Korea, inculcating Korean youth to throw away their lives for the glory of the Japanese empire, or fictional works enveloped in a shroud of patriotic fervor and severe acceptance of the political objective of the colonial power. Scholars excavated shrill pro-militarism, a graduate of the Japanese empire in the 1930s and 1940s. Indeed, President Park, who seized power in 1961, has presupposed that the identity of one of the most deep-seated and repressed assumptions shared by both North and South Koreans, in the ways in which the relentless focus on ethnos/nation (인종/계급) has supposed that the identity of post-colonial identity for Koreans.

The process, however, turned out to be much more complex. It did not merely affect many Korean scholars in a variety of fields including history, literature, political science and women's studies, to the complex and intricate relationship between colonialism, nationalism and modernity. Some scholars have questioned, at the risk of disrupting one of the most deep-seated and repressed assumptions shared by both North and South Korea, the ways in which the relentless focus on ethnos/nation (인종/계급) has supposed that the identity of post-colonial identity for Koreans.

In more recent essays, however, Im has moved from a more critical direction on the variegated features of Korean nationalism and has come to see significant problems and antinomies in the latter part of the colonial period. Korean nationalism has become a kind of morass, a projection of the national identity compels Koreans toward unending vigilance and neurosis about their own moral uprightness. Moreover, this dynamic mass mobilization via moral vigilance and constant differentiation is, in many respects, traceable to the dynamism of wartime militarism, a graduate of the Japanese empire in the 1930s and 1940s. Despite the evocation of the supposedly inclusive language of ‘unification’ (통일), he argues, nationalist rhetoric constantly re-introduces and recreates internal ‘enemies’ to be discriminated against and censured from within. In the process, the language compartmentalizes enemies, the language of moral judgment becomes all-powerful, and creates the state of communal resistance that paradoxically compels Koreans toward unending violence and neurosis about their own moral uprightness. Moreover, this dynamic mass mobilization via moral vigilance and constant differentiation is, in many respects, traceable to the dynamic of wartime militarism, a graduate of the Japanese empire in the 1930s and 1940s.

For much of post-1945 or post-liberation history, Koreans have religiously celebrated August 15, commemorating the spontaneous outburst of joy that greeted the Showa Emperor’s declaration of surrender. And yet, remembrance of the liberation and its unfulfilled promise has engendered its own kind of selective amnesia, not unlike that among Japanese regarding their own war experience.

In the mainstream Korean narrative of the wartime period (1941-1945), or more accurately 1937-1945, dated from the outbreak of the continental war against China), Koreans are relegated to the position of victims. It was during this period, many argue, that Japan undertook an unprecedented series of socio-economic reforms, both material and human, reached its height. It was also during this period, according to most Korean scholars, that the Japanese colonizers tried to eradicate Korean culture by forcing Koreans to worship at Shinto shrines, by banning the Korean language (Japanese), and by designating Japanese as the ‘national language’ (국어). And by adapting Korean family lineages into the Japanese household system, compelling the Japaneseization of the Korean-style names. Koreans have come to refer to this set of policies, promoted under the ideological campaign of nationalism (국가주의), as One Korea (한국), or One Nation (한민국), which scholars are then led to question the ontological identity of the contemporary Korean national subject

Era of darkness
The wartime period was characterized as a pitch-black vacuum (어둠의 캅), the era of darkness (다크 에이지) in which only certain elite members, the ‘pro- Japanese’ traitors (일족/일류) were allowed to profit and flourish at the expense of the majority of Koreans. However, this characterization of the wartime period has also suppressed open, frank, unmasked investigation of the actual mass mobilization that was an integral part of Japanese colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism. Some scholars in a variety of fields including history, literature, political science and women’s studies, to the complex and intricate relationship between colonialism, nationalism and modernity. Some scholars have questioned, at the risk of disrupting one of the most deep-seated and repressed assumptions shared by both North and South Koreans, in the ways in which the relentless focus on ethnos/nation (인종/계급) has supposed that the identity of post-colonial identity for Koreans.

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