



Achievements and Challenges in the Centennial Anniversary Studies of the March First Independence Movement

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Abstract

This paper examines the achievements and limitations of studies conducted in commemoration of the 2019 centennial anniversary of the March First Independence Movement and presents prospects for the direction of future research. On the occasion of the centennial, there was the establishment of data, including the March First Movement Database, and the excavation of new materials. The view that the Movement created crucial momentum for the transition from monarchy to republic was strengthened, a momentum that ultimately lead to the diffusion of the orientation toward democracy. Additionally, the argument to designate the Movement the March First Revolution was raised in several strands. Local uprisings were scrutinized; new actors in the Movement were attended to, such as the March First generation, women, and individual participants; and activities which took place at the sites associated with the Movement were examined more closely. However, the Movement has yet to be studied from a transnational perspective, and the complex web of contemporaneous conditions must be looked at from the new angle of the multitude. Further, instead of politicizing history, it is necessary to undertake studies examining the actual lives of the people.

Keywords: March First Independence Movement, March First Revolution, commemoration, democracy, republic, diversity, multitude, politicization of history

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Introduction

The year 2019 is memorable in many regards, but especially so as it marks the centennial of the March First Independence Movement (hereafter, sometimes just the Movement). On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Movement and the establishment of the Provisional Government of Korea, the central and local governments in Korea launched several campaigns under the banner of “The People Have Preserved History and Guided the Nation.” In response, civil groups, religious organizations, and the media held various programs and events. Befitting the symbolic meaning of the centennial, 2019 was filled with more discussions commemorating the Movement than ever before.

Nonetheless, the South Korean government’s plans to further honor the glorious centennial anniversary through a South-North joint event did not materialize. As tension between the two Koreas continued to build and the controversy over former Justice Minister Cho Guk emerged, by the end of 2019 this objective of national integration around the Movement had gradually lost its momentum. Although events relating to the commemoration of the Movement were held and reported in the news media nearly every day, and some raised voices to upgrade the name of the Movement to that of a *revolution*, public attention began to wane.

Further, with regard to historical consciousness, the South Korean government’s pursuit of an exchange with the North while emphasizing the Provisional Government—to which North Korean historiography does not impart much value—seemed to have a built-in failure factor. The issue of connecting the March First Movement and the establishment of the Provisional Government with the foundation of the Republic of Korea (i.e., South Korea) certainly calls for in-depth study. However, attempting inter-Korean exchange, the South’s move to stress the significance of the March First Movement and the Provisional Government and to laud the creation of the Republic of Korea could be interpreted as an act that did not recognize the existence of North Korea. Thus, promoting the legitimacy of the South Korean state based on the March First Movement would naturally be disavowed by the North.

It is a long-standing practice for political forces to politicize history. Any attempt by the government to spin off grandiose commemorative events under hastily coined new titles is likely to hamper efforts to reflect, with composure, on the contemporary meaning of this movement of a century ago. This paper, prepared in early 2020, comes at a time when the heat of the centennial has somewhat subsided, and it endeavors to look back on the outcomes of the hundredth-anniversary studies of the Movement in Korean academia and grope for direction to future research. Before I move on, let me clarify some limitations of this paper. With more than 200 articles on the March First Movement produced in 2019 alone, many have escaped my careful attention. Also, as the focus of this study is the field of history, research outcomes in literature, philosophy, and the social sciences may be lacking in coverage here.

What Caught Researchers' Attention?: Trends of Academic Seminars

What did Korean academic circles commemorate on the centennial anniversary of the March First Movement? To answer this question, let me first go over in temporal order academic meetings organized in the domain of history around the topic of the March First Movement. While the commemoration centered on the centennial anniversary, the list in Table 1 is not limited to conferences organized in 2019; it also includes those which occurred in preparation for the centennial.

Table 1. List of Academic Meetings Held in Commemoration of the Centennial Anniversary of the March First Movement

| No. | Date | Organizer | Theme | Category | Remarks |
|-----|---------------|---|------------------------------|-----------|--|
| 1 | Feb. 26, 2014 | Center for Historical Truth and Justice | From an Empire to a Republic | Character | Held as a launching ceremony for the Centennial Anniversary Preparatory Committee of the March First Revolution. |

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| 2 | Feb. 23, 2017 | Society for the History of Christianity in Korea | The March First Manse (Hurrah) Movement and Religious Communities | Actors | |
| 3 | Feb. 28, 2017 | Seoul National University Hospital's Medicine History Cultural Center | The Independence Movement and Medical Students | Actors | Seminar held in commemoration of the 98th anniversary of the March First Movement. |
| 4 | June 1, 2017 | Center for Historical Truth and Justice | The March First Revolution in the Records | Awareness and materials | Co-organized with Duksung Women's University Research Institute of Humanities. |
| 5 | Aug. 10, 2017 | Institute of Korean Independence Movement Studies at the Independence Hall of Korea | Changes in International Conditions before and after the March First Movement and the Korean Independence Movement | International context and background | International conference held on the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of liberation and the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Independence Hall of Korea. |
| 6 | Nov. 17-18, 2017 | Korean Social History Association | Uprisings and Social History of the Subsequent Periods: Actors, Counter-protests, and Institutional Change | Outcomes | Co-organized with Chung Ang University Institute of Sociology and the Sociology Department's BK21 Plus Project Team and Graduate Program. |
| 7 | Nov. 18, 2017 | Korean History Society | Review of the History of the March First Movement as Meta History and Reconsideration of the History of Its Awareness | Remembrances | Co-organized with the Seoul Historiography Institute. |
| 8 | Feb. 26, 2018 | Seoul National University Hospital's Medicine History Cultural Center | The Alumni's Roars on D-Day | Actors | Seminar held on the occasion of the 99th anniversary of the March First Movement. |
| 9 | Mar. 17, 2018 | Korean History Society | Meta-History of the March First Movement and Reconsideration of the History of Studies on the Movement | Remembrances | |
| 10 | May 31, 2018 | Center for Historical Truth and Justice | Revolutionary Character of the 'March First Independence Movement' | Character | |

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| 11 | Aug. 9, 2018 | Institute of Korean Independence Movement Studies at the Independence Hall of Korea | Overseas Korean Communities and the March First Movement | Facets (abroad) | International conference commemorating the 73rd year of liberation and the 31st anniversary of the opening of the Independence Hall of Korea. |
| 12 | Aug. 10, 2018 | Association for Historical Studies on Korean National Movements | Bringing New Light to the Independence Movement and Fighters of Gyeonggi Province | Facets (local) | Co-organized with the Pyeongtaek Cultural Center. |
| 13 | Aug. 29, 2018 | Jeonbuk National University, Institute of Jeolla Culture | Exploring a New Direction for the Study on the Righteous Armies and the March First Movement in North Jeolla | Facets (local) | Co-organized with Heritage of Korean Independence's North Jeolla Chapter and the Institute of Korean Classical Culture. |
| 14 | Sep. 15, 2018 | Korean Society for the History of Historiography | Review of the March First Movement and the May Fourth Movement from the Perspective of History of Historiography | Background and outcomes | |
| 15 | Oct. 30, 2018 | Busan Metropolitan City | Revisiting the March First Movement and Anti-Japanese Struggle for Independence in Busan | Facets (local) | |
| 16 | Nov. 2-3, 2018 | Korean Social History Association | A Century after the March First Movement and the Temporal and Spatial Horizon of Social Transformation in Korea | Comprehensive | Co-organized with the Presidential Commission on the Centennial Anniversary of the March First Independence Movement and Korean Provisional Government. |
| 17 | Oct. 3, 2018 | Society for the History of Christianity in Korea | Developments of the March First Independence Movement in Localities and Christianity | Actors | |

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| 18 | Nov. 21, 2018 | Northeast Asia History Foundation | Background and Significance of the March First Movement and the Founding of the Provisional Government: Criticism of Social Evolutionism and Formation of Republicanism | Background | Academic conference held for the centennial commemoration of the March First Movement and the establishment of the Korean Provisional Government. |
| 19 | Nov. 29, 2018 | Suwon Science Research Center affiliated with the Suwon Research Institute | Records of the March First Independence Movement in Suwon | Facets (local) | |
| 20 | Dec. 7, 2018 | Association for Korean Historical Studies | How Did the March First Movement Spread Nationwide? | Facets | Co-organized with the Presidential Commission on the Centennial Anniversary of the March First Independence Movement and Korean Provisional Government. |
| 21 | Dec. 10, 2018 | Hwaseong City | Reillumination of the March First Movement in Hwaseong | Facets (local) | Symposium held for the 99th anniversary of the March First Movement in Hwaseong, co-organized with the Kookmin University Museum. |
| 22 | Feb. 21, 2019 | College of Medicine, Yonsei University | The March First Movement and Severance Hospital and Union Medical College | Actors | Academic symposium held in commemoration of the 134th anniversary of the establishment of Jejungwon (Korea's first Western hospital) and the 100th anniversary of the March First Movement. |
| 23 | Feb. 25, 2019 | Seoul National University Hospital's Medicine History Cultural Center | Medical Students' Anti-Japanese Struggle in the Forced Occupation Period | Actors | Seminar for the centennial commemoration of the March First Movement. |
| 24 | Feb 25-26, 2019 | Yonsei University Kim Dae Jung Library | 100 Years of the Democratic Republic, 100 Years of World Citizenship: Towards Universal Peace | World | Co-organized with Yonsei University Institute of Convergence Science. |

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|----|------------------|--|--|----------------------------|---|
| 25 | Feb 27, 2019 | Association for Historical Studies on Korean National Movements | The March First Movement and Women | Actors | Organized by the Suwon Museum. |
| 26 | Feb. 27, 2019 | National Institute of Korean History | Coming Home after a Hundred Years: Records of Protests in the March First Movement | Materials and facets | Co-organized with the Donga ilbo. |
| 27 | Feb 28, 2019 | Korean History Society | 100 Years after the March First Movement: Past, Present and Future | Comprehensive | Co-organized with the Academy of Korean Studies and the <i>Hankyoreh</i> . |
| 28 | Mar. 8, 2019 | Association for Korean Modern and Contemporary History | International Symposium on World War I and Korea's Independence Movement | World and background | |
| 29 | Mar. 28-29, 2019 | Presidential Commission on the Centennial Anniversary of the March First Independence Movement and the Korean Provisional Government | From the March First Independence Movement to the Candlelight Revolution, from the Provisional Government to a Unified Korean Peninsula | Comprehensive | International symposium held for the centennial commemoration of the March First Movement and the establishment of the Korean Provisional Government. |
| 30 | Apr. 1-2, 2019 | Baekseok University, Yoo Gwan-Sun Institute | A Hundred Years after the March First Movement and World Peace | Facets and awareness | |
| 31 | Apr. 5, 2019 | Northeast Asia History Foundation | The March First Great Revolution and the Constitution of the Korean Provisional Government: Assessment of the Hundred Years of the Democratic Republic and Its Agendas | World, facets and outcomes | International symposium held in commemoration of the centennials of the March First Independence Movement and the establishment of the Korean Provisional Government. |
| 32 | Apr. 10, 2019 | College of Humanities, Mokpo National University | Developments and Significance of the March First Movement in the Southwestern Region of South Jeolla Province | Facets (local) | Conference held for the centennial anniversary of the March First Movement. |

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| 33 | Apr. 14, 2019 | Hwaseong City | A Discourse on Peace in Hwaseong | Facets (local) and awareness | International symposium held in commemoration of the centennials of the March First Movement and the April 15 Massacre in Hwaseong. |
| 34 | Apr. 20, 2019 | Sooseon Historical Association and Sungkyunkwan University Center for East Asian History | The 1919 Versailles Regime and East Asia | World and background | |
| 35 | Apr. 23, 2019 | Incheon City History Museum's Municipal History Compilation Committee | The March First Movement and the Heritage of the Provisional Government in Incheon | Facets (local) | |
| 36 | Apr. 27, 2019 | Korean History Society | The March First Movement in Gyeonggi and Incheon | Facets (local) | Co-organized with the Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation and the Incheon Cultural Foundation. |
| 37 | May 4, 2019 | Seoul National University, Institute for Japanese Studies | Japan, the Japanese, and Korea's March First Movement | Facets and awareness | |
| 38 | May 25, 2019 | Korean History Education Society | A Global Perspective on the March First Movement and Its Education | Remembrances | |
| 39 | June 21, 2019 | Pusan and Kyungnam Historical Association | Developments of the March First Movement and the Social Structure of Pusan-South Gyeongsang Region | Facets (local) | |
| 40 | Aug. 7, 2019 | Center for Korean History and Culture | Young Leaders of the March First Movement | Actors | |
| 41 | Aug. 13, 2019 | Institute of Korean Independence Movement Studies at the Independence Hall of Korea | International Society's View of the March First Movement | World (awareness) | International symposium held on the occasions of the 74th anniversary of the liberation and the 32nd anniversary of the opening of the Independence Hall of Korea. |

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|----|---------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 42 | Aug. 23, 2019 | Korean Historical Association | Refractions of World History in the Early 20th Century and the March First Movement | World and background | Co-organized with the National Research Foundation of Korea. |
| 43 | Aug. 28, 2019 | Association for Korean Historical Studies | Japanese Colonial Domination Policy in the 1910s and the March First Independence Movement | Background | Co-organized with the National Museum of Korean Contemporary History. |
| 44 | Sep. 20, 2019 | Daegu Historical Association | Assessment of the March First Movement from a Glocal Perspective | World, awareness and facets (local) | Co-organized with Kyungpook National University History Department's BK21 Plus Project Team. |
| 45 | Sep. 25, 2019 | Donghak Peasant Revolution Foundation | The Donghak Peasant Revolution and the March First Movement | Background and facets | Conference organized for the centennial anniversary of the March First Movement. |
| 46 | Sep. 27, 2019 | Korean Association of Women's History | Review of the March First Movement from the Perspective of "Gender" | Actors | Co-organized with the Korean Women's Studies Research Council. |
| 47 | Oct. 4, 2019 | Center for Historical Truth and Justice | From Tokyo to Hamheung: The February 8 Proclamation of Independence and the March First Movement Depicted in Documents of Imperial Japan | Materials | |
| 48 | Oct. 11, 2019 | Jeonbuk Historical Association | The Historical Role of the "March First Movement Generation" and Its Significance: Focus on the People of North Jeolla Province | Actors | International meeting for the centennial commemoration of the March First Movement. |
| 49 | Oct. 24, 2019 | Chungnam National University Institute of Chungcheong Culture | Symposium for the Centennial Anniversary of the March First Movement: Salient Characteristics of the South and North Regions | Facets (local) | Co-organized with the CNCITY Maum Energy Foundation. |

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| 50 | Nov. 1, 2019 | Hwaseong City | Reestablishing the Status of the March First Movement in Hwaseong | Facets (local) | Organized by Wonkwang University Korean-Chinese Relations Institute. |
| 51 | Nov. 2, 2019 | Society of the History of Christianity in Korea | The Korean Provisional Government and Christianity | Actors | |
| 52 | Nov. 15, 2019 | Historical Society of Korea | Change in the Representation and Historicizing of the March First Movement in South and North Korea during the Post-Liberation Period | Remembrances | |
| 53 | Nov. 16, 2019 | Institute for Korean Historical Studies | The Era after the Manse (Hurrah) Movement: "Harmony" and "Discord" after the March First Movement | Outcomes | |
| 54 | Dec. 17, 2019 | Chungnam National University Research Institute for Chungcheong Culture | The Independence Movement and Independence Fighters of Sejong | Facets (local) | |

Regarding the major themes of the meetings, five reviewed the overall aspects of the Movement, including its character (nos. 1, 10, 16, 27, and 29 in Table 1); eight addressed its background (5, 14, 18, 28, 34, 42, 43, and 45); and another eight examined the Movement in the context of international and East Asian conditions during the 1910s or post-World War I period (5, 24, 28, 31, 34, 41, 42, and 44). Of 21 dealing with the developments of the Movement, 14 focused on specific provinces, counties, and villages. Meanwhile, 11 drew attention to the activities of religious communities and new actors, such as youth and women (2, 3, 8, 17, 22, 23, 25, 40, 46, 48, and 51). Six examined the awareness of people at the time and their responses to the Movement (4, 30, 33, 37, 41, and 44), four examined the consequences and/or aftermath of the Movement (6, 14, 31, and 53), and three presented newly collated or unearthed materials concerning the Movement (4, 26,

and 47). Finally, four visited the research history of the Movement and the problem of remembrances following liberation (7, 9, 38, and 52).

To summarize, most of the meetings were held to address various facets of the Movement per se, which was partly due to the interests of local governments, while several reviewed the Movement from a global or East Asian perspective. As the sheer number of meetings organized for the occasion illustrate (54 in total), a wide range of aspects relating to the Movement were examined, including the background, facets, actors, remembrances and awareness, influences, and outcomes.

At this point, let us examine the main features of the centennial commemorations of academic circles by closer analysis of several selected meetings. First, propositions were made to rename the Movement the March First Revolution. In 2014, the Center for Historical Truth and Justice played a leading role in launching the Centennial Anniversary Preparatory Committee of the March First Revolution (3·1 hyeogmyeong 100 junyeon ginyeom saeop junbi wiwonhoe; hereafter the Committee), and the Committee asserted its intention to adopt the new appellation (nos. 1, 4, and 10).

The Committee's attempt to adopt the new name was buttressed by the introduction of a name rectification campaign by the government, the ruling party, and several civic groups starting in 2018. Government agencies convened conferences to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the March First Movement and the Provisional Government of Korea (18, 29, and 31). Despite the government's intent, however, many participants did not consent to the name change, implying that the issue of whether to call it a movement or a revolution required further debate in the academic community.

Meanwhile, several symposiums examined views and research trends on the March First Movement over the past hundred years. In 2016, the Korean History Society (Hanguk yeoksa yeonguhoe; KHS) formed the Centennial Anniversary Committee of the March First Movement (3·1 undong 100 junyeon ginyeom wiwonhoe) to draw up a centennial commemoration program, and in 2017 and 2018 convened meetings to examine the historiography on the Movement. The KHS also held symposia

in cooperation with the Academy of Korean Studies and the *Hankyoreh* in February of 2019 (7, 9, and 27), and published the monograph *3·1-undong baengnyeon* (A Hundred Years of the March First Independence Movement) in five volumes. The publication was produced through extensive collaborative work, culling together 49 papers authored by 39 researchers (KHS Centennial Anniversary Preparatory Committee of the March First Movement 2019).

In addition, a number of meetings discussed the Movement in global and East Asian contexts and made comparative reviews in conjunction with World War I, the Versailles regime, and the May Fourth Movement of China, among others (5, 14, 24, 28, 34, 37, 38, 42, and 44). Those meetings had significance with regard to reviews of the Movement in the context of universal history without confining it to the Korean Peninsula. However, they tended to reveal the same limitations as previous efforts, namely, simply introducing foreign views on the Movement, or comparing it in parallel with China's May Fourth Movement—for the purpose of stressing the value of the Korean event—without taking the analysis further.

Other research efforts paid attention to actors who had not previously been brought to light, e.g., youth, women, and the March First Movement generation (25, 40, 46, and 48). In some conferences, attempts were made to examine the Movement in connection with the colonial domination policy and social circumstances of the 1910s and 1920s (43 and 53).

Moreover, with support from local governments, major universities and academic associations held symposia reviewing the developments and characteristics of the Movement in specific localities. Many of these focused on regional or local independence fighters and progress, utilizing funds made available by local authorities for the centennial anniversary. That did not seem to differ particularly from previous commemoration projects, for instance, on the Movement's ninetieth anniversary.

I have thus far reviewed the trends of the centennial anniversary of the March First Movement with a focus on academic meetings. I will now proceed to a discussion of the achievements and limitations of these research efforts in more concrete terms.

Achievements and Limitations

Database Construction and Discovery of New Materials

Meaningful outcomes in materials relating to the March First Movement were achieved on the occasion of the centennial anniversary. Beginning in 2016, the National Institute of Korean History compiled basic materials and information on the Movement and constructed a GIS (geographic information system)-based database. The March First Movement Database (hereafter the DB), which launched in February 2019, contains reports from the Japanese side (e.g., the Imperial Japanese Army in Korea, the colonial police, local administrative offices, and the Japanese Foreign Ministry) and materials available from trials, missionaries, and newspapers (*Maeil sinbo*, *Dongnip sinmun*, and *Sinhan minbo*). Covering the time period January to December of 1919, the DB has several distinct features. Firstly, regarding incidents related to the Movement, it provides the date and time, behavior, suppression, type of media, and Movement subjects. Secondly, information on protests elaborates on the form demonstrations took and their locations, provides estimates of the number of participants and deaths, and details related incidents, persons involved, and repression apparatuses. Thirdly, additional information covers administrative areas, means of repression, independence resistance and moves, and manifestos and declarations. Fourthly, information on demonstration locations is integrated with GIS, allowing for comparisons between maps of the 1910s and contemporary maps.¹

Also, a rare publication appeared that pulled together documents by Hamheung District Court Prosecutor Ishikawa Nobushige, written in the course of his investigations into participants in the Movement and the preparation of indictments. The Center for Historical Truth and Justice gathered these documents in Tokyo in 2010, and they were published in

1. This information is available in the overview of the March First Independence Movement Database compiled by the National Institute of Korean History, accessed January 22, 2020, http://db.history.go.kr/samil/home/introduce/introduce_content.do.

Korean jointly with the Independence Hall of Korea. Approximately 950 activists involved in the Movement appear in the documents, including 181 unknown participants (Institute of Korean Independence Movement Studies 2019). Given that we are currently unable to access court judgments of northern Korea during the colonial period, this publication will aid in the study of developments of the Movement in areas under the jurisdiction of the Hamheung District Court and of the Japanese colonial authority's repressive measures.

The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea (Hanguk gidokgyo yeoksa yeonguso) collated materials concerning Christian circles during the period of the Movement and published a three-volume publication. Volume 1 assembles newspaper reports on the Movement carried by the *Gidok sinmun*, *Dongnip sinmun*, *Maeil sinbo*, *Sinhan minbo*, *Donga ilbo*, and *Joseon ilbo*. Volume 2 and 4 contains court decisions on cases involving Christian participants, while Volume 3 and 5 contains translations of letters, reports, and booklets of missionaries in Korea (S. Kim et al. 2019–2020). The publication should prove a good reference to those who wish to examine developments related to Christians during the March First Movement from the perspective of the Christian community.

Moreover, a collection of photographs was also released, which offers another prism through which to gaze into the era. In *Sajin-euro boneun 3-1: hyeonjang-gwa hyeongmyeong-ui gieok-gwa gonggan* (Sites of the March First Movement in Photographs, and Memories and Sphere of the Revolution), Park Hwan has assembled rare materials, such as the Japanese and Russian versions of the March First Declaration of Independence and photos of the Movement as they appeared in the magazine *Sinhan cheongnyeon* 新韓青年 (New Korean Youth). Park also rectified previously incorrectly referenced photos and provided correct original sources. This publication comes with a supplementary DVD that contains photos left out of the main part of the publication and moving images of the ceremony held in commemoration of the Movement immediately following liberation (H. Park 2019). Despite a few drawbacks, e.g., the republication of some photos already appearing in earlier publications, it is a commendable piece of work, especially considering the dearth of decent photography books dedicated to the Movement.

The March First Movement from the Perspective of Democracy and the Democratic Republic

The year 2019 saw studies arguing that the March First Movement created the crucial momentum in Korea for the transition from monarchy to republic, and in expanding social orientation towards democracy. These studies may have been influenced by the experience of democratization and the growth of civil consciousness since 1987 (Y. Chung 2018, 296). More directly, the situation that occurred on the hundredth anniversary of the March First Movement with the collapse of the Park Geun-hye administration and the inauguration of a new government through the Candlelight Demonstrations may have stimulated studies. One can posit that the practical experience of fighting for democracy and a democratic republic through the process of the Candlelight Revolution was reflected in researchers' conceptions of the March First Movement.

Kim Jeong-in, whose research has reinterpreted Korea's modern and contemporary history through the perspective of democracy, argued in her *Oneul-gwa majuhan 3-1 undong* (Confronting the March First Movement Today) that the Movement was an epoch-making event that separated the modern from the contemporary in terms of democracy. In the preface that work, Kim remarks that she wanted to "depart from the century-old approach of interpreting the Movement with the yardstick of the nation and to take a different look at it from the viewpoint of 'myself' living today and through the values of democracy," and felt "in the sites of the 1919 *manse* (hurrah) protests lies the power that compelled 17 million people to partake in nonviolent peaceful rallies in 2017" (Jeong-in Kim 2019a, 9).

While Kim Jeong-in focused on *democracy*, Park Chan-seung (2019) examined the *democratic republic* in 1919. Viewing 1919 as the starting point of the Republic of Korea, Park believes the March First Movement's greatest accomplishment to be the establishment of the Provisional Government of Korea, which signified the birth of a democratic republic. Apparently, while to the public, *nation* remains the key symbolic word of the Movement, the significance of the diffusion of *democracy* and *republicanism* is being given serious attention, at least in Korean academia.

The impetus created by the Candlelight Protests led researchers to a generation of studies linking the Candlelight Revolution to the March First Movement. *Changjak-gwa bipyeong* (Creation and Criticism) dedicated their March 2019 issue to the topic, “Making the March First Movement Current: To Its Centennial Anniversary,” re-illuminating the meaning of the Movement in connection with the Candlelight Revolution. Im Hyung-taek (2019), calling the Movement an incomplete “revolution” in the transition to a democratic republic, regarded it as the birth of modern Korea. He notes that the left-right confrontation became apparent following the Movement and that the resulting national division remains to be resolved even after the Candlelight Revolution. Meanwhile, Baik Young-seo and Lee Nam-ju attempted to examine the Movement based on the dual-project theory,² which refers to the simultaneous achievement of adaption to and overcoming of modernity. Baik Young-seo (2019a) conceives of the historical transformation from the March First Movement to the Candlelight Protests as a *revolution of continuous learning*. Lee Nam-ju (2019) looks for a connection between the two in the sense that the banner of a democratic republic opened up political possibilities. He considers the Candlelight Revolution as a driving force behind the building of a South-North federation on the Korean Peninsula.

Chotbul-ui nun-euro 3.1 undong-eul boda (Revisiting the March First Movement from the Viewpoint of the Candlelight Demonstrations) was compiled with a focus on how the present day might appropriate the legacy of the March First Movement. In this volume, scholars from various fields discuss the actual developments of the Movement and the modes of its remembrance. A salient feature of the work is its inclusion of roundtable discussions during which different views are addressed on issues of various dimensions, such as the relationship between the Movement and the candlelight rallies, assessments of the idea of a March First *Revolution*, politicity surrounding the centennial anniversary of the Provisional

2. The so-called dual-project theory was proposed as a way of moving beyond the modernism-postmodernism dichotomy regarding capitalistic modernity, in which the former conceives it as a positive value system, while the latter posits it as an outdated heritage. See Nam-ju Lee (2009).

Government, and the significance of the Movement in world history (Ki-hoon Lee 2019a).

It is important to note that identifying the origin of or the turning point toward democracy and a democratic republic in the March First Movement is an emerging trend in academia. However, considering that *democracy* continues to be reconstructed in reality, stressing the March First Movement as a step along the path toward democracy may conceal those aspects of it that are ill-fitting or deviant in relation to democracy (Jang 2019, 16–17). For instance, it has been noted in the study of popular history that peasant uprisings during the March First Movement took on the character of peasant rebellions of the preceding Joseon period and were grounded in a Confucian people-oriented thought (民本主義) (K. Cho 2009; Sung-joon Bae 2009). Although the people's participation in the Movement may be seen as possessing the façade of democracy, viewing numerous developments of that period based on the modern concept of democracy might generate too limited an interpretation of reality. Further, tracing the founding of the democratic republic and the Republic of Korea to 1919 is likely to engender the problem of overemphasizing the significance of the establishment of the Provisional Government, thus refocusing on the legitimacy theory of the Provisional Government.

It can be said that even while upholding democracy, we have before us the challenge of continuously reinterpreting the meaning of the notion that *the people are the master*—something individuals and groups of various ideologies and status have aspired to achieve in reality—without single-mindedly stressing the significance of the Provisional Government. For example, which experiences in the March First Movement led to the rise of a large number of mutual aid associations, peasant cooperatives, and labor unions in the 1920s? How did the Movement impact the butchers' struggle for equality in 1923? We have yet to have detailed answers to these questions.

A Movement or a Revolution?

It is notable that various arguments were put forth concerning the character and nomenclature of the March First Movement on the occasion of its hundredth anniversary. While the government and political circles supporting calling it by its *correct name* (正名論), i.e., the March First Revolution, the academic community engaged in more sober discussions of the name change.

As noted above, the specific issue of changing the Movement's appellation to revolution was commenced by the Centennial Anniversary Preparatory Committee of the March First Revolution. To support the argument, the Committee took note of the following facts: i) the March First Movement removed irrevocably the shadow of the monarchial Korean Empire and ushered in the idea of the democratic republic; ii) people of all rungs of society participated in the formation of a community of the nation, unbridled by class or social status; and iii) the protest leaders later grew into actors in their respective fields, signifying the birth of a modern citizenry. This meant a transformation of Korea from empire to republic and of Koreans from subjects to citizens. Moreover, the fact that even during its own time the Movement was at times referred to as a revolution provided further justification to rectify its labeling (Jun-sik Lee 2014; Lim 2014).

After claims in support of a name change was made in 2014, from 2018 the argument to call it by its *correct name* surfaced in the government, the political community, and civil society, and some involved in this campaign even released books emphasizing the *March First Revolution*. Some of them responded more receptively to the government's centennial anniversary project, stressing that the March First Revolution and the Provisional Government laid the foundation for the Republic of Korea (Sam-ung Kim 2019; Han 2019; Jeong 2019). I think this theory of March First as revolution concerns the search for a new brand of *legitimacy* in reaction to the New Right's assertion regarding the National Foundation Day (建國節). While the New Right's push for the National Foundation Day stresses liberal democracy and anticommunism, the revolution theory, which is based on the idea of *correct naming*, highlights the establishment of the Korean

Provisional Government. Regardless of what one calls the events around March 1, 1919, one needs to be cautious of the possibility that emphasizing *national legitimacy* might conceal or exclude the examination of activities that differ from that view of *legitimacy*.

In fact, many researchers have expressed negative views on the name change. For Oh Je-yeon, the 1919 *manse* demonstrations should be called a movement because they did not lead to political independence from Japan. Lee Ki-hoon critiqued the name change position, arguing that merely because the Movement had some revolutionary aspects did not mean it justified being called a revolution. Jang Young-Eun maintained that many participants in the protests did not have in mind a democratic republic or a revolution, making it therefore more of a movement in nature (Ki-hoon Lee 2019a, 21–33).

On the other hand, Baik Young-seo (2019a) considers the Movement as an “ongoing revolution” or a “revolution in the continuous process of learning.” He clarifies that the idea of revolution can be posited for the events of March 1st, as revolutionary situations emerged with the progress of the Movement, through which subjects aspiring for change and a new order emerged. Several reasons were provided for this presumption: first, the nationalist and republican agenda launched by the Movement continue to the present; second, revolutionary reforms followed in the wake of the Movement; and third, steady moves have occurred up to the present to substantiate the goal of radical change (Baik 2019a; Ki-hoon Lee 2019a, 32–33).

Park Chan-seung proposed that the March First Movement together with the establishment of the Provisional Government be called the Gimi hyeongmyeong—the revolution of the *gimi* year (1919) (Hyun-chul Kim 2019, 284). Regarding the century of democratization in Korea from the March First Movement to the 2017 Candlelight Revolution as a “‘long-term revolution’ and ‘ceaseless revolution,’” Lee Na-Mi (2019, 97) believes that the March First Movement should be called a revolution in consideration of the fact that the Republic of Korea, which was born out of the Movement, proclaimed power to lie with the people. Kim Dong-taek describes the Movement as both a national liberation movement rejecting Imperial Japan and a modern revolution advocating the sovereignty of the people,

republicanism, and democracy, and views it as the “historical origin of Korea’s modern democracy” (D. Kim 2019, 173, 176).

With such contentiousness over the issue, it is at this point necessary to regain composure and undertake in-depth discussions about the naming of the events of March 1, 1919. The views of the March First Movement as a “revolution of continuous learning” or an “incomplete revolution” are positive in that they allow us to regard the Movement as the beginning of the pursuit of reform and peace that was taken up by subsequent generations, and to see the Movement from a long-term and future-oriented perspective. Nonetheless, this view has some limitations; revolution is defined too broadly, and the process of trying to connect the many refractions and changes between 1919 and 2019 can be too forced (J. Oh 2020). The work to link the March First Movement and the Candlelight Demonstrations remains in the preliminary stage of raising the issue.

Deepening our Understanding of Local Developments and the Discovery of Diverse Actors

Our understanding of the developments of the March First Movement in local areas has deepened. On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary, a wide range of academic organizations held meetings focusing on the unfolding of the Movement in specific locales. These activities created the momentum for new studies on places which had received less attention and to shed new light on facets of the Movement in places already studied.

Researchers have also examined the overall aspects of the Movement and identified several places where aggressive demonstrations took place in the early phase of the Movement, along with more confrontational activities that occurred later. Recent research has also revealed that the leading agents of the rallies in Seoul changed from secondary school students to collegians and then to workers as the events progressed. It was also reconfirmed that demonstrations in the Jeolla region—which had suffered the largest numbers of casualties in battles between the Righteous Armies (*uibyeong*) during the Japanese invasions of Korea prior to Japan’s forced

occupation in 1910—were rather small in scale and number. Protests in the Chungcheongnam-do region took more the form of torchlight protests than manse rallies (Association for Korean Historical Studies 2019).

Our understanding of the spatial (regional and local) traits of the Movement were improved with the construction of the March First Movement Database by the National Institute of Korean History. Regarding the major groups of participants in urban and rural areas, students constituted the largest group in cities, while Cheondoists and peasants accounted for a greater share in non-urban locales. In terms of the use of mediums, urban places utilized written materials more often, compared to the slogans used in non-urban areas (B. Yum 2019). It was also reconfirmed that 80 to 90 percent of rural counties had protests of some sort. Concerning the actors during rural protests, compared with Christian participants, Cheondoists tended to show a pattern of concentration in particular locations where dioceses had been developed (Song-soon Lee 2019).

A number of studies examining regional protests have recently been published. Two books published on the March First Movement in the Gyeonggi-do and Incheon areas, respectively, reviewed important facets of the Movement in Yongin, Yeosu, Gaeseong, and Incheon in addition to Suwon and Anseong, which had already been widely studied in earlier works, covering such issues as the Movement's background, repression activities by Japanese authorities, and court judgements (Park and Choe 2019; Korean History Society 2019). A book on the Movement in Gyeongsangbuk-do province, with a focus on Daegu and Andong, was also published, confirming the regional trait of the leading role played by local Confucian scholars (Yoon-gap Lee et al. 2019).

With reference to individual papers, there appeared comprehensive studies of the Movement in Busan (Kang 2019; Suk-man Bae 2019; Hong 2019), and several studies on the Movement in the Jeolla provinces, a region given less attention up until this point, were carried out (Sung 2018; S. Yun 2019; Joo-yong Kim 2019; Hahn 2019; G. Lee 2019). Additionally, interest in protests in North Korean localities grew, which worked to relieve to some extent the wide gap in studies between northern and southern areas of peninsula as a result of national division (Choi 2018a; Jin-ho Kim 2018;

Yong-cheol Lee 2018a, 2018b, 2019a; Shin 2018; Jung 2019; Seung-tae Kim 2019; K. Park 2019). Further, several case studies were conducted on the *manse* movement in a range of other areas (Eom 2019; Yong-cheol Lee 2019b; Choe 2019; Jin-ho Kim 2019).

Together with our broadened understanding of the Movement's developments in local areas, our understanding of leading actors and participants has also deepened. Of particular note are studies of the young generation and women. First, studies of the involvement of youth in the March First Movement increased on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary. Examples of academic meetings organized to focus on the experiences of the younger generations include, "Young Leaders of the March First Movement" and "The Historical Role of the 'March First Movement Generation' and Its Significance" (40 and 48 in Table 1). Researchers who pay attention to the shock of the Movement and the experience of waging the *manse* protests used the expression *March First Movement generation*. Attending to the *generation*, they pointed out that those who lived on with the memories of the Movement later became key agents in the national liberation movement and various other social movements (S. Yun 2019; Joo-yong Kim 2019). Comparing the participation of students, Confucian scholars, and powerful figures in the demonstrations held in Seoul, Joo Dong-bin (2018) notes the emergence of the new generation of "youths-students" who made use of such channels as schools, dormitories, boarding houses, and churches.

Nonetheless, studies emphasizing the March First Movement generation remain at an introductory level and require further data collection and probing of the participants' activities and lives after the Movement, as well as further effort at categorization. Even if individual cases are inductively extracted and labeled as part of the March First Generation, this may remain unclear as a term of analysis, as with the April 19 generation or 586 generation. That is, an analysis of the impact of the Movement on Korean society at the time and taking a March First Generation approach may not reveal any differences.

Meanwhile, women's participation in the Movement and its significance has recently drawn more attention than ever before. This appears to be a

result of academic circles moving in line with the current social sentiment of the Me-Too campaign and the gender conflicts that have emerged as contentious issues in Korean society. In the March First Movement, women formed alliances and mounted struggles, mainly through school or church networks. They took to the streets, challenging and rupturing the gender norms that confined them to the institution of family, arising as political actors in society through the Movement (Jeong-in Kim 2019b; Ji-won Lee 2019; Kwon 2019; M. Oh 2019; So 2019). As one scholar noted, “The March First Movement was a turning point in gender history as well as national history” (Ji-won Lee 2019, 64). Recent research has expanded our awareness of women’s participation in the Movement beyond well-known female independence fighters such as Ryu Gwan-Sun, a notable achievement (3-1 Yeoseong dongjihoe 2018; Jeong-in Kim et al. 2019a).

While it is true that recent studies have broadened our understanding of the Movement’s regional aspects and actors, the extent to which these studies identified local characteristics or employed in-depth approaches is open to question. Local case studies increased in quantity quite impressively, but without achieving much analytical depth, akin to previous efforts. Moreover, with regard to the participants, our knowledge of the role of members of the lower classes and minorities is still lacking, despite the advances made regarding the participation of women (Seo 2018, 38).

Approach to the Protest Sites, Aftershocks of Revolution, and Remnants

Studies were also conducted on the mediums and instruments employed during the Movement and of individual participants. About a decade ago, some studies appeared the Movement’s protest culture, the multilayered literacy and the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) of participants in various texts and media (Jeong-in Kim 2009; Cheon 2009). Since then, recently, a wider spectrum of demonstrations and mediums surrounding the Movement have been studied, including the meaning of the revised Declaration of Independence, the period public’s perceptions of the national flag, the

complexity of tradition and modernity harbored in the flag, highland rallies and beacon fires, and mimeograph networks, among other aspects (Kwon 2019; Ki-hoon Lee 2018, 2019b). These studies reflect a growing interest in individuals who had not been absorbed into the categories of *nation* (民族) or *public* (民衆), and succeed in further approaching the reality of the protests.

Detailed studies of the conditions in Korea in the wake of the March First Movement were also conducted. These studies include examinations of the final demonstrations (Choi 2019); new trends that emerged in Korean society in various realms under the rubric of “aftershocks of the March First Revolution” (Ko 2019); the transformation of students during the Movement into the educational agents of the 1920s (Kyung-sook Lee 2019); and the fervor and energy for a revolution after the Movement as sifted from literary and arts texts (Ju-ra Lee 2019). The masses of Korean people who ceased to be docile as a result of the Movement was studied as well (Jung 2018).

The temporal symbolism of the centennial anniversary stimulated research in various disciplines other than history, enriching the significance of the Movement even further. In the area of literature, the manner by which modern Korean poetry emerged in the 1910s was linked to political events in response to the Movement (Seong-hyuk Lee 2019). In legal studies, research revealed how the Japanese penal court employed a double standard in judgments on Movement participants (Song 2019). Also scrutinized by a recent study was the validity of applying the security law to the Movement participants (Tae-soo Kim 2019). The Movement’s significance as a revolution was examined from the historical perspective of the Constitution (K. Kim 2019), while the assertion of independence made during the Movement was examined in the context of international law (S. Oh 2019). In the field of journalism studies, a study shed light on underground newspapers’ criticism of pro-Japanese forces during the Movement (Y. Park 2019). In the field of music studies appeared examining the songs written and sung in commemoration of the Movement, both before and after liberation (Zhang and Shin 2018; 2019).

How to Study and What to Reflect Upon?

I have reviewed thus far the outcomes of centennial anniversary studies of the March First Movement. In this last section, let me discuss their limitations and offer prospective directions and possibilities for future study.

First, many researchers did not go beyond the Korean Peninsula in terms of the geographical range of their focus. Studies dealing with foreign views of the March First Movement and May Fourth Movement increased in number (Seo 2018, 21–23), but they tended to analyze only the viewpoints of foreigners or the external world. It is essential to take a transnational perspective and examine it on the continuum of the Xinhai Revolution, World War I, the Egyptian Revolution, and the May Fourth Movement (H. Yun 2017; Kwon 2019; Baik 2019b; Hak Jae Kim 2019). Instead of simply praising the significance of the March First Movement and the Provisional Government, efforts should be made to place them in a relative context in view of the world wars and post-colonial history. This will pave the way for a universal historical awareness of the March First Movement.

Second, it is called upon to expand the breadth of discourse beyond the multivocality of people and the diversity of subjects. Jang Won-a (2019, 26–27) speculated that the imperative to examine the “diverse actors” who participated in the Movement operated as a normative rule for researchers. Jang points out that to posit “diverse subjects” as new agents, it is necessary to tackle “diversity” per se in the discussion rather than merely mentioning it. The assertion that diversity has become a norm may seem an overstatement, as studies showing the diversity of agents and the multiplicity of voices are still lacking. Yet it is worth noting considering that historical studies have shown a tendency to be mindful of individual stories and suffer fragmentalization with the pretext of *diversity*.

While more concrete discussions are needed with regard to the diversity of subjects, I mention here the possibility of interpreting the Movement and historical developments in the subsequent period from the stance of the *multitude*. While the term *people* is understood as a collectivity, *multitude* means a host of individuals who participate in a movement while

maintaining their own identities.³ The Korean people participated in the protests with all their grievances, discontent, and hopes in the mixture. They formed their own identities in the process of conceiving themselves as subjects through their participation in the Movement and moved on to new arenas of movements, such as local movements, national movements, youth movements, women's movements, and minority movements, among others. It has been observed in the analysis of the March First Movement and the subsequent period that participants had divergent motives for mounting a struggle, forming an *alliance based on differences*, and went through meeting and parting before moving on to lead their own lives and engaging in resistance in a manner that suited themselves, i.e., as a *multitude*.

Third, a thorough reconsideration of the configuration of history before and after the March First Movement is crucial. An in-depth interpretation is needed of how the conditions during and prior to the 1910s primed the events of 1919. In the study of modern Korean history, the 1910s is a period replete with historiographical gaps. Recently, some have claimed 1919 to be the beginning of Korea's modern period, but they should explain how 1919 differed from earlier periods and what led up to 1919. "Between March and April 1919, a myriad temporal moments of people living on the Korean Peninsula were condensed toward one direction and marched along in the same rhythm" (Ki-hoon Lee 2019c, 111). If this is so, an explication is required of how "a myriad temporal moments" engendered the "same rhythm."

Fourth, we should beware that intentions of highlighting the hundred-year history of the March First Movement, the origin of the democratic republic, and the revolution may lead to another contention akin to the dispute over the date of National Foundation Day, and reinforce nationalist overtones. Overemphasis of the century-old history of democracy, from the Movement to the Candlelight Revolution, may serve to stress only the victorious aspects of that historical path to democracy in Korea. This may result in the overlooking of other values that do not come along with democracy or differ from it.

3. On the notion of the "multitude," see Virno (2004) and Hardt and Negri (2004 and 2009).

As seen by *munhwa jeongchi* (cultural colonial rule; *bunka seiji* in Japanese) after the March First Movement and the May 16 coup d'état (1961) after the April 19 Revolution (1960), democratic failures also ensued after the 1987 democratic uprising. There is much to learn, not only from the audacious strides toward democracy, but also from the trajectory of hardships.

Even if the government and the political community call the March First Movement a *revolution*, this will not make a difference in people's lives. What is more important is to ponder what people longed for and strove to achieve by means of the Movement. Aspiring to world peace, equal rights, and prosperity for all, people who shouted manse on that day hoped to represent in the Korean Declaration of Independence and manifestos the values that have yet to be realized even to this day (KHS Centennial Anniversary Preparatory Committee of the March First Movement 2019, 412–413). Some may wonder whether the parade of numerous centennial commemorative activities was more about a search for past glory than a contemplation of the present and future. What needs to be done to accomplish in actuality the ideals of peace and equality?

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