

Questioning Growth, Interrogating Pollution: South Korea's Political Economic Approaches to the Environment in the Early 1970s*

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Introduction

While environmental issues have not been entirely overlooked in the field of Korean history, they have yet to receive a level of scrutiny appropriate to their importance. Even the relatively limited historical attention directed toward the environment is mostly concerned with how the structure, distribution, and transformations of the natural environment have shaped historical and societal changes.¹ The underlying his-

* This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government (2017S1A6A3A01079727) and also by the Sogang University Research Grant of 2021 (202110017.01). The author would like to thank the reviewers for their thoughtful comments and constructive suggestions.

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1 See, e.g., Kim Dong Jin, *Chosŏnŭi saengt'aehwan'gyŏngsa* [An Ecological-Environmental History of Chosŏn] (Seoul: P'urŭnyŏksa, 2017). For research trends in environmental history in Korea, refer to Ko Tae-woo, "Han'guk kŭndae saengt'aehwan'gyŏngsa yŏn'guŭi tonghyanggwa kwaje [The Research Trends and Challenges of Korean Modern Ecological and Environmental History]," *Saengt'aehwan'gyŏnggwa yŏksa* 2 (2016): 31-70.

toriological assumptions necessitate treating human society and the natural environment as separate categories. The impact of the environment on human society is then evaluated predominantly through knowledge derived from ecology and other pertinent scientific disciplines. In North America and Europe, such historiographical pursuits have sparked intense debates about the potential risk of introducing environmental determinism and scientism to historical analysis.² As yet, no such debate has unfolded among Korean historians. A pervasive conventional wisdom persists: although the environment may significantly influence human society, it remains outside the historians' purview as it is fundamentally distinct from the domains of history, politics, society, and culture. It is, therefore, encouraging to witness the recent growing body of new Korean historical studies that challenge this longstanding bias and aim to examine the intricate relationships between human society and the natural environment.³

It is paradoxical, though, that there are still few studies on the environmental history of Korea during the modern period following the liberation and the Korean War, despite the increased salience during this period of the multilayered and multifaceted nature of socio-environmental relations and order. This can be attributed to the prevalent view that the 1990s was when both environmental problems as serious so-

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- 2 For a broad review of historiographical discussions in the field of environmental history, see, e.g., the following special issues: Donald Worster et al., "A Round Table: Environmental History," *Journal of American History* 76(4) (1990): 1087-1147; Brian Fay et al., "Environment and History," *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 1-135; Adam Rome et al., "Anniversary Forum: What's Next for Environmental History," *Environmental History* 10(1) (2005): 30-109; and Paul S. Sutter et al., "The State of the Field: American Environmental History," *Journal of American History* 100(1) (2013): 94-148.
 - 3 See a special issue, John S. Lee et al., "New Perspectives from Korean Environmental History," *International Journal of Korean History* 25(1) (2020): 1-121 and also the recent edited volume, David Fedman, Eleana J. Kim, and Albert L. Park, eds., *Forces of Nature: New Perspectives on Korean Environments* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023).

cial issues, and the environmental movement as an influential force, began to gain prominence – a period that historians might consider too recent to thoroughly investigate. Instead, it is mainly the studies in the field of social sciences, particularly sociology, that have reviewed societal and policy responses to the mounting environmental problems from the 1960s to the 1980s. Yet, even within these studies, the focus has centered on the post-1990s period. The period from the 1960s to the 1980s has been analyzed as a precursor to areas of interest, including the rise of the environmental movement as a new social movement in the 1990s and the evolution of South Korea’s environmental policies since the democratization of the late 1980s.⁴

This tendency to privilege the post-1990s period in both Korean history and social sciences often appears to implicitly endorse a type of post-materialist value assumption⁵: Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the South Korean public, wrestling with concerns tied to basic economic sustenance, showed minimal interest in the accumulating environmental degradation. The full-fledged emergence of environmental problems as a societal concern only occurred after the 1990s, when South Korea’s economic growth had attained a certain threshold and a

4 See, e.g., Kim Sun-Chul, “Co-governance and the Environmental Movement,” *Korea Journal* 61(4) (2021): 135-71; Ku Dowan and Hong Deok-hwa, “Han’guk hwan’gyöngundongüi söngjanggwa punhwa: chedohwa nonüirül chungshimüro [The Growth and Diversification of the Korean Environmental Movement: Focusing on Institutionalization],” *ECO* 17(1) (2013): 79-120; Heo Inhye, “Changing Aspects of Government-Society Relations in South Korea: Evidence from the Evolution of Environmental Policy Governance,” *Contemporary Politics* 19(4) (2013): 459-73; Ku Do-Wan, “The Korean Environmental Movement: Green Politics through Social Movement,” *Korea Journal* 44(3) (2004): 185-219.

5 The post-material value thesis argues that societal concerns shift from material needs to post-material values, such as environmental protection, when they become more affluent. See Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977). For a critique of this thesis, see Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martínez Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* (London: Routledge, 1997).

substantial middle class, interested in quality-of-life matters, had developed. The recent historical studies by Shin Jae Joon and Ko Taewoo,⁶ which delve into South Korea's engagement with 'pollution' (*konghae*, 公害) issues during the 1970s, offer compelling evidence that challenges the bias toward the post-1990s era commonly seen in previous studies.⁷ These works, from their respective perspectives, effectively illustrate that pollution issues had already surfaced as routine societal problems in the 1970s. They also reveal that, by the late 1970s, there was a growing acknowledgment that pollution was not merely a series of localized problems, but represented basic fundamental rights concerns as well as potential disasters for the society at large.

Although the works of Shin and Ko offer invaluable insights, they are not without limitations. They have not closely followed how the meaning and nature of pollution were comprehended and contested during the 1960s and 1970s. Shin posits that the notion of 'pollution' had a narrower connotation than the 'environment'. He interprets numerous media reports discussing the necessity of pollution prevention and its methods in the context of promoting industrialization as evidence of the constrained scope of the pollution discourse.⁸ But while those reports were likely echoing the dominant, specific view of environmental issues, it does not necessarily follow that the notion of pollution was inherently narrower in its scope than that of the environment.

6 Shin Jae Joon, "1970nyŏn chŏnhu konghae(公害)ŭi ilsanghwawa hwan'gyŏnggwŏn inshigŭi ssiat [Routinization of Pollution(公害) and emergence of Environmental rights awareness around 1970]," *Yŏksamunjeŏn'gu* 25(1) (2021): 523-55; Ko Taewoo, "1970nyŏndae han'gugŭi konghae(公害) sanghwanggwawa chaenan inshik [Pollution Problems and Disaster Awareness in 1970s South Korea]," *Kaenyŏmgwa sot'ong* 28 (2021): 7-52.

7 In this paper, 'pollution' is used as a translation of the Korean term '*konghae*' (公害). During the 1960s and 1970s, '*konghae*' generally referred to a range of environmental disruptions including air, water, soil, and food contamination, noise pollution, wastes, and other forms of environmental damage. Notably, this notion was adopted from its Japanese equivalent, '*kōgai*.'

8 Shin Jae Joon, "1970nyŏn," 537-38, 548.

Japanese anti-pollution activists at the time understood ‘pollution’ as embodying the systematic nature of environmental issues – that environmental degradation was exacerbated due to capitalist industrialization and economic growth.⁹ For them, ‘pollution’ conveyed a far deeper meaning than superficially accentuating the importance of the environment. In fact, the concept of ‘environmental rights’ that Shin discussed became popularized as part of this Japanese anti-pollution discourse. A similar question can be raised regarding Ko’s implication that perceiving pollution as a disaster bolstered South Korea’s anti-pollution activism in the late 1970s.¹⁰ The radical environment discourse by these activist groups, in contrast, conceived pollution as structurally produced harms, not as typical disasters.

There is, therefore, a need for further analysis of how environmental issues, including pollution, were understood, and the conflicts and debates that ensued surrounding them, in South Korea during the period from the 1960s to 1980s. This paper represents a preliminary attempt to move toward a more contextual understanding of South Korea’s engagement with environmental issues prior to the 1990s. The primary objective of the paper is to investigate how South Korea’s concerns and discussions about pollution from the late 1960s to the early-to-mid 1970s intimately intertwined with those regarding the negative consequences of high economic growth accompanied by rapid industrialization and urbanization. A particular emphasis will be placed on tracing the formation of the radical political-economic perspectives on the environment, later adopted by the anti-pollution movement of the late 1970s and 1980s. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, this process was transnational, influenced by the critiques of – and fervent debates over – the problematic relationships between economic

9 See, e.g., Shōji Hikaru and Miyamoto Ken’ichi, *Osorubeki kōgai* [Fearful Pollution] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1964); Tsuru Shigeto, ed., *Gendai shihon shugi to kōgai* [Modern Capitalism and Pollution] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968).

10 Ko Taewoo, “1970nyōndae,” 32-38.

growth and pollution that transpired in Western nations and Japan since the mid-to-late 1960s.

Growing Discontents with Growth

In the aftermath of the Second World War, among newly independent nations and the so-called underdeveloped or developing countries, there was widespread hope that, through state-led economic policies, they could achieve rapid industrialization and economic growth and liberate their populations from poverty. In 1959, the United Nations ambitiously declared the 1960s as the “Development Decade” and stressed the importance of development assistance from Western industrialized nations to these countries. Across the global North and South, there was a prevailing sentiment of optimism toward the success of this global project of ‘development’. However, as the 1960s progressed, it became clear that the situation of poverty in the global South showed no signs of improvement, and the North-South divide was widening and deepening, leading to criticisms and discontent.¹¹ In many developing countries, there was an escalation of radical resistance and struggle from below, demanding a fundamental transformation of the existing political and economic order. Doubts about the mainstream economic order also grew steadily in the global North. Voices were being raised, contending that despite the material abundance brought by the post-WWII economic expansion, its benefits came to be overshadowed by costly consequences. Critics warned that an exclusive focus on economic growth at the expense of social balance could lead to aggravated wealth disparities, escalated environmental destruction such as pollution, and intensified human alienation.¹²

11 See Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 5th ed. (London: Zed Books, 2019) regarding the rise of dissents against the mainstream trajectory of development.

In South Korea, too, concerns about the detriments of growth began to surface around the mid-1960s, although they did not initially draw much public attention. A yearning for economic improvement was very strong among Koreans who had endured a life of devastation throughout the Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War. This desire for economic improvement aligned well with a vision of economic growth that defined the Gross National Product (GNP) and the ‘growth rate’ as its primary indicators.¹³ These concepts permeated South Korean society a few years after the Bank of Korea first produced GNP statistics in the late 1950s and the government’s economic development plan became publicized. In 1962, the military government led by Park Chung Hee (朴正熙), following the discussions of the previous Chang Myŏn administration, announced the first five-year economic development plan, setting an ambitious target growth rate of 7.1% per annum.¹⁴ Subsequently, industrialization was actively pursued in South Korea, spearheaded by the expansion of energy supply such as coal development, construction of thermal power plants, nurturing of key industries, and enhancement of social infrastructure. The government’s strategy for economic development was revised in 1964 to prioritize export-led growth through foreign capital inflows, but the rapid industrialization continued. The annual average growth rate during the first five-year

12 Stephen J. Macekura, Chapters 3 and 4, *The Mismeasure of Progress: Economic Growth and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

13 The GNP is defined as the total market value of all final goods and services produced by the citizens of a given nation in a specific period (usually a year). By the mid-1950s, GNP became the main index for depicting national economic activity worldwide. It came to be replaced by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the early 1990s, which measures the total economic output within a nation’s border. For a brief history of GNP, see Macekura, *Ibid*, Chapter 1.

14 See, e.g., Kim Hyung-A, *Korea’s Development under Park Chung-Hee: Rapid Industrialization, 1961-79* (London: Routledge, 2003); Kim Bo Hyeon, *Pak Chŏnghŭi chŏnggwŏn’gi kyŏngjegaebal: minjokchuwŭwa paljŏn* [Economic Development Under the Park Chung Hee Regime: Nationalism and Development] (Seoul: Galmuri, 2006), for Park Chung Hee’s economic development strategy.

plan period was 7.8%, surpassing the initial goal and reaching an impressive level. The discussion on the downsides of economic growth was somewhat subdued by such accomplishments.

The emergence of voices in South Korea raising issues related to ‘high growth’ (高度成長) became noticeable in the late 1960s. Economists and intellectuals critical of the government’s growth-first policies expressed concerns that high growth was causing inflation, the economy’s foreign dependence, wealth inequalities, and the disparities among industrial sectors, large and small-to-medium enterprises, and urban and rural areas. It is worth noting, however, that these critics scarcely mentioned the issue of pollution, which was becoming a major public concern at the time. Park Chung Hee, who had been pushing for aggressive industrialization, declared in a speech at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Ulsan Industrial Center in 1962 that “black smoke from industrial production” represented “the hope and development of the nation and its people.”¹⁵ Yet, as the dispute over the smog from the Busan Gamcheon Thermal Power Plant in 1965 demonstrated, this “black smoke” became a headache-inducing social issue in South Korea in just a few years. ¹⁶ By the mid-to-late 1960s, newspapers were inundated with articles denouncing the pervasive air pollution, water contamination, and noise pollution caused by rapid industrialization and urbanization. The media also sharply criticized the ineffectiveness of the ‘Pollution Prevention Act’ enacted in 1963, and strongly urged for amendments and strict enforcement.¹⁷ Despite these circum-

15 Park Chung Hee, Inaugural address at the Ulsan Industrial Complex, Ulsan, South Korea, February 3, 1962.

16 “Kamch’ön hwaryökpajönsoe konghaebangjiböp cheIho [First Case of Applying the Pollution Prevention Act to Gamcheon Thermal Power Plant],” *Kyönghyangshimnun*, June 15, 1965.

17 See, e.g., “Mut’öktaen kūndaehwa, taptaphan konghaedaech’aek [Haphazard Modernization, Frustrating Pollution Measures],” *Tongailbo*, June 4, 1968; “Konghaebangjidaech’aegül tōuk tō kangwahara [Strengthen Pollution Prevention Measures Even Further],” *Chosōnilbo*, February 26, 1969; “Konghae, kū ka-

stances, there was a lack of efforts to systematically analyze the relationship between ‘growth’ and ‘pollution’ in South Korea.

Of course, it was widely recognized that the rapid increase in pollution was a consequence of industrialization, which was deemed the key driver of South Korea’s economic growth. However, the dominant view held that pollution was an issue to be managed scientifically and addressed technically. Those who championed the importance of pollution issues and the need for governmental responses were predominantly medical and scientific professionals. The significance of their contributions should not be underestimated. Public health experts such as Kwon Sook Pyo (權肅杓) and Cha Chul-Whan (車喆煥) actively engaged with the academic community, collaborated with journalists, and worked with relevant government officials, occasionally effecting policy improvements in pollution prevention.¹⁸ But they were unable to transcend the technical framing of pollution. It was only in the 1970s that pollution began to be recognized as a central problem of economic growth. This shift in perspective was partly due to the continued deterioration of the environment and intensification of pollution in South Korea, but it was also influenced by contemporary discussions in the West and Japan about the relationship between growth and environmental destruction.

Transnational Debates on the Growth-Pollution Nexus

As briefly mentioned previously, criticisms of the growth paradigm

gonghal chŏngch’e [Pollution, Its Horrifying Reality],” *Kyŏnghyangshinmun*, November 22-29, 1969 (4-part series).

18 See, e.g., Kwon Sook Pyo, “Tosi mit sanŏpkonghae [Urban and Industrial Pollution],” *Kwahakkwa kisul* 2(3) (1969): 18-22; “Konghaedaech’aegüi kin’güpsŏng” [Urgency of Pollution Countermeasures],” *Kwahakkwa kisul* 4(1) (1971): 49-54; Cha Chul-Whan, “Kyŏngŭm mit chindonggwa konghae [Noise and Vibration Pollution],” *Kwahakkwa kisul* 2(3) (1969): 26-32.

had been consistently raised in the West since the late 1950s. John K. Galbraith, an American economist and influential public intellectual, argued in *The Affluent Society* (1958) that growth, defined by the expansion of private goods production and increased consumption, led to a 'social imbalance' by weakening public goods and services essential for people's welfare.¹⁹ A British economist, Ezra Mishan, echoed a similar argument in *The Cost of Economic Growth* (1967).²⁰ He claimed that the increasingly powerful "growthmania", an obsession with GNP-based growth, precipitated a massive accumulation of material goods, but that these resulted in destructive impacts on human values and happiness. Kenneth E. Boulding, another prominent economist, voiced objection to the very idea of GNP, positing that the concept misleadingly equated the increase in throughput with the success of the economy, and chastised it for essentially amounting to a 'Gross National Cost'.²¹ In a period of increasing ecological concern, these critics naturally pointed to the problems of environmental destruction, including pollution, as one of the major damages of growth-addicted societies. Boulding, in particular, sounded the alarm in his widely quoted 1966 essay that the blind pursuit of growth was threatening the ecological limits of the "spaceship Earth".²²

The relationship between high growth and environmental destruction provoked intense debate in Japan. When the Ikeda cabinet announced the 'National Income Doubling Plan' in 1960, Japan embarked on an era of unprecedented rapid economic growth, and by 1968, had attained the second-largest GNP among capitalist nations.²³ Concurrently,

19 John K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1958).

20 Ezra Mishan, *The Costs of Economic Growth* (New York: Praeger, 1967).

21 Kenneth E. Boulding, "Fun and Games with the Gross National Product: The Role of Misleading Indicators in Social Policy," in *The Environmental Crisis*, ed. H.W. Helfrich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 157-70.

22 Kenneth E. Boulding, "The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth," in *Environmental Quality in a Growing Economy*, ed. H. Jarrett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), 3-14.

Japanese society grappled with the adverse effects of high growth. Pollution problems, epitomized by the four major pollution diseases (Itai-Itai disease, Minamata and Niigata Minamata diseases, and Yokkaichi asthma), were most notable.²⁴ Though pollution in Japan has a long history, tracing back to before World War II, the 1960s saw its impacts become more severe, widespread, and frequent. From the mid to late 1960s, the struggles of residents in polluted areas started aligning with left-wing intellectuals, student movements, labor unions, and progressive local government (革新自治体) movements, sparking a wave of more systematic and organized anti-pollution activism. This shift redefined the pollution debates in Japan: pollution was no longer seen merely as an unfortunate but inevitable byproduct of politically neutral industrialization. Instead, it began to be recognized as a politico-economic phenomenon, an outcome of a capitalist pursuit of high growth that prioritized the expansion of private production.²⁵

In this process, key roles were played by leftist economists, such as Tsuru Shigeto (都留重人, 1912-2006) and Miyamoto Ken'ichi (宮本憲一, 1930-), who led the establishment of the Research Committee on Pollution in 1963.²⁶ By the late 1960s, mainstream economists in Japan and elsewhere increasingly conceptualized pollution as an 'external diseconomy' and/or a 'negative public good', instances of market failure wherein market mechanisms could not achieve the optimal allocation

23 Scott O'Bryan, *The Growth Idea: Purpose and Prosperity in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

24 Miyamoto Ken'ichi, *Sengo Nippon kōgai shiron* [A History of Environmental Pollution in Postwar Japan] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014).

25 Shōji Hikaru and Miyamoto Ken'ichi, *Osorubeki kōgai; Tsuru Shigeto, Gendai shihon shugi to kōgai*.

26 For the history of the Research Committee on Pollution, see Miyamoto Ken'ichi and Awaji Takehisa, *Kōgai kankyō kenkyū no paioniatachi: kōgai kenkyū iin-kai no 50 nen* [Pioneers in Pollution and Environmental Research: 50 Years of the Research Committee on Pollution] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014) and also Simon Avenell, *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2017).

of resources. Whether utilizing Pigouvian or Coasean approaches, their understanding was inherently market-oriented, predicated on market exchanges.²⁷ Mainstream economists also largely maintained a technical framing of pollution. By combining theories of Marxist political economy and non-neoclassical institutional economics, Tsuru and Miyamoto presented a strong challenge to these market-oriented perspectives and the underlying GNP-based growth paradigm.²⁸ The critical discourse on growth and pollution was not confined to the academic sphere. In the 1967 election, progressive local government movements succeeded in electing their candidate, Minobe Ryōkichi (美濃部亮吉), as the Governor of Tokyo. Their campaign identified high growth as the main source of socio-economic disparities and pollution. Once Minobe took office in Tokyo, he immediately implemented anti-pollution measures. In 1970, to counter the central government's growth-first policies, he advanced the establishment of the 'civil minimum,' which sought to publicly ensure minimum social conditions for people's welfare and living environments.²⁹ Given that South Korean intellectuals – particularly

27 Arthur C. Pigou, a pioneer of welfare economics, suggested that 'externalities' – costs or benefits affecting a third party due to economic activities – arise from an inconsistency between marginal private and social costs and that the maximization of social welfare cannot therefore be achieved through markets alone. His solution to negative externalities (e.g., pollution) was government measures, including taxes and subsidies, to internalize these external costs. Conversely, Ronald H. Coase, a neoclassical economist, opposed government intervention to address negative externalities. He argued that, assuming transaction costs are low and property rights are well-defined, the best solution would be direct and voluntary negotiations between the concerned parties. For further discussion on these approaches, see, e.g., Clive L. Spash, "The Contested Conceptualisation of Pollution in Economics: Market Failure or Cost Shifting Success?," *Cahiers d'Économie Politique* 79(1) (2021): 85-122.

28 Tsuru Shigeto, *Gendai shihon shugi to kōgai*; Tsuru Shigeto, *Kōgai no sei-ji-keizaigaku* [Political Economy of Pollution] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972).

29 For Minobe Ryōkichi's experiments, see Simon Avenell, *Making Japanese Citizens: Civil Society and the Mythology of the Shimin in Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

economists—were already familiar with figures like Galbraith and Boulding, their discussions were naturally expected to garner attention. Similarly, the vibrant politics of pollution unfolding in neighboring Japan was more than enough to draw considerable interest from South Korean society.

In fact, critical discussions regarding growth and pollution were well communicated between Japan and the West. This was vividly displayed at the International Symposium on Environmental Disruption, organized under the leadership of Tsuru in Tokyo in 1970. Numerous international scholars, including K. William Kapp and Allen V. Kneese, who pioneered economic analyses of pollution, and the renowned economist W. Leontief, were invited to the conference. Despite their differing perspectives, the participants formed a consensus that pollution was more than just a technical problem and originated from specific socio-economic contexts. There was also agreement that GNP-based growth had produced threats to human welfare and the environment. It was against this backdrop that the Tokyo Resolution adopted at the symposium declared the principle of ‘environmental rights,’ demanding that “every person is entitled by right to the environment free of elements which infringe human health and wellbeing and the nature’s endowment.”³⁰ Another illustration of transnational critical dialogues on growth and pollution was an 18-part series titled “くたばれGNP (Down with GNP),” published in the same year by *Asahi Shimbun*, a leading progressive newspaper in Japan. This series cast strong doubt on the GNP-based growth paradigm and even criticized the GNP as “Gross National Pollution.” And its final concluding essay was authored by Tsuru, while the preceding two were written by Galbraith and a co-recipient of the first Nobel Prize in Economics Jan Tinbergen, both of whom he knew well.³¹

30 Tsuru Shigeto, ed., *Environmental Disruption: Proceedings of International Symposium* (Tokyo: International Social Science Council, 1970).

31 This special series was later published as an edited book. See *Asahishinbun kei-*

South Korea's Response: Mainstream Views

At that time, many South Korean intellectuals frequently read Japanese newspapers and magazines, and the influence of the United States on the intellectual community was also on the rise. Consequently, these foreign trends were relatively easy to access. The Korean media played a part by publishing articles introducing discussions at the 1970 Tokyo symposium and the assertions of scholars such as Galbraith, Boulding, and Kneese. Essays by Galbraith and Tinbergen, featured in the *Asahi Shimbun's* "Down with GNP" series, found their condensed versions in a Korean newspaper just two weeks after their original release.³² Various heterogeneous viewpoints were often introduced in a somewhat disorganized and confusing manner. Nevertheless, it was increasingly highlighted that GNP, the central axis of all economic discussions, was failing to take into account environmental degradation. Nixon's State of the Union Address in 1970, which gave extensive consideration to environmental issues, along with the publication of the first report by the White House Council on Environmental Quality in the same year, served as further catalysts in heightening South Korea's interest in the contradictions between economic growth and the environment.³³ However, such an atmosphere did not immediately translate into critical interrogations of the dominant discourse of economic growth or radical political-economic approaches to pollution. The progressive intellectuals and economists, who had been criticizing the Park Chung Hee regime's growth-first policies, were surprisingly

zaibu [Asahi Shimbun, Economic Department], ed., *Kutabare GNP* [Down with GNP] (Tokyo: Asahishinbunsha, 1971).

32 "Chūngdaehanūn GNP iron [Expansionary GNP Theory]," *Kyōnghyangshinmun*, September 15, 1970; "GNPwa in'ganhaengbok [GNP and Human Happiness]," *Kyōnghyangshinmun*, September 16, 1970.

33 "Konghaechaebangjōn [Battle Against Pollution]," *Sasanggye* 18(4) (1970): 111-114; Kukhoesamuch'ō, "In'gu·sōngjang·chawōn [Population·Growth·Resources]," *Kuk'oebo* 107(1970): 135-51.

slow to respond to the problems of the economic growth-pollution nexus. It was, rather, mainstream economists who paid attention to the latter, at least initially.

Since the late 1960s, the influence of neoclassical economics or the neoclassical synthesis rapidly expanded within the South Korean economics community, and the issue of pollution began to be approached within such frameworks. While there were no independent analyses yet, the understanding of pollution as an external diseconomy or a negative public good was consolidated through sources such as Japanese economic literature and the widely read 8th edition of Paul Samuelson's *Economics* (1970).³⁴ For instance, in the early 1970s, the Research Department of the Bank of Korea (BOK) produced various publications addressing the economics of pollution and GNP. These included two series, each comprising eight essays, titled "The Economics of Pollution" and "The Theory and Reality of GNP," respectively, featured in the 'Economic Classroom' section of the *Seoul Economic Daily*.³⁵ Though primarily examining the economic underpinnings of government policies rather than engaging in academic discussions, the BOK's essays effectively demonstrated the stance of mainstream economics in South Korea. They focused on two conceptual approaches: the Pigouvian approach, which seeks to internalize the external costs of pollution through regulations, taxes, and subsidies, and the Coasean approach, which encourages voluntary negotiations among stakeholders to exchange damage compensation.³⁶ In the context of South Korea, it was

34 Paul Samuelson, *Economics*, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970). Samuelson began to address the issue of pollution from this edition, reflecting the societal concerns of the era. This text was extensively read by both students and economists in South Korea during the early 1970s.

35 Söng Ukki, "Konghaeüi kyöngjehak [The Economics of Pollution]," *Söulgyöngjeshinmun*, January 5-15, 1971; Im Haebin, "GNPüi iron'gwa shilche [The Theory and Reality of GNP]," *Söulgyöngjeshinmun*, February 5-18, 1971. Both were 8-part series. Söng and Im were affiliated with the Research Department of the Bank of Korea.

implied, the former approach would be more feasible. Furthermore, the articles introduced the critiques that GNP failed to comprehend externalities such as pollution, thus diverging from the actual levels of welfare and living conditions. The potential to make GNP more realistic by integrating corresponding depreciation was also discussed.

The BOK seems to have primarily referenced Japanese literature. Although its publications introduced some perspectives that diverged from the mainstream economic understanding of externalities, more radical approaches were, unsurprisingly, left out. The concepts of “social common capital (社会共通資本)” and “social real national income (社会的実質国民所得)” that appeared in the discussion on the relationship between pollution and GNP were borrowed from Uzawa Hirofumi (宇沢弘文).³⁷ However, the work of Kapp, despite being essential for deriving Uzawa’s concepts, was not touched upon. Kapp suggested that “social costs” such as pollution were not the result of exceptional market failures but stemmed from the general characteristics of a capitalist economy.³⁸ Similarly, Shionoya Yuichi(塩野谷裕一)’s “Theory of Environmental Destruction (環境破壊論),” which extended the Pigouvian approach and contended that the ownership of the environment should be socially attributed, was introduced.³⁹ On the other hand, the work of Tsuru, who debated with Shionoya over the systematic nature of pollution, was not mentioned. While Tsuru also criticized that productivism and the lack of democratic control of production gave rise to serious

36 For further discussion on the Pigouvian and Coasean approaches, see footnote 27.

37 Uzawa Hirofumi, “Kankyō hakai to infure-shon—shijō kikō to keizai seichō [Environmental Destruction and Inflation—Market Mechanism and Economic Growth],” *Chūōkōron* 85(8) (1970): 54-73.

38 K. William Kapp, *The Social Costs of Business Enterprise*, 2nd ed. (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963).

39 Shionoya Yuichi, “Kankyō hakai no taiseironteki haaku [Systematic Understanding of Environmental Destruction],” *Shūkan tōyō keizai, kōgai tokushūgō* (1970): 52-59.

pollution problems in the Soviet Union and other socialist states, he unequivocally identified the capitalist imperative of relentless profit maximization and capital accumulation as the fundamental causes of environmental destruction of the day. According to him, ‘externality’ in mainstream economics was predicated on the cost calculations of capitalist firms, and with such a limited concept, substantive analysis of pollution would be impossible.⁴⁰

It should be pointed out that Tsuru’s perspective was influential in Japan. The anti-pollution movement and progressive local government movement, which he and his colleagues were deeply involved in, successfully pressed for the enactment and revision of 14 pollution-related laws during the interim diet in November 1970, often referred to as the ‘Pollution Diet.’ During the revision of the Basic Law for Environmental Pollution Control, a clause that specified the harmony between environmental preservation and economic growth was criticized by these movements as embodying growth-first policies and was eventually removed.⁴¹ In contrast, there was no organized resistance to pollution and high growth in South Korea, and even modest pollution measures based on mainstream economics could not be effectively implemented. In the late 1960s, as concerns over the negative consequences of growth increased, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs pushed for ‘social development’ policies with a pollution prevention plan, underscoring the balance between society and the economy. However, this initiative ended up being transformed into a ‘second economy’ project aimed at eliminating non-economic factors that could obstruct economic growth.⁴² Although the Pollution Control Act was revised in 1971,

40 Tsuru Shigeto, *Gendai shihon shugi to kōgai; Kōgai no seiji-keizaigaku*.

41 Simon Avenell, *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement*.

42 For the Park Chung Hee regime’s reframing of ‘social development’ as a ‘second economy’ project, see, e.g., Heo Eun, “Pak Chōnghūi jōnggwōnha sahoegaebal chōllyakkwa chaengjōm [The Strategies of Social Development during the Pak Chōnghūi Government and Related Conflicts],” *Han’guksahakpo* 38 (2010): 213-48; Baek Seung-wook and Lee Jiwon, “1960nyōndae palchōn tamnon’gwa

it could not overcome the implicit premise that pollution prevention should be pursued within limits that did not hinder growth. Nonetheless, this situation did not undermine the mainstream understanding of the pollution-GNP nexus since the logic of internalizing externalities through the market price mechanism did not fundamentally conflict with the GNP-based growth paradigm.

Slow Responses from Progressive Groups

The slower response to pollution by South Korean progressive groups, as compared to mainstream economists, can be partially attributed to the political-economic turbulence of the time—from the 1969 constitutional amendment that allowed for a third presidential term, the public suicide of the garment worker Jeon Tae-il in 1970, to the promulgation of the draconian Yushin Constitution in 1972. They were struggling to cope with pressing issues of political oppression, human and labor rights abuses, and the harsh economic realities of workers, urban poor, and farmers. However, as the anti-pollution resident movements in Japan demonstrated, pollution was directly linked to people's basic right to survival and could readily be connected to other urgent socio-economic and political issues. One reason for the relative indifference of South Korean progressives to pollution was that many of them shared a vision of 'developmental nationalism,' which viewed the achievement of self-reliant industrialization and economic growth as the primary goal and obligation of the nation.⁴³ As noted earlier, their

sahoegaebal chōngch'aegŭi hyōngsōng sahoewayōksa [Development Discourse and the Formation of Social Development Policy in the 1960s Korea],” *Sahoewa yōksa* 107 (2015): 349-88.

43 For an exploration of South Korean dissidents' espousal of developmental nationalism, see, e.g., Kim Bo Hyeon, “Pak Chōnghŭi jōnggwōn shigi chōhangŭi chishik-tamnon, ‘minjokkyōngjeron’: kŭ wisanggwa ūi, han'gye [‘Minjokkyeongjae-ron’ as a Resistant Knowledge-Discourse in the Park Chung Hee

criticisms of high growth policies focused on inflation, the external dependence of the economy, industrial imbalances, disparities between large and small-to-medium enterprises, the urban-rural divide, and unequal distribution of the fruits of growth. But these criticisms usually stopped at addressing the distortion and mismanagement of economic growth, rather than extending to a thorough examination of the logic of ‘growth’ itself. It was, therefore, not easy to move beyond the technical framing or mainstream economic understanding of pollution to grasp its political-economic nature.

The theory of ‘Mass Economy’ (大衆經濟) put forward by Kim Dae-jung (金大中), the opposition New Democratic Party candidate in the 1971 presidential election, well illustrated such limitations. The discourse of ‘Mass Economy’ was a collective work of progressive economists, including Pak Hyön-ch’ae (朴玄塚, 1934-1995), and served as a leading counter-discourse against Park Chung Hee’s developmental dictatorship during the election campaign.⁴⁴ In his articles for the magazines *Sindong’a* (1969) and *Sasanggye* (1970),⁴⁵ Kim argued that “the high economic growth does not necessarily directly lead to an im-

Administration Period: Its Status, Meanings and Limitations],” *Sanghōhakpo* 43 (2015): 125-69; Kim Sang-Hyun, “Pak Chōnghūi chōnggwōn shigi chōhang seryōgūi sahoegisulchōk sangsang [Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Dissident Groups during the Park Chung Hee Regime],” *Yōksabip’yōng* 120 (2017): 316-46; Lee Sangrok, “Minjujuūnūn kaebalchuūie öttök’e chamshiktoeōwannūn’ga: 1960nyōndae han’guk chisōnggyeūi ‘palchōn’e taehan kangbak [How Has Democracy Been Encroached by Developmentalism?: The Obsession with the ‘Development’ of the Korean Intellectual Community in the 1960s],” *Yōksabip’yōng* 134 (2021): 174-217.

44 Jeong Sang Ho, “Chōngch’aek inyōm(Policy Idea)ürosō taejunggyōngjeronūi hyōngsōng kwajōngae taehan yōn’gu [The Study on the Formation of Mass Economy Theory as a Policy Idea],” *Kiōkkwa chōnmang* 18 (2008): 4-39.

45 Kim Dae-jung, “Taejunggyōngjerül chuch’anghanda [Advocating for a Mass Economy],” *Sindong’a* 63 (1969): 176-83; “70nyōndaeūi pijōn: taejungminjuch’ejeūi kuhyōn [The Vision for the ’70s: Establishing a Mass Democratic Regime],” *Sasanggye* 18(1) (1970): 107-22.

provement in public welfare.” He urged for self-reliant and balanced economic development, and suggested that, through “industrial democracy,” the “participants in social production should receive distribution corresponding to their contribution to enhancing productive capacity.” Although his position was clearly distinct from Park Chung Hee’s foreign capital-dependent, export-driven high growth policies, it still adhered to the GNP-based growth paradigm. Nor did it have an account for the relationship between economic growth and pollution, distinct from the mainstream view. The issue of pollution was not even broached in these writings, and neither was it mentioned in the subsequent publication “Mass Economy: 100 Questions 100 Answers” prepared for the election campaign.⁴⁶ In March 1971, Kim Dae-jung did propose an election pledge to establish a pollution control committee and legislative measures for pollution prevention, but this was hardly different from Park Chung Hee’s promise based on the technical framing of pollution.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the period from the late 1960s to the early 1970s witnessed sustained high growth, accompanied by rapid industrialization and urbanization. The pollution conditions in South Korea deteriorated day by day, and it became increasingly challenging to dismiss this merely as a technical issue to be dealt with posthumously. By the time the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm in June 1972, international interest in the relationship between environment and development was at its height. Concerns were raised particularly regarding the environmental challenges faced by many underdeveloped and developing countries. In the midst of this atmosphere, Kim Tohyŏn (金道鉉), a student activist-turned-journalist,

46 Taejunggyŏngjeyŏn’guso, *Kim Taejungssiŭi taejunggyŏngje 100mun 100tap* [Kim Dae-jung’s <Mass Economy: 100 Questions 100 Answers>] (Seoul: Pŏmusa, 1971).

47 “Konghaeyebang apchang [Leading Pollution Prevention],” *Chosŏnilbo*, March 23, 1971; “Yŏ·ya kongyaktagyŏl [Campaign Promises Compared: Ruling vs. Opposition],” *Tongailbo*, March 24, 1971.

wrote an article titled “The Social Character of Pollution in Korea” in the opposition-leaning magazine *Tari* (bridge) in October 1972.⁴⁸ This publication signaled that attempts to address pollution from a progressive political-economic perspective were gradually taking shape in South Korea. Kim posited that pollution is a byproduct of “the system based on private ownership and operation of the economy” prioritizing profit maximization. While the sources of pollution are private, its repercussions are public. Furthermore, environmental damages disproportionately affect low-income communities and workers who bear minimal or no responsibility for their occurrence. Kim therefore contended that to prevent such a situation, residents affected by pollution should unite with citizens who also have interests in its prevention to organize wider social and political movements.

Kim’s stance seemed to draw upon Japan’s progressive anti-pollution discourse, which highlighted the exacerbation of pollution under the capitalist political economy and emphasized the importance of organizing grassroots resident movements. The satirical term “Gross National Pollution,” which he used in his critique of the limitations of GNP, appears to be inspired by the *Asahi Shimbun*’s “Down with GNP” series noted above.⁴⁹ In December 1972, Pak Hyŏn-ch’ae also published essays that critically examined the social and political-economic nature of pollution and its relationship with GNP. A 13-part series titled “Economic Development and Pollution” was featured in the ‘Economic Classroom’ section of the *Seoul Economic Daily*,⁵⁰ where the BOK’s essay series on pollution and GNP had previously been published. Park’s approach represented in the series was quite unique and very different from mainstream economics. It turns out that these

48 Kim Tohyŏn, “Han’guk konghaeüi sahoejŏk sŏnggyŏk [The Social Character of Pollution in Korea],” *Tari* 3(8) (1972): 82-90.

49 Kim, *Ibid.*; Asahishinbun keizaibu, *Kutabare GNP*.

50 Pak Hyŏn-ch’ae, “Kyŏngjebalchŏn’gwa konghae [Economic Development and Pollution],” *Sŏlgyŏngjeshinmun*, December 3-30, 1972 (13-part series).

essays were actually summaries of Tsuru Shigeto's book, *The Political Economy of Pollution*, released by Iwanami Shoten in April of that year. Park never once referenced Tsuru in his writings, perhaps due to the potential risk of mentioning a Japanese neo-Marxist scholar under the oppressive Yushin dictatorship. Notwithstanding, as revealed in his later works, he did not fully endorse Tsuru's perspectives.⁵¹ It was another progressive economist, Yu In-Ho (俞仁浩, 1929-1992), who sought to apply a political-economic approach akin to Tsuru's to the specific contexts of growth and pollution in South Korea.

Yu In-Ho (俞仁浩) and the Radical Critiques of Growth and Pollution

Having studied Marxist economics at Ritsumeikan University in Japan, Yu In-Ho returned home in the mid-1950s and taught at Dongguk and Chung-Ang Universities.⁵² In anti-communist postwar South Korea, it was difficult for him to openly reveal his intellectual inclinations. Nonetheless, many progressive intellectuals at the time, whether Marxists or non-Marxists, embraced the vision of developmental nationalism. They maintained that the country's primary task was to break away from the pre-modern, comprador economic structures entrenched during the colonial era and move toward modern in-

51 Tsuru Shigeto, *Kōgai no seiji-keizaigaku*. Further analysis of Pak Hyōn-ch'ae's engagement with the work of Tsuru Shigeto will be explored in a forthcoming work: Kim Sang-Hyun, "Pak Hyōn-ch'ae (朴玄塚), Tsuru Shigeto (都留重人), and South Korea's Fragmented Approaches to the Political Economy of the Environment in the 1970s," a manuscript in preparation.

52 For a detailed account of Yu In-Ho's life, see Cho Yong-nae, *Yu In-ho p'yōngjōn: sahoeyōnhyōkūl kkumkkun minjunggyōngjehakchaūi sam* [Yu In-Ho: A Life of a Minjung Economist Dreaming of Social Transformation] (Seoul: Inmul kwa Sasangsa, 2012); Ilgokkinyōmsaōp'oe, ed., *Chinborūl hyanghan palgōrūm: Yu In-Ho ch'umojip* [Steps Toward Progress: Memorial Collection for Yu In-Ho] (Seoul: Inmul kwa Sasangsa, 2012).

dustrialization and economic growth. Yu was no exception, and his proposed strategy for a “domestic resource utilization-driven economy (國內資源活用主導型經濟)” resonated with this vision.⁵³ He criticized the uneven industrialization that concentrated on nurturing specific industries dependent on foreign capital, arguing that it exacerbated the disparities between monopolistic industries, small- and medium-sized enterprises, and small-scale agriculture. His solution was to establish a self-reliant and balanced reproductive structure for the national economy. In that context, when the Park Chung Hee regime was still actively preaching a self-reliant economy in the early 1960s, Yu participated in government committees and proposed the nationalization of the petroleum industry—a sector unavoidably influenced by foreign capital.⁵⁴ His leftist position was evident in his opposition to capitalist agricultural enterprises and his advocacy for the types of agricultural cooperatives that would grant farmers control over production and distribution. But even this did not deviate from the framework of developmental nationalism.

However, observing the relentless rapid economic growth in South Korea, Yu In-Ho arrived at the conclusion that espousing economic self-reliance, a balanced industrial structure, and equitable distribution of growth benefits would not be sufficient. GNP-based growth was expanding mass production and consumption, regardless of their desirability, and he believed that its underlying logic had to be confronted. Initially, Yu’s critical examination of high growth centered on inflation, external dependence of the economy, and wealth inequalities, mirroring other criticisms of the Park Chung Hee regime’s growth-first policies.⁵⁵ Yet, his approach differed in that, rather than treating these

53 See, e.g., Yu In-Ho, “Kyōngjebalchōn’gwa han’gugūi chawōn [Economic Development and Korean Resources],” *Sindong’a* 115 (1974): 52-62; Cho Yong-nae, *Yu In-ho p’yōngjōn*, Chapter 16.

54 See, e.g., Cho Yong-nae, *Yu In-ho p’yōngjōn*, Chapters 15 and 16.

55 For his early critiques of the Korean economy, see Yu In-Ho, “Godoseongjanghai

as side effects of otherwise necessary processes, he underlined that they were inherent in the very project of growth itself. From around 1972, he also began to underscore that such problems were directly connected to environmental issues such as pollution and waste of resources.⁵⁶ It remains unclear what precisely triggered Yu's interest in environmental destruction. The escalation of pollution concerns in South Korea and the work of Galbraith and Boulding that he had referred to should have contributed. Upon examining his later writings, though, it seems more likely that he was exposed to the politico-economic approaches to pollution proposed by leftist economists Tsuru Shigeto and Miyamoto Ken'ichi while reviewing the problems of high growth in Japan.

His perspective on the relationship between growth and pollution was succinctly articulated in his 1973 articles entitled "Industrialization and National Welfare: Reflections on Economic Growth and Future Tasks" and "Economic Growth and Environmental Destruction: High Growth Viewed through 'Achievements' and 'Costs,'" published in *Sindong'a* and *Ch'angjak kwa pip'yŏng* (Creation and Criticism, 創作과 批評) respectively.⁵⁷ These two pieces exhibited a common theme, with

gyeongjejeok heojeom [Economic Weaknesses in High Growth],” *Pijinesŭ* 9(1) (1969): 30-33; “Han'guk kyŏngje, kŭ sambunhwa kujo [The Korean Economy and Its Trifurcated Structure],” *Tongailbo*, November 3, 1970. Gradually, Yu began to doubt the logic of growth itself. See Yu In-Ho, “Chŏkchŏngsŏngjang-nyurŭi chaegŏmt'o [Reconsidering the Appropriate Growth Rate],” *Hyŏndae-gyŏngjeilbo*, January 24, 1971; “Ilbon'gyŏngje: kŭ 'p'okpalchŏk' sŏngjanggwa ap'ŭroŭi munje [The Japanese Economy: Its 'Explosive' Growth and Upcoming Challenges],” *Kukchegwan'gyeyŏn'gu* 3(2) (1972): 81-96; “Chehanbatchi annŭn pansŏng [Unrestricted Reflection],” *Sedae* 112 (1972): 88-95.

56 See, e.g., Yu In-Ho, “Ilbon'gyŏngje”; “Chehanbatchi annŭn pansŏng.”

57 Yu In-Ho, “Sanŏp'wawa kungminbokchi: kyŏngjesŏngjangŭi pansŏnggwa kwaje [Industrialization and National Welfare: Reflections on Economic Growth and Future Tasks],” *Sindong'a* 108 (1973): 191-200; “Kyŏngjesŏngjanggwa hwan'gyŏngp'ago: 'sŏnggwa'wa 'taega'esŏ pon kodosŏngjang [Economic Growth and Environmental Destruction: High Growth Viewed through 'Achievements'

the latter supplementing the former by including an overview of the pollution situation in South Korea. Yu In-Ho examined the ‘costs’ of South Korea’s rapid growth since the 1960s in terms of the deepening of the economy’s foreign dependence, the entrenchment of a wasteful economic order, and the destruction of living environments. Drawing on Kapp’s insights, he argued that ‘external diseconomies’ were not anomalous instances where market mechanisms failed to function but were derived from the intrinsic characteristics of capitalism. In other words, within an economic system propelled by profit motives, the presence of effective demands – i.e., opportunities for profit generation – would increase the supply of socially unnecessary goods and services that bear no relevance to people’s lives and welfare, culminating in the misuse and waste of resources. Moreover, even if threats to human life and the living environment were produced in that process, private corporations would prioritize profits and strive to externalize those costs onto society. Yu elucidated that growth, as defined by the increase in GNP (i.e., the nominal scale of the private economy), could only exacerbate this situation.⁵⁸

He reiterated his previous argument that South Korea’s export-led growth, heavily reliant on foreign capital, increased its foreign dependency. He pointed out, however, that by disconnecting the reproductive structure of the economy from local needs and promoting the importation of pollution industries, such a process tended to amplify the institutionalization of waste and the accumulation of environmental destruction.⁵⁹ Another notable point was that Yu In-Ho’s scrutiny of GNP-based growth prompted him to reevaluate productivism and techno-centrism, which were often mindlessly accepted even by many leftists or progressive intellectuals in South Korea. For example, he contended that the advancements in science and technology should not be

and ‘Costs’],” *Ch’angjak kwa pip’yŏng* 29 (1973): 868-96.

58 Yu In-Ho, “Kyŏngjesŏngjanggwa hwan’gyŏngp’agoe”

59 Yu In-Ho, *Ibid.*, 877-90.

embraced unconditionally but adopted selectively after carefully reviewing their impacts on human lives and the environment.⁶⁰ He also asserted that the central tenet of the economy should be to ensure the ‘civil minimum’—the standards of social security, social capital, and social public health required for people’s humane lives.⁶¹ These views contrasted with the typical thinking of developmental nationalism, which largely took industrialization, economic growth, and technological progress for granted and only delved into whether they were properly implemented, without distortion, to genuinely serve the nation. By problematizing the tendency to center on the allocation and distribution of resources without questioning the logic and content of growth, prevalent in development nationalism, Yu indicated potential pathways to move beyond.

There is no doubt that Yu In-Ho was influenced by Tsuru Shigeto’s *Political Economy of Pollution*, which systematically examined the problems of GNP-based growth, its close relationship with environmental destruction and resource wastage, and the idea of civil minimum. Like Pak Hyōn-ch’ae, however, he did not mention Tsuru in his writings, though he referenced Miyamoto Ken’ichi’s co-authored book, *Fearful Pollution*, published in 1964.⁶² Not only was Tsuru’s name omitted, but there were also differences in analysis. For Tsuru, central to his political economy of pollution approach was the integral analysis of the material and systematic aspects of economic phenomena (i.e., use value and exchange value; productive forces and relations of production), as well as of their contradictory relationships. He sought to concretize his analysis and challenge the hegemonic political-economic system. The civil minimum stood as an illustrative case. Tsuru articulated the civil minimum not as an extension of conventional welfare policies or as a

60 Yu In-Ho, *Ibid.*, 884.

61 Yu In-Ho, *Ibid.*, 896.

62 Yu In-Ho, *Ibid.*, 889. See also Shōji Hikaru and Miyamoto Ken’ichi, *Osorubeki kōgai*.

means to secure public expenditures through the socialization of economic surplus but as a political project to achieve human lives and a clean, safe environment outside the capitalist relations of production.⁶³ In a similar vein, Miyamoto argued that, in order to realize the potential of the civil minimum, it should be advanced along with alternative industrial and fiscal policies, including the public ownership and control of energy and transportation, ultimately leading to the structural reform of the existing capitalist economy.⁶⁴ On the other hand, likely constrained by the politically oppressive climate in South Korea during the early 1970s, Yu was unable to push his analysis in such a radical direction.

Even without considering the hostile political environment, it should be noted that the political economy of pollution was but one of many subjects that Yu In-Ho considered important. Additionally, there were few like-minded intellectuals to discuss the growth-pollution nexus, and an anti-pollution movement for potential collaboration had yet to emerge. His situation was quite different from that of Tsuru, who was surrounded by a group of leftist scholars, such as Miyamoto, who shared his critical perspective on growth and pollution, anti-pollution activists with whom he collaborated, and mainstream economists who, despite conflicting views, engaged in debates on these issues. Nevertheless, Yu continued to produce papers, contribute to newspapers and magazines, and deliver lectures on the topic of growth and pollution throughout the mid-to-late 1970s.⁶⁵ Although his analysis might not

63 Tsuru Shigeto, *Kōgai no seiji-keizaigaku*.

64 See, e.g., Miyamoto Ken'ichi, "Ilbon'gyōngjeūi saeroun sōnt'aek: chawōn·hwan'gyōngje yak'aesō sanūn kil [New Paths for the Japanese Economy: Survival Under Resource and Environmental Constraints]," *Ilbonmunje* 8 (1975): 75-87.

65 See, e.g., Yu In-Ho, *Hangukgyeongjeui silsanggwa heosang* [Reality and Mirage of the Korean Economy] (Seoul: P'yōngminsa, 1978); "Kodosōngjang-pulgyunhyōngsōngjang [High Growth·Uneven Growth]," *Taehakshinmun*, October 9, 1978; "70nyōndae kyōngjesōngjangūi hoego: pansōnggwa chōnmang [Reflections and Outlook on the Economic Growth of the '70s]," *Ch'angjak kwa*

have been fully comprehensive, his writings served as valuable educational resources for student activists and citizens interested in environmental issues and played a pivotal role in disseminating critical discourses of growth and pollution within South Korean society. Thus, it was natural that Yu In-Ho was one of the first persons contacted by those who aspired to establish the Korea Pollution Research Institute (KPRI), South Korea's first major progressive environmental movement organization, in the early 1980s.⁶⁶

Conclusion

As delineated above, South Korean society had already started grappling with the mounting environmental issue of pollution during the late 1960s and early 1970s, a period well ahead of the 1990s. Under an oppressive military dictatorship that prioritized industrialization and economic growth without restraint, engaging in comprehensive discussions about pollution presented significant challenges. Accordingly, in terms of the establishment of government measures for pollution prevention or the organization and activities of anti-pollution resident movements, this era might appear to offer less material to explore than the 1990s. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to hastily infer that environmental awareness during this period was substantially inferior to later times, as many assume. As the present paper has attempted to demonstrate, by the early 1970s, a progressive political-economic perspective on the environment began to emerge. This perspective advocated that the root causes of environmental issues and the manifestation of their damages were tied to the high growth driven by capital-

pip'yŏng 55 (1980): 7-28.

66 Ch'oe Yŏl, "Yu In-Howa han'gukkyŏngjeŭi mirae [Yu In-Ho and the Future of the Korean Economy]," in *Chinborŭl hyanghan palgŏrŭm*, ed. Ilgokkinyŏmsaŏp'oe, 100-04.

ist industrialization. It sought to challenge the GNP-based growth regime itself, rather than merely calling for enhanced pollution control measures. Even the technological framing of pollution, which often erased or overlooked its social and systemic nature, could not be separated from specific political-economic assumptions, as illustrated by mainstream economic discussions and the developmental nationalism espoused by progressive groups.

A more acute consideration should also be given to the implications arising from the interweaving of discussions on pollution with the issue of growth from the outset. While many studies in environmental history of the post-industrialization modern period convincingly demonstrate that ‘development’—centered around industrialization, economic growth, and technological progress—has led to widespread environmental impacts, these studies often presuppose such development as a fixed, singular trajectory. However, recent scholarship in the history of development underscores the contextual nature of development, recognizing its construction as a complex interplay of discourses, practices, and knowledge within specific historical, political, and social contexts.⁶⁷ The resulting assemblage of development discourses, practices, and knowledge therefore embeds and is embedded in the corresponding political, economic, and social orders. What is important to environmental historians then is to critically interrogate the constitution, transformation, and fractures of socio-environmental relations and order in this entanglement of development. In that regard, societal responses to environmental issues, such as pollution, cannot be divorced from how

67 For a review of discussions on the new historiography of ‘development,’ see, e.g., Nick Cullather, “Development? It’s History,” *Diplomatic History* 22(4) (2000): 641-53; Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela, eds., *The Development Century: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Kim Sang-Hyun, “‘Palchön’ül munje sangi: ‘palchönsa(History of Development)’ yön’guüi chön’gaewa tonghyang [Problematizing ‘Development’: The Evolution and Trends of Research in the ‘History of Development’],” *Yöksabip’yöng* 134 (2021): 120-45.

the imaginaries of development, and in turn, its political, economic, and social orders, are constructed and contested. The political-economic approach to pollution and growth, exemplified by Yu In-Ho's work, aptly demonstrates this point.

The present brief examination also underscores a need for exploring the transnational exchanges that had given rise to South Korean criticisms of growth and pollution. From the 1960s onward, Modernization Theory and a range of Western theories of development economics were enthusiastically brought to South Korea. Concurrently, discourses that countered these theories were persistently introduced. As described in the paper, the Japanese anti-pollution discourse, including Tsuru Shigeto's political-economic approach to pollution, played a pivotal role in the rise of the critiques of growth and pollution in South Korea. This Japanese discourse was itself, in fact, molded through interactions with various critical discussions beyond Japan.⁶⁸ True, many progressive intellectuals in South Korea then exhibited strong developmental nationalist tendencies, which impeded them from considering the critiques of growth ideology, productivism, techno-centrism, as well as of the technical framing of environmental issues. However, South Korea was far from being an isolated society. The case of Yu In-Ho here illustrates that transnational dialogues on the growth-pollution nexus helped shape perspectives that diverged from typical developmental nationalist views. A more in-depth, detailed examination is needed to discern which discourses were selectively imported and adopted, and how these were reinterpreted or modified in the South Korean context. But the author maintains that this study, while not exhaustive, provides a valuable framework and a path forward in such lines of inquiry.

We also need further studies that examine how the development of ideas and critiques in the early 1970s were transmuted and adapted do-

68 This point is convincingly portrayed in Simon Avenell, *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement*.

mestically in the subsequent decades. Even though Yu In-Ho continued his criticism of growth and pollution in the late 1970s and 1980s, advocating for an “economy for life” in opposition to an “economy for growth,” he did not articulate a vision more systematic than that presented in his 1973 writings.⁶⁹ Tsuru Shigeto’s *Political Economy of Pollution* was also read among student activists involved in the anti-pollution movement of the late 1970s, and it would be interesting to learn what other resources they utilized.⁷⁰ In addition, a pertinent question remains as to how the wave of dogmatic Marxism, which spread rapidly among student movements and social movements from the mid-1980s, impacted the then-still-evolving anti-pollution movement. Activists influenced by Marx-Leninism tended to accept its inherent productivism and were neither sympathetic to radical critiques of growth and pollution nor treated the latter as a key theoretical or praxiological problem. The leftist nationalist groups, emerging as the mainstream in student and social movements, in essence, shared many elements of the previous forms of developmental nationalism.⁷¹ This situation seems to have significantly influenced the course of the anti-pollution movement in the 1980s, but its specific aspects remain largely unknown. Future studies are indeed called for.

69 Yu In-Ho, “70nyöndaey kyöngjesöngjangüi hoego”; “Kodosöngjang, kü shinhwaüi höshil [High Growth, Reality and Mirage of Its Myth],” *Sindong’a* 301 (1984): 188-97.

70 Tsuru Shigeto’s *Political Economy of Pollution* was translated into Korean in 1983 by Cho Hong-Sup and Lee Pil-ryol, who had been involved in the student anti-pollution activism of the late 1970s. Tsuru Shigeto, *Konghaeüi chöngch’igyöngjehak* [Political Economy of Pollution] (Seoul: Pulbit, 1983). However, an informal translation manuscript had been circulating among student activists earlier. Interview with Cho Hong-Sup, July 3, 2018.

71 Kim Sang-Hyun, “Pak Chönghüi chönggwön shigi.”

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<Abstract>

Questioning Growth, Interrogating Pollution: South Korea's Political Economic Approaches to the Environment in the Early 1970s

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There is a growing interest among historians in South Korean society's engagement with the environment. Yet, many studies tend to accept a narrative based on a type of 'post-materialist value' thesis: Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the South Korean public, preoccupied with basic economic sustenance, showed minimal interest in the escalating environmental degradation. Environmental issues gained prominence only after the 1990s, it is presumed, as South Korea's economic growth reached a certain threshold, accompanied by the rise of a substantial middle class that showed interest in quality-of-life and supported the expansion of the new environmental movement. Recent historical studies have challenged this narrative, revealing that 'pollution' problems had already surfaced as routine societal concerns in the 1970s. However, there remains a need for a critical examination of how the meanings and nature of environmental issues, including pollution, were understood and contested prior to the 1990s. Moreover, the assumption that environmental awareness naturally arose in response to a given trajectory of 'development' needs to be interrogated. This study addresses these limitations in previous studies. It investigates the intertwining concerns and discussions about pollution with those regarding the negative consequences of 'high growth' in South Korea from the late 1960s to the early-to-mid 1970s. Specifically, the study focuses on

the emergence of radical political-economic perspectives on the environment, later embraced by the anti-pollution movement of the late 1970s and 1980s. The paper also explores the transnational influence and connections within these discussions regarding the problematic relationships between ‘growth’ and ‘pollution.’

Keywords: anti-pollution activism; environmental history; developmental nationalism; growthism; political economy; pollution; South Korea; transnational history

〈국문초록〉

성장 비판과 반(反)공해: 1970년대 초기 한국에서의 환경에 대한 정치경제적 접근

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한국 사회가 환경 문제에 어떻게 대면해왔는가에 대한 역사학계의 관심이 높아지고 있다. 그러나 아직 많은 연구들이 '탈물질주의적 가치' 이론과 유사한 내러티브를 다분히 무비판적으로 수용하고 있는 것으로 보인다. 1970-1980년대 한국의 대중들은 경제적 생존에 몰두해 점차 심화되고 있던 환경파괴에 주목하지 않았으며, 경제성장이 일정 수준에 도달해 삶의 질에 관심을 지닌 중산층이 증가한 1990년대에 이르러서야 환경 문제가 중요한 의제로 부상하게 되고 새로운 환경운동도 확산될 수 있었다는 것이다. 최근의 역사 연구들은 1970년대에 이미 '공해(公害)' 문제가 일상적인 사회적 관심사로 인식되고 있었음을 보여줌으로써 이러한 내러티브에 도전하고 있다. 하지만 1990년대 이전 시기 공해를 포함한 환경 문제의 성격과 의미가 어떻게 이해되었는지, 그리고 이를 둘러싼 논쟁이 어떻게 전개되었는지에 관한 분석은 여전히 부족한 실정이다. '발전'의 전개에 따라 환경 의식이 자연스럽게 형성되리라는 가정 또한 비판적으로 검토되지 못하고 있다. 본 연구는 이와 같은 기존 연구의 한계를 넘어서고자 하는 하나의 시도이다. 논문은 1960년대 후반에서 1970년대 초·중반 사이 한국의 '고도성장'이 가져온 부정적 영향에 관한 우려와 문제제기가 공해에 대한 비판적 논의와 어떻게 연결되어 진행되었는지를 분석할 것이다. 특히 이후 1970년대 후반과 1980년대의 반공해운동이 채택했던 것과 유사한 환경에 대한 급진적인 정치경제적 접근이 이 시기에 대두되는 과정에 초점을 두고자 한다. 아울러 본 논문은 '성장'과 '공해'의 관계에 관한 비판적 논의가 트랜스내셔널한 성격을 지니고 있었다는 점을 고찰할 것이다.

주제어: 공해, 반공해운동, 발전민족주의, 성장주의, 정치경제학, 트랜스내셔널사, 한국, 환경사