

Article

Post-Colonialism and
the Restoration of Cultural Identity:
A Study on the Reconstruction
of Changgyeong Palace

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Introduction

In August 1945, Korea was liberated from the Japanese Empire. After the liberation, Koreans began the important historical task of eliminating the colonial heritage that permeated its politics, economy, society, and culture. Although severance of the colonial political system and power was easily achieved, it was relatively difficult to overcome the colonial consciousness and cultural influences related to modern culture. Liquidation of the vestiges of colonialism in the culture even faced national resistance, for the modernity that Koreans experienced was largely interlocked with the colonialism established by the Japanese colonial regime.

As Korea entered into the modern era, imperialist countries, which internalized the binary notions of civilization and barbarism, hastily labeled the Joseon culture as backward. This hurried judgment was met with the desire of the people of Joseon to quickly modernize their culture.¹ This desire weakened the rational thinking involved in detecting the true nature of imperialism and later had an effect on the discourse regarding the removal of the vestiges of colonialism post-liberation. In other words, the imperialists' strategic colonization via "modernization" and "civilization" had deeply penetrated into the lives of Koreans. During the colonial period, Koreans formed their identity as a "modern" country through the influence of imperial Japan, but this was a deformed and unstable identity, since it overlapped with their "colonized" status (Cumings 1984, 481-82).

As part of cultural policy, Japan expanded and constructed modern facilities in Korea. Koreans perceived this as providing modern techniques and culture because electricity, a water supply system, railways, automobiles, and parks were symbols of modern civilization and technology. Ironically, Korea's modernization proceeded alongside Japan's imperialism, so peoples' experience of modern culture was interlaced with imperialist exploitation and invasion. The Japanese Empire constructed modern schools, banks, department stores, and parks to promote and strengthen Japan's colonialism and justified their actions

1. Joseon intellectuals, who initiated the independence movement during the late Joseon period, yearned for modernization through accepting civilization and capitalism, according to news articles, "To Our People" and "Age of Destruction" posted on *Daehan maeil shinbo* in 1908 and 1910, respectively.

by holding cultural hegemony in Korea.

Colonialism bolsters the so-called procedure of the “colonization of the consciousness” by justifying the colonialist’s control over the other nation as being right and proper, and also by having the colonized accept their inferior status within the colonial order (Osterhammel 2006, 22-24; Schmid 2007, 262). The colonialists actively used this strategy, which evoked compliance from the colonized country in obeying and accepting the Empire’s culture. Installing “modern” facilities and culture is a typical strategic method of colonization. As Homi Bhabha points out, colonial power is synonymous with modern science, a political system, and progressive “Western” social and economic organizations. These co-existing characteristics grant a clear justification for colonial rule (Bhabha 2002, 83). Indeed, Koreans showed less hostility and resistance toward the introduction of modern technology, institutes, and culture in the name of modernization and progress. Therefore, eradicating the vestiges of colonialism has proven to be a time-consuming project. This is why the imperial and colonial culture still remained entangled with the Joseon culture.

There have been numerous cases of invisible adaptation and assimilation. The reason for the internal acceptance of the colonial order was due to the mutual implementation of colonization and the discourse on the “civilizing process” and the “advancement towards the modern” (Young 2005, 66). A representative case of this civilizing process is the conversion of the “palace” into a public park. The imperialists modified the ultimate symbol of the royal power of Joseon into a place for leisure and amusement.² Out of the public parks, the most distorted and modified place was Changgyeong Park. In it, a zoo opened and cherry blossom viewing was held at night, making it a place for leisure. Transforming Changgyeong Palace into Changgyeong Park was perceived as the “invention” of the park, but it seems apparent that Japan’s intention was to humiliate and disgrace the Joseon Dynasty during the colonizing process.

However, even after emancipation, few considered Changgyeong Park to be a colonial vestige or a symbol of Japan’s violation of Korean culture. This kind of perception later impeded the restoration of Changgyeong Palace. The restoration of the palace was not only initiated as a result of the need to eradicate

2. Palace (*gung*) is a place where the king and the royal family reside whereas park (*won*) is a place for leisure such as hunting and picnics (Hong 1999, 232).

the colonial heritage, but also because of the demand to change its downgraded status as a park, the need to further the Korean economy, and the need to reestablish the Korean identity.

Homi Bhabha (2002, 103-04) claims that the relation between the self and the other, and the other's view of the self, evokes the desire for the self to reach outside its terrain. In a similar vein, the stabilization of the Korean cultural identity is possible through its relationship with the other, and its consciousness of the other's view. This process of recovering identity can be found in the restoration stages of Changgyeong Palace, which underwent the most severe transformation and yet had widely been considered as a park for Korean people.

Two important facts were revealed when Changgyeong Palace was transfigured into a "park" and was then restored to a "palace." First, imperialism and the Japanese Empire's cultural invasion under the pretext of modernization have deeply taken root in the colonized Korea. Second, the cultural identity of Korea, which was intended to be restored by disposing of colonial vestige, is not "pure," since it is already entangled with another identity previously imposed by the Empire. Therefore, the restoration of cultural identity should begin with questioning the identity that was proscribed by the Empire. Additionally, in the restoration process, the "originality" of the identity should not only be viewed as something that solely belongs to the past, but it should also be viewed as continuing originality.

This paper examines the stages of the restoration of Changgyeong Palace by analyzing previous studies on Changgyeong Park that were conducted during the colonial era.³ Through a comprehensive look at the existing research, the frailty of Korean cultural identity due to the imperialists' strategic modernization will be studied, and changes in the characteristics of Changgyeong Park after liberation will be assessed. Finally, the relationship between the "other's" view and that of the self, which enables the reformation of self-identity, will be investigated.

3. Studies on history, architecture, art history, and other fields focused on Changgyeong Park of the colonial era to analyze the essence of Japan's invasion and annihilation policy (Song 1999, 169-98; Hong 2004, 5-34; Bak 2004; Song 2007; Kim 2008; Kim 2009).

Japan's Project of Transforming Changgyeong Palace into a "Modern" Amusement Park

Since opening their ports, the Joseon people referred to the replacement of carts by cars, on newly constructed roads, and the use of trains and railways, as being "modern." They expressed a desire to replace their traditional culture with the modern culture of the west; however, the modernization of Joseon was not free from dispossession of the west and of Japan. In 1910, Joseon degenerated into a colony of Japan and began to be ruled by the Japanese Empire.

The Japanese Empire began to implement its civilizing strategies in the colonization of Joseon; their central strategy was to make the Joseon people feel that their traditional culture was backward and uncivilized, making it easy for Japan to rule them. In fact, Japan's colonizing power was not based on their ability to make people simply obey, but to make the Joseon people belittle their own culture in comparison with the culture of the Empire and view it as extremely uncivilized and backward (Schmid 2007, 262). Throughout the colonial period of Joseon, Japan furthered the feeling of inferiority in the minds of the Joseon people, so that they would perceive the Japanese as a model of an advanced and modern civilization; this weakening of the Joseon people's desire for independence eventually helped Japan to solidify their colonial rule.

Distorting the palace culture of Joseon's ruling class was one of the strategies employed by the Japanese Empire. By changing the image of the five palaces in Joseon, Japan attempted not only to deny the ruling power of the Joseon royal dynasty but also to solidify and symbolize that of Japan. Changgyeong Palace is one of the prime examples of the palaces that faced drastic distortion and deformation.

At first, Changgyeong Palace was a place where the Sugang Building for abdicated kings was located. Later, it was expanded under King Seongjong's rule to accommodate Queen Jeonghui (his grand mother and the consort of King Sejo), Queen Sohye (who was his birth mother and also the consort of King Deokjong), and Queen Ansun (who was his step-mother and also the consort of King Yejong); this indicates that Changgyeong Palace was symbolic of "hyo," which means "devotion to one's parents" (Kim 1994, 247). However, during the colonial period, this symbolic site was transfigured into an entirely different symbolic space.

In 1907, the Japanese Empire forced King Gojong to step down for his

responsibility over the secret envoy that was sent to Hague, and replaced him with King Sunjong. Sunjong was asked to move from Deoksu Palace, where Gojong was residing, to Changdeok Palace; the intention was to keep Sunjong away from Gojong. Changgyeong Palace was then rapidly ravaged on a major scale. Myeongjeongjeon, the major building for official gatherings and the itinerant buildings of the Changgyeong Palace, began to be used as an art gallery. By removing the stone marking that showed the retainer's grade and the king's path, the Japanese attempted to show that no king or political institution existed in Joseon.⁴ Under a false pretense of consoling Sunjong, the Japanese then built a zoo and a botanical garden inside the palace.

Ito Hirobumi was deeply involved in the construction of the park in Changgyeong; the botanical garden was designed by Hakuwawa, who was in charge of the royal park in the palace of the Japanese royal family, and it was built by French engineers. The botanical garden was the first western style building in Joseon to be made of glass, and it was the largest of its kind in the east (Cultural Heritage Administration 1985, 144). The Japanese Empire showed off its ability to modernize Joseon by building the structure; at the same time, by establishing the garden and the zoo as the standard of civilized society, Japan made the Joseon people see the Japanese as supporters of the modern experience in Joseon. By building a glittering and fancy western-style glass building, and prioritizing it over the relatively humble wooden royal palaces, the first "strategic" plan of making people see Joseon as a backward society was accomplished.

Lee Wan-yong, who was then the prime minister of Joseon, declared that it was King Sunjong's order to "rename Changgyeong Palace as Changgyeong Park," open it to the public "as an education center for life-size figures, and use it as a consolation site" (Seoul City 1993, 160).⁵

However, there was disagreement on opening Changgyeong to the public. Some high and low ranking officials strongly opposed the idea of opening it to the public, saying that it was unacceptable to have the public roam through the historical palaces of the royal families, which were filled with things like stone

4. When the Korean Empire perished in 1910, Emperor Sunjong's position as emperor was demoted to Changdeok Palace Majesty (*jeonha*) and then to King Yi (*I wang*) (Hong 2004, 6).

5. According to *Sunjongsillok* (1909), "the zoo and botanic garden will be built inside Changgyeong Palace and people will be granted to come and visit the palace (qtd. in Seoul City 1993, 160).

statues of Buddha, antiques, and even coffins. It was also unbearable for them to see civilians walking inside the palace with muddy feet. The vice-minister, Komiya Mihomatsu, tried hard to persuade people at all costs, insisting that opening the palace to the public was an excellent way to display the historical artifacts of ancient Joseon, to pass them down to future generations for research, and to show Joseon's excellence in art to those inside and outside of Joseon (Siroseuke 2007, 75).

Komiya expanded his argument by saying that the museum, zoo, and the botanical garden could be used to “educate ordinary people and help them cultivate hobbies” and that opening Changgyeong Palace to the public would encourage leisure culture and facilitate elegant civilization (Inoue 1908, 68-69; qtd. in Wu 2009, 205). Through this process, Changgyeong Palace was renamed as Changgyeong Park. Many large and small events were organized in the park; the largest competitive exhibition and exposition in Asia took place at this location. This made the waning Joseon appear even more inferior in contrast to the Japanese Empire's cultural advancement. The palace where the King used to live became an “exhibition space” for the public, and the cries of the animals never ended. After being opened to the public, however, Changgyeong Park drew some interest from the people as it “became the only place for consolation to the citizens who have no other parks to visit in Seoul” (*Maeil sinbo*, February 15, 1920). With its collection of rare plants, animals, and historical monuments, the park became popular among not only Seoul citizens, but also country people (*Joseon-ilbo*, April 12, 1935). The final step in transforming Changgyeong into a park was to plant several thousand cherry trees in 1922. In 1923, cherry blossom viewing began; with the beginning of cherry blossom viewing, Changgyeong became a place for obscene pleasure (Sin 2003, 47).⁶ The Japanese used the downgraded palace for their own entertainment; “they brought *geishas* in it, drank under the cherry trees with bright lights on, and had obscene dances unreservedly” (Seoul City 1993, 103). As such, the palace that used to be

6. In 1930, when cherry blossom viewings took place at night, the place became chaotic. In the 1920–30s, attending a night viewing of cherry blossoms at Changgyeong Park was a hip cultural event that the people of Joseon wanted to experience alongside watching films, dancing, visiting cafes, and shopping at department stores (Sin 2003, 47).

a holy royal abode disappeared and disintegrated into an entertainment park with recreational facilities.

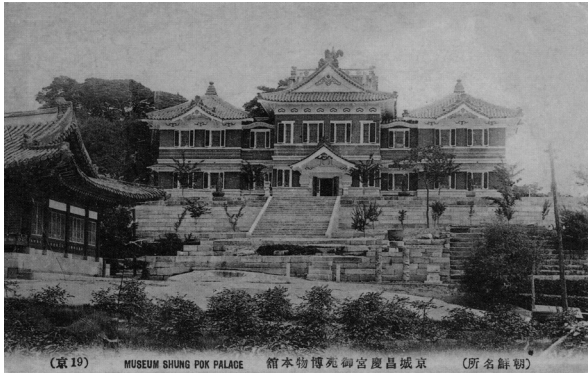


Figure 1. Japanese-style Museum in Changgyeong Palace

Later, government events were organized in Changgyeong, and the cherry blossom viewing became a yearly event. The number of people visiting Changgyeong increased every year, to the point where it became a major attraction in what was then Gyeongseong city; in spring when the cherry trees were blooming, visitors from all over the country crowded into Changgyeong.⁷ As such, Changgyeong gradually became a modern place in which people experienced modern life, internalized the colonial rule of the Japanese Empire, accepted the power of the Empire, forgot their hard lives, and enjoyed their spare time.

The Unstable Restoration of the Changgyeong Palace after Emancipation

The task of cleaning up the vestiges of Japanese imperialism during the process of establishing a new independent nation state after the defeat of the Japanese Empire was not only about the eradication of political “betrayers of the country” (the pro-Japan group), but also about the disclosure of the degree of cultural

7. For further details, see the news articles titled “Night at Changgyeong Park Ended on the 23rd but Visitors Reach 108,580” (*Joseon-ilbo*, April 25, 1928) and “Last Night’s Visitors of Changgyeong Park Reach 31,000” (*Joseon-ilbo*, April 27, 1931).

invasion by Japanese imperialism, and breaking away from it. The process was also intended to uncover and overcome the cultural invasion of imperialism in Korean culture, for the Japanese Empire distorted traditional Korean culture in various ways.

After independence, as a national movement, many groups pursued the eradication of the “Japanese style,” including Shinto shrines, signboards, doorplates, and so on. (*Donga-ilbo*, August 20, 1945)

Mass media also criticized the vestiges of Japanese culture, and tried to sweep them away. The fact that songs about Japanese imperialism were popular in public places like restaurants, cafes, and tea houses, along with the fact that the Japanese language was still actively spoken among students and intellectuals was criticized. (*Daehan-ilbo*, September 3, 1948)

It was in the education sector where the eradication of the vestiges of colonialism proceeded in a particularly systematic manner. A committee for academic terminology was founded, with the aim of erasing Japanese-style words. The intention was to “replace words in primary and middle school textbooks with genuine Joseon words, to produce textbooks for 21 subjects, and to announce in each textbook the complete obliteration of Japanese words” (*Joseon-ilbo*, November 20, 1946). This effectively implemented the foundation work for clearing away the vestiges of Japan.⁸

As such, since obtaining their independence, the people considered it a natural process to clean up the vestiges of Japanese culture and to restore their cultural identity. This was carried out with the hope that similar processes would occur in each and every sector, as soon as possible. However, Changgyeong Park, which was restructured as part of the civilizing process and perceived as a modern park under colonial rule, was not brought into people’s attention as a vestige of colonialism.

When Changgyeong Park was reopened to the public on January 26th, 1949, it was not very different from the colonial era, in terms of its role; greater

8. The committee initiated projects to replace the names of middle and high schools in Seoul that appeared to contain Japanese words. Gyeongseong Public School was converted to Seoul Public School and Gyeonggi Public Middle School was modified to Jangan Public Middle School. This project was carried out nationwide (*Seoul sinmun*, June 26, 1948).

emphasis was placed on Changgyeong being a place where people could rest and relax, away from a hectic life that was in disarray after the country gained its independence. As soon as it reopened, it was used for several events such as the “congratulatory flower viewing for emancipation,” night flower viewing during flower-season (sponsored by the U.S. military and their government, and the Gyeongseong Electricity Company), and several other events celebrating emancipation (*Joseon-ilbo*, April 7, 1946; *Donga-ilbo*, April 20, 1946). The organizers of these events insisted that the events looked even fancier than they would have at any time during the Japanese rule. Furthermore, Changgyeong Park was used not only for congratulatory events for emancipation but also for major government events, such as the welcome party for the U.S. military (organized by people living south of the 38th parallel), memorial services for police officers, Children’s Day, Parents’ Day, Elders’ Day, and so forth. Changgyeong Park was also one of the few scenic spots that were introduced to foreigners as a place that showed “genuine” Korean culture.

While Changgyeong was used for government events, more often than not, repeated rhetoric insisted that it was a “resting place for citizens” (*Donga-ilbo*, March 13, 1946). Since its reopening in 1946, the timing of cherry flower blooming in Changgyeong has been announced in the news every spring; before and after the blooming season, a “flower viewing week” was declared and various programs were carried out accordingly (*ibid.*).

There were visitors from all over the country, with as many as 100,000 visitors a day during the peak season. The Seoul city government sometimes extended the viewing time in order to accommodate tourism needs, and installed a bus stop near the park for the sake of convenience. By then, Changgyeong was perceived by people in Korea to be a park for outings on holidays, because it had been adapted to its role as a “park” since the colonial period.

Due to the perception that Changgyeong was a park for the citizens, it was also thought that shows should be organized on a regular basis for the general population. Based on this view, it was argued that the botanical garden had to be extended, with a larger and better heating system installed for the sake of maintaining rare and important plants, and that the city government had to take over the responsibility of operation from the Royal Household, which was in a poor financial state. There was also a proposal from the U.S. military to change Changgyeong into a zoo (*Donga-ilbo*, March 13, 1946; May 15, 1947).

This idea was refined later as a proposal to change the name Changgyeong Park to Changgyeong Royal Household Park, and to raise funds to repair the buildings and get more plants and animals from overseas, in an effort to establish it as the only “historical ruins” of Korea. This series of status restoration processes showed that the role of a “park,” which was given to Changgyeong by the Japanese Empire was constantly reinforced.

On the other hand, however, there was a movement to identify Changgyeong as a colonial vestige. In 1947, the organization of events in Changgyeong Park was banned by the Capital Police Agency and the Bureau of Public Information; the reason given in the announcement was that the “holy culture of the royal palace had been turned into a popular entertainment culture and thus any event aiming for such popular entertainment was to be banned” (*Donga-ilbo*, April 8, 1947; *Joseon-ilbo*, April 20, 1947). As night flower viewing was also banned, there were also self-reflecting voices speaking up about reclaiming Changgyeong’s status as a royal palace. Similarly, doubts regarding internalized colonialism in Changgyeong Park emerged.

In April 1949, right after the establishment of the government of the Republic of Korea, the Bureau of the Public Information announced—once again—that any form of business activity or entertainment was to be banned within the grounds of palaces and temples that are part of the proud heritage of ancient Korea.

[U]nder Japanese rule, the Japanese wholeheartedly attempted to destroy our culture and historical remains regardless of their importance. Fortunately, there are a few left which were kept in their original form. We shall take good care of them and preserve them well. For the last three years, government agencies and citizens hand in hand shall look after our cultural ruins. Each and every one of us should share equal responsibility and shall not do any harm to those ruins. No disorderly entertaining event, party, show, exercise or similar event is permitted inside the compound of palaces. (*Gyeonghyang sinmun*, April 21, 1949; *Joseon-ilbo*, April 21, 1949)

In 1949, just as in 1947, the Bureau of the Public Information banned all activities for entertainment in the palaces for the sake of preserving the historical ruins. Since then, anyone who wanted to organize events inside Changgyeong had to obtain permission from the Seoul City Department of Culture. In that same year, President Syngman Rhee released a statement which focused on the

need to take care of historical ruins and temples, the intention of the Japanese when dispossessing and damaging Joseon's palaces, and the restoration of Korean cultural identity.

For generations, there have been numerous royal households and temples that are prime examples of our unique culture and show the development of our ancient civilization. Since we were placed under Japan's restraint, Japan abandoned those buildings to collapse and made us completely forget about our ancient civilization. The most bitter part of this [was] that Japan used Gyeongbok Palace as their base station for the Capital building, moved Gwanghwamun to another location and built a new building on its original place. In so doing, Japan damaged the well-designed Gyeongbok Palace. The more we realize Japan's heinous intention, the bitter and more resentful we feel. (Bureau of Public Information 1949, 273)

Statements such as the above were followed by the designation of national treasures and scenic ruins through the implementation of a period of national monument protection. It was only after the establishment of the Korean government that the cultural assets protection movement was carried out, recognizing the urgency in preserving cultural assets (*Hanseong-ilbo*, April 16, 1950; Korea Government 1949, 29-42). Following this series of government policies, a decision was made to tentatively close Changgyeong in May 1950. Yet this decision was unilaterally made by the government. When the citizens were opposed to it, President Syngman Rhee could not ignore the public sentiment. Thus, he released the following statement:

In any country, there are beautiful scenic spots or historical ruins. A country like [the] U.S.A. may conserve the house of general Yi or a room library of any famous person and make it a holy place. Even a defeated country like Japan keeps the Royal family's house unopened to the public... However, it is pathetic that our people treat only the Japanese shrine as a Bethel place. Our Bethel places are Changgyeong Palace, Deoksu Palace, Gyeongbok Palace, and so on. Then, we should have forbidden the Americans from going into places like that. But, instead, we seem happy even to draw them into those places, don't we? The chief police officer of the district police station ordered it closed in order to correct this custom and to protect our prominent historical ruins. Thus, if citizens need a park, we shall fix Sajik Park or Changcheongdan Park for their use. But we shall repair

Changgyeong Park and Deoksu Palace, and build a wall around Gyeongbok palace....Who on earth would install a zoo inside Changgyeong Park or build the capital building inside Gyeongbok Palace if not the Japanese who insulted our dignity? We shall become awaken[ed] about the situation. (*Joseon-ilbo*, May 20, 1950)

At the core of the statement from President Rhee was the belief that Changgyeong, Deoksu Palace, and Gyeongbok Palace were not parks but the holy places of Korea, and that turning these places into parks was part of Japan's treacherous invasion into Korean sacred places; however, this belief faced strong opposition.

There were four major grounds in President Rhee's order: firstly, the fact that Changgyeong had been a park for the citizens of Seoul for 40 years since its opening, as well as a well-known tourist spot, and a famous place in Seoul was something that could not be ignored. Secondly, Changgyeong Park was an important cultural asset, as a national treasure in which ordinary people could appreciate cultural ruins as well as an educational space equipped with a zoo and a botanical garden. Thirdly, it was argued that Changgyeong Park should not be closed, but rather upgraded with better facilities and turned into a useful place for both local citizens and foreigners, since the zoo and the botanical garden were important to people in terms of "leisure" and "education" (*Joseon-ilbo*, June 12, 1950). Lastly, it was argued that it would be shameful if there were no facilities like that in a civilized country (*ibid.*). This meant that having a park for a walk on a holiday in Seoul, where there were not enough parks to accommodate the population, did not simply mean having a park; it was indeed an important national cultural monument and, as such, should not be disregarded.

Without a further discussion of the alternative plans after overcoming internalized colonialism, therefore, President Rhee's blockade neither gained support from the people, nor elicited advanced debate for establishing Changgyeong Park's original identity as a palace. This kind of reasoning was very much in accordance with what Japan expressed when it opened Changgyeong Park to the public, which instilled the idea of Changgyeong Park being an important center of leisure culture in the minds of Koreans. This kind of reasoning, however, went against the government's plan to restore Changgyeong Palace. The argument over the issue of closing up Changgyeong,

and people's resentment over the idea, meant that it made no further progress. Due to the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950, the argument over Changgyeong could not be furthered. As war broke out, all discussion on the status of Changgyeong Park and the process of its restoration came to a stop.

Emphasis on Changgyeong Park as a Place for “Consolation” after the Korean War

Due to the outbreak of war, no progress was made on whether to let the palace become a popular entertainment spot or to restore Changgyeong Palace as part of the project to overcome Japanese imperialism. Changgyeong Park was closed during the war, but it reopened on July 15, 1953. After the war ended, Changgyeong was given another role—as a place to promote anti-communism. Since then, there has been no discussion on recovering the identity of Changgyeong as a palace. Tasks involving cleaning up colonial culture, along with those restoring and reestablishing the cultural identity of the country were overshadowed by the discourse of anticommunism before they finally disappeared.

After the Korean War, Changgyeong Park became a place to organize consolation art festivals for war orphans, to throw parties for the elderly who endured the war, or to offer a “consolation gathering for citizens” who suffered from the war (*Joseon-ilbo*, April 22, 1954). It was also a place that reminded people of the war because it was used for rallies for reunification, photo exhibitions to show footage of soldiers and the navy, as well as exhibitions to promote anti-communism. In 1956, the first Anticommunism Exhibition was held in Changgyeong; it was grand in size, since two separate buildings were used. Starting from the exhibition room that centered on the eradication of communism, the other rooms followed the themes of the attack, victory, reunification, North Korea, the fighting spirit, counterespionage, the UN, justice, and peace, in that order. The exhibition was organized to show “war” from a historical viewpoint, from the invasion of the ancient Japanese to the latest invasion, using miniatures and acquired weapons (*Donga-ilbo*, October 27, 1956). The purpose of the exhibition was to cultivate anti-communism. In another exhibition held in 1957, weapons of the enemy, various types of photographs, apparatuses and signs used in guerilla warfare were displayed on

a grand scale. During this exhibition, Changgyeong Park was opened to the public free of charge. Visiting the Anticommunism Exhibition as part of a group was compulsory for all students in the country and thus, Changgyeong became a field for the ideology of anti-communism.



Figure 2. The Anticommunism Exhibition in Changgyeong Palace.

In 1958, Changgyeong was used as a rallying location when an event to call for the release of anticommunist youth was organized. The message of the opening speech of the event was “to put vigorous efforts into achieving the holy task of reunification” (*Joseon-ilbo*, June 19, 1958). A plea to the people of North Korea was also read at the event (*ibid.*). As such, Changgyeong was not simply a place to see exhibitions; it was transformed into a place for mass gathering, and the expression of opinion and politics.

Since 1953, a special program for soldiers was developed. Changgyeong Park was opened to every soldier, on holidays, free of charge. “Lounge music nights” and broadcast programs were organized to console them (*Donga-ilbo*, September 16, 1953). At the same time, Changgyeong Park was transformed into something much fancier than the park, which was immediately following the emancipation. During the cherry blossom viewing period, electric-light fixtures were installed to add to the amusement. Changgyeong’s role, then, was to console people and help them forget about their worries and the hardship of restoring the country after the war. Changgyeong Park then became a place for entertainment, including such things as miniature airplanes for children

and cable-cars. As Changgyeong's role as a park was emphasized, the Seoul City government took charge of repairing the decrepit botanical garden and zoo, and expanding them. In 1954, a reconstruction committee for the zoo and garden was formed, which began to collect and import animals and plants systematically. The committee was composed mainly of business people, but the mayor of Seoul was also deeply involved in it.

After the establishment of the modern Korean government, President Syngman Rhee, who was previously skeptical about the park project, changed his mind and encouraged it: "If people desire this change and voluntarily participate in the project...Devise a thorough plan to refurbish our zoo and botanic garden in such a way that they look better than they were first created by Japan" (Seoul City 1993, 222). Hence, more attractions were created within the site, and visitors increased yearly.⁹

In 1958, night flower viewing was allowed again. In order to add to the amusement for night viewing, Changgyeong Palace became much fancier than ever before. Electric lights were installed everywhere inside, a television set was added, and a small outdoor stage was installed for entertainment (*Donga-ilbo*, April 10, 1960).

The role of Changgyeong as a place for consolation and rest did not change much until the early 1970s. As it was even used for mass gatherings, the condition deteriorated faster than other locations; thus, financial support from the government also increased. According to the record in 1971, there were more than 3,000,000 visitors a year. The most crowded season was spring, when the cherry blossoms were in full bloom. There were a record 250,000 visitors a day during the peak season; this implies that more than half of the population of Seoul visited Changgyeong Park. Viewed as a resting place, a "special reason" for each generation and gender to visit Changgyeong Park was created. Children visited it for the zoo, for a chance to see elephants and monkeys and learn about nature. The elderly visited it to enjoy the arts. Chundangji, a lake located inside Changgyeong, was a place for lovers for dates. So, all people enjoyed visiting

9. According to the report in 1957, the year when zoo/botanical garden related tasks were completed, from January to August, the number of visitors at Changgyeong Park reached 638,779. 731,186 visitors came to Changdeok Palace, 78,051 visited Biwon, and 216,241 visited Deoksu Palace. Compared to other palaces, about 3 to 6 times the number of visitors went to Changgyeong Park.

Changgyeong for their own reasons (*Gyeonghyang sinmun*, April 17, 1971).



Figure 3. Nighttime Viewing of Chery Blossoms

When people from other places visited Seoul, they even described sightseeing Seoul as sightseeing Changgyeong Park instead; visiting Changgyeong Park became equivalent to visiting Seoul. As such, around this time, Changgyeong Park was seen as a place for rest, rather than a palace or a cultural asset. Changgyeong's degenerated status that was imposed by Japan remained. Changgyeong Park only functioned as an amusement park with a botanical garden and a zoo, not as a palace.



Figure 4. Changgyeong in 1976



Figure 5. People Visiting Changgyeong in 1976

The Restoration Process of Changgyeong Palace and Reconstruction of Cultural Identity

It was 1983 when Changgyeong Park recovered its original name, Changgyeong Palace. The process of restoration from park back to palace began in early 1970, only when the discussion of relocating the zoo from Changgyeong Park to someplace else took place. In 1971, Joo-yeong Yun, then the Minister of Culture, stated: “the government is aware of the seriousness of the pollution and it is not ideal to keep a zoo within the grounds of a historical palace, so plans have been made to relocate it to the outskirts of the city. The search for an appropriate location is being carried out.” Through his announcement, he made it official that the project was to be conducted under the government’s approval (Korea National Assembly, September 29, 1971). The plan to move the zoo was made because Changgyeong Park had deteriorated rapidly, due to the rising number of visitors, the overpopulation of animals inside the zoo, and the serious air and noise pollution that affected the animals. All of these problems contributed to the need to come up with a plan to move the zoo to another location (*Donga-ilbo*, October 4, 1971). At the end of the 1960s, the Ministry of Education emphasized the reorganization of the palace to protect cultural assets and prompt “modernize the mentality” of the people “to establish national consciousness” (Lee 2007, 4).

However, the biggest reason for restoration was the fact that Changgyeong Park itself was deteriorating. From the end of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1970s, facilities in Changgyeong Park became too old to use. There were endless complaints and repair requests from park’s visitors. Changgyeong Park was too small to accommodate the increasing number of visitors from all over the country, including those from Seoul. Thus, it was no longer a place to relax but a “chaotic and overcrowded” amusement park where people could hardly find a place to sit (*Maeil gyeongje sinmun*, April 20, 1970; *Gyeonghyang sinmun*, May 7, 1970). Changgyeong Park gradually lost its function as a resting place, which had been its main role since Korea’s independence.

In October 1971, the Ministry of Culture drafted an act regulating the general operations of national zoos, and announced plans to relocate the zoo in Changgyeong Park. The following were the purpose, content, and plan from the act:

The purpose is to build a new zoo of international standards in Seoul and relocate the existing animals in Changgyeong Park to the new establishment. By doing so:

- A. Animal families will be saved from pollution and new shelters will be provided.
- B. The people in the city suffer from overpopulation, and their desire for nature and humanity will be addressed.
- C. National pride will be recovered via restoration of Changgyeong Palace that was damaged by Imperial Japan.

(Seoul City 1993, 345)

The main theme of the discussion focused on disposing of colonialism and the purpose was to encourage national pride. However, the guidelines for the restoration of Changgyeong Palace were only concentrated on outward restoration. The restoration of Changgyeong Palace did not take place immediately. The actual restoration was closely related to the World Sports Festival, hosted by Korea in the mid-1980s. Sudden interest and efforts in recovering and reforming cultural facilities and properties, including Changgyeong Palace, began around the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympics (*Maeil gyeongje sinmun*, February 19, 1983). This passion for renovating cultural properties was driven by the government's determination to showcase Korean culture to the world. In due course, the Cultural Heritage Administration enacted government-wide projects, such as a water purification project and the restoration of Changgyeong Palace. The government conducted the project with the objective of restoring the palace as a public park.

The main goal of the restoration project was to restore Changgyeong palace to its original form and to remove any sign of the disgrace inscribed by the Japanese imperialists (*Maeil gyeongje sinmun*, February 19, 1983). In 1983, Changgyeong Park was officially renamed Changgyeong Palace (*ibid.*). The restoration proceeded at a fast pace, as parts of the zoo and the botanical garden were relocated. In June 1984, the government announced a new policy to manage and preserve the royal palaces of the Joseon period, such as Gyeongbok Palace and Changgyeong Palace, which were destroyed by the Japanese colonialists. The content of the new regulation entailed: "the five palaces in Seoul that have been downgraded into amusement sites will be renovated into educational spaces where visitors can learn about Korean culture and history" (*Gyeonghyang sinmun*, April 6, 1984).

The government's decision conveyed its determination to make the identity of the royal palaces and Korea's national pride known to the world. The initial step by the Cultural Heritage Administration was to acknowledge and analyze the scale of the violations inflicted on Changgyeong Palace, and the final step was to reform the palace as a historical and educational site for the people (Cultural Heritage Administration 1985, 17). The government realized that the attempt to establish distinctive Korean identity was inseparable from the necessity to reveal "oneself" in the relationship with the other countries through the restoration process.

The first phase of the Changgyeong Palace Restoration Project was to restore the dignity of the royal palace that the Japanese colonists had once disgraced. The second was refurbishing the architecture that the Japanese destroyed or modified. The final step was landscaping, which involved removing cement statues and structures, and planting local trees instead of cherry blossom trees. The restoration of Changgyeong Palace placed emphasis on restoring the outward distortion and deformation; no earnest and deep discussion occurred about the palace's identity and characteristics as a new historical location. In short, there was no deliberation to dispose of and overcome the identity assigned by the old colonial regime. The only master plan for the restoration that was regarded as "natural" was physical and outward rebuilding as a palace of the Joseon period.

As the project progressed, the most deliberated topic was the Cherry Blossom Festival. Discussions centered on topics such as the origin of the cherry blossom viewing event, Japan's intention in planting the Japanese national plant in Changgyeong Palace, and the carefree or careless behavior of visitors during the event. As people began to perceive the festival as one of the vestiges of colonialism, resistance against the event gained support (*Donga-ilbo*, April 25, 1977).

On April 22, 1985, after the completion of the second phase of investigation, the Changgyeong Palace restoration committee established five principles on the reconstruction and launched the restoration project:

- 1) Restore the surrounding areas of Myeongjeongjeon (the oldest building from the Joseon dynasty) by restoring Myeongjeongjeon, the buildings next to it, and Wolgakchi (which is located north of Myeongjeongjeon).
- 2) Remove cement structures such as the sample room, zoo, recreational

facilities, and snack bars that seem to disgrace the royal image, and recover the original walkway.

- 3) Landscape the gardens with features that harmonize with the palace, just like the garden at the back of Changdeok Palace.
- 4) Preserve the main building of the botanical garden so that Korea's indigenous plants can be collected and displayed.
- 5) Restore the original function of the palace; facilities like snack bars or opening at night should be prohibited.

(Cultural Heritage Administration 1985, 19)

The objective for setting up such regulations was to recover the palace's royal dignity. This project included restoring Myeongjeongjeon, refurbishing the surrounding areas of the palace, removing Japanese architecture inside the palace, and reinforcing its original function. While the zoo was relocated, the botanical garden was preserved to be utilized as space where Korean indigenous plants and flowers could be collected and displayed, glorifying "Korean-ness." In these ways, efforts to revive the autonomy of Korea and its awareness of history were also intensified. The basic principle of the restoration policy was to secure the palace's role as a historical site, replacing its previously tainted image as a place for entertainment. In this respect, canteens, strikes or large gatherings, and vendors were banned.

The restoration project initiated discourses on eradicating the vestiges of colonialism and amending the distorted Korean history that resulted from colonization. The discussions centralized on the idea that cleansing the "colonial mind-set" needed to take place alongside the destruction of constructed buildings (*Gyeonghyang sinmun*, June 5, 1984). The idea of promoting our culture to the world accelerated the pace of the restoration project. The ultimate goal for Koreans was to present their national pride and culture to the world.

In the 1980s, the government promoted urban development, especially focusing on Seoul, in the preparation of Seoul Asian Games in 1986 and Seoul Olympics in 1988. In preparation for these international events, city maintenance and improving scenery became main projects for the government, and plan for the "redevelopment of the downtown area" was set (Seoul Historiography Institute 2016, 115). In 1988, as announced by the Cultural Heritage Administration, Changgyeong Palace was reborn to strengthen its role as an educational historical site, as well as a place for public relaxation. The Administration organized concerts every Monday and Tuesday for visitors,

opened the palace on the first day of every New Year, and provided traditional games for the public. However, these cultural events and the government's expectations from Changgyeong Palace have proven that it is still bound to the role (as Changgyeong Park) imposed by the Japanese Empire during the colonial period. The irony lies in the promotion of the botanical garden in Changgyeong Palace, and the launching of a special project called the "active use and preservation of the botanical garden" (*Gyeonghyang sinmun*, January 6, 1984). The administration neglected the fact that this garden exists because of colonization. Hence, this case shows that disposing of the "identity" created by the imperialists is still difficult for Koreans, even after emancipation.

Since the 1990s, restoration of the palace has been rapidly carried forward with the change in people's perception of culture values. People perceive palaces as not only city parks, cultural assets, and historical experience centers but also a place to establish the cultural identity of a nation. Therefore, the restoration project for cultural assets which was distorted by Japan has pursued the restoration of Korea's disconnected history and the continuous development of national culture, but there still remain a number of issues yet to be resolved.



Figure 6. Changgyeong Palace Restored (2015)

Conclusion

In 1983, Changgyeong Park was restored as a palace. The restoration was a process to amend the distortion and transfiguration of the image of the royal palaces by the Japanese Empire, in an attempt to destroy Joseon's sovereignty and the people's consciousness of their history. However, the task of cleaning up the vestiges of colonialism has not been easy. Distinguishing "authenticity of Korean culture" from "imperialistic notion" has been difficult because—whether intentional or not—the people of Joseon internalized the imperialist's philosophy of invasion. In particular, the acceptance of colonial projects, carried out under the pretext of "civilization," is the most notable example of such internalization.

The restoration of Changgyeong Palace focused on outward reconstruction and only "certain" and visible cultural distortions such as cherry blossom viewing were removed during the restoration. Furthermore, the identity given to the palace after the restoration was partly connected to the identity given by the colonial empire. Therefore, after being liberated from the colonial situation, overcoming the colonial strategy and experience was necessary to construct a proper Korean identity.

A simple removal or restoration of the physical remnants cannot guarantee the success of eradicating the vestiges of colonialism; thus, psychological rehabilitation should take place alongside it. However, Japanese cultural and annihilation policies under the strategically devised slogans of modernization and civilization had penetrated and mixed into the layers of Korean culture. Therefore, disposing of colonial notions was not an easy task. The restoration of Changgyeong Palace was a process that led to an endless search for answers, to establish and define Korean identity. The case of the restoration of Changgyeong Palace has proved that stabilizing and restoring identity, via reflecting on the relationship with the "other," is possible and can be successful.

Glossary

Gyeongbok Palace: The palace, where the king and his retainers discussed politics during the Joseon dynasty. The founder of the Joseon dynasty, Yi Seong-gye, decided to relocate Joseon's capital to Hanyang.

Deoksu Palace: The palace used as a temporary shelter for King Seonjo after the Imjin War. Its name was changed to Gyeongun Palace during Prince Gwanghae's era and then changed again to Deoksu Palace after 1907 to pray for longevity of King Gojong.

Shinsa 神社: From Japan's traditional totemism, this refers to a building or facility that signified sacrifices for the gods, which was built in each district in Korea during the Japanese colonial period.

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Abstract

Through the process of restoration of Changgyeong Palace from Changgyeong Park, this article aims to examine how demanding it was to restore the Korean cultural identity which had been distorted and modified by Japanese colonialism. Two important facts were discovered when Changgyeong Palace was transfigured into a “park” and then restored again into a “palace.” Firstly, the Japanese Empire’s cultural invasion under the pretext of modernization was deeply rooted into the colonized Joseon. Secondly, the cultural identity of Korea which needed to be restored by disposing of colonial vestiges was not purely Korean since it had already been entangled with another identity previously given by the “Empire.” After independence, there were not that many who considered the Changgyeong Park as a violation of Korean culture by Japan. This perception later impedes the restoration of Changgyeong Palace. Restoration of the palace was not only initiated due to the need to eradicate the colonial heritage but also due to other reasons. Demands to change its modified role as a park, advancement of the Korean economy, and establishment of Korean identity were the reasons that were driving the need to restore the Palace.

Keywords: post-colonialism, modernization, civilization, cultural invasion, cultural identity, colonial heritage, modern park, Changgyeong Palace