

Article

# Contextualizing the Discourse on Pro-Japanese Collaborators in the Process of Democratization after Democracy\*

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## Introduction

Although the gigantic social movement in the 1980s made Korean democracy possible, Korea still has the very same problems, while the chance for change has lowered and the powers opposing the changes became far more organized and stronger. (Choi 2002, 36-37)

In his book, *Minjuhwa ihu ūi minjujuŭi* [Democracy after Democratization], Choi Jang Jip, a prominent political scientist in Korea, gloomily suggests that Korean society after democratization has been declining in terms of its quality and content. As for the reasons, he primarily blames the “evil” influences of persisting anti-communist ideology and a political structure monopolized by conservatism (Choi 2002, 20). Not only Choi, but many other Korean progressives feel the same kind of sense of insecurity about the path of democracy after 1987. For an instance, Kim Dongchoon, a progressive sociologist, indicates the vulnerability of Korean democracy, which, in his view, remains in the stage of incomplete procedural democracy. He claims that the persisting presence of fascistic anti-Communist force in society is the main culprit.<sup>1</sup> Even back in the early 2000s, the progressives did not consider democracy in Korea fully established, feeling Korean society was under constant threat from the conservative bloc, a group who attempted to “row against the stream” of democracy.

Taking this mentality of progressive intellectuals as part of the socio-political background of the rise of *ch'inilp'a* discourse,<sup>2</sup> this article attempts to

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\* I borrow the basic concept of “democracy after democratization,” which addresses the necessity of continuous democratic progress after official democratization of South Korea in 1987, from Choi Jang Jip’s book, *Minjuhwa ihu ūi minjujuŭi* (2002). For the context of this article, I slightly alter the term into democratization after democracy.

1. Additionally, Kim points out two other reasons: 1) the widespread recognition that democracy is already completed in society; 2) the intensification of socio-economic inequality as the introduction of neo-liberalism after the IMF Financial Crisis (Kim 2005, 118-21).

2. Here I define *ch'inilp'a* discourse as an organized system of language or historical knowledge which provides a way through which Koreans can think, utter, and judge the issue of pro-Japanese collaborators in a certain way. Particularly within the context of this article, it indicates a unique historical narrative of the progressives that explains the reciprocity between the unpunished *ch'inilp'a* and the unfolding of post-1945 S. Korean history. According to the narrative, unpurged collaborators came back to the public sphere after the dissolution of the Special Committee to Judge Anti-national Crimes and continued to rule the society in cooperation with authoritarian regimes and the U.S.

contextualize its emergence as the political rhetoric of progressives in society.<sup>3</sup> In particular, this article focuses on how *The Hangyoreh*, a representative progressive newspaper since 1988, engaged the rhetoric of *ch'inilp'a* (pro-Japanese collaborators) with the on-going political situation in post-democratization period from 1988 to 2002.<sup>4</sup> In other words, it investigates the role of the *ch'inilp'a* discourse in the post-democratic struggle of progressives, by taking examples from *The Hangyoreh*. The significance of the *ch'inilp'a* issue in the 2000s Korean society is hardly exaggerated: it was located at the heart of a fierce political and ideological struggle which took place between the left (the progressives) and the right (the conservatives). Beyond the realm of the political disputes, it also deeply engaged in reshaping the way in which Koreans understand the 20<sup>th</sup> Korean history and they remember their past in relation to post-1945 power elites with charges of collaboration.

In spite of its historical significance, the *ch'inilp'a* issue, after the

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Their very existence and success damaged the historical legitimacy of the newly born nation-state, the national spirit (*minjok ch'onggi*), and a sense of social justice among Koreans. Furthermore, their support for post-1945 dictators resulted in the repeated failures of democracy in the forms of prolonged dictatorship, military coups, and massacre. Therefore, in order to correct these historical wrongs and prevent future misfortune by *ch'inilp'a* (more correctly those who succeed their privilege and legacy), Koreans need to resettle the issue of pro-Japanese collaborators in the present by investigating their anti-national crimes thoroughly and providing them appropriate historical evaluation.

3. Here I clarify that this article is not arguing the anxiety of the progressives over the path of democracy as the sole or principle background of so-called *ch'inilp'a* phenomenon since the late 1990s. This explains the social fervor for its re-visitation (*ch'inil ch'ongsan undong*) as well as its emergence as a political hot potato. It is rather one of the purposes of the article to shed light on the connection between the two, in addition to other already-known backgrounds such as historical obligation for bringing justice to unpunished collaborators, lingering anti-Japanese sentiment among the public regarding Japan's colonial rule, diplomatic troubles with Japan and the U.S., and the political stake over resettling the *ch'inilp'a* issue under progressive governments (1998-2007).
4. The term, *ch'inilp'a* (pro-Japanese collaborators) in the Korean context contains a strong moral judgment. The notion holds a meaning of not only an anti-national traitor, but it is also used to describe an individual as a self-seeking, opportunistic, and immoral traitor of the nation. Since the late-1970s, many progressive intellectuals associated the notion not only with anti-nation, but also anti-democracy and anti-*minjung* (the oppressed common people of Korea who constitute the genuine national subject). Most recently, it tends to refer to someone who is not in line with progressive political line or who is politically conservative/reactionary. In spite of strong negative connotations attached to the term, I prefer to use *ch'inilp'a* in this article than the more neutralized English translation, "pro-Japanese collaborators." It is because this term is already socially accepted to indicate pro-Japanese collaborators in Korea. More significantly, I believe that I can properly convey its meaning and nuance within a specific context, by using it without translating.

forced dissolution of the Special Committee to Judge Anti-national Crimes (Panminjok haengwi t'ŭkpyŏl chosa wiwŏnhoe, 1948-1949),<sup>5</sup> remained a social taboo for almost thirty years with only a few exceptions.<sup>6</sup> However, since the late 1970s, the limited circle of progressive intellectuals and *undongwŏn*<sup>7</sup> began addressing the issue in terms of the detrimental effects that the failure of punishing collaborators brought in post-1945 South Korea. More structured criticism on *ch'ilp'a* was formulated throughout the 1980s among progressive intellectuals and the *undongwŏn*. In tandem with Korea's democratization and liberation of media and publication in 1987, the *ch'ilp'a* issue was once again able to come back to the public sphere. Moreover, the underlying narrative, critical about conservative governing elites supportive of authoritarian regimes, was introduced to the public by politically progressive media, magazines, and journals as well as books on *ch'ilp'a*. *The Hangyoreh* was one of them.

This article thus sheds light on how *The Hangyoreh* took advantage of the *ch'ilp'a* issue for its own progressive political stance, by closely analyzing its reports and editorials: firstly, as a historical lesson or negative symbol, demonstrating the consequences of the failure to prosecute the collaborators in a timely manner, under the administrations of Roh Tae Woo (1988-1992) and Kim Young Sam (1993-1997); secondly, increasingly as a political rhetoric of the progressives under the strong challenges of the conservative camp since the term of Kim Dae Jung (1998-2002). This article covers up until early 2000s, the end of the Kim Dae Jung government. As the *ch'ilp'a*-related news overwhelmingly increased and diversified in terms of its volume and contents around 2000, it is difficult that a single article can explore all of its contents in depth.<sup>8</sup> In

5. The Special Committee to Judge Anti-national Crimes was organized to investigate and judge the pro-Japanese collaborators in 1948 under the Rhee Syngman government. However, its function was practically over after several political crackdowns including the police's attack on its main office on June 6<sup>th</sup> and of the National Assembly Spy Incident in June and July, 1949. In Korean history, this incident is called the (forced) dissolution of the Special Committee (*panmin t'ŭgwi waehae*). It was considered as the symbol of failure of resettling the issue of pro-Japanese collaborators.

6. Many scholars in the studies on pro-Japanese collaborators have made this point. See Yi 1990, 112-44. More recently, see Kim and Cho 2006, 167-225. Both papers equally point out the absence of public discussion on collaboration issue (or even research on collaborators) from the dissolution of Special Committee up to the late 1970s except a couple of pioneer works such as Im Chongguk's research on pro-Japanese literature in 1965.

7. Student activists in the anti-authoritarian movement of the 1980s and early 1990s.

8. Also, I believe that even though my discussion stops in the early 2000s, it shows the nature and basic

addition, this article does not aim at dealing with all the *ch'inilp'a* discourse in *The Hangyoreh* for this later period and rather selectively addresses how the newspaper depicted two representative conservative groups, *Chosun Ilbo* and the Grand National Party (Hannaradang), the conservative oppositional party.

### **The *Ch'inilp'a* Rhetoric of *The Hangyoreh* in the Early Stage of Democracy (1988-1992)**

The establishment of *The Hangyoreh* Newspaper Company on May 15, 1988 was in itself the victory of a long struggle of Korean newsmen for the freedom of speech against military dictatorships. The main members who established the newspaper company were reporters who were laid off from *Donga Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* in 1975. Under the oppressive Yusin regime, more than 150 people were fired from the companies, demanding for the freedom of speech (*Dongah t'ugwi sagŏn* and *Chosŏn t'ugwi sagŏn*). After losing their jobs, they continued to fight and make efforts for free media by organizing Minju ŏllon undong hyŏpbihoe (Citizen's Coalition for Democratic Media) and publishing their organ, *Wŏlgan mal* in 1984, which was known for its brave reporting on media oppression under the dictatorship. Promptly after the freedom of media was achieved in 1987, these reporters and other democratic activists set up *The Hangyoreh* Newspaper Company which was free from outside intervention and financially independent.

The establishment of the new newspaper company was an historic event for Korean progressives who were looking for progressive media representing their voice. Therefore, many well-known progressive and democratic figures such as Song Kŏnho, Yi Yŏnghŭi, and Mun Ikhwan joined in the launch. Regarding the identity of the new newspaper, Song Kŏnho, the first CEO and president of the company, said: "...the new newspaper is not the organ of a political party and does not aim at opposing or supporting any specific political group...(It) will not compromise the principle of representing the wish of the Koreans due to outside intervention or pressure" (Ko 2004, 149). In order

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structure of the politicized *ch'inilp'a* discourse in the 2000s.

for these wishes to come true, the new newspaper made a vow in becoming a faithful democratic national media. Based on the history of democratic struggle in media, the newspaper from the very beginning declared its role as a supporter for democracy and mass-media watchdog for reliable news report.

Claiming itself as the progressive media, the position of *The Hangyoreh* on the *ch'nilp'a* issue represented the conventional view of progressives. Furthermore, the key members of the newspaper, such as Song Kŏnho (founder and president) and Yi Yŏnghŭi (chief editor and a broad member), the renowned progressive intellectuals since the 1960s, were one of those who first raised the unsettled issue of pro-Japanese collaboration as an urgent national problem in the society. Therefore, the newspaper advocated revisiting the issue more firmly than most other media under the influence of the critical position of those intellectuals. As early as the late 1980s, the newspaper made calls to revisit the collaboration issue on every possible occasion including the discoveries of new records on collaborators, the anniversaries such as the March First Movement Day and Independence Day, and whenever Korea had any diplomatic troubles with Japan. It also remained highly supportive of any political and social moves for *ch'nilp'a chŏngsan* (resettling the issue of pro-Japanese collaborators in present) such as the legislation for resettling the issue of pro-Japanese collaborators in the National Assembly and civil movement for publishing *Ch'nil inmyŏng sajŏn* [Who's Who Dictionary on Pro-Japanese Collaboration] (2009).

Although many left-wing and progressive intellectuals and student activists since the late 1970s began pointing out the negative influence of unpunished *ch'nilp'a* in contemporary history, it was only after Korea's democratization in 1987 when the media publically started addressing the issue. One of those pioneers includes progressive media and magazines such as *The Hangyoreh* and *Wŏlgan mal*, *Yŏksa pip'yŏng*, and *Sunguk* that was not particularly politically progressive, but held a strong stance on anti-Japanese issue and Japanese imperialism. Also, the *ch'nilp'a*-related books, exposing the anti-national crimes of collaborators, slowly came out as early as in 1990, starting with *Ch'nilp'a: Ku Ingan kwa nalli* [Pro-Japanese Collaborators] (1990). Kim Samung, a co-author of the book and a stubborn advocate of *Ch'nilp'a chŏngsan* movement,<sup>9</sup> testifies that the publication of the book didn't come easy due to repeated rejections of publishing companies. His story is telling that the *ch'nilp'a* issue cannot be addressed without psychological pressure on the side of the speaker for the first couple of years even after democratization. This is related to the

particular “incomplete” nature of the Roh Tae Woo administration (1998-1992) as a democratic government in the real sense. Cho Hŭiyŏn (1998, 205-06), a renowned sociologist, comments about his government as follows: “it was rather than a true democratic regime, a ‘pseudo-democratic regime,’ ‘transitional civilian government,’ ‘incomplete democracy,’ or ‘limited democracy.’” Despite the fact that Roh was elected as the president by democratic procedure, his administration was only partially or superficially democratic due to his own military background and many legacies of dictatorships in society and political culture remained. In addition, Roh himself took a passive stance for the continuation of democratic reforms in society.

Under this circumstance, *ch'inilp'a* rhetoric in *The Hangyoreh* was mobilized to support the reform moves of opposition parties and progressive groups dealing with the political wrongs and corruption of the former authoritarian regime. In 1988, a series of corruption scandals affecting the family of the former President Chun Doo Hwan were exposed to the public. With strong public support, the National Assembly, under the command of opposition parties for the first time in Korean political history, conducted a full investigation into suspicious political activities of the former dictator. It included inspections of all government offices (for the first time in sixteen years) and public hearings on the Gwangju Democratization Movement. However, despite clearly sufficient evidence of his crimes, the Roh government repeatedly postponed the indictment of Chun.

Frustrated by this delay in early November, college students from 104 universities organized into special units in order to charge into Chun's residence and make a citizen's arrest. Upon reporting this incredible story, *The Hangyoreh* published an editorial in favor of setting up a special committee that could handle arresting and judging former political leaders. In the editorial, the editor specifically chose to use the term, “*panmin t'ŭgwi*” (The Special Committee), to which the historical memory of failure was attached. By referring back to the rhetoric of the Special Committee, the editorial made readers rethink the

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9. Kim is originally a journalist who worked for the organs of the opposition Peace and Democratic Party (Pyŏngmindang) and others and for the *Seoul Newspaper* after Kim Dae Jung's election as the president in 1997. As a prolific writer on the *ch'inilp'a* issue, he co-authored and wrote many books such as *ch'inilp'a I, II, III* (1990-1993), *Ch'inil chŏngch'i 100-yŏnso* (1995), *Ch'inilp'a 100-in 100-mun* (1995), *Panmin t'ŭgwi* (1995), and a mook entitled *Ch'inil munje yŏngu* (1994-1996).

significance of indicting Chun by reminding them of the disastrous results that a failure to do so could bring in the future (Nov. 5, 1998). In this sense, the mention of the Special Committee functioned as a symbol whose meaning was related to the failure in dealing with past wrongs equated with *ch'inilp'a*.

In addition, the rhetoric of the Special Committee was frequently utilized to juxtapose the situation after 1945 with the on-going situation. In November 1988, a newspaper contributor associated the ongoing Gwangju Democratization Movement hearing with the investigation activities of the Special Committee in 1948-1949. In order not to repeat the same miserable wrongs of the past, he claims, the hearing should be the place where accused criminals receive an appropriate ruling. Through the recalling of the traumatic torture and death of Pak Chongch'öl in 1987,<sup>10</sup> he indicates this would be the result of not purging pro-Japanese policemen after liberation (Nov. 24, 1988).

Nevertheless, the early reform drive under the leadership of opposition parties fizzled out in the early to mid-1989.<sup>11</sup> One of the reasons for this has to do with a series of unsanctioned visits to North Korea by South Korean figures in the first half of 1989, which put Kim Dae Jung's Peace Democratic Party (P'yöngmindang, PDP) and the progressive camp in a difficult position. Breaking the strict National Security Law that prohibited any unofficial inter-Korean exchange, Reverend Mun Ikhwan, a renowned unification and democratization movement activist, visited North Korea for ten days in March and April. His visit caused trouble in the progressive camp: the police subsequently cracked down on the National Federation for the Movement

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10. Pak Chongch'öl, was a Seoul National University student and student activist. In January 1987, he was tortured to death in the process of police interrogation. After his death, the police tried to cover up the truth of his torture-induced death in several ways. However, the truth was exposed by the testimonies and efforts of several individuals and organizations, including the Catholic Priests' Association for Justice (Ch'önjugyo chöngüi kuhyön sajedan). His death is considered to trigger the democratization movement of 1987.

11. In the early term of the Roh administration, the political reform under the name of "settling down the issues of The Fifth Republic" (O-gong ch'öngsan) was only possible under the collaboration of three opposition parties (Peace Democratic Party, Democratic Party, and Republican Party) and strong public support. However, the cooperation began breaking down in 1989 as the result of a series of incidents such as the secret consent of the merging of the ruling Democratic Justice Party and the Republican Party, the agreement for deferring interim evaluation, the N. Korea visit of Reverend Mun Ikhwan, and the Buying-out Incident of the opponent political candidate by the Democratic Party in the Tonghae City Election.



of Nation and Democracy (Chŏnguk minjok minju undong yŏnhap), a progressive democratic and unification movement organization, raided the main office of *The Hangyoreh*, and arrested Yi Yŏnghŭi for his connection to Mun and his visit to North Korea. At the same time, news broke that the Peace Democratic Party's Sŏ Kyŏngwŏn had also visited the North the year before. Sŏ was affiliated with Pyŏngminyŏn, a minority group in the PDP that consisted of former democratic activists who were not politicians. Shortly afterwards, Im Sugyŏng—a college student affiliated with a student movement group—also went to North Korea to attend the Pyongyang Youth Festival. Taking advantage of these events, the government and the ruling Democratic Justice Party (Minjŏngdang) tried to veer public interest away from investigations into the Chun regime and point them towards this national security issue. The conservatives brought up the alleged relationship between the Peace Democratic Party and democratic organizations with the North, questioning their ideological soundness.

Due largely to Sŏ's visit to the North, Kim Dae Jung, who was playing a leading role in political reforms, became the major target of the Agency of National Security Planning (Kukka anjŏn kihoekpu or An'gibu). Upon hearing the news of his visit, the party quickly dismissed Sŏ to distance itself from the controversial figure. However, the agency attempted to define Sŏ's activity as a typical North Korean spy affair within the National Assembly. Regarding the development of the situation, an editorial in *The Hangyoreh* compares it with the National Assembly Spy Incident (*Kukhoe p'ŭrakch'i sajŏn*) in 1949. The incident that the police arrested fifteen junior lawmakers on trumped up charges of spying on behalf of North Korea played a direct role in the subsequent failure of the Special Committee. Progressive historians claim that it was part of a bigger conspiracy of President Rhee Syngman and his pro-Japanese policemen to frustrate the investigative efforts of the Special Committee on collaborators.

Because P'yŏngminyŏn was the center of reform-minded progressives within the Peace Democratic Party, the author of the editorial worries that its collapse might lead to the loss of the reform-oriented nature of the party. For this reason, the editorial first describes the connection between the collapse of the Special Committee and the Spy Incident. It then implies that the arrest of P'yŏngminyŏn members might have the same effect on the future of the Peace Democratic Party and Korean democracy (*The Hangyoreh*, July 8, 1989). The editorialist thus points out the great historical magnitude of the growing

political attack on the Party by referring to the 1949 Spy Incident. It shows the fallacy of the Agency's claim of "a spy affair," comparing it with the earlier false claim revealed in the Spy Incident.

When all three visitors to North Korea were brought to trial later that year, *The Hangyoreh*, with its unification-oriented view, was critical about the judicial process, claiming the outcome was predetermined. However, a later editorial raised the wider issue of flawed justice in post-1945 Korea. Entitled "The court of history and the court in reality" (*Yöksa ūi pōpchōng kwa hyōnsil ūi pōpchōng*), Chang Yunhwan indicates there are two different types of courts in Korean history. According to him, "the court of history" is based on an idealized legal system or on the belief of historical progress, while "the court in reality" reflects the actual current repressive law. Speaking of the ongoing trials of Mun Ikhwan, Yu Wōnho, and Im Sugyōng, Chang rhetorically questions whether the court of history ever actually existed in Korean history. As a representative case, he indicates the failure of purging *ch'iniŭp'a*; his suggestion for correcting the negative results is to begin a historic trial of collaborators. His editorial views the *ch'iniŭp'a* issue as the original sin of distorting Korean judicial justice, and further, as something inseparable from the frustration of Korean democracy (*The Hangyoreh*, Nov. 21, 1989).

Anti-*ch'iniŭp'a* rhetoric was also widely adopted to attack both the Korean and Japanese governments on foreign affair issues. In the early 1990s, colonial victims—comfort women, forced laborers, and involuntarily drafted Korean soldiers—began vocalizing their demands for an apology and compensation from the Japanese government. Various civil organizations supporting the war victims took the opportunity of the Japanese Prime Minister's visit to Korea in January 1992 to state their demands. In the middle of an anti-Japanese rally, Chu Kisōng, a member of the Association for Pacific War Victims (T'aep'yōngyang hūsaengja yujokhoe), unexpectedly died. Kim Pongu, the director of the Institution for Research in Collaborationist Activities,<sup>12</sup> in response to this writes an article that emotionally provoked its readers as a way of underlining the urgency of revisiting the *ch'iniŭp'a* issue in order to further progress Korean democracy. Kim comments:

Last mid-January when the Prime Minister of Japan visited Korea, there was an accident; combat policemen trampled an old man to death. His name is Chu Kisōng, and he died because he participated in a street

demonstration for demanding the Japanese government's apology about and compensation for Japanese colonial rule. His death has received extensive media coverage based on Koreans' anti-Japanese sentimentality, but the aftermath soon faded away. The old man "impudently" participated in a "disrespectful" demonstration protesting the visit of the Prime Minister of the great Japanese nation because of intermingled emotions towards the *han* of his older brother, who was sent into forced labor and died, and his own miserable life due to his brother's death. He then ended his *han*-filled life under the combat boots of the healthy policemen of Taehan minguk....What I wonder is how the responsible representatives of the Korean government reacted to this outrageous act, which was shamelessly done by the government, that was in fact responsible for investigating the historical *han* of the old man. Maybe this violence was the actual answer of the historical *han* of the old man, Chu Kisŏng. (*The Hangyoreh*, Feb. 28, 1992)

This account continues to describe how a number of influential politicians in the Rhee regime were in fact pro-Japanese collaborators, while Rhee paradoxically claimed the necessity of exposing dark crimes during the colonial period. After listing the pro-Japanese career of significant political and business figures up to the Chun regime, Kim argues that by preventing historical progress, these *ch'inilp'a* covered their colonial crimes and trampled on Koreans' will for independence. Juxtaposing the misery of the past with that of the present in the life of an old man, Kim attempts to evoke multiple-layered emotions in Koreans. By using ironic language, Kim intends to maximize anger and shame among readers both toward unapologetic Japan for past crimes and toward the irresponsible Korean government for the past issues and the death of Mr. Chu. Furthermore, readers can easily feel the sense of injustice regarding the attitudes of the two governments and anxiousness about the possible repetition of the same history. Therefore, the language of the discourse becomes deeply engaged in the politics of emotion, as well as the politics of memory; it tries to

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12. The Institution for Research in Collaborationist Activities (Minjok munje yŏn'guso, IRCA) is a representative civic *Ch'inilp'a ch'ŏngsan* movement organization as well as a research institute on the issues of Japanese imperialism and pro-Japanese collaborators. It was established in 1991 to continue the pioneer work of Im Chongguk on pro-Japanese collaborators after his death and carried out a project for publishing *Who's Who Dictionary on Pro-Japanese Collaborators* (2009).

obtain democratic progress in the present through invoking the past.

### **Democratic Progress and the *Ch'inilp'a* Discourse under the Kim Young Sam Administration (1993-1997)**

During the Kim Young Sam government, the *ch'inilp'a* rhetoric in *The Hangyoreh* continued to support further democratic reforms in society as similarly as in the earlier period. In 1992, the election of Kim Young Sam as the president heralded Korea's long-awaited return to civilian rule after three decades of military rule. His election and his initial reform drive greatly altered the social atmosphere in a positive way when dealing with past issues including pro-Japanese collaborators. However, despite his life-long career as a democratic movement fighter as well as an oppositional party leader, he was elected the president as the nominee of the conservative ruling Liberal Democratic Party (Minjadang, hereafter LDP).<sup>13</sup> As a result, his civilian rule was not completely free from old politics and the interests of the conservative party and his own party was a setback to his own political reforms.

His early term was nevertheless characterized by sweeping reform policies against all kinds of political, social, and economic evils. Furthermore, the Kim administration initiated a history movement called "Setting History Right" project (*yŏksa paro seugi*, hereafter SHR). According to the government's white paper explaining its goal and achievement, the project eventually focused on highlighting the national spirit and historical legitimacy by resettling some of past issues (Yun 1996, 39-40). Under this favorable atmosphere addressing the issue of past wrongs, the social interests over the *ch'inilp'a* issue rapidly grew. As one example, through his administration, the publication of the *ch'inilp'a*-related books flourished: in 1993 alone, five different books spanning eight volumes

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13. The Liberal Democratic Party (Minjadang, January 1990 to December 1995) was born as a result of a political union of three conservative parties: the Democratic Justice Party (Minjŏngdang), Unification Democratic Party (T'ongil minjudang), and New Democratic Republic Party (Sinminju konghwdang). After his Democratic Justice Party failed to earn a majority in the National Assembly in the 1988 General Election, President Roh Tae Woo pursued an alliance with other conservative opposition parties. Responding to his call, Kim Young Sam and Pak T'aejun joined in the alliance and launched the LDP in January 1990.

were published on the topic, including the best-selling *Ch'inilp'a 99-in* [Ninety-nine Collaborators].<sup>14</sup>

In July 1993, the collaboration activities of well-known figures came to receive public attention when the Ministry of Veterans and Patriots Affairs announced that it would review a previously raised “suspect of collaboration” charge levied on many men of merit.<sup>15</sup> Soon after the Ministry faced a number of strong objections from their influential offspring, it shortly apologized about mentioning the collaboration charge of “the respected figures” without a thorough investigation. In the middle of this political disturbance, newspapers jumped into and initiated debates on how to evaluate wartime collaborations of elites in terms of their lifelong merits and demerits; this offered a rare opportunity to raise the public awareness on the collaboration of formerly respected elites. *The Hangyoreh* (July 11, 1993; July 23, 1993; Aug. 18, 1993) promptly declared its support for the investigation decision of the Ministry, saying that it was not too late to correct the twisted past. Furthermore, upon the news of the “unnecessary” apology of the Ministry, the newspaper cried out against how prevailing conservatism still prevented people from addressing the *ch'inilp'a* issue properly.

The interests on past issues of the Kim administration greatly contributed in creating a society, which was by far more easily engaged in the talk about uncomfortable historical truth and mistakes during the colonial and post-colonial periods. However, in contrast to his dedication to correct historical wrongs done by the Japanese, President Kim was far less willing to confront politically sensitive contemporary issues, such as the December 12 Military Coup<sup>16</sup> and the Gwangju Democratization Movement. In May 1993, two

14. Throughout the 1990s, but mostly under his term, more than eighteen *ch'inilp'a* related books spanning twenty-eight volumes were published. The publications include: three volumes of *Ch'inilp'a* [Collaborators] (1990-1993), three volumes of *Ch'inilp'a 99-in* [Ninety-nine Collaborators] (1993), *Inmul ro ponŭn ch'inilp'a yŏksa* [A History of Collaborators Reading through Individuals] (1993), three volumes of *Ch'ŏngsan haji mottan yŏksa* [History, Failed to Cleanse off] (1994), *Ch'inilp'a 100-in 100-mun* [Pro-Japanese Collaborators: 100 Persons and 100 Questions] (1995), and the series of *Ch'inil munje yŏn'gu* [Studies on Collaboration Issues] (1994-1996).

15. In July, the Ministry named eight people suspected of collaboration, many of whom were in fact previously respected figures such as Kim Sŏngsu, Yi Ŭnsang, and Yi Kapsŏng.

16. On December 12, 1979, New military group (*singunbu*) arrested several top military officials including Chŏng Sŭnghwa, Chŏng Pyŏngju, and Chang T'aewan without the permission of President Choi Kyu Hah (12.12 *kunsa panran*/12.12 *sat'ae*). This coup made it seize the actual power

months after his inauguration, Kim made a special statement that finally declared the December 12 Affair a military coup by low-ranking officials (*Kukmin Ilbo*, May 13, 1993)<sup>17</sup> and the 1980 Gwangju Democratization Movement a landmark democratic movement that set the foundation for both Korean democracy and his own civilian government. While promising all possible efforts to memorialize the movement and restore the rights of those who were engaged in it, he simultaneously expressed his hope to leave the investigation into the truth to history (*The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, May 14, 1993). The progressives strongly renounced his decision as irresponsible. *The Hangyoreh* (June 17, 1993; Aug. 11, 1993) also criticized his wish to “leave the investigation to history” as neglecting the historical responsibility of the present. Regarding this, Sin Ilsöp, a history professor, writes:

The current government denies its own legitimacy when it, without figuring it out clearly, uses the abstract term, “the judgment of history” (*yöksa üi simp’an*) for such emblematic incidents as May 16 Military Coup and May 18 Democratization Movement. [They] can decide the nature of the government and as a matter for the whole nation, are an obstacle to reform projects. (June 13, 1993)

Sin claims that without figuring out the truth behind the May 16 Military Coup of 1961 and the series of events starting with the December 12 Military Coup to the Gwangju Democratization Movement, the civilian government would not be able to achieve either its historical goal to become the first Korean civilian government or its legitimacy. Toward the end, he advises the government to take a lesson from the morally distorted beginning of the Rhee regime. Comparing Kim’s speech with Rhee’s refusal to deal with the colonial past (specifically collaborators), he contends that President Kim should not repeat the same mistake of leaving his responsibility of rectifying the past for the next generation.

Against the wishes of the President Kim, numerous civic groups tried to bring a series of lawsuits against the leaders of the various political disturbances

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of the Army. Later on May 17, 1980, Chun Doo Hwan, the leader of the group, staged another military coup and seized the power.

17. This is the first official recognition by the state that the December 12 Affair was a military rebellion.

from 1979 to 1980. With the help of these groups, Chŏng Sŏnghwa, the former Army Chief of Staff (Feb.-Dec. 1979), accused the leaders of December 12 Military Coup of rebellion in a lawsuit filed in the highest Korean court in July 1993. In 1994, the City Council of Gwangju accused thirty-five military leaders associated with the Gwangju Democratization Movement of the charge of internal disturbance. In response to the former accusation, the Supreme Public Prosecutor's office immediately embarked on an investigation, but the result of the investigation (which lasted sixteen months) was highly disappointing. In October 1994, the prosecution, in contrast to its own definition of the December 12 Affair as a military rebellion, declared a suspension of the indictment of the military leaders of the coup. The prosecution's excuse was that it could cause an unnecessary waste of national power. Similarly, the investigation of the May 16 Military Coup ended with the prosecution declining to indict the leaders for a "successful military coup" in July 1995. It is needless to say that both of these decisions outraged a large number of Koreans.

Rather than acquiescing to the announcements, progressive civic groups kept calling for justice in indicting the two former presidents and other military leaders through 1994 and 1995. The following is one of the articles which emphasize the necessities of punishing the two. In it, Kim Samung criticizes the unfaithful attitude of the government defending the former presidents while also memorializing the shameful forty-sixth anniversary of the forced dissolution of the Special Committee on June 6. Kim writes:

...as Syngman Rhee prevented judicial punishment of *ch'inilp'a*, Kim Young Sam now disregards punishing the slaughterers of Gwangju and those who were engaged in the Military Coup. Even though they shared the commonality as "civilian government" (*munmin chŏngbu*), Rhee and Kim have both equally disregarded the punishment of anti-national traitors and traitors of democracy. We still sigh with regret for the loss of our national spirit and acknowledge that the decedents of independent fighters weren't treated fairly because the Rhee regime didn't punish *ch'inilp'a*. But today, we once again disregard and are silent about the punishment of military dictators and slaughterers. What an irony and what a false consciousness this is! (*The Hangyoreh*, June 3, 1995)

As seen above, Kim underlines the criminality of the former presidents Chun and Roh by equating the military dictatorship and the massacre to pro-



Japanese anti-national crimes. He figuratively identifies the two with *ch'inilp'a*. His rhetoric is compelling because he mobilizes the collective memory of Koreans that morally disapproves Japanese colonialism and *ch'inilp'a*. Rather than enumerating the necessities of the indictment, Kim urges readers to identify the necessity of punishing *ch'inilp'a* under colonial rule with that of punishing dictators and slaughterers. By equating the two with *ch'inilp'a*, Kim attempts to inflame Koreans' anger toward them and highlight the necessity of judicial punishment.

### **The Transformation of the *Ch'inilp'a* Discourse under the Kim Dae Jung Administration (1998-2002)**

In 2003, the advent of the Kim Dae Jung administration (1998-2002) was not just a victory of a long-time democratic movement fighter, but also that of oppositional party for the first time in Korean political history. In that sense, it was different from that of Kim Young Sam, who ran for the office as the nominee of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. However, this historic event, the first rule of the progressive administration, eventually intensified the ideological polarization of Korean society.

The Kim Dae Jung administration, the first progressive opposition party-background, suffered from continuous and persistent challenges from the conservative camp. From the beginning, the government was based on a weak and vulnerable alliance with Kim Jongp'il, the conservative political partner of Kim Dae Jung for the presidential election. His separation from Kim Jongp'il in September 2001 made his political position even more difficult in the National Assembly where uncooperative Grand National Party (GNP),<sup>18</sup> the ruling-turned-oppositional party, remained dominant. In spite of his achievement in the early resolution of the IMF Financial Crisis, domestic politics were in turmoil with a series of suspicious corruption incidents. In addition to the

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18. The Grand National Party was launched in November 1997 by merging the New Korea Party (Sinhan'guktang) and the Democratic Party (T'onghap Minjudang). It was considered to represent the traditional conservative political party in Korea. It changed its name into the New Frontier Party (Saenuridang) in February 2012, which is the present ruling party.



GNP, the conservative media, represented by *Chosun Ilbo*, *Donga Ilbo*, and *Jungang Ilbo*, were hypercritical about and tackled every single policy of the Kim's administration. During this situation, his reconciliatory policy toward North Korea, called "Sunshine Policy" (*haetpit chŏngch'aek*), a first of its kind in Korean history, made the conservative camp, attached to cold war ideology, highly uncomfortable and even more hostile. Therefore, the political dynamic of the Kim Dae Jung administration is characterized with the weak progressive government and progressive camp versus powerful oppositional conservative party and aggressive conservative media. As time went on, public opinion over the government policies at least superficially showed a split between the following ideological lines: 1) the government and progressive intellectuals, citizens, media, and civic groups on the one hand; 2) the GNP, the three major conservative newspaper companies (*Chosun Ilbo*, *Donga Ilbo*, and *Jungang Ilbo*), and the conservatives on the other.

In the meanwhile, the social interests in the *ch'iniŭp'a* issue not only explosively increased, but also rapidly evolved into the nation-wide civic movement for *ch'iniŭp'a chŏngsan*. This substantial change is closely related to a series of *ch'iniŭp'a*-related events from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, which drew keen attention among Koreans and was also thought to be politically sensitive. The incidents cover the Anti-*Chosun Ilbo* Movement, the Anti-Pak Chung Hee Memorial Museum Movement (1999-2002)<sup>19</sup> including debates over his pro-Japanese collaboration charge, suspicions around the collaboration of famous politicians' fathers, troublous diplomatic relationship with Japan over past-related issues, and the preparation for publishing *Who's Who Dictionary on Pro-Japanese Collaborators*. Some of the above events, particularly the first two, caused a sharp confrontation between the progressives and the conservatives, problematizing the pro-Japanese collaboration of Park Chung Hee, the historical icon of the latter, and the *Chosun Ilbo*. As the time went on, *ch'iniŭp'a*

19. In 1999, the president Kim Dae Jung decided to subsidize the Park Chung Hee Memorial Museum with total 10.5 billion won (renewable) in order to fulfill his election pledges. The progressive camp fiercely objected the decision as nonsense, which wasted money for memorializing a dictator. Covering all major social, civic, and labor movement groups, 247 progressive organizations organized The People's Solidarity against the Park Chung Hee Memorial Museum (Park Chung Hee kinyŏmgwan pandae kungmin yŏndae) in August 2000. Under the leadership of IRCA, the Solidarity continued to carry out a four year's campaign to stop the project.

discourse was rapidly transformed into a political rhetoric of progressives specifically to attack the moral flaws of those in the conservative camp—many of whom were spiritual successors of or were members of groups who were founded by so-called collaborators—who were associated as collaborators. In particular, the nature of the *ch'inilp'a* discourse as a rhetorical tool attacking the conservatives is revealing well in the anti-*Chosun Ilbo* rhetoric in *The Hangyoreh*.

The *Chosun Ilbo*, enjoying the highest circulation in the nation, was at the center of ideological warfare under the two progressive administrations, Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun. Claiming itself as the voice/opinion leader of the conservative wing, the newspaper took the lead in attacking the government policies under the support of the GNP and the conservatives. In November 1998, the *Chosun Ilbo* carried out a “thought investigation” on Choi Jang Jip who was appointed the chairperson of the Presidential Consultation Committee on Policy Planning (April 1998-April 1999).<sup>20</sup> This incident, a typical ideological attack by the *Chosun Ilbo* on a progressive figure in the government, led a large number of Koreans to turn their backs away from the newspaper. Progressive groups, as well as college professors, officially announced their support for Choi and criticized the biased reporting practices of the newspaper. Motivated by this Incident, progressive intellectuals and citizens took the step to initiate the Anti-*Chosun Ilbo* Movement in late 1999.<sup>21</sup> This voluntary civic movement officially rejected the paper’s right wing ideological orientation in addition to its “distorted” reporting style. In particular, the progressives claimed that the *Chosun Ilbo* had intentionally disseminated the ideas of cold war anti-communism and regionalism in the society—with ideologically twisted reports throughout the 1990s—expressly to further its own interests.

As a representative progressive newspaper, *The Hangyoreh* soon joined

20. After the appointment, the newspaper and *Wŏlgan Chosun*, its sister monthly magazine, depicted Choi as a North Korean follower by citing his academic works on the Korean War out of context. In response to this political attack, Choi filed a lawsuit for their misrepresentation of his works, but it resulted in his resignation from office in the next spring.

21. In November 1999, an online anti-*Chosun* group, urimodu.com, was launched to oppose the newspaper. In the summer of 2000, the group put up a full-page advertisement on their mission in *The Hangyoreh*. In August 2000, eighty-six intellectuals announced the Anti-*Chosun* Declaration of Intellectuals in order to curb the “unruly” power of the conservative media. More intellectuals joined in the declaration later. In September, the Anti-*Chosun* Alliance (Ant’i-Chosŏn yŏndae) was set up to carry out an organized movement.

this fight and became highly provocative towards the *Chosun Ilbo* around 2000. Here the anti-*Chosun Ilbo* rhetoric in *The Hanryoreh* is a great example of how the *ch'inilp'a* discourse was utilized in attacking the “ultra-right wing” conservative that the progressive considered the biggest enemy of Korean democracy after 1987.

In July 2000, the chief editor of *The Hangyoreh* opens up with a barrage of harsh criticism, sensationally accusing the *Chosun Ilbo* of being a gangster newspaper (*chop'ok sinmun*). In February 2001, Son Sökc'h'un identifies the negative role that the *Chosun Ilbo* played in the development of Korean democracy. According to Son, in agreement with other progressives,<sup>22</sup> the two pillars that held up forty years of dictatorship in post-1945 Korea were the military and the mass media. He states that the democratization movement of 1987 successfully removed the military from the stage, yet “the power of the media” still functions as the critical anti-democracy element in society. For the purpose of preserving democracy, he argues that civil society cannot help but fight against the anti-democratic and conservative politics of newspaper conglomerates like the *Chosun Ilbo* (Feb. 19, 2001). Similarly, Kang Chunman, a well-known professor of journalism and outspoken anti-*Chosun* activist, opines that all reforms under a democratic government are inseparable from the struggle for winning public opinion over to one's side. He claims that in order to make the reform policies of the Kim administration successful, the first task is to curb the power of conservative media that views the government unfavorably (Mar. 26, 2001).

In order to attack the *Chosun Ilbo*, *The Hangyoreh* attempted to prove that, in contrast to its own claim as the proper voice of the nation, the *Chosun Ilbo* was anti-national and anti-democratic. When the government carried out a tax investigation into newspaper companies in 2001, *The Hangyoreh* serialized a full-page special report on “news-media powers” (*öllon kwöllyöök*) on its first page from March to April 2001. The reports consisted of three topics under the titles of “The Tyranny of Unlimited Power,” “The Ugly Past,” and “The Solution for Mass Media Reform.” Even though the titles broadly named news media, the contents specifically targeted the *Chosun Ilbo* and *Donga Ilbo*. In particular, in

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22. For instance, Choi Jang Jip (2002) views the uncontrolled power of mass media as the biggest threat to Korean democracy after 1987.

the section entitled “The Ugly Past,” the newspaper highlighted the pro-Japanese articles of the *Chosun Ilbo* during the Pacific War as unmovable evidence of its anti-nationalist tendency.

The intention of its muckraking was to cut down the credibility and influence of the *Chosun Ilbo* among Koreans who were sensitive to Japanese colonial wrongs, by imbuing the newspaper with an image of being a national traitor. *The Hangyoreh* furthermore emphasized the *Chosun Ilbo*’s close ties with military regimes as a grim legacy from the colonial period. According to the accusations of *The Hangyoreh*, the *Chosun Ilbo* was not only anti-nationalistic (serving Japanese interests while turning its back on its own people), but was also anti-democratic for siding with military dictatorships in order to maintain its power. By reporting so, *The Hangyoreh* intended to emphasize that the *Chosun Ilbo* played the exact same role in the present when it opposed the democratic government (anti-democratic) and discouraged a reconciliatory relationship between the two Koreas (anti-nationalist).

Therefore, the *ch’inilp’a* discourse offered the progressive movements essential historical authority. *The Hangyoreh* and anti-*Chosun* activists claimed that the history of the newspaper showcased the path of *ch’inilp’a* before and after liberation. In contrast with its own argument that it was the upright voice of the nation, progressives argued that the *Chosun Ilbo* newspaper served Japanese and military dictatorships before and after liberation, respectively. This claim, even though only partially veritable,<sup>23</sup> was adopted as the whole truth by progressives who felt uncomfortable with the newspaper’s subservient attitude toward the Chun military regime, as well as its hyper-critical attitude toward post-1987 democratic governments and progressive figures. The effectiveness and persuasiveness of the *ch’inilp’a* discourse in publically attacking the *Chosun Ilbo* encouraged anti-*Chosun* activists to deeply incorporate it within their own rhetoric. Due to the social stigma associated with *ch’inil*, anti-*Chosun* activists actively utilized *ch’inilp’a* rhetoric rather than pointing out other problems of the newspaper. The following political cartoon lampoons the *Chosun Ilbo*.

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23. In spite of contrasting opinions, the *Chosun Ilbo* was one of opposition newspapers up until the early 1980s in post-1945 Korean society. During the colonial period, it also took the nationalist line in the 1920s and 1930s before wartime mobilization policies were implemented by the colonial government in the mid- and late 1930s.



Figure 1. "Cannot be tamed..." (*Kildŭlyŏ chiji annŭm...*) *The Hangyoreh*, July 14, 2000.

The above cartoon is a response by *The Hangyoreh* to a lengthy *Chosun Ilbo* article published on July 1, 2000 titled "Chosun Ilbo won't be tamed" (*Chosun Ilbo nŭn kildŭlyŏ chiji annŭnda*). In this article, the *Chosun Ilbo* claimed

that in spite of the evil intentions of Kim Dae Jung's administration to "tame" the newspaper companies through investigations into their taxes, newspapers would never yield (nor be tamed). Focusing upon the term, "to be tamed" (*kildŭlyŏjida*), the cartoon humorously depicts the newspaper as a dog that claims itself to be untamed, but in fact served many owners unfaithfully, from the Japanese colonial authorities, to military dictators, and to presidents such as Roh Tae Woo and Kim Young Sam.

During this time, the foreign relationships with Japan and the U.S. also greatly affected readdressing the issue of *ch'ŏnŭlpa* and reinforcing the discourse as a progressive rhetoric in society. Particularly, the rocky diplomatic relationship with Japan, ensuing anti-Japanese nationalism, created social atmosphere in which the public could easily and emotionally embrace the discourse of *ch'ŏnŭlpa ch'ŏngsan*.<sup>24</sup> Seizing this opportunity, the progressives took advantage of the *ch'ŏnŭlpa* rhetoric for their political interests. The controversy over the Japanese right wing textbook is one of those examples which reveals how the progressives utilized it for highlighting moral disqualification of the conservatives in addressing past issues.

As early as the late 1990s, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho o tsukuru kai, since 1995) planned to publish a new history textbook with a revisionist perspective on Japan's imperial expansionism in Asia. In 2001, the Japanese government sanctioned publishing and circulating the textbook while rejecting the Korean government's request to review a "sensitive" part of the textbook. In response to that, Korean civic groups, in alliance with Japanese counterparts, jointly set up the Head Office for Correcting Japanese Textbooks (Ilbon kyogwasŏ parojakki undong ponbu) and led various public movements to caution readers of the injustice of the textbook, as well as to reduce its acceptance rate in local school boards in Japan.

When public attention on the textbook issue, as well as anti-Japanese sentiment, ran high in society in early April of 2001, a contributor to

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24. Since the late 1990s, the relationship with Japan grew tenuous with the following issues: territorial disputes over Dokdo/Takeshima Islets, controversy over Japanese right wing history textbooks (especially in 2001 and 2005), and Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine (2001-2006). What makes Korea's diplomatic relationship with Japan more difficult is its association with the colonial past, which deeply stirred post-colonial consciousness and anti-Japanese nationalism among Koreans.

*The Hangyoreh* provided a unique perspective on the on-going textbook controversy.<sup>25</sup> He argues that what is required now for Koreans is not an (easily disappearing) temporal emotional reaction toward Japan, but a fundamental measure to deal with the issue. His point is that Korea first needs to restore its own historical legitimacy before blaming Japan. More specifically, he claims that Koreans should make Japan dare not look down on the Korean nation by correcting their own historical wrongs, such as the *ch'inilp'a* issue (April 9, 2001). *The Hangyoreh* also claimed that public opinion was now arguing for a cleansing of its own ugly past of *ch'inil* before demanding Japan to correct its history textbooks. Furthermore, the newspaper wrote that even Korean high school history textbooks were not much different from their Japanese counterparts in terms of hiding the nation's shameful past like pro-Japanese activities of its representative newspapers, the *Chosun Ilbo* and *Donga Ilbo*, during the Pacific War. The newspaper (April 20, 2001) twistedly said that "teaching the two newspapers as a nationalist newspaper in middle and high school textbooks" was the very Korean version of the distortion of history textbook.

A more specific discursive linkage among *Ch'inilp'a ch'öngsan*, Anti-*Chosun Ilbo*, and anti-Japanese sentiment was made in the political realm in 2001. The two Millennium Democratic Party (Saech'önyön Minjudang) lawmakers, Sin Kinam and Kim Huisön, attempted to redirect Koreans' anger toward Japan to the support of the media reform of the Kim Dae Jung administration. In the National Assembly, Sin stated that Koreans should take this issue as an opportunity for cleansing pro-Japanese collaborators, particularly targeting the *Chosun Ilbo*. His statement came out right after the *Chosun Ilbo* condemned the government for its "lukewarm" response to the textbook issue. In response, Sin argued that the "*ch'inil*" newspaper was disqualified from criticizing the government regarding Japan-related issues (*The Hangyoreh*, April 13, 2001). Similarly in July, Kim Huisön made a connection between the textbook issue and Japanese colonial legacies in society. Kim argued that the unbroken rule of *ch'inilp'a* in our society should hold the responsibility for Japan's repeated history

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25. Yi Yöngghüi (1994, 28-35) presented the similar view. He asked Koreans to be more self-reflective before blaming Japan's distortion of history or Japanese right wing politicians' bold remarks. Yi pointed out that Koreans themselves were also accountable for distorting history by allowing *ch'inilp'a* to reemerge after 1945 and by keeping biased descriptions of socialists based on Cold War ideology.



distortion. Therefore, she claimed that the erasure of the legacies of Japanese colonialism and straightening the national spirit in the society was the first step to change the Japanese people's incorrect perception of their country's history and imperialistic past (*The Hangyoreh*, July 19, 2001).

Although not as strong as anti-Japanese sentiment, anti-U.S. sentiment also played a critical role in reaffirming the *ch'inilp'a* discourse as a historical reality among Korean people. From the viewpoint of Korean progressives, the rise of anti-Americanism became a convenient excuse for denouncing traditionally pro-American attitude of the right-wing conservative as being anti-nationalistic. Even until in the early 1990s, anti-Americanism still remained a social taboo, emerging only in the realms of student activists, labor movement activists, and leftists or social activists. Yet, during the early the 2000s, Korean society witnessed a popular upsurge in anti-U.S. sentiment.

What made anti-Americanism a widely-supported public sentiment was a series of incidents in 2002. In the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games, Korean short track skater Kim Tongsŏng was deprived of his gold medal because of a controversial decision involving an over-action of the American skater Apolo Anton Ohno. The perceived biased judgment of the Olympic referees and the American skater's sarcastic remarks on the incident greatly hurt Koreans' national pride and provoked public anti-U.S. sentiment. After this, Koreans boycotted American products and created anti-U.S. websites on the Internet. Most of all, the Korean media began using the once-forbidden expression of "anti-Americanism" in a casual manner around this time. An even graver incident occurred in June provoked anti-American movement in the national level: a U.S. armored vehicle accidentally ran over two schoolgirls, killing them. As the two U.S. soldiers involved in the mishap were found innocent in the U.S. military court in November, anti-American sentiment reached its peak in the society. In November and December, Koreans held a series of nation-wide candlelight vigils to memorialize the two young girls, while protesting the unfair regulations of the Korea-U.S. SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement).<sup>26</sup> Also, around the same time, the U.S. request for the Korean military to participate in

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26. The full term is "Agreement under Article 4 of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States of American, Regarding Facilities and Areas and the Status of United States Armed Forces in the Republic of Korea."



the Iraq War fanned the flames of growing anti-U.S. sentiment. Until the early term of Roh Moo Hyun, the issue of dispatching troops to Iraq created friction in both the political and public arena, continuously feeding anti-U.S. sentiment among anti-war protesters and progressives.

The spread of anti-U.S. sentiment reshaped the ideological geography of Korea captivated under the ideology of anti-communism and pro-Americanism for more than a half-century. According to the historical narrative of *ch'iniŭp'a* discourse, the pro-Japanese collaborators turned into pro-Americans after 1945 and became strong supporters of post-1945 Korean authoritarian regimes. As anti-American sentiment was being publically accepted, the critical opinions on the post-1945 U.S. policies on the Korean peninsula could be voiced more easily without ideological censorship or psychological repulsion. Also, being pro-American was no longer simply equated to being "natural or loyalty to the blood ally," but rather began to be considered as "being against national interests" among young people and the progressives. In the early 2000s, anti-U.S. sentiment was at an all-time high in Korean society and this political climate was not particularly conducive to the friendly attitude of Korean right-wing conservatives toward the U.S. Additionally, the arrogance of the conservative majority GNP in the National Assembly made Koreans ready to accept the dogmatized historical narrative of *ch'iniŭp'a* as a reality: pro-Japanese collaborators = pro-U.S. authoritarian regime supporters = present Korean conservatives (such as GNP, conservative media, and reactionary/conservative groups). This kind of overly simplified classification, even though making a number of conscious people feel uncomfortable, was widely adopted and circulated in public rallies, media, and internet websites in the early 2000s.

As discussed above, the progressives were newly finding out the significance of the *ch'iniŭp'a* discourse as a rhetorical weapon against the conservatives since the late 1990s in a series of political events and civic movements, i.e., anti-Pak Chung Hee movement and Anti-*Chosun Ilbo* Movement. In society, strong anti-Japanese sentiment and repulsive feelings over national traitors supportive of the foreign ruler made the *ch'iniŭp'a* rhetoric a highly effective one, even crossing the ideological boundary among the public. In the while, the *ch'iniŭp'a* rhetoric in *The Hangyoreh* was rapidly transformed into the representative progressive discourse attacking the conservatives as the Kim Dae Jung administration, the first progressive government, was viewed to be in danger under the severe attack of powerful conservative media and the GNP.

## Epilogue

In early March of 2004, President Roh was impeached in the National Assembly on allegations of violating the Election Law. This unprecedented incident, viewed by many as an unjustifiable display of arrogance by majority opposition parties, stirred anger among a number of Koreans and made them fight against the decision (bill).<sup>27</sup> Specifically, *ch'inilp'a ch'ongsan* advocates viewed it as the very example that revealed the brutality and historical wrong that unpunished *ch'inilp'a* committed in society. Again to them, it proved the presented-ness of the *ch'inilp'a* discourse. On March 15, three days after the impeachment, thirty-six writers made the following announcement in *The Hangyoreh*:

When the impeachment passed, reminding us of the assassination of Kim Gu and the May 16 Military Coup, [we] witnessed that the ghost of *ch'inilp'a*—a remnant of twisted history—has not disappeared....in order to complete the last page of the 1987 Great Democratic Movement with the Korean people, we will cooperate with the cooperation of every living soul.  
(March 16, 2004)

Their statement shows us how the historical consciousness of the writers identified the current political wrong-doers, specifically the conservative party and the conservative media, with historical *ch'inilp'a*. Also, they saw the *ch'inilp'a ch'ongsan* as part of an unfinished democratization movement in Korean history. In other words, the completion of Korean democracy could only be obtainable if *ch'inilp'a* were to be eliminated.

Equally, progressive historians, such as Han Honggu and Sŏ Chungŏk, accused the *ch'inilp'a* as being the historical foundations of the ultra-right wing who passed the bill for impeachment. Han asserted that the fundamental reason for the impeachment was “democracy without cleansing past wrongdoings”

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27. Koreans began street rallies as well as an online signing movement from the very first day of the impeachment. In a few days, more than 550 civic groups, as well as general citizens, launched the All Citizens' Action for the Cancellation of the Impeachment and Eradication of Corrupted Politics (T'anhaek muhyo'pup'ae ch'ongch'i ch'ŏkkyŏl ŭl wihan pŏm-kungmin haengdong). The anti-impeachment rallies culminated in the candlelight vigil event on March 20 in which at least 100,000 people joined across the nation on the streets or online, and was the largest of its kind after the 1987 democratization movement.

(*kwagŏ ch'ŏngsan ōmnŭn minjuhwa*), relating it to the *ch'inilp'a* issue. That is to say, Korean reactionaries (*sugu seryŏk*), symbolized in such past issues as *ch'inil* and Yusin and also strong opposition to the Ch'inil Investigation Law,<sup>28</sup> were the same culprits who proposed the impeachment motion.<sup>29</sup>

Clearly witnessed in the above rhetoric, the conservatives were re-conceptualized as the *ch'inilp'a*, the historical existence of those who twisted proper historical progress of Korea. Within the same rhetorical structure, the right-left political confrontation under Kim and Roh administrations was equated with that between pro-Japanese anti-democratic elements (*pan-minju ch'inilp'a*) and national democratic camp (*minjok minju chinyŏng*). In particular, the rhetorical power of the discourse was displayed in full by overlapping and blurring the boundary between what happened in the past and what is occurring in the present. By materializing a historical narrative into historical reality successfully, the progressive camp was able to complete its long-awaited historical task of bringing collaborators to justice in present.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand on the real politics, the discourse played a critical role inbalancing the power, by curbing the power of the strong conservatives while promoting the political interests of the progressive party.

Although beginning with great distress and shock to Korean progressives,

28. The full title is the Special Law on the Investigation of the Truth on the Pro-Japanese Anti-national Collaboration Activities under Japanese Imperial Rule (Ilche kangjŏm ha ch'inil panminjok haengwi chinsang kyumyŏng tŭkpyŏl pŏp, 2004-2005). Its abbreviation is Ch'inil Investigation Law (Ch'inil chinsangkyumyŏn pŏp). The law was initially submitted to the National Assembly in August 2003. However, it took more than a half a year for the law to pass in the plenary session on March 2, 2004. It is partly because the GNP-led National Assembly and the Judicial and Legislation Committee (Pŏpche sabŏp wiwŏnhoe, JLC) rejected and demanded to alter the law several times.

29. For Han, see *The Hangyoreh*, Mar. 16, 2004; Mar. 27, 2004; and for Sŏ, see *The Hangyoreh*, Mar. 17, 2004.

30. There might be divergent opinions regarding how successfully *ch'inilp'a ch'ŏngsan* was achieved in present. In spite of hovering skepticism, the legislation of the Ch'inil Investigation Law and as a result, the ensuing activities of the Presidential Committee for the Inspection of Collaborations for Japanese Imperialism Presidential Investigation Committee (PCIC, 2005-2009) officialized and institutionalized the *ch'inilp'a* issue on the state-level. The PCIC investigated, named, and offered an historical re-evaluation on collaborators with state authority. In civic society, IRCA published *Who's Who Dictionary on Pro-Japanese Collaborators* in 2009 after more than eleven years' struggle, in which it defined *ch'inilp'a* and investigated their anti-national activities thoroughly. Also, a wide range of civic movements for *ch'inilp'a ch'ŏngsan*, i.e., opposing memorial projects on the figure with a collaboration charge, have been taking place nationally since the late 1990s.

the impeachment is what eventually brought them an unprecedented political victory. Throughout the anti-impeachment movement, the anger of many Koreans was projected onto the opposition parties passing the bill and conservative media backing up them.<sup>31</sup> Taking a step further, there was public outcry for voting out corrupt right wing parties in the coming election. As a result, the April 15 General Election, carried out under extremely unfavorable circumstances for conservative parties, ended with a great victory for progressive parties. The Uri Party, the progressive ruling party became the majority in legislation for the first time in history, critically weakening the position of the conservative camp in society.<sup>32</sup> *The Hangyoreh* (May 17, 2004) celebrated this election as the very completion of Korean democracy, which they believed had been delayed since 1987. Propped by the victory, returned President Roh was able to pursue further political reforms with the help of the strong support in the legislation.<sup>33</sup>

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31. According to the results of nine media investigations right after the impeachment, negative opinion hovered up to 66.7-76.2% and a significant percentage of Koreans (54-64%) believed that oppositional parties were responsible for this incident (*The Hangyoreh*, March 15, 2004).

32. The election made Uri Party, the progressive ruling party, the majority (153 seats out of 300). Also, the Democratic Labor Party (Minodang), a leftist party, won ten seats for the first time.

33. For example, there were four reform legislations (*4-dae kaehyŏk ippŏp*) that symbolically showed the orientation for further democratic reform of the Uri Party as well as the president.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this article lies in examining how *The Hangyoreh* took advantage of the discourse on pro-Japanese collaborators (*ch'inilp'a damnon*) for its progressive political stance in the post-democratization period from 1988 to 2002. As one of the representative progressive media of the day, *The Hangyoreh* took the initiative in re-introducing the once-forbidden topic of collaborators to society and claimed to have resettled the issue in present after Korea's democratization in 1987. Furthermore, the newspaper utilized the discourse of *ch'inilp'a*, which reminds a negative memory of the failure of judging anti-national traitors right after Korea's liberation in 1945 and also "dire historical outcomes" that the rule of those unpurged collaborators brought into the development of post-1945 Korean history. By closely analyzing its editorials and reports, this article attempts to illuminate how the *ch'inilp'a* discourse in *The Hangyoreh* played a leading role in protecting, fostering, and furthering democratic progress, which Korean progressives thought was under the constant challenge during the post-democratization period.

**Keywords:** *ch'inilp'a*, *ch'inilp'a* discourse, pro-Japanese collaboration, resettling the past wrongs