A political issue may happen during the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which is comparable to waving the Nazi flag at the Olympics. Korea's parliamentary committee for sports strongly complained to the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) about approving the use of the Rising Sun flag in the Olympics. JOC replied, however, that there was no political problem because the flag is used universally (CNN, 2019). In response, the Korean government asked the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for the ban of the Rising Sun flag and also plans to make international solidarity with Asian countries (e.g. China), which had previously been victims of Japanese imperialism (Chae, 2019).

The aforementioned issues have led to the following questions: (1) why does Korea react sensitively to the Rising Sun flag? (2) why does Japan allow it despite political conflicts with Korea? For Asian countries invaded by Japan, the use of the Rising Sun flag not only reminds them of the colonial history, but also causes resentment toward the Japanese government (Park, 2017). The international society prohibits the Nazi flag with strict regulations, but does not care about the Rising Sun flag. Along with this, much research has dealt with the subjects of Nazi symbolism: swastika (cf. Quinn, 2005); however, there has been no substantial research on the Rising Sun flag in the socio-historical perspective. For this reason, this study analyzes the sport and political relations between Korea and Japan with a focus on the use of the Rising Sun flag in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. In order to answer the questions, the following parts were created through this research: (1) Korea-Japan historical and political relations, (2) The origin, symbolism, and usage of the Rising Sun flag, (3) Japan’s attitude toward their past-history.

The research methods used in this study come from hermeneutics through document analysis. Peirce's semiotics was adopted as a tool for symbolic analysis of the Rising Sun flag (Peirce, 1991). The semiotics did not only deal with the definition of symbols, but also with the appropriate application in inquiry work (Chandler, 2004). By identifying the internal textuality of the Rising Sun flag’s image, this research confirmed the Korean interpretation of the flag. In order to investigate Japan's attitude toward their past-history, this study investigates using Greimas' actantial model, a theory used to evaluate behavior arising from real or fictional stories (Greimas, 1966). This research defined the relationship between the subject and the object of the actantial model before and after World War II, compared with German cases.

Unlike Europe and the United States, the relationships between Asian countries have not received much interest in research on sport and politics. Therefore, hopefully, this study will shed light on the historical perspectives of Korea and Japan. Moreover, based on the Bye-law to Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter "No kind of demonstration or political … propaganda is permitted" (IOC, 2019), this study will also contribute to providing academic data for the prohibition of the Rising Sun flag in the Olympics and other international sporting events.