

Modern Korea's New Capital?
The Korean Empire's Pyongyang Development Project

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The notion of P'yŏngyang as the Korean Empire (Taehan Cheguk, 1897–1910)'s “Western Capital” (Sŏgyŏng) may surprise many.¹ Korea historians know about the city's past as the final capital of ancient Koguryŏ kingdom (n.d. –668) and the Koryŏ Dynasty (918–1392)'s Western Capital. Also, interpreters of the post-Koguryŏ history of P'yŏngyang have inextricably linked the city with the advocates—such as Myoch'ŏng (n.d. –1135)—of some kind of an alternative ideological orientation for Korea, though into the modern era locus of political power since the tenth century has remained in the western central region of the peninsula.

My interest in the city's elevated status in imperial Korea is a spin-off from my current book project on the rise and transformation of a specialist Seoul *chungin* family in the early modern era (ca. 1500–ca. 1880). While researching on the members that played prominent roles within political, business, and cultural circles of Imperial Korea, I noticed that many were involved in the 1902 construction of a royal palace in the city. In July 2006 when I discussed this with Yi T'aejin, he noted that the imperial government apparently prepared P'yŏngyang as the future capital in anticipation of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05).² Then only a few days ago, thanks to Christine J. Kim who discusses the subject in her book manuscript examining the Chosŏn monarchy's place in post-1910 Korean politics and culture,³ I learned that Kim Yunjŏng and Sŏ Ch'isang's 2006 study on the construction of the new royal palace also stressed the importance of the city in the empire's new, more Russia-oriented strategic plans.⁴ When I presented an earlier version of this paper at a conference in June 2008, Chŏn Uyong offered many useful comments.⁵

In this paper, I seek to offer a more multidimensional analysis of the significance of P'yŏngyang as imperial Korea's potential new capital, though my discussion will be exploratory in nature as I have just begun to look at relevant primary sources. I shall argue that while the well documented rhetoric of an empire needing two capitals certainly gives us a good sense of the

Korean Empire's understanding of its place in the civilized world of the past, present, and future, the circumstances in which the project got underway and then came to a halt raises questions about the empire's geopolitical concerns and future visions at the time and what groups used the project to address them. My paper covers three areas: one, the official rhetoric on the Western Capital and the subsequent palace construction; two, the personnel involved in the project; and three, the justification for abandoning the project. Let us first examine the project's officially documented beginning.

Developing P'yŏngyang as the Western Capital

Four-and-a-half years after the October 1897 inauguration of the Korean Empire, on May 1, 1902 a senior official urged the emperor to build the Western Capital. The Household Department (Kungnaebu)'s "special entry officer" (*tŭkchin'gwan*) Kim Kyuhong (1845–n.d.) submitted a memorial arguing that traditionally, empires had two capitals, including the Zhou (1045–256 BCE), the Han (202 BCE–220 CE), the Tang (618–907), and the Ming (1368–1644) dynasties of China, and that the practice culminated with the Ming system of Beijing ("Northern Capital") and Nanjing ("Southern Capital"). Stressing the city's water virtue (*sudŏk*) and the *qi* (Ko. *ki*) worthy of a dynastic capital for ten thousand years as well as the fact that it had been Korea's first cultural center, Kim then reminded Kwangmu emperor (temple name Kojong, r. 1897–1910; formerly king, 1864–97) that the city had been the capital for the Old Chosŏn (n.d.–108 BCE), Koguryŏ, and Koryŏ rulers. Upon reading the memorial, the emperor expressed his agreement and a desire to pursue the matter further.⁶

The swiftness with which the emperor launched the project strongly suggests that Kim's memorial was a coup de theatre. The general tone of the memorial exudes the author's faith in the dignity of both the empire and the emperor, a position in line with Kim's known anti-Independence Club (Tongnip Hyŏphoe) stance earlier. Only five days later on May 6, Kwangmu

emperor declared that he had been thinking about the project for long and ordered that appropriate officials discuss constructing a new palace and designating the city as the Western Capital.⁷ On May 10, the emperor appointed various officials to manage the project, including the Governor of South P'yŏngan Province Min Yŏngch'ŏl (1864–n.d.) as the senior supervising official (*kamdong tangsang*) of construction work.⁸ Then on May 14, the monarch reiterated the importance of having a second capital and released from the royal treasury fund (*naet'angjŏn*) 500,000 *nyang*—roughly 18.75 metric ton—of cash.⁹ Nonetheless, the government also had to assess a series of extraordinary taxes on the residents of the province. This burden on the local population would prove to be so onerous that in the following year, the government had to reduce the normally assessed levy by one-third.¹⁰

The construction work continued for more a year. It began in June 1902 when Kwangmu emperor approved the names of the palace's new edifices. In September, a procession of officials transported the emperor and the crown prince (future Yunghŭi emperor)'s portraits to the city, passing through large, cheering crowds.¹¹ Then in October, the emperor gave an audience to the processional officials returning from P'yŏngyang and announced rewards for them, including promotions.¹² A year later on November 10, 1903, the two portraits were set up at the newly completed T'ae'gŭk and Chunghwa halls.¹³ In spite of insufficient funding, material, and manpower, the government undertook the project with organization and efficiency at a high level previously unseen, even transporting materials by rail.¹⁴

As Christine J. Kim puts aptly, the Western Capital represented “a monumental fulfillment of Korea's past.”¹⁵ Unlike Meiji Japan's establishment of Tokyo as a modern capital symbolizing a break with the ancien regime, P'yŏngyang was not to replace Seoul.¹⁶ Construction in the city of a new royal residence, P'unggyŏng Palace, proceed in tandem with the renovation and expansion of the emperor's Seoul-based residence in the Kyŏngun (later renamed Tŏksu) Palace.¹⁷ The court, then, was expressing its commitment to the ancient traditions of Koguryŏ's former capital and Koryŏ's secondary capital. By doing so, the empire was reaffirming its

connections to Kija (Ch. Jizi), a Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600–1045 BCE) prince whom for centuries the Koreans and the Chinese alike had credited as the sage bringing civilization to ancient Korea.¹⁸ Of course, China in this context was not so much a modern Chinese nation-state as a universal civilization transcending spatial and even temporal boundaries. Ultimately, Kwangmu emperor was attributing to his empire, though now a Korean nation-state, an illustrious history stretching back to the ancient heartland of civilization in China's Central Plain.

The People Involved

The court mobilized individuals from a range of social backgrounds. On the lists of those rewarded for transporting the royal portraits in 1902, mixed among the regular members of officialdom were 14 men of a high court rank yet without a career of politically significant posts.¹⁹ So far, I have been able to reconstruct the career of one, a certain Pak T'aesik (1855–1933). Hailing from a Seoul *chungin* family with marriage ties to technical specialists and noncommissioned military officers, in January 1881 Pak entered the service of the Military Guard Agency (Muwiso) as a special military officer (*pyölmusa*).²⁰ In May 1882, he passed a large-scale military examination (*mukwa*) that recruited some 2,600 men.²¹ This competition contrasted sharply with the companion civil examination (*munkwa*) that selected only 23 men, including the famous Phillip Jaisohn (Ko. Sö Chaep'il, 1866–1951).²² Sometime between the end of his service as a special military officer in 1882 and the 1894 Kabo Reform, Pak attained a senior-third rank military post, the Five Guards (Owi) general (*chang*)—the reason why the 1902 promotion list indicated the same rank albeit by then he was officeless.²³ Along with 13 others of the same rank on the list, he received promotion to the junior second rank.²⁴

If Pak's career in indeed reflects those of other seemingly obscure men on the list, then we can surmise that somehow they had all won the court's attention and appreciation for other reasons—possibly financial contributions or other forms of service. Amazingly in Pak's case, at

least two of his kinsmen by marriage also participated in the Western Capital project—namely U Hangjōng (1854–1926), who was the father of Pak’s son-in-law, and P’aeng Hanju (1856–n.d.), the brother of U’s sister-in-law. Both active members of the Independence Club, U served as a construction supervising official (*kamdong*) from June 1902 while P’aeng served as the superintendent of trade (*kamni*) for and the magistrate (*kunsu*) of P’yōngyang from July 1901 to December 1904.²⁵ What is known about their careers adds an interesting dimension to the meaning of P’yōngyang as imperial Korea’s new capital.

U Hangjōng hailed from a capital *chungin* family that produced prominent individuals active in Imperial Korea’s political, cultural, and business circles.²⁶ He held offices typical of Seoul *chungin* without a particular technical specialty at the time, including temporary stipend posts (*ch’eajik*) in the Five Guards, the privy concillor (Chungch’uwōn *ūi’gwan*) (1898), and the Office of the Chamberlain (Sijongwōn)’s annex chamberlain (*pun sijong*) (1899).²⁷ Even before his Western Capital construction assignment, U took part in many projects of immediate concern to the throne.²⁸ This reflected the degree of his ties to the monarchy as well as his participation in various civic movements as a wealthy, royalist businessman.²⁹ A household registration (*bojōk*) record dated 1903 shows the size of his father’s mansion at 62 *k’an* (equivalent to about 366 feet) in length measurement—comparable to those of the most affluent, high-ranking aristocratic (*yangban*) officials.³⁰ In fact, he played a remarkable role in the economic history of modern Korea. In 1897 in Seoul, he and 29 others (including Koreans and foreigners) launched the Great Chosōn Ramie Spinning Company (Tae Chosōn Chōmsa Chesa Hoesa), arguably the first modern joint-stock company in Korean history.³¹

His sister-in-law’s brother, P’aeng Hanju, was of even greater fame. Coming from a capital *chungin* family that had been marrying the Us and the Paks for generations, in 1887 he was one of the two Korean representatives during the second Korean-Chinese border negotiations.³² Much later in July 1896 when the Independence Club formed, P’aeng was one of the Club’s founding members (*palgin*) and served as a managing officer (*kansawōn*).³³ Prior to this, he had

served as an interpreter (*pönyökkwan*) for the Foreign Affairs Ministry (Oebu) (1895).³⁴ As true with U, P'aeng clearly was knowledgeable about the changing world, and it is noteworthy that they were both involved in the Western Capital project.

The End of the Project

While P'aeng was serving as the magistrate of P'yöngyang, the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904 effectively brought the project to a halt, preventing the construction of additional buildings. The February 1904 First Korea-Japanese Agreement that the Japanese forced upon the Korean government authorized virtually free movement of Japanese troops, and as of June they were in occupation of all the major administrative, communication, and military facilities in South P'yöngan Province's various counties.³⁵ By August 1904, advancing Japanese troops occupied most of the northwest including P'yöngyang, and the palace halls became makeshift barracks for the Japanese imperial army.³⁶

Even before the war, though, there were indications that continuing the Western Capital project was becoming less viable. In late 1903, Kwangmu emperor was receiving reports of financial hardship suffered by the local population. Then on July 15, 1904, An Chongdök (1841–n.d.), a local elite from South Kyöngsang Province and a privy concillor, submitted a lengthy memorial in which he accused the initial advocates of the projects of deceiving the emperor and intending to ultimately exploit the people. An questioned the value of an expensive construction project in spite of widespread complaints and enshrining so far away the invaluable emperor and the crown prince's portraits. He concluded that as the powerful neighboring nations were warring at Korea's border and given the strategic location of P'yöngyang, a catastrophe might strike the city, and that the portraits must speedily be brought back to Seoul. And to insure that the people will not be burdened again, the construction should not be resumed, he argued.³⁷

It is unclear how corrupt indeed were the advocates of the project, but the perception

seems to have been widespread. For example, Hwang Hyŏn (pen name Maech'ŏn, 1855–1910) claimed that rapacious Min Yŏngch'ŏl confiscated one-third of the entire province's population's properties in the name of the palace construction project but did not actually use them so. As the people became restless, he reportedly announced that the fund was for enshrining the portraits in the city and managed to persuade emperor to carry out the transport.³⁸

In contrast, Yun Ch'iho (pen name Chwaong, 1865–1945) blamed a certain Kim Chŏngsik (n.d.), a man who held many offices during the period but about whose background little is known. According to Yun, Kim told the emperor that he had discovered a prophet advising construction of a palace in P'yŏngyang in imitation of the two-capital systems of ancient China and Japan. Kim reportedly promised to build the palace without costing the emperor any money, and the monarch was duped. Thus authorized, Kim collected money by extorting involuntary gifts from rich people and by other questionable methods and proceeded to build the palace. Apparently his good fortune aroused the jealousy of others no better than he: his prophet, either of his own sweet will or through somebody's instigation, managed to tell the emperor that he was no prophet at all: that the whole thing was a money-making scheme of Kim's. The emperor ordered the arrest of the fake prophet, claimed Yun.³⁹

The P'yŏngyang magistrate at the time, P'aeng Hanju, also came under much criticism. During his tenure, he earned a reputation as a corrupt, rapacious official—reduplicating his previous image as the Tŏgwŏn superintendent of trade.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the Japanese appreciated the assistance P'aeng rendered them during the Japanese advancement against the Russians in the northwest. Although the local population reportedly supplied the Japanese troops with food and water, P'aeng also made sure that the Japanese got plenty of help from the local government officials.⁴¹ In December 1904 when the court wanted to relieve P'aeng of his duty, the Japanese emphasized how helpful he had been and asked the court to retain him as the magistrate.⁴² In April 1908 and August 1910, the Residency-General of Korea awarded him with the Silver Rays Medal of the Order of the Rising Sun.⁴³

Final Thoughts

On the surface, the project suffered from funding troubles, rapacious officials exploiting the local population, and a huge tax burden on the local population. It seems, then, that the entire endeavor was just a minor episode in Korean history, if not even a farce. Or was it?

To be sure, the project lingered for a while. The court continued to appoint new managing officials (*ch'amsŏ'gwan*) for P'unggyŏng Palace up to May 1906, though each appointee's typically brief tenure as short as one day suggests that the appointment was honorary. Elevated against his will by the Japanese, Yunghŭi emperor (temple name Sunjong, r. 1907–10) could do little but watching Korea's sovereignty erode. Less than a month after his accession, in August 1907 the Japanese disbanding of the Korean army deprived P'yŏngyang of its local garrison army (*chinwidae*) responsible for the security of P'unggyŏng Palace.⁴⁴ Then in April 1908, the royal portraits were returned to the capital, with all official posts associated with the palace abolished.⁴⁵ This effectively stripped P'yŏngyang of its status as the empire's secondary capital. And with the new August 1909 law stipulating the establishment of public health service centers (*chahye ūiwŏn*) throughout Korea, the bare-bones palace would eventually become the local public health center facility.⁴⁶

All the same, the memory of Western Capital far outlived the Korean Empire. Popular use of the name "Sŏgyŏng" continued at least into the 1930's. For example, in 1926, a newly founded joint-stock company registered itself as "Sŏgyŏng Commercial and Industrial Company, Ltd." (Sŏgyŏng Sanggongŏp Chusik Hoesa).⁴⁷ As of 1934, Sŏgyŏng Transportation Company, Ltd. (Sŏgyŏng Unsu Hoesa, Chu.) was still conducting business in the city.⁴⁸ And of course, P'yŏngyang would reassume a special status as a national capital with the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948.

Considering the duration of the post-1910 memory of the Western Capital project, we

can only wonder whether its original rationale was more complex. In other words, did the 1902 Kim Kyuhong memorial beatify a set of even geopolitical or strategic concerns? Considering the project's timing, was Kwangmu emperor actually envisioning P'yŏngyang as the new primary capital of Korea? Was his decidedly pro-Russia policy entailing a notion that in terms of national security, it was better to make the national capital closer to Russia? And was the emperor even harboring continental ambitions against the declining Qing empire? Many, if not all, of these questions are not entirely meaningless, especially given that from the perspective of most political leaders in the world at the time, the Japanese victory was Russia was not a certainty.

Indeed, the Western Capital project was consistent with recent, Russia-oriented changes in the military organization that had established that city as the regional headquarters for border defense troops in the northwest.⁴⁹ A regional administrative center situated almost 200 kilometers from Seoul would have given the court a degree of breathing space from Japanese encroachment, as well as opportunities to explore a closer partnership with its main continental rival, Russia. The fact that the emperor's trusted foreign advisors such as Paul von Möllendorf (1847–1901) had earlier laid the ground for a pro-Russia policy, and that the Korean military had adapted the Russian model for training, all suggest that strategic and political considerations were at the heart of building imperial Korea's new capital.⁵⁰

These considerations may strike the still all-too-many critics of Kwangmu emperor and the Chosŏn Dyansty (1392–1910) as historically meaningless if not worse. Actually, the historians such as Yi T'aejin and Chu Chino have shown that a modernization required of Korea for its survival at the time had called for an effective state-centered program rather than that based on civil society. An assessment of the Korean Empire range from Kwangmu emperor's vain, self-serving design to the beginnings of a modern, constitutional monarchy, but to me it seems indisputable that modernizing Korea before the Japanese take over was not just a sitting duck. Among others, the P'yŏngyang project provides a strategic window through which we can try to seek a better understanding of Imperial Korea's visions and ultimately the modernization course.

Notes

¹ Date citations in this paper are according to solar calendar unless noted otherwise.

² Yi T'aejin (Yi Tae-Jin), interview by author, 19 July 2006.

³ See Christine J. Kim, "The King Is Dead: The Monarchy and National Identity in Modern Korea," unpublished book manuscript. I thank Christine J. Kim letting me consult and cite a relevant section of it on 3 June 2008.

⁴ Kim Yunjōng and Sō Ch'isang, "P'unggyōnggung kōnch'uk e kwanhan yōn'gu" [A study on the construction of P'unggyōng Palace], *Taehan Kōnch'uk Hakboe Haksul Pal'yo Taebae nonmunjip* (October 2006) 26.1: 494. Kim Sunil had earlier written on the city's new royal edifice, P'unggyōng Palace. See Kim Sunil, "P'unggyōnggung yōnggōn e kwanhan yōn'gu" [A study on the P'unggyōng Palace construction project], *Yōn'gu pogo* 35 (June 1988).

⁵ Eugene Y. Park, "The Empire's New Capital: P'yōngyang in Imperial Korea, 1897–1910," a paper presented for the First Sangmyung University Symposium in Korean Studies, 13 June 2008.

⁶ *Sūngjōngwōn ilgi* [Daily records of the Royal Secretariat], 1902.lunar03.81a-82b. Since this reprint edition does not show the original volume (*ch'aeke*) numbers, I indicate the lunar month that the cited volume covers. Unless noted otherwise, all citations refer to the reprint edition, *Sūngjōngwōn ilgi: Kojong* [Daily records of the Royal Secretariat: Kojong] (Seoul: Kuksa P'yōnch'an Wiwōnhoe, 1968), 15 vols.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1902.lunar03.111b-112a.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1902.lunar04.9a-9b.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1902.lunar04.22b. Calculating at 3.75 gram per *ton*, Kojong's expenditure amounted to roughly 18.75 metric ton of cash.

¹⁰ *Kojong sillok* [Veritable records of Kojong], 43.1b-2a. *Kojong sillok* citations refer to a reprint edition, *Kojong-Sunjong sillok* [Veritable records of Emperors Kojong and Sunjong] (Seoul: T'amgudang, 1986), 4 vols.

- ¹¹ On the details of the preparation and transport of the portraits, as well as its aftermath, see *Kojong Ŏjin Tosa Togam ũigwe* [State ritual manual on Kojong's portrait preparation commission] (Seoul: Söul Taehakkyo Kyujanggak, 1996).
- ¹² *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, 1902.lunar09.10a–16a.
- ¹³ *Kojong sillok*, 43.49b.
- ¹⁴ Kim Yunjŏng and Sŏ Ch'isang, 494–95.
- ¹⁵ See Christine J. Kim.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Kim Yunjŏng and Sŏ Ch'isang, 493.
- ¹⁸ Jae-hoon Shim, "A New Understanding of Kija Chosŏn as a Historical Anachronism," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62.2 (December 2002): 271–305.
- ¹⁹ Naebu, *Kajarok* [Promotion record], hand-copied edition (n.p., 1905), 181b–182a; *Kwanbo* [The government gazette], 14 February 1903, *hooe* [extra]; and *Ilŏngnok* [The record of daily reflections], 12816-0498.12b–15a. Citations refer to a reprint edition, *Ilŏngnok* (Seoul: Söul Taehakkyo Tosŏgwan, 1996), 86 vols.
- ²⁰ His family background information comes from genealogies and examination rosters. *Chigugwanb'ŏng ilgi* [Daily records of the Military Guard Agency] (n.p., 1882), 7.189b. Citations refer to the original at Changŏgak collection (K2–3375), Academy of Korean Studies.
- ²¹ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, 2898.31b–32a, 85b, 2899.14a–b. Page citations refer to the image files of the original at the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies website (http://e-kyujanggak.snu.ac.kr/sub_index.jsp?ID=SJW).
- ²² Unlike the civil examination passers all of whom were presented to the king during the degree ceremony, somehow only Pak and several other Military Guard Agency-affiliated officers enjoyed the honor while all other military examination passers stood outside the gate. *Chigugwanb'ŏng ilgi*, 9.54b.
- ²³ During my field research in 1995–96 in South Korea, Pak's grandson who grew up in a farming

village in Puyŏ County, South Ch’ungch’ŏng Province, recalled that in the early 1930s when he was a child, neighbors referred to his grandfather as “Five Guards General Pak” (Pak Owijang). Pak Pyŏnghae, interview by author, Seoul, South Korea, 5 October 1995.

²⁴ *Kajarok*, 181b; *Kwanbo*, 14 February 1903, *hooc*; *Isŏngnok*, 12816-0498.12b–15a; and *Kojong Ŏjin Tosa Togam ũigwe*.

²⁵ *Kwanbo*, 2 August 1901, 7 December 1904; *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, 1902.lunar04.xx-xx (5 June); and Chu Chino, “19 segi hu’ban kaehwa kaehyŏngnon ũi kujo wa chŏn’gae: Tongnip Hyŏphoe rŭl chungsim ũro” [The structure and the development of the late 19th-century enlightenment reform discourse: with the focus on the Independence Club], Ph.D. diss., Yŏnse Taehakkyo, 1995, 93–94.

²⁶ For example, U Kyŏngsŏn (1862–n.d.) who managed Korea’s arguably first modern shipping companies, the Iunsa and the Kwangt’ongsa, was U Hangjŏng’s first cousin. Also, U Pŏmsŏn (1857–1903), who led his troops alongside the Japanese into Kyŏngbok Palace during the infamous 1895 Ŭlmi Incident, was a more distant cousin. As well known, born afterward in Japan after Pŏmsom’s flight there was the son, U Changch’un (1898–1959), a world-class agronomist famous for seedless watermelons among scientific contributions.

²⁷ *Kwanbo*, 12 October 1898, 28 January 1900; and *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, 2956.47b, 1899.lunar10.xx–xx (15 November), and 1899.lunar10.xx–xx (25 November).

²⁸ For example, in December 1898 and June 1899, he received promotion for good service during the constructions of Kyŏnghyo Hall, where the court performed ancestor worship rituals for Empress Myŏngsŏng (1851–95). *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, 1898.lunar10.179a; and *Kwanbo*, 14 June 1899.

²⁹ As true with many wealthy members of the Independence Club, he often made donations—including four wŏn in 1898. *Hwangsŏng sinmun* [Capital gazette], 10 October 1898. After the government-forced break up of the Club, U was active in other organizations. For example in March 1907, he contributed five wŏn for the National Debt Repayment Campaign (Kukch’e

Posang Undong). *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, 27 March 1907. As of June 1908, he was a member of the Korean Association (Taehan Hyŏphoe). And as of August 1908, he was one of the an assisting officer (*ch'anmunwŏn*) of the Kyŏnggi-Ch'ungch'ŏng Educational Association (Kiho Hŭnghakhoe). "Ponhoe kisa" [Article on the general assembly], *Kiho Hŭnghakboe* 1 (25 August 1908), 52.

³⁰ Also, during a court trial in 1908, the judge described both him and an interpreter *chungin*, Yi Kŭnbae (1849–n.d.), as rich individuals. *Taehan maeil sinbo* [Great Korea daily news], 19 January 1908. Catalogued as "Kankoku kōseki seisatsu" [A collection of Korean household registration records], the original collection of Korean household registration records of 1896–1907, in 165 bound volumes (*ch'aek*), is at Kyoto University Museum. I consulted the microfilm copy at Langson Library (Microfilm M 000797), University of California, Irvine. Outside the capital, he certainly owned estates that he had took cares to mange. In October 1899, we find him petitioning the Crown Property Court (Naejangwŏn) for what he argued as the government mistaking his land in Pongsan County in Hwanghae Province as a government land (*tunt'o*) and attempting to collect harvest from it. *Hwanghae-do changt'o munjŏk*.

³¹ They founded the company to plait Korean hemp and ramie fabric thread together and export them to foreign weaving factories. Since Hangjŏng's kin by marriage, Pak T'aesik, had at least ten thousand *p'yŏng* of land in Puyŏ and Imch'ŏn producing ramie fabric, the company most likely could count on a steady supply of it. Adjacent to Imch'ŏn, Hansan in particular was famous for fields producing highly profitable ramie fabric. Advocating a more commercializing farming back in the early nineteenth century, aforementioned social critic, Chŏng Yagyong (pen name Tasan, 1762–1836), had noted that a given ramie fabric-producing field there was ten times more profitable than a highest-grade rice paddy of the same size. Chŏng Yagyong, *Kyŏngse yup'yo: wŏnmun* (Seoul: Hyŏndae Silhaksa, 2004), 8.16b–17a. The leaders launched the company with a sizable capital. With the total investment comprising 40,000 won of foreign capital and 35,000 won of Korean capital, public sale of company stocks reportedly brought in some 17,000 won in just one day. At the time, the company leaders believed that their business will be very profitable,

calculating that producing one ton of plaited ramie fabric threads would cost five hundred won but they would be able to export it at the price of 1,400 won. Supporting the founding of the company, the *Independent's* editorial urged Koreans to invest in the company, arguing that ramie fabric manufacturing produces a hundred-fold profit that is three hundred times greater than a profit from buying a superior-quality rice paddy (*sangdŭng tap*). The company proceeded to hire more than 70 employees, but it was unable to actually build a factory. All the same, it is significant that in contrast to the Korean Empire's main motive behind modernization through industry and establishment of production factories was to make capitalistic products daily necessities and free the country from economic servitude to great powers, the company sought to export products. *Cheguk kwa sangin* [The empire and the merchants] (Seoul: Yŏksa Pi'p'yŏngsa, 2007).

³² *Zhong-Han kanjie ditu* (1887), as cited by “‘Kando nŭn Chosŏn ttang’ Chungguk chido palgyŏn” [‘Jiandao is a Chosŏn territory,’ a Chinese map discovered], *Chosŏn tat k'ŏm*, 21 October 2004 (<http://weekly.chosun.com/wdata/html/news/200410/20041019000015.html>), accessed on 11 June 2008.

³³ Chu Chino, 91.

³⁴ *Kwanbo*, 10 June 1895.

³⁵ Kim Yunjŏng and Sŏ Ch'isang, 495–96.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 496.

³⁷ *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, 1904.lunar06.13b–14b.

³⁸ Hwang Hyŏn, *Maech'ŏn yaroŭk* [Private record of Maech'ŏn] (Seoul: Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 1971), 3.2.

³⁹ Yun Ch'ihŏ, *Yun Ch'ihŏ ilgi* [Diary of Yun Ch'ihŏ] (Seoul: Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 1976), 5.321–22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.245.

⁴¹ “Rŏ-Il Chŏnjaeng, Kojong ūn Ilbon sŭngni rŭl wŏnhaenna” [The Russo-Japanese War: Did

Kojong desire the Japanese victory?], *Omainyusū* (OhmyNews), 7 November 2007

(http://www.ohmynews.com/nws_web/view/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0000757923), accessed on 9 June 2008.

⁴² *Kwanbo*, 7 December 1904; and “Rō-II Chōnjaeng, Kojong ūn Ilbon sūngni rŭl wōnhaenna.”

⁴³ These details may prompt many to conclude that P’aeng was a pro-Japanese collaborator, but extant records are silent on his career after this period. Although one might expect him to have enjoyed further promotions once the Japanese gained control of Korea, he is not known to have held any office, but interestingly in June 1920, he spoke at the inaugural meeting of the Inch’ōn branch of the Labor Union (Nodong Kongjehoe). *Tonga ilbo*, 30 June 1920.

⁴⁴ Kim Yunjōng and Sō Ch’isang, 496.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 493, 496.

⁴⁷ *Tonga ilbo*, 12 January 1929.

⁴⁸ Nakamura Shiryō, *Chōsen ginkō kaisha yōroku* [Directory of Korean banks and companies] (Keijō: Tōa Kaizai Jihōsha, 1942).

⁴⁹ Sō Inhan, *Taehan Cheguk ūi kunsu chedo* [The military system of the Korean Empire] (Seoul: Hyeon, 2000), 205-7.

⁵⁰ Christine J. Kim.