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### Education as an Instrument of Power: Japanese Textbooks in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945

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2020  
The Claremont Colleges Library  
Undergraduate Research Award

Junior Award Winner  
Hyun Wook (Jacob) Noh  
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Reflective Essay

## Reflective Essay

Last summer, I explored elementary education in colonial Korea through Pomona College's Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP). I first became interested in the topic after taking a Japanese history seminar led by Professor Samuel Yamashita. In this course, my classmates and I read a variety of secondary sources that included excerpts from Japanese diaries and textbooks. The latter stood out to me. I asked myself, how did the Japanese government use education in its colonies? My professor encouraged me to answer this question by finding, reading, and translating colonial textbooks written in Korean. As a budding historian, I constantly search for topics involving untranslated primary sources, so I can use my developing language skills to conduct original research. This topic allowed me to do just that.

I began my project by asking several research questions: What concepts do colonial textbooks teach Koreans students? Do these concepts have any significance? Are there any noticeable changes in the textbooks' conceptual language or discourse as time passes? And how does the Japanese government influence the actions of its subjects in the classroom? I chose these questions with a particular theoretical framework in mind. Michel Foucault's theory in "How Is Power Exercised" describes the ways in which people and/or institutions exercise power over others. It specifically mentions educational institutions as well, making the use of this theory appropriate for my research project.

Next, I constructed a thorough bibliography. I used online databases—mainly the *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, *Academic Search Premier*, and *Jstor*—to compile a list of sources related to education in colonial Korea. After one week, I ran into a problem: while my search for secondary sources bore much fruit, my search for primary sources did not. I could not find colonial textbooks with the online database search engines. Luckily, I remembered Adam

Rosenkranz's tutorial sessions on the Honnold Mudd Library's Special Collections. I realized that these texts may be right under my nose at the Claremont Colleges. I contacted the Head of the Asian Library, Xiuying Zou, and we searched the library's catalog for these textbooks. With her assistance, I was able to borrow the *Chosŏn Ch'ongdokpu kugŏ kyogwasŏ* (a ten-volume collection of Korean textbooks published between 1913 and 1950) through the Resource Sharing (ILL) services.<sup>1</sup> I have never worked with a librarian prior to this experience, so I did not expect anything from Librarian Zou. Nevertheless, she helped me find a variety of sources within the Asian Library and kept in close contact throughout the process.

After receiving these textbooks, I carefully read and outlined Professor Yamashita's "Confucianism and the Japanese State, 1904-1945."<sup>2</sup> This work examines Confucian ideas and themes in Japanese ethics textbooks published by the Ministry of Education between 1904 and 1945. He advised me to use it as a reference. He wanted me to learn different ways to analyze textbooks and apply them in my own project. I studied the structure, theoretical incorporation, and citing style of his work. With his help, I ultimately gained a better understanding of what I can do with my primary sources.

I read and translated the colonial textbooks in the summer. I took meticulous notes, jotting down major arguments, themes, and changes. Although these sources did not pose much of a challenge in terms of grammar and vocabulary, the *hanja* (traditional Chinese characters) sprinkled throughout the pages confused me. I had never read a book that contained a combination of Korean and *hanja*. I decided to contact my Korean language professor, Don Lee, for advice. He explained that Koreans constructed the majority of their words by approximating

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<sup>1</sup> Korean Government, *Chosŏn Ch'ongdokpu kugŏ kyogwasŏ*, 10 vols., (Seoul: Ch'aek Sarang, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Samuel H. Yamashita, "Confucianism and the Japanese State, 1904-1945," in *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons*, ed. by Tu Wei-ming, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 132-154.

the sound of Chinese characters in *hangul* (the Korean phonetic alphabet). Tens of thousands of Chinese characters, therefore, have Korean equivalents. I was able to find these equivalents using online dictionaries, and I wrote them beside their corresponding *hanja* in the texts. This step allowed me to read the textbooks in Korean rather than in a combination of Korean and Chinese.

I concluded the research project with a final paper. I summarized my findings, detailing the textbooks' thematic changes and their implications within the larger colonial context. All the hard work finally paid off: I created a final product that made me and my advisor proud. More importantly, however, I learned about myself. The long hours of reading tested my patience; the constant need for revision frustrated me; and the busy days drained me. Nonetheless, I was able to power through the summer because of my passion for Korean history. I loved reading about my ancestors and the events that influenced their lives. I was never bored because the personal connection motivated me each day. In the end, I knew I wanted to continue conducting historical research for my academic and professional career.

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Research Project

Education as an Instrument of Power:  
Japanese Textbooks in Colonial Korea, 1910-  
1945

# Education as an Instrument of Power: Japanese Textbooks in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945

Jacob Noh

SURP Final Paper

September 05, 2019

## Introduction

In 1910, Japan annexed Korea after several years of unofficial rule and set up a colonial administration that controlled all aspects of life within it. The governor general of colonial Korea oversaw the colony's finances, laws, infrastructure, and education. Elementary school education, in particular, became important for creating loyal Japanese subjects. Many Korean children did not attend secondary schools or colleges after elementary school, making primary education a vital component in shaping their thoughts and actions. The colonial government understood the value of education for fulfilling its long-term goals. As such, the governor general enacted four educational policies from 1910 to 1945. The first and second policies (*Je Iicha Joseon Gyoyukryeong* 1911-1922 and 1922-1938, respectively) emphasized simple loyalty to the Japanese empire, while the third and fourth policies (*Je Samcha, Sacha Joseon Gyoyukryeong* 1938-1942 and 1943-1945, respectively) pushed for complete assimilation. The governor general's office published several language and ethics textbooks to instill these ideologies into the minds of students.

This research paper analyzes the themes, morals, and stories in three elementary school textbooks issued by the governor general from 1915 to 1935. It shows the evolution of these sources by detailing their specific trends and changes. In order to understand how and why the Japanese government used education to exercise power over its Korean subjects, this paper will utilize Michel Foucault's theory in "How Is Power Exercised" as a framework. This theory explains how states direct the behavior of people through lines of communication, the shaping of capacity, and the exercise of power relations. Thus, a Foucauldian reading of these textbooks allows one to ask and answer several questions: What concepts do colonial textbooks teach Koreans students? Do these concepts have any significance? Are there any noticeable changes in



the textbooks' conceptual language or discourse as time passes? And how does the Japanese government influence the actions of its subjects in the classroom?

The three elementary school textbooks are the first, third, and sixth volumes of the *Chosŏn Ch'ongdokpu kugŏ kyogwasŏ* (*Korea Governor General National Language Textbook*), a compilation of ten textbooks used in Korean elementary, middle, and high schools from 1915 to 1950. These three volumes are the only elementary school textbooks in the series, and the colonial government used them in its schooling system from 1915 to 1918, 1923 to 1924, and 1930 to 1935, respectively. The paper is divided into three sections. The first is a brief history of colonial education in Korea. The second examines all three textbooks in chronological order, noting their major themes and morals. The final section highlights and analyzes the revisions of similar passages across these texts.

## **Colonial Education in Korea**

The Japanese government played an active role in Korea's educational policies. According to Patricia Tsurumi, Japanese-style education most likely started during the protectorate era, but its influence proved limited.<sup>3</sup> Unlike many other East Asian countries, Korea had already established a strong, modern educational system in the nineteenth century due to Protestant Christian missionary influence.<sup>4</sup> The Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897) built western-style elementary, middle, foreign language, vocational, normal, and medical schools.<sup>5</sup> Korean parents, especially those from the wealthier *yangban* class, sent their children to these

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<sup>3</sup> Patricia E. Tsurumi, "Colonial Education in Korea and Taiwan," in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, ed. Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 294.

<sup>4</sup> According to Andrew Hall, the educational system in pre-colonial Korea was extensive. In his own words, "private schools flourished, scholar-teachers were held in great esteem, and the literacy rate among males was probably high for an early modern society." For more information, see Andrew Hall, "First Steps Toward Assimilation: Japanese Run Education in Korea 1905-1910," *Acta Koreana* 18, no. 2 (2015): 359.

<sup>5</sup> Tsurumi, "Colonial Education in Korea," 295.

institutions—more specifically, private and traditional *sodang* schools—to receive an education.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the Japanese government's first order of business was to enroll children in public, government-run schools known as normal schools. It shut down many private institutions by withdrawing government funding in 1910<sup>7</sup> and reallocated financial resources to transform pre-existing buildings into normal schools.<sup>8</sup> Education quickly became the central focus of colonial development. The Japanese government's main goal, as Ronald Toby states, was "to create a base of loyal subjects susceptible to propaganda through the medium of schools."<sup>9</sup> Foucault argues that an educational institution can do just that, for it constitutes a unique "block of capacity-communication-power."<sup>10</sup> By establishing lines of communication (lessons, questions and answers, and orders) and power relations (power structures and hierarchy) within the classroom, the colonial government can mold students' capacity and ensure different forms of behavior. In this way, it gains the ability to "modify, use, consume, or destroy" its subjects.<sup>11</sup> This is precisely what the Japanese colonial government did.

### ***Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918)***

Korean language and ethics textbooks reveal how the Japanese government exercised power over students during the colonial era. The most frequently mentioned themes in volume one of *Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918)* are education and duties of a

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<sup>6</sup> *Sodang* schools were elementary level educational institutions that taught the rudiments of *hanja*, arithmetic, and Confucian classics and ethics. For more information, see Seong-Cheol Oh and Ki-Seok Kim, "Japanese Colonial Education as a Contested Terrain: What did Koreans do in the Expansion of Elementary Schoolings?" *Asia Pacific Education Review* 1, no. 1 (2000): 76.

<sup>7</sup> Tsurumi, "Colonial Education in Korea," 296.

<sup>8</sup> Shino Toyoshima, "State Schools and the Local Community in Colonial Korea," *International Journal of Korean History* 5 (2003): 128.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Toby, "Education in Korea under the Japanese: Attitudes and Manifestations," *Occasional Papers on Korea*, no.1 (1974): 59.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, (1982): 787, [www.jstor.org/stable/1343197](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343197).

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, "The Subject," 786.

student.<sup>12</sup> It presents these themes in a subtle manner early in the text. One of the first full passages, for example, reads: “The time is 7AM. I should hurry and go to school. Mother, please give me breakfast. The food is good today. Bring the rice water. Clean the table.”<sup>13</sup> This excerpt presents a brief early morning conversation between a mother and her son. The boy’s first thought is school. As a student, he makes sure to eat, clean, and go to school in a timely manner. Through this passage, the Japanese government stresses the need for young children to prioritize education.

The duties of a student become more explicit later in the textbook. Consider the following conversation between a mother and her son: “What did you learn in school today? I learned how to read and write. What reading lessons did you learn? I learned Lesson 40 today. How many texts did you read? I read two texts today. Make sure to practice what you have learned every day.”<sup>14</sup> The passage concludes with the mother directly commanding her son to practice his studies on a daily basis. It does not allow readers to interpret the meaning of the text; rather, it clearly expresses the importance of retaining information learned in normal schools. The young boy, therefore, has an obligation to fulfill his role as a student by following his mother’s advice. Furthermore, the writers of the textbook couple the passage with a workbook activity, which reads: “Answer the following questions: 1. What subjects are taught at your school? 2. For how many hours are you taught?”<sup>15</sup> These questions interpellate readers: they are to see themselves as the young boy who must study daily. The passage suddenly becomes personal, and the students become the person in the story. The activity also commands readers.

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<sup>12</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” in *Chosŏn Ch’ongdokpu kugŏ kyogwasŏ* (Seoul: Ch’aek Sarang, 2007), Volume 1: 32, 54, 56, 60, 61-2, 64-5, 71-2, 73, 95-6, 97, 105-109, 111-13, 118-19, 120.

<sup>13</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 54.

<sup>14</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 61-2.

<sup>15</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 62.

Although the questions' effectiveness cannot be determined by analyzing the textbook alone, one can assume that the students answered the questions aloud, silently, or on the page itself.

Whatever the case, the Japanese government tried to direct the actions of its subjects through these textbooks. Foucault states that "power exists only when it is put into action."<sup>16</sup> The ability to influence an individual's behavior—in the present or in the future—gives one power over the other. Indeed, this exercise does just that.

The presence of school-related passages should come as no surprise. The colonial government wanted all elementary-school-aged children to attend normal schools, so they could receive a standardized, "Japanese-style" education. The school's curriculum prioritized Japanese language and arithmetic, two subjects the government deemed vital for success.<sup>17</sup> By subjecting students in the classroom, the colonial government could effectively control the information consumed by them. The colonial government also wished to combat the popularity of private and *sodang* schools. It constructed sixty normal schools by 1910 and continued to build more each year.<sup>18</sup> It even provided mobile classes, night schools, and private seminars to those who could not attend schools because of location, age limitations, or other restrictions.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the opportunity to receive a normal school education increased dramatically. The majority of education-themed passages reflect this urgency by describing students going to school and studying hard.

The importance of education becomes most evident in the textbook's lengthiest story titled "Two Children."<sup>20</sup> Its translation is provided below:

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<sup>16</sup> Foucault, "The Subject," 788.

<sup>17</sup> The normal school curriculum prioritized Japanese language and arithmetic. Other subjects—such as Korean, Chinese, physical education, vocational studies, and sewing—did not receive as much attention. For more information, see Tsurumi, "Colonial Education in Korea," 300.

<sup>18</sup> Hall, "First Steps," 371.

<sup>19</sup> Toyoshima, "State Schools," 134.

<sup>20</sup> While the rest of the passages in this textbook are one to three pages in length, "Two Children" is five pages.

There are two roads. One leads to school and the other leads to a field. Lee Bok-Dong and Kim Su-Chul accidentally meet at a crossroad one morning. Kim says, ‘I don’t want to go to school. Come here. Let’s go to the field and play.’ Lee replies, ‘Why don’t you like going to school? What’s better than learning new things every day?’ ‘What are you going to do after learning things like national language?’ Kim asks. ‘Let’s just go to the field and have fun.’ After this exchange, Su-Chul went to the field, and Bok-Dong went to school. Twenty years later, on a cold winter day, a man wearing one layer of clothing stood in front of a gate begging for food. The landowner came out wearing beautiful clothes. Once the beggar saw the face of the man, he became embarrassed and lowered his face. Who do you kids think these two people are?<sup>21</sup>

This passage is important for several reasons. First, it reveals two kinds of students: a bad student who neglects his studies and engages in fun activities and a good student who understands the value of education and enjoys learning school material. The consequences become obvious after the twenty-year time skip. The former will become a poor and shameful beggar, whereas the latter will become a wealthy landowner. Second, it implies that students who choose the wrong path will regret their decision. The beggar does not shamelessly ask the landowner for food. Once Su-Chul recognizes him as Bok-Dong, he hides himself. He is embarrassed because he understands the severity of his past mistakes. Third, the passage concludes with a question directly addressing the readers. The line “who do you kids think these two people are?” not only makes the students reflect on the moral of the passage but also incorporates them into the text.<sup>22</sup> Fourth, it contains a workbook activity that reveals the main purpose of the passage. The exercise reads: “Answer the following question: Why is the beggar embarrassed?”<sup>23</sup> In case readers did not grasp the moral of the passage fully, the textbook offers an opportunity to reflect further. They are asked to tackle a question with two logical answers. Students may initially conclude that the beggar feels embarrassed because of his need to ask for food, for it is the more

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<sup>21</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 105-9.

<sup>22</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 109.

<sup>23</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 109.

immediate and surface-level answer. Upon further reflection, however, they may conclude a deeper, more thoughtful answer: the beggar feels embarrassed because of his choice to play in the fields rather than to attend school twenty years prior. Finally, the passage shows how the Japanese government subjected its students. Poor schooling habits do not guarantee a beggar's life in the future, and good schooling habits do not ensure future success. Nonetheless, the textbook implies that these are the only two paths for students at normal schools. In doing so, it creates a clear distinction between “good” and “bad” students. Foucault refers to this as “dividing practices” that objectify individuals by categorizing them into groups.<sup>24</sup>

Confucianism—represented by the five cardinal social relationships and filial piety—is the third most frequently mentioned theme in this textbook.<sup>25</sup> The text clearly determines the roles and responsibilities of students, parents, siblings, and friends. One passage, for instance, states that “you can be loyal, parents can teach, brothers have the ability to love, and friends have the ability to trust each other.”<sup>26</sup> The Confucian principle of “loyalty” is coupled with “monarch and his subjects;” “teaching” and “respect” are coupled with “father and son;” “love” is coupled with “brothers;” and “trust” is coupled with “friends” in the practice portion of the same page.<sup>27</sup> The Japanese government communicates different qualities one must exhibit according to one's position. Unlike the others, however, “loyalty” belongs to two groups: “you” (as in the students) and “subjects.” Without a doubt, the colonial government viewed students and subjects as one and the same, and it conveyed that point of view to its students. The message becomes clear: Korean children must show loyalty to the Japanese emperor as subjects of the colonial order.

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<sup>24</sup> Foucault, “The Subject,” 777-8.

<sup>25</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 32, 34-5, 48-50, 56, 60, 63, 69, 95-6, 101-3, 113, 118-9.

<sup>26</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 60.

<sup>27</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 60.

The textbook establishes teacher-student relations as well. One passage reads: “Teachers teach. Students learn. Teachers love their students. Students respect their teachers.”<sup>28</sup> Both groups of individuals have an obligation to one another, emulating a common aspect in all five cardinal Confucian social relationships. Nevertheless, the “love” portion of the passage proves interesting. It is intimate in nature, making the relationship between a teacher and student resemble that of a parent and child. Foucault writes that a series of power processes—like that of a pyramidal hierarchy—ensures “the acquisition of aptitudes or types of behavior.”<sup>29</sup> The Japanese government uses the textbook to build a specific power structure in the classroom in which students view teachers as their parents and treat them with respect. As a result, students become subject to Japanese authority.

One should expect Confucian ethics in Korean colonial education. Toby argues that the Japanese schooling system emphasized the ruler/subject relation, respect, and filial piety.<sup>30</sup> Because the government adopted a “Japanese-style” education in colonial Korea, the same ideology appears in this textbook. More importantly, Koreans understood and valued Confucian ethics. After centuries of Chinese influence, Korea became one of the most Confucian nations in East Asia. It informed the decisions and practices of nearly all men, women, and children. Thus, incorporating its fundamentals into the textbooks ensures a greater possibility of understanding and acceptance.

Agriculture is the fourth most frequently mentioned theme in this textbook.<sup>31</sup> There are two types of agricultural passages. The first refers to farming or crops in general. A line from

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<sup>28</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 56.

<sup>29</sup> Foucault, “The Subject,” 787.

<sup>30</sup> Toby, “Education in Korea,” 58.

<sup>31</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 46, 63, 67, 69, 75, 77, 80, 83-4, 85-6, 88-9, 101-3.

one passage, for example, explains that farmers “plant seeds in the spring and harvest them in the fall.”<sup>32</sup> It does not contain implicit or explicit morals; instead, it informs readers of popular agricultural practices. As a non-industrial country, the majority of Koreans farmed. The governor general of colonial Korea made it an even more common practice by implementing an “agriculture first policy” in the early twentieth century.<sup>33</sup> The inclusion of agricultural passages, therefore, should come as no surprise. Children understood agriculture, making it an obvious subject to use in lessons. In contrast, the second type of agriculture passages encourages action. A passage in the middle of the textbook reads: “The weather today is good. The farmer harvests the rice. Since the weather was good this year, the rice grew well. One must harvest rice on a good day because one cannot do so on a rainy day. Farmers work diligently on days they harvest rice.”<sup>34</sup> This excerpt differs from the first in that it stresses the need for farmers to cultivate crops. Foucault asserts that the exercise of power “is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions.”<sup>35</sup> Once again, the Japanese government uses lessons to influence the actions of its readers. Elementary school children—most likely the son or daughter of Korean farmers—have the capacity to help their parents cultivate crops. Learning the importance of such activities urges them to do just that.

The encouragement of action becomes more explicit as the text progresses. The narrator of a later passage, for instance, states that “tomorrow is a free day, so I must follow my father and help him.”<sup>36</sup> The Japanese government instills an expectation within readers by repeatedly incorporating passages that depict children helping their parents in their free time. The characters

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<sup>32</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 77.

<sup>33</sup> Timothy C. Lim, “The Origins of Societal Power in South Korea: Understanding the Physical and Human Legacies of Japanese Colonialism,” *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (1999): 618.

<sup>34</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 67.

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, “The Subject,” 789.

<sup>36</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 69.



in these stories view helping their parents as an obligation and fulfill it without hesitation. They take any opportunity to do so. Since all the characters in the first textbook are males, young boys often follow their fathers to the fields.

Japanese leaders debated the trajectory of colonial education in the early twentieth century. While some believed that schools should educate Korean children in Japanese literature and drama, others—like Ishimori Hisane (the publisher of the *Chōsen Review*)—argued that it would be more beneficial to emphasize agricultural production. Ishimori wanted the Japanese government to focus colonial education on rural villages, so Koreans could ““grow more rice and potatoes.””<sup>37</sup> The use of agricultural passages suggests a similar view. One may infer that the colonial government included these texts to encourage Koreans to produce more crops for the empire. It, therefore, communicates the need for children to help their parents in the fields.

Japanese nationalism is the fifth most frequently mentioned theme.<sup>38</sup> Despite the limited number of these passages, the integration of pro-Japanese sentiments is significant. The textbook, for example, pairs the word “flag” with a picture of the Japanese flag and a text that reads: “beautiful flag.”<sup>39</sup> The connotations associated with this insertion are obvious. First, the Japanese government wanted its subjects to accept the Japanese flag as *their* national flag. Tsurumi argues that the colonial government constructed the schooling system in Korea to encourage the acceptance of Japanese culture and values.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, educational lessons serve a specific purpose: to transform Korean children into loyal subjects of the Japanese empire. The nationalistic sentiments found in this textbook communicates this idea to readers. Second, the Japanese flag is depicted in a positive light. The example phrase—used to help children

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<sup>37</sup> Toby, “Colonial Education in Korea,” 57.

<sup>38</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 16, 42-3, 97.

<sup>39</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 16.

<sup>40</sup> Tsurumi, “Colonial Education in Korea,” 302.

remember vocabulary words in context—characterizes the Japanese flag as “beautiful.” By doing so, the textbook communicates a sense of admiration to its readers. Students may start to feel a sense of nationalism and pride whenever they see the flag.

The theme of Japanese nationalism is subtle at first, but it becomes more explicit further in the textbook. Consider the following passage: “We drew a sun on our country’s flag. On ceremonial days, people put flags outside their doors. We put up a big flag at the main gate of our school. When the flag waves fiercely in the wind, it looks pleasing to me.”<sup>41</sup> Compared to the first example, this excerpt contains more direct pro-Japanese sentiments. The use of the word “we” implies that all Koreans view Japan as their mother country. As a result, they willingly perform rituals that glorify the empire. The passage also indicates a communal action. Foucault deems the exercise of power as “an action upon another action,” meaning a higher authority must shape the behavior of its subjects to hold power over them.<sup>42</sup> The textbook reveals how the Japanese government directed the actions of all its subjects. Members of the Korean community placed flags outside of their doors to celebrate a particular day. By including this in the lesson, the Japanese government hopes to ensure future cooperation in the next generation. Most importantly, the last line of the passage communicates how children should feel when they see the Japanese flag. The flag itself does not please the narrator; rather, the fact that it waves fiercely in the wind does so. This implies that the success of the empire should move the hearts of colonial subjects. The writers of the textbook also couple the passage with a workbook activity that reinforces pro-Japanese sentiments. The exercise reads: “Answer the next questions: 1) On what day do you put up the flag? 2) When is the emperor’s birthday? 3) What is the

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<sup>41</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 42-3.

<sup>42</sup> Foucault, “The Subject,” 789.

meaning of the emperor's birthday?"<sup>43</sup> These three questions ensure that the children understand the ritual performed on the emperor's birthday. They ask for specific dates and interpretations used to help assimilate Koreans into the Japanese empire. After all, education within the colony focused on "ideologies designed to incorporate people into the colonial order."<sup>44</sup>

The majority of passages in this textbook relate to the themes of education, duties of a student, Confucianism, agriculture, and Japanese nationalism. As one of the first colonial textbooks, it stresses the need for children to attend normal schools and learn the material thoroughly. The characters enjoy their education and encourage others to join them. The textbook also uses Confucianism ethics to build power relations inside and outside of the classroom, particularly between the teacher and student. Lastly, it includes the themes of agriculture and Japanese nationalism to direct the actions of readers. The agriculture-themed and nationalistic-themed passages encourage Koreans to cultivate the land and embrace Japanese colonialism, respectively.

### *Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924)*

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919, thirty-three nationalist and religious leaders led a group of over 3,000,000 Koreans to demand independence from the Japanese government.<sup>45</sup> Leaders read Korea's Declaration of Independence in downtown Seoul; followers shouted "Independence! Long Live Korea!" on the streets; and students of all ages participated in the protest. The peaceful movement suddenly turned violent once Japanese forces opened fire on the crowd. They

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<sup>43</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918)," Volume 1: 53.

<sup>44</sup> Toyoshima, "State Schools," 127.

<sup>45</sup> Ko, Seung Kyun, "The March First Movement: A Study of the Rise of Korean Nationalism Under the Japanese Colonialism," *Koreana Quarterly: A Korean Affairs Review* 14, no. 1-2 (1972): 24.

killed over 7,000 and imprisoned over 50,000 people.<sup>46</sup> Although Koreans did not receive independence on this day, the Japanese government could not ignore the demands of its subjects. As the first colony-wide nationalistic movement after World War I, the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement captured the attention of the international community. President Woodrow Wilson's principle of national self-determination inspired "a new era in which brute force would have no place."<sup>47</sup> This pressured the Japanese government into allowing more rights and liberties to the Korean people in the following decade. It appointed Saito Makoto as the new governor general. He started the "cultural period," which introduced a "softer Japanese stance" in colonial Korea.<sup>48</sup> The Japanese government, therefore, countered the independence movement with other mechanisms of governance that did not appear to be so brutal.

Not surprisingly, the colonial government's approach toward education changed, and volumes one, two, and three of *Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924)* reflect this change. The most obvious one is the addition of more lighthearted passages. In fact, the most frequent theme in the third textbook is fun activities.<sup>49</sup> One passage tells a story about two boys flying kites one winter morning. It uses playful words such as "glitteringly" and mentions how much fun the boys experience.<sup>50</sup> Unlike those in the first textbook, the fun-themed passages in this textbook express a much more playful tone. The wording and tone allow readers to infer that the characters take advantage of the opportunities around them and enjoy themselves. In addition, characters in the second textbook engage in fun activities outside of school. They go to fields,

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<sup>46</sup> Ko, "The March First Movement," 28.

<sup>47</sup> Ko, "The March First Movement," 23.

<sup>48</sup> Jeong Ha Kim, "Rethinking Colonialism: Korean Primary School Music Education during the Japanese Colonial Rule of Korea, 1910-1945," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 36, no. 1 (2014): 28, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43664219>.

<sup>49</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924)," in *Chosŏn Ch'ongdokpu kugŏ kyogwasŏ* (Seoul: Ch'aek Sarang, 2007), Volume 1: 41, 60-1, 62-3, 64-5; Volume 2: 3-5, 17-9, 33-6, 60-2, 63-5, 68-70; Volume 3: 13-7, 21-5, 26-8, 33-7, 45-8.

<sup>50</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924)," Volume 1: 62-3.

lakes, and other sights, whereas those in the first textbook only participate in fun activities as part of their physical education on school grounds.<sup>51</sup>

This does not mean, however, that the second textbook eliminates school-related fun-themed passages. The excerpt titled “Field Day” describes children running around on a field, competing in competitions, and enjoying themselves as part of their education.<sup>52</sup> This communicates the different facets of a normal school: it is not only a place of study but also a place of fun and entertainment. The picture associated with the passage conveys that message.<sup>53</sup> It expresses motion rather than stillness. Students and teachers race one another with some falling to the ground. According to Keon De Ceuster, the Japanese government pressured all schools to demilitarize physical education and implement playful elements in the early twentieth century.<sup>54</sup> Field days epitomize the outcome of that change.

The second most frequently mentioned theme is education.<sup>55</sup> A few of these passages—much like the ones in the first textbook—emphasize the need for children to attend school and bring others along with them. Consider this excerpt from volume one. It reads:

There were two children. The older one was named Shu-Nam. The younger one was named Bok-Dong. Shu-Nam is in third grade while Bok-Dong is in the first grade. Shu-Nam is currently taking Bok-Dong to school. Bok-Dong is happy to be attending school. Isn't Shu-Nam such a genial child?<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> For more information on fun-themed passages in the first textbook, see Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 36-7, 118.

<sup>52</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 3: 45-8.

<sup>53</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 3: 46.

<sup>54</sup> De Ceuster, Koen, “Wholesome Education and Sound Leisure: The YMCA Sports Programme in Colonial Korea,” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2003): 59-60.

<sup>55</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 1: 29, 46, 53, 58-9, 67-8; Volume 2: 7-10, 17-9, 25-7, 33-6, 36-9, 46-9, 63-5, 66-8, 77-9; Volume 3: 1-5, 6-9, 21-5, 43-5, 45-8, 65-6. The majority of these passages mention “school,” but they do not center the passage on schooling itself. For that reason, I have deemed it the second most frequent theme in the textbook.

<sup>56</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 1: 67-8.

Shu-Nam holds the responsibility of taking Bok-Dong to school because of his seniority. He must set a good example to the younger students and encourage them to continue with their education. The direct question at the end of the passage aims not only to praise the older child for his actions but also to make readers admire him. Moreover, the phrase “Bok-Dong is happy to be attending school” implies that education brings joy to children, and readers should feel the same way.<sup>57</sup> Once again, the writers of the text communicate a specific feeling to elementary-aged children in an effort to increase and retain school attendance. Interpellation is doing its work.

The majority of education-themed passages, however, do not focus on children attending school itself; they simply mention it in the text while expressing different morals. The passage titled “Su-Nam’s Good Deed,” for instance, reads:

Yesterday, when Su-Nam was walking home late at night after cleaning the classroom, he saw a child crying on the side of the road. The child chased an animal outside and fell to the ground, causing him to cry. Su-Nam immediately ran to the child, held his hand, and told him to stop crying. He helped the little boy find his way home. The little boy’s parents were really grateful.<sup>58</sup>

The main purpose of this passage is to highlight Su-Nam’s kindness and teach children to help those in need. The older boy acts swiftly, consoling the crying boy and taking him to safety. The parents thank Su-Nam for this good deed. Nevertheless, the textbook slips in the fact that the boy is a student. Several excerpts follow a similar pattern where students come back from school in the beginning of the story and exemplify great moral character later. The writers of the textbook no longer focus on school attendance. In fact, their passages imply that the children are already enrolled in normal schools.

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<sup>57</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 1: 68.

<sup>58</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 2: 77-9.

The second textbook also includes female students.<sup>59</sup> It introduces them in a subtle manner in the first volume. The picture associated with the phrase “raise hands” contains both male and female students—distinguishable only by the length of their hair.<sup>60</sup> Both groups of students actively participate in the classroom by answering the teacher’s questions. The incorporation of female students become more obvious in the second volume. The passage titled “The Kind Schoolgirl,” for example, reads:

One morning, an elderly man was walking on a street in front of a school when a strong wind blew the man’s hat away. The hat continued to roll further and further away. Because the old man was unable to chase the hat, he asked the two schoolboys nearby to pick it up for him. The two schoolboys, however, laughed at the situation and simply watched. A schoolgirl passed by and felt bad for the old man, so she decided to help him. She ran to the hat, picked it up, pulled out a handkerchief to wipe the dust, and gave him the hat with two hands. The old man felt thankful. The teacher saw this event unfold inside the school. He complimented the schoolgirl, while rebuking the schoolboys.<sup>61</sup>

This lengthy passage proves important for two reasons. First, it is the first time a textbook passage has a female student as its main protagonist. Although the text provides depictions of schoolgirls in the first volume, it does not include them in the lesson material. This student not only appears in the story but also becomes the center of attention. Second, the schoolgirl wins the admiration of her superior by exhibiting good moral character. The teacher praises her, while rebuking the schoolboys. As a result, she suddenly becomes the “good student” that every reader must attempt to imitate. This is a sharp contrast compared to the first textbook where there are no references to schoolgirls at all.

These two changes correspond with the statistical data on normal schools in the late 1910s and early 1920s. According to Tsurumi’s records, the number of Korean children who

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<sup>59</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 1: 29, 53; Volume 2: 7-10, 48; Volume 3: 21-5, 45-8.

<sup>60</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 1: 29.

<sup>61</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 2: 7-12.

received a normal school education rose dramatically a few years after annexation. By 1918, the Japanese government established 464 normal schools with an estimated attendance of 88,000 pupils (one-seventh of whom were female).<sup>62</sup> Both the male and female enrollment rates increased across colonial Korea because the government encouraged all genders to attend its institutions. Prior to Japanese colonial rule, Korean girls were allowed to attend schools, but they never received the same resources or opportunities. The governor general also aimed to construct a school in every district by 1920.<sup>63</sup> Koreans responded positively to the colonial government's expansion policies. Local community members—especially those in rural areas—started drives to collect money and build new schools themselves.<sup>64</sup> Soon, normal schools gained popularity. The Japanese government's reach expanded, and its ability to exercise power over children grew as well.

Most importantly, the second textbook replaces nationalistic pro-Japan passages with pro-Korean ones.<sup>65</sup> They explain traditional Korean holidays that do not appear in the first textbook. One passage, for example, describes *Hansik*, the 105<sup>th</sup> day after the winter solstice. It reads: “Today is *Hansik*. It is a holiday in Joseon. In our house we set out food, and my father and older brother go to the mountains to pay respects to our ancestors by bowing and offering food to them. My dad tells us that one must perform ancestral worship with a true heart.”<sup>66</sup> Koreans often celebrate this day as part of their tradition. By devoting a textbook passage to this holiday, the Japanese government not only recognizes a distinct Korean identity but also allows readers to learn about their customs in the classroom. Passages with similar events do not exist in

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<sup>62</sup> Tsurumi, “Colonial Education in Korea,” 299.

<sup>63</sup> Tsurumi, “Colonial Education in Korea,” 305.

<sup>64</sup> Oh and Kim, “Japanese Colonial Education,” 83.

<sup>65</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 2: 1-3, 66-8; Volume 3: 33-7, 43-5.

<sup>66</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 2: 1-3.



the first textbook. In addition, this is the first time the textbook refers to Joseon by name. As a pre-colonial dynasty, it alludes to an independent Korea, thereby undermining the colonial government's authority to a certain degree. Nevertheless, it appears in the text.

Pro-Korean passages become more detailed in the next volume. They touch on multiple themes. Consider the passage titled "*Chuseok*." It reads:

Today is *Chuseok*. It is often referred to as a farmer's favorite holiday and Korean Thanksgiving. The weather is neither hot nor cold; the wind is clean and cool, which refreshes my mind; and the grains are mixed together like a picture, making a beautiful sight. The farmers spent the summer working on the fields tirelessly, but now they are able to eat their crops. Is it not such a happy day?...The farmers share their crops with one another and enjoy their time together. This is a custom. Today is a free day for me. I will take father to grandmother's grave and bring rice cake and fresh fruit. The night of *Chuseok* is known to have the brightest stars of the year. I will bring Ah-Oo and Nu-Aye to see the stars and sing songs with me.<sup>67</sup>

The textbook depicts *Chuseok*—one of the most important Korean holidays—in a positive light. First, it describes the beautiful weather and scenery associated with this day. The narrator states that the outside temperature is just right, the breeze allows him to clear his mind, and the grains gather together to form a pleasing picture. By describing the weather and scenery in this way, the passage gives *Chuseok* a connotation of perfection. Everything, including nature, comes together on this day. Second, it portrays Koreans as hardworking and kind individuals. The farmers make sure to share their precious crops with one another. They do not selfishly keep the products to themselves or sell them for profit; instead, they allow others to indulge in the harvest. They are communal people who care for those around them. Third, it touches on a traditional Confucian practice. The narrator and his father pay respect to their ancestors. They place rice cake and fresh fruit from the harvest on the grave, so the dead may indulge in the holiday as well. Fourth, it argues that the night of *Chuseok* has the brightest stars of the year. The children view these stars

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<sup>67</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924)," Volume 3: 33-7.

and sing songs to conclude their day. The passage, once again, makes this holiday seem superior to every other day.

The influence of the March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 Movement becomes clear when analyzing the passages in this textbook. The inclusion of more fun-themed passages suggests that studying and playing are not mutually exclusive. Students can attend school while enjoying themselves. The education-themed passages offer similar morals as those in the first textbook. They do not, however, stress going to normal schools to the same degree. Their contents imply that children already receive an education at these institutions. Finally, the incorporation of pro-Korean sentiments allows readers to learn material related to their Korean identity.

### ***Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935)***

Like the first textbook, the most frequently mentioned themes in volumes one, two, and three of *Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935)* are education and the duties of a student.<sup>68</sup> Many passages mention the word “school” at some point in their story. Characters either go to school for class or come back from school before performing other chores. In volume one, a short passage describes a schoolgirl and schoolboy bowing to their mother and saying goodbye before departing for school.<sup>69</sup> By incorporating these types of passages, the textbook suggests that enrollment into a normal school is a given for both boys and girls. This follows the trend set by the second textbook.

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<sup>68</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” in *Chosŏn Ch’ongdokpu kugŏ kyogwasŏ* (Seoul: Ch’aek Sarang, 2007), Volume 1: 8, 13, 14, 19, 21, 29, 38-40, 64, 69; Volume 2: 8-11, 23-7, 54, 68-71, 91-8; Volume 3: 1-3, 52-7, 64-6. Duties of a student-themed passages: Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 1: 4, 13, 73; Volume 2: 8-11, 23-7, 71-6, 91-8; Volume 3: 1-3, 24-30, 52-7, 66, 67-9.

<sup>69</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 1: 13.

The duties of a student initially prove simple. A young boy, for instance, receives a postcard from his older brother in Seoul. The older brother reminds him to “take care of [his] body and study hard” during the winter.<sup>70</sup> People expect the younger brother to study and perform well in his studies. They constantly encourage him to strive for academic success. As a student, he has an obligation to fulfill that role and live up to those expectations. This is a similar idea seen in all three textbooks. In later volumes, however, students begin to take on a bigger role that is not seen in the first two textbooks. One passage begins with these lines: “Older brother became the teacher. In-Su and Sung-Ok became students. They are studying arithmetic.”<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the duties of a student become more complex as time passes, especially for older children. In-Su’s and Sung-Ok’s older brother takes on the role of teacher at home and helps his younger siblings learn basic arithmetic. Thus, the text encourages older children to become both teacher and student—the former at home and the latter at school. They must help educate the younger generation and learn new material for themselves. By providing an example to follow, the Japanese government can effectively influence the future actions of its colonial subjects.

Agriculture is the second most frequently mentioned theme.<sup>72</sup> Unlike the other textbooks, both men and women take on agricultural responsibilities. On the one hand, males work on the fields to cultivate crops. One excerpt highlights the hard work performed by a father and his sons. It reads: “The father and son have been working since the morning, and they are now returning home. While looking at his son, the father says, ‘Chang-Gun, you’re tired, right? Ride

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<sup>70</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 1: 73.

<sup>71</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 2: 8.

<sup>72</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 1: 4, 34, 36-7, 46-8, 52; Volume 2: 1-3, 23-7, 64, 64-6; Volume 3: 1-3, 4-5, 49-51.

the cow.’ The child replies, ‘no, the cow is also tired, so I cannot ride it.’”<sup>73</sup> The father’s question suggests that the two worked diligently all morning, while the son’s answer affirms it. On the other hand, women participate in a different form of agriculture. Although they do not cultivate crops like the men, they plant flowers and collect them for the house. The textbook includes a passage focused on five women working outside and planting flowers in the ground.<sup>74</sup> Women performing this type of work do not appear in the first two textbooks. It is a new concept designed to engage schoolgirls in agricultural work at home.

The Japanese government’s goals for colonial Korea in the 1930s explain the significant increase of agriculture-themed passages compared to the last textbook. The governor general criticized knowledge-oriented subject matter such as the sciences.<sup>75</sup> Instead, he emphasized the need to learn vocational and practical skills. These subjects—such as agriculture and sewing—comprised more than 320 hours of study over a span of six years in normal schools.<sup>76</sup> Clearly, the Japanese empire used Korea as a base for resources. A few lines from the passage “Rice and Beans” proves this fact. One sentence states that “Korea’s climate is good for cultivating crops” while another sentence reveals that Koreans “are not the only ones eating their crops, but the Japanese empire and foreign countries do as well.”<sup>77</sup> The Japanese government, therefore, takes advantage of Korea’s climate, land, and workforce by taking the colony’s food. The textbook does not hide this fact from readers; instead, it uses it as motivation for children to help their parents in the fields.

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<sup>73</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 1: 46-7.

<sup>74</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 1: 34.

<sup>75</sup> Oh and Kim, “Japanese Colonial Education,” 85.

<sup>76</sup> Oh and Kim, “Japanese Colonial Education,” 85.

<sup>77</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 2: 64-5.

Passages that contain the themes of education, duties of a student, and agriculture all communicate the need for hard work. They emphasize not only one's role but also one's duty to prioritize it above all else. Take the passage "Our House" for example. It reads:

Recently, father and older brother wake up early every day and work on the field. Mother and older sister do needle work and laundry in the front of the house. My younger sibling and I feed the chickens before and after school, and we clean the house. These are the chores assigned to us. We also do these chores while studying. Once we have completed studying and doing our chores, our family can finally meet and talk about fun things together. Father says, "The happiest thing in the world is when the people in the house are healthy enough to do their jobs well and live harmoniously."<sup>78</sup>

This story proves noteworthy for multiple reasons. First, members of the family—men, women, and children—have a specific role that they must fulfill before enjoying themselves. They prioritize their chores above all others in order to benefit the family. Second, the parents "assigned" these chores to each person, giving them a job-like connotation. The members of the house do not complain; they all understand their tasks and complete them without hesitation. Third, the last line of the passage reveals the motives of the Japanese government. The father's closing statement says that the members of the family must cultivate a strong physique to complete their assigned tasks. By doing so, they can achieve happiness. The Japanese government feels that Korean children will have a role in the future, and when the time comes, it does not want its subjects to waver or question themselves in fulfilling that role.

As the textbook progresses, the benefits of working hard shift from the family to the state. In the passage titled "Sweat," a schoolboy and his father walk together on a hot day. They see a traffic officer guiding people on an intersection, a man pulling a wagon in front of a hospital, and a farmer working in the field. The son notices that all these men sweat profusely. The father explains to his son that all these men sweat in order to do their jobs. He explains that

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<sup>78</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935)," Volume 2: 23-7.

if the traffic officer did not direct traffic, there would be lots of injured people; if the man didn't pull the wagon and bring supplies to the hospital, there would be more people in pain; and if the farmer did not collect food, they (him and his son) would starve and die. The father then points to a train in the distance and explains how there is a man hauling coal to ensure that the train brings cargo to a far distance in a short amount of time. After hearing this, the young boy reflects. He swears, "I will sweat too. I will sweat for myself and those who sweat for me."<sup>79</sup> The boy's final thoughts reveal a sense of urgency to help the state. He believes that each person works for the benefit of a whole. Thus, he has an obligation to push through hardship and ensure the greatest possible future for the people in his community. Individuality disappears, and collectivity fills the void. Children, in short, become spokes on a wheel. They must fulfill their roles and work hard to benefit the state.

This reflects how the Japanese government wanted colonial Korea to succeed. According to Sang-Sook Jeon, Joseon served a vital role in guaranteeing the "success of Japan's imperialistic and expansionist ambition as the key strategic outpost"<sup>80</sup> The failure of Korea would undermine the expansion of the Japanese empire to the rest of the world. Thus, the government wished to create a generation of hard-working individuals that prioritized the success of the state over all others. Foucault states that "to govern...is to structure the possible field of actions of others."<sup>81</sup> The contents of this textbook certainly direct readers to certain modes of behavior. The lessons contain explicit parables that align with the motives of the Japanese government.

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<sup>79</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935)," Volume 3: 24-30.

<sup>80</sup> Sang-Sook Jeon, "The Characteristics of Japanese Colonial Rule in Korea," *Journal of Northeast Asian History* 8, no. 1 (2011): 65.

<sup>81</sup> Foucault, "The Subject," 789.

Korean history and geography are other themes present in this textbook. Tsurumi explains that the colonial government included history and geography in the normal school curriculum after the March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 Movement.<sup>82</sup> The consequences of the large-scale resistance movement seem to show even a decade later. One passage, for example, tells a story about the founding monarch of the Silla Dynasty Park Hyeokgeose.<sup>83</sup> The inclusion of a respected Korean historical figure seems counterproductive toward the Japanese government's goal for assimilation, but it appears in the text. The children gain the opportunity to learn about Korean history rather than Japanese history. It is important to note, however, that the government did not include these passages without caution. The stories do not present real events. They resemble myths rather than factual lessons, giving children only a small—and modified—taste of their actual history.

Despite this change, the Japanese government reincorporates nationalistic passages within the textbook. Consider the following passage:

Today is November 3<sup>rd</sup>, so it is Cultural Day. Every household has a flag outside of their house and the wind makes the flags wave fiercely. There was a ceremony at school in the morning. The principle told us a praiseworthy story about the Japanese emperor. The Japanese emperor is going to become a grandfather. He helped our country make rapid progress in work, making it into a praiseworthy country. For that reason, November 3 has been designated as Cultural Day. The whole nation congratulates him with sincerity and good faith.<sup>84</sup>

Here, the Korean people celebrate a Japanese holiday. They engage in a community-wide ritual by placing flags outside of their houses and congratulating the emperor. The passage asserts that the emperor helped pave the road for Korea's progress and transformed Korea into a praiseworthy country. By doing so, it justifies Japanese imperialism and aims to make readers

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<sup>82</sup> Tsurumi, "Colonial Education in Korea," 303.

<sup>83</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935)," Volume 3: 10-6.

<sup>84</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935)," Volume 2: 68-71.

realize the benefits of living under colonial rule. Pro-Japanese sentiments should come as no surprise. As mentioned, the government wished to control the actions and thoughts of Koreans, so they could adopt a form of Japaneseness.<sup>85</sup> This objective became even more important during the publication of this textbook. The late 1920s and early 1930s marked Japan's militaristic aggressions toward Manchuria: Kwantung Army officers secretly engineered the assassination of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin on June 4, 1928; invaded Mukden on September 18, 1931; and established the puppet state of Manchukuo on February 18, 1932.<sup>86</sup> Assimilation proved most essential for the Japanese empire during this time, for the creation of loyal Japanese subjects would ensure military success in the future. The exercise of power, as Foucault puts it, consists in "guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome."<sup>87</sup> The Japanese government attempts to do just that by implementing nationalistic passages in its textbooks during trying times.

The most frequent themes in this textbook are education, duties of a student, agriculture, Korean history and geography, and Japanese nationalism. The first three themes urge Korean children to work hard for the empire, so they can help their communities prosper. The next two themes seem at odds with one another. While one helps cultivate a Korean identity, the other undermines it. Korean history and geography passages do not present a particular moral. Instead, they inform readers of the past and present situation of Korea. Japanese nationalistic passages push readers into accepting the Japanese empire as their own.

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<sup>85</sup> Lee, Chulwoo, "Modernity, Legality, and Power in Korea Under Japanese Rule," in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 47.

<sup>86</sup> The Kwantung Army was a Japanese military unit stationed at the Kwantung Territory in southernmost Manchuria. For more information see Alvin D Coox, "High Command and Field Army: The Kwantung Army and the Nomonhan Incident, 1939," *Military Affairs* 33, no. 2 (1969): 302, doi:10.2307/1983925.

<sup>87</sup> Foucault, "The Subject," 789.



## Passage Revisions

The evolution of colonial textbooks becomes clearest when analyzing the revision of specific passages found in two or all three editions. Certain passages resemble one another, but their contents differ in both subtle and obvious ways. Take the Confucian-themed passage found in all three textbook editions as an example. It explains how one should say “goodnight” and “good morning” to one’s family members. Textbooks #1 (*Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook 1915-1918*) and Textbook #3 (*Normal School Korean Textbook 1923-1924*) are nearly identical: the father and mother receive the highest level of respect, the older brother receives the second highest level of respect, the older sister has the third highest level of respect, the brother-in-law receives the fourth highest level of respect, and the pet receives the least level of respect.<sup>88</sup> The pictures associated with the passage also resemble one another with a male child bowing to the father and mother.<sup>89</sup> Textbook #6 (*Normal School Korean Textbook 1930-1935*), in contrast, divides the same lesson into two sections—one for a boy and the other for a girl. The speech levels used to address the family members remain the same. The textbook writers do not implement any drastic changes to the contents of the passage; they simply provide both a male and female perspective for the children. As previously stated, an increasingly large number of schoolgirls attended normal schools after each year. In fact, approximately 40 percent of normal school students were female by 1933.<sup>90</sup> The revision of this Confucian-themed passage reflects that trend.

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<sup>88</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 48-50 and Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 1: 54-5.

<sup>89</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 48 and Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 1: 54.

<sup>90</sup> Tsurumi, “Colonial Education,” 305.

The revisions seen in the passage titled “Swallow” from Textbook #3 and Textbook #6 reveal a more conspicuous change. Both texts focus on a conversation between two young boys who see a swallow’s nest. In Textbook #3, one child explains to the other that this bird feeds its children and migrates to different areas during the year.<sup>91</sup> The boys acknowledge the uniqueness of the bird and stare at it for a considerable amount of time. In Textbook #6, however, the child provides a much deeper and detailed account of swallow’s migration. He admires it for its ability to travel “long distances”<sup>92</sup> in “rainy and windy weather.”<sup>93</sup> The passage even includes an additional character who claims that his will becomes stronger every time he sees the bird.<sup>94</sup> The two excerpts resemble one another in many ways. They include identical topics, titles, main characters, and pictures. Nonetheless, their contents differ in regard to the swallow’s migration. The former passage holds a more direct and matter-of-fact tone while the latter holds a more admiring one. The children praise the bird for its willingness to work hard and overcome many obstacles. This idea appears frequently in the last textbook, especially because of the Japanese political climate in the 1930s.

The most noticeable revision comes from a passage centered on New Year’s Day in all three textbooks. The one in Textbook #1 reads:

On first day of the New Year, the flag is waving under the newborn sun. Children gathered at school and sang songs to celebrate the birthday of the emperor.<sup>95</sup>

The version in Textbook #3 reads:

Today is the first day of the New Year. We woke up early in the morning, dressed up, and ate rice cake soup. After coming back from school, we gave our

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<sup>91</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924),” Volume 3: 13-7.

<sup>92</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 3: 17.

<sup>93</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 3: 18.

<sup>94</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935),” Volume 3: 18.

<sup>95</sup> Korean Government, “Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918),” Volume 1: 97.

neighborhood elders a New Year's bow. Our teacher says we are one year older starting today, so we must study harder...<sup>96</sup>

The version in Textbook #6 reads:

My younger brother, Jong-Hak, is four years old this year, but he still makes funny remarks. Today, mother said, 'Jong-Hak, New Year's Day is near.' Jong-Hak asked her, 'how many more nights until the New Year?' 'Only five more nights,' mother replied. Jong-Hak exclaimed, 'Woah, so amazing. I will wear my new clothes and bow to the New Year.' After hearing this, our whole family began to laugh.<sup>97</sup>

The passage in the first edition is short and straight forward. It contains the most nationalistic content despite its length. The passage itself reveals how students must perform rituals that celebrate the emperor on New Year's Day, while the picture associated with it depicts a highly regulated event where children line up in a formation and teachers observe from the sidelines. The same passage in the second edition provides more detail and does not reference the Japanese emperor. It not only reveals a typical routine on New Year's Day but also includes Korean traditions. The narrator eats rice cake soup in the morning, bows to his elders, and turns one year older. Koreans practice these three customs on this day, while the Japanese do not. The passage in the third edition contains neither pro-Japanese nor pro-Korean sentiments. It merely presents an amusing conversation between family members before New Year's Day. When one considers the political atmosphere of colonial Korea on the publication dates of each edition, these changes should come as no surprise: the first passage appeared during the first stages of colonization. The Japanese government wanted to communicate the message of loyalty to its subjects. The second passage emerged after the March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 Movement. The government decreased nationalistic ideas and increased in cultural knowledge in educational lessons. The third passage came eleven

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<sup>96</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924)," Volume 2: 66-7.

<sup>97</sup> Korean Government, "Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935)," Volume 1: 60-3.

years after the resistance movement and two years after the assassination attempt in Manchuria. The inclusion of pro-Korean ideas was no longer a top priority.

## **Conclusion**

The Japanese government wanted all elementary-aged children to enroll into normal schools and receive a standardized, "Japanese-style" education. As a result, it constructed hundreds of normal schools throughout colonial Korea from 1910 to 1945. These institutions used *Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918)*, *Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924)*, and *Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935)* as part of their curriculum. A Foucauldian reading of these texts reveals how the colonial government exercised power over Korean children through primary school education. Their themes, morals, and stories communicate certain actions and develop power relations within the classroom, thereby molding the capacity of students. Analyzing these textbooks within their historical context allows one to see how and why the Japanese government used education to achieve its goals.

Volume one of *Normal School Korean and Chinese Textbook (1915-1918)* reveals that the Japanese government wished to transform Korean children into loyal subjects. The majority of the textbook's contents are centered on the themes of education and duties of the student, which inform children to attend normal schools and study diligently. By doing so, the Japanese government could control the information consumed by Korean students and direct their present and future actions. Passages centered on Japanese nationalism are also present. They not only depict the Japanese emperor in a positive light but also encourage children to participate in rituals that glorify him. The most obvious examples take place in the workbook activity sections.

Volumes one, two, and three of *Normal School Korean Textbook (1923-1924)* show the impact of the March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 Movement on colonial education. The Japanese government responded to the Korean people's demand for independence by implementing more lenient policies throughout the colony. The textbook reflects this change. It contains fun and pro-Korean passages, which proves significant because the first textbook rarely—if not ever—mentioned these themes. Moreover, school attendance is implied for both boys and girls. The addition of female protagonists and perspectives confirm that more girls attended normal schools in the 1920s. The Japanese government's power and influence over the Korean children certainly increased.

Lastly, volumes one, two, and three of *Normal School Korean Textbook (1930-1935)* highlight the need for Korean students to work hard in academics and agriculture. The Japanese government wanted them to contribute to the state by providing resources to the Japanese mainland. After all, it believed Koreans should devote their time and energy to ensure the prosperity of the empire as colonial subjects. Agriculture-themed passages in this textbook emphasize hard work for all men, women, and children within the colony. No one is an exception. The passages encourage Korean children to help their parents farm and finish household chores before enjoying themselves. The textbook aims to increase pro-Japanese sentiments as well by depicting the emperor in a positive light. In short, Koreans students are to see him as a man worthy of respect and admiration. These changes are not random. They can be seen as preparations for military mobilization due to the political climate surrounding Manchuria during this time.

Without a doubt, the Japanese government used primary school education to achieve its long-term goals in colonial Korea. It adjusted educational policies in accordance with the

political situations of the time—most notably after the March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 Movement. This allowed the government to exercise power in the most effective manner. Colonial textbooks serve as evidence for this occurrence. Furthermore, the three textbooks examined in this paper predate the start of the Pacific War. Their contents, however, suggest that the main objectives of the Japanese government, before and during the war, were not so different. Its methods simply changed to accelerate the process of assimilation and resource gathering.

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