

2010 년 3.1 절 (March First Independence Movement) 기념 사진 (2/27/2010)



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Korea's March 1st Independence Movement: March 1, 1919

The March 1st independence movement was one of the earliest displays of the Korean people's demonstrations against brutal Japanese occupation

The March 1st Independence Movement marks a national holiday commemorating Korea's 1919 independence against Japanese colonial rule. Korea was occupied and declared a Japanese protectorate in the 1905 Eulsa Treaty and officially annexed on August 22, 1910.

The March 1st independence movement was one of the earliest displays of the Korean people's demonstrations against brutal Japanese occupation. The peaceful nationwide movement, which gathered in momentum and number, caught Japanese authorities by surprise. In the end, the growing number of demonstrators were crushed with bloody military force.

According to official Japanese reports, 7,509 people were killed with many more injured, but in reality, those numbers are believed to be much higher.

The catalyst for the March 1st or Samil Movement came from the ["Fourteen Points"](#) outlining the right of national "self-determination" proclaimed by President Woodrow Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919.

According Lee Ki-baik, author of *A New History of Korea*, "It was the doctrine of the self-determination of nations that provided the impetus to transform the Korean nationalist movement - a movement that hitherto had trusted in the activities of exiles and of clandestine organizations, or had placed its faith in educational activities or religious movements - into a full-scale, nationwide effort regain Korea's lost independence. This doctrine was put forward by the American President, Woodrow Wilson, as an integral part of the post-World War I peace settlement, in response to the burgeoning independence movements that had arisen among the national minorities of Europe . . ."

"The principle of the self-determination of nations naturally was greeted with the greatest enthusiasm by the Korean people, suffering as they were under the harsh colonial rule of imperial Japan. Koreans were persuaded that at last the world was ready to bring an end to the 'age of force' and usher in an 'age of justice'. It was the belief that the principle of self-determination also could bring independence to Korea that thrust the Korean nationalist movement forward as a single great crying out for freedom.

"Korean patriots in exile meetings in Shanghai in January, 1919, organized the New Korea Youth Association and sent Kim Kyu-sik as its representative to the peace conference in Paris to make an appeal for Korean independence. The new organization also sent representatives to Korea, Japan, Manchuria, Siberia and other areas to explore ways to develop specific independence activities. At the same time, Cho Par-yong and other Korean students in Tokyo formed the Korean Youth Independence Corps and laid out a course of action."

Subsequently, some six-hundred students met at the Y.M.C.A Hall in Kanda, Tokyo, on February 8, 1919 and adopted a series of resolutions and issued a declaration demanding independence. Within Korea as well a new phase of the movement was being coordinated.

With funeral rites for former King Kojong scheduled to take place on March 3rd, "observances that would bring throngs of people to Seoul from all over the country," the independence organizers decided to act on March 1st.

On March 1st, 1919, "thirty-three representatives of the Korean people" formally declared

Korea's independence. Students gathered to hear the Declaration read aloud and then began marching through the streets of Seoul in peaceful procession, shouting, "Long live Korean independence!" (Tongnip manse!)

It was the greatest mass movement of the Korean people in the history of the peninsula.



"The demonstrations for independence gradually spread into the countryside, until the cries of 'Tongnip manse!' could be heard all across the length and breadth of the nation. From men and women, from old and young, from people in every walk of life, the single outcry of the whole population was for independence," Lee writes.

The movement grew into so vast a scale, it caught authorities by surprise and Japan was stunned by the enormity of the movement in which more than 2 million directly participated in more than 1,500 separate gatherings. The demonstrations also quickly spread to Manchuria, to the Russian Maritime Territory and to other overseas areas as well.

But the peaceful movement was crushed with brutal military force by the Japanese authorities. "The unarmed and peaceful demonstrators were met with a hail of bullets, while with equal wantonness the Japanese set fire to schools, and churches, and private dwellings as well." Lee says. "The reports issued by the Japanese authorities themselves record 46,948 demonstrators arrested, 7,509 killed, and 15,961 injured, while as many as 715 houses were destroyed or burned, along with 47 churches and two schools. But in reality the numbers in all these categories far exceeded those officially reported."

And with Japan, one of the victors in WWI and enjoying a strong international position, the Korea people's plea for independence failed to win support of the Western powers.

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