W. L. Holland, Mr. Bruno Lasker, Dr. G. McCune, Dr. S. McCune, Professor N. Pepper, Professor Russell Smith, Miss Frances Friedman and Miss Clara Spidell for their advice and help in many respects. Though the study has been made as part of the international research program of the Institute of Pacific Relations, I am solely responsible for the statement of facts, opinions and interpretations as given in the book.

A. J. GRAJDANZEV

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
AUTHOR'S PREFACE	v
I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. KOREA'S GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING	8
Area and Elevation	8
Inland Waters	9
Climate	14
III. HISTORY	23
The Protectorate	39
Political Movements after 1919	64
IV. POPULATION	72
Distribution	74
Japanese in Korea	75
Urbanization	80
Emigration	81
V. AGRICULTURE IN KOREA	84
Introduction	84
The Structure of Korean Agriculture	86
Agricultural Policy	92
Increase of Area under Cultivation	94
Kaden	95
Irrigation	95
Annual Frequency of Utilization	99
Improvements in Seed Material	100
Fertilizers	100
Agricultural Machinery and Implements	102
Livestock	103
The Social Stratification of the Korean Village	105
Japanese Seizure of Korean Agricultural Land	105
Ownership and Tenancy	107

	<i>Page</i>
VI. FORESTRY AND FISHING	123
Forestry	123
Fishing	127
VII. POWER AND MINERAL RESOURCES	131
Power Resources of Korea and Their Exploitation	131
Water Power and Generation of Electricity	133
Mining	139
Other Minerals	144
VIII. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT	148
Size, Character, and Distribution of Industry	148
Modern Industry	152
Metal Industry	156
Ceramics	158
Chemical Industry	159
Lumber Industry	166
Printing	166
Food and Beverages	166
Alcoholic Beverages	168
Gas and Electricity	170
The Problem of Nationality in Industry	171
Labor Conditions	177
Nationality of Workers	178
Women and Children in Industry	182
Hours of Work	184
IX. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS	185
Description of Railways	188
Private Railways	190
Roads	191
Ports and Communications	193
Air Lines	197
Post, Telegraph, Telephone, Radio	198
X. MONEY AND BANKING	201
Money and Prices	202
Banks in Korea	204
Interest Rates	207

	<i>Page</i>
XI. PUBLIC FINANCE	210
XII. THE EXTERNAL TRADE OF KOREA	226
XIII. THE GOVERNMENT OF KOREA	238
The Government General	238
Departments and Bureaus	239
Civil Service	243
The Central Council	243
The Army in Control	245
Provincial Administration	246
Provincial Councils	246
City (<i>fu</i>), County (<i>gun</i>) and Island (<i>shima</i>) Organization	248
Towns and Townships (<i>Yu</i> and <i>Men</i>)	248
XIV. COURTS, PRISONS, POLICE	250
Courts	250
Crime	253
Police System	254
XV. HEALTH, EDUCATION AND RELIGION	259
Health	259
Education	261
Libraries	270
Theaters, Cinemas, Playgrounds	271
Newspapers and Magazines	272
Religion	273
XVI. PROBLEMS OF KOREAN INDEPENDENCE	276
Material and Human Prerequisites	276
Proofs of Organizing Experience	278
Korean Nationalists	279
The Nub of the Case	280
Form of Government	281
The Danger of Class Government	282
Form of Social Organization	284
Nationalization of Japanese Enterprises in Korea	286
A Cooperative Commonwealth	286

APPENDICES

	<i>Page</i>
I. AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS OF KOREA.....	291
II. RELIABILITY OF KOREAN AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS..	296
III. SOME INDUSTRIAL STATISTICS.....	300
IV. EXTERNAL TRADE OF KOREA.....	305
V. LIST OF EQUIVALENTS OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN KOREA IN JAPANESE AND KOREAN LANGUAGES....	310
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	317

MAPS

KOREA.....	2
PHYSIOGRAPHIC DIAGRAM OF TYOSEN.....	11
GEOMORPHIC PROVINCES.....	12
THE SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION OF PRECIPITATION IN KOREA.	17
KOREA'S CLIMATIC REGIONS.....	20
THE LIMIT LINES OF IMPORTANT CROPS.....	91

MODERN KOREA



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Anyone interested in Korea knows that relatively few books, other than official Japanese accounts, have been written about that country since it became a part of the Japanese Empire in 1910. There is probably no other country in the world with so large a population and so strategic a position that has received so little attention in Western literature. In 1919-21, during and immediately after the movement in Korea for the restoration of independence, a few books were published on the subject, chiefly in the English language. But this interest soon died, and almost all the books that have appeared since 1921 may be included under one of two categories: they are either published by the Japanese government or "inspired" by it; or they represent "glimpses" of Korea caught by travelers who had neither the time nor the inclination to study Korean problems seriously. The publications of the Japanese government in the English language have a special purpose. The facts which they present are for the most part correct, but they are carefully selected and their interpretation is often biased.

It is not difficult to explain the lack of objective studies of Korea. Under the conditions existing just before the present war, Japanese scholars were not able to present to the outside world a truthful picture of the Korean situation; any scholar in Japan who tried to preserve even a semblance of independent thinking was persecuted by the Government or by chauvinist organizations. Foreign scholars, except those who were missionaries in Korea, had no access to the country; and the missionaries generally kept silent so as not to complicate the already difficult position of their churches.

But there are several reasons why Korea should be better known. First of all, it is a nation with a population of twenty-four million. Moreover, it is a country with a long and brilliant history—a country which at one time was in the forefront of human civilization. Secondly, for thirty-seven (counting from the date of formal annexation, thirty-two) years Korea has been

a Japanese colony, and is therefore of interest as an example of Japanese colonial administration. Speaking of Formosa, W. H. Chamberlain notes: "However justly it may be criticized on these and similar counts, Japanese imperialism in Formosa has not been of a decadent parasitic type. It has been efficient and hardworking. It has brought incidental benefits in the shape of railways, roads, schools, hospitals, and assured safety of life and property."¹ In Korea, too, Japanese imperialism has built many railways and roads, quite a number of schools, and some hospitals; and, in certain ways, it has "assured safety of life and property" in Korea, as it has in Formosa. The very exercise of domination over a colony demands railways, roads, some schools, and some hospitals. The Japanese authorities have constantly stressed this side of their activities in Korea in their foreign propaganda. The annual reports of the Government-General of Korea abound in pictures of roads, post offices, hospitals, and improved types of sheep. But the purpose and the effects of these achievements should be carefully examined before they are recognized as unqualified "benefits."

It may be argued that it is difficult to find a criterion for an objective appraisal of Japan's colonial regime in Korea. However, a suitable criterion is supplied by the Japanese themselves. In the rescript of the last Korean Emperor, by which he ceded sovereignty to the Japanese Emperor, he wrote (under the dictation of his Japanese advisers): "We have ceded all rights of sovereignty over Korea to His Majesty the Emperor of Japan in whom we have placed implicit confidence . . . in order to consolidate the peace of the Extreme East and ensure the welfare of Our people." The Japanese Emperor, in his rescript on the annexation of Korea, declared: "All Koreans, being under our direct sway, will enjoy growing prosperity and welfare, and with assured repose and security will come a marked expansion in industry and trade. We confidently believe that the new order of things now inaugurated will serve as a fresh guarantee of enduring peace in the Orient."²

Did the Korean people enjoy a growing measure of prosperity and welfare between 1910 and 1942? Did the annexation of

¹ W. H. Chamberlain, *Japan Over Asia*, New York, 1937, p. 172. Unfortunately, in this book on Japan's imperial policy, Chamberlain devoted only two lines to Korea.

² Quoted from the *Annual Report on the Administration of Chosen*, 1933-34, pp. 198-199.

Korea contribute to enduring peace in the Orient? These questions can be answered with reasonable accuracy. As a yardstick for measuring the prosperity and welfare of the Korean people under Japanese rule, comparable data for the Japanese people in Japan will be used in this book. It was not to be expected that the Japanese would raise the level of prosperity and welfare of the Korean people above that of the Japanese. But in view of the pledges given by successive Japanese administrators, there was reason to expect that Korean welfare would approach the level enjoyed by the Japanese people. The Korean people are called the "junior brother of the Japanese people"; Japan and Korea are declared to form one body (*naisen ittai*). Thus we have some basis for comparison and a yardstick for measuring the prosperity and welfare of the Korean people so solemnly promised by the Emperor of Japan.

It should also be noted that the climate of Korea is not very different from Japan's and that, for the last thirty-two years, Japan and Korea have been for all practical purposes part of the same economic units, with free movement of capital between them, the same monetary unit, the same tariff wall, and the same official language. Only 120 miles separate Fusan (southeastern port of Korea) from Shimonoseki in Japan. Writing in 1907 Professor F. H. King noted:

"Coming from China into Korea, and from there into Japan, it appeared very clearly that in agricultural methods and appliances the Koreans and Japanese are more closely similar than the Chinese and Koreans, and the more we came to see of the Japanese method the more strongly the impression became fixed that the Japanese had derived their methods either from the Koreans or the Koreans had taken theirs more largely from Japan than from China."³

Such similarities are to be found in many other respects and these increase the value of comparisons between conditions in the two countries.

The war in the Pacific provides a third reason for the study of Korea at this time, inasmuch as Japan's economic capacity to conduct war is to a considerable degree dependent upon the Korean economy. Korea is now supplying Japan with rice, fish, cotton, iron, coal, gold, fertilizers, and many other products of great importance to the Japanese war effort. No serious study of the Japanese war economy is possible without an apprecia-

³ F. H. King, *Farmers of Forty Centuries*, p. 374.

tion of the role and importance of the Korean economy for Japan. The countries of southeastern Asia that have fallen into Japanese hands may be potentially richer than Korea, but Korean resources have already been pressed into service. Large investments have been made, lines of communication have been established, and a considerable labor force has been trained. The entire economy of Korea has long been adjusted to the needs of Japan's war machine, while in southeastern Asia such adjustments are still a matter of the future. Moreover, the route to southeastern Asia is long: from Singapore to Kobe is about 2,800 miles, as compared with only 120 miles from Shimonoseki to Fusan; and as long as China is not conquered, the southern route is exposed to enemy attacks, while the route to Korea passes through the closely guarded Chosen and Tsushina Straits. All this makes Korea especially important to the Japanese war effort.

A fourth reason relates to the problems of peace. When the United Nations will have achieved victory, the problem of Korea will inevitably occupy a prominent place in the peace settlement of the Western Pacific. A free Korea will be the best guarantee against new attempts on the part of Japan's rulers to build a new empire. A Formosa restored to China and a free Korea (now promised in the Cairo declaration of December 1, 1943) will be barriers to new outbursts of imperialistic expansion on the part of Japan. But, it may be asked, has Korea all the prerequisites for an independent existence in the modern world? True, she has had a long and brilliant history and was a civilized country at a time when Imperial Rome started on its road to conquest. But in the final decades before annexation, her king—and later emperor—was one of the worst examples of an Oriental despot, and for the last thirty-two years the country has been a Japanese colony. How soon will she again be able to stand on her own feet? Are there enough Koreans of education and experience to guide the country? Has Korea sufficient economic resources to be really independent? In short, is there any real basis for confidence with respect to her future as an independent country? The form of government itself and the type of economic organization may be decided for Korea at the peace conference; and those who will be responsible for the decisions should be in a position to know the most impor-

tant facts about Korea as it has developed during the long period of Japanese administration.

The present investigation, then, is an attempt to throw light on some of these problems. Unfortunately, reliable information about Korea is scanty. The Japanese Government-General has made every effort to hide parts of the truth from the world. Many reports are not made public even in Japanese. Other reports recently published in Japanese were not permitted to leave the country.⁴ Moreover, after Pearl Harbor all American and British connections with Japan and her dependencies were severed, and current information is meager. However, the absence of recent works on Korea and the urgency of the problems which confront us in connection with the war justify the attempt to supply such significant information on Korea as may be gleaned from those official sources which are available.

⁴ The author received the invariable answer from Japanese publishing houses to requests for such publications that these were "not available"; efforts to obtain such publications through the good offices of Japanese educational and cultural organizations likewise failed.

CHAPTER II

KOREA'S GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Area and Elevation

Geographically, Korea consists of the Korean peninsula projecting from the mainland of Asia, and of 3,479 islands—most of them mere rocks. It is separated from Manchuria by the Yalu River, the Paitoushan, or White Head Mountains (Hakutosan in Japanese), and by the Tumen River. Near its mouth this river separates Korea from the Maritime Province of the Soviet Union. On the east the peninsula is washed by the Sea of Japan and on the west by the Yellow Sea. The Straits of Chosen (Korea) and Tsushima separate the peninsula from Honshu, the main island of Japan, and from Kyushu.

The geographic coordinates of Korea are as follows: its easternmost point is $130^{\circ} 57'$ longitude (i.e., almost the same as Yakutsk in the north and Port Darwin in Australia); its westernmost point, $124^{\circ} 11'$; its northernmost point $43^{\circ} 1'$ northern latitude (about the same as Portsmouth, New Hampshire); and its southernmost point $33^{\circ} 7'$ northern latitude (about the same as Charleston, South Carolina). Placed over the western Mediterranean, Korea would occupy an area from northern Spain to central Morocco.

The area of Korea is 220,741 sq. km. or 85,228 sq. miles,¹ i.e., slightly larger than that of Minnesota, Utah, or Great Britain (with Scotland, but without Northern Ireland). The longest distance in the peninsula from north to south is 463 miles; and the broadest distance from west to east is 170 miles.² The coast line of the peninsula is about 5,400 miles and that of the islands around it about 6,000 miles.³ The east coast has relatively few good harbors, while the western and southern coasts abound in

¹ This figure is given in *Annual Reports on the Administration of Chosen; The Financial and Economic Annual of Japan* gives 220,769 sq. km., and *Chosen Nenkan* 220,788 sq. km.

² H. K. Lee, *Land Utilization and Rural Economy in Korea*, New York and Shanghai, 1936, p. 7.

³ This does not mean that the islands are big; only one of them, Saishu (or Quelpart) is more than 700 square miles.

them. But on the west coast the difference between high and low tide reaches as much as thirty-three feet at Jinsen. On the east coast near Gensan the difference is only three feet.

The general character of the country is mountainous.

"There is no spot in the country in which a mountain does not form a part of the landscape. Only a scant fourth of the land has an altitude of less than 100 metres (330 feet). In the north only fourteen per cent of the area is as low and level as that. More than half of the northern part, but only one-fifth of the rest of Korea is 500 metres (1641 feet) or more above sea level."⁴

The principal mountain range runs from the Paitoushan on the Manchurian frontier southward toward the east coast, with lateral branches and spurs extending in a southwesterly direction. The slopes to the east are steep and those to the west gentle. This feature of the mountains has permitted the construction of tunnels through them and the diversion of waters from west to east so as to exploit the great difference in the fall for the generation of electricity. The elevation of the mountains (from sea level) may be seen from the following table:⁵

<i>Number of Peaks</i>	<i>Elevation</i>
1	Above 9,000 feet (Paitoushan)
6	8,001-9,000 feet
29	7,001-8,000 feet
26	6,001-7,000 feet
4	5,001-6,000 feet
5	4,001-5,000 feet

The mountain range slopes down toward the south, thus making the southeastern part of the country fairly level and the northern part mountainous or hilly. Because of this, the southeastern region is Korea's granary and most of its population is concentrated in that area.⁶

Inland Waters

The direction of the mountains and their lateral spurs, as well as the relative narrowness of the peninsula, makes most of the streams short and swift. This, combined with the concentration of rainfall in the summer months, causes many disastrous floods. The length of the most important rivers (those flowing more

⁴ E. De Schweinitz Brunner, *Rural Korea*, New York, 1928, p. 109.

⁵ *Chosen Nenkan*, 1941, p. 46.

⁶ For detailed data, see below, p. 72 *et seq.*