Colonial Modernity and Rural Markets during the Japanese Colonial Period

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Colonial Modernity and Rural Areas

Up until the mid-1990s, a period in which the influence of nationalism-based historical studies was dominant, the trend of perceiving the notions of ‘coloniality’ and ‘modernity’ as being antagonistic and incompatible with one another remained a predominant one. Having failed to achieve independent modernization, Korea found itself during the early 20th century falling under the yoke of Japanese imperialism. The Republic of Korea which was established after World War II adopted independent modernization as its supreme task. As such, the colonial period was defined as one in which the advent of Japanese imperialism resulted in the task of modernization being obstructed or abandoned, and as a period of colonial exploitation. However, no in-depth discourse on what the contents of these notions of ‘modernization’ and ‘modernity’ was ever conducted.

The growing introspection on the shortcomings of the existing perceptions of history rooted in the dichotomous perception of the colonial period as a conflict between exploitation and resistance resulted in increased attention being paid to the theory that capitalist industrialization

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was carried out as part of changes wrought to the economic structure during the Japanese colonial era, and that modernity expanded throughout every aspect of public life, including society and culture. As a result, the modern changes wrought during the Japanese colonial period, and in particular the introduction and spread of the capitalist economic system, are now recognized as accepted facts. There has also developed a consensus that the specific production type called capitalism had the effect, much as was the case in the West and Japan, of condensing modernity in people’s everyday lives in colonial Korea. In this regard, it has now become increasingly important to develop a better understanding of the quantitative and qualitative depth of these ‘modern changes,’ and how these should be interpreted.

Various diverging interpretations of the level of capitalization and modernization carried out in colonial Korea, as well as of the historical characteristics of this capitalization and modernization, have begun to be introduced. The prevailing perceptions of colonial modernity in the field of history can be identified as the following. First, some have regarded modernization during the Japanese colonial period as having been limited to the advent of quantitative changes to the economy. Moreover, as industrialization and economic growth during the colonial period were pursued for the purpose of imperialistic exploitation, this phenomenon has been likened to little more than distorted modernization. Second, others have argued that although visible and quantifiable modern development and growth did occur during the Japanese colonial period, such denouements were solely geared towards the Japanese people, and did little to improve the life of Koreans. Third, another group of scholars has maintained that a modernized capitalist society was in fact formed in Korea during the Japanese colonial period, and that this became the cornerstone of the growth and development that occurred from liberation to the present era. Fourth, those advocating the need to develop a critical interpretation of modernity have, while accepting the modernization that took place within the colony as an objective fact, focused on the fostering of critical reinterpretations of the modernity which was carried out during
the Japanese colonial period. As the first and second assertions in many ways overlap, three overarching stances can be identified: critical acceptance, positive acceptance, and critical reinterpretation of modernization.

Despite differences in terms of their fundamental viewpoints, these recent studies have commonly adopted ‘colonial modernity’ as their main theme. Explaining the characteristics of the modernity which Korea experienced, while also paying attention to the fact that the modernity carried out at the entire global level was heteronomously experienced in different regions, has now emerged as an important research task. Colonial rule should not exclude modernity, but rather should be considered as a condition that leads to the formation and reproduction of modernity. This newly defined concept of modernity is based on a consciousness of historical time, and should be regarded as a specific cultural form that is differently experienced depending on the type and customs of a society. This modernity is experienced through the time and space called everyday life. Therefore, the modernity of a colony is actualized and expressed through the people’s everyday lives. The modernity experienced in large cities such as Seoul and Pusan during the Japanese colonial period was not very different from that which took place in cities in the West and Japan. The perception of colonial modernity through elements of urban culture such as cinema theatres, cafés, teahouses, department stores and show windows; public culture; and the contemporary people who sought to keep pace with these fashions, can be regarded as being connected to the task of discovering new modern actors while raising criticism of the existing nationalism-based perception of history.

This new perception of colonial modernity has brought about meaningful changes in the study of Korean history during the Japanese colonial period. However, most of the reviews conducted from the standpoint of modernity have been concentrated on industry and cities. Although agriculture and rural areas accounted for a great majority of industry and demographics respectively, these studies have failed to clearly position them within this new awareness of the issue of the explanation of colonial
modernity. The reason for this failure has been closely related to the belief that while peasants were structurally incorporated into colonial capitalism, their labor and rural-based lifestyle were not based on the creation of new styles, but rather inherited from the previous era.

Somewhere amidst the militarist oppression of Japanese imperialism and the direct and indirect resistance to this oppression, resistance to colonial rule and the acceptance of modernity became separated into different issues. During the opening period, anti-enlightenment/ anti-modernity was directly linked to anti-Japan/ anti-imperialism. However, as the awareness of the need for cultural enlightenment spread, the notions of anti-Japan and enlightenment, while still intersecting, began to be separated from one another. While the advent of the Japanese colonial era saw the perception of colonial rule and the attitudes toward modernity be clearly separated, a certain overlap remained between the two in the form of the people’s everyday lives. In this regard, rural areas proved to be no exception to this rule. While they connected modernization/ civilization to Japanese rule, the peasants did not look upon it as a purely positive or negative development, but rather were to a great extent aware of the inherent grey zone associated with this denouement.

The rural areas, where over 70% of the Korean population resided, were thus integrated into the ‘modern world.’ The elements that made up this modern world included the agricultural policies implemented by the Government-General of Chosôn to meet the needs of the Japanese empire; the commercialization of farming household economies; as well as the railroads and newly constructed roads, lights and telephones, silk mills, post offices, financial associations, normal school system and companies, and entertainment and consumption oriented restaurants which made their way down even into rural areas. However, the claim that peasants experienced modernity in their everyday lives simply because they were included in the colonial capitalist system is one that is hard to substantiate. Amidst a reality in which “most people could not even dream of going up to Seoul,” Seoul (Kyōngsŏng), which glowed with modern urbanity, was more of an abstractive space to peasants than
an actual city. Few of Korea’s poor rural masses subject to the colonial agricultural policy had ever seen a train or streetcar.\textsuperscript{7} The benefits of modern infrastructure, such as electricity and a water supply system, also remained outside of the reality of most poor Koreans.

Peasant farmers suffered from extreme poverty throughout the entire Japanese colonial period. The landlord-oriented agricultural policy implemented by the Government-General of Chosŏn had the effect of increasing the ratio of peasant farmers. The economic situation of lower class farmers became even more precarious, so much so that 40% of all farming households recorded a deficit in 1925. The commercialization of agriculture, which was one of the economic attributes of colonial modernity, only served to further exacerbate landlords’ exploitation of farmers. Under these circumstances, the modern land tax system, which was based on the individual tax introduced by the Government-General of Chosŏn, had the effect of weakening the traditional solidarity of agricultural communities. Moreover, the economic gap between landlords and farmers was further increased.\textsuperscript{8} According to a survey conducted in 1933, over 80% of peasants, and this regardless of whether they were independent or peasant farmers, were in debt. Farmers resorted to all kinds of actions, including the taking of second jobs and hiring out as part-time labor, to secure the supplementary income needed to make a living. However, as the opportunities for second jobs and part-time work decreased, farmers found themselves with no other choice but to depend on loans.\textsuperscript{9} The daily lives of farmers, which all but collapsed due to the agricultural policies and institutions of colonial modernity implemented by the Government-General of Chosŏn, was another face of colonial modernity, one that stood in complete contrast to the neon signs and modern civilizations found in cities.

**Changsi and the Farming Household Economy**

The rural market, or *changsi*, which opened every five days emerged as
the sphere which connected the farming households who managed to eke out a living in isolated rural villages by investing all of their family’s labor to the outside world. *Chang,* or *changsi,* were also called *5-il chang* (five-day markets) because they opened at five-day intervals. Peddlers regularly travelled to four or five adjacent marketplaces to sell their wares on respective market days. For their part, farmers went to one or two marketplaces which could be reached on foot every 5-10 days to sell their agricultural products so that they could purchase basic life necessities. In addition, they also took care of their official and individual job tasks. The enhancement of agricultural productivity resulted in an organically connected *changsi* network being formed during the 18th century in the three southern provinces. The number of rural markets, or *changsi,* continuously increased during the Japanese colonial period, going from 1,000 to 1,500. With the notable exception of the 1940s, when their numbers were forcefully decreased as part of the mobilization for war, the *changsi* served as an important agricultural and daily life market in the rural areas of Korea. The scale of such markets deeply rooted in agricultural areas continuously increased up until the 1970s.

Farming households and villages, both of which had strong self-sufficient characteristics during late Chosŏn, were connected to other villages through marketplaces. This contributed to the promotion of reproduction at the village unit. Nevertheless, each village community strongly maintained, in their capacity as independent life zones, a sense of closedness. However, Korean agriculture was tasked with contributing to the reproduction of the Japanese imperialist economy during the colonial period. As such, the rural markets or *changsi* became the intermediary that connected individual farming households and villages to the distribution structure of colonial capitalism. Various middlemen were engaged in economic exchange activities within the *changsi,* and the latter were vertically linked to one another within an export chain that saw resources, commodities, and services be exported from rural areas to cities, inland regions to railroads and ports, and eventually to Japan. As a result, the *changsi* were no longer simply ‘sectional markets’ that connected
together closed off villages, or that functioned as a hub for independent trade amongst locals.\textsuperscript{11}

The traditional marketplace system consisting of a spider web-type structure was transformed into a high profit-seeking arrangement in which the goods and resources of inland area were amassed after the opening of three ports, with these three ports serving as the hub for the new distribution structure.\textsuperscript{12} Once railroads were constructed, agricultural and industrial products were increasingly dispatched for export directly from local railroad stations rather than through the \textit{changsi}.\textsuperscript{13} The denouements of the \textit{changsi} amidst these changes can be interpreted as the result of the fact that these markets were able to flexibly adjust to the colonial capitalist structure.

The gradual disorganization of the \textit{changsi} at the national level did not stop these markets from continuing to play an important role in horizontally connecting together villages in rural areas, which as mentioned before possessed a strong sense of closedness and communality. Especially, in the southern provinces, where well-organized \textit{changsi} networks had been in place since the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, these entities continued to play the crucial role of local market during the entire colonial period.\textsuperscript{14} The actual state of \textit{changsi} in rural areas, as well as the changes that had been wrought to their status, during the Japanese colonial period, can be ascertained by a look at the renowned Ansŏng Market located at the gateway to Seoul during late Chosŏn. The reorganization of the distribution structure that took place during the Japanese colonial period resulted in the role of the Ansŏng Market as a hub for exports being assumed by P'yŏngt'ae Train Station. The establishment of a train station and accompanying urbanization helped P'yŏngt'ae to rapidly entrench itself as a distribution center. Nevertheless, Ansŏng Market still retained its powerful commercial status as a local market which provided everyday necessities to residents of outlying areas.\textsuperscript{15} Another factor which greatly contributed to the \textit{changsi}'s continued importance was its status as a socio-cultural network through which local culture was communicated.\textsuperscript{16}

The use of \textit{changsi} as a sphere for trade was also common practice
amongst farmers during the Chosŏn dynasty. In this regard, the spread of *changsi* and the densification of *changsi* networks reflected the development of commerce. While the opening of the three ports resulted in agriculture and peasant life being incorporated into the capitalist market economy in a full scale manner, the extent of this incorporation became more severe during the Japanese colonial era. In the 1910s, farming households sold 20-30% of their annual yield in order to purchase the basic life necessities they could produce for themselves.\(^{17}\) Farmers provided the merchants who visited individual farming households with spot goods such as agricultural products in exchange for basic necessities, or resorted to face-to-face trade with other village residents. However, the conducting of such activities through the *changsi* was already becoming more common.

An analysis of materials related to the household accounts of the Hamyang Pak family of Yech’ŏn compiled from the mid 19th century to the 1930s reveals that, while the ratio of trade carried out via the *changsi* and other means rapidly increased during the 19th century, these other forms of trade accounted for a greater ratio of overall trade than that conducted through the *changsi*. However, the advent of the Japanese colonial era resulted in a net and rapid increase in the trade carried out through the *changsi*.\(^{18}\) Various goods were traded via the *changsi*. A survey conducted by the Temporary Cadastral Survey Bureau during the mid-1910s found that it was commonplace for farmers to secure the basic industrial goods they required in even the remotest of *changsi*, such as the one in Yanggu-kun, Kangwŏn Province.\(^{19}\) The consumption of basic industrial goods underwent a rapid increase in a short period of time. One salient example which can be raised in this regard is that of rubber shoes. First imported from Japan in 1918, rubber shoes were initially introduced into urban areas. However, by the autumn of 1921 they had proved to be popular even in the most remote areas of local provinces. Over 800,000 pairs of rubber shoes were sold in Seoul alone from the autumn of 1921 to the summer of 1922, 80-90% of which had been imported from Japan.\(^{20}\) Rubber shoes were also sold through the *changsi*. Farmers wearing
homemade straw shoes had to sell off some of the goods they produced if they desired to purchase such rubber shoes.

The most important task with regards to the ability to reproduce the farming household economy amidst a new world in which modern industrial goods had been thrust into farmers’ everyday lives was the achievement of food self-sufficiency. To this end, peasants focused on the cultivation of agricultural products that could be sold as spot goods, and maintained stringent control over their budgets. Inevitable cash expenditures were covered with the income obtained by selling off their agricultural products, or with additional non-agricultural income. However, the phenomenon of declining agricultural income and ever-increasing cash expenditures forced many small-scale farming households to sell their agricultural products for below market value. During the 1930s, 40-45% of the rice produced by small-scale peasant farmers and tenant farmers that remained after the tenancy fee had been levied was sold commercially. As the degree of farming households incorporated into the market economy increased, so did the extent to which the changsi were used. Farmers sold agricultural products such as grains, livestock, vegetables, and firewood at the changsi, the sale of which helped to keep family finances in the black. In addition, they also acquired the supplementary income needed to maintain their lifestyle through the taking of part-time jobs, second jobs, or hiring themselves out as temporary labor. The changsi was a place which provided them with an opportunity to secure additional income through such means as the transportation of goods and the sale of food. In this regard, a close relationship was formed between the changsi and farmers.21

The changsi played a significant financial function for farmers. Poor farmers who could not use modern colonial financial institutions were able to secure the emergency capital they required to stay afloat through the changsi. The exchange of capital between farmers and money lenders was a common sight on market days. Payment for goods or the interest on loans was, in keeping with the regular opening day of changsi, effectuated every five days.22
Interpretation of the Expansion of the *Changsi*

The majority of those who used *changsi* were farmers who sold their products, such as a small amount of grains, livestock such as hogs and chickens, eggs, fruits and vegetables, and then purchased basic life necessities with the cash they had earned from selling their products. The rapid urbanization and population increase that occurred during the colonial period served to enhance the necessity of establishing permanent markets. Nevertheless, the majority of provinces, with the exception of certain large cities within their midst, continued to operate five-day markets.

The *changsi*, which were set up along the main road or in an empty lot in downtown areas and did not require any special facilities, consisted of a grain market in which rice and other grains were traded, and various others markets specialized in items that included marine products, firewood, and livestock such as cows. In the case of large-scale markets, in excess of 10,000 people routinely gathered on market day, effectively transforming the entire downtown area into a marketplace. Marine products, which had to remain fresh, were delivered by merchants specialized in marine products, or peddlers who hailed from the relevant areas. Meanwhile, farmers from the surrounding area were the ones who delivered the other agricultural products.

Trade within the *changsi* was never advantageous to farmers. Trading at the *changsi* was an absolute necessity for farmers, who were responsible for keeping their household economy in the black. However, it was difficult for them to gain the upper hand in such trade. Farmers had to not only sell their own products during the hours in which the *changsi* was open, but also to purchase the necessities they required. As a result, it was commonplace for the price of goods to fluctuate seriously during the hours in which the *changsi* was opened, and there were many dishonest merchants who tried to deceive the naive farmers who had little experience in terms of market transactions. These merchants purchased grains at lower than market cost, and then raised the prices in order to
earn excessive profits. As such, conflicts between dishonest merchants and farmers were a common occurrence on market days.\textsuperscript{23}

The presence of regularly-convened local markets such as the \textit{changsi}, where farmers actively participated during the stage in which the economy was based on agriculture, has been a generalized phenomenon found in many countries around the world, including many in East Asia. However, under the ‘modernization theory,’ these regularly-convened markets are argued to have become permanent markets, or to have been replaced by modern permanent markets, during the process of industrialization and the development of the capitalist market economy. The existence of regular markets in rural areas was generally accepted as a sign of society’s economic backwardness. The Government-General of Chosŏn also perceived the \textit{changsi} phenomenon, and especially the fact that over 1,000 \textit{changsi} were regularly convened nationwide and more were being added all the time, as a sign of Korea’s economic and social backwardness. The majority of researchers and scholars have concluded that the same side effects of a colonial rule that distorted the progression towards modernity, also ensured the continuation of this regressive phenomenon.\textsuperscript{24}

Most studies conducted to this point on these markets have concentrated on analyzing the role of \textit{changsi}, which they identified as an implement of trade, as part of the distribution economy that took root within the colony. Although there have been non-economic approaches that have focused on the traditional or folkloric aspect of such markets, these have proven unable to provide a precise explanation for the expansion of the \textit{changsi} that took place. Given the importance of the \textit{changsi} in Koreans’ daily lives during the Japanese colonial period, such studies can be said to have failed to perceive the \textit{changsi} as a hybrid sphere/relations created as a result of colonial modernity. Moreover, few studies have sought to interpret the economic and social phenomena associated with the \textit{changsi}. Various issues were however emphasized during the process of mitigating dichotomous approaches such as those which focused on exploitation and resistance, as well as modernity and premodernity. These issues include
the interpretation of the expansion of *changsi*, reanalysis of the conflicts that emerged within local society in conjunction with the *changsi*, analysis of the various actors related to the *changsi*.

Studies which have sought to reinterpret the expansion of the *changsi* during the colonial period have been actively conducted of late as part of efforts to overcome the imperative concept of ‘normal’ modernity. These studies have attempted to situate the *changsi* phenomenon within the process of colonial modernity, while criticizing existing viewpoints which have regarded the expansion of *changsi* as an abnormally distorted phenomenon occasioned by Korea’s political and economic backwardness. These studies have emphasized the need to reconsider the theoretically accepted notion that modern changes are either delayed or abnormally distorted in a colony, and the deterministic belief that the social changes which occur within a colony are unilaterally determined by the colonial authority.

The main elements associated with the *changsi*, as well as their development, that have been mentioned in recent studies can be summarized as follows. First, under the colonial capitalist structure, farmers needed the *changsi*, which they could freely enter, to maintain their small-scale farming household economies. This can be likened to the argument presented above that the continued existence of the *changsi*, which was a farmer-led regularly convened market, was made possible by the inherent needs of the farming household economy. Second, the incorporation of farming household economies into the wider monetary economy had the effect of ushering in many changes in the inherent characteristics of the trade conducted within the *changsi*. The *changsi* in rural areas functioned as networking markets that effectively connected these rural areas to the global market. The *changsi* played an important role in terms of the collection and exporting of the agricultural products and raw materials demanded by Japanese capitalism, but also functioned as windows for the distribution and sale of capitalist goods. Third, the *changsi* was a socio-cultural hybrid space in which Koreans, who were prohibited from participating in politics, could release their pent-up
energy. As such, the *changsi* was not only an economic mechanism involving the simple trade of resources, but also a sphere of communication in which social activities, entertainment, communication, information exchanges, as well as national movements including the March First Movement, could unfold. Fourth, the *changsi*, in their capacity as a basic trading mechanism, served as collective goods which contributed to the activation of local economies. Furthermore, additional local development effects could be expected through the advent of other collective goods, such as financial institutions, agricultural product inspection centers and agricultural product stores, and means of transportation. In this regard, local residents sought to attract *changsi* to their areas as part of efforts to ensure local development and reap the benefits of such development. This can be regarded as one of the key reasons for the expansion of the *changsi* during the Japanese colonial era.

**Characteristics of the Conflicts that Emerged in Connection with the Changsi**

Who controlled these *changsi* which underwent a tremendous expansion during the Japanese colonial period? Even if we assume that it was in fact the colonial authority which exercised control over these gatherings, then this creates another question. Did the Government-General of Chosŏn restrain or encourage the *changsi*? A number of studies have suggested that the colonial government adopted a policy of encouraging the *changsi* as part of its efforts to secure the goals of its colonial rule by incorporating the self-sufficient rural economy of Korea into the capitalist market economy. However, this amounts to little more than conjecture that is based solely on the *changsi* expansion phenomenon. In reality, while it used the *changsi* as a propaganda sphere for its policies, the Government-General of Chosŏn also consistently sought to curtail the growth of the *changsi* and to limit farmers’ access to such markets.

Conflicts related to the internal coordination of the *changsi*, establishment
of branches, as well as the relocation of *changsi* to other areas, continuously emerged during the colonial period. Despite the policy of the Government-General of Chosŏn of decreasing and eventually abolishing the *changsi*, the latter continued to play an important role not only in terms of farmers’ everyday lives, but also with regards to the preservation of the colonial capitalist structure. These conditions created a competition for interests that revolved around the *changsi* during the process in which socioeconomic changes were unfolding within the colony. This competition took the form of conflicts between local residents over matters such as the establishment, abolishment, and existence of *changsi*. The scope of the conflicts over the *changsi*, which as mentioned above revolved around such matters as the reorganization of the internal structure of the *changsi*, establishment of branches, and the relocation of the *changsi*, was relatively microscopic. In this regard, the microscopic character of such conflicts is clearly evidenced by a comparison with cases of regional conflicts waged at the provincial and county levels over such matters as the relocation of provincial government or county offices.

The main actors engaged in the conflicts related to the *changsi* included: 1) the *simin* or citizens who lived in the areas where the *changsi* were located; 2) the merchants who engaged in commercial activities by travelling from market to market, 3) and the farmers, who formed the majority of the individuals who made use of such markets, that populated the areas adjacent to the *changsi*. To this end, it was the *simin* who lived in areas occupied by the *changsi* who were the most directly and actively engaged in the changes that took place within such markets. The lives of the *simin* were greatly influenced by the establishment or abolishment of a *changsi*. To this end, even the mere relocation of a *changsi* to a site only a few hundred meters away from the previous site, or partial internal reorganization of the *changsi*, had an impact on their lives. The *changsi* were not only assets which could determine the fate of the socioeconomic interests of local residents, but also a place where many less fortunate individuals earned a living. Therefore, the *simin* who resided near *changsi* reacted very sensitively to even the smallest of changes that was believed
to have an impact on the distribution of the profits they earned from the changsi. As their dependence on the changsi was the greatest, it was only natural that they were also the group that reacted the most aggressively to any changes that took place within the changsi.29

These ‘simin’ included the regular residents which lived around the site where the changsi was convened, a group that consisted of merchants, brokers, peddlers, and others who sought to earn a living from the changsi. The simin also included non-agricultural members of the population such as government officials and company workers, as well as the local influentials that controlled the downtown and market associations. The term simin has traditionally been used to indicate the privileged licensed merchants called sijŏn sangin who were active in Seoul during the Chosŏn dynasty. However, during the Japanese colonial era, this term was used to indicate the residents who lived in the area adjacent to the changsi or in the downtown area. The inclusion of both residents related to the market and those living in urban and downtown areas within the definition of the term ‘simin’ in all likelihood reflects the fact that these changsi were generally set up in urban areas. Viewed from this standpoint, the conclusion that the term ‘simin’ as employed during the Japanese colonial period indicated the ‘modern actors who participated in public politics’ in the Western sense of the word, appears to be a generous one. Above all, the Japanese colonial era in Korea was characterized by the imposition of rigid prohibitions on colonial subjects’ participation in politics, a denouement that in turn resulted in delaying the dissolution of communal solidarity in local societies. In this regard, there is a need to conduct a separate study on the potential/process of the differentiation of the term ‘simin.’

The debate over how the changsi-related conflicts should be evaluated has already begun in earnest. Some researchers have regarded the changsi as a kind of collective good, much like roads, railways, schools, and government offices, and perceived these entities as a means to pursue coexistence and the development of local societies that still featured the characteristics of agricultural communities.30 Meanwhile, others have
labeled the *changsi* as an ‘incomplete free market’ that featured certain barriers to entry, and viewed the communal reciprocity that developed in conjunction with the *changsi* conflicts as a calculated and logical reciprocity rooted in market principles. According to this line of reasoning, the *changsi* conflicts had more to do with local residents seeking to advance their commercial interests than with the protection of public values.\(^3\)

The pursuit of individual benefits cannot be ruled out as a motivation for the *changsi* conflicts. However, it is inherently difficult for both individuals and groups alike to act in a way that is completely devoid of selfishness or calculated logic when a conflict involving collective goods breaks out under a capitalist structure. Even if we assume that these conflicts were not related to the pursuit of individual profits, the characteristics of the *changsi* as a collective good must nevertheless be recognized. This problem is not one whose scope is limited to the debate over the characteristics of the *changsi* and *changsi* conflicts. Rather, such arguments related to the characteristics of the *changsi* conflicts in effect delay a confirmation of the validity of the perception that local provinces within the colony were unilaterally and homogenously controlled by the colonial authority. On the contrary, while it was impossible to engage in completely autonomous politics, the *changsi* provided a limited space in which conflicts between the colonial authority and residents, as well as amongst residents, over local issues could be coordinated.

Then, did the *changsi* conflicts encompass the potential for fundamental resistance against the colonial ruling order? This question can also be posed in conjunction with any conflict related to public matters that caused turbulence within local society, such as the establishment of schools, roads and railways, and the relocation of government offices. However, even in cases where violence was involved, such as the closing up of stores, strikes, and the aggressive resistance against the colonial authority, the *changsi* conflicts were praxis that existed outside of the organized social movements set up by people who shared identical beliefs. Although perhaps not an organized and systemic resistance movement,
local residents, in the name of communal honor and benefits, nevertheless forged an alliance on matters related to the distribution of collective goods. They adopted the internal tools of the system, such as petitions and appeals, when dealing with colonial administrative agencies. However, such steps only reflected the official standards with regards to the scope of the independent practices which were permitted. Although the colonial authority had responsibility for the official coordination and prevention of social conflicts, such collective actions on the part of local residents in pursuit of communal interests also included the inherent possibility of developing into fundamental criticism or refusal of the colonial system.

Although the ‘political’ space which had been somewhat opened up after the March First Movement was completely sealed shut under the wartime system, the changsi conflicts over public goods that emerged during the 1920s-1930s nevertheless exhibited various attributes generally associated with conflicts between the power group and local society. While these conflicts were ostensibly not related to the refusal of the colonial authority’s control and regulations, one can nevertheless imagine ‘local society’ as a social space in which competition with the colonial power was made possible by the fact that the unilateral leadership of the colonial authority proved unable to penetrate this particular space. This space existed not as a simple metaphor for critical thinking, but rather as the actual sphere which the great majority of colonial residents functioned.

**Changsi and Farmers**

While farmers were the group that made the greatest use of the changsi, they, unlike the simin, farmers did not have any direct interest at play in the highly-charged changsi conflicts that broke out over microscopic issues. That being said, the farmers active in changsi zones emerged as the most important actors in terms of the promotion of the expansion of the changsi, as well as with regards to the definition of the characteristics of such markets.
The colonial authority was the party who possessed the legal rights pertaining to the sanitation, security, and operation of the changsi. While the colonial farmers sometimes ignored the intervention and control of the colonial authority, at other times they responded very aggressively to such factors. The expansive and well-organized changsi networks provided farmers with various options in terms of the countermeasures they could opt for. Changsi-related matters which raised the ire of farmers included the levying of excessive taxes, brokerage fees, and other usage fees. The primary response of farmers with regards to such issues was the boycott. Whenever the officials in charge of a market sought to forcibly impose excessive brokerage fees or taxation, farmers simply avoided using the changsi in question, a move that eventually resulted in its contraction. The fact that the changsi were markets that only came into their own when many people gathered at a fixed time and space meant that farmers’ collective boycott of such venues inevitably became a very effective means of protest. Theses markets in which no farmers gathered in effect ceased to exist as a changsi. In such cases, the responsibility for removing the obstacles that led the farmers to boycott the market fell on the shoulders of the simin residing in the marketplace and surrounding areas whose living depended on the changsi. Thus, the taking of a collective action on the part of the farmers, in the form of a boycott of the changsi, spurred the simin to undertake their own. In some cases however, farmers did intervene directly.32

‘Modernity’ can be defined in various ways from a conceptual as well as concrete manner. In this regard, no review of each of these factors is needed to reach the conclusion that colonial modernity took on different features in urban and rural areas, permanent markets department stores and changsi. Despite the obvious communal and reciprocal elements involved in such conflicts, the assertion can be made that the changsi conflicts nevertheless did feature some of the characteristics of colonial modernity, in that, not only were they based on a desire for modern development at the regional level, but also involved a certain amount of selfishness that took the form of wanting to emerge victorious in the
competition with other local areas. Furthermore, the fact that the *changsi* functioned as one of the components of the colonial capitalist structure, as well as of its exploitative distribution system, all but ensured that the *changsi* conflicts would inherently be laden with modern characteristics.

Colonial capitalism had the effect of worsening the conflicts between capitalists and laborers, as well as between landlords and farmers. However, the necessity to defend the nation against Japan’s dictatorial rule also had the effect of mitigating the inherent hierarchal differences between the various social groups. This hybridity was also reflected in the *changsi* markets that operated in rural areas. This hybridity created through the combination of traditional communality, reciprocity, equality, local chauvinism, desire for development/improvement, and the pursuit of capital gains, can be regarded as a reflection of the impact of colonial modernity on rural markets.

**Keywords**: colonial modernity, modernity, rural markets, *changsi*, five-day market, *changsi* conflicts, collective goods, *simin* (citizens)

**Notes**:

1 Various discussions concerning colonial modernity were carried out in the 1990s. Yun Hae-dong can be regarded as the individual who rigorously criticized the dichotomous perception of history known as the ‘theory of colonial exploitation,’ and emphasized the necessity to overcome the existing dichotomous perception and establish a new perception of the colonial period. Yun Haedong, *Singminjīūi hoesaek chidae (The Colonial Gray Zone)*, (Yōksa pip’yōngsa, 2003).

2 Hur Young-ran, “*Saenghwal sujun hyangsaengron pip an* (Criticism of the improvements rendered to public life)” in *Ilbonūi singminji chibaewa singminjijŏk kündae (Japanese Colonial Rule and Colonial Modernity)*,
Examples of studies which have reflected these new perceptions of modernity and critical approaches to modernity include, Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson eds., *Colonial Modernity In Korea*, (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), (Samin, 2006); Yun Hae-dong, *Singminjūi hoesaek chidae: han’gukū kāndaesōnggwa singminjuūi pip’an ( The Colonial Gray Zone of a Colony: A criticism of Korean Modernity and colonialism)*, (Yǒksa pip’yǒngsa, 2003); Kong Cheuk and Jung Keunsik eds., *Singminjūi ilsang, chibaewa kyunyŏl (Daily Life in the Colony: Control and Crevices)*, (Munhwa kwahaksa, 2006); Yun Hae-dong et al., *Kündaeerūl tasi ingnūnda 1·2 (Review of Modernity 1·2)*, (Yǒksa pip’yǒngsa, 2006).

For more on the trend in various studies to deal with the issue of capitalistic public consumption and modern urbanity that emerged during the Japanese colonial period, please refer to Hur Young-ran, “*Ilche sigi saenghwalsarūl parabonūn kwanjōnggwa minjung* (Viewing the history of everyday life during the Japanese colonial period and the public)” in *Yǒksa munje yŏn’gu (Korean Journal of Historical Studies)*, Vol. 20 (2008), 132-133.

The above mentioned studies are significant in that they brought the issue of colonial modernity to the surface. However, recent studies on the penetration and spread of ‘modernity’ during the colonial period have highlighted the fact that it is necessary to newly and critically review the notion of ‘colonial modernity.’ The time has now come to discuss about whether ‘colonial modernity’ has any concrete usefulness as an analytical concept with which to explain the Japanese colonial period.


Hur Young-ran, “*Kaehang ihu~ ilche sigi han’gukinūi ilbon insikkwa singminji kānda* (Korean perceptions of Japan and colonial modernity during the period spanning from the opening of the three ports to the Japanese colonial period)” in *Han’guk kūm · hyǒndae chǒngch’wa ilbon I (Korean Modern and Contemporary Politics and Japan I)*, (Sǒnin, 2010), 337-340.


Lee Muyoung, “*Hükū noye (Slaves of the earth)*” in *Inmun p’yǒngnon (Review
of Humanities), (April 1940); Lee Kyung Ran, “1930 nyŏnda nongmin sosŏlul tonghaesŏ pon singminji kŭndaehwa wa nongmin saenghwal (Colonial modernity and peasants’ lives as viewed from the agricultural novels produced during the 1930s)” in Ilcheŭi singmin chibaewa ilsan saenghwal (Japanese Colonial Rule and Public Life), (Hyean, 2004), re-quoted in 395.


9 Hur Young-ran, ibid, (2009), 262-263.

10 Eric Wolf called these local markets in rural areas ‘sectional markets.’ Sectional markets are markets through which autonomous villages, or what can be referred to as independent sections, come into contact with one another on a regular basis to exchange the result of their labor and experience a sense of mutual solidarity. (Eric R. Wolf, trans. by Pak Hyunsu, Peasants, (Chŏngnyŏnsa, 1978)) 75.

11 For more on the changes in the characteristics of the changsi, please refer to Hur Young-ran, Ilche sigi changsi yŏn’gu -5 il changŭi pyŏndonggwa chiyŏk chumin (The Study of Marketplaces during the Japanese Colonial Era – Changes in the 5-day market and local residents), (Yŏksa pip’yŏngsa, 2009), 245-250; “1910 nyŏnda kyŏnggi nambu chiyŏk sangp’ium yut’ong kujŏui chaep’yŏn (The reorganization of the wholesale and retail distribution structure in the southern part of Kyŏnggi Province during the 1910s)” in Yŏksa munje yŏn’gu (Korean Journal of Historical Studies), Vol. 2 (1997).

12 Kim Dong No, Kündaewa singminŭi sógok (Prologue of Modernity and Colonization), (Ch’angbi, 2009), 183.

13 Hur Young-ran, “1910 nyŏnda kyŏnggi nambu chiyŏk sangp’ium yut’ong kujŏui chaep’yŏn (The reorganization of the wholesale and retail distribution structure in the southern part of Kyŏnggi Province during the 1910s)” in Yŏksa munje yŏn’gu (Korean Journal of Historical Studies), Vol. 2 (1997), 164.

14 Hur Young-ran, “Ilche sigi sjang chŏngch’aekkwa chaerae sjang sangŏp’ŭi pyŏnhwa (Market policy during the Japanese colonial era and changes in the nature of the commerce conducted through traditional markets)” in Han’guksaron, Vol. 31, History Department, Seoul National University (1994), 309-310.

15 Hur Young-ran, ibid (1997), 188.

16 For more on the various socio-cultural functions of changsi, please refer to
Chung Seungmo, “Nongch’on chônggi sijang ch’egyewa nongmin chiyŏk sahoe kujo” (The regular market system and the structure of local society in rural areas)” in Honam munhwa yŏn’gu (Journal of Honam Culture Studies), Vol. 3, Honam Culture Research Institute, Honam University (1983); Sijangŭi sahoesa (Social History of the Marketplace), (Ungjin Publishing, 1992); Hur Young-ran, “Ilche sigi sangŏpŭi kûndaesŏnggwa singminjisŏng (The modernity and coloniality of commerce during the Japanese colonial period)” in Yŏksa pip yŏng (Critical Review of History), Vol. 27 (1994).

Lee Hun-chang, “Kuhammer · inchech’o nongga kyŏngyangŭi kujowa sangp’um hwap’ye kyŏngje” (The structure of farming household management and the monetary economy during the final period of the Taehan Empire – early Japanese colonial period)” in Taehan cheugkkiŭi i’oji chedo (The Land System during the Taehan Empire), (Min’umsa, 1990), 243.

Ahn Byung-jik and Rhee Younghoon eds., Matchilŭi nongmindŭl (The Farmers of Matchil), (Ilchogak, 2001), 139-140.

The Government-General of Chosŏn, 朝鮮の市場 (Markets in Korea) (1924), 52.

Hur Young-ran, “Ilche sigi sangŏpŭi kûndaesŏnggwa singminjisŏng (The modernity and coloniality of commerce during the Japanese colonial period)” in Yŏksa pip yŏng (Critical Review of History), Vol. 27 (1994), 211.

Hur Young-ran, ibid (2009), 257-263.

Hur Young-ran, ibid (2009), 243.

Hur Young-ran, ibid (2009), 244-245.

For a summary of the history of the research conducted on the changsi, please refer to Hur Young-ran, ibid (2009), 19-25; Cho Hyung Keun, “Chuch’esŏngŭi kwanjŏmesŏ pon ilche sigi changsĭŭi kaldŭng” (The changsi-related tensions during the Japanese colonial period as viewed from the standpoint of independence)” in Yŏksawa Hyŏnsil (Journal of History and Reality), Vol. 73 (2009) 303-306.

For more on the studies conducted based on this standpoint, please refer to Hur Young-ran, ibid (2009); Cho Hyung Keun, “Singminjigi chŏnggi sijangŭi sŏngjang wŏnin –kyŏngjejŏk yoin’gwa pigyŏngjejŏk yoinŭi kubyŏlŭl wihayŏ (The growth of regular markets during the Japanese colonial period – separating economic and non-economic factors)” in Sahoewa yŏksa (Society and History), Vol. 76 (2007); Cho Hyung Keun, “Singminjigi chaerae sijangesŏ sijang kaldainggwa sahoejŏk kwan’gyeŭi pyŏndong (Conflicts within traditional
markets during the Japanese colonial period and the changes in social relations”), PhD dissertation, Sociology Department, Seoul National University (2005).

26 Kim Sung-hoon, Han’guk nongch’on sijangŭi chedowa kinŭng yŏn’gu (The institutions and functions of Korean rural markets), National Agricultural Economics Research Institute (1977), 141.

27 Hur Young-ran, ibid (2009), 88-99.

28 Although this summary of cases was based on the instances reported in newspapers, there were at least 264 cases of market conflicts that emerged between 1920 to1940. This accounts for approximately 20% of all markets in Korea at the time, the majority of which were changsi. The number of market conflicts was based on Cho Hyung Keun, ibid (2005), 174.

29 For more on detailed aspects, development of the changsi conflicts, and the characteristics of the main actors involved in such conflicts, please refer to Hur Young-ran, ibid (2009), 159-236.

30 Hur Young-ran, ibid (2009), 207-217.

31 Cho Hyung Keun, ibid (2009), 313-321.

32 Hur Young-ran, ibid (2009), 286-290.
Recent studies on Korean history during the Japanese colonial period have in general focused on ‘colonial modernity’ as their main theme. They have sought to analyze the characteristics of the modernity which Korea experienced, while paying special attention to the fact that while modernity should not be ignored, colonial rule should be perceived as having been a condition that contributed to the formation and reproduction of modernity; and that modernity, which was carried out at the global level, was variously and heteronomously experienced in individual regions. This fresh perception of colonial modernity has helped to bring about a meaningful change in the heretofore nationalism-centered study of the colonial era. Nevertheless, a great number of these analyses of modern elements have tended to concentrate on two spheres: industry and urban areas. To this end, although agriculture and rural areas accounted for a significant majority of industry and the overall population respectively, these elements were not identified as being crucial to the formation of the proper interpretation of colonial modernity.

The study of the elements of the traditional lifestyle of farmers that were passed down from generation to generation is indeed a more simple one than the analysis of the new elements that were introduced. However, the rural markets, or changsi, which connected farmers to the external world, clearly exhibit the hybridity that characterized their lives during the colonial era. Colonial capitalism had the effect of worsening the conflicts between capitalists and laborers, as well as between landlords and farmers. However, the necessity to defend the nation against Japan’s dictatorial rule also had the effect of mitigating the inherent hierarchal
differences between the various social groups. This hybridity was also reflected in the changsi markets that operated in rural areas.

The commercialization of agriculture and the agricultural policy of the Government-General of Chosŏn had the effect of further exasperating the already dire situation which farmers faced. The direness of this situation forced many small-scale farmers to try to eke out a living by selling their agricultural wares at lower than market value prices. In this regard, the changsi emerged as the main sphere in which such exchanges designed to ensure farmers’ ability to continue to earn a living were carried out. The expansion of the changsi during the Japanese colonial period was motivated by the following factors. First, under the colonial capitalist structure, farmers needed the changsi, which they could freely enter, to maintain their small-scale farming household economies. Second, the changsi in rural areas functioned as networking markets that effectively connected these rural areas to the global market. The changsi played an important role in terms of the collection and exporting of the agricultural products and raw materials demanded by Japanese capitalism, but also functioned as windows for the distribution and sale of capitalist goods. Third, the changsi was a socio-cultural hybrid space in which Koreans, who were prohibited from participating in politics, could release their pent-up energy. To this end, the changsi conflicts reflected not only the confrontations and fissures that crisscrossed local society, but also the inherent politics of coexistence and alliance. Fourth, the changsi, in their capacity as a basic trading mechanism, served as collective goods which contributed to the activation of local economies. Furthermore, additional local development effects could be expected through the advent of other collective goods, such as financial institutions, agricultural product inspection centers and agricultural product stores, and means of transportation. In this regard, local residents, or simin, sought to attract changsi to their areas as part of efforts to ensure local development and reap the benefits of such development. This can be regarded as one of the key reasons for the expansion of the changsi during the Japanese colonial era.

The changsi conflicts over public goods that emerged during the 1920s-1930s nevertheless exhibited various attributes generally associated with conflicts between the power group and local society. While these conflicts were ostensibly not related to the refusal of the colonial authority’s control and regulations, one
can nevertheless imagine ‘local society’ as a social space in which competition with the colonial power was made possible by the fact that the unilateral leadership of the colonial authority proved unable to penetrate this particular space. In addition, the hybridity created through the combination of traditional communality, reciprocity, equality, local chauvinism, desire for development/improvement, and the pursuit of capital gains, can be regarded as a reflection of the impact of colonial modernity on rural markets.
식민지 근대와 일제시기의 농촌시장

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일제시기 한국사에 대한 최근 연구는 공통적으로 '식민지 근대'를 화두로 삼고 있다. 식민지배는 근대성을 배제하는 것이 아니라 근대성이 형성되고 재생산되는 하나의 조건이라는 점, 전지구적으로 진행된 근대가 각 지역에 따라 매우 다양하고 이질적으로 경험되었다는 점에 주목하면서, 한국이 경험한 근대성의 성격을 해명하고자 하는 것이 다. 식민지 근대에 대한 논란이 민족주의의 일색의 식민지 연구에 의미 있는 전환을 가져왔지만, 근대적 양상에 대한 다양한 검토는 주로 공업과 도시라는 두 차원에 집중되었다. 농업과 농촌은 산업구성이나 인구구성에서 지배적 비중을 차지하고 있었음에도 불구하고, 식민지 근대의 해명이라는 문제의식에서 뛰어난 위치를 설정하지 못했다.

새로움 보다는 이전 시대와의 연속성이 두드러지는 농민의 존재양식을 여러 각도에서 검토할 수 있었지만, 그들을 외부와 연결시키는 농촌시장, 즉 장시는 그 존재의 혼성성을 잘 보여준다. 식민지 자연주의에 대한 자연가와 노동자, 자주와 농민의 계급적 갈등을 심화시켰지만, 일제의 위압적인 지배에 대한 방어의 필요성은 사회세력의 계급적 계층적 분화를 압제시켰다. 그러한 조건이 야기한 혼성성은 농촌시장의 장시에 그대로 반영되었다.

농업의 상업화와 조선총독부의 식민지 정책은 농민의 궁핍을 심화시켰다. 영세농민 들은 생계유지를 위해 농산물의 공박관매로 내몰렸다. 그러한 생계유지형 교환이 이루어지는 곳이 바로 장시였다. 일제시기에 장시가 확산된 이유를 정리해보면 다음과 같다. 첫째, 식민지 자연주의 하에서 영세한 농가경제를 유지하기 위해 농민들은 진압이 자유로운 농촌시장, 즉 장시를 필요로 했다. 둘째, 농촌 장시는 식민지 상품유통체제에 유연하게 적응하여, 농가와 농민, 농촌조합을 세계시장과 연결하는 네트워크 시장으로서 기능했다. 장시는 일본자본주의가 요구하는 농산품과 원료 등을 수급, 배출하는 기능과 자연주의상품을 배급, 판매하는 통로이기도 했다. 셋째, 장시는 정체를 근거로 한 한국인들의 에너지를 사회문화적 형태로 표출하는 공간이었다. 장시감등에는 지
역사회를 종횡하는 대립과 균열, 연대와 공존의 정치성이 반영되어 있다. 냉해, 잔해는 그 자체가 기초적인 교역기구로서 지역 경제를 활성화하는 데 기여하는 집합체 (collective goods)였으며, 교통기관, 관공서 등 관련 시설의 집중을 유도하여 추가적인 지역개발 효과를 가능하도록 만드는 메개체였다. 따라서 시민 등 지역주민들은 지역발 전과 그에 따른 이익을 확보하기 위해 잔시 유치에 합었고, 그것이 일제시기에 나타난 잔시 확산의 한 가지 요인이 되었다.

1920~30년대에 확인되는 장시감동은 공공제를 둘러싼 권력과 지역사회의 다양한 갈 등 양상을 보여준다. 그것이 식민당국의 허울 거스를 정도는 아니더라도, 권력과의 경 협이 이루어지는 사회적 공간의 존재 가능성을 압시한다. 그것을 통해 식민권력의 일 방적인 독주가 관찰되는 것만은 아닌 ‘지역사회’를 상정해 볼 수 있다. 그리고 이렇게 장시감동을 통해 확인되는 것, 즉 전통적인 공동체성, 호혜주의, 평등주의, 지역이기주의, 개발/발전에의 육망, 시장적 이익의 추구가 결합된 흔적성이야말로 농촌시장에 투 영된 식민지 근대성이라고 할 수 있을 것이다.