

Article

An Analysis of Discussions on “Korea is the Second Ireland”: Focused on John Dewey

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Introduction

Korea is symbolically referred to as “the land of the morning calm,” “hermit kingdom,” “Asia’s small dragon,” “the light of the East,” “the country of courteous people in the East,” “the dagger pointed at Japan,” and more. Such names historically symbolize Korea: some reflect foreigners’ standpoints; some reflect Koreans’ expectations; some represent both of these; and some have long been used while others have recently begun to be used.

In addition to the forementioned names referring to Korea, there are yet other very interesting references to Korea that have been used by many people for more than one century. These include “Ireland of Asia,” “Ireland of the East,” and “the second Ireland.” It is uncertain who started using these expressions, but over the past century, Korea has long been compared with Ireland by many people. With the diversity of Irish cultures, the Irish people and their history are evaluated in a multitude of ways. Therefore, these identifications of Korea with Ireland must vary in meaning according to periods and the people who used such expressions.

Intellectuals broadly compared Korea with Ireland from 1905 when the country actually lost sovereignty to Japan until the end of 1920s immediately after Ireland was given an autonomous right by the U.K. Foreigners as external observers, Koreans as the internal party, and Japanese as a powerful neighbor were all inclined to use the identification of Korea with Ireland.

John Dewey, an outstanding 20th century American philosopher of education who has exercised a near-absolute influence on the educational thoughts and practices of modern Korea, was among those who compared Korea with Ireland, although this fact was not well known. Dewey inhabited Asia from February 1919 to July 1921. He first visited East Asia on a short trip, but ended up staying in the region for a longer period. Nonetheless, he did not visit Korea under the colonial rule of Japan, presumably due to several reasons that are still unclear (Lee 2013, 129-31).

Dewey’s perception of Korea or the then typical perception of East Asia in relation to Korea was, “Korea is the second Ireland.” This paper’s objective is to analyze the concept of “the second Ireland,” which Dewey used to explain Korea and its people. Identical and similar expressions before and after the era of Dewey are compared for the purpose of understanding the meaning of Dewey’s perception of Korea better.

Various Discussions on “the Ireland of Asia” in Dewey’s Days Lillias Horton Underwood’s *“The Irish People of the East”*

It is generally recognized that Korea began to be identified with Ireland starting from Korea’s annexation to Japan in 1910. That is to say, the comparison of Korea with Ireland is understood as the product of colonial rule (Lee 2005, 69). However, some people focused on the similarity between the two nations before 1910. One of them is Lillias Horton Underwood (1851-1921).¹ Born in the state of New York, U.S., she was attending a medical college in Chicago, when, at the request of the Presbyterian Mission Committee, she visited Korea in 1888. A year after she moved to Korea, she married Horace Grant Underwood, a British American, who then engaged in education and missionary activities in Korea. Horace Grant Underwood visited Korea in 1885 and became the first American Presbyterian missionary in Korea, and in 1915 established Gyeongsin School, the former school of present-day Yonsei University. He was born in London in 1859 just after a great famine broke out in Ireland. He later emigrated to the U.S. in 1872 right after the independence movement began in Ireland. Horace Grant Underwood’s childhood experience and thoughts were molded in London, the main area rampant with diverse voices during that period of confusion and change. This presumably influenced the image about Ireland held by Lillias Horton Underwood.

In her book titled *Fifteen Years among the Top-knots; Or, Life in Korea*,² published in 1904, Lillias Horton Underwood stated, “Koreans are the East’s Irish people.”

To the writer it seems that there is a close parallel between the Irishman and the Korean. Both are happy-go-lucky, improvident, impulsive, warm-hearted, hospitable, generous. Take either in the midst of his native bogs, untutored, without incentive,—he is thoughtless, careless, dirty; drinking, smoking and gambling away his time with apparently little ambition for anything better. Remove this same man, be he Irishman of Great Britain, or Irishman of the East-Korea—place him in a stimulating environment, educate him, instill the principles of Protestant Christianity, give him a chance to make a good living, and a certainty that he may keep his own

1. It is uncertain that she was the first person to compare Korea to Ireland.

2. This book was first published in Korean in 1984, and a second revised edition was published in 2010.

earnings, and you will find a better citizen, a more brilliant scholar, a finer Christian. Look at the men of North Ireland and tell me if this is not so? (Underwood 1904, 273-74)

Lillias Horton Underwood's viewpoint of Ireland contains several aspects. First, Irish people are optimistic, emotional, and warm-hearted. Second, they enjoy drinking, smoking, and gambling in which they could barely pull themselves away without external help. Third, they are able to grow into positive citizens like the British by utilizing outside assistance. Both the Irish people and Koreans have enough inherent character to be modernized if they would accept education and Christian benefits, and this evaluation was seen as positive. However, her insistence that external help is essential for obtaining modern civility reflects the West's strong racialism at the time.

Most Westerners who visited Korea in the late 19th century to the early 20th century held a negative perception of Koreans, Korean culture, and Korean politics. They viewed Korean society's backwardness as attributable to Koreans' negative mindsets or Korean political leaders' incompetence or corruption. Few indicated the problems of external environments surrounding Korea, in particular, imperial expansionism, and Lillias Horton Underwood was no exception to this viewpoint.

Westerners held a mostly negative evaluation of and outlook for Korea. Yet, Lillias Horton Underwood presented a positive prospect for Koreans' future. However, her differentiated evaluation of Koreans was based on the then perception of the superiority of Westerners and Western civilizations, and this was not greatly different from the prevalent imperial racism at the time. Lillias Horton's comparative discussions of North Ireland and South Ireland exemplify her distinctive world view characterized by racism and imperialism. She emphasized that, unlike South Ireland's people who claimed independence, North Ireland's people who willingly accepted Britain's help were independent, did not drink, were very religiously faithful, were diligent, and made great efforts to learn (Underwood 1904, 274).

Lillias Underwood's symbolic expression of "Irish people of the East" clearly includes a strong racialism based on racial inferiority and superiority, and imperialism that supports the legitimacy of the West's ruling of the non-West. Such Underwood-type inclinations whereby Korea's situations were explained based on Koreans' unique ethnicity, and whereby the future of Korea

was discussed later on appeared in the descriptions of Korea’s history frequently and in diverse ways.

Yun Chi-ho’s “The Ireland of Asia”

As the saying “Don’t bark if you cannot bite” goes, Yun Chi-ho (1865-1945), who demanded Koreans under the colonial rule should increase their capabilities rather than unwisely conduct independence movements, is seen as a representative pro-Japanese figure. In December of 1919, the same year the March 1 Independence Movement was staged, he read the History of Ireland.³ Based on his understanding of Ireland, he compared Korea to Ireland, and Japan to the U.K.

He saw that Japan’s crimes and mistakes it committed in the process of ruling Korea, perfectly resembled those committed by the U.K. in the process of ruling Ireland. However, Yun Chi-ho (1986, 7:433) argued that Japan should not imitate the U.K., for three reasons: (1) Korea was annexed to Japan not as a conquered country while England took Ireland by a series of conquests. (2) England had no Ireland to act as a warning or lesson while Japan has. (3) Ireland had no neighbor nearer than England while Korea is nearer to China and Russia than to Japan. Yun Chi-ho saw that one state’s violence and oppression against another, e.g., done by the U.K. to Ireland, by Russia to Poland, and by Japan to Korea, would fail. At the same time, he was very critical of the independence movements by the Irish people and Koreans. In October 1920, Irish independence activist Terrence McSweeney, imprisoned in the U.K., died after a 74-day hunger strike. At this news, Yun Chi-ho (1987, 8:174) compared this incident to Korean Confucian scholar Choe Ik-hyun who in 1907 died at Tsushima Island after a hunger strike, saying, “Are the Irish imitating the Koreans or is England imitating Japan?”

To Yun Chi-ho, the U.K.’s ruling of Ireland was not a success but a failure. Thus, to him, it was a tragedy that Korea would become the Ireland of Asia, while Japan would become the U.K. of Asia. Yun Chi-ho saw that if Japan would implement policies based on justice, kindness, and fairness in

3. The exact author or title of the book was not known.

Korea, Koreans would love and respect Japan. However, he was convinced that if Japan used injustice, oppression, and indelicacy, Korea would become the Ireland of Japan (Yun 1987, 8:106). To Yun Chi-ho, Ireland was nothing but a failed example of colonial rule, and it was not desirable for Korea to become the Ireland of Asia.

To Yun Chi-ho, the most exemplary model that Korea should follow was Norway. He saw that Norway's history of change was the most interesting example wherein a strong national instinct toward an independent existence was clearly shown. According to his analysis, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden were linguistically, culturally, and geographically much closer than Korea and Japan were, and Norway was given very generous treatment by Sweden. Nonetheless, Norway either would not allow itself to be merged into Denmark or Sweden, or did not intend to do so; thus, it ultimately conducted independence activities, and successfully established an independent nation in 1905. This point was stressed by Yun Chi-ho (1987, 8:111-12). Norwegians were ruled by Denmark for over 400 years, but they did not become Danish. In this fact, he saw Korea's hope and expressed the following.

If Norway could not and would not live annexed to Denmark or Sweden—
if 400 years or more failed to Danify the Norwegians, it's useless to expect
the Koreans to be Japanized. (Yun 1987 8:112)

From the Norwegian example, Yun Chi-ho did not believe that Korea would be permanently Japanized although it would recognize Japan's colonial situations and learn Japanese superiority.

To Yun Chi-ho, it was a tragedy for Korea to become the Ireland of Asia, and it was a hope for Korea to become the Norway of Asia. In comparing Ireland and Korea, Yun Chi-ho intended to argue that he tried to indicate the problematic nature of the British-style assimilated colonial rule, as well as the unreality of some Koreans' independence movements.

Rhee Syngman's "The Ireland of Asia"

Prior to Yun Chi-ho, Rhee Syngman gave attention to Ireland. In 1912, directly after the so-called 105 People Incident, Rhee traveled to the U.S. In

February 1913, he visited Hawaii, where until 1939 he conducted a variety of activities in education, press, and religion among other areas. One of his primary activities there was the publication of the Korean Pacific Magazine in a bid to conduct media activities. This magazine, beginning with its inaugural issue in 1913, handled colonial cases including those of Ireland. Rhee's attitude towards Ireland, as disclosed in the Korean Pacific Magazine, was very consistent. He had a favorite attitude towards the autonomous movement of Ireland which began in 1870 (Oh 2012, 70). In his 1914 writing titled “Ireland's Autonomous Movement,” Rhee Syngman gave a positive evaluation of Ireland's Autonomous Law that was proposed and discussed by the U.K.

Ireland will set up its own Parliament to handle its affairs and to enact its own laws, while the British Parliament determines usual political affairs. This nominally causes Ireland to still be annexed to the UK, but in actuality to become an independent nation. (*The Korean Pacific Magazine*, April, 1914)

Unlike Yun Chi-ho's perspective, to Rhee Syngman, the fact that Korea would become the Ireland of the East was a stark reality for Korea, but it was a desired future for its independence.

To both Yun Chi-ho and Rhee Syngman, the “Ireland of the East” is an interesting incident wherein symbolic and significance contradicts each other.

Yanaihara Tadao's “The Ireland of Japan”

Yanaihara Tadao (1893-1961), a pioneer in Japan's colonial politics, is well known not only for his research on Taiwan, Manchuria, and Korea under Japanese colonial rule, but also for his research on India and Ireland under the rule of the U.K. He was forced to resign from his professorship with Tokyo University because of his persistent criticism of Japan's colonial policy through the late second half of the 1930s. However, in the 1950s after the war, he served as president of Tokyo University.

Yanaihara is one of the few Japanese intellectuals who, throughout the entire Japanese colonial period, criticized Japanese colonial policy. Thus, he is known to Koreans as a Korean-friendly civil colony-policy scholar (G. Lee

2004, 178). In particular, he is famous for criticizing Japan's assimilation colonial policy. Yanaihara saw that it was impossible to assimilate Korea into Japan through suppressive reign policies since Korea was historically and culturally different from Japan. He advocated autonomous colonial policy instead of assimilation policy. Specifically, he proposed that autonomous rights should be granted to Koreans by establishing the Korean Council. Of course, what Yanaihara criticized was Japan's method of colonizing Korea, but did not deny or criticize Japan's colonial rule in and of itself. He saw that Korea was not prepared for independence, and thus it would be most beneficial for Korea to develop under the Japanese rule. Yanaihara held the viewpoint that it would be theoretically impossible to maintain permanent colonial rule, so he acknowledged that Korea would achieve independence sometime in the future, albeit not in the near future. Contributing to the formation of his thoughts as a Christian and liberalist were his Tokyo University teachers, Nitobe Inazo and Yoshino Sakuzo, among other figures. Yanaihara succeeded the Tokyo University professorship of Nitobe who in 1920 was appointed as the Deputy Secretary General of the Secretariat of the League of Nations. For two years beginning at the end of that year, he conducted research tours of the U.K., Germany, France, and the U.S. During his trips, he visited Ireland in July 1921 right after the independence war, where he witnessed the tragic aftermath of that war.

Yanaihara drew Koreans' attention again after the colonial era, when a scholar, representing Korea regarding research about Ireland, argued in her book about the history and literature of Ireland. Published in 2002, the scholar contended in her book that Korea and Ireland resemble each other in many aspects, and introduced Yanaihara's expression of "Korea is the Ireland of Japan" (Park 2002, 17). Afterwards, Yanaihara began to be noted as a key originator who identified Korea with Ireland (T. Lee 2004, 98).

Yanaihara, in his thesis titled "Ireland and Korea," describes the two nations' similarities as follows:

People of our country usually compare Korea to Ireland. Considering that Korea has long engaged in historical exchanges with our nation, that in ancient times, it was more advanced than our nation culturally and religiously, that it was several times intruded by our nation's troops, that Koreans are racially similar to but not identical with Japanese, and that

Korea is adjacent to our nation, thus having close economic and defense relations with our nation, it is not necessarily inadequate to compare what Korea is to our nation with what Ireland is to the U.K. (Yanaihara 1937, 654-55)

Yanaihara emphasized these similarities of the two nations, presumably because his criticism of Japanese colonial policy and alternative solutions were all based on the case of Ireland. Yanaihara reminded us of the fact that although the Irish people use English, they were not mentally assimilated into the U.K., and strongly and persistently criticized Japan's assimilation education pursued in Korea. Yanaihara's proposal to grant political rights to Koreans was also drawn on the U.K.'s new policy for ruling Ireland. Yanaihara discovered some similarities in relations between Korea and Japan, and between Ireland and the U.K., and hoped that Korea would become the Ireland of Japan, but he did not mention the unique ethnicity of the Irish or Koreans, or the commonalities of the two nations. He did not endorse the then prevalent racial viewpoint that a particular ethnicity exists with a particular nation as a fixed form (T. Lee 2004, 116). He was opposed to the unfounded fact at the time that the Irish ethnicity was characterized by laziness, uncleanness, drinking habits, conspiracy, and insincerity, and that the Irish tragedy was attributed to such ethnicity. At the time Koreans' laziness and dependent inclination were not unique Korean characteristics, but temporary ones brought about by feudalistic explorations. He was interested not in the two nations' similarities overall, but in their similarities in relation to their respective colonial powers.

This attitude of Yanaihara's was in stark contrast to those of most contemporary and pre-era Japanese intellectuals who supported assimilation policies. Advocates of assimilation policy, such as Shimada Saburo and Ebina Danjo, and those like Yoshino Sakuzo influenced by them, held several common views about their attitude towards Korea. First, Korea lagged behind in terms of civilizations, and Koreans were a corrupt people who had no passion for independence and no autonomous ability. Second, Japanese people could not endure the pain and agony of Koreans who were similar and akin to Japanese. Third, civilized Japan had the mission to enlighten uncivilized Korea. And fourth, to make Koreans permanently happy, Koreans should be Japanized through assimilation policies (Han 2004, 137). They aimed to implement an assimilation policy to eventually mold the relation between Korea and Japan

into one like the relation between Ireland (finally becoming a self-governing dominion) and the colonial power U.K. Japanese democratic intellectuals accepted the dual structure of democracy internally, and imperialism externally. In this respect, attention needs to be drawn to the fact that Yanaihara's perception of Korea, which was disclosed through his expression of "Korea is the Ireland of Japan," had very scant or weak traces of racial characteristics or the dual structure.

Discussions on Ireland by Korea's press under Japanese rule

While Yanaihara used Ireland as a model to confirm the necessity of appropriate colonial policy or autonomous policy, Ireland was at the same time quoted as a means to criticize such policies. Colonized Korea's press took the latter position. Ireland was a prime example for both advocates and opponents of colonial rule or dominion policy because the country's history and situations were complex and polysemous.

Dong-A Ilbo and *Chosun Ilbo* newspapers took a great interest in Ireland. From April 9, 1919, eight days after its inauguration, to April 21, 1919, *Dong-A Ilbo* ran a feature about the origin of Ireland's problems. Later, until 1922, *Dong-A Ilbo* ran detailed articles of how Ireland established a dominion (Lee 2005, 74). *Dong-A Ilbo* saw that although the Irish chose reality over the ideal, they did not abandon their independence. Regarding the proposed dominion for Korea, both *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* took a critical position. After Ireland obtained a dominion status in 1922 after it negotiated with the U.K. and acknowledged the British queen's rule, the Irish-style autonomy was persistently proposed for Korea, but *Chosun Ilbo* expressed its critical position regarding such a proposal.

Around the time of Gimi, amid Korea's fierce national movements, a Japanese politician mentioned a dominion of Korea, and this is proposed because such politicians always compare Korea to Ireland. Thus far, even some Koreans have suggested compromised movements or compromised schemes, and this comes because such Koreans always compare Korea and Ireland. Either way, Korean and Irish problems are always associated and compared to each other. However, if the two nations' problems are regarded

as the same, it would definitely be wrong. (*Chosun Ilbo*, November 14, 1926)

As such, *Chosun Ilbo* was opposed to discussing similarities between Korea and Ireland with the aim of supporting or empathizing with the dominion policy, but it saw Ireland's efforts for independence as positive. *Chosun Ilbo* reported that Ireland was not satisfied with a dominion status, but expected the country to achieve independence like Denmark, Sweden, and Norway (*Chosun Ilbo*, November 15, 1926). The media's such efforts to establish Ireland as a model for Korea's independence continued until the second half of the 1920s. For example, after Lee Jeong-seop visited Dublin where he met Jim Larkin, the Communist Party leader, he wrote a series of articles on the World Tour—“From Joseon to Joseon” in the *Jungoe Ilbo* newspaper from February 18 to 23, 1928 (Lee 2005, 78).

Korea's press position under the colonial rule was that although Korea should not imitate Ireland as it was, Korea should learn from Ireland, which was expected to achieve independence in the near future.

Dewey's “Korea is the second Ireland”

John Dewey (1859-1952)⁴ was an American psychologist, philosopher, educator, social critic, and political activist. He is a well-known American progressive education philosopher, and one of the creators of pragmatism underlying the American thought. He has also significantly influenced the theories and practice of 20th century American education. Dewey, who earned a Ph.D. in 1884 from Johns Hopkins University, the incubator of American pragmatism, lectured on education and psychology at the University of Chicago after teaching at the University of Michigan and the University of Minnesota. To practice his educational philosophy, he established and ran the Laboratory School, so called Dewey School in 1896. Educational principles that Dewey introduced at this school were to base education on children's interests, to respect children's experiences for education, and to see school as a

4. Dewey, born in Burlington, Vermont, was raised in a middle class environment in a community consisting of natural born Americans and newly settled immigrants from Ireland and French Quebec.

miniature of society. This laboratory school's reputation and his vital research activities made pragmatism the American thought, and turned Dewey into a well-known American education philosopher. After he moved to Columbia University in 1904, he also achieved a vast quantity of research on knowledge theory, metaphysics, and education, and taught pragmatism-based education theories to students who came from China, Japan, India, and other nations around the world. In 1916, when the First World War was at its peak, he wrote *Democracy and Education*, which is his classic book that summarizes his education thought.

After the First World War ended, in February 1919 when discussions were actively being made to reshape a new world order, John Dewey visited Japan at the invitation of his students (Lee 2013, 114). At that time in Japan, a new movement in pursuit of democratization was rising across society under the liberalist thought of so-called "Taisho Democracy." Dewey's *Democracy and Education* and many other books had been translated into Japanese and published thereafter. It was the time when, as one of the First World War winning members states, Japan actively engaged in pursuing external movements to obtain its greatest interests in the reshaping of the post-war world order. In particular, in January 1915, when the First World War was at its peak, in order to secure interests and rights from China, Japan offered the so-called twenty-one demands,⁵ which the Chinese government accepted. This led to anti-Japanese sentiments being spread among the Chinese.

Dewey's visit to Japan was disappointing to both Japanese intellectuals and himself. Christian leader Uchimura Kanzo, philosopher Nishida Kitaro, and other famous Japanese intellectuals expressed disappointment with Dewey's lectures, and audiences at his lectures rapidly dwindled. His first lecture drew an audience of over one thousand people, but his eighth lecture drew just 30-40 attendants. This represented Japanese intellectuals' response to Dewey. For his part, Dewey witnessed that in Japan, the democratic spirit and liberalist spirit were overwhelmed by the spirit of worshipping the Emperor, authoritarianism, or patriotism, and expressed great disappointment (Lee 2013, 116).

5. 21 demands include the recognition of Japan's rights to railways and mines in Shandong Province, the establishment of Japan's leased territory in Manchuria, and the guaranteeing of Japan's rights to use China's seaports, islands, and harbors.

After finishing his visit in Japan, Dewey stayed in China for over two years from May 1919 to July 1921, during which time he conducted diverse activities such as lectures at Peking University, Nanjing Normal University, etc., visits to education fields, and speeches to the general public. At that time, China was pursuing the so-called new cultural movement by dispelling external influences and maintaining Chinese sovereignty, and by internally shedding old customs and constructing a new society based on sciences and democracy. Many of the new cultural movement leaders were Dewey's students or followers of his ideas, such as Hushi, Taoxingzi, Jiangmenglin, Guobingyuan, and Caiyuanpei. Thus, his visit to China brought about very satisfactory results to both Chinese intellectuals and Dewey. He commented on his visit to China, saying it was “The most interesting and intellectually useful trip among trips he has made thus far,” and hence “the most valuable experience” in his life (Lee 2013, 125).

A review of articles and essays written by Dewey from 1919 to 1921 reveals that his interest in East Asia was very strong. Among them, overwhelming are his analyses of Chinese and Japanese politics and economy and of U.S.'s politics of East Asia, and proposals of new policies.⁶ Through writings, speeches, and lectures, he left very diverse and ample analyses of China and Japan, Chinese and Japanese people, and Chinese culture and Japanese culture. However, regrettably, Dewey did not leave a single article on Koreans and Korean culture. Thus, it is very difficult to properly understand his perception of Korea. His interest in colonized Korea was presumably not great. It is therefore necessary to reconstruct his perception of Korea based on several quotes on Korea that he made when discussing China, Japan, and East Asia.

The following is the most clear and perspicuous writing about Korea that he wrote when he was in China. In his article titled “Is China a Nation?” that

6. *An Analysis of John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, a collection of Dewey's writings which was edited by Jo Ann Boydston in 1983, reveals the degree of his interest in East Asia. In Volume 11, a collection of his 33 essays published in the period between 1918 and 1919, 10 essays concern Japan, China, and East Asia. Volume 12, a collection of articles published in 1920 while he stayed in Asia, offers eight speeches delivered in Japan, three lectures in Japan, and seven essays about China. Only 4 essays are not related to East Asia. In Volume 13, a collection of articles written in 1921 when he concluded his visit in East Asia, as many as 23 essays concern East Asia. In particular, 19 essays concern China, so his interest in China was very great. Other 20 essays concern other themes such as philosophies and American politics.

he wrote in 1920 and published in *New Public* in 1921, he stated:

Effort to take advantage of absence of national unity to subject a country is likely to end in creating a national consciousness. Korea is a striking example. Politically corrupt and divided, with no national political consciousness, less than a generation of alien rule combined with industrial and educational changes designed wholly to subserve the interests of the foreign power, have almost converted Korea into a second Ireland. (Dewey 1921a, 74)

This writing is short yet Dewey's perception of Korea is systematic, clear, and implicative.

First, Korea was a corrupt nation before Japan ruled it. Reasons for Korea's fall and colonization are diverse. Some scholars argue that in the era of the Western powers occupying the East, external powers' political and economic ambitions for expanding their influence on Korea constituted such a reason. Other scholars argue that Korea's closed policies, adopted since the 17th century, constituted a reason as well. Still, some scholars argue that Confucian ideologies, which delayed Korea's modernism, were to blame. More importantly than these external and internal factors, the Korean political leaders and ruling elite at the time were incompetent and corrupt. The Korean dynasty's improprieties and corruption could not be excluded from the discussion regarding the history of its fall. The Korean dynasty's political corruption was a distinct reason for the country's fall and for leading to imperial Japan's intrusion. Japan argued that since politically corrupt Korean political leaders were not able to achieve Korea's national unity or independence in the face of Western imperialism, Korea's long-time neighbor, Japan, should defend Korea's independence. This was the logic for why Korea's fall into Western imperialist powers would threaten Japan's security. Dewey indicated political corruption as the first characteristic of Korea. His thought presumably was influenced by then Japanese colonial policy scholars, who argued that it would be inevitable to colonize Korea, and who supported the advantages of colonial rule. Dewey was also likely influenced by Nitobe Inazo, who provided him with boarding and lodging while he stayed in Japan.

Second is Korea's political division. Political division is different from corruption, and in and of itself it is not necessarily a problem. Diverse debates

and conflicts among individuals or groups that differ in political opinions are a common practice in democratic society. At that time, confrontations between liberalists and conservatives in Japan, confrontations and conflicts between new cultural movement activists and conventionalists in China, and conflicts concerning the dominion of Ireland in the U.K. were all political divisions. However, these divisions represented normal political conflicts in democratic nations. However, under the circumstances of internal poverty and external threats, excessive political conflicts, in particular, divisions related to trifling interests, could adversely affect the nation's fate as corruption could. This was the situation that Korea experienced and Japan observed towards the end of the 19th century. This, too, was the pretext of Japan's intrusion of Korea, and was part of Dewey's knowledge of Korea that he learned from Japanese intellectuals. While Dewey focused on Korea's political corruption and conflicts being the cause of its colonization, he did not pay attention to the fact that the ruling ambitions of external powers including the U.S. were the cause of Korea's internal conflicts and corruption.

Third is Koreans' absence of political consciousness. Diverse opinions exist concerning the time at which Koreans started to have a nationalistic identity or nationalistic consciousness. Most Korean historians argue that before Japanese colonial rule, Koreans had already a nationalistic identity and state identity. This is to say that Koreans shared the same language, culture, and history, and that as they continued to experience intrusions by the surrounding nations, they already had considerable levels of nationalistic identity and state identity before the end of the 19th century. Such evidence is that Koreans massively resisted the Western imperialist powers' intrusions and Japan's colonization in the second half of the 19th century. On the other hand, many Japanese politicians and historians argued that the Korean populace under the Korean dynasty was merely the target of exploitation by the corrupt dynasty, and that Koreans were barbaric void of any political consciousness. This led to arguments that Koreans began to develop their political consciousness just under Japanese colonial rule, and this opinion was adopted by some Western scholars or intellectuals, of which Dewey was among.

Fourth was that Japanese colonial rule, in a shorter-than-a-generation period, brought about many changes to Korea's industries and education. Dewey paid attention to the fact that Japan's rule of Korea brought about many positive changes to the latter's industries and education, namely, the

infrastructures of modernization. During Japanese colonial rule, this argument was supported and emphasized by most Japanese intellectuals, Western experts on East Asia, and some pro-Japan Korean intellectuals. Dewey's understanding was that not only the economic development and educational growth of Korea, but also Japan's colonization of Korea brought about the integrity and independence of Korea (Dewey 1919b, 179; 1919c, 193). In other words, Dewey endorsed Japan's reasoning of colonization that Japan prevented Korea's national division attempts by Western imperialist powers. After Korea's liberation, critical historical analyses of the widespread arguments on Japan's colonial rule across worldwide academia, as well as such potential historical analyses eclipsed by nationalistic historical analyses prevalent in the academia in newly independent nations like Korea are recently being revived again into the colonial modernity arguments, thus triggering many controversies. This corresponds to the same context of revisionism by which the British and Irish academia are now seeking after a new interpretation of Irish history under British rule. In Korea, arguments are currently being made concerning analyses of the colonial-period industrial development and education growth as the background behind the one-generation-period-achievements of industrialization and democratization in particular. In the case of the U.K., new analyses were offered that all historical sufferings sustained by Ireland under British rule were not necessarily attributable to poor British colonial policies alone, and that under British colonial rule, Ireland achieved development in certain areas (Kim 2003, 248). Dewey acknowledged that in the colonial rule period, investments in Korea's industrial development and education were made for the benefits of Japan, and nonetheless emphasized that such colonial policy developed Korea.

Lastly, Dewey emphasized that Koreans developed their nationalistic consciousness due to Japanese colonial rule. This means that while Koreans' lack of nationalistic consciousness enabled Japan's colonization of Korea, Japan's rule of Korea finally awakened Koreans' dormant nationalistic consciousness. Presumably, the Koreans' March 1 Independence Movement, which broke out immediately after Dewey arrived in Japan, enabled such his analysis. Until Dewey visited Japan, the analysis was overwhelming that not only Japanese but also Western academia saw Japan's rule of Korea progressing well. However, the development of the March 1 Independence Movement and Japan's cruel response to that led the international society and Japanese intellectuals to newly

criticize Japan’s method of ruling, and enabled the activation of exploration of new colonial policies. Such proponents included Dewey’s friend Nitobe Inazo, and his student Yanaihara Tadao. At that time, Dewey visited Japan, and engaged in close exchanges with Japanese liberalist intellectuals who led the criticism of Japanese colonial rule and efforts to explore corresponding alternative solutions. What most distinctively made Dewey compare Korea and Ireland was the ruled people’s nationalistic consciousness growth under colonial rule. Political corruption and conflicts were very likely part of the characteristics that Dewey understood Korea and Ireland shared. However, the more important commonality—this being the decisive factor for calling Korea as the second Ireland—is the Irish’s ceaseless independence movements under British rule, and Koreans’ resistance movements against Japanese rule. Dewey tried to explain the relationship between China and Japan, citing the example of Korea. In other words, Dewey saw that if Japan pushes ahead with twenty-one demands in its ambition to rule China, it would further grow Chinese’s nationalistic consciousness and would eventually face huge resistance.

The background behind Dewey calling Korea the second Ireland was seemingly his knowledge of East Asia. Dewey (1919a, 169) acknowledged that as, a long time ago, Ireland transferred civilizations to Britain, Korea transferred its civilizations to Japan one thousand years ago. This was one of commonalities of Korea and Ireland that Yanaihara emphasized.

To wrap these arguments up, there were two bases having been used in identifying Korea with Ireland. The first one is similarities in ethnicity adopted mainly by Lillias H. Underwood. Another one is similarities in historical, geographical, and actual relation with the colonizer, respectively with Japan and England. While Yun Chi-ho, Rhee Syngman, and Korea’s newspapers focused on actual relation, Yanaihara Tadao was interested in historical and geographical relations between two nations. John Dewey, interestingly, mentioned both.

The meaning contained in their identifications is divided into two, negative and positive. It was understood by Rhee Syngman good for Korea to become the Ireland of Asia. Yanaihara also recognized that it is good for both if Korea become Ireland of Asia and Japan England of Asia. To become the second Ireland, for Lillias H. Underwood, Yun Chi-ho and most of Korea’s newspapers, was read negative. For Dewey who paid attention to Irish people’s endless resistance to the rule of England, it was not comfortable as well as

desirable to watch ceaseless independence movement in Korea.

Table 1. Comparison: foundations and connotations of identification of Korea with Ireland

	foundations of identification (similarities in)	connotations of identification
Lillias H. Underwood	ethnicity	negative
Yun Chi-ho	relation with colonizer	negative
Rhee Syngman	relation with colonizer	positive
Yanaihara Tadao	relation with colonizer	positive
Korea's newspapers	relation with colonizer	negative
John Dewey	ethnicity & relation with colonizer	negative

“The Ireland of the East” after Dewey

In the early 1940s, when the Second World War was nearing an end, Korea’s provisional government’s continued request for an international approval of it was rejected by the U.S. government, primarily because of Koreans’ perceived divisiveness. John Hodge, the chief commander of the occupation force, who visited Korea after the Second World War and led the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea for three years, referred to Koreans as “Irish people of the East,” discussing Koreans’ characteristics of hostility. (Yoon 2005, 67)

Attempts to explain modern-time Korean society’s characteristics in relation to the nationalistic similarity between Koreans and Irish people have continued until recently. When Lucian Pye, a famous American Asian-studies specialist, explained the causes of political crises and confusion that Korea repeatedly undergoes, he described the popular image of Korea as the “Ireland of the East.” He indicated Koreans’ nationalistic similarities with the Irish: first, they are overall deferential to authority. Second, Koreans individually are combative defenders of their rights. Third, they have a culture of taking the risks created by their ethnicity (Pye 1985, 216). Francis Fukuyama (1999, 215) saw that Korea was nicknamed “Oriental Ireland” because Korea, after the Korean War, staged more political strife, and such evaluation is based on the nationalistic uniqueness and similarity of Koreans and the Irish.

It has been seen as persuasive to argue that Ireland and Korea and the Irish and Koreans are similar and that Korea can be compared as the Ireland of the East, although such arguments vary in meaning according to speakers. The most authoritative Ireland researcher in Korea, Park Jihang, expressed in her famous book titled *Sad Ireland*, “Koreans are very similar to the Irish.” This argument is based on commonalities in their history and ideological world. She cited the following five reasons for why “Korea is the Ireland of the East.” First, they hold a blind belief that they are the most genuine, pure, and outstanding people. Second, they believe that their history is the most miserable and tragic in the world. Third, they suffered from tribulations due to outside powers. Fourth, they are geographically located in a peripheral manner; Korea is situated at the eastern end of the Eurasia continent, while Ireland is situated at the western end of it. Lastly, they are known for their underlying suppressed emotions (Park 2002, 19). Park Jihang’s insistence on the commonalities of the ethnicities of Koreans and the Irish, on the distinctive characteristics and similarities of Korean history and Irish history, and on the geographical similarity of the two nations is being criticized in many ways within academia, but the general population is strongly driven or inclined to describe Korea as the Ireland of Asia. Such a description is being widely accepted.

Eamonn McKee, the Irish ambassador to Korea (2009-2013), had heard the saying before he came to Seoul in 2009 that Koreans are the Irish of Asia. McKee stated that he at first thought that the Japanese and the British had fabricated such an expression to mock the Irish and Koreans, who tend to be emotional, to enjoy leisure, and to be hard to govern. However, he said that he came to believe there may be truth to such an expression after he lived in Korea for a time. His indication of commonalities of the two nations is summarized as follows.

First, two countries, Ireland and Korea, are surrounded by big powers and have retained their national identity over many centuries despite being buffeted by these powers and the power politics of their regions. Second, the two countries were colonized quite dramatically by their neighboring countries. Third, the two countries have been poor up until recently and rapidly become modernized, but the rural and agricultural background is still very similar. Korean people still have older kinds of approaches to life, interest in people and village talk just as most Irish parents or grandparents would have come from farms. (*Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 2012)

McKee also mentioned the following historical fact. Under the colonial rule, Korean nationalist intellectuals sought a desirable independence struggle direction and looked to the Ireland model. And, to overcome Koreans' resistance and to create a great empire, Japanese nationalists looked to London. This occurred since the two nations each have long explored peace between the divided North and South, and sought toward peaceful relations with their colonial powers, the U.K. and Japan, respectively. In this respect, Ireland and Korea are similar.

In the arguments of Park Jihang and McKee are found the diverse commonalities of Ireland and Korea, which were accumulated and experienced in history. With racism diminished, the ideological commonalities of Koreans and the Irish are being discussed. The history of being invaded by their neighboring nations, and their recent economic achievements are being emphasized. The two nations commonly have to resolve the reality of their respective country division and improve their relations with their respective colonial powers. Interestingly, not just Park Jihang and McKee, but many other Korean intellectuals also emphasize the commonalities of the two nations, and yet another similarity is discovered behind such mindsets. That is, their strong nationalistic mindset or elitism to boast of their economic achievements and political advances attained amid difficult conditions and backgrounds.

Conclusion

As Jessica Ching-Sze Wang (2012) put, China's reactions to Dewey during his two-year trip to China influenced Dewey's interpretations of China. Dewey was changed as a result of his stay in China. Dewey discovered the value and possibility of pursuing social reform through education in China because China had many problems and yet was variable. The Chinese called Dewey the second Confucius and welcomed his idea of social reform. Dewey chose China as the optimal place where he could test his educational reform program of constructing a democratic society through education. His most interesting target in around the 1920s was obviously China. His objective was to offer a policy designed to analyze Chinese society and culture socio-scientifically, to predict Chinese changes, and to maximize American interest while maintaining the unity of China. He was encouraged by new culture

movement proponents’ acceptance of his educational reform thought based on pragmatism, and placed his hopes on China’s democratic reform. To Dewey, China was full of uncertainties and yet full of possibilities. However, China’s social and political changes developed after his visit to China, and the fading new culture movements were sufficient enough to deal a blow to his hopes as well.

To Dewey, Japan was the U.S. of Asia. As the U.S. shouldered the white man’s burden of civilizing the world, Dewey (1921b, 80) saw that Japan was the only optimal nation to shoulder the yellow man’s burden of leading the incompetent and corrupt Asian people. Of course, he was critical of Japan’s emperor ideology that made the diffusion of democracy difficult—Japanese intellectuals’ conservative adherence to such ideology, and Japan’s excessive political and economic ambitions concerning China. During his visit to Japan, Dewey offered the necessity of reconstructing philosophies to Japanese intellectuals, to which Japan was cynical and critical, and Dewey was disappointed with such Japanese intellectuals’ response. His conviction was also hurt about the possibility and value of mutual learning about heterogeneous civilizations through dialogue. Nonetheless, he had no doubt that Japan was the most important U.S. partner to practice American interests in Asia. Dewey (1921b, 79) even expressed Japan as the key to the gigantic lock of East Asia. To Dewey, Japan was a clearly comprehensible nation but it was difficult to find the possibility of change with.

As discussed above, to Dewey, Korea under the colonial rule was not a target of his great interest. Korea was used only as a comparative target to predict the future of China in his analysis of Japan’s policy for China. Dewey accepted the notion that Korea experienced positive changes in industries and education under Japanese colonial rule, while keeping silence concerning the pain of colonized people. He commented nationalistic consciousness among Korean people that was being newly formed under Japanese colonial rule without speaking a word concerning the irrationality that a well-developed nation occupied and ruled its neighboring nation with different language and culture. His identification of Korea with Ireland was firmly based on his negative and discriminative recognition about the ethnicity of Korean people.

Does the recognition of John Dewey on Korea exposed through his saying “Korea is the second Ireland” correspond to his arguments on democracy? Steven Rockefeller (1991) used the expression of “democratic

humanism” to phrase Dewey’s philosophy. According to Rockefeller, Dewey’s democratic humanism is well disclosed in his emphasis of intellectual empathy toward others. Intellectual empathy, which Dewey identified with democratic way of life, was a voluntary and conscious concern about the interests, pain, and rights of the weak. That is to side with the weak against the strong. Dewey’s indifference to the painful situation of Korean people under the harsh colonial rule of Japan is clearly contradictory to his democratic ideal and democratic humanism. His favorable appreciation of Japanese control of Korea and negative estimation of Korean people’s resistance against Japan is in conflict with his equalitarian philosophy. It might be right, as Melvin L. Rogers (2009, 70) argues, that Dewey was neither concerned with power nor the inequities in the use of power.

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Abstract

John Dewey, a well-known American educational philosopher who had led the so-called progressive educational movement in early 20th century, visited East Asia around 1920 for a while. Facts about his visit, not to mention the meaning or impact of his visit, were not fully researched yet, while his educational thoughts have had deep and wide impacts on educational theory and practices in this region since then. Especially Korea is one of the countries in Asia where the thought and theory of John Dewey extended strong influence in educational reforms and academic debates on schooling. Before and after his visit of East Asia, John Dewey expressed his notion about East Asian countries including Korea. His visit, as a matter of course, was done based on his knowledge about this region. This paper is interested in looking for the background, contents, and the significance of his perception of Korea around 1920 when Korea was under the colonial rule of imperial Japan and the name John Dewey was in every intellectual's mouth. There is not a single article or document on Korea written by John Dewey. Some sentences or paragraphs on Korea are found among his works on Japan and China written by him around 1920. These recordings are fortunately included in the 15 volumes of collection of John Dewey's middle works compiled by Jo Ann Boydston and published by Southern Illinois University in 1982. These are some parts of the full collection of his writings, making up 37 volumes. This collection is to be analyzed carefully for this research. Dewey's perception of Korea is well condensed, I assume, in his expression “Korea is the second Ireland” which he used in an article on China in 1919. I would like to clarify the reason why Dewey identified Korea with Ireland by comparing him with other intellectuals who used the same metaphor in Korean history.

Keywords: John Dewey, Dewey's perception of Korea, Ireland and Korea, Korea under Japanese rule

