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Chapter 4: Escalating History into Monumentality—Construction of Monuments

A flurry of events was reeled out to commemorate the one year anniversary of the death of Kim Jong Il.¹ The embalming of Kim Jong Il, the reopening of Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, and a mass memorial dedicated to Kim Jong Il captured the attention of the world's media, bringing to the fore the paramount position of monuments in North Korean politics. In a thank you letter to all the people who contributed to renovating the mausoleum written by Kim Jong Un and published in the *Rodong Sinmun*, the official mouthpiece of the North Korean state, Kim Jong Un likened the Kumsusan mausoleum as a sacred place, a hallowed ground of the revolution.² As the eternal resting place of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, the gist of the letter was found in Kim Jong Un's exhortation for all the people to defend the mausoleum and advance on the path trodden by the Great Leaders toward autonomy, socialism, and sŏngun (military first policy).³

The placement of the embalmed bodies of the Great Leaders in the hallowed grounds of the Kumsusan mausoleum, an immense structure located in P'yŏngyang and a symbol for the revolution, brings to light how monuments are mobilized as ideological instruments. Massive in scale, stark in features, monuments express the essence of history. They are a distillation of a vision into a punctuating, massive image. As an essential element in the vast system of cultural production, monuments are found across North Korea, mostly concentrated on key historical sites and P'yŏngyang. Images of North Koreans visiting and paying their respects at the sites of

¹ The one year anniversary of the death of Kim Jong Il was marked on December 12, 2012.

² Kim Jong Un, "Kŭmsusan T'aeyanggungjŏn ūl chuch'e ūi ch'oego sŏngjiro hullyunghi kkurinŭnde on'gat chisŏngŭl da pach'in chŏnch'e inmin'gunjangbyŏngdŭlgwa inmindŭreke," *Rodong Shinmun*, December 18, 2012, http://www.rodong.rep.kp/InterKo/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2012-12-18-0007.

³ Ibid.

monuments are widely accessible to the outside world, foregrounding the important position held by monuments in the cultural landscape of North Korea. From the towering bronze statues of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il in front of the Museum of the Korean Revolution to the equally immense Juche Tower in the center of P'yŏngyang, monuments are steeped in the revolutionary history of Kim Il Sung, using public space as the blank canvas to render history into monumental art.

The dramatization of history also transpires in monuments through the monumentality of history that is captured in them, condensing history to the Great Leaders and select heroes and heroines. Adorning the squares of P'yŏngyang and the countryside, sites imbued with the memories of historical events from the past, monuments use public space to write history.⁴ Like a drama unfolding on stage in several acts building up to a conclusion, history unfolds from public space sometimes buttressed by supporting actors. The profusion of monuments, particularly the importance of erecting statutes of the Great Leaders and sacralizing the mausoleum, speaks to the profound need to find a sense of attachment, a tangible connection to history in a real, living space. In a space where the vestiges of the past linger, monuments fulfill the actualization of the illusory revolution, connecting individuals to a greater collective in an experiential, powerful way. By writing history onto public space, monuments create a makeshift world, where the soul of the revolution is felt as an individual is absorbed into what is the black hole of Kim Il Sung.

Monuments are occupied land, transforming North Korea into Kim Il Sung land.

Through occupied land, the past is fixed in the present. A common self-evident truth about

⁴ The idea of using public space to write history stems from Susan Buck-Morss. In the Soviet context, Susan Buck-Morss writes that monuments were “public art that wrote history onto urban space.” Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 42.

monuments is their permanence, their eternity transcending time. It is the eternalness (*yŏngwŏnsŏng*) of monuments, one of the main aesthetic qualities that define monuments as indicated in a North Korean theoretical writing, which makes monuments highly attractive as ideological weapons for North Korea.⁵ As Kim Jong Il points out, monuments are artifacts, created to eternally preserve the exceptional feats of individuals and historical events for future generations.⁶ Yet monuments are not immaterial; they are chunks of stone. The eternal nature of monuments is the imperishable material—monuments are there for eternity, setting the future in stone. Monuments make the past, setting the past also in stone. A natural tension arises as monuments face history in the endeavor to mold and cast the past along a fixed revolutionary trajectory. While history is fluid and multifaceted, monuments monopolize the past by essentializing history into a single, condensed narrative. What is presented is the essence of North Korea and monuments maintain this essence by eradicating changes and possibilities. By solidifying the past, there is no more doubt about the revolution.

An integral element in monuments is their interaction with an audience. Though monuments occupy a confined space, their presence is looming, ubiquitous. Monuments are Big Brother, keeping a tab on the everyday life of the people. The immensity of monuments, towering over the people and dominating the skyline like punctuating starlight, renders the imprint monuments make greater than the actual size of the monuments themselves. Even from a distance the land is taken. Due to their sheer size, monuments seep into the everyday life of the people. The need for a felt attachment to history is achieved through the transformation of monuments into a locus of spiritual gatherings and sites of emotional engagement. As people congregate forming a communal bond to pay homage to the sacred and holy, monuments

⁵ O Taehyŏng and Ha Kyŏnggho, *Tang-ŭi ryŏngdo mit-e ch'angjak kŏlli toen taekinyŏmbitŭr-ŭi sasang yesulsŏng* (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn misul ch'ulp'ansa, 1989), 8.

⁶ Kim Chŏnggil, *Misullon* (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn rodongdang ch'ulp'ansa, 1992), 24-25.

transform into a pilgrimage site and a venue for public ceremonies, where the old and young gather to mark the rites of passage, attend synchronized rallies, and participate in school trips. Monuments are ideologically, eminently functional because they are part of the people's environment, part of the people's everyday life. The gigantic size of monuments ensures that the people are always living in the shadow of history. Monuments historicize the quotidian and they are a reminder that a single person, merely a small individual, is part of a larger, greater collective.

By the act of ritual, monuments become holy and sacred, echoing Kim Jong Un's comment on the holiness of the Kumsusan mausoleum. The importance of creating a sacred environment at the sites of monuments can be traced to sublimity (*sungŏmsŏng*), a vital aesthetic quality of monuments that transpires through the union between the people's inner world and the architectural space of the monument.⁷ Sublimity is lofty and solemn, evoking deep thoughts and emotions. Through the experience of sublimity in the everyday life of the people, monuments become a source of awe-inspiring, deeply moving veneration for the Great Leader, providing an opportunity to reflect on one's own role in the ongoing revolution. While the North Korean state expounds on the sacredness of the monuments' sites, it is worthwhile to remember that there is nothing sacred and holy about the monuments. With the exception of the Kumsusan mausoleum, the sites of monuments usually do not possess any palpable presence or relics from the past. In the case of the Kumsusan mausoleum, it is because of the presence of the embalmed bodies of the Great Leaders that the mausoleum becomes a sacred site. Moreover, what the North Korean state propagates as historical sites are, in fact, to be taken with a grain of salt. Monuments are

⁷ O Taehyŏng and Ha Kyŏngho, *Tang-ŭi ryŏngdo mit-e ch'angjak kŏlli toen taekinyŏmbitŭr-ŭi sasang yesulsŏng*, 8, 10.

representations. They are made sacred through their representations—the presentation of the essential North Korea, the immense size, the imperishable material.

Despite the artificial creation of sacredness by the North Korean state, monuments offer a unique ambiance. Certainly the presence of the embalmed bodies of the Great Leaders invests monuments with an aura of sacredness, but also the use of props such as a red flag, a gabled roof, pagoda-style architecture, postures of individuals, and epitaphs on monuments, which are all symbols of the revolution that have become common by virtue of their repetition. In fact, commonness (*t'ongsoksǒng*) is an important element in the production of monuments.⁸ While the act of repeating certain props that are easily identifiable as symbols for the revolution may seem mechanical, simply impersonal manufacturing, the repetition taking place on a massive scale and at a cloistered space, where individuals gather forming a larger body, transforms the props into a semblance of sacredness.

If the repetition of props occurs on a small scale, surely the effects of the monuments would be drastically different. The unique aura of monuments is triggered by the vast space monuments occupy. It is the totality of the experience—standing underneath the behemoth monument, seeing common symbols zoomed on an immense scale, seeing up-close imperishable materials molded aesthetically, becoming part of a community of believers—that distinguishes monuments from other mediums of art. Feeling history by witnessing the unveiling of a dramatic act becomes more effective on an endlessly vast space. All of the important aesthetic qualities for monuments set forth by the North Koreans are linked to one another by vast size. Without vast size, eternalness, sublimity, and commonness would not be as effective. Indeed, North Koreans emphasize the importance of grandness (*ungjangsǒng*), an emotional element that can be uniquely created and felt in a vast space, eliciting great inspiration, as one of the vital

⁸ Ibid., 11.

aesthetic qualities of monuments.⁹ For North Koreans, while grandness elicits emotions, the key is that it elicits a large quantity of emotions.¹⁰ Through an extensive space, monuments are meant to evoke a wave of emotions that engulfs and overpowers the people, further dwarfing the people under the greater collective.

The idea of monumentality is, therefore, both physical and spiritual—enormity in size and enormity in emotions. In this respect, North Korean monuments resemble the concept of the sublime described by David Brett.¹¹ While monuments cause astonishment and the history represented is beyond dispute, adhering to Brett's analysis that vast size, repetition, uniformity, and superhuman powers and courage are the preconditions of sublime power, North Korean monuments take sublime further by emphasizing emotion, the felt connection to history that overwhelms the senses. Overpowering emotions result from a vast, immense space. Monuments are three-dimensional and, in the case of a statue of Kim Il Sung, it is a real-life replication of the Great Leader magnified on a colossal scale. In the presence of an enormous monument, an individual is meant to feel and succumb to the overpowering greatness of the revolution. This process is provoked by the towering physicality of the monuments, but it is further accelerated by the profusion of emotions. An enormity in size translates metaphorically to an enormity of history captured in monuments. History frozen in monuments is gigantic and heroic, an awesome tidal wave that subsumes an individual into a collective—the dramatization of history. The greater the size, the greater is the diminishment of the individual, leading to the augmentation of the collective.

Despite the attractiveness of monuments, neither Kim Il Sung nor Kim Jong Il discovered monuments and their usefulness in ideologically controlling the masses. An obvious reference

⁹ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹¹ David Brett, *The Construction of Heritage* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 51-60.

point is Lenin's long cherished idea for a "monumental propaganda" through the construction of statues and monuments in the squares of Moscow, where the masses "see history as they moved through the city."¹² The penchant for monuments among leaders predates Lenin's time, traveling further back to the eighteenth-century when nation-states became immersed with the construction of monuments to glorify and recreate their past. While monument-building existed since the ancient times, national monuments became form during the mid-eighteenth-century and reached the pinnacle of their glory during the nineteenth-century with the rise of the European nation-state, its fervor also spreading to the American shores with the L'Enfant Plan that envisioned Washington, D.C. as a city of monuments.¹³ National monuments of this era borrowed several stylistic structures from the Romans—the Trajan's column, the triumphal arch, and the equestrian statute. Years later, North Korean monuments would inherit the same stylistic structures, individualized to make them their own. Closer to home during the Chosŏn period, monuments were also constructed to commemorate government officials killed by Musin rebel forces in 1728 and the government suppression of the rebel,¹⁴ showing how the construction of monuments was not relegated only to the West and perhaps how such indigenous traditions affected North Korea years later.

The tradition of glorifying and recreating a nation's past metamorphoses into the personality cult of the Great Leader in monuments. The essential North Korea is the revolutionary history of Kim Il Sung, reducing history to a single, hero-narrative. History becomes a drama because dramas are about the struggles and ultimately the triumph of heroes.

¹² Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, 42.

¹³ Matthew Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany 1871-1918* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 61-62. See Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) for a detailed analysis on the changing memorial landscape of the National Mall since its conception.

¹⁴ Andrew Jackson, "The Initiation of the 1728 Musin Rebellion: Assurances, the Fifth Columnists and Military Resources," *Korean Histories* Issue 3.2 (2013): 3-15.

Dramatization of history is personified history and nowhere is man more glorified than in Kim Il Sung's Juche ideology for Juche is all about man, a man's triumph through adversity. A hero-narrative becomes cogent through magnification. Just as immensity is incorporated into the images of Stalin in the Soviet Union,¹⁵ the gargantuan Kim Il Sung in front of the Museum of the Korean Revolution is a testament to North Korea's past, present, and future all in a single, monumental image. History's dramatic turn is the unremitting escalation of the hero into a superhuman force. The hero-narrative is an illusion, an embellished history that seeks to belie its fictitious elements by willing the illusion to life through immensity. The idea is that the illusion becomes real by imagining on a massive scale. When describing monuments, North Koreans harp on the importance of sublimity (*sungŏmsŏng*). Yet sublimity is nothing short of a contradiction. The larger and the bigger, the more sublime the history becomes. In the obsession with immensity, the more an individual becomes sucked into the sublime collective, the more the individual actually becomes detached from the sublime. In fact, there is nothing but physical suffering, destitution, an abysmal bleakness. Stripped bare to the core, only dystopia remains. In this dystopia, monuments are the trappings of a grandiose make-believe world.

When sublimity reaches its apogee, "Art leaves monuments in history."¹⁶ With the continuation of historical progress as envisioned by those with vested interests in power, monuments are a triumphant mirage, conquering land and instructing the masses by permeating into their everyday experience. Functional in form, artworks are markers of history for they create the past. Just as monuments occupy space and impose a specific historical reading of that space, so too art leaves footprints in time. With great zeal, the constructed past is proliferated on a gigantic scale because it is only through the past that the present and future are secured. The

¹⁵ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, 149.

¹⁶ Kim Chŏngil, *Misullon*, 21.

idea of leaving monuments in history is exemplified by producing artworks that feature Kim Il Sung and his revolutionary achievements, which serve as what Kim Jong Il calls the “nucleus” of socialist realist art.¹⁷ Monuments are so central to Kim Jong Il’s art theory because they immortalize and pass down Kim Il Sung’s revolutionary feats to future generations. History is represented to justify the legacy of Kim Il Sung, props are repeated to reinforce immediate identification, and vast size is utilized to conquer the individual both physically and emotionally. Monuments are living memorials to the past, readily accessible to the public for their physical conspicuousness and strategic location. Yet when historical progress crumbles, monuments also come crumbling down. As witnessed in the fall of Ceausescu’s Romania and more recently the invasion of Iraq, the enormous statues of Lenin in Bucharest and Saddam Hussein in Baghdad, the icons of monumentality at their most sublime, fell mercilessly with the disruption of historical progress. Art in its monumental form seeks to keep historical progress moving forward with an inexorable force.

Beginnings and Political Context

The construction of monuments began in the 1960s as part of the massive movement to ideologically mobilize North Korean society. With the adoption of Juche as the official ideology of North Korea by Kim Il Sung in 1965, cultural production entered a new phase to secure the total victory of socialism.¹⁸ During the 1970s, this movement became all the more intensive with the promulgation of the “Three Revolutionary Small Group Movement” with ideology,

¹⁷ Ibid., 22-23.

¹⁸ In a speech titled, “On Socialist Construction and the South Korean Revolution in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea” on April 14, 1965, Kim Il Sung outlined the main principles of Juche ideology.

technology, and culture as the three revolutions (*3 tae hyŏngmyŏng sojo undong*).¹⁹ In purpose, the “Three Revolutionary Small Group Movement” was similar to China’s Cultural Revolution that was occurring concurrently. In the field of art production, while Kim Il Sung-centered paintings on the anti-Japanese guerrilla activities and traditional revolutionary themes were created extensively during the 1960s, the deification of Kim Il Sung in the form of a personality cult took off with a force during the 1970s.²⁰ Under the direction of the Workers’ Party, one of the most important policies of this time was the production of artworks on Kim Il Sung’s revolutionary activities and leadership. The body of artworks on Kim Il Sung, along with artworks featuring the people’s struggle for socialist nation-building, is collectively considered the epitome of Juche art.²¹ During the mid-1970s, the deification of Kim Il Sung reached its apex in art production through the proliferation of a hero-narrative centered on the Great Leader. Starting in the mid-1970s, Kim Jong Il began to wield power over the direction of art by

¹⁹ The “Three Revolutionary Small Group Movement” (*3 tae hyŏngmyŏng sojo undong*) was initiated on February 13, 1972 by Kim Il Sung, and Kim Jong Il became the head of the movement in September 1972. It was a revolutionary movement to materialize the complete victory of socialism. It was an effort to ideologically, technologically, and culturally revolutionize Party leaders entrenched in old ideas so that the demands of socialism could be cultivated. The small group was an organization comprised of core Party members and young intellectuals, which was dispatched to all parts of society to realize the three revolutions. The composition of the small groups was mostly scientists, technicians, and young intelligentsia with modern education and model Party members. Ideological revolution was a human-cultivation movement to revolutionize and transform the society into the working class. It was also a political movement to increase revolutionary fervor and creativity. Technological revolution was an effort to occupy the material aspects of society during the process of transforming society into a communist society. Particularly, it was the struggle to replace antiquated technology with new technology. Cultural revolution was the struggle to resist old, reactionary culture. It was an effort to arm the workers with communist ideology and raise the level of knowledge and skills of workers. Among the three revolutions, ideological revolution was considered the most important because the complete victory of socialism and the construction of communism could not be achieved without ideological revolution. The “Three Revolutionary Small Group Movement” played an important role in the power transition from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il. Not only did Kim Jong Il take complete control over the movement in September 1972, but a significant number of former small group members joined the Workers’ Party after Kim’s takeover of the movement, serving as an important political bedrock for Kim’s support. (Sahoe kwahagwŏn Ryŏksa yŏn’guso, ed., *Ryŏksa Sajŏn* 4 [P’yŏngyang: Kwahak paek kwa sajŏn ch’ulp’ansa, 2002], 77.)

²⁰ In 1960, the North Korean government ordered its artists and sculptors to create artworks with themes on the history of the Party to be placed in the Museum of the Korean Revolution. Thus, the task of producing works focused on model communists of the 1930s, Kim Il Sung-centered anti-Japanese guerrilla activities, and traditional revolutionary themes was considered an important undertaking for the artists and sculptors (Yi Kuyŏl, Pukhan Misul 50 nyŏn, 75).

²¹ Hong Ŭichŏng, “Tang-ŭi ryŏngdo mit-e manbarhan chuch’e misul,” *Chosŏn Misul Nyŏn’gam*, ed. by Nam Minu, Kim Myŏngwŏn, Chŏng Wŏnyong, and Han Wŏn’gŭn (P’yŏngyang: Munye ch’ulp’ansa, 1992), 329-333.

increasing the production of Juche artworks. With the official designation of Kim Jong Il as Kim Il Sung's successor in 1974 and the promulgation of the "Three Revolutionary Small Group Movement," the transition of power became directly linked to accomplishments in art, setting the stage for the day when Kim Jong Il took full power.²² By the 1980s, all accomplishments in the field of art were attributed to Kim Jong Il as part of the power transition.

Within this context, monuments are part of Juche artworks and their emergence is tied to the power transition from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il. In a dictatorship, a power transition is always a slippery slope and it becomes an utmost priority to safeguard the process from potential threatening forces for those vested with power. As part of the personality cult of Kim Il Sung to shore up support for the state, monuments are usually constructed and dedicated to honor the anniversary of major historical events and accomplishments attributed to the Great Leader and other exceptional revolutionaries and to celebrate the Great Leader's milestone birthdays.²³ While monuments are praised for capturing the revolutionary accomplishments of Kim Il Sung, articles on monuments also praise Kim Jong Il for directing and undertaking the production of monuments from their initial to final stages. Kim Jong Il's guidance and vision are particularly emphasized, an unequivocal link to the transition of power by elevating the filial piety and visionary, artistic brilliance of the younger Kim. In an article on the construction of the Wangjaesan Grand Monument, Kim Jong Il is noted for displaying his exceptional expertise on how to improve the quality of the monument and guiding its successful completion with his on-

²² Kim Jong Il was elected to the Politburo of the Workers' Party in 1974 as the heir designee of Kim Il Sung.

²³ With the death of Kim Jong Il in December 2011, a new monument honoring and glorifying him was constructed. On April 13, 2012, the largest monument of Kim Jong Il in North Korea was unveiled and dedicated in P'yŏngyang. Situated next to a statue of Kim Il Sung in front of the Museum of the Korean Revolution as part of the Mansudae Grand Monument, the unveiling of the bronze statue of Kim Jong Il was part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il Sung.

the-spot instructions.²⁴ Ten years later, in an article on the construction of the Party Foundation Monument, Kim Jong Il's expertise and filial piety continue to be a central theme.²⁵ The relatively short time it took to finish the construction is attributed to Kim Jong Il's clear leadership and scrupulous teachings.²⁶ Such praise for Kim Jong Il can be seen for the construction of most other monuments in a deliberate effort to link the revolutionary legacy of Kim Il Sung to the younger Kim.

The first monument to be constructed was the Martyrs of the People's Revolutionary Army in 1959 to honor the soldiers who lost their lives in the Korean War with a renovation in 1968.²⁷ This was followed by the Ch'ollima Statue (*ch'ollima tongsang*) in 1961 and the Victory of the Battle of Poch'ŏnbo monument (*poch'ŏnbo chŏnt'u sŭngni kinyŏmt'ap*) to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the battle in 1967. Coming on the heels of Kim Il Sung's important 1966 decree, "Let us develop a revolutionary art that is national in form with socialist content," with chosŏnhwa (traditional East Asian-style ink and brush painting) as the national form,²⁸ the construction of monuments bolstered the cultural project to ideologically arm society by developing a unique style inherent to North Korea. In line with the promulgation of Juche ideology, construction of monuments flourished during the 1970s when some of the most well-known North Korean monuments were constructed.²⁹ Monuments followed the lead of

²⁴ Kim Hyŏngsu, "Widaehan ryŏngdoja Kim Chŏngil tongji-ŭi hyŏnmyŏnghaen ryŏngdo mit-e Wanjæsan dae kinyŏmbi-ŭi kŏllip," *Ryŏksa Kwahak* Issue 4 (P'yŏngyang: Kwahak paekkwa sajŏn jonghap ch'ulp'ansa, 1999).

²⁵ Pak Kisŏ, "Tang-ŭl sangjinghan sekye ch'oech'o-ŭi kinyŏmbi tang ch'anggŏn kinyŏmt'ap," *Chosŏn Yesul* Issue 10 (P'yŏngyang: Munhak yesul ch'ulp'ansa, 2009), 13.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ O Taehyŏng, "Chŏnhwa-ŭi yŏngungjŏk wihun-ŭl ryŏksa-ŭi kinyŏmbi-ro pitnaein pulmyŏl-ŭi ryŏngdo," *Chosŏn Yesul* Issue 4 (P'yŏngyang: Munhak yesul ch'ulp'ansa, 2002), 36.

²⁸ Kim Ilsŏng, "Uri-ŭi misu-rŭl minjokchŏk hyŏngsig-e sahoejuŭijŏk naeyong-ŭl tamŭn hyŏngmyŏngjŏgin misull-o palchŏnsik'ija: che-9-ch'a kukka misul chŏllamhoe-rŭl pogo misulgadŭl-gwa han tamhwa, 1966 nyŏn 10 wŏl 16 il," in *Kim Ilsŏng chŏjakchip 20* (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn rodongdang ch'ulp'ansa, 1982), 474. For a detailed article on the development of Chosŏnhwa, see Frank Hoffmann, "Brush, Ink, and Props: The Birth of Korean Painting," in *Exploring North Korean Arts*, ed. by Rüdiger Frank (Vienna: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2011), 145-180.

²⁹ Some of the most prominent monuments constructed during this time includes the Mansudae tae kinyŏmbi (Mansudae Grand Monument), Samjiyŏndae kinyŏmbi, Wangjaesanddae kinyŏmbi, Musanjigu chŏnt'u sŭngni

chosŏnhwa, cultivating their own individuality that separated them from monuments from the past. What made North Korean monuments categorically different from bygone monuments, according to Kim Jong Il, were the former's ideological content and social significance.³⁰ Unlike monuments from the past, North Korean monuments were a new form of revolutionary, people-oriented creations that markedly left Kim Il Sung's revolutionary feats in history.³¹ Thus, while monuments predating the personality cult, such as the Ch'ollima Statue, did not feature the Great Leader, those following afterwards featured Kim Il Sung with the exception of the Party Foundation Monument. Carrying on the Juche art began in the 1970s, art production in the 1980s witnessed a continuation of the personality cult of Kim Il Sung with chosŏnhwa taking the lead. As set forth by Kim Jong Il, now fully in charge of all aspects of art production, new developments and improvements in all art production, including monuments, were ordered to ideologically galvanize society.³² As a result, the 1980s, coupled with Kim Jong Il's solidification as Kim Il Sung's heir, ushered in a period of ideological fortification with the construction of new monuments glorifying Kim Il Sung's revolutionary legacy. As a change-agent, art was leaving monuments in history at this critical juncture, the engine pushing history forward through limitless escalation that became the "icon of the architecture of dictatorship."³³ By forcing the realization of an illusory history to secure the future, time halted, trapped in the monumental history of the Great Leader.

The Making of a Monument

kinyŏmbi (Musanjijgu Battle Monument), and Taesŏngsang hyŏngmyŏng nyŏlsarŭng (Revolutionary Martyrs' Cemetery).

³⁰ Pak Kisŏ, "Tang-ŭl sangjingham sekye ch'oech'o-ŭi kinyŏmbi tang ch'anggŏn kinyŏmt'ap," 13.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ri Wŏlsong, "1980 nyŏndae kinyŏmbi misul ch'angjo- e ki't-tŭn widaehan ryŏngdo," *Chosŏn Yesul 2001 Issue 9*, (P'yŏngyang: Munhak yesul ch'ulp'ansa, 2001), 10.

³³ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, 176.

As in paintings, monuments start from a Kim Il Sung-center that captures an important moment in the revolution.³⁴ The center is surrounded by a large group of people, or subsidiary subjects, which supplants the center.³⁵ Similar to the circles centered on Kim Il Sung in paintings, monuments also move in an outward direction from a center. Probably considered the most famous North Korean monument, the Mansudae Grand Monument, located in front of the Museum of the Korean Revolution in P'yŏngyang, is the embodiment of an ideal monument. Constructed in April 1972 to commemorate Kim Il Sung's 60th birthday, the monument consists of four parts and 38 subsidiary subjects composed of 229 individuals. It is mammoth and sprawling in size, displaying a towering center supported by subsidiary subjects. The colossal statute of Kim Il Sung placed in the center is the main focal point of the monument, enclosed by two additional monuments and a mural. The first supporting monument depicts the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle and the second portrays the socialist revolution and nation-building. Hanging on the front of the Museum of the Korean Revolution is a mural of Mount Paektu, the sacred mountain that is the historical root and symbol of the revolution.³⁶ The fusion of all four components, the subsidiary subjects encircling the statute of Kim Il Sung, is described as an "epic poetry-like canvas."³⁷ While epic tells a monumental story in a single canvas, poetry-like is suggestive and emotional, enormity of size and enormity of emotion seamlessly coming together on public space.

³⁴ Kim Chŏngil, *Misullon*, 112-113.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

³⁶ For a detailed discussion on North Korean murals, see Marsha Haufler, "Mosaic Murals of North Korea," in *Exploring North Korean Arts*, ed. by Rüdiger Frank (Vienna: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2011), 241-275.

³⁷ O Taehyŏng and Ha Kyŏngho, *Tang-ŭi ryŏngdo mit-e ch'angjak kŏlliptoen taekinyŏmbitŭr-ŭi sasang yesulsŏng*, 17.

The victory of the people during the Korean War also unfolds on an “epic poetry-like canvas” in the sprawling Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Monument.³⁸ Constructed in 1993 to mark the 40th anniversary of the victory of the Korean War, the monument structurally resembles a palatial garden with a front gate monument placed at the entrance. The front gate is upheld by four symmetrical columns with walls placed on either side. On each wall the years 1950 and 1953 are engraved and soldiers are placed beneath the years. On the top of the front gate, the insignia of the Workers’ Party is visible in the center with North Korean flags on either side. Below the insignia and flags, a signboard hangs with the name of the monument. After passing through the entrance gate, an enormous “cultivation ground” (*kyoyang madang*) is seen.³⁹ As the name indicates, the space is an instructive ground for cultivating the people into revolutionaries. Immediately to the left is a monument with an inscription of Kim Il Sung’s words celebrating the achievements of the soldiers. Though physically absent, the presence of the Great Leader looms large through his words engraved in his handwriting that begins the cultivation ground. Two monuments signal the beginning of the subsidiary subjects. One monument depicts the flag of the Workers’ Party while the other depicts the flag of the Korean People’s Army. A soldier stands in front of both flags. These two monuments are the prologue of a drama about to unfold. As the viewer walks further in, ten subsidiary monuments depicting pivotal battle scenes from the war proceed. The viewer is literally witnessing history unfold on public space. The central monument, towering over the subsidiary monuments, is located at the rear of the cultivation ground and is titled “Victory.” It is an image of a soldier holding the North Korean flag, shouting the victory of North Korea as he marches forward.⁴⁰ The subsidiary

³⁸ *Chosŏn kŏnch’uk* Issue 1 (P’yŏngyang: Kongŏp ch’ulp’ansa, 2005), 20. The Korean War is called the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War in North Korea.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

monuments lead up to the central monument like a drama leading up to its finale. From the front gate to the final central monument, the layout of the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Monument mimics the experience of watching a drama unfold on stage. The story is epic, supported by the eternal words of the omnipresent Kim Il Sung, each subsidiary monument captures a dramatic scene infused with emotion, and the central monument secures the present and the future.

Commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Musan battle during the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle in May 1979, the Samjiyŏn Grand Monument is centered on a massive statute of Kim Il Sung. The center captures the Kim Il Sung-led march toward the fatherland during the guerrilla struggle. Located in the Samjiyŏn region of Ryanggangdo province close to the Korean-Chinese border, the Samjiyŏn Grand Monument is composed of a beacon fire and five subsidiary monuments that surround the statue of Kim Il Sung titled the fatherland, admiration, the march, military camp, and the water of the fatherland. The beacon of fire, situated to the right of Kim Il Sung, symbolizes the torch of liberation.⁴¹ At the top, a beacon of fire made of red stone is found with red symbolizing the color of the revolution. The fatherland subsidiary monument represents the Korean People's Revolution Army's undying loyalty to Kim Il Sung and ardent love for the fatherland.⁴² The admiration subsidiary monument represents the soldiers of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army and the people's eternal admiration for Kim Il Sung.⁴³ Heeding Kim Il Sung's order to march toward the fatherland, the soldiers of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army marching proudly and racing toward the destruction of the enemy as the sound of the trumpet rings are captured in the march subsidiary monument.⁴⁴ The march

⁴¹ Ibid., 16.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

subsidiary monument is comprised of the following themes: the trumpet of advancement, the march, and the battle.⁴⁵ Conveying Kim Il Sung's order to march on, the trumpet of advancement symbolizes the revolution's flag and the march to the fatherland.⁴⁶ The military camp subsidiary monument depicts the poor conditions faced by the soldiers and Kim Il Sung as they set up a military camp to spend their first night on the march.⁴⁷ The final subsidiary monument, the water of the fatherland, represents the scene of soldiers drinking the water of Samjiyŏn and taking a rest, which captures the soldiers' strong love for their fatherland.⁴⁸ While everyone featured in the subsidiary monuments is in motion, Kim Il Sung is static. The Great Leader does not need to do anything for his presence simply is enough. He is the sun, he is superhuman, his preternatural feats shining over everyone.

As the center, the statute of Kim Il Sung, both in the Mansudae Grand Monument and the Samjiyŏn Grand Monument, towers over the subsidiary monuments. This palpable physical disparity underscores who the principle agent is in the ongoing revolution. The subsidiary monuments are important, but only insofar as they contribute to the personality cult of Kim Il Sung. The gigantic size of the monuments, particularly the statutes of Kim Il Sung, underlines the idea that enormity bullies into believing, dwarfing the people. It is here that the enormity of physical size, structured centripetally, translates to an enormity of history captured in monuments. By diminishing the individual, the collective is intensified, reinforcing the idea that an individual is meaningless unless it is part of the larger struggle for revolution. This is all the more intensified by the subsidiary monuments, moving inwards toward the center. When viewing a monument, the viewer is enclosed by the subsidiary monuments and by overpowering the viewer

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

through physical size, the monuments seek to create believers in the revolutionary history unfolding in front the viewer's eyes, forever loyal to the Great Leader, continuing the revolutionary cause into the future.

One of the uniqueness of monuments is its three-dimensional quality, which enables monuments to closely mirror real-life forms. In monuments that feature individuals, facial expressions, movements, and props are used to convey the individual's psychological condition and personality traits.⁴⁹ Through the face, posture, and the use of an individual and a group of individuals, a statue is emotionally formed.⁵⁰ Precisely because statutes are three-dimensional replications, a distortion of any part of the body destroys the external beauty of an individual and precludes the depiction of an individual's inner world.⁵¹ The emphasis on the external characterizations of an individual results in the repetition of similar features. From monument to monument, what is noticeable is the sameness in body movement and attire, or the absence of variety in the depiction of individuals, especially in the depiction of Kim Il Sung. This sense of sameness is also found in paintings in the images of the Great Leader. In the statutes of Kim Il Sung, he is usually represented in three poses: 1) standing with two feet apart and looking far out, 2) standing with an arm reaching into the sky, and 3) marching forward. The Mansudae Grand Monument, Samjiyŏn Grand Monument, and P'op'yŏngmyŏng historical site monument feature Kim Il Sung with the first pose, the Wanjaesandae Grand Monument and the victory of the battle Musanjigu Monument feature Kim Il Sung with the second pose, and the Victory of the Battle of Poch'ŏnbo monument features Kim Il Sung with the third pose.⁵² In

⁴⁹ Kim Chŏngil, *Misullon*, 111.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² P'op'yŏngmyŏng historical site monument commemorates Kim Il Sung's march from Manchuria to Man'gyŏngdae (A Thousand Miles of Knowledge) in 1923 at the urging of his father who believed that his son must know his fatherland, and the march from Man'gyŏngdae to Manchuria (A Thousand Miles of Liberation) in 1925 when Kim swore not to return to the fatherland until its liberation. The starting point for both these marches was

many of the subsidiary monuments that feature a group of individuals, the postures are also quite similar. The individuals are usually in motion, moving forward, or standing still looking far out. In many instances, the figure of Kim Il Sung is physically larger than the rest. Throughout the sea of sameness, facial expressions, however, are individualized. It is the bodies and the way the individuals are dressed that are repeated, the individuals as a whole representing a social class and category.

Considered an iconic monument in North Korea, the Juche Tower looms largely over the cityscape of P'yŏngyang. Constructed in 1982 to celebrate Kim Il Sung's 70th birthday, Juche Tower honors the Great Leader's ideological and revolutionary achievements through his Juche ideology. The center is the red beacon of fire that shoots into the sky and the three constituent elements of the Party—a laborer, a farmer, and an intellectual holding the mark of the Workers' Party. The red beacon of fire is also found on the Wangjaesan Grand Monument, equally shooting high into the sky, making the two monuments strikingly similar though with some slight differences. The mark of the Workers' Party is the center of the Party Foundation Monument (*Tangch'anggŏn'ginyŏmt'ap*). Constructed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Workers' Party and completed in 1995, the Party Foundation Monument celebrates the Great Leaders' efforts to strengthen and develop the Party, which serves as a

P'op'yŏng near the Korean-Chinese border (Sahoe kwahagwŏn Ryŏksa yŏn'guso, ed., *Ryŏksa Sajŏn* 4 [P'yŏngyang: Kwahak paekkwa sajŏn ch'ulp'ansa, 2002], 267.)

Constructed in 1975 and located in North Hamgyŏng province, the Wangjaesandae Grand Monument honors the March 1933 Wanjaesan meeting led by Kim Il Sung. During this meeting, Kim Il Sung laid out the revolutionary principles and strategies that the people and the Korean People's Revolutionary Army must carry out into the future. The primary strategy was to expand the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle to the fatherland (O, Taehyŏng and Ha Kyŏnggho, *Tang-ŭi ryŏngdo mit-e ch'angjak kŏlli toen taekinyŏmbi tŭr-ŭi sasang yesulsŏng*, 99).

Like the Samjiyŏn Grand Monument, the Musanjigu Monument commemorates the Musan battle. Constructed in May 1971, the Musanjigu Monument is located in Ryanggang province and precedes the Samjiyŏng Grand Monument. The Musanjigu Monument was renovated and unveiled in 2002 with a statue of Kim Il Sung (Ch'oe Wŏnch'ŏl. "Musan chigu chŏnt'u sŭngni kinyŏmt'ab-ŭl ch'at-ŭn tongp'o-tŭl," Naenara, May 2011, <http://naenara.com.kp/ko/periodic/kumsugangsang/index.php?contents+5446+2011-05+113+22>).

model for Juche ideology.⁵³ Shaped like a circle to symbolize the unity of the leader, party, and people, the monument is composed of three hands of a laborer, a farmer, and an intellectual holding a hammer, sickle, and brush—the mark of the Workers’ Party—vertically shooting up. On the exterior of the circle supporting the three hands, a slogan is engraved: “Long Live the Workers’ Party that is the Organizer of all the Victories of the Korean People!” This slogan is supported by the words “*paekchŏnbaeksŭng*” (invincibility) on either side of the monument on top of two buildings. The placement of two words on either side of a monument is also found in the Juche Tower, where the words “*ilsimdan’gyŏll*” (single hearted unity) on two buildings located on each side of the tower function to shore up support for the revolution under the ruling family.⁵⁴ These buildings physically frame the monuments and the words interpret them. The words are a legend for reading the monuments. Postures, structural patterns, and certain props become instantly recognizable and, thus, common through repetition. Enhanced by the physical enormity of the monuments, repetition has the effect of inculcation—the more one sees a motif the more one becomes indoctrinated.

Showcasing Monuments

⁵³ Chŏn Myŏngsu, “Tang ch’anggŏn kinyŏmt’ap,” *Chosŏn Yesul* Issue 10 (P’yŏngyang: Munhak yesul ch’ulp’ansa, 2003), 11.

⁵⁴ What is interesting about the Establishment of the Workers’ Party Monument is the placement of the subsidiary monuments inside the circle. The first subsidiary piece captures the revolutionary history of the Workers’ Party by depicting soldiers from the Korean Revolutionary Army, a laborer, and a farmer with a red flag in the background. On either side of the first piece, scenes depicting Korean Revolutionary Army soldiers fighting the Japanese and the unity between the leader, party, and people are found. The second subsidiary piece features a laborer, farmer and an intellectual linked in arms, symbolizing the invincibility of the Workers’ Party, in the center. Anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle fighters and a new generation of students are seen on the left of the center. To the right of the center, a university student and a female student are featured, symbolizing the unity of society that has inherited the anti-Japanese revolutionary legacies of Kim Il Sung and the continuation of the revolution into the future (Pak Kisŏ, “Tang-ŭl sangjinghan sekye ch’oekh’o-ŭi kinyŏmbi tang ch’anggŏn kinyŏmt’ap,” 14).

Where to place a monument is just as crucial as picking an appropriate center in the making of a monument. Monuments are created to reflect the aspirations and desires of the people and, as a result, they must be placed in meaningful locations where many people will be able to see and access them.⁵⁵ Locations where the vestiges of war linger that are embedded with Kim Il Sung's revolutionary accomplishments, historical sites, and the city center's best spots are the most ideal locations to place monuments.⁵⁶ In addition, monuments must blend harmoniously with the natural environment and the city's architecture.⁵⁷ It is when this harmony is achieved that monuments reveal the beauty of their sublimity and arouse the ideological emotions (*sasang kamjǒng*) and aesthetic feelings (*mijǒkchǒngsǒ*) of the people.⁵⁸

Emotion is central to the theme of monumentality and location contributes to increasing the emotionality of monuments. A location enhances the way a viewer interacts with the monument. Located in central P'yŏngyang, Juche Tower occupies a large open space overlooking the Taedong river. Supporting buildings next to the tower blend fluidly into the landscape and the tower's strategic location enables easy access for the people.⁵⁹ From the location of the Juche Tower, people can view the sprawling panorama of P'yŏngyang and the beauty of the Taedong River.⁶⁰ While the immensity of the tower and its central location contribute to the tower's easy physical accessibility, the natural landscape– the river and the panoramic views of the city– contributes to emotionally enhancing the revolution. Numerous monuments are concentrated in central P'yŏngyang, including the Mansudae Grand Monument,

⁵⁵ Kim Chǒngil, *Misullon*, 114.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ *Chosŏn kǒnch'uk*, 15.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

the Party Foundation Monument, the Arch of Triumph (*Kaesŏnmun*), and the Victory of the Fatherland Liberation War Monument (*Chokuk haebang jŏngjaeng sŭngni kinyŏmt'ap*).⁶¹ These monuments, dotted along the major thoroughfares and squares of P'yŏngyang, punctuate the city's landscape. Without these iconic monuments, P'yŏngyang is virtually unfathomable.

Monuments located in P'yŏngyang are deemed necessary because they help to create a socialist city in the crux of power. Though supported by some aspects of nature as in the case of Juche Tower, monuments in P'yŏngyang are largely shaped by their urban setting. Being present in the center of power, the heartbeat of the revolution amidst socialist realist architecture, elevates the emotionality of witnessing history unfold in monuments. Yet monuments can also be imbued with deep emotions in locations far from the center of power. Though physically distant from P'yŏngyang, monuments located on historical sites derive a large part of their emotional impact from their historical locations. The Samjiyŏn Grand Monument is located on Samji pond, a spot from where the sacred Mount Paketu is visible.⁶² All elements of the monument are placed to highlight the pond, the forest of the surrounding area, and the beauty of the natural nature of the location.⁶³ The Wanjaesan Grand Monument, Victory of the Battle Musanjigu Monument, and the Victory of the Battle of Poch'ŏnbo Monument, too are located on historical sites. Historical sites are sacred places, where history literally lives on, the lingering memories of historical events forever woven into the sites. Many of these sites, located in the northern-most region of North Korea are surrounded by mountains. Set against this natural landscape, these historical sites create an ambiance of holiness that is meant to trigger an overpowering admiration for Kim Il Sung.

⁶¹ Constructed in 1982 and modeled after Paris' Arc de Triomphe, the Arch of Triumph, exalts Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese activities. On the southern pillar the years 1925 and 1945 are engraved—1925 marking the year Kim Il Sung departed his home for the liberation of Korea and 1945 marking the liberation of Korea from Japan.

⁶² *Chosŏn kŏnch'uk*, 16.

⁶³ Ibid.

From Monuments to Paintings and Posters

If monuments are meant to be eternal, overpowering the viewer through their immense size and emotions, the eternalness of monuments is further perpetuated in paintings. In paintings, monuments are rendered miniscule, the three-dimensionality transformed into a two-dimensional depiction. A representation within a representation, paintings of monuments offer a different aesthetic effect than the real-life monuments. Unlike the correction of the painting *Mass Gathering to Welcome the Return of the Great Leader of the Revolution, Comrade Kim Il Sung* and its transformation into an immense, freestanding mosaic mural *Cheers of the Whole Nation*, monuments are not overtly tweaked and corrected in their depictions in paintings.⁶⁴ This is perhaps due to the quality of monuments as opposed to a painting, which has more material that could be added and erased. Rather than outright corrections, the portrayal of monuments in paintings are more aesthetically enhanced and beautified with the help of coloring, light, and shade. Monuments are also more contextualized in paintings, capturing an action scene with a monument in focus or serving as a symbolic object comprising a larger scene.



Fig. 1

⁶⁴ Frank Hoffmann, “Brush, Ink, and Props: The Birth of Korean Painting,” 160. Marsha Haufler, “Mosaic Murals of North Korea,” 260-261.



Fig. 2

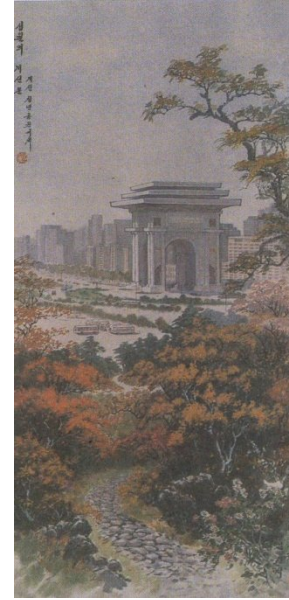


Fig. 3

A painting of the Juche Tower from 2000 (figure 1) illustrates the aestheticization of monuments.⁶⁵ While the tower is obviously the central theme, the surrounding environment is also given great consideration. Depicting a side view of the tower, the painting is awash in iridescent reds, oranges, and yellows. The intense, vibrant coloring suggests the beauty of dusk, the tower engulfed in red and the sky glowing luminously in a mixture of red, orange, and yellow lights. The tower's beacon of fire is set against the backdrop of the yellow sky, its red glow prominently standing out. Capturing a monument amidst the beauty of the natural environment is also found in the depictions of the Arch of Triumph. Two paintings of the Arch of Triumph show subtle changes in the depiction of nature. *The Arch of Triumph's Morning* (figure 2) portrays the Arch of Triumph from a side angle.⁶⁶ Bright red, pinkish and white flowers are placed on the lower left side of the painting, closest to the viewer, and a sense of depth is created.

⁶⁵ Kim, Sangsun, ed., *Chuch'e yesul-ŭi pitna-nŭn hwap'ok*, (P'yŏngyang: Munhak yesul chonghap ch'ulp'ansa, 2001), 66.

⁶⁶ *Chosŏn Misul Nyŏn'gam* (P'yŏngyang: Munye ch'ulp'ansa, 1989), 128.

The view of the Arch of Triumph is seen from behind these flowers, the proximity to the monument tangible. The surrounding buildings are faintly visible and seagulls are flying. While the flowers indicate spring, *October's Arch of Triumph* (figure 3) is set in fall.⁶⁷ Vertical in layout as opposed to *The Arch of Triumph's Morning's* horizontal layout, *October's Arch of Triumph* is seen from a more distant, higher position. The view begins from a stone pathway surrounded by shrubberies awash in fall's deep, lustrous foliage. The shrubberies and a lone tree branch placed on the top right hand side frame the painting. The Arch of Triumph is placed behind this frame and, similar to the *The Arch of Triumph's Morning*, a sense of visual depth is created.



Fig. 4

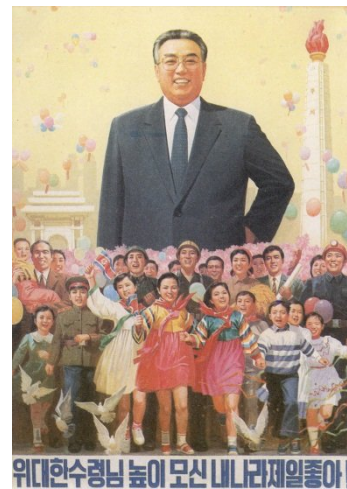


Fig. 5

The Ch'ollima Statue, constructed to celebrate the reconstruction of North Korea after the devastation of the Korean War, features a male laborer and a female farmer holding a sheaf of rice, riding a horse with wings shooting up toward the sky. In a painting from 2000 (figure 4), the Ch'ollima Statue is captured amidst a rally taking place below related to the Ch'ollima

⁶⁷ *Chosŏn Misul Nyŏn 'gam* (P'yŏngyang: Munye ch'ulp'ansa, 1991), 94.

movement.⁶⁸ The view begins from the top, close to the Ch'ollima Statue, and descends to the rally. The crowd of people far below is visible only faintly, emphasizing the distance from the top to bottom and the height of the statue, and creating a sense of depth. The numerous trees in the background are hazy and softened, which contribute to highlighting the Ch'ollima Statue in the center. In the painting titled *My Country that Highly Takes Care of the Great Leader is the Best!* (figure 5), the Arch of Triumph and the Juche Tower are placed on each side of a massive Kim Il Sung, placed strategically in the center.⁶⁹ This painting shows how monuments comprise a larger scene. In front of Kim Il Sung is a large group of people, diverse in age and occupation, considerably smaller than he is. In this painting, both the Arch of Triumph and the Juche Tower function as symbols representing the greatness of Kim Il Sung, which is literally exemplified by his physical enormity compared to the other individuals in front of him.



Fig. 6

⁶⁸ Kim, Sangsun, ed., *Chuch'e yesul-ŭi pitna-nŭn hwap'ok*, 66.

⁶⁹ Kang, Sŏngguk, *Kukka misul chŏllamhoe hwach'ŏp* (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn misul ch'ulp'ansa, 1994), 53.

Monuments also feature commonly in propaganda posters.⁷⁰ Posters are aggressive and bold; they are an immediate, combative call to action. They are a message on how people should behave. Unlike paintings, posters are much less aestheticized and more militant. While paintings have a more visual sense of depth, posters have the effect of flattening. In posters, monuments are rendered literally flat, all sense of their three- dimensionality eradicated. Monuments are not freestanding. Instead, in posters, they function as central or supporting symbols that seek to militarize the masses under the banner of a catchy, belligerent slogan. The natural landscape that envelops and the subsidiary monuments that comprise some monuments are discarded. Monuments are usually stripped bare to their central element as part of a larger image. Structurally, posters are usually composed of several elements that form an image. Monuments function as one of these elements. The function of monuments is well-illustrated in a poster titled *Let's Unswervingly Protect P'yŏngyang, the Heart of Korea* (figure 6).⁷¹ In this poster, the city of P'yŏngyang is featured as the capital of revolution and depicted under the image of a menacing soldier holding a bayonet. A hodgepodge of various monuments are featured in the poster—the Juche Tower, the Party Foundation Monument, and the Arch of Triumph—and few other landmarks.⁷² The depiction of P'yŏngyang is not the actual layout, but an essentialized version of the city. The selected monuments and the landmarks as a whole symbolize P'yŏngyang as the revolutionary capital of the world. Here, again, the theme of commonness permeates. The selected monuments are common because they are synonymous with P'yŏngyang. These monuments are instantly recognizable and instantly associated with the revolution and Kim Il Sung. What is germane is not the real-life depiction of the layout of

⁷⁰ For a collection of North Korean propaganda posters, see David Heather and Koen De Ceuster, *North Korean Posters: The David Heather Collection* (Munich: Prestel, 2008).

⁷¹ Ibid., 219.

⁷² These landmarks are the May Day Stadium, the Grand People's Study House on Kim Il Sung Square, and the Koryo Hotel (David Heather and Koen De Ceuster, *North Korean Posters: The David Heather Collection*, 219).

P'yŏngyang, but the representation of an ideal, the essential North Korea. In this ideal, monuments, just like paintings, are didactic tools, powerful symbols of the revolution that instruct the viewers to struggle for the revolution into the future.