

Dr Robert Winstanley-Chesters (University of Cambridge/University of Leeds)

“Tainted Topography” – Resolving Colonial Environmental Impacts in North Korea

Imperial Japan, upon its annexation of the Korean peninsula in 1910, gained bureaucratic and sovereign power, institutional responsibility, and developmental authority over a topographic space which had followed apparently very different developmental strategies towards its environment than the Japanese mainland. While many of the Chosen Government General’s assertions, for example that there “were no laws on forestry to speak of” in pre-colonial Korea, appear something of a heated exaggeration, Chosen would follow a very different developmental path in its creation and embedding of colonial modernity of than its predecessor polity.

When it came to forestry matters, the Government General, after taking stock of available and extant resource, established a programme of wide scale afforestation before abruptly changing developmental course in the mid-1930s. The result was an industrial denudation of forest stock and cover. This paper holds that for the post-Liberation North Korean polity this policy of denudation created what I call a “tainted topography”, a semi-permanent geographic imprint of coloniality and its attendant vision of modernity. With Liberation from Japanese rule, sovereignty in the North passed to the political entities, structures, and family in whose control it rests still. This post-colonial regime sought through a vision of socialist modernity that over time has become highly distinctive, to both overcome the geographic impact of colonial and historical aristocratic rule, re-ordering space and land use according to its new priorities. In later years, North Korea has harnessed environmental features and landscapes extensively within its political and historical narratives, developing a topography closely in step with institutional needs.

This paper, working through an analytic framework underpinned by the work of Cosgrove and Castree on politically and socially constructed landscapes, and of Heonik Kwon on North Korea’s charismatic and theatric political formations, will investigate the impact of this politico-environmental approach and past topographic inheritance on North Korean political and developmental policy (amplified as it was by further environmental destruction and denudation during the Korean War). It will also seek to analyze the colonial denudation’s part in the construction of environmental elements within North Korean nationalism. Finally, it will explore these vectors, processes and impacts of later resolution or topographic reclamation on these political and popular narrative and practical approaches to nature and the environment in a North Korea seeking to construct, embed and develop its own distinct vision of a socialist modernity.

“Tainted Topography” – Resolving Colonial Environmental Impacts in North Korea

“With this rifle bearing the blood of the revolutionary forerunners and the people’s desire for national liberation, I will be faithful to General Kim Il Sung to the last moment of my life. I take this one rifle as one hundred rifles and will shoot one hundred bullets to take revenge on the enemy Japanese...” (Biography, 2002: 45).

Kim Jong-suk’s recounting of her time with Kim Il-sung’s band of Anti-Japanese guerrilla fighters in the 1930s (she would later become his wife and the mother of Kim Jong-il), with her passionate desire to take revenge in a hail of bullets on the forces of Imperial Japan is but one of an infinite number of examples of the extraordinary hostility felt towards the colonial forces by figures of later importance in North Korea. This hostility however moves simple disdain for the institutional power of Japan at the time, but considers their having been in control on the physical space of the peninsula as a slight, and their works and impact a tainting of the landscape itself. The Japanese colonial period indeed serves as a benchmark and fulcrum of political authority in North Korea. Kim Il-sung’s concrete resistance to Japanese power and imposition is in fact the source of both historical and contemporary conceptions of his own political legitimacy and power, it appears certainly the reason for the support given to his candidacy as head of a new political polity in North Korea, by the Soviet Union in 1945. Obviously beyond the circles of power in North Korea, the colonial period is felt acutely negatively elsewhere in Korea, colonial collaboration is still a difficult issue in the South, but in the North Korean institutional mind, perhaps in part due to this conception of taint, it has always possessed another level of piquancy.

This paper seeks to encounter this coloniality in the environmental and topographical field, intriguingly a key element in North Korean historical and political narrative as the site of much colonial-era contestation by those anti-Japanese forces took place in the wild and mountainous spaces of the northern boundaries between then Manchukuo and Chosen. Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-suk’s fight was in and amongst mountains, ridges, forests and steep valleys of the Tumen and Yalu watersheds. Perhaps therefore the impact of industrial coloniality on these spaces is felt even more acutely, its tainting or impacts seen more distinctly. In colonial Korea Japanese urgent and nascent conceptions of modernity clashed first with more ancient paradigms of governmentality following the Yi dynasty model and then with what has later been referred to as the “socialist modern”. Both clashes and encounters took place in part in these environmental fields and both were manifest in developmental approach to them.

In encountering this coloniality, contemporary resistance to it and in later attempts and the resolution and negation of its taint we encounter a distinct and determined form of politics and political approach, one in a sense familiar from much contemporary reportage and analysis on North Korea. This in a sense however, is its pre-history, its backstory and root narrative. In focusing on this narrative of terrains and topographies however this author hopes to follow the narrative further back from simple page, screen or recording, but back to that which is writ on landscape, the physical space in which competing claims to modernity and the modern are made and manifested.

In outline the paper will outline the conceptual and analytic framework through which it examines North Korea as nation and political entity and as geographic and topographic space on which politics and political approach impact. In particular the reader will encounter the political geographic realm as described and framed by Noel Castree and Denis Cosgrove,

before engaging with the political modality in Pyongyang's remit referred to as charismatic or theatric politics by Heonik Kwon and Byung-Ho Chung. The paper will then delve into the regional forest histories of East Asia (in particular China and Japan's), in order to contextualise the pre-history of forestry development. The reader will then encounter the colonial modern and its interaction with the forest stock of Japanese ruled Korea. Finally the paper will review the contest of this tainted topography and its residual terrains, not just by the forest policy of a nascent North Korea, but by its continued rejection and contestation through North Korea's forestry narratives.

Charismatic Landscapes and Landschaft

Accordingly before encountering either socialist or colonial modes of modernity, or even a topography or geographic terrain that might be described as 'tainted', this paper must address the theoretical framing in which landscapes and natural spaces can be seen to have either incorporated political structures or process or been impacted by them in such a way to allow for concrete and physical transformations in the appearance or physicality. Within previous work of mine I have addressed for example the root concept of utopia and utopianism and its intersection with geographies, topographies and spatiality. The meaning of Thomas More's original conception of 'utopia' or 'Οὐτοπία' arguably lies somewhere in a space equidistant to philosophy and satire; indeed, the term can be read in English as 'no space' or 'not a space', even though it is more commonly misread as Εὐτοπία or 'good place'. Given North Korea's equal assertion of utopian reality or manifestation, as well as the modernist 'call' to reconfiguration and transformation, I examine utopian and 'utopic' claims within the field of actual geographic space, asking what approach have academic Geographers previously adopted in exploring such claims of transference between the realm of politico-social theoretical approach and nature itself.

Prior to investigating this process of transference, which will be key to both analysis of modernity's impositions and North Korean transformations; however, we arguably need to reflect upon the meaning of the term 'nature', and thus the conceptual ground upon which this transference takes place. It may, of course, be that just as in political science there are a number of possible definitions of the notion of politics and the political, the same may be true of academic theorisation of 'nature'. Noel Castree in his book 'Social Nature: Theory, Practice and Politics', for example, lays out a helpful tripartite set of definitions focused on contemporary conceptions of nature. Firstly, nature may be understood as external to the social and political organisation of humanity. As Castree (2001, p. 6) notes 'The familiar distinction between society and nature indicates a long-standing assumption that nature is external and different to society'. Such thinking is representative of much of the Platonic root of 'western' or 'modern' political or social theorisation, in that conceptions of universalised concepts must inherently be rendered into dualistic modalities of being or not being. Thus the social, political, human world is essentially and radically different from the world of the natural and the environmental. Castree (2001, p. 6) also notes that since the European Enlightenment (which embedded Platonic dualism within the roots of philosophic and social ordering), there have been other cases of such a process; that is "other dualisms organizing our thought, such as rural-urban, country-city and wilderness-civilisation".

Secondly, nature can be understood as 'intrinsic', in the sense that there is something innate and ineffable about natural or environmental spaces, different from human or social existence which appears to be in a state of permanent flux. This fixed and ineffable state of being also defines nature and the natural as inherently finite in capacity. As Castree (2001, p. 7) reminds us 'pessimist among the 'humans and environment' tradition of geography take the Malthusian line that natural resources are fixed in quantity, such that population levels will outstrip them with disastrous consequences". Finally, Castree identifies that nature is also understood as 'universal'. This universalism allows for the conception that events or situations in nature will always follow a universally similar pattern. It thus follows that "a hydrologist studying how pesticides leak from fields of a certain soil type into rivers might use a general theory of soil water movement" (Castree, 2001, p.7). But nature may also be considered universal in a 'Gaian' sense, that current human interaction with the natural runs counter to world order, and that such action will be subject to a necessary and inevitable correction, at which point the world will revert to a universal mean.

Following the lead of Castree and other 'critical geographies' it thus appears that multiple conceptions of nature and the natural, and of their interaction with the human and the political might be possible. So what scope might this give this for investigation into developmental practice and relations between environmental and utopian political and theoretical forms in the case of North Korea and its forests? If Castree and others determine the existence of a social form of nature, could a utopian, political or charismatic nature be possible?

Aside from Noel Castree's framing of different approaches to nature and the natural, Denis Cosgrove's analysis of the concept of 'landscape' could also play a key role in our analysis. Cosgrove separates land from landscape in a way which echoes the Platonistic dualism of disconnection between nature itself and social or political conceptions of the natural. Placing the concept of landscape well within the field of social/political construction, Cosgrove asserts that "the landscape idea represents a way of seeing – a way in which some Europeans have represented themselves and to others the world about them and their relationships with it, and through which they have commented on social relations" (Cosgrove, 1984, p. 1). Cosgrove's 'way of seeing' embeds the natural and the world of social relations well within these representations, and within those forms of being, relating and producing which they represent. Thus nature and the natural are captured within the realm of economic relations and modes of production. Indeed, Cosgrove employs the Marxian designation of capitalism's mode as being rooted in the disconnection between producer and the 'natural' ownership/control of his production; recognising that at the time of Marx's writing the latter primarily related to control of the land or resources derived from the land. It follows, therefore, at times of modal shift "the land, both objectively and subjectively is implicated ... and we should therefore expect it to undergo radical change during the period of the capitalist transition" (Cosgrove, 1984, p. 61).

Cosgrove himself identifies a number of examples of both the representation of land and nature within the output of cultural production at times of modal shift, and the more practical, actualised affect upon natural landscapes themselves at times of either colonial or capitalistic exploration. For Cosgrove the transference of the natural in urban spaces and around the

home is central to the process of relational formation during the development of capitalism as a mode of production. Cosgrove focuses particularly on the application of theory to practice in Italy, identifying the social and political movement from feudalism to proto-capitalism, and its subsequent arrest in an underdeveloped state as a useful exemplar through which to analyse this process. Leaving behind the commitment demanded by cyclical seasons of agriculture and rurality, co-opters and controllers of newly generated capitalistically derived wealth and status aimed to construct 'Palladian' architectural pieces within new planned urban environments, which had as their mirrors carefully planned gardens and country-scapes. Cosgrove himself quotes A.R. Turner on this matter; "Renaissance landscape ... exists to serve mankind. Its fields and groves are carefully groomed and only rarely give way to wild ravines, spectacular vistas or deserted places"(Turner, quoted in Cosgrove, 1984, p. 100).

These new Italian capitalistic landscapes of constructed and mediated rurality or wildness represent one form of symbolic conquering of nature. Castree goes on to analyse the more esoteric, forthright and adventuring examples in the formative years of the United States. The transformation of the natural and landscape in America, although in one sense an expression of the same capitalistic impulse responsible for re-ordering social relations and conceptions with the wild in Europe, appears a great deal more abrupt and less considered than that encountered in Italy. The European prospectors and pioneers of the 17th and 18th centuries encountered, in North America, what they understood as an unmediated, unreconstructed wild. Cosgrove thus argues that "the actions of settlers down the length of the seaboard had little if anything to do with Golden Age fantasies.... Those who cleared the forests, removed stones from the fields, ploughed up virgin earth ... adopted practical attitudes and quickly learned the most efficient techniques for disposing of a wilderness" (Cosgrove, 1984, p.170).

We will see similar examples in an almost contradictory modal setting later in this chapter, but what America shares with the Korean peninsula will be a virulence and violence in its progress and interaction with modernity and its mores. However this is a relationship between the social/political and the natural of a determinedly dialectical nature, one which bears a great deal of commonality with narratives of natural conquest possibly familiar to the reader and to which we will soon turn. So far as Pyongyang is concerned a case for a 'Hausmannian' or 'Boulevardian' conception of Pyongyang as utopic landscape space has been best articulated by Benjamin Joinau in his work 'The Sun and the Arrow : A Topo-Myth Analysis of Pyongyang' (Joinau, 2012). Joinau envisages the landscape of Pyongyang itself under construction, the cities axis being reoriented "...in order to correspond to the new ideological agenda. This axis rotates slowly during the 1970s and 80's...becoming eventually a new 'destiny axis'...to the glory of Kim Il Sung's personal myth..." (Joinau, 2012).The conceptions advanced by Cosgrove and others of nature, landscape and their utopian connection with the realm of social, economic and political interaction and exploitation serve firstly to enlarge our understanding of the modal shifts associated with the collapse of feudalism and mercantilism in Europe and their replacement with capitalistic approaches to economy and society. Secondly they support or analysis of the more general interactions between political, social and economic modernity and the landscapes of the colonial Korean Peninsula

Given all of this generality, in light of Castree, Cosgrove and Joinau's framing of a constructed or created landscape, what will be the analytical vectors for the re-embedding of the ideological or the political within these constructed landscapes in the particular case of North Korea during its encounter with the terrain bequeathed it by Japanese colonial modernity. This author suggests the utilisation of a key work in contemporary Korean Studies addressing the political form of North Korean institutional structure and regime.

Much in recent years has been written following the publication of Heonik Kwon and Byung-ho Chung's landmark work "Beyond Charismatic Politics, on the theatricality of contemporary politics the hinterland of its supportive mythos. This author has utilised Kwon and Chung's thesis along with Cosgrovia or Castree inspired analysis to develop a general assertion that not only in North Korea is there a charismatic politics, but that this political form perhaps necessarily begets a charismatic landscape. Further to this I have sought to, in North Korea's case examine how these constructions, this theatricality and mythos might impact upon this landscape, and how they might transform it?

Landscape is of course, as a word in the English language coming to us somewhat denuded of both politics and content, a denudation that makes its connection to such a rich and content filled conception as Charisma and the Charismatic difficult to say the least. Landscape is not currently therefore an ideal word or conception to twin with Charisma in any realm of "thick" politics, let alone in North Korea. I instead intend to use (or mis-use), a more ancient piece of terminology, the German word "Landschaft".

Denis Cosgrove himself engaged with the Landschaft conception and for him its conceptual utility lies in its original usage to define spatial organisation in political or social terms "Custom and culture defined a Land, not physical geographical characteristics – it was a social entity that found physical expression in the area under its law..." (Cosgrove, 2004). This author would claim that North Korea can be seen as just such a social or political entity, a space in which particular customs, culture and political manifestations interact with physical or topographical features within the remit and utilizability of its sovereignty and law. Cosgrove determines that Landschaft "...points to a particular spatiality in which a geographical area and its material appearance are constituted through social practice..." (Cosgrove, 2004) In North Korea's case I would claim that its Landschaft is instead constituted through political practice and the mode of that practice is the Charismatic as outlined by Kwon and Chung.

Forest Narratives and Charismas

While North Korea's political construction and reconstruction are of course specific, and when this paper moves to examine and investigate the developmental role of forestry and afforestation, its own charismatic form becoming particularly useful to this paper's analysis of its rejection of the topographic impact of Japanese coloniality; it is does not as a political or developmental form exist outside of local or regional context. East Asian political and sovereign forms have impacted their natural topographies and landscapes in a number of different ways, modernity and developmental approach transforming their natural spaces in

ways marked by their locality. As this paper ultimately locates its analysis of colonial and post-colonial environmental action with forests and afforested spaces, this section reviews this regional and local context in that natural realm, examining forest development in two very particular local historiographies.

“Beside the walls of Jurong city, along the verges of ancient roads, rise a thousand – ten thousand – stumps of elms, but all of them are colourless. Nothing but withered trunks are left, their bark-covers stripped off totally, as the famished inhabitants, loathing it, pestled the chunks into crumbs...” (‘The Song of the Elms’ by Changheng, 1869, quoted in Elvin, 2004)

Turning first to the polity located to the north of the Korean peninsula, traditionally within the era of the Yi dynasty, Choson Korea’s ally and supported, China and its markedly ambivalent and conflictual relationship with landscape and natural terrain. In particular Mark Elvin in his work “The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China”, assesses the impact of state formation in China on environment and landscape. Until relatively recently, institutions and populations within the forming Chinese polity encountered the inhabitants of the non-human world in hostile circumstances (Elvin, 2004). The development of human populations, and the institutions and infrastructure that governed and supported them, seemed to regularly clash for rapidly diminishing space; and rapid development only increased such clashes. Elvin describes a historical narrative of the Chinese polity, which he names “The Great Deforestation”. It consists of three phases.

The first phase was during the Zhou, Qin and Han dynasties. At this time, institutions of the developing state had already begun to take customary lands and rights throughout its realm. This took the guise of imposing institutional monopolies on timber resources, in the face of already determined overuse (Elvin, 2004).

A second phase was centred in the era of the Song dynasty, during the European medieval period. The invention of blast furnaces for the smelting of iron ore into steel and other technological inventions, created something of an industrial revolution during this period. This revolution not only led to massive increases in population, but also to accompanying resource demands (Elvin, 2004). Much timber was needed in order to supply such demands and allow for the construction of new centres of population, as well as military infrastructure. The use of more and more iron ore for the production of steel drove the revolution, and also put pressure on forests by the need for wood to create fuel for the furnaces. The obtaining of iron ore itself by rather aggressive mining techniques eradicated large areas of forest (Elvin, 2004). All these factors led to the development of heavily denuded areas, and severe localised restrictions of timber availability and supply.

The final and third phase in Elvin’s analysis covers the more recent period between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. During this later period, population growth expanded to such an extent, that industrial usage of timber combined with the impact of domestic exploitation leads to a national shortage of timber and wide scale denudation of forests. This leads to what Elvin terms “...a general forest crisis...” (Elvin, 2004). Unlike Japan there was to be no redemptive second act the development of institutional functionality, political charisma and bequeathed a relationship with natural and environmental terrains toxic in its

nature and radically opposed to that of Japan. Political landscapes in China would be free from darker, uncontrolled spaces, free of forests.

“Every foreign traveller in Japan is delighted by the verdant forest-shrouded mountains that thrust skyward from one end of the island chain to the other...” (Totman, 1989)

In contrast to Chinese interactions with nature, now its great rival for regional superiority, Japan engaged with its environmental inheritance in a radically different way. Crossing the East Sea to Korea's former colonial master and traditional enemy Japan we find even in our contemporary era though massively industrialised and densely populated, still very well endowed with forests. According to Conrad Totman however to presume that these forests are ancient or historic would be wrong. Totman asserts that Japan's forest resources have been as exploited and overused as those elsewhere in the world. Around the third century BC, arable agricultural practice in the guise of rice cultivation drove the eradication, appropriation and adaptation of forests and woods: “...forest clearance that permitted this diffusion was humankind's first dramatic and permanent modification of Japanese woodland...”(Totman, 1989). Totman named this initial phase of forest management “The Ancient Predation”. As religious and political institutional development gathered pace, so an inclination towards the construction of monumental wooden architecture arose, as Buddhist and Shinto places of worship and reverence used enormous quantities of wood in the Kinai basin. Early Ecclesiastical architecture laid such demands on available resources that very soon: “...standards of architectural excellence had to adjust downward to accommodate changes in raw material quality...” (Totman, 1989). Another such demand, closely connected to the needs of institutional or political charisma was the tradition of rebuilding the headquarters of tribal or family polities every couple of decades. During the Yamato period, this approach was reinforced by a custom that involved the demolition of estate buildings upon the succession of the next generation to headship: “...tearing down the rotten old palace and replacing it with a fresh, new one symbolized the auspicious start of a new reign...”(Totman, 1989).

A transfer of political authority to centralised institutions during the process of state formation might have limited over-exploitation of forest resources and during the Heian era in the 7th century, an attempt was made to manage and coordinate resources. However central authority (and therefore organised national or supra-regional control) over forest resources collapsed into the hands of local and regional authorities during the Kamakura and Murumachi periods and these sub-national authorities lacked both the inclination and power to exercise control over the forestry development, and a return was made to the exploitative pattern of earlier periods.

Central institutional authority did in fact not develop in Japan until the fall of the Ashikaga Shogunate and the end of what has become known as the “Warring States Period”. However, when Ashikaga fell to Oda Nobunaga in 1573, the development of victorious institutions proved even more destructive than the non-centralised governance of previous centuries. Hideyoshi's expansionist military campaigns demanded enormous amounts of forest resources in the building of ships and equipment to service them. Such exploitation resulted

ultimately in a collapse of the availability of timber; in spite of developments in transportation and survey quality.

If Japanese development had continued along these lines, its developmental history would be as famous as much for its denudation as for its current verdancy. However ultimately this was not the direction taken by its institutions and political form. This over-exploitation had begun to hamper the continuation of social and political development, as well as damaging the economic potential of all forms of institutional authority (Morris-Suzuki, 2007). Accordingly, an intellectual approach to the position of forests and their utilisation began to develop. This supported a change from a paradigm of careless exploitation to one of regenerative management. Totman uses Nobumasa, a daimyo of Tsugara as an example of this new impulse: "...To assure that wood should not become scarce, one cherishes the mountains. And thus, because they are the foundation of the hearth, which nurtures the lives of all people, the mountains are to be treasured..." (Nobumasa, quoted by Totman, 1989). Such a Confucian approach to forestry will be echoed by statements and policies of a contemporary North Korea and is the basis of much of the academic narrative surrounding the later and modern Japanese approach to forestry.

The seedling culture and plantation based forestry that developed into a regenerative approach during the Edo era and into the modern era, ultimately saved Japanese woodlands from complete denudation. However, Japan's being covered by regenerated woodland monocultures does not assume a reverence for forests or the natural, derived from a Shinto philosophical inclination. Rather, it suggests that forests exist within Japanese institutional and developmental mind sets as a resource, requiring management; and that the justification of this approach lies in their potential usefulness to human society, development and political charisma.

Given the obvious importance of forestry and forest resource to the development of Japanese society and statehood, its management and revitalisation during the more modern era perhaps we might expect to see a similar process and outcome during the period in which Japan colonised Korea. Just as forested verdancy has been so important in the outcome and conception of Japanese modernity, would a similar topographic impact and interaction be seen within colonial Chosen as the institutions of the ruling power sought to embed and impose their own particular vision of the topographic modern upon its landscape.

Colonial Forestry: Chosen Government General and Korean Forest Resource

"The Mountain Ranges in Korea cover more than half the total area of the country. Owing to indiscriminate felling of trees without public supervision, which was practiced for a long time past, most of the mountain slopes...have become denuded of trees..." (HIJMRG, 1907)

This the opening paragraph to the forestry section of the first "Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Korea", published in 1907 by His Imperial Japanese Majesty's Residency General (Japanese governmental authorities seemingly were not bold enough to assert their role as a Government General until the year of annexation in 1910), in Seoul is an essential summation of the Japanese view on Korean forestry management. Coupled with later

statements that Korea has “no forestry law to speak of” speak of great conceptual difference between the classical, bureaucratic legalistic approach of Imperial Japan and that of the Choson dynasty.

It is of course difficult in a sense to assess the fairness or otherwise of Japanese claims so far as Korea’s ineffectual and uncoordinated approach to forest and timber resource and management, difficult as the chaos of the later Yi dynasty meant that whatever institutional systems and records that had been undertaken in the later years within Korea’s forest sector are essentially lost to us now, if they were ever accessible and obtainable to foreigners and externally interested parties. Equally as has been asserted many times and many scholars Choson Korea and the institutions of the Yi dynasty were simply not that sort of institutional or developmental state. While Yi dynasty Korea had a highly developed and deeply organised bureaucracy and civil service (which of course was intricately embedded with social stratification), in the Yangban classes and the Civil Examination process, it was not that sort of bureaucracy, focused primarily as it was on the maintenance of the Royal House, specific and general structures of social order and the difficult tenuous relationships this Korea had with its favoured partner China and the outside world.

As we have seen in the previous section, the institutional structures of Korean forestry were not the intricate works of bureaucratic organisation of Japanese history, but neither were they subject to amateurish neglect of the colonial imagination. Whatever the reality of this past however, its present manifestation did not suit the needs and requirements of the colonial administration and it was keen to make radical changes tailored to its agenda.

At the earliest moment of colonialism, even while it was still in the infancy of the Residency General, Japan sought to capitalise and reconstruct Korean forestry resource:

“There exist rich forests along the banks of the Yalu and the Tumen Rivers, but they were never properly exploited, except in a temporary manner by the Russians prior to the recent war...Proper exploitation with adequate capital should undoubtedly yield a considerable revenue to the Treasury...” (HIJMG, 1908)

Accordingly the Residency General negotiated and undertook what it describes as a ‘joint’ enterprise with the Korean Government in building a new forestry coordination and trans-shipment centre at Antung (present day Chinese Dandong), opposite the Korean town of Sinuiji (which the document describes as Wiju), on the mouth of the Yalu. This served to coordinate and develop timber shipments along the Yalu River from the deep northern interior forests of North Pyongan and Chagang provinces. The annual report notes the extent of the timbers journey: “...The distance from the place where the timber is felled to the main station at Antung is 150 ri (375 miles) and the rafts take 40 days to make the journey...” (HIJMG, 1908). This project in total extracted some 71006 cubic ‘shaku’¹ of timber from these ancient forests.

¹ Shaku is a Japanese measurement of length formulated in its modern form in 1891. A Shaku corresponds to 10/33 of a metre

Further to this simple extractive project the Japanese Residency General sought in these early, initial days to reorganise the wider strategy and approach of Korea's forestry institutions. In a section of the 1908 Annual Report marked as 'Agricultural and Industrial Encouragement' the Resident General asserts that "The Korean Government, appreciating the urgent advice of the Resident General, established, in 1906, three modal forests in the mountains near Seoul, Pinyang (sic) and Taiku..." (HIJMRG, 1908) These new forest, colonially guided projects were to be the locus and fulcrum of a new approach to timber and forest management. They were to cover 83,300 acres and include a number of new species imported directly from Japan. Along with these projects focusing on more mature forest stock, deeper research had begun to be framed and undertaken: "In 1907, three Nursery Gardens were established in the vicinity of the Model Forests near Pyingyang and Taiku, and also at Suwon. In these Gardens seeds of various trees were sowed in the spring of 1907, and promising results were obtained..." (HIJMRG, 1908)

Beyond these site and location specific developments the Residency General suggested educational improvements and changes ("In a school attached to the...model station at Suwon, a short course in forestry was added to the curriculum, and the first graduates, 12 in number, are now actively engaging in forest administration under the Government and at the Model Stations..." (HIJMRG, 1908), as well institutional changes moving forest administration responsibilities from the agricultural section of the Department of Agriculture to a new Forest Bureau – itself employing "several Japanese experts in forestry". Finally the legal structures and frameworks were to be reworked to support the impending arrival of 'modern' practice, the text claiming that "...the Government is now preparing comprehensive laws which will provide, among other things, that certain mountains and forests, both public and private shall be preserved as protections against landslides, floods and drought." (HIJMRG, 1908)

Before this new forestry legislation was brought into force, Korea's total forestry stock under the control of the state was reviewed and assessed ("With the object of protecting as well as utilizing the States forests..." (GGC, 1909), and the outlines of extensive surveying of private forest resource were unveiled. This surveying took the form of cadastral surveying carried out during the spring and summer of 1910. By August the peninsula's entire forest stock (other than on Jeju Island), had been surveyed and was found to stand at some 16,000,000 Cho². This wider stock was found to be in similarly denuded and degraded conditions as the initial State Forest stock and thus wider strategies of afforestation were to be carried out. By this year of course the Government General had assumed political sovereignty on the Peninsula and the need for "model afforestation" centers under the control of Japanese experimental institutions was no longer necessary. Forestry management was thus devolved back to the Provincial administrations now coordinated by the Government General, and afforestation strategy undertaken by the propagation of a number of 'seedling bed's in different Provincial territories. The Government General also sought to encourage other, private sector based stake-holders to begin afforestation projects and asserted that "...In order to encourage afforestation on the part of the general public the Government

² Cho is a Japanese measurement of area. A Cho is equivalent to .9917 of a hectare.

General (selected)...April 3rd, 1911, the anniversary of the accession of the First Emperor of Japan, as a memorial day for a universal plantation..." (GGC, 1911).

Having gained institutional and sovereign control of the Korean Peninsula, its institutions and forest resources, reviewed those resources and begun a series of afforestation projects, the aforementioned legal revisions came with Serei (Imperial Decree number 10), issued through the Governor-General in July of 1911. Its stipulations came into force at the end of the year and both asserted the Government General's overall control of natural and forest resources at the same time as opening up State Forests to both preservation and exploitation by private or non-state actors. Ultimately the Annual Report for 1912 suggests that "...the vital object of the revised forestry law aims not only as a continuance of the government undertakings to afforestation, but also at stimulating the people in general to undertake afforestation as far as possible on their own initiative..." (GGC, 1912).

This transfer of responsibilities in a sense sought to break the bounds of reverence for local communities and their sacred or customary forests, as much as colonial Japanese administration would seek to break the bounds between the Korea and Koreans of the present and the Korean's of the historical past and the historical Korea. Forestry management and resource was to be brought into modernity by a quasi-free market in forest management (be that for exploitative or regenerative purposes), one that could allow for deep inroads to be made by the institutions and organisations of Japanese colonial modernity. Dramatic developments were made in terms of experimental and exploitative forestry projects in this early colonial period, developments that would point ahead to later manifestations of colonial industrial denudations and exploitations...for example the Government General Annual Report for 1912 already reports some 1649 Cho of seedling beds within ten years for future exploitation.

Of course these reports from the colonial Government General are subject to some disputation on statistical grounds, as well as we will later on see on conceptual or ideological grounds. Andrew Grajdanzev for example in 1944 utilising a later set of data points provided by the Government General of Chosen asserts that comparisons and reportage made by the Annual Report of 1938 "...are of doubtful value..." (Grajdanzev, 1944,p.123), owing to their failure to correctly combine and account for different methods of forest stock assessment in the later years of the colonial government. Further to this Grajdanzev asserts that in later years the Government General undertook large scale privatisation of forest resources, utilizing the tools of modern, Liberal legal frameworks into the hands of companies such as the '*Chosen Ringyo Kaihatsu Kabushiki Kaishi*' or 'Corporation for the Development of Forest Exploitation in Korea'. In fact Grajdanzev notes that this particular organisation was granted for no charge some 500,000 *cho* of forests in Korea (equating to a quarter of the remaining 'good' forest) (Grajdanzev, 1944,p.126). This was not to engage in its afforestation or protection, for its whole scale deforestation. Accordingly Grajdanzev and the Government General itself (in reports not directly accessible to the author), recount the increase in cubic meterage of timber felled across the peninsula from some 700,000 in 1910 to 2.8 million in 1939 (Grajdanzev, 1944,p.124).

While the reports continue to recount in meticulous detail the modernisation of Korean forestry stock and practice, producing what ...refers to as the colonial modern. In the later period of the colonisation the nature of what is meant by forestry practice following Grajdanzev's analysis, radically alters. Perhaps this is to take into account the needs of Japanese military build-up and the eventual undertaking of the conflict in the Pacific and South East Asia. Whatever the impetus or drivers behind this process it seems from 1933 developmental paradigms and practices changed to one's of deforestation and extraction. While this of course denuded forest stock to a much greater extent than the earlier period (in which there was an expansion in resource levels as shown by Grajdanzev), the later impact on North Korean conceptions of Japanese impact on the environment in general in North Korea was much greater.

Encountering the “Tainted Topography”

“The Korean nation is facing a question of life or death today – it either perishes for ever under the colonial yoke of the Japanese imperialists or rises up in a fight to survive. If it merely laments over its ruined land...our nation will fall never to rise again...” (Kim Il-sung 1930, p.2)

On the second page of the first volume of the (now) forty seven volume set of Kim Il-sung's Works a young Kim many years before the Liberation of Korea and his ascent to power as head of a young North Korea highlights his conception of the topographic impact on the peninsula of the Japanese presence. This is of course only the first such statement, but it is clear that the impact of colonisation on the land and its resources is felt as keenly by those resisting it and allied to the guerrilla clique under the control of Kim as is Japanese bureaucratic or institutional control. While during the pre-Liberation period this may have been down to the actual topographical locale of their resistance, be it as it was generally focused on wild and mountainous spaces towards and beyond the Chinese/Manchurian border, upon forming the government of the North in late 1945, Kim Il-sung would find himself responsible for the rehabilitation of Japan's apparently nefarious developmental approach.

Aside from the many assertions to right the many ‘plunderings’ and ‘robbings’ of the colonial period when it came to forestry resources, the first important text signifying future developmental strategies that would encounter, correct and reconfigure this colonized topography came in April 1947. The publication of “Let us Launch a Vigorous Tree Planting Movement Involving All the Masses” will serve in the distant institutional future of North Korea as the foundational moment in the forestry and afforestation sector, but at the time seemed focused on both generating a level of political legitimacy and charismatic authority for the relatively new government, and as a statement of intent so far as the impact of Japanese power on its territory was concerned.

“From ancient times our country has been widely known as a land of embroidered in silk, a land with beautiful mountains and sparkling rivers. Its beauty, however, was long clouded over by Japanese imperialist colonial rule...” (Kim Il-sung, 1947, p.171)

This more generalised tainting of Korea's natural landscapes is again described here as a ‘plundering’ and a ‘devastation’, however it is more specific in that: “...they robbed our

country of forests...” (Kim Il-sung, 1947, p.171). North Korean political process and articulation has always required a model, not simply during the period post Great Leap Forward when ‘revolutionary modelling’ and ‘revolutionary speeds’ became de-rigueur, but throughout it seems the entirety of its institutional history. Topographic taint within the forest sector therefore would have its model, its exemplar at Munsu Hill in Pyongyang itself. The hill according to Kim “...as the name signifies, the hill used to be as beautiful as a piece of embroidered silk...” (Kim Il-sung, 1947, p.171). However during the colonial period “It lost this beauty and became ugly, denuded by the Japanese imperialists...there is not a decent tree on this hill and there is nothing there except the old barracks used by the Japanese imperialists aggressor troops...” (Kim Il-sung, 1947, p.171)

The destroyed and denuded landscape of Munsu Hill, specific and local as it is within an institutional and developmental field deploying revolutionary models however can equally serve for generalities “The Japanese aggressors stripped not only Munsu Hill but almost every one of our mountains and hills. The sight of these naked mountains rends my heart.” (Kim Il-sung, 1947,p.171). Accordingly and owing to this denudation general forestry policy must correct this denudation: “... We must plant trees well and remove quickly the aftereffects of Japanese imperialist colonial rule...” (Kim Il-sung, 1947, p.171).

While in other sectors of the North Korean economy removing the impacts and aftereffects of Japanese colonialism would take many forms – from reordering land ownership and the legal frameworks surrounding land and land management, to education, culture, linguistic structures and even architecture – so far as nature and the environmental realm were concerned it would forestry and forestry policy that would remove the taint and distress of colonial modernity. Forests It seems would contribute extensively to the construction of a new North Korean nation: “Forests are the wealth of the nation...Creating good forest resources through energetic tree planting therefore, is of great importance in developing the national economy, improving the people’s standard of living and making our country rich and strong...” (Kim Il-sung, 1947, p.172) More than this simple construction of developmental capacity or resource availability, forest management and development will contribute to the more metaphysical elements of national construction, from the simply economic to the realm of the mythic and the charismatic.

Building the North Korean Socialist Modern

“Covering the mountains with thick forests is also greatly important to protect the land and make the landscape beautiful. Dense forests...make our country a peoples paradise with beautiful environment and good conditions to live in...” (Kim Il-sung, 1946, p.172)

The metaphysical, utopian element to environmental development revealed in part within these initial narratives of the rejection of colonial, capitalists modernity, can be traced into a number of North Korea’s developmental narratives. However of course for the continued purposes of this paper we will continue to focus on forestry and afforestation practices.

While this paper focuses again on a specific developmental area in its investigation of post-colonial topographic reconfiguration, a note on a more general economic and institutional undertakings is necessary here. The infrastructural, institutional and

environmental landscapes bequeathed North Korea by the colonial era were generally of course annihilated by the Korean War of 1950-1953. Cumings describes the post-War landscape of North Korea for example as a scorched earth (Cumings, 1981). Within Pyongyang some 93% of all buildings had been destroyed and there had been an enormous level of damage and destruction done to the environment of North Korea. Enormous levels of rehabilitation in all sectors would be required, rehabilitation that could not be achieved by Pyongyang on its own. External funders and supporters would be required and it would be from these fellow ideological travellers in the early Cold War that North Korea's particular vision of Socialist modernity would spring.

A key element in this support was the incorporation into Pyongyang's developmental and conceptual framework of governance of the classical mode of central planning. The Soviet Union under Lenin's premiership had essentially undertaken a reconfiguration of its industrial and agricultural sectors under the impetus of narratologically at least, rigorous and ambitious central planning. While as we will see central planning theory would lose some of its legitimacy and coherence during later more "urgent" periods such as China's Great Leap Forward, later Stalinism and later ambitious programmes under Khrushchev, North Korea would at least until 1980 utilise such paradigms of planning extensively.

September 1953's formulation by North Korea of a "Three Year Plan" for the reconstruction of the country, and the connected negotiations with the USSR for an extension of its credit lines to achieve this reconstruction do not offer much in the way of direction so far as forestry matters are concerned. The 1953-1956 plan was primarily concerned with the rehabilitation of transport and industrial infrastructure, essentially laying some of the groundwork for the continuation of socialist modernity following the destructive, yet in legitimacy terms, redemptive war period, from which North Korea's later government's would derive extensive authority.

It would not be until this initial period, focus and era of geo-politics came to an end in 1956 with the completion of the plan, the death of Stalin and the destalinization period under Nikita Khrushchev's reign that forestry matters would come again into focus in the construction of an authentic North Korean modernity. Khrushchev's 1956 "Secret Speech" denouncing Stalin and the publication in April of 1956 of "On the Personality Cult in North Korea" which heavily critiqued the political strategy of Kim Il Sung as one might expect forced a shift in the positioning of the parties involved within the Warsaw Pact, a breakdown in relations between the USSR and China known as the Sino-Soviet split and rapid political and diplomatic movement away from the USSR on the part of North Korea. It would also herald the rising influence of Mao's China on North Korea's developmental and environmental strategies.

The "Mass Movements" of China's Great Leap Forward would impact upon the next stage of central planning and construction. North Korea's First Five-Year Plan (1957-1961), for example, envisaged an approach based on the utilisation of such movements. Thus the text entitled "Tasks of the Party Organisation in Ryanggang Province" (Kim Il Sung, 1958, p.222) declared that tree planting "should be carried out through a mass movement". This

application of the “mass” to practical policy in the forestry sector clearly reflects the ideological influence of the Great Leap Forward. These could of course be conceived of as connecting to the very early approaches outlined by Kim Il-sung in 1947 on Munsu Hill with collective bouts of “energetic tree planting”. However unlike China’s radical adoption of landscape focused *Yundong* (which would utterly transform landscapes and the social relations of those connected to them), whilst adopting the rhetoric of the mass movement, North Korea was distinctive in its much greater focus on the detailed technical aspects and execution of such strategies, whilst less emphasis was placed on its more utopic possibilities. The text of 1958, for example, sets out a highly organised pyramidal approach to forestry policy within Ryanggang province and stipulates that organisational responsibility should rest primarily with official afforestation stations.

The First Seven Year Plan (1961-1967)

The first phase of forestry policy did not, however, long survive the period of the First Five-Year Plan. Already by the end of the 1950s the institutions of North Korea had begun to appear more permanent and solid; as a state North Korea began the process of political, institutional and diplomatic triangulation with its neighbours. The early 1960s are thus presented in governmental and theoretical narratives of North Korea as witnessing the arrival of another new era in central planning. Forestry and afforestation continued to be regarded as an important facet of this wider policy area, but chiefly with regard to the management of orchards and fruit production. Much less consideration was given during these years to reconfiguration of land to eradicate the last vestiges of colonial taint. Instead the First Seven Year Plan sets about the creation and construction of what it conceives of as an authentically socialist modernity.

In the forestry sector, socialist modernity was to be first and foremost productive. Forestry strategy in the first seven year plan prioritised the development of orchards, stressing their place in achieving an increase in productive capacity and the creation of a seemingly utopian space. These latter concerns we to the fore in Kim’s statement of 1960, which asserted that: “We are struggling for the future. We must build a communist society and hand it down to the coming generations.... We are creating everything from scratch in our time.... This is the only way we can be as well off as other peoples, and hand over a rich and powerful country to the new generation. If we plant many orchards, our people will become happier in seven or eight years” (Kim Il Sung, 1960, p.21).

The priorities of developmental modernity and developmental approach laid out in the First Seven-Year Plan directed the forestry sector to focus on the creation of productive orchards and fruit plantations. Indeed, this field of silvicultural management soon had its own core text, “On Planting Orchards through an All-People Movement”, published in April 1961 as a consolidation of existing policy. The text stressed the need for forestry planning to focus chiefly on the production of economic exploitable output. The goals of the sector were thus aligned with planning policies for the wider development of agriculture and industry in North Korea. Forestry was deemed central to the production of foodstuffs, but it also came to be seen as a key area in which North Korea would utilise utopian “mass line” principles which it had appropriated from Maoist China, but had reconfigured to suit the local political terrain.

The First Seven-Year Plan did not, however, apply other elements derived from more classical approaches to central planning to the forestry sector. There were no initial moves to set specific goals for production or the development of capacity as had previously been widespread in the Soviet Union. Towards the end of the seven years covered by the Plan there were signs of change; previous statements of intent regarding afforestation and forestry policy appear to have acquired a growing significance as definitive and quantitative indicators of intended future outcomes for the sector. Thus in the document “On Developing the Successes Achieved in the Rural Economy” (Kim Il Sung, 1963), Kim Il Sung stated that “we have planted 120,000 chongbo³ of orchards in different parts of the country”. This quantitative achievement is then also coupled with demands for infrastructural and technical improvement: “We must establish an effective system of orchard management so as to improve fertilization and cultivation” (Kim Il Sung, 1963, p.402).

The First Six-Year Plan (1971-1976)

Moves to incorporate forestry policy within a wider framework of economic planning seem to have been somewhat disrupted in the final years of the First Seven-Year Plan. Originally scheduled to last until 1967, but in fact extended by three years to 1970, this planning period seems, similar to the previous First Five-Year Plan, never to have fully achieved its official goals (Chung, 1972). It is possible that this failure reflected the disruption caused by attempts to incorporate Maoist-influenced “revolutionary models” and “revolutionary speeds” and a more overtly utopian approach into an economy established on technocratic and productivity-driven lines. Yet despite considerable evidence to the contrary Kim Il Sung and state’s official narrative maintained that the Plan was ultimately successful, moving North Korea closer to the reality of a “lived” utopia, to the socialist modern, utterly distinct from the colonial past. As Kim asserted: “During the Seven-Year Plan we have founded a modern industry, self-supporting in structure, and have, in the main, put all the branches of the national economy on a modern technical footing, by vigorously accelerating the socialist industrialization of the country and the all-around technological reconstruction of the national economy”(Kim Il Sung, 1971, p.277).

During the final phase of the First Seven-Year Plan, forestry policy had come to be directed more closely by Pyongyang’s central institutions with the aim of obtaining the required rapid growth in output and productivity. With hindsight, some of these earlier attempts at institutional connection appeared irrational and arguably counter-productive. During the First Six-Year Plan period some attempt was therefore made to rework such developments to create a more cohesive framework. Forestry and afforestation policy would exist under the second of “three major objectives for the technical revolution”. This second objective directed institutions to “continue to accelerate the technical revolution in the rural areas, to reduce the difference between agricultural and industrial labour” (Kim Il Sung, 1972, p.30). Although the core directional text for forestry during this planning period did not appear for further year with the publication of “Let us expedite the Introduction of a Supply of Running Water in the Rural Communities and Press Ahead with Afforestation”, local and

³ A ‘Chongbo’ is a traditional Korean measurement of area equivalent to 9.2 hectares

regional government institutions were already exposed to new developments in the field of forestry policy.

Absent both from documentation shaping forestry policy and, indeed, from the First Six-Year Plan as a whole, was a focus on grand utopian targets at a national level, or quotas and targets for forestry and afforestation. A profusion of targets continued to be set for particular localities and institutions, but national targets, such as the 400,000 chongbo of afforestation demanded under the First Seven-Year Plan, were absent.

In place of any aggregate national target for forest reconfiguration, the new Plan set a series of smaller goals for particular agencies and institutions; the People's Army, for example, "must plant 15,000 hectares of forests every year, of which 5000 hectares should be planted with oil-bearing trees ... the Ministry of Public Security should plant 5000 hectares every year." (Kim Il Sung, 1973, p. 275). Cooperative farms were also given detailed instructions: "it is desirable in future for cooperative farms with 300 to 500 hectares of cultivated land to devote one hectare to the cultivation of young trees, for those with 501 to 1000 hectares of cultivated land to devote two, and for those with more than 1000 hectares of cultivated land to devote three hectares, for the purpose." (Kim Il Sung, 1973, p.276).

Five Great Nature Remaking Projects and the Second Seven-Year Plan (1978-1984)

Again it seems that North Korea found it difficult to implement the vision of centralised planning set out in the First Six-Year. Indeed it was announced in 1976 that "The Party Central Committee has defined the new year 1977, as a year of readjustment for easing the strain created in certain branches of the economy in the course of carrying out the Six-Year Plan, and for preparing to embark on a new long-term plan." (Kim Il Sung, 1977, p. 5). Chung (1972).

However, the efforts made to fulfil the goals of the First Six-Year Plan in the agricultural and forestry sectors were not wasted. Perhaps the most overtly utopian approach advanced during North Korea's history, the "Five Great Nature-Remaking Tasks" programme was developed during this planning period. The utopian approach of "The Tasks" influenced the direction of much later development policy in North Korea, influencing the regime's political and ideological agenda, even when the reality of it's situation has seemed far from utopian. "The Tasks" in a sense are the key moment in the construction of an identifiably local and modern North Korea. "The Tasks" also contributed to the formulation of targets for the agricultural and forestry sectors during the next planning period, the Second Seven-Year Plan which was to run from 1978 to 1984.

The new plan was introduced in December 1977 and, at first glance, its goals appear similar to those defined by previous planning documents. The first paragraph bears some similarity to the text of the First Six-Year Plan: "The principal task of the Seven-Year Plan is to further strengthen the economic foundations of socialism and to raise the standard of living of the people still higher by introducing Juché, modern techniques and science into the national economy at a rapid pace." (Kim Il Sung, 1977, p.519). In practice, however, policy during this period proved to be less overtly utopian than during earlier phases of North Korea's development. Previous plans and planning period had emphasised the requirement

for: reconstruction (the Three-Year Plan); capacity building (the First Seven-Year Plan); diversification and consolidation (the First Six-Year Plan). The Second Seven-Year Plan in contrast focuses primarily on modernisation, mechanisation and research capacity building.

A “scientific”, modern approach to the development of all economic areas became a key goal under the Second Seven-Year Plan: “Scientific research should be given priority and the development of science must be strongly encouraged, so as to place all production-technical processes, production methods and management in all fields of the national economy, particularly industry and agriculture, onto a more scientific basis”(Kim Il Sung,1977, p.519). For the forestry sector, placed firmly within the industrial sphere by the planning document, this would mean for the first time since the 1950s and the era of revolutionary silviculture, national targets for production-focused afforestation. These targets divided the forestry estate into productive categories, demanding that some 170,000 hectares of “fibre and pulp-wood forests” and 340,000 hectares of “oil-bearing forests” be created. The forestry industry would also be subject to goals surrounding the diversification of its productive output; “the output of chipboards and wood-fibre boards will be increased; and the wood chemical industry will be developed so that comprehensive and effective use is made of timber” (Kim Il Sung, 197, p.532).

The diversification of the forestry sector’s productive capacity in Ryanggang Province was also suggested as a priority area for the realisation of the goals of the Second Seven-Year Plan goals. Although subsequent critical comment indicates a failure of local engagement: “Forestry officials are not implementing to the full the Party’s policy on producing a variety of goods from treetops and branches”, but proper utilisation of research inspired forestry management could “produce wood-shaving and wood-fibre boards, ethyl and methyl alcohol, tannin, tar, acetic acid, paints and many other goods.” (Kim Il Sung, 1979, p.290). The Plan was, however, clear that none of this productive development should exist in isolation. Instead it called for the dissolution of differences between industrial and agricultural sectors, which would have had important implications for forestry policy. The Plan not only urged greater connection between forestry and other sectors of industrial production, but also that afforestation should become a goal shared by all members of the wider socio-economic community and the population at large: “When planting trees, you should mobilize factory and office workers, pupils and students, housewives and all the other people living in the province.... The afforestation office and work-teams should be developed well so that they plant large numbers of trees in a mass movement” (Kim Il Sung, 1979, p.287).

Reviewing the Forested Modern

The reader will note this paper’s truncation of historical review of North Korea’s developmental and forestry strategies in 1979. I do so, not because this where the narrative ends, but for North Korea forestry this where the concrete lines of ambition and connection leading from the pre-Liberation colonial past and its denigration of North Korea’s landscape end. This is where to ambitious plans to create a beacon of socialist modernity under Pyongyang’s domain end. 1980 was the year of the Fifth Party Congress of the Korean Workers Party, an even at which essentially ambition was finally checked. Forestry and environmental sectors at this Congress had their targets abandoned and no more national

targets of afforestation or forestry reconfiguration have been set since. More than that, 1980 and beyond seems the twilight of North Korea's productive or successful period, from then on it appeared only downhill to collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the famine period of the mid 1990s and the conflicted muddling through of later years.

That is of course not to say that forests, afforestation, the environment and all of these elements part within the construction of what might be termed the socialist modern do not still matter greatly to North Korea, its narratives and institutions. Nor does it mean that the acute rejection of Japanese colonialism and its impact is any less determined, acute or definite. Pyongyang's institutions and central governmental narrative still utilize their conceptual victories over colonial forces during the guerrilla period of the 1930s, as well as the Liberation from Japan itself to bolster their authority. Even in spite of the decline and difficulty of recent years, North Korea still requires of others and of itself that it be considered as a space of modernity, of socialist modernity, distinctly at odds with capitalist or "imperial" visions of the modern.

Forests of course still play their part in these narratives and in this authority, even in spite of the abrupt reversal of many decades worth of afforestation policy during the famine period: "the Ministry of Land Management and Environmental Protection ... sanctioned deforestation, in order to produce crops on the marginal land, especially on sloping land" (Bobilier, 2002, p. 5). Later Bobilier (2002, p.5), among many analysts records the results of an UNDP/FAO investigation, which concluded "that more than 500,000 hectares of marginal lands were deforested and cultivated". Recent FAO (2005) reporting has asserted, utilising statistics sourced through the "FAO STAT" system, that forestry cover in North Korea declined in total from some 8.2 million hectares in 1990 to 6.8 million hectares by 2000, or nearly one-fifth of total forest cover was removed in a decade.

In a sense these later difficulties do not diminish the institutional impetus for developmental strategy in the forestry or other sectors. This period and this deforestation were issues, like the Japanese colonial period and its environment and topographical impact to be overcome and which in a manner have been overcome. North Korean institutions and narratives now deploy environmental themes to support its legitimacy, not simply from the guerrilla period, but from later periods of their distinct vision of modernity's construction .

A key and in some ways familiar example is the role accorded to National Tree Planting Day in more contemporary narratives. For many years North Korea had celebrated National Tree Planting Day (its own inheritance of the colonial era's Arbor Day), on 6th April marking of course Kim Il Sung's visit in 1947 to Munsu Hill. In 1999, however, National Tree Planting Day became 2nd March. This new date was presented as commemorating an earlier event on 2nd March 1946 when Kim Il Sung climbed Mount Moran on the outskirts of Pyongyang, with both Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Suk. Kim Jong Il would have been 4 or 5 years old at this time. The KCNA described the background to the event in the following terms: "On March 2nd, 53 years ago, the President Kim Il Sung climbed up Moran Hill together with the revolutionary fighter Kim Jong Suk and General Secretary Kim Jong Il and said that many trees should be planted there to turn it into a recreation place for the people". Accordingly, "the working people across the country are now all out in the drive to plant

more trees in mountains and fields of the country on the occasion of the tree planting day” (KCNA, 1999). Mirroring both Heonik Kwon’s conception of the charismatic politics of North Korea (Kwon, 2012) and Denis Cosgrove’s theorisation of socially or politically constructed landscapes (Cosgrove, 1994), this is perhaps an example of forestry becoming a charismatic and politicised landscape of modernity, one which can resist other forms and resolve past difficulties.

Further to this simple use of a forested space of charisma and politics at Munsu Hill, the forestry sector moved from simple ‘one-off’ uses as part of national and historical narratives to function in a more holistic sense in which the importance of forests and natural landscapes is seen in more abstract terms to be important for the nation as a whole : “the DPRK has channelled great efforts into afforestation, setting it as an important work for the prosperity of the country and the happiness of the people... in order to beautify the landscape of the country, develop the economy and improve people's living standard ... forests are the precious treasure for the prosperity of the country and happiness of the generations to come” (Minju Joson reported by KCNA, 2001).

This more holistic conception envisages terrains and landscapes as wholly local, completely “socialist”. Forests and other natural terrains therefore are combined with those human’s under Pyongyang’s sovereign remit in their connections with North Korea’s charismatic politics, becoming charismatic, political landscapes; no longer those of the colonial period, of Chosen, Choson or any other, but acutely North Korean.

References

- Biography of Kim Jong-suk. (2002) - *Kim Jong-suk: A Biography*. Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House.
- Bird, I. (1905) - *Korea and her Neighbours : a Narrative of Travel, with an Account of the Vicissitudes and Position of the Country*, London, John Murray
- Bobilier, B. (2002) – *Environmental Protection and Reforestation in DPR of Korea, Project Evaluation and Feasibility Study*, Pyongyang, Triangle Generation Humanitaire
- Castree, N. (2001) – *Social Nature*, Malden, Mass, Blackwell Publishing
- Chung, J. (1972) – “North Korea's "Seven Year Plan" (1961-70): Economic Performance and Reforms”, *Asian Survey*, **12** (6) : 527-545
- Conroy, H. (1960) – *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868 – 1910*, Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Press
- Cosgrove, D. (1984) – *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison, WI, The University of Wisconsin Press
- Cosgrove, D. (2004) – *Landscape and Landschaft*, Lecture Given the “Spatial Turn in History” Symposium German Historical Institute, February 19, 2004
- Cumings, B. (1981) - *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press
- Cumings, B. (2010) – *The Korean War*. New York City, NY, Modern Library
- Elvin, M. (2004) – *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China*. New Haven, CT. Yale University Press
- Government General of Chosen. (1909) – *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chosen (Korea)*, Keijo (Seoul), GGC
- Government General of Chosen. (1911) – *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chosen (Korea)*, Keijo (Seoul), GGC,
- Government General of Chosen. (1912) – *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chosen (Korea)*, Keijo (Seoul), GGC,
- Grajdanzhev, M. (1944) – *Modern Korea*, New York City, NY, Institute of Pacific Relations

His Imperial Japanese Majesty Residency General. (1907) - Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Korea, Seoul, HIJMRG

His Imperial Japanese Majesty Residency General. (1908) - Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Korea, Seoul, HIJMRG

Joinau, B. (2014) – “*The Arrow and the Sun*”: A Topo-Myth Analysis of Pyongyang, Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies, 14 (1), pp. 65-92

Kim Il Sung. (1930) – “‘The Path of the Korean Revolution’ – Report to the Meeting of the Young Communist League and the Anti-Imperialist Youth League”, Works 1, Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House

Kim Il Sung (1946) – “Encouraging Address Delivered at the Ceremony for Starting the Potong River Improvement Project, Works 2, Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House

Kim Il Sung (1947) – “Let us Launch a Vigorous Tree Planting Movement Involving all the Masses”, Works 3, Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House

Kim Il Sung. (1958) – “Tasks of the Party Organisation in Ryanggang Province”, Works 12, Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House

Kim Il Sung. (1960) – “On the Tasks of Party Organisations in South Pyongan Province”, Works 14, Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House

Kim Il Sung. (1961) “On Planting Orchards Through an All-People Movement”, Works 15, Foreign Languages Publishing House

Kim Il Sung. (1973) – “Let us Expedite the Introduction of a Supply of Running Water in the Rural Communities and Press Ahead with Afforestation”, Works 28, Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House

Kim Il Sung. (1977) – “On the Second Seven Year Plan”, Works 32, Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House

Kim Il Sung. (1979) – “Let Us Make Ryanggang Province a Beautiful Paradise”, Works 34, Pyongyang, Foreign Languages Publishing House

Kwon, H and Chung, B. (2012) – North Korea : Beyond Charismatic Politics, Lanham, MY, Rowman and Littlefield

Lee, C. (1965) – *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press

Lee, Ki Baik.(1984) – *A New History of Korea*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press

Totman, C. (1989) – *The Green Archipelago : Forestry in Pre-industrial Japan*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press

Totman, C. (2004) – *Pre-industrial Korea And Japan in Environmental Perspective*, Leiden, Brill