

# The Educational World of Joseon People Living in Manchuria during Japanese Imperialism

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This study examines the educational world of Joseon people living in Manchuria during Japanese imperialism through life history records. It covers educational environment, meanings and value of education, and curriculum and contents of education. The interviewees were immigrants to Manchuria from a colonized nation so they had to suffer from the pains of adapting themselves to a new land, from the economic exploitation of Japanese imperialism, and from national lamentation, and they weren't free from the extant premodern discrimination. This living environment was also their educational environment. They believed education was the key to helping them and their nation escape from poverty and suppression. Therefore, they were unified in the thought that they themselves, their brothers, relatives, and nation should be educated. Finally, in school, they were prevented from using the Joseon language, they were mobilized for labor, and they received a military training education. They respected the Joseon teachers who had national spirit most. Joseon people in Manchuria during Japanese imperialism regarded education as the gateway to a better world from the suppressive and impoverished situation that they and their nation faced. They believed education was the first step to a better future. Therefore, many Joseon people were saddened because they couldn't go to school, and they strived to be educated or to educate by willingly submitting to any economic, national, and physical hardships

Keywords: Japanese imperialism, Joseon people in Manchuria, life history, oral history, educational world, experience, memory, recognition

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## I. Introduction

The minority races in China are mostly natives who have lived there for a long

time; however, the Joseon people were immigrants.<sup>1</sup> They moved to Manchuria from Joseon between the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> In the strange and new environment of Manchuria, they lived together in a village (Choi 1995:381-3) so they could maintain their traditions and have similar emotions,<sup>3</sup> one of which was a passion for education. “As soon as they could make a living in Manchuria by cultivating paddies and dry fields, they put a priority on educating their descendants” (Heo 1995:141).

After building a village, they would then build a village school or a new elementary school. And if they could afford it, they built a middle school. If parents had to skip their meals in order to send their children to school, then that is what they did. When they couldn't afford to send their children to school, they would send them instead to a village school or a night school. Their children's wish was to go to school too. When they couldn't go to school, they helped their younger brothers and sisters or relatives go to school. After the establishment of a new government in China in 1949, the Joseon people were the first to operate a nine-year compulsory education system among the fifty-five minority groups in China, which shows their passion and will for education.<sup>4</sup>

This research will show the educational world of the Joseon people in Manchuria. It will examine the educational environment, values, and curriculum that they experienced and recognized in their daily living. The existing studies on the educational history of Joseon people in Manchuria focus on the educational systems and the movements for national education. However, educational history is the science of studying what people living in a particular time thought

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1. In this paper, the term Joseon people is used differently depending on the time period. Before 1945, it means Joseon people in Manchuria and after 1945, it means Joseon people. The term was created in the process of the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The government stipulated the Joseon people in Manchuria as a minority race at that time.
  2. The number of Joseon people in Manchuria was 77,000 in the 1860s and 200,000 in 1910, but in 1944 right before national independence, it increased to 1,600,000. However, after national independence, many of them returned to Korea so that in 1953, it had gone down to 1,120,000 (Han and Gwon 1994:25-7). As of 2000, 1,920,000 Joseon people lived in China, including the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture ([www.korean.net](http://www.korean.net)).
  3. In fact, over 90% of Joseon immigrants were farmers. Thus they got together to find land and water which was necessary for farming, and this isolated them from the world. Under such conditions they were able to maintain their own culture (Kim 1993:74-5).
  4. Joseon people's desire for education can be seen when comparing the ratio of high school graduates and the illiteracy rate between Chinese and Joseon people in 1987. Chinese had a 7.67% and 26.4% respectively, while Joseon people had a 23.14% and 7.16% (Han and Gwon 1994:74-5). In addition, Joseon people believe that they have a greater desire for education than other nations (Son, Kim, and Yu 1994:30).

about their educational world, i.e., what they expected from their education, and what conflicts and problems they had in relation to education. This paper uses oral history<sup>5</sup> because it is the most suitable and sincere way to learn about the Joseon people's hopes and experiences in relation to education.

This paper will clarify the interview process and specifics about their educational world.<sup>6</sup> The educational world will be divided into educational environment, meanings and value of education, and curriculum. In the conclusion, this paper will summarize the research and make suggestions regarding the study of oral history and educational oral history. This research of educational oral history is based on life history records.<sup>7</sup> By examining personal educational experiences which documentary analysis has overlooked, this study intends to help in the understanding of the intrinsic nature of the educational reality and world at that time. This study focuses on the period from 1920 to 1945, not the entire period of immigration.

## II. Details about Interviews

### 1. Premise of the Research

Human beings live their daily lives in a restricted world. They keep living, while recognizing partially or impressively the world where geological, historical, and cultural conditions exist because they recognize the world and behave based upon their experiences, expectations, and desires (Lee 2005:130). An individual interprets the social reality which he faces in his daily life through his own eyes, and copes with it, through which he maintains his life. Therefore, life history records that contain one's life experiences are personal and subjective. However, life history records are a subjective reflection of objectivity (Yun and Ham, 2006:53).

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5. This researcher interviewed about thirty Joseon people as a member of the "Oral Examination of the Life History of Joseon People in Manchuria" research group, under the financial support of the Korea Research Foundation in 2006~2007.

6. This research doesn't attempt various and detailed interpretations of "Mutual Relation of Realistic Fidelity and Narrative Fidelity" (Kim 2004:50).

7. "Educational oral history can become an important methodological issue in the future" (Jeong 2006:247). Oral history materials are more intrinsic than documentary materials in solving the questions of the appropriateness of macro-history and of historical reality; thus it can expand and deepen the contents and the level of educational history.

One's restricted daily life, or living world, is shared with others living at the same time and in the same space, so one's cognitional structure is reorganized as a social cognitional structure. In other words, an individual shares his daily life with others through social interactions, and a shared daily life is accumulated as his experiences and thoughts. These accumulated experiences and thoughts interpret and reorganize his thoughts and experiences. Human beings are social beings and they see and determine their thoughts and behaviors based on their experiences, knowledge, and behaviors of the society where they live (Shutz 1962).

Based on that premise, this study collected the life history records of those who lived in Manchuria during Japanese imperialism. Through interviews, it intends to understand their educational world. The reason for restricting the time and the place of the research is that the region or the social class that passes through the same period is the basic unit of forming a particular prospect (Blau 1964). In addition, the reason for viewing the educational world through life history records is that the records which contain one's living world are the most suitable historical material. The living world includes the educational world, which contains educational experiences and prospects. A human being forms his experiences, consciousness, and prospects related with learning, education, schools, and studies that are directly related with his future.

## 2. Method of Examination

### 1) Interviewees and Interviewers

A total of thirty-one people were interviewed. They are Joseon people who lived in Manchuria during Japanese imperialism. As of 2009, the interviewees are between 67 and 90 years of age. Diversity in regions, gender, and jobs were considered. Their current job or job experience is varied. Information about each interviewee is contained in Table 1.

Most of the interviewees live in one of three provinces in northeastern China, so the interviews were conducted in China. Because they live in Seoul, Lee Seung-Gyun and his wife, Lee Hyeon-Seung, and Park Gwi-Nyeo were interviewed in Seoul.

Fourteen interviewers participated in the interviews.<sup>8</sup> They are professors,

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8. The reason why this paper clarifies the profiles of the interviewers is that in order to understand and analyze the contents of oral histories, not only the interviewees' conditions, but also the interviewers' conditions should be considered for analysis (Nakaya 1977:15).

**Table 1** Interviewees

No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Date of Birth (Age)	Job (Experience)
1	Kang Gwi-Seok	Male	1930 (79)	Professor
2	Kang Yeong-Ho	Male	1931 (78)	Public peace officer
3	Kim Ryong-Seok Jo Bong-Nyeo	Male	1926 (83)	Doctor
		Female	1931 (78)	Teacher
4	Kim Ryong-Su	Male	1925 (84)	Farmer
5	Kim Seong-Wu	Male	1938 (71)	Researcher
6	Kim In-Seok Ju Gi-Don	Male	1931 (78)	Principal
		Male		
7	Kim Jae-Ho	Male	1928 (81)	Newspaper reporter
8	Lee Gyeong-Hui	Female	1936 (73)	Restaurant owner
9	Lee Myeong-Suk	Female	1924 (85)	Famer
10	Lee Myeong-Jun	Male	1939 (70)	Teacher, public official
11	Lee Bok-Sun	Female	1923 (86)	Government corpora- tion worker
12	Lee Seung-Ha	Male	1930 (79)	Teacher
13	Lee Seung-Gyun	Male	1919 (90)	Farmer
14	Lee Hyeon-Seung	Male	1939 (70)	Farmer
15	Park Gyeong-Chan	Male	1926 (83)	Teacher
16	Park Gwi-Nyeo	Female	1927 (82)	Farmer
17	Park Mun-Sik	Male	1932 (77)	Principal
18	Park Sun-Hui	Female	1922 (87)	Farmer
19	Park Jin-Ha	Male	-	Professor
20	Park Chang-Su	Male	1928 (81)	Professor
21	Byeon Cheol-Hui	Male	1928 (81)	Teacher
22	Bang Hyeon-Ok	Female	1925 (84)	Farmer
23	Song Seong-Gil	Female	1942 (67)	-
24	Jeong Bong-Dae	Male	1928 (81)	Political party member
25	Ju Ok-Sun	Female	1922 (87)	Farmer
26	Chae Gyu-Cheol	Male	1927 (82)	Teacher
27	Cheon Sun-Ja	Female	-	Farmer
28	Han Su-Nam	Male	1923 (86)	Principal
29	Hyeon Song-Nam	Male	1929 (80)	Farmer
30	Hong Byeong-Ju	Male	1930 (79)	Farmer

\* Age is as of 2009

researchers, and graduate school students. Twelve of them are Korean and two are Chinese (Joseon people). Their backgrounds are in history, social studies, or education. Six of them focused their research on the period of forced occupation by Japan and two focused on Manchuria. Since all interviewers lacked an in-depth historical knowledge of Joseon people living in Manchuria during Japanese imperialism, they had seminars about the topic. In addition, they consulted an oral historian about how to conduct the interviews.

## 2) Interview

After a preliminary list of interviewees and a preliminary questionnaire were made, the interviewees had to give consent to participating in the interview. In the process of getting interviewees' consent, the following items should be considered:

First, an interviewer should explain who s/he is and provide information about the research organization. In addition, the reason for the interview should be explained because it can help the interviewee participate in the interview positively and actively. The biggest reason why someone refuses an interview is he has doubts about who will carry out the interview and why. In the case of this research, the interviewees avoided talking about their lives in detail because China considers it taboo to talk about politics, religion, and national relationships. Therefore, the researchers had to emphasize that the research organization is an academic organization and the research would be used for academic purposes only. It also added that it intended to hand down the history of Joseon people, which is being lost, to their descendants. Finally, the interviewees willingly agreed to participate.

Second, an interviewer should explain the process of the interview. Who and how many will visit, how long will it last, if they agree to audio or visual recording, and if they agree to show the interviewer relevant materials. This research experienced cases where the interview atmosphere became bad because the interviewer was embarrassed about some unexpected situation. In one case an interviewee refused to be recorded. However, after an explanation of the interview process, the interview went smoothly. The interviewee introduced another interviewee who had sufficient experience to this research and even prepared documents, photos, letters, and diaries.

Third, the date and the place for an interview should take into consideration the interviewee's circumstances. Most of the interviewees for this research are over 70

years old, so for many it was too difficult to travel long distances. If possible, the interviewers tried to visit the interviewees' home, since this visit was helpful for examining their life history. It was also possible to film places that the interviewees had lived and to touch living materials and hear an explanation of them. In consideration of the age of the interviewees, the interview lasted for about an hour at a time. If they were not tired, the interview took a break and the interview lasted for over two hours.

### III. Components of an Educational World

#### 1. Educational Environment

This section covers the interviewees' overall experience and recognition of the social, national, and personal environment related with education. It examines their educational experiences as well as their social consciousness and practice.

##### 1) School and a Bitter Life

Manchurian winters are fiercely cold, with the average temperature being  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Their memories about school remind them of winter's severe cold and of their poverty. Kim Ryong-Seok, an internal medicine doctor at Yanbian University Hospital, moved to Yeongil from Gyeongseong, Hahmbuk Province when his grandfather was alive. His father was a tenant farmer with nine children, so his father was too poor to send his children to school. Therefore, Kim Ryong-Seok entered elementary school<sup>9</sup> when he was 12 years old. For four years after graduating from elementary school, he couldn't go to school because he had to help his father with farming. In 1945, he finally entered Daeseong Middle School in Yongjeong.

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9. The educational system for Joseon people in Manchuria was divided into before 1938 when the 'new educational system,' which is the Manchurian National Educational System, established by Japan was announced and after 1938. Before 1938, elementary school (ordinary school) was six years and middle school was five years, which were changed into the national school (four years or six years of the national higher school) and the national high school (four years). This paper uses elementary school to mean elementary educational institutions and middle school to mean middle educational institutions.

At that time, I had no money so I couldn't purchase paper. I put sand into a board and wrote letters on it...I did farming at home and studied at a night school until I was 12 years old. And when I was 12 years old, I joined the fourth grade class in elementary school. I graduated from it in 1942, but I couldn't go to middle school. I had no money...After that, I left Yongjeong School and transferred to Deoksin School which was near my home. At Deoksin School, I completed all the courses in 2.5 years, passing the test for skipping. (Kim Ryong-Seok, February 20, 2007)

After graduating from elementary school, he “participated in the March 1<sup>st</sup> Independence Movement and he entered Daeseong Middle School in Yongjeong,<sup>10</sup> which was famous among Joseon people,” but he couldn't pay for board so he transferred to a middle school near his home (Kim Ryong-Seok, February 20, 2007). In order to graduate early, he skipped courses. Park Mun-Sik, former principal of Yanbian University, talked about his poor family in relation to school.

There was Seoseongchon at Palgaja. I studied there, having a round trip of 25 ri (10 km) every day. My elder brothers strived to educate me in many ways. At that time, I wore straw sandals to school. I envied the kids wearing rubber shoes. (Park Mun-Sik, October 19, 2006)

Park Mun-Sik had tears in his eyes when he recounted that he had to get his elder brothers' support. His family was very poor, but his love for his family was enough to overcome the poverty. Kang Gwi-Seok talked about the tuition and his shabby clothing when he entered middle school in 1945.

At that time, the entrance fee was 100 won, which was not a small amount for farmers. In addition, I lived in lodgings in Yongjeong while

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10. At that time, there were only six middle schools for Joseon people in Yanbian, which were established in the 1920s. There were Gwangmyeong, Daeseong, Eunjin, Dongheung, Gwangmyeong Girls', and Myeongshin Girls'. The schools for both Chinese and Joseon people were Gando Mission School, Yeongil National High School, and Hunchun National High School (Park Mun-Sik, October 19, 2006). Among the schools, Daeseong Middle School was the most prestigious (Kang Gwi-Seok, October 19, 2006).

studying. I paid 6 *mal* (about 90 kg) of rice for lodgings. I did farming, but the Japanese took all the crops, so I had no rice. Oh! I had to sew my clothes and at the end, I had to patch them up using rice paste. (Kang Gwi-Seok, October 10, 2006)

Byeon Cheol-Hui remembered that he couldn't afford the fare for the boat to school and tuition. He had lived in Cheongjin, Hahmbuk Province before he, together with his mother, moved to China. He couldn't afford the 3~4 *jeon* fare for the boat to cross the Rhim River, so he swam. "I couldn't pay tuition often so when my teacher checked, I couldn't enter the classroom" (Byeon Cheol-Hui, April 25, 2007). When he told of this experience, he clearly remembered the color of the envelope. The memory remains as clear as the yellow-colored envelope.

Most of the Joseon people were poor farmers at that time so it was difficult for their children to enter middle school. For example, "In Hwangsinchon at Yongjeong before national independence, there were about forty Joseon families living there, and among them, just one was a middle school student" and the other children who were of similar age had to farm (Kang Yeong-Ho, October 20, 2006). In Hunchun where Chae Gyu-Cheol lived, "there were Haeseong, Sinhan, and Myeongdeok National High Schools where Chinese and Joseon people studied together, and four middle schools for the Japanese" and "the number of Joseon middle school students in Hunchun was just five or six" (Chae Gyu-Cheol, April 24, 2007). In Musun where Park Gyeong-Chan lived, there was one national high school and four middle schools for Japanese. However, the ratio of Joseon students was just one or two students a year. Park Gyeong-Chan went to a middle school in Musun by using his mother's maiden home. "At that time, it was like picking up a star in the sky to go to middle school under my mother's maiden home" (Park Gyeong-Chan, April 10, 2007).<sup>11</sup>

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11. National high schools and Japanese middle schools, which were middle school educational institutions in Manchuria, were different in many ways. According to Jeong Bong-Dae, national high schools, which were for both Chinese and Joseon people, were a four-year system, but "a Japanese middle school was a five-year system and a higher level. Only one or two elementary school graduates could enter the school" (Jeong Bong-Dae, April 24, 2007). However, Joseon students who entered the school were the sons of the chairman of the Parents Association or of the Joseon People's Association, and their academic results were not so good.

Going to school was an economic burden to parents and was physically difficult for the children.<sup>12</sup> Young children had to walk 7-9 ri (about 3 km) to school (Byeon Cheol-Hui, April 25, 2007). Some had to walk 35 ri (about 14 km) to school (Kim Ryong-Seok, April 20, 2007). Shabby shoes and clothing made it tougher to go to school. They had to go to school in straw sandals and repetitively patched-up clothes (Park Mun-Sik, October 19, 2006; Kang Gwi-Seok, October 19, 2006). Most of their parents, who worked as tenant farmers, had to give half or 70% of their crops to the Chinese owners. If they lived in a safe agricultural village that Japan artificially made, the farmers were forced to give all their rice to the Japanese (Lee Seung-Gyun, January 20, 2007). The average salary of teachers was 40 *jeon*, with the maximum being 100 won (Kim Jae-Ho, October 20, 2006), so it was difficult for parents to pay 30 *jeon* for their children's elementary school tuition (Byeon Cheol-Hui, April 20, 2007). To attend middle school, more money was required; there was monthly tuition of 30 *jeon* as well as an entrance fee of 100 won. Besides, there were only a few schools, so most middle schools were far from home. Therefore, 6 *mal* of rice (90 kg) had to be paid for lodgings (Kim Jae-Ho, October 20, 2006; Kang Gwi-Seok, October 10, 2006). "A *mal* of rice [about 15kg] cost 2 or 3 won" (Park Gyeong-Chan, April 10, 2007).<sup>13</sup> Six *mal* a month cost 12-18 won, which was quite a lot of money. Therefore, the interviewees talked about their poor family circumstances, high tuition, and long distances to school.

## 2) Premodern Consciousness and Desire for Education

Kang Gwi-Seok, who was a professor at Yanbian University, is the eldest son of nine children. His father heard that China was good for farming and moved to Yanbian. He was a tenant farmer. His father was uneducated, but like the Mandate of Heaven, he thought that he had to make his eldest son study at a school.

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12. According to an examination conducted in the 1920s, 93.6% of Joseon people who immigrated to the northeastern part of China left Joseon for economic reasons (Im 2003:65). In the 1920s, over 90% of them made their living through cultivating paddy fields, but only 60% owned land and the land was very small, an average of 0.4 hectare per household (Hong 1993:77-82).

13. According to Lee Seung-Ha (October 22, 2006), five *mal* of rice cost 10 to 25 won at that time.

My family had nine children and I was the eldest son. Therefore, only I could go to school. My goal was to graduate from elementary school. My elementary school was in Tudogu so my father moved there and built a small house. We were poor so we couldn't buy a house. (Kang Gwi-Seok, October 19, 2006)

Kang Gwi-Seok's father moved to Tudogu without his wife so that Kang Gwi-Seok could study.<sup>14</sup> After Kang Gwi-Seok graduated from elementary school, his father saved money for a year and sent him to middle school. In 1943, Kang Gwi-Seok entered Gwangmyeong Middle School in Yongjeong. However, his brothers and sisters couldn't go to school at all.

Han Su-Nam, a former principal of Yanbian Sports School, suffered similar pains. He was not the eldest son so after graduating from elementary school, he couldn't continue with his schooling. He consoled himself by saying that he should help farm after graduating from elementary school. However, his teacher recommended that he enter a mission school that didn't charge tuition. Han Su-Nam was aware that his parents would be opposed to it, but he wanted to go to school so he, in tears, asked his parents to send him to the school. His father didn't think it was important to send him, the third son, to study; his parents thought that his elder brother's 8-year-old son (Han Su-Nam's nephew) should go to school because the boy was the eldest grandson. Since his family was worried about the eldest grandson living alone in lodgings, they allowed Han Su-Nam to go to the mission school while taking care of his nephew. Han Su-Nam explained the atmosphere of his family life after he was recommended for the mission school:

I cried at home for about a week. My parents said that I didn't need to study at all because I would not perform a sacrificial rite. I am the third son in my family. Therefore, I cried while weeding. I envied other children who went to school, but the grandson was the eldest of my family so he had to study, so my parents thought. Therefore, my family had discussions. (Han Su-Nam, October 26, 2006)

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14. At that time, in Tudogu, there was the Tudogu Ordinary School which was directly controlled by Japan. The educational level of this school was very high; a graduate of this school was at the top of Gwangmyeong Middle School in Yongjeong every year, which was the most prestigious school in Yanbian (Kang Gwi-Seok, October 19, 2006).

This situation was the same for women. Women lost the chance to go to school because they were female. “My parents didn’t allow me to study, saying that only boys had to study” (Lee Bok-Sun, October 8, 2007). But her elder brother and three younger brothers all went to school. She lived in a collective village for Joseon people that the Japanese made. She talked about the elementary school built there and about the memory that she couldn’t go to elementary school because of her family’s objection.

One day, the village chief visited every home and wrote down the names of the students entering the school. I followed the chief and teased him to write down my name because I wanted to study. He refused because my family was opposed to it. At that time, my grandfather was against it. Others went to school, but I couldn’t, so I entered a back room and cried all day long. (Bang Hyeon-Ok, April 21, 2007)

After that, Bang Hyeon-Ok secretly went to a night school and studied hard there. She worked as the class leader and she was also praised by the teachers. The principal of the night school taught her separately so that she could study at the elementary school in Paldogu. He wanted her to be able to enroll in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade there. The night school taught up to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade while ordinary schools had courses for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. The principal tried to persuade her grandfather to allow her to enter elementary school and she cried for several days because she wanted to go to school, but her family’s objection was consistent. It was a different story for Bang Hyeon-Ok’s younger brother. He went to Gando Ordinary School and Gwangmyeong Middle School. Sons or the eldest sons of families could be educated under the families’ full support, but daughters or the second sons had little opportunity to be educated.

### 3) Budding National Spirit

Most of the interviewees called the Japanese ‘Japanese Wretch’ or ‘Japanese Kid.’ Lee Seung-Ha and Jeong Bong-Dae naturally named them ‘Japanese Sons of a Bitch.’ “Over 90% of Joseon people at that time had an anti-Japanese ideology” (Jeong Bong-Dae, April 13, 2007). According to Kang Gwi-Seok (October 19, 2006), “The idea that they should study hard and defeat Japan was prevalent among students.” Jeong Bong-Dae had to walk 15 ri (6 km) to school. His hands and feet would freeze and his only side dish in his lunch box was kimchi, which

hurt his self-respect, but he could overcome every difficulty because of his “national self-respect that he would study harder than Japanese students” (Jeong Bong-Dae, April 24, 2007).

This anti-Japanese sentiment was a result of their daily living and unconsciousness during their childhood. During Japanese rule, “there were Japanese only signs in the shops in the Jangchun area” (Jeong Bong-Dae, April 24, 2007). Jangchun was the capital of Manchuria and an international city where not only Japanese and Joseon people, but also Manchurians, Chinese, and Russians got together. Here, Joseon people felt national discrimination every day. In addition, some of the interviewees had family members who participated in independence movements. Lee Seung-Gyun’s wife said that she heard the song of the national independence army from her brother who was a member of the national independence army (Lee Seung-Gyun’s wife, January 20, 2007). “When I was 6 years old, my father passed away. At that time, I learned that my father had been a member of the national independence army so the thinking that Joseon should be independent was rooted in me” (Park Gyeong-Chan, April 10, 2007). Park Gyeong-Chan also had a national awakening while in school because a student who was older went out to the yard of the school dormitory and talked about the national independence army. Upperclassmen gathered in the evening and talked about the independence movement.

Some of the students were over 20 years old and they studied together with their sons. The son was in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and his father was in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade. While living in the dormitory, we sat on the bench under the elm in the school yard and talked, exposing ourselves to the wind. At that time, older students talked about the independence of Joseon. The story that I have remembered so far is that Kim Il-sung contracted space by magic so he went to several places a night, which made the Japanese wretches tremble. While in middle school, older students got together in the evening and talked about the independence movement. (Park Gyeong-Chan, April 10, 2007)

At that time, Joseon people felt national discrimination in their lives, and some of their family members were members of the independence national army. Students got together and talked about the independence of Joseon. Their anti-Japanese sentiment became slowly rooted in their hearts while they passed through elementary and middle school.

## 2. Meanings and Value of Education

This section examines their passion for education and the reason for this passion. I examine their experiences of working their way through school, studying under relatives' support, or studying in other places besides ordinary schools, and further, it examines their expectations.

### 1) Passion for an Education and Assistance for Education

The desire for an education was one of the most universal and strongest desires that Joseon people had.<sup>15</sup> "I farmed first as soon as I got up in the morning and ran the distance of 15 ri (6 km) to school. While running, I memorized what I needed to study" (Kim Ryong-Seok, April 20, 2007). According to Lee Seung-Ha, "At that time, we students were interested in studying hard and entering a college, so we had no time to think about others" (Lee Seung-Ha, October 22, 2006). In order to make children study at school, parents exerted themselves. When a family was really poor or there were no parents, brothers or relatives helped their younger brothers or relatives study. Hong Byeong-Ju, who couldn't go to school because he was responsible for the housework of his poor family, strived to make his younger brothers study at school even though he was young too.

My father and mother passed away when I was 8 and 9 years old. What could kids do? I couldn't go to school and my elder sister couldn't either. It was okay that I couldn't study, but I thought that I had to make my younger brothers study. I thought I would make money for their study. Therefore, I made my younger brother go to school when he was 15 years old. (Hong Byeong-Ju, April 22, 2007)

Many of the interviewees went to school with the help of their relatives. Lee Bok-Sun went to school thanks to her elder brother. After graduating from ele-

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15. Many of the interviewees recognized the Joseon people's desire for education. For example, Kim Jae-Ho said, "We, Joseon people, are the same now as then. We think we should make our sons study even though we have to beg." Lee Seung-Ha, Kim In-Seok, and Kang Yeong-Ho also said, "There is an old saying. Joseon people sell a cow to make their children study. However poor we were, we educated our children."

mentary school, she worked as a clerk in a shop. Her elder brother thought that a woman should study too and he offered her money in order to go to school (Lee Bok-Sun, October 8, 2007). Jeong Bong-Dae went to school thanks to help from his elder brother. He went to the national high school, getting a perfect score on the entrance exam. At first, his father avoided letting him go to school because his family became poor, but his elder brother who felt sorry for not studying insisted that his younger brother should study and offered money for his studies (Jeong Bong-Dae, April 24, 2007). In addition, Kim Jae-Ho went to middle school thanks to the help of his cousin who was a teacher (Kim Jae-Ho, October 20, 2006). Chae Gyu-Cheol went to middle school because his cousin lived with his mother and younger brother only. Chae Gyu-Cheol was well aware that his family couldn't afford for him to study so he didn't think about entering middle school. However, his teacher, with tears, recommended that he enter middle school, so he took the entrance exam (Chae Gyu-Cheol, April 24, 2007). He passed the exam, getting a high score, and his cousin who was 15 years old offered him the money to study.

Others worked their way through school. Park Gyeong-Chan made money for his tuition by himself and entered the mission school.

I couldn't even conceive of the idea of going to middle school and I idled away my time. I worked as a shop clerk for a month and was paid 12 won. The twelve won was not small at that time so I thought that I would make more money and keep studying. And then, I left the shop and started to deliver newspapers, which made me 40 won a month. It was real suffering. I got up at 5 a.m., had breakfast, walked 10 ri, and arrived at the newspaper delivery center at 7 a.m. I delivered newspapers twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon. Three hundred copies at a time... And then, I worked at a carpenter's shop run by a Japanese. I made 15 won a month varnishing with lacquer. I saved money for ten months, which totaled 500 won, so I went to school with the money. (Park Gyeong-Chan, April 10, 2007)

The interviewees were able to continue studying because of help from their brothers or relatives when they couldn't get their parents' help. If a brother or relative couldn't help, then they had to work their way through school. They couldn't give up studying even under serious difficulties.

## 2) Various Educational Spaces

Before studying at an ordinary school, the interviewees studied at night schools because of high tuition and/or their family's objection. Kim Ryong-Seok couldn't enter an elementary school so he studied at a night school for five years, starting at the age of 8 (Kim Ryong-Seok, April 20, 2007). Bang Hyeok-Ok secretly studied at a night school, thus avoiding her grandfather's objection. During the daytime, she helped with farming and in the evening, she went to night school. She couldn't open a book in front of her parents and grandparents because she was afraid of them. She started to study at the night school when she was around 10 years old, and continued until she got married at the age of 19 (Bang Hyeon-Ok, April 21, 2007).

Night school was not an ordinary school, but it was not inferior to an ordinary school in terms of its operation and educational level. Han Su-Nam learned the Joseon language at night school before entering elementary school. "The academic ability that I obtained at the night school was the level of a 5<sup>th</sup> grader" (Han Su-Nam, October 26, 2006). In addition, in the night school that Bang Hyeon-Ok went to, "students filled half of the classroom. The night school had a principal and teachers. In order to keep up with elementary schools, a test was given. And a graduation ceremony was held, together with that for elementary schools." She "worked as the class leader and received all the honor prizes at the night school" (Bang Hyeon-Ok, April 21, 2007). The night school was her only important educational organization in her life. It was the only place where she could show her hope for learning. In addition, the night school was the place for awakening their nationalism.

My house was in a mountainous district. In 1936 when I was a 4<sup>th</sup> grader, the army for national independence came to my village and left. At night, a night school was opened where the army for national independence made speeches and held discussions. Therefore, the village people brought them food. However, one day, in the evening, the Japanese army came to the village and shot. (Kim Jae-Ho, October 20, 2006)

In addition to the night school, there was a village school. Those who couldn't go to school or who were preparing to enter school went to the village school, which taught Chinese characters in a rented room. In 1934 when Chae Gyu-Cheol was 8 years old, his father died of tuberculosis, so his mother alone, with-

out any relatives, took care of him and his younger brother. Before going to elementary school, Chae Gyu-Cheol went to the village school. His mother let him go to the village school even though living was very difficult. She paid his tuition using crops or goods she had made (Chae Gyu-Cheol, April 24, 2007).

Joseon people made unofficial educational institutions like the night school or the village school; poor and young students were educated there. They taught Chinese characters, the Joseon language, mathematics, songs, and independence ideology. The educational level was high and its operation was systematic. Joseon people in Manchuria devoted themselves to educating themselves, their children, family, and nation. Why did they strive for education? Park Chang-Su explains.

Why? Now I think the motive was not right. A farming village was difficult to live in so those who didn't study had only farming, which seems to be the reason why they tried to study. It was the motive. (Park Chang-Su, April 20, 2007)

“We could escape from a farming village if we went to school” (Chae Gyu-Cheol, April 24, 2007). They and their nation could escape the impoverished farming village through education. Therefore, they built ordinary schools, night schools, and village schools where they could realize their dream, and they strived for their, their brothers', relatives', and nation's education.

### 3. Curriculum and Contents of Education

This section examines what curriculum made the biggest impression. The impressions made are important regardless of the interviewees' recognition of the social and educational structure.

#### 1) Banned from Using the Joseon Language

Among the memories of the interviewees' school days, they talked most about the ban on the use of the Joseon language. “From 1940, the school gave a tag to the students speaking the Joseon language and the student who had it in his/her hands finally had to clean the toilets” (Ju Gi-Don, October 22, 2006; Lee Bok-Sun, October 8, 2007). “The school distributed five tags to each student and in case a student spoke the Joseon language, a teacher slapped the student on

his/her cheek and took away a tag, so on weekends, the students who had no tags were punished” (Byeon Cheol-Hui, April 25, 2007). According to Park Chang-Su, beginning in 1939, students received a punishment tag if they used the Joseon language, and the students who had the most punishment tags had to clean the toilets. Other schools used to fine the students 1 won for each punishment tag. At that time, the monthly tuition for elementary school was 10~30 won so 1 won was a lot of money to the young students. However, if they didn’t pay the money, their calves were whipped. Therefore, Park Chang-Su used to run to the school gate during breaks in case he wanted to speak the Joseon language. Talking about those times, Park Chang-Su smiled a bitter smile.

From 1939, the school made a punishment tag and it gave a punishment tag to those who spoke the Joseon language. And in the afternoon, the school checked who had the most tags and those who had the most tags cleaned toilets and got whipped. Other schools charged a fine, 1 won for each punishment tag... Therefore, I used to run to the school gate during break whenever I wanted to speak the Joseon language. I intended to speak it out of the school. (Park Chang-Su, April 20, 2007)

The Joseon people in Manchuria during Japanese imperialism suddenly fell into the situation that they couldn’t use their own language in school any longer. Using the Joseon language was punished, which was difficult for them. However, elementary school students followed the school’s instruction without any national antipathy (Hyeon Song-Nam, October 26, 2006). Their recognition of the colonized situation was dim. Nevertheless, it was difficult for them to adapt themselves to the ban so they were internally hurt.

## 2) National Insubordination

The interviewees who were middle school students at that time clearly recognized that the operation of schools and curriculum originated from the colonial structure of Japanese imperialism. They talked about their seeing or participating in anti-Japanese collective activities in school. Kim Jae-Ho, Park Chang-Su, and Hyeon Song-Nam said that the schools instructed their students to wear a combat cap instead of a school cap in school when the Pacific War broke out. Kim Jae-Ho talked about his participation in a demonstration against this:

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There were a lot of ideological fights or actual behaviors related to national problems.... In 1942 when I was a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader in middle school, we wore a round school cap. However, the school instructed the students to wear a combat cap instead of the school cap, so all of us had a demonstration, insisting that we should wear a school cap, not a military cap. (Kim Jae-Ho, October 20, 2006)

Park Chang-Su was enrolled in the 6<sup>th</sup> National High School in Gillim Province in 1941. He talked about his participation in the opposition to building a Japanese shrine and in a demonstration against the mobilization of laborers while staying in the dormitory. His middle school was built by an electrical chemical factory, and he entered the school hearing that “the graduates of the school would be employed by the factory. However, the school’s dormitory that accommodated 50 to 60 students per room was like a harsh military life. I didn’t study at night; I just cried in to a blanket.” Park Chang-Su said, “During a semester, all the middle school students of Gillim Province were mobilized to pave a road. They had to walk for a week with a blanket and a shovel in their hands. Returning to school, they had to build a Japanese shrine at the school. The students couldn’t stand it any longer and refused to go to classes in protest of the mobilization of laborers.” In addition, teachers were not sufficient. “The chemical factory which was the holding company of the school dispatched an instructor so we could take a chemistry class, but in the case of the electricity class, the electric company didn’t dispatch an instructor, so the class was not given correctly. Students refused to go to classes and tore up the photo of the Emperor of Japan. The Japanese consulate and police found out which students tore up the photo of the Emperor of Japan. Finally, six students left the school and ten students were suspended from school.” At that time, parents sympathized with the students’ national behavior. “When I was a 4<sup>th</sup> grader in middle school, I went to the factory for practice. The practice was to make a bag and break limestone for eight hours. The students refused to go to classes again and Park Chang-Su was appointed messenger of the fight. While working as the messenger, he earnestly felt the national sentiment. Many students were determined to become a member of the Palo Army to which a lot of Joseon soldiers belonged” (Park Chang-Su, April 20, 2007).

On the other hand, they recognized what nationalism was through books. Jeong Bong-Dae had access to proletarian literature and ideological books at his friend’s house, and these opened his eyes to communism and nationalism. “In

the beginning of the Daejeong and Sohwa periods, we could easily find those books. After finishing all the classes, students got together once a week and read the ideological books on communism and nationalism. The name of the student meeting was Mumyeonghoi” (Jeong Bong-Dae, April 24, 2007). Together with the members of Mumyeonghoi, Jeong Bong-Dae discussed joining the Joseon Independence Army in Sanhaegwan.

We didn't believe that we were suppressed by Japan, so about forty students got together once a week after school. Sometimes, we teased Japanese teachers. At last, we talked about going to Sanhaegwan. That is, we talked about going to Sanhaegwan to find the independence army. (Jeong Bong-Dae, April 24, 2007)

Chae Gyu-Cheol was enrolled at the Hunchun National High School (middle school) in 1942, which had a reading club for students reading books on the ideology of nationalism. Because of this club, some students were arrested. In 1945, conscription was started and the school soon became an army.

In 1945, I was a 4<sup>th</sup> grader. For a year, the school didn't teach anything and it just made the students work. There was an ordnance army over Mt. Hunchun, Unit 1637. There, we made bullets, cannons, boxes, and carts used by the army while sleeping and eating there. (Chae Gyu-Cheol, April 24, 2007)

Hyeon Song-Nam talked about forced conscription while talking about the school becoming more impoverished under wartime emergency. “The conscripted wandered about schools and private houses and collected one stitch from a 1,000 people, totaling 1,000 stitches, on a white cloth, hoping that they wouldn't be killed” (Hyeon Song-Nam, October 26, 2006). It was an impending moment for them. However, many students were drafted to the battlefield and finally, many students lost their lives there.

### 3) National Spirit of the Unforgotten Teachers

It is teachers that are remembered most. For the interviewees, the teachers were their idols, especially the teachers who talked about the pride and the dignity of the nation. Lee Seung-Ha talked about the teacher he remembered most:

I learned from the Japanese history book *Gosatong*. In Chapter 3, it said that Queen Sinhu conquered Joseon. My teacher, Lee Dong-Sin, said to us that it was really a lie. (Lee Seung-Ha, October 22, 2006)

Park Gyeong-Chan, whose father participated in the independence movement, remembered the teacher who studied in Japan and taught in his middle school, avoiding Japan's eyes (Park Gyeong-Chan, April 10, 2007). Byeon Cheol-Hee pointed out the female teacher who taught Joseon language as the most memorable teacher. The female teacher defended the students who were punished for speaking the Joseon language.

My school had a female teacher who taught the Joseon language, whose name was Kim Yeong-Suk. She was a great teacher. I still think about her. When we were punished for speaking the Joseon language, she defended us, which I still remember. Compared with Japanese teachers, her knowledge and personality were really great. (Byeon Cheol-hui, April 25, 2007)

The teachers who were remembered had national spirit and resolution. The ideal human that they thought was an intellectual had national spirit.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This study examined the educational world of the Joseon people living in Manchuria during Japanese imperialism through life history records. The three aspects of educational environment, meanings and value of education, and curriculum and contents of education were covered. First, they were immigrants to Manchuria from a colonized nation so they suffered from the pains of adapting themselves to a new land, from the economic exploitation of Japanese imperialism, and from national lamentation, and they weren't free from the extant pre-modern discrimination. Second, they thought that education was the key to helping them and their nation escape from poverty and suppression. Therefore, they were unified under the idea that they themselves, their brothers, relatives, and nation should be educated. Finally, in school, they were prevented from using the Joseon language, they were mobilized for labor, and they received a military training education. They respected Joseon teachers who had national spirit most.

For future studies of oral history and educational oral history, this paper intends to make some suggestions. First, in analyzing oral history records, ‘the present of oral statements’ should be considered. Most of the interviewees looked back on the educational environment using a personal abstract time and place rather than through a social structural context. They recognized the causes and the results of the educational environment as personal matters. Many focused on personal and practical values more than on national values. However, in relation to the curriculum and contents of education, all of them focused on national values. None of them talked about schoolmates, worries, or pleasures and hopes. They all talked about the ban on the use of the Joseon language, the mobilization for labor, and military training. It is not a consistent result from the same experience, but after China became communized, it repetitively taught those contents so children’s different feelings almost disappeared and only the contents remained in their recognition, which is also found through the fact that the residents of Seoul who were educated during Japanese imperialism had comparatively various experiences. Therefore, in order to interpret the details of an interview, a researcher needs to consider and understand what the interviewees couldn’t tell because of the involvement of their various emotional and social factors, what they distorted, what they intentionally fabricated, and why they said certain things.

Second, oral history records and studies using oral history records should clearly clarify the limitations of the records and the studies because the understanding of the subject can be insufficient without grasping the methodological base, the procedures, and the research direction. That is, oral history records depend on the ‘verbalness’ of the statements, i.e., on the circumstance of the statements. They are the only material that has some limitations or characteristics, depending on the characteristics of the interviewee and the interviewer, on the time, and on the place. Only after understanding them, will it be possible to correctly grasp the oral history records and the studies using oral history records. That is the reason this research described the outline of the oral examination.

Third, the research of life history or educational oral history, which is based on the oral records of life history, should be expanded. The field of educational oral history has not been developed. In general, existing studies of educational oral history are focused on an isolated incident or topic. Systematically examining and collecting oral history records based on a particular educational incident, place, or topic can reduce the cost and the time in that it can filter out unrelated content. However, it is not sufficient to explain educational values or conscious-

ness. As for the study of educational history, to check the consciousness of education of those living in those times is important; in the future, the study of educational oral history should be conducted to clarify educational consciousness from extensive and various viewpoints. Life history or the oral records of life history that contain one's daily experiences or overall life experiences need to be noteworthy as one of the major materials for this.

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