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KAMUSAL ALANDA JAPON YÖNETİMİNİN SÖMÜRGE POLİTİKALARI: YOOKCHO CADDESİ, SEUL

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ÖZ

Yookcho Caddesi, Seul'un tam merkezinde, Joseon hanedanının ana kuzey-güney eksenini oluşturulduğundan beri Seul'un kentleşme tarihine tanıklık etmiştir. Yaklaşık 600 yıldır, farklı güç ilişkileri ve çıkar çatışmaları katmanlarının biriktiği bir sahne olmuştur. Yookcho Caddesi'nin kentleşme tarihinde en önemli dönüm noktası, 1910'dan 1945'e kadar Japonların egemenliğinde bir sömürgeleştirme ve modern kentleşme sürecini deneyimlemesi olmuştur. Japon hükümetinin sosyo-mekansal düzenlemeleri ile Yookcho Caddesi, Japon İmparatorluğunun önemli siyasi mesajının iletildiği modern bir bulvara dönüşürken ve sömürge yönetiminin gücünü simgeleyen bir sahne haline almıştır. Bu makale, Yookcho Caddesinin imparatorluğun sergi alanı olarak hizmet veren modern bir bulvara dönüştürülmesine odaklanarak Japon sömürge yönetiminin sosyo-mekansal politikalarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yookcho Caddesi, Seul, Joseon hanedanı, Japon Somurge Yonetimi, asimilasyon

Jel Kodları: H70, P10, P11

COLONIAL POLITICS ON PUBLIC SPACE UNDER JAPANESE RULE: YOOKCHO STREET OF SEOUL

ABSTRACT

Yookcho Street² located at the very heart of Seoul, has been witnessed the urbanisation history of Seoul since it was formed as the main north-south axis of the Joseon³ dynasty. For almost 600 years, it has been a significant stage where multiple strata of power relations, conflict of interests are gathered. The most pivotal turning point of Yookcho Street was to experience a process of colonisation and modern urbanisation under the rule of Japanese from 1910 until 1945. Through Japanese government socio-spatial arrangements Yookcho Street turned into a modern boulevard and became a stage symbolising the colonial power by conveying the important political message of the Japanese Empire. This paper aims to examine the socio-spatial policies of Japanese colonial rule through focusing on the transformation of the Street into a modern boulevard serving as an imperial showcase.

Keywords: Yookcho Street, Seoul, the Joseon dynasty, Japanese colonial rule, assimilation

Jel Codes: H70, P10, P11

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² It is also called as Suzaku Tairo (in Japanese), Yukjo-gori (육조거리), Eukjogeory, Yukjo Street, Jujak Daero, Chujak Taero. Yookcho (육조) means six ministries/dynasties of Joseon.

³ It is also referred as Choson, Chosen (조선)

1. INTRODUCTION

Seoul as a primary global city with a history over six centuries, has always been a very significant city in the urbanisation history of the Korean peninsula. The very first important milestone of Seoul, by the name of Hanyang by then, was the year 1394 when it became the capital city of Joseon dynasty (Kim, 2009). While Seoul was announced as the capital city and planned the very first time in the Joseon dynasty period, Yookcho Street was designed as the main north-south axis and the first street of the dynasty; since then, it has maintained its significance. In the very beginning when the Joseon dynasty had commenced, it was the symbol of the new dynasty and its modernisation attempts; after then under the Japanese colonial government, it turned into a showcase for Japanese imperialism and colonial modernity. This axis has been the main structure of the city under different sovereigns and rules; and therefore, it has always been the focus of conflict of interests.

The physical and symbolic landscape of Yookcho Street and Seoul as well, have changed with historical events, especially with the Japanese colonisation. While Seoul transformed from a traditional city into a colonial modern city; Yookcho Street evolved into a modern boulevard with the symbolic transformation. According to Lee there are significant turning points in the physical and symbolic transformation of Seoul and Japanese rule over 35 years, within which the transformation of Yookcho Street is the most pivotal of them especially through the implementations and policies of Keijo Urban Improvement Plan (1912&1919) (Lee, 2019). One of the most significant achievements of those plans was to create modern boulevards, where modern lifestyle and colonial ideals were introduced to citizens.

Besides reconstructing the built environment, those policies and implementations of urban improvement plans proposed, were designed to accomplish public hygiene, ensuring architectural standards, promoting the quality of physical landscape. In this respect, urban planning played quite a critical role in social control in colonial Korea. Moreover, spatial arrangements used as a significant tool for achieving economic concerns. More precisely, through spatial assimilation while the colonial country becomes an integral part of the colonised country and the differences between the colony and the metropolis are wiped out (Kim, 2016); economic benefits from the colonised country were transferred to mainland.

Under Japanese colonial rule through assimilation policy, colonial Seoul had experienced a new urban regime of which spatial policies were changed according to the power and desire of Japanese colonial rule. One of the most significant motives of colonial rule was to embody its colonial visions through physical and visual representation of space in urban areas (Henry, 2014). In this era, the spatial pattern of Korean cities, which reflected the Korean history; culture and collective memory, was systematically destroyed. When Seoul was colonised and decided to be the centre of colonial rule in 1910, Japanese inherited a socio-spatial organisation from Joseon dynasty and Daehan Empire. This inheritance had designed to represent the power of Koreans, yet the Japanese colonial government focused on the eradication of it. The very first action of Japanese colonial rule was to change the name of symbolic places and the built environment of cities. Yookcho Street, as a significant example of a modern boulevard in those times, renamed Kokamon Dori⁴ in the colonial era. Moreover, the name of the capital city changed to Gyeongseong (in Korean) /Keijo (in Japanese); and words such as Hanyang or Hwangseong reminder of the Joseon dynasty and Daehan Empire, were prohibited.

As one of the most significant heritances, the main north-south axis and the first street, Yookcho Street became the main target of colonial rule and the subject of new socio-spatial organisation. Yookcho Street was formed as the largest street of the Joseon dynasty in front of Gwanghwamun⁵, the main gate of Kyongbok Palace⁶. Along the street, major government buildings, altars, parks placed. After colonisation, first Gwanghwamun removed, several buildings of Kyongbok Palace complex destructed and Government General Building (GGB) was built on the place where the axis from the main throne connected to Yookcho Street. Yookcho Street began pointing the entrance of this building. Following, Yookcho Street connected another significant modern boulevard Taihei. Because of Japanese settlers' oppressions, Seoul was planned to develop southern part. In order to highlight this development, the

⁴ Dori or doori (Kanji - 通り (と お ・ り) means avenue or boulevard in Japanese.

⁵ In Korean 광화문. English sources it is mostly used as Gwanghwamun Gate.

⁶ Kyongbok Palace (경복궁) also known as Kyongbokgung, Gyeongbokgung or Gyeongbok Palace.

north-south axis was strengthened with the building a huge Shinto⁷ shrine on the hillside of Namsan. Hence, Yookcho Street became a modern boulevard surrounded with significant Japanese representative buildings, run from GGB to Namdaemun⁸ to Shinto shrine and finally Yongsan area where Japanese settlers mostly preferred to live. Yookcho Street once a representative space of the Joseon dynasty and Korean nation, turned into a place where symbolise the Japanese empire. After liberation from Japan, Korea gave huge effort for nationalisation of space and for a long time (almost six decades) Koreans tried to remake of colonial sites and memories (Han, 2014). Under nationalism attempts Yookcho Street was renamed as Sejongno⁹, after Sejong the Great fourth king of Joseon. While Kyongbok Palace was renovated according to its originals, GGB was demolished in 1996 and Gwanghwamun as symbolic gate of Joseon replaced its original site.

In order to give a comprehensive understanding of present-day Gwanghwamun Square, where several layers of urban structure accumulated, and its current spatial practices; it is necessary to examine the physical transformation of Yookcho Street and Seoul under Japanese rule. Moreover, this topic will contribute to the studies of spatial policies of Korea from 1945 to 1990s, which mostly focused on the nationalisation of space. It is necessary to remind that following the liberation from Japan, within months, the majority of colonial structures had disappeared, yet it took quite time to wipe out the influence of colonial past in everyday life practices (Henry, 2014, p. 207). Reminders of the colonial period were refashioned, destroyed, and replaced with national elements. To Henry, in the same way as Japanese officials and planners overleapt pre-colonial history, the South Korean planners of contemporary Seoul disregarded the heritage of Japan's imperial capital (Henry, 2014, p. 21). This paper will seek to contribute to an understanding of cities colonised by the Japanese.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. General Overview of Colonial Korea

Korean peninsula and Seoul as well had always been an important target for neighbour countries' invasions. Therefore, Seoul was the subject of constant deconstruction and reconstruction according to the passage of times serving distinct roles in each era (Cumings, 1997). On August 29, 1910, Japanese authorities officially announced their victory over the Korean peninsula and their reign on the peninsula lasted until 1945 when Japan surrendered in World War II. From 1910 to 1945, Japanese rule effectively took control of the peninsula and chose Seoul as the centre of colonial rule. In his seminal book, Cumings discusses the Japanese reigning over the Korean peninsula once, as either "administrative colonialism, exploitation or modernisation" (Cumings, 1981). He argues that an organised and architectonic colonialism which was modelled by planners and administrators, was conducted. Very strong and highly centralised Japanese colonial state took control of the country by intervening the economy, creating markets, investing in new industries, and suppressing dissent (Cumings, 1981). During this period, the Korean peninsula had been subjected to exploitation and influenced in economic, political, social and spatial terms. Koreans were under extreme oppression politically, yet even if it was not even, there was a significant economic growth (Cumings, 1981) (p. 305). Westerners especially British and Americans interpreted those developments and intervention as modernisation and they supported the role of Japan in the modernising process of Korea (Cumings, 1981) (p. 294). According to Peattie and Cumings the main motive of Japanese behind colonising of the Korean peninsula was racial and cultural similarities, although in their long history Koreans believed they had more common things with China rather than Japan, and they even felt superiority over Japan (Peattie, 1984, p. 13). Lee noted that unlike Western counterparts, Japanese colonial rule was more interested in the integration of Korean people to Japanese society and gave more effort to create a common cultural and political platform more than making economic profits (Lee, 2019). Such that, to Japanese, Korean inhabitants were the people who "were

⁷ Japanese national religion's sacred place, place of worship, in some resources it is defined as place of god.

⁸ Namdaemun (남대문), official name is Sungnyemun (충례문). It is also used as Namdaemun Gate.

⁹ It is also known as Sejong-daero (세종대로). Sejong the Great is very remarkable king of the Joseon Dynasty of Korea. In order to reduce and promote the literacy, he developed Korean alphabet as an alternative to Chinese alphabet. With the rise of Korean nationalisation after Japanese colonialism, he became a significant historical character who represents the Korean national spirit. Therefore, various significant representative places were renamed after his name as a way of showing gratitude to him.

not quite Japanese, yet capable of becoming Japanese” (Tsurumi, 1984, p. 309). Moreover, assimilation was considered only option for ensuring the harmony between Korean inhabitants and Japanese residents in Korea. Most of the Japanese residents in Korea considered Korean as “primitive, lacked the standards of hygiene and cleanliness, backward in daily life and lack of spirit” (Caprio, 2009, pp. 90-91). In this respect, colonial rule designed to transform Koreans into the subjects whose everyday life practices are the same to the Japanese born in Japan. Henry states: “assimilation project of Japan had series of ideological messages about what it meant to ‘become Japanese’” (Henry, 2014, p. 11).

2.2. Colonialism, Colonial Cities and Spaces

Porter and Yiftachel argues that in building relation between the coloniser and the colonised one, cities have always played a crucial role (Porter, 2019). Since, through urbanisation, colonial rulers easily operate the spatial and economic dispossession of colonised people. Moreover, towns and cities that have direct relations with development and progress had been the focus in the building of a colonial nation. Lefebvre, regarding to Latin America, argues that a colonial empire could only be possible with the foundations of colonial towns (Lefebvre, 1993). In this respect “their (colonial towns’) urban space, which was instrumental in this larger production process, has continued to be produced despite the vicissitudes of imperialism, independence and industrialization” (Lefebvre, 1993, p. 151). Those towns were built accordingly, following the three stages of a sequence, i.e., “discovery, settlement and pacification” for reorganising the administrative and political authority of urban power (Lefebvre, 1993, p. 151). More precisely, according to Lefebvre, the construction of the city legitimised the occupation of the land and the authority of colonised country. In this respect, some historians considered the colonial town as an artificial product, yet it should always be reminded that in a colonial society this artificial product plays as a role of instrument for production which is a superstructure alienated from the original space provides a political reference for announcing the social and economic structure, while constructing its base (Lefebvre, 1993, p. 151). Japanese colonial rule also designed the spatial policies for assimilation of the peninsula, yet it is highly controversial among scholars in terms of outcomes. Some scholars argue that Japan’s infrastructure investments helped Korea after liberation from Japanese colonial rule to transform itself into a modern country (Caprio, 2009) although Japan did not have any intention to contribute to Korea for her own sake¹⁰. However, there are scholars stating that Koreans missed the opportunity to evolve the modernisation which could be peculiar to the Korean peninsula. Moreover, Shin and Robinson claim that “the Japanese repressed nascent Korean modernity in favour of economic exploitation and cultural assimilation” (Shin, 1999, p. 13). The modernisation attempts which began with the Joseon dynasty, transformed into a different type of modernisation with Japanese invasion. The Joseon dynasty focused on creating the Korean nation through modernisation attempts.

In that matter, while reproducing the space, colonial rules mostly carry their own spatial knowledge on the colonised land. Therefore, it is very common to observe similar spatial patterns at colonial and colonised countries. According to King colonial cities were the significant sites where modern capitalist culture was transferred to colonial countries through mimicking the colonised countries’ architectural form and urban planning (King, 1990). Rex defines it as producing new social and material arrangements (Rex, 1981). Very significant example of this: British influence on Sri-Lanka’s capital city Colombo, India’s city of Mumbai, Dutch influence on Indonesian port cities and of course Japanese’s influence on Korean cities¹¹. In this regard, colonial rule’s spatial policies as a modernisation project which forced assimilation and enhanced capital accumulation, embedded in the representations of space. Moreover, to Lefebvre in a colonial society, social space produced according to the colonists’ use and exchange value (Lefebvre, 1993, p. 76). In this respect, it can be argued some of the significant aims of colonists are to manipulate the colonised country and reconstruct the space for the ideal representation of power. In other words, “various forms of assimilation operated on the grounds of colonial society and in its public spaces” (Henry, 2014, p. 3). Porter brings a different perspective to colonial space, and he argues that as part of the social relations of production, colonists also spatialized the scaling of inhabitants’ bodies (Porter, 2010, p. 76). Everyone would be wherever they belong to; like “women in dwellings,

¹⁰ Here, it is necessary to point out whatever Japan did, it was not obviously for Korean benefit; yet the peninsula was considered as Japan’s property and the main motive was to transform the Korean into Japanese. In this respect all those investments directly for the Japanese benefits, still it helped the Koreans.

¹¹ However, with the movement of Korean nationalisation, heritages from Japanese colonial rule were destroyed and reconstructed according to original versions.

labourers on the land, natives on the other side of the fence”. To Jacobs colonial cities were reconstructed according to “European architectural styles and planning practices as part of the project of colonial domination” and also newly created colonial cities become the place where colonial rules introduce the way of modern and western lifestyle to non-Western and traditional societies (Jacobs, 1996, p. 20).

In this respect, the colonial countries desired to control over the public spaces where everyday lives take place (Yeoh, 1996, p. 29), because they were quite aware of the fact that whoever takes control over the public spaces once, has the power to control over the society. However, it is necessary to remind that it is not always easy to transform public spaces, especially in conflicting geographies like colonial ones. Moreover, public space has always been a matter for negotiation between local people and colonial rule. Yeoh and Kong argues that in a colonial city “landscape not only articulates the ideological intent of the powerful who plan and shape the landscape in particular ways but also reflects the everyday meanings implicit in the daily routines of ordinary people associated with the landscape” (Yeoh & Kong, 1994, p. 17). In other words, there are two different versions of reality for public spaces: (i) the reconstruction of social meanings from the colonial rule(r)’s perspective through public spaces and (ii) the preservation of social spaces where daily activities and cultural practices are performed, by inhabitants of colonised country. In this sense, the negotiation of power between colonial rule and inhabitants changes and reshapes public spaces. On the one hand, colonial rule has power on the social construction of public spaces through technocrats, urban planners, architects, property owners, politicians; on the other hand, inhabitants have power on transforming the public spaces according to their everyday life practices.

3. YOOKCHO STREET AS A MODERN BOULEVARD OF COLONIAL SEOUL (1910- 1945)

There are significant reasons to choose Yookcho Street as case study: (i) being the very significant part of the capital city of Korea for a long time, that is it boasts national and cultural institutions and heritage entities, (ii) as a modern boulevard of Japanese colonial rule, associating the modern streetscapes and imperial representation, (iii) playing a significant role in nationalisation process after liberation from Japan. Therefore, it lets us examine a public space, colonised once, according to different spatial policies and urban planning in distinct periods.

3.1. A Brief and Short History of Pre-Colonial Seoul (From Hanyang to Hwangseong) and the Production of Yookcho Street

Very first time in 1394, Seoul was chosen and designed as the capital city of the Joseon Dynasty with the name of Hanyang. Under the Joseon Dynasty, the spatial structure of Seoul was planned, and the influence of that spatial structure has still vividly sighted in modern Seoul’s cityscape (Lee, 2019). In this period, along four inner mountains, the city wall was constructed and four main gates¹² and four auxiliary gates along the four sides of this wall was built as the symbol of the nation (Kim, 1994).

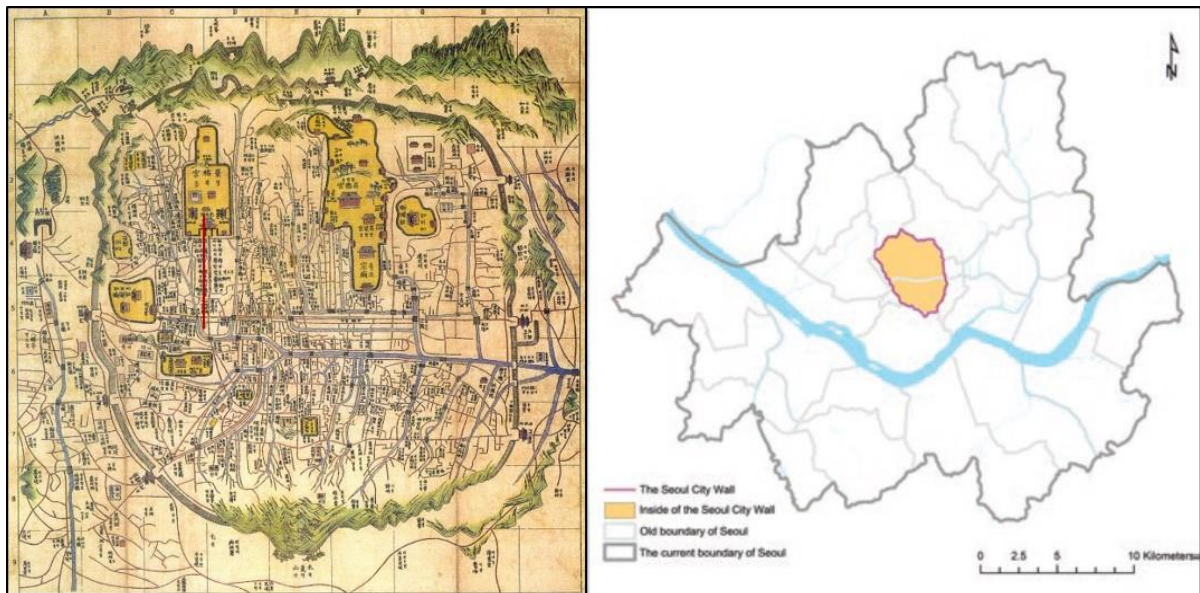
Following the proclamation as the capital city, the construction of Seoul began and in accordance with the alteration of political power in distinct periods, the landscape of Seoul’s public spaces has been evolved symbolically and physically (Lee, 2019) . The spatial structure of Seoul was built on the very significant axis of Yookcho Street, which points from Gwanaksan and Pukhansan¹³ to Namsan (mountains). This street has maintained its importance since it was constructed. It runs along the axis from Gwanghwamun, a landmark and symbol of Seoul and the largest gate of Kyongbok Palace, to Hwangtomaru (Bae, 2017). The significant buildings, including six ministries called as Yookcho and government offices located on each side of the street. Therefore, the Street began to call Yookcho Street. They are still the essential urban components of the area in contemporary Seoul. The image of the Joseon dynasty was built in this area. Rather than an ordinary street, Yookcho served as a square or a stage for

¹² The four main gates were East Gate (Heunginjimun-홍인지문-Official Name/Dongdaemun-동대문-Directional Name), West Gate (Donuimun-돈의문-Official Name/Seodaemun-서대문-Directional Name), South Gate (Sungnyemun-승례문-Official Name/Namdaemun-남대문-Directional Name), and North Gate (Sukjeongmun-숙정문-Official Name/Bukdaemun-북대문-Directional Name). In between main gates there were four auxiliary gates: Souimun (in the southwest), Changuimun (in the northwest), Hyehwamun (in the northeast), and Gwanghuimun (in the southeast).

¹³ It is also Latinised as Bukhansan.

residence to perform cultural practices (Bae, 2017). Kyongbok Palace in the centre of the city, was constructed in 1395. It was designed as the centre for the government of Joseon including the palace, government buildings, and residences for the king and high-rank employees of the dynasty. This palace opened to the city with a remarkable gate, Gwanghwamun where Yookcho Street began. This area and its structure also shaped the consequent development plans for Seoul, and it provided the spatial construction of several public spaces. As a landmark, it has always been significant and stacked with several distinct layers of urban structure.

Figure 1: Hanyang, in the 1840s, surrounded by the city wall and Yookcho Street (red one) from north to south (left); current Seoul and 1840s the position of the wall (red circled one) (right)



Source: Lee, 2019: 11

All of them together constituted the main structure of the design and planning elements of the city. Henry (2008) argues that Joseon Dynasty’s capital city of Hanyang played a major role as not only a “politico-symbolic centre” but also a “commercial hub” of the peninsula. More precisely, this period, spatial structure of the city was formed to be “central locus of the nation”, to demonstrate “its superiority”, and to perform “economic functions” (Lee, 2019, pp. 17). In 1895, very first urban-improvement project was undertaken. While improving the existing roads, new ones were constructed, illegal buildings on significant streets were demolished (Lee, 2020). Yookcho Street was intended to be representative public spaces of Hanyang, and it generated national power, yet it later would become the destruction target of Japanese colonial rule (Hong, 2010).

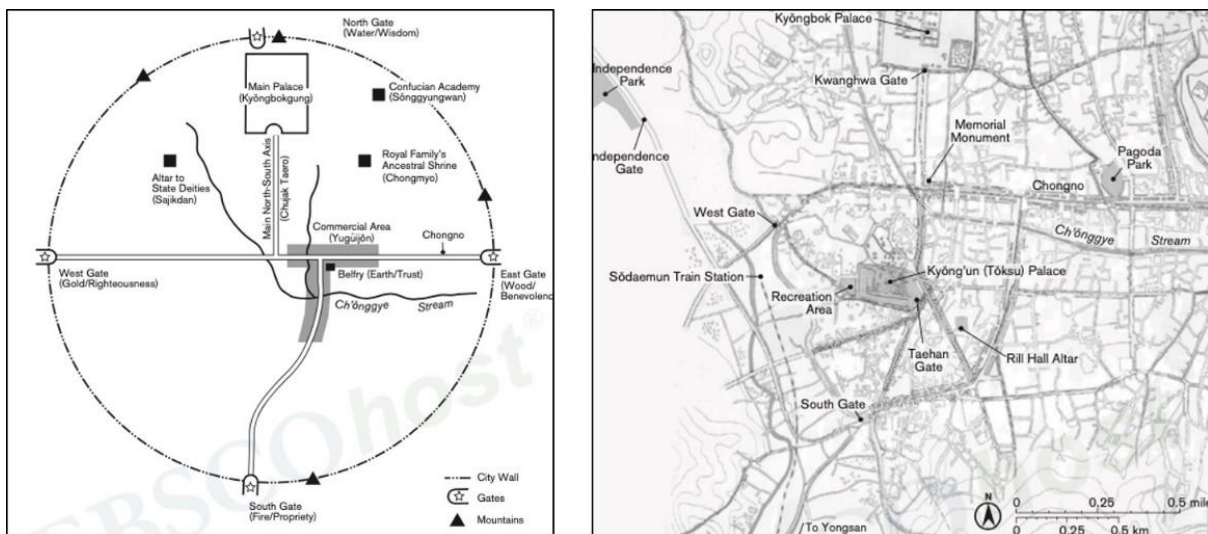
Figure 2: The main axis of Yookcho Street and its built environment



Source: <https://blog.naver.com/gnass/220475575700>, Retrieved on 09.12.2019.

Following the Joseon Dynasty, in order to protect the country from Japanese and Chinese attacks; Daehan Empire was proclaimed in 1897. The capital city of Hanyang was re-designed as the imperial capital and renamed as Hwangseong (Lee, 2019). Daehan Empire re-planned the royal city of Hwangseong and tried to create an imperial capital in order to build an autonomous, modern nation-state. In this period, urban environment, infrastructure, public parks, sanitary conditions, water supply facilities were considered carefully and action was taken to develop them (Kim, 1995). Those developments were considered as the modernisation efforts of imperial Hwangseong. Significant projects were held in realising this aim. It was decided to purge the Yookcho Street of commercial stalls for restoring the original width of axis. In order to connect the capital city to the city's outskirts, a radial system of roads which centred around the Daehan Gate of the Kyongung/Toksu Palace were constructed and Yookcho Street extended till Daehan Gate. Along those axes, politically significant buildings and structures like the Independence Gate, Pagoda Park, and a Memorial Monument were built (Yi, 1999). Due to financial difficulties, urban development projects had to stop after 1901.

Figure 3: Hanyang in late 14th century (left); Hwangseong in 19th century (right)



Source: Henry, 2014: 24-26.

During the Joseon Dynasty and Daehan Empire, Seoul was essentially planned according to the basic principles for creating a capital city of Koreans. Streets, altars, palaces had been designed for representing power. It is a city that privileges authorities' knowledge because it was literally formed from their intentions, desires, and modes.

3.2. The Colonial Capital City of Seoul (Gyeongsong/Keijo) and Transformation of Yookcho Street (Kokamon Dori) into Modern Boulevard

Under Japanese rule, Seoul had served as a colonial capital city from 1910 to 1945. During the colonial period, Seoul became political, cultural and economic centre, which represents the desire and power of Japanese colonial rule. Japanese had to deal with the very substantial and symbolic architectural and urban heritage, which inherited from Joseon Dynasty and Daehan Empire. Nevertheless, according to the Japanese, that heritage not only was meaningless, but also did not have any politic-symbolic inanity. Therefore, rather than any action, Japanese focused on transforming them into meaningful artefacts, while reconstructing the built environment (Shinbu, 1901.). This new meaning was created through urban improvement plans.

The planning issue of Seoul under colonial rule began in 1912 and carried till 1936. In between those years, one of the major changes of plans was to reform the north-south axis and extending it till newly developed areas. The north-south axis linked Kyongbok Palace, Gwanghwamun, Taihei Boulevard, Hwangtohyeon square, Gyeongseongbucheong (office), Namdaemun, Namsan and Yongsan. While the major government buildings on Yookcho Street were replaced by the Japanese government buildings,

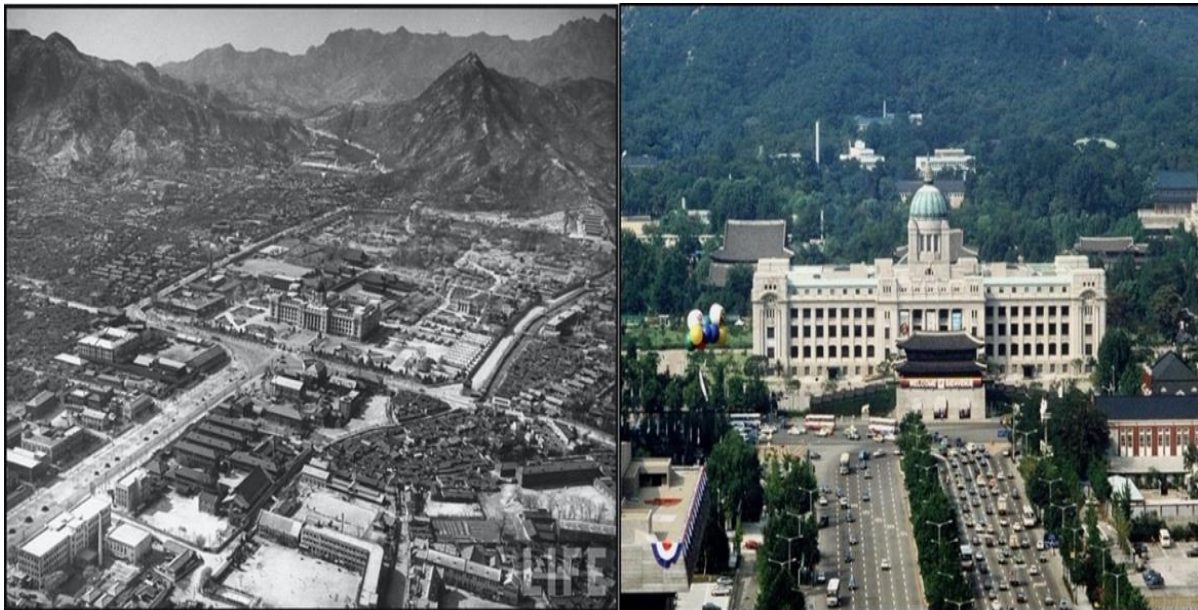
the Street became the very central place of colonial rule. In 1914, it almost took form of present-day Sejongno and turned into a square, Gwanghwamun Square.

By announcing the Annexation Treaty on August 29, 1910, Japanese authorities became the only official power to interfere in the symbolic and physical topography of Seoul (Henry, 2014) (p. 29). In order to implement its spatial policies, the colonial government announced The Land Expropriation Decree and Road Regulations in 1911. Following these regulations that the endowed colonial government with eminent powers on any spatial matter, the City Ward Improvement Decree was promulgated in the 1912 for controlling the development of urban areas. A month hence, in 1912 Keijo Civil Engineering Office developed the Keijo Urban Improvement Plan, the very first example of modern urban planning attempts by Japanese colonial governments, focusing on the empowering of the Japanese Empire over the public spaces with the actual embodiments of which was to be seen on urban space: i.e. the radial streets were designed and linked the headquarter buildings. This plan intended to bind together civic centres by designing an orthogonal transportation network, and creating plazas and shared rotaries (Lee, 2020). According to this plan, while 29 new roads were being established in a grid-pattern system, radiating roads beaming out from the confluence-point squares formed the layout of the plan. Moreover, this plan was the very first organised attempt to change urban built environment within the Korean peninsula. It was revised five times until 1928 (Jung, 2014). Because of military and geomantic reasons, old Seoul was planned in tune with a closed street layout. In order to create a modern city, the colonial government developed the first city improvement plans that changed this closed street layout into an open one. The most substantial success of Keijo Urban Improvement Plan was creating the modern boulevards in Seoul. One of the most representative boulevards of Seoul, Taihei Boulevard (current Taepyeongro Boulevard) which run to Yookcho Street to the South Gate, was constructed in 1912. Taihei Boulevard was the very first example of a modern boulevard which was planted darken tree-lined including modern facilities. Following, Gwanghwamun Plaza was extended till the boulevard, and in a couple of years Seoul City Hall was transferred from Namdaemun Street to the boulevard (Lee, 2020). In 1915, in order to memorialize the Japanese rule's first five years, Korea Products Competitive Exposition was held in Kyongbok Palace (Han, 2014). Jacobs argues that technologies of power were gathered at colonial cities in order to control and categorise indigenous populations (Jacobs, 1996). Japanese through those industrial expositions showed their superiority over the inhabitants of the peninsula.

Another proposal of this plan was to place the Government General Building at the very centre of the city. In this way, Government General Building would be the centre of the newly planned radiating roads and the axis of the grid system. As a means of manifesting political power in urban space, corresponding patterns was developed as all newly built capital cities of the period share in common. However, it was decided to replace directly in front of the old throne hall in Kyongbok Palace. In order to match the axis of the newly built GGB, Yookcho Street was moved 10 m to the east by implementing the land division (Bae, 2017). According to Kim with these new arrangements, while Kyongbok Palace was transformed into public exhibition venue, Yookcho Street evolved into a stage where protests, marches, memorial events associated with colonial rule, took place (Kim, 2016). Moreover, as a part of the Japanese colonial rule's policy of manifesting the Japanese hegemony in industry, technology, design, production over the peninsula; Kyongbok Palace was redesigned for housing various politic, cultural, and economic events and industrial expositions (Han, 2014). On 25 June 1916, GGB was designed in neo-classical style, that was popular in Japan at the time it was constructed. It was a deliberate attempt not only to block the scenery of Kyongbok Palace from the centre of Seoul, but also highlight the cultural transcendence of the modern Japanese Empire over Korea (Chun, 2018). Lee argues that "as a component of Japanese imperial expansion, new forms of urban design and imperial architecture were one of the means through which Japanese authorities attempted to signify their imperial power" (Lee, 2019) (p. 5). With these radical revisions on the built environment, the representation of Japanese authority on Seoul's landscape was being inscribed while eradicating the symbolic meaning of the past and authority of the Joseon Dynasty. In the following years, many buildings of other significant palaces were destroyed and out of 300 buildings only 36 could survive and reached today (Yoon, 2006). However, the destruction of Kyongbok Palace with building GGB and using its spaces for serving Japanese imperial policies has still impacts on Korean's collective memory. To Son "the demolition of Kyongbok Palace has been publicly remembered as a Japanese exercise in

spatial politics, with the goal of ‘cutting the national life vein of pungsu’¹⁴, and ‘blocking the vital force’ of the Korean spirit” (Han, 2014) (p. 5).

Figure 4: Government General Building in 1940s (left); Government General Building in 1995 (right) (before it was demolished in between 1995-1996)



Sources: Anon., n.d.

Besides creating a political centre on the north-south axis, a Shinto Complex with the name of Korea Shrine nearby Seoul Shrine, as religion centre, was constructed. With GGB, this new shrine was designed to forge a link between the train station in the southern part of the city to Kyongbok Palace while running along Taihei Boulevard. Two years after the first initiative, in 1914 another regulation was imposed connecting the southern Japanese neighbourhoods and northern Korean neighbourhoods. In 1917, in order to emphasise shift in the city’s development from north to the south, a new bridge on Han River was built connecting the historic core in the northern part to the newly developed southern district.

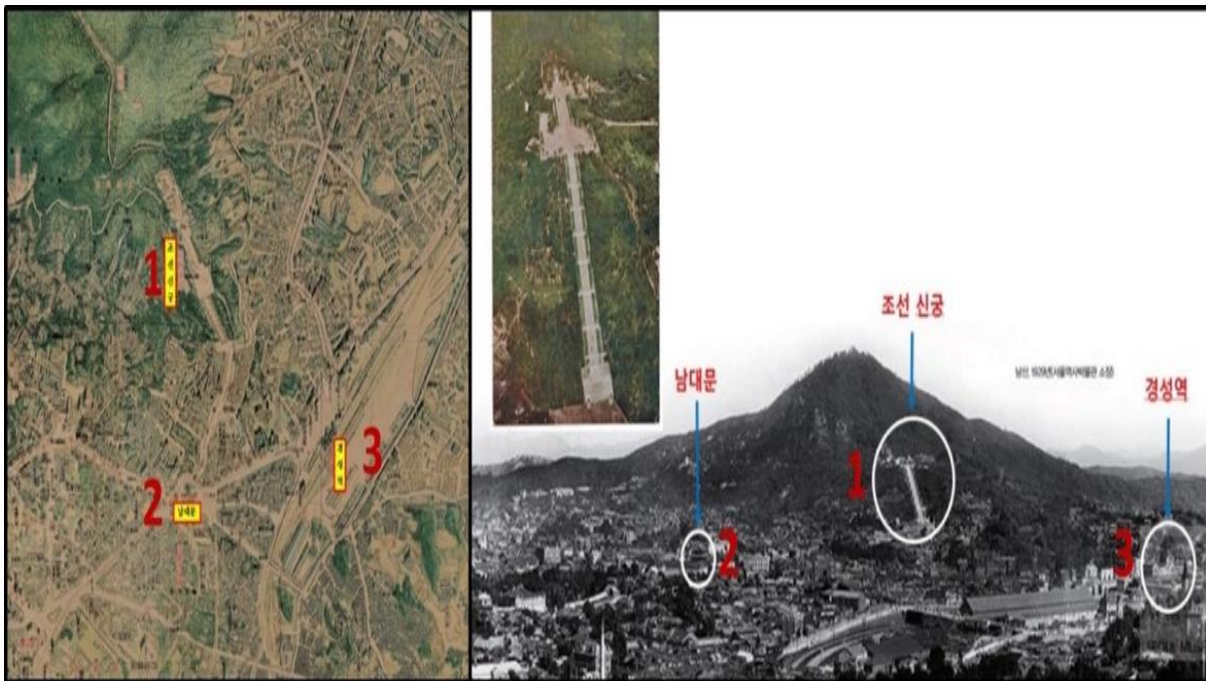
In 1919, The Keijo Urban Improvement Plan was re-prepared in order to increase the colonial headquarters building right in front of the Kyongbok Palace, thus the street layout also had to be revised. Radiating streets and plazas were expunged contrary to the former plan, the new plan focused on the development of the traditional centre of Seoul (Lee, 2020). Rather than radiating streets as a practical method of opening up new lots for development. As the radiating streets vanished, most of the plazas disappeared also. It was quite questionable whether the city needed these new arterial streets. The implementations of this plan focused on the high density, yet Seoul did not experience any density problem (Valat, 2014). That is, rather than solving urban problems first, affirming the superiority of Japanese Empire and colonial rule was more crucial. Through the implementation of this new plan, Yookcho Street turned into a modern boulevard flanked by Western-style architectural buildings and modern civic centres. Moreover, with Taihei Boulevard became a representative public space of colonial modernity, beginning with the symbolic GGB at the north, passed Gwanghwamun and Keijofumae plazas and finally ended with Namdaemun. By this second urban reform while increasing the emphasis on the link between Taihei Boulevard and Yongsan, the significance of the northern axis highlighted.

¹⁴ Feng Shui. After Seoul was chosen as capital city, it was designed to basic traditional principles. One of them was fengshui which means wind and water. Seoul is surrounded by four mountains and there exists a very important river, Han River in the very centre. Seoul was designed considering their impacts on the city’s landscape. North-south axis began with a mountain and ended at the river. As a very big block GGB building right in front of the Kyongbok Palace interrupting the flow of fengshui energy coming from Pukhan Mountain down on the North-south axis running through Namsan (Pratt, 2006). The very basic, yet very efficient planning principles of Seoul were violated. Moreover, meaning, symbolism, social and cultural impacts, spatial practices were ignored intentionally. What Son means with “cutting the national life vein of pungsu” is this.

Through transforming the traditional street to modern boulevard, Japanese colonial rule succeeded not only to create a public space which demonstrate the power of colonial authority but also gave a sense of modernity to citizens, regardless of all the disparities of Japanese and Korean people. After liberation, those boulevards gained further meaning; in reconstruction of the national identity and eliminating the marks of the colonial times. They were the symbolic places displaying the colonial modernity once, and after liberation they transformed into representative places manifesting the democracy in South Korea.

Another exercise of Japanese rule was to build Shinto shrines all over the country and forced Koreans to learn and practice Shintoism. One of the most remarkable examples of it was erected in 1925 after 5 years of construction, on the hillside of Namsan¹⁵ in Seoul with the name of Joseon Jingu¹⁶ as one of the top ranked shrines in the Japanese shrines (Sapochak, 2015). In order to make a meaningful design, this shrine was built at the end of Yookcho Street. With the completion of the construction of the shrine, Yookcho Street's spatial structure would be defined clearly which began with GGB, then run to Namdaemun, and reached to Joseon Jingu at Namsan, finally went down to the Japanese military base in Yongsan (Chung, 1994).

Figure 5: 1 Joseon Jingu, 2 Namdaemun, 3 Gyeongseong-Yeog (Gyeongseong Station) (Current Seoul Station). The spatial construction of Joseon Shrine in the 1936 (left), and in 1929 (right)

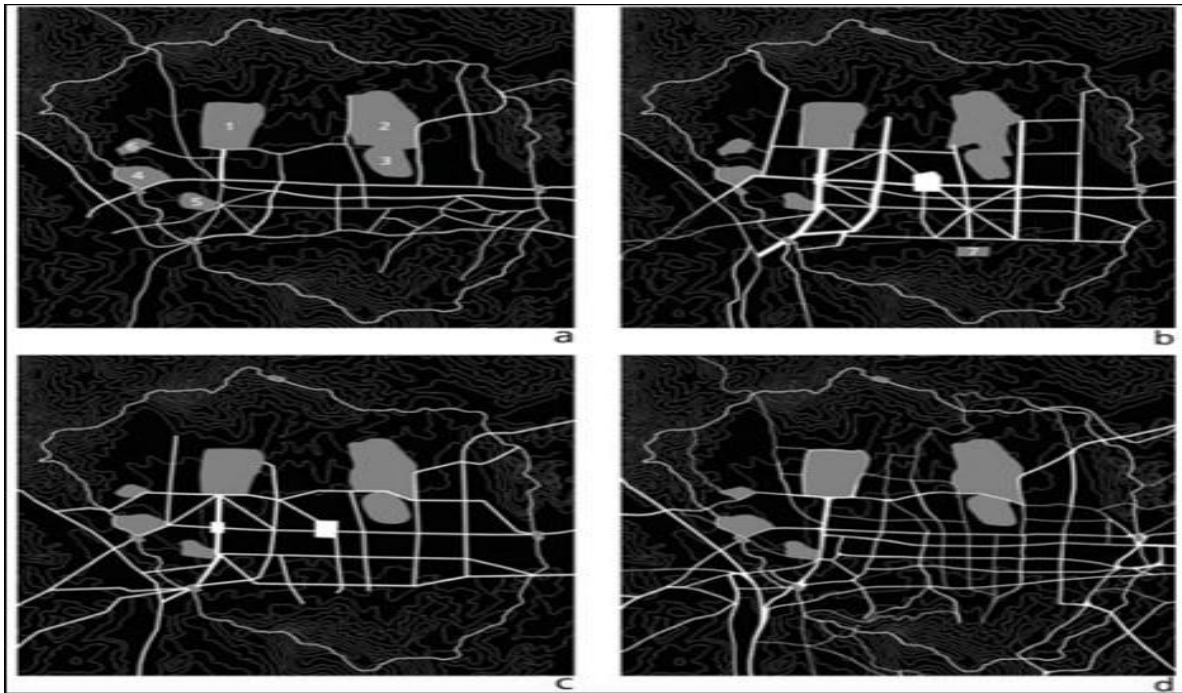


Sources: Anon., n.d.

Figure 6: Transformation of the city centre: a) Seoul as traditional walled city; b) city ward improvement plan, 1912; c) city ward improvement plan, 1919; d) current urban structure of Seoul (1. Kyongbok Palace; 2. Changdeokgung Palace; 3. Jongmyo (the ancestral shrine of the royal family); 4. Gyeonghuigung Palace; 5. Deoksugung Palace; 6. Sajik (altar to the state deities); 7. GGB before the replaced in front of Kyongbok Palace)

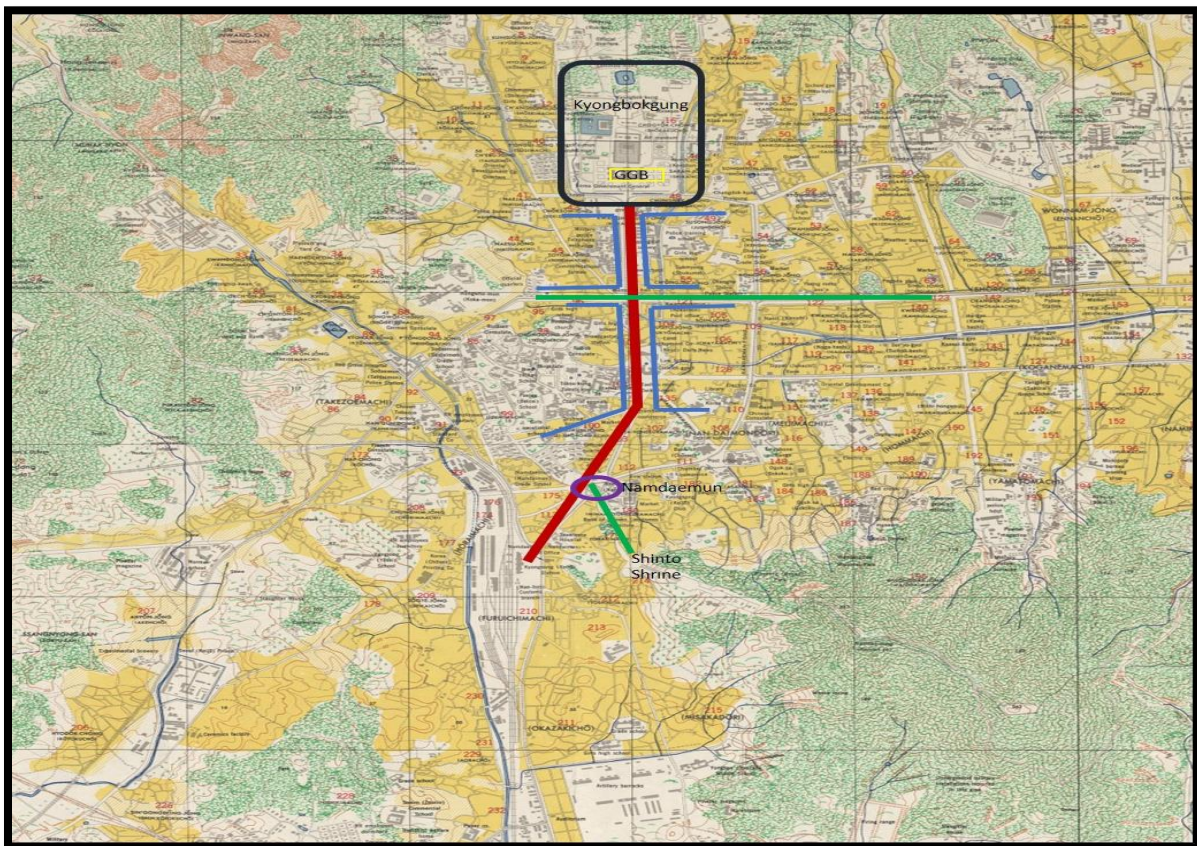
¹⁵ Namsan (South Hill) (남산) is also referred as Namsan Mountain in some sources.

¹⁶ It is also known as Chosen Shrine, Joseon Shrine, or The Grand Shrine of Joseon. It was destructed in 1945 right after Korea became independent. In 1970, 'Patriot An Chung-gun Memorial Hall' was constructed in the memory of An Chung-gun who assassinated the first Japanese Resident- General of Ito Hirobumi.



Source: Jung, 2014:11.

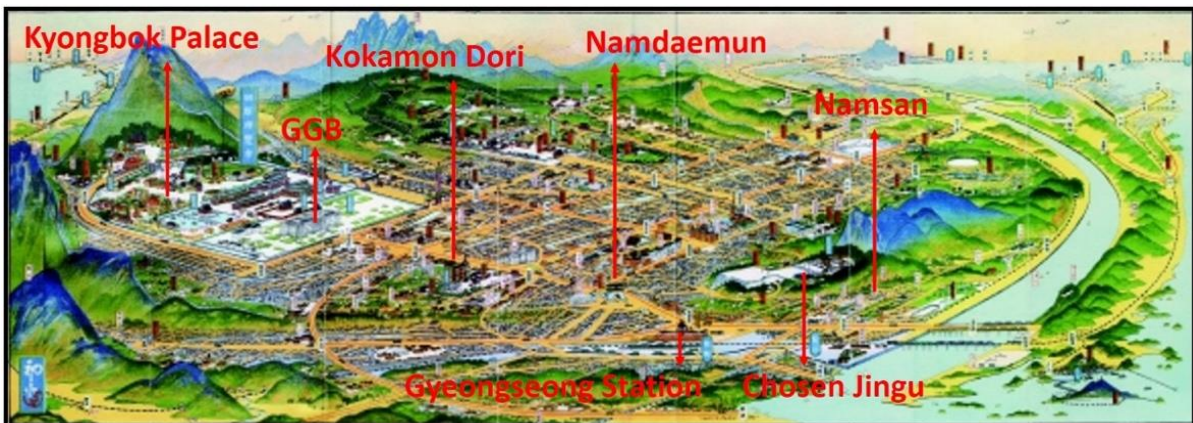
Figure 7: Map of Kyongsong or Seoul, U.S. Army Map Service, 1944-1946



Sources: The base map, (Iris, 2019), Personal Rendering.

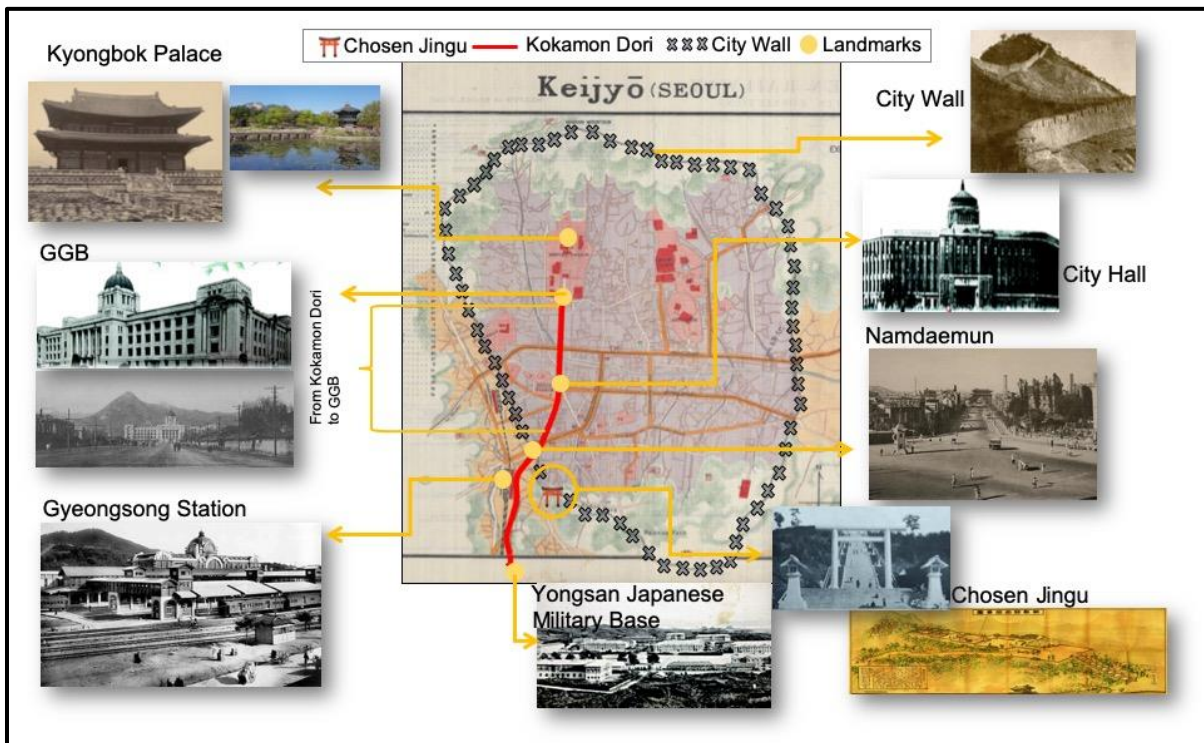
One of the most common legitimacy of Imperial Japanese for the Korean occupation and for the promulgation of Shintoism is that Korean and Japanese customs had a shared ground connecting them in shamanic roots (Nakajima, 2016). Japanese traditional shrines served to demonstrate the national religion of Japanese and introducing Shintoism into the everyday life of Koreans. Through building Shinto shrines, spiritual assimilation was aimed. Korean people not only had to respect the sacred place of Japanese religion, but also show their gratitude to imperial house in public space where Koreans enjoyed their spare time. From 1925, students were compelled to visit the shrine and in 1935 government workers and university students were obliged to join Shinto ceremonies in order to thank the imperial deities (Grayson, 1993). According to Kim this is considered as a religious act and thus it can be interpreted as spiritual assimilation, yet it should not be missed that it is also “a political expression of patriotism” (Kim, 1997). When Japanese colonialism finally was over the Korean peninsula in 1945, there were 1140 Shinto shrines in Korea (Grayson, 1993).

Figure 8: Yookcho Street’s Spatial Structure



Source: Personal rendering, the base figure, Anon., n.d.

Figure 9: The Spatial Structure of Yookcho Street (Kyongbok Palace to Yongsan Japanese Military Base (current American Military Base))



Source: Personal rendering, the base map Moore, 2018.

To sum up, there was a conflict between the socio-spatial heritage of the Joseon Dynasty, Daehan Empire and the assimilation projects of colonial rule. In this respect, very significant main axis of Yookcho Street and the buildings surrounding it went through a radical transformation both physically and symbolically. This street and the surrounding buildings which had been originally the politico-cultural centre of Korea since the Joseon dynasty, destructed and reconstructed according to Japanese desire, ideals for reflecting Japanese power and prestige. Following this, the street and the buildings resided along this boulevard were rearranged to represent the power of Japanese colonial rule. Yu argues that the area of the Hanyang City Wall with Korean traditional buildings and Yookcho Street “regarded as the most sacred and auspicious place in Korea to traditional Korean belief and the wall itself generated national power and prosperity, became the centre of conflict between Korean tradition and Japanese modernisation” (Lee, 2019) (p.12). The European style architectural buildings along Yookcho Street came to concretize colonial progress. In order to make the city modern, cleaner, organised and the centre of capital accumulation; all the meanings of modern planning techniques were used for creating the political space, which represent the authority of Japan. Moreover, the new buildings, which symbolised the authority and permanence of Japanese, dramatically changed the city’s landscape.

CONCLUSION

Yookcho Street, the first and the largest street of Joseon dynast, has changed according to its roles. During the Joseon dynasty, it was the locus of the nation and served as a stage where cultural and administrative events took place. Under Japanese colonial rule, while it turned into a modern boulevard, served as colonial showcase where Japanese power was represented. When prolonged with another significant boulevard i.e., Taihei Boulevard, Yookcho Street axis runs across from newly built Government-General Building to the Joseon shrine at Namsan and the Japanese military base at Yongsan and becomes the main north-south axis connecting the traditional Seoul to the newly developed Japanese neighbourhoods. Through those modern boulevards, Japanese government aimed to offer Koreans the essence of colonial modernity and Japanese spirit. It was designed as a wide street, tree-lined, well illuminated with streetlamps, well defined borders with European-style modern architectural buildings. In this respect, this modern boulevard served as a meeting ground where the policies and ideals of Japanese colonial rule and modern lifestyle were introduced to the inhabitants. With those spatial interferences, Japanese colonial rule aimed to turn Korean people into dutiful cases of the Japanese emperor.

By drawing attention to the urban development plan under Japanese colonialism, this paper gives an insight to those spatial conflicts between Japanese modernisation and Korean tradition. At the end, when Japanese colonial rule was over, Yookcho Street would have turned into the symbol of not only Japanese colonial rule and its representative values but also displacement, erasure and destruction of Korean values. After liberation, radical spatial interferences have happened not only reconstructing Korean ideals, and national legitimacy, but also overcoming colonial memories. Yookcho Street was renamed Sejongno where the political centre of the Republic of Korea, and it has been transformed from symbolic space, where the colonial modernity and ideals of Japanese imperialism was introduced to the local people, into a representative space that reconstructs the Korean nationalism and democracy. Gwanhwamun was relocated its original place. The Government-General Building was renamed as Capital Building, but finally in 1996 it was destructed and constructed according to Joseon originals. End of 2009, Sejongno began to host cultural events, protests, demonstrations, and took back its name Gwanhwamun Square.

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