

Nodeulseom in Seoul as a Postcolonial Landscape: A Geohistorical De/Reconstruction, 1910–1995*

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포스트식민 경관으로서 서울시 노들섬: 지리사적(地理史的) 해체와 재구성(1910–1995)*

이재열**

Abstract : Nodeulseom in Seoul has evolved from a natural geographic feature to a cultural landscape for a century. This article nonetheless does not aim to offer a Sauerian account about the cultural landscape. Instead, it distantiates from the Berkeley School tradition in order to unveil the island's hidden landscape history. To do so, this article examines and deconstructs the official geohistorical narrative of Nodeulseom that Seoul Metropolitan Government offers, and finds out its association with planning, design, and architectural professionals, whose accounts are centered solely on artificial structures. On the other hand, they neglect the history of Nodeulseom inhabitants. Thus, shifting away from such a 'situated knowledge' and calling for a more grounded approach centered on inhabitants, this article also develops a set of alternative geohistorical narratives attentive to displaced working class villages, scenes behind place of attraction, and squatter settlement conditions. These narratives help to understand the presence of ordinary people at Nodeulseom and the actual reason for their displacement during the colonial era and the geohistory's continued effects in the subsequent postcolonial condition. In conclusion, Nodeulseom is discussed as a postcolonial landscape that bears both colonial legacy and its postcolonial reinvention.

Key Words : Landscape, Postcolonialism, Situated knowledge, Nodeulseom, Geohistory

요약 : 서울의 노들섬은 지난 한 세기 동안 자연경관에서 문화경관으로 변모하는 과정을 겪었다. 이런 경관 역사의 특성에도 불구하고 본 연구에서는 버클리학파의 전통을 따르는 대신, 숨겨진 경관 역사를 드러낼 목적으로 서울시에서 제공하는 노들섬의 공식 역사를 해체하여 검토한다. 이 과정에서 노들섬 경관 역사에 관한 공식 담론이 계획, 디자인, 건축 전문가의 시각과 밀접하게 관련된다는 점을 발견하였다. 다시 말해, 인공 구조물에 치우친 노들섬의 공식 역사는 특정 전문가 집단의 위치성이 반영된 '상황 지식'에 가깝고, 그로 인해 노들섬에서 삶을 영유했던 사람들의 이야기는 찾을 수 없게 되었다. 그래서 과거의 신문기사, 지도, 사진 자료를 활용해 본 논문에서는 노들섬의 사람들과 그들의 삶을 중심으로 대안적 지리사(地理史) 내러티브를 개발하여 제시하였다. 이를 위해 일제강점기 동안 노들섬에서 벌어진 노동 빈민 마을의 소멸 과정 및 빈민촌을 대체했던 근대적 구조물의 설치 이유를 면밀히 살폈고, 이러한 노들섬 경관의 식민화 역사가 포스트식민 상황에서 지속하여 재구성되는 방식도 고찰하였다. 그래서 노들섬을 식민의 유산과 포스트식민 상황에서 개발주의적 재구성이 복잡하게 뒤얽힌 포스트식민 경관으로 이해할 수 있었다.

주요어 : 경관, 포스트식민주의, 상황 지식, 노들섬, 지리사(地理史)

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I. Introduction

Nodeulseom in Seoul is an island in the middle of the 1 km long Hangang Bridge, which connects Ichon of Yongsan District with a girder bridge in the north and Noryangjin of Dongjak District with a tied-arch bridge in the south (Fig. 1). Prior to the Bridge construction that was undertaken between March 1916 and October 1917 during the Japanese colonial era (Table 1), Nodeulseom was a part of natural levee in a 3.3 km² point bar area, which was formed by flood-driven stream channel changes of the Han River.¹⁾ Thus, Nodeulseom was not physically detached from its mainland Yongsan at the time.²⁾ During the construction process, the area of Nodeulseom was elevated by transporting sands from the Han River in order to level it with a higher terrain of Noryangjin's river terrace in its south. Then, the Japanese Empire named the 165 meter-long elevated 33,000 m² area as Jungjido, whereby 'jung' and 'do' can be translated to 'center' and 'island', respectively.³⁾

Despite the Bridge construction, the alluvial landform around Nodeulseom was relatively well preserved until the mid-1960s, but this place started to experience major development driven environmental changes from the late 1960s and Nodeulseom became a literal island in

the middle of the Han River by the end of 1980s.⁴⁾ Preparing for a developable land was the primary goal of the project. Private construction company Jinheung did the site preparation in order to build a ferry terminal after acquiring a license to elevate and expand Nodeulseom from the national government in 1970. With the project proposal, the company was also able to obtain the ownership of the island's central part in 1973 because of the Public Waters Reclaiming Act.⁵⁾ Due to lacking financial resources, Jinheung could not actualize its proposal, and sold the property accounting 51% of Nodeulseom to another construction company Gunyoung Corporation in 1986. Followed by the purchase, Gunyoung proposed another plan of an international tourist hotel in 1986, but this plan was also canceled for the same reason.

As a result of the failed plans, Nodeulseom remained a reserved site for development. In this period, several temporary leisure uses emerged.⁶⁾ Then, Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) purchased Nodeulseom at 27.4 billion Won in March 2005 with aim to build an opera house as the city's new cultural tourism landmark. The megaproject generated controversy over its relevance. In the face of fierce opposition at the City Council, its implementation ultimately stopped in 2010, and this



Fig. 1. Nodeulseom in the middle of Han River in Seoul

Source : Youngdeungpo District Office.

Table 1. Major Geohistorical Events at Nodeulseom (1910–1995)

Year	Events
1910	Beginning of Japanese colonial era
1911	Enactment of Land Acquisition Act
1914	Gyeongseong's city limit expansion to Yongsan
1917	Birth of Jungjido by the completion of the Hangang Bridge
1925	Great Floods in July, and residential relocation from Jungjido
1927	Enactment of Choseon River Act
1929	End of 1925 Great Floods restoration Yongsan Trolley Line's extension to Jungjido Choseon Exhibition in Gyeongseong
1934	Enactment of Choseon Urban Planning Act
1936	Introduction of first modern urban plan in Gyeongseong (Gyeongseong Urban Plan)
1945	End of Japanese colonial era
1950	Beginning of the Korea War (1950–1953)
1962	Enactment of Public Waters Reclamation Act
1967	Beginning of the Comprehensive Hangang Development Project (CHDP)
1969	Ministry of Construction's approval of a public water reclaiming project at Jungjido
1973	Jinheung's acquisition of Jungjido ownership from the national government
1982	Jinheung's proposal of a ferry terminal project at Jungjido
1986	End of the Comprehensive Hangang Development Project Gunyoung's purchase of Jungjido, and proposal of an international tourist hotel project at the island
1995	Renaming Jungjido to Nodeulseom

* Author's compilation from various sources.

place was temporarily used for the city government's urban agriculture program between 2012 and 2018 (Lee, 2016). After a long period of development controversy, Nodeulseom has become a place of music centered cultural activities since September 2019.

Nodeulseom's history can be epitomized by an evolution from a natural geographic feature (i.e., natural levee on a sandy point bar) to a cultural landscape through a century-long process of built-environment aspirations and construction (Table 1). Nonetheless, this article does not aim to offer a Sauerian account about the cultural landscape because such a mode of explication tends to pay sole attention to visible landscape outcomes and related processes. The Berkeley School perspective also runs the risk of reinforcing taken-for-granted landscape history and perception and neglecting the geohistory's 'others'.

Distantiating from the 'superorganic' conception of landscape history, this article is designed to unveil the hidden geohistory of Nodeulseom. To do so, Section II

that follows these introductory comments deconstructs the official history of Nodeulseom in reference to SMG's (2014) official booklet about the island and related written materials, critiquing it as a 'situated knowledge' belonging to design, planning, and architectural professionals.⁷⁾ Then, calling for a more grounded approach centered on inhabitants, Section III reconstructs Nodeulseom's landscape history and develops a set of alternative narratives focused on three themes including displaced working class village, place of attraction, and squatter settlement. Archival data of old newspaper articles, maps, and photographs, as well as research papers, are utilized for the purpose. These narratives help to understand the presence of ordinary people at Nodeulseom and the actual reason for their displacement during the colonial era and the geohistory's continued effects in the subsequent postcolonial condition. In this line, Section IV offers a discussion on Nodeulseom as a postcolonial place that bears both colonial legacy and its postcolonial developmentalist reinvention.⁸⁾

II. Deconstructing the Official History of Nodeulseom

The 'official' history of Nodeulseom that SMG offers is focused on its evolution from a natural landscape to a cultural landscape in order to "maintain the historical trace of... Nodeulseom and use [it] as a background" of a new development project (SMG, 2014: 30). The city's "historical trace" is biased in two ways. First, the official history is largely confined to a 'building scale', and negligent of the place's 'dominant' users. SMG (2014) offers a detailed historical trace of building artifacts such as a village, a ferry site, the Hangang Brige, a mini park (once called Jungjido Park), a trolley station, a site expansion, and cancelled building proposals, whereas it ignores the sustained presence of 'settled', but property-less, people at the island before the removal of sandy terrain in the late 1960s. The official history is not simply negligent, but also evocative of building as a rational imperative in the place, implying that non-building, settlement is an irrational behavior. What I call 'building rationality' is most prominent in the city's description about the presence of an early settlement at the island in the early 1910s (SMG, 2014: 3, emphasis added):

[T]here was once a pretty large village... It was called 'Shinchori' at that time and seems to have been formed spontaneously because it [the place of current Nodeulseom] was considered [as an] *undesirable* place to live... Shinchori was built in relatively higher place and... due to this reason, current large bridge must have been constructed [there].

As such, building is rendered to be rational and imperative there, and thus SMG asks neither who Shinchori people were, nor why they disappeared. Another introduction authored by a city official of Urban Planning Bureau also simply says, "the complete disappearance of [Shinchori] seems to be a change engendered by the construction of the Hangang Bridge in 1917" (Park, 2014).



Fig. 2. The Hangang Beach in 1956

Source : Seoul Metropolitan Government.

Relatedly, second, visitors' temporary uses, more specifically leisure uses, are deemed to be meaningful and legitimate to the understanding of the place's history. Women wearing Japanese kimono on the Hangang Bridge in the late 1910s, dating couples at Jungjido Park in the late 1930s, and swimmers on the Hangang Beach in the 1950s are emphasized to describe past Nodeulseom as a "beautiful attraction" (SMG, 2014: 6). Cancelled leisure site plans of the past are also portrayed as "continuous development drives... [to prevent] waste of resource" (SMG, 2014: 10). These representations are in line with the city's will to "make it more accessible and worthwhile visiting" (SMG, 2014: 3). In other words, a predetermined end appears to influence the city's historical account. Whilst the city typifies Nodeulseom as a past leisure site by circulating placid photographs such as Fig. 2 through documentation and online publishing, it has never told of past stories and images that are incompatible with the planning goal, or its planning rationality.⁹⁾ With respect to Fig. 2, for example, no explication has been provided about scenes behind the photographer and the Hangang Beach's upper side.

Therefore, the official history of Nodeulseom seems to be a planning professionals' design, rather than a piece of unproblematic and interest-free knowledge. An important clue is the composition of, and the relation between the story's writers. The story was initially written by an architecture historian Chang-Mo Ahn (2013), who focused mainly on 'surface' feature changes in reference to newspaper articles, old maps, and past

photographs. Then, this particular knowledge of ‘building scale’ (Jacobs and Merriman, 2011) account was transferred to SMG’s Urban Planning Bureau, which has in turn produced and circulated key official documents (e.g., Park, 2014; SMG, 2014). One of the documents indicates the original author Dr. Ahn as the ‘examiner’ of its accounts (Park, 2014), and the other utilizes the same historical resources and evidence that aforementioned Ahn (2013) cites. Given the presence of particular rationalities (i.e., those of building and planning), the official history of Nodeulseom can be referred to as a knowledge construction embedded in their professional positionality.

Another noticeable rationalist narrative in the official account is Nodeulseom’s centrality in Seoul. SMG (2014: 25) introduces the locational centrality as an important background of future development planning, saying that “criticism was raised arguing that only a certain people use Nodeulseom, the core part of Seoul and demand was emerged to use for more public purpose” (emphasis added). However, both theory and history can easily dispute the centrality argument, which is reminiscent of the ‘central place theory’. Nodeulseom in fact emerged in the margin of the city. When the island was built by the Japanese colonial administration in 1917, it was at a southern end of the city boundary (Fig. 3).¹⁰⁾ Thus, any historical account with no consideration of its locational marginality is only partial.

At the same time, Nodeulseom was also a socially marginalized place throughout its history. In a socio-spatial sense, it has rarely been a place of Seoul despite its location within the city’s jurisdiction since 1914. The city under the guidance of the national government kept certain people out of the place, and vacating the island was the city’s project as I show in the following sections. Thus, if the city wants to “use [the history] as its background” (SMG, 2014: 30) for filling the place, it also needs to fully reflect it, instead of sensationalizing its past with a particular knowledge embedded in a certain group of professionals.

Tracing the history of socio-spatial marginalization is

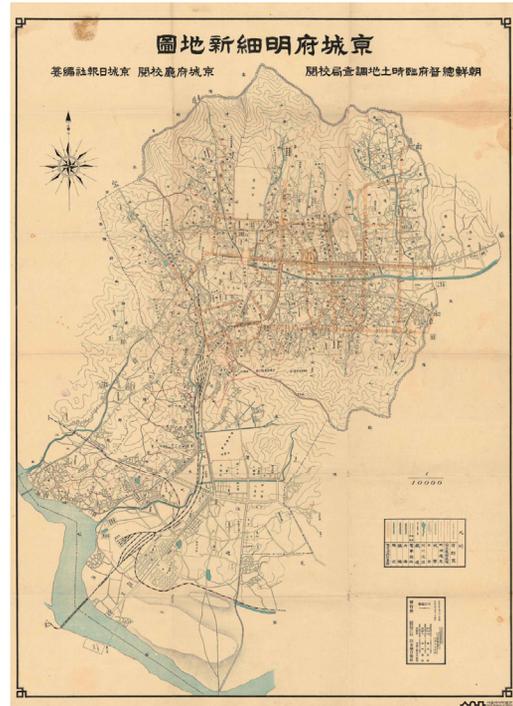


Fig. 3. Map of Gyeongseong (1914)

Source : Seoul Museum of History.

not a difficult task. The same data resources that architects and planners in Seoul use are enough to reveal the history. More specifically, available newspaper articles, maps, and photographs are sufficient, but the official history producers were unable to identify and disclose socio-spatial injustice in the past. This might be attributable to different disciplinary sensibilities between architects and geographers. As architectural geographers Jacobs and Merriman (2011: 219) note, “architecture is at core a design-led discipline oriented towards (re)making and (re)shaping space. Geography, in contrast, at core an analytical discipline oriented towards... spatial circumstance s... [and] reality” (also see Lee, 2015). Thus, geographers’ ‘biased’ attentiveness to what actually happened in place (as well as imaginations) and its contexts (in addition to space per se) is able to help fill the knowledge gap, if the goal of writing Nodeulseom’s history is to grow “public awareness” and to draw “social consensus” as SMG (2014: 3) says in the beginning of its booklet:

Nodeulseom is not really known to people nowadays. Nor the island is the place people can visit and enjoy conveniently. Thus, Seoul City has been promoting the island to make it more accessible and worthwhile visiting. Still, few people are aware of the presence of the island and how it has been formed historically from the past... [We find out how... a sandy plain has become an island of today, which used to connect itself to Ichon, Yongsan,

As SMG (2014) correctly indicates, Nodeulseom's past 'connection' to Ichon is crucial to a historic exploration of the island. Whereas the official history's articulation is limited only to physical link, I want to highlight Nodeulseom's 'social' link to Ichon. Indeed, Nodeulseom was the original place of East Ichon, which was Shinchori's new name under the Japanese rule. Unlike current East Ichon that Maekyoung has identified as one of "top ten wealthy neighborhoods" in the country (Maekyoung, On March 6th, 2015), past East Ichon was an area of disenfranchised urban poor when the neighborhood was at the island during the colonial era, and near the island in 'postcolonial' Korea. Against this background, the next section reconstructs Nodeulseom's history, with three thematic emphases including: (1) displaced early working class village, (2) place of attraction, and (3) squatter settlement. All of these alternative geohistorical narratives, I argue, are closely associated with the effects and the processes of modern architecture and urban planning.

III. Reconstructing Nodeulseom's Modern Geohistory

1. Nodeulseom as a Displaced Working Class Village

Nodeulseom, more specifically its east part, was a waterfront area of human settlement before the construction of the Hangang Bridge (Fig. 3 above). This settlement's traditional name was Shinchori meaning

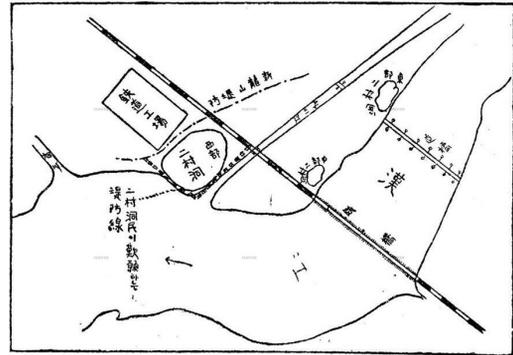


Fig. 4. Location of East, West, Middle Ichon Villages
Source : Donga Daily, On July 27th, 1923.

'new grass village', but this place became a part of Ichon (two villages) under the rule of Japanese Empire after an administrative merger with nearby Shinchonri ('new village') and Sachori ('sand vaillage') in 1911. During the colonial era, Shinchori was also identified as East Ichon to differentiate it from Middle Ichon (Shinchonri) and West Ichon (Sachori) (Donga Daily, On July 26th, 1923), but Middle Ichon was frequently identified as a part of East Ichon because of its relatively small size. In 1925, 807 households (including 406 in East Ichon and 401 in West Ichon) and about 7,500 residents were reported to live in the Ichon area (Donga Daily, On October 3rd, 1925), which was a "working class village" of log raft builders, railroad workers at nearby Yongsan Railroad Depot, and sand transporters (Donga Daily, On July 27th, 1923; Fig. 4).¹¹⁾ Despite frequent summer floods, the Ichon villages appeared to form relatively stable settlements. West Ichon was already a village with "a history of 500 years" according to an opinion piece a West Ichon resident surnamed Choi sent to Donga Daily (On March 12th, 1924), and East Ichon was an important ferry village before the construction of the Hangang Bridge (SMG, 2014).

However, the human settlement on Nodeulseom was completely cleared as a result of the colonial city administration's measure to the 1925 Great Flood, which demolished the majority of houses in Ichon villages as a result of 300 to 500 mm heavy rains from July 15 to

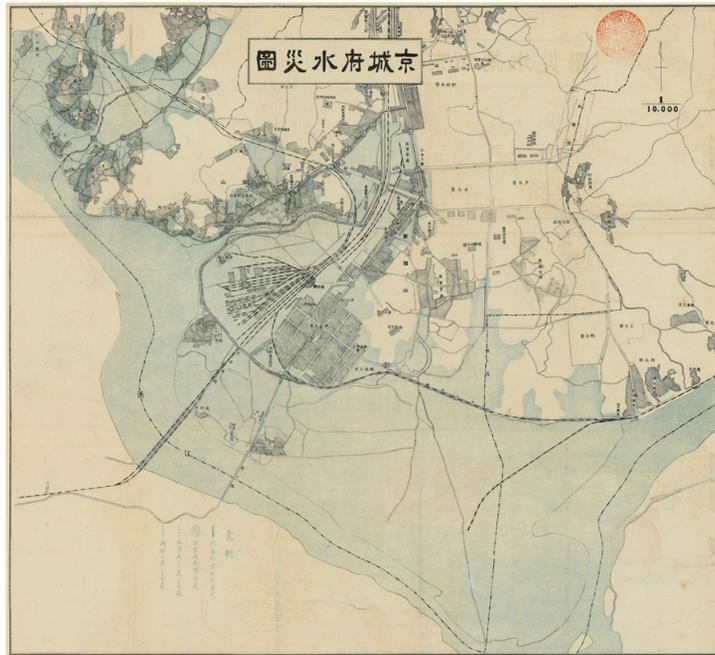


Fig. 5. Affected Areas of the 1925 Great Flood in Gyeongseong

Source : Seoul Museum of History.

July 18 (Kim, 2012; Fig. 5).¹²⁾ Following the Flood, the Empire announced its decision to seize and nationalize the whole Ichon as a 'river area' on July 22, and immediately prohibited any building construction there (Donga Daily, On July 22th, 1925). The measure was taken in accordance with Land Acquisition Act, which the Empire introduced in 1911 in order to lay a legal foundation for its forcible government acquisition of private land for public interest. Following the Acquisition Act's enforcement in Ichon, both Ichons were displaced outside Yongsan: East Ichon residents a highland in Noryangjin across the Han River in September (Donga Daily, On August 18th, 1925), and West Ichon people to Dohwa in the west end of Gyeongseong (Donga Daily, On July 14th, 1926). The residential relocation was not a preferential treatment of the Ichon residents who were affected by frequent summer flood. Instead, Japan had an intention to displace the Korean-only Ichon villages from Japanese dominant Yongsan well ahead of the 1925 Flood, and the disaster was utilized

as an opportunity.

In this regard, Yongsan's emergence as a new prosperous center of Japanese immigrants is noteworthy. While ruling Korea, the Empire preferred developing a new segregated town for Japanese immigrants outside traditional urban centers, and Yongsan was developed as such an ethnic hub in Gyeongseong after pre-colonial Choseon granted Japanese Concession in the place in 1882 (Yongsan Cultural Center, 2012). As a result, Japanese immigrants accounted for about 28% of 355,000 Gyeongseong residents in 1931, and about 33% of Gyeongseong Japanese lived in Yongsan while comprising 44% of the area's 84,000 population and dominating commercial and industrial activities (Kim, 2001). In the early 1910s, Japan also turned Yongsan into a railroad transportation hub linking Choseon's major national lines, which were reachable to Manchuria in Northeast China, to support its warfare in China and Russia and logistic operations of its local army headquarters, which was established in a 9.9 km² area near Yongsan Station through forcible

land acquisition between 1904 and 1913. To support this development, Gyeongseong's administrative jurisdiction was expanded in 1914 to include Yongsan, and the city's construction projects of modern infrastructure and urban amenities concentrated in the newly incorporated area (Yongsan Cultural Center, 2012).¹³⁾ This uneven development generated a clear ethnic division between Koreans and Japanese in Gyeongseon as a Donga Daily (On March 9th, 1924) article entitled "the death of Korean Gyeongseong" reported:

At present, South Gyeongseong including Yongsan is a Japanese place. With a great living condition, this area's future is promising. In North Gyeongseong, only poor Korean villages are stretched from east to west, but this area is also increasingly falling into Japanese hands... Due to the Japanese north invasion, Koreans are leaving Gyeongseong because they never dreamed of living in the south [Yongsan].

The aforementioned residential displacement at Nodeulseom was also closely associated with the Empire's ethnically biased urban planning, and the construction project of New Yongsan Bank in 1923 most clearly demonstrates such a discriminatory measure's impact in the Korean-only place, Ichon (Kim, 2012). The Bank was planned to protect Yongsan from frequent summer floods, but all Ichon villages were excluded from the protection as its line was drawn in the north of the villages. In other words, the project was designed to protect only railroads, military facilities, and Japanese commercial and residential districts near Yongsan Station. In response, West Ichon residents asked Gyeongseong City Hall to embank their place, emphasizing its proximity to the planned bank boundary (Donga Daily, On July 27th, 1923), but the city refused to accept their request referring to "excessive" additional cost 39,600 Chosen Yen (Donga Daily, On March 12th, 1924).

Given that a much more fund 134,000 Chosen Yen was paid for West Ichon people's relocation after the

1925 Flood (Donga Daily, On April 10th, 1927; Fig. 5), the colonial city's administration did not seem to have any intention of keeping the Korean working class villages. Instead, Gyeongseong City Hall had an alternative non-residential plan for the sandy area before the 1925 Flood. In November 1923, more specifically, the city considered a plan of creating a plantation system composed of not only cultivation sites, but also human feces treatment facilities to deal with a rapidly growing discharge amount of such human wastes from the city and use them to fertilize the sandy area (Donga Daily, On November 29th, 1923).¹⁴⁾ The ambition of colonial plantation in Ichon was not fully realized before Japan left the country in 1945 and any implementation record of plantation is untraceable.

However, a fertilization facility of human feces was built in the middle of East and West Ichon in September 1925, immediately after the city's announcement of the residential areas' clearance (Donga Daily, On October 3rd, 1925). This quick decision-making suggests that residential displacement and land use change were the city administration's highly premeditated action (cf., Kim, 2012). Another important evidence is a Donga Daily (On March 9th, 1924) report, which cited the city's intention to build such a facility there "in whatever way possible". For this "dreamlike plan", the city also considered extending a trolley line ending near Yongsan Station to Nodeulseom through the Hangang Bridge for the transportation of human feces (Donga Daily, On November 29th, 1923).

2. Nodeulseom as a Site of Attraction

The housing removal at Nodeulseom was associated with the colonial city's effort to improve and beautify scenery in this place. With the rapid development of Yongsan, the waterfront area became an important leisure site for Gyeongseong dwellers. A variety of public cultural events including sports competitions, exhibitions, and fireworks were held on the Ichon beach, and ordinary Gyeongseong people increasingly



Fig. 6. Completion Ceremony of Yongsan Trolley Line at Nodeulseom in 1929

Source : Donga Daily, On June 29th, 1929.

enjoyed seasonal leisure activities such as summer swimming and winter skating there as transportation accessibility greatly improved owing to the completion of the Hangang Bridge construction and the availability of trolley service in a walking distance at Yongsan Station. For the reason, as Kim (2012) suggests, the presence of poor working class houses was seen as an irrelevant and undesirable landscape at the colonial administration because it could disclose a thorny colonial reality of ethnic discrimination and segregation in the prospering new town of Yongsan to the visitors. In other words, the relocation of Ichon villages can be thought to be an exclusionary spatial representational politics, which is intended to hide the presence of poverty, discrimination, and segregation from the sight of Nodeulseom visitors.

In this line, the cover-up of backwardness was followed by a presentation of modernity at Nodeulseom when the Empire hosted the Choseon Exhibition in Gyeongseong from September 12 to October 31 in 1929. More specifically, Nodeulseom was showcased as a starting point of Gyeongseong's modern public transportation at the completion ceremony of Yongsan Trolley

Line extension to the island on September 19 in front of about 1,000 crowd (Fig. 6), while the Exhibition was underway in order to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Japanese Empire's rule, boost the colonial Choseon progress, and promote cultural exchange regarding modern development among metropole regions and their colonial and semi-colonial counterparts including Hokkaido, Manchuria, Sakhalin, and Taiwan. The end of post-disaster recovery after the 1925 Flood was also the ceremony's another important meaning, considering that the completion of restoring New Yongsan Bank and the Hangang Bridge, both of which were partly demolished by the Flood, was celebrated at the event (Donga Daily, On June 29th, 1929). As such, a new presentation of Nodeulseom was made by the colonial administration with emphasis on modern development and post-disaster restoration of urban infrastructures during the Exhibition that attracted about 3 million people around the country. In the hidden side of the progress of Nodeulseom as an attractive place, there were displaced East Ichon residents as stated above.

Nodeulseom's attractiveness to visitors improved further when a small park named Jungjido Park was

established in the place in late 1930s (SMG, 2014). This park was designed to transplant a leisure culture in Japan. When releasing its plan of the “modern style park” in June 1937, Gyeongseong City Hall said that it would arrange the park “like Tokyo’s Asakusa Park to serve Gyeongseong people in hungry for well-shaded green space... by planting good-looking plane trees on two road sides, and weeping willows and scrubs in the remaining” (Maeil Shinbo, On June 29th, 1937). However, transferring modernized Japanese cultural life and space to underdeveloped Gyeongseong was not the only intention in the landscaping project at Nodeulseom. But, it was also the beginning of a much larger scale green space planning, which was almost impossible to achieve in the Empire’s metropolises.

Influenced by the rise of modern planning in the United Kingdom, Japanese planners were increasingly penchant for the modernist ideal of totality at the time, but actualizing the ideal in their homeland was very difficult because the level of landowners’ influence was extremely high and government authorities were reluctant to intervene private land ownership (Kim, 2007; Lee, 2018). Due to this institutional condition, preparing a large developable land was challenging in Japan. In contrast, as the stories of forceable land acquisition in Ichon and Yongsan military base above illustrate, Land Acquisition Act and other supportive legislations (such as Choseon River Act of 1927 and Choseon Urban Planning Act of 1934) made the public acquisition of large-scale developable site relatively easy in Choseon.¹⁵⁾ Thanks to these early legislations, Gyeongseong City Hall could introduce Gyeongseong Urban Plan in 1936 with focus of ten new town development projects in newly incorporated city fringes (Yeom, 2005; Kim and Ishida, 2009). In this context, Gyeongseong was seen as a land of opportunity among Japanese planners as Kijima Kumetaro, a senior planner at Gyeongseong City Hall once said, “truly meaningful urban planning spirit is in Choseon” (cited in Kim and Ishida, 2009: 172; also Kim, 2007; Lee, 2018).

Regarding Nodeulseom, newly established Jungjido

Park was a piecemeal execution of a totalized citywide plan. More specifically, to rationalize land use in Gyeongseong as a whole in a particular way of modern urban planning, the city introduced zoning regulation in the aforementioned Gyeongseong Urban Plan in accordance with Choseon Urban Planning Act. In this vein, Gyeongseong was divided into commercial zone (city center and major roads’ waysides), industrial zone (southwest and northeast Gyeongseong), residential zone (preexisting residential areas and ten new town sites), and reserved land to be designated (alluvial sandy areas along the Han River) in 1939 (Donga Daily, On June 3rd, 1939; Yeom, 2005). When another type green zone was introduced through a revision of the Planning Act in 1940, the reserved land was designated as two different zones in each side of the Hangang Bridge: west industrial zone and east green zone (Donga Daily, On July 1st, 1940).

A wider industrial zone was considered in both sides of the Hangang Bridge “to address the problem of lacking land for factory construction” (Donga Daily, On July 1st, 1940), but the east side is seen to become a green zone for two important reasons. First, as introduced above, East Ichon’s proximity to Japanese residential area and the colonial government’s important facilities including military base and railroad lines. Given this spatial circumstance, it is unlikely at the administration that a large-scale industrial expansion in East Ichon was thought to be an appropriate land use. Second, more importantly, it is also possible reckon that the green zone designation in East Ichon was in line with the colonial administration’s ambition to build a large plantation there (see above), and that this preexisting consideration was influential to the zoning division between east and west sides of the Hangang Bridge. This inference is highly probable given the operation of human feces fertilization facility in West Ichon at the time.

Under these two planning circumstances, a large scale “waterfront park” was planned in the East Ichon green zone (Donga Daily, On July 1st, 1940). At the same

time, the city also decided to build a sports complex composed of multi-purpose stadium and indoor gymnasium in a 330,000 m² land between the waterfront park and Japanese residential area. None of these plans was actualized because of the end of colonial era in 1945, but it is certain that greening and promoting leisure activities were two primary planning themes for the East Ichon area, to which Nodeulseom's Jungjido Park was the west end entry and viewpoint. As a result of the colonial planning legacy including residential clearing, greening, and zoning, Nodeulseom became a popular visiting site and its modern leisure use continued after the country's Independence, as a Hangyeorye Daily (On February 21th, 2005) article described (by Nam, J.-Y.):

Nodeulseom was one of most loved modern leisure places during the Japanese colonial era. The first bridge in the Han River attracted a lot of people, and the visitors experienced and felt 'modernity' on the 'iron' Hangang Bridge. After an extension of trolley line, Nodeulseom became a popular dating course for under-resourced couples... The island's eastside was call the Hangang White Sand Beach after the Independence, and Seoul people enjoyed summer swimming and winter skating there. Mr. Gyeong-ho Park, a Wangsimri resident of the 1950s and 1960s recalled, "sand on the White Sand Beach was invisible from the trolley stop [in Nodeulseom] because it was filled with a huge crowd of summer vacationers".

The White Sand Beach in East Ichon disappeared due to the aforementioned CHDP and accordingly Nodeulseom has lost much, if not all, of its role as an attractive leisure site, but this past is the most dominantly remembered and celebrated image of the place in two distinct and conflict planning motivations at present (see Fig. 2). In one side, as I explicate somewhere else, developmentalists have consistently proposed high-profile megaprojects for the island with aim to recreate its spectacular attractiveness (Lee, 2015). In contrast, environmentalists emphasizing Nodeulseom's nature as the

primary source of its past attractiveness are striving to block any excessively artificial development and design a different site plan focused on the place's ecological value. However, I argue, these two groups are similar, as equal as different, in that their past spatial imagination of Nodeulseom is limited to a particular use leisure, and this superficial understanding of Nodeulseom's place-ness prevent both sides from tracing the unjust planning processes that turned the place into an attractive leisure site in the colonial era. In addition, this partial and biased place-ness perception also has an effect of erasing another important history of Nodeulseom as a site of squatter settlements, which was an important element of the island's human use even when ordinary visitors enjoyed leisure activities there.

3. Nodeulseom as a Place of Squatters' Settlement

After the relocation of permanent East Ichon residents in 1925, Nodeulseom became a more desirable viewpoint of the Han River as the city had wished, but its invisible part rapidly turned into a habitat of property-less households. During the colonial era, these squatters were called 'tomakmins' (meaning 'earth lodge people') because their habitat, or 'tomak' was usually made by digging the ground and covering the hollow space with straw mat, plywood, and the like (Yeom, 2005). The absence of ownership was also a key defining feature of them as tomakmin was defined as "a person who occupies public land such as, river areas and forests, and private properties without permission" at Gyeongseong City Hall (Yeom, 2005: 14). In terms of income source, tomakmins were not different from previously permanent Nodeulseom residents given that the vast majority of them were day workers (Kim, 1998; Yeom, 2005; Kim, 2012). About 500 landless contingent working class people were reported to live at Nodeulseom in 1940 (Donga Daily, On July 29th, 1940), while Gyeongseong saw a three-fold growth in tomakmin population in the 1930s (5,093 in 1931 to 16,644 in 1938) due mainly to

a mass inflow of impoverished rural migrants (Kim, 1998).

Nodeulseom area, especially sandy terrain under the Hangang Bridge was an ideal place for tomakmins because digging was relatively easy and the Bridge acted as a shield from weather. The terrain was also an important income source because the vast majority of tomakmin families lived on pebble collecting (Gyeonghyang Daily, On July 27th, 1957). In case of those working somewhere else in Gyeongseong, the availability of trolley service at Nodeulseom was a great advantage. In the colonial era, contingent labor markets started to emerge in the city center at daybreak, and an easy transportation access to the center was critical to daily employability (Yeom, 2005). For this reason, many tomakmin villages were formed near last stops of trolley and bus services such as Nodeulseom (Yeom, 2005).

In addition, the absence of private property ownership in Nodeulseom was also a favorable condition for more stable occupancy because tomakmins were not affected by ownership change. This was true especially when 10 new town development projects started in 1936 (Lee, 2018). Different from the city's official definition above, many tomakmins on private land lived with landholders' permission and/or due payment, and this type of occupancy became extremely unstable because the new town projects were primarily planned where tomakmins concentrated. In such districts, land transaction was highly active, and new landlords tended to ask tomakmins' evacuation in a very short notice because real estate speculation was the transaction's primary purpose. As Yeom (2005) notes, the presence of tomak was seen as a major hindrance to property value increase in the development site. Motivated by economic gain, the use of violence for tomak village clearance was also frequent as the demolition of Charity School Gwangdong in an east side tomak village illustrates (Donga Daily, On October 6th, 1937):

Gwangdong offered elementary education to tomak kids on Maeyama Yoshiyuki's property on his permission.

Right after his property was sold to Choseon City Management Company in July [in 1937], all the tomaks on the land were displaced, but the school could not leave because there was no substitutable place to move and kept teaching there. On October 10, all of sudden, 40 to 50 men appeared without any notice and completely tore down the school.

The threat of private landownership driven evacuation, which took place regardless of landlords' ethnicity, was little concern among Nodeulseom tomakmins, but summer flood was the major peril for their occupation not only because of highly expected and thus avoidable flood damages per se. But, more importantly, necessary flood driven evacuation also made them visible and identifiable subjects in the public. As the story of East Ichon relocation and the creation of Jungjido Park illustrate, 'urban beautification' was a primary city management concern at Gyeongseong City Hall, and public visibility increased greatly the possibility of their evacuation. Indeed, the city administration was largely indifferent about tomakmins, such that it neither made active relief efforts for tomakmins nor took adversarial actions against them (Yeom, 2005). To a degree, tomaks were acquiesced if they stayed in well-hidden places such as mountain cemeteries. For example, city officials did not make any intervention to a tomak village at city-owning Shindangrin Cemetery in an east end of Gyeongseong until it grew to a settlement of 240 tomaks and 3,000 tomakmins, and even house tax collection was made as the village became a stable community (Donga Daily, On November 11th, 1933). However, when the presence of tomakmins became highly noticeable, city-led displacement from public land was usually exercised. In case of Nodeulseom, for example, a summer flood in July 1940 led its 500 tomakmins to "wander around a road", and the city sent 100 of them on a train to Pyeongtaik, a city 65 km away from Gyeongseon, after placing the remaining at temporary refuge facilities (Donga Daily, On July 29th, 1940; Lee, 2018). This relocation was in consistent with another post-flood

Ichon tomakmin measure, which the city moved 263 tomaks to a remote hillside village in Gyeongseong's west end (Kim, 2012). However, such tomak removal at Nodeulseom was always a temporary solution as many evacuees made a return, new town projects produced a number of homeless families, and Gyeongseong was a major destination of impoverished rural peasants.

Nodeulseom's use as a habitat for disadvantaged citizens continued after the 1945 Independence, albeit in some different ways. During the Korean War, military tents became widely available because of international relief, and after the war Nodeulseom turned to a tent village while Seoul became a major destination of war refugees from all over the country including those from North Korea. In 1957, about 840 tent houses of 4,200 poor people were set up in the middle of the Hangang Beach (Gyeonghyang Daily, On July 27th, 1957), and they were "mostly North Korean refugees" (Donga Daily, On May 6th, 1955). These people of tent house, which was called 'cheonmak', comprised the lowest economic class in not only Seoul but also Ichon, and their habitat, or 'cheonmakchon', was distinct from those of relatively well-resourced, but still poor, residents near New Yongsan Bank, along which settled villages of wooden plank houses (called 'panjajib' or 'hakkobang') were formed. The panjajib people could build a relatively stable house because wooden wastes from nearby Eighth U.S. Army Headquarters were circulated in informal markets after the U.S. took over Japanese military base in Yongsan and turned preexisting human feces treatment site into its waste landfill (Gyeonghyang Daily, On August 28th, 1957; Sohn, 2003).

Different from such settled panjajib squatters, many of early cheonmakchon people in the White Beach lived a migratory life because summer floods hit their habitat first. Some of them settled in safer places through the city government's measures especially after 1958 flood, but seasonal migration was the life of about 20% of early East Ichon cheonmakchon people in 1963 (Donga Daily, On July 19th, 1963). Their comeback was usually made in the winter season as a Gyeonghyang Daily (On

January 14th, 1965) article reported: "an underground village of 70 poor households and 427 people was set up this winter again" (emphasis added). Tents were put up under the Hangang Bridge in the same way that tomakmins did during the Japanese colonial era. This recursive human migration pattern caused a "big headache to Seoul... just as [tomakmins] did under the Japanese rule" (Donga Daily, On July 19th, 1963).

Therefore, Seoul took similar measures to Ichon cheonmakchon people, but in a greater degree. Like Gyeongseong, the city sent 150 Ichon flood refugees (30 households) out of the city on a train on December 12, 1962 (Donga Daily, On December 20th, 1962). Unlike tomakmins to Pyeongtaik (see above), the cheonmakchon people had to make a much longer 300 km railroad trip to a port city Mokpo, where they were supposed to transfer to a ferry for an additional 150 km trip to Jeju Island (Lee, 2018). In addition to relocation programs, the city also took several cheonmakchon preventive measures in the Hangang Beach from the late 1950s including the prohibition of unlicensed housing and address registration. However, the inflow of poor people did not stop, but newcomer cheonmakchon people were excluded from social services such as disaster relief as they were delivered only to registered citizens.

Only the Beach's complete removal from 1967 to 1982 could achieve the goal of cheonmakchon's disappearance. It was a part of the CHDP, which was composed of large-scale public water reclamation projects that turned the Han River's wetlands into development sites. The projects generated a total of 7.8 km² new developable lands in Seoul (Sohn, 2003; Jung, 2010). For the projects composed primarily of terrain elevation, road building, and housing construction, Ichon's sands transported all over the city. As a result, the Hangang Beach disappeared, and Nodeulseom became physically separated from remaining Ichon as it currently is. Thereafter, as noted above, Nodeulseom remained a reserved land for development until recently.

The Beach's removal meant the disappearance of

panjajibs and cheonmaks. Ahead of the site operation, preexisting squatter settlements were relocated to remote places in Seoul, and aforementioned measures for the prevention of new arrivals were also taken. These policy actions resulted in the disappearance of the original place of East Ichon at and near Nodeulseom. At the same time, new East Ichon was built where a sports complex was planned in early 1940s during the Japanese colonial era (see above). In the new East Ichon area of 400,000 m², a high-rise residential district was built in 1969 to house three complexes of 1,313 unit apartments to be sold to government employee (Government Official Apartments), 700 high-rise condominium units (Hangang Mansion), and 500 apartment units for foreigners' lease (Foreigners' Apartments). As a result, what East Ichon meant also changed, as a 1970 Gyeong-hayng Daily (On October 2nd, 1970) reported the new high-rise neighborhood in an article entitled Seoul's New Customs: "A crowd of magnificent apartments decorates the shore of the Han River, and symbolizes the River's change. The tragedy of summer floods is overcome, and the skeleton of poverty is washed away... This area of flood and crime has become a new landmark".

IV. Conclusion: Nodeulseom, a Postcolonial Landscape?

Nodeulseom is a compound word that combines a proper noun Nodeul and a common noun "seom" meaning island. This is a purely Korean name that replaced Jungjido in a state concerted nationalist movement to erase Japanese colonial legacy in 1995. However, the renaming hardly disconnects this place from its colonial past. Despite the use of Nodeul, a traditional name of Norayngjin, the new name's identification of the place as a seom appears to continue the colonial legacy of Jungjido, with which Japan identified the place as an island when it was still a part of land. As noted in Section III, Nodeulseom's pre-

colonial names had always been associated with its land characters and human settlement. Its east Shinchori and west Shinchonri mean 'new grass village' and 'new village', respectively. Similarly, their predecessors Sapyeongri ('sandy plain village') and Sapyeongjin ('sandy plain ferry village') identified the place in relation to landform, land material, land use, and most importantly human settlement. Against these pre-colonial traditions, Nodeulseom disassociates this place from the landmass to which it belonged, just as Jungjido did. Ironically, the anti-colonial, nationalist project of the 1990s reaffirmed the place's colonial legacy of seamness.

However, the reaffirmation does not necessarily mean a fixation to the colonial past. It also entails a re-interpretation in postcolonial context. Whereas seams are where ordinary Japanese live, it is an extraordinary spatial entity in which human intervention and colonization are necessitated in the developmental state of Korea. While offering detailed explications the term 'seom', an article in *The Encyclopedia of Korea Culture* highlights "remoteness", "closure", "disconnectedness", and "isolation" as its key characteristics to differentiate it from ordinary non-seom mainland (Chang and Lee, 2011). In turn, this opposable situatedness to the "mainland" is equated with a condition of being "backward", "undeveloped", and "uncivilized", as the article's author states: "in general, due to distance from mainland, transportation is inconvenient, production is scarce...; equipment is lagging behind, income is low, and educational and cultural advantages are lacking in the soem. Thus, soems tend to remain undeveloped areas." With this elaboration, the Encyclopedia article also describes human colonization of the "undeveloped" condition as a legitimate policy intervention. Most noticeably, the late nineteenth-century's policy of promoting land people's immigration to "uninhabited islands" is described as an important progress, and the Korean state's enforcement of Islands Development Promotion Act from 1986 is referred as an important "preparation of island development era". For the development, seom's "beautiful and natural landscape" is perceived as a "precious development resource" potential

to be used for “cultural tourism”.

This encyclopedic objectification of seom as a site that needs development is primarily done with “islands on the seas”, but the modern history of their counterparts on the Han River does not tell a completely different story. Indeed, the Han River’s alluvial islands in Seoul have been a matter of development, especially during the CHDP period from 1967 to 1986, as a physical geographer Hyeok-Jae Kwon (2011) critically reviews in another article about ‘The Han River’ in the same Encyclopedia. In the late 1960s, for example, Yeouido in the Han River west was developed as an economic and political center where the headquarters of major financial institutions and corporations and the National Assembly were relocated. In the process, a nearby stony island Bamseom were blown up to use its rocks for the construction of Yeouido banks, and Ichon beach sands were transported to elevate the embanked area. In a similar way, Jamsildo in the Han River east was turned into the site of 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympic Games, and it has also been developed as a residential area of upper-middle class. Both Yeouido and Jamsil have a tourist ferry terminal, and their waterfront areas are used as an important tourism resource of the Han River and Seoul.

Those stories of alluvial seom development suggest, colonial technologies, namely architecture and urban planning, have acted as important mediums not only between pristine condition and development, but also between colonial past and developmental present. Nodeulseom’s ‘unofficial’ history that this article delves into is illustrative. Japanese Empire utilized the technologies to displace Korean-only working class village from Nodeulseom on the one hand, and boost its rule and power with transplanted modern architectural artifacts there. Public land that the Empire generated through its architectural and urban planning practices in and around Nodeulseom was a valuable resource for the ‘developmental state’ of Korea. Sandy materials on the nationalized Hangang Beach were used for infrastructure and residential development projects, and Nodeulseom was utilized to

induce private company Jingheung’s participation in the national project. Like the way that the Empire had done with modern architectures, Korea boosted its development by putting Foreigners’ Apartments in the middle of new East Ichon. Therefore, I argue, a ‘postcolonial landscape’ appears to be an adequate descriptor for Nodeulseom because it bears “the complicated and fractured histories through which colonialism passes from the past into the present” and it also helps to understand “the ways which colonial and postcolonial societies are drawn together in webs of affinity, influence, and dependence” (Yeo, 2009: 561).

The postcolonial landscape development process was always experienced unevenly. For example, whilst 500 units of the Foreigners Apartments in East Ichon were under construction by President Chung-Hee Park’s “special order” to use 2 billion Korean Won from national treasury (Maekyoung, On January 8th, 1970), only 870 apartment units for panjajib people in West Ichon were built through 348 million Korean Won city funds (Maekyoung, On January 8th, 1970). Ahead of these projects, the vast majority of cheonmakchon people on Nodeulseom and the Hangang Beach were displaced to nowhere.

None of this story or similar is found in the island’s official history (SMG, 2014), which architectural and planning professionals co-produced, even though neglecting and passing are harder than seeing in available newspaper articles, old maps, and past photographs. This also means that knowledge construction is uneven. For practices related architectural colonization were written provoking a sense of relevancy, whereas the colonized are absent. The history writers might be either unable to read socio-spatial ramifications of buildings because design-centered, and imagination-focused, disciplines blurred their gaze at realities, or unwilling to admit the presence of unevenness. In either way, the knowledge intended to ‘grow public awareness’ about Nodeulseom may grow geo-historic awareness in a particular way. Hopefully, this ‘partial’ and disciplinary ‘biased’ geohistorical description of ‘some’ unnoticed aspects of Nodeulseom may close a knowledge gap.

Notes

- 1) The Hangang Bridge is the Han River's first land transportation bridge, whose construction was followed the completion of the Hangang Railway Bridge in 1900. Two bridges are placed apart about 520 to 630 meters from each other.
- 2) Two distinguishable type bridges are bearers of its past natural environment. A girder bridge requiring many support beams could be built in its north because construction was relatively easy on the sandy area, whereas a tied-arch bridge was built to reduce weights on a smaller number of beams in the south water body.
- 3) This name had been used until 1995 when the place was renamed to Nodeulseom by a statewide effort to erase Japanese colonial legacy in place names and restore Korean traditions.
- 4) In this process, the Comprehensive Hangang Development Project (CHDP) played a key role. During the Project's first phase (1967-1974), much of the sands adjacent to Nodeulseom were used to elevate nearby waterfront areas for civil engineering construction projects including new river banks, highways, and high-rise apartment buildings. In the following second phase of CHDP (1982-1986), the sandy area was completely removed in order to increase the River's capacity of keeping water and straighten its flows. Like in the first phase, the removed sands were primarily used for urban development, but some of them were also moved to Nodeulseom to expand its length to about 730 meters and size to about 119,924 m².
- 5) The Act, which is defunct now, allowed the national government to transfer ownership as a compensation for public water development from 1962 to 2000.
- 6) In late 1970s, Jinheung created 48 tennis courts in both sides of Nodeulseom. Under Gunyoung's ownership, the east side of Nodeulseom turned into a storage yard of sands to be used for construction sites somewhere else, leaving 23 tennis courts in only the island's west side (Donga Daily, On June 1st, 1996).
- 7) The term 'situated knowledge' highlights the interpretative, contextual, and processual nature of knowledge production and consumption, and that the creation and the circulation of knowledge are necessarily influenced by specific people involved and their positionalities including identities and subjectivities. It was coined by Donna Haraway (1988) in order to demystify the positivist notion of 'objective' knowledge from a feminist perspective and emphasize knowledge production as a project and process of social construction. Situated knowledge is utilized in this paper to highlight a preexisting knowledge about the geohistory of Nodeulseom as a social construction of particular professionalism and reconstruct an alternative piece of knowledge from a human geographer's viewpoint.
- 8) The postcolonial approach refers to a critical study about how colonial relations, practices, and representations in the past are continued, reproduced, and transformed in successive postcolonial projects (Yeo, 2009). Postcolonialist geographers are particularly attentive to (1) postcolonial discourses such as orientalism, (2) colonial legacy in postcolonial spatial formations, (3) relations between the heart of empire and its margins, and (4) the political implications of postcolonial history. This paper can be categorized as the second form of postcolonial analysis with a relatively weaker association with the fourth.
- 9) This photograph is one of the most widely circulated images of Nodeulseom's past. The island is where the Hangang Bridge and the Hangang Beach met in the photograph.
- 10) Seoul's urban development began in 1392 as the capital city of the Choseon Dynasty (1392-1987), and the development was limited

within surrounding fortress walls (north on this map). After the Dynasty fell to the Japanese Empire in 1910, Japan expanded the colonial city's limit toward Yongsan in 1914 (south in the map near the Han River). This map before the Hangang River Bridge construction shows the presence of a human settlement at Nodeulseom (northern end of a dotted line crossing the River), and a 3.3 km² sandy point bar Ichon area between the River and a railway.

- 11) According to another Donga Daily (On October 3rd, 1925) report, log raft builders and railroad laborers accounted for 50 % and 20 % workers in Ichon.
- 12) The Flood affected most Yongsan area (shaded area in Fig. 4), and Ichon villages were relocated. Fig. 4 also shows the presence of New Yongsan Bank enclosing railway facilities and Japanese residential areas and excluding all Korean Ichon villages.
- 13) Before the administration boundary expansion in 1914, the urban development in Seoul was limited within a 16.5 km² area which was surrounded by 18.6 km long fortress walls. The early city boundary was placed about 5 km away from the Han River. As a result of the boundary expansion that reached to Yongsan and the Han River in its south, Seoul experienced a two-fold increase in its area to 36.2 km².
- 14) Gyeongseong's daily discharge of human feces reached about 288,000 liters in 1920s (Donga Daily, On November 29th, 1923), and it grew to 345,000 liters in 1936 (Donga Daily, On July 1st, 1936).
- 15) The Choseon River Act was enacted in 1927, and it allowed the colonial government of Choseon to nationalize the 'river areas' between opposable banks and limit private property rights for public interest.

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