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Seoul's Bando Hotel: *A Postwar Space of Americanism and Cold War Internationalism*

Taejin HWANG

Abstract

The hovering Bando Hotel in central Seoul, built by a Japanese industrial mogul in 1938, enjoyed notoriety as a key landmark in the capital cityscape for thirty-some years. The Bando also occupied political and cultural centerstage, visually signifying Japan's colonial modernity during its foundational years, followed by representing a political nerve center for both the American military occupation (1945–1948) in southern Korea and the postwar Syngman Rhee regime throughout the 1950s. This study examines the Bando Hotel as an ensconced space of political power and Cold War internationalism in Seoul, under Rhee's postwar translation of the hotel from its Japanese foundation into Americanism from 1954 to 1960. Reflecting Rhee's desires to be intimately integrated into the American-led Free Asia, the Bando Hotel embodied American modernity and Cold War cosmopolitanism. This spatial and symbolic transformation, however, was more superficial than actual, much like Rhee's precarious and fraught support from the United States; despite his attempt to control and project this exclusive space of power and Americanism, the emblematic significance of this spatial facade also diffused following Rhee's fall from power. The spatial history of the Bando encapsulated the interpenetrating desires and failures of his regime.

Keywords: Bando Hotel, 1950s Seoul, postwar space, landscape of power, Cold War modernity, Americanism, Syngman Rhee

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Taejin HWANG is an assistant professor in the Department of History at Kyungpook National University, Daegu, South Korea. Email: hwangtj@knu.ac.kr.

Introduction

The Bando Hotel, built in 1938 as the second Western-style luxury hotel in Seoul, enjoyed notoriety as the tallest building in Korea, at eight-stories high, until the mid-1960s, and a key landmark in the capital cityscape for thirty-some years. The Bando also occupied political and cultural centerstage through three pivotal periods of 20th-century Seoul—the eras of Japanese colonial occupation (1910–1945), liberation and war (1945–1953), and postwar reconstruction (1954–1960s). When built by a Japanese industrial mogul who amassed his fortune in close cooperation with the Japanese imperial government, the Bando Hotel visually signified Japan's colonialism and its capitalist modernity in the heart of the capital city. Following national liberation in 1945, the hotel then headquartered the American military occupation forces (1945–1948) in southern Korea, and then saw postwar usage by the Syngman Rhee regime (1948–1960) as a state-operated hotel. Thus, from 1945 to 1960 the Bando represented a political nerve center for both the foreign and Korean elites in Seoul and for what was described as *hotel jeongchi* (hotel politics)[1]; Korean politicians frequented the Bando to consult the American military government and then the Rhee government used the hotel to host Cold War politicking among the foreign and Korean elites. Along with hotel politics, the Bando also epitomized one of the most Americanized spaces in Korea, where English was the common language spoken and the US dollar the circulated currency, as well as a rendezvous point of social life for the city's privileged class throughout the 1950s. But by the time the hotel was torn down in 1974, it had lost its luster as an island of American modernity. In the course of its "bittersweet 38 years of turbulent historical entanglement,"[2] this study examines the Bando Hotel as a landmark Cold War space in Seoul, under Syngman Rhee's postwar

1. "Gyeokbyeon sok-e eolkhin aehwan 38-nyeon, bando hotel-i heollinda" (Entangled in Bittersweet 38 Years of Turbulence, Bando Hotel to Be Torn Down), *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 4, 1974.
2. "Gyeokbyeon sok-e eolkhin aehwan 38-nyeon, bando hotel-i heollinda" (Entangled in Bittersweet 38 Years of Turbulence, Bando Hotel to Be Torn Down), *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 4, 1974.

translations from 1954 to 1960.

This analysis stands on two premises on *space* from Henri Lefebvre. First is that "space is no more a passive surface," but rather "space, like other commodities, *is itself actively produced*" (Merrifield 2006, 107). Second, that space is "interpenetrating" and "different layers of time are inscribed in the built landscape, literally piled on top of each other…" (Merrifield 2006, 105). One significance of the Bando lies in this construction of its layered histories—as a colonial, postcolonial, and postwar space. Reflective of this, previous studies have imbued a range of emblematic significance to this space, from representing Japanese coloniality (Yoon 2012) to embodying the desire and consumption of postwar modernity (Yi 2018b) as well as a state-led, hybridized space of capitalist influx (Choi 2016). What interpenetrates these studies, and subsequently the layered meanings, is that *hotel politics* and capitalist modernity converged here. As a capitalist space, it represented a spatial structure of both "a localization of global economic and social forces" and "a nodal point, or a location, in a world capitalist order" (Zukin 1991, 268). As a crucial political space, it was where the Syngman Rhee regime pursued the integration of postwar South Korea into the American-led Free World or, as partaking in what Christina Klein describes as the political discourse dimension of Cold War cosmopolitanism, "rooted in the United States-led push, largely supported by Republic of Korea president Syngman Rhee, to secure South Korea's integration into the community of noncommunist, capitalist nations and especially into the emerging entity known as Free Asia" (2020, 6). Together, this postcolonial space of political-economic constructions, from which powerful governance and capitalist lure emanated, comprised a landmark in what Sharon Zukin defines as "landscapes of power"—with *landscape* denoting "an ensemble of material and social practices and their symbolic representation" (1991, 16). The hovering Bando at the heart of Seoul's cityscape, codified in Korea's particular coloniality and embedded in its postcolonial desires, represented an essential transnational space linked to the international capitalist order, Cold War cosmopolitanism, and Americanism for 1950s South Korea.

The defining characteristic of this landscape of power in postwar Seoul was Americanism, or South Korea's enfolding into America-led liberal

modernity. The US military, as the largest contingent of the American presence in postcolonial South Korea, has often been identified as at the forefront of these transnational circuits of American lifestyle and Cold War soft power. Such studies have emphasized American military camps as "Little Americas" (Gillem 2007; Hwang 2018) and their surrounding camptowns as transnational "borderlands" and indispensable conduits of American modernity and Cold War integration (Hwang 2013). This study focusing on the Bando Hotel, an exclusive space located in the city centrum and reserved for elites, positions it as a counterpart or a complementary space to the American military camps and their camptowns. Imagined as "privileged isolated zones" (Cazes 2007, 227, 295) or as *ibang jidae* (foreign zone) in the urban center (Choi 2016),[3] Koreans and Americans engaged in constructing South Korea's postwar modernity here. Reflected in the transformation of this space from its Japanese colonial foundation to a post/neo-colonial space of Americanism in the 1950s were Rhee's attempts to control and ensconce this exclusive space of power and Americanism as well as his desires to be intimately integrated into the American-led Free World. This spatial and symbolic transformation, however, was more superficial than actual, much like Rhee's precarious connections to and support from the United States; despite his attempt to control and project this exclusive space of power and Americanism, this spatial facade too lost its emblematic significance by the early 1960s following Rhee's fall from power. The spatial history of the Bando encapsulated the interpenetrating desires and failures of his regime.

Following a discussion of the hotel's Japanese colonial foundation and initial postcolonial transformations under the American military occupation, the focus of this analysis will be the postwar transference and Cold War translations during the Rhee years. The interpenetrating layers built into Seoul's Bando Hotel as an exclusive *ibang jidae* of Americanism and capitalist cosmopolitanism as well as a space of Cold War internationalism and Free Asia integration will be examined.

3. "Jeongchi sidae wan galsaek-ui jeongdam—Bando hotel dasil" (The Completeness of a Political Age, Political Talks in Brown—Various Rooms of Bando Hotel), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, October 12, 1960.

From Japanese Colonial Foundations to Militarized American Occupation, 1938–1953

When Japan joined the ranks of the imperial powers and began to lay out the infrastructures for its dominance on the Asian mainland, hotels, alongside railroads, made inroads into the colonial territories. In Korea, the Japanese imperial government built trans-peninsular railroads that connected the southern port city of Busan to the northernmost borders with China (Gelézeau 2007, 78–79).[4] Then they connected Busan to Japan's Shimonoseki by ferry line, opening the way from Japan to the far reaches of the Eurasian continent via Busan port and the Manchurian and Siberian railways. Railroads represented both modernity—with its intersection of technology, industrialization, and capitalist development—and coloniality piercing through landscapes to be dominated. The expansion of railroads and the accompanying massified mobility also led to the emergence of a related industry of railroad-hotels. Consequently, it was in Busan, a hub in this transcontinental transportation network, that Japan built the first railway hotel on the Korean Peninsula. Japan's South Manchuria Railway Company, a semi-public conglomerate established in 1906 after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) to develop Manchuria, and the railway bureau of the Government-General of Chosen, the Japanese colonial government in Korea, oversaw the building of the Busan Railway Hotel (Choi 2016, 17). The first railroad hotel opened in July 1912 on the third floor of Busan Railway Station, modeled after the British-American precedent of building hotels within train stations (Gelézeau 2007, 79). Thus, the first Western-style hotel in Korea was a state-operated hotel interconnected with railroads, symbolizing both capitalist modernity and an imperial apparatus of penetration (Tomita 2008, 11, 234).

The first two Western-style hotels in Seoul were the Chosen Hotel, completed in 1914, and the Bando, which opened in 1938. The construction of Chosen was, again, ordered by the railroad bureau with the South

4. A rail line connecting Busan, Seoul, Pyongyang and then Sinuiju on the border with China was completed in 1908, and in 1911 this was extended to Changchun, China.

Manchuria Railway Company's participation. But unlike the other colonial railroad hotels built within railroad stations, the Chosen Hotel was instead built in the heart of Seoul in Sogong-dong, about two kilometers from Gyeongseong (Seoul) Railway Station. At five-stories with sixty rooms, the Chosen was also much grander in scale than other railroad hotels and became Seoul's tallest building. The motivations for its exceptional location and scale appears strategic: with the transfer of the Daegwanjeong (Great Pavilion), the royal guesthouse of the Daehan jeguk (Great Korean Empire), to the Japanese Governor-General in 1911, the Chosen Hotel was planned across the space formerly occupied by the Daegwanjeong the same year (Choi 2016, 10–13). In juxtaposition to the Great Pavilion, a German architect, Georg de Lalande, designed the Chosen in "a neo-classical style with round roofs with columns and spiers lined up side by side in European style" and the interior, too, boasted European influences from a ballroom in "Louis XVI style" to a restaurant in colorful Rococo motif (Gelézeau 2007, 79–81). In replacing the former royal guesthouse of the Joseon dynasty with a European-style structure, the Japanese colonial government constructed a landscape of power that emulated Western modernity.

Built over twenty years after the Chosen and as the second luxury hotel in Seoul, Bando was more American than European in its architectural design and more capitalist than colonial in its function. In 1938, a Japanese businessman, Noguchi Shitagau, who had amassed, with extensive subsidization from the Japanese imperial government, his industrial empire from shipbuilding to establishing hydraulic power and electrochemical plants in northern Korea, built the Bando directly behind the Chosen. The eight-story, 111-room Bando stood taller and larger than the Chosen (Yi 2018a). In architectural design, although it too adopted the hotel style in vogue in the West, unlike the heavy European-style influences of Chosen, the Bando replicated the international modernism style popular at the time and was modeled after the American classic hotel architecture of Chicago's Grant Building (Choi 2016, 46–48). Funded with private capital, this architectural shift also emblematically captured the transition from state-led colonial to more capitalist integration by the late 1930s. The privileged few who could enter this international hotel partook in consuming the latest

modern—rare imported goods, Western cuisine, music, and fashion, as well as standards of luxury replicated throughout the nodal points in a world capitalist order (Zukin 1991, 52). As Kim Baek-yeong contends, moreover, Western spaces like department stores in the city center enabled an indirect but perhaps more insidious form of colonial governance by creating a seemingly *taljeongchihwa* (trans-political) space of capitalist desires that also naturally created the ethnic division among the colonizers who could and the colonized who could not partake in the modern consumption (2009, 507–508, 520–521). Like Kim's department stores, the two hotels, thus, spatially projected colonial modernity and its promised capitalist consumption from the heart of the cityscape.

These two luxury hotels in central Seoul had a complementary relationship in their shared functions and spatial representations of colonial rule. Foremost, the very names of the Chosen and Bando hotels signified their coloniality, with Chosen being the Japanized pronunciation of Joseon Korea (Choi 2016, 56). Also embedded in the name of the Bando Hotel is its coloniality, since *bando* means "peninsula" and imperial Japan referred to the Shandong and Liangdong peninsulas of China as well as the Korean Peninsula as "*bando*"; the spatial noun of "peninsula," in other words, carried the connotation of colonial mainland for imperial Japan (Yoon 2012, 201, 215). The two hotels, located in close proximity to the government-general buildings and residences, also served multiple functions as the diplomatic guest-hotel for the Japanese government and the rendezvous point for the colonial elite to experience and flaunt their modernity (Choi 2016, 12–13). Together, they occupied the emerging urban center, a landscape of power that emanated both its coloniality and colonial modernity infused with capitalist consumption culture. And upon this "actively produced" colonial foundation, the new postcolonial occupiers began the reconfiguration of it into a militarized American space of power in 1945, inscribing yet another layer of time in the built landscape, "literally piled on top of each other…" (Merrifield 2006, 107, 105).

Upon Korea's liberation from colonial rule on August 15, 1945, Lieutenant General John Reed Hodge, appointed Commanding General of the United States Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK) and the United States

Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK or AMG), entered the southern half of the hastily bifurcated peninsula and usurped all military installations as well as property and enterprises owned by the Japanese government.[5] General Hodge also temporarily closed hotels, factories, and all schools above the primary level to accommodate the 85,000 occupation troops and to meet the AMG's administrative purposes (Denfeld 1997, 6). In this process, the AMG took over the two tallest buildings in central Seoul, setting up its headquarters at the Bando and converting the Chosen into their guest hotel and recreational space (Choi 2016, 52). The selection of the Bando for the American military occupation headquarters, foremost, made functional sense since it was already a familiar space architecturally, having been modeled after an American hotel, and also designed from its inception as an "officetel" that combined office and retail spaces on the ground floors and hotel rooms on the upper levels (Choi 2016, 48); the hotel, thus, could be quickly converted to work and residential spaces for the new occupiers. The downtown location of the hotel, moreover, meant proximity to the Yongsan military installation, the former Japanese Imperial Army headquarter located just south of the city centrum that the American occupying forces also took over as its main military command post (Hwang 2018). The political and emblematic significance of taking over the landscape of power of the exiting Japanese colonial government and the urban heart of the liberated capital was also probably not lost on the new occupiers.

The AMG quickly reconfigured the eight stories of the Bando Hotel hierarchically according to American military rank and the hotel soon came to represent the actual and symbolic center of militarized American power in liberated Korea. While low-ranking enlisted men "quartered out back in old Quonset huts that had been used by the Japanese Army," the lower floors housed headquarter offices and the higher ranked officers lived on the floors above the offices[6]; General Hodge occupied room 801 on the top floor of

5. US Army, *History of the United States Armed Forces in Korea*, unpublished history (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration), pt. I, ch. 4, 23–27.
6. "Sgt. Maj. Recalls Early Days at the Bando," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, March 2, 1974.

the hotel (Son 2005, 27). A young American sergeant, Norman E. Durkee, who served as a chief clerk from 1945 to 1946 at the AMG headquarters, recalled how, since he lived out back in a Quonset hut without hot water, he would sometimes wear just his "bathrobe and sneak upstairs to take a hot shower" in the officers' quarters.[7] At the opposite end of this military hierarchy was General Hodge, who governed from the "Banto"[8] and lived nearby in the former residence of the Japanese governor-general. An August 1948 retrospective report on Hodge's three-year task of commanding the American occupation in southern Korea described his daily life that largely revolved around three exclusive spaces in central Seoul—the former Japanese governor-general residence and the Bando and Chosen hotels: His day began after "eating a heavy breakfast that he learned to like when he was a small-town boy" at his residence. He then headed to his place of work and by 8:00 a.m.

> …Hodge was at his massive desk in the Banto Hotel where he plunged into staff work that kept him busy until mid-morning. Then came his Korean problems. His invaluable Korean aide…would start the Korean business by giving an early summary of the Korean newspapers that morning. Then came Korean callers. [...] Around noon he trooped to the Chosen Hotel for lunch with his staff. [...] He insists on eating raw sliced onions for lunch and supper but otherwise likes staple food such as meats, potatoes and pie. Back at the office Hodge was ready for more staff work and visitors. […] Hodge left his office unceremoniously at 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. and drove home in a sedan with his aide and an armed guard.[9]

Although former Japanese colonial spaces, they were converted to offer familiar American comforts to the new occupiers, such as General Hodge being able to eat his daily meals in the all-American style of "meats, potatoes and pie" at both his place of residence and work. Most of all, the selection

7. "Sgt. Maj. Recalls Early Days at the Bando," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, March 2, 1974.
8. Americans referred to the Bando during the liberation and Korean War periods as either the Banto or Hanto hotel, retaining the Japanese pronunciation.
9. "Hodge of Korea," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, August 29, 1948.

of the spatial center of the outgoing Japanese power as AMG headquarters not only signified the transference of governance from Japan to the United States, but also a symbolic continuation of that particular landmark in the landscape of power of foreign occupiers (Choi 2016, 51). Korean political leaders like Syngman Rhee, Kim Gu, and Kim Gyu-sik frequenting the hotel to consult with Hodge also marked the beginning of the so-called hotel politics.[10] And for Koreans who could not enter the hotel gates, there were also anecdotes of impoverished protesters gathering outside of the hotel demanding rice and Hodge looking down on them from his eighth-floor office (Son 2005, 27–28). Koreans of all social classes, in other words, clearly identified the Bando Hotel as the center of American occupation power.

Once the Republic of Korea (ROK) was established on August 15, 1948, the USAMGIK returned the Chosen Hotel to the Korean government, but requested to keep the Bando under its usage. The returned Chosen Hotel was transferred to the Ministry of Transportation in 1949 and the Syngman Rhee government renamed Chosen to Chosun in a deliberate attempt to erase its colonial origins (Choi 2016, 56). The Bando, on the other hand, not only retained its name, but also its official American usage by housing both the US embassy and the Economic Cooperation Agency (ECA). The new ROK government consented to the American request based on an agreement that allowed the United States to retain certain areas under free leasehold.[11] The United States had originally sought to purchase the hotel and the surrounding land to establish its embassy, but the ROK government maintained that national property could not be sold to foreign governments and instead granted the hotel usage as a gesture of the "Korean people's appreciation, justice and respect for the United States

10. "Gyeokbyeon sok-e eolkhin aehwan 38-nyeon, bando hotel-i heollinda" (Entangled in Bittersweet 38 Years of Turbulence, Bando Hotel to Be Torn Down), *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 4, 1974.
11. "Bando hotel-deung miguk gwisok" (Return of Bando Hotel, etc.), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 9, 1948.

Military Government" for the sacrifices it made for Korea's liberation.[12] During the gifting ceremony of the hotel in April 1949, the United States gave three million US dollars to the ROK government with the intent that it offset the construction cost of another administrative building, along with a promise that the hotel would be used for continued American economic assistance to South Korea since it would also house the ECA.[13] Besides the central location, size, and convenience of the facility, the Bando was also a logical choice for the American embassy because it already embodied since 1945 an American space of power for both Americans and Koreans alike, as aforementioned (Choi 2016, 62–63). Along with the official political and economic headquarters of the American presence, the hotel also continued to be a social and cultural center for Americans in Seoul, with a chapel that held weddings and weekly religious ceremonies or a post exchange (PX) for shoppers of American goods, for instance, until the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950.[14] After the armistice, however, the Syngman Rhee government took over the hotel, marking the end of the Bando as an official American space, and provided another building (Samjeong) across the street to the United States for use as the embassy in exchange.[15] This actively produced, layered, and interpenetrating space of power, inscribed with its Japanese colonial foundation and militarized American occupation, transformed even more completely into a space of Americanism under the Rhee-directed postwar translations.

12. "Bando hotel jeungyeogeon—Jeongbu-cheuk gukhoe-e dongui yocheong" (Bando Hotel Gift Matters—Government Requests Consent from the National Assembly), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, December 17, 1948; "Bando hotel gijeung-eul gagyeol" (Donating Bando Hotel Approved), *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 23, 1949.
13. "Bando hotel jeungyeosik geohaeng" (Bando Hotel Gift Ceremony), *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 21, 1949.
14. "Hood, Rouse Wed in Rites at Banto," Pacific Stars and Stripes, April 24, 1948; "Church News," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, August 20, 1948; "Opening Set for Main PX," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, April 28, 1949.
15. "Dolaon Bando hotel" (Returned Bando Hotel), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, January 1, 1953; "Seoul Bando hotel dasi uri jeongbu-seo maeip" (Government to Buy Back Seoul Bando Hotel), *Dong-A Ilbo*, May 8, 1953.

Postwar Translations, 1954–1960

Syngman Rhee, a staunch anti-Japanese, anti-communist, and pro-American nationalist, unsurprisingly looked toward the United States as the ideal modernity to aspire to for post-armistice South Korea. In this period of postcolonial "transition and translation" (Gandhi 1998, 4–5), the once colonial and then liberated yet occupied landscape of power was to be metamorphosed once again, to shed its Japanese foundation and to not only retain but to build on the Americanism of its military occupation period. The Rhee government completely refurbished the Bando for a year from military and government offices and residences back to its original function as an international hotel and commercial officetel before reopening its doors in 1954. It modeled Bando's renovation on American luxury hotels with the goal of making it one of the most international spaces in Seoul, in order to attract American visitors and, in turn, achieve *ttalla hoekdeuk* (dollar acquisition) direly needed for postwar recovery.[16] The Rhee government also sought to continue the spatial recognition of the Bando as the ensconced elite seat of political power and cosmopolitanism. In order to do so, Rhee closely dictated the spatial translation and constructed the intimate identification of the hotel with American modernity and Cold War internationalism, utilizing the space as a locus of integration into the American-led Free World.

The extensive refurbishing of the hotel involved everything from American architectural design to importing building material and furnishings from the United State, and Rhee actively oversaw this entire process. Norman R. Dehaan of Chicago, who worked for the US Army during the Korean War on road construction, headed the renovation design, while the ROK Army 1201 Construction Engineers handled the reconstruction (Yi 2018b). "The plans for the hotel space contemplate modern but not elaborate accommodations," reported C. Tyler Wood, the

16. "Bando hotel unyeonggwon eodiro" (Regarding the Bando Hotel Operation Authority), *Dong-A Ilbo*, May 27, 1953.

United Nations Command Economic Coordinator (in Korea, 1953–1956).[17] This "modern, but not elaborate" design included the addition of a sky lounge on the top east side with one side completely made of glass, allowing for an overlook of the city from the tallest building in Korea and the visual consumption of the landscape below from the enclosed space above (Yi 2018b). This process of adding the sky lounge also illustrated the transpacific transference of expertise and material; the architects for the Bando sent the final design plans for the sky lounge that laid out the air ducts to the ROK Consulate General Young Han Choo in San Francisco, who then acted as a liaison with companies in San Francisco to arrange shipments to Korea of air conditioning equipment and air ducts that fit the design plans.[18] Most of the other building material was also imported from the United States and President Rhee often sent direct instructions and payments to Consul General Choo. A letter from Rhee to Choo dated January 14, 1954, for instance, included a check for US$68,000 to cover the payment for "Blendwood Floor Block, Luminous Ceiling, Rever Hot Copper, Lally Cement Columns," etc. and another check for US$47,195 for two passenger elevators for the hotel.[19] Along with importing structural material, interior equipment and decorations, ranging from "China, Flatware, Beauty Parlor Equipment, Barber Shop Equipment, Vacuum cleaners" to "shower curtains, sheets, pillow cases, bath towels," table linens and rubber bath mats were also ordered.[20] Demonstrating how essential the American imported material was to the renovation, "the delay in the shipment of lighting fixtures" from the United States meant "plastering on the first floor of the Bando cannot be completed and therefore," Rhee wrote, the opening of the hotel had to be pushed back, and the delay meant losing earning US

17. A memorandum from C. T. Wood to C. B. Brownson, Reconstruction of the Peninsula Hotel, February 27, 1954, National Archives of Korea (hereafter NAK), CTA 0001466.
18. Architects for the Bando Hotel, February 6, 1954, Rhee Syngman Papers and Archives (hereafter RSPA), Yonsei University, Seoul, file 545, no. 11700011.
19. Office of the President, January 14, 1954, RSPA, file 546, no. 11700205.
20. Office of the President, April 8, 1954, RSPA, file 556, no. 11670245-6; Office of the President, July 23, 1954, RSPA, file 559, no. 11660070.

dollars from "the coffee shop and [other] income producing services."[21] So clear was the objective of the hotel for dollar earnings that even American embassy staff reported difficulties paying in Korean currency, with the hotel management citing a presidential order that gave the Bando an exception to the law that prohibited the usage of foreign currency in Korea.[22] From structurally renovating the building with imported material from the United States to the circulation of American currency, the Bando transformed more completely into an Americanized space.

By the time the hotel reopened in 1954, the newly translated space was filled with imported consumables from the United States as well as services rendered by an American executive manager of the hotel and Korean hoteliers trained at premier hotels in San Francisco. And the exchange of letters between Rhee and Choo concerning the Bando employees sent to San Francisco for their training indicated once again how intimately involved Rhee was in this spatial transformation. For instance, Rhee instructed the Consul General in a January 7, 1954, letter to "Please impress upon these boys the importance of creating a good impression…and I wish you could explain to them that I personally wrote you about this."[23] In a letter dated two weeks later, Rhee again expressed his hope that "these boys are really making good use of their time and that they will be able to make good use of what they learn when they return."[24] The President even oversaw the importing of consumable goods from the United States that catered to the largely American cliental. An April 1955 letter to Choo, for instance, instructed that "As the Bar of the Bando Hotel is now operating and doing a good business the Hotel urgently needs a supply of Scotch liquor. Will you please order 100 cases for the Hotel."[25] A procurement expenses list from March 1956 also indicated the extensive range of goods imported monthly for the hotel: "cigars, 1,000 lbs. of coffee, 200 cases of beer, meat,

21. Letter from the President, March 11, 1954, RSPA, file 554, no. 11680126.
22. Hwan Payments in Korea and at the Bando Hotel from Henry Costanzo (embassy), 1955, NAK, CTA0001321.
23. Letter from the President, January 7, 1954, RSPA, file 546, no. 11700256.
24. Letter from the President, January 28, 1954, RSPA, file 546, no. 11700094.
25. Office of the President, April 22, 1955, RSPA, file 575, no. 12860101.

poultry and milk, office supplies, liquor, 300 cases soda water, etc. for a total of $33,573."[26] From structural rehabilitation to all that could be consumed inside the space indicated its translation into American modernity under Rhee's close supervision.

Figure 1. "Bando hotel jeongyeong" (Bando Hotel full view), 1957
Source: Republic of Korea, Public Information Office, National Archives of Korea, CET0066433.[27]

26. Weekly Report, March 30, 1956, RSPA, file 589, no. 12720049; Bando Hotel Procurement Expenses List from the Consulate General, March 31, 1956, RSPA, file 589, no. 12720030.
27. Photograph published in "1957 Bando Hotel," *JoongAng Ilbo*, September 26, 2017, https://news.joins.com/article/21971925.

Figure 2. "Yi Seungman daetongnyeong bando hotel mit gukje hotel sichal 7" (President Syngman Rhee inspects the Bando Hotel and International Hotel 7), 1960

Source: Republic of Korea, Information Office, National Archives of Korea, CET0024876.[28]

For those who partook in consuming this space, the Bando represented an exclusive island of cosmopolitanism and American modernity in the heart of Seoul. Korean newspaper reports at the time and analysis of it since often deemed the Bando Hotel an *ibang jidae* (foreign zone) because its guests were mostly foreigners, English was the common language, and the US dollar the preferred currency (Choi 2016; Yi 2018b).[29] From American perspectives too, as reported by C. T. Wood, the UNC Economic Coordinator, "the design of the building…will meet a very pressing need in the city of Seoul for office space and for suitable hotel accommodations for

28. Photograph published in "Hotel saneop-ui tansaeng (2): Bando hotel-ui deungjang" (Birth of the Hotel Industry (2): Appearance of the Bando Hotel), *JoongAng Sisa magazine*, October 22, 2018, https://jmagazine.joins.com/economist/view/323263#self.
29. "Jeongchi-sidae wan galsaek-ui jeongdam—Bando hotel dasil" (Completeness of a Political Age, Political Talks in Brown—Various Rooms of the Bando Hotel), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, October 12, 1960.

Americans and other foreign businessmen."[30] And in the "new American 'jet age'" of the 1950s "posturing to displace train travel as the principle mode of modern international transportation," according to Alice Kim, and with the construction of South Korea's first modern airport terminal at Gimpo (1958–1960), the Bando became "the natural complement to Kimpo [Gimpo] airport as the typical passengers of the period—foreign diplomats, businessmen, high ranking US military officers, and the occasional celebrity—would be whisked from the airport to the hotel" (2013, 249, 256, 260). The Bando had transformed into a space fluidly integrated into the new American jet age for the cosmopolitan foreign elite. For American travelers in Seoul, indeed "the government-operated Bando Hotel, an air-conditioned, eight-story, modern structure in the heart of the city, serve[d] as the chief rendezvous for tourists," offering not only modern rooms and "large Western-style dining rooms, a coffee shop, pharmacy and other shops," but also a "fine view of growing Seoul…evident from the glass-enclosed sky lounge on the roof."[31] The opportunity to take advantage of this modern facility and exceptional view was, of course, limited to the privileged few, much like the aforementioned international capitalist spaces of luxury hotels and department stores of the 1930s. The prohibitive cost to stay at the hotel excluded most Koreans, considering that while the average GNP per capita was less than US$100 in 1961 South Korea (Lie 1998, 19), room rates in 1957, for instance, started at US$11 per night for a single occupant in the smallest room and up to US$769 per month for the largest suites.[32] And at this rate, even for the majority of Americans in Korea—lower ranking military personnel—the hotel usage was also beyond their means. The Bando clearly embodied a privileged space largely reserved for Seoul's jet-setting foreign elites.

This *ibang jidae* connected to the circuit of international capitalist order was at the same time a shared space among elite Koreans and Americans.

30. A memorandum from C. T. Wood to C. B. Brownson, Reconstruction of the Peninsula [Bando] Hotel, February 27, 1954, NAK, CTA0001466.

31. "Tourism on the Rise in Korea," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, September 5, 1959.

32. Memorandum from Pratt to R. Parker: Agreement on Renting Bando Hotel Rooms, December 27, 1957, NAK, CTA 0001655.

From cultural and social events to economic and political meetings, American patronage and active Korean participation further entwined the two nations in Cold War integration. For one, the hotel served as a locus of exclusive social practices, such as art patronage, fashion shows, dance parties, and music concerts. A 1956 report claimed that "Korean traditions and 'general Korean atmosphere' is being offered to viewers—on canvas—in the second exhibit of the Seoul Art Society…in the Bando Hotel. The group was formed earlier this year by foreign residents who gave Korean artists a permanent exhibit hall in the hotel."[33] This patronage of Korean artists by Americans continued with the Asia Foundation taking over the operation of the hotel art gallery in the hopes of introducing Korean modern art to foreign audiences.[34] Conversely, Western forms of social practices were brought to Seoul's high society, such as the first ever fashion show in Korea in 1956 by a designer who studied in the United States[35] or like a gala dance party held at the hotel the same year. The American Chamber of Commerce, under the sponsorship of the American ambassador to South Korea, presented "on behalf of the foreign community in Korea a gala dance, carnival, and Montel Carlo night for the financial benefit of the Korean Olympic Team," held at the Bando Hotel on September 29, 1956. Guests were invited to "thoroughly enjoy a full evening of dancing, floor shows, contests, other entertainment, and hobnobbing." And "the girls will get a special delight out of this festive evening," they announced, since there would be "a contest to choose a queen of the ball."[36] The Bando, as an international luxury hotel, was a social venue within which the material consumptions of the affluent, from art galleries to fashion shows, and the social practices of the foreign and native elites, such as gala balls, could be

33. "Seoul Art Society Holds Second Show," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, September 3, 1956.
34. "Bando hotel nae hwarang asea jaedanseo unyeong" (The Asia Foundation will Operate the Gallery in Bando Hotel), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, February 8, 1957.
35. "Gongjja-neun amugeotdo eopseoyo: 1-sedae paesyeon dijaineo, norano" (Nothing is for Free: First Generation Fashion Designer, Norano), *Lady Kyunghyang*, November 2013, http://lady.khan.co.kr/khlady.html?mode=view&code=4&artid=201311061520221&pt=nv.
36. "Letter from H. E. Renfro to All Friends of the Korean Olympic Team: September 29, 1956, Bando Hotel welcome reception for the Korean Olympic Team," NAK, CTA0001233.

shared as "markers and norms" of their privilege and cosmopolitanism (Gelézeau et al. 2007, 18).

Beyond social practices at the hotel being expressions of cosmopolitanism replicated in the nodal points in the international capitalist map, social gatherings also often mixed cultural hobnobbing with hotel politicking and Cold War internationalism. The first Sunday Music Concert held in the hotel gardens, hosted by the Seoul Music and Art Society, was attended by the chair of the ROK National Assembly as well as the minister and foreign guests of the Ministry of Transportation.[37] And in celebration of the second anniversary of William E. Warne's appointment as the UNC Economic Coordinator (in Korea, 1956–1959), 200 distinguished guests, including members of the ROK National Assembly and the chief justice of the judiciary committee, attended a cocktail party held at the Bando Hotel. Warne reportedly enjoyed himself, shaking hands with guests and repeatedly calling out, "Wine, wine!"[38] Besides parties, the top representatives of the American government in Korea, like Warne, also hosted talks at the Bando. On one occasion in 1957, Warne addressed the International Legal Society of Korea at the Bando, praising them for their "free and open discussion of legal and international problems between laymen and professional attorneys," since this helped the "spread of knowledge among all groups… that if the law should cease to protect life, liberty and property, all blessings we enjoy because of that protection would fade into oblivion. May it always be said that the lawyers of the free world are alert to the great responsibility that rests upon them."[39] His speech clearly echoed not only American liberal values, but also Cold War rhetoric of leaders of the free world having the responsibility to spread and protect the inalienable rights of "life,

37. "Ilyo eumak yeonjuhoe bando hotel jeongwon-eseo" (Sunday Music Concert Held at the Bando Hotel Garden), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, November 9, 1954.
38. "Warne jojeonggwan chiwim 2-junyeon ginyeom: Balhyeop pyeonhyeop juchoe-ro bando hotel-seo pati" (Newspaper Associations Host the Second Anniversary of Warne Coordinator's Appointment Party at the Bando Hotel), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, July 25, 1958.
39. Address by William E. Warne, UNC Economic Coordinator for Korea at the Third Meeting of the International Legal Society of Korea at the Bando Hotel, Korea, October 31, 1957, NAK, CTA0003196.

liberty and property." Besides American sponsorship, Rhee's South Korea also carved out its own place in Cold War internationalism. For instance, delegates gathering in Seoul in March 1954 for the Asian People's Anti-Communist League lodged at the Bando, even before its official re-opening after renovations.[40] This Free Asia integrations continued with Seoul's mayor hosting a banquet in honor of the president of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, in September 1957.[41] The Cold War interpenetrated this shared construction and practice of new cosmopolitanism at the Bando Hotel.

Both American advisors and Korean participants utilized the Bando Hotel as a meeting point of two sides to deliberate the ways in which South Korea could be intimately integrated into American-led Cold War internationalism and secure its place in "the emerging entity known as Free Asia" (Klein 2020, 6). At a luncheon meeting held on March 13, 1957, for instance, Warne, who headed the Office of the Economic Coordinator (OEC) created in 1953 by the United States to provide economic development expertise to South Korea, gave a talk to "80 members of the Seoul Rotary Club, comprising business and social leaders of the capital, that the republic is faced with a challenge and opportunity to put to a halt the inflationary spiral which has plagued and beset the economy..."[42] A few weeks later, American Ambassador Walter C. Dowling urged Korean and American Chamber of Commerce members and President Rhee in attendance at a luncheon meeting at the hotel that South Korea must attract private foreign investment.[43] The two American leaders' economic advice for South Korea to get its inflation under control and to open up its market to direct foreign investment well reflected principle American economic strategy for Korea's postwar recovery and, in turn, for it to become less dependent on US aid

40. "Sawol hasun bando hotel wansu: Ajubingohoe-ui daepyo sukso-ro sayong" (Bando Hotel Completed in April: To be Used as Lodging for Asian People's Anti-Communist League Delegates), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, March 18, 1954.
41. "Go sijang chodaeyeon bando hotel-seo seonghwang" (Banquet Hosted by Major Go Successfully Hosted at the Bando Hotel), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 22, 1957.
42. Aspects of Korea's Inflation: A Speech by Economic Director Warne before the Seoul Rotary Club, Bando Hotel, March 13, 1957, NAK, CTA0001628.
43. "Attract Private Capital, Dowling Urges Korea," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, March 27, 1957.

(Park 2007, 41, 74–79, 119). American aid had become a paramount political economic power base in 1950s South Korea, to the point of the South Korean economy being referred to as an "aid economy" (Park 2007, 37; Lie 1998, 26). Yet rather than enabling economic development, US aid hindered it by facilitating what John Lie deems a "parasitic relationship" among the "triple alliance"—"a hierarchical power structure in South Korea with the United States at the apex, Rhee and the subservient state bureaucracy in the middle and dependent capitalists at the bottom"—that dominated the 1950s political economy (1998, 26). The United States backed Rhee despite his well-known "autocracy and patrimonialism" because the "paramount importance of anticommunism led the United States to prize stability over its distaste for autocratic rule" (Lie 1998, 30–31, 25). Despite the exigency of the Cold War, however, this supposed intimate connection to and support from America that undergirded Rhee's grip on power was fragile and fraught, with Washington strategizing to replace Rhee throughout the 1950s (Park 2006, ch. 3). Thus, behind the facade of the Cold War alliance, Rhee's relations with the United States were precarious, ultimately evidenced by the United States pressuring Rhee to resign from office during the April 19 (1960) Student Revolution. It was also no coincidence that the protests that raged against his autocratic rule surrounded the hotel—the very landmark in the landscape of power that he sought to inherit from the United States.[44]

But even before Rhee's fall from power, the Bando as a landmark in the postwar landscape of power—a space of American modernity and Cold War cosmopolitanism—could not sustain its exclusiveness. It could not financially stay afloat, let alone achieve its goal of dollar acquisition, since the dollar intake generated by the hotel could not cover the expenditure to import most of its service goods from the United States. When payments for purchases for the hotel were not received for three months of 1956, Consulate General Choo requested that the Bando Hotel remit funds immediately, to which the Office of the President sent a bank draft for

44. During these protests one American businessman, watching from the rooftop of the hotel the protest that raged below, was shot by a deflected bullet and eventually died from his injury. "3 Americans Injured, 1 Badly in Uprising," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, April 20, 1960.

US$61,703.[45] That this correspondence happened between Choo and Rhee, rather than with the hotel manager, indicated not only that this was a state-operated hotel that Rhee oversaw intimately, but also that the state was heavily subsidizing the hotel to upkeep its gleam. The fiscal problems of the hotel point to the inherent contradictions built into the postwar translation of the space. While Rhee desired to occupy this landscape of power as the legitimate inheritor by tightly controlling this space, limiting its access to foreign and Korean elites, the incongruence of it being an international capitalist space only in superficial appearance and not in actual practice became apparent when the hotel could not sustain itself commercially without heavy government subsidy. The fact of the matter was that the hotel had "lost $400,000 during the first 11 months of 1957."[46] And from October 1959, the Bando Hotel began to accept Korean currency in an attempt to remedy its annual deficit.[47] It also opened its doors to *ilbanin* (ordinary persons) in 1960, officially ending its fifteen years as an exclusive contact zone, an *ibang jidae* of American modernity, hotel politics, and Cold War cosmopolitanism in the heart of the city.[48] This inability to sustain fiscal soundness and spatial exclusivity indicated that the postwar translations were more insecure and superficial than actual and foundational, much like Rhee's precarious connections to and support from the United States; the Bando encapsulated the interpenetrating desires and failures of the Rhee regime.

Despite Rhee's attempt to control and ensconce this exclusive space of power and Americanism, this spatial facade too began to lose its emblematic significance in the 1960s following Rhee's fall from power. Of course, it did

45. Letter to the President, July 27, 1956, RSPA, file 593, no. 12740183; Weekly Report, August 10, 1956, File 593, 12740142-4; Letter from the President, August 16, 1956, RSPA, file 593, no. 12740139.
46. "5700 manwon 9-wol-mal hyeonjae-ui bando hotel jeokja" (Bando Hotel Deficit at 57 million won as of Current End of September), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, October 11, 1957; "Bando Open to All After 1st of Year," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, December 19, 1957.
47. "Uri dondo batgiro 10-wol buteo bando hotel-seo" (Bando Hotel will Accept Our Currency from October), *Dong-A Ilbo*, August 21, 1959.
48. "Bando hotel gaebang—Ilbanin-egedo" (Bando Hotel to Open to Ordinary Persons), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, May 20, 1960.

not immediately lose its political symbolism. In fact, the Bando remained at the center of the breathtaking political transitions and civil protests that rocked Korean society in the early 1960s, from Chang Myon, the prime minister of the short-lived Second Republic (1960–1961) that replaced the Rhee regime, being surrounded by paratroopers of the Park Chung-hee-led military coup d'état on May 16, 1961, at the Bando Hotel where Chang had set up his office, to the controversial normalization talks between the ROK and Japan that also began in 1960 at the Bando Hotel.[49] And when the temporary Japanese embassy was set up on the fifth-floor of the hotel in December 1965, student demonstrators climbed up the hotel columns to take down the Japanese flag to protest the normalization treaty[50]—a treaty that was heavily pushed by American Cold War aims of Free Asia integration (Lie 1998, 59). All this turmoil that took place at the hotel signified the continued identification of the Bando as a locus of political power, even after Rhee's demise. Nevertheless, the early 1960s marked the decline of the Bando due to the growing diffusion of the spatial function and the emblematic significance of the hotel as an exclusive *ibang jidae* of Americanism and capitalist cosmopolitanism interpenetrating with Cold War internationalism and integration.

Diffused Landscape of Power, post-1960

Unlike Rhee, who sought to ensconce this space of power among his allies and foreign elites, the succeeding Park Chung-hee government rendered Bando's function and purpose insignificant through promoting tourism

49. "ROK Military Coup: Magruder Backs Ousted Premier," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, May 16, 1961; "Japan, ROK Schedule 'Normalization' Talks," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, September 8, 1960.

50. "Bando hotel 5cheung sayong juhan ildaesagwan-euro" (Fifth Floor of the Bando Hotel to be Used as the Japanese Embassy in Korea), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, December 1, 1965; "Gyeokbyeon sok-e eolkhin aehwan 38-nyeon, bando hotel-i heollinda" (Entangled in Bittersweet 38 Years of Turbulence, Bando Hotel to Be Torn Down), *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 4, 1974.

throughout the peninsula as a means to earn foreign currency. In 1960, the ROK's Transportation Ministry and the United States Forces in Korea (USFK) authorities agreed to allow American military personnel to stay in Korea for their R&R (rest and recuperation) leaves as a way for Korea to earn foreign currency. In announcing this agreement, General Carter Magruder, the Commander of the USFK, stated that "Many American soldiers spend as much as $300 each on R&R in Japan or Hong Kong. I would like to see a considerable part of this money spent in Korea. I believe it will be if tourist facilities, services and prices here in Korea are made attractive."[51] And to make Korea a more attractive place for American military personnel to spend their R&R dollars, the Park regime, soon after it took control in 1961, proclaimed the Tourism Promotion Law and established the Korean International Tourism Corporation. The Tourism Promotion Law allowed for tax-free alcohol to clubs and bars in military camptowns that surrounded American military camps throughout the peninsula as special tourism facilities (Hwang 2013, 93–94). The Park junta heavily promoted military camptowns as tourist destinations with establishments that catered to American military clientele of all ranks, and camptowns proved indispensable conduits of foreign currency earnings for the developing nation in the 1960s (Hwang 2013, 97). Concurrently, the Tourism Corporation took over the management of state-run hotels throughout the peninsula and built in 1963 the Walkerhill Hotel and Resort as the official tourist hotel for Americans and other foreigners (Gelézeau 2007, 86–87).[52] From its design modeled after American resort hotels popular at that time, replete with live theater shows and casinos like those found in Las Vegas, to even naming the hotel in appreciation after Lieutenant Walter Walker, an American military officer who died during the Korean War, the hotel catered mostly to American clientele (Gelézeau 2007, 87–89). Although built on the outskirts of Seoul, rather than in the city centrum, the Walkerhill had clearly replaced the function of the Bando Hotel as the elite locus of social practices for Americans and of Cold War integration—the space of

51. "Magruder Prepared to OK Korea R&R," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, March 4, 1960.
52. "Amid Evergreen Trees Hotel Lies Near Shrines," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, June 30, 1961.

luring American dollars and culture as its greatest soft power. The once Americanized landscape of power that had been concentrated in the heart of the capital had diffused by the 1960s.

Along with the economic development take-off from the mid-1960s, the urban center also expanded vertically and exponentially. Within five years of the general public gaining access to the Bando Hotel, the hotel had lost its draw as having the highest sky lounge in the city; when the New Korea Hotel opened in 1965 with a sky lounge on the fifteenth floor, people moved on to a higher place and quickly forgot about the Bando (Yi 2018b). *The Pacific Stars and Stripes* also captured this change in 1971; in praising Seoul as "A City on the Way Up," the paper described how it was "hard to find the Bando," which had once been "a landmark and easily recognized as it stood out above surrounding buildings," and was now "nestled among the multi-storied giants which have sprung up around it."[53] The Bando Hotel, which had not only withstood and witnessed Seoul from colonial to liberated, and from wartime to postwar transformations, but had also been a politically instrumental and representational space, came to its end in 1974. In reporting how the Bando was to be torn down, and in its place a 45-story, thousand-room Lotte Hotel to be built with capital investment from the Korean-Japanese conglomerate group Lotte Corporation, a *Dong-A Ilbo* article commented that "Perhaps it is an irony in history that the hotel, built by a Japanese, fell into the hands of a Korean-Japanese conglomerate in Japan to be torn down."[54] Although transformed from its colonial foundation into a space of Americanism, once it had outlived its representational purpose as a postwar space of Cold War internationalism and integration, it had to be destructed altogether to make room for the construction of the new urban center that encapsulated Korea's rapid rise as a capitalist, modern nation-state fully integrated into liberal Asia.

53. "Seoul: A City on the Way Up," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, July 9, 1971.

54. "Gyeokbyeon sok-e eolkhin aehwan 38-nyeon, bando hotel-i heollinda" (Entangled in Bittersweet 38 Years of Turbulence, Bando Hotel to Be Torn Down), *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 4, 1974.

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