

# “The Public Works of Japanese Colonial Governmentality in Korea”

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Japanese rulers in colonial Korea released voluminous reports publicizing the various reform and improvement programs they introduced to administer the peninsula. Distributed worldwide to garner acceptance and international approval of Japanese achievements, these reports also archived for posterity the colonial government’s systematic efforts to index and manipulate Korean social life, institutions, and territory in the name of furthering Japanese knowledge of, and power over, the Korean population and landscape. The *Annual Reports* published between the years 1907 and 1938, especially, read as catalogues of Japanese micro-technologies of rule, for the projects and statistics indexed within were all mechanisms of Japanese colonial governmentality.

Through a close reading of public works projects detailed in the *Annual Reports*, this paper introduces a material understanding of governmentality to map how space, power, and knowledge intersected in Japanese colonialism in Korea. Expansion of railway networks, restoration of rural highways, improvement of rivers, construction of ports, redevelopment of major urban centers, and the laying of water and sewer systems were all deployed to further colonial rule. In this regard, manipulation of natural and built environments through public works projects was meant to engender “bio-power” over colonial Korea. Yet, in the case of Japanese colonialism, such programs were intended less to increase territorial legibility and more to project Japanese representations of modernity and civilization. Not only did public works projects militarily consolidate, politically centralize, and economically integrate colonial territories into the empire, they were designed, I argue, to reify and perpetuate Japanese colonial power in built form.

Keywords: governmentality, colonialism, urban space, public works, modernity, built forms

Public works projects played a vital role in Japanese colonialism. By one estimation, Japan expended \$8 billion on such works – paving highways, laying railways, constructing bridges, improving harbors, restoring rivers, installing water systems – over the 36 years it occupied Korea between the years 1910-1945.<sup>1</sup> Why did Japanese colonizers focus so much on infrastructural development? The easy answer for this is that public works were designed to render the colonial landscape legible, governable, and profitable. In rural areas, Japanese colonizers laid railways, improved rural highways, built dams, and constructed ports in order to spur industrial development, facilitate commerce, and promote trade. Better communications would also accelerate troop movements in times of war. In urban areas, meanwhile, Japanese engineers paved streets, installed sidewalks, buried water and sewer pipes, and erected Western-style buildings in order to sanitize the city, and improve everyday life. But there is an additional aspect of this answer that bears mention: public works were the principle tools of a particular Japanese colonial governmentality.

In what follows, I attempt two things: firstly, I offer a preliminary tracing of the epistemological parameters of Japan’s colonial governmentality, illuminating its key features and mechanisms, and identifying its key practitioners and operatives. Secondly, as a concrete example of how this colonial governmentality was carried out on the ground in the form of public works projects, I briefly highlight urban improvement projects in the colonial capital of Seoul.

## Japan’s Colonial Governmentality

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<sup>1</sup> Hong Yung Lee, “Introduction: A Critique of ‘Colonial Modernity,’” in Hong Yung Lee, et al, *Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea, 1910-1945*, 11.

Japanese colonizers in Korea published voluminous amounts of material documenting their various efforts to administer the colonies. Published in the name of garnering acceptance and approval of Japanese achievements, these reports also archived for posterity the colonial governments' systemic efforts to index and manipulate Korean social life, institutions, and the natural and built environments in the name of furthering Japanese knowledge of, and power over, the peninsula. Starting with the first *Annual Report for 1907 Reforms and Progress in Korea*, the reports covered reforms in: Korean government administration, the judiciary, defense, finance, currency, banking, commerce, communications, and education. A number of statistical tables were appended, cataloguing "Population and Domicile (Exclusively Koreans)," Korean government revenues, imports and exports, the number of schools, and the size of the Korean student population.<sup>2</sup> Later reports grew even larger as the government-general added programs of Shinto shrine administration, "charity and relief work," and archeological excavation. Reflecting this expanded coverage, later issues contained even more statistical tables. The *Annual Report for 1921-1922*, for instance, included a total of 49 statistical charts and tables detailing Japanese surveillance of all aspects of life in Korea. From these statistics, we learn, for example: the total rainfall and average temperature for 14 different cities; the number of Korean families in the peninsula; the population by occupation; births, deaths, marriage, and divorce figures; detailed totals for agricultural, industrial, and forestry production; and the Korean student population.<sup>3</sup> Not only do these reports read as catalogues of Japanese micro-technologies of colonial rule, for historians of the Japanese empire they provide a useful source base for delineating and dissecting the political rationality of Japan's colonial governance – in other words, Japan's "colonial governmentality."

Introduced by Michel Foucault in his influential 1978 lectures on "Security, Territory, and Population," the term "governmentality" refers to the complex set of knowledges and strategies states wield to control their populations. In Foucault's own words, "governmentality" indicates: "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security."<sup>4</sup> Since a transcription of Foucault's lecture on governmentality first appeared in English in 1979, scholars have applied the concept to a wide range of disciplines from history, to geography and sociology.

This goes for studies Japanese colonialism as well, especially in Taiwan. In her discussion of Japanese "colonial engineering," Hui-yu Caroline Ts'ai analyzed the Taiwanese *hokō* (CHN: *baojia*) system of local land administration adapted by the Japanese colonial authorities from the traditional Chinese practice in order to "illustrate the insights – and also the limits – of Foucauldian governmentality in colonial studies."<sup>5</sup> As Ts'ai demonstrates, local *hokō* agents became transponders of social control as they were increasingly tied to local police stations and charged additional responsibilities. "In addition to local police work and documenting population movements," Ts'ai notes, "they had to track infectious diseases and opium smoking, provide money for laborers for public works and community services, and the like."<sup>6</sup> Paul Katz, meanwhile, has included the *hokō* system along with regular censuses and the household registration system as policies of governmentality that exacerbated Taiwanese anger at the colonial regime and fueled the widespread 1915 protests known as the Ta-pa-ni Incident.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Yao Jen-to has examined colonial statistics, land surveys, censuses, and research of local customs to demonstrate how governmentality informed Japanese colonial rule.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Annual Report for 1910-1911*, 255.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Report for 1921-1922*, 260-274.

<sup>4</sup> See: Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault: Power*, 219-220.

<sup>5</sup> Ts'ai, *Taiwan in Japan's Empire Building*, 95-96.

<sup>6</sup> Ts'ai, *Taiwan in Japan's Empire Building*, 117.

<sup>7</sup> Katz, "Governmentality and Its Consequences in Colonial Taiwan: A Case Study of the Ta-pa-ni Incident of 1915.

<sup>8</sup> Yao Jen-to, "The Japanese Colonial State and its Form of Knowledge in Taiwan."

While early studies laid a vital groundwork in understanding the rationality of Japanese rule, there is still more work to be done in fully unpacking Japan's particular colonial governmentality. Building from Foucault's more familiar early works on power and discipline, previous studies have largely focused on elucidating the disciplinary aspects of Japanese governmentality. In doing so, scholars sought to demonstrate how colonial subjects were able to redirect and subvert these mechanisms of disciplinary power. But, it is important to point out that governmentality – especially in the colonies – was never limited to restrictive disciplining of individual bodies. David Scott, for example, defines “colonial governmentality” as a “distinctive political rationality...in which power comes to be directed at the destruction and reconstruction of colonial space so as to produce not so much extractive-effects on colonial bodies and governing-effects on colonial conduct.” Or, in other words, “*the systematic redefinition and transformation of the terrain on which the life of the colonized was lived*” [emphasis in the original].<sup>9</sup> Colonial governmentality, then, according to Scott, was a strategy by which the conditions of everyday life in the colonies were irrevocably altered to the point that a rupture was produced between the pre-colonial “primitive” past and the colonial “modern” present, forcing all subsequent actions – both collaborative and oppositional – to be carried out according to new rules and on a new playing field.

Japan's governmental imperative in the colonies, then, was to produce a chasmic gap between precolonial conditions and the colonial present. Colonial planners therefore turned to a strategy that had worked well back in the Japanese mainland following the Meiji Restoration: the renovation of “material civilization” through “development.” In Japan, this had meant the importation of Western ideas, technology, and built forms. In the colonies, this meant not only the introduction of cultural “modernity” but also the destruction of the “primitive” in order to emphasize the rupture between colonizer and colonized. “It is said that if we are to build a new age here in Korea, then the present must be destroyed,” wrote Tokyo Imperial University professor Kuroita Katsumi in 1922. “But even that destruction is done for the purpose of creation.”<sup>10</sup> Just as early Meiji Japanese planners introduced a number of transformative reforms as an opportunity for the Meiji government to differentiate itself from the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japanese planners would now utilize “creative destruction” as a tool in the colonies.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the defining feature of Japan's particular colonial governmentality, was its emphasis on “development” (*kaitaku*), a catch-all term for the introduction of the materials of “modern culture.” In the language of Meiji officials, this meant modern industry, infrastructure, technology, and built forms. This would be accomplished through public works projects.

To be sure, expansion of railway networks, restoration of rural highways, improvement of rivers, construction of ports, redevelopment of major urban centers, and the laying of water and sewer systems all had practical benefits and were all designed to further colonial rule in one way or another. Not only did such projects militarily consolidate, politically centralize, and economically integrate colonial territories into the empire, they also contributed to the colonizer's knowledge of, and power over, the colonial population and landscape. As scholars of the colonial built environment have pointed out, one way this was accomplished was by ordering colonial space and exposing it to governmental surveillance. Ambe J. Njoh, for example, argued that urban planning and public works in colonial Africa “were necessary to broadcast the authority and power of the colonial state over the colonial subjects.”<sup>12</sup> In addition to reaffirming “preconceived notions of European supremacy and power,” Njoh notes, “Colonial physical space was ordered to afford the colonial state total and

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<sup>9</sup> David Scott, “Colonial Governmentality,” 204-205.

<sup>10</sup> Kuroita Katsumi, “Bunka to Kenchiku,” *Chōsen to Kenchiku* 1:2 (February, 1922): 3.

<sup>11</sup> In using the term “creative destruction,” David Harvey refers to both the radical man-made physical transformations to existing built forms and the conceptual tearing asunder of social organizations and pre-existing thought that intentionally gouged the chasm severing the modern from the premodern. That is to say – whether it was Haussmann destroying existing structures in order to install new thoroughfares, or embellishing Napoleon III's and his own roles in the planning of Paris – if “modernity” is a myth, it is a myth purposely created in order to differentiate the new from what came before. Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ambe J. Njoh, *Planning Power: Town Planning and Social Control in Colonial Africa* (New York: UCL Press, 2007), 11.

inordinate control over the capital city, other cities, and the colonial territory as a whole, in that order.”<sup>13</sup> Through projects that would make colonial territory “ordered, sanitized, and amenable to regulations, and structured to enhance the flow of economic activities such as trade and communications,” Brenda Yeoh adds, colonizers structured the built environment in order to “facilitate colonial rule and express colonial aspirations and ideals.”<sup>14</sup> Clearly marked streets, sewers, parks, and open spaces, Yeoh argues, were all components of British attempts to construct a “legible system” in Singapore.<sup>15</sup> Yet, in the case of Japanese colonial governmentality, public works programs were designed less to increase territorial legibility and more to proclaim and validate Japanese colonial rule by reifying the cultural difference between the Japanese colonizers and the native colonized.

The centrality of material culture in Japanese colonial governmentality can be most clearly seen in the political philosophy of Gotō Shimpei, “Japan’s statesman of research.”<sup>16</sup> Perhaps most well-known as mayor of Tokyo from 1920 and then chairperson of Imperial Capital Restoration Board following the devastating 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake, Gotō built his metropolitan career on colonial positions in Taiwan and Manchuria. After catching the eye of government officials with multiple hygienic and sewer reform proposals for Tokyo and Taiwan, Gotō received his first overseas posting as Director (*Minsei Chōkan*) of the Civil Affairs Bureau (*Minseibu*) of Taiwan in 1898. In addition to his responsibilities as director of civil affairs, Gotō sat on a number of committees tasked with planning and executing various public works projects, including railway construction, urban planning, land surveys, and port improvements. Gotō’s next career move was to Manchuria in 1906, where he was appointed the first president of the South Manchurian Railway.<sup>17</sup> Nominally a railway company, the SMR under Gotō’s leadership functioned more as a semi-governmental colonizing institution that carried out its own nation-building programs.

Gotō elaborated on the governmental rationality that informed his administrative policies in both Taiwan and Manchuria, what he referred to as the “biological politics” of “scientific colonialism” (*kagakuteki shokumin seisaku*). “Any scheme of colonial administration, given the present advances in science, should be based on principles of biology,” Gotō famously argued. “What are these principles? They are to promote science and develop agriculture, industry, sanitation, education, communications, and police force. If these are satisfactorily accomplished, we will be able to persevere in the struggle for survival and win the struggle of the ‘survival of the fittest.’”<sup>18</sup> “It may be hoped,” Gotō glossed in a 1902 English-language article on the Japanese administration of Taiwan, “developing industries, imparting education, and improving the sanitary condition will lead the native population to appreciate the boons of the Japanese administration and to assimilate themselves gradually to the ways of civilized life.”<sup>19</sup> Public works, then, were central components of Gotō’s strategies to solidify and justify Japanese colonial rule by asserting cultural hegemony.

For Gotō, public works projects were at the same time prime mechanisms for establishing security over the colonial population. This was the goal of Gotō’s principle of “*bunsō teki bubu*.”<sup>20</sup> Because of the double meaning of Japanese ideographic orthography, this perplexing term can be translated in a variety of ways. The most literal rendering would be “military preparedness in civil garb.” Yet a more accurate version given Gotō’s administrative policies would be “military

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<sup>13</sup> Njoh, *Planning Power*, 1, 229.

<sup>14</sup> Brenda S.A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment in Colonial Singapore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 12-13, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Yeoh, *Contesting Space*, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Yukiko Hayase, “The Career of Gotō Shinpei: Japan’s Statesman of Research, 1857-1929.”

<sup>17</sup> For Gotō’s background, see Yukiko Hayase, “The Career of Gotō Shinpei: Japan’s Statesman of Research, 1857-1929,” PhD Dissertation, Florida State University, 1974, especially chapter 2. These proposals are all located in the Gotō Shimpei papers in the Tokyo Institute for Municipal Research and the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room in the National Diet Library.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Chang and Myers, “Japanese Colonial Development Policy in Taiwan,” 438.

<sup>19</sup> Gotō, “Formosa Under Japanese Administration,” 1585.

<sup>20</sup> This perplexing phrase has been translated in a variety of ways, ranging from Fogel’s most literal “military preparedness in civil garb” to Chang and Myers’ most liberal “the use of culture as a major weapon.”

preparation under the guise of civilization.” This reading is, in fact, supported by Gotō’s own explanation of the term: “In short, colonial policy is [*bunsō teki bubi*]; it is carrying out the hegemon’s strategies under the flag of the kingly way.” “What facilities, then, are necessary to see it through?” he continued:

We have to implement a cultural invasion with a Central Laboratory, popular education for the resident populace, and forge other academic and economic links. Invasion may not be an agreeable expression, but [language] aside, we can generally call our policy one of invasion in civil garb.<sup>21</sup>

Japanese colonial bureaucrat Mochiji Rokusaburō even more closely linked culture to control and security. Dispatched on inspection tours of the American Philippines, Dutch Java, and British India and Egypt during 1907-1908, Mochiji was a respected scholar of international colonialism who published a lengthy colonial policy proposal entitled *Colonial Policy in Taiwan (Taiwan Shokuminchi Seisaku)* in 1912.<sup>22</sup> Within, Mochiji echoed Gotō in proclaiming that “In controlling a foreign race acquired through military force, the colonizer must by all means have in mind not only the objective of securing its own rights (*riken fushoku*), but also the noble aims (*kōshō no mokuteki*) of proclaiming civilization (*bunmei no senden*) and promoting the social welfare of humanity (*jinrui fukushi no zōshin*).”<sup>23</sup> What Mochiji had in mind, Michael Weiner describes, was a “reassurance and guidance” policy (*suibu keidō*), “which would gradually introduce the benefits of modern civilisation, discourage hostility to Japanese rule and safeguard the future welfare of the Taiwanese.”<sup>24</sup> Sitting on the Deliberative Assembly in Taiwan along with Gotō from 1903 to 1906, and then chairing the Civil Engineering Bureau in Korea from 1912-1917, Mochiji was perfectly situated to carry Gotō’s governmental rationality across the Japanese empire.

With Mochiji transponding Gotō’s policies, it is no surprise that public works programs quickly became a central tenet of Japanese governmentality throughout the colonies. A 1929 Taiwan Government-General report of water systems in Taiwan made a clear connection between public works and colonial governance, explaining that urban development (*toshi setsubi*), promotion of industry (*sangyō shinkō*), “winning hearts and minds” (*min’i yūdō*), and the pacification and development of remote areas (*riban kaihatsu*) were all “stages (*kaitei*) endlessly confronted in the cultivation (*kaitaku*) of rule over the island.”<sup>25</sup> In practical terms, public works projects in Taiwan and Korea were meant to make both city and countryside sanitary, hygienic, and economically profitable by repairing gutters, installing water and sewers systems, constructing railways and ports, realigning city blocks, and improving urban streets. At the same time, these projects were designed to expand colonial power in three ways: 1) by justifying Japanese claims of ownership of colonial territory and of a right to rule through cultivation and improvement of the natural and built environments; 2) by announcing the arrival of the new Japanese colonial regime by concretizing the transition of rule by juxtaposing the urban modern with the vernacular “pre-modern”; and 3) by garnering acceptance and approval of Japanese colonialism from the colonized population, the Japanese expatriate community, and Western imperialists. As a 1930 report on public works in Taiwan indicates, Japanese colonizers drew a close connection between public works and notions of “civilization.” “When it comes to the development of colonies with low levels of civilization,” the report explained, “the first priority is to provide for the economic enrichment of the people’s lives. The most vital measure for achieving this is the completion (*kanbi*) of public works facilities, such as railways, roads, ports, urban planning, irrigation, and rivers.”<sup>26</sup> A 1937 report from Korea sounded a similar note: “For the development of humanity (*jinbun*) and the promotion of industry, public works

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Joshua Fogel, *The Cultural Dimension of Sino-Japanese Relations: Essays on the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 119.

<sup>22</sup> Mochiji, *Taiwan Shokumin Seisaku*, 15; Tsurumi, “Colonizer and Colonized in Taiwan,” 214.

<sup>23</sup> Mochiji Rokusaburo, *Taiwan Shokumin Seisaku*, (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1912), 432.

<sup>24</sup> Weiner, *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan*, 28.

<sup>25</sup> Taiwan Government-General Home Bureau, *Taiwan Suidōshi* (Taipei: Taiwan Government-General Home Bureau, 1929), 2.

<sup>26</sup> Taiwan Sōtokufu Naimukyoku, *Taiwan Sōtokufu Naimukyoku shukan Doboku Jigyō* 1930, 2.

(*doboku jiygō*) must never be neglected.<sup>27</sup> As these reports demonstrate, in the minds of Japanese colonizers, “development,” “civilization,” and governance were all closely related concepts, and all were dependent on public works.

### The Public Works of Colonial Governmentality

Having traced the outlines of Japan’s colonial governmentality, I now turn to offering a case study of how such strategies were deployed on the ground through public works projects, namely urban improvements. Japanese colonizers most tangibly attempted to assert their power by constructing colonial difference in the built form of the city. For Japanese colonial planners, the built environment was most visible “mark” of colonial difference. Streetscapes of straight, paved, and clean thoroughfares outfitted with sidewalks, sewers, and roadside trees, it was believed, would join with western architecture to frame modern urban spaces that dramatically contrasted with surrounding areas not yet improved. To Japanese planners who saw street conditions as the barometer of civilization, it was so-called “culture streets” (*bunka dōro*) and “civilized cities” (*bunmei toshi*) that would reify Japanese modernity and colonial power by vividly differentiating “modern” Japanese and “primitive” native space.<sup>28</sup>

For the rule of colonial difference to work, there had to be appreciable contrast between the precolonial past and the colonial present. Only by demonstrating a dramatic transformation between “before” and “after” could such a strategy work. With this in mind, Japanese colonizers’ attempts to deploy the rule of colonial difference incorporated three components: saying, doing, and showing. In order to justify their programs and embellish their accomplishments, colonial planners and administrators first emphasized the unhygienic and disorderly conditions of the “primitive” precolonial city in their writings. In the process, they downplayed efforts of modernization that had taken place prior to the beginning of colonial rule. Simply claiming colonial difference was not sufficient, however: Japanese colonizers backed up their words with actions by carrying out key urban improvements: street repairs, sewer installation, and roadside tree planting in order to produce modern urban space. Yet, it was equally important that these programs not work too well. Colonial power based on difference could only be effective when colonizers were able to sustain that difference. Constructing spaces of colonial difference therefore meant not only paving new streets and erecting new buildings, but also maintaining old ones in order to preserve a visible distinction between colonial and precolonial forms. For this reason, traditional structures were set aside and exhibited as historical remnants – often publicized in travel literature as “historical ruins” (*kyūseki*) that could be juxtaposed to the new modern built environment. Finally, these displays of colonial difference were advertised around the world as Japanese colonizers sought to garner international approval of Japanese colonialism with reports of urban “transformations” and dramatically staged photos.

The first component in constructing colonial difference was emphasizing the squalor and disorder of the “primitive” native city prior to Japanese urban improvements. Not only did this serve to justify new projects, it exaggerated the before-and-after transformation they accomplished. As an official history of public works projects in Korea recorded, “[In] the urban areas of Korea, as a rule, the streets are narrow and excessively winding, making the city blocks even more irregular; not only do they cause many hindrances in transportation, hygiene, and fire prevention, but they also cause many impediments in the development of the urban area.”<sup>29</sup> Likewise, the “great inconvenience to communications, and sanitary and fire-brigade arrangements” posed by the “narrow, dirty, and crooked streets” of Korean cities was a common theme in the Government-General’s *Annual Reports*.<sup>30</sup> Planners also tied the improvement of streets to the development of civilization. A 1922

<sup>27</sup> Chōsen Sōtokufu, ed. *Chōsen Doboku Jigyōshi: Shōwa 3-nen made*, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Taihoku-shi Dobokuka, *Taihoku-shi Doboku Yōran* (Taipei: Taihoku-shi Dobokuka, 1939), 8; and Taiwan Tsūshinsha, ed., *Taihoku Shi-shi* (Taiwan Tsūshinsha, 1920), 55.

<sup>29</sup> Chōsen Sōtokufu, ed., *Chōsen Doboku Jigyōshi*, 1023.

<sup>30</sup> These and similar comments can be found in reports for 1918-1921, 1921-1922, 1922-1923, 1923-1924, 1924-1926, and 1929-1930. Quotes from Government-General of Chosen, ed., *Annual Report 1921-1922*, 162.

Government-General report asserted that urban planning was necessary in Korea because of its “current low level of civilization (*kaimei*)” and the need for “comparatively rapid future development.”<sup>31</sup> Later, the Government-General elaborated that street improvements were necessary because Korea was “still in the first stages of modernization in many ways” and “nothing [was] more keenly required” to “forward the sound development of a Korean town.”<sup>32</sup>

Improving streets in Seoul, in particular, was seen as imperative for producing the commercial efficiency and modern appearance expected of the colonial capital. “Most of the streets, even in the city of Keijo [*sic*], the capital,” the Government-General lamented in 1912, “developed very irregularly, so that great inconvenience has hitherto been felt in street communications and sanitation.”<sup>33</sup> A 1935 Civil Engineering report went further: “Because of the outdated transportation system, the urban streets within Keijo, as seen in the back streets of the northern parts of the present-day city, are meandering and narrow, as if they were mazes.”<sup>34</sup> Engineer Iwamiya Noboru, meanwhile, tied street improvements to urban aesthetics, speaking in familiar terms, “because the streets in traditional Korean cities for the most part lacked any order and were so crooked, and their widths so narrow, they were so inconvenient that we could simply not leave them in that condition for the sake of [Seoul’s] transportation, hygiene, security, and appearance.”<sup>35</sup> Clarifying that “Keijo [*sic*], the capital, was no exception” to the “miserable state in which most Korean towns were before the Japanese authorities took in hand the improvement or reconstruction of their streets,” the Government-General explained that street projects in Seoul were intended to “set an example to other towns.”<sup>36</sup>

Such rhetoric necessarily overlooked modernization efforts undertaken prior to the arrival of Japanese colonizers. The city had seen a series of projects that effected a remarkable change in its appearance long before the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. The famous world traveler Isabella Bird, for example, extolled the “extraordinary metamorphosis” she saw in the face of the city between her first trip to the city in 1894 and her return in 1896.<sup>37</sup> “Seoul in many parts, specially in the direction of the south and west gates,” Bird exclaimed, “was literally unrecognizable.” Gone were the narrow alleyways and overflowing sewage ditches she had seen on her first visit. In their place were new streets “widened to 55 feet, with deep stone-lined channels on both sides, bridged by stone slabs.” “Seoul,” Bird concluded, “from having been the foulest is now on its way to being the cleanest city in the Far East!” She went on to attribute these improvements to the work of two people, British advisor to the Minister of Finance, John McLeavy Brown, and the governor of Seoul, Yi Ch’ae-yŏn. Yi had visited Washington D.C. with the first Korean ambassador to the United States, Pak Chŏngyang, and this experience influenced his ideas for urban improvement.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Chōsen Sōtokufu, ed., *Chōsen Sōtokufu Shisei Nenpō* 1922, 305.

<sup>32</sup> Government-General of Chosen, ed., *Annual Report 1922-1923*, 142-143; and Government-General of Chosen, ed., *Annual Report 1924-1926*, 140.

<sup>33</sup> Government-General of Chosen, *Annual Report on Administration of Chosen, 1911-1912*, 120.

<sup>34</sup> Keijō-fu, ed., *Keijō-fu Doboku Jigyō Gaiyō* (1935), 5 back.

<sup>35</sup> Iwamiya Noboru, “Dorō Keikaku ni Tsuite,” in *Keijō Toshi Keikaku Kenkyūkai*, ed., *Chōsen Toshi Mondai Kaigiroku* (Keijō: Keijō Toshi Keikaku Kenkyūkai, 1936; Seoul: Kyōngin Munhwasa, 1990), 54. Page numbers refer to the 1990 edition.

<sup>36</sup> Government-General of Chosen, ed., *Annual Report 1923-1924*, 135.

<sup>37</sup> First arriving in the city in 1894, Bird did not mince words describing the squalid conditions. “I thought it the foulest city on earth till I saw Peking,” she lambasted, “and its smells the most odious, till I encountered those of Shao-shing.” Adding, “For a great city and a capital its meanness is indescribable,” Bird wrote that Seoul was full of “labyrinthine alleys, many of them not wide enough for two loaded bulls to pass...and further narrowed by a series of vile holes of green, slimy ditches.” Returning two years later in October 1896, she could barely believe her eyes. Isabella Bird, *Korea and Her Neighbors* ([1897] London: KPI Limited, 1985), 40, 435-436. See Yi Tae-jin, *The Dynamics of Confucianism and Modernization in Korean History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 246-247, and Sohn Jung-mok, “Colonial City Planning and Its Legacy,” 434-435 for more discussion of Bird’s recollections.

<sup>38</sup> Writing in 1990, urban planning historian Kim Kwang’u attributed these improvements to the efforts of the Independence Club led by Sō Chae’pil (*aka* Philip Jaisohn, publisher of *The*

Street improvements in Seoul specifically were part of an attempt by the Korean government to re-brand “the hermit kingdom” as a modern empire. In addition to contracting foreign investors to construct railways across the peninsula, the Great Han Empire (*Taehan Cheguk*) carried out a number of urban improvements in the capital. As Todd Henry has described it, the government cleared stalls impeding the city’s main thoroughfares, installed new roads, and constructed several monuments in an attempt to “re-create the royal city of Hanyang into an ‘imperial capital’.”<sup>39</sup> Yi T’ae-jin, likewise, has asserted that the street improvements observed by Bird in the mid 1890s were not solely the work of the Independence Club, but were instead undertaken at the behest of King Kojong as part of a larger attempt to “make Seoul into a suitable imperial capital” for a newly independent Korea starting in mid-1896.<sup>40</sup> As Yi argues, this included the reconstruction of Seoul into an imperial capital “befitting the new monarchical system.”<sup>41</sup> According to Yi, King Kojong ordered the relocation of the court from Kyōngbok Palace to the Kyōng’un Palace in early September 1896, and then initiated a massive urban redevelopment program centered on the new palace. As Yi notes, this explains the timing of the Interior Ministry Order No. 9 issued later that month.<sup>42</sup> Piecing together the admittedly limited historical record, Yi catalogues the improvements included in the plan as: 1) the laying or repair of roads and sewers, in addition to the clearing of new roads radiating from the Kyōng’un Palace; 2) the construction of new buildings, including the Kyōng’un Palace and Independence Gate; 3) the opening of new parks, such as Independence Park and Pagoda Park; 4) the introduction of electricity, waterworks, streetcars, and railways; and 5) the designation of an industrial district in Yongsan and a city market near Namdaemun.<sup>43</sup> Yi concludes that these projects “visibly changed the city’s landscape,” but during the colonial period, “The Japanese systematically obliterated the physical landmarks of the urban development that had been implemented by the emperor beginning in 1896, and the project itself was eventually forgotten.”<sup>44</sup> Some scholars, such as planning historian Sohn Jung-mok, on the other hand, have been skeptical of these arguments, pointing out “although highly feasible, no concrete proof has been found to prove what Kim and Lee [Yi] suggested.”<sup>45</sup> There is also evidence indicating street projects by the Korean government may have started as early as the 1894 Kabo reforms.<sup>46</sup> In any event, Korean attempts to rebrand the city as an imperial capital continued beyond the turn of the century as two Americans were hired to install streetcars, electricity and telephone lines, street lamps, and water pipes in the city starting in 1898.<sup>47</sup> Although Japanese colonizers downplayed the success of these reforms, they clearly also benefited from them when enacting their own projects following colonization in 1910.

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*Independent* newspaper), of which Yi was a founding member. Kim points to Interior Ministry Order No. 9, issued September 28, 1896, as evidence that the changes observed by Bird were part of larger, more systematic modernization efforts initiated by Yi and Pak. According to Kim, the Order called for the widening of streets in the capital to their original widths by tearing down houses impeding the roadways, the creation of a new road network of radial roads centering on the main gate of Kyōng’un Palace, and construction of Western buildings along main streets (Yi, *The Dynamics of Confucianism and Modernization*, 247, 270-271).

<sup>39</sup> Todd Henry, “Respatializing Chosŏn’s Royal Capital: The Politics of Japanese Urban Reforms in Early Colonial Seoul, 1905-1919” in *Sitings: Critical Approaches to Korean Geography*, Timothy Tangherlini and Sallie Yea, ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), 20.

<sup>40</sup> Yi, *The Dynamics of Confucianism and Modernization*, 269-273.

<sup>41</sup> Yi, *The Dynamics of Confucianism and Modernization*, 250.

<sup>42</sup> Yi, *The Dynamics of Confucianism and Modernization*, 249-250.

<sup>43</sup> Yi, *The Dynamics of Confucianism and Modernization*, 275-276.

<sup>44</sup> Yi, *The Dynamics of Confucianism and Modernization*, 290-291.

<sup>45</sup> Sohn, “Colonial City Planning and Its Legacy,” 437.

<sup>46</sup> See: JACAR, Doc.#B12083364500, “6. *Deiken Chihō Dōro Shūri no gi Zai Keijō Uchida ryōji yori hōkoku no ken, Meiji nijūjūnen ni-gatsu.*” For Komura’s report, see: JACAR, Doc.#B12083364600, “7. *Keijō Nandaimon dōri hanro kaoku torikowasu kata chakuraku no tenmatsu guhō no ken, Meiji sanjūnen.*”

<sup>47</sup> Yi Tae-jin, “Seoul at the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Urban Development Based on Western Models,” *Korea Journal* 39:3 (Autumn, 1999): 111.

Claiming colonial difference by emphasizing the poor conditions of the native city and exaggerating the lack of planning and urban development in Taipei and Seoul was only the first step. The actual street improvement work of breaking ground, moving earth, laying pipe, and rolling pavement was the next component of constructing colonial difference. Japanese efforts to construct spaces of difference in Seoul, meanwhile, started even before the beginning of formal colonial rule in 1910. As early as 1891, then-consulate official Sugimura Fukashi praised the “remarkable progress” seen in the Japanese areas of the southern part of the city, writing that the area around the consulate was starting to “take on the appearance of a Japanese village.”<sup>48</sup> This was the product of Japanese emigrants, who had begun to reside in the city in large numbers from the early 1880s. At first, Japanese residents were confined to an area granted by the Korean government as the Japanese Settlement (*kyoryūchi*) on a hill at the foot of Mt. Namsan to the south. As the Japanese settlers quickly realized, this was not prime real estate. The area was known as “‘muddy town’ (*deiken* or *chinkōkai*)”<sup>49</sup>, Jun Uchida notes, and was “an area of relative neglect that had been inhabited by impoverished *yangban* elites and Chinese merchants in the Chosŏn period.”<sup>50</sup> Sohn likewise relates the origin of the name for the area, quoting 18<sup>th</sup> century scholar Hong Ryang-ho: “It is a narrow low land, and when it rains the water does not drain well and the roads get muddy causing trouble for passers-by. That was why the village there is called Jingogae [*Chinkokae*, or JPN: *chinkōkai*] meaning ‘a muddy hill.’”<sup>51</sup> Japanese residents understandably became frustrated with the area because of its muddy conditions, its isolated location, and the fact that they were not allowed to open stores in other parts of Seoul. As the Japanese consul in Seoul, Sugimura Fukashi, complained to Tokyo in 1891, the settlement was “stuck into a corner of Seoul,” which was bad for business. Chinese merchants, he noted by contrast, were free to open stores wherever they wanted in the city.<sup>52</sup> Legation official Uchida Sadatsuchi echoed these frustrations in 1896, complaining, “Chinkokae is a backwoods (*hekichi*) part of Seoul, located at the foot of Mt. Namsan. Its roads are so narrow and steep that it is exceedingly difficult for people or animals to pass, not to mention carts or wagons.”<sup>53</sup>

Unhappy with the poor conditions of the settlement, the Japanese consulate and residents in Seoul set about converting this muddy hill into a modern Japanese town by improving streets and removing Korean dwellings in the process. As Uchida Sadatsuchi described, this was done with the cooperation of the Korean government. To widen the street running through the area, the Korean government and Japanese legation agreed that Korean-owned temporary structures would be torn down and Japanese houses would be withdrawn to the new street line when remodeled. According to the deal, Uchida explained, the Korean government funded the removal of Korean structures: “In the end, we achieved our goal of widening the street without any Japanese spending even one dollar.”<sup>54</sup> Once the street widening was completed in the Japanese settlement area by May or June of 1895, the Japanese legation funded the digging of stone gutters on both sides of the street, leveling of the road surface, and the application of new gravel paving. The Japanese Settlement Assembly (*Kyoryūchi minkai*) – later called the Seoul Resident’s Association (*Keijō Kyorūchimindan*) – then determined plans for future road improvements and established a Road Improvement Committee to oversee their

<sup>48</sup> JACAR, “*Keijō Kyoryūchi Honpōnin Shoyū no Tochi narabini Kyoryūjin no tame Shōrai toru beki no Hōshin ni tsuki zai Keijō Ryōji gushin no ken*,” Doc.# B12083364100.

<sup>49</sup> “*Deiken*” is the Japanese pronunciation of the two Korean Hanja characters for the name of the hill. In Korean, the characters can be pronounced either “*Yihyōn*” or “*Nihyōn*,” although “*Chinkokae* (*Jingogae*)” appears to be the common local reading. The *Keijō-fu Shi*, published by the colonial government in 1937, gives the reading of these characters in Hangul as “*Chinkokae*,” (*Keijō-fu Shi*, 634).

<sup>50</sup> Uchida, *Brokers of Empire*, 71.

<sup>51</sup> Sohn, “Colonial City Planning and Its Legacy,” 437.

<sup>52</sup> Sugimura’s memo to Sugimura, along with a map of Japanese holdings in settlement, can be found in JACAR, “*Keijō Kyoryūchi Honpōnin Shoyū no Tochi narabini Kyoryūjin no tame Shōrai toru beki no Hōshin ni tsuki zai Keijō Ryōji gushin no ken*,” Doc.# B12083364100.

<sup>53</sup> JACAR, “*Deiken Chihō Dōro Shūri no Gi zai Keijō Uchida ryōji yori Hōkoku no ken Meiji Nijūkyū-nen ni-gatsu*,” Doc.#B12083364500.

<sup>54</sup> JACAR, “*Deiken Chihō Dōro Shūri no Gi zai Keijō Uchida ryōji yori Hōkoku no ken Meiji Nijūkyū-nen ni-gatsu*,” Doc.#B12083364500.

completion. To make the area more attractive to residents and shoppers alike, the association funded a garbage collection program and the installation of street lamps.<sup>55</sup> Several years later in 1901, the Assembly funded more street repairs in the settlement, at which point, according to a history of the Association, “the Settlement for the first time began to look like a Japanese village (*machi*).”<sup>56</sup> Uchida Jun points out that this had been the objective of the president of the organization, Nakai Kitarō, who even envisioned building two-storied brick houses lining the street, “just as the Meiji state had done along the streets of the Ginza.”<sup>57</sup>

Following the annexation of Korea in 1910, Japanese colonizers expanded their gaze from the Japanese settlement to the entire city of Seoul. Over the years 1911-1937, the Government-General and Keijō Municipal Government carried out a series of concurrent programs to modernize the transportation network of the whole city. The most well known of these were the Keijō Urban Improvement (*Keijō Shiku Kaishū*) projects planned by the Civil Engineering Council and implemented by the Government-General over 2 phases between 1912-1929. Notably, these street improvement plans were made at a time when the public works bureau was directed by former Taipei Urban Planning Committee member Mochiji Rokusaburō. As planners had done in Taipei, Mochiji used the rhetoric of culture and civilization to justify street improvements in Seoul. As Todd Henry explains, Mochiji “plac[ed] the city within the global contexts of modern imperialism and urban planning...In addition to being a transportation hub, the new colonial capital also served as a gauge for what Mochiji called the ‘country’s level of civilization’ and its ‘barometer of culture’.”<sup>58</sup> Not surprisingly, the optimistic plans for street improvements in Seoul exhibited several stylistic flourishes also seen in Taipei. Phase 1 of the Keijō Urban Improvement (See Figure 8), announced in November 1912, called for an opulent baroque-style grid network of streets traversing the entire city center, featuring radial boulevards focused on Hwangt’ohyōn Plaza and “Kōganechō Plaza” located in the center of the southern Japanese residential area.<sup>59</sup> Phase 2, which began in 1919, updated the total number of routes to be improved to 47 (See Figure 9).<sup>60</sup> As with Phase 1, this second plan also laid out an elaborate grid network of streets cast over the city center. Although the monumental rotary plazas from the first plan were absent from this Phase 2 plan, new radial boulevards accentuated the planned location of the future Government-General Headquarters Building directly in front of the historical Kyōngbok Palace. The grid of broad boulevards, plazas, and rotaries envisioned in these plans vividly illustrate what Baek Yung Kim has called the Japanese “panopticonization” of Seoul. By creating wide urban plazas, Kim argues, colonial urban planners increased the legibility of the urban area, making it more visible to the imperial gaze. To evade this surveillance, interestingly, Korean colonial subjects avoided these large plazas and instead traveled along older alleyways, especially in the northern, more traditional parts of the city.<sup>61</sup>

Yet Japanese manipulations of the colonial built environment in Seoul did not stop with major thoroughfares or plazas. Rather, the Keijō city government supplemented Government-General

<sup>55</sup> JACAR, “*Deiken Chihō Dōro Shūri no Gi zai Keijō Uchida ryōji yori Hōkoku no ken Meiji Nijūkyū-nen ni-gatsu*,” Doc.#B12083364500

<sup>56</sup> Keijō Kyoryūmin-dan Yakusho, ed., *Keijō Hattatsu-shi* (Keijō: Keijō Kyoryūmin-dan Yakusho, 1912; Tokyo: Ryūkei Shohsa, 2001), 75-76, 106. Citations refer to 2001 edition.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Uchida Jun, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 71.

<sup>58</sup> Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 32.

<sup>59</sup> Initially, 29 routes were announced. See: Government-General Notice (*Kokuji*) #78 in *Kanpō* #91 (November 18, 1912), 342. Two more routes were later added by *Kokuji* #24 in *Kanpō* #1335 (February 9, 1917), 198. Accessed through the National Diet Library Digital Archive.

<sup>60</sup> Only 46 routes were initially listed in 1919. See: *Kokuji* #173 in *Kanpō* #2072 (July 2, 1919), 3. Revisions in 1922, 1925, and 1928 raised the final number of routes to 47. See: *Kokuji* #124 in *Kanpō* #3047 (October 28, 1922), 716; *Kokuji* #134 in *Kanpō* #3875 (July 23, 1925), 58; and *Kokuji* #264 in *Kanpō* #483 (August 6, 1928), 139. All accessed through the National Diet Library Digital Archive.

<sup>61</sup> Baek Yung Kim, “Shokuminchi toshi Keijō no Hiroba to Roji,” in *Shokuminchi Chōsen to Teikoku Nihon: Minzoku, Toshi, Bunka*, Chōng-wan Sō and Masuo Shin’ichirō, ed. (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2010): 21-31.

projects by extending street repairs into backstreet areas with three phases of its own projects. First, the Keijō government took over execution of the Government-General's projects after 1929. With subsidies from the National Treasury, the city completed just over 5 miles of 10 uncompleted routes from the Government-General programs between 1930 and 1937.<sup>62</sup> Before this, the city had again used national subsidies to improve and pave 3.5 miles of 11 separate trunk roads, including the major east-west thoroughfares of Chongno Road, Kōganechō Road, and Meijimachi Road between 1924 and 1930.<sup>63</sup> Finally, spanning both of these projects, the Keijō government used city funds to carry out sectional improvements and paving of nearly 20 miles of 96 older backstreets located largely in the southern half of the city from 1917 to 1937.<sup>64</sup> As one civil engineering report explained, "because these construction projects carry out sectional improvements in the especially unregulated backstreets of the old urban area, the results are remarkable."<sup>65</sup> By accomplishing this seemingly innocuous paving of Seoul's backstreets, Japanese colonizers attempted to frame colonial urban space in order to demonstrate Japanese modernity. It could even be said that these paving projects in the backstreets of Seoul formed the "capillaries" circulating the mechanisms of Japanese imperial power further into the illegible backstreets and throughout the urban body of colonial Seoul.<sup>66</sup>

With all of these projects, Japanese colonial planners in the Government-General and Keijō city government worked in concert to complete the widening and improvement of a total of 141 streets in the city, for a total length of just over 42 miles, of which 128 acres was paved, lined by 21 acres of paved sidewalks, and shaded by over 6,000 trees.<sup>67</sup> Upon completion, the Government-General frequently boasted that these streets improvements "[brought] about an extraordinary change in both the appearance and traffic efficiency of the city," and "[added] one more step in the beautifying of the city and the convenience of traffic."<sup>68</sup> The partial paving of the trunk streets in "tar macadam" and asphalt, especially, was said to "[add] to the modern aspect of the city."<sup>69</sup> By improving "the modern aspect of the city" in the southern, Japanese half of the city especially, Japanese colonial planners attempted to create a Japanese enclave of urban modernity within the vernacular city. At one level, this was done to make Japanese expatriate settlers feel more at home by providing amenities to which they had grown accustomed in Japan. At a deeper level, however, the production of an organized, hygienic, and visibly "modern" Japanese space in the city was intended to assert Japanese cultural hegemony to the colonial population. Japanese planners programmed these spaces to announce not just that Japan had the power to modernize the built environment, but that this represented a more advanced culture.

Amidst street improvements, Japanese colonizers carefully preserved examples of vernacular "primitive" architecture in order to visibly display colonial difference in the built form of the city. Architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright has argued that such dramatic embrace of vernacular built form in the colonial setting was often an attempt to justify colonial rule and limit popular resistance by "temper[ing] the disruptions" of modernity on colonial societies.<sup>70</sup> Colonizers "sought specifically to mitigate the disruptions caused by modernist urban reforms," Wright writes elsewhere, "by actively

<sup>62</sup> These projects are designated the Keijō Administered Urban Improvements (*Keijō-fu Shikō Shiku Kaishū*). See: Keijō-fu, *Keijō-fu Doboku Jigyō Gaiyō* (1938), 13, 19-20.

<sup>63</sup> These projects are called "Trunk Road Improvement Projects" (*Kansen Dōro Kaishū Kōji*). See: Chōsen Sōtokufu, ed., *Chōsen Doboku Jigyōshi*, 1045; Keijō-fu, ed., *Keijō-fu Doboku Jigyō Gaiyō* (1935), 12 front-13 front; Keijō-fu, ed., *Keijō-fu Doboku Jigyō Gaiyō* (1938), 13, 20-21.

<sup>64</sup> The projects are referred to as "*Keijō-fu shikō kyokubu kaishū oyobi romen kairyō kōji*." Keijō-fu, ed., *Keijō-fu Doboku Jigyō Gaiyō* (1938), 23-28.

<sup>65</sup> Keijō-fu, ed., *Keijō-fu Doboku Jigyō Gaiyō* (1935), 13 back.

<sup>66</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 39 for the "capillary form" of the mechanisms of power.

<sup>67</sup> Keijō-fu, ed., *Keijō-fu Doboku Jigyō Gaiyō* (1938), 14; Keijō-fu, ed., *Keijō-fu Doboku Jigyō Gaiyō* (1935), 17 back-19 front, 20 back-21 back.

<sup>68</sup> Government-General of Chosen, ed., *Annual Report 1923-1924*, 135; and Government-General of Chosen, ed., *Annual Report 1929-1930*, 118.

<sup>69</sup> Government-General of Chosen, ed., *Annual Report 1924-1926*, 140.

<sup>70</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 9-10.

engaging traditional architectural forms and attuning themselves to the ways in which various cultural groups typically responded to the city.”<sup>71</sup> It was such adaptation to local form that made Morocco, in the words of one Parisian observer, “a laboratory of Western life and a conservatory of oriental life.”<sup>72</sup> Writing about Seoul, Chon Uyong has similarly noted that such purposeful retention of “shabby” traditional structures juxtaposed to nearby modern buildings served as a reminder of the transition of power while also encouraging the association of the new buildings with the old structures of power.<sup>73</sup>

In Seoul, Japanese urban planners carefully set aside and preserved the Namdaemun. Starting in 1907, Japanese engineers attached to the Korean government had used Korean government funds to tear down the city walls on either side of the gate, leaving the gate itself standing alone at the center of a newly constructed rotary. Because the existing route through the gate itself was only 3 *ken* (~18ft.) wide and “the inconvenience and danger for transportation could not possibly be concealed any longer,” new 8 *ken* (~48ft.) roads were constructed on both sides. The historical gate, meanwhile, was retained in order to “preserve the beauty of the city” (*shigai no bikan wo tamotashime*).<sup>74</sup> Not only was the gate repurposed as an isolated ceremonial archway into the city, but, juxtaposed to the adjacent Namdaemun railway station, the historical city gate also became a stark sign of native primitiveness. Once the Western-style Keijō Station replaced Namdaemun Station in 1925, moreover, the Namdaemun became a site of Japanese cultural hegemony. Solidifying this link between the old gate and the neighboring train station, the existing road was widened into a 19 *ken* (~108ft.)-wide thoroughfare starting in 1910.<sup>75</sup> This exhibition of the Namdaemun was part of a larger Japanese design strategy in Seoul. As Todd Henry has argued, the difference between “dynamic” and “modern” Japanese southern parts of the city and the “‘quaint’ and ‘decrepit’ anachronisms of the northern part of the city” was a common theme in Japanese travel-guides of Seoul. “This discursive strategy worked to strip these areas of their precolonial significance as centers of kingly rule,” Henry notes about the former palace complexes in Seoul, “and their potential in the colonial present as rallying points of Korean nationalism.” “Instead, they were refashioned as archaic counterparts to the modern present and future of the city, converted into entertainment and tourist sites to be visited by Japanese and foreign travelers.”<sup>76</sup> The importance placed on the Namdaemun in this regard is revealed in the fact that its image graced the cover of the 1913 *New Guide to Seoul (Shinsen Keijō Annnai)*. The Namdaemun was also frequently featured as the first stop on Seoul tourist itineraries, such as in the 1935 *Guide of Seoul Sightseeing (Keijō Meishō Yūran Annai)* or the 1940 *Seoul Sightseeing Guidebook (Keijō Kankō Shiori)*, because of its proximity to Keijō Station.<sup>77</sup>

Japanese colonizers sought an even wider audience for the display of colonial difference in built form by advertising urban improvement efforts worldwide with progress reports complete with photos staged to dramatically illustrate the success of their projects. Such publications were an attempt to solicit popular acceptance of Japan’s claims to its “mission civilisatrice” in the colonies – especially from their Western imperialist counterparts. The *Keijō Urban Improvement Projects: 20 Years of Memories (Keijō Shikukaisei Jigyō: Kaiko Nijūnen)* published by the Government-General Civil Engineering Office in Seoul in 1930 is remarkable in this regard as a 100-page portfolio of dramatically staged before-and-after photos aggrandizing the modern transformation accomplished by

<sup>71</sup> Wright, “Tradition in the Service of Modernity,” 299.

<sup>72</sup> Wright, *The Politics of Design*, 85.

<sup>73</sup> Chon Uyong, “Shokuminchi toshi ime-ji to Bunka Genshō – 1920 nendai to Keijō,” in *Nikkan Rekishi Kyōdō Kenkyū Hōkokusho 3, jō-maki, Nikkan Rekishi Kyōdō Kenkyū Iinkai*, ed. (Tokyo: *Nikkan Rekishi Kyōdō Kenkyū Iinkai*, 2005): 220.

<sup>74</sup> Chōsen Sōtokufu, ed., *Chōsen Doboku Jigyōshi*, 1023-1024.

<sup>75</sup> Construction on this road was started in 1907, the city walls were torn down in 1909, and a sidewalk of 2.75 *ken* laid on one side in 1910. This route was repaved in 1910-1911 and a sidewalk installed on both sides over the next year (Keijō-fu, ed., *Keijō-fu Doboku Jigyō Gaiyō* (1935), 9 front; Chōsen Sōtokufu, ed., *Chōsen Doboku Jigyōshi*, 1023-1024, 1041-1042; Government-General of Chosen, ed., *Annual Report on Administration of Chosen 1921-1922*, 162-163).

<sup>76</sup> Henry, “Sanitizing Empire,” 664.

<sup>77</sup> Keijō Takushii Yūran Basu Kakari, *Keijō Meishō Yūran Annai* (Seoul: Keijō Takushii Yūran Basu Kakari, 1935); Keijō Kankō Kyōkai, *Keijō Kankō Shiori* (Seoul: Keijō Kankō Kyōkai, 1940). Accessed through the Kindai Digital Library.

Japanese urban improvement programs in Seoul. As we have already seen, the *Annual Reports* ostentatiously celebrated the success of Japanese-led reforms on the Peninsula, complete with illustrations, charts, and graphs. Without fail, these reports proudly displayed the same before-and-after photos of the urban transformation of Seoul.

### **Conclusion: Public Works and Japanese Colonialism**

In colonies and other territories under Japanese rule, Japanese engineers carried out public works projects designed to render the colonial landscape legible, governable, and profitable. This applied to both the natural and the built environments. These projects required immense manipulation of the environment. Massive amounts of earth had to be dynamited, cleared, and removed to lay railways and rural roads; enormous amounts of stone and gravel had to be quarried for rail bed ballast and street surface paving; vast stores of timber, granite, marble, and brick had to be harvested for the construction of monumental Western-style structures. Through these projects, Japanese colonizers hoped not only to assert cultivators' rights to colonial territory but also to project Japanese power and modernity. As a result, Japanese colonial rule was therefore built as much on domination of the colonial environment as it was on harsh control of the colonized population.

In Seoul, Japanese colonizers attempted to rule through modern urban space. This meant constructing "modern" Japanese cityscapes juxtaposed to "primitive" native urban areas, issuing building regulations to and street use codes to enforce "civilized" built forms and public behavior while criminalizing those considered "primitive" in Japanese eyes, and finally deploying urban design to produce spaces charged with imperial power. Why did Japanese colonizers exert so much effort and spend so much money on colonial public works? In the minds of Japanese colonial engineers, such projects had material and conceptual goals. From a material perspective, public works were meant to benefit Japanese colonialism in three ways. First, especially in the colonial countryside, improvements to roads, railways, ports, and rivers, along with cadastral surveys, were designed to make colonialism profitable by facilitating the exploitation of the colonial landscape to the benefit of the metropole as agricultural, industrial, and commercial goods were shipped back to Japan. Secondly, transportation improvements had the added logistical advantage of expediting troop movements, both to pacify local insurrection and to dispatch armies in time of war. Troops were necessary in both colonies as Japanese garrisons were frequently called on to suppress "Righteous Army" (*Ŭibyŏng*) guerillas in the early years of colonial rule. Thirdly, infrastructure and housing improvements in colonial cities were carried out first and foremost to make Japanese colonial officials and expat residents feel at home by re-creating "Japan Towns" within the city, such as Seoul's "Meijimachi." As a result, efforts to produce modern streetscapes – the paving of streets, the digging of gutters, the laying of water and sewer systems, the planting of trees, the installation of street lamps and sidewalks, the construction of fireproof housing and Western-style buildings – were primarily localized to areas of Japanese residence, forcing native property owners out in the process.

While immediate material benefits were an important objective of colonial public works, Japanese colonizers executed extensive programs for a much more significant conceptual goal: legitimating Japanese colonialism. Aside from the aforementioned commercial, logistical, and corporeal advantages, public works were expected to further Japanese colonial hegemony in three related ways. First, as with development of the natural environment, Japanese colonizers saw improvement of the built environment as a means of validating Japanese claims to territorial ownership and affirming Japan's right to rule. By cultivating land that earlier governors had failed to exploit, pacifying territory that the previous regime had been unable to rule, and sanitizing and ordering cities their predecessors had left unorganized, Japanese rulers thought they could build colonial authenticity. It was for this reason that Japanese colonizers sought to construct tangible "modernity" in the colonies by introducing the built forms and public behaviors that characterized "civilized" life in Japan. Secondly, the construction of "modernity" in Korea contributed to Japanese colonial rule by denoting the passing of the old regime and marking the arrival of the new. In the eyes of Japanese colonial engineers, there was no better way to demonstrate this rupture than by constructing spaces of colonial difference. This was not limited to the production of modern Japanese cityscapes by improving streets and erecting Western-style buildings, but also included the preservation of vernacular structures as historical artifacts exhibited to reify the difference between the "modern" Japanese colonizers and the "primitive" native colonized population. At the same time,

building regulations and street use codes were issued to reinforce Japanese spaces while also enforcing Japanese expectations of “civilized” public behavior throughout the entire city. Finally, planners expected public works projects to legitimate colonialism by asserting Japanese cultural hegemony. Constructing modernity, reifying colonial difference – both were essentially means to this end. This was done with two targets in mind. On one hand, attempts to improve urban conditions and demarcate the arrival of the new regime were intended to impress the colonial population with the modernity, culture, and power of the Japanese empire, compel subservience, and encourage assimilation. On the other hand, improvements were carried out to garner the recognition and acceptance of Japanese colonialism in the eyes of the international audience. It was for this reason that Japanese colonizers eagerly publicized their successes around the world with voluminous reports, statistics, and staged photographs.

Public works, then, were a prime mechanism of Japanese colonial governmentality. As Japanese imperialism spread to Taiwan and Korea, it was the Japanese civil engineers and architects who followed the flag overseas that made Japanese colonialism work. It was these operatives of empire – armed with gravel, brick, and mortar – who laid the foundation of Japanese imperialism and concretized Japanese colonial power. While the construction of cultural hegemony in built form was just one mechanism of Japanese colonial rule, it was a strategy that was common to cities around the Japanese empire, including Taipei and Seoul. Despite extremely divergent trajectories and legacies, Japanese colonialism in both Taiwan and Korea nevertheless shared one common premise: the manipulation of the natural and built environments through a colonial governmentality built on public works.