Buddhist writers in colonial Korea: Rethinking Korean literature, religion and history during the colonial period, 1910-1945

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Introduction

This study on a group of Buddhist writers active in colonial Korea (1910-1945) is part of a broader attempt to look into the complex process of interaction between religion and literature in producing history during the colonial period. When studying colonial history, it is a salient feature of the period that religion and literature took a prominent role. One may remember that the monumental March First Movement in 1919 was led mainly by *Ch'ŏndogyo* (an indigenous religion), Christian and Buddhist religious leaders. Cultural nationalism in the 1920s was under the guidance of devout Protestant Christians such as Yun Ch'iho and An Ch'angho. Authors were actively engaged in many fields as journalists, priests, schoolteachers, scholars of history or law, and leaders of nationalist and socialist movements. Religious and literary figures were influential social actors who had close contact with the public as well as the colonial authorities and were concerned with social, cultural, and political events and affairs, large or small. It is also no coincidence that many wartime collaborators at the end of the colonial period were either religious figures or literary writers.

The existing dominant scholarship particularly in Korea on the role and meaning of religion and literature for a long time has been conditioned by a nationalist historical perspective, which limits relevant research to the single theme of national resistance against the Japanese colonial power. The description of colonial period literature often begins with the major premise that it was a period of economic hardship and mental distress due to Japanese exploitation and repression. The Korean nation (*Han minjok*) fought against colonialism and demonstrated their national strength in various fields of economy, society, and culture. The motive that dominated the literary consciousness of authors in this period was nothing else but the wish to express their anger with the pen. Facing the national ordeals, writers are assumed to have shown a spirit of resistance or non-conformist attitudes, and made an effort to protect the nation and boost the national spirit of the people.[1]

What tends to be emphasized in the general history of Korea concerning religion is confrontation with the Japanese government and religious service to the Korean nation (*minjok* or *kyŏre*). Korean Buddhists tried to guard their tradition from the penetration of Japanese Buddhism and governmental control. Such efforts to protect religion were nothing different from the anti-Japanese movement.[2] Korean Christian churches brought

[1] Yi Myŏngjae 李明宰, *Singminji shidae Han'guk munhak* 植民地時代의 韓國文學 (Seoul: Chung'ang taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1991); Kim Yunsik and Kim Hyŏn 김윤식 김현, *Han'guk munhaksa* 한국문학사 (Seoul: Minŭmsa, 1973/2000); Cho Tong'il 조동일, *Hanguk munhak t'ongsa* 5 한국문학통사 5 (Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa, 2005).

[2] Kim Kyŏngjip 金敬執, *Han'guk kŭndae Pulgyosa* 한국근대불교사 (Seoul: Kyŏngsŏwŏn, 1998/2000); Chŏng Kwangho 정광호, *Ilbon ch'imnakshigi-ŭi Hanil Pulgyo kwanggyesa* 일본침략시기의 한일불교관

modernization to Korea and made a major contribution to political anti-Japanese struggles. Christians labored to save the Korean people in the midst of hardship and despair and shared joy and sorrow with them.[3] New religions such as Ch'ŏndogyo are often regarded as the defenders of the national spirit against foreign encroachment of Japan and the West.

However, the relationship of religion, literature, and colonial history is much more diverse, complicated, and controversial than we habitually assume. The majority of (Christian/Catholic/Buddhist) believers actually conformed to the colonial rule and tried to concentrate on their religious and spiritual practice without regard to political affairs.[4] It is problematic to consider the conflation of religion with politics and religious support to Korean nationalist movements as natural and justifiable. The assassination committed by a religious person for the sake of the nation is a question causing controversy rather than a source of pride and compliment.[5] We need to question if it is realistic to assume that all Korean writers only thought of national independence, and clung to the single theme of resistance without consideration of their job, family, and livelihood. Or, if a literary work is poorly written, is it still a great work if it deals with the national spirit? While he blatantly acted as a pro-Japanese collaborator, Yi Kwangsu devoted himself to Buddhist exercise. Is such a man morally depraved due to his political choice? There are many other questions which do not neatly fit into the nationalist interpretation of religion and literature.

I became aware that the nationalist historical perspective is one fundamental problem that should be dealt with first. As a recent surge of scholarly works points out, this perspective is too simplistic and skewed to capture the complexity of the colonial history of Korea. It makes religion and literature completely subservient to the central concerns of the nationalistic view; in other words, it transforms them into nothing but ideological tools for national politics. It excludes the possibility that religious/literary ideals and goals can be in discord with the national aspirations and that religious and literary figures had divergent responses to colonialism and not just manifested

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계사 (Seoul: Aŭmdaun sesang, 2001); Kim Sunsŏk 김순석, *Ilcheshidae Chosŏnch'ŏngdokpu-ŭi Pulgyo chŏngch'aek-kwa Pulgyogye-ŭi taeŭng* 일제시대 조선총독부의 불교정책과 불교계의 대응 (Seoul: Kyŏngin munhwasa, 2003/2004).

[3] Min Kyŏngbae 閔庚培, *Han'guk Kidokkyohoesa* 韓國基督敎會史 (Seoul: Yŏnse taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1993/2002); Yi Manyŏl 이만열, *Hanguk Kidokkyo-wa minjok ŭisik: Han'guk Kidokkyosa yŏn'gu non'go* 한국기독교와 민족의식: 한국기독교사연구논고 (Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa, 1991/2000).

[4] Chang Kyusik 장규식, *Ilcheha Han'guk Kidokkyo minjokjuŭi yŏn'gu* 일제하 한국 기독교 민족주의 연구 (Seoul: Hyean, 2001), pp.74-75; Kim Kwangsik 김광식, *Kŭnhyŏndae Pulgyo-ŭi chae chomyŏng* 근현대불교의 재조명 (Seoul: Minjoksa, 2000), p.23; Pori Park, "Korean Buddhist Reforms and Problems in the Adoption of Modernity during the Colonial Period in *Korea Journal* (Spring 2005):87-113, pp.106-107.

[5] In this light, we need to critically think about Yun Sŏnja's study on Catholicism in Korea. From the nationalist perspective, she regrets that Catholicism was passive and less contributive to national movements. Restoring An Chunggŭn who assassinated Korea's enemy Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 in 1909 as a true Catholic national fighter, she re-nationalizes Catholicism. See Yun Sŏnja 윤선자, *Han'guk kŭndaesa-wa chonggyo* 한국근대사와 종교 (Seoul: Kukhak charyowŏn, 2002).

a single spirit of resistance. For a more nuanced and fuller understanding of the meaning and role of religion and literature, I found it necessary to avoid the limitations of the nationalist historical perspective and to seek an alternative or different view of colonial history.

I was not alone in this endeavor. Many scholars have recently worked on challenging the nationalist master narrative and presented a more complex and diversified vision of colonial history.[6] Historians, in particular, have critically tackled and demystified the status of the nation as a single monolithic agent of national history[7] and explored more diverse social agents such as women, laborers, and peasants whose various experiences, needs, interests, and self-oriented activities cannot be homogenized into nationalist independence movements.[8] They have also labored to draw a more subtle and complex landscape of colonial Korea, confronting the simplistic binary of colonial repression/exploration versus national resistance, and bringing the interplay between colonizer and colonized to light. In doing so, they have headed toward a postnationalist and postcolonial historiography on the colonial period.

Such attempts have brought a remarkable change to various fields of study previously affected by the nationalist perspective and triggered in-depth studies and analyses. But looking closely into the question of what sparked this historical reappraisal, it is surprisingly methodologies, theories, and sources of other fields of studies that have provided a new and alternative way to an understanding of colonial history. Diverging from the "classical" history which

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[6] Yonson Ahn and Koen de Ceuster succinctly summarize issues, changes and trends in recent scholarship on the history of colonial Korea. See Yonson Ahn, "Introduction: De-nationalising and Re-nationalising the Past" in *Contested Views of a Common Past: Revisions of History in Contemporary East Asia*, edited by Steffi Richter (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2008), pp.11-21; and "The Colonial Past in post-colonial South Korea: Colonialism, Modernity and Gender" in Ibid, pp.157-180; Koen De Ceuster, "When History Matters: Reconstructing South Korea's National Memory in the Age of Democracy" in Ibid, pp.73-98.

[7] E.g., Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 1895-1919 (Columbia University Press, 2002); Henry H. Em, "Minjok as a Modern and Democratic Construct: Sin Ch'aeho's Historigraphy" in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, edited by Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp.336-361; Yun Haedong 윤해동, *Singminji-ŭi hoesaekchidae: Han'gug-ŭi kŭndaesŏng-gwa singminjuŭi pip'an* 식민지의 회색지대: 한국의 근대성과 식민주의 비판 (Seoul: Yŏksa pip'yŏngsa, 2003); Im Chihyŏn 임지현, *Minjokjuŭi-nŭn panyŏkida: sinhwa-wa hŏmu-ŭi minjokjuŭi tamnon-ŭl nŏmŏsŏ* 민족주의는 반역이다: 신화와 허무의 민족주의 담론을 넘어서 (Seoul: sonamu, 1999/2008); Pak Noja and Hŏ Tonghyŏn 박노자, 허동현, *Uri yŏksa ch'oe jŏnsŏn* 우리역사 최전선 (Seoul: P'urŭn yŏksa, 2003).

[8] Clark Sorensen, "National Identity and the Creation of the Category "Peasant" in Colonial Korea" in in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, edited by Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp.288-310; Joong-Seop Kim, "In Search of Human Rights: The Paekchŏng Movement in Colonial Korea" in Ibid, pp.311-335; Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910-1945* (University of California Press, 2008); Mun Okp'yo et al, *Shin yŏsŏng: Han'guk-kwa Ilbon-ŭi kŭndae yŏsŏngsang* 신여성: 한국과 일본의 근대 여성상 (Seoul: Ch'ŏngnyŏnsa, 2003); Hyaeweol Choi, "Wise Mother, Good Wife": A Transcultural Discursive Construct in Modern Korea" in *The Journal of Korean Studies* 14.1 (Fall 2009):1-34.

usually focused on political and economic issues, recent scholarship has become aware of colonial history as a site where political studies, economics, sociology, cultural and gender studies, psychology, geography, and anthropology are intertwined. By applying sociological, cultural, and anthropological theories and methods, for instance, socio-cultural history, the history of everyday life, and oral history focusing on individuals' experiences and voices enter into a new mainstream of study on colonial Korea.[9]

Religion and literature: An interdisciplinary approach to colonial history

I argue in this study that religion and literature are key fields to illuminate the diversity and complexity of history and that they deserve to be the focus of postnationalist and postcolonial studies. Religious historians have made efforts to question the nationalist take on religion. They have noticed that the reactions of religious leaders to modern colonial society were not homogeneous at all. For example, critically reappraising the notions of "Buddhism for protecting the nation" (*hoguk Pulgyo*) and celibacy as the general characteristics of Korean Buddhism, they have come to claim that the assumption that religion should serve the nation or state or the equation of religious and political identities cannot be simply justified as morally correct and politically patriotic. Rather, it needs to be critically discussed with regard to its strong connection with similar Japanese notions and its tendency to ignore the possible diversity of interests among Korean Buddhists.[10]

Ken Wells's insights and arguments concerning the relation between religion and politics have been particularly important for my investigation. He points out how if one approaches religion as a crucial part of cultural history, the claims attached to the concepts of nation, state, and religion can collide with each other.. Religion and nationalism as cultural expressions bring into light tensions and conflicts as well as intimate connections between these concepts.[11] Yet, he admonishes researchers not to "reduce" religion to a mere constituent element of culture and argues that to believers, religion may be the most

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[9] Yonson Ahn, "The Colonial Past in post-colonial South Korea: Colonialism, Modernity and Gender" pp.170 and 176; Koen De Ceuster, "When History Matters" p.92.

[10] Kim Kwangsik 김광식, *Kŭnhyŏndae Pulgyo-ŭi chae chomyŏng* 근현대불교의 재조명 (Seoul: Minjoksa, 2000), p.17; Robert E. Buswell, "Imagining "Korean Buddhism" in *Nationalism and the Construction of Korean Identity* edited by. Hyun II Pai & Timothy R. Tangherlini (University of California, 2001), pp.73-107; Gregory Evon, "Contestations over Korean Buddhist Identities: The "Introduction" to the Kyŏnghŏ-jip" in *The Review of Korean Studies* 4.1, (2001):11-33, p.13; Kim Jongmyŏng 김종명, *Hanguk chungse-ŭi Pulgyo ŭirye: sasang-chŏk paegyŏng-gwa yŏksa-jŏk ŭimi* 한국중세의 불교의례: 사상적 배경과 역사적 의미 (Seoul: Munhak-kwa chisŏngsa, 2000), pp.146-150; Pankai N. Mohan, "Beyond the "Nation-protecting" Paradigm: Recent Trends in the Historical Studies of Korean Buddhism" in *The Review of Korean Studies* 9.1 (march 2006):49-68.

[11] Ken Wells, *New God, New Nation: Protestants and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea, 1896-1937* (Allen &Unwin Pty Ltd, 1991), transl. In Soo Kim, *Sae hananim sae minjok* 새 하나님 새 민족 (Seoul: Publishing House The Presbyterian Church of Korea, 1997), pp.13-41.

fundamental part of their lives and be central to all other activities, including those of a nationalist nature.[12] I agree with his assertion that religion "suggested ideas and directions of change to significant numbers of Koreans…inspired whole programs of social reform…and motivated national leaders and their followers to take decisive action in relation to the challenges of their times - in short, religious beliefs determined key positions historical figures held and acted upon."[13] Seeing religion as a motivating force of history and a source for the richness of historical experiences, he strongly suggests that we should "restore religious language and metaphors to discourse about history and society".[14]

Boudewijn Walraven has pointed out that some religious narratives provide alternatives to the mainstream national history on colonial Korea. He argues that religious leaders and philosophers, novelists, poets, playwrights, politicians, journalists, and media personalities all contribute to the representation of history. According to him, "Korea offers a striking example of non-professional historiography influencing professional historians in the early part of the twentieth century, when religiously motivated historical views originating in *Taejonggyo*, the cult of Tan'gun, gained wide currency outside their original context".[15] New religions in the general history of Korea are often regarded as the defenders of the national spirit against foreign encroachment, of both Japan and the West. However, his close investigation reveals their alternative discourses of history, i.e. in one particular case, resistance against the Japanese, goes against the divine plan, colonization is the way Japan serves Korea in penance for the crimes they committed during the Imjin War, and God chose Japan as protector against the West. Thus, Walraven argues, religion provides us with a wide range of historical narratives, contested interpretations of the turbulent events of the twentieth century in the light of religious teachings and various collective representations of Korean history.

Reading colonial literature as nothing else but the creative work of an author or as a political instrument for achieving national liberation is seen as an outdated method these days. In recent years, more and more scholars take interest in literary texts as cultural products and alternative sources for socio-political history.[16] Literature may bring us closer to the lived experience of people and shed light on various facets of social and cultural life as it was

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[12] See particularly his article "Providence and Power: Korean Protestant Responses to Japanese Imperialism" in *Reading Asia*, edited by Frans Huesken & Dick van der Meij (Richmond, Survey: Curzon, 2001) pp.154-172.

[13] Ken Wells, "The Failings of Success: The problem of religious meaning in modern Korean historiography" in *Korean Histories* 1.1, 2009, p.62.

[14] Ibid., pp.63-64.

[15] Boudewijn Walraven, "The Parliament of Histories: New Religions, Collective Historiography, and the Nation" in *Korean Studies* 25.2 (2001):157-178, p.158.

[16] Korea, Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Narratives of Nation Building in Korea: A Genealogy of Patriotisms* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003); Kyeong-Hee Choi, "Neither Colonial nor National: The Making of the "New Woman" in Pak Wansŏ's "mother's Stake I" in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, pp.221-247.

shaped in colonial society, such as the realities of daily life, gender, free love, marriage, poverty, migration and the conditions of the diaspora, print capitalism, the consumption of material modernity, and urban landscapes.[17] It is colonial literature, too, that opens a new way of understanding colonialism and how it was a deeply "psychological" matter. As scholars such as Ashis Nandy argue, colonialism was not only about political domination or economic gains. It was to colonize the mind, using a gendered and sexually allegorized vision of the colonial relationship. The colonized thus had to cope with a profound psychological transformation.[18] Nowhere else but in the powerful language of literature are captured the feelings of loss, melancholy, a sense of the unheroic nature, desire for power, fear, and self-pity that were underlying the colonial relationship.[19]

As post-colonial studies articulate, "literature and literary study in the academy have been crucial sites of political and cultural struggle with the most far-reaching results for the general history and practices of colonization and de-colonization".[20] The definition of the term "postcolonial" may be still debatable. It may simply indicate the aftermath of colonialism and it might be confused with anti-colonial nationalism. Postcolonial studies, in the general sense, imply an acknowledgement of the interaction between colonizer and colonized both ways and between imperial culture and indigenous cultural practices. It explores diverse and complex reactions to colonialism beyond the single narrative of resistance nationalism and challenges the dichotomous opposition between colonialism and nationalism, as well as the conventional discourse of political dominance and resistance.

Post-colonial critics stress the importance of the literary texts as a site where colonizer and colonized encounter each other, the dynamics of domination and subjugation and control and subversion are shaped, and a complex and mutually interactive process of identity formation takes place.[21]

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[17] Kwŏn Podŭrae 권보드래, *Yŏnae-ŭi shidae: 1920-nyŏndae ch'oban-ŭi munhwa-wa yuhaeng* 연애의 시대: 1920년대 초반의 문화와 유행 (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa yŏn'gu, 2003/2004); Yi Sanggyŏng 이상경, *Han'guk kŭndae yŏsŏng munhaksa ron* 한국근대여성문학사론 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2002); Jiwon Shin, "Recasting colonial space: nationalist vision and modern fiction in 1920s Korea" in *Journal of international and area studies* 11.3 (2004):51-74; Munhak-kwa pip'yŏng yŏn'guhoe 문학과 비평 연구회, *1930-nyŏndae munhak-kwa kŭndae ch'ehŏm* 1930년대 문학과 근대체험 (Seoul: Ihoe munhwasa, 1999); Ch'ŏn Chŏnghwan 천정환, *Kŭndae-ŭi ch'aek ilkki: Tokcha-ŭi t'ansaeng-gwa Han'guk kŭndae munhak* 근대의 책 읽기: 독자의 탄생과 한국 근대문학 (Seoul: P'urŭn yŏksa, 2003).

[18] Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism (Oxford University Press, 1983/2009); T.M. Luhrmann, The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society (Harvard University Press, 1996).

[19] T.M. Luhrmann, *The Good Parsi*, p.6.

[20] "General Introduction" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft et al (London and New York: Routledge, 2006/2008), pp.3-4.

[21] George Lamming, "The occasion for speaking"; Abdul R. JanMohamed, "The economy of manichean allegory"; Homi K. Bhabha, "Signs take for wonders" republished in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, pp.9-43; Sascha Ebeling, "Introduction" in *Colonizing the Realm of Words: The Transformation of Tamil Literature in Nineteenth-Century South India* (Albany: SUNY, 2010), pp.1-20.

The literature of the colonizer represents imperial language and knowledge, imaginary assumptions of the superiority of the colonizers' culture and values, and strategies of discrimination and integration. The literary acts of colonized people show their attempts to cope with the imperial presence through translating, reproducing, and re-working colonial language and its strategic narratives, a process that may be described with concepts such as mimicry, mockery, hybridity, and ambivalence, through which they could subvert colonial discourses or produce counter-colonial discourses.

Pro-Japanese collaborationist literature in Korea is a good object for post-colonial readings. The relevant texts have been neglected and disparaged by nationalist scholarship for a long time. They were even excluded from Korean literature. Im Chongguk was the first scholar who saw the necessity of studying pro-Japanese literature.[22] Yi Kyŏnghun followed him, conducting an extensive study on Yi Kwangsu's pro-Japanese writings.[23] However, their works were still confined within the nationalist perspective as is manifest in their goal: to convict the pro-Japanese collaborators and not to repeat the shameful history by revealing what they did. It was up to recent scholars such as Kyeong-Hee Choi and Yun Taesŏk to embark on a true re-reading and re-evaluation of wartime collaborationist literature.[24] They argue that wartime collaboration is not the only message we need to pick up from those literary works. Creative writers produced significant subtexts under the surface of collaboration. Their writing is situated between the extremes of collaboration and resistance. Detecting the contradictions and ambivalences of colonial power and propagating its imposing wartime rhetoric, they see, these writers attempted to subvert the colonial narratives and destabilize the original identity of colonial authority.

Buddhist writers in colonial Korea

In line with this interdisciplinary approach to colonial history, I will focus on writers with a Buddhist background and deal with their literary articulations on religious themes. My aim is a study on religion and literature during the colonial period but also, more importantly, a study of colonial history through religion and literature. Religious writers are placed in a space where religion

[22] Im Chongguk 林鍾國, *Ch'inil munhak non* 親日文學論 (Seoul: Minjok munje yŏn'guso, 1966/2002).
[23] Yi Kyŏnghun, *Yi Kwangsu-ŭi ch'inil munhak yŏn'gu* 이광수의 친일문학연구 (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1998).
[24] Kyeong-Hee Choi, "Another Layer of the Pro-Japanese Literature: Ch'oe Chŏnghŭi's "The Wild Chrysanthemum"" in *POETICA* 52, 1999:61-87; Kim Chaeyong et al 김재용 외, *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi naejŏk nolli*친일문학의 내적 논리 (Seoul: Yŏngnak역락, 2003); Han Suyŏng한수영, *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chaeinsik: 1937-1945-nyŏngan-ŭi Han'guk sosŏl-kwa singminjuŭi* 친일문학의 재인식: 1937-1945년 간의 한국소설과 식민주의 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005); Yun Taesŏk 윤대석, *Singmunji kungmin munhak non*식민지 국민문학론 (Seoul: Yŏngnak, 2006); Kim Yangsŏn 김양선, *Kŭndae munhag-ŭi t'alsingminjisŏng-gwa chendŏ chŏngch'ihak* 근대문학의 탈식민지성과 젠더정치학 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2009).

and literature cross-fertilize each other rather than exist in separation, and therefore, show dynamic interaction in co-producing history. This area of intersection or the triangle where religion, literature, and colonial history meet has been little considered by existing scholarship, [25] even by most interdisciplinary approaches to colonial history, because these still seek to single out religion or literature rather than paying attention to both.

There were a considerable number of religious writers in colonial Korea. Many authors felt affinity with religion and incorporated religious views – of Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, or one of the New Religions - into their literature. It is almost impossible to deal with all of them and the huge body of texts they produced, the more so because this kind of study demands a close scrutiny of the literary works. Hence, I have limited my scope to Buddhism and singled out four important writers. Buddhism has been one of the most influential religions in Korean society and culture. Somehow, studies of Buddhist literature in Korea have been mostly about songs and Buddhist tales in the Silla period, about Buddhist poetry in the Koryŏ period and about novels that were generally written in vernacular Korean in the Chosŏn period. Thus, these studies concentrate on the ancient and pre-modern periods.[26] The modern period is almost exclusively the subject of studies of Christian literature.[27] There is a clear need to embark on research of modern Buddhist literature.

Another reason is that the four Buddhist writers I singled out are important historical figures, who should be reappraised from recent religious, postnationalist and postcolonial perspectives. They were socially prominent intellectuals in colonial Korea, who took leading roles in literature, religion, socio-cultural reforms, women's rights movements, nationalist movements, or collaborationist wartime mobilization campaigns. Despite their fame and social influence, the presence of their religiosity and the literary texts related to this have received little attention from scholars except in the case of one writer, Han Yongun. In discussing the various activities of these Buddhist writers, religion and religiously inspired writings so far have not been taken into consideration.

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[25] Historians usually do not take fiction, the product of the writer's' imagination, as a historical source. Scholars in religious studies do not take a serious interest in literary works, either. Literary critics tend to view the religion of an author as a matter of personal religious belief unconnected to his or her literature and other activities.

[26] Examples are Hong Kisam 홍기삼, *Pulgyo munhak yŏn'gu* 불교문학연구 (Seoul: Chimmundang집문당,1997); In Kwŏnhwan인권환, *Han'guk Pulgyo munhak yŏn'gu* 韓國佛敎文學硏究 (Seoul: Kogyŏtaehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1999). The first attempt at a study of modern Buddhist literature came out in 2007 but it still needs to be explored and developed more. See Minjok chakka hoeŭi pip'yŏngpunkwa wiwŏnhoe 민족작가회의 비평분과위원회, *Han'guk hyŏndae chakka-wa Pulgyo*한국현대작가와 불교 (Seoul: Yeok, 2007).

[27] Im Yŏngch'ŏn 임영천, *Munhak-kwa chonggyo: Kidokkyo-wa hyŏndae munhak* 문학과 종교: 기독교와 현대문학 (Kwangsu: Chosŏn taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2000); Kwŏn Oman et al 권오만 외, *Kidokkyo-wa Han'guk munhak* 기독교와 한국문학 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2000) ; Sin Ikho신익호, *Munhak-kwa chonggyo-ŭi mannam* 문학과 종교의 만남 (Seoul: Han'guk munhwasa, 1996).

Nationalist scholarship has been biased toward religiousness, either filing it away as a personal matter irrelevant to writers' activities related to social and literary issues, or viewing it as an expression of escapism from harsh reality, in other words, a retreat from the national struggle. Alternatively, religion is regarded as a pathway to the aims of the nation. The nationalist interest in Han Yongun tends to make his Buddhism completely subservient to nationalist undertakings and even asserts that his Buddhism was a guise for nationalist movements. Whether Han is concerned or the other writers we discuss, nationalist scholarship also has focused on some very limited texts as canonical works, while the remaining large number of texts has been granted less attention or completely neglected like the pro-Japanese collaborationist literature. From the nationalist perspective, their Buddhist-inspired works are regarded as insignificant, and hence left unattended.

Of course, there have been some counter-studies, though generally conducted in a fragmented and scattered manner, that have emphasized the importance of Buddhism in the literature of the colonial period, but these dissociate religion and literature from colonial reality and have produced limited interpretations without considering their socio-historical meanings and roles in a broader historical context.[28] Probably as believers, the scholars mainly focus on interpretations of dogmas and teachings in literary works and do not question how writers concerned understood Buddhism on an individual basis. In some of these studies, the writers cannot be distinguished from preachers and their Buddhist writings from books of sermons, which aim to propagate Buddhism and seek converts. From such an apologetic and evangelist standpoint, Buddhist literature can only be glorified. A critical examination is impossible.

Given the fact that an evangelist approach has been a general characteristic of studies of religious literature in Korea, it seems to me necessary to discuss it with reference to my study. Many religious writers indeed had didactic intentions and wished to propagate their religion in the popular form of literature. Some of them were also priests, monks, and theologians who were bound to the doctrines, dogmas, and standpoints of one church. Nonetheless, the intention to propagate one's faith was only one aspect of the multiple and varying meanings of religiosity in colonial literature. There is a possible divergence between their didactic intentions and their actual literary expressions. The religious beliefs of the writers are not consistent or always the same, either. There are different shades of religion from writer to writer and from story to story, even within the same religion. Because religious notions mentioned in literature are usually basic concepts targeting ordinary readers

[28] I cannot mention all of those studies. In case of Yi Kwangsu, see Ch'oe Chŏngsŏk 崔正錫, "Ch'unwŏn Yi Kwangsu-ŭi taesŭng Pulgyo sasang yŏn'gu" 春園 李光洙의 大乘佛敎思想 硏究 (Ph.D. dissertation, Tongguk Univeristy, 1977); Tongguk taehakkyo pusŏl Han'guk munhak yŏn'guso東國大學敎附設韓國文學硏究所, *Yi Kwangsu yŏn'gu: ha* 李光洙 硏究 : 下 (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1984).

and the majority of the writers were lay believers, it often makes little sense to look for profound philosophical or theological explanations or to glorify this literature as "sacred."

What these writers were mainly concerned with was fundamental matters of the human condition, life, death, misfortune, and the tragedies of existence rather than rigid religious dogmas. As writers, they were open to other religions. In search of the significance of existence, they often had an interest in various religions and practiced them as well. Compared with religious leaders, they were relatively free to express their opinions and thoughts. This becomes particularly obvious at a time when churches and religious organizations, under the direct control of the colonial government, spoke with one voice. These individual writers let us hear more diverse voices, more profound considerations, and different reactions with regard to issues and events in colonial society. Inconsistency in their religiosity is closely related to the constantly changing historical context and their public and private reality. Hence, this feature is not a problem but rather, a useful indicator as to how keenly religious writers were aware of and reacted to the changing historical situation of early twentieth century Korea.

For the Buddhist writers, Buddhism was not reduced to a personal belief, nor were their Buddhist-inspired writings a mere tool for missionary work, or for the promotion of Korean nationalism. In line with the argument Ken Wells has advanced, one has to accept that religion held a key position in determining their life, thought, literature, as well as the direction of their social projects, producing distinctive and diverging discourses about colonial history. Therefore, without consideration of Buddhist knowledge and belief, we cannot gain a proper and full understanding of these writers' lives, significant activities or projects in colonial Korea. At this point in time, when the large neglected body of texts is being restored and explored avoiding the excessive concentration on canonical works, Buddhist-inspired writings are among the first texts worthy of notice, for they provide us with rich resources for critical postcolonial, postnationalist and feminist discourses about colonial history.

The writers I deal with in this study represent a larger body of thinking and writing individuals in colonial Korea, while at the same time their creative writing on Buddhist themes imparts individual life stories, voices, and experiences. As scholars such as Poshek Fu claim, writers were not abstract intellectuals in isolation from the historical reality or living upon national ideology alone.[29] Made of "flesh and blood," they had needs, emotions, and weaknesses and took care of food, clothes, shelter, family, children, means of subsistence, a profession, and knew love, marriage, and divorce, while living everyday life. As writers, they were capable of articulating their

[29] Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937-1945* (Stanford University Press, 1993) p.xii.

autobiographical experiences, inner feelings, pains and conflicting moral and political choices in vivid images and powerful language.[30]

Facing the negotiations of daily life and reality, a person we now call a nationalist hero turns out to have been driven by emotional tension and intellectual anxiety, rather than displaying heroic fearlessness. So-called villainous, shameless pro-Japanese collaborators were actually tortured by fear, anxiety, and pangs of conscience. Their observation of individual human lives (in particular, women's lives) discloses how Korean nationalism interfered with basic human rights and infringed on their liberties, just as colonialism did. Their stories capture the diversity, complexity, and richness of colonial life experiences which the nationalist historical perception has failed to catch.

The nationalist narrative has stressed the nationalist struggle as the most important priority for the Koreans under the colonial rule. Individual stories and experiences that emerge from the writings mentioned above show us that nationalism is one possible solution, not the perfect solution. Sometimes it brought about more problems and troubles than it settled, and there were many things it would not solve. When these writers struggled with disease, when they grieved over the loss of a child, when they were broken-hearted from love lost, when they failed in business, when they became involved in quarrels, they realized that it was neither Korean nationalism nor Japanese colonialism but religion (Buddhism) which could give them answers about what life and death are, why misfortune happened to them, and how they could cope with sadness, pain, and despair. Their writings dramatized this and provide a rich record of how Korean individuals coped with life in colonial reality, trying to make sense of their existence in various ways on the basis of their religiosity.

These writers were social actors who often spoke on behalf of their contemporaries in the same situation and their literary works in many cases became part of the robust public debate of the period. When, as Benedict Anderson has argued, the novel, the newspaper, and magazines became the major technical means for producing and disseminating the idea of national identity and nationalism,[31] writers dominated printed media and became the prime movers in introducing, translating, (re)producing, and disseminating nationalist discourse as well as a wide range of social, cultural, and political discourses to people. Such social activities were far removed from boosting a monolithic nationalism in the form of anti-Japanese resistance through their writing, as nationalist scholarship presumes.

As Andre Schmid argues, the act of writers was not promotion of a settled form of nationalism focusing on political struggles, but a process of nation-building in that they produced divergent visions of the nation, a

[30] Ibid.

[31] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983/2006), pp.25-36.

discourse of the nation, and nation-building strategies, deeply entwined with the international environment of that particular historical moment, when in various ways the colonizer and the colonized interacted with each other.[32] The writings of Buddhist authors show us that their attempts at producing historical discourses constituted a complex process fashioned by reinventing Confucian tradition as the national ideology, advocating or condemning the cultural trend of modernity, revisiting ancient history of Korea, translating and adopting gender politics from the colonizer, and so on.

More specifically, Buddhist knowledge, metaphors, images, insights, and beliefs provided a powerful language to interpret the living history of the colonial period. Few writers undertook a direct attack on the colonial authorities and some even dissuaded people from harboring hatred or anti-Japanese sentiments. The Buddhist vision for nationalism was not focused on "resistance" but primarily on self-reflection and self-cultivation. The March First Movement, which is proudly commemorated in national history as an event where Koreans showed their collective strength, was diagnosed, for example, by writers like Hong Sayong as abortive and demonstrative of the blindness to the most fundamental truth: colonialism does not merely imply political rule or economic benefit but colonization of the mind. Buddhist-inspired interpretations and historical discourses of the colonial period present many alternatives to mainstream nation-focused history and richly nuanced responses to colonialism, defying the simplistic nationalist view of Buddhism as a defender of the national spirit.

This is not to deny that Buddhist writers were prominent producers and promoters of a set of national discourses, but their predominant role in this is only half the story, and mainly based upon their early works and activities up to and including the 1920s. Their writing in the 1930s and early '40s reveals the untold story that they were the very critics of Korean nationalism and in some cases, iconoclasts who pulled down the concepts and visions for nation building they had previously created. At odds with the nationalist assumption that in this dark colonial period (*amhŭkki*) Korean literature suffered a period of frustration and regression due to political repression and enhanced censorship, many writers, in particular the Buddhist writers I have chosen to study, steadily and even more vigorously continued to conduct their literary activities. Ironically it was the time when these writers were most preoccupied with Buddhism and poured out Buddhist novels, essays, and poems. These Buddhist narratives afford us a window on many intriguing and controversial discourses. A critical reflection on Korean nationalism and nationalist movements is part of this. They denounced the hypocrisy of nationalists who still practiced blatant discrimination against women and low status groups while preaching that all Koreans were equal in the sight of the nation and should pursue the spirit of brotherhood. They saw how often Korean nationalism sharply contrasted with

[32] Andre Schmid, *Korea between Empires*, pp.4-9.

humanity and questioned what is morally and politically more valuable: the abstraction of the Korean nation or concrete human lives. It is particularly interesting to investigate how this matter came up in another sensitive debate, over the tacit or explicit acts of collaboration life in the turmoil of wartime seemed to require, and how Buddhism was presented as holding the key to the solution of this besetting problem.

This study is divided into four main parts, each one devoted to one of the writers I singled out: Han Yongun, Yi Kwangsu, Kim Iryŏp and Hong Sayong. Different from the other three, the monk Han Yongun (韓龍雲, 1879-1944) is widely recognized as a Buddhist writer. Given the quantity of research on him, which amounts to about seven hundred books and articles on his Buddhism, literature and nationalism, one might question if a further study is necessary.[33] Surprisingly, however, many of those studies have focused on three extremely early texts, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* 朝鮮佛敎維新論 (A treatise on reformation of Korean Buddhism, 1913), "Chosŏn tongnib-ŭi sŏ" 朝鮮獨立의 書 (A letter about the independence of Korea, 1919), and *Nim-ŭi ch'immuk* 님의 沈默 (*Silence of the Beloved*, 1926) and, in line with nationalist historical perspective, drawn an image of a heroic Buddhist monk who championed Korean nationalism. Exploring many of his non-canonical, neglected, or forgotten works in the light of critical postcolonial and postnationalist readings, I will attempt to reappraise his predominant image as a national hero and the incongruous assumptions over his "Buddhist nationalism." Instead of the politicization of his religiosity, I will present Han's divergent views i.e., his nationalism with an emphasis on self-reflection, not on resistance, the centrality of Buddhism to human life, not national political goals, his ambiguous and controversial notions reeking of collaboration, and as yet untold stories about the moral conflicts and dilemmas he faced in wartime.

Part two deals with the most controversial writer in colonial Korea: Yi Kwangsu (李光洙, 1892-1950). As is widely known, he was a prominent writer who by 1919 assiduously cultivated modern Korean literature, and a leading cultural nationalist who worked for the Provisional Government of Korea in Shanghai, and was in charge of the nationalist organization Suyang tong'uhoe (moral cultivation society), at home. He provided one of the most controversial instances of wartime collaboration at the end of the colonial period. His insistence that I did "collaboration for the sake of the Korean nation" is still a topic of hot debate. The wide range of activities he undertook touch the central issues in colonial history, and therefore constitute an important part of the study of colonial history itself. Important is that he was a very religious person during his entire life and that his religiosity which is covered by a veil and

[33] According to Pak Ch'ŏrhŭi, the number of studies was presumed to be five hundred in 1997. In 2008, it reached seven hundred in total. See Pak Ch'ŏrhŭi 박철희, "Introduction" in *Han Yongun*한용운 (Sŏgang University Press, 1997/2000), p.7; Kim Kwangshik 김광식, *Manhae Han Yongun p'yŏngjŏn* 만해 한용운 평전 (Seoul: Changsŭng, 2008), p.4.

rarely brought to scholarly attention is crucial to an understanding of his life, literature, and sociopolitical activities. His Buddhism is particularly interesting because it was his faith during the most critical period of his life, when he was engaged in life-or-death struggles with terrible diseases and trapped in despair due to his son's death. Publicly presenting himself as pro-Japanese, he feverishly produced a vast amount of Buddhist works. Two chapters on his Buddhist novels constitute my attempt to understand this most controversial man in colonial history. This Buddhist fiction will be read as "hidden transcripts," which allegorically unfold the forbidden sociopolitical stories of wartime colonial reality he faced, as well as reveal his Buddhist belief behind his outward political choice of collaboration. From a postcolonial point of view, this fiction can be read as literature that creates layers of counter discourses while using colonial language.

In part three, I discuss Kim Iryŏp (金一葉, 1896-1971) who added a rare female voice to male-dominated Buddhist literature. She was an eye-catcher in 1920s colonial society as one of the pioneering New Women (*sin yŏsŏng*). When such a woman was tonsured and entered the Buddhist sangha around 1930 to be a Buddhist nun, people saw her with a biased gaze, saying it was the inevitable fate of a New Woman. Scholars have primarily focused on her feminist activities and writings and taken for granted that, as a Buddhist nun, she left mundane colonial society and abandoned all of her literary, feminist, and social activities. The fact is, however, that she remained active, even more enthusiastic and productive, as the increased amount of her writing demonstrates. The neglected Buddhist literature of Kim Iryŏp, which was silenced in masculine nationalist discourses and is still misconstrued as a lack of concern for colonial reality and national affairs, needs to be explored anew. It will provide us with the subtle yet significant voice of a Buddhist woman articulating the experiences of free love, modernity, personal suffering, social misunderstanding, conflict, and self-sacrifice, while denouncing the inhumanity and violence of Korean nationalism against women.

The final part deals with Hong Sayong (洪思容, 1900-1947). He is best known as a poet in charge of the early 1920s literary coterie magazine, *Paekcho* 白潮 and as a casual playwright for the theater group T'owŏlhoe 土月會. From a nationalist perspective, many of his poems, with themes such as dreams, women, and liquor, are labeled as "decadent" or "escapist" literature, whereas some poems in folksong-style and plays with a hint of tradition or local color are simply regarded as patriotic or nationalistic. Up to now, the fact that he took a serious interest in Buddhism and went on a pilgrimage several times, roaming temples and reading Buddhist scriptures, has been glossed over. His literary works with Buddhist inspiration, however, demonstrate that Hong was neither a simply decadent nor a simply nationalist writer, but as one of the most prominent Buddhist writers in colonial Korea exhibited counterdiscursive strategies. As one of the few writers who were able to see through the colonial subterfuge and the psychology of colonialism, he struggled to awaken the

colonized mind of the Koreans and employed mockery, parody, mimicry, and satire to threaten the dominant colonial culture. The question how Buddhist motifs, languages and insights were incorporated into his early and late writing in order to grapple with the colonial experience of the March First Movement and imperial wars will be my main concern in this part.

Part 1

Han Yongun (韓龍雲, 1897-1944): A doubtful national hero

Chapter 1

A doubtful national hero: Han Yongun's Buddhist nationalism revisited

Introduction

It is commonplace to say that Han Yongun was a hero who led the Korean nation through its darkest period of colonial history. His participation in the March First Independence Movement (1919), his flat rejection of the colonial government's civil registry and name-change order, and his attempts to reform and modernize Buddhism, to oppose its subordination to Japanese Buddhism and the colonial government's intervention in Buddhist affairs, and to boost national spirit through his literature are told and retold as proof of his uncompromising attitude towards Japanese colonial rule and his unwavering striving for national independence throughout his lifetime. It is often held that his nationalism and literature could remain morally and politically pure, correct, flawless, original, and prominent due to its grounding in his profound Buddhist philosophy.[1]

In present-day Korea where, to borrow a phrase from Carter J. Eckert, "the nationalist historical discourse is buttressed by strong vested interests throughout the community",[2] Han Yongun is hailed as a symbol of heroic nationalism, a source of national pride whose spiritual, cultural, and political achievements in this era of globalization can contribute not only to Korea but to the world. It is against this backdrop that recent scholars have begun to express deep concern about the hero-worship of Han Yongun and to question whether these commonplace beliefs are really tenable. There is a growing recognition in scholarship both in Korean and English that questions the nationalist interpretations that dominate numerous existing studies, reconsiders Han's nationalist ideas from new and diverse perspectives,[3] looks at the ambivalence

[1] Pori Park, "A Korean Buddhist Response to Modernity: The Doctrinal Underpinning of Han Yongun's (1879-1944) Reformist Thought" in *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 20.1 (2007): 21-44; Chŏng Kwangho 정광호. "Minjokhon-ŭi sangjing Han Yongun" 민족혼의 상징 한용운 in *Ilbon ch'imnakshigi-ŭi Hanil Pulgyo kwanggyesa* 일본침략시기의 한일불교관계사 (Seoul: Aŭmdaun sesang, 2001), pp.299-246; Cho Chihun 趙芝薰, "Minjokchuŭija Han Yongun" 民族主義者 韓龍雲 in *Sajo* 思潮 (Oct. 1958). Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 4 韓龍雲全集 4 (Seoul: Pulgyo munhwa yŏn'guwŏn, 2006), pp.362-366; Hong Ibyŏn 洪以燮, "Han Yongun-ŭi minjok chŏngsin" 韓龍雲의 民族精神 in *Korea Journal* 13.4 (April 1973). Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 4, pp.367-373.

[2] Carter J. Eckert, "Epilogue: Exorcising Hegel's Ghosts: Toward a Postnationalist Historiography of Korea" in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*. Edited by Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), p.364.

[3] Ku Moryong 구모룡, "Manhae sasang-esŏŭi chayu-wa p'yŏngdŭng" 만해사상에서의 자유와 평등 in *Manhaehak yŏn'gu* 2 만해학연구 2 (2006):36-59; Pae Pyŏngsam 배병삼, "Manhae Han Yongun-ŭi sahoe sasang-gwa silch'ŏn-e taehan pip'an-jŏk koch'al" 만해 한용운의 사회사상과 실천에 대한 비판

and complexity of his literature,[4] and discusses larger problems within Buddhism.[5]

This chapter is one of the attempts to revise our understanding of Han Yongun, in particular tackling the popularly accepted cliché of his Buddhist nationalism. Since he was a Buddhist monk, his Buddhism is naturally seen as the underlying ideology of all his ideas and practices. As Pori Park has stated, Han related Buddhist reformation to national identity and tried to develop a socially conscious Buddhism.[6] However, it is hardly addressed that while relating Buddhism to politics, Han clearly opposed the politicization of Buddhism as a political instrument to serve colonial and nationalist interests and goals. Rather than equating religious beliefs with political agendas, I argue, he was aware of the difference between religion and national politics in terms of identity, ideals and goals, and regarded religion as more fundamental than any ideology. Evident in his later writing is his emphasis on self-reflection or self-cultivation within nationalism in place of anti-Japanese sentiment. My analysis of a broad range of neglected texts mainly written in the 1930s will reveal how his own views concerning the relationship between Buddhist and national affairs were significantly more diverse and even more controversial than is often thought.

Self-reliance: demystifying resistance nationalism

The Buddhism Han Yongun practised as a monk is assumed to have primarily served nationalist purposes. He is seen as a true nationalist whose spirit of resistance was as firm and correct as his Buddhist belief and as acute and uncompromising as that of the armed independence fighters active outside colonial Korea. His strong resistance nationalism is further assumed to stand in

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적 고찰 in *Manhaehak yŏn'gu* 3:7-31; Yi Sŏni 이선이, "Munmyŏng-gwa minjog-ŭl t'onghae pon Manhae-ŭi kŭndae ihae" '문명'과 '민족'을 통해 본 만해의 근대이해 in *Manhaehak yŏn'gu* 3:34-52.

[4] See Gregory N. Evon, "Eroticism and Buddhism in Han Yongun's Your Silence" in *Korean Studies* 24 (2000): 25-52, and his "Ghostly Voices and Their Avatar: Buddhist Resonances in Han Yongun's Enlightenment Verse" in *The Review of Korean Studies* 3.1 (2000):93-122; Yi Sŏni 李善伊, "Manhae Han Yongun munhag-e nat'anan t'alsingminjijuŭi-jŏk insik" 만해 韓龍雲 文學에 나타난 脫植民主義的 인식 in *Ŏmun yŏn'gu* 語文硏究 31:2 (Summer 2003):245-263.

[5] Kim Kwangsik 김광식. *Kŭnhyŏndae Pulgyo-ŭi chae chomyŏng* 근현대불교의 재조명 (Seoul: Minjoksa, 2000), pp.18-22; Hendrik H. Sørensen, "Buddhism and secular power in twentieth-century Korea" in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, edited by Ian Harris (London and New York: Continuum, 1999), pp.127-152; Gregory N. Evon, "Contestations over Korean Buddhist Identities: The "Introduction" to the Kyŏnghŏjip" in *The Review of Korean Studies* 4.1. (2001):11-33; Pori Park, "Korean Buddhist Reforms and Problems in the Adoption of Modernity during the Colonial Period" in *Korean Studies* 45.1:87-113; Pori Park, "A Korean Buddhist Response to Modernity: The Doctrinal Underpinning of Han Yongun's (1879-1944) Reformist Thought" in *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 20.1 (2007): 21-44; Vladimir Tikhonov and Own Miller, "Introduction" in *Selected writings of Han Yongun: From Social Darwinism to 'Socialism with a Buddhist Face'* (Kent: Global Oriental, 2008):1-36.

[6] Pori Park "A Korean Buddhist Response to Modernity," pp.27-28 and 35-36.

sharp contrast to the attitudes of the cultural nationalists who had a low spirit of resistance and reached compromises with the colonial authorities.[7] However, I will argue that Han should be reconsidered as one of the self-reconstruction nationalists. The core of his nationalism was neither anti-colonialism nor resistance but self-reflection, self-reliance, and self-cultivation. He shared nationalist ideas and views with many cultural nationalists and actively participated in their campaigns.

Han's famous treatise, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* 朝鮮佛教維新論 (A treatise on the reformation of Korean Buddhism, 1913), is one of the first texts in which his early self-reflection emerges. As is well known, this long treatise was written to devise a reform plan for the Korean Buddhist monasteries, which had by then badly deteriorated. The introduction of this reform proposal makes it clear that Han seeks the reason for the degradation of Korean Buddhism inside the Buddhist community rather than accusing the Confucian state of its suppression or blaming unfavorable circumstances. He emphasizes this "self-critical attitude" towards Buddhism, and further, towards all human affairs.[8] He strongly refutes the ancients' saying that everything depends upon heaven (*hanŭl*) or is the will of heaven. According to him, this customary conviction is outdated, illogical, and superstitious in the eyes of a "civilized person" (*munmyŏng'in*) who believes that everything depends on oneself. He argues that one should get things done through one's own efforts, capabilities or mistakes, and therefore it is the person involved who has full responsibility for whatever happens to one.[9]

Han stands for this self-reliance, further equating it with the virtue of freedom. He accuses those relying on heaven as "slaves" or "sinners" who forsake their own freedom and are deficient in self-esteem. He states that those who fully understand the spirit of "I endeavor" and "everything depends on me" level blame on themselves instead of others and believe in themselves without counting on other things like heaven. Self-reliance, self-blame, and self-esteem are argued by him to be the guiding principles to reform Korean Buddhism.[10] He radically espouses the removal of all the elements in the contemporary Korean Buddhist monasteries that run counter to this "self-reliance" principle: the *Yŏmbultang* (Buddha invocation hall) should be abolished because people resort to the false image of Buddha instead of seeking Buddhahood inside themselves; monks should be self-sufficient and stop engaging in religious mendicancy; and all the relics of idolatry and superstitions in Buddhism should be taken away.[11]

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[7] Yŏm Muung 염무웅, "Han Yongun non" 韓龍雲論 in Pak Ch'ŏrhŭi (ed), *Han Yongun* 한용운, (Seoul: Sŏgang tahakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1997/2002), pp.33-34.
[8] Han Yongun, *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.34.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., pp.56-60, 70-75, and 78-82.

About a decade later, Han Yongun addressed the notion again, but this time as the very nature of Buddhism. In his essay "Nae-ga minnŭn Pulgyo" (내가 믿는 佛敎: The Buddhism I believe in, 1924), he explains why he believes in Buddhism and what he sincerely and single-mindedly believes.[12] It is first and foremost that Buddhism is self-belief or self-faith (*chasinjŏk*, 自信的). By this he means that Buddhism seeks its object of faith inside oneself, not outside oneself. The customary Buddhist practice of praying to Buddha's supernatural powers is, according to him, not the true nature of Buddhism. Instead of worshipping other powers such as Heaven or God as in other religions, proper Buddhist belief leads its followers to seek one's true self and gives them a sense of self-reliance.

As far as his early writing is concerned, Han Yongun's discussion on self-reliance and self-blame is basically confined to religion and philosophy. However, although it remains abstract, he gradually begins to specify its meaning and role in national circumstances. In 1923, the *Tonga ilbo* 東亞日報 asked Han (as a representative of a Buddhist association, Pŏppohoe 法寶會) for advice on how to cope with the spiritual and material hardship colonial Korea and the Koreans experienced.[13] Han first sympathizes with emotional pain and economic despair the Koreans faced in reality. Yet he dispassionately explains that the suffering cannot be diminished by blaming, resisting (*chŏhang*) or begging the Japanese colonial authorities, who have, in his words, taken away Koreans' freedom. In his view, such responses are the most certain way to make people feel suffering, even keenly. How then can they get rid of all their suffering? Han answers that no matter what the situation is, one's mind is most important. The point is that if one has a strong mind and spiritual strength one does not feel the suffering, whereas being weak and poor in spirit intensifies the suffering. He emphasizes the practice of cultivating and strengthening spirituality as a key factor in handling the Koreans' hardship.

From this article, one can gain a glimpse of Han's alternative way of seeing and settling the difficulties of his compatriots. He does not promote resistance and resentment against the colonial authorities, nor dependence on them. Based upon the self-reliance principle, he focuses on the Korean self rather than on the colonial oppressor and tries to find the solution within the Koreans themselves, particularly seeking their spiritual empowerment. It is much later, after another decade or so has passed, that he more explicitly applies his vision to colonial society and elaborates his idea of nationalism by drawing upon the concept of self-reliance. Of his various works treating this issue, I will focus on his essay "Pansŏng" 反省 (Self-reflection, ca. 1933).

In this essay, Han first points out the general tendency in human society for people to blame their problems and misfortunes on outside groups.

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[12] *Kaebyŏk* 開闢 (March 1924).

[13] "Chosŏn kŭp Chosŏnin-ŭi pŏnmin p'al: Yŏngjŏk pinp'ib-ŭro koťong" 朝鮮及朝鮮人의 煩悶 八: 靈的貧乏으로 苦痛 in *Tonga ilbo* (9 Jan. 1923).

The poor tend to resent the rich. A man with low status is apt to begrudge a person of high standing. The weak reproach the strong. Han flatly opposes this habit, saying, "Whoever makes you poor is not the rich but you yourself. Whoever makes you weak is not the strong but you yourself. Whoever makes you distressed is neither society, nor heaven or earth, nor the times but you yourself. Thus, while it is your right to make yourself happy you ought to take responsibility for your unhappiness".[14] It is not his intention to simply forbid people to desire to be rich or strong or to wish that the rich or strong be poor or weak like them. What he is basically trying to say is that one should seek the main causes and effects of all human affairs in oneself. By blaming others and complaining about one's circumstances, one can temporarily forget one's problem and feel better, but this does not bring about fundamental change. He argues that change begins with oneself. In the face of difficulties, the first and wisest thing to do is to reflect on illusory thought and misbehavior. An effort made by oneself is the strongest weapon on behalf of happiness.[15]

As mentioned above, Han in his early days tackled the customary belief that others are to blame for one's unhappiness. From a social-Darwinist point of view, he disdained this as superstitious and claimed that a civilized man holds the belief that everything depends on oneself. In his later writing, he no longer uses social-Darwinist terms, but maintained the main points of his argument in a clearer form. The ideas of self-reflection and self-responsibility which he put forward as the guiding principle to reform the Buddhist community are now developed and refashioned as important guidelines for the Korean people to live, think and act in colonial Korea.

> *The despair over the loss of the country [Chosŏn Korea] is indescribable. However, the person who only resents the occupier will never resolve his deep sorrow. In extreme agony and distress, one is prone to reproach one's more affluent and powerful counterpart [Japan] but it will not bring happiness back…Even if the occupier (chŏngbokkuk) self-destructs and the ruling counterpart becomes unhappy, unless one does not uproot the cause of national decay [in the Korean self], the second and third occupier will appear. Unless one eliminates the bane, one cannot free oneself from the agony. It is a matter of self-reflection or self-blame.*[16]

Han Yongun sees that the Koreans feel sorrow and live miserably in colonial Korea. In their predicament, they tend to lament the misfortune of losing sovereignty and often nurture resentment against Japan. As he points out, this entails a desire and expectation that the occupier will become even unhappier than themselves and in the end destroy itself. People think that when this happens, they can be freed from both the Japanese occupier and their

[14] Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 1, p.210.
[15] Ibid., p.211.
[16] Ibid., pp.210-211.

miserable reality. Han does not support or encourage this mindset, but on the contrary demands they change their mind or revise their thinking. He concedes that what happens to Japan can bring some change to them (even implying its retreat from Korea and national independence), and yet he argues that it would not amount to the removal of the fundamental cause of the misfortunes they suffer. Even the national goal of independence is not seen by him as the final solution, since the Koreans who regain charge of their national affairs will not have changed at all.

In the same way as Han sought the reason for the degradation of Korean Buddhism inside the Buddhist community rather than accusing the Confucian state of its suppression, so he looks for the main cause of the loss of the country and its misfortunes inside the Korean self rather than fiercely resenting Japan's colonization and oppression. Referring back to history, he states that no country ever perished through a foreign invasion unless it had first self-destructed.[17] That is to say, Chosŏn Korea perished fundamentally by the Koreans' own hands before being colonized by Japan; the Koreans let the Japanese occupy them. One might question whether this entails shifting all the blame onto the Koreans and acquits the Japanese colonizer of guilt, and whether his idea of self-blame was marshalled to justify the colonial domination.

Contrary to the standard viewpoint, Han indeed hardly raises a critical voice against colonial oppression in his writings on self-reliance. He avoids problematizing the colonial government and accusing it of oppression and domination. He does not encourage his compatriots to cultivate a fighting spirit against it. He only sticks to the principle of directing one's critical look towards oneself and to depending on oneself. His lack of criticism of colonial oppression and his advocacy of self-blame might be interpreted as giving indirect and tacit approval to Japan's colonial domination. However, his arguments are not aimed at making the Korean feel inferior or at justifying colonial domination.

On the contrary, Han's core intent is to motivate the Koreans to rehabilitate their self-esteem and attain spiritual and psychological independence from their colonial master. In the colonial relationship, the Japanese colonial government is presumed to be the agent and provider of change, whereas the Koreans are regarded as passive and submissive subjects and recipients. Against this conception, Han sets up the Koreans as the main agents of change. He clearly articulates that both misfortune and happiness are entirely dependent on the Koreans' own efforts. They are not given by the Japanese counterpart.[18] He makes it clear that blaming the colonial master means that the Koreans still depend upon him, that their minds are still bound to the colonizer-colonized relationship, and that they make themselves into "slaves." Reflecting on oneself is not to express self-depreciation but to

[17] Ibid., p.210.
[18] Ibid., p.211.

challenge the deep-rooted dependence in the mind of the Koreans on external political powers, which he sees as the bane of their miserable colonial lives.

Han Yongun's national ideas with their focus on self-reliance constitute an important alternative to the existing nationalist view of his anti-colonial resistance nationalism. Few have noticed until now that he largely shared his ideas and insights with cultural nationalists, in particular self-reconstruction nationalists in colonial Korea. In his earliest essays, Yi Kwangsu 李光洙 also reiterated that Koreans were imbued with a fatalistic view of life, believing that all decisions are made by heaven (*ch'ŏnmyŏng*) and fate (*p'alcha*). Yi strongly argued that this "old superstitious belief" should be discarded. The Koreans should believe that it is they themselves who determine their lives and create happiness.[19] The passage by Han quoted above, in particular, is a textbook example of the classic cultural/self-reconstruction nationalist position.

Both key propagators of self-reconstruction nationalism, Yun Ch'iho 尹致昊 and An Ch'angho 安昌浩, thought that Korea's colonial fate was a result of an absence of moral fortitude, lack of public morality, lack of self-reliance, and a fatal tendency to rely on larger powers in each individual Korean, rather than of the event of colonization itself. They spelled out that it was not Japan that ruined Korea. If any are to blame, it is Koreans: they allowed Japan to occupy their country. Nonetheless, the Korean people blame others for their misfortune without realizing their own responsibility. From this perspective, the proponents of self-reconstruction nationalism focused on the moral aspect of nationalism and argued that if the Koreans did not reconstruct themselves morally and spiritually and did not cultivate their moral capacity and spiritual strength, national independence would be difficult to achieve. They also believed that even were it to take one or two centuries, there was no other way but this non-political moral improvement for the Koreans to nurture the requisites of independence. Without this, even if Japan left and independence was restored today, the Koreans would lose it tomorrow.[20]

Han and other cultural nationalists did not share exactly the same nationalist ideas but their opinions to a larger extent concurred on the reason

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[19] Yi Kwangsu 李光洙, "Sungmyŏngnon-jŏk insaenggwan-esŏ charyŏngnon-jŏk insaenggwan-e" 宿命論的 人生觀에서 自力論的 人生觀에 in *Hakchigwang* 學之光 (Aug. 1918); Yi Kwangsu, "P'alchasŏr-ŭl kich'o-ro han Chosŏnin-ŭi insaenggwan" 八字說을 基礎로 한 朝鮮人의 人生觀 in *Kabyŏk* 開闢 (Aug. 1921).

[20] For details about Protestant self-reconstruction movement, see Michael Edson Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988); Ken Wells, *New God, New Nation: Protestans and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea, 1896-1937* (Allen &Unwin Pty Ltd, 1991) Transl. In Soo Kim, *Sae hananim sae minjok* 새 하나님 새 민족 (Seoul: Publishing House The Presbyterian Church of Korea, 1997); Koen de Ceuster "From Modernization to Collaboration, the Dilemma of Korean Cultural Nationalism" (PhD dissertation, Leuven, 1994); Pak Ch'ansŭng 박찬승, *Han'guk kŭndae chŏngch'i sasangsa yŏn'gu: Minjokchuŭi up'a-ŭi sillŏk yangsŏng undongnon* 한국근대정치사상사연구: 민족주의 우파의 실력양성운동론 (Seoul: Yŏksa pip'yŏngsa, 1992/1997); Chang Kyusik 장규식, *Ilcheha Han'guk Kidokkyo minjokchuŭi yŏn'gu* 일제하 한국 기독교 민족주의 연구 (Seoul: Hyean, 2001).

for the loss of country, the emphasis on moral/spiritual values, and the importance of self-blame, self-responsibility, and self-reliance. Regardless of their philosophical and religious backgrounds (Han in Buddhism, whereas many of the cultural nationalists were Protestants), they crafted a shared national vision and sought to actively mobilize their compatriots toward the achievements of shared goals. In practice, too, Han closely cooperated with the cultural nationalists. When these nationalists embarked on a large campaign to promote Korean products (*Chosŏn mulsan changnyŏ undong*, 朝鮮物産奬勵運動), a movement to raise funds for a Korean university (*Millip taehak sŏllip undong*, 民立大學設立運動) and a movement to foster the Korean vernacular language, Han actively supported these movements and was an invited speaker on the topic of "chajo" (自助, self-help). In 1931, he joined hands with Protestant cultural nationalist leaders such as Yun Ch'iho and Sin Hŭng'u in leprosy research and relief works.[21] Han Yongun, who proclaimed that "*Chosŏn undong* (Korean national movement) should be called *munhwa undong* (cultural movement) in Korea," should be reclaimed as a cultural nationalist.[22]

Buddha above and beyond nation

Han Yongun was not a Buddhist hermit living isolated from colonial society, concentrating on his Buddhist practice. Instead, he strove to reform Korean Buddhism to align with contemporary society, to popularize it among the ordinary people, and to put Buddhist thought into socio-political practice. His active participation in national politics is, however, widely misunderstood. Many find that Han's Buddhism and ideas about national identity were conflated in the colonial context and that there was no collision between them in terms of ideal and goal. Still, he is assumed to have regarded national independence as taking precedence over everything else, including Buddhism, and as a Buddhist, to have done his best to serve his nation. Some even argue that he became a monk not for its own sake, but to disguise his true identity as a Korean, an independence activist (*tongnip chisa*) and an anti-Japanese fighter (*hang'il t'usa*).[23]

However, Han's own voice questions and challenges the conventional portrayal of his Buddhism as a vehicle of national politics. In many of his Buddhist essays and speeches, in particular those written in the 1930s, he insisted on the strict separation between religion and politics (*chŏnggyo pulli*), arguing, "True Buddhism is only possible when it is free from all political

[21] See the chronological report of Han's life: An Pyŏngjik 安秉直 (ed.), *Han Yongun* 韓龍雲 (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1980), pp.299-306.
[22] Han Yongun, "Chŏngmyŏnghan insik" 正明한 認識 in *Tong'a ilbo* (1 Jan. 1933).
[23] Ko Myŏngsu 고명수, "Chosŏn tongnip iyusŏ-e nat'anan Manhae-ŭi tongnip sasang" 조선독립이유서에 나타난 만해의 독립사상 in *2001-Manhae ch'ukchŏn* 2001 만해축전 (Seoul: Pulgyo sidaesa, 2001), pp.378-380.

interference and restrictions".[24] His purpose was basically to criticize the colonial government's political control over the Korean *sangha* and intervention in Buddhist affairs through a set of regulations, the so-called Temple Ordinance. Therefore, his attempts to stay away from state politics and to achieve the self-management of the Buddhist *sangha* (although they practically failed) are often interpreted as expressing anti-Japanese nationalism at a religious level.[25] Still, it is too hasty to regard his stance on the separation between religion and politics as the same as anti-colonial nationalism, since my findings are that he also guarded Buddhism from the control and intervention of Korean nationalism in accordance with this same principle.

The first instance in which Han separates Buddhism from Korean nationalist politics is found in his essay "Nae-ga minnŭn Pulgyo" (The Buddhism I believe in, 1924), in relation to which I have already examined his emphasis on self-reliance as a feature of Buddhism. As he clearly states at the end of this essay, he advocates neither imperialism nor nationalism but Buddhism as the guiding principle for the present day and future age of Korea and the world.[26] He acknowledges that these two political ideologies wield enormous power in reality and dominate people's lives in his day. Yet he does not support using Korean nationalism to oppose imperialism. Nor does he criticize imperialism in order to defend Korean nationalism. Instead of accepting either imperialism or nationalism, he argues that neither is the all-surpassing truth. In his thought, Buddhism deserves to be the ultimate truth because it encompasses, surpasses and transcends all current opinions, ideologies and discourses.

Han explains that the true self of Buddha or the Buddha nature delivers the value of self-reliance. He attempts to seek the meaning of equality (*p'yŏngdŭng*) from the inherent Buddha nature that exists in all beings. Regarding the controversy over spiritualism (*yusimnon*) versus materialism (*yumullon*), he emphasizes that the Buddhist view of mind covers both spirit and body (the material world), or more exactly, transcends those theoretical distinctions. Above all, the Buddhist imperative of compassion (*chabi*) or salvation for all myriad things is to express, in modern terms, *pagae* (universal love, 博愛) and *hoje* (mutual aid, 互濟). He does not merely use contemporary terms in order to explain Buddhism but to claim that the transcendental Buddhism is neither unrealistic nor unearthly but realistic in the way it embraces and reconciles all the other socio-political ideas. In conclusion, he emphasizes that Buddhism can truly be the ultimate guide to all things.

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[24] "Han Yongunsa–chŏnggyo pulli yŏksŏl" 韓龍雲師–政,敎分離 力說 in *Tong'a ilbo* (27 March 1931).
[25] Pori Park, "Korean Buddhist Reforms and Problems in the Adoption of Modernity during the Colonial Period", pp.106-110; Pori Park, "A Korean Buddhist Response to Modernity", pp.29-32; Chŏng Kwangho 정광호, *Ilbon ch'imnak sigi-ŭi Han-Il Pulgyo kwangyesa* 일본침략시기의 한,일 불교 관계사 (Seoul: Arŭmdaun sesang, 2001), pp.137-157.
[26] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.289.

In this essay, Han does not directly propose the separation of Buddhism from politics as he did in later writings targeting the colonial state control, but shows his awareness that religious and political ideologies cannot be regarded as belonging to identical categories. Imperialism and nationalism are not perceived as oppositional but alike, as being both dominant political ideologies. In its relation to politics, Buddhism is placed as holding a position of central leadership and as of fundamental importance. This strongly implies that he rejects subservience of Buddhism to any socio-political ideology, even if it is nationalism. There is good reason to question the assumption that the national goal of independence was the most important matter in Han's life.

Han's vision of Buddhism as beyond and above political ideologies, and in particular Korean nationalism, is more polemically argued in a later interview titled "Han Yongunssi-wa Sŏkka-rŭl ŏham" 韓龍雲 씨와 釋迦를 語함 (An interview with Han Yongun: Talking about Shakyamuni, 1932).[27] This text is actually part of a collection of interviews conducted around a counterfactual idea: "If sages were reborn in Korea?" For a special January issue, the popular magazine *Samchŏlli* 三千里 asked Yi Kwangsu about Christ, An Chaehong about Confucius, and finally, Han Yongun about Shakyamuni. The focus of the interviews was to inquire whether these religious saints possessed patriotic love for their countries and what a religion can do for its country (in this case, the Korean nation). The first two intellectuals, Yi and An, answered that if Christ and Confucius had been born as Koreans in colonial Korea, they would have practically become a patriot or nationalist and would have tried above all to save their compatriots.[28] If Han Yongun had been a monk who regarded the nation as his first priority, he ought to have said the same thing. However, he thoroughly opposed the idea that Buddha should be a patriot serving the Korean nation.

The *Samchŏlli* reporter initiated the dialogue saying, "If Shakyamuni had been born in today's Korea and not in India 2400 years ago and had witnessed the pathetic sight of Korea, he would have immediately rushed to save the Koreans." He was pretty much convinced that "Buddha would have been an ardent nationalist and would have organized a secret organization. If not, he would have at least delivered speeches on the street or spread leaflets in the darkness".[29] The interviewer takes it for granted that the founder of Buddhism should be a savior of the Korean nation caught in the predicament of colonial rule, or at least as a nationalist who is willing to do anything for the nation's sake. The Buddha pictured by the interviewer precisely resembles the way Han is conventionally portrayed.

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[27] Han Yongun was interviewed on December 9, 1931. This interview was published on January 1st, 1932. When it was reprinted in the collected works, the title was changed to "The spirit of Shakyamuni." The date of publication was also wrongly given as 1931.

[28] "Taesŏng-i onŭl Chosŏn-e t'aeŏnattamyŏn?" 大聖이 오늘 朝鮮에 태어났다면? in *Samch'ŏlli* (Jan.1932), pp.65-68.

[29] Ibid., p.69.

However, Han does not agree with the interviewer, remarking: "The historical Buddha transcended life and death as well as the distinction between sentient and insentient beings and time and space. In other words, he aimed at a universal revolution [transcending national boundaries]. He would not have striven for Korea only."[30] He does not say that the historical Buddha would have served the Korean nation, saved the Koreans from colonial hardship, and resolved all the problems surrounding colonial Korea. Nor does he deny the possibility that Buddha would have worked for the Korean people, either. He does not attempt to answer the question with either yes or no but problematizes the reporter's question itself. By emphasizing that the Buddha is a transcendent being whose universal and universe-oriented scope is beyond racial and national boundaries, he indicates that it is absurd to understand Buddha as a savior or nationalist for the sake of the Korean nation.

Finding Han's remark totally unexpected and incomprehensible, the interviewer retorts with a question whether Han means that the Buddha completely denied the existence of all national boundaries and borders and blood bonds. Historically considered, the reporter argues, Shakyamuni Buddha was born as an Indian. He wore Indian clothes, spoke Indian and wandered around among the Indians to preach Buddhism and save them from suffering. This being the case, the reporter asks, what was wrong with seeing Buddha as a savior of the Indian people and, further, of the Korean nation? Han responds that while it is true that Shakyamuni acted first of all to save the Indians when he embarked on his mission of salvation of mankind, that was because Indians were the nearest to him, not because he consciously selected the Indians out from among others such as the Turks, British, and Germans and intended to save only the Indians to the neglect of others.

Against the interviewer's insistence that something like national spirit or national identity existed in Buddha's mind, responding to historical conditions and circumstances, Han elucidates his previous argument that Buddha was beyond racial and national boundaries, transcended time and space, and was free from all bonds and distinctions. He thus implies that it is impossible to measure or even judge Buddha's spirit using the yardstick of patriotic nationalism. He makes it crystal clear that the focus of Buddha was on "myriad things" (*manyu*) in the universe, not on India or colonial Korea. What concerned him day and night was revolutionary change of the whole universe, not nationalist movements for the sake of a particular nation or country. Han's view runs counter to the strongly held politicized picture of Buddha as a national savior or a nationalist. Instead, he tenaciously describes Buddha as loyal to the religious vision of universal compassion.

Han's uncompromising view of Buddha as beyond and above the nation finally provokes anger in the interviewer, who asserts that it does not matter what Buddha's philosophy exactly was: what is important is its relation

[30] Ibid.

to reality. The Koreans are now witnessing many great political convulsions and international developments such as the Manchurian invasion, the clash between Japan and China, the League of Nations, and friction among the great powers. In such a dire situation, the interviewer wonders if Buddha would have sat by as an idle spectator. He sarcastically questions of what avail it is to think of the morning star (Buddha attained enlightenment by looking up at the morning star), to contemplate life and death in a leisured manner and to show mercy to animals, trees, grasses and fishes. To him, such a Buddha is an unrealistic daydreamer and useless to colonial Korea.[31]

The interviewer's criticism of Han's view of Buddha and Buddhism is to some extent persuasive and compelling. In fact, Han was not an advocate of Buddhism for its own sake. As is widely known, he attempted to reform and secularize Buddhism to keep up with changes in society. In this interview, however, why is he so adamant that the founder of Buddhism would have not concerned himself with national and international affairs and not offered any help to the Koreans trying to cope with the difficulties that composed their reality? It may seem inconsistent on the face of it, but if one looks closely, consistency can be detected. Han regards Buddhist ideals and activity as most important, central and fundamental in relation to other ideologies. Thus, it is unacceptable to him if politics in the form of imperialism and nationalism imposes its dominant position upon Buddhism and makes use of it for political purposes.

Han discerns that the reporter's view of religion and reality is highly politicized and nation-centered. The Koreans and their national affairs are of utmost importance to the reporter. Other nations and countries and matters irrelevant to the Korean nation are regarded by the reporter as less important or even meaningless and useless. If religions are autonomous, they are condemned as unrealistic or anti-national; they should be subservient to national interests and goals. Han seriously questions this nationalist perspective on religions. Political movements or (socialist) revolution (*hyŏngmyŏng*) are of secondary importance. For Buddha preached about matters of higher relevance than politics; his teachings help us to realize that many things neglected and devalued by the limited nationalist viewpoint are not trivial and meaningless but no less important than the Korean nation and nationalism. In the light of Buddha's teaching, indeed, Koreans and their national affairs are not an urgent matter. By depicting Buddha as one who never loses sight of things outside the Korean nation, Han implicitly criticizes Korean nationalism for its own sake, which tends to be aggressive toward other values and practices, even though it is not his intention to reject its existence itself. This criticism of narrow-minded nationalism is also present elsewhere in his early writings, but this time he focuses more sharply on the relationship between Buddhism and nationalism and argues that Buddhism is not a political tool supporting whatever the

[31] Ibid., p.70.

Koreans and their nationalism want. Rather, he maintains that Buddhism is first and foremost a universal religion of broader vision and scope and more fundamental than political ideologies and practices. It is also presented as having a crucial role in rectifying the wrong course of nationalism and inspiring insights going beyond nationalism.

The newspaper interview and "Nae-ga minnŭn Pulgyo" present one more important matter, namely, the relation between Han's Buddhism and socialism. As the terms he uses, such as *yumullon* (materialism), *hyŏngmyŏng* (revolution), and *Pulgyo sahoejuŭi* (Buddhist socialism), indicate, Han was certainly aware of the newly arisen socialist or radical ideas in society. In this regard, Tikhonov and Miller have proffered an interesting argument: Han described Buddhism in terms acceptable to contemporary radicals and responded positively to socialist, anarchist, and communist criticism of imperialism and nationalism in the early 1920s.[32] According to them, there are other terms in the texts that also strongly allude to socialist, early communist ideas. The term mutual aid, for example, is argued by them as being popularly used among Korean anarchists. Han's term "Buddhist socialism" is considered as crucial evidence of his affinity with socialist ideas, although they acknowledge that he never became either a Marxist or a communist.

Tikhonov and Miller's argument is, however, somewhat tendentious and overstated where his affinity with socialism is concerned. What Han emphasized above all else in those essays is self-reliance as a characteristic of Buddhism, and this is a core concept that Korean cultural nationalists advocated in distinction to the socialist way of revolution. However, Tikhonov and Miller do not refer to this contradictory concept in their discussion. Contrary to their claims, the terms Han used to explain his Buddhist belief are not exclusively related to socialist ideas but also are widely and popularly used among many cultural nationalists in support of their idea of self-reconstruction.[33] For example, Yi Kwangsu heralded the whole world turning to democracy, mutual aid (*sangho pujo*, 相互扶助), gender equality, non-violence, mutual love (*sang'ae*, 相愛), and equality (*p'yŏngdŭng*). If history taught freedom and equality, all great religious men such as Shakyamuni, Confucius, Christ, Socrates, and Gandhi in unison taught love (*sarang*) and salvation of mankind from conflict and suffering.[34]There are more similarities between Han and cultural nationalists than between Han and the socialists.

It is worth noting that Han's consideration of socialist ideas is primarily limited to economic matters. As he briefly summarizes in the newspaper interview, the intriguing term of socialist Buddhism refers to nothing else than Buddha's economic views: Buddha rejected accumulating a fortune and

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[32] Vladimir Tikhonov and Owen Miller, *Selected writings of Han Yongun*, pp.21-25.

[33] Pak Ch'ansŭng, *Han'guk kŭndae chŏngch'isasangsa yŏn'gu*, pp.176-185.

[34] Yi Kwangsu, "Minjok kaejoron" in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 10 李光洙全集 10 (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1971/1973), p.116; -------, "Sangjaeng-ŭi segye-esŏ sang'ae-ŭi segye-e" 相爭의 世界에서 相愛의 世界에 in *Kaebyŏk* (Feb.1923). Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 10, pp.173-176.

opposed economic inequality. Han sees that Buddha's economic ideal of living without a desire to possess has something in common with socialist ideas and expresses his intention to write a book about the topic later.[35] Nonetheless, the fact that he failed to do so may be more significant. He wrote no book nor even as much as a short article related to socialist Buddhism. He never explained why he did not and never mentioned the notion again in his writing. At any rate, it is an overemphasis to say that Han described Buddhism solely in tune with socialist or anarchist ideologies. In his thought, socialism is also one of many sociopolitical ideologies Buddhism could embrace, guide, and at the same time, surpass. One should not forget his insistence that political movements or "socialist revolution" are not what ultimately counts. The centerpiece of his thinking is not imperialism or nationalism or socialism but his Buddhist belief.

The same goes for Han Yongun's view of other religions like Ch'ŏndogyo. As is generally known, this religion was deeply involved in Korean nationalist movements. During the colonial period, it took a prominent place in launching national movements such as the March First Movement (1919). Its magazine *Kaebyŏk* 開闢 professed to be published on behalf of the entire Korean people.[36] Its leaders, Son Pyŏnghŭi 孫秉熙 and Ch'oe Rin 崔麟, were also recognized as nationalists up to the 1920s. Through his essay, "Ch'ŏndogyo-e taehan kamsang-gwa ch'ongmang" (天道敎에 대한 感想과 囑望: Observations and suggestions regarding Ch'ŏndogyo, 1928),[37] Han expressed his deep concern over the politicization of the Ch'ŏndogyo organization. In his view, this religious group deviated from its original path by paying too much attention to nationalist movements. He made it clear that before anything else Ch'ŏndogyo is a religious group rather than a nationalist association. Although a religion cannot avoid secularization and socialization in these times, he argued, a religious organization should preserve its religious identity, lest it lose its power and disappear. Rather, Ch'ŏndogyo should more earnestly religionize itself. He did not oppose its social and nationalist participation itself but made his point clear: religion is the most important primary matter of all activities and therefore cannot be subordinated to politics.

Collaboration during the second Sino-Japanese War?

Despite ideological differences, many scholars strongly believe that Han Yongun never compromised with Japanese imperialism (nor with Japanese Buddhism) and its acts of war and also tried to persuade Koreans not to yield to them. It is popularly assumed that he acted up to what he had in mind. His

[35] "Taesŏng-i onŭl Chosŏn-e t'aeŏnattamyŏn?", p.70.
[36] Kim Kŭnsu 김근수, *Han'guk chapchisa yŏn'gu* 한국잡지사연구 (Seoul: Han'gukhak yŏn'guso, 1992/2004), pp.108-113.
[37] *Sin in'gan* 20 新人間 20 (1928).

brave rejection of the civil registry requirement that he change his name into a Japanese one is reiterated as clear evidence for his uncompromising and unyielding nationalism. However, there have been some counterarguments which in some way tackle the above assumption. For example, Han's experience of short-term study in Japan (at a Japanese Buddhist university) had a strong influence on the development of his ideas about modernization of Buddhism. His Buddhist reform proposals were largely adopting the Japanese model, in particular his insistence on monks' marriage. In order to garner maximum support for such reformist demands, he appealed time and again to the colonial authorities. His attempts to reform and secularize the Korean *sangha* were not made in order to oppose the Japanese colonial government, for on the contrary, he ended up supporting the Government-General when it made similar attempts at reform.[38]

Recently, moreover, Ku Moryong has unearthed Han's collaborationist essay entitled "Sina sabyŏn-gwa Pulgyodo" 支那事變과 佛敎徒 (The China Incident and Buddhists, 1937), wherein Han's attitude coincides with that of the wartime colonial government and he utterly justifies and supports Japan's war against China.[39] Ku himself has cited this essay simply as an example that does not match up with Han's nationalism, rather than as evidence of collaboration and concluded that Han's nationalism or worldview based upon his Buddhist philosophy might have shortcomings. Yet this essay has sparked controversy among scholars about the possibility of Han Yongun's collaboration.

This essay on its own is sufficient to debunk the strong belief that Han did not ever participate in collaboration. It can further endanger his reputation as a national hero because the nationalist myth does not allow any wrongdoing with regard to the nation. This essay therefore deserves more detailed scrutiny than it currently receives. But before doing so, one matter must be addressed first. This essay turns out to be an "unsigned" editorial of the magazine *Pulgyo*, which was probably written by its editor, Han. The nationalist scholarship which finds it hard to acknowledge that their national hero wrote such a piece ofwartime propaganda does indeed tackle the question of authorship and even argues that someone else wrote it.[40]

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[38] Hendrik H. Sørensen, "Buddhism and secular power in twentieth-century Korea," pp.132-137; Ku Moryong , "Manhae sasang-esŏŭi chayu-wa p'yŏngdŭng," pp.38, 49, and 54-56.

[39] "2004-Manhae ch'ukchŏn haksul semina nunkil kkŭn nonmun" 2004 만해축전 학술 세미나 눈길 끈 논문 in *Pudap'ia* (13 Aug. 2004), http://buddhapia.com/_Service/_ContentView/ETC_CONTENT_2.ASP?pk=0000760994&sub_pk=&clss_cd=0002171397&menu_cd=&menu_code=0000004225&top_menu_cd=0000000287&sub_menu; Pak Suyŏn 박수연, "Hwaŏmjŏk p'yŏngdŭng-ŭi minjok-kwa segye" 화엄적 평등의 민족과 세계 in *Manhaehak yŏn'gu* 2, p.64.

[40] "Yŏm Muung chakka hoeŭi isajang, chigŭm pundan ch'eje-ga mopsi hŭndŭllinŭn chung": chakka hoeŭi Manhae sasang silch'ŏn sŏnyanghoe chuch'oe kwangbok 60-chunyŏn kinyŏm haksul semina" 염무웅 작가회의 이사장 "지금 분단체제가 몹시 흔들리는 중": 작가회의 만해사상실천선양회 주최 광복 60주년 기념 학술 세미나 in *Han'guk chakka hoeŭi* 한국작가회의 (20 Aug. 2005), http://www.hanjak.or.kr/zboard/zboard.php?id=allimpress&page=8&sn1=&divpage=1&sn=off&ss=on&sc=on&select_arrange=headnum&desc=asc&no=510.

However, according to Im Hyebong, when the Buddhist organ, *Pulgyo*, was reissued from March 1937 onwards, its advisory editor Han Yongun took full charge of it (even though another monk Hŏ Yŏngho was appointed as chief editor and publisher) and wrote unsigned editorials from the first to the 17th volume (March 1937 to November 1938), among which is the problematic editorial of the seventh volume.[41] Han wrote the editorial but it remained unsigned. In view of his signed editorials of the same magazine in early 1930s, it becomes clear that he intentionally did not sign the later editorial. By doing so, he probably intended to show that the editorial was billed as the media's official opinions rather than his personal opinions. Nonetheless, this does not mean that he had no or indirect responsibility for that, as some scholars argue. Regarding anonymous editorials, the key should not be authorship but editorship. Han's unequivocal editorship thus means direct and full responsibility for the controversial editorial.

Then, what is exactly articulated in the editorial concerned? How controversial is it? Han probably wrote this one-page editorial and certainly published it under his editorship in October 1937, a few months after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. He first laments the military confrontation between China and Japan. He then adds that an increase in military forces and military training is not the right policy of a country regardless of purpose. This may sound like a pacifist or anti-militarist claim. However, it is not offered in opposition to war or militarism. His critique on the preparation for war and war mobilization targets only the Chinese side. Japanese military action is tolerated and even worse, supported by the author. He states, "The incident is caused and exacerbated by the Chinese's misjudgment of international affairs and their wrong policy of digging their own grave in belittling and resisting Japan."[42] He blames the Chinese government for initiating the war, misjudging the intentions of Japan, and underestimating and defying the Japanese empire.

The author's remarks are probably based upon manipulated news. The colonial government made an official statement that the Chinese military troops initiated the military clash and Japan only reacted to them. But the truth was that the Japanese army provoked the Chinese by detonating a bomb nearby the South Manchurian Railway. Whether the news was manipulated or not, if Han had viewed militarism itself critically from a pacifistic point of view as he had done in his earlier treatise "Chosŏn tongnib-ŭi sŏ" 朝鮮獨立의 書 (A letter on the independence of Korea, 1919), he would have criticized the military actions of both Japan and China. Instead, the author now applies a double standard *contra* China and *pro* Japan. His earlier anti-war and anti-militarist view targeting both Germany and the allied forces has turned into war propaganda

[41] Im Hyebong 임혜봉, *Ch'inil sŭngnyŏ 108-in: Kkŭnnaji anŭn yŏksa-ŭi murŭm* 친일승려 108인: 끝나지 않은 역사의 물음 (Seoul: Ch'ŏngnyŏnsa, 2005), pp.440-441.
[42] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.359.

in this later writing that celebrates Japan's military punishment of China which is portrayed as the belligerent party.

Han's notions of the imperial mission for peace in Asia (*tongyang p'yŏnghwa*, 東洋平和), the future of the Asian races, the unification of minds, and the promotion of imperial glory are not meant to express pacifism in Asia or the world but are a useful rhetoric for justifying the war waged by Japan. Some scholars are apt to interpret his mention of peace in the literal sense of the word and jump to the conclusion that he was a pacifist or pacifist nationalist. Some go further and argue that he should be seen as an (Pan-)Asianist rather than a nationalist, one whose concern for peace went beyond colonial Korea.[43] However, they fail to take into account the historical context of the time, when peace in Asia or world peace often was used in wartime propaganda, and do not question whether there is any difference between Han's articulations and the war rhetoric.

As far as his early treatise "Chosŏn tongnib-ŭi sŏ" is concerned, Han himself was clearly aware of the fact that in a manner similar to other expansionist great powers, Japan declared peace in Asia and the autonomy and prosperity of Chosŏn Korea as reasons for its warfare, as clearly articulated in its treaties with Korea during the wars against China (1894-1895) and Russia (1905), and that it claimed to be a peacekeeper. However, he denounced this as rhetoric designed to mask its desire to occupy countries like Korea and to treat the occupied people as slaves.[44] Against this rhetoric, he insisted on world peace, pacifism and justice in its true sense from the occupied people's point of view. However, the notions expressed in his later essay are neither more nor less than the wartime ideology the Japanese empire propagated. He reproduced what he had previously condemned: the role of the Japanese imperial army as a peacekeeper in Asia and as a fighter for justice and the future of the Asian races, and so on. Of course, he was not alone in this effort. Many Korean collaborationist Buddhists also gave speeches on "For world peace," "Spirit of peace in Asia," "The China Incident and Asian peace," and "Asian peace and the duty of the civilians" in support of Japanese expansionism and the Japanese invasion of China.[45]

More striking in this later essay is that Han rebukes China's "resistance" to Japan because he thinks it is the wrong policy: "Regardless of motivations, it is not the right way for a country [China] to make a national policy of expulsion or contempt targeting another country [Japan] and to educate and train their people to attain this goal."[46] Whatever Han himself meant, the actual "motivations" of China were a desire to defend the nation

[43] Pak Suyŏn, "Hwaŏmjŏk p'yŏngdŭngŭi minjokkwa segye," pp.75-78; Kim Kibong 김기봉, "21-segi Manhae Han Yongun-ŭi 'nim'-ŭn nuguinga?" 21세기 만해 한용운의 '님'은 누구인가? in *Manhaehak yŏn'gu* 3:55-77.
[44] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 1, p.346.
[45] Im Hyebong, *Ch'inil sŭngnyŏ 108-rin*, pp.409, 461, 462, 487 and 468.
[46] Ibid.

against Japanese aggression and halt Japan's expansion in the region. The Chinese definition of the Second Sino-Japanese War was a war of resistance against Japan.[47] Simply on straightforward logical grounds one would expect of a Korean independence fighter that he would endorse Chinese resistance movements and condemn Japanese imperial power. In his editorial, however, far from supporting anti-Japanese movements in China as well as China's desire to maintain national unity and independence, he condemns them.

The author's critique of China concludes with a more direct glorification of the Japanese empire. He insists that it is the duty of people on the home front (*ch'onghu kungmin*, 銃後國民) to show "gratitude" to imperial soldiers (most of them Japanese at that moment) for their thoroughgoing punishment of (stubborn) China.[48] He particularly urges Buddhists in colonial Korea to pray for the soldiers' health and victory. Calling for the proper attitude and readiness as "Japanese nationals" (*ilbon kungmin*, 日本國民), he insists on keen awareness of the national emergency and of the future of the Asian race. In this editorial, Han does not utter a word about either the Korean nation (*Chosŏn minjok*) or Koreans (*Chosŏnin*). The readers who are supposed to be Koreans and Buddhists are re-designated as "Japanese nationals" and "imperial servants on the home front." This re-designation does not simply change the language but the entire discourse in line with the wartime policy of assimilation designed to turn the Koreans into loyal subjects of the Japanese Emperor. Under the banner of *naissen ittai* 內鮮一體 (Japan and Korea are One Body), for example, the Koreans were forced to assimilate into Japanese culture and adopt its language, religion, spirit, and customs while extirpating Korean identity, language, and culture.

It is noteworthy that Han's editorial is eerily analogous with those written by prominent pro-Japanese monks. During the same period, Kim T'aehŭp 金泰洽 published a series of essays in the Buddhist newspaper, *Pulgyo sibo* 佛教時報, asserting that since China initiated this war of aggression, it should be punished by Japan and encouraging Buddhists to support and show patriotism toward Japan and the imperial army.[49] He further asserted that the punishment of perfidious China was aimed at establishing eternal peace in Asia. He in particular called Japan "our country" (*aguk*) and the Koreans *kungmin* (a term meaning nationals, but used to mean "Japanese nationals") and called upon them to practice loyalty and render service to the country of Japan. He emphasized that "we, Japanese citizens," should strive for spiritual mobilization and lead religious lives for that purpose.[50]

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[47] Joseph W. Esherick, "Ten Theses on the Chinese Revolution" in *Modern China* 21.1 (Jan.1995), pp.51,53, and 66; Wen-HsinYeh, "Dai Li and the Liu Geqing Affair: Heroism in the Chinese Secret Service During the War of Resistance" in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48.3 (August 1989):545-562, pp.545, 550 and 551; Peter Duus, *Modern Japan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p.222.

[48] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.359.

[49] "Aeguk sasang-gwa kyŏngsin sungbul" 愛國思想과 敬神崇佛 in *Pulgyo sibo* (Oct. 1937).

[50] "Pisang siguk-kwa sinang saenghwal" 非常時局과 信仰生活 in *Pulgyo sibo* (Nov. 1937).

Kwŏn Sangno 權相老, who had been a prominent scholar-monk but later became one of the active pro-Japanese monks, also condemned China for its misjudgment of the situation and sided with Japan during the Second Sino-Japanese War. In his essay "Sidae kaksŏng-ŭi p'iryosŏng 時代 覺醒의 必要性 (The necessity of a keen awareness of the times, 1937), he argued that the Chinese should have cooperated with the Japanese empire for the sake of peace in Asia but that instead they destroyed themselves and brought danger to Japan and Asia as well. So, it was natural for "our" Japanese empire to harbor animosity against China in the face of the danger; and it was proper for Japan to punish the Chinese aggressor. Kwŏn also called for a keen awareness of the national emergency and declared that not only soldiers but people on the home front should be ready to support the war effort in their daily activities.

Evidently, what those collaborating monks stated in the same period is surprisingly identical to each of Han Yongun's arguments. It is probably so because those essays and speeches did not need to be creative but merely follow the dictates of the colonial government. Given that an editorial would undergo careful scrutiny by the colonial censors, there would have been a need to appease the censors, too. As he intentionally showed by not signing it, the collaborative text was not to express his personal opinion but rather to represent the stance of the *Pulgyo* magazine as an institution. In other words, it was not what he personally thought and wanted to write but what he officially had to write in order to be able to run the official magazine of Korean Buddhism in a difficult situation where its survival was impossible without collaboration. Nonetheless, even if it was his "helpless" compliance as a means not his goal or true intention, this cannot entirely take away the taint of pro-Japanese collaboration. He cannot avoid responsibility for the collaborationist essay he wrote as a magazine chief. He may have been in the same shoes as many of his peers: alleged collaborators just trying to rescue their Korean organizations and institutions by willingly or unwillingly following the colonial government's policies.

A heroic Buddha and the martial spirit

The issue of Han's relevance to pro-Japanese collaboration is a complicated matter which cannot be judged by one or two texts. As some scholars point out, it is important to explore whether Han continued to draw up collaborationist documents. Is this collaborationist editorial "exceptional" or are there more texts related to the issue of his collaboration? Scholars tend to jump to the conclusion that there are no more collaborationist texts written by Han Yongun and that this editorial is too exceptional in the light of the consistent nationalism shown throughout his life. However, the sources used to buttress the myth of Han's ideological consistency are limited primarily to his earliest canonical

texts,[51] and therefore it is of utmost importance to examine his later works (from the 1930s onward), which to date have been largely neglected, and to check whether Han maintained a consistent uncompromising nationalist stance in the later period or he continued to produce collaborationist texts like the editorial examined above.

In none of his later work did Han call for an explicit nationalism or actively support the colonial government. He mainly discussed issues and problems in Buddhism without mentioning specific political events or circumstances. However, on closer inspection, one can detect that many of his Buddhist texts convey significant messages of which social and political implications lead us to question the issue of collaboration once more. One of the prominent examples is the recurring image of Buddha as a heroic fighter that occurs in his 1930s writing particularly in the form of editorials (mostly signed). The Buddha is popularly known as an awakened and compassionate saint, who attained complete insight into the cause of suffering and the truth of the universe and tried to save all living beings. Strangely, however, Han highlights Buddha as a great hero who punishes and triumphs over evil rather than as a merciful Buddha and stresses his ferocious, fearless, and brave fighting spirit rather than compassion.

For example, in "Ch'ulbalchŏm" 出發點 (Point of Departure, 1932), Han states: "Our Buddha embodies great compassion and great kindness (*taeja taebi*, 大慈大悲) but at the same time, he was also known for his great strength, the highest prowess and fearlessness (*taeung taeryŏk taemuoe*, 大雄大力大無畏)." [52] He further explains that Buddha practiced forbearance (*inyok*, 忍辱) for the purpose of leading living beings to the path of enlightenment but had to exhibit extraordinary courage and a fighting spirit to vanquish evil. In this editorial, Han does not deny the validity of Buddha's popular image as a compassionate savior of all living beings. He still reveres Buddha's well-known characteristics of compassion and forbearance. However, he certainly rehabilitates the lesser known image of Buddha to the public as a heroic and fearless warrior. The focus of his message is clearly more on Buddha's fearless fighting spirit and prowess than his mind filled with compassion.

This is not an editorial in which Han intended to elucidate a Buddha's spiritual qualities –compassionate, powerful, fearless– in a conventional sense. The example of Buddha is basically cited by him to support the central message he clearly proclaims in the very beginning of the essay: "there is only one thing for us [Koreans/Korean Buddhists] to do in our life: advance and never retreat".[53] In this essay, he discusses how to live in the 1930s colonial society and emphasizes a life with bellicose spirit and behavior as the historical Buddha

[51] *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* 朝鮮佛教維新論 (1913), "Chosŏn tongnib-ŭi sŏ" 朝鮮獨立의 書 (1919), and *Nim-ŭi ch'immuk* 님의 沈默 (1926).
[52] *Hoegwang* 2 回光 2 (March 1932). Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.363.
[53] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.363.

himself showed. When facing obstacles, in his own words, such as the devil (*ma*, 魔) or the enemy (*chŏk*), one should vanquish them at the risk of one's life and charge (*tolchin*) toward one's original purpose. According to him, retreat is not an option in one's life. This is argued by him as the correct view of life and the appropriate course of conduct for the people in colonial Korea.

In his editorials such as "P'yŏngbŏm" 平凡 (Ordinary, 1937), Han reiterates that Buddhist practice is always attended by evil events (*map'yŏn*, 魔便).[54] Evil spirits constantly appear as obstacles to meditation and awakening, because the evil and wicked (*sama*, 邪魔) detest the correct law of Buddha (*chŏngpŏp*, 正法).[55] Nonetheless, such difficulties make strenuous adherence to the principle of "no retreat and no surrender" all the more praiseworthy. According to him, this is not merely confined to Buddhist affairs. Secular matters are viewed as the same. In the fulfillment of personal goals, one cannot help but encounter obstacles and ordeals. People in colonial societies, particularly, are regarded as being beset by adversity. These, he exhorts to be brave and courageous.[56] Following the example set by Buddha, they should not be defeated by, but on the contrary defeat evils, enemies and obstacles. They should be armed with strong fearless courage and be prepared to move forward.[57]

This heroic and fearless Buddha is not an arbitrary distortion. Nor does the image occur solely in Han's Buddhist writing. As his long essay "Chŏngjin" 精進 (Endeavor, 1937) shows, Buddhist scriptures already contain many references to such images of Buddha.[58] Han thus rediscovered the motif of great heroism, that is, courage, prowess and fearlessness, which was exhibited by the Buddha in the existing Buddhist texts and refashioned it for the contemporary reality of colonial Korea. As the title of the essay indicates, the Buddhist notion of *chŏngjin* (endeavor) or *yongmaeng chŏngjin*, (勇猛精進, fearless effort) particularly features the event of enlightenment in which Buddha with dauntless will subjugated the evil spirit of Māra, thrust away temptation, and achieved great wisdom.[59] The historical Buddha was a man of great valour (*tae yongmaeng*, 大勇猛) who had no fear of life or death and countenanced no retreat and no surrender.[60] The Buddhist practitioners therefore should re-enact Shakyamuni Buddha's conquest of Māra and his subsequent enlightenment. This is a ritual still practiced in Sŏn (Zen) monasteries and called *yongmaeng chŏngjin* (fearless effort), whereby Sŏn monks engage in "intensive meditation," going without sleep for seven straight days.[61]

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[54] *Pulgyo: sin* 佛敎: 新 (July 1937).
[55] "Soin-gwa kunja" 小人과 君子 in *Pulgyo* (May 1933).
[56] "Yongja-ga toera" 勇者가 되라 in *Pulgyo* (Jan. 1932).
[57] "Nun-ŭl tŭrŏ mŏlli pora" 눈을 들어 멀리 보라 in *Pulgyo: sin* (April 1937).
[58] *Pulgyo: sin* 6 (August 1937). Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, pp.329-332.
[59] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.329.
[60] Ibid., p.330.
[61] Robert E. Buswell, *The Zen monastic experience: Buddhist practice in contemporary Korea* (Princeton

Han's attempts to recall Buddha's conquest of Māra and to emphasize the warrior aspect of the Buddha are associated particularly with Japanese militarism in the colonial context. He himself took the Buddhist idea and applied it to colonial society, emphasizing its secular meaning of "go ahead and no retreat." This main message as well as the words he uses in his essays such as enemy (*chŏk*), devil (*angma*), evil spirit, surrender, vanquish (*hangbok*), conquer (*t'oech'i*), and move forward (*toljin*) are rather military terms than Buddhist terms and strongly remind us of a series of Japanese military operations throughout the 1930s, from the Manchurian Incident (1931) and to the outbreak of the total war against China (1937). As baldly described in one of his editorials, Buddha is envisioned less as a compassionate savior than as a brave military warrior bearing a sharp sword.[62] This man encounters evil foes on his way to enlightenment, beheads them, and destroys the false. His prowess and fighting spirit bespeak soldierly morale, as his vanquishing and beheading of the enemy represent soldierly conduct. Such a heroic Buddha, while saving all living beings, evokes images of the soldiers of Japanese imperial army who fight against evils like China on the way to the Asian continent at that time.

It is no coincidence that Han's statements are not really different from those of many Buddhist leaders who supported the Japanese military aggression. From the early Meiji period on, Japanese military and Buddhist leaders actively incorporated Buddhism into Japanese war efforts and advertised Buddhism as the very heart of Japanese nationalism. In the 1930s, under the banner of imperial or nation-protecting Buddhism, they sanctioned and justified Japan's military operations, including the Manchurian Incident (1931) and the second Sino-Japanese War (1937). The Greater East Asian War (Pacific War, 1941) was justified as a holy war of compassion, a mission to punish formidable enemies such as China and the West and to contribute to the salvation of justice, progress, humanity, and peace. [63]

Zen, in particular, was reconstructed and heavily emphasized as the true spirit of Japanese militarism and as the martial spirit of warriors represented by Bushidō. As D.T. Suzuki's explained, Zen goes well with the fighting spirit. The fighter should be single-minded with one object in view: to fight, looking neither backward nor sidewise. To go straight forward in order to crush the enemy. [64] This explanation is eerily similar to Han's editorials discussed above. Shakyamuni Buddha's heroism when conquering demons was frequently rediscovered to heighten support for Japan's imperial wars and boost military morale. For example, one of the most committed Zen supporters

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University Press, 1992), pp.187-189.

[62] "Taeryŏk" 大力 in *Pulgyo* (April 1933). Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.356.

[63] Robert H. Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism" in *Curators of the Buddha: The study of Buddhism under colonialism*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995); Brian Daizen Victoria, *Zen at War* (Oxford: Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

[64] Cited from Brian Victoria, *Zen war stories* (London &New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p.25.

of Japan's military actions, Harada Daiun Sōgaku, insisted: "Buddha Shakyamuni himself had conquered demons in the course of realizing enlightenment. Thus, without plunging into the war arena, it is totally impossible to know the Buddha Dharma."[65]

It is no surprise that some more years later when there was actual war with China and the West and the Koreans were drafted to help the Japanese war effort, pro-Japanese Korean monks also cited notions similar to Han's in their collaborationist writings. In his essay "Sigukha Chosŏn Pulgyodo-ŭi immu" 時局下朝鮮佛敎徒의任務 (The duty of Korean Buddhists in a state of national emergency, 1940), Kwŏn Sangno noted that Buddha defeated evil forces and temptations before attaining enlightenment and urged Buddhists on the home front to whole heartedly live for the state, as Buddha did. Kwŏn also insisted that, in light of Buddhist teachings, it was natural that young monks volunteer to serve the militaries of their countries.[66] In the same year, he wrote another essay in which he cited many more examples of Buddhism's association with militarism such as Shakyamuni's role as a warrior protecting his country and Korean monks such as Sŏsan and Samyŏng who defended Chosŏn Korea by gathering warrior monks.[67] Of course, the ironic fact that these Korean monks actually fought against Japanese was glossed over in his essay. The Buddhist concept of *chŏngjin* or *yongmaeng chŏngjin* was emphasized by Kwŏn, too, in his case explicitly, as a morale booster for imperial soldiers.[68] He argued, "on a battlefield, one has no choice but to go forward. Retreat is not allowed….The best example of *yongmaeng chŏngjin* is to be fearless of a curtain of fire, to break through the enemy line, and go onwards and onwards. This heroic act of *yongmaeng chŏngjin* represents loyalty and justice and enables the building of eternal life and history. National loyalty and devotion (to the Japanese emperor) are equal to the attainment of enlightenment".[69]

Whether Han was aware or not, his description of Buddha as a conqueror of evil, a warrior who was fearless and, therefore, would not retreat, is uncomfortably close to the distorted interpretations of Buddhism presented by both Japanese and Korean war-supporting Buddhists. Of course, Han's Buddhist articulations are not as strong and obvious as theirs. He never directly stated that the evils and enemies referred to China. Nor did he directly mention that he supported Japanese military aggression as the collaborationist Buddhists did. His Buddhist articulations cannot be seen as a kind of wartime

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[65] Brian Daizen Victoria, *Zen at War*, pp.136-137.

[66] *Pulgyo: sin* 25. Quoted from Im Hyebong 임혜봉, *Ch'inil Pulgyoron: sang* 친일불교론: 上 (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1993), pp.287-289.

[67] "Sŭngnyŏ chiwŏnbyŏng-e taehaya" 僧侶志願兵에 대하야 in *Pulgyo sibo* 57 (Jan. 1940). Cited from *Ch'inil Pulgyoron: sang*, pp.298-300.

[68] Kwŏn Sangno 權相老,"Hanbŏn k'ŭge chungnŭn chŏngsin, yŏngwŏn pulmyŏr-ŭi saengmyŏng-ŭn ch'ŭng-esŏ nanda" 한번 크게 죽는 精神, 永遠不滅의 生命은 '忠'에서 난다 in *Maeil sinbo* (29 Nov. 1943). Republished in *Haktoyŏ sŏngjŏng-e nasŏra* 학도여 성전에 나서라, Edited by Chŏng Unhyŏn (Seoul: Ŏpsŏjiji annŭn iyagi, 1997), pp.66-71.

[69] *Haktoyŏ sŏngjŏng-e nasŏra*, pp.70-71.

propaganda because in the early and mid-1930s when he wrote those Buddhist essays, Japan had some military clashes with China, not an actual war and no aggressive wartime campaigns directly mobilizing the Koreans. Nonetheless, it is clear that he was far from being an anti-military pacifist, anti-Japanese, and uncompromising monk. The Buddhist examples in association with militarism he highlighted prove that he basically followed the colonial state's lead instead of resisting it and shared the insights of collaborationist Buddhists, even in a time when the economic, political and military efforts of the colonial authorities failed to draw full attention and support from the Korean men.[70]

Seeing that Han has been too much romanticized as a faultless and uncompromising national hero, it is important to explore his behavior and conviction tinged with collaboration and challenge false assumptions about him. However, the conventional practice in reaction to pro-Japanese collaboration, namely, labeling someone as pro-Japanese, retrospectively downgrading all his previous thoughts, writings, and activities, and pouring out all sorts of criticism, is no way to settle the controversy. Han's literature with collaboration tendencies needs to be explored afresh from a postcolonial perspective and in the context of the complicated and nuanced interactions with the colonial government and its dominant discourse.[71] Collaboration was not his only reaction to colonial reality in a later period. There are more subtle subtexts in his writing which are divergent from or even subversive of colonial policies or ideologies.

The bottom line here is that while compromising with the colonial overlord, Han also imparts another message that people in colonial Korea despite adverse conditions should persistently and unyieldingly work at their goals until they are fulfilled, alluding, implicitly and explicitly, to national movements of the Koreans. Throughout his essays, he talks about obstacles and ordeals the Koreans faced in their lives. Yet, he does not specify further what kind of adversity it was. It is probably due to the intensified censorship, but I think that the specification was not necessary to his readers because they were the ones who experienced adversity by themselves and therefore already knew what the obstacles connoted. By taking the contemporary state of Korean Buddhism as an example, however, we can approximately estimate what obstacles prevailed in the 1930s when Han composed various Buddhist essays.

As revealed by a series of articles in *Pulgyo*, Korean Buddhism faced a deadlock in the early 1930s.[72] The author of the articles analyzed six factors

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[70] Carter J. Eckert et al., *Korea Old and New: A History* (Havard University Press, 1990), pp.305-306.
[71] Kyeong-Hee Choi, "Another Layer of the Pro-Japanese Literature: Ch'oe Chŏnghŭi's "The Wild Chrysanthemum"" in *POETICA* 52 (1999): 61-87; Han Suyŏng 한수영, *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chaeinsik* 친일문학의 재인식 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005); Kim Yangsŏn 김양선, *Kŭndae munhag-ŭi t'alsingminsŏng-gwa chendŏ chŏngch'ihak* 근대문학의 탈식민성과 젠더정치학 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2009); Yun Taesŏk 윤대석, *Singminji kungmin munhak non* 식민지 국민문학론 (Seoul: Yŏngnak, 2006).
[72] Mongjŏngsaeng 夢庭生, "Wigi-e chingmyŏnhan Chosŏn Pulgyo-ŭi wŏnin koch'al" 危機에 直面한 朝鮮佛教의 原因考察 in *Pulgyo* (Oct. 1932) and *Pulgyo* (Nov. 1932).

leading to the desperate condition of Korean Buddhism. Among them, three external influences are particularly worth noting. The central organization of Korean Buddhism was in heavy debt and was about to shut down. According to the author, it was not only the Korean temples but the whole of Korean society was in economic hardship and its economy had literally collapsed in the Great Depression (1929). The second external reason was the ideological crisis. The Korean public and Korean Buddhism were in a chaotic situation in which communism, anachronism, anti-religious movement flooded into their country, all kinds of new religions arose and those ideologies confronted with each other. The third reason was the temple ordinance (*sach'allyŏng*). Although the state regulation of religion was rejected in Japan because it was against the Constitution, the colonial government enforced this law in colonial Korea under the pretext of protecting the Korean Buddhism. However, it turned out to bring the Buddhist institution under their direct control and caused problems in Korean Buddhism such as the government-appointed abbots' abuse of power.

Likewise, there was an increasing turbulence in economic, ideological, and political environments which badly affected people's life and livelihood. Koreans were disoriented in their personal and public lives. This also seriously influenced their national agenda. As Adrian Buzo succinctly observes, the 1930s was a period in which the long-desired national goal of independence had started to look unlikely to Koreans, whose lives were becoming more and more integrated with the colonial system. As preparations for war got underway, even mild expressions of nationalism or socialism were harshly suppressed by the colonial government.[73] All Korean institutions and associations were on the eve of either shutdown or reconstruction into imperial organizations. Under such circumstances, people in colonial Korea came to lose sight of their original goal of national independence.

Perceiving that Koreans faced obstacles in their lives and began to see their national goal of independence as a far-fetched or impossible dream, Han encouraged them not to let the obstacles defeat them and reminded them not to forget their beginnings, lose sight of their ideals and original plans and purposes, or change direction. The recurrent theme of Buddha's heroism and his fighting spirit of "go forward and no retreat" that relates to his collaboration with Japanese military effort also enables this subtle counter-discourse. The Way of Bodhisattva which he tellingly revisited and discussed as the way to cope with colonial life in the 1930s is another example of counter-discourse. Among six paramitas (*yukp'aramil*, 六波羅蜜) constituting the quintessential of the Bodhisattva Way,[74] Han particularly singled out the practice of *chŏngjin* for that purpose.

[73] Adrian Buzo, *The Making of Modern Korea* (London and New Work: Routledge, 2002), pp.38-49.
[74] The six paramitas are generous giving, precept observation, forbearance, endeavor, meditation and wisdom.

As Han explains in his essay "Chŏngjin" (1937), *chŏngjin* appears everywhere in the Buddhist scriptures, connoting perseverance, zeal, diligence, great valor, and non-negligence. He explains that this practice of perseverance is ranked as the fourth among the six paramitas and therefore, one might think that this virtue has a low priority. However, he emphasizes that it is not true. The paramitas are not ranked in the order of priority. They are all equally important. He further argues that this practice of *chŏngjin* turns out to be the very essence of a bodhisattva's practice and thus the most fundamental.[75] Without this virtue, he argues, it is impossible to fulfill other paramitas and to achieve the ultimate Buddhist goal. Its importance is not limited to Buddhism only. He sees it as a crucial element of success in all secular affairs. In a more secular sense, this Buddhist concept is defined as referring to the unyielding and invincible spirit engaged in sustained and ceaseless effort.[76] He argues that all things are attended by obstacles and challenges and without this spirit of tenacity, one cannot overcome them and comes to relinquish one's goal and dream. Although great religious leaders, successful businessmen, and great inventors did not believe in Buddhism and never heard of *chŏngjin*, he sees that they all demonstrated this spirit of tenacity and made unprecedented and matchless achievements in their fields despite adversities.

Given the intensified censorship, Han never directly stated what adversity the Koreans faced, the growing political repression imposed by the Japanese government, and the massive withdrawal from Korean national movements. Also, he never directly insisted that people in colonial Korea should maintain ceaseless efforts toward their national goals and exhibit unyielding spirit. He was clever enough to stick to acceptable words under colonial censorship. He rather chose to express his thoughts and wishes to his compatriots indirectly and figuratively. His poetic expressions illustrate snow, cold wind and winter as an allegory of the predicament of the Koreans and highlight plum blossom as a symbol of tenacity and perseverance.[77] In this symbolic way, he pronounces that in whatever predicament the Koreans find themselves, they should continue tenaciously and courageously along the path they have chosen and aimed for success.

Han uses anecdotes and proverbs to deliver this subversive message. In "Ch'oehu-ŭi obun'gan" 最後의 五分間 (The last five minutes, 1935), for example, he cites Liang Qichao's experience.[78] When Liang's *coup d'état* failed and he crossed to America, Liang met a famous entrepreneur who had a five-minute rule in meetings: "Success relies on the last five minutes." To Han, this adage explains the very meaning of *chŏngjin*. All undertakings tend to start with adversity and, accordingly, are accompanied by difficulties, which mean that

[75] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.333.
[76] Ibid, p.335.
[77] "Maehwa" 梅花 in *Pulgyo* (Jan. 1933); "Pomŭi sado" 봄의 使徒 in *Pulgyo* (March 1933).
[78] *Chogwang* 朝光 (Feb. 1935).

one should not be discouraged or give up if, having completed half a task, success has not yet been achieved. He insists that people (in colonial Korea) not change course at the very last moment, as this would go against their real intentions and would not result in success. He even scares them, saying that those who do not maintain ceaseless efforts toward their goals and exhibit no unyielding spirit will only taste defeat and sorrow throughout their lives. The five-minute rule is aimed to encourage Koreans to bravely suffer the difficulties necessary to obtain the initial (national) goals they set themselves in the beginning.

In the conventional view, Han is strongly assumed having nothing to do with collaboration. His idea of nationalism is also regarded as incompatible with or opposing to collaborationist effort. However, his 1930s works show that he assimilated colonial discourse into his writing. It was his collaboration that enabled him to create such a counter-discourse that continued the advancement of the national ideals and movements that the Japanese government would have repressed. It should be noted that he did not align himself with all policies and ideologies the war-preparing colonial government promoted and enforced. He might have supported Japan's military expansionism but at the same time stood against other policies such as Japanization or assimilationism which denied Korean indigenous nationalist movements.

Conclusion

Han Yongun's Buddhist writings, in particular those written in his later life, offer many alternatives to the existing mode of understanding him. Habitual assumptions informed by the nationalist perspective turn out to be erroneous and betray his ideas and claims. As I have shown, the gist of his nationalist ideas was not anti-Japanese resistance but self-reliance (self-criticism). Under the influence of Buddhism, he adopted this particular mode of nationalism and shared his national ideas with many cultural nationalists who often ended up collaborators. Thus he was not a superhero whose nationalism was unparalleled, original, and faultless. He did not encourage anti-Japanese sentiment but, on the contrary, forbade the Koreans to blame the colonial authorities. In this sense, he was rather pro-Japanese than anti-Japanese in sentiment. His basic intention was to produce a counter-discourse subverting the colonizer-colonized relationship, disenchanting the colonized mind, and above all, attaining spiritual independence from colonialism.

To Han, Buddhism was the primary and fundamental matter in everything. It was in no way a vehicle for politics, neither for colonialism nor for Korean nationalism, nor any other socio-political ideologies. He clearly articulated the notion that religious ideals and goals may not be identical or subordinate to those of political (nationalist) movements. Rather, he emphasized the precedence and transcendence of Buddhism. However, he did not mean that Buddhism was unworldly and unrealistic. What he tried to argue

was that in the relationship between Buddhism and politics, Buddhism should be the guideline for all human activities including political ideologies, not the other way around.

The idea that Han never compromised or collaborated with the colonial authorities needs to be seriously reconsidered. What is true is that he did not participate in war-effort campaigns. He refused taking a Japanese name and family registry. However, many of his later works, in particular written during wartime unfolded a different story, strongly related to his literary collaboration. He marshaled Buddhist themes and images in support of Japanese military aggression. He propagated a military spirit as the right attitude and behavior for people on the home front. Nowhere did he oppose Japan's warfare on moral, pacifistic grounds. Views that may be regarded as collaborationist are evident in his later writings. Resistance and collaboration co-existed in his life. With his writings, he further proved that the line separating them was hard to draw and the two worked in tandem rather than collided. His collaboration was a selective and at the same time subversive process through which he could impart a nationalist message to carry on national movements without yielding to the colonial government policy of suppressing Korean nationalism.

Han Yongun holds an important position in Korean history. His life is of considerable significance in contemporary Korean society where colonial history and its legacies are still relevant and sensitive issues. In tune with the popular acceptance of his role as a national hero, his birthplace has been restored and memorial museums, parks and monuments have been constructed in his memory. Every year, a cultural festival is held and awards named after him are given to writers, scholars and a host of eminent leaders in the world. These social practices serve as a reminder how important it is to more accurately illuminate his diverse and alternative considerations of Buddhism, nationalism, and collaboration with colonialism. This study may help people to recognize the complexities and ambiguities of the colonial era in Korea and enable them to settle or resolve the troubled colonial legacy.

Chapter 2

Pangmyŏng: A hero's dilemma amidst war

Introduction

Han Yongun's fiction is still largely *terra incognita*. Few among the general public know whether this nationally acclaimed writer ever wrote a novel, and if he did, how many novels he produced during his lifetime and when he did that. In people's minds, this literary giant seems almost to be a one-hit wonder who wrote only his *magnum opus*, *Nim-ŭi ch'immuk* 님의 沈默 (Silence of the beloved, 1926). Yet he wrote several novels that merit attention. The first novel manuscript, *Chugŭm* 죽음 (Death, 1924), although unpublished, is important as historical source material for re-evaluating his approach to nationalism. A decade later, Han published several novels in various newspapers and magazines.[1] Apart from this creative novel writing, he also translated and serialized the famous Chinese novel *Samgukchi* 三國志 (Romance of the Three Kingdoms, 1939-1940) in the *Chosŏn ilbo* 朝鮮日報. Why are his novels nearly forgotten? What are the signature characteristics of his novels? Are they all Buddhist novels?

The main reason that Han's fiction has become more or less neglected is that it cannot be considered as having great literary value. As many literary scholars concede, his fiction far from displays the level of mastery shown in his poetry. His work is not even up to par with other novels of the 1930s. His plot, style, themes, and characters are all basic and straightforward, similar to fiction written in the very early twentieth century and have a great distance to go in terms of sophistication and subtlety to catch up with his literary contemporaries. However, his fiction constitutes the bulk of his later writing. As previous scholarship has excessively focused on his early texts, in order to provide a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of Han as a person and as an author a consideration of his fiction is overdue.

In spite of its scant aesthetic and literary value, Han Yongun's fiction has many redeeming qualities. As scholars such as Kim Chaehong claim, the serialized novels of Han Yongun are full of cultural and ideological significance and can play an important role in understanding his time and his work.[2] Han Yongun himself stated that he was neither a talented novelist nor aspired to be

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[1] Apart from *Pangmyŏng*, the topic of this chapter, *Hukp'ung*黑風 (Black Wind, 1935-1936) in *Chosŏn ilbo* and four uncompleted and unpublished works such as *Chugŭm* (written in 1924, unpublished), *Huhoe*後悔 (Remorse, 1936, uncompleted) in *Chosŏn chungang ilbo* 朝鮮中央日報, *Ch'ŏrhyŏl miin*鐵血美人 (A woman with steel in her blood, 1937, uncompleted) in *Pulgyo* 佛敎, and *Samgukchi* 三國志 (Romance of the Three Kingdoms, 1939-1940, uncompleted) in *Chosŏn ilbo* 朝鮮日報.

[2] Kim Chaehong 金載弘, *Han Yongun munhak yŏn'gu* 韓龍雲 文學硏究 (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1982/1996), p.109.

a novelist. He used the novel as a chance to speak to his readers and inform them of his opinions.[3] He did not concern himself with a single pet issue; instead, his novels cover a wide range of problematics. Most grippingly, he juxtaposes contradictory and incompatible views with one another, such as feminism and patriarchal Confucianism, Confucianism and Buddhism, religion and socialist revolution, nationalist and colonial arguments, and fictional and factual elements. All of these issues are very complex, and therefore require full enquiry and serious discussion, but in the scholarly literature few of them have invited more than cursory attention or rash speculation.[4]

Among Han Yongun's novels, *Pangmyŏng* 薄命 (Misfortune, 1938-1939) is arguably the work most worth examining. This is one of the two finished works. The rest of his novels were left unfinished, as their serialization was interrupted by the closure of the newspaper company. As his last creative piece of work, *Pangmyŏng* also shows some improvement in artistic character and techniques. Above all, I will argue that it is the one and only Buddhist novel Han ever wrote. Generally, Buddhism is seen as the ideology underlying all of his work, including his fiction. Indeed, Buddhist terms and figures are ubiquitous in nearly all of novels, but, as In Kwŏnhwan remarks, it is too early to leap to the conclusion that all Han's novels are Buddhist fiction or a collection of Buddhist sermons.[5] According to In Kwŏnhwan the only novel which deserves the appellation of Buddhist fiction is *Pangmyŏng*. He sees this as the potentially best Buddhist work ever produced in the history of Korean Buddhist literature.[6] That may be somewhat exaggerated, and this is not the only reason why this novel is significant. Apart from Buddhist teachings, this novel imparts Han's alternative views and narratives, once again, providing a different perspective on the assumed heroic nationalism that saturates narratives of his life in colonial Korea in wartime. His interest in the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds, his political opinions that diverge from the mainstream, and in particular, his autobiographical experience of the dilemma of morality and politics will be discussed.

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[3] "Sin yŏnjae changp'yŏnsosŏl yego" 新連載長篇小說豫告 in *Chosŏn ilbo* (April 1935) Quoted from Ibid., p.108.

[4] One of the noteworthy changes in recent years is a "postcolonial" (*t'alsingmin*) approach to Han Yongun's literature. Scholars such as Song Hyŏnho and Yi Sŏni reflect on the excessive preoccupation with Han's nationalism and pay attention to "postcolonial theories". Yet, due to the confusion of crucial concepts and the narrow focus on the modernity issue, their studies have not reached a stage yet in which the intricate and ambivalent interactions between colonizing imperatives and counter-discourses are illuminated in detail. See Song Hyŏnho 송현호, "Manhae-ŭi sosŏl-kwa t'alsingminjijuŭi" 만해의 소설과 탈식민지주의 in *Han'guk hyŏndaemunhak-ŭi pip'yŏng-jok yŏn'gu* 한국 현대문학의 비평적 연구 (Seoul: Kukhak charyowŏn, 1996); Yi Sŏni 李善伊, "Manhae Han Yongun munhag-e nat'anan t'alsingminjijuŭi-jŏk insik" 만해 韓龍雲 文學에 나타난 脫植民主義的 인식 in *Ŏmun yŏn'gu* 語文硏究 31:2 (Summer 2003)

[5] In Kwŏnhwan印權煥, "Han Yongun sosŏr-ŭi yŏn'gusa-wa munjetchŏm" 韓龍雲 小說의 硏究史와 問題點in *Han'guk Pulgyo munhak yŏn'gu* 韓國佛教文學硏究 (Seoul: Koryŏ taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1999), pp.426 and 429.

[6] Ibid., p.429.

A Buddhist novel written in the midst of war

As its title implies, *Pangmyŏng* deals with a miserable life, a life of suffering. The main character, Sunyŏng, is a young girl living with a wicked stepmother in a remote mountain village. She works like a servant girl, plowing a stony field, cooking and cleaning, maltreated by her stepmother. She runs away and goes to Seoul with her hometown friend Unok and her foster mother Mrs. Song. However, these kind sympathizers turn out to be a barmaid and a madam. The heroine is deceived, forced to learn singing skills for entertainment and finally sold to an old-style Korean tavern (*saekchuga*, 色酒家) in the port city of Inch'ŏn. Despite her wretched situation, she behaves properly and shows dedication in performing her music. As a consequence, she basks in the favor of customers and the tavern's madam. This rouses jealousy and resentment from her colleagues. Being falsely accused of theft and of having syphilis, her life is threatened, but soon the incident is solved.

The hardest ordeal for the heroine comes later. Sunyŏng marries Kim Taech'ŏl who saved her from drowning. After their marriage, her husband engages in gold mining speculation and completely neglects his family. Taech'ŏl wastes his whole fortune digging for gold and finds himself penniless. Sunyŏng struggles to make a living and to care for her child alone. Nonetheless, her husband demands a divorce, claiming that he needs to marry a rich woman to restore his mining business. His violent behavior gives a fatal shock to their son who dies. Four years after their divorce, Taech'ŏl re-appears with his new wife as an opium addict. The heroine cares for her ex-husband, begging for money to buy medicine and drugs for him. She sacrifices herself to serve the man until he dies. After his death, she becomes a Buddhist nun.

This main story unfolds the misfortune and ordeals the heroine must get through. Despite various other incidents, the hardship in marriage is treated as the main theme. In "Chakcha-ŭi mal" 作者의 말 (A Word from the Author, 1938), in which Han Yongun succinctly described the intended storyline before the serialization of the novel, he makes this clear:

> *I would like to tell a story about the loftiest woman I have ever heard about. The main story will be approximately as follows. A country girl becomes the wife of a prodigal son. She is first forsaken by her husband but when he returns ill and penniless, she serves him wholeheartedly until his last breath. I never intended to apply the old [Confucian] concept of the chaste woman (yŏllyŏ, 烈女) to the heroine. Rather, I would like to depict the lofty and sublime spirit of a person who remains unchanged from start to finish and serves the other person despite all difficulties, even completely sacrificing herself.*[7]

[7] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.6.

A woman's troublesome marriage to a libertine and her loyal and self-sacrificial spirit toward her husband creates the novel's main storyline. This plot resembles that of Han's first novel, *Chugŭm*, in which the heroine, Yŏngok, is troubled by the libertine Sŏngyŏl, but remains faithful and self-sacrificing to her husband, Chongch'ŏl. In the first novel, Han advocated traditional (Confucian) femininity against the contemporary cultural trend of *yŏnae* (free love).[8] *Pangmyŏng* depicts a similar type of woman but the writer flatly denies a concern with the traditional female virtue of fidelity. According to his intention, the heroine does not represent a virtuous wife but a "human being" (*in'gan* and *saram*) who works for another person. What he aims to emphasize is not traditional femininity but a "*noble and sublime spirit*" (*kogwi-hago kŏruk-han simjŏng*) in a religious sense. In the short quote above, he twice uses *kŏrukhada*, a term with sacred connotations. The last sentence, the essential part of the text, strongly alludes to the bodhisattva nature and perfections (*paramitas*) such as compassion (*chabi*, 慈悲), giving of oneself (*posi*, 布施), patience (*inyok*, 忍辱), and strenuous effort (*chŏngjin,* 精進), which as we have seen in the previous chapter, he emphasized in a similar way in essays around that time. It is easy to see that he intends to write a Buddhist novel, a fictionalized embodiment of his Buddhist ideas and insights.

True to his intention, this novel contains many explicit Buddhist themes. The writer depicts how the heroine becomes a Buddhist adherent. The heroine has a Confucian background because of the influence of her father who has been a Confucian scholar and taught children at a *sŏdang* (traditional school). She encounters Buddhism for the first time when she is sold and moves to a tavern in the port of Inch'ŏn. On her first day there, she is led to the madam's personal room. There she sees a luxurious cabinet inlaid with mother-of-pearl, a goldfish basin, a radio and a gramophone. Yet these luxury goods were not what draws her attention. Instead, it is a Buddhist altar and a low table with an incense burner and prayer beads. The tavern's madam is a Buddhist laywoman. She shows the heroine a Buddha statue on the altar and talks about Buddhism. She explains that while practicing *yŏmbul* (念佛, invocation of the Buddha Amitābha), one can expiate one's sins, make one's dreams come true in this life and be reborn in a good place after this life.[9] Hearing the madam's explanation, the heroine comes to believe in Buddhism without any doubt.

After that, Buddhism plays an important role in the heroine's life. When she is falsely accused of stealing, nothing can stop the mad madam from beating her to death. The madam even takes a knife to force her to confess. In such a dangerous moment, Sunyŏng turns to the altar and prays to the Buddha Amitābha. This conduct stops the madam. The heroine clears herself of

[8] Jung-Shim Lee, "Women, Confucianism and nation-building in HanYongun's novel Death" in *IIAS Newsletter* 54 (Summer 2010).

[9] In the early writings Han had strongly denounced this practice as "superstition." It was basically an attempt to reform the Buddhist sangha. However, this novel reflects his perception of reality in which *yŏmbul* was a popular form of practice among lay Buddhists.

suspicion thanks to a dharma speech by a monk. After the incident, the madam goes to a temple and hears about basic Buddhist teachings such as the three karmic activities (*samŏp,* 三業)[10] and three poisons (*samdok*, 三毒).[11] Hearing the sermon, she was reminded of her violent act and felt guilty for distrusting the innocent heroine.

Also, there is a Buddhist nun who plays an important role in the heroine's life from the beginning. The heroine believes Taech'ŏl saved her life because he ostensibly rescued her from drowning, and she dedicates her entire life to finding him and returning his kindness. However, it was not thanks to him but to a benevolent Buddhist nun that her life was saved. Before he dies, Taech'ŏl confesses that seeing the heroine in danger, he thought that it was none of his business but the nun urged him to save her from drowning. The nun offered thirty wŏn, a considerable amount of money, and that changed his mind. Therefore, the heroine would not have survived without the nun. The nun is the heroine's real benefactor. It is no coincidence that the heroine enters the temple where the benevolent nun is present and becomes a nun.

More implicitly, Sunyŏng's life symbolizes the practice of a bodhisattva (*posalhaeng*, 菩薩行). Bodhisattvas live and work in this world to save living beings but are never contaminated by the vice and the evil that surround them. They are pure, just as a lotus flower that is not defiled by muddy dirty water. The heroine lowers herself to the status of a barmaid, the lowest in Korean society. Entertaining men, she has to sell her smile and is exposed to harassment from her customers. Despite her miserable situation, she never lets her body and mind become polluted. As is repeatedly emphasized, although she works in a tavern where women often happen to sell their bodies, she remains pure and is never defiled by her environment.[12]

While Sunyŏng's sense of chastity might have influenced her, Han Yongun cites her strong determination as the primary reason she does not give up her goal of repaying the kindness shown to her.

> *While serving drinks, Sunyŏng is exposed to temptation and threats. It is not once that she is in danger of losing her chastity. Her determination to keep her humble body chaste is not derived from her sense of female chastity, but due to a debt of gratitude she owes to the man [Taech'ŏl]. If she bumps into him some day and if the situation allows, she will devote herself to him. It is an intention that comes from the bottom of her heart*.[13]

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[10] *Samŏp* refers to the committing of a sin through deeds, words, and thoughts.

[11] The three poisons are greed, anger, and ignorance. Because the mind of living beings is defiled by such poisons they do not realize their innate true nature of Buddhahood and fail to achieve enlightenment.

[12] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, pp.79, 80, 115 and 172.

[13] Ibid, p.150.

According to the writer, Sunyŏng's commitment to Taech'ŏl is not that of a woman who remains faithful to her man, but is the gratitude of a person who owes her life to somebody and is determined to repay the debt. In fact, this determination is already there before the heroine and Taech'ŏl enter into a conjugal relationship. The heroine's sacrifices for Taech'ŏl's sake take place not only during their marriage but also after their divorce. Although they are not wife and husband anymore, Sunyŏng keeps her mind and body clean and sacrifices herself for the sake of T'aech'ŏl, which means that her attitude and practice have nothing to do with the conjugal relationship or a woman's virtue or her duty to serve her husband. Instead, her attitude embodies the practice of a bodhisattva. This is the author's intention and conclusion of this novel. A dharma speech at the end of the novel explicitly articulates this.

Borrowing a high priest's voice, Han Yongun elucidates that Sunyŏng's acts do not embody a wife's duty to her husband or a woman's subjugation to a man as usually demanded by the secular world. In this novel, this secular view is represented by New Women (*sin yŏsŏng*).[14] Seeing Sunyŏng begging on the street for her ex-husband, they laugh at her and ridicule her as an old-fashioned "virtuous woman" (*yŏllyŏ*, 烈女) or a "wise mother and good wife" (*hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ*, 賢母良妻).[15] In their eyes, the heroine is blindly subservient to her husband, a slave to the traditional moral imperative. The heroine is condemned as an obstacle to women's liberation and to struggles for extending women's rights and individuality.[16] Against this secular view, the priest clarifies that the heroine did not practice the Confucian imperatives of chastity, fidelity or submission to men. What she demonstrated were the commitments of *poŭn* (報恩, repaying kindness) and compassion 慈悲.

The priest laments that people are usually grateful if they receive a favor, but as time goes by they easily forget it. If their benefactor has a problem or can disadvantage them, they are prone to avoid contact with him/her. A feeling of indebtedness to someone and a wish to return the favor is forgotten easily and quickly. However, the heroine is different. In response to the mercy and benevolence Taech'ŏl has shown her, the heroine continues to feel indebted and tries to repay the favor. She never forgets the kindness and never gives up her wish to repay the debt. Repayment of that kindness becomes her goal. Whatever happens to her and wherever she goes, the heroine does not forget her goal or gives up halfway. Such strong tenacity is reminiscent of the bodhisattva's practice of strenuous effort (*chŏngjin*), which Han explained and emphasized in his Buddhist essays.[17]

The heroine's sacrifices and selfless spirit represent the bodhisattva's hallmark: benevolence. Taech'ŏl leads a fast life, loses all his money, and

[14] For more details about New Women in colonial Korea, see Chapter 5.
[15] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, pp.267-270.
[16] Ibid.
[17] For more details, see Chapter 1.

impairs his health by his dissipation. He returns to the heroine as a homeless, penniless drug addict. As the priest says, ordinary people tend to turn their backs on such a ruined person. They only concern themselves with asking if their involvement with that person can harm them or taint their reputation.[18] However, the heroine embraces the devastated and miserable man and takes care of him. She does not think of herself, only of others. She constantly recalls the kindness done to her. Seeing the plight of the man, she thinks that it is a good chance to repay the favor he did her once and takes pity on him. According to the priest, she conducted such a sacrifice out of the compassion that takes pity on a degenerate man.[19] In other words, it is Buddhist teaching to practice altruism and compassion with regard to all living beings without discrimination.

The heroine in the novel never blames people who deceive, slander and insult her. This is in conformity with another practice of the bodhisattva, that of forbearance. When she is deceived and forced to learn entertainment skills and finally sold to a tavern, she never resents the people who do this to her or seeks revenge. She tries to reflect on herself and does her best to cope with her miserable situation. Although her husband has lied and cheated on her, she is never suspicious of him or feels anger or jealousy. Even when her son dies because of her husband's reckless behavior, she does not rage against him. Although people laugh at her and humiliate her while she begs, she endures the suffering, humiliation and insults. In sum, she never complains about her fate or laments her misfortune. Such a heroine personifies the virtue of endurance that a bodhisattva perfects.

Human trafficking and gold speculation

Pangmyŏng deals with a woman's turbulent life from a Buddhist point of view. Refraining from using direct Buddhist terms, it expounds and illustrates basic Buddhist doctrines in its plot and its characters. However, Buddhism is not the only theme in this novel. Kwŏn Podŭrae has observed that this novel is unusual because it takes a bar waitress (*chakpu*) as its protagonist and vividly portrays the scene of bars in the 1930s and the education for barmaids, which is not often treated in modern Korean literature.[20] However, Kwŏn does not ask further why country girls like Sunyŏng become barmaids or *kisaeng* and how this fictional novel is associated with the social problems of wartime colonial society around 1940 and portrays the experiences of a diverse group of people, which cannot be reduced to single narrative of striving for national independence we habitually expect from Han Yongun.

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[18] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.289

[19] Ibid., p.288

[20] Kwŏn Podŭrae 권보드래, *Yŏnae-ŭi sidae: 1920-nyŏndae ch'oban-ŭi munhwa-wa yuhaeng* 연애의 시대: 1920년대 초반의 문화와 유행 (Seoul: Hyŏnsin munhwa yŏn'gu, 2003/2004), pp.231-241.

The first social issue Han Yongun addresses is the trafficking of women. Human trafficking was rampant in colonial society during the second Sino-Japanese War. It was deeply connected with the rural crisis of the 1930s. The Great Depression severely hit the rural economy in colonial Korea. The price crash of main agricultural crops such as rice and silkworm cocoons threatened rural communities. In a year of bad harvest, farmers suffered from rice shortage, whereas in a year of abundance, they were afflicted with a severely lowered price of rice.[21] Landlord-tenant disputes raged out of control. Many small farmers were ruined and suffered from heavy debts. A mass of small farmers lost and left their land and drifted about, creating slums in the cities. These rural problems of the 1930s came to be recognized as a "national problem" and the colonial government, nationalists, socialists, religious leaders and many more were urged to take countermeasures.[22]

During the war, rural communities fell into a state of misery called "starving hell" as malnutrition became common.[23] The majority of rural families languished in extreme poverty, heavily burdened with debt. A shortage of food under the pressure of war and a bad harvest due to natural calamities in 1939 forced many rural households to devise survival strategies. As a consequence, many country girls were sold off to the cities as labor to support their families. Traffickers hung out an employment agency signboard but in practice traded girls and women. They wandered around rural areas to seek girls from impoverished households. They usually employed deceit and trickery, promising them a better life in cities, educational opportunities, and employment. However, many girls were sent to factories, cafés, bars, taverns, and brothels and were forced to work like slaves under poor labor conditions.[24] Moving one step further, these girls became a cornerstone for wartime industrialization and later on were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military.[25]

This social problem is woven into Han Yongun's Buddhist novel. Sunyŏng is a country girl, but one day she meets Mrs. Song, a recruiter who

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[21] Chŏn Ponggwan 전봉관, *Hwanggŭmgwang sidae* 黃金狂時代 (Seoul: Sallim, 2005), pp.60-65; Han Suyŏng 한수영, "Habakkun-esŏ Hwanggŭmgwang-kkaji: Singminji sahoe-ŭi t'ugi yŏlp'ung-gwa Ch'ae Manshig-ŭi sosŏl" 하바꾼에서 황금광까지: 식민지사회의 투기 열풍과 채만식의 소설 in *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chaeinsik*, p.267.

[22] For more details, see Gi-Wook Shin and Do-Hyun Han, "Colonial Corporatism: The Rural Revitalization Campaign 1932-1940" in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, edited by Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999): 70-96.

[23] Ibid., p.78

[24] "Ch'un'gung kigŭn nongch'on-ŭr, yunyŏ-nŭn kŏik chŭngga" 春窮飢饉 農村으로, 遊女는 去益增加 in *Maeil sinbo* (May 1936); "Insin maemae hyŏmŭi-ro" 人身賣買嫌疑로 in *Maeil sinbo* (March 1939).

[25] Shabshina, F.I., *Singminji Chosŏn-esŏ: Ŏnŭ Rŏsia chisŏng'in-i ssŭn yŏksa hyŏnjang kirok* 식민지 조선에서: 어느 러시아 지성인이 쓴 역사현장 기록, translated by Kim Myŏngho (Seoul: Hanul 한울, 1996), pp.92-98;Yuki Tanaka, Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual slavery and prostitution during World War II and the US occupation (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp.33-44; An Yŏnsŏn 안연선, *Sŏngnoye-wa pyŏngsa mandŭlgi* 성노예와 병사 만들기 (Seoul: Samin, 2003/2008), pp.19-23.

wanders around the countryside in search of girls. She is told of luxury items, urban living, modern education, and tourist attractions in Seoul.[26] Deceived by such sweet talk, Sunyŏng follows the old woman and is brought to big cities such as Seoul. Instead of sightseeing and getting an education, she is forced to learn entertainment skills and is traded by a fellow called Kim, a broker who trades sing-song girls and prostitutes for a large amount of money (500-800 wŏn). The heroine is not the only girl who is subjected to human trade. In Mrs. Song's house, there are many more girls who are supposed to be sold to a human trafficker. The story of one of them, Ch'aeran, unfolds in a different way than Sunyŏng's. She is the daughter of a tenant farmer. In a year of bad harvest, the land owner took the whole crop from her family and they faced starvation. To escape from this fate, the family resorted to selling their daughter. Thus Ch'aeran was sold by her own parents.

> *If I [Ch'aeran] am sent there [Shinmachi], I will run away or kill myself. How the hell would I do such a thing? Working as a kisaeng and hostess would be better. Prostitution is to serve this and that man for a day. Far from serving but a single man, a woman is forced to sell her body for a little money like dog meat. Death would be a better choice.*[27]

Girls were sent to restaurants (*yoritchip*), bars, taverns (*saekchuga*) and whorehouses (*yugwak* or *ch'anggichip*). In the quote, Ch'aeran expresses her anxiety and frustration about being sold as a sex slave. "There" in Ch'aeran's remark indicates Shinmachi 新町 in Seoul, which was widely known as a licensed prostitute quarter, which was named after Shinmachi in Osaka. Girls who were sent to brothels in Shinmachi were deprived of their dignity and worth as a human being and forced to sell their bodies in return for payment. There was no hope for them to live like a human being unless they ran away. Yet, the writer questions again if they can run away. As a dialogue between Mrs. Song and Kim reveals, many of those girls would run away with friendly customers. However, these men would turn out to be traffickers themselves who after seducing the girls would resell them.[28] The girls thus were stuck in a vicious cycle of human trafficking.

The craze for gold mining is the second issue this novel portrays. As Chŏn Ponggwan brings to light, the 1930s was the period of a Korean style "Gold Rush."[29] In the aftermath of the Great Depression, gold came to hold an absolute place in international trade. The Japanese government needed to increase its gold holdings and for that purpose, gold exports were banned and smuggling was severely punished. The colonial government extensively promoted gold production and bought gold in large quantities. Due to these

[26] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, pp.32-33 and 45-46.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., pp.55-57.
[29] Chŏn Ponggwan, *Hwanggŭmgwang sidae*, p.15.

policies, colonial society plunged into gold speculation.[30] In reality, a renowned professor and nationalist immediately headed for his own gold mine after his release from prison where he had been incarcerated because of connections with the independence movement. An independence activist affiliated with the Provisional Government of Korea in Shanghai ceased his activities and returned to Korea for gold mining, and a socialist leading the Korean Federation of Labor renounced his affiliation and headed to a northern province in search of gold. [31]

The president of *Chosŏn ilbo* newspaper, where Han Yongun published this novel, was a man nicknamed the "Gold King" (*kŭmgwang wang*) in colonial Korea. This man, Pang Ŭngmo, had acquired a basic knowledge of Confucianism in a *sŏdang* but despite his low education level, became a gold millionaire and took over one of the leading newspaper companies when it was in financial difficulties. Writers were not immune to the gold craze. Kim Kijin left *Chosŏn ilbo* complaining that he could not work under the gold digger (Pang Ŭngmo) but ironically became a gold digger in search of a rich vein of gold ore himself.[32] Prominent writers such as Ch'ae Mansik and Kim Yujŏng, also dug for gold during the day and wielded the pen at night.[33] Likewise, intellectuals, farmers, *kisaeng*, students, lawyers, doctors, nurses and female activists all were crazy about gold and abandoned their occupations, dreaming of becoming a millionaire.[34]

Han Yongun's novel illustrates the gold speculation fever that swept the whole country. Taech'ŏl, the heroine's lifesaver and husband, represents the crazy gold seekers. At first, he hesitates to marry the heroine because she is a bar hostess, but hearing that she has saved a considerable amount of money, he takes an interest in her. Through a matchmaker, he informs her that he is engaged in gold mining and is short of funds. If this problem is solved, he is willing to get married. He does not force her outright but subtly seeks voluntary payment from her. As expected, the heroine gives him her savings. Furthermore, she pays her ransom with the rest of the money. This is usually what a man does to free a barmaid but in her case, she did it herself. Before marriage, he brazenly proclaims that he cannot be at home or support and sustain the household while operating a mine. In spite of this, the heroine marries him.[35]

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[30] For details, see Chŏn Ponggwan, *Hwanggŭmgwang sidae*, pp.213-290; Han Suyŏng, "Habakkun-esŏ Hwanggŭmgwang-kkaji", pp.263-278.
[31] "Kwangsan-hanŭn 'Kŭmgwang sinsa'gi" 광산하는 '금광신사'기 in *Samch'ŏlli* 三千里 (Nov. 1938).
[32] Chŏn Ponggwan, *Hwanggŭmgwang sidae.*, pp.31-33.
[33] Ibid., pp.34-37; Han Suyŏng, "Habakkun-esŏ Hwanggŭmgwang-kkaji", pp.263-278; Ch'oe Kangmin 최강민,"Singminji-jŏk kŭndae-rŭl paehoe-hanŭn yurang'in: Kim Yujŏng munhag-ŭi kŭndaesŏng-ŭl chungsim-ŭro" 식민지적 근대를 배회하는 유랑인:김유정 문학의 근대성을 중심으로 in *1930-nyŏndae munhak-kwa kŭndae ch'ehŏm* 1930년대 문학과 근대체험, Edited by Munhak-kwa pip'yŏng yŏn'guhoe (Seoul: Ihoe munhaksa, 1999), pp. 224-227.
[34] Chŏn Ponggwan, *Hwanggŭmgwang sidae.*, p.15-37.
[35] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.205

As the matchmaker and heroine state, it is widely told and believed that "gold digging is a sure road to riches these days" and that "all millionaires are persons who prospected for gold."[36] Preoccupied with gold digging, Taech'ŏl does not come home and takes no notice of his family. If he goes home, it is to squeeze money from Sunyŏng. However, the heroine does not oppose or complain about Taech'ŏl. She supports him and tries to make the best of the situation.

> *Whenever Taech'ŏl takes money from her [Sunyŏng], he preaches that while gold digging, it is not strange to mortgage the slip of one's wife. Only after hardship, one comes to discover a rich vein of ore. She also knows by hearsay that most who get rich by finding gold have a difficult time and find gold at the very last moment. That is the usual course for someone who becomes rich or a millionaire.*[37]

Taech'ŏl and colonial society dreamt of making a fortune in one stroke. It can be seen as a social ill on the one hand, but on the other hand, as Chŏn Ponggwan remarks, it was the only way to endure the distress and to stay hopeful in a poverty-stricken society.[38] Sunyŏng, who in this novel represents what is good, does not think that the gold craze is a false or idle dream either. She also dreams of wealth and happiness through gold prospecting. She forgets life's difficulties with the expectation that one day she will be reimbursed ten times or a hundred times for all her efforts. Even when she gives birth to a baby all alone, she does not complain about her husband's indifference. She continues to seek comfort in the dream that her child will be the son of a gold king and inherit a large fortune from his father. [39]

Contrary to their expectations, gold mining destroys the rosy dreams and happiness of the novel's main characters. Blinded by gold fever, Taech'ŏl abandons his wife and child and marries a woman whose money is available for mine prospecting. Sunyŏng desperately looks for ways to protect her family from divorce and considers selling herself again and funding the mining with the proceeds. Nonetheless, she is forced to divorce and her family is broken up. To make matters worse, her son dies of shock in the midst of a quarrel between her and her husband. Taech'ŏl abandons his family out of greed for gold and causes the death of his own son. The gold-digger ends up addicted to opium and meets a painful death.

In this way, Han Yongun's Buddhist novel sketches a distorted colonial landscape during the second Sino-Japanese War without generalizing or politicizing his narrative. There are no words used in this novel that remind the reader of the Japanese expansionist war or the militarization of colonial Korea.

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[36] Ibid., p.186.
[37] Ibid., p.211.
[38] Chŏn Ponggwan, *Hwanggŭmgwang sidae*, p.59.
[39] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.211.

Wartime propaganda slogans or national consciousness (*minjok ŭisik*) are not mentioned, either. The human trafficking, gold craze and opium addiction he dealt with in this novel were part of the actual lived experience of various social groups and the living condition of individuals, and so the story he told is far removed from the homogenizing nation-centered historical narrative of Korea's resistance and national struggle.

In sum, Han Yongun was aware of social problems rampant in wartime colonial Korea and wove them into his Buddhist novel. The women trafficking, gold craze, and opium addiction he tackled exhibit the distorted colonial landscape in the contemporary wartime. Although he did not mention any words reminding the reader of wartime propaganda slogans or policies, it is clear that these social problems were associated with the turmoil created by war. Han gave voice to voiceless people who were involved in or victimized by social evils in wartime. Yet, his concern with particular individuals or groups and their various experiences and living conditions was not homogenized to the monolithic of Korean nation. Also, it has nothing to do with the central concerns of the nationalist movements such as resistance or independence.

Using the heroine's voice, Han expressed rage about social evils. For example, in the quoted remark of Ch'aeran, he expressed his deep detestation of women trafficking and forced prostitution, interestingly, taking the Confucian womanly virtue that "a woman cannot serve two men" as his yardstick. He certainly felt the horror of the inhumanity shown to colonial women whom their family or parents mercilessly sold off and whose bodies were traded like meat by traffickers. His anger, however, did not stem from his national consciousness (*minjok ŭisik*) but from humanistic concerns. Han did not delve into the problems any further, but the social problems he tackled were much more complicated than what could be solved by venting anger or accusing some inmoral individuals. Many issues were involved: the second Sino-Japanese War, the massive breakdown of the Korean rural economy, extreme poverty and the struggle for survival, wartime industrialization, violence against women, the breakdown of families and human values, lack of material and moral support by the colonial government, etc. These social problems also call into question the representation of Koreans as victims and victimizers.

A lingering concern with Confucianism

Yet, it seems that Han Yongun was not completely indifferent to or ignorant of the political events or atmosphere in colonial Korea during the turbulent war period. The second Sino-Japanese War (1937) was a decisive event through which hosts of prominent nationalist and socialist leaders deviated from their existing creed and activities and turned to collaboration with the colonial authorities. An number of Han Yongun's companions and acquaintances followed this path. For example Ch'oe Namsŏn 崔南善, who had been the

drafter of the manifesto of independence of Korea during the monumental event of the March First Movement (1919) became a councilor of *Chungch'uwŏn* (中樞院, the advisory council for the governor-general) in 1938 and from 1939-1942, taught as a professor at Jinguo University, established by Japanese officials in Manchukuo. Han's close acquaintance Ch'oe Rin 崔麟, who had been a national leader heading *Ch'ŏndogyo*, the biggest religious group, and had been appointed a councilor of the *Chungch'uwŏn* in 1934, was appointed to become the president of the colonial governmental newspaper *Maeil sinbo* 每日新報 in 1937 and a board member of the Korean National Mobilization Association (Kungmin ch'ongnyŏk Chosŏn yŏnmaeng, 國民總力朝鮮連盟) in 1940. Some hearsay statements inform us that Han expressed disgust against these so-called turncoats, flatly rejected the financial support they offered, and ended his relationships with them. This is often used as evidence to prove his brave and staunch nation-loving spirit, remaining unbroken in spite of the oppressive atmosphere at the end of the colonial period.[40] However, *Pangmyŏng* shows that his own narratives, experiences, and explicit and implicit reactions to the political atmosphere were somewhat different than the stories told about him, far more diverse and intricate than the homogenized accounts.

The Confucian tradition that Han once reinvented for his attempt at modern nation building as seen in his unpublished manuscript *Chugŭm* 죽음 (Death, 1924) still served him as a useful means to articulate his political stance in this novel with strong Buddhist characteristics. He depicted how Sunyŏng grew up under the influence of Confucianism, her father being a Confucian scholar who taught Confucian primers to children at a *sŏdang* (traditional school). In such an atmosphere, she had a chance to get acquainted with basic Chinese characters and Confucian textbooks for children such as *Ch'ŏnjamun* 千字文 (Thousand Characters Classic), *Tongmongsŏnsŭp* 童蒙先習 (First Lesson for Ignorant Children), and *Kyŏngmongyogyŏl* 擊蒙要訣 (The Right Way to Get Rid of Ignorance).[41] She was also taught proper womanly moral conduct according to the standards of Confucianism.[42] This Confucian-based home education later awakened her to a sense that *kisaeng* or barmaids deviate from the proper behavior of a decent woman when Mrs. Song forced her to learn songs to entertain men.[43]

Nevertheless, Confucian virtue imposed upon women is not what Han Yongun underscored in this novel. As mentioned before, his authorial intention was not to apply the Confucian concept of the chaste woman to the heroine. The ultimate aim of the heroine's story was to convey Buddhist moral views and practices. That is why he maybe needed an alternative Confucian concept

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[40] "Manhae-ga namgin ilhwa" 萬海가 남긴 逸話, Edited by Kim Kwanho in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, pp. 370-372 and 374; Im Chungbin 임중빈, *Manhae Han Yongun* 만해 한용운 (Seoul: Pŏmusa 범우사, 1995/2002), pp.183-192.

[41] Composed in 1577 by the famous Confucian scholar Yi Yulgok (李栗谷, 1536-1584).

[42] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, pp.21, 22 and 61.

[43] Ibid., pp.61-62.

to send a political message, in the form of a poetic expression of Confucian allegiance to the king. When the heroine succumbs to Mrs. Song's coercion and starts to learn songs to entertain men, the song the elderly music master teaches her is not a vulgar song, but a fourteenth century *sijo* poem of Chŏng Mongju (鄭夢周, 1337-1392):

> *Though this frame should die and die, though I die a hundred times,*
> *My bleached bones all turned to dust, my very soul exists or not-*
> *What can change the undivided heart that glows with faith toward my lord?*[44]

The music master explains to the heroine who the composer was and what this song means. Its composer, Chŏng Mongju, was an official of the Koryŏ dynasty. When the dynasty he had served, Koryŏ, perished, he did not yield to the new rulers but maintained fidelity (*ch'ungchŏl*, 忠節) toward his old master. As a result, he was killed on a bridge which later was named *Sŏnjukkyo* 善竹橋 (The Good Bamboo Bridge) because on the spot where his blood was found, bamboo shoots, symbols of loyalty, grew. While explaining the meaning of the verse, the master spells out the designation of "nim" (the beloved). Ignorant people think that it merely refers to one's husband (*sŏbangnim*) or lover (*chŏngdŭn nim*). This term was commonly used to refer to the king (*imgŭmnim*). Besides, one's parents, spouses, one's country and what one cherishes can be all called "nim".[45] The heroine is so enthused by the verse that she decides to find out what the significance is.[46]

It is easy to conclude that in borrowing this old poem, the writer tries to send a message to the readers that one should persist in one's effort to maintain a sense of political constancy for the Korean nation. As is widely known, the historical person Chŏng Mongju is a national symbol of loyalty. In a more strict historical sense, he was a Koryŏ civil officer who remained loyal to Koryŏ and opposed a new political power, Yi Sŏnggye, when the latter attempted to found a new dynasty, the Chosŏn dynasty. His faithful allegiance to the Koryŏ king, his *sijo* poem "Tansimga" 丹心歌, and his death prove his devotion to the Confucian principle of loyalty (*ch'ung*, 忠). This Confucian political ethic is revisited by Han Yongun and refashioned into the political attitude of patriotic loyalty to the Korean nation during wartime. It is quite noticeable that he did not use the name of dynasties such as Koryŏ and Chosŏn. Instead he speaks of "his country" and "the other country," which leaves open the possibility that he is actually talking about colonial Korea and the Japanese empire rather than the states of the fourteenth century. Telling of Chŏng's unyielding spirit and willingness to risk life and limb, Han sends a covert message that one should

[44] Richard Rutt, *The Bamboo grove: an introduction to sijo* (the University of Michigan, 1998), p.51.
[45] *Han Yongun chŏnjip*, pp. 69-70 and 113-114.
[46] Ibid., p.71.

bravely maintain one's political loyalty and defend the Korean nation in spite of the political repression of the wartime colonial government.

However, this should not be the end of discussion. Ironically, the Confucian virtue of loyalty he insisted on was at the very foundation of the national polity (*kokutai*, 国体) propagated by the Japanese government as the core of the imperial ideology and a justification for thought control.[47] An expression of Japanese ultranationalistic ideas, the concept of *kokutai* posited the uniqueness and the divine origin of Japan, its people and its ruling family.[48] It had Confucian roots, however. As Robert King Hall points out, it established "a code of ethics based on the patriarchal Confucian structure of social obligations".[49] The corresponding virtues of loyalty and patriotism and filial piety are all Confucian. The national polity clarified that the country of Japan was established by an emperor who was a descendent of the Divine, Amaterasu Omikami. Individual Japanese were fundamentally one body with the emperor and the state. Loyalty which means to obediently serve the emperor and follow him was claimed to be a unique way of existing. Offering one's life to the emperor does not mean self-sacrifice. It means "the casting aside of our little selves to live under his august grace and the enhancing of the genuine life of the people of a State."[50] The Japanese country is assumed to be "a great family nation and the Imperial Household is the head family of the subjects and the nucleus of national life."[51] In this sense, loyalty and filial piety to the emperor are one. Although filial piety is common characteristic of Asian morality, the oneness of loyalty and filial piety was regarded as the unique characteristic of Japan, without parallel in the world.[52]

These Confucian tenets of *kokutai* were not only applied to Japan but also to its colonies such as Korea and Taiwan, as a means of thought control and as the ultimate purpose of spiritual mobilization. In colonial Korea, *kokutai* was linked to various other concepts, such as the idea that Japan and Korea are one body (*nasesŏn ilch'e/naisen ittai*, 内鮮一体), that they shared the same ancestral origin of, that every man should be loved with impartiality (*ilsidong'in/isshi-dōjin*,一視同仁), that the Koreans should be educated to become imperial citizens (*hwangminhwa/kōminka*, 皇民化), and that all the world should be united under one roof (*p'algoeng iru/hakkō ichiu*, 八紘一宇). How such ideas might propagate loyalty and filial piety to the Emperor is well expressed in the collaborationist writing of Yi Kwangsu by 1940. Thanks to the grace of the emperor, he wrote, the Koreans were given a chance of discarding the label of

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[47] Robert King Hall, "Introduction" in *Kokutai No Hongi: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan* trans. by John Owen Gauntlett (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1949), p.36.
[48] Ibid.,p.8.
[49] Ibid., p.34.
[50] Ibid., republished in *Japan 1931-1945: Militarism, Fascism, Japanism?* Edited by Ivan Morris (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1963), p.47.
[51] Ibid., p.48.
[52] Ibid.

the colonized and becoming the subjects of the Japanese empire (*sinmin*, 臣民) and the children of the emperor (*chŏkcha*, 赤子). Yet, the chance was not given but rather earned by demonstrating loyalty and filial piety to the emperor, obediently following the directives of the Japanese state in the name of public service.[53] Yi further exclaimed that the Koreans, should appreciate the Great Care of the Emperor (*taeŏsim*, 大御心,) and gladly and gratefully dedicate themselves to be reborn as real Japanese, cast off their Korean selves and offer up their lives for the emperor's sake.[54] Seen in this light, Han's emphases on Confucian loyalty and the heroic act of risking one's life for that virtue in no way obviously oppose the imperial ideologies. On the contrary, the voices in his narrative appear to echo Confucian-based war propaganda, but they are not exactly identical to it.

In this context it is necessary to explain Han's use of the term *nim* in greater detail. First of all, it is strongly reminiscent of the use of the term in Han's early poetry collection *Nim-ŭi ch'immuk*. This open concept allows for a variety of the meanings signified by *nim*, including the Korean nation, but it might potentially also invite a much more contentious signifier, in particular by the time of the Pacific War: the Japanese emperor. At the time, Yi Kwangsu wrote a considerable number of poems in both Japanese and Korean dedicated to the emperor, calling him *imgŭmnim* (king). In those poems, Yi overtly called on the readers to look up to the emperor, protect the Japanese empire in obedience to his directives, to honor him, and to purge the darkness with his imperial radiance.[55] Yi insisted that the emperor is the head of the country, as a father is the head of a household, and that therefore, to honor him is to be both loyal and filial.[56] Of course, different from Yi, Han never wrote a single poem explicitly glorifying the Japanese emperor but as far as his interpretation of *nim* in this novel principally embraces all and includes the monarch, the symbolic designation might very well have been interpreted as signifying the emperor who was the locus of all ideologies and activities in wartime.

In short, Han's insistence on Confucian loyalty and *nim* through revisiting Chŏng Mongju's *sijo* presumably was intended to counteract the spread of a political conversion of the Koreans and their leaders to the Japanese cause and to call for a steadfast political loyalty to the Korean nation, but, this attempt is not simply nationalistic, because on some points it was congruent with wartime ideologies rather than that it opposed or defied them. In the eyes of the contemporary public and censors, his novel may have been read as if it propagated loyalty, (Japanese imperial) patriotism and service to the Emperor.

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[53] Yi Kwangsu 이광수, *Tongp'o-e koham: Ch'ŭnwŏn Yi Kwangsu ch'inil munhak* 동포에 고함: 春園 李光洙 親日文學 edited by Kim Wŏnmo and Yi Kyŏnghun (Seoul: Ch'ŏrhak-kwa hyŏnsilsa, 1997), pp.31, 34, 52, 72-73, 77, 81-82, 88-89, and 161.

[54] Ibid., pp.74, 91, 112, and 118-119.

[55] Yi Kwangsu 이광수, *Ch'unwŏn Yi Kwangsu ch'inil munhak chŏnjip*춘원 이광수 친일문학전집 II (Seoul: P'yŏnminsa, 1995), pp.13-15 and 19.

[56] Ibid., pp.16-17.

In this sense, his novel is pro-Japanese collaborationist. Collaboration was not what he intended. In my view, he was not even aware that his depiction of Confucianism could be confused with the imperialist use of it, but this unexpected confusion deluded the Japanese censors and eventually enabled him to express his concern for the Korean nation.

Political implications of Buddhism

In *Pangmyŏng*, it was Buddhism rather than Confucianism that Han Yongun primarily employed to express in a round-about and subtle way his reactions to the political climate. This novel is characterized by clear Buddhist allusions and motifs. The heroine is a messenger designed to deliver Han's intention of Buddhist moral edification. Yet, at the same time, she is recruited as a political agent whose Buddhist spirit and practice create a more diverse narrative on the sociopolitical issues of the day. First, we can find an explicit criticism of the mass political conversion of Korean national leaders.

> *How deplorable is the way of the world now! Those, who once behaved like real men, loudly proclaiming this or that ideology and leading the whole country, now look like a turkey before Thanksgiving. A patriot (chisa, 志士) this morning is degraded to a puny coward by the evening. An "-ist" yesterday today has turned into an anti "-ist". Without consistency, they change their creeds only in pursuit of personal interest and safety, faster than a cat's eye moving.*[57]

In the concluding part of the novel, Han Yongun borrows a priest's voice and directly rebukes the Korean social leaders for their political inconsistency and spiritual frailty. His criticisms are not only addressed to Korean nationalists, but include nationalists, liberalists, socialists, communists, patriotic activists, feminists, and any other social leaders who "converted" politically at that time. As the term, *taejangbu* (a real man), indicates, he thinks mainly of the male leaders rather than their female counterparts. According to him, faced with unfavorable political circumstances they too easily gave up and discarded their creeds and beliefs. He despises them as impatient, capricious, cowardly, unmanly, opportunistic, and above all, selfish. They only count their own interest and safety, never feeling a concern for other people. In other words, it was impossible for them to endure the difficulties for the public good. He even calls the political converts "monkey-like" gentlemen. They changed their political attitudes in favor of the wartime colonial authorities and this in his eyes is like what a monkey does to please people.

The heroine who embodies the bodhisattva spirit and practice is intended to impart a strong criticism of such Korean social leaders. Han

[57] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.289.

articulates that women are traditionally viewed as fickle as a reed. They are supposed to be weak and emotional whereas their male counterparts are supposed to be strong and determined. Against this traditional view or even subverting the gendered prejudice, the heroine demonstrates how a woman, especially armed with Buddhist belief, can be more strong-willed than any man. She encounters a series of obstacles and difficulties, but this does not keep her from persisting in her effort to achieve her goal of repaying kindness. This is contrary to the social leaders who did not persevere to the last and abandoned their initial ideologies and activities in an unfavorable political situation. She does not think of herself but only of other persons such as her benefactor and endures unbearable sufferings, whereas the social leaders thought just of their own interests and benefits. Despite all temptations and humiliations, she remains unchanged. The heroine never gives up her goal and finally realizes it, thanks to her persistent and strenuous effort, which is called *chŏngjin* 精進 in Buddhism.

Likewise, the heroine's selfless spirit and perseverance stand in sharp contrast to the political attitudes and behavior of the Korean male leaders. Yet, Han Yongun seems to have noticed some logical problems in his attempt at comparison. The heroine's actions are basically religious, whereas the Korean male leaders' acts are basically political. Her sacrifice for an individual has nothing to do with society or country, which means that he might have made a mistake comparing the different levels of commitment in this novel. Considering this, Han remarks,

> *There may be some difference in scale between an effort on behalf of a single individual and of one's society or country, but there is no difference in the sense that in both cases the actors should have an indomitable spirit. Sacrifice for the state and society is not bigger, nor is sacrifice for an individual smaller. Only the results differ. The cause for the acts, in other words, the sacrificial spirit of the actors is in both cases the same.*[58]

Han Yongun insists that the sacrifice, patience, unyielding spirit, compassion, and perseverance of the heroine are not just prescribed by Buddhist (religious) precepts but that these are basic prerequisites for benefiting individuals, society, and country and for achieving ideals and goals in human life, regardless of the different levels of activity. His further clarification that "if we would have let the nun Sŏnhaeng [the heroine of *Pangmyŏng*] work for the state or the society, she would have sacrificed herself to her last moment. If she had become a leader or thinker, she would have remained unchanged from beginning to end, whatever the risk, and put monkey-like gentlemen to mortal shame"[59] makes his intention clearer. He

[58] Ibid., p.288.
[59] Ibid., p.289.

intends to denounce the social leaders and counteracts their changes in political attitude and behavior, by refashioning the bodhisattva precepts into a basis to criticize spreading political tendencies among Korean social leaders.

However, regarding Han Yongun's criticism of the politically disloyal Koreans, there are some important questions to consider before simply reducing its interpretation to the cliché of his heroic nationalism. First, his consideration of political turncoats is leaning toward scorn and contempt rather than to constructive criticism. According to him, their political decision entirely stemmed from their lack of character. Their personality flaws – impatience, cowardice, selfishness, unmanliness, cunning and opportunism – made them incline to the "wrong" political attitudes and behavior. He humiliates them and even debases their human dignity, ridiculing them as "monkey-like gentlemen." According to him, these people do not deserve respect as a human being due to their political tendencies. By rebuking them, he may demonstrate the indomitability of his own patriotic nationalism, but on the other hand he denies their humanity, ruthlessly wielding the whip of nationalism.

The problem is that the political turn to collaboration was not as simple as Han Yongun thought. Few gave up and discarded their creeds and beliefs "easily." Unlike he surmised, many of them agonized over the political decision, experiencing inner conflicts and feelings of loss or an extreme fear of safety, as we shall see in Yi Kwangsu's case in the following chapters. Individual motivations and circumstances behind the political decision were too diverse and heterogeneous to conflate into the single narrative of self-interest and cowardice Han presents. There were many people like Ch'ae Mansik, who changed their political color to support their families and survive under extreme financial difficulties.[60] Not all of them were egoistic persons who did not care about other people and public matters. Many of them found other values and activities, e.g., human life, religion, and education, more important than the nation and nationalism. While collaborating, some writers could devise ways of creating counterdiscourses against the colonial discourse. Therefore, Han Yongun's critical reaction to the political atmosphere proves its own limitations by failing to listen to more diverse voices and individual experiences from wartime colonial Korea.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that Han Yongun's Buddhist-inspired political critique once again diverges from the cliché image of anti-colonial resistance. Upon close examination, the heroine who represents the writer's Buddhist insight into wartime colonial society does not challenge her situation or try to improve her lot. She just submits tamely to humiliation and accepts her

[60] Ch'ae Mansik, Kim Tongin, Chang Chiyŏn, Chang Tŏkcho and many more writers produced collaborative literature to cope with financial problems. After liberation, Ch'ae wrote an autobiographical novella *Minjog-ŭi choein* 民族의 罪人 (1948) and denounced his own "pro-Japanese" activities, but also the postcolonial social atmosphere in which people were preoccupied only with accusing what the collaborators did without any consideration of why they did it and under what circumstances. Han Yongun at least in this respect cannot avoid criticism.

misfortune with resignation. She never complains about her ill fate and never expresses discontent and anger. Suffering hardship, she even feels thankful. Reduced to begging, she thinks that she is treated by people much better than other beggars and finds comfort and satisfaction.[61] With this depiction, the writer voices a narrative of the wartime colonial situation that differs from the standard accounts. Nowhere does he even hint at a challenge to the colonial authorities or criticism of wartime reality. Rather, his depiction strongly suggests that people in wartime colonial Korea should "endure" the reality of hardship and difficulties. This is the way for the Koreans to lead their lives during the war. And this is not Han's unique idea but common among other Buddhist writers such as Yi Kwangsu and Hong Sayong regardless of their political stand.

Such an endurance exercise almost looks like "submission" to the wartime government. What the heroine puts into practice is that one may not try to change or improve one's miserable life in wartime colonial Korea, nor challenge one's circumstances. One should accept the colonial reality as it is. The enduring heroine who never expresses complaint, discontent, anger or criticism does not oppose the Japanese wartime regime but on the contrary interacts with it in a way that strives to reduce the spread of social unrest and to stabilize the extreme political tension in colonial Korea during the second Sino-Japanese War. This interaction shows that Han's criticism of the converted Korean leaders does not necessarily imply criticism of Japanese colonialism or his anti-Japanese heroic nationalism.

Then, is Han's emphasis on endurance simply meant to propagate the policies of the wartime government? Does he plead with the Koreans to submit to the authorities? To find the answer, we should have a look at his essay "Innae" 忍耐 (Forbearance, 1938) written in the same period. In this long essay, he insists that forbearance should be certainly distinguished from blind subservience. The point he makes is that forbearance is a goal-oriented act whereas subservience is aimless.[62] On the way toward reaching a goal, one often encounters difficulties and needs to endure them. This is forbearance Han argues. According to him, patience determines whether one can have success or not. As various phrases he quotes from Buddhist scriptures show, forbearance is originally one of the bodhisattva's practices to attain Buddhahood. Yet, Han Yongun interprets the Buddhist precept broadly and proposes it as a sociopolitical attitude one should hold fast to in wartime society. Forbearance is suggested not as a goal in itself but as a skillful means (*pangp'yŏn*, 方便) for people to cope with war and sociopolitical adversity and to continuously pursue and achieve their goals such as national identity or liberation.

In short, Han Yongun's Buddhist articulations have diverse social and political implications. They cannot simply be regarded as either direct

[61] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.266.
[62] *Pulgyo: sin* 佛敎: 新 (July 1938). Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.343.

resistance or blind submission to the colonial authorities. The writer creates a critical voice to stop the political conversion of Korean leaders, but consciously or unconsciously acts in congruence with wartime colonial policies, instead of challenging or criticizing them. Yet, his interaction with the colonial government cannot simply be reduced to propaganda because he produces a counter-discourse that proposes an alternative, divergent way to persist with national (Korean) goals.

Compassion, sacrifice and repaying kindness

To extricate more political implications, we need to have a closer look at some Buddhist themes that recur frequently in *Pangmyŏng*. These are compassion, sacrifice (*hŭisaeng*, 犧生), and repaying kindness (*poŭn*, 報恩). The Buddhist way of indebtedness is the leitmotif of this novel. On the way to Seoul, Sunyŏng nearly drowns and is rescued by a man called Kim Taech'ŏl. This incident is not a one-time experience to her, but the incident that will determine her entire life. When she is taken out of the water, she keeps repeating in the confusion "how can I repay your kindness?"[63] From that moment on, she is filled with a deep sense of gratitude and indebtedness. She never forgets her savior and only wishes to meet him again in the future.[64]

> *Mister! I am indebted to you. What can I do to repay you? If I had been rich, I would have paid my debt of gratitude with money. What else can I requite you with? In old days, one often gave oneself to the man one owes but it is not allowed to me because I have this humble occupation as a bar waitress. Even if I had not been a barmaid, with what could I have served you? I wish you would allow me to be your maid. But you will turn me down due to my humble occupation, won't you?*[65]

The heroine's sacrificial desire to serve does not result from ignorance or poor judgment. According to Han Yongun, it stems from an awareness of indebtedness and compassion.[66] The first is the most beautiful and purest ideal one can have, the latter the beautiful virtue of feeling deep sympathy for a man in misery. These virtues are not trained or taught; they are all inherent in Sunyŏng. The heroine just puts them into practice. She does not aim for reputation or reward. This altruistic and sacrificial compassion is the main theme or the message of the novel as later episodes, near the end of the novel, will relate. Han elucidates that the Buddha's altruistic compassion reaches not only to human beings but also to all sentient beings, without discrimination. For that reason, certain monks in ancient times risked their lives to save

[63] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.165.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., p.167.
[66] Ibid., pp.288-289.

insignificant beings such as a goose or grasses. In this respect, it is only natural to show mercy to human beings and to sacrifice oneself for the person who saves one's life.

The willingness to realize one's indebtedness and to requite it by practicing the enduring sacrifice and compassion which are emphasized by Han in Buddhist teachings flow from the Four Graces (*sajungŭn*, 四重恩). There are several formulations of the four graces but the most widely accepted one is the grace of parents, of all sentient beings, of sovereign (country), and of the Three Treasures of Buddhism (i.e. Buddha, dharma, and sangha).[67] One has great debt to one's parents for giving birth to and caring for. Without all living beings, one cannot make a vow to save them and to accrue merit. One is indebted to one's king, ruler and country for bringing order and security to one's life. One greatly owes a debt of gratitude to Buddha, Buddhist law and sangha which opened the way toward enlightenment and supported to change and improve one's quality of life.

The importance of the Four Graces is probably more explicitly stated through a non-fictional prose literature. In his early writing of *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* (1913), he was against the Buddhist tradition of clerical celibacy and instead, proposed a marriage of monks and nuns. One of the main reasons was that celibacy does not respect filial duty and does not benefit society.[68] In his later days, he wrote some more essays in which he directly dealt with the Four Graces in parallel with in his novel. In a long essay "Pulgyo-wa hyohaeng" 佛敎와 孝行 (Buddhism and filial duty, 1938), he quoted many phrases and passages from Buddhist scriptures which deal with the virtue of respect for parents. This was to demonstrate how Buddhism has actually regarded filial piety as important. Seeing renunciation, leaving home and becoming celibate clergy, people in secular world concluded that Buddhism as a whole was a religion ignoring parents and moral principles. In his early essay mentioned above, he agreed with the secular view and required to reform the practice of celibacy. However, in this later essay, he argued that the secular prejudice was ignorant of the essence of Buddhism. Renunciation was a part of Buddhism which was only practiced by the clergy and priests. It had nothing to do with lay believers. He argued that still, for monks and nuns, renunciation was not the purpose in itself. Its ultimate goal was to benefit all sentient beings.[69]

Han's editorial "Kamsa-rŭl nŭkkinŭn maŭm" 感謝를 느끼는 마음 (Gratitude, 1938) directly illustrated the Four Graces and applied it to people's lives in colonial Korea. He claimed that one should feel gratitude for one's family (parents), neighbors, society, the state, and all living beings. He did not explain the details of indebtedness one owes to them and of the duty of repaying it. Instead, he explained that by feeling gratitude for all, inmeasurable

[67] Brian Daizen Victoria, *Zen war stories* (London &New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p.250.
[68] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.84.
[69] *Pulgyo: Sin* (May 1938). Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, pp.337-338.

merit can be accrued. He also changed the content of the classical four groups to make the Buddhist doctrines easy for the common people to practice. Gratitude was emphasized as a practical tool for removing the root of suffering such as greed, anger and ignorance and living a peaceful and content life.[70]

The problem is that Han emphasized the Four Graces against the backdrop of the second Sino-Japanese War. Seen in its historical context, this Buddhist tenet was not immune from the political ideology or war propaganda, such as the ideology of the Imperial Way, the philosophy of favor and indebtedness, and the doctrine of selflessness and sacrifice. Japan and its colonies were engaged in a war based on an imperial ideology and system. It was a war against Western imperialism being propagated as a "just and holy" war to liberate Asian brothers from Western imperial aggression. Challenging the violent, humiliating Western domination of Asia, the Japanese empire declared a "New Order for Asia" in 1938 based upon the notion of "imperial benevolence." [71] Under the principle of *hakkō ichiu*, for example, it was proclaimed that different from Western imperialists, the eight corners of the world should be ruled by a "benevolent" emperor and his moral principles, and that instead of conflict and exploitation, harmony and peace should be spread around the world under his leadership. In return for his benevolence, his subjects were required to feel grateful for the Emperor's grace and strive to glorify him and repay the Emperor's love. Han's emphases on benevolence (mercy), gratitude, indebtedness, and repaying kindness in this novel, like his references to Confucianism mentioned earlier, resonate with *hakkō ichiu* and the philosophy of debt to the Emperor whether he was conscious of it or not.

It is no surprise that collaborationist Buddhists in his days rediscovered and reworked this ideal Buddhist way of life to support Japanese government in its fight against China and the West. Kwŏn Sangno 權相老, for instance, explained that one should strive to repay the four debts of gratitude and to save suffering humans in times of both war and peace. As Shakyamuni defeated evil ghosts, Mahayana Buddhists should "punish" all who resisted the Pan-Asianism and bring about peace by building the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere.[72] According to Kwŏn, the four graces and salvation were the true duty of Buddhists during wartime to benefit society and myriad beings under the slogan of "New Order in Asia." [73] In a collaborative essay, Yi Kwangsu, focused on the grace of the monarch among the four graces and demanded repayment of the debt one owes the Emperor.[74] According to Yi, this

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[70] *Pulgyo: Sin* (June 1938). Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, p.361.

[71] Miwa Kimitada, "Pan-Asianism in modern Japan: Nationalism, regionalism and universalism" in *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, regionalism and borders*. Edited by Sven Saaler and J. Victor Koschmann (London and New York: Routledge, 2007) pp.24 and 29.

[72] Kwŏn Sangno 權相老, "Ŭngjing sŏngjŏn-gwa Pulgyo" 膺懲聖戰과 불교 in *Maeil sinbo* (Sep.1941), pp.324-325.

[73] Ibid., p.328.

[74] Yi Kwangsu, "Jingi to chūkō" (仁義と忠厚) in *Keijō nippō* (Feb. 1940). Republished in *Tongp'o-e*

is the attitude of civilized people. They should know that they exist because of the grace of the Emperor. They owe everything –public order, education, industry, culture– to their country. The grace of country is equated to that of the Emperor. It means that people breath and live thanks to the Emperor's august grace. Yi recalls that "Shakyamuni Buddha taught us the grace of the ruler (country) as the first among the four graces."[75] Yi saw that expressing gratitude to the Emperor is the first step to completing the "Japanese spirit" which implies oneness of loyalty and filial piety.

Han did not directly mention the grace of the Emperor or country and the repayment of the debt to it in this novel but it is clear that he did not state the opposite of what Kwŏn and Yi proclaimed but he basically shared their collaborationist claims. In a similar vein, we may reconsider Han Yongun's glorification of the heroine's spirit of selfless service and anguished effort to offer her life for the sake of her benefactor. This was intended to condemn the Korean leaders for their egoism, pursuit of personal ends and lack of the sacrificial spirit for the public good, as I mentioned before. As a counter-model against those egoistic persons, he cited some more extreme examples, of compassionate and sacrificial monks who risked their own lives to save others at the end of the novel. However, this is eerily similar to pivotal wartime propaganda motifs such as the no-self philosophy of destroying the self to serve the Emperor, the state, and the public, and the criticism of individualism.[76]

For example, the principles of the *kokutai* 国体 condemn individualism, which is the root of modern Occidental ideologies, and is held responsible for the ideological and social confusion and crisis in Japanese society. "A society of individualism is one of clashes between [masses of] people" and there exists no true harmony.[77] The true meaning of the Japanese national polity, the killing of the self, one's ego and one's own purpose of life, and offering one's life for the sake of the Emperor, is opposed to Western individualism and egocentricity. By casting themselves aside, the Japanese imperial citizens can live under the Emperor's august grace.[78] However, "the spirit of self-effacement is not a mere denial of oneself, but means living to the great, true self by denying one's small self."[79]

For Japan, this articulation had various connotations in the wartime context; it was a pivotal logic for war mobilization, aggressive anti-Westernism, a reaction to modernity, a protest against the dominance of the hegemonic Western discourse, an appreciation of "Japanese values," and ultra-nationalism

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koham: Ch'ŭnwŏn Yi Kwangsu ch'inil munhak, pp.77-79.

[75] Ibid., p.78.

[76] Christopher Ives,"Ethical Pitfalls in Imperial Zen and Nishida Philosophy: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique" in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, & the Question of Natio*nalism. Edited by James W. Heisig & John C. Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), p.28.

[77] Ivan Morris, "The Unique National Polity" (Kokutai no Hongi) in *Japan 1931-1945: Militarism, Fascism, Japanism?* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1963), p.49

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., p.50.

as a belief in the spiritual and cultural superiority of the Japanese over other Asian countries.[80] It does not seem probable that Han Yongun caught all the connotations and reacted to them. Although he respected the Korean tradition, he did not address the dichotomous construction of the West versus the East prevailing at that time (as I will show later, another Buddhist writer, Hong Sayong, was clearly aware of it). Nowhere in his writing, including this novel, did he mention overcoming modernity or anti-Westernism. However, one thing is clear; his articulation of the spirit of self-sacrifice against egoism is far from showing antagonism, resistance to or criticism of the colonial authorities and their *kokutai* wartime ideology, in particular "sacrifice for the sake of the Emperor, country and society," but is closer to sharing their ideas and spreading them through this novel. Han Yongun was not an anti-colonial nationalist as we believe, but a nationalist who used the same mechanism and the same themes as Japanese imperialist propaganda, but with a different goal. He structurally imitated Japanese imperialist discourses, but filled in the contents differently with nationalist ideas.

It is no surprise that there is a common thread between Han Yongun and Korean collaborators such as Kwŏn Sangno and Yi Kwangsu. According to the nationalist historical narrative, it is impossible that the heroic nationalist Han Yongun and the pro-Japanese stooges shared religious and literary ideas and political beliefs. They appear to be completely different from each other. Han's lofty sociopolitical ideas and prominent literary stature are regarded as diametrically opposed to the depraved collaborationist ideologies and practices. However, *de facto* Han, Kwŏn and Yi had a lot in common. In his essay on the four graces, Kwŏn Sangno stressed that Buddhism plays a significant role in the total mobilization by inducing people to forget their individual selves (*sa*, 私) and to serve the public goal (*kong*, 公), to renounce the small in order to secure the great, and to return to the one (the Emperor), forgetting their bodies, lives and deaths.[81]

Yi Kwangsu produced a novel that in many ways provides a parallel to Han Yongun's. In 1939 when Han was publishing his novel *Pangmyŏng* in *Chosŏn Ilbo*, Yi wrote *Sarang* 사랑 (Love, 1939) about a woman who thoroughly forgets herself and sincerely sacrifices herself for her decadent husband, his mistress and her mother-in-law, until they all die. Yi stated explicitly that "love must be characterized by indiscrimination. It is the love of Buddha [i.e. compassion]. It is to cast one's physical instincts aside. It further means to abandon one's "self-centered mind" (selfishness). If one forgets "oneself" and thinks only of "him/her" in love, then the love is transformed into

[80] Robert H. Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism" in *Curators of the Buddha: The study of Buddhism under Colonialism* Edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (The University of Chicago Press: 1995), pp.133 and 135-139; Chris Goto-Jones, "The Kyoto School, the Cambridge School, and the History of Political Philosophy in Wartime Japan" in *East Asia Cultures Critique* 17:1 (Spring 2009):13-42.
[81] Kwŏn Sangno 權相老, "Ŭngjing sŏngjŏn-gwa Pulgyo", p.325.

"compassion" as pure as gold."[82] Yi, like Han, intended to shed light on the Buddhist tenets of selflessness and compassion through the figure of such a self-sacrificing woman. As some have pointed out, Yi's Buddhist notions of the relinquishing of egocentricity (*myŏlsa*, 滅私), self-sacrifice and compassion were employed to support wartime activities and justify his collaboration.[83]

Of course, it is clear that Yi Kwangsu's literary activity was much more blatantly, intensely and intentionally collaborationist than Han's indirect collusion with the Japanese authorities, but at the same time, Yi's collaborationist writing seems more carefully crafted than Han's, containing hidden motives and messages and even subversive tactics aimed at overthrowing colonial authority and its oppressive culture, as will be discussed more in detail in later chapters. It is important to note that Yi's collaborationist works I have referred to compare with Han's were not written for Koreans but for the Japanese. The texts were all published in the Japanese governmental newspaper *Keijō nippō* 京城日報 which mainly targeted Japanese residents in colonial Korea (For the Korean public, there was another governmental newspaper, *Maeil sinbo* 每日新報, which was issued in Korean). While using Japanese language and publishing his works in *Keijō nippō*, Yi was keenly aware of the fact that the Japanese were his readers. In his collaborative writing in which war propaganda overtly surfaced, he denounced the Japanese colonial domination in strong terms such as "exploitation and enslavement." Responding to the criticism of the Japanese that the Koreans were not sincere and serious about the war-effort, he answered back with a question whether it was natural for the Koreans to love Japan and die for the sake of Japan, and why only the Koreans should love Japan one-sidedly, why the Japanese did not love the Koreans.[84] Counter-discursive strategies which are evident in Yi's writing did not appear in Han's novel. Han seems not to have intended to promote any war ideology but what happened was that Han used the structure of Japanese propaganda but used it for his own ends.

The hero's dilemma between morality and politics

The final matter I want to examine in relation to *Pangmyŏng* is the account of Han Yongun's life through the period of war. As mentioned, what the standard narrative repeatedly dictates and speculates on is that he was a tenacious heroic nationalist who remained loyal to the Korean nation in this turbulent period and dared to reject all offers, i.e., of money and land and requests from the

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[82] Yi Kwangsu 李光洙, "Chasŏ" 自序 (Author's note) in *Sarang* (Love, 1939). Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 李光洙全集10, p.526.
[83] Yi Kyŏnghun 이경훈, *Yi Kwangsu-ŭi ch'inil munhak yŏn'gu* 이광수의 친일 문학연구 (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1998), pp.91-152; Ch'oe Chuhwan 최주환. *Cheguk kwŏllyŏg-eŭi yamang-gwa pan'gam sai-esŏ: sosŏr-ŭl t'onghae pon chisigin Yi Kwangsu-ŭi ch'osang* 제국권력에의 야망과 반감 사이에서: 소설을 통해 본 지식인 이광수의 초상 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005), pp.138-151.
[84] Ibid., pp.11-29.

colonial government. Hearsay reports that he detested speaking the Japanese language, changing his Korean name for a Japanese one, and the mobilization of student soldiers.[85] However, Han Yongun's personal story, inasmuch as it can be elicited from *Pangmyŏng*, neither reiterates nor disproves the conventional story of his life. It reveals a hidden side of the putative hero Han Yongun, who was confused and confounded by the dilemmas of life and struggled to resolve the inner conflict between morality and politics.

The fact that Han Yongun had no *minjŏk* (civil registration, 民籍) or *hojŏk* (family registry, 戶籍) is one of the most famous biographical facts about him. Civil registration is a system by which a state or government measures, records and controls its population. It has, in principle, existed throughout the ages, changing its purpose and appellation. In the case of Korea, the *minjŏk* system originated in the last years of the Taehan Empire (in 1909) under the strong influence of Japanese administrative authority, and continued after annexation. In 1923, the system was partly revised by introducing the full-scale Japanese *koseki* family registration system and promulgating the *Chosŏn hojŏngnyŏng* (Korean family registration ordinance, 朝鮮戶籍領).[86] By the time Han Yongun published his novel, the civil registration system was about to be more coercively enhanced by the Name Order (lit. creating surnames and changing given names, 創氏改名) which entirely abolished Korean names and implied a total Japanization of the Koreans.

As Yi Sŭngil and Chŏng Chusu point out, the *minjŏk* or *hojŏk* system introduced in 1909 was used to institutionalize the Japanese family registry centering around the head of household (*hoju*, 戶主). It was a compulsory registration of only the Korean residents in colonial Korea.[87] Offenders who neglected to register were subjected to fewer than fifty strokes of the cane or a fine of below five wŏn, and those who made false reports were more heavily sentenced and sent to jail, flogged or heavily fined one hundred wŏn.[88] These penalties were abolished by a law revision in 1923. According to Yi, the Japanese colonial authorities seemed to have found it difficult to control and rule the Koreans by the use of the pre-existing Korean civil registration system, and therefore, the Taehan Empire's *Hogu chosa kyuch'ik* (Census Edict, 戶口調查規則, 1896) was abolished as soon as *minjŏk* was implemented.

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[85] "Manhae-ga namgin ilhwa" 萬海가 남긴 逸話, Edited by Kim Kwanho in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, pp.365, 373- 374 and 379-380.

[86] Yi Sŭng'il 이승일, "Chosŏn ch'ongdokpu-ŭi Chosŏnin tŭngnok chedo yŏn'gu: 1910-nyŏndae munjŏk-kwa kŏju tŭngnokpu-ŭi tŭngnok tanwi-ŭi pyŏnhwa-rŭl chungsim-ŭro" 조선총독부의 조선인 등록 제도 연구: 1910년대 민적과 거주등록부의 등록 단위의 변화를 중심으로 in *Sahoe-wa yŏksa* 사회와 역사 67 (June 2005): 2-40; Chŏng Chusu鄭周洙, "Ilche kangjŏmgi hojŏkchedo-ŭi koch'al: Ilche kangjŏmgi pŏmmuhaengjŏngsa yŏn'gu" 일제강점기 戶籍制度의 고찰: 일제강점기 法務行政史 연구 in *Sabŏphaengjŏng* 司法行政 (April 2010): 33-54.

[87] Yi Sŭng'il, p.26, 28, and 35; Chŏng Chusu, p.42.

[88] Chŏng Chusu, p.36.

Nevertheless, there were misinterpretations and confusion about some concepts and Korean common law traditions, particularly concerning inheritance and the Korean family name system, which were necessary counterparts to the Japanese-style system in the beginning phase of the *minjŏk* law period.[89] Yet, through several law revisions, the Koreans soon began to accommodate to the Japanese style. Through a new census, the Japanese government-general of Korea was able to reorganize the Koreans and their families under the same system of population control as in metropolitan Japan. In this way, they were also able to improve the surveillance of their lives and to promote the goal of assimilating Koreans to be more like the Japanese.[90]

Han Yongun lived and died without a *minjŏk* and *hojŏk*. Why did he not register? According to an anecdote referred to as "Hojŏk ŏmnŭn ilsaeng" 戶籍 없는 一生 (Life without family registration), he was resolute, saying, "I am a Korean man (*Chosŏn saram*). I will not register my name in a register managed by *waenom* (a disparaging term for Japanese)."[91] A strong sense of anti-Japanese patriotic nationalism is speculated to have been the reason. The hearsay further informs us that as a result he faced various difficulties. His life was in danger, as he was excluded from legal protection during the entire colonial period. During the period of war, in particular, he was completely excluded from the state rationing system of commodities like food and rubber shoes. He could not send his beloved daughter (born in 1934) to school because she did not have a *hojŏk*.[92] It is told that he taught her himself, saying, "I will become a Jap's citizen (*ilbonnŏm-ŭi paeksŏng*) over my dead body. I will not send her to a Japanese school, either."[93]

According to this brief hearsay account, it was a very courageous and heroic act and evidence for an invincible national spirit when Han Yongun willfully refused to register. His steely determination probably deserves to be admired. However, some questions still remain unanswered. He was a man of flesh and blood. How could he live and survive without receiving rations in wartime or at any time in a colonial reality in which even many "registered" subjects barely managed to get by? Moreover, he was not a single man but a husband and the father of a family. How did he support his family? Was not his nationalist ideology victimizing the rest of his family, disregarding their own intentions? How did he himself express his view of *minjŏk/hojŏk* through his writing?

The issue of *minjok/hojŏk* was not overtly problematized or criticized by Han Yongun in his literature. In fact, it was not even one of the recurrent issues such as the Temple Order 寺刹領, which he constantly questioned in his

[89] Yi Sŭng'il, pp.23 and 37; Chŏng Chusu, p.34.
[90] Yi Sŭng'il, p.26.
[91] "Manhae-ga namgin ilhwa" 萬海가 남긴 逸話, Edited by Kim Kwanho in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.378.
[92] He married Yu Sukwŏn in 1933. A daughter was born in 1934.
[93] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.378.

writings. The biographical fact of his refusal of civil registration is only briefly hinted at in two of his literary works. The first is his early work *Nim-ŭi ch'immuk* (1926). In a poem in this collection, he poetically expressed this fact as the female narrator is in danger of being sexually assaulted and being deprived of her human rights due to her lack of civil registration.[94] The other is in a short passage from his last novel.

> *Did you [Sunyŏng] ask me [Mrs. Song] what we can do with the civil registry? These days, if you don't have it, you can be murdered at any moment and you have nowhere to appeal. Wherever you go, whatever you do, nothing works without the paper. Therefore, you need it.*[95]

This is an excerpt from a conversation between Mrs. Song and the heroine in the beginning of this novel. The first thing Mrs. Song does after bringing the heroine to Seoul is to make a civil register for her. Sunyŏng, who has lived in the backcountry her whole life, has never heard of civil registry. Mrs. Song explains to her that it is indispensable to life. Without papers, nothing is possible. If the papers are not valid, one does not have basic human rights. Mrs. Song emphasizes the necessity and importance of civil registration to the ignorant heroine.

As in the poem, Han Yongun focuses here on how the *minjok/hojŏk* paper wields power over people (the Koreans), controlling their lives and safety, infringing on their basic human rights when they refuse. It is implicitly expressed that "unregistered" persons, like him, were not safeguarded by law and were in danger of losing their lives anytime. One literary difference is that in the poem, he showed some opposition (*hanggŏ*, 抗拒) against the colonial government's control of the population through *minjŏk* and vented his emotional reactions, such as fury and self-pity. However, the quoted passage from the novel does not convey resistance or anger. Rather, it appears almost as propaganda, alerting people who were ignorant of or indifferent to the importance of civil registration, ironically, as Han himself never had such papers.

Apart from this one quote, Han Yongun does not again mention civil registry in this novel. However, *Pangmyŏng* needs further close examination with regard to that issue and, in particular, to unanswered questions about how he managed to live and support his family without registration and what was going on in his mind. This novel deals with various adversities faced by the heroine, but the main focus is on her relationship with Kim Taech'ŏl, once a praiseworthy savior to the heroine, now degenerated into an abhorrent prodigal. The heroine does not turn her back on him but instead performs acts

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[94] Poem "Tangsin-ŭl poassŭmnida" 당신을 보았습니다 Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 1, pp.57-58.

[95] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.73

of self-sacrifice and shows compassion, in spite of humiliations, insults and rebukes. Surprisingly, it may be argued that this fictional story recounts Han Yongun's personal narrative.

One might disagree on this point because as Kwŏn Podŭrae points out, this novel took a real begging husband and wife whom Han Yongun witnessed in Sajik Park as a model.[96] Han's first attempt at the novel was *Huhoe*, but he failed and *Pangmyŏng* was his second attempt. However, although these two novels are based upon the same real story, there are many differences between them. While writing *Pangmyŏng*, Han added many other issues as we have discussed in this chapter. His personal narrative can be regarded as one of them. He was keenly aware of the long literary tradition that a man speaks through the mouth of a woman. Using the female persona, the male literati could talk about their personal stories and experiences as many Chinese poems as well as *sijo* and *kasa* show us. So, the heroine in this novel may be seen not only as a real woman or the symbolic body of the Korean nation but as an avatar of the male writer Han Yongun himself.

Seen in this way, Kim Taech'ŏl represents Han's benefactors, whereas the heroine represents Han himself, who was beholden to these benefactors for financial and material help. The problem was that those benefactors had "degenerated" and collaborated with the wartime colonial authorities. Thus, Han was stuck with a dilemma: whether he was morally bound to defend his degenerate benefactors or to turn his back on them and condemn them for political reasons. His obsessive overemphasis on the "repayment of kindness" indirectly informs us how deeply he was troubled, what his choice was, the answer between moral and political (nationalist) imperatives and how skillful he was in justifying his choices and actions.

It is not difficult to find evidence that there were a cluster of people who knew that Han Yongun was in difficult circumstances and helped him to survive (dramatized in this novel by the incident in which Sunyŏng is in danger of losing her life by accidently falling into the sea but is saved by Kim Taech'ŏl). The construction of the house called *Simujang* (尋牛莊, Ox-searching Villa) is also a good example. As he confessed in a poem in *Nim-ŭi ch'immuk* (1926), Han did not have shelter to rest and he lived moving around until *Simujang* was prepared in 1933. Seeing that he took a wife and began a family, many of his acquaintances worried about his unsettled existence without a house and took the initiative to build him one. It is told that Pang Ŭngmo 方應謨 (the president of *Chosŏn ilbo*), Pak Kwang 朴珖, Song Chinu 宋鎭禹 (the president of *Tong'a ilbo*) and another businessman Hong Sunp'il gave financial support to him. The monk Kim Pyŏksan donated his land to him.[97] It would have been impossible

[96] Kwŏn Podŭrae, *Yŏnae-ŭi sidae: 1920-nyŏndae ch'oban-ŭi munhwa-wa yuhaeng*, pp.225-231.

[97] Ko Ŭn 고은. *Han Yongun p' yŏngjon* 한용운 평전 (Seoul: Hyangyŏn, 2004), pp.341-344; "Manhae-wa Kyech'o Pang Ŭngmo sŏnsaeng" 만해와 계초 방응모 선생in *Chosŏn Ilbo* (7 August 2007); *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, pp.365-366.

for Han Yongun to afford a tile-roofed house without their kind consideration and financial support. However, the existing nationalist narrative tends to underestimate the support of various people for Han Yongun and instead highlights the fact that *Simujang* was a house facing north because Han detested seeing the hated building of the General Government.[98]

Life became more difficult for Han Yongun during wartime. As mentioned previously, he was severely restricted in his activities and experienced inconveniences and safety problems. During the heat of war, he was excluded from the rationing of food and any kind of commodities. However, there were many donors who paid visits to him to present gifts or who sent gifts to him, although it is uncertain whether he accepted any of the offers or not. He certainly refused a huge amount of money from the Japanese colonial government and a wide stretch of land for free from the Chosŏn industrial bank because it was too closely tied to the colonial government.[99] Apart from these politically motivated offers, there were other donations made on humanitarian grounds from close colleagues such as Ch'oe Rin 崔麟. In this particular case, Han threw the money back at him in anger because Ch'oe had become a "pro-Japanese" collaborator.[100]

In this situation, publication fees earned from submitting his essays and novels to newspapers and magazines must have been an important source of income for Han Yongun to support his family. Yet, he could not do it alone. There were journalists and writers who saw his difficulties and offered him jobs. For example, chief and subordinate executives of *Chosŏn ilbo*, such as Pang Ŭngmo, Yi Kwangsu and Hong Myŏnghŭi, allowed him to publish a couple of serialized novels so that *Hŭkp'ung* (黑風, 1935), *Huhoe* (後悔, 1936), a translated version of the Chinese novel *Samgukchi* (三國志, 1940) as well as the novel *Pangmyŏng* were all issued in the newspapers they were connected with, supplying him with some income. Han contributed many more essays in those years to *Chosŏn ilbo*'s sister magazine *Chogwang* 朝光 (1935-1944).

The problem is that many of those businessmen, journalists, and writers Han Yongun owed his livelihood to turned toward collaboration with the Japanese around the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War. Once compassionate benefactors degenerated into archenemies, just as in *Pangmyŏng* Kim Taech'ŏl degenerates from a lifesaver into a depraved prodigal man, addicted to gold speculation and opium. Ch'oe Rin, who invited Han to participate in the March First Movement (1919), and Yi Kwangsu, who was a great help to him during novel writing as they discussed literature and

[98] Apart from the donations, he also took a loan from a savings and loan association. This was arranged by his acquaintances, too. Regarding this, but some researchers assert that Han never took money from them but loan.

[99] "Sisihan simburŭm" 시시한 심부름" and "Nan kŭrŏngŏ morŭo" 난 그런 거 모르오" in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, p.371.

[100] "Tŏrŏun ton" 더러운 돈, Ibid., pp.372-373.

Buddhist doctrines,[101] were all appointed to important posts in imperialist organizations for wartime mobilization.

In *Pangmyŏng*, Kim Taech'ŏl, who is involved in gold mining, is reminiscent of Han's enthusiastic backer, Pang Ŭngmo. As mentioned before, Pang was one of the most successful gold miners, and nicknamed the Gold King. As a millionaire, he had a very high profile in colonial Korea. However, he was not a simple *nouveau riche* who wasted his fortune on entertainment and pleasure. He took over the *Chosŏn ilbo* newspaper company when it was in financial difficulties and pumped in a huge sum of money (500,000 wŏn) in order to bring it up to working order. He established a scholarship for poor students and spent his fortune for education and social welfare services.[102] Han Yongun was one of the beneficiaries of Pang's charity work. However, as the president of a newspaper, Pang was involved in war mobilization and participated in imperialist associations, such as Chosŏn munyehoe (Society of Chosŏn Art and Literature, 朝鮮文藝會, 1937), Kungmin chŏngsin ch'ongdongwŏn Chosŏn yŏnmaeng (Chosŏn National Spirit Mobilization League, 國民精神總動員朝鮮聯盟, 1937), and Chosŏn imjŏn poguktan (Korean National Defense Association, 朝鮮臨戰保國團, 1941). He gave some speeches about homage to the Japanese Emperor, active contributions to the war effort, and enlistment in the Japanese army. Yet, compared with others, his collaborationist activities were limited, and perhaps unavoidable because of his post as the president of a newspaper. Even according to a strong nationalist perspective, he is considered as neither anti-Japanese nor pro-Japanese but more an opportunist than a pro-Japanese collaborator.[103]

Han Yongun's dilemma became more pronounced as his benefactors became more deeply engaged in wartime collaborationist activities. Could he simply put them to shame, scare them away, slap their faces, even go as far as regarding the living as dead and holding a symbolic funeral for them (as hearsay evidence claims)?[104] If he had really done this to them, he might have proved his own unchanged patriotic nationalism, but his conduct in this respect was somewhat problematic, because he rather indulged in personal accusations, defamation, and libel regarding their human dignity than providing constructive criticism targeting their "activities" related to government wartime propaganda. A bigger problem is that if he decided to break off his relationships with them and repudiate them, he himself would become an immoral and ill-mannered person, too easily forgetting their kindness and aid, and acting ungratefully. Conversely, if he remained faithful to them, he could have been misunderstood to be a sympathizer or defender of national betrayers and wartime collaborators. In a word, there were probably some tensions

[101] "Ch'unwŏn-gwa Manhae" 春園과 萬海, Ibid., p.374.
[102] Chŏn Ponggwan, *Hwanggŭmgwang sidae*, pp.198-209.
[103] Kim Hangmin, Chŏng Unhyŏn 김학민 정운현, *Ch'inilp'a choesanggi*, p.381.
[104] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 6, pp.370-371 and 373-374.

between his ideals and reality and between politics (nation and nationalism) and morality (indebtedness to personal benefactors).

The hearsay episodes that are popularly accepted as truth are overtly weighted toward Han's preoccupation with the (Korean) nation and nationalism. However, this novel informs us about an alternative path for individuals and a moral life based upon his Buddhist conviction. The main themes, "repayment of kindness" and "compassion," which are so much stressed in this novel, are important clues to the answer. The heroine, who represents the writer, does not ignore Taech'ŏl or scare him away when he becomes a degenerate. Instead of breaking off the relationship, she embraces him with a compassionate heart and sacrifices herself to serve him out of gratitude. Using the high priest Tŏgam's speech, Han denounces people who feel grateful if they receive a favor but forget it soon without repaying the kindness.[105] He further explains that one might question if this sacrifice for the sake of an individual, especially for such a harmful, trouble-making person in society, is significant in comparison with the sacrifice for other, bigger entities such as society as a whole or one's country (*kukka*). His answer is that sacrifice for the sake of one's society and country is not bigger and that sacrifice for an individual is not smaller.[106] He adds that while repaying what one owes and showing mercy, one must not weigh the others' personality or circumstances. He makes it abundantly clear that it is an unchangeable and most important fact that one should be first faithful to individuals whom one owes one's life to, although those individuals now became degenerates (in the case of his benefactors, collaborators) and one might be reviled and get into trouble.[107]

On the basis of this speech it seems that Han Yongun does not hesitate to make decisions based upon his strong religious morality. That his decisions are based more on religious imperatives than on the political or national imperatives of one's nation, society and country is surprising if one regards him exclusively as a national hero. According to Han, repaying kindness and compassion are fundamental principles that should be followed under all circumstances, which means that even though his benefactors become degenerates, he must not forget what he owes them and try to repay their kindness out of gratitude and compassion. He must remain loyal to his benefactors, even one single individual, a choice that involves a risk. If he maintains contact with his politically converted benefactors, he may be regarded as one of them, or be misunderstood, humiliated, and spiritually tortured, as the heroine in the novel is for serving the man who saved her life. The choice might ruin his fame and reputation as well. Nonetheless, like the heroine in the novel, he is resolute in his determination to be first and foremost a moral man before a politically lofty nationalist.

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[105] Ibid., p.289.
[106] Ibid., p.288.
[107] Ibid.

Han's experience of the dilemma between moral and political (nationalist) imperatives and an alternative individual religious morality is surprisingly very much akin to that of the alleged pro-Japanese collaborator Yi Kwangsu. As will be discussed in the following chapters in greater detail, Yi was also faced with a quandary in the midst of the Suyang tonguhoe Incident: whether to save the lives of individuals or to be loyal to the (Korean) nation. His choice for humanity before nation and nationalism was based upon his strong Buddhist beliefs. It was to follow the Buddhist moral imperative to sacrifice oneself to save a living being. While doing so, he must have known that he risked losing his fame and his reputation as a national leader. Han Yongun and Yi Kwangsu, who are assumed to be totally different figures due to their political positions, one the uncompromising nationalist and the other a pro-Japanese collaborator, to a great extent shared similar experiences, inner conflicts, and even Buddhist-inspired choices.

However, the conflict, distress and political pressure Yi Kwangsu had to face, as revealed in the concrete historical incident of Suyang tonguhoe and vividly dramatized in his novels, were probably more violent and serious than what Han Yongun experienced. Yi's choice was more extreme than Han's because Yi was inclined to skepticism and criticism of the Korean nation and nationalism, and very actively took part in collaborationist activities. Despite his firm religious beliefs and the influence of religion on his life, Han did not criticize or deny the nation or the patriotic national spirit, or change his name a Japanese one. Nor did he participate in any mobilization campaign or political organization. Han did not collaborate with the wartime government, but he remained loyal to benefactors friendly to the authorities who collaborated with the colonial government. His contributions to print media such as *Chosŏn ilbo* and *Chogwang* during wartime are the outcome of this.

It is an exaggeration to denounce these publications as "pro-Japanese" from the outset and by their very nature. What we can say is that from 1936 on, wartime collaboration became general practice for the newspaper company that published the *Chosŏn ilbo* and *Chogwang*. Many alleged collaborators joined the company and published propaganda essays in the newspaper and its sister magazine. These were the media for which Han Yongun wrote. As discussed in Chapter One, many of his publications in these print media are controversial. In 1940, when the wartime colonial government forced *Chosŏn ilbo* to shut down, he wrote a poem of consolation all of the associates of the newspaper company. His commitment to *Chosŏn ilbo* and *Chogwang* is totally incomprehensible to nationalist scholarship. According to their vision, he had to make a clean break with those "tainted" print media and adopt a more critical attitude toward them. The present-day *Chosŏn ilbo* newspaper company conversely claims Han Yongun's involvement as strong evidence that the principle of collaboration was merely a disguise to run the company amid pressure by the wartime

government and that their newspaper always served the Korean nation, as did Han Yongun.[108]

Conclusion

Han Yongun was not a heroic hermit living a life shielded from colonial society. He lived together with his contemporaries, observing and experiencing the vicissitudes of colonial history. His fiction was an important medium for him to make a living and to speak to the public, and on behalf of them, in turbulent times of war. His reactions to wartime colonial society diverged from the popular single narrative of heroic nationalism. He showed more interest in the actual lived experience of various social groups than in the nation, the national spirit, and the nationalistic movement. His alternative views and diverse sociopolitical narratives were above all informed by Buddhist notions. Examples of this, such as ideas about self-sacrificing compassion and a sense of indebtedness, were in harmony with various wartime ideologies and propagandas. To us these notions provide important clues that help us detect a deeper level of his life experience and reveal the choices between religious moral values and politics he had to face in wartime colonial reality.

Han Yongun's fiction was not isolated from the historical context or the work of contemporary writers. In particular, Yi Kwangsu's Buddhist novels that were published around the same time invite comparisons. According to the conventional master narrative, Han and Yi should be completely different persons. One was an honorable national hero whereas the other was a mean-spirited betrayer of the nation and a "pro-Japanese" stooge. However, as I have briefly indicated, they experienced more or less the same existential dilemmas and to a great extent shared religious (Buddhist) and political ideas. Even, their choices were similar. It is obvious that Yi interacted with the wartime colonial authorities more closely, but at the same time he was more crafty and tactful in producing counter-discourses against the colonial discourses than Han. This I hope to show in the next two chapters.

[108] Chosŏn ilbosa saryo yŏn'gusil 조선일보사 사료연구실, *Chosŏn ilbo saramdŭl: Ilche sidae*조선일보 사람들: 일제시대 (Seoul: Raendŏm hausŭ chungang, 2005), pp.308-311.

Part 2

Yi Kwangsu (1892-1950): Korea's most controversial writer

Chapter 3

Religion reclaimed: Yi Kwangsu's Buddhism in its relationship to literature, nationalism and collaboration

Introduction

Many remember Yi Kwangsu (李光洙, 1892-1950) as the iconic figure in modern Korean literary history who wrote the first modern novel *Mujŏng* 無情 (Heartless, 1917), but he was not a mere writer. Yi was the greatest intellectual of the day and the highest leader of Suyang Tong'uhoe (moral cultivation society), an organization which played a pivotal role in nationalist movements in colonial Korea.[1] Yi's significance in colonial society is however not confined to nationalism and nationalist movements but extends to pro-Japanese collaboration, which is one of the most controversial issues in today's Korea, as manifested in a surge of attempts to settle the colonial past and legacies.

Yet despite widespread publicity and growing controversy over Yi Kwangsu, there is an important fact that has gone largely unnoticed and unstudied. It is that Yi was a very religious person during his entire life and that the diverse elements of his life – literature, nationalism and collaboration – were primarily associated with his religious views and beliefs. He was not a follower of one single religion. He was influenced by a variety of religions, from the indigenous religion of Tonghak (Eastern Learning), to Puritanism, Tolstoy's Christian beliefs and in his final years, the Buddhist faith. Among these, Buddhism is particularly noteworthy because it served as a great inspiration for creating literary works in his later days. In view of the large amounts of Buddhist-inspired works and the high level of creativity, completion, and popularity, no one can doubt that he was an important Buddhist writer.

Buddhism was Yi's faith during the most critical time of his personal and public life. He was personally engaged in life-or-death struggles with terrible diseases and trapped in despair due to his son's death. Publicly, he was caught in the middle of the Suyang Tong'uhoe Incident and afterwards, he proclaimed himself pro-Japanese collaborator and feverishly cried for Japanization (*kōminka*, 皇民化) and oneness of Japan and Korea (*naisen ittai*). Why was he so eager to incorporate Buddhism into his literary works while posing as pro-Japanese? Was his Buddhist literary work aimed to propagate Buddhist teachings regardless of the situation?[2] Was it a source of comfort in all

[1] Cho Paewŏn 조배원, "Yi Kwangsu: han kŭndaehwaronja-ŭi ilgŭrŏjin ch'osang" 한 근대화론자의 일그러진 초상 in *Han'guk yŏksa yŏn'guhoe wepchin* 8 한국역사연구회 웹진 8 (August 2002).

[2] Ch'oe Chŏngsŏk 崔正錫, "Ch'unwŏn Yi Kwangsu-ŭi taesŭng Pulgyo sasang yŏn'gu" 春園 李光洙의 大乘佛教思想 研究 (Ph.D. dissertation, Tongguk Univeristy, 1977); Yi Hwahyŏng 李和珩,

his troubles, a way he tried to forget worldly affairs? Did his preoccupation with Buddhism show his repentance for his pro-Japanese collaboration? Or was his Buddhism nothing but a vehicle of war propaganda, justifying wartime ideologies such as support behind the lines for the imperial army (*ch'onghu ponggong*, 銃後奉公) as Yi Kyŏnghun points out?[3]

Looking for answers to these questions, this chapter will discuss two of Yi's historical novels, *Tanjong aesa* 端宗哀史 (A tragic story of Tanjong, 1928-1929) and *Sejo taewang* 世祖大王 (Great King Sejo, 1940) which were written when he went through the most turbulent time in his personal and public life and came to be preoccupied with Buddhism. The most answers will be found in the second novel but to understand this abstruse novel written as a follow-up to *Tanjong aesa*, it is necessary to examine the first novel in advance, questioning how fifteenth-century Chosŏn history was captured and reconstructed differently in those novels, written ten years apart, and how Yi's telling and retelling of the historical past show his take on colonial reality.[4] I will pay special attention to religions, in particular Buddhism, which are placed by Yi at the center of his fiction. My examination of Yi's religious beliefs will bring to light how his idea of nationalism was promoted, revised, criticized and restored and how Buddhism, in particular, played a crucial role in solving problems such as pro-Japanese collaboration and coping with dilemmas in his life.

Tanjong aesa: tragic history, colonization and the nationalist movement

Yi's novel *Tanjong aesa* was serialized in *Tong'a ilbo* 東亞日報, for one year. The novel chronicles King Tanjong's life from birth to death. However, the main character of the novel seems to be Prince Suyang 首陽大君 (later King Sejo) rather than Tanjong. The main event in the novel is the process of Prince Suyang's usurpation of the throne. This bloody historical *coup d'état* began with slaying the then minister Kim Chongsŏ 金宗瑞 who was Suyang's most formidable political rival and continued to remove Suyang's opponents, and even his own brothers. By dethroning his young nephew, King Tanjong 端宗, Suyang finally ascended the throne himself as King Sejo 世祖 in 1455. These events are not dealt with seriously in official records or in historical studies.[5]

"Ch'unwŏn sosŏr-e nat'annan Pulgyo sasang" 春園小說에 나타난 佛敎思想 in *Yi Kwangsu yŏn'gu: ha* 李光洙 硏究 : 下, edited by Tongguk taehakkyo pusŏl Hanguk munhak yŏn'guso (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1984), pp.119-136; Ch'oe Wŏngyu 崔元圭, "Ch'unwŏnsi-ŭi Pulygogwan" 春園詩의 佛敎觀 in Ibid., pp.503-513.

[3] Yi Kyŏnghun 이경훈, *Yi Kwangsu-ŭi ch'inil munhak yŏn'gu* 이광수의 친일문학연구 (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1998), pp.91-152.

[4] For a more detailed discussion, see Jung-shim Lee, "History as colonial storytelling: Yi Kwangsu's historical novels on fifteenth-century Chosŏn history" in *Korean Histories* 1.1 (2009):81-105, pp.81-87.

[5] Historical studies mainly focus on politics during Sejo's reign or on Sejo's reorganization of the administrative system and establishment of new governmental institutions. Some studies have dealt with the Tanjong restoration movement, but despite its popularity, few seem to delve deep into Sejo's usurpation of the throne.

However, recollections of that time have been eagerly reproduced in unconventional, historical, narratives such as *yasa* 野史 (collections of interesting anecdotes, essays, memoirs, and fragments) and *pang'oein munhak* 方外人文學 (outsiders' literature). As an example of a *yasa* in the Chosŏn period, *Taedong yasŭng* 大東野乘 informs us how many Confucian scholars were traumatized by Sejo's usurpation of the throne.[6] They had heated debates as to whether the seizure of kingship by force could be morally justified and politically legitimated according to Confucian principles.[7]

After five hundred years, Yi Kwangsu reworked the historical incident in his novel *Tanjong aesa*. The novel begins with the birth of Tanjong. Hearing the news, the then king Sejong 世宗 (Tanjong's grandfather) entrusts two officials, Sŏng Sammun 成三問 and Sin Sukchu 申叔舟, with the care of his grandson after his death. Tanjong grows up. Prince Suyang (Tanjong's uncle), along with Kwŏn Nam 權擥, is already beginning to gather people to conspire, devising a secret and elaborate plan for the future. The following long chapter gives a detailed description of Suyang's *coup d'état*. Suyang's right-hand man, Han Myŏnghoe 韓明澮, draws up a hit list of their enemies. Suyang's warriors kill every single opponent on the list and their families, accusing them of treason. Suyang is depicted as utterly ruthless. He kills anybody who expresses the slightest dissent towards him. The cruelty reaches a peak in a detailed description of a killing in which his warriors even murder two- and three year-old toddlers.[8] In the third chapter Suyang dethrones Tanjong and ascends to the throne himself. First, through the successful coup, he becomes the main holder of power, occupying more than one position including that of prime minister, and then he forces Tanjong to abdicate the throne in favor of himself.

Subsequently, the novel recalls another historical event known as the Sayuksin Incident 死六臣事件 (1456). This was representative of the resistance against Sejo. Officials who supported the deposed King Tanjong plotted to assassinate Sejo and his officials, taking the opportunity of the visit of a group of Ming envoys to carry out the assassinations. However, their plan failed due to internal betrayal, and the six plotters were tortured to death. Yi Kwangsu depicts this incident in full detail but from Sejo's point of view. Sejo's meritorious retainers feel uneasy and intimidated by the presence under the same sky of the deposed king, Tanjong. Although Tanjong is dethroned and has lost his political power, public sentiment is still with him. The Ming Chinese

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[6] This is a collection of anecdotes, essays, jokes and the like dating from the early Chosŏn period to c.1650.

[7] Yi Kang'ok 李康沃, "Chosŏn ch'o chunggi sadaebu mit p'yŏngmin ilhwa-ga Chosŏn hugi yadamgye sosŏllo palchŏnhanŭn han yangsang: Hong Yunsŏng irhwa-rŭl chungsim-ŭro 朝鮮 初,中期 士大夫 및 平民逸話가 朝鮮 後期 野譚系 小說로 發展하는 한 樣相: 洪允成逸話를 中心으로," in *Ko sosŏlsa-ŭi che munje* 古小說史의 諸問題, edited by Sŏng'o So Chaeyŏng kyosu hwallyŏk kinyŏm nonch'ong kanhaeng wiwŏnhoe 省吾 蘇在英敎授 還曆紀念論叢刊行委員會 (Seoul: Chimmundang, 1993), pp.851-853.

[8] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4 李光洙全集 4 (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1971/1973), p.369.

emperor also does not fully recognize the legitimacy of Sejo's rule. Sejo's company awaits a chance to remove the deposed king. Sejo is the person who is most scared of rebellion or betrayal. The rebellious movement is however detected, and fails because of internal conflict. Most impressive is the scene in which the six ministers who plotted to restore Tanjong are captured by Sejo, are brutally tortured and meet death courageously rather than submit to Sejo. The novel ends with the murder of the ex-king in exile.

Yi Kwangsu offers a rich storyline and vividly depicts a series of incidents associated with Sejo's seizure of power in the fifteenth-century history. The majority of the characters and events in the novel are not fictional but correspond to real historical figures and incidents. In "Tanjong aesa-e taehayŏ" 端宗哀史에 對하여 (On *Tanjong aesa*, 1929), Yi Kwangsu himself stated:

> *The officially recorded documents on the young king are not so informative but non-official narratives (yasa, 野史) provide important insights into his character. Now I am using both official and non-official narratives as sources and I will try to refrain from fictionalizing them. I attempt in the novel to reconstruct the historical events and reproduce the historical figures as they were.*[9]

However, the novel is in no way an exact copy or representation of the succession of historical events. In his exhaustive study on Yi Kwangsu, Kim Tong'in 金東仁 (1900-1951) disclosed that Yi's novel was very much based upon a document written by Nam Hyoon entitled *Yuksinjŏn* 六臣傳 (Biographies of six scholars), and that Yi accepted Nam's view and errors uncritically.[10] Yi himself also admitted that, although he tried to write down impartially what the historical records stated, he could not look dispassionately at fifteen-century history but was as eager as if he was writing his own autobiography or drawing his own his own "portrait."[11] This remark informs us that the historical past recaptured in this novel is not the past itself but is related to the colonial present, and especially to Yi's personal life experiences in colonial Korea. Then, how should we read the novel?

The period in which Yi was writing and serializing this novel in the *Tong'a Ilbo* 東亞日報 was a critical moment in his life. He underwent a life-or-death struggle with chronic tuberculosis, and in January 1927, he had relapsed, coughing up blood several times and losing consciousness. In the middle of writing this novel, the disease attacked him again. In May 1929, he underwent a major operation, in which his left kidney was removed. The process of writing

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[9] In *Samch'ŏlli* 三千里 (June 1919). Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 10, p.507.
[10] Kim Tong'in, *Ch'unwŏn yŏngu* 春園硏究 (Seoul: Ch'unjosa 春潮社, 1956), pp.108-126.
[11] Ha Ch'ŏljong 하철종, "Ch'unwŏn-gwa Tong'in yŏksa sosŏr-ŭi taebi-chŏk yŏn'gu: *Tanjong aesa*-wa *Tae Suyang*-ŭl chungsim-ŭro 춘원과 동인 역사소설의 대비적 연구: 단종애사와 대수양을 중심으로" (Ch'angwŏn: Ch'angwon University, 2005), p.44.

this serialized novel was interrupted eleven times.[12] His experiences of serious illness and the painful operations awakened Yi to the religious foundation of life and death. As he stated in his essay "Susultae wi-esŏ" 수술대 위에서 ("On the operating table," 1927), he realized that faced with death everything except religion disappeared.[13] In particular, the Buddhist view of impermanence (*musang*, 無常) appealed to him. He awoke to the illusory nature of suffering (*kogong*, 苦空) and the truth that nothing is permanent (*musang*, 無常), not even the self (*mua*, 無我). His awakening of impermanence was accompanied by a feeling of the sadness and a sense of transience of life. These feelings intensified whenever he prepared for his death and thought of his children, whom he would have to leave behind.

The Buddhist doctrine of impermanence is perceived in the secular world as referring to the fleetingness and sorrow of life as Yi did. However, this is far from the true meaning of impermanence. The Buddha's teaching that all things are impermanent was to let people realize the inherent nature of everything that exists in the universe in a state of change. It teaches them to seek the true nature of self instead of attaching oneself to the illusory and transient things. However, as a person who just began to feel an affinity with Buddhism, Yi had limited ability to perceive the deeper meaning of impermanence and relied on the secularized meaning.

Tragedy typically evokes memories of the rise and fall of individuals and countries. There were many tragic incidents in Korean history but Yi Kwangsu saw the Tanjong story in particular as a dramatic reflection of the vanity of life. It is no coincidence that the beginning of the novel corresponds to Yi's religious insights and moods as mentioned above. In the novel, Tanjong's grandfather King Sejong worries about the poor health of his son Munjong 文宗. The sick Munjong is heartbroken, thinking of his all too short life and seeing his little son (Tanjong), a simple and innocent child, happily playing games. It is obvious that what King Sejong and King Munjong feel mirrors the writer's suffering when looking at his own children. The novel proceeds to depict the transience of life, in a scene in which King Tanjong is degraded to the much lower noble rank of Prince Nosan'gun and sent into exile by his uncle Suyang. To emphasize this focus on transience, Yi has court ladies lament the uncertainty of life upon seeing Tanjong's dethronement and the death of various people in the course of Suyang's usurpation. Their only solace is reciting the Buddha's name, chanting mantras wishing that Tanjong be reborn in paradise in the next life, or venting their animosity (towards Suyang). They also pray for the dethroned king's good fortune, believing that it is all they can do. Such a description of the transience of life is based upon Yi's understanding of the Buddhist notion of impermanence.

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[12] Song Paekhŏn 송백헌, "Han'guk kŭndae yŏksa sosŏl yŏn'gu 韓國 近代 歷史小說硏究" (Ph.D. dissertation, Tanguk University, 1982), p.71.

[13] In *Munye kongnon* 文藝公論 (July 1929). Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 8, pp.333-334.

Still, sadness, loneliness and the transience of life are not the writer's main concern. Yi's primary focus is the similarity between fifteenth-century history and contemporary colonial reality, which he encapsulates in his novel as follows:

> *The merits and deficiencies of our ancestors living 500 years ago reappear among us today so clearly and in such a similar manner. Even the event which took place in the past seems to repeat itself in the present day. This might be the reason why historical reading is so exciting*.[14]

What is the historical similarity Yi found? What incident is he talking about? What Yi Kwangsu contemplated while looking back to Sejo's usurpation of the throne in the fifteenth century is not the historical event per se, but what happened in the early twentieth century. In other words, *Tanjong aesa* is a narrative, in the guise of fiction and history, representing the colonial experience of the Koreans. In a review, Pak Chonghwa 朴鐘和 succinctly sums up the similarities between the historical past and colonial present. The people who were subjected to the coercive prince Suyang four hundred years ago seem to stand for the contemporary Koreans who were by force deprived of their country by the Japanese. The dethronement and death of the young king Tanjong is reminiscent of what the deposed Korean emperor Kojong 高宗 and his young son Sunjong 純宗 underwent in the present. Sejo evokes Meiji or Taishō Japan. The martyred and loyal ministers in the fifteenth century are reminiscent of the loyal ministers of the Taehan Empire, whereas Sejo's meritorious officers such as Sin Sukchu and Han Myŏnghoe are reminiscent of Yi Wanyong and Song Pyŏngjun who gave in to Japanese demands. Contemporary readers felt a great deal of sympathy and empathy for the young king, as his tragedy was reminiscent of their colonized condition. Tanjong's sorrow, mortification and tears represented their own lives under colonial rule, which is why this novel garnered enormous popularity among contemporary readers.[15]

Yi's historical novel reflected the sentiment and feelings shared by most of the Koreans who deprived of their sovereignty by Japan were living under colonial rule, "having their voices muffled during the day and wetting their pillows at night."[16] Pak Chonghwa focuses on matching historical personages with his contemporaries and concludes that Yi intended to depict the battle between good and evil and to promote the moral righteousness of the Korean nation and to condemn the injustice and misdeeds perpetuated by Japan and bad Koreans.[17] In my estimation, however, this novel does not merely end with

[14] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4, p.404.
[15] Pak Chonghwa 朴鐘和, "Tanjong aesa" 端宗哀史 in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4, pp.610-611.
[16] Ibid., p.610.
[17] Ibid.

stirring people's emotion. Yi did not simply attempt to identify good or evil in colonial Korea and to morally judge people in a dichotomous manner. He seems to have focused more on historical events such as Sejo's usurpation and the Sayuksin Incident than on personages. It means that we need to look for what were the equivalents of those historical events in his present day.

The bottom line here is that Yi wanted to tackle Japan's colonization of Korea in this novel, taking Suyang's *coup d'état* as an allegory. Instead of simply condemning the colonial event, he provided a detailed picture how Korea was colonized by Japan by means of militarism, international law and new forms of domination such as the protectorate. Yi depicts Suyang as a military man. The protagonist Suyang prefers archery and horse riding to reading Confucian classics, and cannot compose a line of Chinese verse. In Suyang's view, ancient Chinese history is musty and tiresome, consisting of mere words. Due to an inferiority complex, he harbors antipathy towards Confucian scholars, classics, and rituals.[18] This depiction of Suyang does not exactly correspond to the historical Prince Suyang who was good at martial arts but also highly literate and scholarly. It is rather redolent of Meiji Japan which abandoned its Confucian tradition and culture under the motto of leaving Asia and resorted to militarism to seek colonies as its Western predecessors had done.

Suyang's c*oup d'état* was bloody and violent. So many lives were sacrificed for his political goal. Suyang was not reluctant even to kill his brothers. As mentioned before, Yi also denounced the cruelty of the historical event in his novel, but on top of that, he expressed in detail and in full how Suyang's usurpation was a sophisticated and goal-oriented process. To usurp the throne, Suyang resorts to the sudden, violent overthrow of the existing king. It is not simply a matter of murdering the king. His military coup is not a rash accidental happening without any goals and plans. With the help of crafty advisors, he initiates a deliberate meticulous long term planning process, gathering and training a group of fighters, who will act as the vanguard in the coup. The ultimate purpose of this coup is the dethronement of Tanjong, but for that Suyang first needs to remove all his political enemies, particularly remove two key figures, Kim Chongsŏ 金宗瑞 and Hwang Poin 皇甫仁. The coup is successful and as a result, Prince Suyang becomes the main power holder. Nonetheless, he does not directly become a king. He first gains all the important positions, including those of prime minister, minister of personnel and minister of defense, but still allows Tanjong remain the king. Suyang does not directly wrest the throne from Tanjong, either. Through his machinations, Tanjong abdicates the throne in favor of himself. Suyang ascends to the throne at Tanjong's earnest request.

Yi's particular depiction of Suyang's c*oup d'état* parallels the annexation of Korea by Japan. Compared with the long history of colonization in Europe,

[18] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4, pp.272, 290, and 291.

the colonial expansion of Meiji Japan was "phenomenally rapid,"[19] like c*oup d'état* one might say. The political actions taken by Meiji Japan in order to annex Korea were first and foremost militaristic. Militarism was quite acceptable at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Together with international law, it was the way Western imperial powers acquired colonial territories. Within this context, Meiji Japan strove to enhance its militarism, to build a strong nation and to colonize its neighbors, which was seen as a prerequisite for overcoming its own unequal and weak position vis-à-vis Western imperial powers and ensuring its national security. Japan demonstrated its military power through two wars: the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1905). The removal of China and Russia was aimed at taking two key powers out of the equation and acquiring new colonies such as Taiwan and Korea.

The way in which Yi explains Suyang's military *coup d'état* as primarily targeting Kim Chongsŏ and Hwang Poin corresponds to the two wars against China and Russia. Yi reconstructed the historical incident of the slaying of Kim Chongsŏ in a way to fit in to Japan's fighting two wars against China and Russia. As a result of winning the wars, Japan was able to wield more power over the politics of Korea. However, Meiji Japan did not directly take over the sovereignty of Korea, as Suyang does in the novel. In 1905, right after the victory of the war against Russia, Japan took over Korea's diplomacy and made Korea its protectorate; in 1907, it dismissed the Korean army and took full control of Korea's domestic affairs. It brought the Korean government, although nominally headed by King Sunjong, under the leadership of the Resident-General. Thus, step by step, Japan finally annexed Korea in 1910 and the Taehan Empire (Korea) relinquished sovereignty to it, exactly King Tanjong had abdicated in favor of Suyang.

Yi's comparison of the annexation of Korea with a sudden coup first suggests that the colonial event was accidental rather than planned, but at the same time he revealed Japan's persistent imperialist ambitions (Suyang's desire to be a king) and its primary goal of acquiring colonies (Suyang's enthronement). While allegorically depicting the exact sequence of events, he suggested that Japan drew up elaborate plots and steadily prepared for the annexation of Korea. In the same vein, he explored how Japan not only resorted to arms but attempted to officially legalize and legitimize its colonial expansion via a form of treaty that was legal under international law, as Western imperialism had done with its colonies. For example, whenever Suyang removes his political enemies, he makes up good reasons for doing so, such as protecting and safeguarding Tanjong from dangerous and ambitious officials who could pose a threat to his authority. Suyang and his party find it

[19] Bonnie B. Oh, "Meiji Imperialism: "Phenomenally Rapid"" in *Japan Examined: Perspectives on Modern Japanese History*, Edited by Harry Wray and Hilary Conroy (University of Hawai'i Press, 1983), pp.122-130.

opportune to write a decree in the name of King Tanjong in which those officials are proclaimed to be traitors and Suyang is represented as a patriotic subject who safeguards Tanjong's throne. However, as Yi explains, what was proclaimed was not true. The officials Suyang killed were not dangerous and traitorous but instead loyal subjects whom King Sejong and Tanjong trusted. Many of them were innocent, as Suyang's party also admits in the novel. What Suyang states through the royal decree is rhetoric to falsely accuse his political rivals and opponents of committing rebellion and to justify his military coup and hide his own desire for the throne.

Suyang's sophisticated rhetoric of "protection and safety" and his documentation are eerily reminiscent of a series of treaties (signed in 1876, 1904, 1905, and 1907) between Korea and Japan in the early twentieth century. Whenever Japan conducted wars, it signed treaties with Korea in advance. In those treaties, Japan's political rivals, China and Russia, were imaged as threatening powers, seeking sovereignty over Korea. On the contrary, Japan was described as a country fighting on behalf of Korea and protecting it. The treaties repeatedly recognized Korea as an independent state having equal rights as Japan and ensured Korean independence and peace in Asia. Korea and Korean independence were indeed perceived as important by Japan, not for the sake of Korea but for Japan's own national security. Japan needed to prevent Korea from being colonized by other powers such as China, Russia, and any third power and keep Korea independent, regarding Korea as the front line or buffer zone for Japan.[20] To the Korean intellectuals and leaders, however, Japan claimed to be a safeguard of Korea's autonomy and the peacekeeper of Asia. However, as Yi implies in the novel, the promises Japan made in the treaties were an empty rhetoric to hide its own imperialist desire and to justify its military actions and could easily be broken when Japan won more power through military victories.

Of course, Yi could not capture all aspects of the colonization of Korea in his novel. He mainly focused on the political incidents and aspects and completely neglected socio-economic issues. However, this novel shows his particular perception that colonialism was not merely a matter of political gains but also a psychological matter. Ashis Nandy argues that "the first differentia of colonialism is a state of mind in the colonizers and the colonized".[21] For that, colonialism craftily used notions of sex, gender, and age to dominate its colonies and produced a cultural consensus on colonial domination, while symbolizing it as the dominance of men and masculinity over women and

[20] Mark R. Peattie, "Japanese Attitudes Toward Colonialism, 1895-1945" in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945* edited by Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton University Press, 1984), pp.82-96; Koen de Ceuster, "From Modernization to Collaboration, the Dilemma of Korean Cultural Nationalism: the Case of Yun Ch'i-ho (1865-1945)" (Leuven PhD dissertation, 1994), pp.473-475 and 529.

[21] Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Oxford University Press, 1983/2009), p.1.

children. Yi's fictionalization of the historical past uncovers this psychology of colonialism. In the novel, colonial Korea is portrayed as a young, weak and innocent child (King Tanjong) and the Japanese colonizer as a strong, ambitious and greedy male adult (Prince Suyang). As evident in the letter requesting China's sanction for his investiture, Suyang insists that King Tanjong is unqualified to be a king because his body is as weak as that of a woman and has been ill from childhood and no ability to rule the country. Tanjong's mental infantility, physical weakness and political incompetence are argued by Suyang as having caused the intervention of wicked officials such as Kim Chongsŏ. Suyang's party manipulates Tanjong to acknowledge Suyang's moral superiority, intellectual prominence and political maturity and to hand over his sovereignty to Suyang as a matter of course.[22] In this way, Yi reveals the paradigm of the child-adult relationship Meiji Japan adopted to manipulate the Koreans into feeling inferior by nature and unqualified to manage their own country, and to justify its political subjugation of Korea as a well-qualified ruler possessing military strength, knowledge (Western technology and modernity), racial and cultural superiority, and political maturity.

This novel also shows Yi's attempts to disclose the falsehood of such a colonial ideology and to subvert the myths of the innate inferiority of the Koreans and the superiority of the Japanese colonizer. Tanjong who symbolizes Korea is depicted as passive, effeminate, and helpless by trembling in fear and shock. However, Yi shows that such a disposition is in no way inherent. He emphasizes that Tanjong is highly intelligent from childhood and by nature has a cheerful, lovely, gentle personality but has been depressed since he experienced a string of tragic events.[23] Borrowing the opinion of the third party, Ming China, the writer informs the readers that Tanjong's physical weakness and incompetence are not real but forged by Sejo to justify his usurpation of the throne. The truth is that Tanjong is in no way in poor health. No illness is found in his little body. Since Tanjong has married, he is even healthier. The Chinese court judges that Tanjong is lucid enough to be a king and competent to manage state affairs. From his childhood, people have expected him to be a wise ruler. Suyang's accusation of Kim Chongsŏ and Hwang Poin as national traitors is also exposed as false, since their loyalty is well-known among Chinese envoys.[24] Yi shows the groundlessness of Suyang's claim of Tanjong's inferiority and by doing so, he also reveals the falsehood of the claim that the Koreans are racially inferior to the Japanese in many aspects.

The colonial vision of inferior Korea and superior Japan is subverted in his novel even further. Using history as a form of allegory, Yi shows that it was not Korea but Japan which had been afflicted by a sense of inferiority. Suyang who embodies Japan is depicted as a military man. He is good at archery and

[22] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4, p.445.
[23] Ibid., pp.291 and 411-412.
[24] Ibid., p.445.

horse riding but he is ignorant of Confucian knowledge and philosophy. He cannot compose a line of Chinese verse. If King Munjong (Tanjong's father), Prince Anp'yŏng, and other scholars discuss state affairs in Confucian terms or hold a scholarly debate, he does not understand what it is about and often excluded. His younger brother Prince Anp'yŏng, in particular, is respected among literati on account of his eloquent poetry writing and literary pursuits, whereas few acknowledge the presence of Suyang. Once, his younger brother belittles him, by saying "You do not know what we are talking about. Why don't' you go outside and hunt some rabbits?"[25] Confucianism makes Suyang feel inferior. Due to his inferiority complex, he harbors an antipathy towards Confucian scholars, classics, and rituals. This Suyang is far from the historical Suyang, who was intelligent and scholarly, but closer to Japan which had a cultural inferiority complex vis-à-vis China in pre-modern times and the West in recent days.[26] Confucianism serves as a reminder of Japan's former self, which was viewed by Confucian Koreans as less advanced within the Sinitic cultural sphere.[27]

Yi's careful observations of the colonization of Korea and the ideology that underpinned Japanese colonialism result in a reconsideration of his early cultural nationalist view of the fundamental reason why the Koreans lost their country and were colonized. In his earlier magnum opus "Minjok kaejoron" 民族改造論 (*A treatise on national reconstruction*, 1922), he found the reason in the moral character of the Korean people. At that time, his focus was not on Japan. Korean maladministration was given as the background for colonization but not as the fundamental reason. He saw that the decay of Chosŏn Korea was not caused by one or two persons. Time and again he stressed that the whole Korean people (*Chosŏn minjok*) was to blame and the moral flaws in the national character were the fundamental reason for national deterioration. [28] He saw the Koreans as deficient without consciousness of freedom, equality, and progress. Koreans collectively were characterized by deceptiveness, selfishness, and lack of public virtue and of unity. Yet, he saw that it was possible to cultivate their morality and minds and to reconstruct a nation on the basis of an improved national identity. Refraining from criticizing the Japanese, he focused on depicting the details of the moral shortcomings of the Koreans and called for the practice of self-construction as a gradual but fundamental way to overcome difficulties.

In *Tanjong aesa* written by 1930, Yi still explains the importance of the idea of morality in his self-cultivation movement. But this time, the object he criticizes as morally deficient is not Korea but Japan. He has found that the

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[25] Ibid., pp.290-291.
[26] Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (University of California Press, 1995), pp.1-25.
[27] Kyeong-Hee Choi, "Impaired Body as Colonial Trope: Kang Kyŏng'ae's "Underground Village" in *Public Culture* (13:3) (Fall, 2001): 431-458, p.434.
[28] Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 10, pp.125-127.

Japanese colonizers are not morally superior, but in reality inferior and that their moral flaws caused the entire tragedy of the colonial present. Yi's critical view of Suyang's personal flaws alludes to this:

> *He [Suyang] was smart enough to know everything. But all his virtue and all his brightness were subjected to an irrepressible desire […]. His uncontrollable ambition determined his fate as the protagonist of the tragedy. This shortcoming in his personality was stronger than his intellect.*[29]

Suyang, the avatar of Japan, is not depicted as morally upright, nor as absolutely evil. He is a wise, virtuous, brave, talented and competent prince. However, all his positive qualities are eventually undone by a fatal flaw in his personality. Suyang has an uncontrollable desire and ambition in his mind to be a king. For that, he does not mind ruthlessly killing everybody who turns against him. After brutally eliminating all enemies on his way to the throne, he is paranoid about possible rebellions and forcibly subdues any rebels. He is devoid of humanity and a sense of morality. To frighten Tanjong and subjugate him, Suyang appears with the heads of the officials he has killed and shows them to the king. He even brandishes his sword and kills eunuchs in front of Tanjong.[30] Like him, his warriors wield immense power, cruelly killing women and babies for fun. Many lives are sacrificed due to his irrepressible desire for the throne.

With the depiction of Suyang's selfish greed (*yoksim*), desire for the throne, and brutality out of self-interest, Yi vividly dramatizes Meiji Japan's uncontrollable craving for power, its military aggression leading to the annexation of Korea when in the first ten years of military rule (*budan seiji*) only military officers were appointed as governors-general of colonial Korea who suppressed any disobedience with guns and swords. The Japanese colonial power pointed to the maladministration of the Korean Confucian state as the main cause for the weakness and ruin of Chosŏn Korea.[31] It blamed others, the Koreans and their former state, for their own moral shortcomings, to hide its political desire and its aggressive politics motivated by its self-interest and paranoia. Yi questioned the legitimacy of such a colonial power. He exposed the problematic nature of its political desires, ideologies and actions and brought to light that the moral deficiency the Japanese tried to hide was the fundamental cause of the colonization of Korea.

In the same way, Yi's view of the Korean also completely changed in this novel compared with that expressed in "Minjok kaejoron." As he himself pointed out in "*Mujŏng* tŭng chŏn chakp'um-ŭl ŏhada" 無情 等 全作品을 語하다 (Discussing all works including *Mujŏng*,1939), through many of his

[29] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4, p.407.
[30] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4, pp.348-350.
[31] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 10, p.125.

novels he had depicted the shortcomings of the Korean nation, for example, in the guise of historical personalities. However, in this novel *Tanjong aesa*, he himself said that he intended to take the opposite approach and underline "the gallant character of the Korean nation."[32] The Confucian notions which are used to evoke Japan's sense of inferiority are also used to highlight the Koreans' moral strength. In the novel, the six martyred ministers' devotion to righteousness (*ŭi*, 義), regardless of personal benefit and self-interest, represents the moral and spiritual strength of the Korean people. The Sayuksin Incident depicted at the end the novel is to demonstrate such spirituality, and more concretely may be seen as an allegory of the March First Movement (1919) as I will argue below.

> *The flesh and blood of righteous people make this land righteous. Even the grass that grows on the tombs of the righteous fertilizes this land. Without such righteous people, this land will be ruined. Fearlessness in the service of loyalty is the foremost enemy of Suyang.*[33]

The writer focuses on the confrontation between the usurper Suyang's selfish greed and the six martyred ministers' selfless loyalty to King Tanjong. Despite Sejo (Suyang)'s reign[34] of terror, there are a small number of ministers who refuse all the bait Suyang throws at them and risk their lives for the sake of King Tanjong. These ministers stick to their Confucian loyalty in serving their previous sovereign Tanjong. Their strong spirit cannot be changed by Suyang's threats and oppression. Their unyielding spirit is the strongest weapon against Suyang and defies his uncontrollable desires. Like Suyang's elaborate plan of usurpation, they also plot to expel Suyang from the throne and to restore the deposed King Tanjong. However, their attempt fails due to betrayal but according to the writer, in their fearless and selfless service to Tanjong they do not die in vain. Their spirit of righteousness and loyalty live on and continue to protect the land the quotation above suggests. Yi Kwangsu depicts this incident in full detail, showing that the six plotters who are tortured to death are not afraid of dying. They do not yield to Sejo but insist that nothing is wrong with their rebellion. They meet a terrible end but their deaths epitomize the utmost bravery and spiritual strength.

With regard to the Confucian vocabulary Yi uses in his description of the clash between Suyang and the six ministers, some scholars think that this was a retreat from his early progressive views, which were critical of Confucianism.[35] Others conclude that this is intended to boost "national

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[32] *Samch'ŏlli* (Jan. 1939). Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 10, pp.522-523.

[33] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4, p.407.

[34] Sejo is a *myoho* (廟號, temple names) given posthumously. In Chosŏn Korea, after kings died, their ancestral tablets were kept in a royal temple (shrine) which recorded the temple name of the deceased rulers. That became the way to refer to them and to praise their achievements.

[35] Kim Yunsik 김윤식, *Yi Kwangsu-wa kŭ-ŭi shidae* 이광수와 그의 시대 2 (Seoul: Sol, 1999/2001), p.171.

consciousness" (*minjok ŭisik*, 民族意識), and accordingly categorize this novel as a "nationalistic" novel.[36] However, as I discussed in the previous chapter, Confucianism which is incorporated into colonial-period literature should not be taken at face value, because it is often refashioned into an allegory conveying nationalist discourses. The usual conclusion that Yi fostered national spirit using the Confucian virtue should be specified, because nationalist ideas are diverse and complex, even changing. As long as Yi's novel is concerned, we should also ask what the historical incident directly alludes to in relation to colonial reality.

In my view, Yi's emphasis on the Sayuksin Incident and the Confucian virtues the martyred ministers embody can be viewed as a reference to the March First Movement and its spirit. The failed attempt in the 15th –century to restore the deposed Tanjong to the throne bears resemblance to this national demonstration in the 20th –century of which one aim was to restore the collapsed state of Chosŏn Korea. In fact, some intellectuals devised to place the deposed Emperor Kojong 高宗 as a focal point to unite people and to rebuild the country. They even purchased a refugee house for the king somewhere in China.[37] But Kojong met a sudden and mysterious death, as did Tanjong 500 years before him. The death of Kojong stirred up sorrow and patriotic feelings among Koreans because it symbolically meant to them the final extinction of Korean autonomy. His funeral served as the impetus for the March First movement.[38] Both movements failed miserably. In the fifteenth century six martyrs were brutally executed, but they were not the only victims of the Sayuksin Incident. As Yi depicts in his novel, scores of people were put to death, and hundreds of their family members and relatives were given to other officials as slaves and concubines.[39] This depiction evokes the atrocity the March First Movement was faced with in the twentieth century. The movement which was initiated as a series of peaceful demonstrations was violently suppressed by the Japanese highhanded police. Not only the thirty-three national representatives but a number of participants were arrested, severely tortured and killed.

Looking back in history at the Tanjong Restoration Movement, Yi recalls the recent incident of the March First Movement. Yi offers his

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[36] Song Paekhŏn 宋百憲, "Han'guk kŭndae yŏksa sosŏl yŏn'gu" 韓國近代歷史小說硏究 (Tanguk taehakkyo PhD dissertation, 1982), pp.71-87; Kong Imsun 공임순, "Han'guk kŭndae yŏksa sosŏr-ŭi changnŭron-chŏk yŏn'gu" 한국 근대 역사소설의 장르론적 연구 (Sŏgan taehakkyo, PhD dissertation, 2000), pp. 60-68.

[37] *Han'guksa* 한국사 47 (Kwach'ŏn: Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 국사편찬위원회, 2001), pp.307-308.

[38] Koen de Ceuster, "From Modernization to Collaboration, the Dilemma of Korean Cultural Nationalism: the Case of YunCh'i-ho (1865-1945)", pp.305-309.

[39] For more detail about the punishment of those rebels, see Yang Chiha 양지하, "Sejo i-nyŏn (1456) Tanjong pogwi sakkŏn-ŭi sŏngkyŏk 세조 2년 (1456) 단종복위사건의 성격" (Seoul: Ewha Womans University, 2008), pp.45-51; Yu Yŏngbak 柳永博, "Tanjong pogwi moŭijadŭr-ŭi sabŏp ch'ŏri: Tanjong pogwi moŭi-e kwanhan yŏn'gu 2 端宗復位 謀議者들의 司法處理: 端宗復位 謀議에 관한 硏究 2" in *Chindan hakpo* 震檀學報 78 (1994): pp.125-145.

perspective of the event that took place a decade ago by presenting his view of the Sayuksin Incident. While providing a full description of the historical incident, Yi reminds the readers of what they experienced during the March First Movement. He does not focus on the failure of the historical incident but on the righteous and loyal officials who were adamantly resisted Suyang's blandishments and threats and did not mind risking their lives in service to Tanjong. Instead of the result, he extols the spirit of the six martyred ministers. In Yi's view, the righteous and loyal officials demonstrated the moral and spiritual strength of the Korean people in history. The March First Movement may be seen as demonstrating the same Korean spiritual bravery and strength, even though it did not achieve its goal. Against the Japanese colonial authorities who wielded brutal force in his view, it exposed their moral inferiority. Yi's commemoration of the death of the six martyred ministers is thus intended to commemorate the sacrifice of so many of the participants in the March First Movement. It is probably no accident that 1929, the year in which this novel was written, was the tenth anniversary of the March First Movement. The novel was a reminder for the Koreans not to forget the national event of a decade earlier and to consider its national historic significance. In sum, drawing a parallel between history and colonial reality and emphasizing Confucian tradition and virtues, Yi's novel *Tanjong aesa* mirrors the colonial experience and the March First Movement, in an attempt to subvert the colonial ideology that saturated the era.

Sejo taewang: Buddhism and the Suyang Tong'uhoe Incident

Ten years after writing *Tanjong aesa*, Yi Kwangsu published a follow-up novel: *Sejo taewang* 世祖大王. This novel has the same historical person Prince Suyang (now King Sejo) as its main character but it is not to retrace Suyang's seizure of power once again. Yi deals with Sejo's reign, a decade later. He does not cover the whole thirteen years of Sejo's reign. The focus is not on the king's reorganization of the administrative system or on his effective frontier defense, topics historians usually concentrate on. Yi only focalizes the last years before Sejo's death. The big difference between the two novels is their religious background. The first novel highlights Confucianism whereas the second novel features Buddhism.

In fact, in order to write this novel, Yi read a vast number of Buddhist scriptures, amounting to four or five thousand pages. The novel contains many direct quotations from a wide range of sutras such as the *Complete Enlightenment Sutra* (Wŏngakkyŏng, 圓覺經), the *Diamond Sutra* (Kumganggyŏng, 金剛經), the *Suramgama-Dharani-Sutra* (Nŭngŏmgyŏng, 楞嚴經) and the *Lotus Sutra* (Pŏphwagyŏng, 法華經). Yi copied a number of phrases and passages from those sutras and included them verbatim in his own text in Sino-Korean. These quotations, however, make the novel deviate from the genre of fiction and come closer to being a collection of sermons. No specific incidents occur; the plot of

the novel is that Sejo holds Buddhist ceremonies and rituals one after the other. A sequence of sermons constitute the novel. This novel with little plot is difficult to penetrate and understand. As a consequence, it is the least studied and the most poorly understood of all Yi's works of fiction. Accordingly, questions as to why Yi worked on fifteenth-century history once more, how his revised novel drew on similar or different views of the same historical personages and events, and what the imaginative reworking means in light of colonial present still remain unanswered.

Upon close inspection, the overabundant dharma-preaching in *Sejo taewang* functions, surprisingly, as a reminder of controversial issues in the past. They constantly refer to a series of murders, from the usurpation of the throne (Kyeyu chŏngnan) in 1453 and the Sayuksin Incident three years later to the death of the dethroned King Tanjong in 1457. In the novel no one, from Sejo and those immediately surrounding him to his subjects in the rest of the country, forgets what happened in the past. Observing Sejo's Buddhist undertakings, such as the building of temples and the publication of Buddhist sutras, ordinary people think their king intends to avoid retribution for his evil deeds by praying for help from Buddha. They still remember the series of incidents ten years before, when Sejo stole the throne from young King Tanjong, whom he demoted in rank, sent into exile and finally killed. They do not forget that he killed loyal servants of the former king and even his own brothers to secure his political position. Once Suyang becomes king, he rules the country well, and his accomplishments are admired by the people. Some of his controversial policies and violent acts are even forgiven, mainly by blaming the villainous retainers around him. yet, the homicide Sejo committed ten years earlier is neither forgotten nor forgiven by his subjects.

The king Sejo in the novel does not feel free from the heavy burden of the past either. He lost his first son just after he had put the dethroned king to death (in the second year of his reign). His son's death causes him grief but, also a feeling of anxiety that his son paid with his life for his own evil deeds. Yi Kwangsu describes how through his death, Sejo's son skillfully led Sejo to Buddhism (*pangp'yŏn*, 方便). Historically this is not correct, because Sejo had already shown great enthusiasm for Buddhism when he was still a prince helping his father Sejong to compile and publish Buddhist scriptures. The prince's sudden death only deepened Sejo's faith. It is actually Yi Kwangsu who was led to Buddhism through the death of his son; he lost his son Ponggŭn in 1934, in his grief read Buddhist scriptures and experienced a spiritual awakening.[40]

Literary critics tend to interpret Sejo's inclination towards Buddhism in the novel as an expression of repentance, as it probably was in actual history.[41]

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[40] "Ponga-ŭi ch'uŏk 봉아의 추억" in *Insaeng-ŭi hyanggi* 인생의 향기 (Hongji ch'ulp'ansa, 1934). Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 8, pp.268-269.

[41] Ch'oe Chuhwan 최주환, *Cheguk kwŏllŏg-eŭi yamang-gwa pangam sai-eŏ* 제국 권력에의 야망과 반감

However, upon my observation, the protagonist Sejo in this novel is not simply doing penance for his cruel deeds, and even denies doing so. Whenever Sejo is scared of karmic causality, he soothes his worries, saying "I committed [atrocity] to bring glory to the prosperity of the monarchy and to lead living beings to the right way, not to gratify my desires".[42] The sentiment he expresses here has nothing to do with repentance. It is an excuse for not repenting. His subjects in the novel presume that Sejo has temples constructed and sutras printed in order to expiate his sins or to avoid the revenge of the dead. However, the protagonist himself emphasizes that his Buddhist undertakings are not for that purpose, not for his own sake. They are inspired by his unselfish intention to pray for the repose of his son's soul. He also intends to collect good karma for the kings who preceded and will succeed him; he is not acting out of concern for his own comfort and security.

It is while holding a celebration for the completion of the Wŏn'gak temple that Sejo first realizes that his desire to collect good karma for other kings might be motivated by self-centered concern. As soon as he realizes this, he tries to remove his self-interest and to pray instead that all the karmic benefits associated with his undertakings be fully offered to Buddha and that all living beings will benefit from them. His great sense of vocation, that he was born as a king in order to enlighten and to save the entire people, allows him to avoid thinking about his illness, the death of his son, the vengeful souls of the preceding Koryŏ 高麗 dynasty, and of Nosan'gun (the former King Tanjong), and the others he has killed. Sejo experiences no angst or unease, and even becomes overconfident, comparing himself to the great Indian Buddhist King Asoka. Sejo's son does repentance in place of the king in the novel by copying seven volumes of the *Lotus Sutra* and two of the *Diamond Sutra*. Yet, the king himself barely atones at all for the wrongs he has committed.

In the novel, despite strong objections from his Confucian officials, King Sejo holds Buddhist memorial services for those who were murdered by his hand or at his command. One might think that such mourning is an act of repentance and an expression of remorse for his misdeeds. However, when the Prime Minister Shin Sukchu discretely asks him whether this is the case, Sejo makes clear that he regrets neither the coup nor the executions of the six martyred ministers. Sejo claims that the coup took place at a critical time, and that without his seizure of power, the state could have collapsed, the country been plunged into disorder, and the northern regions been lost to foreign barbarians. He emphasizes how he only seized power for the good of the country, without thinking of his own safety and self-interest. Hearing Sejo's explanation, Sin Sukchu is ashamed because he, in contrast, had striven hard to

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사이에서 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005), pp. 278-285; Sim Wŏnsŏp 심원섭, "Yi Kwangsu-ŭi posalhaeng sŏwŏn-gwa ch'inil-ŭi munja: haebanggi sanmun-gwa sip'yŏndŭ-rŭl chungsim-ŭro" 李光洙의 菩薩行 誓願과 親日의 問題: 해방기 산문과 시편들을 중심으로 in *Hallim Ilbonhak yŏn'gu* 7 翰林日本學硏究 (Dec. 2002): 68-92.

[42] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4, p.504.

win fame and guarantee his own safety, both during that period and afterwards. Sejo goes on to say that he has done what is known in Confucianism as sacrificing one's own life in order to preserve the virtue of benevolence (*salsin sŏng'in*, 殺身成仁), but above all, embody the practices of a bodhisattva (*posalhaeng*, 菩薩行). Like a bodhisattva, Sejo will accept the torments of hell and undergoes *samsara* or reincarnation for the sake of other living beings. Even though Sejo admits responsibility for the murders he committed, he still expresses no remorse and feels no guilt.[43]

What Sejo is more concerned about is not the feelings of unease, anxiety or remorse due to the tragedies of the past, but others' misunderstanding of his intentions. All of his deeds were and are for the sake of others, but his subjects misinterpret his enthusiasm for Buddhist undertakings as acts of repentance. Sejo's servants, too, misread his heart and his selfless sense of purpose. Sejo prays for others, while they believe the king prays for himself. The king is distressed whenever others mistake his intentions.

> *Even in many years to come, there will be people who will accuse me of the crime of killing the former king and [members of the] royal family as well as officials whom previous kings trusted and favored. I have never addressed the issue before in public and I have never wanted to make an excuse for myself. Instead, I will say one thing only. Since the usurpation of the throne, I have never been concerned with my own interests […]. One might think that I desired the throne and hence acted as I did. Others might think that I committed murder because I was heartless […]. However, [the truth is that] it was my duty to my country. Without me the country could have perished. I just wanted to make a better country*.[44]

The reason for the misinterpretation of Sejo's intentions is that he stole the throne. Yet, Sejo argues that becoming a king had nothing to do with his desire for the position. He just believed that without him the country could not be safeguarded.[45] Such a mindset is far removed from feelings of guilt and acts of repentance. But what is more striking is the articulation that the brutal homicide he committed did not result from his greed for the throne but from his spirit of selfless service to his country. This completely overturns the image that Yi had created in *Tanjong aesa*. In the first novel, Yi Kwangsu depicted Suyang as greedy, selfish and ambitious and explained that these character flaws were the origin of the tragedy. In its sequel, Yi depicts Sejo as selfless, courageous and compassionate. The tragic incident that killed Tanjong, as well as princes and loyal officials, was not caused by Sejo's self-interest but, on the contrary, by his selfless sacrifice for the country. To save his country from a crisis in which it could have perished, he went as far as committing the crime of

[43] Ibid., pp.513-517.
[44] Ibid., p.590.
[45] Ibid., p.551.

homicide.

Yi seeks the origins of the tragedy not in Sejo's personality, but elsewhere. First, there were precedents that princes would fight for the throne. Chosŏn's third king, T'aejong 太宗, for instance, had also usurped the throne; Sejo thus followed in his footsteps. Second, a misguided state policy that prohibited princes from taking part in politics worsened the situation. Competent and ambitious princes could not bear to see inept officials administer the country. Third, it is the egoistic and jealous servants who usually stir up the princes. Yi considers these three factors to have caused the tragic events rather than Sejo's desire for the throne. Munjong (Tanjong's father), too, excluded his brothers (including Suyang) from his deathbed. He expressed his last wishes only to his most trusted ministers. These wishes might have included the wise advice to be wary of Suyang's ambition. Regardless of what was said, Yi sees the secrecy as misguided and having the counterproductive effect of angering the prince. The dying king's trusted ministers are not described as trustworthy and loyal as depicted in *Tanjong aesa*, but disparaged as aged and incapable. Evil officials pull the strings of these aged men and prohibit the interference of members of the royal family in politics because they are jealous of the princes' outstanding ability and intelligence. Their motive is simple: hatred of and resentment towards the distinguished princes.

In *Sejo taewang*, Yi Kwangsu takes an approach to Sejo and the origins of the tragedy that is the opposite of the view he had adopted in *Tanjong aesa*. In *Tanjong aesa*, Prince Suyang takes no interest in Confucian studies and shows contempt for them. In *Sejo taewang*, however, the prince is depicted as an intellectual and talented man who becomes the object of jealousy. In *Tanjong aesa* Suyang's bad temperament is held responsible for his misdeeds, whereas in *Sejo Taewang* all blame is shifted from Sejo to a group of "wicked officials": "One should hold the wicked officials responsible for the murder of the young king [Tanjong], rather than Sejo."[46] Why does Yi suddenly change his attitude toward Suyang? Why does he search for a different reason for the historical tragedy, one that makes King Sejo innocent? How are the altered or subverted historical narratives linked to the contemporary colonial reality? What does Yi Kwangsu try to tell us by his changed view of the past?

Tanjong aesa deals with collective colonial events and experiences such as the details of the colonization processes in Korea and the March First Movement, whereas *Sejo taewang* seems to portray Yi's personal experience of living in the changing political landscape of colonial Korea. Still, in his personal and public life he became deeply involved in a series of important events in colonial society. Among them, this second novel tackles the Suyang Tong'uhoe Incident. Suyang Tong'uhoe (The self-cultivation society, 修養同友會) was one of the pivotal Christian national organizations pursuing cultural nationalism in colonial Korean society. In the early 1920s, it was founded by Yi Kwangsu as a

[46] Ibid., p.513.

sister body of An Ch'angho's 安昌浩 Hŭngsadan (Korean Youth Academy) that had been created abroad. As summed up in his essay "Minjok kaejoron," this national organization aimed to cultivate and perfect the moral character of individual Koreans, regarding this as the first step toward social reconstruction and as fundamental to all Korean national movements. As a cultural organization it claimed to stand strictly separated from politics, although its members were allowed personally to engage in political activities. It was a legally recognized organization in colonial Korea and did not openly claim the national goal of independence. Therefore, there is a diversity of opinions about the question whether the organization lost a sense of national purpose or still retained it albeit concealed because of circumstances.

Right before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937), Yi was arrested by the Japanese police together with about 180 other Tong'uhoe members and imprisoned together with forty-two of the movement's central figures. They were accused of harboring "dangerous thoughts of national independence."[47] This incident is known as the Suyang Tong'uhoe Incident. The incident started when the Japanese police found a pamphlet containing a provocative phrase about the role of Christians in saving the nation from being eliminated and realized that many Tong'uhoe members were behind the affair.[48] According to another account, Yi already had foreseen that the Tong'uhoe would either be forced to shut down or reconstructed into imperial organization like all the other Korean institutions and associations at that time. But before he could reach a tactical decision, this tragic incident befell the association.[49] After six months imprisonment, Yi Kwangsu and An Ch'angho were moved from jail to hospital due to their critical health conditions. An died soon afterwards, and Yi was released on bail. The trial against them took more than four years before all the accused were released in 1941, with a verdict of "not guilty."

Before the Tong'uhoe incident ended, Yi Kwangsu, who was in charge of the national organization, underwent a dramatic change from being a prominent national leader into becoming a fervent pro-Japanese collaborator. In 1939, he paid a consolatory visit to the Japanese Imperial Army in the north. When the directive to adopt Japanese-style family names was imposed upon the Koreans in February 1940, he publicized his Japanese name, Kayama Mitsurō 香山光郎 in the *Maeil sinbo* 每日新報. It was to put the ideology of oneness of Japan and Korea into practice in his own person and to induce his compatriots to change their names. After the Tong'uhoe case was closed, his collaboration became more pronounced. He contributed a considerable number

[47] At that time, the colonial government labeled every little offence as "dangerous thought of national independence" and punished those offenders.

[48] Chang Kyusik 장규식, *Ilcheha Han'guk Kidokkyo minjokjuŭi yŏn'gu* 일제하 한국 기독교민족주의 연구 (Seoul: Hyean, 2001), p.149-150.

[49] Kim Yunsik 김윤식, *Ilche malgi Hanguk chaka-ŭi Inbonŏ kŭnssŭgiron* 일제말기 한국 작가의 일본어 글쓰기론 (Sŏul taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2003/2004), pp.115-125.

of essays to the Japanese-language governmental newspaper, *Keijō nippō* 京城日報, in which he propagated the wartime ideologies and policies of the colonial government and glorified the Japanese Emperor.

However, Yi's aggressive and blatant collaboration cannot be taken at face value. It contains hidden motives, alternative goals and subversive strategies. Regarding his Japanese name, for example, Yi gave an explanation that Kayama was inspired by Kaguyama 香久山 where Japan's first emperor was enthroned. Adding the character "ro," he also changed his first name in a Japanese way. He argued that the current Korean names were actually following the Chinese-style names. Before the onset of Chinese influence, the Korean ascendants had used names akin to the current Japanese-style of name. His new name was thus argued to revive the ancient indigenous names of his ascendants.[50] However, Kim Wŏnmo argues that Yi's name change was mere camouflage because Yi had already created a similar name much earlier and used it in a letter (1936) and as his pen name for his novel *Sarang* (issued in October 1938). According to Kim, the first two characters "hyangsan" do not refer to Kaguyama but to Myohyangsan, a mountain onto which Tan'gun, Korea's mythical founder, had descended from Heaven. The last character "ro" is also to refer to ancient Silla's *hwarang* warriors. Therefore, the name is considered as nationalistic rather than pro-Japanese.[51]

Kim's new findings are significant in exploring whether Yi's name change was not a simple matter to propagate the colonial government policies. However, the issue of Yi's name change is far more complex than Kim thought in a dichotomous way. Kim argued that Yi's new name had nothing to do with pro-Japanese collaboration, because of its relevance to Tan'gun myth and Silla hwarang. Kim failed to take it into consideration the historical context in which the ancient history revisited by Yi was supposed to prove the Japanese and Korean had the same ancestral origin. So, Yi's new name or name change, although it related to the ancient Korean figure and custom, was undeniably in line with collaboration. The point is thus not whether he collaborated or not but how complex his collaboration was. As clarified in his essay "Ch'angssi-wa na" 創氏와 나 (Name change and me, 1940), Yi supported the *naisen ittai* campaign with his Japanized name, but not for its own sake. He had another intention to remove all barriers of racial discrimination through it.[52] He discussed name change from a Korean's standpoint, not from that of the Japanese authorities. It had to benefit the Koreans' interests in their daily lives. Japanized name was to show loyalty to the Japanese empire but at the same time, to confuse and subvert it. The Japanese authorities forced the Koreans to create Japanese-style

[50] "P'ogp'unggat'ŭn kamgyŏk sog-e "ssi" ch'angsŏr-ŭi sŏngudŭl" 暴風가튼 感激속에 "氏"創設의 先驅들 in *Maeil sinbo* (5 Jan. 1940)

[51] Kim Wŏnmo 金源模, "Yi Kwangsu-ŭi minjok chuŭi-jŏk yŏksa insik" 李光洙의 民族主義的 歷史認識 in *Ch'unwŏn yŏn'gu hakpo* 春園硏究學報 1 (2008), pp.113-115.

[52] "*Maeil sinbo* (20 Feb. 1940)

name but forbade taking real Japanese names because in the eyes of colonial government there was a urgent need to distinguish the names of Koreans and Japanese. Especially names related to the Japanese imperial family were strictly forbidden. It was lèse majesté.[53] Against the regulations on name change, Yi attempted to create a name creating confusion with Japanese and even to relate his name to the Japanese Emperor.

Since I have already briefly mentioned it in the previous chapter, I will not go into detail but Yi's pro-Japanese collaborationist essays published in *Keijō nippō* mainly targeted Japanese readers and were likely to pay lip-service to the colonial authorities or intended to inform the Japanese about how make them hear about how the Koreans thought and felt. They were not texts targeting his compatriots, delivering war propaganda to them. For his Korean readership, Yi attempted to use the Korean language, different writing styles, and different media, including another governmental newspaper *Maeil sinbo* 每日新報, and tried to impart different messages. *Sejo taewang* was such a work designed to communicate with his Korean readers and tell them how the author, Yi Kwangsu, was experiencing the Suyang Tong'uhoe Incident and a political shift toward collaboration. Sejo who personified the Japanese colonizer in *Tanjong aesa*, in this novel represented the author himself. Sejo serves as a reflection of Yi's own interior landscape in the midst of political and personal turmoil. What does Yi express through his fictional character? Was it his feelings of fear, guilt, and repentance for his collaboration as some presume, or his utter shamelessness as more generally assumed?

Yi's portrayal of Sejo as a king who does not deny the crimes he has committed but never reflects on himself nor repents and instead argues that his true motive is misunderstood by the surrounding people sheds light, implicitly and explicitly, on what was going on in Yi's mind: Yi acknowledges that he probably committed the unforgivable act of abandoning his loyalty to the Korean nation and becoming a collaborator. His contemporaries, as well as later generations, would assume that Yi did so out of personal interest and concern for his own safety. His becoming engrossed in Buddhism in parallel with his active collaboration might be understood as an attempt to forget worldly concerns or to expiate his guilt. Contrary to these common presumptions, in *Sejo taewang* he indirectly argues that repentance or remorse was not the feeling he had while posing as a pro-Japanese collaborator. Through Sejo's mouth, Yi reiterates that he and his true motive were misunderstood. His choice of collaboration was never for his own sake. It was intended to benefit others. Without his act of collaboration, others were in danger of losing their lives. In this sense, he argues, his sinful and unforgivable act of collaboration was like the sacrificial act of a bodhisattva, undertaken to save the lives of living beings.

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[53] Mizuno Naoki 水野直樹, *Ch'angssi kaemyŏng: Ilbon-ŭi Chosŏn chibae-wa irŭm-ŭi chŏngch'ihak* 창씨개명:일본의 조선지배와 이름의 정치학, translated by Chŏng Sŏnt'ae (Seoul: San ch'ŏrŏm, 2002), pp.68-70.

The act deserves blame but the true intention behind it is good.

Yi's fictionalized account in the novel does not specify what kind of danger threatened in colonial reality and who were the others he sacrificed himself for. Sejo in the novel intends to safeguard the country but it is not entirely clear if he refers to the Japanese state or the Korean nation, to the Korean people or to some individuals such as the imprisoned Tong'uhoe members. The complex reasoning behind his act of collaboration, which he had to explain using historical metaphors and allegories in his colonial-period novel *Sejo taewang*, could be more directly uttered and be made public after liberation in his confession entitled *Na-ŭi kobaek* 나의 告白 (My confessions, 1948). It is no surprise that in this postcolonial text, Yi raises the subject of fifteenth-century history again and writes that it is correct and good for the nation to admire people like Sŏng Sammun (one of the Six Martyred Ministers) and to criticize people like Sin Sukchu for their betrayal.[54] He claims that, like Sin Sukchu, he himself deserves to be condemned for his pro-Japanese collaboration. However, there is one thing he cannot admit that: he acted out of self-interest. The motive for his collaboration, he argued, was his wish to "preserve the Korean nation" (*minjok pojŏn*, 民族保存) by sacrificing his reputation as a nationalist. He writes that it was a period in which the Koreans were suffering under suppression and would eventually face vengeful massacres if they failed to cooperate in national (read: Japanese Imperial) emergencies.[55] Scenting the danger for the nation, Yi decided that he had to pose as a collaborating Korean nationalist, because such an act was regarded as a yardstick to measure the cooperation of the Koreans. In this text, Yi explains more concretely that it was the Korean nation that was put in peril by the Japanese and for which he sacrificed himself by demonstrating his fervent collaboration with the colonial government. Therefore, he finds no reason for feeling repentance and regret and writing a note of repentance, even though those surrounding him strongly suggested that he do so in the postcolonial era.

Although Yi had allegorized his experience of collaboration and the logic that accompanied it in his *Sejo taewang* and once again explained it in his *Na-ŭi kobaek*, his complicated narratives were neither noticed by the contemporary readers nor convinced the later public. As recorded in the *Panminja choesanggi* 反民者罪狀記 (Record of the charges against national traitors, 1949), it was strongly assumed as a straight fact that Yi had betrayed the Korean nation in pursuit of his own personal welfare and safety.[56] In people's ears, Yi's confession sounded like an excuse or self-justification and disappointed those who expected sincere regret and self-reflection.[57] They were even furious with Yi when he expressed his idea of "collaboration for the sake

[54] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 7, p.282
[55] Ibid., p.277
[56] Kim Hangmin and Chŏng Unhyŏn 김학민 정운현, *Ch'inilp'a choesanggi* 친일파 죄상기 (Seoul: Hangminsa 학민사, 1993), pp.273-275.
[57] An Pyŏngjik 안병직, "Chakp'um haesŏl 작품해설" in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 7, p.663.

of the nation." To them, this puzzling insistence was nothing but sophistry or just a convenient and shameless excuse.

Interestingly, the view of scholars is not very different from the public reaction. Since Im Chongguk's pioneering study, there is a growing scholarly interest in Yi's collaboration and his pro-Japanese literature. The initial tendency to condemn him is less pronounced nowadays. Instead of blindly accusing him and disregarding his collaborationist writing, scholars attempt to conduct research into his reasons for collaboration, and into the various discourses Yi used collaborating with the colonial government. They do not dismiss his claim of collaboration for the nation but try to make sense of it.[58] Nonetheless, many tend to end up homogenizing their discussions to the single theme of collaboration, with all of its negative implications, and affirming Yi's self-justification, self-deception, and misperception of self and the colonial ideologies, and his moral deficiencies. Some even claim that Yi's pro-Japanese tendency was not confined to the later years, but actually latent from the beginning.

Buddhism, the true motive for collaboration

Yi's novel *Sejo taewang* suggests that his experience of the Tong'uhoe incident was far more diverse and nuanced than can be accounted for by the uniform narrative of collaboration. It is widely told that during the Tong'uhoe incident, he faced a political choice between colonialism (collaboration) and nationalism and chose the former to solve the incident. Yet, his novel conveys that what followed the incident was more fundamentally to make a choice between politics and morality and between national identity and human life. There were scores of Yi's Tong'uhoe companions who endured the hardship of prison life. Its members such as Yi Yun'gi and Ch'oe Yunho were tortured to death. If Yi proves willing to cooperate with the colonial authorities, he can probably help these men to be released and survive, but he cannot maintain his political loyalty to the Korean nation. If he chooses the Korean nation and nationalism, in a word, politics, Yi should disregard the life of the forty imprisoned members. This would go against humanity. What is more important, the Korean nation or living individuals? More extremely, what is a better choice, to be a national betrayer (collaborator) or be a betrayer of humanity?

To explore the wrenchingly difficult dilemma Yi faced, the choice he

[58] Cho Kwangja 조관자, "'Minjog-ŭi him'-ŭl yŏnmanghan 'ch'inil naesyŏnŏllisŭt'ŭ Yi Kwangsu" '민족의 힘'을 욕망한 '친일 내셔널리스트' 이광수 in *Kiŏk-kwa yŏksa-ŭi t'ujaeng* 기억과 역사의 투쟁 (Seoul: Samin, 2002), pp.322-346; Yi Kyŏnghun, *Yi Kwangsu-ŭi ch'inil munhak yŏn'gu*; Kwak Ŭnhŭi 곽은희, "Hwangminhwa-ŭi hwansang, ododoen kyemong: Yi Kwangsu-ŭi Tongp'o-e koham-ŭl chungsim-ŭro" 皇民化의 환상, 오도된 계몽: 이광수의 <동포에 告함>을 중심으로 in *Minjok munhwa nonch'ong* 31 民族文化論叢 31 (2005):365-393; Jun-Hyeok Kwak, "Domination through Subordination: Yi Kwangsu's Collaboration in Colonial Korea" in *Korea observer* 39.3 (Autumn 2008):427-452.

made, and the philosophy it was based on, one needs to take a closer look at *Sejo taewang*, in particular the writer's condemnation of Confucian virtues and praise of Buddhism. In *Tanjong aesa*, Yi had condemned Suyang's irrepressible greed and held in high regard the Confucian virtues of righteousness and loyalty demonstrated by the six martyred ministers. However, in *Sejo taewang*, the previously highly admired Confucian virtues become a target for condemnation. Confucian statecraft is still seen as a useful political tool to govern the country, while Buddhism is regarded as necessary for the people's moral and spiritual life. To a certain extent, Sejo tries to balance the two religions and to be both a Confucian and a Buddhist king. Yet, from a religious point of view, he ranks Buddhism higher than Confucianism; in Sejo's view, the teachings of Buddha are sufficiently broad to integrate the words of Confucius. He further states that the doctrine of salvation in Buddhism – the principle of saving living beings regardless of one's own life and death – is unthinkable in Confucian moral ethics.

The protagonist Sejo acknowledges the role and value of Confucian principles in parallel with Buddhism as moral teachings. However, these two ends cannot be always met as harmoniously as he intends. The Confucian officials around Sejo, despite being his servants, do not follow Sejo's ideals, looking down on Buddhism and even its well-respected monks. Instead, they cling to the Confucian principle of righteousness, and show envy, arrogance, and contempt towards expressions of Buddhism. The discord between the Buddhist King Sejo and his Confucian officials and thus between Buddhist morality and Confucian politics becomes increasingly tense in the wake of the Tanjong incident. Sejo and his Confucian officials had killed Nosan'gun (the former King Tanjong), advocating this course of action in the name of greater righteousness (*taeŭi,* 大義). It was against Confucian principle to have two kings in a country; therefore, the dethroned king was seen as deserving to die. Ten years later, the Confucian officials still see nothing wrong with the Confucian principle they appealed to when killing the former king. Sejo, however, who has become a sincere Buddhist, comes to have a different insight into the event:

> *The current Confucian scholars maintain that the murder follows the Confucian principle of justice (ŭi, 義), but the future generation of Confucian scholars will rebuke it as a violation of justice. If so, what is justice on earth?*[59]

Sejo points out that Confucian principles invoked cannot be a perpetual truth which can be called upon anytime and anywhere. He sees that Confucianism as a political philosophy is relative rather than absolute, showing how its interpretations vary according to the time, in particular for political purposes. The later Sejo sharply criticizes the Confucian rhetoric of greater righteousness as a crime against humanity. From a Buddhist moral point of

[59] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 4, p.515.

view, he denounces the Confucian political concept of justice as a mere pretext for self-deception and for masking the sin of murder. Whatever the excuse, Buddhism as a moral code makes it clear that murder remains murder and can never be justified as a righteous act. Thus Sejo in the novel condemns himself and his accomplices as sinners who have killed the previous king, members of the royal family and loyal servants of the state.

Sejo's criticism of the notion of Confucian righteousness in the novel shows how the writer's view has completely changed. In *Tanjong aesa*, Confucian officials represent righteousness and are admired, whereas Suyang is denounced for his self-interest and hunger for power. In *Sejo taewang* it is the Confucian officials who are criticized for their self-interest and hunger for fame. The righteousness they advocate is denounced as mere rhetoric to justify the crime of murder. In contrast, King Sejo is depicted as far from greedy and self-interested. The Buddhist king is described as the only one who can see and tell the perdurable truth and safeguard humanity as an absolute truth in confrontation with the political purposes of the wicked officials.

This changed view of Confucianism in *Sejo taewang* reflects Yi's political transformation under contemporary colonial rule. When Yi wrote *Sejo taewang* in 1939-40, he had been implicated in the Tong'uhoe incident and had begun to collaborate with the Japanese wartime government. Under the circumstances he deliberately, perhaps unavoidably, broke his pledge of political loyalty to the Korean nation. Therefore, he no longer could honor the Confucian virtues of loyalty and righteousness which allegorize the spiritual strength of the Korean nation. But Yi's criticism of Confucianism and praise of Buddhism is far more than a humble apology for his disloyal conduct. It more importantly reflects a dilemma between national politics and morality he underwent during the Tong'uhoe Incident, his choice of moral principles based on his Buddhist belief, and furthermore, his reflection from a religious (Buddhist) perspective on and disillusionment with nationalist movements.

It is still an untold fact that Yi started reconsidering the role and meaning of nationalism under the influence of Buddhism. As a recognized cultural nationalist, he had firmly believed that the national interest and national goals were the most important matters in his personal and public life. Yet, while suffering a potentially fatal illness at the end of the 1920s and the death of his son in 1934, Yi gradually came to realize that the most important of human problems is the matter of life and death (neither nation nor nationalism) and that facing impending death everything, including one's desire for fame and material gain and artistic (political/nationalist) aspirations, loses its meaning. The only thing left is religiosity.[60] Nationalism could not explain why he had to undergo such unbearable physical pain on the operation table. It could not offer any explanation about the death of his dear son. It was not

[60] Yi Kwangsu, "P'yepyŏng sasaeng 15-nyŏn" 肺病死生 十五年 in *Samch'ŏlli* (Feb. 1932); -------, "Susultae wi-esŏ" 수술대 위에서 in *Munye kongnon* 文藝公論 (July 1929).

nationalism but Buddhism, in his case, which dealt with these fundamental questions of life and death.

In his essay "Chilli-ŭi sangdaesŏng" 眞理의 相對性 (The relativity of truth, 1933) written after experiencing fatal illness, Yi more clearly articulated that national politics cannot be considered as most important, surpassing all the others but it must be religion. He explains that there are two kinds of truths: one is an absolute truth. The other is a relative truth. The truths of science and religion dealing with the problem of life and death are seen as the absolute truth, whereas "as far as the nation and the nation's political, social and economic interests are concerned, they look entirely relative."[61] He saw the reality that nation-state cling to their own relative truths and so become involved in disputes and lamented that to settle these disputes, those countries tend to resort to (military) power instead of transnational (*ch'o minjok-chŏk*) or transcendental imperatives like religion. Yi did not deny the value of national ideology. He was still the top leader of a self-reconstruction nationalist movement at this point of time. But as expressed through fictional and non-fictional writings, Yi limited the role and meaning of national ideology and practice as political and of relative importance, whereas he considered religions like Buddhism as absolute importance above and beyond national boundaries.

Nationalist and Buddhist identities probably co-existed in Yi's mind side by side as in *Sejo taewang* Sejo first tries to pursue Confucian and Buddhist principles. However, it was some years later that Yi experienced in person a violent clash between them. It was the Tong'uhoe incident which Yi allegorizes as the Tanjong Incident in *Sejo taewang*. The fictional confrontation between the Buddhist king Sejo and the Confucian officials reveals Yi's inner conflict between Buddhist morality and national politics during the Tong'uhoe incident. His nationalism (represented by the Confucian officials) argues that the individual Tong'uhoe members (Tanjong in the novel) deserve to die and it is the right way justice prevails for the bigger purpose of national independence. On the contrary, his Buddhist morality represented by the Buddhist king Sejo makes him think that the lives of his companions compatriots are of utmost importance, that he should save those individuals and prevent them from meeting death in jail, and that this Buddhist imperative of salvation comes before national interests and goals. Although he theoretically knew religious morality as the most important of all ideologies and matters, it was still extremely difficult to put it into practice without any hesitance.

Yi's dilemma of choosing either the nation or the life of individuals very much resembles the question of apostasy Endō Shūsaku 遠藤周作 deals with in his religious novel titled *Chinmoku* 沈默 (Silence, 1966).[62] This novel thematizes Portuguese Catholic missionaries suffering from fierce persecution

[61] In *Ilsa Irŏn* 一事一言. Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 9, p.353.
[62] With regard to Endō Shūsaku's novel, I refered to the studies by Sin Ikho, *Munhak-kwa chonggyo-ŭi mannam*, pp.115-130; Im Yŏngch'ŏn, *Munhak-kwa chonggyo*, pp.173-209.

in sixteenth-century Japan. Christians are put into jail by the local authorities, where they are tortured and many of them die. Foreign priests (among whom was one Father Rodrigues) are forced to step on a picture of Christ. By doing so, they symbolically demonstrate their apostasy from the church in exchange for the lives of Japanese Catholics. Hearing groans and seeing people dying, Father Rodrigues is faced with the dilemma of whether he should die as a martyr for his faith or become an apostate by treading on a painting of Christ and in so doing save the Japanese Catholics from more suffering. Through this novel, Endō Shūsaku questions what is a right decision and the true expression of faith. Is it right to choose Christ and church without helping the suffering believers? Or is it the better decision to save the lives of believers by betraying Christ and church? Intriguingly, the dilemma between Christ (church) and believers is analogous to the choice between the nation and the lives of some Koreans in Yi's mind.

Then, what was Yi's choice? *Sejo taewang* shows his resolve to save the lives of Tong'uhoe members in jail instead of sticking to his patriotic nationalism for the nation's sake. It was not a sudden and impulsive decision, but a decision motivated by his Buddhist belief. He followed the absolute imperative of Buddha that one should respect life and that nothing has a higher priority. As Confucian officials allegorically demonstrate in the novel, politics, even if is associated with the national interest and goals, often are for the selfish pursuit of a nation's interests against the interests of the other nations. When it confronted with the universal value of humanity, politics tend to subordinate humanity to political purposes. Using Sejo's Buddhist point of view, however, Yi flatly opposed the subordination of human life to political considerations and purposes. Yi ranked Buddhist respect of for human life higher than a political ideology for the sake of nation. Through Sejo's mouth, he articulated that Buddhist universalism is bigger than political nationalism and nationalist ideology cannot imagine or comprehend the deep meaning of respect for life in Buddhism. Accordingly, faced with colonial reality, his choice was to follow the Buddhist doctrine and to respect the lives of Tong'uhoe members.

Yi's Buddhist-inspired decision with regard to the Suyang Tong'uhoe case and collaboration as its consequence is more clearly expressed in the preface of his postcolonial text *Na-ŭi kobaek*:

> *For what reason did I pose as pro-Japanese? [...] The reason was, in short, to save my companions in need, even though I had to make sacrifices and even though I could save only a few […]. I simply felt an affinity to the Buddhist imperative that if you can save even one living being in exchange for your life, you must consider yourself fortunate.*[63]

Buddhism played a crucial role in his decision to collaborate. However,

[63] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 10, p.539

its role was not to simply serve as a means to support his pro-Japanese political stance and to create a wartime colonial ideology as some scholars assume.[64] What Buddhism taught was the importance of human lives. It encouraged him to save some individuals, even though it meant to go against the Korean nation and allying himself with the Japanese colonial government. Politics, whether in the form of nationalism or of colonialism (collaboration), was not the main concern for Yi. As articulated in the quote above, his real concern was with following the Buddhist moral view of the value of human life and putting the Buddhist imperative into action under any political circumstance.

Intriguingly, Han Yongun, known as an undaunted nationalist, shared this Buddhist view of respect for life with Yi Kwangsu, who posed as pro-Japanese. As discussed in the previous chapters, Han also had strong views about Buddhism as being beyond and above political ideologies. Against its role as a political tool in service to the nation, he argued that Buddhism was central and fundamental to all ideologies and discourses. Han, too, although in a slightly different way, experienced the inner conflict between morality and politics in his later years just like Yi. Han preferred morality and human value to politics, claiming that all acts of compassion are equally great, regardless of the object of that compassion and stating that, "a sacrifice made for the state and society is not more valuable than a sacrifice made for an individual".[65] Of course, Yi's choice in many ways was more extreme than Han's. This is probably because the conflict, distress and political pressure Yi Kwangsu had to face, as revealed in the concrete historical incident of Suyang Tong'uhoe, were more violent and intense than what Han Yongun experienced. Yi's choice was not merely to be faithful to Tong'uhoe members, as Han was to his benefactors, but to save their lives by directly and actively appealing to the colonial government.

For that purpose, Yi professed to be pro-Japanese and adopted a Japanese-style surname earlier than anyone else. He participated in overt collaboration and stood in the vanguard of spreading wartime ideologies. Doing so, he abandoned his political loyalty to the Korean nation. Still, it was probably not easy to forget his previous attachment to nationalist movements all at once, as shown allegorically in the novel in which the later Sejo desperately struggles to disentangle himself from all the complications of his past life. It was as if he just forgot about it. When he embraced Buddhism, he repositioned the role and meaning of national ideology and practice as political and relative and practically came to question his allegiance to the nation when the Tong'uhoe incident took place. Yi became skeptical about the concept of nation and was disillusioned with national politics. This was again closely connected to central Buddhist notion: *sunyata* (*kong*, 空).

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[64] Yi Kyŏnghun, *Yi Kwangsu-ŭi ch'inil munhak yŏn'gu*; Kwak Ŭnhŭi, "Hwangminhwa-ŭi hwansang, ododoen kyemong".

[65] *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 韓龍雲全集 6 (Seoul: Pulgyo munhwa yŏn'guwŏn, 2006), p.288.

In *Sejo taewang*, Yi cited a considerable number of phrases and expressions from Buddhist scriptures, but it is obvious that the citations relating to the Buddhist concept of *sunyata* are dominant, which means that Yi emphasizes its importance in this novel. The term *sunyata* is translated as emptiness or nothingness but its meaning is more profound. It expresses the ontological truth that all phenomena are themselves empty and dependently related to other phenomena. However, this was not the way Yi understood it. As Saegusa Toshikatsu points out, Yi underlined the philosophically abstract meaning that the world is transient, void and incomplete. Saegusa sees in this an analogy with emotions that was characterized by feelings of resignation and of the emptiness and meaninglessness of life and further assumes that this was the feeling behind his act of collaboration.[66]

To my thinking, however, there is something more than emotional release involved. The recurrent notions of emptiness (*kong*, 空), illusions (*hwan*, 幻), and dreams (*mong*, 夢) are linked to the central theme of the novel: the memories of the murders Sejo committed when seizing power. These notions crop up as a way of viewing and settling those tragic remembrances. Settling Sejo's past is the key part of the novel. Confucian officials, on the one hand, mask the incidents; Sejo, on the other hand, tries to reconcile himself with the tragic past by holding a Buddhist memorial service for his victims. Sŏlcham Kim Sisŭp 雪岑 金時習, who is one of the *saengyuksin* 生六臣 (six living loyal officials) who remained loyal to the former king Tanjong but abandoned their offices, leads the ceremony. In charge of resolving the unforgivable sin of homicide, Sŏlcham preaches that living beings in their mind stir up judgments of good and evil and emotions of grief and joy. Such things do not really exist; They are all false images created in the mind. They are nothing but dreams and illusions. Emphasizing the notions of *sunyata*, non-self and no-rising-and-falling, Sŏlcham comforts the deceased and attempts to settle Sejo's complicated relationship with the tragic past.

Sejo's attempt at reconciliation with the ghosts of his past life allegorizes Yi's desperate struggle to reconcile and settle his past life as a nationalist. As the leader of Suyang Tong'uhoe, Yi had served the nation as if it were his God and had led a life dedicated to the self-cultivation movement for over fifteen years. As Korea's most popular writer, through his writings he had tried to help his compatriots construct a vision of their community (a united nation) as a group where they would feel they belonged. He had firmly believed that the self-cultivation movement was the fundamental way for the Korean people to strengthen their spiritual moral capacity and in the end achieve the national goal. And now, to save the life of his compatriots, leading his present life as a self-claimed collaborator,[67] he all of sudden needed to

[66] Saegusa Toshikatsu 三枝壽勝, "Yi Kwangsu-wa Pulgyo" in *Saegusa kyosu-ŭi Han'guk munhak yŏn'gu*, Trans. Sim Wŏnsŏp (Seoul: Pet'ŭlpuk, 2000), pp.212-216.

[67] In *Na-ŭi kobaek*, Yi discussed the issue of his collaboration under the rubric of "why did I become a

dissolve the nation and devalue nationalist movements. The heavy burden of the past kept weighing on his mind, in the same way in the novel Sejo all the time carries the past memories he cannot forget. Nor were the nation and nationalism something he could just forget about. To placate the ghosts of his troubled past life, he needed to know what they truly were and what they purpose they served.

The Buddhist monk Sŏlcham and his sermon about *sunyata* in the novel indicate that Yi found his answers to these questions with the help of Buddhist teachings. The Buddhist notion of *sunyata*, in particular, made him realize that none of them are substantial and fundamental by nature. They are all creations of the mind. The concept of nation and the significance of the nationalist movement that he has firmly believed in as his ultimate truth from the Buddhist perspective turn out to be all illusions which obscured truth and reality, instead of bringing them to light. The illusion of his nationalist gospel made him believe that the concept of nation was of the greatest importance, because it united all the Koreans on an equal footing. It is supposed to represent the Koreans as a whole. Korean nationalism was supposed to resolve all the problems under colonial circumstances and to fight for human dignity and justice on behalf of the Koreans. In particular, the self-cultivation movement among various national movements he believed to be the way to bring a fundamental change to the Korean people, because it was aimed to improve their moral character.

However, Buddhism disenchanted Yi's nationalized mind and made him to see what reality and truth really are. As featured in the Tong'uhoe incident, the concept of the nation did not only unite the Koreans but also discriminated them. The interests and goals of the nation did not always represent those of individual Koreans. When nationalism was confronted with individuals' lives and rights, it often controlled and subjugated them to its own political purposes under the pretext of fighting for national justice and freedom against colonialism, just as the Confucian officials in the novel conceal the fact of homicide and justify on the basis of Confucian principle of great righteousness. Yi's own self-reconstruction movement aiming to improve personal morality did not serve human dignity during the Tong'uhoe incident. Only Buddhism advocated the sanctity of human life and the dignity of persons as the absolute truth Yi and others should never lose sight of at any time. Seen from a Buddhist moral perspective, nation and nationalism were a dehumanizing force, tempting Yi to violate basic human rights and to disregard human dignity for the sake of the nation.

Yi's skepticism about the concept of nation and criticism of Korean nationalism were more directly addressed in his non-fictional texts written around the same time. In 1940, he published an article "Chosŏn munhak-ŭi

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ch'inilp'a (pro-Japanese)?" He did not deny that he was a collaborator. He found the reason why more important.

ch'amhoe" (朝鮮文學의 懺悔, Repentance for Korean literature, 1940) in *Maeil sinbo*. In this essay, Yi looks back on his lifelong creation of literary works and expresses remorse. It is not because they were poorly written. It is because of the underlying ideology he has clung to. This he clearly identifies as the concept of the nation (*minjok kwannyŏm*, 民族觀念). He states that his conversion to religion (Buddhism) in 1934 made him realize that the nation is a confusing and erroneous concept. So, he disowned his past writings as affected by confusion and errors and decided to write taking the correct view of Buddhism as an alternative literary ideology. He remarks that his novel *Sejo taewang* as well as his novella "Mumyŏng" 無明 (Ignorance, 1939), *Sarang* 사랑 (Love, 1939), and *Ch'unwŏn sigajip* 春園詩歌集 (A collection of poems by Ch'unwŏn, 1940) were written with this intention. This essay confirms Yi's disillusion with the concept of the nation under the influence of Buddhism and the fact that his novel *Sejo taewang* is associated with this change of mind. Yet, he does not explain further why the concept of the nation is seen as erroneous from a Buddhist standpoint and what doctrines in Buddhism exactly triggered his negative feelings, which he explained in greater detail in metaphors in *Sejo taewang*.

Yi's long autobiographical essay "Yukchanggi" 鬻庄記 (Selling a villa, 1939) is another important text in which his skepticism with regard to the nationalist enterprise is succinctly articulated:[68]

> *Anyhow, I have struggled to be a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra during the six years since I built this house. I realized the fleetingness of the nationalist movement and the hopelessness of the moral cultivation movement, which I have led for more than ten years. Of course, ideologically, it is progress that I perceive the moral cultivation movement as the more proper way to rescue the Korean people than political activities. Notwithstanding, through my own experiences I have realized that moral cultivation is useless if it is not rooted in religious belief.*[69]

Yi confesses that Buddhism offered him critical insights into nationalism and nationalist movements and made him reflect on his past engagement with them. When he wrote this essay, he still thought that the moral cultivation movement he chose was a better approach to save the Koreans than political activities such as the armed independence movements or a socialist revolution. Yet, through his own experience, Yi came to realize that the character building movement, too, cannot provide a fundamental set of solutions. He personally strove for more than a decade to stand by the main principles of this moral cultivation movement. His efforts, not to lie, to keep promises, to be aware of one's responsibilities, to work on behalf of the community, and to love and respect others in everyday life, however, could not

[68] In *Munjang* 文章 (Sep. 1939).
[69] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 8, p.43.

remove his deep-rooted desires (*t'amsim*, 貪心) and passions (*pŏnnoe*, 煩惱).[70] The moral improvement movement only polished the surface of his personality and could not solve fundamental human questions regarding human suffering and life and death. More importantly, his own experience of the Suyang Tong'uhoe Incident made him realize that nationalist movements tend to prioritize things the Korean nation needs, at the expense of the sanctity of human life. Only religion, in his case Buddhism, offered answers to the fundamental human questions and assured him of the ultimate importance of humanity.

Yi's disillusionment with nation, national identity and the nationalist movement is certainly relevant to his ensuing collaboration, but it is not an absurd and self-deceptive excuse for his political decision, as some nationalist scholars assume. A set of myths constituted the Korean nation and nationalism. In the formulation of Benedict Anderson, the nation is an "imagined community," national identities and nationalism are socially constructed through vehicles like print-capitalism. Yi was one of the intellectuals in colonial Korea who conjured up and propagated the modern construct of the nation among the Korean public through his literary writings. However, as recent postnationalist and postcolonial scholarship more and more unveils, there were many social agents in colonial reality who cannot be homogenized to a monolithic nation and whose interests and life goals were too diverse and complex to be reduced to those of Korean nationalism.[71] It was not a description of reality but close to myth that Korean nationalism resolved all the problems the Korean people had under colonial circumstances and always fought for freedom on behalf of all Koreans. Within the myth of one nation, individual Koreans, in particular Korean women, were often discriminated against and deprived of their freedoms and human rights. Nationalist movements turned out to copy the aggressive, dehumanizing and domineering manner of their imperialist oppressors.[72] As will be discussed later, other contemporary Buddhist writers also criticized Korean nationalist movements for their aggression and hypocrisy, even earlier than Yi did.

Maybe one last question is left now: did Yi collaborate only for the sake of the nation? Does his statement "I don't feel the slightest morsel of shame in saying that I lived and died for the nation"[73] reflect the truth that he had always kept in mind? His novel *Sejo taewang* and some other colonial-period texts tell

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Henry H. Em, "Minjok as a Modern and Democratic Construct: Sin Ch'aeho's Historigraphy" in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, edited by Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp.336-361; Clark Sorensen, "National Identity and the Creation of the Category "Peasant" in Colonial Korea" in Ibid, pp.288-310; Joong-Seop Kim, "In Search of Human Rights: The Paekchŏng Movement in Colonial Korea" in *Ibid*, pp.311-335.

[72] Prasenjit Duara (ed), *Decolonization:perspectives from now and then* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p.7; Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi (ed), *Dangerous Women: Gender & Korean nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[73] "Ingwa 因果" in an unpublished manuscript of the collection of poems *Nae Norae* 내노래.

that this is not true. The truth more correctly should be phrased as "collaboration for the sake of some individual Koreans," not for the nation's sake. The concept of the nation was dissolved and doubted from a religious moral standpoint when he came to pose as pro-Japanese collaborator. It was only after the liberation in 1945 that Yi restored the idea of the nation from oblivion. In his postcolonial text *Na-ŭi kobaek*, for example, he emphasizes how important the self-cultivation movement was and how the movement shared a common destiny with the Korean nation. Therefore, if the Tong'uhoe would have been dissolved and its leading members met their deaths, the movement would have ceased to be. It would have meant that the life of the nation had come to an end. For the survival of the nation, Yi felt responsible for the rescue of the Tong'uhoe's leaders, he claimed after the war.[74]

This postcolonial-period explanation differs from what Yi experienced and told in his colonial-period texts such as *Sejo taewang*. The individual deaths of members of the national elite cannot be equated with the death of the nation. As depicted in his novel *Sejo taewang*, the value of individual lives was, on the contrary, juxtaposed with the death of the nation. The self-cultivation movement was seen as no more than a superficial remedy for the Koreans, which could not redeem even a single life and which threatened living individuals as much as Japanese colonialism. His previous disillusionment with and criticism of nationalist interests and goals was however thoroughly silenced in his postcolonial confession. In his novel, he emphasized and prioritized his Buddhist belief and the Buddhist doctrine of saving living beings, at the expense of the nation and national politics. Buddhism which offered a critical insight into the dehumanizing force of nationalism is largely obscured in *Na-ŭi kobaek*. In this postcolonial text, Yi's focus is clearly reoriented from Buddhism to politics. The nation and the self-cultivation movement, which were questioned and devalued in previous days, re-emerged and were re-evaluated.

I am not claiming that Yi's *Na-ŭi kobaek* is an untrustworthy confession or a complete lie. This is basically a "postcolonial" representation in which memories of the colonial past are reconstructed from the perspective of the postcolonial present. It means that the reconstructed colonial past in this text tells more about Yi's experience of living in the postcolonial era of Korea than about his life in the colonial period. His postcolonial insistence on "collaboration for the sake of the nation" is thus to meet the needs of the new age in which the Korean nation-state was being built. The real story behind his experience of the Suyang Tong'uhoe Incident and collaboration in wartime colonial Korea was that he renounced the nation and started pro-Japanese collaboration in order to save the real subjects of the imagined community of the nation, as he articulated in a fictionalized form in *Sejo taewang*.

[74] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 7, p.274.

Conclusion

Yi Kwangsu's novel *Tanjong aesa* and *Sejo taewang* show that religion played a significant role in his life, literature, cultural-nationalist movements, and collaborationist activities. Among the various religions he took an interest in, Confucianism and Buddhism were explicitly invoked in those two historical novels to speak about the collective colonial experience, such as the colonization of Korea and the March First Movement (in *Tanjong aesa*) and to cope with his personal and public life events such as the Suyang Tong'uhoe Incident and its consequences like engaging in collaboration (in *Sejo taewang*). Both religions offered messages with profound implications. Confucianism invoked in the first novel was not merely to bolster nationalism. It was to revise the nationalist discourse illustrated in his early treatise "Minjok kaejoron," which claimed that the Koreans were morally deficient and needed to strengthen their character. In *Tanjong aesa*, the ascription of Korean's inferiority and Japanese's superiority was denounced as a false ideology and subverted. Confucianism was utilized to reveal the moral inferiority of Japanese colonialism and to reinstate the moral and spiritual strength of the Korean people.

Buddhism in *Sejo taewang* brought to light the most controversial issue of Yi Kwangsu: his pro-Japanese collaboration. His Buddhist belief was not a mere politicized means to justify his decision of collaboration. Nor was it to solely express his remorse for his wrongdoing as some sympathetic scholars tend to think. It provided a much more detailed and nuanced story behind his political decision showing that he was caught in a dilemma between the nation and human life. Buddhism taught him the fundamental value of the life of each person and the profound meaning of salvation. So, he chose not to commit crimes against humanity, preferring to be a sinner against the nation. He preferred humanity and morality to politics (in the shape of nationalist interests and movements) and did not feel remorse for his ethical choice. Furthermore, his early ideas on nation and nationalism, which had been revised in *Tanjong aesa*, were questioned more thoroughly in its follow-up novel. From a Buddhist moral standpoint, he criticized aggressive and dehumanizing nationalism.

After completing *Sejo taewang*, Yi Kwangsu embarked on more blatant collaboration with the Japanese colonial government. This was at first motivated by his Buddhist ethical imperative of saving human beings, but as time goes by tended to deviate from its humanitarian principles. During the Pacific War, he encouraged Korean students to enlist in the imperial army and to die for the Japanese Empire. Although he argued later in the postcolonial era that what he really meant was that they would fight and die for the Korean nation, nothing changes from a humanitarian point of view. While collaborating with the wartime colonial government and rebuilding the Korean nation-state after the liberation, he unconsciously took after the historical Sejo in sinning against the absolute truth for humanity, and thereby repeated the same kind of historical tragedy.

Chapter 4

Yi Kwangsu's novel *Wŏnhyo taesa* as counter-discourse

Introduction

In 2006 around the time around Buddha's birthday, there was a heated debate within literary and publishing circles in Korea. It was about Yi Kwangsu's novel *Wŏnhyo taesa* 元曉大師 (Great Priest Wŏnhyo, 1942). The novelist Han Sŭngwŏn, who has published his own fictional version of Wŏnhyo, *Sosŏl Wŏnhyo* (Wŏnhyo: The Novel, 2006), in that year ignited the debate, insisting on a ban on Yi's novel because Yi was a pro-Japanese collaborator during the late colonial period. Han argued that a pro-Japanese writer's works could never be justified by eloquence or rhetoric. He also pointed out how problematic Yi's novel is. According to him, Yi seriously misread the eminent monk of Silla, his life and philosophy and distorted Wŏnhyŏ's anti-war pacifism in order to exhort the young Koreans in colonial Korea to participate in the imperial war. In his eyes, there was no good reason to (re)publish such a controversial and even harmful novel.[1]

The publisher of Yi's novel rebutted the criticisms made by Han point by point. The publication ban Han requested was denounced as a serious violation of the freedom of the press. Han's assumption that a novel written by a pro-Japanese writer is necessarily harmful and that nothing can be learned from it was seen as belittling the readers, who may derive pleasure from it and be touched by the novel. Han's claim that his interpretation of Wŏnhyo was the right one whereas Yi's was erroneous was regarded as no more than proof of self-righteousness and arrogance, because diverse approaches to Wŏnhyo's life and thought are possible. The publisher made it clear that Yi's pro-Japanese activities do not necessarily make all his literary works, including this novel, pro-Japanese and underlined that a literary work should be first and foremost read and assessed for its own sake.[2]

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[1] "Yi Kwangsu, Han Sŭngwŏn 'Wŏnhyo'-ro kyŏktol" 이광수, 한승원 '원효'로 격돌 in *Chosun.com* (April 2006)
http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2006/04/26/2006042670257.html; "Chŏnjaengjuŭija, panjŏnjuŭija…Wŏnhyo nollan" 전쟁주의자, 반전주의자…원효 논란 in *Chungang ilbo* (April 2006), http://article.joinsmsn.com/news/article/article.asp?ctg=15&Total_ID=2278433; "Yi Kwangsu-ŭi <Wŏnhyo taesa>nya, Han Sŭngwŏn-ŭi <Sosŏl Wŏnhyo>nya: 'Puch'ŏnim osin nal aptugo ch'ulp'angye 'Wŏnhyo taesa nonjaeng'" 이광수의 <원효대사>냐, 한승원의 <소설 원효>냐: '부처님 오신 날' 앞두고 출판계 '원효대사 논쟁' in *Omai nyusŭ* (May 2006),
http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/view/at_pg.aspx?cntn_cd=A0000328552

[2] "Yi Kwangsu-ŭi <Wŏnhyo taesa>nya, Han Sŭngwŏn-ŭi <Sosŏl Wŏnhyo>nya: 'Puch'ŏnim osin nal aptugo ch'ulp'angye 'Wŏnhyo taesa nonjaeng'".

Siding with the publisher, the distinguished critic Yi Pyŏngju wrote a review, insisting that Yi's novel is worth reading and being printed. According to the critic, this novel is the masterpiece among Yi's historical novels in literary style and ideology. Yi Kwangsu showed his profound knowledge of Buddhism (instead of misreading Wŏnhyo as Han argued). Yi Pyŏngju praised *Wŏnhyo taesa* as a nationalist novel written for the benefit of the Korean people (so, it was not a pro-Japanese novel which supported war effort as Han argued). Although the Japanese colonial authorities made Yi Kwangsu publish this novel in the governmental newspaper *Maeil sinbo* 每日新報 as a propaganda tool to mobilize the Korean population for war, in the view of the critic, he took it as a chance to boost the national spirit of Korea.[3]

The dispute between Han and the publisher of Yi's novel was resolved for the time being when Han conceded that he had overreacted and withdrew his demand for the ban, suggesting the need for fair competition in the literary marketplace. However, the discussion on Yi's novel itself has not ended yet. *Wŏnhyo taesa* still remains a source of contention among a wider circle of scholars and the public, as its author Yi Kwangsu is an iconic figure in the national memory of Korea[4] and his collaborationist writings and activities provoke endless controversy in scholarship and society. This novel accordingly requires further scrutiny or discussion on why Yi revisited ancient Buddhist history, how he depicted the Silla monk Wŏnhyo, whether his fiction was associated with the current colonial context of the Pacific War or not, and what kind of message he delivered or delivers to readers now and then.

In this chapter, I will argue that *Wŏnhyo taesa* does not fit the simple dichotomy of nationalism and pro-Japanese collaboration but first and foremost is a Buddhist novel that deals with an ancient Buddhist monk and a range of Buddhist concepts and doctrines. Yet, my close reading will reveal that Yi did not depict Wŏnhyo in history as he was. Surprisingly, the Buddhism depicted in this novel is not Wŏnhyo's profound philosophy, either. As I will show, the fictional representation of Wŏnhyo and the Buddhist notions selected by Yi Kwangsu represents the writer and his own Buddhist insights, in particular those that were entwined with his political experience of collaboration in wartime colonial Korea. Among the many messages this novel conveys, his attempt to construct a divine mythology of Silla is the most striking because it demonstrates that while or through producing colonial discourse, Yi was able to create a counter-discourse and to subvert the very core of Japanese colonialism and that the pro-Japanese collaboration he engaged in was far too complicated and multilayered to be simply condemned without further ado.

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[3] Yi Pyŏngju 이병주, "Yi Kwangsu changp'yŏnsosŏl <Wŏnhyo taesa>-e taehayŏ" 이광수 장편소설 <원효대사>에 대하여 in *Wŏnhyo taesa* 1 원효대사 1 (Seoul: Hwanam, 2006/2011), pp.261-270.

[4] Ch'oe Yŏngsŏk 최영석, "Minjog-ŭi mamodoen pisŏk, Yi Kwangsu haesŏg-ŭi yŏksa" 민족의 마모된 비석, 이광수 해석의 역사 in *Chakkasegye* 57 (Summer 2003):40-64, pp.41-43.

Wŏnhyo in history and in the novel

It is probably important to mention first that Yi Kwangsu was not the only colonial intellectual who took an interest in Wŏnhyo.[5] In the 1910s already, modern Buddhist scholars such as Kwŏn Sangno and Yi Nŭnghwa remarked, though briefly, about the ancient Silla monk in their introductory books on the history of Korean Buddhism.[6] Short hagiographies about Wŏnhyo were written.[7] Also the study or research on Wŏnhyo's philosophical writings was begun.[8] Ch'oe Namsŏn was the author who wrote the most remarkable yet controversial work on Wŏnhyo. In his article "Korean Buddhism: its position in the history of Oriental culture (朝鮮佛敎: 東方文化史上에 잇는 그 地位, 1930), he celebrated Wŏnhyo as the greatest monk in Korea, Asia and the world, arguing that he built Syncretic Buddhism (*t'ong Pulgyo*) in Korea and achieved the unification and completion of Buddhism in the world. In other words, if Skakyamuni initiated Buddhism, Wŏnhyo consummated it. Wŏnhyo's exploits were not limited to Buddhism. He was elevated as the pride of Korean culture and nation with whom Korea could demonstrate its cultural supremacy all over the world.[9]

Ch'oe exaggerated his praise of Wŏnhyo and Korean Buddhism to the point of absurdity. Wŏnhyo was certainly an eminent monk but was he the greatest monk in Asia and even in the world? Could Wŏnhyo embody Korean Buddhism and Korea, which were the culmination of both Occidental and Oriental cultures, as Ch'oe argued?[10] Ch'oe created a myth of Wŏnhyo and a great misunderstanding of the general characteristic of Korean Buddhism rather than a credible scholarly work. Nonetheless, there are still significant aspects of his work. As Shim Jae-ryong pointed out, it was an attempt to counterbalance the disparaging, biased view of Japanese scholars such as Takahashi Tōru 高橋亨 that Korean Buddhism is a mere transplantation of Chinese Buddhism.[11] With his interpretation of Wŏnhyo, Ch'oe invented the defining characteristic of

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[5] For more details on the genealogy of studies on Wŏnhyo, see Ko Yŏngsŏp 고영섭, "Wŏnhyo-nŭn ŏt'ŏk'e ihaedoeŏ wannŭnga" 원효는 어떻게 이해되어 왔는가 in *Onŭr-ŭi tongyang sasang* 오늘의 동양사상 4 (March 2001):173-187.

[6] Kwŏn Sangno 權相老, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yaksa* 朝鮮佛敎略史 (1917); Yi Nŭnghwa 李能和, *Chosŏn Pulgo t'ongsa* 朝鮮佛敎通史 (Kyŏngsŏng 京城: Sinmungwan, 1918).

[7] Chang Tobin 張道斌, *Wiin Wŏnhyo* 偉人元曉 (Kyŏngsŏng 京城: Sinmungwan, 1917); Cho Soang 趙素昻, *Taesŏng Wŏnhyojŏn* 大聖元曉傳 (1933).

[8] Kim Yŏngju 金瑛周, "Chesŏ-e hyŏnhan Wŏnhyo hwaŏmso kyoŭi" 諸書에 現한 元曉華嚴疏敎義 in *Chosŏn Pulgyo ch'ongbo* 朝鮮佛敎叢報 12 (1918): 9-14; ----, "Chesŏ-e hyŏnhan Wŏnhyo hwaŏmso kyoŭi-sok" 諸書에 現한 元曉華嚴疏敎義 (續) in *Chosŏn Pulgyo ch'ongbo* 朝鮮佛敎叢報 13 (1918): 26-30; Cho Myŏnggi 趙明基, "Wŏnhyo chongsa-ŭi simmun hwajaengnon yŏn'gu" 元曉宗師의 十門和諍論 硏究 in *Kŭmgangjŏ* 金剛杵 22 (1937):18-36.

[9] *Pulgyo* 74 (1930), pp.1-51.

[10] Ibid., p.50-51.

[11] Shim Jae-ryong, "II. General Characteristics of Korean Buddhism: Is Korean Buddhism Syncretic?" in *Korean Buddhism Tradition and Transformation* (Seoul: Chimmundang, 1999):171-182, pp.176-178.

Buddhism in Korea. While delving into ancient Buddhist history (the migration of Paekche and Silla people to Japan and the proselytizing of Korean monks in Japan), he twisted colonial scholarly discourse around and argued for the dependency of Japanese Buddhism on Korean Buddhism (explained as a child-mother relationship) and for the cultural superiority of Korean over Japanese Buddhism.[12]

There had been religious and scholarly interest in Wŏnhyo during the colonial period but Yi Kwangsu was probably the first writer who reconstructed the life of this historical figure using literary imagination. How did he depict Wŏnhyo and his life in his fiction? How distinctive is his literary approach compared with religious and scholarly approaches, in particular with Ch'oe's article on Wŏnhyo? Let me first give a summary of the plot of the novel. It begins with the death of Queen Sŭngman. This charismatic female ruler dies of sickness after she has spoken of her unrequited love for Wŏnhyo. Wŏnhyo is shocked by her death and afflicted by feelings of guilt because of his refusal to grant her wish. One day, he meets a monk called Taean 大安 and realizes that compassion is to provide practical help, adjusting to the needs and condition of living beings. Wŏnhyo then puts his awakening into action. Hearing that Princess Yosŏk is dying for love of Wŏnhyo, he transgresses the *vinaya* precept that forbids contact with women and sexual intercourse. After his transgression, Wŏnhyo calls himself a *kŏsa* (居士, lay-believer) and goes to practice a form of Silla's native ascetic training. Afterwards, he confronts a cluster of beggars who had caused social unrest and makes them surrender by reciting mysterious mantras. The beggars repented their sins and became distinguished generals and spies during Silla's war with Paekche and Koguryŏ. Wŏnhyo himself hides in the mountains and teaches his followers.

It is interesting to note that Yi did not delve into Wŏnhyo's Buddhist philosophy and did not highlight the profundity of his thoughts as scholars such as Ch'oe had attempted. The protagonist Wŏnhyo in this novel basically serves to represent Yi Kwangsu's own understanding of Buddhism. As widely recognized, the core of the historical Wŏnhyo's Buddhist thought is *muae* (無碍, unimpededness), a concept that is elaborated in the *Hwaŏmgyŏng* (華嚴經, Flower Garland Sutra). In this novel, however, *muae* is preached as a goal of practice only in the beginning.[13] Wŏnhyo's interest in *muae* and the Hwaŏmgyŏng soon fades away when the protagonist sees the queen's death and awakes to the impermanence of all conditioned things (*chehaeng musang*, 諸行無常).[14] What Yi emphasizes in this novel is the protagonist's commitment of selflessness and compassion rather than *muae*. Yi's emphasis on selflessness is

[12] *Pulgyo* 74, p.33; Ryu Sihyŏn 류시현, "Ilcheha Ch'oe Namsŏn-ŭi Pulgyo insik-kwa 'Chosŏn Pulgyo' t'amgu" 일제하 최남선의 불교인식과 '조선불교' 탐구 in *Kundae-rŭl tasi ingnŭnda* 2 근대를 다시 읽는다 (Seoul: Yŏksa pip'yŏngsa, 2006), pp.375-404.

[13] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, p.338.

[14] Wŏnhyo in the novel even expresses skepticism over the necessity to finish his commentary on the Flower and Garland Sutra. *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, p.385.

well expressed in the scene in which Wŏnhyo practices asceticism: "All of what Shakyamuni said is, in one word, emptiness (*kong*, 空). This signifies nothing else than that one empties the self."[15] Through his ascetic ordeals of selflessness, the protagonist also attains enlightenment.

Yi's emphasis on compassion is well expressed in a scene in which Wŏnhyo practices the path of the bodhisattvas (*posalto*, 菩薩道) that is to cultivate the mind of enlightenment and to work for the liberation of all beings. Accordingly after attaining enlightenment, Wŏnhyo does not stop but further practices compassion. Yi wrote, "In the eye of bodhisattvas, all living beings are equal. Bodhisattvas evenly treat each living being as their only child. They sacrifice themselves to save even a single living being. They would like to die a thousand times to save even one living being. This presents the great compassion of bodhisattvas."[16] Yi elaborated this in his description of Wŏnhyo as a bodhisattva in action, who goes to the haunts of beggars and thieves. This emphasis on selflessness, salvation, compassion, and the practices of bodhisattvas, and the way Yi explained these concepts in this novel correspond to his general understanding of Buddhism as he explained it in various essays) rather than to the historical Wŏnhyo's doctrinal teachings.[17]

In Yi Kwangsu's view of Wŏnhyo, there are some other aspects, however, which are more distinctive and somewhat obsessive. He delves into Wŏnhyo's eccentric behavior of breaking the precept (*p'agye*) forbidding sexual intercourse. That Wŏnhyo broke his vows, slept with Princess Yosŏk in Silla and had a son called Sŏl Ch'ong is a famous tale that everyone knows in Korea today, but few actually know the details of the story. Despite its apparent popularity, this story is barely mentioned or largely downplayed in historical and biographical records on Wŏnhyo, which basically deal with him as an eminent monk. Iryŏn's *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms, 1281) may be the best source that conveys the legend more in detail. This account was ignored by Ch'oe Namsŏn, who intended to celebrate Wŏnhyo as an honorable monk. Why did Yi regard Wŏnhyo's *p'agye* as a serious matter unlike other Buddhists? Is there any special reason? Above all, how is Yi's literary imagination similar to or diverging from the historical account in the *Samguk yusa*, for example?

According to the *Samguk yusa*, Wŏnhyo one day proclaimed, "Who will grant me an axe without a handle? I want to construct a pillar to support heaven!"誰許沒柯斧 我斫支天柱. Nobody comprehended the meaning of this proclamation. The only person who fathomed his intention, that he wanted to have a son from a noblewoman, was King Taejong.[18] The king ordered to usher

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[15] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, p.435.

[16] Ibid.

[17] "Sinbi-ŭi segye: Chabi-ŭi wŏlli" (神秘의 世界: 慈悲의 原理, 1930), "Pulgyo" (佛敎, 1935) and "Taesŏng Sŏkka: Sŏkka yŏrae-ŭi karŭmch'im" (大聖釋迦: 釋迦如來의 가르침, 1940).

[18] Wŏnhyo referred to the poem "Fake" (伐柯) in the Chinese *Shijing* (詩經, *Book of Songs*), which is traditionally assumed to have been edited by Confucius: 伐柯如何 匪斧不克. 取妻如何 匪媒不

him to the Yosŏk Palace where a princess resided alone. When royal servants came to look for him, Wŏnhyo intentionally fell into the river and made his clothes wet. He was brought to the Yosŏk Palace in order to dry his clothes and spent some nights there. As a result, the princess gave birth to Sŏl Ch'ong. In this legend, Wŏnhyo's transgressive act is not considered a serious matter or harshly condemned. As implied in the general heading for the section at the *Samguk yusa* about him "Wŏnhyo pulgi" (元曉不羈, Wŏnhyo is freed from restraint), Iryŏn saw the act of *p'agye* as his practice of unimpededness 無碍. Although this is a famous tale to the present day, it by no means affects or eclipses the Buddhist exploits of the historical Wŏnhyo.

Compared with the account in the *Samguk yusa*, Yi Kwangsu's interest in Wŏnhyo's *p'agye* is considerable and his attention to it may be called obsessive. Using his imagination, he adds details to Wŏnhyo's breaking of his vows and magnifies it. If the legend in *Samguk yusa* deals with the relationship with Princess Yosŏk only, Yi's fictional story depicts love affairs between Wŏnhyo and three women. Before the encounter with Yosŏk, Queen Sŭngman (Queen Chindŏk's name, after the Buddhist figure of Indian Queen Srimala 勝曼) looks for Wŏnhyo's love. By rejecting her affection, he observes the *vinaya* precept. However, facing her death, he suffers acute agony because of his rejection of mercy. This serves as the crucial momentum for violating the precept later. This love story is a pure invention on Yi's part.

When Princess Yosŏk is sick with yearning for Wŏnhyo, the protagonist Wŏnhyo cannot pretend not to know that she is suffering from love-sickness. In response to her love, he comes to have a conjugal relationship with her. In other words, he breaks the precept for the purpose of giving life to a dying woman, not because he wants it. This depiction is completely different from the historical legend in which Wŏnhyo took the initiative and demonstrated his view of unimpededness. Wŏnhyo in the novel is distant from the historical Wŏnhyo's state of mind, which was characterized by freedom and *muae*. The protagonist is time and again confused and plagued by his act of transgression of the *vinaya*, asking whether his act was purely out of compassion or whether he unconsciously sought pleasure. Still, afterwards Wŏnhyo encounters one more woman: Asaga, whom he meets during his ascetic practice. She also confesses her wish to have Wŏnhyo as her spouse, although she knows of his conjugal relationship with Princess Yosŏk. Wŏnhyo admonishes her saying that he cannot commit *p'agye* twice.[19] These extended and intricate affairs and the protagonist's strong perturbations of the soul and inner conflicts do not appear in the historical legend. Why did Yi regard this matter of transgression as so important?

Yi Kwangsu himself has provided a clue why he was so much fascinated by Wŏnhyo's transgressive act. It was because Wŏnhyo appealed to

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得. 伐柯伐柯 其則不遠. 我遘之子 籩豆有踐. This poem is about match-making.

[19] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, pp.433 and 436.

him personally and Yi felt strong affinity with him.[20] If so, Wŏnhyo's transgression may be similar to something in Yi's life. What was that? This "something," scholars such as Saegusa Toshikatsu assume, is Yi's experience of collaboration during the Pacific War, in the sense that he broke his loyalty to the Korean nation just like Wŏnhyo broke the rule of conduct of a Buddhist monk. The link between a monk's sexual impurity and collaboration with Japanese colonial authorities was not Yi's invention, but it was a pervasive idea among Buddhists in the colonial and postcolonial periods.[21] A monk's sexual purity (celibacy) was argued to be essential to Korean Buddhist identity, Korean Buddhist patriotism, and a devotion to the Korean nation during the colonial period. A monk's sexual impurity was vilified as degradation, and collaboration with Japanese Buddhism and the colonial authorities.[22]

However, this central assumption does not always reflect reality. The majority of Korean monks did not remain celibate. The central institution of Korean Buddhism actively collaborated with the colonial government. As Gregory Evon argues, there was contestation over the identity of Korean Buddhists and monks often did not act according to the assumption presented.[23] Han Yongun, for example, was a nationalistic monk but stood for a monk's marriage, arguing that it was good for the prosperity of Buddhism and society.[24] In response to his controversial proposal, Yi Nŭnghwa explored this problem in a broad religious context, comparing Buddhism with various religious traditions such as Confucianism, Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism.[25] It is noteworthy that when Kyŏngho was attacked because of his vow-breaking conduct, despite his great teaching and attempts to revive Sŏn Buddhism in modern times, Han Yongun implicitly recalled Iryŏn's perspective on Wŏnhyo and envisioned Kyŏnghŏ to be like the Silla monk Wŏnhyo.[26]

Yi Kwangsu's obsession with Wŏnhyo's *p'agye* was associated with the colonial present rather than the Silla past. It was particularly associated with Yi's identity problem as a pro-Japanese collaborator. The vow-breaking Wŏnhyo is designed to represent Yi who broke his nationalist vows. Wŏnhyo's sexual impurity allegorizes Yi's political impurity. A monk's celibacy or marriage was not a simple matter of right or wrong during the colonial period. It had many implications. Yi implicitly suggested that his political identity and act of collaboration was also a complicated matter. The pervasive assumption

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[20] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 10, p.530.
[21] Gregory N. Evon, "Contestations over Korean Buddhist Identities: The "Introduction" to the Kyŏnghŏ-jip" in *The Review of Korean Studies* 4.1. (2001):11-33.
[22] Ibid., p.15.
[23] Ibid., p.11.
[24] Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* 朝鮮佛教維新論. Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, pp.82-87.
[25] Yi Nŭnghwa 李能和, *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsa* 朝鮮佛教通史 2 Trans. Yun Chaeyŏng (Seoul: Pakyŏngsa, 1918/1980), pp.14-20.
[26] Gregory N. Evon, "Contestations over Korean Buddhist Identities: The "Introduction" to the Kyŏnghŏ-jip", pp.25-26.

that Yi's act of collaboration was no more than anti-nationalism and lack of patriotism was called into question. In his novel, he showed that there was no clear line between collaborative effort and national identity.

P'agyesŭng and collaborator

Yi Kwangsu does not depict Wŏnhyo as a great monk as Ch'oe had done. Wŏnhyo is mostly depicted as a *p'agyesŭng* (a transgressive monk). Wŏnhyo's Buddhist act of transgression is correlated with Yi's pro-Japanese collaboration during the Pacific War. In his novel, Yi depicts Silla against the background of the war for the unification of the Three Kingdoms. It is historically true and correct that the time Wŏnhyo (617-686) lived was not a peaceful period, but a time of warfare between the three kingdoms. When Silla was in distress because of an internal rebellion, Paekche and Koguryo joined together and attacked Silla. Silla sought Tang Chinese help. The Silla-Tang allies then conquered Paekche in 660 and Koguryŏ in 668. After the fall of Koguryŏ, Tang tried to establish a Protectorate General to control the Korean peninsula, but Silla resisted this attempt. The struggle between Silla and Tang lasted through the 670s. Finally the Silla-Tang wars came to end in 676 when Silla expelled the Tang forces.

Yi Kwangsu pays attention to the unification war in Wŏnhyo's days and depicts Wŏnhyo as a person who is engrossed in the political and military concerns of Silla. Wŏnhyo's supportive view of the war is well expressed in the following paragraph: "Wŏnhyo feels the urgency of uniting Koguryŏ, Paekche and Silla. Otherwise, all would be ruined. For that goal, Silla should strengthen itself and go to war twice. Even though many people will die, one should pull out the root of evil all at once. Otherwise, people from the three countries cannot live in peace."[27] Wŏnhyo is keenly aware of the necessity of the unification wars. His thought implies that no country other than Silla can take the lead in building a larger kingdom. Other countries should be subordinate to Silla; otherwise, they are evil and enemies to be conquered. Silla needs military and spiritual readiness and should go to war. The goal of uniting the three kingdoms is not described as motivated by Silla's self-interest in expanding its realm, but by the desire to procure a peaceful life for the people in all three kingdoms.

In the novel Wŏnhyo fervently supports the wars Silla engages in. Although he is a Buddhist monk, he does not care about the sanctity of human life. He takes for granted the sacrifice of a great number of people during the war. More strikingly, he promotes the sacrifices using Buddhist concepts of selflessness (*mua*, 無我) and compassion (*chabi*, 慈悲). As mentioned before, Wŏnhyo, who practices asceticism in the mountains, emphasizes that the core

[27] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, p.429.

of Buddhism is to empty the self and to devote oneself to the non-self.[28] Once again he preaches, "The true character of Buddhism is to cut off attachment to the self…If so, what are our bodies and souls for? Loyalty to the king, filial piety to one's parents, and salvation of living beings are our tasks…This is the Buddha way. This is a bodhisattva's practice".[29] In this paragraph, the Buddhist concepts of selflessness and salvation are connected with the Confucian values of loyalty and filial piety. Among manifestations of the non-self, there are the king and parents. Thus, the bodhisattva's compassionate acts serving them embody loyalty and filial piety. Moreover, loyal and dutiful Silla soldiers such as Kŏjinnang and Pinyŏngja are praised for bravely sacrificing themselves on the battlefield and thus embodying selflessness.[30]

Wŏnhyo in the novel identifies the Buddhist way with the secular values of patriotism, filial piety and military prowess. Such political judgments and praise of militarism by Wŏnhyo are not found in historical records. Most legends about Wŏnhyo are related to Buddhism. According to *Samguk yusa* (1281)[31] and Yi Nŭnghwa's *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsa* (1918),[32] there is only one record which might imply Wŏnhyo's involvement in the wars of those days. In 661, by order of King Muyŏl, the Silla general Kim Yusin was on his way to conquer Koguryŏ. The Tang command of Su Dingfang who was supposed to join forces with Silla in Pyŏngyang suddenly sent a message nobody could decode. So, Kim Yusin sent someone to ask Wŏnhyo. Wŏnhyo provided the interpretation that the Tang would withdraw their troops. Thanks to Wŏnhyo, the Silla forces, too, could withdraw.

Can this single act of decoding demonstrate Wŏnhyo's keen awareness of political-military affairs described by Yi in his novel? Apart from this, Wŏnhyo was not involved in Silla's unification wars in historical accounts. He remained a faith-oriented Buddhist monk. This becomes clearer if we compare him with other politically active monks in Silla. As Pankaj Mohan notes, Silla's King Chinhŭng (r.539-575) took the Indian King Asoka as a role model and forged an intimate relationship between sangha and state. The king justified his conquest and unification war as aimed to protect righteousness, as Asoka had done.[33] The king himself was ordained as a Buddhist monk. To appease the souls of the war dead, he hosted the Buddhist ritual of *p'algwanhoe*.[34] There were

[28] Ibid., p.435.
[29] Ibid., p.342.
[30] Ibid., pp.340-342.
[31] The "Kii" chapter on King T'aejong in *Samguk yusa* trans. Yi Pyŏngdo (Seoul: Myŏngmundang, 1992)
[32] Yi Nŭnghwa, *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsa* 2, pp.51-52.
[33] Pankaj, Narendra M., "The Life and Times of the Silla King Chinhung: Asoka as a Role Model" in *Korean Culture* 17:1 (Spring 1996), pp.18-19; Robert Buswell, "Imagining 'Korean Buddhism': The Invention of a National Religious Tradition" in *Nationalism and the Construction of Korean Identity*, edited by Hyung Il Pai and Timothy R. Tangherlini (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1998) pp.75-77.
[34] Yi Nŭnghwa, *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsa* 2, p.41.

Buddhist monks such as Pŏpchang and Hyeja around him who served as state top officials and joined the king's tour to the newly conquered territories.

In Wŏnhyo's time it was rather the monk Chajang (慈藏, 590-658) who despite his primary concern with religion was greatly involved in contemporary politics. As Jong Myung Kim (1995) summarizes, Chajang was Taegukt'ong (大國統, Great National Overseer) and advised to adopt the Chinese dress code in Silla. Moreover, his argument that Silla was a Buddha land contributed to the formation of the idea of a single nation and to the unification of the Three Kingdoms.[35] In contrast to those monks who actively supported war and engaged in politics, Wŏnhyo in history basically concentrated on religion[36] and was not involved in political affairs and ideologies or military actions. In brief, Yi Kwangsu's protagonist Wŏnhyo who shows a keen awareness of the war situation and justifies Silla's desire for unification of three kingdoms has little to do with the Wŏnhyo of the historical records but was invented by the author. This invented historical character he described says more about the present of the Greater East Asia War than about ancient history.

Silla's war to unify the Three Kingdoms in the novel is strongly reminiscent of Japan's war to build a Greater East Asia in the early 1940s. Yi's description of Silla's self-declared leadership in the fictionalized war of unification evokes Japan's pan-Asian leadership. Wŏnhyo's proclamations of the urgency of the war, his sense of justice and the goal of peace all represent wartime ideologies prevailing in Yi's days. It was clearly articulated by Japanese Buddhists that the reason for war was not to continue war but to stop it. Their claims that war is evil but that if one cannot avoid war, one must fight and in particular that the war Japan faced was a "just and holy" war because it aimed to expel the evil of the Western powers and bring world peace are reproduced in Yi's novel about Wŏnhyo.[37]

It is interesting to compare Wŏnhyo in Yi's novel with his depiction in Kim T'aehŭp 金泰洽's short hagiographies. Kim was one of the fervent collaborationist Buddhist monks. He paid particular attention to Wŏnhyo and wrote two short hagiographies about Wŏnhyo in 1935 and 1940 respectively.[38] In the first essay, he approached Wŏnhyo as one of the many eminent monks Korea generated and as the most celebrated among them, but in the revised essay, he highlighted Wŏnhyo as one of "many Korean monks who at odds with those in other countries had been engaged in military affairs".[39] Wŏnhyo's

[35] Jong Myung Kim, "Chajang (fl. 636-650) and 'Buddhism as National Protector' in Korea: A Reconsideration" in *Religions in Traditional Korea* edited by Henrik H. Sorensen (Copenhagen: Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1995), p.25.
[36] Yi Nŭnghwa, *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsa* 2, p.235.
[37] Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York & Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1997), pp.109-113.
[38] Kim T'aehŭp 金泰洽, "Kosŭng irhwa, Wŏnhyo taesa" (高僧逸話, 元曉大師) in *Samch'ŏlli* 7:6 (July 1935); ------, "Kosŭng irhwa, Wŏnhyo taesa" 高僧逸話, 元曉大師 in *Samch'ŏlli* 12:3 (March 1940).
[39] Kim T'aehŭp, "Kosŭng irhwa, Wŏnhyo taesa" in *Samch'ŏlli* 12:3 (March 1940), p.280.

act of decoding a military message was emphasized as the evidence for his war-effort. Wŏnhyo's *p'agye* was also dealt with as a revolutionary Buddhist reformation aiming to liberate the monks.[40] It seems that Yi was not the only person who revisited the historical figure of Wŏnhyo to support the imperial war.

Moreover, the Buddhist notions of selflessness and compassion Yi used to justify Silla's patriotic spirit and military action are in parallel with the war propaganda of self-sacrifice for the sake of the Japanese state and Emperor 滅私奉公 during the Greater East Asian War. In the case of Japanese Buddhists, they did not separate between the Law of the Buddha (*buppō*, 佛法) and the Law of the Sovereign (*kokuhō*, 国法) as indicated in the slogan of "Imperial Way Buddhism" (皇道佛教, *Kōdō Bukkyō*).[41] They asserted that war was an act of compassion.[42] Zen Buddhists particularly stressed that Zen spiritually had influenced the martial arts in terms of "sacrificial spirit and emptiness of the self."[43] Collaborative Korean Buddhist leaders did not remain silent either. Like their Japanese peers, they appealed to protect the country with Buddhism. They claimed that facing the war the individual self disappears and only the country remains immortal. Facing death, only patriotic loyalty (*ch'ungŭi*, 忠義) survives.[44] Even Korean Christian leaders stressed forgetting the self, not retreating on the battlefield, and the religious mission of self-sacrifice for the nation and the country.[45] In view of such assertions, one cannot avoid understanding Yi's *Wŏnhyo taesa* as a plea for war and war cooperation.

P'agye, its justification, and the ensuing spiritual torment

Yi's collaboration is usually assessed as an object of reproach or condemnation. The voices rebuking him are aggressive and exaggerated. His twenty-year long nationalist activities and literary achievements come to be overshadowed and devalued by a few years of collaboration near the end of his life. It is asserted that his collaboration sprouted from the early 1920s and that accordingly his

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[40] Ibid., pp.282-188.

[41] Of course, we should not imagine "one" Japanese Buddhism standing in contrast to "Korean Buddhism." Japanese Buddhism consists of many sects and movements. Although the majority of Japanese Buddhist leaders supported the wars that their state faced, there was still a minority of Buddhists who embarked on anti-war movements and criticized the war support of the dominant Buddhist leaders. The Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism (Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei) was such a group of lay Buddhists of the Nichiren sect. The Sōtō Zen monk Kondō Genkō and an old monk of Higashi Honganji branch, Takenaka Shōgan, individually opposed the wars from their Buddhist convictions. See Brian Victoria, *Zen at War*, pp.66-78.

[42] Brian Victoria, *Zen at War*, pp.79, 89 and 90.

[43] Ibid., p.79.

[44] Im Hyebong 임혜봉, *Ch'inil Pulgyoron* 친일불교론 2 (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1993), pp.499-500, 418, 52-530 and 400.

[45] Im Chongguk 林鍾國, *Ch'inil nonsŏl sŏnjip* 親日論說選集 (Seoul: Silch'ŏnmunhaksa, 1987), pp.334-335, 342-343.

nationalist activities were false. Yi, the political turncoat, is morally judged as a shameless person. [46] This blind condemnation, however, obscures the complexity of Yi's collaboration. Moreover, there are other important aspects which are silenced in the habitual assessments.

What are those aspects? Examining Chinese literary collaborators such as the *Gujin* group during the Japanese occupation (1937-1945), Poshek Fu has found that their collaboration did not result from thoughtlessness. They justified it by a sophisticated philosophical logic of "survival" as part of human nature. On the other hand, though, they were guilt-ridden and felt their existence to be miserable, debased and meaningless.[47] Considering the political and literary collaboration of Yi Kwangsu, too, we can uncover a strong rationale on one side and the experiences of inner torment and conflict on the other side. The transgressive monk Wŏnhyo in his novel is not only an emblem of the author's wartime collaboration in colonial reality, but also of his attempts to justify himself and the torment he suffered because of his collaboration.

As I have argued with regard to his previous novel *Sejo taewang*, Buddhism, in particular its imperative to respect human life, is once more emphasized as Yi's rationale for collaboration in this novel. From the beginning of the novel, Yi depicts how the Buddhist precepts (which may be regarded as a symbol of the nationalist code of conduct) clash with the more fundamental principles of life and death. Wŏnhyo sticks to the precept of the *vinaya* and rejects Queen Sŭngman's love. However, letting her die without fulfilling her wish, the protagonist feels guilty and realizes that there is a more important and fundamental principle than the *vinaya* rule. It is the matter of life and death. It is the truth of impermanence (*musang*, 無常). His keen awakening to this truth devalues the precepts of the vinaya and serves as the crucial momentum for violating the precept later on. In this way, Wŏnhyo's transgression of the *vinaya* is already justified before he really commits his deviant act. Accordingly, this is defense of Yi's collaboration against his critics, which Wŏnhyo's breaking of his vows symbolizes.

In the novel Wŏnhyo breaks the precept for the sake of one individual called Yosŏk. When Wŏnhyo is led to Princess Yosŏk, she confesses that she has considered taking her life if Wŏnhyo would not come to her. The seriousness of her yearning for Wŏnhyo implies that his transgression of the *vinaya* was inevitable to help her survive. Yi Kwangsu looks into her heart and reveals her feelings as follows:

> *The princess thought that Wŏnhyo was not the kind of man to fall for her beauty or to be attracted by her status as a princess. Wŏnhyo had entered into relations with her out of compassion, merely to save her; she believed that he felt pity for her. She believed that he had fulfilled her wishes, even though he*

[46] Chŏng Unhyŏn et al 정운현 외, *Ch'inilp'a* 친일파 3 (Seoul: Hangminsa, 1993/2002), pp.24-33.
[47] Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration* (Stanford University Press, 1993), pp.160-161.

had to break the precepts. She found Wŏnhyo on account of that even more precious, longing for him even more strongly.[48]

In this paragraph, princess Yosŏk does not blame or belittle the transgressive monk. Rather, she expresses her deep gratitude towards Wŏnhyo. She pays homage to him and appreciates his transgression of the *vinaya* as a respectable act of compassion. She does not think that Wŏnhyo broke the precept because he was attracted by her beauty or noble status. It was, she thinks, because he felt pity seeing a suffering living being and to save her from her suffering. Through the princess's mouth, Yi Kwangsu subtly speaks up for the transgressive monk. Far from condemning him, the author defends *p'agye* and even justifies it as a respectable act of compassion. The Buddhist concept of compassion is used as an argument to justify Wŏnhyo's transgression of the *vinaya*. Yi's collaboration, which Wŏnhyo's transgression of the *vinaya* symbolizes, accordingly, comes to be justified as a compassionate act, for which he did not shrink from abandoning his political loyalty to the Korean nation and did not hesitate to damage his fame as a national leader. His collaboration is justified as a compassionate deed aiming to save people, even though it may be just a single person.

The appearance of the priest Taean in this novel adds a subtle nuance to Yi Kwangsu's treatment of the problem of *p'agye* and the justifying concept of compassion. Seeing young raccoon dogs that have lost their mother in a flood, the protagonist Wŏnhyo chants some phrases of the Expedient Means chapter 方便品 of the Lotus Sutra for them, whereas the priest Taean gives milk to the hungry animals saying they cannot understand Buddhist phrases. This practical help, which is adjusted to the level of living beings, signifies the concept of *upaya* (expedient means). This is the way Buddha's compassion takes shape and is delivered to living beings. In a way akin to giving milk to the hungry animals, Wŏnhyo gives romantic love to the lovesick princess. In this way, it comes to be plausible that Yi did what, he thought, could practically help some individuals in danger of life. His acts of collaboration rather than a prayer for them were a concrete deed from which they could benefit.

If this justification is a rationalization of his collaboration, we may wonder what was Yi Kwangsu's emotional response to his collaboration. Was he as shameless, even experiencing a thrill of pleasure, as is generally assumed? Was he as overwhelmed with gratitude to the Emperor as his exaggerated words and acts suggested? What ensued after he betrayed his nation and what he felt during his wartime collaboration was not joyfulness but a horrendous trauma which left deep scars. The more Yi Kwangsu attempted to justify his collaboration, the more he experienced a terrible feeling of loss and inner conflict. This spiritual torment referring to the deepest feeling was often kept hidden and can only be perceived through fictional stories like *Wŏnhyŏ taesa*.

[48] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, p.407

The Buddhist concept of *p'agye* in this novel, which symbolically stands for the act of collaboration, allows the author to express his traumatic experience. The author describes the protagonist's feelings after he leaves the palace where Yosŏk lives as follows:

> *The whole world seemed changed. Wŏnhyo had lost the self-confidence with which he was able to announce, "I am a pure and undefiled priest"… He felt that if he were a bird, he would fall down to the earth with broken wings. It weighed heavily on him….Somewhere he incessantly heard the words "Apostate monk! Apostate monk!" How shameful to hear it! What was more disgraceful in the world than this?*[49]

As we see, the protagonist Wŏnhyo is terribly afflicted by his transgressive act of *p'agye*. He has become a defiled monk and lost all his self-confidence, his honor, his loftiness, his face and voice. The whole world looks as if it has turned its back on him or shut the door in his face. Wŏnhyo feels discarded and debased. The author projected his own confusion on the protagonist of his novel. The crashed bird with broken wings is a crucial trope for such a fallen nationalist who has lost authority and been humiliated. Chased by auditory hallucinations denouncing him as "an apostate monk" the figure of Wŏnhyo expresses how serious the author's traumatic stress was. Elsewhere Yi Kwangsu wrote, "Wŏnhyo was dejected by his transgression of the *vinaya*. One night spent in the palace had swept his ambitions and courage away… He could not look up to the stars for shame."[50] This phrasing contains a hint of Yi's continuing shame and his painful sense of self-reproach for his deviant behavior of collaboration.

The Wŏnhyo in the novel, whose face is contorted with all kinds of terrible emotions and whose mind is obsessed by the act of *p'agye*, is irrelevant to the Wŏnhyo of actual history. As said before, the historical person is recognized as an eminent monk, despite his transgression of the *vinaya* or even because of it. A Chinese Buddhist work *Huixuanji* 會玄記 also presents him as a figure who is outspoken in his remarks and not bound by conventional norms of behavior.[51] His unrestrained behavior, hanging out in bars and taverns with lay Buddhists, strongly implies a nonchalant attitude toward *p'agye*. However, in the novel, *p'agye* obsesses Wŏnhyo. The imaginary cries of "*Apostate monk! Apostate monk!* " are nothing but transformations of the names Yi Kwangsu was called: collaborator, traitor, apostate or pro-Japanese stooge.[52] The degradation

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[49] Ibid.,p.405.

[50] Ibid., pp.441-442.

[51] A late thirteenth century work written by Purui 普瑞. The original title is *Huayan xuantanhui xuanji* 華嚴懸談會玄記. Quoted from Yi Nŭnghwa, *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsa*, pp.233-235.

[52] Due to the colonial censorship, there was no document proving that he was called these names in the colonial period. However, hearsay evidence abundantly shows that *hwejŏl* (selling one's national identity), *pyŏnjŏl* (turncoat), *panminja* (anti-nationalist), *ch'inilp'a* (pro-Japanese person), and *ch'inil*

in the novel of Wŏnhyo from an honorable priest to a defiled monk represents Yi's fall from a respected national leader to a despicable traitor. Therefore, the protagonist Wŏnhyo is constantly haunted by the dilemma of his transgression: was it an expression of compassion or of sexual excitement? This reflects Yi's own dilemma: whether his collaboration was for the sake of the (Korean) people, obeying his consciousness, or whether it was related to rewards and privileges for himself.

If Yi's justification emphasizes the benefit for others, his inner agitation admits the possibility of selfish desire and self-interest. This is articulated in the novel: "Desire often disguises itself as compassion".[53] When Princess Yosŏk reappears to see Wŏnhyo with a baby, Wŏnhyo for the first time sees it as the karmic retribution of his previous pleasure. He had never thought that he felt lust while spending the nights with her, thinking of it as an act of mercy or compassion, in answer to her wish. It should be justified by the principle of *muae* but in the novel Wŏnhyo admits: "It was not *muae* but selfishness under the guise of *muae*."[54] The reappearance of the princess scratches the scar of his apostasy. Although Wŏnhyo achieved profound levels of study and practice, Yi repeatedly states that Wŏnhyo's wound will never be healed and that the conjugal relationship with the princess pierces his heart forever.[55] Here sexual intercourse symbolizes Yi's political cooperation with the wartime colonial authorities. Through Wŏnhyo's incurable wound that results from his transgressive act, we can discern the author's own traumatic experience of spiritual torment in the aftermath of his political choice.

Nationalist mythmaking as a counter-discourse

Yi's novel *Wŏnhyo taesa* has many faces. It is a Buddhist novel which deals with a Buddhist monk and basic Buddhist teachings. It is a historical novel that has ancient Silla as its setting. As the same time, it can be labeled as a colonial-period novel, even as a "pro-Japanese novel." Through revisiting the ancient history of Korea, Yi talks more about colonial reality and colonial events and disseminates wartime propaganda. Still, there is another important element in this novel, which subverts the Japanese wartime colonial agenda and in this sense is anti-Japanese and anti-colonial. Already, some postcolonial readings have demonstrated that pro-Japanese literature (*ch'inil munhak*) does not only deliver war propaganda, but creates counterdiscourses against the colonial power and its dominant culture and knowledge.[56] Although there is a surge of

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hyŏnyŏkcha (pro-Japanese collaborator) tagged after him. It is no coincidence that after liberation, those names were overtly pronounced. See Yi Chŏnghwa 이정화, *Kŭriun abŏnim ch'unwŏn* 그리운 아버님 春園 (Seoul: Usinsa, 1955/1993), pp.46-47, 77, and 97.

[53] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, p.479.

[54] Ibid., p.480.

[55] Ibid., pp.480 and 506.

[56] Kyeong-Hee Choi, "Another Layer of the Pro-Japanese Literature: Ch'oe Chŏnghŭi's "The Wild

scholarly attention to Yi's pro-Japanese literature, few actually have brought this ambivalence and counter-discoursive subtext to the forefront.[57]

From my observation, this counter-discourse can be but explored in the most puzzling part of *Wŏnhyo taesa*: the imaginary story of the *yongsindang* training. Historical records state that after committing *p'agye*, Wŏnhyo called himself *sosŏng kŏsa* (小性居士, a humble lay-believer) and wandered around in the secular world. In this novel, however, the author drew on his fertile imagination and created an episode about Wŏnhyo's mysterious ascetic practices between the two historical events. It concerns the cultivation of the way of the *hwarang*, the "flower-boys," who constituted an association of young men from the elite in Silla. The *hwarang* were also called *kuksŏn* (national immortals). The way of the *hwarang* is explained as referring to Silla's native religiosity, called *kosindo* 古神道, namely the Way of the Ancient Gods. According to the author, "*Kuksŏndo* embodies patriotism and filial piety. This was in no way an imported idea. Rather, it originated from Silla".[58] He repeats that *hwarangdo* was the spirit of patriotism that since ancient times loyalty to the state and filial piety have sprung from one root (*ch'unghyo ilbon*, 忠孝一本) and ran through the deepest veins of Silla.[59]

After defining the *hwarang* spirit, Yi explains how this spirit crucially contributed to the unification war. King Chinhŭng (r. 540-576) who had the ambition to unify the three kingdoms made young boys practice physically and spiritually. "The goal of [*hwarang*] practice was to think nothing of wealth and comfort and to devote oneself only to patriotism, filial piety, sincerity, valor, and benevolence (*ch'ung*, *hyo*, *sin*, *yong*, *in*, 忠孝信勇仁). This was to be ready to answer the call of the country and to prepare oneself to die on the battlefield. Ch'unch'u [King T'aejong] and Yusin [Silla's general Kim Yusin] both were of *hwarang* origin".[60] The *hwarang* spirit was explained as strengthening morale in warfare of the men in the frontline but also of the whole population on the homefront. Silla's women supported the men donating their hair to make

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Chrysanthemum"" in *POETICA* 52, 1999, pp.61-87; Han Suyŏng한수영, *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chaeinsik: 1937-1945-nyŏngan-ŭi Han'guk sosŏl-kwa singminjuŭi* 친일문학의 재인식:1937-1945년 간의 한국소설과 식민주의 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005); Yun Taesŏk 윤대석, *Singmunji kungmin munhak non* 식민지 국민문학론 (Seoul: Yŏngnak역락, 2006); Kim Yangsŏn 김양선, *Kŭndae munhag-ŭi t'alsingminjisŏng-gwa chendŏ chŏngch'ihak* 근대문학의 탈식민지성과 젠더정치학 (Seoul: Yŏngnak, 2009).

[57] Im Chongguk 林鍾國, *Ch'inil munhak non* 親日文學論 (Seoul: Minjok munje yŏn'guso, 1966/2002); Yi Kyŏnghun, *Yi Kwangsu-ŭi ch'inil munhak yŏn'gu* 이광수의 친일문학연구 (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1998); Chang Sŏnggyu 장성규, "Ilche malgi Yi Kwangsu-ŭi ijung-jŏk chŏngch'esŏng-gwa Pulgyo suyong-ŭi munje: Wŏnhyo taesa-rŭl chungsim-ŭro" 일제 말기 이광수의 이중적 정체성과 불교 수용의 문제: 원효대사를 중심으로 in *Han'guk hyŏndae chakka-wa Pulgyo* 한국현대작가와 불교 (Seoul: Yeok, 2007), pp.137-164; Kwak Ŭnhŭi 곽은희, "Hwangminhwa-ŭi hwansang, ododoen kyemong: Yi Kwangsu-ŭi Tongp'o-e koham-ŭl chungsim-ŭro" 皇民化의 환상, 오도된 계몽: 이광수의 <동포에 告함>을 중심으로 in *Minjok munhwa nonch'ong* 31 民族文化論叢 31 (2005): 365-393.

[58] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, p.408.

[59] Ibid., p.409.

[60] Ibid., p.418.

soldiers' hats. Thanks to the *hwarang* spirit, Silla became as one body and could achieve the great work of the unification of the Three Kingdoms.

Following Lee Ki-baik's notion that "the most important function of the *hwarang*, after all, was military"[61] and Yi Pyŏngdo's view that the core spirit of *hwarang* bands was found in the virtues of patriotism and filial piety,[62] some scholars conclude that Yi's emphasis on *hwarangdo* is, after all, to boost Korean patriotic nationalism and therefore, his fiction is intrinsically a nationalist novel.[63] However, they did not look over carefully the colonial context and oversimplified the implications of *hwarangdo*.

As Richard Rutt and Vladimir Tikhonov point out, the idea of *hwarang* as a military cult did not become prominent until the days when the Japanese were promoting the idea of *bushidō* to boost military morale of imperial soldiers during the Great East Asian War and Pacific War.[64] Silla's *hwarangdo* was indeed discovered first by Japanese historians such as Ikeuchi Hiroshi 池内宏 (1929) and Mishina Akihide 三品彰英 (1937) against the backdrop of the Imperial War.[65] It was their idea that the *hwarang* represented the forgotten warrior spirit of ancient Silla. They spotlighted the *hwarang*'s warrior's spirit (the Buddhist monk Wŏngwang's code of warriors of self-sacrifice, valor, and patriotism 忠義), military functioning and achievements in the ancient wars. Their focus was however not on the existence of *hwarangdo*, but on the loss and disappearance of the martial spirit in contemporary colonial Korea and the ensuing degeneration of the Koreans. It was compared with Japan and its long tradition of *bushidō*. Japan was argued as the only country in which the warrior spirit had never been discontinued and is still alive and therefore, Japan possessed the qualifications to be the leader of Asia and the world.

Prompted by Japanese scholarship, Korean scholars embarked on studies on *hwarang* but with different purposes. Sin Ch'aeho 申采浩 serialized *Chosŏn sanggosa* (朝鮮上古史, 1931) in *Chosŏn ilbo*, and in this work he saw the association of *hwarang* with military martyrdom as Japanese scholars did, but laid great emphasis on its Korean origin, seeing it as representing the independent spirit of Korean history from that of other countries like China.[66]

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[61] Lee Ki-baik, *A new history of Korea* trans. by Edward W. Wagner with Edward J. Shultz (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1984/1996), p.55.

[62] Yi Pyŏngdo 李炳燾, *Han'guk Yuhaksa* 韓國儒學史 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1989), pp.43-44.

[63] Kim Wŏnmo, "Yi Kwangsu-ŭi minjokjuŭi-jŏk yŏksainsik" in *Ch'unwŏn yŏngu hakpo* 1, pp.83-98; Yi Myŏng'u 이명우, "Ch'unwŏn-ŭi yŏksasosŏl yŏn'gu"; Nam Inhyŏn 남인현, "Yi Kwangsu-ŭi Wŏnhyo taesa yŏn'gu" 이광수의 <원효대사> 연구 (MA thesis, Tongguk taehakkyo, 2003), pp.10-19.

[64] Richard Rutt, "The flower boys of Silla (Hwarang)" in *TKBRAS* (Transactions of the Korea branch of the Royal Asiatic Society) 38 (Oct. 1961): 1-66; Tikhonov, Vladimir, "Hwarang Organization: Its Functions and Ethics" in *Korea Journal* 38:2 (Summer 1998): 318-338.

[65] Remco Breuker, "Contested objectivities: Ikeuchi Hiroshi, Kim Sanggi and the tradition of Oriental history (tōyō shigaku) in Japan and Korea in *East Asian History* 29 (June 2005):69-106; Mishina Akihide 三品彰英, *Silla hwarang-ŭi yŏn'gu* 新羅 花郎의 硏究 (1937) trans. by Yi Wŏnho (Seoul: Chimmundang 집문당, 1995).

[66] Kim Kyoung-hwa, "Reevaluating Hwarang's Images: National Scholarship in Colonial Korea and

Another Korean scholar, Ch'oe Namsŏn, also thought that the essence of the *hwarang* was the fighting spirit of Silla but he also paid attention to the cultural role of the *hwarang* and examined how Korean culture and tradition were transmitted and preserved by them.[67] Likewise, colonial intellectuals negotiated with the colonial vision of Korean history and culture but tweaked it to subvert the colonial politics of knowledge and to reclaim Korean identity and authenticity (originality) for the Koreans. [68] However, not all colonial intellectuals were able to do that. Many more Korean intellectuals and leaders uncritically parroted the Japanese claim of the ancient Korean martial spirit, including the spirit of the *hwarang*, in order to encourage Korean students to volunteer for the imperial army and to participate in the holy war.[69]

In short, we should more carefully examine how Yi Kwangsu deals with the *hwarang* motif in his novel before simply concluding that it was either nationalist or pro-Japanese. Yi basically talks about the military spirit and role of the *hwarang* as the Japanese and Korean intellectuals did. He glorifies the warriors and their service to the country and their readiness to die on the battlefield. The *hwarang* warriors are praised as the leading figures in the unification war. Since the ancient unification war in this novel symbolizes the Imperial War to unify the whole of Asia and the world under the leadership of Japan like the peninsula under the leadership of Silla, the *hwarang* warriors are correlated to the imperial soldiers, whereas the spirit of *hwarang* is compared to the fighting spirit of the Japanese Imperial Army.

Yi even alludes to Japan's Total War while applying the *hwarang* spirit to the ordinary Silla people. He depicts that brave fearless *hwarang* warriors were active in Silla's unification war but at the same time, that the war was not only conducted by the Silla warriors but supported by the whole population in Silla. This particular depiction conveys the concept of Total War which was used when Japan started the full-scale war against China and the West. This concept emphasizes that a modern war is not merely conducted by the soldiers but the participation of the citizens to support the war spiritually, morally, economically, and culturally was seen as crucial in deciding whether the war ends with victory or defeat.[70] The *hwarang* spirit Yi talks about in his novel thus can be seen to promote national mobilization for Total War.

Yi's explanation of the *hwarang* may be seen a war propaganda on its surface, but there is something particular about it. He gives a whole new meaning to the way of *hwarang* by renaming it *kuksŏndo* (the way of *kuksŏn*).

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its Traditional Sources" in *ArOr* 76 (2008), pp.186-188.

[67] Ibid., pp.188-190.

[68] Ellie Choi, "Yi Kwangsu, 1922: 'Seeing' Korea and the Ethnic Spectator's Search for Authenticity" in *Ch'unwŏn yŏn'gu hakpo* 1 春園硏究學報 1 (2008): 281-328, p.287.

[69] Chŏng Unhyŏn 정운현, *Haktoyŏ sŏngjŏn-e nasŏra* 학도여 성전에 나서라 (Seoul: Opssŏjiji annŭn iyagi, 1997).

[70] Jerôme de Wit, "The Dilemmas of Nationalism during Civil War: In kim Song's living Forever" in *Korean Histories* 2.2:24-41, pp.25-27.

This designation represents Silla's native spirituality and the indigenous mode of life of the Silla people. He once again refers to it as Silla's ancient divine way, called *kosindo* 古神道. His interest in this native spirituality is greater than his attention to the military function of the *hwarang*. He etymologically reconstructs Silla's ancient divine way using dozens of pages (whereas he writes only a few paragraphs about *hwarang* warriorship). To cut a long story short, he explains that the name of Silla's mythical founder Pak Hyŏkkŏse is derived from or related to Pang'a, which is the name of the god of sun. The syllable *pa* means sun or fire. So, the forefather of Silla goes back to a sun deity or a fire deity. A big *pak* (gourd) indicates the sun, but a small *pak* indicates the moon deity (Tang'a). The next king is etymologically associated with a water deity (Sang'a) and a deity of the life force (Sarang'a). Not only Silla but Koguryŏ's and Paekche's royal houses were of divine descent. He also explains that ordinary people in the Three Kingdoms were also divine beings as their names such as Kagabasaga, Kagamanaba, Manabara, Pagaganakara and the like represent important deities. In sum, he creates a myth about the divine origin of the Three Kingdoms, their royal families and people, taking archaic language as a source.[71]

The novel reaches its climax in a scene in which Wŏnhyo himself dramatizes the myth-making process in action. Despite his Buddhist priesthood, Wŏnhyo practices Silla's worship of deities, a ritual to establish direct contact with deities. He first undergoes *kang'ama* (purification) training in nature. He goes to a shrine and claps his hands, chanting formulas such as *kanarasa* which refer to deities in relation to agriculture (this is reminiscent of Japanese Shinto ritual). During the day, he washes his body and meditates in the sun called Kang'a. After sunset, he eats some porridge and makes an offering to the sun deity. In the night, he and his attendee do not sleep but turn around and around a hundred times chanting spells like *kangara* (this anachronistically reminds us of the sixteenth century folklore dance *kanggang sullae*). If they fall asleep, the ritual master hits them with a stick. Before the sun rises, they loudly recite the spell of *kangara pangara*. In this way, they practice the ritual for seven days and nights (this practice somewhat resembles the seven-day intensive meditation called *yongmaeng chŏngjin* in Sŏn (Zen) Buddhism).

The second ritual called the *kasang'adang* practice is rather Silla people's way of life course than a religious ritual. Boys cut off the top of their hair and paint it in orange. This is called *paek'o*. This means that they become grown-ups. Girls put a spot of rouge on their forehead (*konji*) and are recognized as women. They are allowed to get married. Men with *paek'o* are regarded as the moon whereas women with *kanada* (*konji*) embody the sun. They are not human beings but close to deities.[72] Women, in particular, now wear *pangara* (*ch'ima chŏgori*: the traditional costume). The male and female attendants seal their eyes

[71] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, pp.414-421.
[72] Ibid., p.428.

and sing and dance to the music (this is a kind of esoteric Buddhist ritual). Some yell if they feel their spiritual eye is opened (this looks like an eye-opening ceremony in Buddhism). In the final section only three persons including Wŏnhyo are allowed to take part. Their goal is to meet a deity called Ang'a. This is creator god (ch'angjosin) or God of Emptiness (hŏgongsin). They sit on a cliff without food and shelter. A man called Kanasaga cannot stand the hunger and stops. Only Wŏnhyo and a woman called Agasa endure till the end and finally meet the Ang'a deity in the form of an old man with a long white beard. (this depiction is reminiscent of the tiger and bear which appear in the legend of Tan'gun). In this way, Wŏnhyo meets the supreme god who created Silla in the beginning and becomes part of Silla's myth.

As I mentioned before, this depiction of Wŏnhyo's experience of Silla's divine way is sheer fiction and fantasy, which has nothing to do with the historical Wŏnhyo. To reconstruct ancient Silla's divine way, Yi seems to have borrowed a wide range of existing religious rituals and practices and folklore and linguistic components. Regarding this, some assume that Yi restored *Sillaŏ* (Silla language) and Silla culture in *Wŏnhyo taesa* and through it sought the origin of Korean national identity and culture. This is again regarded as proof of his patriotic nationalism, while he ostensibly posed as a pro-Japanese collaborator and published his novel in the colonial governmental newspaper.[73] Put aside the fact that these scholars tend to gloss over the wartime propaganda this novel delivers, it should be clarified that regarding the ancient Silla's worship of deities, Yi created fiction and myth, not history. He did not restore Silla language, customs and culture to the original forms, but fabricated them using existing religious, linguistic, and cultural elements often anachronically. These included Japanese Shinto, esoteric Buddhism, Sŏn Buddhism, the much older Tan'gun myth, folk customs of Korea of which the origin is not clear or assumed to be medieval, archaic Korean language (which we cannot identify really as the language of Silla). The letter seems inspired by the *hangŭl* alphabet (a fifteenth-century construct).[74] How much of this really belongs to Silla?

My question is why Yi so laboringly fictionalized ancient Silla's worship and created a myth about the divine origin of ancient Korea, its rulers and people. Is this just idle fancy and groundless imagination? Or is there a certain intention behind this fictionalization? What does Yi want to tell contemporary readers with this fictitious story? In his fictionalization of Silla's *kosindo* he did not just follow his fancy. It very much echoes Ch'oe Namsŏn's much earlier linguistic and folklore-based attempt to reinterpret the divine myth of Tan'gun in the mid 1920s. Ch'oe argued that the mythical founder of Korea, Tan'gun, was of divine origin as the name comes from *tălgări* or *tăigăr* in

[73] Han Sŭngok 韓承玉, "Ch'unwŏn Yi Kwangsu-ŭi <Wŏnhyo taesa> yŏn'gu" 春園 李光洙의 元曉大師 硏究 in *Hanjung inmun kwahak yŏn'gu* 19 韓中人文科學硏究 (2002):55-77.

[74] Yi pronounces Kanadaramabasa'a –ㄱㄴㄷㄹㅁㅂㅅㅇ- and explains them as the names of Silla deities. The way he arranges the syllables exactly corresponds to *han'gŭl* alphabet order. See *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, p.416.

archaic Korean, which means Heaven or a shaman or head. Tan'gun's father Hwanung descended from heaven. His mother, the she-bear, was a divine animal. The divine Tan'gun was a central figure in an ancient religious tradition that worshipped Heaven and its human representation.[75]

This religious cult Ch'oe called the "Way of *Părk*" or Korean Shinto (Chosŏn Sindo), seems to have been adopted and reworked by Yi Kwangsu in his novel. Ch'oe indeed mentioned that since Tan'gun, all subsequent Korean communities were organized by this ideology. The practice of *hwarangdo* in Silla was seen as an example.[76] Decades later (in 1942), Yi succeeded to Ch'oe's linguistic folkloric inquiries, focusing on the myths of the Three Kingdoms instead of the Tan'gun myth. Ch'oe's "Way of *Părk*" is revived as Silla's *kosindo* (the ancient divine way) in this novel. If Ch'oe argued Tan'gun's divine origins, Yi explores the linkage between deities and the royal households of Three Kingdoms in ancient Korea and further attempts to deify the ordinary people in Silla and other ancient kingdoms. Since Ch'oe's theory is close to mere speculations based upon linguistic and folklore sources rather than a credible scholarly work with historical evidence, Yi's fictional work has also validity issues. Yet, the significance of Ch'oe's and Yi's works should be found not in its validity but in its role in the colonial context.

As Chizuko T. Allen elucidates, the Korean Shinto forged by Ch'oe was a reaction to Japanese scholarly theory of common ancestry of Japanese and Koreans (*nissen dōsoron*, 日鮮同祖論) and to its attempt to justify Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 and the policy of assimilating of the Koreans to Japanese subjects.[77] Japanese scholars speculated linguistic, ethnic, mythological, and religious similarities between Japanese and Korean in ancient times but mainly in two ways. The first group speculated that Korean ancient kingdoms were founded by the Japanese deities or emperors and argued that therefore, it was natural to annex the Korean peninsula and to restore the old territory of the Japanese Imperial House. The second group argued that Japanese ancestors had migrated from Asian continent and the Korean peninsula. Kita Sadakichi, for example, insisted that the Jingu Empress and Kanmu Emperor in Japan actually originated from Korea and that the Japanese foundation myth about the descendents of the Sun-Goddess (Amateraru) is comparable with Puyŏ and Koguryŏ myths.[78] His theory of Japan being composed of mixed races and the common roots and ancestry of Japan and Korea was not only accepted by many intellectuals but became an official ideology for the Japanese colonial

[75] Chizuko T. Allen, "Northeast Asia Centered Around Korea: Ch'oe Namsŏn's View of History" in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49:4 (November 1990), pp.796-797; Yi Yŏnghwa 李英華, *Ch'oe Namsŏn-ŭi yŏksahak* 崔南善의 歷史學 (Seoul: Kyŏng'in munhwasa, 2003), pp.90-99.
[76] Ibid., p.797.
[77] Chizuko T. Allen, "Early Migrations, Conquests, and Common Ancestry: Theorizing Japanese Origins in Relation with Korea" in *Sungkyun journal of east Asian studies* 8.1 (2008):105-130, p.105.
[78] Etsuko H. Kang, "Kita Sadakichi (1871-1939) on Korea: A Japanese Ethno-Historian and the Annexation of Korea in 1910" in *Asian Studies Review* 21.1 (2007): 41-60, pp.43 and 54-56.

government, justifying Japan's imperialistic expansion into Korea and Asia and achieving the assimilation of the Koreans into Japanese subjects.[79]

As Allen succinctly describes, Korean intellectuals interacted with the colonial discourse by attempting to accept, modify, defy and subvert it. Sin Ch'aeho, for example, did not deny early Korean-Japanese relations but refuted the interpretations of Japanese scholars. He focused on seeking Korea's independence, distinct identity, and origins rather than the ethnic closeness between Korea and Japan. He reversed the Japanese assertions on its superior leadership by arguing that the ancient Korean kingdoms were cultural benefactors for Japan and that Korea (Paekche) had attacked and subjugated Japan, not the other way around.[80] By contrast, Ch'oe Namsŏn acknowledged the cultural and religious ties between Korea and Japan and the Japanese theory of migrations. However, he did not just follow the Japanese scholarly views and the subsequent policy of assimilationism. He explored the Tan'gun myth to assert Korea's central position in ancient cultural sphere characterized by its tradition of heaven worship which encompassed the whole northeast Asia and which Japan belongs to as a mere member.[81] In this way, he subverted the Japanese arguments for the sake of Korea.

Yi Kwangsu's articulation of *kosindo* in his fiction was thus not a groundless imagination but a serious reaction against the Japanese theory of common ancestry and the assimilation policy. Actually, the issue was more explicitly stated in his non-fiction writings. In his essay "Tōhō ni yosu" 同胞に寄す(Toward compatriots, 1940), *sindo* 神道 was mentioned as an example of common culture shared by Japan and Korea. Yet, it referred to contemporary cultural exchange between the two nations rather than to shared common ancestry and roots in ancient times. He saw that despite attempts by the Confucian state to suppress it, *kosindo* survived and formed the basis for the religious sentiment of contemporary Koreans in the mixed form with Buddhism. In today's Japan, he found many Shinto shrines worshipping Korean deities. He also reminded his readers of the facts that Buddhism in Japan was transmitted from Paekche and that the Koguryŏ monk, Hyeja, preached Buddhism to *Shōtoku* Taishi 聖德太子.[82]

This essay was published in the government newspaper for Japanese (*Keijō nippō*) and therefore written in Japanese. Yi was aware of the fact that the majority of his readers were Japanese people. To his Japanese readers, he showed his attitude supporting the policy of assimilation under the banner of *naisen ittai* as its subtitle "the possibility of *naisen ittai*" indicates. For that purpose, he approved of the shared culture between Korea and Japan

[79] Ibid., pp. 41, 57, and 58.
[80] Chizuko T. Allen, "Early Migrations, Conquests, and Common Ancestry", pp.116-117.
[81] Ibid., pp.117-118.
[82] *Keijō nippō* (4 Oct. 1940). Republished in Yi Kwangsu 李光洙, *Tongp'o-e koham: Ch'ŭnwŏn Yi Kwangsu ch'inil munhak* 동포에 告함: 春園 李光洙 親日文學, edited by Kim Wŏnmo and Yi Kyŏnghun (Seoul: Ch'ŏrak-kwa hyŏnsilsa, 1997), pp.18-21.

exemplified by *kosindo* and Buddhism. However, the detailed accounts provide a hidden subversive message. As Sin Ch'aeho did, Yi's articulation implied how the ancient Korean people and kingdoms had transported advanced culture to Japan and contributed to its development. Yi subtly hailed Korea's early hegemony over Japan as many Korean scholars did and do.[83] Yet, he did not only regard it as a past event but more importantly as a present, ongoing process. One-sided assimilation of the Japanese into Korea he argued subverted the exact concept of *naisen ittai* that the Koreans were supposed to assimilate into Japan.

Yi's essay "Chōsen bunka no shōrai" 朝鮮文化の將來 (The future of Korean culture, 1940), even more clearly, reveals his keen interest in *kosindo* as an ancient custom of heaven worship and in particular Silla's called *kuksŏndo*.[84] *Kosindo* was argued as the origin and the ever present undercurrent of Korean culture from ancient times. He pointed out how this Korean *kosindo* was similar or even identical to the Japanese counterpart and argued that *naisen ittai* on spiritual and cultural levels was a kind of restoration of Korean original culture. This basically collaborationist essay in favor of *naisen ittai* also contains many interesting and intricate details. An example is that most of his efforts was concentrated on explaining Silla's *kosindo*. He physically used over six pages to discuss the definition, basic principles, and detailed episodes of *kuksŏndo* (his labored explanation of *kuksŏndo* was considerably reflected in his fictional work) whereas the sameness of Japanese and Korean culture and the message of assimilation were merely mentioned using some sentences. He attempted to restore the origin of Korean culture under the pretext of assimilation.

In *Wŏnhyo taesa*, Yi went one step further. He only delved into Silla's *kosindo* tradition without mentioning its relations with Japan. If he stood for the same ancestry theory and the assimilation policy, he had to dramatize a mythical story that Susanoo, the brother of Japanese sun goddess Amaterasu, conquered Silla and that Silla's fourth ruler Sŏkt'alhae was of Japanese origin as a Japanese scholar Yoshida Tōgo contended.[85] That the Koreans undoubtedly descended from Susanoo and therefore, share the same ethnic identity with the Japanese was also what the Governor-General of Korea stated in 1942, the year when this novel was published.[86] Or on the contrary, he could have depicted that the Yamato founders came from Silla and conquered the natives.[87] The worship of sun god in Silla he depicted could be argued as same as the Japanese heaven worship. Nonetheless, he ignored all those ideas and arguments related to early Korea-Japanese relations and instead, focused on restoring *kosindo* as Silla's indigenous religious beliefs and rituals, customs, society, and people's view of life.

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[83] Chizuko T. Allen, "Early Migrations, Conquests, and Common Ancestry", p.106.
[84] *Shōdōin* 總動員 (Jan.1940). Republished in Yi Kwangsu, *Tongp'o-e koham*, pp.40-50.
[85] Chizuko T. Allen, "Early Migrations, Conquests, and Common Ancestry", p.107.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., p.108.

Yi's attempt to forge ancient Korea's divine way in *Wŏnhyo taesa* was a reaction to the Japanese argument of *Nissen Dōsoron*. But there was one more colonial discourse his articulation of *kosindo* questioned: *kokutai* 国体, which was the essence of Japanese national polity and became the core ideology of Japanese imperial state during the Pacific War. *Kokutai* was the ideology for Japanese ultra-nationalism and insisted on the "uniqueness" of the Japanese race, spirit and culture and emphasized "differences" from others.[88] It distanced itself from modern Occidental ideologies such as individualism and socialism, but also emphasized how Japan was unique among Asian or Oriental cultures. The *kokutai* ideology had loyalty, patriotism, filial piety, harmonious oneness, the martial spirit (*bushidō*) as its crucial tenets. Loyalty and filial piety are virtues which can be found in other Asian countries such as China, but the *kokutai* ideologues argued that Japan was still unique in a sense that there was no country but Japan which fused the two values into one through the Imperial Household. In other words, Japan in the past imported, assimilated, and sublimated Chinese and Indian ideologies such as Confucianism and Buddhism, but this was all to support the Imperial Way. This made possible to establish an original culture in Japan.[89]

Japanese national polity was centered on the emperor. The uniqueness of the Japanese national polity was impossible without the ancient mythology of Japan, which was identified as the divine country. Its ruler, the Emperor, was a direct descent of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and a living god. The Japanese people, whose father was the Emperor, were claimed to be of divine origin, too.[90] While sincerely believing in it, a majority of Japanese people imposed their putative superiority, leadership and governance on other regions and countries and assured themselves that under the protection of deities it was impossible to lose in the sacred and holy wars. This Japanese divine myth was supposed to be absolutely unparalleled and unprecedented in any other country. The subjects of Japan, including the Koreans, were supposed to obey the will of the divine Emperor and sincerely worship the Japanese emperor as their benevolent father. This made it possible to convert Koreans from a colonized people to Japanese citizens (*kokumin*). However, it did not mean that they were on equal footing with the "real" Japanese. They were just allowed to assimilate into the superior culture of the divine Japanese under the banner of *naisen ittai* (Japan and Korea as a single body).[91]

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[88] Ivan Morris, *Japan 1931-1945: Militarism, Fascism, Japanism?*, p.46

[89] Ibid., p.50.

[90] Robert King Hall, "Introduction" in *Kokutai No Hongi: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan* trans. by John Owen Gauntlett (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1949), p.8; "The Unique National Polity" (Kokutai no Hongi) in *Japan 1931-1945: Militarism, Fascism, Japanism?* Edited by Ivan Morris (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1963), pp.46-52.

[91] Ch'oe Yuri 최유리, "I. Chŏnsich'eje-wa minjok malsal chŏngch'aek" 전시 체제와 민족 말살 정책 in *Han'guk sa* 한국사 50, edited by Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 국사 편찬 위원회 (Seoul:T'amgudang, 2001), pp.43-47.

Yi Kwangsu was one of the most influential and prominent pro-Japanese Korean leaders in charge of promoting the idea of *kokutai* and its application to Korea in the form of *naisen ittai* among the Korean public. So, he must have acquainted himself with those concepts in wartime imperial rhetoric, which were actually confused, ambivalent and unsettled in the changing course of war. This caused difficulties of understanding, even among intellectuals, but enabled Korean intellectuals like Yi to discern some contradictions and vulnerabilities in the Japanese wartime ideologies. The *kokutai* ideology was surely not a picture-perfect ideology. As an ideology that claimed uniqueness, authenticity, and the purity of Japanese racial and cultural origins it paradoxically had from the outset the very problem of originality and purity because of imported ideas and traditions. When the *kokutai* doctrine makers glossed over this weakness by putting more emphasis on the aspects of adaptation than on origins, stressing how the Japanese nation had imported, assimilated and sublimated and completed all these foreign ideologies in a unique Japanese way, Yi attempted to counteract this by showing Korean equivalents and even claiming that the Korean spiritual culture was more pure and original than the Japanese *kokutai* doctrines.

Silla's *hwarangdo*, *kuksŏndo* and *kosindo* as presented in Yi's fiction are a calque of *kokutai*. This is a way to contest the uniqueness and authenticity of the Japanese national polity. The two axes of *kokutai* ideology are the unparalleled Imperial Household and *bushidō*. These are supposed to be found nowhere else but in the divine country of Japan, and not in China or in India. The two axes should have no counterparts in other cultures and countries. However, in his novel, Yi Kwangsu revisits ancient Silla history and shows how an ancient Korean kingdom, Silla, had both unparalleled divine royal kings and the Korean counterpart of *bushidō* in the guise of *hwarangd*o. Japanese *bushidō* is not merely the military spirit but represents the Japanese spirit and culture in its entirety. In the same way, Yi emphasizes that *kuksŏndo* (*hwarangdo*) was not just something a few youths practiced but represented the spirituality and mode of life of Silla as a whole. While *bushidō* conveys the uniqueness of Japanese culture, which consists in the oneness of loyalty and filial piety, he also explains *hwarangdo* as the spirit of patriotism and filial piety as a single body.

Yi's depiction of *kuksŏndo* imitates and emulates the characteristics of *bushidō* to problematize the uniqueness of the Japanese national polity, but he goes one step further attempting to destroy its unique aura. Yi claims, "This [*kuksŏndo*] was by no means imported from Chinese thought or culture. It was Silla's indigenous tradition."[92] He underscores that loyalty and filial piety were Silla's indigenous spiritual values and flatly denies any foreign influences. This emphasis on the originality of Silla's *kuksŏndo* is far removed from credible scholarly accounts such as of the historian Sin Ch'aeho, who had carefully deduced its origin from the ancient kingdom of Koguryŏ. Even, the Japanese

[92] *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 5, p.408.

kokutai doctrine makers did not assert the originality of the *kokutai* tenets, in the way Yi asserts the originality of the culture of Silla. Although *bushidō* was regarded as the outstanding characteristic of Japan's national morality, the basic tenets of it were acknowledged to be cultural importations from the Asian continent (mainly China and India) and were characteristic of Oriental morals.[93] Yi's claims about the originality and indigenousness of a Silla *hwarangdo* free from outward influences are absurd and exaggerated. However, they are not merely meaningless, because by such exaggeration Yi exposes the vulnerability of Japanese wartime ideologies and magnifies their self-contradictions.

An even stronger instance of the counter-discourse can be found in Yi's attempt to point a divine origin of Silla, its kings and its people. The uniqueness of Japanese national polity was, after all, centered on the unparalleled Imperial Household. Although Japan imported many cultural components from abroad, the Japanese emperor helped to create the original Japanese culture. It brought loyalty and filial piety together in a unique way. All the foreign imports converged on the emperor and this was evident only in Japan. Japan was the only divine country in the world. It was supposedly impossible to find another such a country in human history. The divine myth of Japan had to be absolutely unique, pure, untouchable and unparalleled. However, Yi argues that nothing is unique about the Japanese myth of the divinity of the Imperial Household. It is in no way unprecedented and inimitable. Japan is not the only country that was a divine ancient kingdom. Korea had the same kind of ancient kingdom and in this respect also may be called a divine country. As modern wartime Japan revisited ancient Japanese mythology to forge the uniqueness of the Japanese national polity, Yi produced a divine Silla mythology, the worship of the Sun god and the divine origin of Silla kings and people. This was a tactic to demystify the unparalleled mythology of Japan and to subvert the *kokutai* ideology.

Conclusion

Yi Kwangsu has been the center of attention for scholars, the public and the media and his pro-Japanese collaboration whipped up a storm of controversy in his days that still rages in contemporary Korea. My attempt has been not only to interpret his novel *Wŏnhyo taesa*, but ultimately to shed light on Yi's life, faith and literature which have been subjected to both praise and condemnation. Attitudes toward him vacillate between adoration and revulsion. As I have tried to show in this chapter, it is misleading to analyze Yi and his fiction in dichotomous terms and to seek one dominant answer. His novel is multilayered, referring to Buddhism, history, his own life, the colonial period, to the cultural and politics and illustrates the complexity and ambivalence the writer experienced.

[93] Ivan Morris, *Japan 1931-1945: Militarism, Fascism, Japanism?*, pp.48-50.

Yi was a devoted Buddhist and wrote a multitude of works on Buddhist figures and doctrines, including this novel on Wŏnhyo. However, it is wrong to think that he singled out this eminent monk from ancient Korean history to promote the quintessence of Mahayana Buddhism and to prove the greatness of Wŏnhyo's Buddhist thought of *muae*. Wŏnhyo in this novel represents Yi's own understanding of Buddhism and more intriguingly, Yi's current political stance as a pro-Japanese collaborator. The ancient Buddhist monk Wŏnhyo is depicted as a trangressive and war-supporting monk in this novel. This depiction magnifies or fabricates certain historical facts. It is far from celebrating Wŏnhyo as the pride of the Korean nation and culture under colonial rule, as Yi's contemporary Ch'oe Namsŏn tried. On the contrary, the depiction may be seen to slander this eminent monk. However, it should be clearly stated that Yi's focus here is neither on history nor on Wŏnhyo; speaks about wartime colonial present and reveals his role in it, including his support for the war effort, through historical allegories.

Although acknowledging his literary collaboration, I argue that this novel cannot be simply marked as a pro-Japanese novel, and neither can Yi simply a pro-Japanese writer. This is because pro-Japanese collaboration was not the only or the entire message his novel conveyed and because as shown by the forged myth of Silla's *hwarangdo* or *kuksŏndo*, Yi crafted a counter discourse that subverted the core ideology of Japanese colonialism and debunked Japan's cultural myth, while at the same time collaborating with the wartime colonial government. This novel further captures how Yi's experience of collaboration was not simply a matter of politics, but a complex and deeply religious matter. Yi faced an agonizing moral dilemma: to opt for the sanctity of human life or for national politics and followed the Buddhist principle of respect for life to handle this dilemma. Buddhism served to vindicate his decision and ensuing act of collaboration. Nonetheless, he could not avoid suffering mental anguish while losing his identity as a nationalist and posing as pro-Japanese.

Part 3

Kim Iryŏp (1896-1971):
A New Woman reborn as a Buddhist nun

Chapter 5

Love, Buddhism, and nationalism: Kim Iryŏp's Buddhist stories in the age of free love

Introduction

In march 1933, *Samch'ŏlli* 三千里 magazine presented a caricature of a woman in thick-rimmed glasses, standing on a large lotus leaf, pressing her palms together. She is clothed in an unusual costume, a full robe knotted at the waist, and is adorned with armbands; she is crowned with a dragon. She looks like a goddess, a beautiful female avatar of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. At the pond's edge, there is a man in a Western suit, necktie, and felt hat. He is holding a pen and a letter and is crying for her. The cartoon tells the story that the woman says good bye to the gentleman who is probably in love with her and leaves the secular world on a single leaf for a new Buddhist world. The woman portrayed in the caricature is Kim Iryŏp (金一葉, 1896-1971).[1]

Kim Iryŏp, whose real name is Kim Wŏnju, was one of a few audacious pioneering New Women (*sin yŏsŏng*) in early 1920s colonial Korea. Like the famous Japanese female poet Higuchi Ichiyō (通口一葉, 1872-1896) from whom Yi Kwangsu took her pen name Iryŏp ("single leaf"), she was a promising female poet active in a male-dominated literary circle. As an early advocate of the women's rights movement, she strove for women's liberation, education, and gender equality. Kim was arguably one of the most radical New Women in Korean history; she openly promoted free love and women's sexual freedom, engaging in fierce confrontations with the existing patriarchal society. These efforts brought her enormous unwanted attention and prompted gossip and scandals about her love life.

However, there is another side to Kim Iryŏp. As the caricature above indicates, Kim Iryŏp renounced her role as a New Woman and became a Buddhist nun in 1933. The eye-catching New Woman's entering the Buddhist sangha stirred up public interest and prompted her to clarify her religious aspirations: she was content with her current married life but needed a life of religious dedication to fully inquire into the depth of life and her true being.[2] Her aspirations were not really different from those associated with Buddhist renunciation in general. Nonetheless, as a Buddhist woman she was subjected to social prejudice almost throughout her life. Her contemporaries misjudged

[1] Her real name is Wŏnju. Her Buddhist name is Hayŏp 荷葉. Iryŏp is her pen name. She is better-known by her pen name Iryŏp. Thus, I will use her pen name rather than her real and Buddhist names.

[2] "Ilch'e-ŭi seyŏg-ŭl tanhago" 一切의 世慾을 斷하고 in *Samch'ŏlli* (November 1934); "Kain tokssuk kongbanggi" 佳人獨宿空房記 in *Samch'ŏlli* (August 1935), p.90.

her religious volition, lamenting how repeated failures in love, heartbreak, and an unhappy marriage had finally forced her to leave reality and escape to the remote mountains.[3] Many of today's scholars, too, write off her transition to Buddhism as the doomed end of a premature New Woman, just as her peers did at the time.

Recently, however, there has been a growing recognition of the need to rethink Kim Iryŏp's involvement in Buddhism. Recent scholarship points out her monastic life was not a failure or the end of her career, having been overshadowed by the scholarly focus on her feminist activity as a New Woman.[4] Buddhism turns out to have occupied a prominent place in her life, thought and literature. Jin Y. Park, for example, argued that Buddhist philosophy provided Kim with a way to overcome the limitations of modernity and feminism and to find answers to her lifelong search for self and freedom. Park especially looked the importance of Kim's Buddhism in a broad context in which Korean Buddhism encountered modernity, showing how Buddhist women had different views and experiences of modernity.[5] The general tendency that the activities of women have been neglected and left out in male-dominant Korean Buddhist history also makes Kim's religious life worth examining.[6]

Kim Iryŏp's role as a female Buddhist writer puts her in a unique position, too. Buddhism provided a new orientation and inspiration for her writing. It is wrong to assume that she abandoned her literary and social activities due to Buddhism. Since her first encounter with Buddhism in 1928 until 1940, she produced a great output of literature, as the increased number of her publications proves.[7] Many Buddhist-inspired works written during this period are not quite up to par from a religious and literary perspective. Nonetheless, they furnish rich and significant source materials we need to explore more nuanced and complicated experiences of Kim Iryŏp in her relationship with Buddhism and nationalism than is assumed.

The short stories by Kim Iryŏp that I will analyze in this chapter vividly portray the process of her struggle with life in colonial times with help of her Buddhist beliefs. However, she did not just accept Buddhist views as

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[3] "Kain toksuk kongbanggi" 佳人獨宿空房記, pp.89 and 91; "Sakppalhago changsamibŭn Kim Iryŏp yŏsa-ŭi hoegŏngi" 削髮하고 長衫입은 金一葉女史의 會見記 " in *Kaebyŏk* (Jan. 1935), pp.14-15.

[4] Kyŏng'wan 경완, "Iryŏp sonsa-wa sŏn," 一葉禪師와 禪 in *Han'guk hyŏndae chakka-wa Pulgyo* 한국현대작가와 불교 (Seoul: Yeok, 2007), p.52; Pang Minho 방민호, "Kim Iryŏp munhag-ŭi sasang-jŏk pyŏnmo kwajŏng-gwa Pulgyo sŏnt'aeg-ŭi ŭimi" 김일엽문학의 사상적 변모 과정과 불교 선택의 의미 in Ibid, pp.83-84 and 130.

[5] Jin Y. Park, "Gendered Response to Modernity: Kim Ir-yŏp and Buddhism," *Korea Journal* 45.1 (Spring 2005):114-141.

[6] Cho, Eun-su, "Introduction" in *Korean Buddhist nuns and laywomen: hidden histories, enduring vitality* (Albany: SUNY, 2011), pp.1-14.

[7] According to Bonnie B.C. Oh, 1932 was the most productive year of her poetry composing. See Bonnie B.C. Oh, "Kim Iryŏp: Pioneer Writer/Reformer in Colonial Korea" in *Transactions* 71 (1996): 9-30, p.24.

readymade answers for her problems. As will be discussed, she as a Buddhist woman, having a keen awareness of gender equality problems, noticed the male-dominated nature of Korean Buddhism and tried to amend or criticize it from a woman's point of view. Her short stories will further show that she did not simply give up her early ideas of modernity (epitomized by free love) and feminism under the influence of Buddhism. This is why I will examine her Buddhism as an extension and revision of her early activity.

The age of *yŏnae*: From a New Woman to a Buddhist nun

Kim's involvement in Buddhism did not clearly distance her from her previous activities as a New Woman. It did not simply oppose or condemn her feminist ideas and goals, by adopting Buddhist principles. Kim's concern with love (*sarang*) continued in her Buddhist writings; it even was the main concern in many of her postcolonial texts from the 1960s. One might think this was because of her lingering attachment to that particular secular affair, but Kim herself disputed this, insisting that she consciously became a Buddhist nun to be able to love in a true sense, to be the master of love, not the slave, and to solve love's problems by learning the essence of love.[8] This remarkable marriage of love and Buddhism, as far as Kim's colonial-period texts are concerned, needs to be discussed within the broad historical context in which love (*yŏnae* or *chayu yŏnae*, 戀愛) pervaded the air as socio-cultural ideology and practice. Therefore, a sketch of the climate of 1920s and 1930s Korea, her role as a revolutionary New Woman at the time, and her transition from a women's leader to a Buddhist woman is necessary and it also will be useful for other chapters in this dissertation.

In Kwŏn Podŭrae's phrase, the 1920s in colonial Korea was the age of free love (*yŏnae-ŭi sidae*).[9] Colonial society after the March First Movement (1919) was infatuated with the new cultural trend of *yŏnae*. This term may now belong to everyday language but historically seen, it was a Western import that reached colonial Korea through China or Japan, a modern construct that did not exist before. From the outset, the term *yŏnae* was devised to translate Western term "lŏbŭ" (love) and its exotic mood and came to connote romantic feelings between man and woman only.[10]

Soon a new group of women, tellingly influenced by Western liberalism and the trans-cultural feminist trend of New Women movements, appeared in

[8] In "Mu-rŭl anŭn munhwain: hŭllŏgan yŏinsang-ŭl ilkko" 無를 아는 文化人: "흘러간 女人像"을 읽고in Kim Iryŏp, *Miraesega tahago namtorok: sang* 未來世가 다하고 남도록 上 (Seoul: Inmul yŏn'guso, 1974), pp.284-294. (Further abbreviated as *Miraese*)

[9] Kwŏn Podŭrae 권보드래, *Yŏnae-ŭi sidae: 1920-nyŏndae ch'oban-ŭi munhwa-wa yuhaeng* 연애의 시대: 1920년대초반의 문화와 유행 (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa yŏn' gu, 2003).

[10] Kim Kyŏng'il 김경일, *Yŏsŏng-ŭi kŭndae, kŭndae-ŭi yŏsŏng: 20-segi chŏnbangi sin yŏsŏng-gwa kŭndaesŏng* 여성의 근대, 근대의 여성: 20세기전반기 신여성과 근대성 (Seoul: P'urŭn yŏksa, 2004), pp.121-124; Kwŏn Podŭrae, *Yŏnae-ŭi sidae*, pp.12-18.

Korea as a cultural symbol and preached and practiced the gospel of free love (*chayu yŏnae*) and love-based marriage (*chayu kyŏrhon*). Kim Iryŏp was one of those pioneering New Women in the early 1920s who played a pivotal role in the process that turned the term *yŏnae* into the hallmark of 1920s Korean culture. She edited a woman's magazine, *Sinyŏja* 新女子, which was short-lived but the "first journal published and run by Korean women in Korea with a distinctive feminist orientation,"[11] and advocated the most liberal revolutionary feminist ideas, with special emphasis of freedom of love and sexuality, in confrontation with the traditional virtues and customs imposed on women.

As Jiweon Shin remarks, Confucian ideology stresses the inferior position of women to men. "Obedience, subjugation, chastity and endurance were considered the highest virtues that they could attain."[12] The role of women was primarily to produce sons and offer cheap labor. In the traditional patriarchal system of early arranged marriages, the most important duty of women was to serve their parents-in-law, their husbands and children. During the enlightenment period when Confucianism as a state ideology was denounced for hindering modernization and causing the downfall of the country, the traditional restrictions on women, such as early and arranged marriage, concubinage, and no school-education and the ban of re-marriage were placed under heavy and concentrated attack. Korean intellectuals (mostly males) began to realize the importance of women's education, in particular of its role in national politics.

Kim Iryŏp and her peers[13] in the early 1920s had the benefit of a female education at modern (in particular, Christian mission) schools and colleges and came to be the first generation of women in colonial Korea who advocated self-awakening for women and emancipation for their own sake. They claimed that women should free themselves from the traditional gender-discriminative and patriarchal family system and be reborn as "new women." They discarded the traditional clothes and long hairstyle and wore short skirts and bobbed hair and argued women's right to education as the way to discover individuality and personal happiness, not for the benefit of home education for children. Instead of women's submission to men and responsibility for caring parents-in-law and children, they suggested that Korean women should pursue absolute sexual equality, basic human dignity, spiritual and economic independence, and a profession.[14]

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[11] Kim Yung-Hee, "A Critique on Traditional Korean Family Institutions: Kim Wŏnju's Death of a Girl" in *Korean Studies* 23 (1999):24-42, p.6.

[12] Jiweon Shin, "Social construction of idealized images of women in colonial Korea: the 'new woman' versus 'motherhood'" in *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*, edited by Prasenjit Duara (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p.240.

[13] Na Hyesŏk, Kim Hallan, Hŏ Yŏngsuk, Chŏng Chongmyŏng, etc.

[14] There are a surge of studies on New Women in the early 1920s. Among them, see Theodore Jun Yoo, *The politics of gender in colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910-1945* (University of California Press, 2008), pp.58-94; Mun Okp'yo et al 문옥표 외, *Sin yŏsŏng: Han'guk-kwa Ilbon-ŭi kŭndae yŏsŏngsang* 신여성: 한국과 일본의 근대여성상 (Seoul: Ch'ŏngnyŏnsa, 2003); Yi Sanggyŏng 이

Yet, Kim's most iconoclastic ideas of new womanhood are evident in her claims on freedom in love, marriage, divorce, and family matters.[15] She regarded love (*yŏnae*) as the fountain of energy of human beings. Adopting Hendrik Ibsen's and Ellen Key's view of love and marriage, she believed that *yŏnae* is beautiful and sacred because it unites the human body and mind and that love-based marriage is moral regardless of legal process, whereas marriage without love is immoral and sinful. She encouraged women to free themselves from unhappy marriages. Divorce was suggested by this free love advocate as a better and honest choice than the continuation of a loveless, hypocritical, and unfaithful marriage. The traditional custom of early and arranged marriage was anathema to Kim. Most of all, she flatly challenged the traditional view of female chastity.

> *According to old customs, chastity is a material thing… If a woman has a sexual relationship with a man, her chastity is assumed to be contaminated and ruined… but chastity is in no way such a solid body. There is love and there is chastity. If love disappears, the obligation of fidelity disappears, too*.[16]

From the outset of her feminist activity and even after she converted to Buddhism, Kim was critical about the fact that chastity was imposed on women only in traditional society. She did not demand chastity from both woman and man. Rather, she re-defined the concept of chastity from something physical to a spiritual matter. In her view, it was neither a material things having a form or shape nor a moral imperative. It was the passion itself between the two lovers and the emotional devotion to the partner. Therefore, if the feeling of love is gone, there is no obligation of chastity. In the same way, if new love comes, then the emotional form of chastity should be activated. Her insistence on freedom in love and sex was very radical and revolutionary even for today and stirred up a great deal of public debate and controversy.

Free love became popular among young people, and was put into practice as the hottest cultural trend. Stories of free love and marriage, love affairs, the abandoning of female chastity, the failure of love, divorce, re-marriage, the degradation of female students into second wives (modern concubines) and love-induced insanity and suicide filled newspapers, magazines and literary works of the 1920s. These were no more the New

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상경, *Han'guk kŭndae yŏsŏng munhaksaron* 한국근대여성문학사론 (Seoul: Somyŏng, 2002).

[15] As studies on Kim's feminist-oriented works and activities, see Bonnie B.C. Oh, "Kim Iryŏp: Pioneer Writer/Reformer in Colonial Korea"; Kim Yung-Hee, "A Critique on Traditional Korean Family Institutions"; ------, "From Subservience to Autonomy: Kim Wŏn-ju's 'Awakening'" in Korean Studies 21 (1997): 1-21; Pak Yongok 박용옥, "1920-nyŏndae sin yŏsŏng yŏn'gu: *Sin yŏja*-wa *Sin yŏsŏng*-ŭl chungsim-ŭro" 1920년대 新女性 硏究: *新女子*와 *新女性*을 중심으로 in *Yŏsŏng yŏn'gu nonch'ong* 2 여성연구논총 2 (2001):1-31.

[16] Kim Iryŏp, "Na-ŭi chŏngjogwan" 나의 貞操觀 in *Chosŏn ilbo* (8 Jan. 1927). Republished in *Miraese: ha*, p.156.

Women's personal matters. Many people rallied to support, oppose, or discuss those issues. *Yŏnae* was consumed by new social players called 'modern girls' (*modŏn gŏl*) and 'modern boys' (*modŏn poi*) as representative of modernity or Western culture.

The chief consumers of free love dated in newly created spaces such as cafés, bars, dance halls, theaters, and restaurants in the Namch'on district of Seoul, an area in which Japanese settlers resided. They drank "Western" liquor and beverages while listening to jazz music.[17] Ch'anggyŏngwŏn and Namsan Parks were the preeminent dating locations. These parks were a product of colonial modernity. In 1907, the Korean King, Kojong 高宗, had been dethroned by the Japanese authorities. His Ch'anggyŏng Palace 昌慶宮 had been transformed into a public zoo, where Japan's unofficial but symbolic flower, the sakura (cherry blossom) was planted and in full bloom in the spring. Namsan Park, built in 1910, harbored the Chosēn jingu shrine 朝鮮神宮, a Japanese Shinto shrine which was a symbol of political and religious patriotism.[18] *Yŏnae*, likewise, runs parallel with the history of colonial modernity.

Modern literature became a touchstone of the enthusiasm for *yŏnae* and the impetus for spreading the idea of free love and marriage.[19] The romances of the Japanese writer Kikuchi Kan 菊池寬 were widely read by Korean students. No Chayŏng's *Sarang-ŭi pulkkot* 사랑의 불꽃 (*A flame of love*, 1923) - a collection of love letters - was the top selling book throughout the 1920s. Many writers preached their versions of free love; No more arranged and early marriages, a man's proposal of marriage and a woman's acceptance of it in a Western way, a waiting period until their love is firmly settled, pure platonic love without interference of money, distinction between pure love and lust, marriage recognized by authorities such as the church, the principle of monogamy, et cetera. Interestingly, the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, the love story of a daughter of a *kisaeng* and a son of *yangban*, was also popularly read and sold in the marketplace.

As a recent surge of studies describe, New Women and their embodiment of free love became the central theme in social, cultural, moral, religious, and political (colonial, nationalist and socialist) discourses. Various groups from New Women to conservatives, nationalists, socialists, missionaries and the colonial authorities were fiercely engaged in a discussion over the issue of

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[17] Yoo Sunyoung, "Embodiment of American modernity in colonial Korea" in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2.3 (2001):423-441.

[18] Sin Myŏngjik 신명직, *Modŏn ppoi, Kyŏngsŏng-ŭl kŏnilda* 모던보이 京城을 거닐다 (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa yŏn'gu, 2003), pp.41-49.

[19] Ch'ŏn Chŏnghwan 천정환, *Kŭndae-ŭi ch'aek ilkki: Tokcha-ŭi t'ansaeng-gwa Han'guk kŭndae munhak* 근대의 책 읽기: 독자의 탄생과 한국근대문학 (Seoul: P'urŭn yŏksa, 2003), pp.64-76, 157-167 and 348-349; Ko Misuk 고미숙, *Nabi-wa chŏnsa: Kŭndae! 18-segi-wa t'alkŭndae-rŭl mannada* 나비와 전사: 근대! 18세기와 탈근대를 만나다 (Seoul: Hyumŏnist'ŭ, 2006/2008), pp.167-233; Kim Chiyŏng 김지영, "Kŭndae munhak hyŏngsŏnggi 'yŏnae' p'yosang yŏn'gu" 근대문학 형성기 '연애' 표상 연구 (PhD dissertation, Koryŏ tahakkyo, 2004); Kwŏn Podŭrae, *Yŏnae-ŭi sidae*, pp.92-145.

"women." Despite their different intentions, the most influential and dominant ideology of gender politics throughout the whole colonial period was *hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ* 賢母良妻 (wise mother and good wife). As scholars such as Hyaeweol Choi observe, this was also a modern construct under the influence of Korea's Confucian notion of *pudŏk* (womanly virtue), Japan's Meiji gender ideology of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife and wise mother), and American Protestant missionary women's ideology of domesticity in mission schools.[20]

The promoters of this ideology condemned *yŏnae* (free love) as nothing more than lust and irresponsible behavior. Nationalists and socialists once supported the idea of free love but largely and in particular from the late 1920s, experienced severe criticism against New Women's free love ideology as sexually indulgent, morally decadent, bourgeois taste, an imitation of Western sentiments, vain and selfish, and especially indifferent to national, colonial, and class-related matters. Through female school education, a supportive, home-keeping and self-sacrificing image of women was taught. The primary role of educated women was to create a sweet home, to support their husbands, to raise their children healthily and to manage home economy efficiently.

From the 1930s, sacred motherhood was justified and supported by the colonial authorities, the Korean nationalists and a new generation of New Women. They all emphasized that the fate of the empire and the Korean nation was on the shoulder of women. Concurrent with war preparations, imperial mothers were encouraged to contribute to demographic increases, to raise proper imperial citizens, and to conserve basic necessities and electricity, and donate war supplies to the empire. The nationalists shared their view of womanhood with the colonial authorities, but for a different purpose. Korean women were not excluded from national struggles, but conformed to the nationalist agenda as a symbolic body of the Korean nation and as supporters of male nationalists. The pursuit of their souls and bodies had to be protected for the sake of nation.[21]

New Women who made iconoclastic attacks on female chastity and the myth of motherhood were subjected to enormous pressure in colonial society. This was especially true in the changing climate of the 1930s. In the confrontation with the Western powers, Western culture and modernity were re-defined as evil. Free love, once celebrated as the sign of modernity, was accordingly stigmatized as a symbol of degeneration, egocentrism, and self-indulgence under the evil influence of Western culture. As a consequence, many pioneering New Women were driven to insanity and suicide. Kim Iryŏp

[20] Hyaeweol Choi, ""Wise Mother, Good Wife": A Transcultural Discursive Construct in Modern Korea" in *Journal of Korean Studies* 14:1 (Fall 2009):1-34.
[21] Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Narratives of Nation Building in Korea: A Genealogy of Patriotism* (Armonk: M.E.Sharpe, 2003); Suh Ji-young, "Collision of Modern Desires: Nationalism and Female Sexuality in Colonial Korea" in *Review of Korean Studies* 5.2: 111-132; Insook Kwŏn, "'The New Women's Movement' in 1920s Korea: Rethinking the Relationship between Imperialism and Women" in *Gender & History* 10.3 (Nov. 1998):381-405.

found a way out in the form of Buddhism. Her conversion to Buddhism (1928) in no way equals a tragic ending.

Kim's personal experiences inform us that her concern with love did not end when she converted to Buddhism. In fact, she converted to Buddhism after falling in love with a Buddhist man and later married a secularized Buddhist monk (*chaegasŭng*, 在家僧). Contrary to the stereotypical prejudice, she did not retreat from her feminist and literary activities due to Buddhism. She made most controversial statements refuting the dominant ideology of wise mother and prudent wife during this period.

> *It is unreasonable that we should stay at home because we are women. It is unavoidable that women give birth to children. But we can leave our children to professionals. Women need social activities. Our home is too small and limited. The position of women will never be better if we waste our time with domestic labor.*[22]

In a discussion meeting organized by *Sin Tong-A* 新東亞 journal in May 1932, she complained about a woman's duties related to housekeeping and childrearing. As seen in the quotation, she cried out for an alternative model. She argued that women should get out of the home and not confine their activities to housekeeping. Moreover, the ideal of sacred motherhood was rejected by her. She did not oppose women's role in the reproduction of offspring, but as long as childrearing was concerned she thought that women do not have to raise their children by their own hands and can rely on other persons such as kindergarden teachers. Although she accepted Buddhism as her religion, she still stuck to her feminist arguments. As many studies point out as her shortcoming, she was preoccupied with women's love and sexuality and may have shown little attention to other sociopolitical issues such as class, national movements, and colonialism. Yet, her views were not entirely irrelevant to politics. Since women's issues were central to colonial and nationalist politics, she was one of a few thinkers fighting against the patriarchy that colonialism and Korean nationalism shared.

Revisiting Buddhist tales and legends

After her conversion, Kim Iryŏp eagerly participated in Buddhist activities such as publishing modern Buddhist magazines such as *Pulgyo* 佛教 and strove to propagate Buddhism through her literary works. In doing so, she socialized with well-known progressive Buddhists like Kwŏn Sangno 權相老 and Paek Sŏnguk. In 1931, she was appointed the commissioner of education (*mungyo pujang*) in the (Korean) Buddhist youth and women's association (Pulgyo yŏja

[22] "Yŏgija chwadamhoe" 女記者 座談會 in *Sin Tonga* 新東亞 (May 1932). Republished in *Miraese: ha*, p.215.

ch'ŏngnyŏnhoe, 佛教女子青年會).[23] So, she was not a failure who turned her back on a colonial society that was hostile to her and hid herself in Buddhism. Rather, she started a new life as a successful leader of Buddhist women.

Buddhism was in no way a single and readymade answer for Kim, as some Buddhist-oriented studies conclude, in "overcoming" the limitations of modernity and feminism. In my thinking, Buddhism was a lifelong question that Kim had to ponder. It was another question for her to figure out what in Buddhism was useful for solving love problems. Even if one acknowledges that Buddhism is a timeless and universal philosophy, historically seen, however, Korean Buddhism could not be unaffected by the vortex of change Korea found itself in. It had to make a desperate attempt to find ways to keep up with the times; restoring its traditional presence, renewing and modernizing its organization, negotiating and battling with the Japanese colonial government or Japanese Buddhists, competing with other religions, and taking part in society as well as in nationalist or collaborationist projects.[24]

As Jin Y. Park points out, women's roles in and responses to those various Buddhist attempts to cope with various challenges have been completely neglected in the related discussion.[25] The free love trend prevailing in 1920s Korea I sketched before also has not been much considered as an important part of the social environment Buddhism faced. In that sense, Kim Iryŏp's distinctive (gender-specific) responses to Buddhism and her vivid experiences as a Buddhist woman in colonial Korea can fill a lacuna. This is nowhere more evident than in her 1930s short stories. One of the first attempts in this respect was a short story entitled "P'arangsae-ro hwahan tu ch'ŏngch'un" 파랑새로 化한 두 靑春 (The transformation of two lovers into bluebirds, 1929).[26]

The main storyline of this work is as follows: A young mendicant comes to a house. In this house, a maiden lives alone, waiting for her father. Her father has gone to town and has still not come back home. It is already late and dark. The monk lodges at her house, spends the night with her and leaves the next morning. Her father comes back with good news about her marriage. However, the daughter is indifferent to her marriage. She only thinks of the

[23] "Chŏnwi yŏsŏng tanch'e pangmungi, Pulgyo yŏja ch'ŏngnyŏnhoe-ŭi chinhyŏng: changch'a chŏnsŏn-e chojog-ŭl kwaktchanghandago handa" 前衛 女性團體 訪問記, 佛教女子青年會의 陣形: 장차 전선에 조직을 확장한다고 한다 in *Samch'ŏlli* (Dec 1931), p.72.

[24] Robert E. Buswell, The Zen Monastic Experience (Princeton University Press, 1992), pp.21-36; Hendrik H. Sørensen, "Buddhism and Secular Power in Twentieth-Century Korea" in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, Edited by Ian Harris (London and New York: Continuum, 1999), pp.127-152; Kim Kwangsik 김광식, *Kŭnhyŏndae Pulgyo-ŭi chaejomyŏng* 근현대불교의 재조명 (Seoul: Minjoksa, 2000); Pori Park, "Korean Buddhist Reforms and Problems in the Adoption of Modernity during the Colonial Period," *Korea Journal* (Spring 2005):87-113;------,"A Korean Buddhist Response to Modernity: The Doctrinal Underpinning of Han Yongun's (1879-1944) Reformist Thought," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 20.1 (June 2007):21-44.

[25] Jin Y. Park, "Gendered Response to Modernity," pp.115-116.

[26] In *Pulgyo* 55 (Jan. 1929). Republished in *Miraese* 1, pp.189-199.

monk and chants what she has learned in the arms of the monk. Spring comes. The mendicant comes back as promised. When he recites a magic spell, the two young people are transformed into bluebirds and fly away. After they have disappeared, two pairs of shoes are left behind.

This work deals with a curious love story between a monk and a woman. Not only the content but the method of storytelling may be seen as crude and simple. The protagonists commit "improper" acts without the slightest pang of conscience. Although they meet with some difficulties, neither of them shows emotions and inner conflicts. The ending of the story, that the protagonists change into birds, is far removed from reality. The lack of realism can be explained by the fact that this short prose has its origin in the oral tradition. At the beginning of the work, Kim Iryŏp alludes to the resemblance of her story to existing folktales or legends by saying, "This story might be an old tale or a legend. I might have heard it in childhood, otherwise I dreamt it."[27]

It is interesting to see that when Kim wrote this work, her colleagues in *Pulgyo* magazine were busy with re-discovering, re-introducing and recording many unattended oral legends or tales in Buddhism. For example, they released a special collection of Buddhist tales on snakes, at the beginning of the snake year of 1929.[28] From such a climate, Kim Iryŏp took a hint for her literary compositions. The Buddhist legends or tales she found interesting were especially related to love. Her short story "Yŏngji" 影池 (Reflections in a pond, 1928),[29] for instance, is based upon the sad love story of a mason, Asadal, and his wife Asanyŏ, which is associated with the Sŏkka Pagoda in Pulguk Temple 佛國寺. If so, what kind of specific legends were re-introduced and even remade into "P'arangsae-ro hwahan tu ch'ŏngch'un"? How did she change the existing tales and what do these changes tell us?

As to which Buddhist legends or folktales Kim's short story is related, my belief is that a folktale and two kinds of Buddhist tales can be considered: the first is Tanggŭm-aegi, a *muga* (shaman songs) narrative which probably existed as a form of folktale. The other is a representative Buddhist tale about a lovesick monk Chosin 調信. Another is a Buddhist legend about the personification of Kwanseŭm bodhisattva 觀世音菩薩. Although it is a shaman song, the story of Tanggŭm-aegi deals with the theme of monk. In this story, a mendicant monk visits a *yangban* house where he only finds the daughter called Tanggŭm-aegi. She as a chaste girl denies him to access, but the monks enters her house using a magic and makes her pregnant by swallowing three grains of rice the monk has given her. After spending the night, the monk leaves. The family members who return to home find the pregnant girl and expel her from

[27] *Miraese: sang*, p.189.
[28] There are five essays on the theme of snakes published in the 55th edition of *Pulgyo* from "Sa-wa Pulgyo-e kwanhan sŏrhwa" 蛇와 佛敎에 關한 說話, "Ŏbin-gwa kŭmsabo" 業因과 金蛇報, to "Sama" 蛇魔 of which the full text was censored and deleted by the colonial administration.
[29] In *Pulgyo* 50/51 (Sep. 1928). Republished in Kim Iryŏp, *Miraese* 2, pp.246-249.

the family. Tanggŭm-aegi gives birth to three sons. The sons become deities or *mudang* ancestors.[30]

One can easily see that the story retold by Kim Iryŏp is very much like the Buddhist tale in *muga*. The main motif of the relationship between a girl and a mendicant monk is borrowed in her short story. However, I want to pay attention to some large and small differences between them. As Boudewijn Walraven explains, in the story of Tanggŭm-aegi, becoming pregnant and giving birth to three babies have an important religious meaning, because it indicates the supernatural birth of deities.[31] However, this important theme in the old tale is completely left out in Kim's short story.

The old tale does not propagate Buddhism, but it rather sends a message that young girls should beware of mendicant monks.[32] Tanggŭm-aegi indeed denies the mendicant monk whereas the monk intrudes into her house and makes her pregnant at his will. However, the message Kim imparts differs from it. She depicts that the mendicant monk proselytizes. The maiden in Kim's story does not deny the monk and his Buddhist teachings. She accepts him as well as Buddhism and love he gives. She is still not a passive recipient of his love and Buddhism. She diligently practices Buddhism and actively keeps her love for him. Regardless of her arranged engagement with another man (this is missing in the story of Tanggŭm-aegi), she tries to be faithful to the monk where her heart belongs to. The monk also keeps his promise and comes back to her. In this way, Kim conveys the love story of a girl and a monk, changing the old tale about the supernatural birth of deities or a warning about bad mendicant monks.

A love story between a monk and a woman Kim Iryŏp composed is rare to find in Korean Buddhist history. What we can find most is a Buddhist tale on a lovesick monk represented by the Chosin tale in *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), which may have been popular in Korea since Yi Kwangsu adapted this tale for his successful novel *Kkum* 꿈 (*Dream*) in 1947. Chosin is a young monk. One day, he sees the daughter of Kim Hŭngong and falls in love with her. He prays to Kwanŭm bodhisattva [33] – Avalokiteśvara – for help and falls asleep. In his dream, he marries her and they live happily together. But the happiness does not last forever. After forty years, he cannot afford to provide for his large family. He even kills someone out of hunger. He becomes old. At last, he and his wife part from each other. At the moment of their bitter parting, Chosin awakes from his dream. Through the dream, Chosin

[30] Boudewijn Walraven, *Songs of the Shaman: The ritual chants of the Korean mudang* (Columbia university press, 1994), pp.50 and 94-95.
[31] Ibid., p.50.
[32] Ibid., p.98.
[33] Tae-Hung Ha and Grafton K. Mintz translated Kwanŭm Bodhisattva as a "goddess of mercy." Yet, I have chosen the designation of "Kwanseŭm bodhisattva" to emphasize the role of bodhisattva in the associated Buddhist tales.

has tasted all the sweetness and bitterness of life. He feels shame for his desire and behavior and becomes a widely admired monk.[34]

(Table 1)

Chosin tale	**Kim Iryŏp's short story**
A lovesick monk	A love story of a monk and a woman
Has a crush on a girl who is engaged to someone else	A mendicant and a woman fall in love. She is engaged to someone else
Prays to Kwanŭm bodhisattva and achieves love in his dream	Spend night together. The monk teaches her Buddhism
Awakes from his dream, has remorse for his passion and transgression of the *vinaya*	Recites a magic spell, changes their bodies into bluebirds, flies away to an eternal place
Love is an obstacle to Buddhist practice	Love has a positive meaning to propagate Buddhism
Warns monks against degeneration	Achievement of love = attainment of the Buddhist goal

As is shown in Table 1, both stories present young monks who fall in love with girls at first glance. Both heroines are engaged to another man. Chosin achieves his love in his dream. The young monk and the young maiden in Kim's story achieve their love, transforming themselves into birds and flying to an eternal place. Despite similar plot structures, these two stories have crucial differences. Chosin's tale focuses on the male protagonist Chosin and his Buddhist awakening. The male protagonist awakes from his dream and perceives the transience of his passion. He feels remorse for his attachment and transgression against essential precepts. The mendicant's breaking the *vinaya* (律/戒) precept is not an issue at all in Kim's short story. Although the monk spends the night with a woman, he has limited inner conflict because of his transgressive behavior and feels little remorse or regret.

Kim's story focuses more on the girl. The heroine falls in love with a mendicant monk and becomes a Buddhist. Regardless of the arranged engagement and marriage with another man, she only thinks of the monk and tries to be loyal to her feeling toward him. The mind-set of the heroine

[34] Iryŏn一然, *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Seoul: Yonsei UP, 1972), pp.247-251.

resonates with Kim's feminist claims; women should free themselves from arranged marriages. It does not bring them happiness. Marriage should be based on love. Love as a union of two bodies and minds does not need to be sanctioned by legal measures such as marriage.

The big difference between the two stories is in relation to the view of love or passion. Chosin's tale illustrates the traditional, male-oriented, Buddhist view of love as a big obstacle to Buddhist practice. A lovesick monk is not an object of sympathy but of accusation. He should be warned, so that he becomes aware of his depravity and conforms to appropriate practice. Although Chosin temporarily achieves his love for a woman, it does not last forever. Love cannot be a goal for a Buddhist practitioner. *Nirvana*, great wisdom and enlightenment are given as the ultimate goal. Love is seen as an obstacle to be overcome on the way to enlightenment. This is the edifying intention of the Chosin tale.

Did Kim Iryŏp also try to overcome love with the help of Buddhism, as some studies presume? Is this a gender-specific, female-oriented attempt, or is it again the confirmation of a male-oriented Buddhist culture and tradition? Kim's view of love, at least expressed in this short story, is not to discard or overcome love, devaluing it as incomplete and limited. She rather discerns that the existing Buddhist view of love is male-centered and tries to subvert and reinterpret it. Love in her story is not an obstacle to Buddhism, but has a positive meaning, as it helps to convert the young girl to Buddhism, a detail, by the way, that is absent in the folk-tale versions of love stories of monks. Without falling in love with the mendicant, the woman does not become a Buddhist. Yet, love is not a mere means to lead living beings to Buddhism. In that case, the skillful means should be abandoned after the goal is achieved. As depicted in the story, Kim values the ideal of love as much as Buddhism. It is not a choice for one or the other. Showing that the achievement of love and the propagation of Buddhism are not in mutual conflict, she suggests the possibility of the compatibility of love and Buddhism. In this way, the edifying traditional tale is remade into a revolutionary love story between a monk and a woman.

A comparison of Kim's story with another tale about a personification of Kwanseŭm bodhisattva once again brings out her viewpoint. This tale, which has several cognates, is a legendary story associated with the Podŏk Hermitage 普德庵 in the Kŭmgang mountains. This legend is not widely known to the public. So, let me first sketch out the legendary tale on the basis of *Yujŏmsa ponmalsaji* 楡岾寺本末寺誌 (Record on head and branch temples of Yujŏmsa) complied by Kwŏn Sangno.[35] In the Koryŏ period, there was a young monk called Hoejŏng 懷正. In his dream, he received summons to find a person named Haemyŏngbang 解明方. Hoejŏng was able to find his house but he was not there. His daughter was alone. The young monk and the daughter slept together for several nights. He felt shame when he considered his sins and left

[35] Kwŏn Sangno 勸相老, *Han'gul sach'al chŏnsŏ* 韓國寺刹全書 (Seoul: Dongguk taehakkyo, 1979), pp.478-483.

her. The monk heard later that she was actually Kwanŭm bodhisattva. So, he re-visited her. The woman washed herself under a waterfall. She became a bird and fluttered into a grotto. Inside the grotto, he found a Buddhist scripture and an incense-burner. The monk established a hermitage in that place.

(Table 2)

Podŏk legendary story	**Kim Iryŏp's short story**
A story about belief in Kwanŭm bodhisattva	A love story of a monk and a woman
The young monk Hoejŏng spent several nights with a girl whose father was absent	A mendicant visited a house and spent the night with a girl whose father was absent
He felt remorse for his sins and left her	He felt little remorse. Taught Buddhism and left the woman
Hoejŏng heard that she was Kwanŭm bodhisattva and revisited her	He revisited her
The daughter changed into a bird and hid herself in a grotto	Both changed their bodies into bluebirds and flew away to an eternal place
A Buddhist scripture and an incense-burner were left behind	Their shoes were left behind
A bird as a sign of Kwanŭm bodhisattva	Bluebirds as a medium which makes the impossible, such as the forbidden love between a monk and a woman, possible.
A monk had a sincere belief in the supernatural power of Kwanŭm bodhisattva and re-established a temple	Two young people achieved their love as well as their Buddhist goal

Where is the summary of Kim's story? As summarized in Table 2, the Podŏk tale has a greater resemblance to Kim Iryŏp's story than the former legend. A young monk Hoejŏng visited a house where a woman was alone. Her father was absent for several days. He stayed with her and had a conjugal

relationship with her. This series of incidents corresponds to those in Kim's story. The fact that Hoejŏng left her and then revisited her is also similar to Kim's plot. What attracts our attention is the presence of birds. The daughter of Haemyŏngbang changed into a bird and fluttered into the grotto. This transformation is not presented in the Chosin story. In Kim's story, the mendicant and the young maiden also become bluebirds and fly away to the eternal place. While the bird left a Buddhist scripture and an incense-burner behind, the two bluebirds in Kim's story leave their shoes behind.

Regardless of variant versions, the Podŏk legend is basically related to Kwanŭm belief. Kwanŭm bodhisattva, whose characteristic feature is compassion, manifests himself as a mortal woman, attracts and tests the monks, and ultimately leads them to awakening. In the same way, the daughter of Haemyŏngbang attracts the young monk Hoejŏng, informs him of her true identity as Kwanŭm and in the end, grants him awakening. The Buddhist scripture and the incense-burner are signs that she is actually Kwanŭm. A white or blue bird and shoes are also typical symbols of Kwanŭm as presented in a number of legends.[36]

However, Kim Iryŏp's story has little to do with a sincere belief in Kwanŭm's supernatural power and compassion. The bluebirds in her story are not the manifestation or sign of a bodhisattva's supernatural power but used as a medium, which goes beyond time and space and which, therefore, makes the impossible possible. As in the folktale "Urŏng kaksi" (The Pond-snail Maiden),[37] bluebirds play a role in making the forbidden love between a monk and a young woman possible. Like the Chosin tale, the Podŏk tale about Kwanŭm aims to warn a loose-living monk, allowing him to feel remorse and leading him to awakening. Love, in that Kwanŭm tale, represents temptation that lures the monk away from the Buddhist path. It is a form of skillful means, not just a disguise to hide the bodhisattva's true nature. It is not love or passion but Kwanŭm's virtue of compassion that leads and guides the monk to the right path to awakening. The Podŏk tale may be considered another kind of male-narrated edifying tale.

Kim, who had been an ardent advocate of free love, did not reproduce the conventional view on passion as it was in male-dominated Buddhist tradition. Rather, she reworked it from a woman's point of view. Her short story shows that she revolutionarily amended the legendary stories handed down in Buddhism from early times into a love story in which a monk and a woman achieved lasting love. She changed the negatively charged meaning of love and tried to discover a positive role for love within Buddhism. As Buddhist woman she revalued love, which had represented as an obstacle, a regrettable

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[36] Iryŏn一然, *Samguk yusa*, translated by Tae-Hung Ha and Grafton K. Mintz (Seoul: Yonsei tahakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1972), pp.245-246.

[37] Ch'oe Naeok 崔來沃, *Han'guk kubi* pp.245-246. *chŏnt'ong-ŭi yŏn'gu: kŭ pyŏni-wa punp'o-rŭl chungsim-ŭro* 韓國 口碑傳說의 硏究: 그 變異와 分布를 中心으로 (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1981), pp.118-121.

temptation. She accepted Buddhism as her religion and aimed to solve love problems through it, but she did not uncritically accept all of Buddhist ideas and customs. Nor did she abandon her feminist idea of love.

Calling renunciation into question

Some years later, Kim wrote a more realistic work which portrays the experience of Buddhists in colonial Korea and tackles the traditionally most honored act of Buddhism: renunciation. Her short story "Aeyogŭl p'ihayŏ" (愛慾을 避하여, Escape from passion)[38] deals with the parting of two lovers because of a renunciation. Its plot is not complicated: Hyŏngsik leaves his lover Hyeyŏng and enters a monastery. Hyeyŏng, in tears, writes letters to him questioning his retreat. Her letters deeply shake him and he finally takes his life, leaving a note behind. His note says that his decomposing body can teach her the truth. Hyeyŏng feels remorse and meditates in repentance.

This is a quite short story, but it tackles the major Buddhist problem of *ch'ulga* (出家, renunciation) in modern society. *Ch'ulga* means leaving one's home and abandoning one's dear wife, children, parents, and friends. In Buddhism, it is conventionally taught that otherwise one cannot end karmic relations. These karmic relations become causes that once again draw one into the cycle of transmigration. Renunciation by monks has often been admired as a noble deed, aiming to take care of other living beings while forgetting one's own comfortable life. For example, the founder Shakyamuni's renunciation was admired as "Buddha's concern for universal rather than private well-being."[39]

However, recent Buddhist feminists such as Rita M. Gross have asked the question of whether the Buddha was not, in fact, irresponsible and cruel, and whether his actions did not leave his wife emotionally vulnerable.[40] Renunciation in reality is accompanied by many kinds of trouble, conflict, hardship, and worries. However, this remains unspoken or is silenced, because it is overshadowed by the great act of reclusion in many cases conducted by men. In colonial society, when the Confucian family ideology was still dominant, a man's renunciation was almost like running away from his family. The monk Ch'ŏngdam, for example, even went to a temple in Japan to be a monk, but in the end, he was caught by his mother and forced to conceive a son with his wife in order to continue the family lineage. He had to break the *vinaya* precept.[41] Another monk, Unhŏ, had to bring his family near his temple because

[38] In *Samch'ŏlli* (April 1932). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, pp.232-241.
[39] Rita M. Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (Albany: State University of New Work, 1993), p.17.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Yun Ch'ŏnggwang 윤청광, *Kosung yŏltchŏn 24: Ch'ŏngdam k'ŭn sŭnim* 고승열전 24: 청담 큰스님 (Seoul: Uri ch'ŭlp'ansa, 2002), pp.15-96.

his mother, wife and children suffered from economic and spiritual hardship due to the absence of the head of family.[42]

How many Buddhist leaders in colonial Korea did address this problem? Surprisingly, there were few. In his early treatise, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* 朝鮮佛教維新論 (The Reformation of Korean Buddhism, 1913), Han Yongun 韓龍雲 iconoclastically refuted the long Korean Buddhist tradition of celibacy and insisted on the importance of the marriage of monks. Han argued that celibacy is not Buddhist truth but an expedient means of practice, and he saw it as a serious obstacle to the future development of Buddhism in Korea, which caused many evils, such as impiety to one's parents and a lack of patriotism to one's country. [43] While focusing on the problem of celibacy, Han implied that celibate monks and nuns caused great trouble in society, but his focus of criticism was celibacy, not becoming monks or nuns. His proposal was intended to reform the traditional *sangha* system, not to deny its presence. He did not question or problematize reclusion itself. What he worried about was the possibility that many monks would leave the priesthood and temples become empty, not the other way around, which implies that he still supported the act of renunciation.

The celibacy Han questioned was but one part of the more fundamental issue of renunciation. The troubles and problems he pointed out were also limited and male-oriented. He cared about the man's "duty" to serve parents, society, and country by reproducing. It was not to deeply sympathize with the uncared-for (mostly women), their vulnerable position and emotional wounds, and their spiritual and economical sufferings, and to listen to their voices, which had to be silenced in the course of a man's renunciation and for the development of a Buddhist *sangha*. Accordingly, he never elaborated the problems of renunciation in his literary and non-literary texts.

It had to be a Buddhist woman, Kim Iryŏp, who called the major Buddhist event of renunciation into question in her literary work and sought to amplify silenced voices, in particular of those who had been left behind. It was possible for her because she had first-hand experience. "Escape from passion" is largely autobiographical. Kim dated a Buddhist, Paek Sŏnguk. This man was one of the first Korean Buddhists who went to Europe for study. In 1925, he received a doctorate in Zen Buddhist philosophy at Würzburg University, Germany. Returning to Korea, he was appointed the director of the *Pulgyo* publication company, to which Kim frequently contributed her literary pieces. He introduced Buddhism to her but after entering into a relationship with her one day, left her and entered a temple to become a monk, leaving Kim Iryŏp heartbroken and despondent.[44]

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[42] Yun Ch'ŏnggwang, 윤청광. *Kosung yŏltchŏn 19: Unhŏ kŭn sŭnim* 고승열전19: 운허 큰스님 (Seoul: Uri ch'ŭlp'ansa, 2002), pp.187-193.

[43] Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* 朝鮮佛教維新論. Republished in *Han Yongun chŏnjip* 2, pp.82-87.

[44] "X-ssi-ege" X에게 in *Pulgyo* (June 1929). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, pp.219-225; "B-ssi-ege" B씨

Hyŏngsik in "Escape from passion," who is highly educated and has received a university degree, is modeled after Kim's lover in reality. He repeatedly says that he cannot marry the heroine because he is determined to enter priesthood and leaves a short note: "It is time to say good-bye". This also reflects the autobiographical facts in detail. The heroine, on the other hand, represents the writer herself. As Kim did in reality, Hyeyŏng desperately wishes to get married to her lover. The heroine falls in love at first sight when she meets Hyŏngsik in the office of a publishing company and is asked to tellwhere she comes from. This is what Kim actually experienced. Most of all, the heroine's letter addressed to her lover expresses her despair and sorrow when she was abandoned due to her lover's renunciation.

Based upon her own experience, Kim could write a short story about renunciation as it is practiced in Buddhism. Hyeyŏng, who represents the voice of the writer, does not praise Hyŏngsik's resolution to enter the temple. Following the traditional Buddhist views of selflessness, Hyŏngsik breaks up with his girlfriend to become a monk. In his thinking, love and marriage are for one's personal wellbeing. The noble act of leaving home is to leave this behind for a larger altruistic purpose, to benefit others. By tradition, women like Hyeyŏng should not hinder a man's entering the monastery and should remain silent about the hardship they experience because of it.

However, as expressed in her letter, Hyeyŏng does not passively accept her lover Hyŏngsik's unilateral withdrawal from the relationship. She breaks her silence to protest against his leaving. She laments that he, Hyŏngsik, has taken all happiness from her. She blames him for his irresponsibility and his outdated way of thinking. In the present time, she argues, everyone experiences love, gets married and gives birth to babies. This is the way people live. Refusing to see her viewpoint, Hyŏngsik declines her proposal of marriage many times over and finally runs away from her. In her eyes, he sticks to the conventional Buddhist view of love and marriage and does not even try to think of other possible relationships between the practice of Buddhism and the human life course.

From a woman's perspective, Kim gives a voice to those helplessly left behind after a partner's act of renunciation. The lengthy complaint letter of the heroine, which actually constitutes the whole short story, reveals the violent and ruthless side of the honorable deed of renunciation.

> *You who I once believed to be the personification of compassion! How could you put me into pain who once sincerely loved you? It is said that the true aim of Buddhist practitioner is to save sentient beings. Does it make sense that you chose to abandon a suffering sentient being to practice*

에게 in Kim Iryŏp, *Ch'ŏngch'un-ŭl pulsarŭgo* 靑春을 불사르고 (Seoul: Kimyŏngsa, 2002), pp.16-133; "Chilli-rŭl morŭmnida" 眞理를 모릅니다 in *Yŏsŏng tonga* 女性東亞 (Dec. 1971-Jun. 1972). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, pp.301-319.

Buddhism? No. Please forgive me. I am not expressing resentment but just my own groaning. Maybe, I am too stupid to understand your aspiration? Don't worry. I will never stand in the way of your serene wish.[45]

Hyŏngsik's lofty act of renunciation is supposed to benefit other living beings and to help them get rid of suffering. Hyeyŏng's confession shows how this act that in principle is compassionate turns out to be ruthless in reality. After being abandoned, the heroine, Hyeyŏng, comes to suffer from a disease and is in pain. In the quote above, one can hear the heroine groan in deepest grief and sense her criticism of the way a compassionate act of renunciation in actual fact victimizes an innocent person and even drives her into death. She clearly enunciates her feelings of grief, frustration and helplessness in this story. However, she also displays her resolution and the extant of her love by not wanting to stand in the way of her lover's serene wish and choice of Buddhism.

It is important to note that Kim Iryŏp expresses her emotional and spiritual torment. As mentioned before, lamentations or complaints from the abandoned party have, traditionally, been neglected and even condemned as obstacle by the male-dominated Buddhist tradition. In his play called "Ch'ulga" 出家 (Leaving home, 1938), Hong Sayong (洪思容, 1900-47), for example, depicts Shakyamuni as shaking off his wife Princess Yashodhara's hand while scolding her, "You silly woman. One who obstructs my way will be cursed. Family and relatives are all demons".[46] This male playwright represents the view and narrative of historically male-dominated Buddhism and sees a woman and her love as silly and evil, and as failing to understand the great act of renunciation.[47] Instead of soothing and persuading the woman, Shakyamuni scolds and curses her; the female character is shown as vulnerable, passive and voiceless. In contrast, Kim Iryŏp restores the voice of the deserted woman and subverts the male-dominant perspective and narrative.

In Kim's story, it is not the woman but the man who is weak and indecisive. The heroine Hyeyŏng is not a passive and submissive woman who helplessly accepts her lover's leaving and is silent about her pain and agony. Breaking the male-imposed silence, she is eager to express herself and her feelings. She forms and defends her own opinion about his act of reclusion. She is also resolute in showing the power of love, whereas the protagonist Hyŏngsik is not a strong man like Shakyamuni in Hong's play. His act of leaving is not depicted as noble but as cowardly. It is to run away from a woman and conceal himself in the mountains. The heroine disparagingly regards it as due to the stubbornness and rigidness of his character. Although

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[45] *Miraese: sang*, p.238.

[46] In *Hyŏndae Chosŏnmunhak chŏnjip* 現代朝鮮文學全集 (Sep. 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip* 洪思容全集 (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1985), p.265.

[47] Shakyamuni in history left his palace secretly in the middle of night while his wife was sleeping. So, Hong's depiction that Shakyamuni condemned his wife is fictional.

he has become a monk, his spirit is not strong enough to forget or ignore all of his previous relationships and secular concerns. At the end of the story, after reading her touching letter, he falters in his resolution and takes his own life.

> *My eyes looked for Hyeyŏng. I failed to deter my hands from writing a response to her letter. I failed to stop halting my legs. I fell asleep, hugging her letter. Like a baby who falls asleep hungry, and wakes up over and over crying for milk, twisting his body, I was overwhelmed by my passion. At last, I could not withstand the call of my passion any more*.[48]

This paragraph shows how Hyŏngsik's troubles derived from the collision between Buddhism and passion. In spite of his intense meditation, he is disturbed by a single letter from his lover and turns out to be vulnerable to love. He first hides himself in the mountains to escape from love. After reading the love letter, he realizes that he cannot suppress his feelings and desire for her anymore, unless he disappears from this world. Thus, he decides to abandon his body, which has fallen victim to passion. This contrasts with the heroine's strong will to survive despite desperate circumstances.

This short story gives us more interesting hints as to the ways in which love and Buddhism confront each other. In the previously discussed story "P'arangsae-ro hwahan tu ch'ŏngch'un," Kim Iryŏp depicted the idealized compatibility of Buddhism and love as challenging the negative connotation that conventional Buddhism attached to love. From a woman's perspective, this second story tackles another conventional practice in male-dominated Buddhism that is renunciation, and it restores the lost voice of the female victim of renunciation. At the same time, Kim does not show love as compatible with Buddhism any more. She sees the troublesome way in which the existing form of Buddhism is in fierce confrontation with love as the modern way of life. If the first story has a happy ending in which the protagonists achieve their lasting love in harmony with Buddhism, the later work has a tragic ending, in that the Buddhist monk takes his life after experiencing the conflict between love and his faith.

The storyteller seems to be aware of the fact that a Buddhist's suicide is definitely problematic and evades the question by saying that Hyŏngsik's death is not suicide, but rather a mysterious disappearance. There is no description of his actual death. When his body is found, only his letter tells us that he "has left." Kim ambiguously relates that some medical doctors examined the corpse, but that there was no trace of him having taken poison or done any fatal damage to it. Hyŏngsik leaves his physical body, rather than dying. This mysterious ending is somehow reminiscent of the old Buddhist legends discussed before. His body and a short note left behind are similar to the shoes, the Buddhist scripture or the incense-burner in those tales. Its effect is also

[48] *Miraese: sang*, p.240.

similar.

Seeing Hyŏngsik's body and note, the heroine converts to Buddhism, feels remorse and repents. She awakens to the Buddhist truth of impermanence (*musang*, 無常), realizing that everything is in a state of continual change and nothing stays as it is. Hyŏngsik's decomposing corpse functions as a skillful means (*upaya*) to lead the heroine to awakening and induce repentance. In the light of these effects, Hyŏngsik's act of leaving his body behind is an act of compassion, similar to that depicted in the traditional Kwanŭm tales. Interestingly, Kim Iryŏp reverts to the view of the Buddhist legends which she had rebelled against. Does this mean that she began to adapt herself to the male-dominant narratives of Buddhism, rather than simply challenging?

The confrontation between love and Buddhism seems not to be a simple triumph of Buddhism over love. The male protagonist is touched by a woman's love letter, succumbs to his passion for her and finally ends his life, whereas the heroine is moved by his note containing his last wish, reflects on herself, and converts to Buddhism. Nobody has won or lost. The man accepts the power of love, whereas a woman accepts the power of Buddhism. Reconciliation rather retaliation is Kim Iryŏp's solution for the problem of love and Buddhism people may face with in personal life.

A critical voice toward nationalism

As a Buddhist woman, Kim did not accept Buddhism as it was. She discerned that the Buddhism of her days was very much male-oriented. She attempted to problematize its conventional views and practices and sought to restore the voices (mainly of women) that had been silenced in the male-dominant Buddhist society. Amid such attempts, she came to write one more remarkable work. The short story "Hŭisaeng" 犧牲 (Sacrifice) serialized in *Chosŏn Ilbo* from the very first day of the year 1929 for a week is a rare piece of work in which Kim calls Korean nationalism into question as
another patriarchal ideology. Contrary to the assumption that this feminist and Buddhist woman never showed any interest in politics, colonial policies and nationalist movements, this work addresses her critical questions and responses concerning these political issues.

The short story begins with a scene where the heroine Yŏngsuk nervously waits for her lover Sŏng'il. Sŏng'il regularly visits her, but on this morning it is particularly hard for her to be patient. It is because she has an important news to tell him. While confessing that she is pregnant, she desperately hopes that Sŏng'il will propose marriage to her and form a family. The unexpected news causes him mental anguish. Sŏngil is a man whose life is wholly dedicated to his work. It is not clear what kind of work he is exactly doing but this work definitely demands his full attention and dedication. It does not allow him to pursue personal interests. Personal happiness is regarded

as a sin. To do the job, he is not allowed to marry, form a family and support wife and child.

Pregnancy is usually a matter for congratulations, but in their relationship, the child is a seed of misfortune. The pregnancy turns out to be an insurmountable source of suffering. Sŏngil cannot give up his undertaking because of his personal matters. Nor can he deny or evade his responsibility over the pregnancy. In distress and despair, he makes up his mind. It is not to marry but to commit double suicide. The heroine is surprised and disappointed by his suggestion. She deters him from committing suicide and eases him saying that she and her future child will not burden him and hinder his undertaking. She suggests an alternative plan to marry another man and raise the child with him. She swears to hide herself forever and not to reveal that they have a son. Sŏng'il feels uncomfortable but agrees with her.

The short story reminds an informed reader of Kim Iryŏp's own experiences. One might characterize her entire work as autobiographical fiction. In the two short stories discussed in earlier sections, both heroines are led to follow Buddhism by falling in love with men, a male mendicant or a would-be monk (This is exactly the opposite of old Buddhist legends in which monks are led to practice Buddhism more sincerely by women, the personification of Avalokiteśvara). This particular depiction is analogous to Kim's own conversion to Buddhism. Yet, no other work better fictionalizes the variety of her experiences than "Hŭisaeng." The beginning, in which Sŏng'il regularly comes the girl's house and the heroine Yŏngsuk nervously waits for her lover is identical to Kim's own experience meeting her lover Paek Sŏnguk. He regularly came to her house to preach Buddhism to her. As amply reiterated in her autobiographical writings, Kim, who fell in love with him at first sight, used to wait for him with nervous excitement. The detailed descriptions in the short story, such as the fact that the only pleasure in her life came when meeting Sŏng'il, the European style greeting kiss the lovers share, and the heroine's expectation of marriage, all reflect Kim's experiences while dating Paek.

The motif of suicide in the story seems borrowed from a different experience. By 1923, she was dating the poet Im Changhwa 林長和. He hid the fact that he had a wife in his hometown, the consequence of the old custom of early arranged marriage. To achieve a union that was impossible in reality, he suggested double suicide to her. Kim Iryŏp had no intention of taking her life. So, she exchanged the lethal dose of heroin with sodium, and by doing so, prevented the incident, but their relationship ended as a result.[49] The pregnancy shares similarities with Kim's secret delivery of her son Kim Taesin (whose Japanese name was Ota Masao) in 1922. Marrying a Japanese student was difficult, even though she was pregnant with his child. After giving birth to the

[49] Kim Iryŏp, "P'iŏngk'in kasŭm-ŭl angko sanŭn R-ssi-ege" 피엉킨 가슴을 안고 사는 R씨에게 in *Ch'ŏngch'un-ŭl pulsarŭgo*, pp.156-193; Kim Iryŏp, "Heroin" 헤로인 in *Chosŏn ilbo* 朝鮮日報 (9-10 March 1929). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, pp.212-218.

baby, she left him and the infant, suggesting him to marry another woman and to form a happy family.[50]

Kim apparently created the plot by interweaving her previous, diverse and incoherent experiences into it. For that reason, maybe, the storytelling is inelegant, unnatural and unconvincing. The story deals with a premarital, unwanted pregnancy. This is far from an unusual problem for many young couples, either in the period in which the story was written or today. However, the way both protagonists solve the problem is out of the ordinary. Abortion is not taken into consideration as an option at all. Instead, the male protagonist makes an extreme suggestion of suicide as if there were no alternative way to deal with the situation. It is a natural expectation on the woman's part that the man would marry her. However, when this expectation is not met, her plan B is neither abortion nor suicide. It is not to raise the child by herself. It was to seek an alternative man with whom she can raise her child.

The most doubtful and absurd thing about the story is the "undertaking" the male protagonist is engaged in. The reason why the pregnancy of the heroine is problematic is not that it is unexpected and unplanned, but that it clashes with Sŏngil's work. This activity is designated merely as a certain "thing" (*kŭ il*) and is not concretely defined. Nonetheless, this vague term rules over the mind of protagonists. This activity wields enormous power over Sŏngil's mind and life. Marriage, forming a family, pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing are all incompatible with it. What is this mysterious undertaking?

> *Sŏng'il and Yŏngsuk are Koreans (Chosŏn saram), the most distressed people in the world. They are not egoistic and shameless persons who only pursue their own happiness. This is the reason why their love has no hope and future. The greater their delight is, the more they feel sorrow. The more their love deepens, the more their heart is filled with grief.*[51]

Although the writer does not explicitly say so, presumably because of censorship, this paragraph gives a clue that the mysterious undertaking is for the sake of the Korean people. The Koreans, including Sŏngil and Yŏngsuk, are an unhappy nation, having lost their sovereignty, country, freedom, and voice to the Japanese colonial power. Seeing their plight, all Korean men and women feel obliged to fight against the colonial authorities and to achieve the ultimate national goal of independence. This is supposed to give freedom and happiness to all Koreans. In such a situation, a person who looks after his own happiness, personal interests and pleasures in the form of love is politically condemned for

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[50] Kim T' aesin 김태신, *Hwasŭng Ŏmŏni-rŭl kŭrida* 1 화승 어머니를 그리다 (Seoul: Irŭn ach'im, 2004); Yi Ch'ŏl 이철, *Kyŏngsŏng-ŭl twihŭndŭn 11-kaji yŏnae sakŏn: modŏn kŏl-gwa modŏn poi-rŭl maehoksik'in ch'imyŏngchŏgin sŭnk'aendŭl* 경성을 뒤흔든 11가지 연애사건: 모던걸과 모던보이를 매혹시킨 치명적인 스캔들 (Seoul: Tasan ch'odang, 2008), pp.132-137.

[51] *Miraese: sang*, p.203.

lack of patriotic nationalism and also morally accused as mean-spirited, egoistic and shameless.

It is, however, not Kim's intention to condemn such egoistic individuals. In her reality, she herself was condemned for her individual pursuit of free love and marriage. The quote above rather reflects the dominant social atmosphere and reveals the paradox caused by nationalist struggles; this struggle aimed to unite all Koreans and achieve freedom and independence, but for that purpose it demonized and took away their individual freedom to love, their joy, hope, and laugher. Individual Koreans were doubly controlled by colonial and nationalist powers, but did not realize this because Korean nationalism had "nationalized" their minds, as if this state of affairs was natural and right, exactly in the way Japanese colonialism had "colonized" the mind of the Koreans. Sŏngil is a social leader and nationalist, whose body and mind, more than ordinary Korean men and women, should be solely dedicated to the Korean nation. He is symbolically married to the "imagined community" of the nation. This is the reason why he cannot marry Yŏngsuk and be the father of their child. Korean women such as Yŏngsuk lose their future husbands and fathers of children.

In the story, Kim depicts the confrontation between human dignity and patriotic nationalism and reveals the dehumanizing power that is often inherent in nationalist struggles. The historical master-narrative perceives anti-colonial nationalism as a form of humanism and equates justice with patriotism. However, Kim saw how often Korean nationalism sharply contrasted with humanity. This is expressed in the inner conflict of the male protagonist. Sŏngil's nationalist undertaking clashes with Yŏngsuk's pregnancy. Love, marriage, forming a family, pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing are actually universal human rights and ordinary life activities. However, his nationalized mind makes him think of the pregnancy as an obstacle that stands in the way to the national goal. Although it is happy news for him personally and a matter of congratulation, it only burdens and agonizes him. On the one hand, he feels responsibility and sympathy for the woman who is pregnant with his child. Without his help, this pitiful woman may have a hard life. With a little fatherless child, her life may be ruined. He cannot merely leave the two pitiful lives alone in this turbulent world.

On the other hand, Sŏngil questions whether his compassion may be due to love and lust, to trivial feelings that distract him from the nationalist can be.

> *Who can carry out the undertaking at issue except me? The problem with Yŏngsuk is anyhow my personal affair. The discussion of raising a child as a future hope might be a pretext to avoid my public and social responsibility. My conscience does not let me take care of my own comfortable life and enjoy a happy sweet marriage and family life, ignoring my compatriots (tongjok). However, these days and in the current social structure, it is hard for a woman*

like Yŏngsuk to take care of herself, even though she is a well-educated and sensible woman. Yet it is much harder to pull out my arms from the collapsing house where thousands of people are living. What should I do?[52]

The nationalist concern for one's fellow man stands in direct confrontation with basic human feelings and rights that are part of almost every human life. It disparages Sŏngil's inclination to love and marry as selfish and anti-social. Yŏngsuk is a temptress who tries to stop him from continuing his nationalist work. A man's parental love is labeled as his personal affair and an excuse to shrink from his urgent responsibility to defend thousands of people and their lives. Although Sŏngil further sees his child as one of the important future servants for future Korea and realizes the importance of education and safety for the child at that moment of time, it is not seen as urgent as the colonial condition and misfortune of his compatriots. It is also not his job. As sketched before, nationalists as well as Japanese colonial authorities promoted the cult of domesticity and the ideology of wise mother and prudent wife and fully entrusted the role of reproduction, childrearing and education to women, encouraging Korean men to strive for the nation. Nationalism in Sŏngil's mind tips universal human rights, diminishes their value as a personal matter. He evaluates them using the nationalist yardstick whether and in which way they can contribute to the nation.

Facing the confrontation between ordinary human life and a life dedicated to the Korean nation, Sŏngil chooses neither his family (wife and child) nor his compatriots, but an alternative; double suicide. He is distressed and confused, pinned in between his conscience as an individual human being and his responsibility to his Korean compatriots. He is unable to solve this problem. He loses his perspective and tries to forget his problems through suicide. Compared with the male protagonist, the heroine is more resolute in taking decisions. Yŏngsuk releases Sŏngil from the heavy duty of paternal care and suggests to him that he should work wholeheartedly for his nation, whereas she herself chooses to give birth to a child and raise it.[53] This choice may be to defend human value and life on the one hand, but on the other hand may be seen as supporting the cult of domesticity with its emphasis on motherhood and female sacrifice for the sake of men.

However, Yŏngsuk's choice turns out to defend neither human value nor the cult of domesticity. Her initial dream to get married and form a family with Sŏngil is broken by the forceful assertion of nationalism. As an alternative plan, she will have an incomplete and deformed family in which the missing husband and father is replaced by a puppet. This is not really to protect human value and life. Nor is Yŏngsuk a wise mother and prudent wife in a true sense. As articulated in her last statement, all of this is done for Sŏng'il, whose life

[52] Ibid., p.205.
[53] Ibid., pp.206-207.

dedicated to national struggles will be noted and honored in history.[54] To make Sŏng'il a national hero, women like Yŏngsuk sacrifice their lives, human dignity, human rights, fundamental freedom, even swearing to keep it a secret. Their experiences of broken love and marriage, the distorted family life, the ensuing mental agonies and economical hardship are all silenced.

Somehow, Sŏngil's dedication to the nationalist movement is reminiscent of the religious practice of renunciation Kim tackled. Both nationalists and Buddhist practitioners tend to be admired as noble or great. Mostly male, they forget their personal interests – a sweet home, happy marriage and harmonious compatible family life – and intend to take care of a large group of people. They leave their families, wives, and children uncared for on their way to Buddhism and nationalism. Many of the uncared-for are exposed to emotional hurt and economic hardship. However, the male-dominated narratives of Buddhist and national histories only remember and shed light on the great acts and efforts of men. Women who are left behind or sacrificed themselves as victims for men appear nowhere in the dominant narratives. Their experiences and voices are put to silence.

Kim Iryŏp, as a Buddhist woman, breaks the silence. She shows people like Yŏngsuk who were excluded from the national arena as the nameless and voiceless. They are usually assumed to be irrelevant to the nationalist struggle or even temptresses who are an obstacle to the nationalist movement. Against this, she argues that one should remember the voiceless people whose silence and sacrifice became the foundation of the nationalist movement. In another essay, she also claims that male nationalists such as Yi Kwangsu are greatly indebted to the women and families behind them.[55] While uncovering the experiences of individuals and women, she reveals that Korean nationalism did not work side by side with human values; rather, it confronted and even severely damaged them. The distorted body of a Korean family in her fictionalized account shows how Korean nationalism dehumanized individual Koreans and impinged on their human dignity and liberty instead of protecting them.

Conclusion

Kim Iryŏp's short stories show how a New Woman was reborn as a Buddhist woman. Although she herself thought that Buddhism is a fundamental truth, whereas the feminist ideology is also a temporary remedy,[56] it does not mean that she discarded her feminism in adopting Buddhism as her new creed. Interestingly, right after her conversion, she made more radical feminist arguments challenging the patriotic idea of virginity and the dominant ideology

[54] Ibid., p.210.
[55] Ibid., pp.352-363.
[56] *Kaebyŏk* 開闢 (Jan. 1935). Republished in *Miraese: ha*, p.226.

of the wise mother and prudent wife in her society. Religiously, at that time she was a mere novice without proper and deep insight into the essentials of Buddhist teachings but she could discern how Buddhist tradition and culture in her days were male-dominated and that women had no voice in the male-dominated Buddhist community. She attempted to change and revise the hostile view of women and love in Buddhism. She did not merely follow existing Buddhist ideas and practices but critically questioned them, exploring voices and experiences often silenced by conventional Buddhism.

Buddhism was not the only authority Kim Iryŏp criticized in her fictional stories. Korean nationalism, too, was questioned. Her contemporaries, as well as today's scholars, were critical of her preoccupation with women's love and sexuality and of her indifference to colonial reality and the national movements. It is true that she did not much problematize Japanese colonialism or policies in her Buddhist works. Nor did she infuse patriotic nationalism into the people's hearts in colonial Korea. Instead of the Korean nation, she discovered more diverse and neglected social agents, such as women, and shed light on their experiences which are often silenced and excluded by mainstream historical narratives. In her writing, Korean nationalism came under criticism for impinging upon fundamental human rights to love, marriage, pregnancy and childbirth. Kim Iryŏp proved that a Buddhist woman was able to see the dehumanizing power hidden in nationalism.

Chapter 6

Women, disability and Buddhism in Kim Iryŏp's (post)colonial literature

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing attempt by scholars to reconsider postcolonial theory in light of disability studies and to explore (post)colonial relationships, politics and experiences through the framework of disability.[1] In a groundbreaking study, Kyeong-Hee Choi proposes a reading of Korean colonial literature and history from this new perspective.[2] As the detailed examples of literary works she has listed demonstrate, the theme of the impaired body and mental disease is overwhelming in colonial literature. She argues that there is an inseparable relationship between this literary imagination and the historical and political situation Koreans experienced as colonial subjects. The Koreans felt lack of mobility and control over their lives, being disrupted and dislocated by the pressures of colonization, commercialization, modernization and urbanization. Their colonized nation was imagined as the community of the metaphorically disabled. According to Kyeong-Hee Choi's analysis, many Korean writers sought to capture the experience of colonialism using disability and illness as a metaphor, to reveal colonial political violence, and to impart anti-colonial messages of protest.

Choi's postcolonial reading of disability inspires us to revisit one of the most iconic women in the early twenty century, Kim Iryŏp (金一葉, 1896-1971), and reconsider our understanding of her life, experiences, and works. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kim is known as a New Woman (*sin yŏsŏng*) who preached free love, envisioned sexual freedom and advocated women's rights in the early 1920s. However, she remained active until her death in 1971. During this long period after the 1920s, did she only cling to the one single subject of free love and have the same opinion and view of it as expressed in the early period? A close examination of her literary representations of disability will reveal how she dealt with many diverse experiences, many different identities and emotions and how her own colonial experience had many implications that are essential for understanding the colonial society of Korea.

In this chapter, I will explore the pervasive theme of disability that Kim elaborated upon to capture the colonial experience in her works. Her narratives on disability will add more diversity and complexity to Ch'oe's

[1] Mark Sherry, "(Post)colonizing Disability" in *Wagadu* 4 (Summer 2007): 10-22; Michelle Jarman, "Resisting "Good imperialism": Reading disability as radical vulnerability" in *Atenea* 25.1 (June 2005):107-116.

[2] Kyeong-Hee Choi, "Impaired Body as Colonial Trope: Kang Kyŏng'ae's "Underground Village" in *Public Culture* 13:3 (Fall, 2001):431-458.

analysis presented above. Kim's descriptions of disability do not represent the colonial experience of the nation, the national body, national disablement, national aspirations, the evils of colonialism, and colonial pressure. They represent her own colonial experience as a woman and individual, beyond the national/colonial binary. Through her autobiographical narratives, Kim shows how diverse social agents felt their disablement, marginalization and lack of control over their lives and reveal that colonialism was not the only power that created disablement and disrupted the lives of Koreans, but that many more sociopolitical factors, from gender to the free love trend, and national politics, were implicated.

My examination will also discuss Buddhism as the most distinctive and critical feature of Kim's narrative on disability. She converted to Buddhism in 1928 and became a Buddhist nun in 1933. This was not the end of her career as is widely assumed. Buddhism actually constituted the main part of her life. It was part of a lifelong struggle for her. What she wanted to achieve during such a long time might have been enlightenment as many Buddhist practitioners do. However, I will argue that the focus and goal of her Buddhist practice was very distinctive. It was to overcome personal and collective disability. Her awareness of disability/impairment actually arose after she became a Buddhist. Through the lens of Buddhism, she came to see her life in colonial society as disabled, crippled, and impaired and realized that there were more people like her. She resorted to Buddhist teachings, in particular Sŏn (Zen) meditation, to cope with colonial disability rather than to national politics, nationalism or socialism, which were the refuge sought by many of her (male) Korean contemporaries.

A woman's distorted self-image

Questions what kind of woman Kim Iryŏp was and why she became a Buddhist nun were hot issues among her contemporaries and still lingered as the years and decades passed. Public opinion was always more or less similar, namely, that she was a flamboyant woman known for her expression of controversial and revolutionary views of love and marriage in a conservative Korean society where the idea that men are superior to women was still prevalent and romantic love was criticized and ridiculed. She was labeled as the incarnation of love and lust (*aeyog-ŭi hwasin*) and a proponent of love for love's sake (*yŏnae chisangjuŭija*).[3] A failure in love or disappointment in love was assumed to have resulted in her becoming a nun.[4] Her religious life was seen by many as reclusive and socially dysfunctional. People lamented that she had been like a showy flower in her heyday in society but now had wilted in the Buddhist monastery.[5]

[3] Yi Myŏng'on 李明溫, *Hŭllŏgan yŏinsang* 흘러간 女人像 (Seoul: Ingansa, 1956), pp.23, 34, and 35.
[4] Kim Iryŏp, "Mu-rŭl anŭn munhwain: hŭllŏgan yŏinsang-ŭl ilko" 無를 아는 文化人: <흘러간 女人像>을 읽고 in *Miraese: ha*, pp.286 and 288.
[5] Yi Myŏng'on, *Hŭllŏgan yŏinsang*, pp.57, 70, and 74; Yi Sŏgu 李瑞求, "Sarang-gwa chŏlmŭm-ŭl

The public depiction of Kim Iryŏp however contradicts her own self-perception, her view of her pre-Buddhist life, and the reason of her conversion to Buddhism and the goal of her Buddhist practice. Her life as a New Woman was not her heyday. Kim saw it as a temporary and insecure phase tainted by her ignorance and self-righteousness.[6] She described herself in pre-Buddhist (secular) life as emotionally disturbed, socially dysfunctional, and psychologically disordered. Her recognition of the disabled self was not limited to her love life but associated with more diverse experiences. Buddhism did not disable her socially, but on the contrary restoring the distorted and damaged self, and to revitalizing her life enabled her to realize herself and made her a socially able being.

In her Buddhist-inspired writing, Kim recounted her experience, self-perception and identity using the metaphor of disability. Looking back to her childhood, she described herself as a "fool" (*mŏngch'ŏngi*). She was easily deceived by her friends. Once, she exchanged her gilt quality pencil for a useless picture with a man with a topknot and Western shoes on it because she did not know the worth of modern photographs.[7] Her playmate, Yun Simdŏk,[8] who had entered modern school first, tricked and fooled her time and again. Kim was helpless before her friends' trickery which led her to make a mistake and be scolded by her teacher. She was not clever (*ttokttokhaji mothan*) enough to prove her innocence. Nobody listened to her sluggish voice. As a consequence, she suffered severe emotional disturbance and distress.[9]

Kim lost her parents early in her life. Her life as a parentless and brotherless girl crippled her psychologically, socially and economically. Her mother died when she was at primary school, whereas her father died by the time Kim graduated from Ewha haktang. She received little home education. Her mother as an unconventional woman never taught her womanly conduct or feminine virtues when she was a young girl. Her father who was a pious Christian minister supported her to receive modern education and much sympathized with his motherless daughter. However, the fatherly love and care she received were too limited and short-lived to guard her from a lapse into disbelief. Kim Iryŏp grew up ignorant of the world, living alone in a student dormitory. The dominant feeling of her life as an orphan was loneliness. She felt a lack of close family ties as well as alienation from the whole world outside. As described by herself, she had no clear direction, no identity, and no goals in life.

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pulto-e sarŭgo" 사랑과 젊음을 佛道에 사르고 in *Taehan ilbo* 大韓日報 (29 Jan 1971); "Kain tokssuk kongbanggi" 佳人獨宿空房記 in *Samch'ŏlli* (August 1935).

[6] "Iryŏp sojŏn: na-ŭi ipsangi" 一葉小傳: 나의 入山記 in *Miraese: sang*, pp.257-258; "Sin tonga yŏgija chwadamhoe" 新東亞 女記者 座談會 in *Sin tonga* 新東亞 (May 1932). Republished in *Miraese: ha*, p.216.

[7] "Iryŏp sojŏn: na-ŭi ipsangi" 一葉小傳: 나의 入山記 in *Miraese: sang*, pp.260 and 263.

[8] She later became a famous female vocalist and ended her life with double suicide.

[9] "Chilli-rŭl morŭmnida" 眞理를 모릅니다 in *Yŏsŏng tonga* 女性東亞 (Dec. 1971-Jun. 1972). Republished in *Miraese:sang*, pp.280-285.

She found herself disoriented, not knowing what to believe and what to do.[10]

But Kim was not simply frustrated. She desperately sought to overcome psychological impairments with the form of loneliness and alienation. First and foremost, she thought of free love (*yŏnae*) as the solution to her problem. She tried to find everything – parents' love, brotherhood, peace and harmony in her family life, the meaning of life – in love with a man.[11] She was ready to sacrifice all her personal comfort and reputation to achieve one true love. In public, she advocated that human beings cannot live without love. Love, she claimed, was the raison d'être and goal of life for all human beings. Free love was argued to play an important role not only in one's personal life but also in society. She considered it to be an essential element of one's inner life, a fountain of energy for one's personal life and social activities.[12] But did the power of free love rescue her, heal her crippled mind, create the energy that gave her a new meaning of life, and rebuild the connection with society?

Kim forgot her loneliness while practicing free love, but when love was over she experienced more severe loneliness and depression. Free love gave happiness and joy to her, but also sorrow and despair. Love made her blind, so she could not see and think normally. Kim in love was, in her own words, a silly woman (*ch'inyŏ*, 痴女), a mad woman (*mich'in yŏin*) and a moron (*paekch'i*).[13] There were too many skirt chasers who regarded her as easy prey. Once in love, she could not imagine that one can fall out of love and change one's mind. She cherished the illusion that she was loved by the man she fell for, never questioning whether the man had the same feeling and seriously considered marrying her. She did not know that there is more than romantic love between a man and a woman and that some people regard other persons and other life goals a more important than the beloved and love.[14]

While experiencing love, Kim Iryŏp saw the downside of free love, but in particular after turning to Buddhism, she came to realize that free love was not a solution for all problems as she idealistically thought but in reality itself was a big problem. Free love may have emancipated Korean women like Kim from the patriarchal society and culture of her day, but also took control over their lives and minds. It turned out to be one of the oppressive, destructive, and dehumanizing forces of colonial society. Under its pressure, one's heart and soul were torn apart. One's life was ruined. One felt like a slave to its power, feeling a lack of mobility and self-control. One's spirit was tortured and one's mind was disordered so that one made light of one's life, regarding love as most important and urgent. The later Buddhist Kim even called it a most lethal machine which destroyed both body and soul.[15]

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[10] *Miraese: sang*, pp.268 and 277.
[11] Ibid., p.312.
[12] Ibid., p.312.
[13] Ibid., pp.312, 316, 317, and 322.
[14] Ibid., p.315
[15] Ibid., p.299.

Many of her autobiographical love poems, which was a medium to express her feeling, not her thought, exactly capture how Kim Iryŏp in reality experienced the overwhelming power of free love while she as a free love advocate theoretically enunciated it as an absolute and sacred affair. As long as her experiences were concerned, free love was not as beautiful, sacred, comforting and invigorating as she thought. Poems reveal her vulnerability in her love relationships. Love took first place in her mind, even more important than life. She devoted herself to the beloved, but she still felt loneliness, dissatisfaction, lack of unity and alienation.[16] She wanted to forget all her suffering caused by love and live in free of care but she could not. The uncontrollable feeling of love drove her to tears.[17]

In the long poem "Tchaksarang" 짝사랑 (Unrequited Love, ca. 1928), in particular, Kim Iryŏp portrays herself as a mad woman, whose body and mind have been thoroughly damaged by free love.[18] In the poetic picture, a woman cries alone in a room. She is in love, but her love is not returned. Finding no way to express her love, her soul is wounded and her heart is filled with nothing but tears. Unanswered love wields a demonic power over her. It turns into fever in her body and makes her critically ill. The flame of love burns up her body and soul. She writhes and screams out in pain. Finally she runs out of her house and climbs up the mountains like a mad woman. She cries her heart out, desperately wanting to feel a single stroke of the beloved's hand and to see a single drop of tears he sheds.

The focus of the poem is not the beloved, nor a woman's burning love. This poem presenting physical illness and mental disorder rather reveals the horror of free love Kim experienced and lets us know that she was not always a free love advocate who blindly supported the modern trend. In particular after she became a Buddhist, she critically reconsidered free love as violent and disruptive power and reflected on her previous life and identity as metaphorically disabled, fragile and insecure. But she did not perceive her love experience as failure as widely assumed. One can learn from one's good and bad experiences. In this sense, her terrible love experience was not seen by her as meaningless as the term failure connoted.[19] It was a life, disturbed, confused, distressed and disordered by pressures like free love, which needed to be recovered and resettled by means of Buddhism, as will be discussed later.

Disability in colonial society

[16] "Tangsin-ŭn na-ege muŏsi toeŏssapkie?" 당신은 나에게 무엇이 되었삽기에?" (April 1928) in *Miraese: sang*, pp.36-37; "Nim-gwa kojŏk" 님과 孤寂 in *Samch'ŏlli* (April 1932).
[17] "T'ŭmipcha" 闖入者" in *Tonga ilbo* (6 Dec. 1926).
[18] The date of publication is actually unknown. But in light of her autobiographical experience, this poem seems to have written around 1928. Published posthumously in *Miraese: sang*, pp.72-73.
[19] "Sakpalhago changsam ibŭn Kim Iryŏp yŏsa-ŭi hoegyŏngi" 削髮하고 長衫입은 金一葉女史의 會見記in *Kaebyŏk* (Jan. 1935), p.15.

Kim Iryŏp has been seen as an early proponent of women's rights in the early 1920s whose primary concern was limited to women's experiences of love, marriage, and sexuality and who paid little attention to other social, political, economic problems the Koreans faced during the colonial period. Her lack of concern for politics, i.e. Japanese colonialism, nationalist movements and class disputes, is criticized as proof of her shortcomings or at best is evaluated as a gender specific response to colonial reality.[20] However, there are some counter examples to this general assumption.

Kim's acquaintances testified that Kim was not indifferent to national politics. During the March First Movement (1919), for instance, her house became a base for student demonstrators. Together with them, Kim mimeographed countless leaflets with statements about Korea's independence. The Japanese police discovered this fact and came to search the whole house. She destroyed the remaining leaflets and the mimeograph machine just in time.[21] It is seldom told that Kim was also one of the members of Kŭnuhoe (槿友會, 1927-1931) which was a woman's organization affiliated to the united national front of Sin'ganhoe 新幹會, and which as Kenneth M. Wells argues, enables us to conceive of a female version of nationalism.[22] The (male) Buddhist master Ch'unsŏng even looked up to her as a role model of a patriotic monastic, telling an unknown story; during the Korean War (1950-1951), a North Korean army unit stormed into the temple where she resided. They threatened her at gunpoint and demanded a conversion to turn to communism. But she refused without the slightest fear, saying that her country was the Republic of Korea.[23]

As the evidence demonstrates, Kim unequivocally engaged with nationalist politics and participated in major national events. Nonetheless, her concern with nationalism is underestimated in her personal histories and her role as one of the inconspicuous and female participants is silenced in the narrative of national history as usual. It may be meaningful to restore and reevaluate her nationalist contributions but at the same time, a focus on the national is, as repeatedly warned, problematic because it excludes the possibility of all other reactions to politics and colonial reality. As discussed in the previous chapter, she was critical of nationalism rather than affirmative. A close examination of her narratives reveals that neither her contribution to national politics nor her criticism of it is essential in her social and political experience. Her focus is on social disablement. Although she had a strong social consciousness and was trying to belong to and play a role in colonial society, she remained marginalized from society and felt herself to be socially disabled.

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[20] Jin Y. Park, "Gendered Response to Modernity: Kim Ir-yŏp and Buddhism" in *Korea Journal* 45.1 (Spring 2005): 114-141, p.136.

[21] Ch'oe Ŭnhŭi 崔恩喜, "Iryŏp sŭnim-ŭi ipchŏk" 一葉 스님의 入寂 in *Miraese: ha*, pp.480-481; *Iryŏp sŏnmun* 一葉禪文 (Seoul: Munhwa sarang, 2001), p.289.

[22] Kenneth M. Wells, "The Price of Legitimacy: Women and the Kŭnuhoe Movement, 1927-1931" in *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), p.192.

[23] Ch'unsŏng 春城, "Aeguksim-ŭl chinin hyean" 愛國心을 지닌 慧眼 in *Miraese: ha*, p.450.

Kim Iryŏp shares her experience of disability through a collection of essays. One of them is "1932-nyŏn-ŭl ponaemyŏnsŏ" 1932年을 보내면서 (Adieu 1932, 1932). In this essay, she does not consider herself a full-fledged member of society, calling herself a semi-social member of society (*chun sahoein*, 準社會人).[24] It is not because she had left society and entered the temple. When she wrote this essay in 1932, she was still living in the secular world as a lay Buddhist. Although she physically resided in society, she did not feel she fully belonged to society. Why? She does not answer the question directly but implies that one does not automatically become a member of society because one is born in it. One should be recognized by others as an equal and a member of the same society. In this sense, she felt inadequate.

Kim states that few in colonial society recognize her as a socially responsible adult and treat her with the dignity that goes with it. Once, when she claimed to be a member of society, she was helplessly exposed to ridicule, trickery, and insults. However, she does not express her anger to people who treated her badly. Nor does she try to resist being treated badly because she is too powerless to do so. Rather, she bitterly reproaches herself for not having the qualifications to be socially recognized. She blames her lack of self-assurance and lack of clear ideological orientation. She relates how she is constantly influenced and confused by this and that ideological trend. She associates this with mental disorder and says that she should recover from this mental illness.[25]

Kim's self-reproach reaches its peak when she compares her existence with that of a parasite (*kisaengch'ung*). In her young age, she was cared for by her parents although she lost them early. In her old age, she came to rely on her husband(s) financially. At that time, many women in colonial Korea lived like that. They realistically found it impossible to support their lives by themselves. Marriage was a surefire way for them to have shelters for their heads and financial support. In exchange of for it, they were absolved by their role and work, which were largely limited to domestic household, as a wise mother, good wife and prudent housewife and put their time and effort into raising their children, serving their husbands, and fulfilling household duties.[26] However, Kim was a woman who had a different opinion and conditions. She was aware of the parasitic way of life Korean women including her practiced and, in particular of the broad fact that society benefited them. She claimed that women should enter the business world and take part in social activities to overcome their status quo and to do duties they owe to society.[27] She was personally exempt from women's domestic duties such as childrearing because she had no child. Her family life was quite simple because she had no one else

[24] *Chosŏn ilbo* (21-22 Dec. 1932). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, pp.440-445.
[25] *Miraese: sang*, p.441.
[26] "Yŏgija chwadamhoe" 女記者 座談會 in *Sin Tonga* 新東亞 (May 1932). Republished in *Miraese: ha*, p.215.
[27] Ibid.

but her current husband (Ha Yunsil). So, social participation was in principle a much easier option to her than to other women.

Despite her desire for social participation and her better family circumstance, however, Kim Iryŏp still finds herself as one of those useless to society, disabled and inept. Calling herself a parasite, she just lives off society, doing more harm than good. In reality, she is unemployed and depends on her husband for a regular income. She is physically not strong enough to do manual labor. She has no skill and no special knowledge and is not talented, either. She feels financially, physically and intellectually crippled. Accordingly, she finds no work, no job, and no role in her society. In her thirties she reflects on her age. She is not too young and not too old and her life is probably at its height. Nonetheless, she is simply of no use to society. She feels the frustration of being powerless and regrets wasting half of her life with stupidities. She blames herself for her inability to live an independent life and her inability to function socially.

Social disablement was not just Kim's own personal experience. She shows how it was widely experienced by the majority of Korean people. A parasitic way of life was, in her observation, very common in Korean colonial society. The majority of Koreans relied solely on the income of one or two persons in their family. Some of them lived off a small inheritance. Otherwise, they just went hungry. Many had no ability to manage their lives. They were all useless to society and even directly or indirectly harmful to it, because they cared for nothing but filling their bellies (Hong Sayong, called such people hungry ghosts, using a Buddhist term, instead of parasites). According to Kim's observation, only very few Koreans were able to lead the society and they turned out to be all men. Women held the absolute majority of those who were socially defective and disabled. She denounces that many of them did not know why it is important to be active in society. Their interests seem to have been limited to domestic issues such as a nice house, household items and clothes. They were engaged in consumption rather than productive work. It is also self-evident that they could not live without men financially.

Kim suggests severe social disablement as the main feature of both her personal and the collective experience in colonial Korea, but her awareness expressed in this essay seems not to extend to raising questions as to why not one or two but so many Koreans felt excluded from their own society and became powerless and incompetent, nor why Korean women, in particular, more severely suffered from social disablement compared with their male counterparts. Nowhere she explained that colonialism and its control over the lives and activities of the Koreans made the Koreans feel disabled. She may have suggested implicitly that there were more forms of power than colonialism in colonial society which imposed pressure on particular groups of Koreans. Korean women remained socially disabled because they were doubly marginalized under the colonial and national pressure and their role and activities were limited to domesticity because of the gender politics of concepts

such as *hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ* (wise mother and good wife).[28]

In "Adieu, 1932," social disablement is basically seen as Kim Iryŏp's and the Koreans' own fault rather than as caused by certain external pressure applied to their lives. Yet, this act of self-blame does not end up accepting the status quo passively and expressing only frustration and depression. On the contrary, Kim shows her strong will to challenge social exclusion and disablement and expresses her determination to be a "full-fledged and powerful member of society."[29] What is the way that she, the Korean women and the majority of Koreans might overcome social disablement? The bottom line is that she and other women should participate in society. She compares Korean colonial society to a carriage and a pair of horses. Korean men and women are supposed to be the two horses leading the cart of society. Current society, which is run by Korean men only, is seen as crippled and dysfunctional. To make society functional, it is critical that the power of the other horse, namely, Korean women, is used. She does not seek change afar but in herself. She determines to settle her parasitic life and struggles to be a socially able being.

Two years later, Kim wrote another notable essay titled "Ilch'e-ŭi seyŏg-ŭl tanhago" 一切의 世慾을 斷하고 (Forsaking all worldly desires, 1934).[30] This essay is noteworthy in the sense that she showed a totally different attitude toward social disablement. Her criticism is much more directed to external pressures, showing how a woman who takes part in public life is indiscriminately criticized and assailed by the people in contemporary colonial society. This essay begins with poignant experiences of regret concerning her social life. She had high expectations for women's participation in the social, political and economic activities. She had viewed it as the solution for the social disablement she, Korean women and Korean colonial society suffered from and romanticized it as the way to construct an ideal society. However, now she realizes that she got it all wrong. Social disablement still has not healed after half of her life has passed. There is no significant improvement in society. She only feels insulted, cheated, and disgraced as a result of her social experience.[31]

In society, Kim was engaged in many diverse activities and organizations ranging from politics and literature to business, mass media, and religion. She accordingly socialized with various people, most of whom were men, because those social domains were overwhelming male-dominated. As specified in this essay, she interacted with socialists, businessmen, and writers.

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[28] For more details on gender politics, see Hyaeweol Choi, ""Wise Mother, Good Wife": A Transcultural Discursive Construct in Modern Korea," *Journal of Korean Studies* 14:1 (Fall 2009):1-34; Theodore Jun Yoo, *The politics of gender in colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910-1945* (University of California Press, 2008); Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi, *Dangerous Women: Gender & Korean Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1998)

[29] *Miraese: sang*, p.445.

[30] *Samch'ŏlli* (Nov. 1934). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, pp. 463-471.

[31] *Miraese: sang*, p.463.

At first, it seemed that she was well accepted in those social areas and her ability was fully appreciated by her male peers. Socialists praised her as a brave iconoclastic heroine. Writers romanticized her as a glamorous goddess, and business men idealized her as a wise mother and good wife.[32] They all praised her, but why did she feel disturbed? The male social leaders did not directly criticize her in her face but it turned out at her back that they called her names and ridiculed her. Compliments and praise turned out to be all lip service designed to woo her. She was outraged to discover that none of them was sincere in treating her and that she was merely a toy to them. Her social participation did not make her into a socially able being, but on the contrary, badly injured her on the emotional and psychological level.

When entering the Buddhist sangha, Kim more keenly realized how colonial society placed individuals and women like her under control and made them feel disrespected. She had struggled to put an end to her parasitic life and to be a socially able, self-reliant and powerful person/woman. A monastic life she saw as a form of resolution to achieve this, will be discussed later more in detail. She ended her loveless marriage and divorced her husband, whom she lived off, and started a new life in the monastery. As she exclaims in her essay, she then became finally autonomous and able to restore her human dignity. However, society looked askance at her renunciation. She had to face harsh lashings from public opinion, which agreed that she had done something bad and wrong. Conservative elderly people rebuked her for her divorce. People armed with new ideas and ideologies did not support her resolution to end her loveless marriage, either but condemned her as a wicked wife (*tokpu*, 毒婦).[33]

Regardless of ideological differences, people scolded Kim in unison. Few understood her motivation and supported her act of renunciation. In such a situation, she finds herself virtually a "disabled" person (*pulguja*) whose life is cursed by society.[34] She was disillusioned by the overbearing and inhuman response of colonial society. When she wrote the essay "1932-nyŏn-ŭl ponaemyŏnsŏ," she still felt that society has raised her so that she was indebted to it, although she had no ability to repay the debt and did society more harm than good. However, while writing this essay, she realized that it was actually not her but society which was injurious and harmful. Society hurt and devalued her. It should be noted that the social pressure she experienced did not refer to the political and economic pressure created by the colonial power. As far as her experiences were concerned, those who humiliated and victimized her were not the Japanese colonizers but her compatriots, in particular the male social leaders active in politics, literature, and business. These men may have done good for the Korean community and society, benefiting the Korean people and defending their rights against Japanese colonialism. However, Kim Iryŏp

[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., p.464.
[34] Ibid., p.468.

reveals the other side of their national agenda; a serious lack of respect for the dignity, humanity and life of individuals and women. The individuals and women were marginalized by colonial society. Their individual needs, voices, freedom and even human dignity were ignored for the nation's sake.

In response to the disablement and impairment created by colonial society, Kim declares that she was leaving the secular world and breaking her relations with the inhumane people who regarded her as their prey or toy. She shows strong determination to pursue her monastic life in spite of criticism and words of contempt. However, she did not mean that she was running away and hiding from the world provoked by fear or worldly failure, simply trying to forget all problems and social affairs, and abandoning social responsibility, as public prejudice judged. She made it clear that her declaration aimed at reflecting on her past secular life when she was at the mercy of those who injured her and starting up a new life, taking her fate in her own hands. It was not an escape from the world but in her own words, a "pilgrimage" to make up for lost time and to save her personality and dignity from the dehumanizing influence of society.[35]

Kim does not turn her back on society altogether. Her renunciation is not to forget social responsibility. On the contrary, she presents a particular vision of new society, different from contemporary colonial society. The society she wants to create is owned by individuals, not by some collective and political powers. In this society, the individual Koreans are not marginalized, manipulated, and dislocated for collective and political reasons, either. Instead, each of them may seek to pursue an autonomous, self-chosen and self-fulfilling life, be able to enjoy freedom, express one's individuality, and develop one's own sense of lifestyle. The most important values in this society are not property, fame, and status, but human life (*saengmyŏng*) and dignity (*ingyŏk*). Nobody in this society seeks to disturb the life of others and ignore other's dignity. Every individual recognizes the importance of ensuring the dignity of both self and others and lives up to the principle of mutual respect for life and individuality.[36]

Such a humanized society is described in terms of a "new form of individualism" (*sin kaeinjuŭi*) or a broadminded individualism (*kŏin-jŏk kaeinjuŭi*).[37] This unfamiliar term seems not to have been invented by Kim arbitrarily. Citing a different essay of Kim, Pang Minho argues that Kim in the early and mid 1920s was influenced by her lover, poet Im Nowŏl, and his view of individualism.[38] Im's main emphasis was laid upon individuals and their character building (*ingyŏk wansŏng*). He basically opposed socialist ideals of

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., p.468.
[37] Ibid., pp.466 and 468.
[38] Pang Minho 방민호, "Kim Iryŏp munhag-ŭi sasang-jŏk pyŏnmo kwajŏng-gwa Pulgyo sŏnt'aeg-ŭi ŭimi" 김일엽 문학의 사상적 변모과정과 불교 선택의 의미 in *Han'guk hyŏndae chakka-wa Pulgyo* 한국 현대작가와 불교 (Seoul: Yeok, 2007), pp.95-103.

material and economic well-being and the importance of collective and group ownership. He was also against reducing individualism to private ownership of property. Instead, he stood for the full development of the personality and character of the individual as the most important indicator of human well-being. He judged that property, fame and status all tainted one's personality and hindered its development, just as Kim Iryŏp also stated in her essay mentioned above. The personal aesthetic expression of individuality was considered as essential to create a man of character and a beautiful society.[39]

Im's idea of new individualism considerably resonates in Kim Iryŏp's thinking but there are also some discrepancies. Im basically proposed a view of art for art's sake, in particular in confrontation with the socialist writers.[40] Kim's concept is not particularly associated with art or literature, nor opposed to socialism. Different from Im, she did not have a particular objection against socialists in the beginning and socialized with them. She also worked with socialist women in the Kŭnuhoe and to some extent sympathized with their point of view where a break with the feudal tradition and the importance of economic matters were concerned.[41] However, when she wrote this essay in 1934, she felt betrayed and outraged by their disregard for her human dignity. Still, her criticism does not target socialists only. What she brings into question is rather the contemporary colonial society in which the dominant sociopolitical powers controlled, used and victimized individuals in the collective name of empire, nation or public.

Kim's new individualism is not limited to her view of art but a sociopolitical discourse designed to criticize the dehumanized colonial society and to speak up for individuals under social pressure. It is noteworthy that her attempt ran counter to the dominant social current throughout the 1930s. As I discuss throughout this dissertation, in particular in Chapter 2, individualism was harshly condemned at the time of preparation for war (against the West). It was seen by the Japanese policymakers as nothing better than egoism, selfishness and decadence, of which the root is Western, and which causes social clashes and breaks the unity and harmony of the Japanese empire. Their basic wartime ideology, *kokutai*, was thus aimed at eliminating individualism and drawing upon Japanese traditions characterized by the display of the sacrificial spirit of individuals on behalf of the public (empire and the emperor).

Many Korean social or national leaders did not oppose the Japanese wartime logic of sacrifice, but reproduced it for their own national agendas. The individual Koreans who pursed their personal interests and goals rather than the good of the Korean nation were harshly criticized for their lack of nationalism or for being harmful to the public good, as Han Yongun, for

[39] *Han'guk hyŏndae chakka-wa Pulgyo*, pp.97-100.
[40] Ibid., p.97.
[41] Some of her works reflect her awareness of economic hardship the Korean people faced. See for example "Chabi" 慈悲 in *Pulgyo* (Feb. 1932); "50-chŏn ŭnhwa" 50錢 銀貨 in *Samch'ŏlli* (Jan. 1933); "Kwitturamisong" 귀뚜라미頌 (Feb. 1932). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, p.58.

example, tried to claim in his novel *Pakmyŏng*.[42] Against this backdrop, Kim does not speak up for colonial and national powers, but for the individual. She reveals what these social and political powers glossed over or kept in silence; individuals whom they tended to describe as egoistic, selfish and indulgent were actually the weak, oppressed and marginalized of colonial society. Using her own social experience, she shows disabled and impaired individuals whose needs, rights and dignity were often ignored and who experienced feelings of humiliation and mortification.

Buddhism as a way to overcome disability

Kim confronted a distorted self-identity and experienced social disablement while living and working in colonial society. Her individual colonial experience was not exclusively her own. It also reflected the disrupted lives of many others (the majority of Koreans, individuals, and women in particular) and revealed the disabling contemporary socio-political conditions. However, her awareness of disability was always accompanied by a strong determination to restore her emotionally disordered mind and regain the lost self-control over her life. She struggled to make herself a socially able being and to find a way for people in colonial Korea to overcome the disabilities colonial and other sociopolitical powers imposed on them.

Nationalism and socialism were popularly seen as the best way to end colonial oppression and to settle the problems of colonial Korea. However, neither was adopted by Kim Iryŏp as a solution. She was critical of these political ideologies, revealing the diverse forms of marginalization and disability they created at the individual and gender level. Instead of politics, she sought to find an alternative way to cope with personal and collective disability. This was creative writing (literature) for the time being, but ultimately her Buddhist belief. She regarded herself as a useless cripple throughout her life, but saw some hope for improvement.

Kim had some aptitude for literature and wanted to develop it so that she could take care of herself.[43] Through literature, she also convinced herself, she could demonstrate her ability to be useful and helpful to society. She was aware that writers play an important role in society. If a writer does not capture people's lives and does not fictionalize their stories, nobody will remember them. The life experiences of many anonymous people are useless and futile unless writers document their lives, share and rework their stories through their literary creations, and transform them to instruct and comfort others.[44] What writers create Kim Iryŏp did not see just as entertaining tales. In their

[42] See chapter 2.

[43] "1932-nyŏn-ŭl ponaemyŏnsŏ" in *Miraese: sang*, p.443; "Sŏjung chapkam" 署中雜感 in *Pulgyo* (Sep. 1932). Republished in *Miraese: ha*, p.258.

[44] "Midŭm-i ssakt'ŭl ttae: sahoesang-ŭi yŏrŏgaji" 믿음이 싹틀 때: 社會相의 여러가지 in *Pulgyo* (March 1933). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, p.254.

works, writers bring people to life and construct a whole new meaning of their existence. In this way, writers become active creators, not passive recipients. Becoming such a great writer was the supreme goal of her life.[45]

Kim struggled to overcome disabilities in her personal and social life and become an able being through creative writing. To improve her literary skills, she labored at her desk writing everyday, line by line, as if plowing a field. She reduced her sleeping time and refrained from going out to concentrate on writing only. It was urgent for her to enhance her knowledge of the world, human life, and social affairs. So, she read widely, books, newspapers, and magazines. She attempted to learn foreign languages among which Chinese.[46] Above all, she made an effort to read Buddhist scriptures and practice Buddhist meditation. Buddhism was still difficult to understand to her but this laywoman and new convert at least knew that Buddha's teachings are worthy of respect and worth promoting among people. She composed her poems, essays, and short stories citing at random words, phrases and sentences from the Buddhist scriptures. She even sought occult Buddhist knowledge (*sint'ongnyŏk*), wishing to become a great writer preaching the profound philosophy of the Buddha's teaching.[47]

However, despite all her literary aspirations and efforts, Kim could not get over her mental, emotional, intellectual, and social disabilities. She had many things to say and her heart was filled with feelings she wanted to convey. Nonetheless, she found it very hard to put her impressions, thoughts and feelings into words. What she expressed was less than one percent of what she thought and felt. She felt as if she had a severe impairment in expressing something in a written form and conveying it to an audience. Although it was spoken and written, her acquaintances and her readers did not listen to her carefully or appreciate her works. Instead, they laughed at her and called her a woman crazy with Buddhism.[48]

The practice of writing could not be an experience that made Kim Iryŏp feel emotionally powerful and strong, more worthwhile as a person and validated as an able being. Literature did not solve the problems caused by disability but added more problems. The problems she faced were partly caused by her lack of knowledge and poor literary skills. Yet, the more she learned and practiced Buddhism, the more she realized that the problems with disability were fundamentally caused by self-ignorance. She had got it all wrong. Buddhism was not an occult power to bring her literary fame. It was not something she could just preach to people without learning and practicing it

[45] "Chilli-rŭl morŭmnida" Republished in *Miraese: sang*, p.334.
[46] *Miraese: sang*, pp.443-444.
[47] *Miraese: sang*, pp.318, 332 and 333; "Sinbul-gwa na-ŭi kajŏng" 信佛과 나의 家庭 in *Sin tonga* 新東亞 (Dec. 1931). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, pp.430-431.
[48] *Miraese: sang*, p.318, 332 and 333; "Yŏsindo-rosŏŭi sinnyŏn kamsang" 女信徒로서의 新年 感想 in *Pulgyo* (Jan. 1931). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, p.436-437; "Hanjari-ŭi toep'uri" 한자리의 되풀이 in *Miraese: sang*, pp.484-485.

seriously. Whether she could become a great writer or not, should not be the primary question. The foremost thing that she needed to overcome disability was the restoration of her sanity (or mental clarity) and establishing a firm view of life. She realized how absurd and stupid it was to aspire to be a great writer without even knowing who she was. Literary works created by such an ignorant person were, in her own words, an illusion and nonsense.[49]

Kim Iryŏp did not, however, discard literature entirely, nor depreciated its value. What Kim realized was that literature/art cannot be the fundamental way to deal with personal and collective disabilities. She saw that a thoroughly awakened view of life and self precedes all other things including literature/art and it ultimately enables writers and artists to create immortal masterpieces.[50] She thus needed to forsake her desire to write poetry and prose for a while and to focus on exploring her true identity of self and awakening to the truth of life. For that reason, she entered monastic life and attempted to concentrate on Buddhist practice. As she repeatedly emphasized in various essays, she became a Buddhist nun to bring her literature to life and to create a masterpiece that addressed the truth of life.[51]

Kim did not understand Buddhism as a religion which simply gave comfort and solace to her. She did not adopt the widely acknowledged goals of Buddhism such as enlightenment, Buddhahood, nirvana, the universal salvation of living beings, and compassion as her own. Buddhism had a very specific meaning and role in her life. It ultimately helped her recognize her personal and the collective colonial experience as a form of disability and prescribed a fundamental solution for it. She was, she said, like a blind man (*sogyŏng*) who had lost his way in life. [52] Through Buddhism, she became able to identify herself as having a psychological, intellectual and social disability and came to be aware of various pressures causing the disability problem. Buddhism became a compass for her to find the right way and fundamental solution to overcome disability and regain self-esteem and mobility in life.

The first sermon Kim heard from Paek Sŏnguk, which led her to believe in Buddhism, used metaphors of disability. It was about Buddha's awakening and teaching; when Shakyamuni gained and preached his awakening to the supreme wisdom, people were as if blind and deaf (*nun mŏlgo kwimŏgŏri*). Their minds were crippled and impaired so that they could not understand the full meaning of what the Buddha said. For forty-nine years, Buddha taught them many things but his message in a nutshell was self-discovery (*cha'a palgyŏn*). Buddha taught that one should first and foremost explore one's true nature which is as same as that of the universe and lead an autonomous (*tongnip-jŏk*) life, unimpeded by all kinds of sufferings, illusions and constraints. Buddha

[49] *Miraese: sang*, pp.333-334.
[50] "Pulto-rŭl takkŭmyŏ" 佛道를 닦으며 in *Samch'ŏlli* (Jan. 1935). Republished in *Miraese: sang*, pp.476-477.
[51] *Miraese: sang*, pp.350-351 and 486.
[52] Ibid., pp.335.

showed the way to acquiring one's true self. It was to concentrate one's mind on a certain object or thought, questioning what nature is. If one solves this question, one can also find one's own true nature, the Buddha had said.[53]

It is easy to notice that Kim did not adopt the ordinary and conventional aspects of Buddhism. For her, the core of Buddha's teachings was not the four noble truths[54] nor the eightfold path as most commonly explained.[55] The main features of Buddhism were sketched by her in terms of disability and self-discovery. She was impressed by the Sŏn (Zen) approach to Buddhism which emphasizes awareness of the true nature of existence and universe through the meditative practice of concentrating one's mind on one thing or holding the *hwadu* (critical phrase). However, self-realization did not mean to her to attain perfect enlightenment and become a Buddha. To her, it meant to create an independent life. Sŏn Buddhism actually underscores the interdependence of all beings (*sasamuae*, 事事無碍) and the mutual conditioning of phenomena, but these Buddhist concepts and their profound meaning were not grasped by her. From the outset, Buddhism was understood by her in particular as a religion in search of full control or ownership over one's own life and self, free from social pressures, dependence on others, the mental delusion of heaven and hell, and space-time constraints.[56]

A second sermon preached by master Mangong 萬空 is important because it more clearly confirms that Kim sought in Buddhism the best way to tackle her disabled life and crippled mind. When she entered monastic life in 1933, her master gave her the following instruction: the aim of leaving home and pursuing a monastic life is to survive and live life. He questioned what the use of food, clothes, society, country and world is if one dies. Because one is alive and well, these things have meaning. However, survival (living) does not merely mean to cling to life. It is to revitalize one's infinite life force in oneself and to restore the original and complete form of one's life force. According to him, she (and many others) had lived depending on a small fragment of her mind and life force and never realized them in their entirety. Like a fool (*paekch'i*) while acting she had never made free use of what she possessed, the full power of her life force. Although her life and mind were her own, she had no power to bring them under her control. Her current secular life without self-control was diagnosed by her master as no life, or no human life. Her master provoked her anger by repeatedly asking why she could not make up her own mind as she liked and why she did not try to live a life worth living as a human by solving this problem.[57]

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[53] Ibid., pp.302-304.
[54] The truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path of the cessation of suffering.
[55] This concept describes the way to end suffering; right views, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right contemplation.
[56] *Miraese: sang*: p.303.
[57] Ibid, pp.321-322.

Mangong basically explained to Kim, the novice, what monastic life is. Interestingly, he did not mention any rules in monastery and basic Buddhist doctrines in his sermon. He did not advocate the monastic life as the way envisioned by the Buddha and the surest way to enlightenment. In his sermon, the meaning and goal of monastic life were oriented toward enabling the recovery of one's full life force and bringing one's life under one's control. This explanation seems not to represent Mangong's distinctive Buddhist view. Given that he delivered this sermon specifically for the benefit of Kim, this sermon addressed more what she had experienced in secular colonial society, what kind of problems she had, and what were the cause of and solution to those life's problems. Through Mangong's mouth, her secular life was implicitly and explicitly declared to malfunction; she was disabled, and enslaved. Her master awakened her to the seriousness of losing power over her life and lacking control over her mind, and he moved her to act against it.

Living a monastic life, which was often subjected to social prejudice as confining life to the limited space of the temple and disabling other activities, was on the contrary argued by her master to be a fundamental activity to overcome disability and lack of mobility in her life and to recover (rejuvenate) the unlimited power of life in herself. This was ultimately to make her an able person in her life, society and the world. Mental concentration or meditation was particularly emphasized as most conducive to such a monastic life. Mangong pointed out that to live as a full-fledged human being in the true sense of the word, she first needed to gather together her split and scattered mind. Her mind was dispersed and disordered like the dismembered body of an earthworm of which the broken parts are moving in all directions. If she would bring order to her mind and restores it to its complete form, which is as big as the universe, she would not feel any emotional disturbance, psychological disorder and impaired mobility and lack of control over her life. He did not forget to mention that this original state of mind when fully recovered resonates with the sublime state of mind called compassion.[58]

A Buddhist struggle with disability

Could Kim live up to her master's directions and overcome the problem of disability by herself? In her study, Jin Y. Park opines that Kim could overcome the limitations of modernity represented by love with the help of Buddhism.[59] Park has noted that despite her priesthood, Kim showed great concern with love (liberal love or free love) in her Buddhist writings, which was at odds with her male counterparts' indifference to it. Considering the social and cultural context in which the idea of free love was correlated with modernity or modernization and gender equality, Kim's interest in the issue of love is seen as

[58] Ibid., pp.322-323.
[59] Jin Y. Park, "Gendered Response to Modernity: Kim Ir-yŏp and Buddhism," pp.126-133.

a gender-specific response of a Buddhist woman to modernity. This is wrong. Neither was it opposed to modernity. On the contrary, it provided a philosophical foundation to overcome its limitations. According to Park's observation, it was self-identity and freedom that Kim Iryŏp ultimately pursued. Love as a cultural and social construct could not help her find her identity and freedom whereas Buddhism, in Park's words, as a timeless and universal truth made possible what love (modernity) lacked.

Park's findings have important implications for the study of modern Korean Buddhism. She sheds light on women and their particular (gendered) experience of Buddhism, which has been ignored and silenced in the male-dominated narrative. She also reformulates dominant representations of Buddhism, modernity and gender. However, she fails to see that the problem of love and modernity is still the tip of a much larger iceberg, consisting of Kim's experiences in colonial Korea. There were many more problems Kim faced in her life, such as orphanhood (lack of parents and of spiritual and physical shelter), frustrated literary ambitions and the inability to express thoughts and emotions, social alienation, feelings of uselessness and powerlessness in society, disillusions about national politics, a weak position as an individual and a woman, feelings of humiliation, and the trauma of having been deceived. These experiences resulted in a destroyed self-perception, low self-esteem and lack of control and mobility in her inner and exterior life prompting her to pursue self-identity and freedom. Consequently Kim Iryŏp wanted Buddhism to settle far more diverse and complex colonial experiences than only love and modernity.

Disability represents and captures the richness and complexity of Kim's life events and problems. In her Buddhist practice she strenuously tackled her problems using the metaphor of disability as her autobiographical poems vividly portray. Her poem "Hyangsim" 向心 (Devotional mind, undated), for example, shows how she struggled with love as part of her problems and in which way Buddhism helped her to get through it.[60] Noteworthy is that in this poem, she describes love as having no limitation and boundary unlike Park's interpretation of Kim Iryŏp's love above. Love is a powerful uncontrollable force, which Kim compares to the image of a voracious fire. Like an all-consuming fire, it envelops and overwhelms her body and mind until she is scorched by it, as the ashes in this poem imply. Love out of control becomes dangerous and life-threatening. She needs to survive and bring herself back to life, but how?

As the flame of *samadhi* 三昧火 in this poem denotes, Kim found the solution in Buddhist meditation. However, this fierce and intense meditation is not designed to extinguish the fire of love in a conventional way in Buddhism. She rather attempts to transform the flame (passion) of love into a brighter flame of *samadhi* and bring her from death (loss of self/life) to life. If love

[60] Although it is undated, one can surmise that it is one of the poems written in the beginning phase of her Buddhist practice (ca. 1933). This poem is republished in *Miraese: sang*, p.78.

disrupts and overpowers her body and mind as captured in her poetical vision that her body and mind turn to ashes and its particles are scattered to pieces in the air, her attempt at mindful concentration (*samadhi*) on the contrary helps her recollect the torn parts of her mind and restore the self and life force in its complete form. In other words, her Buddhist approach to love is not to overcome the limitations of love but to harness its formidable power by bringing it under control.

Kim's autobiographical poems were a process, not a finished product, showing her Buddhist struggle with the disabilities caused by colonial life. This is also shown by the fact that she constantly revised many of her poems and tried to improve her works. Her poems "Han nip" 한닢 (One leaf, undated) and "Insaeng-gwa sep'a" 人生과 世波 (Life and its vicissitudes, undated) are an example of this. Since both poems are undated, we do not know which one is original and which is the revised version but it is clear that the two poems share the same poetic structure and vision and show her struggle with social disablement.[61] In the first poem, Kim depicts a leaf's life journey from the mountain to the big ocean. It is a little fragile leaf. It falls into a waterfall and is swept down. The leaf is vulnerable to the formidable power of the waterfall. Its body is helplessly crushed and broken into pieces by the swirling water. However, it is not the end of the leaf's life. She emphasizes the spiritual strength inside the dying body of the leaf. Although the body of the leaf succumbs under the pressure of the waterfall, she sees that the spirit of the leaf is indestructible and therefore, will reach the great sea.

This poem does not simply romanticize nature or express a feeling of empathy for nature.[62] It is a poem in which Kim personifies herself as a single leaf, borrowing the literal meaning of her pen name Iryŏp (one leaf) and dramatizes her life disrupted by social pressure. The second poem makes the metaphorical expressions of the first poem explicit; the fragile leaf refers to her vulnerable life. The hurdle of the waterfall parallels the vicissitudes of life she underwent in colonial society. The dangerous journey of the little leaf is to allegorize her turbulent life course. The two poems metaphorically and also directly state that her life was under heavy pressure from colonial society and that she struggled with maltreatment and the ensuing emotional and psychological injuries as someone who was socially weak and marginalized.

However, Kim does not only talk about vulnerability, social impairment, wounds, miserable fate or distorted social life. At the end of her poems, she shows a strong determination and perseverance to overcome her social disability instead of yielding to it. Her conviction is bolstered by her

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[61] Although these poems are undated, considering the content, they seem to have been written after she entered the monastery.

[62] Kim Yŏngok 김영옥, "1920-nyŏndae yŏsŏngsiin yŏn'gu: Kim Iryŏp, Kim Myŏngsun, Na Hyesŏg-ŭi si-rŭl chungsim-ŭro" 1920년대 여성시인 연구: 김일엽, 김명순, 나혜석의 시를 중심으로 in *Uri munhak yŏn'gu* 20 우리文學硏究 (2006):159-185; Bonnie B.C. Oh, "Kim Iryŏp: Pioneer Writer/Reformer in Colonial Korea" in *Transactions* 71 (1996): 9-30, pp.22-25.

Buddhist belief, as her affirmation of the indestructibility of the spiritual or true body (*ponch'e*, 本體) conveys. Buddhism teaches the true nature of existence as eternal, infinite and indestructible. To overcome social disablement, she firmly holds on to this Buddhist truth and will go her way to reach her true nature.

Surprisingly, the first poem shows how her journey in search of the true nature of life is reminiscent of Bodhidharma 菩提達磨 who crossed a river on a single rush leaf when he went from India to China. Bodhidharma was an Indian Buddhist monk who founded meditational Buddhism and traveled to China around the 6th century to propagate Buddhism there. He was introduced to the Emperor of China. When the emperor, who was proud of his knowledge of Buddhism and his support of Buddhism, asked him how great the merit was of all his works and what the highest meaning of the noble truth is, Bodhidharma stunned him with shocking replies. He stated that there was no benefit at all in the emperor's works and that the noble truth were empty. The emperor did not understand his answers. After his meeting with the emperor, Bodhidharma crossed the Yangzi River on a rush leaf and spent nine years in meditation and became the first patriarch of Sŏn (Ch'an/Zen) Buddhism. His mysterious crossing over the river on a rush is the most popular legend about his life, and depicted in many art works.[63]

There may be another important allusion to Bodhidarma in this poem. It is the disabled figure of Bodhidharma. A legendary story tells that he sequestered himself in a cave for nine years, sitting and meditating facing a wall. He came to lose his eyelids because he wanted to stay alert and cut them off. He was deep in meditation for such a long time so that his arms and legs shriveled off. The Japanese Daruma doll with wide-open eyes, no arms and no legs (*okiagari kobōshi*), for example, comes from this old legend.[64] Bodhidharma did not shy away from having his body deformed, disabled, and distorted. He demonstrated the spiritual power to proceed, against all odds, with his meditation until he achieved spiritual fulfillment. Kim's poem recalls the fierce practice performed by the founder of Sŏn Buddhism and shows how she can also overcome social disablement by following his spiritual path.

However, Buddhism was no ready-made solution for Kim's problems but required painstaking efforts on her part. Buddhism was an arduous path, a hard and long road. She had to struggle hard to get over disability as the state of her life and identity and to get one moment of awakening. It is not surprising

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[63] Jeffrey L. Broughton, *The Bodhidharma Anthology: The Earliest Records of Zen* (University of California Press, 1999), pp.2-4; Beatrix Mecsi, "The Power of Images on Texts Re-Examined: The Case of Bodhidharma's Crossing and the Mass-Consumption of Bodhidharma Images in Japan and Contemporary Korea in *Oriental Archive* 76.2 (2008), p.218; Meher Mcarthur, *Reading Buddhist Art: An Illustrated Guide to Buddhist Signs and Symbols* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), p.85.

[64] H. Neill Mcfarland, "Feminine Motifs in Bodhidharma Symbology in Japan" in *Asian Folklore Studies* (45.2) (1986):167-191, pp.169-171; Beatrix Mecsi, "The Power of Images on Texts Re-Examined", p.232; No Mirim 노미림, "Kim Iryŏp-ŭi yŏsŏngsŏng koch'al" 金一葉의 여성성 고찰 in *Yŏsŏng yŏn'gu* 67.2 여성연구 (2004):291-313, pp.300-301.

that the majority of her poetic works reflect her spiritual struggles rather than enlightenment experiences. More concretely seen, there are only three poems which are recognized as enlightenment verses among the dozens of her poems.[65] Needless to say, the outcome of awakening and its poetic expressions are important matters. However, the process of struggle and its expression are no less important than the outcome. The numerous efforts she made may be more valuable than solving the problems. This is the reason why I want to discuss one or two poems that illustrate her Buddhist struggles with disability rather than her enlightenment poems.

Kim's poems "Nim-ege" 님에게 (To you, my beloved, 1932) and "Haengnonan" 行路難 (A rough path, 1932) are two related poems. She first wrote "Nim-ege" in the *sijo* style and published it in *Samch'ŏlli* magazine with four more *sijo* poems (interestingly, the magazine company singled out this poem and republished it in 1937). On the same month, April 1932, she revised it into a freestyle poem and published it in a different magazine, *Pulgyo*, under the different title of "Haengnonan." She changed the poetic style and the title in order to publish them in two different publications. She did not touch the main content but largely change the style of the original poem, inverting the order of the first and last stanzas and adding one more stanza. Her elaborate revision of the poems is directly proportional to her painstaking struggle to acquire Buddhist insight into the issue of disability.

In the poems, Kim likens herself to a pilgrim who traverses an arduous, almost ascetic path to get closer to the beloved object called *nim*. The pilgrim hears the beloved calling and sets out on the road. She steps forward, one step after another, like a toddler, but it is no easy walk. She describes herself as mentally and physically weary. The bigger problem is that she is like a blind pilgrim, who can hear but cannot see the beloved. Whenever she hears the voice of the beloved, she feels that the beloved is near. However, she actually does not know where the beloved is and from which direction his voice reaches her. In her expression, he might be located a thousand or ten thousand (light-)years away from her. She is at a loss which way to go. Although she tries to walk and walk, she eventually realizes that she is still in the same place, uselessly covering the same terrain again and again. The pilgrim's way is not only physically tiring but also mentally draining. Moving forward with tired feet, she is swayed by different emotions, sometimes despair and sorrow when she cannot find her way and gets lost and sometimes rapture when for an instant she senses the voice of the beloved. She is confused or exhausted. The poem "Haengnoran" ends with her crying in frustration, asking when she can see him.

One might think that the beloved is the central theme in these poems, like in Han Yongun's *Nim-ŭi ch'immuk* (Silence of the beloved, 1926) and that

[65] The first enlightenment verse "Chasŏng" 自性 (The nature of the self, ca. 1943) was the outcome of her ten years of meditation. The second enlightenment came on the first day of 1957. The third poem "Illyŏm" 一念 was written about a year after, when she had a birthday.

finding what the beloved signifies is key to understanding Kim's poems.[66] However, her poems are not all about the beloved. In her poems, the significance of the beloved is actually quite simple. It relates to Buddha or the personified truth of Buddhism. The most pervasive theme in her poems turns out to be disability. In her poetic works including these two poems, she describes herself as deaf-blind and impaired, and also as emotionally vulnerable and disturbed. These physical and mental disabilities are of critical importance in her poems.

Kim's poems actually show that the beloved as an allegory of the Buddhist truth manifests itself in and through all phenomena. He is not far away from her but on the contrary, everywhere and ubiquitous. Besides, the beloved is not a passive bystander. He ceaselessly calls her. In other poems, he even stretches his hands out to her and shouts that she should take them.[67] Thus, the beloved is not difficult to find. But why does Kim Iryŏp still desperately seek the beloved? It is because she is unable to see and find him, being like a blind person. Unless she overcomes physical and mental disabilities, she can never receive the omnipresence of the beloved and feel his compassionate hands. Buddhism represented by the beloved does not save her. It rather constantly motivates her to work for her own salvation. Her struggle with Buddhism is ultimately associated with overcoming her state of disability/impairment on her own. Her poems show how she arduously pursued and eventually perfected her lifetime wish of restoring her true sense of self and life as an able human being.

Conclusion

Kim Iryŏp was a woman who did not cease to change, evolve, and refashion herself throughout her life time. Her life was a process in which she constantly looked back upon her experiences, re-examined her thoughts and ideology and explored her identity and the meaning of life. She experienced life as a process, which means that we also need to understand her life, literature, thinking and activities as a process having various phases rather than being fixed. She is probably best known as a pioneering New Woman, an early advocate of free love and romance, active in the 1920s, but this activity constitutes only one part of her early experiences. For a while she was in thrall to the cult of free love, believing this would liberate women like her, improve her life and give meaning to it, but later on, she reconsidered it critically, realizing that the force of love made her lose control over her life and distorted and ruined it.

Disability was a powerful metaphor or literary device which revealed Kim's nuanced and complicated experience of love. But more importantly, it

[66] Kim Hyŏnja 김현자, "Kim Iryŏp si-ŭi chaŭisik-kwa kudo-ŭi kŭlssŭgi" 김일엽 시의 자의식과 求道의 글쓰기, *Han'guk sihak yŏn'gu* 9 한국시학연구 9 (Nov. 2003):31-58, pp.46-48.

[67] "Nim-ŭi sonkil" 님의 손길 in *Pulgyo* (May 1932); "Chabi-ŭi sonkil" 慈悲의 손길 in *Miraese: sang*, p.61.

reminds us that her colonial life experiences were not limited to the problem of love. It is not true that she was concerned only with her own personal affairs, and showed complete apathy toward colonial reality, the lives of the Korean people, national movements for freedom, and sociopolitical discourses. The truth is that she participated in nationalist movements such as the March First Movement and Kŭnuhoe and cooperated with many political, economic and literary leaders. She also felt empathy with her compatriots. Her literary representations on the theme of disability, however, also reflected the other side of the truth. She received bad treatment from her fellow workers and compatriots. Her individuality, liberty and human dignity were often disregarded and infringed on by colonial society in pursuit of collective goals such as nation-building and national liberation. She felt unfree or restricted as a colonial subject, but also as a socially marginalized individual and woman within the Korean community.

The role and influence of Buddhism in Kim's life cannot be overemphasized. It was not a refuge she sought to forget her worldly problems and to escape from social responsibility, as common prejudice has it. On the contrary, she adopted Buddhism as a fundamental solution for the colonial experience of disability. It was an alternative to the dominant political paradigm. Many of her (male) peers resorted to nationalism or socialism to solve the colonial problem but she did not agree. According to her experience, those political ideologies often became another form of disabling and marginalizing power, in particular against individuals and women. Buddhism pointed the way she could overcome disability, restore her lost self, and become an able and full-fledged human being who had power over her own life, but the struggle was all her own.

Part 4

Hong Sayong (1900-1947): A writer on a pilgrimage

Chapter 7

Neither decadent nor nationalist: Hidden Buddhist themes in Hong Sayong's 1920s literature

Introduction

In modern Korean history, Hong Sayong (洪思容, 1900-1947) is known as a poet and a playwright who led early literary and cultural movements in the 1920s. When vernacular newspapers and magazines emerged against the background of Japanese cultural domination, he established the *Paekcho*白潮 literary magazine and became a leading exponent of romanticism in modern Korean poetry. Different from other members of this coterie, however, he not only underwent Western literary influences characterized by individualistic, decadent, and nihilistic tendencies, but he also paid attention to Korean traditional folksongs and made contributions toward establishing the foundation of folksong-style poems (*minyosi*).[1] This latter movement in the 1930s as well as modern Korean theatre movement he dedicated himself to (associated with leading theatrical group T'owŏlhoe 土月會) are evaluated as "nationalist"; as showing his attempts to express nationalism and support the nationalist movement through literature.[2]

However, in this chapter, I will argue that Hong Sayong was neither simply decadent nor simply nationalist, but that he needs to be revisited and revalued as one of the important Buddhist writers active in colonial Korea. As Hong Sinsŏn recognizes, Buddhism was one of the pillars that supported Hong Sayong's literary world.[3] Hong Sayong was deeply interested in Buddhism as his attempts of visiting temples and studying Buddhist scriptures demonstrated. His interest was reflected in his literature, too. For example, he wrote plays on the theme of Korea's first Buddhist martyr Ich'adon and Shakyamuni Buddha's great act of renunciation and opened up a new genre of Buddhist dramas in

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[1] O Seyŏng 吳世榮, "Nojak Hong Sayong yŏn'gu" 露雀 洪思容 硏究 in *Han'guk nangmunjuŭi si yŏn'gu* 韓國浪滿主義詩硏究 (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1980/1983), pp.353-377; Kim Haktong, 김학동, "Hyangt'osŏng-gwa minyo-ŭi yulcho" 鄕土性과 民謠의 律調in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*洪思容全集 (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1985), pp.354-389.

[2] Sŏng Pagwŏn 成百元, "1920-nyŏndae nojak Hong Sayong-ŭi minjokchuŭi undong: chakp'um segye-wa singŭk hwaltong-ŭl chungsim-ŭro" 1920年代 露雀 洪思容의 民族主義 運動: 作品世界와 新劇活動을 중심으로 (Kyŏnggi University MA thesis, 1999); Yi Wŏn'gyu 이원규, *Paekcho-ga hŭrŭdŏn sidae: Nojak Hong Sayong iltaegi* 백조白潮가 흐르던 시대: 노작 홍사용 일대기 (Osan: Saemunsa, 2000), pp.35-49.

[3] Hong Sinsŏn 洪申善, "Nojak Hong Sayong-ŭi in'gan-gwa munhak" 露雀 洪思容의人間과 文學 in *Hwasŏng munhagwŏn* (Dec. 2010)
http://www.hscc.or.kr/board/read.asp?menu_cat=3&id=21&no=7

colonial Korea.[4] Buddhism did not only provide inspiration for his literature, but more importantly insights into how diverse and complex the colonial history was and how Hong's reactions to colonialism and his interpretations of the historical events were too subtle, divergent and alternative to be simplified by existing scholarship to a single narrative of whether it was national resistance or not.

In this chapter, I will reexamine Hong Sayong's literature from a religious perspective, focusing mainly on his early works after 1920. Much of this work in which the dominant images are dreams, liquor, and women, are conventionally labeled as examples of romantic decadence and nihilism and are interpreted as a form of escapism from colonial reality, and from the despair or frustration of colonial intellectuals in response to the failed March First Movement of 1919. However, existing scholarship has failed to notice the variety of Buddhist terms, symbols, and images from the hall of the ten kings (sibwangjŏn, 十王殿), Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva, and stone Buddha sculptures, to wooden gongs (*mokt'ak*) and questioned what these Buddhist allusions mean and how the odd co-existence of decadence and Buddhism can be explained.

In this chapter, I will try to find answers to these questions by looking at the great affinity of Hong Sayong with the fifteenth-century historical figure of Kim Sisŭp (金時習, 1453-1493). Hong borrowed historical memories as a useful literary device to indirectly describe the 1920s colonial landscape. The Buddhist concepts and ideas for which Hong Sayong took hints from Kim Sisŭp's Buddhist assertions became strong socio-political statements that diagnosed and evaluated the collective experience of the March First Movement of 1919 and its aftermath in an alternative way. The elements from Buddhism hidden in his 1920s literature will shed light on how Hong Sayong did not only question the dominant colonial discourses, but also was critical of that of Korean nationalism and created a more intricate and subtle counter-discourse than the simple version of anti-colonial resistance.

Colonial landscape: broken dreams, grief and nostalgia

As I have hinted before, the fifteenth century history, suffused with power struggles as it was, greatly appealed to writers in colonial Korea. They found many historical similarities between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries. Fictionalizing history, they could "regain their voices from the censorship of colonial rule and speak about their own experiences of colonization from a variety of perspectives."[5] In my view, Hong Sayong was one of those writers

[4] Song Chaeil 송재일, "Han'guk kŭndae hŭigog-ŭi 'p'alsang' suyong yangsang" 한국 근대 희곡의 '팔상 (八相)' 수용 양상 in *Kongju munhwa taehak nonmunjip* 27 (2000): 5-17, pp.9-10; Yi Wŏn'gyu, *Paekcho-ga hŭrŭdŏn sidae: Nojak Hong Sayong iltaegi*, pp.45 and 50-53.

[5] Jung-Shim Lee, "History as colonial storytelling: Yi Kwangsu's historical novels on fifteenth-century Chosŏn history", *Korean Histories* 1.1 (http://www.koreanhistories.org) (2009):81-105, pp.81-82. Also see Chapter 4.

who returned to the fifteenth century history. Yet, he did not write historical fiction that has its setting the particular period of history and deals with actual historical personages and incidents as many writers tended to do. He used history as inspiration for his literature. History is not visibly represented in his works and therefore, it is yet to be explained clearly that the dominant motifs of tears, broken dreams, mortification and nostalgia in his early literature are borrowed from historical sources.

Among various historical figures in the fifteenth century, Kim Sisŭp (金時習, 1453-1493) was the one whom Hong felt great affinity with. As his close literary friend and neighbor Yi Kwangsu affirmed, Hong Sayong was well-acquainted with Kim's life, literature and his Buddhist insights. Yi saw a strong resemblance between Kim Sisŭp and Hong Sayong because Hong strongly identified himself with the historical person.[6] Who was Kim Sisŭp? Why did this figure appeal to Hong in his colonial present? Kim Sisŭp is known as an eccentric person, a mad monk, and a wandering poet, as well as one of the six loyal subjects who had chosen lives of reclusion (*Saengyukshin*, 生六臣), rejecting government service after King Sejo overthrew his young nephew King Tanjong and was enthroned. Kim Sisŭp's life, philosophy and writings cover Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism and cross the border between reality, dreams and fantasy. For that reason, Kim Sisŭp has drawn a great deal of attention, but is also considered as elusive and enigmatic. There have been many efforts to figure out who he was. A recent scholarly tendency is to deconstruct the fictitious and idolized image of Kim Sisŭp and throw light on an ill-starred intellectual caught in agony and self-contradiction.[7] These studies reveal a man who was morally ambiguous: he found life meaningless but also tried to compromise with reality.

It is not my concern here to make Kim Sisŭp thoroughly intelligible. My question is what among the many aspects of Kim Sisŭp appealed to Hong Sayong. One might easily conclude that Hong adopted Kim's uncompromising attitude of rejection toward the new ruler King Sejo and refashioned it into his political attitude toward the colonial ruler. However, this is not the case. Among the historical memories associated with Kim Sisŭp, Hong Sayong took special notice of the motif of "broken dreams" and the emotional responses to

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[6] "Nanje'o" 亂啼烏 in *Munjang* 文章 (Feb. 1940). Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 李光洙全集8 (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1971/1973), p.213.

[7] There are many studies on Kim Sisŭp. There include Chŏng Pyŏng-Uk, "Kim Si-sŭp," *Korea Journal* 12.6 (1972): 36-42; Chŏng Pyŏng'uk 鄭炳昱, "Kim Sisŭp yŏn'gu" 金時習研究 in *Kojŏn sosŏl yŏn'gu* 古典小設研究, Edited by Kugŏ kungmunhakhoe (Seoul: Chŏng'ŭmsa, 1979/1982); Sim Kyŏngho 심경호, *Kim Sisŭp p'yŏngjŏn* 김시습 평전 (Seoul: Tolbegae, 2003); Gregory N. Evon, "Remembering the past, condemned to the present: The imaginative retreat of Kim Sisŭp (1435-1493)" *International review of Korean studies* 1(2004):49-81; -------, "Kim Sisŭp (1435-1493): The Perils of Memory in an Imperfect Present" in *KAREC Discussion Paper* 5.2 (2004): 1-38; Sonja Häußler, "The contemplation of the past in Kim Sisŭp's poetry" in *Proceedings of the 21th conference of the Association for Korean Studies in Europe*, edited by Antonetta L. Bruno and Federica Baglione (Frascati: Università La Sapienza, 2003).

it. There is a famous episode about Kim Sisŭp's childhood. He was a child prodigy who could read when he was eight months old. At the age of three, he composed Chinese poems and surprised people. As a consequence, he became the talk of the town. The then current king Sejong heard about him by hearsay and called him to the royal palace out of curiosity. The five year old child Kim Sisŭp composed Chinese poems and answered the questions King Sejong asked him. The king was impressed by this genius child and rewarded him with five rolls of silk, promising an appointment to a high position in the future.[8] As a young man, he held an administrative position at court during the reign of King Tanjong (Sejong's grandson), but it did not last long and the rosy dream of high position never came true. After Tanjong was dethroned and Tanjong's uncle Sejo became king, he resigned office and became a wandering monk.

Kim Sisŭp gained a reputation as an eccentric monk who did not feel bound by the precepts and freely roamed throughout the country. One of his more eccentric patterns of behavior was his "crying." People witnessed that he cried loudly after writing poems, cried again after carving a wooden image, mourned after harvesting, sobbed on hillsides, and again wept on crossroads.[9] He wrote poems everywhere and erased them while crying. He visited the tombs of loyal servants killed by Sejo, wrote poems to commemorate them, and lamented their deaths.[10] Tears were the outward expression of his grief over Sejo's usurpation of the throne and the world ruled by Sejo.

The broken dreams of Kim Sisŭp and his eccentric crying have become recurring motifs in Hong Sayong's early literature through which Hong expressed personal and collective experiences in colonial Korea and described events related to the March First Movement as well as the psychological reactions of the Koreans to these events. In his essay "Kŭriŭm-ŭi han mukkŭm" 그리움의 한묵금 (A bundle of yearnings, 1923), for instance, Hong Sayong talks about broken childhood dream in a similar way as occurred to Kim Sisŭp.[11] Hong states that he is a young man of twenty-three. He is no child any more. His childhood has ended regardless of whether he wanted or not. He recalls childhood memories with nostalgia. He was one of the most loved grandchildren together with his cousin when his grandmother was alive. The cousin was the only son, born after his father died, whereas Hong was adopted by his uncle as the only child. These two children were treated as precious as gold in their families. They particularly enjoyed their grandmother's love.

Hong and his cousin were praised by their grandmother for intelligence and courage respectively. Their grandmother anticipated that Hong in the

[8] Kim Sisŭp 金時習, *Kugyŏk Maewŏltangjip* 1 국역 매월당집 (Seoul: Sejong taewang kinyŏm saŏphoe, 1980), p.8. For more details about Kim Sisŭp's childhood, see Sim Kyŏngho, *Kim Sisŭp p'yŏngjŏn*, pp.79-95.

[9] See Yi Sanhae 李山海, "Maewŏltangjip sŏ" 梅月堂集序. Republished in *Kugyŏk Maewŏltangjip* 1, p.28; Yi I 李珥, "Kim Sisŭpchŏn" 金時習傳. Ibid., pp.36-37.

[10] Sim Kyŏngho, *Kim Sisŭp p'yŏngjŏn*, pp.135-142.

[11] *Paekcho* (Sep. 1923)

future will be a minister of royal court (*chŏngsŭng*) and look after the interests of the people whereas his brave cousin will pass the military examination and become a great general (*taejang*) commanding a number of soldiers. Under her high expectations, they woke up early in the morning and studied books on Chinese history and military affairs. They rose to meet her belief in their ability.[12] However, their rosy dream of future was broken by the loss of their grandmother. When their grandmother passed away, there was nobody who called them a would-be minister at royal court and a promising commander in the future. Their identification with *chŏngsŭng* and *taejang* turned out to be a silly dream (*hŏt kkum*).[13]

Hong acknowledges that of course, his grandmother was an old-fashioned woman, ignorant of the change of the times. There were no more civil and military examinations in his days as having been held during the Chosŏn dynasty. After Korea perished and was colonized by Japan, *chŏngsŭng* and *taejang* became an empty designations. Those offices were replaced by Japanese colonial offices. Despite ability and effort, Koreans had no longer access to high and prestigious positions. The identity that Koreans, including Hong and his cousin, were supposed to have was far from prestigious. Colonization created their identity as colonized and ruled-over subjects. The childhood dreams of Hong and his cousin were ostensibly shattered by the grandmother's death, but ultimately by political changes such as Japan's colonization of Korea. Hong, of course, does not directly address this political aspect. Instead, he questions why the bright future of these brave and promising boys turned out disastrous and why his cousin, in particular, was attacked by mental disease and slided into madness (like the mad monk Kim Sisŭp). He asks if it is a sin to go beyond one's place (as the colonized) and dream about what one is not allowed to possess (prestige and power).[14]

Hong Sayong and his cousin were not the only one who had their dreams broken. There were many like them. The motif of broken dreams denoted the collective experience of Koreans in the twenty century. Using this motif that led to tears of nostalgia, woe, and sorrow, he depicted how the experience of colonization affected Koreans and how they reacted to it on a psychological level. It is widely recognized that "overabundant" tears characterize Hong Sayong's poetics as he was given the epithet of a "tear-jerking poet." However, scholars never questioned why Hong Sayong chose children and women in particular as main characters or narrators in his poetic works and why he depicted them weeping and crying. This is no coincidence but rather a deliberate ploy to see those characters as an allegory for colonized Korea. As discussed in previous chapters, colonial discourse actually viewed Koreans as infants, children and women to be guided, educated, fed, protected,

[12] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.277.
[13] Ibid., pp.278-279.
[14] Ibid.

and conquered by a strong adult man like Japan. For example, a cartoon entitled "Consolation" illustrates Korea in the midst of the Russo-Japanese War (1905) as a young widow who has lost her husband.[15] The woman is crying over a broken pot labeled "neutrality of Korea." On the contrary, Japan and Russia figure as military men. The Japan general soothes the Korean woman whereas the Russian general looks angrily at them. Using this gendered image, the cartoon shows how Japan as the victor of the war possessed the feminized Korean body.

Hong Sayong followed this gendered and allegorized colonial vision instead of rejecting or subverting it. However, it was not aimed justifying the colonial domination of colonized "children and women" as a form of parental and masculine concern. Hong's focus was clearly on what those colonized "children and women" experienced and felt, which was silenced in dominant colonial discourse. Koreans whose country was collapsed is represented in Hong's poems by young widows, women who have lost their husbands. What do the widows do in the absence of their husbands? Do they look for consolation and protection from another man (Japanese colonizers) as in the cartoon mentioned above?

Hong's female characters only lament the absence of their husbands and suffer from nostalgia for their days of happiness. Living alone in a big, empty, house, they cry every night and wail from sorrow.[16] They remember their trembling hearts, secret kisses, sweet talk and whispered dreams, the joy and laughter that took place especially in the springtime.[17] As spring refers to a new beginning of life, bright hope and future and happy feelings were once with them. However, the sweet dreams of springtime had been broken. The happy times turned into sad memories. The joy they had experienced only served to make their sorrow and grief greater. In his poem "Hae chŏmŭn nara-e" 해저믄 나라에 (In the land of sunset, 1923), Hong Sayong depicts how a young widow loses her mind.[18] After sundown, she wanders around like a madwoman, looking for her husband. Neither on the hill nor on the field does she find any sign of him. She only finds the bitter tears she sheds and the broken heart she has. As its title implies, this poem depicted colonial Korea as a land of sundown and captured the feelings of loss, grief, confusion and nostalgia that Koreans had living in such a dark land.

Crying children are another category of Hong Sayong's narrators through whom we can look into interior landscape of Koreans in the 1920s. A widespread colonial trope compares colonized people to children. Using this anthropological trope, colonizing powers attached immaturity, dependency,

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[15] Charles-Edouard Saint-Guilhem et al., *Corée : Voyageurs au Pays du matin calme, Récits de voyage 1788-1938* (Omibus, 2006), p.695.

[16] "Norae-nŭn hoesaek, na-nŭn tto ulda" 노래는 灰色, 나는 또 울다 in *Tong'a Ilbo* (1 Jan. 1923); "Param-i purŏyo!" 바람이 불어요! in *Tongmyŏng* 東明 (Dec. 1922).

[17] "K'isŭ twie" 키쓰 뒤에 in *Tongmyŏng* (Dec. 1922).

[18] *Kaebyŏk* (July 1923).

underdevelopment, and inferiority to the colonized people and argued that these childlike people needed to be raised, disciplined, and civilized by the fatherlike colonial master and needed to embrace the colonial system and the supreme ideas of progress and modernization.[19] However, Hong Sayong revealed what the infantilized colonial men really experienced and felt. They did not feel happy, safe, hopeful or grateful as assumed by the colonial discourse, but on the contrary, felt vexation, woe, anxiety and fear as crying children in his poems embody.

Children in Hong Sayong's poems cry all the time, because they are losing or have lost their childhood. Childhood is loaded with the negative connotations of inferiority in colonial discourse. It is viewed as a benighted time of ignorance by the Japanese colonial master. Against it, however, Hong argues that childhood is supposed to be the happiest time of one's life in which one feels loved and cherished.[20] During this period, one is regarded by one's mother as the most precious and important person in the world like the "king" in the title of Hong's famous poem "Na-nŭn wang'irosoida" 나는 王이로소이다 (I am a king, 1923) implies.[21] He associates childhood with goodness, purity, and innocence (not with immaturity and inferiority), and in particular with the purity of Korean identity. Losing childhood and being raised up to the stage of adulthood through a Japanese-led civilization and modernization is argued as constituting a traumatic experience for Koreans in which they lose their self and identity rather than the positive experience of blessing and gratefulness the colonial authorities asserted it to be.

Nowhere are fear and grief about losing Korean identity through modernization better captured than by Hong's symbolic use of braided hair (*kwimit mŏri*). In the poem "Na-nŭn wang'irosoida," a mother tightens the braid of her son, who cries all the time feeling afraid of death, and tells him not to cry anymore. A tightly plaited braid soothes the crying child, alleviating the fear of death. Another narrator, in the poem "Kkumimyŏnŭn?" 꿈이면은? (If this is a dream?, 1922), laments having lost his braid.[22] Of course, children do not die from having their braided hair cut. They are frightened to lose childhood. In traditional Korean society, both young boys and girls sported braided hair as a symbol of childhood. When they married and grew up, they tied a topknot or put their hair up in a chignon as a token of adulthood. However, amidst the turmoil of colonial modernization, braided hair as well as topknots were seen a symbol of Korean identity and were in particular associated with negative characteristics such as backwardness and stagnancy. Short haircuts, on the contrary, epitomized modernization and progress. Under pressure to

[19] Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983/2009); Rogis Tove Stella, *Imagining the Other: The Representation of the Papua New Guinean Subject* (University of Hawaii Press, 2007), pp.100-110.
[20] "Kkuimyŏnŭn?" 꿈이면은 in *Paekcho* (Jan. 1922).
[21] *Paekcho* (Sep. 1923).
[22] In *Paekcho* 1. Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.16-18.

modernize, the then Korean king Kojong set an example by cutting his hair short and issued a prohibition of the topknot. It happened often that children had their braids cut off at school or on street by force and their grandparents sighed that they had become Japanese.[23] The loss of braids is likened to the experience of being modernized, being colonized and losing one's Korean identity.

In sum, Hong Sayong's early works reflect on 1920s colonial Korea, as Adrian Buzo characterizes, as "marked by a gathering sense of loss, confusion, and ardent spiritual yearning."[24] This emotional turmoil was a reaction to colonialism, colonization and the failed March First Movement that Hong and his contemporaries personally and collectively experienced. It is obvious that this emotional and psychological reaction to colonialism cannot be simplified to a single narrative of "resistance," as the existing nationalist scholarship has it, because it deals with historical allusions, the gendered and infantilized colonial relations, which cannot be captured by such a homogenizing nationalist view.

March First Movement: national discourse as *upaya*

Hong Sayong did not only focus on portraying the colonial landscape. In his early literature, he further tried to delve into colonial events such as the March First Movement, diagnosing why this national movement failed and how this failure could be evaluated from the point of view of people in those days. From today's perspective, the movement is seen not as a failure but as a significant event in many ways. It was one of the first and nationwide displays of resistance shown by Koreans. It played an important role in establishing a provisional government of Korea in Shanghai. It provided impetus for bringing change to colonial domination. However, Hong Sayong provided alternatives to this generalized view. The bottom line is that the national movement was seen by him as neither a breakthrough nor as a solution, but as a form of *upaya*, a skillful means that offered the Koreans a temporary relief.

As the term *upaya* indicates, Hong Sayong's effort to build a layered understanding of a failed national movement resonates with Buddhist ideas. *Upaya* (*pangp'yŏn*, 方便) is a central Buddhist concept, referring to a method that Buddha employed to present his teachings in a manner comprehensible to the layman as well as the learned monk; different varieties and intellectual modes of approaches were necessary. All these forms of communication constitute *upaya*.[25] As told in the Lotus Sutra, Buddha made a great use of parables, stories and metaphors to elucidate the incomprehensible dharma to ordinary people, adjusting to their needs and capacity for comprehension. *Upaya* is a provisional

[23] Hildi Kang, *Under the black umbrella: Voices from Colonial Korea 1910-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001) pp.25-26 and 37-39.
[24] Adrian Buzo, *The Making of Modern Korea*, p.28.
[25] Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga, "The Concept of Upāya (方便) in Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 1.1 (March 1974):51-72, p.53.

method rather than the ultimate truth of Buddhism, but it serves as a medium whereby the individual can attain the experience of enlightenment.

Yet, Hong Sayong did not accept this general view of *upaya*, but seems to have paid attention to Kim Sisŭp's particular interpretation of the concept, whom he had affinity with. While living as an itinerant monk, Kim Sisŭp wrote some remarkable annotations of Buddhist scriptures. In his Buddhist-related texts, Kim explained the meaning of the concept of *upaya* as follows: "In Buddhism, doctrinal teachings (*kyo*, 敎) make use of expedient means and a direct expression of the truth, whereas Sŏn (禪, Zen/meditation) refers to the truth itself. Practice during thousands of kalpas, karmic causality and retribution, and heaven and hell are all false illusions to lead people to enlightenment. To use a simple metaphor: adults give children maple leaves saying it is money or tell stories of ghosts and tigers to stop babies from crying. These are all examples."[26]

The Buddhist texts Kim Sisŭp wrote were essentially intended to affirm Buddhism and protect it from disparagement by Confucian scholars in his days. Yet, he clearly preferred Sŏn practice to doctrinal teachings. Although he studied extensively the doctrinal philosophy of the Hwaŏm Sutra (Flower Garland Sutra) and Pŏphwa Sutra (Lotus Sutra) and annotated those Buddhist scriptures, he understood those scriptures from the Sŏn standpoint.[27] His preference for Sŏn Buddhism is also expressed in his elucidation on the meaning of *upaya*. *Upaya* is associated with doctrinal Buddhism, not Sŏn Buddhism. It is neither the Buddhist truth itself nor a direct reference to the truth, but an illusion and deception. Yet, this false image does not play a negative role but a positive role in benefitting living beings and offering instant help to them. Kim compared it with telling white lies in the secular world. He explained that *upaya* is like tricks and lies that grown-ups (parents) use to calm baby's tears and soothe crying babies.

Hong Sayong's poems show how he was clearly aware of Kim Sisŭp's Buddhist elucidation of the meaning of *upaya*, in particular in its sense of a "white lie" told by grown-ups to children, and further how he used this Buddhist idea to understand the failed March First Movement. In his poem "Norae-nŭn hoesaek, na-nŭn tto ulda" 노래는 灰色, 나는 또 울다 (A grey song, I cry again, 1923), Hong literally articulates, "When a mother soothes a crying baby, she tells a lie out of love".[28] The mother tells a lie to her baby that everything good in this country is his. It is an empty promise, helping the baby calm down and fall asleep.[29] When a child cries in fear of losing his braid, his childhood identity and his life, his mother soothes him and promises him that

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[26] *Kugyŏk Maewŏltangjip* 5, pp.18-19.

[27] Kim Yongjo 김용조, "Sŏlcham Kim Sisŭb-ŭi Han'guk Pulgyo sasangsa-jŏk wich'i" 雪岑 金時習의 韓國佛敎思想史的 位置, *Kyŏngsangtae nonmunjip* 24.1: 71-82 (1985); Han Chongman 韓種萬, *Han'guk Pulgyo sasang-ŭi chŏn'gae* 韓國佛敎思想의 展開 (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1998).

[28] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.26.

[29] "Kkumimyŏnŭn?" 꿈이면은? in *Paekcho* (Jan. 1922).

he never is going to lose his childhood, safety and life by tightening his braid.[30] What the mother said is all lies, the opposite of the truth that neither childhood nor life lasts forever, but it was not mere lies but white lies, *upaya*, as told in the Lotus Sutra. A stanza in the poem "Param-i purŏyo!" 바람이 불어요! (Wind, 1922) demonstrates this.

> *When it becomes dawn, I become twenty-four.*
> *Mother. Don't pray for me in the Hall of the Ten Kings.*
> *The fence of thorny bushes is burning in front.*
> *Your only son will leave home*.[31]

This stanza evokes a famous *upaya* story about the burning house in the Lotus Sutra. In this parable, the three sons of a wealthy man are trapped inside a burning house. They are absorbed in their play and do not get out the house. So, the father promises them nice carts outside so that the children rush out of the house. Using a white lie, the father rescues his children from a burning house. This parable lets us easily understand that Buddha (the father) used *upaya*, skillful means, (white lies) out of compassion to save sentient beings (children) from sufferings (the burning house). Instead of the father in the parable, in this poem a mother uses a white lie (*upaya*) to save his only son. She even goes to temple and prays in the hall of the Ten Kings (sibwangjŏn, 十王殿) to protect her son with help of *Chijang posal* (地藏菩薩, Ksitigarbha bodhisattva), who supported by the Ten Kings is believed to save living beings even from hell.

Calling himself a twenty-four-year-old grown-up, the son in the poem dissuades his mother from telling white lies. He is not a child anymore who may believe the stories of the burning building and of the *Chijang posal* being associated with the Taoist Ten Kings of hell who list and judge the sins of the dead to be true. The grown-up son sees them all as false illusions or tricks, not the truth itself, which as explained by Kim Sisŭp, are contrived as skillful means to lead people of different capacities to the same truth called dharma. In the poem, further, the Ten Kings of Hell are depicted as a magician (*mabŏpsa*) in a fairy tale who composes a list of sins using fresh animal blood while sitting in a dark room. This awe-inspiring figure which scares children and gets them to stop crying is however ridiculed by the grown-up son. He responds to it with laughter, stating "You, magician! Come on. What would you do/ if I ignore and laugh you off?"[32]

Young widows in Hong's poems, too, realize that they have been told white lies. First of all, a love spell is as such. These women are led to "just believe" (*kŏjŏ midŏra*) that love in springtime will take forever and bring only

[30] "Na-nŭn wang'irosoida" 나는 王이로소이다 in *Paekcho* (Sep. 1923).
[31] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.24.
[32] Ibid., p.25.

happiness.[33] However, men who are supposed to be with them forever are dead. The love is gone as the springtime comes and goes. The happiness of love can easily turn to deep sorrow and unhappiness. Love spells they believed turn out to be all lies. Therefore, in the poem "Kkumimyŏnŭn?" 꿈이면은? (1922), a widow proclaims, "Don't deceive me, my dear! Don't deceive me, please don't! If you will do it, place me first into a black coffin and seal the casket with your own hands."[34]

To give consolation to a widow who cries sitting alone in an empty house, people tell her a white lie: "If you pray sincerely, your dead husband will come back to you."[35] Can a strong prayer and the invocation of Avalokiteśvara or Ksitigarbha bodhisattva bring the dead husband to life? The widow (or the speaker of the poem) answers that she does not believe it because it is a lie. Although one's prayer is strong, one cannot make fire from the extinguished. In the same way, a dead person can never be alive in reality. He can maybe live in the widow's memories or in her dream. What she is told is a lie and deception, but this empty promise serves the deeper purpose of bringing consolation to crying widows and soothing their distress or sorrow.

What did Hong Sayong mean with *upaya* as a white lie in a colonial context? In particular, how did he use this Buddhist idea to understand the failed March First Movement? If the child and the widow are a metaphor for the colonized Koreans, the white lie "If your prayer is sincere, you can recall your dead husband to life" is analogous to "If you sincerely believe, you can restore your perished country and recall your dead fatherland to life." It was the language of the nationalist discourses of colonial Korea, which was put into practice at the March First Movement. After Korea collapsed and ceded its sovereignty to Japan, many Koreans refused to acknowledge Japan as their new ruler, but felt the loss of hometown and nostalgia for the past of Chosŏn as Hong's poetic characters miss lost childhood and dead husbands, yearning to return to the happy past.

The March First Movement was understood by Hong Sayong as one of the attempts to restore the collapsed country of Chosŏn rather than just to declare the independence of Korea. There was indeed a movement to restore the deposed Korean emperor Kojong 高宗. Taking him as a "potent symbol of Korean political and cultural unity and integrity,"[36] some national leaders plotted to let him take refuge in Beijing and, once there, declare Korea's independence. They even purchased a house in Beijing with Kojong's permission.[37] However, Kojong met a sudden and mysterious death on January 22, 1919. The sudden death of the ex-emperor was commemorated by many

[33] "Pom-ŭn kadŏida" 봄은 가더이다. Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.20.
[34] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.16.
[35] "Param-i purŏyo!" 바람이 불어요! Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.24.
[36] Adrian Buzo, *The Making of Modern Korea* (London and New Work: Routledge, 2002), p.20.
[37] Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe (ed.), *Han'guksa* 한국사 47 (Kwach'ŏn: Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, 2001), pp.307-308.

Koreans as if the last hope of restoring Chosŏn was gone, but at the same time, his funeral and the rumor that Kojong had been poisoned by the Japanese added fuel to their long-cherished desire for independence from Japan and reestablishing their country. Through the March First Movement, Hong saw, Koreans expressed their strong feelings of nostalgia for the past of Chosŏn which was idealized as a period of prosperity.

We may not overstate Hong Sayong's depiction of nostalgia and identify it with a sense of patriotism. He did not celebrate the massive expression of national aspiration during the March First Movement. Nor did he seek the significance in the indomitable spirit of courage of Koreans, the demonstration of a national unity or fruitful results such as the introduction of cultural rule in Korea and the establishment of a provisional government in Shanghai as we do for today's concerns.[38] On the contrary, what he emphasized was "disenchantment" from the nationalistic "spell" or "magic." In the aftermath of the March First Movement, he realized that the nationalist language that Koreans can resurrect the dead country if they strongly yearn for it was illusion or deception. As allegorized in his poetic works, this yearning was like an empty promise leading people to believe that they can return to happy childhood if they deadly miss it and that a widow can bring a dead husband back to life if her prayer is sincere. These things never happen in reality. A grown-up cannot be a child again. A dead husband cannot return to life. In the same way, Hong diagnosed that Koreans cannot go back to the happy past of Chosŏn and restore their dead country by pointing the arrow of time to the time before colonization.

However, Hong's diagnosis was far from justifying Japanese colonialism and its brutal counter-measures that led Korean national movement to failure. It was not his contention to disparage the failed movement and its underlying nationalistic language as useless, meaningless and worthless. By adopting the Buddhist concept of *upaya*, he evaluated the movement as a skillful means. The national promise that Koreans can return to the past of Chosŏn and resurrect the dead country was not mere deception but a white lie, the purpose of which was to bring consolation to Koreans and help them overcome grief and despair. They were like crying children and widows, who dwelt on the colonial sentiments of loss, sorrow, grief and fear after they had lost their country. What they needed first and foremost was consolation and soothing in order to get over those painful feelings. The dream of the national movement of reviving the lost glory of the nation served as *upaya* for giving immediate relief to the Korean people and helping them lead their lives further. Despite its significant role as *upaya*, Hong insisted that Koreans may not

[38] The collective memory of the March First Movement is not settled but constantly revised and reproduced by the current agent of power. See Kim Hyeon-seo, "State rituals, symbolic space, and Korean national identity," *Review of Korean studies* 8.2 (2005):91-110; Guy Podoler, "Revisiting the March First Movement: On the commemorative landscape and the nexus between history and memory" in *The review of Korean studies* 8.3 (2005):137-154.

constantly cling to *upaya*, the failed event and idea, but they need to move on in search of truth in colonial society and the fundamental resolution to bring an end to the colonial relationship. Then, the question remains what were the colonial truth as well as the fundamental resolution he had in mind.

A preaching madman: non-dependency and colonial discourses

It is important to note that Hong Sayong employed the trope of madness and the figure of a madman in order to speak the truth of colonial life and the solution in a fundamental sense to overcome colonial domination. As examined by Foucault, madness is not simply biological but a product of culture. Madmen who are representative of unreason and insanity are people who are defined as "abnormal" by society. Every society has its mechanism of power that produces knowledge and discourse, which acquire value as "truth," and that controls and describes human behavior in terms of norms.[39] People who like madmen do not fit into the exiting social structure, who stray from societal norms, and who do not speak the socially accepted language (discourse) are considered to be a threat to "normal" and "sane" people in society and need to be punished, repressed, confined, and sent out of city.[40]

However, a postmodern study has re-examined madness as a tool to reconsider rationality and reality and a tool for the destabilization of identity, knowledge, and society.[41] The chaos, fragmentality, and confusion which madmen advocate are recognized as aspects of reality. Madmen as outsiders in society do not conform to prevailing social norms and rules and reject social identities and political agendas. Such a madman is seen to stand as a social critic whose madness destroys the existing relations of power and reveals that values, ideas, knowledge and rules dictated by the existing society are no absolute and universal truth, but represent the interests of dominant power.

A recent critical analysis of madness emphasizes its relations with colonialism or colonization. Richard Keller, for example, explicates how colonial powers seized control of discussions about normality and pathology and saw their colonies as a space of insanity and the colonized as an absence of reason. Colonial institutions dehumanized the colonized subjects, by producing knowledge about their inferior identity, primitive mentalities and irrational behavior and emphasized imperial mission to civilize and develop colonial space and impose discipline on colonized people according to the ideas of progress, enlightenment, rationality (modernity) and development.[42] However,

[39] Michel Foucault, *Power /knowledge: Selected interviews & other writings*, 1972-1977, edited by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp.109-133.
[40] Jennifer A Krause, "From classical to postmodern: Madness in inter-American narrative" (PhD dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 2009), pp.1-31.
[41] Ibid., pp.31-54.
[42] Richard C. Keller, "Introduction; Madness and Colonization" in *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in French North Africa* (University of Chicago, 2007), pp.1-18.

the literary works of writers in colonies shed new light on the meaning and role of madness. These writers saw insanity as a consequence of the traumas of colonial rule. The poetics of madness disclosed the process how colonialism generated psychological disorder and emotional and mental tensions in colonies.[43] Madness was seen as a form of resistance to challenge colonial authorities, its social and political order, and colonial knowledge and to create an alternative reality for the sake of the colonized.[44]

Hong Sayong was one of a few notable writers in colonial Korea who was aware of madness in relation to knowledge and power under Japanese colonialism and employed madman as a literary device designed to challenge the colonial mechanism and order in its fundamental sense. Kim Sisŭp who was known as a madman in the fifteenth century served as direct inspiration for Hong's literary representations of madness. Kim Sisŭp was called a mad monk by his contemporaries. People often witnessed the eccentric behavior that made him frantically note down poems anywhere, cry bitterly, and erase poems full of rage. When King Sejo once asked him to hold a Dharma talk, he deliberately plunged into a pool of night soil and was driven away from the temple. Once, he sued a farmer who had stolen the acres of agricultural land he had inherited and won the lawsuit. Yet, he laughed publicly and tore the documents to pieces. However, it is also told that Kim Sisŭp was neither a lunatic nor a fool, but presented to be one so that he could live alternatively during the reign of Sejo without being influenced by the unjust political power. Many of his peers including King Sejo recognized his intelligence and attempted to win him over to his side. But he rejected government service and got out of Sejo's control by acting like a madman. Being under the influence of liquor, he could freely state what he thought. Under the influence of insanity, he could ridicule and rail at high-officials in their faces.[45]

The trope of madness is evident in Hong's essay "Kŭriŭm-ŭi han mukkŭm" (1923). He talks about his insane cousin. The cousin suffers from mental disorder. He mutters incomprehensible sounds all day long. He has an absent look on his face, because he has retreated into in his own world. He has lost his mind, reason and in particular language. He suffers from aphasia. He is able to speak but has lost his voice.[46] All this happened after his grandmother died. The grandparent's death has left a gaping hole of sadness. His grief has turned to mental illness. No medicine works. The cousin who was lucid and energetic in his childhood has become an insane fool who shuts himself in reflection or rambles incoherently about God, Buddha, human life, path to world beyond, destiny, love, and happiness. One day, the insane cousin yells "Solved!" He has broken his silence and talked to Hong that he realized the

[43] Ibid., pp.1-4.
[44] Seri Luangphinith, "Tropical Fevers: "Madness" and Colonialism in Pacific Literature," *Contemporary Pacific* 16.1 (Spring 2004): 59-85, pp.62 and 76.
[45] Such eccentric behaviors are repeatedly mentioned in various biographies of him.
[46] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.278.

truth. The truth is that there is nothing to be afraid of in this world. It is just illusion that places like the outside world, subjects like death, and people like Hong are fearful for him. The cousin claims that he is normal now. He speaks well and logically. He behaves appropriately. But the other day, he appears with a knife and says that he came to kill Hong. It is because Hong who looks like good-hearted also has the nature of evil behind the good and his cousin cannot tolerate evil and wants to remove it.[47]

However, Hong repeatedly expresses serious doubt about his cousin's insanity. He questions whether the silence and self-reflection his cousin suffers from really are symptoms of mental pathology.[48] His cousin is able to speak but has chosen to be mute. Silence might be diagnosed as aphasia in medical terms, but his deliberate silence is more than that. It conveys his resolve to avoid speaking the language which is imposed and prescribed by the dominant authority in his society (Japanese colonial power). The cousin seems lost his mind, but he has actually lost himself in thoughts. While shutting himself off from the outside world controlled by colonial power and knowledge, the cousin tries to develop his own self-knowledge (*ch'ungsir-han chagi-ŭi chilli*).[49] The questions he raises as to what is life, death, God, happiness, agony and lot are highly philosophical and intellectual, which the fool or inferior cannot harbor and find answers to. Hong states that along with the self-imposed knowledge, the cousin has restored his healthy body, an open-mind, enthusiasm, and indomitable spirit.[50] Hong laments that nonetheless, his cousin is still defined as mad and insane by his society.

Hong's doubt of madness of his cousin is not about whether the cousin is really insane in its real sense of word, but it is to present madness as colonial trope, representing the conditions of colonial life of Koreans. Hong's cousin is not the only one who suffers from madness. Taking the space of Seoul as an example, Hong points out that everybody is mentally abnormal. Seoul itself may be the representative city of modernization, having an air of prosperity. But people in there are all caught by incurable severe (mental) illness (*koch'iji mothal kiphŭn pyŏng*).[51] Like the mad cousin who was originally brainy and energetic, these people were first sane and behaved well. They were innocent, pure, energetic, industrious, upright and sincere. But since they came to live in Seoul, they have turned to be criminal, degenerate, timid, lazy and low-spirited. Hong laments how they all look like fools and how smart people like a genius (*ch'ŏnjae)* all died out.[52]

Using the trope of madness, Hong Sayong depicts Seoul as a space of insanity and its city dwellers as having inferior and debased cultural

[47] Ibid., p.281.
[48] Ibid., p.278.
[49] Ibid., p.280.
[50] Ibid., p.281.
[51] Ibid., p.282.
[52] Ibid., pp.282-283.

mentalities. However, he does not see degeneracy and inferiority as indigenous mentalities of Koreans as colonial power argued in order to legitimate its political domination. On the contrary, he clearly articulates that Koreans were originally sane and had superior cultural mentality, but that they were transformed from sane into insane and from superior into inferior. He seems to blame the city of Seoul for the degeneracy of Koreans, but intrinsically Japanese colonial power and knowledge. Seoul was under the close control of colonial power as a colonial capital of colonial Korea. It was a laboratory for Japan's project of modernization. The political and economic agenda of Japanese colonialism was deeply associated with the production of colonial knowledge about Koreans' idiotic, sick, inferior and disordered mentalities and about the Japanese mission to civilize colonial space like Seoul under the slogan of modernization and development and impose discipline on colonized Koreans according to the ideals of rationality, reason and progress.

Hong Sayong discloses how Koreans, who as colonial subjects were given no political voice like the mad cousin with aphasia in his essay, accepted this unquestioned colonial knowledge as "truth" and underwent a process of psychological transformation to feel their inferiority, difference, and dependency on the colonizer's authority. Comparing colonial knowledge with highly toxic drugs (*kajang chiakhan tokyak*), he implicitly criticizes how it colonized the mind of Koreans and dehumanized them.[53] He depicts that somewhere within the gates of Seoul, a fatal poison is hidden. It releases poisonous gas that permeates every corner of Seoul. Anyone without exception gets sickened by the poisonous air. Hong does not talk about the real poison and air pollution. He symbolically depicts how colonial knowledge was disseminated throughout the whole country and captured the life and mind of Koreans. It was presumably promoted by colonial power as a kind of medicine to cure Koreans' inferiority and incapacity to adapt to modern civilization, but Hong reveals how it was like a fatal poison to Koreans under which influence they are marginalized and dehumanized.

At the end of his essay, Hong more explicitly challenges colonial discourses on colonial Korea and the Koreans.

> *Our personality is the most refined, gentle, and sensitive, but the other ridicules us as crude, rough, and dull. Are we really like that? Our heart is burning with passion and enthusiasm, but the other disparages us saying that we are foolhardy and lazy. Are we really? I see modest and pure white clothes. I think of the fine line of Koryŏ celadon. I hear the subtle vibrating rhythm of work songs on the fields.*[54]

[53] Ibid., p.282.
[54] Ibid.,p.284.

Despite its short length, this short paragraph is full symbolic objects used in colonial discourses on Koreanness. As scholars such as Tessa Moritz-Suzuki point out, what Japanese colonialism was obsessed with from beginning to end was to find the identity of Japan through defining "otherness" found in places such as Taiwan and Korea. The project of creating difference/similarity and discrimination/assimilation between Japan and Korea, for instance, continued although it was constantly amended and revised amidst discord, contradiction and contention. In fact, various discourses ranging from the purity of Yamato blood to the identicalness of the ancestral lineages of Japan and Korea were produced.[55] The paragraph quoted above, in particular, reflects the language in "popular ethnographies of Korean manners and customs" which according to scholars such as Todd A. Henry became the ground for creating discriminatory and disparaging views of colonized Korea and justifying civilization through Japan and Japanese colonial domination from the 1910s on.[56]

"The other" (*tarŭni*) in the quote, who characterizes the Koreans as "crude, rough, dull-minded, and lazy" referred to Japanese ethnographers and authorities. They inspected the Korean body and mind and diagnosed these as dirty, prone to diseases, and hygienically and mentally backward. On the contrary, the Japanese were described as hard-working, trustworthy, sophisticated, healthy, progressive, and hygienic. The "white clothes" were argued by many Japanese writers to be a sign of idleness and filthiness, whereas they were viewed by the Korean people as a symbol of purity and the nation.[57] Korean music like the folksong "Arirang" was ruthlessly ridiculed by Japanese ethnographers as pessimistic, individualistic, clannish, devoid of public consciousness and seen as a symbol of national doom.[58] The Korean ceramics mentioned in the quote were also seen as objects which epitomized the pathetic history of Korea in the eyes of Japanese sympathizers such as Yanagi Sōetsu.[59] Adopting this rhetoric, the Koreans lost their selves becoming the

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[55] See Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Becoming Japanese: Imperial expansion and identity crises in the early twentieth century" in *Japan's competing modernity: Issues in culture and democracy 1900-1930* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1998); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-inventing Japan* (M.E, Sharpe, 1998); Michael Weiner, *Race and migration in Imperial Japan* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[56] Chŏng Hyegyŏng and Kim Hyesuk 정혜경/김혜숙, "1910-nyŏndae singminji Chosŏn-e kuhyŏndoen wisaeng chŏngch'aek" in *Ilche-ŭi singminji chibae chŏngch'aek-kwa Mail sinbo: 1910-nyŏndae* 일제의 식민지 지배정책과 매일신보: 1910년대, edited by Suyo yŏksa yŏn'guhoe (Seoul: Turi midiŏ, 2005); Todd A. Henry, "Sanitizing empire: Japanese articulations of Korean otherness and the construction of early colonial Seoul, 1905-1919," *Journal of Asian studies* 64.3 (August 2005):639-675.

[57] Todd A. Henry, "Sanitizing empire: Japanese articulations of Korean otherness and the construction of early colonial Seoul, 1905-1919", p.668; Yun Taesŏk 윤대석, *Singminji kungmin munhangnon* 식민지 국민문학론 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2006), pp. 25-27 and 139-140.

[58] Todd A. Henry, "Sanitizing empire: Japanese articulations of Korean otherness and the construction of early colonial Seoul, 1905-1919", p.647

[59] For details about Yanagi Soetsu, see Kim Brandt, "Objects of desire: Japanese collectors and colonial Korea," *Positions: East Asia cultures critique* 8.3 (2000):711-746; Pak Yuha 박유나,

others of their colonial counterparts and underwent psychological changes with regard to their identity, feeling inferior to the Japanese, acknowledging their backwardness, asking for assistance and guidance from their colonial masters and desiring the modernized culture of Japan.

As the quote above shows, Hong Sayong questioned and even subverted the colonial language which indoctrinated the Koreans with negative assertions of their selves. Instead of lazy and dull Koreans, he talked about passionate and industrious people. The crude and raw Koreans were replaced by sophisticated and sensitive people. Purity and innocence were associated with the white clothes. Korean music was rehabilitated as being refined, but lasting and tenacious. In this manner, the writer threw doubt on the language used in colonial discourses and revealed what was not told and remained hidden. In short, he tried to restore the colonial subject's damaged self-confidence and to overcome feelings of loss and inferiority by arguing the need for positive self-esteem of the Korean people and their culture.

Most of all, according to Hong, we should listen to the Buddhist insistence on no-dependency of the mind, as articulated by the ramblings of the cousin in Hong's essay, in this manner making Buddhist language a powerful political language to disenchant the "colonized mind" of the Koreans and overcome their reliance on the Japanese authorities. This was argued by Hong as fundamental to end the colonial relationship. This counter-discourse is drawn up by his mad cousin as an outsider and as a social critic of colonial society. The madman strays from colonial order. Instead of speaking the language sanctioned and controlled by colonial power, he tries to say things outside of colonial discourse and develop new knowledge about the Korean self.

The mad cousin condemns all religious figures such as Christ, Shakyamuni, and Confucius. He ridicules them saying "God does not exist…Christ relied on God, merely prayed to him and was helplessly dragged to the cross. Shakyamuni confided all his problems to the Buddha and was doomed to die, uselessly chanting the name of Buddha. Confucius only admired the heaven and dropped dead." [60] The origins of this somewhat incongruous remark actually stemmed from Kim Sisŭp. To paraphrase Gregory Evon, Kim Sisŭp questioned in his poems what sort of men Confucius and Shakyamuni were and noted that "both Confucius and the Buddha were loquacious, with Confucius traveling about giving lectures and the Buddha preaching countless sermons."[61] Kim did not call both of them sages but mere

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"Sasangdoen mi ŭisik-kwa minjok-chŏk chŏngch'esŏng: Yanagi Muneyoshi-wa kŭndae han'guk-ŭi c hagi kusŏng" 상상된 미 의식과 민족적 정체성: 야나기 무네요시와 근대 한국의 자기 구성in *Kiŏk-kwa yŏksa-ŭi t'ujaeng* 기억과 역사의 투쟁 (Seoul: Sam'in, 2002); Yun Taesŏk, *Singminji kukmin munhaknon*, pp.87-116.

[60] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.280.

[61] Gregory N. Evon, "Remembering the past, condemned to the present: The imaginative retreat of Kim Sisŭp (1435-1493)", p.59.

men who had to die. Adding Christ to the list, Hong Sayong demystified the religious figures people were awed by and relied on.

What does such demystification mean? In Kim Sisŭp's case, the death of sages implied the Buddhist teaching of impermanence (*musang*, 無常), according to Evon.[62] But what Hong Sayong imparted to his readers by laughing at the sages was different from Kim's intentions. Hong Sayong emphasized a message of "no-dependency." The mad cousin blames the reliance of each sage on objects of worship. He concludes that none of them tried to solve their problems on their own, but shifted the burden to objects or beings they held in awe. Furthermore, the mad cousin tells of the awakening brought about by his illness called contemplation: the truth of self-reliance and self-salvation. This truth lies in awakening by oneself without depending on something or someone else. It is to solve one's problems on one's own without asking for the help of others. Therefore, the mad man does not pay reverence to dead sages. He tries to eliminate all objects which inspire awe and make him dependent.

The extreme form of madness the mad cousin shows can be understood in terms of non-dependency. At a certain moment, the mad cousin appeared with a knife intent on killing Hong Sayong, saying that in the previous days, Hong had looked very formidable and thus, his cousin could not even open his mouth in front of him. But his awe-inspiring cousin (that is, Hong) turned out to be no more than a mere man. He would kill Hong because Hong was what made the cousin trust and love, and lean on others. The mad cousin's strange act of expelling the dependency in one's mind by killing someone he loved and held in awe is actually reminiscent of Zen master Lin Chi's saying, "If you meet Buddha on the road, kill the Buddha." This famous Sŏn *kongan* admonishes practitioners of the danger to rely on the Buddha outside oneself without making endeavors to awaken inherent Buddhahood in oneself. It emphasizes no-dependency in mind as well as freedom/ unrestrictedness of the mind.

The Buddhist language of no-dependency articulated in the madman's voice became a political statement which shattered the dependency of the colonized mind. A colonial relationship needs interdependence of the colonizer and the colonized. Colonial rhetoric says that the colonial subjects are too effeminate to be independent and need protection, help, and guidance of their colonial master toward modernization and progress. The mental dependency of the awed Koreans served to embrace and uphold the political system of colonialism. Under such a system, Koreans could not be their own selves, but necessarily became the others of the Japanese and came to experience the loss of selfhood in the colonial relationship. Insisting on non-dependency, Hong Sayong disempowered the colonial authorities ruling over the Koreans like awe-inspiring religious sages and disenchanted the imprisoned mind of the Koreans.

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[62] Ibid.

Hong Sayong laid stress on finding the lost mind and self. In the poem "Kŭgŏsŭn moda kkumiŏtchimanŭn" 그것은 모다 꿈이었지마는 (It was all a dream, 1923), the widow blames her dead or lost husband and years for their days of happiness.[63] When she laments that "the mysterious, most mysterious thing is the promise of a man," the narrator emphasizes "the self" in the beginning and end of the poem saying that the most mysterious thing is not a man's promise, but the self. This implies that what the widow has lost is not her husband but her own self and that what the widow should find is accordingly not her lost husband but her lost self. This resembles an episode in Shakymuni's life story. Buddha found a party of thirty wealthy men who were accompanied with their wives. One of them had no wife and thus, had a courtesan with him, but while indulged in pleasure, the woman had taken their things and fled. They looked for her and asked Shakyamuni where she had gone. Shakyamuni answered "Look for your lost mind, not for a lost woman."[64] This episode emphasizes the awakening of the mind free from worldly pleasures, whereas Hong's Buddhist message expressed in the poem is more political.

As mentioned before, the narrators in the shape of widows and children represented the colonized body of Korean. A lost childhood and a lost husband symbolized the perishing of the country. When the Koreans did nothing but nostalgically looking back at the past, the writer critically regarded this as another dependency in the Koreans' mind. The Buddhist insistence on non-dependency and the finding of the lost self became a means to overcome the loss of the self, which was prevalent in the psychological landscape of colonized Korea and in the language and colonial and nationalist discourses.

A burning house and 1920s colonial reality

There is one more important thing Hong Sayong borrowed from Buddhism or Kim Sisŭp's representation of Sŏn Buddhism to describe colonial life. It is the image of the burning house. As mentioned before, the image is based on a famous parable in the Lotus Sutra, which is also known as an example of the Buddhist concept of *upaya*. With reference to the concept of *upaya*, Kim Sisŭp, for example, depicted the fire of hell in his story collection *Kŭmo sinhwa* 金鰲新話 (New Stories from Golden Turtle Mountain), in the fifth story "Nam yŏmpuju chi" (Student Pak visits the underworld). In the story, the main character, the Confucian student Pak, is skeptical about Buddhism, particularly the existence of ghosts, the belief in heaven and hell, and karmic retribution. One day, he falls asleep and meets the king of hell, named Yŏmma 閻魔, whose body is surrounded by flames. The land he rules is called Yŏmbuju and is

[63] In *Paekcho* 3. Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.33-35.
[64] Edward J. Thomas, *The life of Buddha: as legend and history* (New York: Dover Publications, 2000), pp.90-91.

burning in the air.[65] Pak asks the king whether ghosts, heaven and hell, and the Ten Kings" 十王, who judge one's sins after death, really exist. The king states that all are "idle words" and that it is a "deception" to wish to extinguish one's sins by practicing worship of Buddha or the Ten Kings.[66] After the conversation ends and the two bid each other farewell, Pak wakes from his "dream." Through a fictional artifice, Kim argues for his Sŏn (zen) Buddhist insight that popular beliefs in Buddhism are not the Buddhist truth but rather the lies of *upaya*.

The burning house, as well as the Ten Kings, dreams, death and ghosts, are all recurrent themes in Hong Sayong's literary works. These motifs are used by Hong to highlight the meaning of *upaya* and further to offer the criticism of national discourses. However, he used them once more in a different light. As explicit in his short story "Chŏsŭng kil" 저승길 (Road to the world beyond, 1923), he used the image of a burning house to portray colonial society, particularly in the aftermath of the March First Movement.[67]

> *The village is burning. Caught in the fire. Strange flames blaze up. A small flame splits out, enlarges and envelops. Flames shoot up to the sky as if they would embrace the whole world. I see something pressed down under the thick dark clouds and almost collapsing. This is my house. The village! That village! I realize now that where I lived has been caught in fire.* [68]

In the story, the heroine Hŭijŏng dies. Her soul is freed from her body that is bound to *isŭng* (this world or colonial society) and witnesses that the world in which she has lived is surrounded by the flames of fire. Her house and the village all are devoured by fire. Furthermore, "the room which she lays smells foul odor. This dark and dismal place contains sadness and riddles. An old rat dozes lazily, a hungry ghost cries, the old woman sighs, and a young widow weeps. Choked by tears, mortification by the moldy and bloody smell."[69] This *isŭng*, filled with hunger, foul odors, sighs, grief and grudges, looks like "hell." The heroine denounces the lies that people in this world tell. *Chŏsŭng* (the world beyond) is usually depicted as a fearful place where a terrible gatekeeper stands waiting and cuts off one's head. Yet, the heroine's soul sees the truth as being the other way around. This terrible place is actually not *chŏsŭng* but *isŭng*, namely colonial Korea.

The *isŭng*, which is revealed by the deceased heroine to be a burning house, concretely refers to colonial society, particularly in the aftermath of the March First Movement. As the word "Mansekkun" (a *manse* demonstrator) indicates, Hŭijŏng's lover Myŏngsu participated in the declaration of

[65] *Kugyŏk Maewŏltangjip* 3, p.360.
[66] Ibid., pp.364-366.
[67] In *Paekcho* 3 (Sep. 1923).
[68] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.62.
[69] Ibid, pp.57-58.

independence movement. Since that time, the Japanese police constantly watched him. The heroine offered her room to him as shelter and to protect him from arrest, even used her body as a means to win the favor of a police officer. As a consequence she was put in jail, charged with hiding a criminal. After suffering such physical and spiritual agony, she finally died. Her death demonstrates the abuse and violence of the colonial authorities. Her ghost becomes a truth teller exposing the colonial language as a "lie." The colonizers promised progress, wealth and high culture to the Koreans, as if colonized Korea would become a paradise by their leadership, but colonial Korea turns out to be a grotesque hell, where people physically and spiritually suffer at the hands of terrifying wardens, who resemble the military police in colonial Korea.

Hong's short story reflects the national condition in the aftermath of the March First Movement, but it is not a booster of Korean nationalism as Chang Tusik still argues from a nationalist perspective.[70] Hong does not only criticize colonialism. The same criticism is applied to Korean nationalism. The heroine Hŭijŏng was a *kisaeng* (female entertainer). In traditional society, this was the lowest status one could have. Time has passed, but she still experiences social discrimination in the colonial society. Her contemporaries scoff at her status and do not consider her as an equal. She is called a lowly "thing." They treat her poorly and abuse her.[71] Suffering from the rampant discrimination, she finally meets her death. This underlines the deception of the "oneness" of the Korean nation. On the one hand, Korean nationalism emphasizes national unity and equality among its members, but on the other hand, it obscures forms of another discrimination which is due to the ideology imposed on the people of the lowest status among the Koreans such as the *kisaeng* and ignores their agony and painful lives.

It is important to notice that Hong Sayong took interest in various social groups and their experiences in colonial society and could critically reflect on both colonialism and Korean nationalism. As recent historians argue, there were many diverse social agents in colonial Korea, who challenge the myth of the nation whose multiple experiences, interests and goals cannot be homogenized into the national movement for intendance.[72] Without perceiving this, the existing studies on Hong Sayong thoroughly misunderstood his interest in *kisaeng* and *paekchŏng* (outcaste butchers) as depicting the tragedy of the nation through various social actors, expressing anti-colonial resistance and passionate nationalism, motivated by the experience of the March First Movement.[73]

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[70] Chang Tusik 장두식, "Hong Sayong <Chŏsŭngkil> yŏn'gu" 홍사용 <저승길> 연구, *Tongyanghak* 東洋學 46 (Aug. 2009):23-42.
[71] Ibid., p.60.
[72] See Introduction.
[73] Ch'oe Wŏnsik 崔元植, "Hong Sayong munhak-kwa chuch'e-ŭi kaksŏng" 洪思容 文學과 主體의 각성 in *Minjok munhag-ŭi nolli: Ch'oe Wŏnsik p'yŏngnonjip* 民族文學의 論理: 崔元植 評論集 (Seoul: Ch'angjak-kwa pip'yŏngsa, 1982), pp.148-155.

Through the discovery of another status and identity, Hong Sayong criticizes colonial and nationalist idioms. His short story "Ponghwa-ga k'yŏjil ttae-e" 烽火가 켜질 때에 (When the fire burns on the hilltop, 1925) tells of the daughter of a butcher in colonial society. From the 20th century on, butchers awoke to a sense of equality and strove for status improvement and human rights. They organized a nation-wide butchers' association "Hyŏngpyŏngsa" in 1923. The popular magazine *Kaebyŏk*, which was affiliated to Ch'ŏndogyo (an indigenous religious group) sympathized with their movement and joined forces with. It seems no accident that Hong Sayong contributed this short story to the *Kaebyŏk* magazine.[74]

The heroine Kwiyŏng suffers social discrimination. Her mother was possessed by a *yangban*. When her father declared, "A butcher is a human," he was beaten to death. The heroine was sent to a modern school in Seoul, but when her status was revealed, she was shunned and driven out of the student group. This short story first reflects on colonial society in which butchers were badly treated. As members of the lowest social class in traditional Korean society, they suffered harsh social discrimination until the 1920s even though they tried to improve their status and life through modern education.[75] Secondly, such a discriminated class can represent the whole of colonial society, comprised of people who suffered racial discrimination and felt constant mortification. The anger of Kwiyŏng, who belonged to the butcher class, represented the maltreatment over the course of hundreds of years and came to a head during the March First Movement.

More importantly, however, Kwiyŏng was abandoned by her husband, who as an independence fighter participated in the March First Movement and who was imprisoned with her. Her husband propagated for the national spirit and insisted on the brotherhood of the Korean nation and independence, crying: "We are compatriots, brothers, and sisters. People in this country live in tears. The weak should be strong in order to restore our life!"[76] Yet, when his wife's humble origins were revealed to him, he felt insulted and betrayed. He discarded her, condemning her, "You dirty bitch! How dare you, a butcher's daughter!" The writer Hong Sayong critically witnesses how a nationalist campaigner acts and how the oneness of the Koreans is merely idle talk to stir up people.[77] The fire burning on top of the hills in the story sheds light on the obscured colonial reality and life distorted by deceptive words in both colonialism and nationalism.

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[74] In *Kaebyŏk* 61 開闢. Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.66-82.
[75] On paekchŏng movements, see Kim Joong-Seop, "In search of Human Rights: The *Paekchŏng* Movement in Colonial Korea" in Colonial Modernity in Korea (Harvard University Asia Center, 1999): 311-335; --------, *The Korean paekchŏng under Japanese rule: the quest for equality and human rights* (London and New York, Routledge Curzon, 2003); Pak Chongsŏng 박종성, *Paekchŏng-gwa kisaeng* 백정과 기생 (Seoul: Sŏul taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2003/2004).
[76] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.76.
[77] Ibid.

Conclusion

In the early or mid 1920s, Hong Sayong was not a Buddhist yet, but generously borrowing Buddhist concepts, ideas and motifs, he questioned the dominant colonial and national discourses and created a counter-discourse in his literature. The motifs of the dream, liquor and women, which are usually identified as expressions of escapism from the colonial reality, conversely became devices to critically approach colonial reality. His reactions to colonialism were too varied and subtle to be reduced to a single narrative of nationalistic patriotism versus colonialism, if we take into account gender politics, Foucault's discourse of power and knowledge, and discourses of hygiene and customs. From a Buddhist perspective, he provided a divergent interpretation of turbulent events such as the March First Movement. He did not celebrate the significance of the event, as it is done in today's Korea. Nor did he lament the failure of the independence movement. Nor did he regard the failed attempt as useless. He evaluated the movement as a skillful means which brought some changes to the Koreans, but not a fundamental resolution. Discerning that colonialism colonized the body and the mind of the colonized, he suggested the Buddhist concept of non-dependency of the mind as the fundamental way to break free from the colonial relationship. He also critically reflected on the undivided Korean nationalism. He discerned more social agents in colonial society than the Korean nation and denounced how not only colonialism but also anti-colonial nationalism treated them badly. Hong Sayong and his 1920s literature proved that decolonization was a project that should be accompanied by a critique of Korean nationalism and national movements.

Chapter 8

Meditating amid war: Hong Sayong's Buddhist literature in wartime colonial Korea

Introduction

In 1976, when the first posthumous book of Hong Sayong (洪思容, 1900-1947) was released, his eldest son looked back upon the last decade of his father's life.[1] According to his son, Hong Sayong put down his pen long before the Pacific War reached its peak in 1939, at the time that he was given a fixed-term governmental order to write a play about Kim Okkyun (金玉均, 1851-1894) and depict this 19th-century "pro-Japanese" reformer and "Pan-Asianist"[2] as an early advocate of *naissen ittai* 內鮮一體, whose failed dream came true in the early 20th century thanks to the grace of the Emperor. Hong Sayong, however, did not write the play in the way the government dictated. As a consequence, his manuscript was confiscated by the government, and he was punished with house arrest. He even could not have attended his son's wedding if Yi Kwangsu, the president of the Korean Writers' Association, had not asked the colonial government for a favorable arrangement.

This short description of the circumstances surrounding the Hong Sayong's confiscated play *Kim Okkyunjŏn* 金玉均傳 (A biographical tale of Kim Okkyun) was widely accepted among researchers. It was continually reiterated and regarded as evidence of Hong's indomitable nationalist spirit against Japanese colonialism in the late colonial period. However, there are some inaccurate and questionable details his son added to the memoir. The year 1939 was not in the midst of the Pacific War, but more correctly, the second Sino-Japanese War, which was prolonged and extended to the Pacific War from 1941 onward. Few ask why Hong Sayong did not turn down the request from the colonial authorities rather than obeying it and writing the manuscript. The Korean Writers' Association (Chosŏn munin hyŏphoe, 朝鮮文人協會), of which Yi Kwangsu was president, was a pro-Japanese collaborationist organization. When a man like Yi Kwangsu offered Hong to help, Hong accepted it and even let him officiate at his son's wedding. Would not rejection have been a more suitable reaction if Hong was a man of indomitable nationalist pride? The problem becomes more serious when we consider the chronology of Hong's

[1] Hong Kyusŏn 洪奎善, "Yujak ch'ulgan-e chŭŭmhayŏ" 遺作 出刊에 즈음하여 (Nov. 1976). Republished in *Paekcho-ga hŭrŭdŏn sidae: Nojak Hong Sayong iltaegi* 백조白潮가 흐르던 시대: 노작 홍사용 일대기, Edited by Yi Wŏn'gyu 이원규 (Osan: Saemunsa, 2000), pp.83-84.

[2] Sven Saaler, "Pan-Asianism in modern Japanese history: overcoming the nation, creating region, forging an empire" in *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, regionalism and borders* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p.6.

literary activities. Hong's son's claim that Hong Sayong abandoned writing long before 1939, implying that it was as a form of resistance against colonialism when many Korean writers, caught in the vortex of war, had no alternative but collaboration, is far from the truth. Instead of quitting, he wielded his pen more eagerly. Surprisingly, he also contributed a considerable part of his output to the *Maeil sinbo* 每日新報, which was the propaganda mouthpiece of the colonial government. What prompted him to undertake the task of literary creation in that turbulent period of time? Why did the alleged uncompromising writer publish a series of his works in this controversial governmental newspaper, even though Korean newspapers such as *Tonga ilbo* and *Chosŏn ilbo* were still running? Was it not close to an anti-national act of *maesin* (賣身, selling one's soul and body to the colonial government) as some of his contemporaries alleged?[3]

In this chapter, I will explore Hong's later life and literature in order to unravel these lingering questions. My main contention is that Hong was neither simply a nationalist nor pro-Japanese collaborator, but offered a religious alternative. While overemphasizing him as a writer who foregrounded the "national spirit" (*minjok chŏngsin*) or the "national soul" (*minjok hon*) throughout his life and literature, the existing scholarship has neglected his religious belief and labeled these insignificant.[4] As a consequence, the fact that Hong published his works in the *Maeil sinbo* and most of all, that those controversial works were Buddhist essays on his meditative experience and contemplations on Buddhist truth has never been noticed or brought into the discussion. Against the predominant view among scholars, I will show how religion played a significant role in Hong's thinking and writing during the turbulent time of war and will further argue that it was not nationalist ideology but his Buddhist faith that became the most sustained and quintessential element in his work and a source of inspiration to gain insights in colonial society. Recognizing that Hong has been excessively romanticized by nationalist scholarship, it is important first to make it clear that Hong's contribution to the governmental newspaper certainly constitutes compliance with the colonial authorities. However, this does not necessarily mean that his texts became "pro-Japanese" or "anti-national." Examining the matter, I will show that Hong was able to produce a "religious" counter-discourse while interacting with Japanese colonialism. My probing into his idea of Asia versus the West, his Buddhist view of hungry ghosts, and his attempts at folksong-style poems will reveal how his reaction to

[3] Hong Kidon 홍기돈, "Pokkojuŭi ŭijang-ŭl han kŭndaejŏk cha'a ŭisig-ŭi pyŏnmo" 복고주의 의장(擬裝)을 한 근대적 작가 의식의 변모 in *1930-nyŏndae munhak-kwa kŭndae ch'ehŏm* 1930년대 문학과 근대체험. Edited by Munhak-kwa pip'yŏng yŏn'guhoe (Seoul: Ihoe, 1999), p.264.

[4] Yi Wŏngyu, *Paekcho-ga hŭrŭdŏn sidae*, pp.29-31, 43-45, 73-75; Kim Haktong, "Hyangt'osŏng-gwa minyo-ŭi yulcho" 鄕土性과 民謠의 律調 in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*洪思容全集, pp.354 and 381-389; Kim Pongju 金奉柱, "Hong Sayong siyŏn'gu" 洪思容 詩硏究 (MA thesis, Korea University, 1985), pp.53-75; Song Chaeil 송재일, "Nojak Hong Sayong-ŭi hŭigog-e kwan-han koch'al" 露雀 洪思容의 戱曲에 관한 考察 in *Han'guk ŏnŏ munhak* 26韓國言語文學 (1988).

Japanese colonial policies and discourses was far more subtle and nuanced than a simple nationalist representation of anti-colonial resistance.

Hong Sayong and Buddhism

Hong Sayong showed a great interest in Buddhism in his early days, but it manifested itself to a much greater degree once he came to believe in and to practice Buddhism as his personal religion. According to his close friend Pak Chonghwa (朴鐘和, 1901-1981), Hong seems to have turned to Buddhism from around 1928.[5] Like Kim Iryŏp, he came into contact with progressive Buddhists and frequently visited the Kakhwang Temple 覺皇寺 (the predecessor of the Chogyesa Temple, the center of Zen Buddhism in modern day Korea) for research for his literary works, which were to be published in modern Buddhist journals including *Yŏsi* 如是 and *Pulgyo* 佛教. Inspired by Buddhism, he had turned Shakyamuni Buddha's renunciation and Ich'adon's martyrdom into Buddhist dramas.[6] Some of his plays were also staged during the biggest Buddhist festival, the celebration of Buddha's birthday.

On a personal level, physical, spiritual, and financial suffering led Hong to Buddhism. He actually came from a very well-off family, which owned huge tracts of land. Later, he was adopted by his childless uncle, who was an even wealthier landowner.[7] However, when he engaged in literary and theatrical activities, his fortune waned. He failed in everything he did. He was tricked into a fake lump investment and suffered huge losses.[8] The literary magazine *Paekcho* (1922-1923) proved abortive. For the theater group T'owŏlhoe (土月會, 1923-1931) he served as a playwright, acting supervisor and, most of all, financial backer until it was finally dissolved. In 1927, he personally established another theatrical group, Sanyuhwahoe 山有花會, which went on a provincial tour, but as Pak Chonghwa stated, this tour proved a thorny path: "He ran out of money. His dream was shattered. Only contempt and cruelty awaited him."[9] Along with his spiritual torment, he lost his health, and started coughing blood.

When Hong faced physical disease and spiritual despair, it was not nationalism but Buddhism which provided him with a remedy. As his repetitive temple pilgrimages demonstrate, he relied on Buddhism to find answers and explanations about the true nature of pain and suffering; what happiness, misfortune, life and death were; and how he could cope with pain, despair and life. From 1929 onward, he led a nomadic life, drifting from temple

[5] Pak Chonghwa朴鐘和, *Yŏksa-nŭn hŭrŭnŭnde ch'ŏngsan-ŭn mar-i ŏmne* 歷史는 흐르는데 靑山은 말이 없네 (Seoul: Samgyŏng, 1979), pp. 439-444.
[6] *Hŭin chŏt* 흰젓 in *Pulgyo* (1928); *Ch'ulga* 出家 in *Hyŏndae Chosŏn munhak chŏnjip* 現代朝鮮文學全集 (1938).
[7] Hong Kyusŏn 洪奎善, "Yujak ch'ulgan-e chŭŭmhayŏ", p.82.
[8] Pak Chonghwa朴鐘和, *Yŏksa-nŭn hŭrŭnŭnde ch'ŏngsan-ŭn mar-i ŏmne*.
[9] Ibid.

to temple, which was a traditional form of Buddhist practice. According to Yi Kwangsu, by 1940 he resided in a temple in Yŏngnam province, reading sutras or meditating.[10] In 1944, he went on another temple pilgrimage and studied Buddhist scriptures.

What did Hong Sayong learn or realize through his study of Buddhism and practice while roaming restlessly from temple to temple and traversing the border between the secular and religious worlds? Ten years after establishing a relationship with Buddhism, a series of essays were born by the end of the 1930s. Through exploring those texts, we may get a glimpse of Hong's Buddhist life. In those essays, he first and foremost observed an array of nature's objects including the moon, an ox, rains and autumn scenery. This kind of observation of nature expressed in literary works is commonly interpreted as relishing the beauty of nature or empathizing with nature. However, the act of contemplation described in Hong's essays is somewhat different. Far removed from such an aesthetical attitude, it turns out to be entirely religious in nature.

A clear example is Hong's description of the moon in one of the first contemplative essays.

> *The moon is a mute saint. Its clear and clean-looking, perfect shape, solemn but compassionate, is impressive to us even though we are mere sentient beings. It awakes us to a sense of wonder with its all-embracing and all-penetrating power and its lofty, mysterious, awe-inspiring magnificence*.[11]

In the lines, Hong does not see the moon as a beautiful natural object and appreciate its natural beauty. He describes the moon as a personified saint, manifesting essential concepts of Buddhism, such as tranquility (*ch'ŏngsŏngsim*, 淸淨心), unimpededness (*muae*, 無碍), compassion (*chabi*, 慈悲), the unimpeded interpenetration of all phenomena (*sasamuae*, 事事無碍), etc. Although ordinary people do not exactly comprehend what those Buddhist notions signify, he argues, they intuit their meaning while quietly looking up to the moon. He adds that the qualities of the moon appear to be in the eye of beholder. Some might feel sad. Some might instead feel good. In any case, he claims, we need to take time in order to observe the moon at a spiritual or contemplative level and reflect what life is in essence and where we, humans, come from.

It is not only nature which Hong observes from a religious perspective. Interestingly, he deeply contemplated everyday life objects from the same perspective. In his essay "Tubu manp'il" 豆腐漫筆 (A causerie on bean curd, 1939), for example, he praises something as humble as bean curd cake as a bodhisattva, borrowing a Sŏn monk's remark. According to his observation,

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[10] "Nanje'o" 亂啼烏in *Munjang* 文章 (Feb. 1940). Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 李光洙全集8 (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1971/1973), p.213.

[11] "San'gŏ-ŭi tal" 山居의 달 in *Maeil sinbo* (July 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip* 洪思容全集, Edited by Kim Haktong (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1985), p.302.

bean curd cake is pristine-white and has a simple natural taste, clean and pure as the Buddha nature. Bean curd cake is not self-assertive. It shows the emptiness of self (*mua*, 無我) and seeks harmony with all other ingredients regardless of their kind. However, this selflessness and adaptability do not mean that it loses its original taste or gets stained. Conversely, the author marvels that bean curd cake never loses its mild nature and plain taste and adds flavor to foods, freely changing its form and shape and benefiting both itself and others. Hong sees that bean curd reflects the great virtue of bodhisattvas, in particular, the spirit of harmonious, non-obstructive totality (*wŏnyung muae*, 圓融無碍) and free and unrestricted being (*chajae*, 自在) in the phenomenal world.

Why does Hong observe nature and everyday life objects from a religious point of view? What does this act of observation mean? Is there any religious rationale for it? His vision of things is not designed to excite a sense of relaxation or aesthetic enjoyment. Its focus is to share his reflections on his religious life of which the essence was Sŏn Buddhist meditation. He explains various Buddhist concepts, in particular citing famous Chinese Chan masters such as Huineng (慧能/惠能, 638–713), Daoxin (道信, 580–651), and Linji (臨濟, ?-866).[12] The words and actions of those Sŏn patriarchs which are collected as *kongan* (jp. kōan)[13] are cited in *hangŭl* (Korean) and even in *hancha* (Sino-Korean).

The fact that he meditated with the help of *kongan* makes clear that Hong favored Sŏn meditation among the many strands of Buddhism. His contemplative observation of nature was in line with a long Sŏn tradition and practice. As scholars such as Sŏ Yŏng'ae and Kim Tŏkkŭn elucidate, Sŏn practitioners in Korea, like their Chinese peers, considered nature as already awakened and thus tried to acquire awakening through observing natural objects such as mountains, rivers, grasses and trees.[14] Their study and practice were based upon a Mahayana Buddhist concept which came to become a key notion of Sŏn Buddhism: *chinyŏ* (眞如, true thusness). As Hong himself explains in the essay entitled "Chinyŏ" (1938), natural objects such as the moon reveal that all dharmas (all phenomenal things) are created by the mind and this mind is called true thusness. Seeing from the enlightened mind, all things and human life are one and same. They all are already enlightened, manifesting the true nature of reality. Therefore, Hong suggests to observe all objects as they are.[15] It

[12] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.304-307 and 314.

[13] *Kongan* are enigmatic remarks of previous Sŏn masters concerning the nature of enlightenment, intended as the forms of meditation.

[14] For a detailed discussion about Sŏn literature, see Sŏ Yŏng'ae 서영애, *Pulgyo munhak-ŭi ihae* 불교문학의 이해 (Seoul: Pulgyo sidaesa, 2002), pp. 233-253; Kim Tŏkkŭn 김덕근, *Han'guk hyŏndae sŏnsi-ŭi maengnak-kwa chip'yŏng* 한국 현대선시의 맥락과 지평 (Seoul: Pakijŏng, 2005), pp.15-213; Hong Sinsŏn 홍신선*Han'guk si-wa Pulgyo-jŏk sangsangmyŏk* 한국시와 불교적 상상력 (Seoul: Yŏngnak, 2004), pp.11-22.

[15] In *Maeil sinbo* (August 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.304-305.

is to see their true nature rather than their surface and more essentially, to see one's own true nature and mind, which is not different from that of all things.

Hong did not mention this, but his pursuit of contemplation is associated with another popular Sŏn slogan: *kyŏnsŏng sŏngbul* 見性成佛. It is to accomplish Buddhahood by looking into one's own nature. This Sŏn notion aims to encourage practitioners to seek direct and first-hand experience rather than relying on the words of teachers and scriptures. Facing natural objects is one way to cultivate and actualize one's own Buddha nature by oneself. Yet, although not depending on words, Sŏn and Chan practitioners did not completely exclude words. As Sŏ and Kim remark, their study and practice as well as their awakening were expressed in the written form of verse and then sanctioned, transmitted, and compiled as Sŏn meditation topics (*kongan*). They studied and practiced meditation largely in reference to those topics.[16]

Like other Sŏn practitioners, Hong also expressed his Buddhist experiences, his own thoughtful contemplation of nature and life, and his Buddhist knowledge in a written form in his essays. If we discuss his study of Buddhism and the issue of writing, Kim Sisŭp 金時習 is an important person who may not be overlooked. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hong in his early days had felt affinity with this 15th-century historical figure and his Buddhist assertions. Kim was also frequently quoted in Hong's later Buddhist texts. Kim's *Myobŏp yŏnhwagyŏng pyŏlch'an* 妙法蓮華經別讚 (A commentary on the Lotus Sutra) seems to have been one of the scriptures Hong avidly read and engraved in his mind, as his frequent borrowings from this text attest. This commentary is not the standard one. As Kim himself clarified in the preface of his commentary, Kim saw that this sutra can only be properly understood beyond words and letters and thus approached it from a Sŏn angle.[17]

From this particular commentary, Hong cited a phrase presenting a white ox cart as an important signifier of the so-called one vehicle teachings (*ilsŭnggyo*, 一乘敎), which are said to be identical to the Buddha's true teaching that all people are able to attain Buddhahood,[18] Which is reminiscent of Hong's contemplation of an ox as a sage Buddha I will discuss below. Hong's essay on bean curd ends with Kim's *gatha* verse about Bodhisattva Never Despise (常不輕菩薩, Sangbulgyŏng posal).[19] This humble bodhisattva who practiced Buddhism enduring abuse and insults for a long time told sentient beings about everyone's capacity of becoming Buddha, without making a distinction between the Buddha and sentient beings. Hong did not see this bodhisattva as

[16] Among such *kongan* collections, a Chinese collection *Jingde chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄 and a Korean indigenous collection *Sŏnmun yŏmsong sŏrhwa* 禪門拈頌說話 have been popularly used in Korean temples. See Robert E. Buswell, *The Zen monastic experience: Buddhist practice in contemporary Korea* (Princeton University Press, 1992), p.97.

[17] See *Kugyŏk Maewŏltangjip* 5 국역 매월당집 (Seoul: Sejong taewang kinyŏm saŏphoe, 1980), pp.42-45.

[18] Ibid., pp.55-56.

[19] Ibid, p.81.

existing only in the Buddhist sutra or the commentary, but tried to see it in reality and in his everyday life, for instance in a piece of bean curd.

Meditation in time of war

One of the most controversial aspects of Hong Sayong's meditative essays is the question of when these texts were written and where they were published. Ironically, it was during the Sino-Japanese War that Hong produced these explicitly Buddhist-inspired works. As said, he contributed them to the governmental paper, not to the *Tonga ilbo* or *Chosŏn ilbo*. In July 1938, when he began to serialize his essays in the *Maeil sinbo*, colonial Korea was loudly celebrating the first anniversary of the Second Sino-Japanese War. At the Kyŏngsŏng stadium (Tongdaemun stadium today), all of the era's leading figures and groups gathered and inaugurated a pivotal organ of the war mobilization campaign, called the Chosŏn National Spirit Mobilization League (Kungmin chŏngsin ch'ongdongwŏn Chosŏn yŏnmaeng, 國民精神總動員朝鮮聯盟). There was no end to the war in sight.

Why did Hong publish his works in the controversial medium of the governmental newspaper? Was his meditative writing associated with the historical events and if so, in what way? What was the meaning of the meditation he practiced, especially during the war? Regarding the first question, we may assume that Hong was under pressure from the colonial government to write those essays. Given the fact that he received a governmental order to submit a play on Kim Okkyun around that time (1939), this assumption is likely to be true. Yet, we still need more direct evidence for that, as well as answers to the following questions: why did not he choose to refuse or to quit writing as some non-compromising writers eventually did? Why did he opt to write about his Buddhist meditation and contemplative life, not producing political propaganda in support of war?

Hong Sayong's contemplative writing needs to be placed and examined in its historical context in order to find the answers to questions like the above. Two of his essays are worth taking a closer look at: "Usong" and "Tubu manp'il." In the first essay, Hong admires a white ox as a saint, but his reasoning and description are somewhat different from his glorification of the moon. He depicts an ox that is suffering hardship because of the heavy pack on his back. The ox groans under the stinging lashes while doing his hard work. Nonetheless, the animal never complains nor loses its temper. In spite of the hard work, torture, and pain, the ox simply forgets everything and does not lose its benign, serene, and peaceful mind.[20] The ox is also free from possessiveness and desire and lives in a low-pressure atmosphere, filled with peace and tranquility. According to Hong, the ox in the field is the image of a

[20] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.304.

Buddhist saint who endures hardship and preserves a peaceful and tranquil mind.

In the second essay, Hong Sayong describes another painful process—how a block of bean curd is made—from a Buddhist point of view. He claims that the bean curd deserves high praise for its bodhisattva's forbearance. To become a block of bean curd, beans are first ground on a grindstone, then are heated and compressed into a mold. From the beans' standpoint, this is extreme adversity, causing unbearable pain and suffering. Hong calls it "asceticism" (*kohaeng*). The bones are pulverized and the body is torn apart (*pun'gol soesin*). The pulverized beans are cooked in a hot iron pot, like a pool of fire, like that of hell. The cooked beans are wrapped in rough hemp cloth, like the dead are wrapped in the shroud and then, put in the pressing machine.[21] However, like the ox, fermented bean curd endures this great hardship, and transforms itself into a high-protein food to nourish people.

Hong Sayong's parables of the white ox and the bean curd cake suggests that he does not merely talk about his Buddhist meditation, but also alludes to his and others' experiences of colonial life during the war. The ox, which suffers from hard work and groans under the yoke, seems to represent the colonized Koreans who lived exhausting lives under the colonial yoke as the servants of their Japanese colonial masters. The ox pulling a cart and delivering the heavy load on his back is reminiscent of the Koreans who were mobilized, whether they liked it or not, and were forced to perform extremely hard and laborious farm and factory work under wartime conditions. The hardship that the fermented bean curd undergoes dramatizes the colonial experience during the oppressive war mobilization. Using terms like *pun'gol soesin* (pulverizing the bones and tearing the body apart) and *apch'ak* (compression and repression), Hong reveals that the Koreans living in wartime colonial Korea experienced extreme suffering. The lump of bean curd wrapped in rough hemp cloth evokes a grotesque portrait of the Koreans as living corpses.

Hong's writing is not uncompromising in the sense that his essays were published in the *Maeil sinbo*, in compliance with the colonial authorities. However, this is not mindless war propaganda dictated by the wartime government, either. Wartime slogans and ideologies which used to be prevalent in pro-Japanese collaborationist speeches and writings are mentioned in none of his Buddhist narratives. Hong's specific description does neither support the war effort nor challenge it, but is more focused on revealing people's life experiences in wartime colonial reality.

While attempting to allegorize people's hardship, Hong Sayong faces further questions: How should people in colonial Korea, including himself, live in such an agony-ridden reality? Should they criticize the reality of their lives, condemn it or complain about it? Should they fight against the oppressive and controlling colonial government or rather fight for the Japanese empire? Or

[21] Ibid., p.315.

should they leave the land of suffering? According to the assumptions of the existing scholarship, the answer should be resistance without compromise. In other words, as a writer with the true spirit of nationalism, Hong is simplistically assumed to have told his compatriots to condemn their colonial reality and criticize or oppose the wartime government.

However, Hong's Buddhist resolution to cope with colonial life in wartime seems more complicated than the nationalist scholarship thinks. First of all, his understanding of Kim Sisŭp's Sŏn Buddhist thought seems to have served as a way of discovering an alternative view of colonial reality. Kim Sisŭp is usually known as a recluse who detached himself from the secular world, trying to find inner peace by communing with nature and avoiding compromise in troubled times. However, this was not the perspective Hong borrowed from Kim. He based himself on Kim's later thought, which according to scholars such as Han Chongman shows a strongly affirmative view of reality, as is evident in Kim Sisŭp's *Siphyŏndam yohae* 十玄談要解 (*Annotation of Ten Miraculous poems*, 1475).[22]

In this work, Kim presented an interesting parable about an ox. He stated that if an ox performs its duty properly, it has to endure burning pain. Kim also emphasized the need to turn the great dharma wheel in the mundane world, in the face of both adversity and prosperity. It was to claim that the Buddhist law is dead if it is not practiced in reality. In other words, the secular world may be as unbearably painful and distressful as a pool of fire, but Kim argued that there is no place but reality where one can realize the Buddhist law. To bring the dharma to life, Kim insisted, one needs to acknowledge the realities of life and harmonize adversity and prosperity. One needs to be faithful to secular life without distinguishing between the mundane and religious worlds.[23]It is easy to notice how Hong's own contemplation of an ox is eerily similar to Kim's parable. Hong depicts how objects such as an ox and beans turn the great dharma wheel in their respective realities. The ox turns the wheels of the heavy cart, whereas the beans are crushed to pieces between two grinding "wheels."[24] They are faced with adverse circumstances; however, neither denying nor escaping them, they endure the pain and agony of reality and carry out their duties faithfully. Hong rejuvenates Kim's synthetic (non-dualistic) view of reality, which joins the phenomenal and Buddhist worlds, and his approval of the phenomenal reality and all things. In the end, he applies this Buddhist view of reality to wartime colonial Korean society.

Hong suggests that his compatriots should learn the way how the ox and bean curd exist under hardship. While experiencing hardship and adversity, people are apt to either lament or deny their realities. They would

[22] Han Chongman 韓種萬, "Kim Sisŭb-ŭi Hwaŏm, Sŏn sasang" 김시습의 화엄, 선사상 in *Han'guk Pulgyo sasang-ŭi chŏn'gae* 韓國佛敎思想의 展開 (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1998), pp.339-346.
[23] Ibid., pp.342-343.
[24] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.302.

prefer to escape from their current hard life. In the throes of chaos, many of them seem to turn into "hungry ghosts" (*agwi*, 餓鬼) who fight with each other and whose minds are rife with desires, worries, anxieties, anger, and discontent.[25] Seeing them, he insists on facing reality and enduring hardship taking for an example the ox and bean curd cake, being aware of the Buddhist truth that there is nowhere to escape, but (colonial) reality. Concerning their agonizing reality, he argues, people should not be captured by negative feelings such as state of mind of the hungry ghost but maintain carefree, peaceful, and tranquil minds in order to live harmoniously with others at a time of war. It is the bodhisattva's spirit and practice which is embodied by the ox and bean curd cake people in wartime should search for as the right way to liberating themselves from the hungry ghost in their mind.

Hong Sayong's alternative view of life in colonial reality is no problem from a Buddhist point of view. However, his view can be contested from a sociopolitical angle. It is undeniable that this view inhibited people in wartime colonial Korea from critically thinking about their reality or bringing about change. As Hirata Seikō explains, many Japanese Zen Buddhists misused this Buddhist view of reality to fervently support the wartime Japanese empire. They made people in Japan accept life as it is without complaint and propagated the attitude that "in times of misfortune, misfortune is fine," which according to Hirata prevented sociopolitical reform and a critical look at such an inhumane and agonizing situation as war.[26] Hong did not blatantly support the wartime government as the Japanese Buddhists did. It seems that he did not intentionally distort and misuse Buddhist ideas. But he made the Koreans accept and endure the worsening conditions of their reality and dissuaded them from complaining about their lives and venting their anger. It was in line with the colonial government's attempts at that time spiritual control to alleviate social tension and discontent through the propagation of the "right spirit."[27]

Hong's advocating of Buddhist notions such as *wŏnyung muae* and *chajae* is also controversial from a sociopolitical point of view. Explaining these Buddhist doctrines with the example of soy bean curd, he emphasizes the attitude of harmoniously living and serving others in a cooperative way. He remarks that the bean curd cake is not picky. It does not make a distinction between ingredients, preferring or disliking a certain kind. It harmonizes well with fish and cooperates with meat, too. It is not self-assertive by nature. It adapts itself to any circumstances. When the bean curd cake is served as food and mixed with other ingredients, it does not clash with them, emptying its mind to be compassionate.[28] Hong likewise underlines harmony (*chohwa*) and

[25] Ibid., pp.303 and 313.
[26] Hirata Seikō, "Zen Buddhist Attitudes to War" in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, & the Question of Nationalism*. edited by James W. Heisig & John C. Moraldo (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1994) pp.11-14.
[27] For more details, see Chapter 1 and 2.
[28] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.314-315.

cooperation (*hyŏpcho*) as the way Koreans should live in wartime colonial Korea. He suggests that one should have the spirit of no-self, rather than being led by self-interest.

Surprisingly or not, Hong's Buddhist insistences are analogous to Japanese wartime ideologies. As repeatedly discussed in previous chapters, the service to the Japanese empire and Emperor was a fundamental tenet for conducting the wars against China and the West through the mobilization of the entire population. The pursuit of one's own interests and ends was harshly condemned as Western individualism and egocentrism that shattered harmony among the people and brought about conflicts in society, whereas the spirit of service and sacrifice were glorified as noble and sacred for bringing harmony and peace to Asia and the world. Harmony, cooperation, and selfless service to benefit others were the very political slogans with which the wartime government indoctrinated individuals in both Japan and Korea.

However, Hong does not seem simply end up supporting the colonial authorities. He does not sympathize with all wartime policies, either. Instead, he finds a way out of the troublesome wartime situation and even creates a counter discourse. Taking the example of the bean curd, he does not only emphasize how it exists in harmony with other foods, but also how its inherent taste and flavor are never tainted by them. Although the bean curd is mixed with other ingredients and although its form and body is broken and changed by the grindstones, the bean curd never loses itself. He argues that its true self (*pon myŏnmok*) such as its mild, plain taste cannot be destroyed. The self-empting bean curd looks like sacrificing itself to other foods, but Hong disapproves of the implication of self-sacrifice, articulating that "the bean curd does not kill itself to save the others (to feed others), miraculously saving both the self and non-self."[29]

Hong's insistence on living in harmony with others and adapting oneself to one's present circumstances does not equal mindlessly obeying the colonial authorities. In fact, he stresses that one never should be impeded or tainted by the impure wartime society. It is to live in accordance with the spirit of bodhisattvas: to live in the filth of the world without being tainted by it. The bodhisattva's spirit and practice Hong suggests as an alternative way to grapple with wartime colonial reality agree with wartime slogans such as harmony and cooperation but at the same time, oppose the most basic fundamental tenet of war doctrines: self-sacrifice for the sake of others. It was a political doctrine to which two other prominent Buddhist writers, Han Yongun and Yi Kwangsu, were vulnerable. By insisting on compassion, for instance, they imposed the relinquishing of self on individuals, as the political authorities did. However, Hong seems to be one of the few colonial writers who was able to subvert the doctrine. With his conviction of the indestructible self and free and unimpeded mind, he led his compatriots to life rather than death. He suggested that one

[29] Ibid.

should live under impure and unfavorable conditions without sacrifying any life.

Asia versus the West

One striking feature of Hong Sayong's meditative essays is the background logic of "Asia versus the West." While talking about nature, he particularly expresses abhorrence to modern, material, and urban culture. He states that nature belongs to nature. To add "artificial" beauty to nature destroys it and is a "crime." He also shows distrust of capitalist money worship, arguing that one does not need to "pay" for enjoying the fresh wind and bright moon. He draws a contrast between pure, clean objects in nature and ferroconcrete buildings (*k'ongk'ŭrit'ŭ tach'ŭng kŏnmul*) in modern cities beset by meat smells and smeared with greasy "dirt".[30] His loathing, most of all, is directed at "Western" objects of urban Westernized life. The following phrases, embedded in his essay "San'gŏ-ŭi tal," are a good example of this attitude.

> *Society becomes more and more cold-hearted every moment, to the degree that it would even slash the bright moonlight to death. By now, all youths within the gates of Seoul will be totally mobilized in the dance halls and frantically shake their hips to the rhythms of jazz, sweating heavily. What would they think if they look up at the moon? They enjoy guzzling from a "kŭlaessŭ k'ŏp" [a glass cup] blinded by the dazzling "neon ssain" [neon lights]. It is deplorable that nowhere can we find moonlit refinement, which has lasted for such a long time*.[31]

Notable in this passage is Hong's comparison between Western materials and the Asian spirit. Using quotation marks, in his essay he particularly distances himself from glass cups, neon signs and concrete buildings as Anglo-American objects. The words he uses for there are all loans from English, and parts of Western material culture (interestingly, he does not use quotation marks for jazz music, which is not material). These objects represent Western material civilization and visualize its sophisticated technology (*multchil munmyŏng-ŭi chŏnggyo-han kisul*).[32]

Hong Sayong laments that people are hungry for money, material things and technology and have come to suffer from spiritual panic. Indulging in city life and material culture, they have forgotten their own ancient spiritual practice as *tongyangin* (Orientals).[33] They have lost the way to engage with their higher spirituality through meditation and contemplation. As a consequence, they live in anxiety and nervousness, not knowing what the foundation of

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

happiness is or how to find peace of mind. Hong invites those city dwellers to nature. He suggests they wash their body and mind, defiled by the dirt of Westernized material city life, in a small spring and restore their lost Eastern spirituality while contemplating nature.

"Ch'ŏmha-ŭi injŏng" 檐下의 人情 (Human feelings under the eaves, 1938) is another essay that reflects Hong Sayong's view of the materialistic West versus a spiritual Asia. In this essay, he compares traditional and Western-style houses in terms of eaves. The traditional houses and buildings had eaves under which passers-by could take shelter from the rain. According to him, the eaves were not merely part of the architecture, but the embodiment of human feelings (*injŏng*), of the spirit of mutual help (*sangbu sangjo*, 相扶相助) and of "coexistence and co-prosperity" (*kongjon kong'yŏng*, 共存共榮).[34] While being modernized, the eaves of houses became shorter and shorter. Eaves disappeared without a trace when the luxurious Western-style houses (*yangokchip*) began to be built. These Western-style houses fill so-called civilized cities. Yet, they are merely material objects without humanity. If there is a shower, pedestrians have nowhere to escape, and instead must stand in the rain like drowned mice. People in Western-style buildings coldly look out off the window at the pitiful scene. Hong deplores how contemporary material civilization, epitomized by the Western style house, has cruelly eaten away the heartwarming hospitality of Korea (Chosŏn) and even the "Oriental" (*tongyang-jŏk*) landscape of nature.[35]

Hong Sayong dichotomously separates West and East, the materialistic and the spiritual, city and nature. He does not only separate them, but he places Asian culture in opposition to Western civilization and deprecates the latter as dirty, defiled and polluting, causing disharmony, depravity, inertia and mental derangement. He then suggests the former as a strong remedy for recovering Asians' higher spirituality and energy. The meditation and contemplation he focuses on in his essays are suggested as a way to return to Asian spiritual culture and revive Eastern values and spiritual traditions. This pursuit of traditionalism is held in contrast to modernity, which, most conspicuously in his folksong-style poems, have been understood by nationalist scholarship as an attempt to express nationalism in the dark age of colonialism. Scholars hold slightly different views on Hong; some claim that in his early period, he composed Western-oriented romantic poems, and only later returned to Korean national and indigenous literature, culture and sentiments[36], while others hold that, in contrast to other *Paekcho* coterie members, he was considerably tradition-oriented from early on,[37] and even poeticized the traditional Korean

[34] Ibid., p.311.
[35] Ibid., pp.310-311.
[36] Chŏng Hoch'ang 정호창, "Hong Sayong-ŭi si yŏn'gu" 홍사용의 시 연구 (MA thesis, Sangji University, 1996), pp.36-48.
[37] Kim Haktong, 김학동, "Hyangt'osŏng-gwa minyo-ŭi yulcho" 鄕土性과 民謠의 律調in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip* 洪思容全集, Edited by Kim Haktong (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1985), pp.354-389; Kim

sentiment called *han* (恨, sorrow) in early poems.[38] However, they all equated Hong's traditionalism with nationalism.

Recently, this nationalist understanding has come to be reconsidered. Scholars such as Yi Sŏni take on this kind of re-appreciation of Oriental traditions as an attempt to overcome the (colonial) modernity imposed by the Japanese colonial authorities, and therefore, as an attempt to ultimately take a position against Japanese colonialism as an alternative to "direct resistance."[39] Arguing that anti-colonial nationalism in Korea is problematic in the sense that it tried to overcome colonialism by striving for modernization, which was colonialism's rationale, they find in this supposedly anti-colonial plea for Asian tradition a more thorough way of breaking away from the colonial discourse of hegemonic domination. This postcolonial reading opens up ways to explore more diverse reactions to Japanese colonialism, beyond the single narrative of resistance nationalism. However, together with nationalist scholarship, it fails to take into account the late 1930s historical context and the changing nature of colonial political discourses and overlooks the possibility that the literary tendency of stereotyping Asian tradition in stark opposition to modernity was not intended to overcome the colonial hegemony of modernity, but conversely to be in line with Japanese wartime ideologies.[40]

Hong's idea of "Asia versus the West," as well as his plea for the restoration of Eastern tradition and the expulsion of modern Westernized material civilization, is intimately connected to the Pan-Asian ideology prevalent throughout the 1930s, which was reinforced by Japan's wartime empire as the "New Order in East Asia" in 1938 and the ideology of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere in 1940. Pan-Asianism did not only advocate the solidarity and identity of Asia, assuming commonalities of Asian nations, such as common culture and race, and mutual economic interests in particular,[41] but also expressed aggressive anti-Westernism during the war against the West. This ideology drew upon the distinction between Asia and the West and was directed against Western influence and imperialism.[42] Japanese

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Pongju 金奉柱, "Hong Sayong si yŏn'gu" 洪思容詩硏究 (MA thesis, Koryŏ Univertiy, 1985), pp.53-75.

[38] O Seyŏng 吳世榮, "Nojak Hong Sayong yŏn'gu" 露雀 洪思容 硏究 in *Han'guk nangmunjuŭi si yŏn'gu* 韓國浪滿主義詩硏究 (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1980/1983), pp.353-377.

[39] Yi Sŏni 李善伊, "Manhae Han Yongun munhak-e nat'anan t'alsingminjijuŭi-jŏk insik" 만해 韓龍雲 文學에 나타난 脫植民主義的 인식 in *Ŏmun yŏn'gu* 語文硏究 31:2 (Summer 2003); Kang Chin'gu 강진구, "'Sasir-ŭi segi'-rŭl hwanghan usŭm-ŭi mihak: Ch'ae Mansik non" '사실의 세기(세기)'를 향한 웃음의 미학: 채만식론 in *1930-nyŏndae munhak-kwa kŭndae ch'ehŏm* 1930년대 문학과 근대체험 (Seoul: Ihoe, 1999), pp.237-258.

[40] Kim Yangsŏn 김양선, "Oksident'alijŭm-ŭi simsangjiri-wa yŏsŏngsŏng-ŭi palmyŏng" 옥시덴탈리즘의 심상지리와 여성성의 발명 in *Kŭndae munhag-ŭi t'alsingminsŏng-gwa chendŏ chŏngch'ihak* 근대문학의 탈식민성과 젠더정치학 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2009), p.39.

[41] Peter Duus, "Introduction: Japan's Wartime Empire: Problems and Issues" in *The Japanese wartime empire, 1931-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp.xxi-xxvi.

[42] Sven Saaler, "Pan-Asianism in modern Japanese history: overcoming the nation, creating region, forging an empire", p.2.

Pan-Asian thinkers and policymakers condemned the Eurocentric world order, modernization and Western domination in China and other Asian countries, claimed a return to Asia, Asian culture and values, and sought to establish a new order centered on Asia under Japanese leadership.[43]

As seen in many speeches, in particular in the wake of the outbreak of the Pacific War, Korean collaborationist leaders, too, in line with the dictates of the contemporary colonial wartime government, cried out for such a Pan-Asian ideology, denouncing Anglo-American imperialism, its racial discrimination, its economic exploitation, its shallow arrogance, its money worship, hedonism, and individualism.[44] For example, Kim Tujŏng, a secretary of the Spiritual Patriotic League (Sasang poguk yŏnmaeng), exclaimed in 1939 that the era of the whites was over and the twentieth century would be the heyday of the yellow race, with Japan as its center.[45] During the past three centuries, the white race had dominated the Asian nations economically, spiritually and militarily. As a result, the "Asian spirit" (*tongyang chŏngsin*) had degraded, and huge amounts of raw materials and resources had been taken away by the whites. In addition, the majority of Asians had been enslaved.[46] He claimed that the Asian nations needed to be liberated from the Western imperialists politically, economically and culturally as soon as possible and should be revived as independent, equal countries. Asian countries could not help but accept Japan as the leader of Asia because Japan was uniquely qualified to do so.[47] As far as spiritual culture is concerned, all great religions had their inception in Asia, but at present, Asian spiritual culture had been ruined by Western material civilization (*mulchil munmyŏng*), and had declined and disappeared without a trace – except in Japan.[48] Therefore, Asian countries should admit the completeness of Japanese culture and restore Asian spirituality under Japanese leadership. Kim Tujŏng repeated Japanese wartime ideology like a parrot. He even acquiesced in the Japanese colonialists hiding their own imperialistic nature under the cloak of inspiring the Japanese people to be a liberator of Asian brothers.

Hong Sayong did not emphasize Japan's superior political position as the leader of all Asians, nor did he talk about all the political, economic and military aspects of Pan-Asianism. However, his idea of Asia versus the West, his antipathy toward modern Westernized life, which he saw as devastating to Asian spiritual tradition, and his nostalgic return to "Asian" spiritual antiquity

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[43] Minamoto Ryōen, "The Symposium on "Overcoming Modernity" in *Rude Awakening*, pp.197-229; Richard F. Calichman, *Overcoming modernity: cultural identity in wartime Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[44] In *Tongyang chigwang*東洋之光 (Feb. 1942). Republished in *Ch'inil nonsŏl sŏnjip* 親日論說選集. Edited by Im Chongguk林鍾國 (Seoul: Silch'ŏn munhaksa, 1987), pp.158-204.

[45] "Ashia hutko to naisen ittai" 亞細亞 復興と內鮮一体 in *Tongyang chigwang*東洋之光 (May 1939). Republished in Ibid., pp.123-131.

[46] Ibid., p.123.

[47] Ibid., p.124.

[48] Ibid., p.126.

represented by Buddhist meditation and contemplation, coincide to a surprising degree with the rhetoric of wartime colonial discourse as presented by the Korean collaborators. In particular, the spirit of mutual help (*sangbu sangjo*, 相扶相助) and the spirit of coexistence and co-prosperity (*kongjon kong'yŏng*, 共存共榮) that Hong longed for as the cradle of Asian humanity (*injŏng*) in his essay "Ch'ŏmha-ŭi injŏng" remind one of the then current wartime ideology of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (*Taedonga kongyŏngkwŏn*, 大東亞共榮圈). Up to a point this was because the war ideology had been basically refashioned from old Asian traditions. In this way, his Buddhist essays citing Asian values and traditions were so much in line with the colonial government's wartime policy that they were allowed to be published in the governmental newspaper.

The question remains whether Hong Sayong's meditative writing was a mere disguise for wartime propaganda. His rejection of the West and the advocacy of Oriental values was definitely in keeping with Japanese war rhetoric, but it seems not to have simply been dictated by the colonial authorities, as was the case with the writing of many Korean collaborationist leaders. Beside Hong Sayong, there were more writers who expressed criticisms of modernity and pursued traditionalism in the surge towards the restoration and reevaluation of Eastern culture during the second Sino-Japanese War. Through a postcolonial re-reading, recent literary studies try to illuminate how these tradition-oriented writers struggled with counter-discursive strategies while following the colonial government's ideological line. How was it possible to achieve this balance when placed under tight government control and censorship?

As Peter Duus points out, there was a huge gap between rhetoric and reality during the war against China and the West.[49] Japan's wartime empire set forward high moral goals such as "liberating" China and Asia from the Western powers, harmony and cooperation among Asian counties, and ultimately, world peace under imperial benevolence. In reality, Japanese forces economically exploited those Asian countries, "embarked on a rampage of killing, raping and looting" of civilians in Nanjing,[50] and coerced Asian men and women into physical and sexual slavery for the Japanese military.[51] According to Christopher W.A. Szpilman, Pan-Asian wartime ideology was also not a single doctrine but unsettled and contradictory.[52] It was anti-Western, but also inspired by Western writings. It proclaimed Asian solidarity and equality, but insisted on Japanese superiority, hegemony and leadership.

[49] Peter Duus, *Modern Japan* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), pp.224-225 and 237-238.
[50] Ibid., p.222.
[51] Ibid., p.238.
[52] Christopher W.A. Szpilman, "Between Pan-Asianism and nationalism: Mitsukawa Kametarō and his campaign to reform Japan and liberate Asia" in *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, regionalism and borders* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p.85.

Rhetorically, it stood for peace in Asia, where as practically it was used as a tool to legitimize Japanese militarism and aggression throughout the continent. It was ambiguously positioned at the intersection between nationalism, regionalism, imperialism and universalism.

Like the Japanese civilian populace, Korean colonial writers may have been ignorant of the gap between realities and rhetoric and stood behind their government's vision of the "New Order in Asia."[53] As Han Suyŏng points out, many of them did not know what exactly the unfamiliar slogans and various wartime ideologies stood for, and tried to interpret and understand them at their own discretion.[54] However, there were some who were able to detect logical contradictions and inherent dissonances within colonial discourse and use them to create counter-discourses. The literary attempt to seek Korean indigenous tradition and culture within Asianism is one good example of this tactic. The wartime ideology of the "New Order" in Asia prompted many Korean writers to restore and reevaluate "Eastern" spirituality, traditions and values that were devastated by Western modern material urban civilization. However, this was not intended to promote diverse regional and indigenous Asian cultures. As the collaborator Kim Tujŏng stated, only in Japan Asian culture was preserved and alive, and therefore, Asians should admit the cultural and spiritual superiority and leadership of Japan and assimilate to Japanese culture. Korean writers such as Kim Tongni, Kim Yujŏng, and Pak T'aewŏn were greatly inspired by this Pan-Asian ideology and expressed their contempt for Western modernity and the evil of capitalism.[55] Nonetheless, tradition-oriented writers, in particular Yi T'aejun, Yi Hyosŏk and the associated members of the group around the journal *Munjang* 文章 (1939-1941), did not acknowledge or admire Japanese spiritual culture as "unique" and "complete." Under the disguise of returning to Asian culture, they longed for or revived the Korean cultural heritage, the "indigenousness" and "uniqueness" of which could not be homogenized or assimilated into Japanese and Asian culture.[56]

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[53] Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, pp.224-225.

[54] Han Suyŏng 한수영, *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chae insik* 친일문학의 재인식 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005), pp.17-33 and 81-85.

[55] Han Suyŏng 한수영, "Pak T'aewŏn sosŏr-esŏ-ŭi kŭndae-wa chŏnt'ong" 박태원 소설에서의 근대와 전통 in *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chae insik* 친일문학의 재인식 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005), pp.77-106; ------, "Sunsu munhangnon-esŏ-ŭi mi-jŏk chayulsŏng-gwa pan kŭndae-ŭi nolli: Kim Tongni-ŭi kyŏngu" 순수문학론에서의 미적 자율성과 반근대의 논리: 김동리의 경우 in Ibid., pp.214-239; Kim Yangsŏn 김양선, *Kŭndae munhag-ŭi t'alsingminsŏng-gwa chendŏ chŏngch'ihak* 근대문학의 탈식민성과 젠더정치학 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2009), pp.35-58.

[56] Ch'a Sŭnggi 차승기, "Tongyang-jŏk segye-wa 'Chosŏn'-ŭi sigan" 동양적 세계와 '조선'의 시간 in *Kŭndae-rŭl tasi ingnŭnda* 2 근대를 다시 읽는다 (Seoul: Yŏksa pip'yŏngsa, 2006/2007), pp.219-255; Han Suyŏng 한수영, "Yi T'aejun-gwa sin ch'eje: Singmin chibae tamnon-ŭi suyong-gwa chŏhang" 이태준과 신체제: 식민지배담론의 수용과 저항 in *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chae insik* 친일문학의 재인식 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005), pp.34-51; Yun Taesŏk 윤대석, *Singminji kungmin munhangnon* 식민지 국민문학론 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2006), pp.87-116.

If so, did Hong Sayong, too, create such a counter-discourse while praising Eastern spirituality in his Buddhist essays? Unlike other tradition-oriented Korean writers, he seems not to look for a revival of Korean indigenous culture or Korea's unique spirituality or religious traditions. From his repeated use of "we, Asians" and "Oriental landscape of nature," we can surmise that he only wants to revive the Asian identity and shared spiritual culture, without a particular awareness of Korean indigenous elements.[57] On the other hand, it is noteworthy that nowhere does he mention Japan or the Japanese spirit, or praise Japanese cultural superiority and leadership, which was an important prerequisite for the New Order ideology. His Buddhist essays do not seem to be the genre through which he attempts to revive Korea' distinctive linguistic and cultural heritage, to produce a form of counter-discourse. Instead, his folksong-style poems, which I will examine in the following section, are the medium which he chose for this purpose.

Reconsideration of Hong's folksong-style poems

Hong Sayong's folksong-style poems, which he also wrote most intensively during wartime, are the genre in which we can find the richness of traditional, Korean native, local culture (*chŏngt'ong/hyangt'o munhwa*). As mentioned previously, existing scholarship regards these texts uniformly as "anti-modernist" and "anti-colonial nationalist" because of the fact that they were inspired by Korean tradition, in particular folksongs. Celebrating Hong's poems, however, few further try to inquire if the content of the poems also relates to national circumstances and what is the exact historical background behind the poetic expressions. Most scholars have failed to recognize that Hong's attempt to restore the traditional culture was incorporated into cultural politics under colonial rule. In this respect, Hong's tradition-inspired poems need to be re-read beyond the limited scope of the nationalist perspective.

Hong Sayong was one of the important writers who wrote poetry inspired by folksongs in the colonial period. Before examining his folksong-style poems, it may be helpful to look into his literary criticism of Korean folksongs first, because the essay gives us a clue about how he himself thought about Korean folksongs. In his essay "Chosŏn-ŭn menari nara" 朝鮮은 메나리 나라 (Korea is a country of folksong, 1928), he states that although Korea is a devastated country, it still preserves its rich heritage called "*menari*," which may be rendered as folksong.[58] Hong argues that "*menari* is not a piece of writing. Neither speech nor a poem. It was naturally generated when this people (*paeksŏng*) and this nation (*nara*) were formed. It is our sublime soul, kept in the inmost recesses of our heart."[59] He boasts that Korea is the kingdom

[57] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.301 and 310.
[58] In *Pyŏlkŏngon* 12/13 別乾坤 (May 1928). Republished *in Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.316-321.
[59] Ibid., p.317.

of folksongs in the sense that its people have made singing folksongs a part of their lives and therefore, although everything fades away, he anticipates that Korean folksongs will go on forever.[60]

Korean folksong had been orally transmitted from generation to generation but it was rediscovered and renamed with a homogenizing term, *minyo*, in the modern, colonial period. It was the Japanese novelist Mori Ōgai who had adopted the German concept of *Volkslied* and translated it with the new term *minyo*.[61] Since then, this neologism came to be used as the general term for folk music in Japan as well as Korea. In his article, however, Hong tries not to depend on the imported term, a term coined by a Japanese. Instead of it, he uses the alternative term *menari*. *Menari* actually refers to a certain mode of folk music particularly common east of the T'aebaek mountain area. There is actually no homogenizing indigenous term referring to all Korean folksong. There are a diversity of more or less general designations: *norae* (song), *t'aryŏng* (ballad), and *sori* (song), or names referring to particular types of song such as Arirang, Sanyuhwa and so on. Among those terms, Hong singled out *menari* and generalized it to refer to all Korean folksongs.

To Hong, *menari* does not merely refer to the collection of Korean folk music. In his view, its meaning is not confined to music or sound alone. Also, a certain written or spoken form cannot exactly express what *menari* is because he finds a greater meaning in it: it is an intangible container for Koreans' emotions, thoughts, and lives. He attempts to rediscover Korean folksongs as the voice of Koreans and to reinterpret their presence as an embodiment of Korean national identity. Can his attempt be seen as congruent with his nationalism and be regarded as representing resistance literature against the Japanese as argued by nationalist scholars?[62]

Hong's detailed description of Korean folksong and the Korean identity, concealed in it seems not to resist colonial discourse but rather, to accept or appropriate it. He describes how the songs of this "mysterious calm land" represent the characteristics and sentiments the Korean people have. Their tears, sighs, mortification, woes, sadness, and pitifulness permeate the songs. In his ears, the rhythm of songs is far from cheering, enterprising, and high-spirited, but basically sad, mournful and pensive.[63] Hong's description of a "mysterious calm land" echoes the way in which Western countries typically view and describe their Oriental others, and in particular characterizations of Korea as the "Hermit Kingdom" and the "Land of the Morning Calm."

Interestingly, Japan, which was put under the Orientalist gaze as part of the Orient, re-directed Orientalism toward its colonial vision of Korea. Its view of Korean native folksong was no exception. In 1913, the Japanese Government

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[60] Ibid., p.318.
[61] Keith Howard, "Minyo in Korea: Songs of the People and Songs for the People" in *Asian Music*, pp.1-2.
[62] Cho Tong'il 조동일, *Han'guk munhak t'ongsa* 5 한국문학통사 (Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa, 1997), p.259.
[63] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.318-319.

General in Korea undertook extensive research on Korean folksongs.[64] Recognizing them as a symbol of Korean identity and an expression of the inherent sentiment or spirit of the Koreans, the colonial government investigated Korean folksong, because such knowledge was judged to be necessary for colonial domination. Japanese popular ethnographers such as Okita Kenjō looked to the native Korean folksong "Arirang," which every Korean was accustomed to singing, regardless of age, status and residence, and asserted that this representative folksong has a certain sadness in its rhythm that is the mark of a "doomed country." His colonial gaze implied that the Koreans who used to sing the sad song must have a passive and pessimistic attitude to life and are unable to retain the autonomy of their country.[65]

We see that there is no difference between Hong and his Japanese colonial counterpart on the point that folksong should be taken as the epitome of the Korean national character. Also, Hong agrees on the discourse of Japanese colonialist aesthetics: Korean folksong is characterized by its sad and sorrowful melody. Logically, if he really intends to challenge the colonial discourse and gaze, he should put more focus on discovering a cheerful tone in the Korean songs. However, there is a crucial difference between Hong and Okita. Okita manipulated his knowledge of Korean folksong in order to justify colonial takeover and domination. As Todd A. Henry points out, he did not acknowledge that the national "doom" of Korea was in fact the result of Japan's imperial domination; he closed his eyes and ears to the Koreans' efforts of nation-building and anticolonial nationalism, instead accusing them of spending their time in pure idleness.[66]

Hong's ideas on Korean folksongs had certain things in common with the views of the Japanese ethnographer but he did not aim to justify Japanese colonialism, but rather to tackle it. Korean folk music was disparaged by the Japanese as a token of inferiority of the Koreans. Against this, Hong tried to revalue Korean folksongs, proclaiming that *menari* was a national treasure and source of pride for the Koreans. He claimed that this buried treasure can be found by no one but Koreans. Only we, Koreans, can perceive its value possess, enjoy, and take pride in this wonderful and precious treasure.[67] To the question why Korean folksongs sound sad and pitiful, he gives a different answer, too. It is not because tears, sighs, and complaints were innate in the personality of Koreans, but due to emotions in reaction to maltreatment. He reveals what the Japanese ethnographer tries to hide: the people who sang *menari* were subjected to ill-treatment (*kubak*) and contempt.[68]

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[64] Keith Howard, "Minyo in Korea", p.4.
[65] Todd A. Henry, "Sanitizing Empire: Japanese Articulations of Korean Otherness and the Construction of Early Colonial Seoul, 1905-1919" in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64.3 (August 2005):639-675, p.647.
[66] Ibid.
[67] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.316-317.
[68] Ibid.,p.320.

Hong directly asks who maltreats the Koreans. The answer is easy if it would be Japanese colonialism. Yet, instead of blaming the Japanese colonizers, he tries to point out that it is rather Koreans themselves whose minds are colonized and look down on their own songs as worthless and inferior in a way the colonial power dictates. For ages, Koreans chose to look up to Chinese literature (*hanhak*, 漢學) as superior. In modern-day Korea, they indulge in Western-influenced songs. Arguing that these are all borrowed and therefore, sound unfamiliar and strange, he suggests his compatriots seek something Korean, a natural sound coming from their hearts. *Menari* is given as a way to restore the Korean self and the Korean voices. [69]

In his late 1920s literary criticism, Hong Sayong attempted to reevaluate the meaning and value of Korean folksong in self-reflective manner rather than as a way of resistance as is often assumed. A decade later, he began to write his own poems inspired by folksong. Ironically, it was in the midst of war and turmoil. Because they are *minyosi* (folksong-style poetry), scholars conclude in unison that these poems had their origin in Hong's nationalism and were composed to boost the nationalist spirit at the end of the colonial period. However, we need to distinguish the oral *minyo* from the poems inspired by *minyo*. Although the former may be considered to have a nationalistic meaning, the latter do not necessarily produce the same meaning or play the same role. For instance, many *minyosi* were composed during wartime under the auspices of the government policy as war propaganda to lift military morale among soldiers and civilians on the homefront.[70] Did Hong's folksong-style poems result solely from his uncompromising nationalist spirit or did they adapt *minyo* to the military use of songs for propaganda in wartime?

Hong's poem "Hojŏthan kŏrŭm" 호젓한 걸음 (A lonely walk, 1939)[71] which seems to be, as Ch'oe Wŏnsik argues, a reworking of a traditional Korean ballad, *Maengkkongi t'aryŏng* (The song of a narrow-mouthed frog), is an important poem that provides clue to the question.[72] In this poem, Hong Sayong depicts a lonely walker who walks around somewhere in Seoul, which had been renamed Keijō 京城 by the colonial authorities. The poem basically consists of a question-and-answer conversation between the poet and the lonely walker. In the first stanza, the poet asks the walker if he is afraid of crossing the P'och'ŏng 捕廳 bridge. The walker answers that its current name is Pokch'ŏnggyo 福淸橋, a place where one can hear *salp'uri changdan* (originally a shamanic tune) flowing out from a *yoritchip* (restaurant). The walker says

[69] Ibid., pp.320-321.

[70] Pak Suyŏn 박수연, "Kungmin munhak, sijo-wa minyosi, ch'inil" 국민문학, 시조와 민요시, 친일 in *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi nae-tchŏk nolli* 친일문학의 내적 논리 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2003): 85-115; -----, "Naejaesŏn pujae-ŭi chuch'e-wa munhak-chŏk chongch'akchi" 내재성 부재의 주체와 문학적 종착지 in Ibid., p.65-71 and 75-76; Barak Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), pp.21-24 and 30-35.

[71] In *Samch'ŏllli* 三千里 (April 1939) Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.45-46.

[72] Ch'oe Wŏnsik, "Hong Sayong munhak-kwa chuch'e-ŭi kaksŏng", pp.146-147.

further that he has deliberately walked in the snowfall and does not mind getting wet. A large thousand-year-old bell rings silently (*sori ŏpsi ulda*) at the end of the first stanza.

In the second stanza, the poet asks the walker whether he is afraid of passing through Tokkaebikkol (the neighborhood of goblins).[73] The lonely walking man answers that he is just annoyed by the noisy jazz music ringing out there. The walker then repeats what he said in the first stanza, that he has deliberately exposed himself to the snowfall and does not mind getting wet. The dirty water overflows the Sup'yo 水標 bridge at the end of the second stanza. In the last stanza, the poet asks the walker if he is afraid of passing in front of the site of the Hullyŏnwŏn 訓練院. The walking man answers that it is the overworked people and factory sirens in its neighborhood that exhaust him. The walker once more repeats what he said about the snowfall in the previous stanzas, but worries how he will be able to reach Wangsimni 往十里, as he sees the water rise under the Ogan bridge 五間水.

The lonely walker in this poem resembles the many who rambled about in downtown Seoul at that historical moment. Such rambling was called *bura bura* (ぶらぶら), a word adopted from Japanese that suggests strolling aimlessly through modern busy streets. Honmachi 本町 (present-day Ch'ungmuro) as the center of modernity and a Japanese-run commercial and shopping area in Seoul, drew the majority of those ramblers, as the newly coined word *honbura* (本ぶら) attests. The Japanese residents in Seoul seem to have first used this term as an equivalent of *gin bura* (銀ぶら), or taking a walk around the Ginza area, and Koreans seem to have popularly used it, too.[74] In this poem, Hong Sayong imitates the modern colonial experience of *bura bura*, but in such a way as to re-examine colonial society and the power dynamics embodied by space.

The lonely man does not take a walk around the chief Japanese thoroughfare of Honmachi, a place where night was like day, ablaze with bellflower-shaped streetlamps.[75] Instead, he is walking around the opposite side, the chief Korean area, which was geographically separated from the brightly lit Honmachi by a stream (*kaech'ŏn*) which was renamed Ch'ŏngp'ung kyech'ŏn 淸風溪川 by the colonial authorities (presently known as Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn 淸溪川),[76] and administratively discriminated against by the colonial authorities. At the end of the Chosŏn dynasty, festering slums grew

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[73] Ibid., p.146.

[74] Kim Yŏnggŭn 김영근, "Ilche ha singminji-jŏk kŭndaesŏng-ŭi han t'ŭkching: Kyŏngsŏng-esŏ-ui tosi kyŏnghŏm-ŭl chungsim-ŭro" 일제하 식민지적 근대성의 한 특징: 경성에서의 도시 경험을 중심으로 in *Sahoe-wa yŏksa* 57 사회와역사 (June 2000):11-44, p.36; Sin Myŏngjik 신명직, *Modŏn poi kyŏngsŏng-ŭl kŏnilda: Manmun manhwa-ro ponŭn kŭndae-ŭi ŏlgul* 모던보이 경성을 거닐다: 만문만화로 보는 근대의 얼굴 (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa yŏn'gu, 2003), pp.27-31.

[75] Kim Yŏnggŭn, "Ilche ha singminji-jŏk kŭndaesŏng-ŭi han t'ŭkching: Kyŏngsŏng-esŏui tosi kyŏnghŏm-ŭl chungsim-ŭro", p.18.

[76] Son Chŏngmok 손정목, "Tosi 50-nyŏnsa 8: Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn pokkaegongsa-wa kogadoro kŏnsŏl" 도시 50년사 (8): 청개천 복개공사와 고가도로 건설 in *Tosi munje* 37 도시문제 (2002):95-113, pp.99-100.

along the stream. The stream was contaminated and a source of disease. Even the chief Korean thoroughfare, Chongno, contrasted sharply with the clean, highly modernized, cheerful and inviting Honmachi. According to *Chungang ilbo* 中央日報, the Great Depression seemed to affect only the Korean neighborhood. During the day, Chongno looked as if it exemplified the economic crisis in colonial Korea, and at night, it seemed like a street in the underworld, with a melancholic, dark and eerily still atmosphere.[77]

It is noteworthy that the pedestrian in the poem actually does not wander around in a leisurely, aimless manner. The walker in the poem walks along Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn, the very dividing line between the Korean area of Pukch'on (Northern Village) including Chongno and the Japanese area of Namch'on (Southern Village) including Honmachi. His walk starts at the Pokch'ŏng bridge, the beginning of the main stream, and winds through famous historic sites, to the five-arched bridge (Ogansugyo), the end of the main stream. The walker in the poem does not only march around the contemporary city, he also revisits history and travels between present and past, as a number of the archaic stone bridges on the Ch'ŏnggye Stream and those famous heritage sites have their own long histories and legends.

The poet first talks about the Pokch'ŏng bridge 福淸橋. Its original official name was Hyejŏnggyo 惠政橋. This bridge was also commonly called P'och'ŏng tari because the old police bureau of Chosŏn (P'odoch'ŏng, 捕都廳) was situated nearby. Among the many stone bridges on Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn, this bridge was historically, culturally, politically, and ethnographically the most important, as Yi Chunghwa has argued. As its title implied, Hyejŏnggyo embodied the governing ideology of the benevolent ruler. The kings of Chosŏn paid a visit to the bridge in person and listened to the complaints of the common people while passing along it. In 1434, King Sejong installed a sundial on this bridge for the first time, to benefit his people.[78] However, in 1926, the colonial government carried out river conservation work and changed the bridge's name to Pokch'ŏnggyo 福淸橋. As Yi Chunghwa surmises, the government was either ignorant of the real name of the bridge or misunderstood the pronunciation of its popular name, P'och'ŏng tari.[79] Much more likely, the government did not need to respect the old name any more and chose a name more to their liking. After that, the bridge lost its original and popular name, and the stories related to it were also lost. However, Hong Sayong evokes the forgotten popular name of the bridge from the past and revives the stories that the bridge conceals.

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[77] *Chungang ilbo* 中央日報 (November 1931).

[78] Yi Chunghwa 李重華, "Chigŭm-ŭn 'Pokch'ŏnggyo' Hyejŏnggyo-ŭi naeyŏk: Hampuro kaemyŏngdoen kujŏk illam" 只今은 '福淸橋' 惠政橋의 來歷: 함부로 開名된 舊跡 一覽 in *Tong'a ilbo* (Dec. 1926-Jan.1927).

[79] Yi Chunghwa 李重華, "Chigŭm-ŭn 'Pokch'ŏnggyo' Hyejŏnggyo-ŭi naeyŏk: Hampuro kaemyŏngdoen kujŏk illam."

In the same stanza, Hong Sayong revisits another old relic and its gruesome and tragic stories: the big bell housed in the Posingak pavilion. This bell was cast in 1396 and hung in its present place in 1468. The metal of which it was cast failed to fuse until a living child had been tossed into the molten mass, from which circumstance the Koreans claim that the wailing of a child can always be detected in its notes.[80] Its dull, heavy boom is heard in all parts of the city, and its warning tones were the signal for the opening and closing of the gates during five centuries. Formerly at 8 or 9 o'clock, when darkness had fallen, this great curfew was rung as a signal to all the men that they must hurry home, seclude themselves, and give the women a chance to come out and amuse themselves. The custom fell into disuse when foreigners came to live in the capital and the gates were left open. During the colonial period, this great bell lost its function and stopped ringing. As Hong expresses in his poem, it lost its powerful sound and became "mute."

The original Posingak bell, cast in 1395, had been destroyed during the *Imjin* War (Japanese invasions of Korea, 1592-1598) and at the current King Sŏnjo 宣祖's order, the *Tongdaemun chong* 東大門鐘, originally the bell of the *Wŏngaksa* 圓覺寺 Temple, was moved to replace it. In folklore, this bell deeply touched people's hearts as a signal that a day was over and the tranquil night had come; it came to be called *In'gyŏng* or *Indyŏng* because of its newly built pavilion.[81] As it was originally a temple bell, the place where the bell was hang was once regarded as a "sacred place" (*sŏngji*, 聖地).[82] When hearing the bell ringing, the sentient beings in the sea of suffering woke up from their delusions and were led to happiness and bliss. In the older days, it also served as an administrative signal to inform of morning gatherings of the kings and his officials and to control people's customs and behavior, and even was used for political and military purposes to call out armed forces in the case of a national emergency.[83] However, the big bell as well as the temples bells were symbolically and literally displaced in the colonial period. After losing all the functions they had had, most of them were exhibited in museums and seen as aesthetic objects or antiques.[84]

It is noteworthy that in 1928 Hong Sayong wrote a one-act play about this Posingak bell, which he wanted to publish in the Buddhist journal, *Pulgyo*, but its full text was deleted and confiscated by the colonial authorities. According to his colleague Pak Chin, this play, entitled *Pŏngŏri kut* (A shaman ritual of mutes), dealt with a rumor about the bell. After the March First Movement (1919), a rumor was circulated that if the bell rang secretly, everyone should gather on Chongno. In the play, people hear the bell and rally from all

[80] "Posingag-ŭi chŏnsŏl" 普信閣의 傳說, *Samch'ŏlli* (March 1931).
[81] Yi Chunghwa, "Chŏngnu-wa posingak chong-e taehaya" 鐘樓 와 普信閣鐘 에 對하야, *Chindan hakpo* 震檀學報 (March 1937), p.521.
[82] Ibid., p.506.
[83] Ibid., p.508.
[84] Ibid., pp.506-507.

over the country, intending to perform a grand ritual without saying a word. But the Japanese police get wind of the event, storm into the street and arrest the crowd.[85] This was not a rumor but really happened during the March First Movement.[86] That was why the colonial authorities had forbidden to ring the bell, arguing that this was ideologically dangerous,[87] and found Hong's play dangerous because it evoked memories of the national event using the motif of the Posingak bell. With his play Hong failed but in his folksong-style poem, he successfully restored the once lost sound of the archaic bell with its religious, political and cultural functions and histories.

The P'och'ŏng bridge and the five-arched bridge, Ogansugyo Hong mentioned in his poem were respectively the first and last bridges on the Ch'ŏnggye Stream. In the process of modernization and urbanization, they were seen as too narrow and impractical. The colonial authorities took those archaic stone bridges down and instead built strong but ugly concrete bridges (in 1926 and 1907 respectively). The Big Bell, an instrument which indicated time and determined people's way of life for centuries, was discarded as useless and inadequate for modern times and degraded to an antique remnant. However, in the changed historical atmosphere where Western modernity was condemned whereas Asianism was proclaimed as the ideology for the new world order, Hong Sayong rediscovered this lost cultural heritage with all the memories attached to it and revaluated it. His poetic return to the past and rediscovery of tradition and history are basically in line with the anti-Western Asianism in support of the Japanese wartime empire.

At the same time, Hong Sayong destabilizes the dominant Pan-Asian discourse of the Japanese Empire and challenges its assumptions. As one might have noticed in the previous paragraph, it was the colonial authorities who disparaged and destroyed those archaic stone bridges and constructed modern concrete bridges as emblems of modernity. Therefore, Hong's rediscovery of this cultural heritage in its opposition to modernity, implies a distancing from the politics of the colonial government. Furthermore, the revisited cultural objects were indigenous and unique and could not be assimilated into the homogeneity of "Oriental culture." They had their own long histories and distinctive stories. Elsewhere in Asia, including in Japan, one might find a similar story but not exactly the same. While a common culture in Asia under the leadership of Japan was promoted and Japanese culture was mystified as unique and divine, Hong destabilized Japan's new order of Asianism, its myth of Japanese uniqueness, and its assimilation policy by reinstating Korean indigenous traditions.

This happens again in Hong Sayong's comparison of traditional and modern sounds. The poet, for example, confronts *salp'uri changdan* and the

[85] Cited from Yi Wŏngyu, *Paekcho-ga hŭrŭdŏn sidae: Nojak Hong Sayong iltaegi*, pp.44-45.
[86] "Chongno chonggak" 鐘露鐘閣 in *Tonga ilbo* (25 Feb. 1924).
[87] "Tto motch'il posingak" 또 못칠 普信閣 in *Tonga ilbo* (28 Dec. 1932).

thousand-year-old bell's ringing with "tchassŭ" (jazz music) and factory sirens. The poet clearly shows his irritation and discomfort with the modern capitalistic sounds of colonial Korea. The jazz music hurts his ear and the factory sirens exhaust his body and mind. In this way, he expresses his antipathy toward the West, modernity and capitalism that resulted from colonial policies. However, factory sirens are not only modern capitalistic sounds but also the voice of Japan's wartime empire. The wartime government opposed Western materialism and capitalism, but paradoxically accelerated the development of modern industries and factories in 1930s colonial Korea to procure military supplies. Thus, while condemning the modern capitalistic sound of factory sirens, the poet also has a chance to express his antipathy toward the colonial authorities. Meanwhile, the traditional sounds represent the lost voice of the Korean people. The ringing of the bell, *emilele*, and the Ogansu bridge which is personified as being choked by tears reveal the sighs, groans and tears that people should hold back.

Finally, one last question needs to be answered. Why does Hong repeatedly ask "Aren't you afraid?" in this poem? Why does the walker in the poem repeatedly answer in each stanza that he deliberately exposes himself to the snowfall and does not mind getting wet? What on earth is scary? What does the poet mean with walking in the snow and getting wet? The question "Aren't you afraid?" refers to P'och'ŏng tari, Tokkaebip'al (Tokkaebip'alkkol) and Hullyŏnwŏn. These places are associated with the old police bureau, goblins and the old military base, which may have terrified people in older days. The old designations and places also evoke memories of fear. That is why the poet asks the walker if he does not feel afraid of passing by those locations.

The walker does not answer with yes or no, but instead, he denounces modern, colonial materials and sounds such as Pokch'ŏnggyo, Jazz music and factory sirens as terrible as those in the past, or even worse. As the old P'och'ŏng bridge was destroyed and lost its name and story and Pokch'ŏnggyo was constructed by the colonial government, Koreans became spiritually crippled and lost their past memories. Jazz music and factory sirens violently drown out the voices of the people, silencing them. The poet saw the grotesque reality in which colonial modernity and colonialism wielded their violence against people. Yet, he confronts reality instead of avoiding it out of fear. The puzzling gesture that the walker has no fear of getting wet and does not avoid exposing himself to the snowfall seems to reveal this intention.

Hungry ghosts and a grotesque Buddha

Many images appearing in Hong Sayong's wartime writing are deformed and grotesque. In his essay "Ch'ŏmha-ŭi injŏng," he not only presents a comparison between a traditional cottage and a Western style house. The ruined cottage with a torn window, a leaking roof, and cracked mud walls looks like a spooky haunted house. The dilapidated house evokes the incidence and intensity of

impoverishment of wartime colonial Korea. As he remarks at the end of the same essay, the lack of humanity (*injŏng*) in society is not merely caused by modern Western materialism. The hardship of life affects the life of people. He realizes that it is too much to expect the humanity of old and generosity from those who live a hard life moving from one rented room to another.[88]

Poverty was one of the biggest problems people in wartime colonial Korea confronted, in particular in rural area. Of course, as far as the economic crisis was concerned, the people in metropolitan Japan knew hard times, too. As Peter Duus states, "collapsing farm income, rising debt, and food shortages created widespread rural desperation, and in the cities blue collar workers and university graduates alike faced unemployment."[89] From the early 1930s, the Japanese government engaged in active public spending to stimulate the economy in Japan, increased its spending on military procurements and public works, in particular in rural society. This was "to push cash in the hands of the farm population" and as a result, by 1936, Japan somewhat recovered from the economic downturn and enjoyed a mild prosperity.[90]

As Gi-Wook Shin and Do-Hyun Han have made clear, the colonial government in Korea also attempted to deal with rural deterioration, agrarian depression and tenant disputes through new land laws and the Rural Revitalizing Campaign (*nongch'on kaengsaeng undong*, 1932-1940).[91] Compared with the 1920s campaign focusing on increasing rice production, this new policy aimed to raise rural living standards, and moreover emphasized "spiritual regeneration," fostering pride in labor, self-reliance, frugality, social harmony, and gratefulness rather than materialism, by reinventing Confucian traditional virtues. This also strengthened the foundation for material and spiritual mobilization during wartime. Government accounts indicated modest achievements in improving rural economic welfare.[92] About one third of rural households resolved food shortages and repaid usurious debts. More than half of the participants in the campaign increased their land.

However, historians say that the colonial government claims were tendentious and may have been exaggerated.[93] By 1939, 64 percent of rural households still suffered food shortages and 73 percent remained in debt. Those who benefited from the campaign were a limited number of local leaders. Many of the rural poor could not endure the poverty and left for Japan, Manchuria, or urban areas in Korea. There was a huge gap between government statements and the life experience of rural people. Korean writers saw this gap and provided narratives that told how people in rural areas led their everyday lives

[88] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.311.
[89] Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, p.215.
[90] Ibid., p.225.
[91] Gi-Wook Shin and Do-Hyun Han, "Colonial Corporatism: The Rural Revitalization Campaign 1932-1940", p.74 and 77.
[92] Ibid., pp.89-94.
[93] Ibid., pp.89 and 93.

under worsening conditions. Their literary works reflected the everyday experience of the rural poor, a reality filled with hunger and deprivation, characterized by the erosion of human values, gambling, prostitution and women trafficking, all of which gave the lie to the government's statements mentioned above.[94]

Hong Sayong was one of those writers who depicted the distorted and poverty-stricken lives of people in rural areas. However, there is something distinctive about the way he viewed and tackled the problem. From a Buddhist perspective, he envisaged poverty-stricken rural society as the realm of "hungry ghosts" (*agwi*, 餓鬼). These grotesque figures are usually depicted as having a large stomach and a thin neck, and afflicted by extreme hunger and thirst which they can never satisfy. In Buddhism, the realm of the hungry ghosts is one of the lower realms where people are reborn and suffer, or signifies a low state of mind, being caught up in greed, desire and craving. In his Buddhist essay "Usong," Hong remarked that people in his time searched in vain for food and fought over one another's rice bowls like hungry ghosts.[95] In another essay "Kung-gwa tal" 窮과 達 (1939), he deplored the heartless society in which brothers and sisters turned to hungry ghosts upon their parents death and quarreled over the inheritance in court.[96]

In his folksong-style poems Hong attempted to give a more detailed picture of the "hungry ghosts" of the rural population. Many of his poems depict the landscape of spring because poverty, hunger and starvation went to extremes at that time of year. According to Ch'oe Wŏnsik, while composing these poems, Hong seems to have adopted Korean folksongs such as *namul t'aryŏng* and *namul norae*, which commonly describe women going to the field in twos and threes, holding baskets and hoes, to gather fresh vegetables, and singing about the beauty of spring.[97] However, Hong Sayong completely reworked the typical image of springtime from these original folksongs. His poems on spring are far from nostalgic about the pleasures of rural life or the peaceful idyllic beauty of spring, in spite of what some scholars think.[98] As the poet himself satirically states in "Siaksi maŭmiran" 시악시 마음이란 (A woman's heart is, 1938), such a hopeful and beautiful spring landscape and such romantic sentiments are a silly dream (*kaekkum*).[99] This is to say that the bright days of spring do not exist in colonial reality. The spring he depicts in his

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[94] Ch'oe Kangmin 최강민, "Singminji-jŏk kŭndae-rŭl paehoehanŭn yurangin: Kim Yujŏng munhag-ŭi kŭndaesŏng-ŭl chungsim-ŭro" 식민지적 근대를 배회하는 유랑인: 김유정 문학의 근대성을 중심으로 in *1930-nyŏndae munhak-kwa kŭndae ch'ehŏm* 1930년대 문학과 근대체험 (Seoul: Ihoe, 1999), pp.211-235; Kim Yangsŏn, "1930-nyŏndae sosŏl-gwa singminji muŭisig-ŭi yangsang" 1930년대 소설과 식민지 무의식의 양상 in *Kŭndae munhag-ŭi t'alsingminsŏng-gwa Chendŏ chŏngch'ihak*, pp.83-103.

[95] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.303.

[96] *Maeil sinbo* (March 1939). Republished in Ibid., p.313.

[97] Ch'oe Wŏnsik, "Hong Sayong munhak-kwa chuch'e-ŭi kaksŏng", pp.139-140.

[98] Ibid., p.138; Kim Haktong, 김학동, "Hyangt'osŏng-gwa minyo-ŭi yulcho" 鄕土性과 民謠의 律調 in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip* 洪思容全集, pp.372-375.

[99] In *Samch'ŏlli munhak* 三千里文學 (Jan. 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.41.

poems is associated with the hardest time for people in rural areas to survive: the moment of spring starvation (*ch'un'gung* 春窮).

Early spring was a period in which there was insufficient food and the peasant population starved. Spring starvation occurred not only in pre-modern, traditional societies, but also in the "modern" colonized period. There were unending reports in the 1920s and 1930s Korean dailies on the gory details of spring starvation: children and the elderly were lying in the sheets as if they were dead, people barely subsisting by begging or eating the roots of plants and trees, a hungry blind man who committed suicide, a farm woman killing her child before he died of hunger, and rural poor digging up a buried dead cow and eating it. According to a report in the *Tong'a ilbo*, the rural population suffered starvation every spring, and the government authorities did nothing to prevent it.[100]

The government newspaper *Maeil sinbo*, on the other hand, remained silent about what rural Koreans experienced during the murderous spring starvation season. By 1937, the government still repeated that the authorities were considering countermeasures against the spring starvation problem and were investing in research; they anticipated that spring starvation would get better quickly.[101] A report titled "Ch'un'gung-e taech'ŏ" 春窮에 對處 (A countermeasure against spring starvation, 1936) did not talk about how to solve the starvation problem, but instead how to cope with crimes such as robberies due to hunger. Because of a poor harvest, the police in Taejŏn anticipated an increase in crime and, therefore, the government was preparing necessary measures.[102] The newspapers also delivered the "good" news that Ch'ŏrwŏn District planned to plant many chestnut trees to serve a double purpose: reforestation and the provision of an alternative source of food.[103] Japanese professor Hirota Yutaka supported the government saying that *ch'un'gung* might be terrible, but was not always bad because it might give *yangban* women a chance to go outside and be liberated from the inner rooms.[104]

The colonial policymakers avoided telling the heart-wrenching life stories of the rural population during the *ch'un'gung* period, making far-fetched claims for such schemes such as the chestnut tree plan. To counter such absurdities, Hong Sayong wrote a folksong-style poem "Kamch'ul su ommŭn kŏsŭn" 감출 수 업는 것은 (What cannot be hidden, 1939) and satirically asked

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[100] *Tong'a ilbo* (April 1935)

[101] "Ch'un'gung-ŭl mijŏ kŭkpok" 春窮을 微低克服 in *Maeil sinbo* (Nov. 1936); "Ch'un'gung-ŭn chŏmch'a haeso" 春窮은 漸次解消 (Jan. 1937); "Ch'un'gung-e hŭiborae!" 春窮에 喜報來 (Feb. 1937).

[102] *Maeil sinbo* (Dec. 1936).

[103] "Singyul-lo nokhwa: ch'un'gunggi singnyang poch'ung" 植栗로 綠化: 春窮期 食糧補充 in *Maeil sinbo* (Feb. 1937)

[104] Shabshina, F.I., *Singminji Chosŏn-esŏ: Ŏnŭ Rŏsia chisŏng'in-i ssŭn yŏksa hyŏnjang kirok* 식민지 조선에서: 어느 러시아 지성인이 쓴 역사현장 기록. Translated by Kim Myŏngho (Seoul: Hanul 한울, 1996), pp.98-101.

whether the spring starvation could be hidden or not.[105] In the first stanza, an eldest daughter (*k'ŭn agi*) goes to the hill to gather herbs and vegetables, gets distracted and looks at her reflection in the water. In the second stanza, a virtuous woman goes out at midnight instead of staying at home. She first steals fish from somebody's net and goes to a drinking party (*sul ch'unyŏm*) to pour liquor for men. In the third stanza, a *yangban* man goes to steal a chicken in the dark instead of reading Confucian classics.

The three main characters in the poem are two-faced. They all hide something. The young girl picks wild plants but her mind is elsewhere. She looks to the hill in the distance as if waiting for someone. She looks at her reflection in the water. This is a typical gesture before a woman meets a man. The allegorical reference "*soldoch'i-e mondangsor-ŭl kamch'ŏya ssŭji*" (insert the pinewood handle into the axe head for use) is also suggestive of matchmaking or mating (as mentioned in the chapter on Yi Kwangsu's *Wŏnhyo taesa*). She gathers the roots of plants and vegetables in hunger, but she hungers for another things: a man. She tries to hide her face and feelings in shame, showing her back and pretending to gather plants. But neither her hunger nor her love for a man can be hidden, because of the irony that the more she hides her face, the more she shows her buttocks, which the Korean word *kungdung* suggesting *ch'ungung* (spring starvation) and which as a more intimate part of the female body alludes to love and sex.

In the following stanzas, Hong shows us that the *yangban* woman and man in rural areas also are two-faced. Being high class, they save face during the daytime, but when night comes, they show their true colors, engaging in behavior that if discovered would make them lose people's respect. The *yangban* lady goes out in the middle of the night and comes back early in the morning. In between, she steals fish from somebody's net and goes to a drinking party (*sul ch'unyŏm*) to pour liquor for men. During the day, she is a decent, chaste and virtuous lady as Hong called her a *yŏllyŏ* 烈女 or virtuous woman, but at night she degenerates into a barmaid or hostess and a petty thief. She does this because she is deeply indebted, as the poet tactfully tells us, using the proverb *kosŭmdoch'i oemajigo* (lit. a hedgehog carries a cucumber on its back). This proverb compares a person in heavy debt with a hedgehog which delivers a heavy cucumber on its thorny back. Despite her class, she was one of those many in rural Korea who were subjected to usurious debts and food shortage especially during the spring starvation period and who had no choice but to steal and work in the bar in order to survive.

Like the *yangban* lady, the *yangban* man, too, loses his civility and decency in the face of poverty and starvation. In the third stanza, the poet makes fun of the yellow-bearded licentiate Kang (Kang saengwŏn). This Confucian gentleman goes out at night to rob a chicken from somebody's yard because he has a craving for meat. As the medical term *sojŭng* (素症, a

[105] In *Samchŏlli* (April 1939). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.44.

deficiency disease) implies, he is suffering from protein deficiency or a related disease after eating only plant-based foods for so long. This symptom is most often seen in impoverished people. The poet, who was thoroughly familiar with medical terminology and symptoms (because he made a living as a pharmacist of oriental medicine), indirectly revealed the bitter truth about impoverishment and spring starvation.[106]

The *yangban* gentleman, ravished by hunger, loses all sense of shame: as the poet says, shame is "exiled" to a distance place (*kwiyang*). What concerns the gentleman is not the profound teachings of Confucius or lofty morals but, rather hilariously, chicken meat. He spends a sleepless night stealing chickens instead of reading Confucian classics. That he walks around, sleepless, looking at the stars has nothing to do with lofty contemplation. As the phrase "chomsŏng'i ch'ŏn'gi pomyŏ" 좀星이 天機보며 indicates, this Confucian gentleman is practicing the custom of divination: *Chomsaeng'ijŏm* or *chomsaeng'i pogi* (observing small stars). Watching these stars, their movement and positioning in relation to the moon, people in traditional Korea used to predict the outcome of the harvest for the year ahead. The Confucian gentleman in the poem observes the small stars in order to know whether it will be a good or bad harvest next fall.

The Korean seasonal custom *chomsaeng'i pogi* is related to a grim myth associated with hunger. The custom is to observe the distance between the moon and the stars. The moon symbolizes parents (grown-ups) delivering meals or rice, whereas the small stars represent children. When the moon and stars are near each other, it means that the children are hungry and crave rice. It is an omen for a bad harvest. If the moon and constellation are far from each other, the stomachs of children are full. This means a good harvest.[107] Using this ethnographic and linguistic knowledge, Hong Sayong draws attention to the rural problem of hunger and poverty.

However, there is a double entendre in Hong Sayong's use of *chomsŏng'i*. It does not only designate the stars but also a petty little person (*chomsaeng'i* or *chomsaengwŏn*). The poet shows how Kang saengwŏn, a Confucian gentleman who was once a great man, is now degraded into a *chomsaengwŏn*, a small-minded person, who madly looks for a brood hen and secretly steals it. In the eyes of Hong Sayong, rural colonial Korea was a place where hungry ghosts live. People in rural areas were afflicted with an extreme degree of hunger, as hungry ghosts are, and thus fought over one another's rice bowls. Without directly mentioning the terms starvation or poverty, his poem vividly shows the grim details of spring starvation: stealing food and robbery

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[106] "Chakka yŏnbo" 작가연보 in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.401.

[107] Kungnip minsok pangmulgwan 국립민속박물관, *Han'guk sesi p'ungsok sajŏn: pom p'yŏn*한국세시풍속사전: 봄편 (Seoul: Kungmin minsok pangmulgwan, 2004),p.74; Koryŏ taehakkyo minjok munhwa yŏn'guwŏn 고려대학교 민족문화연구원, *Han'guk minsog-ŭi segye 5: Sesi p'ungsok, chŏnsŭng nori*한국 민속의 세계 5: 세시풍속, 전승놀이 (Seoul: Kodae munjok munhwa yŏn'guso ch'ulp'anbu, 2001), p.123.

were rampant as the only means for survival, decent women were degraded into bar hostesses due to high household debts, and innocent and well-educated people were driven to commit crimes.

Hong Sayong did not show the tragedy of rural Korea as it was. He twisted the tragedy into a comedy and dissolved suffering into laughter, as is popularly done in traditional Korean plays such as *p'ansori* and performances such as the mask dance. This comically twisted poem cannot be seen as direct resistance against the colonial authorities. His reaction presented an alternative. Hong Sayong did not criticize the colonial government but mocked and embarrassed it, as symbolically shown through the girl's "mooning." The more she turns around and hides her face in shame, the more she shows her buttock, which was a more intimate part of her body. Hong's characters were designed to reveal what the colonial authorities were busy trying to hide: their true face of a hypocrite and the harsh reality of spring starvation. Hong's folksong-style poem exposed the hypocrisy of the colonial authorities through mockery as the traditional mask dances did with the *yangban* class.

Rural Korea was not merely populated by hungry ghosts. Hong Sayong shows Buddha statues standing calmly next to those hungry ghosts in his literature. Is this to be taken as a promise of salvation? As depicted in the essay "*Kwihwang*" 歸鄕 (Return to home, 1928), people like Hong Sayong himself fervently prayed before a Buddha statue for their wishes to be fulfilled and their anxieties about an uncertain future to be resolved.[108] However, Buddha does not grant their wishes, nor provides answers, even though people's hopes are utterly shattered, their plans fail in the end, and they become as wretched as hungry ghosts.[109] The Buddha statues appearing in his literature do nothing but standing calmly with quiet smiles (*kamjungnyŏn*, 坎中連).

A young woman in the poem "Kakssip'ul" 각시풀 (Reeds, 1938) who gathers plants to still her hunger comes to a temple and desperately asks a golden Buddha how to exorcize the three forms of bad luck, *samsal* 三殺 which befell her during the springtime.[110] *Samsal* in folk belief represent the worst that can happen in one's life such as unnatural and accidental death (*kŏpsal*, 劫煞), arrest, imprisonment (*chaesal*, 災煞), natural disasters, spinsterhood (*sesal*, 歲煞), etc. As far as this poem is concerned, it is clear that the bad luck associated with spring refers to spring starvation. Its consequences for people's lives are equivalent to the forms of bad luck mentioned above: hunger leads to robbery and murder, and then to imprisonment or the death penalty, young women who once dreamt about a happy marriage are sold into factories or prostitution, etc. So, the woman in the poem desperately seeks help from Buddha to cope with spring starvation. However, Buddha does not answer to her prayer. The Buddha statue only stands calmly with a quiet smile. Does Hong want to say

[108] *Pulgyo* (Nov. 1928). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.288-289.
[109] Ibid., p.289.
[110] In *Samch'ŏlli munhak* 三千里文學 (Jan. 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.41.

that the golden or stone Buddha (statue) is nothing more than a lump of material, which does nothing in reality, as some scholars assume?[111] If the sculpture is meaningless, why does it keep recurring in Hong Sayong's literary works?

> *Puch'im pawi gets more and more damaged day after day. Who among the afflicted and distressed in mind came to gouge and scrape the rock so cruelly? In the temple at the back, a stone Buddha undergoes malicious punishment every night, too. His sound nose gets scraped and worn out mercilessly. Nonetheless, with nowhere to plead his grievous case, he stands in deep contemplation*.[112]

This paragraph may give us a hint about what role the stone Buddha plays. What we should note is not its silence but its grotesque body. The stone Buddha does not look great and awe-inspiring. It has a worn-off and broken nose. His whole body is covered with wounds. It is not vandalism of Buddhist property in today's terms. As Hong Sayong mentions, people with afflictions come to the statue and scratch its surface to gain relief from their troubles. In old days, their wishes were mostly related to getting pregnant as the legend affiliated to Puch'im pawi in Segŏmjŏng town describes.[113] As time went by, the content of their wishes may have changed but they did not disappear or diminish. The Buddha's scars reflect people's piteous and painful stories. The stone Buddha does not answer to their prayers, nor solve their problems but it gives voice to them and has their stories carved into its body. In this way, the grotesque body of Buddha statues reflects the grotesque stories experienced and shared by real people in colonial Korea.

For example, the stone Buddha statue appearing in the short story "Ppaengdŏgine" 빵덕이네 (Ppaengdŏk's family, 1938) tells us one family's terrifying story.[114] Chŏmsun's family is impoverished. Her father goes begging and returns home beaten and injured. At the end of her wits, her mother sells herself as a temple servant for thirty wŏn and in practice becomes a monk's wife. After fifteen years, she sells off her own daughter Chŏmsun for hundred wŏn and disappears. Confronted with the story of a woman who remarries to stay alive, leaving her husband, and of a mother who sells off her own young daughter, nobody condemns the woman for an outrage against humanity and motherhood. Rather, people in the village just deplore their ill-fated lives. This horrible story of Chŏmsun's family was nothing out of the ordinary in impoverished rural areas.

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[111] Ch'oe Wŏnsik, "Hong Sayong munhak-kwa chuch'e-ŭi kaksŏng", p.141; Chŏng Hoch'ang, "Hong Sayong-ŭi si yŏn'gu," p.28.
[112] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.83.
[113] The legend says that women can get pregnant with a boy baby or find a lost son if they can glue a stone on Puch'im rock by scrubbing it.
[114] *Chosŏn ilbo* (Dec. 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.82-90.

The trafficking of women was legal and rampant in colonial Korea. According to An Yŏnsŏn, in 1925 Japan signed an international treaty that prohibited the trafficking of women and children but this law was not applied to its colonies.[115] The colonial government tried to gloss it over, whereas Korean writers such as Hong Sayong captured the distortions of the colonial experience in their literature. In the short story, Hong describes how year after year more and more young girls and women go to work in factories. For example, a young girl named Puksil runs away on her wedding night and becomes a factory laborer. It is to regain her family farmland by means of her wages but she ends up conceiving a fatherless baby. Another eldest daughter is supposed to go to work as a bar girl. She needs to submit her family registry together with a letter with her father's consent.[116] The mother of Chŏmsun brings girls to the Chinese brokers, including her own daughter. Hong does not only tell how rampant women trafficking was in a destitute village in a remote valley, where they satisfied their hunger on a bowl of cooked millet or boiled barley instead of rice, but also how such an impoverished village was incorporated into the processes of industrialization and military expansion, and how the daughters of debt-stricken farmers were sold as workers in factories or to brothels in urban cities and even the newly-acquired territories of the Japanese empire.

What is remarkable is that as the title of the short story indicates, Hong Sayong parodies the classic Sim Ch'ŏng story to depict the colonial experience of women trafficking. The classic story is about the filial daughter Sim Ch'ŏng who sells herself as a human sacrifice for 300 *sŏk* of rice offered to Buddha in order to regain the eyesight of her blind father. Hong states, "Borrowing the old story of the filial daughter Sim Ch'ŏng, Chŏmsun was renamed Ppaengdŏk and her mother "Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏni" (lit. the mother of Ppaengdŏk).[117] In the classic, Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm is a typical wicked woman who married Sim Chŏng's father for his wealth and runs away with another man. In Hong's story, the modern Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm has two faces. On the one hand, this woman is a bad wife who deserts her original husband and becomes the concubine of a monk and a bad mother who sells off her own daughter. But on the other hand, she has Sim Ch'ŏng's sacrificial spirit as well. As Sim Ch'ŏng in the classic sold herself as a human offering to the sea and demonstrated her filial piety, the modern Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm sells herself as an offer to a Buddhist monk and in doing so, supports her entire family. Her family staves off hunger thanks to her concubinage. If Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm in the classic is condemned as a bad wife, the modern Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm is in a morally ambiguous situation. She is a victim of such trafficking and at the same time, a victimizer. As people in the village do, one cannot but deplore her ill fate in the face of extreme poverty.

[115] An Yŏnsŏn, *Sŏngnoye-wa pyŏngsa mandŭlgi*, p.16.
[116] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.84.
[117] Ibid., p.90.

It is interesting to see that there was a comedy drama in the 1930s recorded for the gramophone entitled *Modern Sim Ch'ŏngjŏn*. This comedy depicts a modern Sim Ch'ŏng who is a worker in a rubber factory. To pay 300 wŏn for an eye operation for her blind father, she is employed in a dancing hall in the Chinese city of Harbin.[118] Ch'ae Mansik was another writer who adapted Sim Ch'ŏng to the the colonial context. In 1936, Ch'oe wrote the drama *Sim pongsa* (Blind Mr. Sim) and in 1944-45 a novel that took its plot from from the drama.[119] If the classic focuses on the filial piety of Sim Ch'ŏng, Ch'ae focuses on the incompetence of Sim Ch'ŏng's father as a ruined *yangban*. In his way, he castigates incompetent male Koreans (in particular, intellectuals) in colonial Korea, who sell their daughters to go to work in factories.[120]

In his story, Hong Sayong also draws attention to the male protagonist, the father of Chŏmsun and the husband of Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm. This man is not physically blind like Mr. Sim (Sim pongsa) in the classic story, but spiritually blind and disabled. He actually has a mild temper and healthy body but is "so good-tempered that he is like an idiot, incompetent and dull-headed".[121] Hence, when he loses his wife and daughter, he cannot say a word and is unable to cope with the hardship. Through this man, Hong satirizes the Korean men in colonial Korea, who were incompetent husbands and fathers and who drove their entire family to starvation. Hong's mockery comes to a climax in his serious joke that if this man had been born in the past, he would be a hero. His firm and unimpeded determination, his mind without anger, his achievement of emptiness of mind (*musim*, 無心) embody the virtue of old sages.[122]

There is one other form of patriarchal power Hong Sayong furtively mocks, the Japanese emperor. "When he [the father of Chŏmsun] does not appear, people call him by his nickname "the descendent of the Emperor" (Ch'ŏnhwangssi). But he is not that stone-headed."[123] This mockery astonishingly presents the Japanese emperor as a synonym for foolishness so that even a village idiot is regarded as smarter than the Emperor. The Japanese emperor was the center of imperial power and regarded as a personified god, the "father" or "head" of the big family of the whole Japanese empire. Imperial subjects (Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese and others) had to worship him as divine and show "filial piety" as his children.[124] Such a divine Japanese emperor is ridiculed in this story as most foolish. Hong Sayong laughs at the

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[118] See appendix in Kim Mansu and Ch'oe Tonghyŏn 김만수, 최동현, *Ilche kangjŏmgi yusŏnggi ŭmbansog-ŭi taejung hŭigŭk* 일제강점기 유성음반속의 대중희극 (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1997), pp.363-367.
[119] Kim Tonggwŏn 金東權, "Ch'ae Mansik-ŭi *Sim pongsa*-wa *Sim Ch'ŏngjŏn* pigyo koch'al" 채만식의 <심봉사>와 <심청전> 비교 고찰 in *Mogwŏn ŏmunhak* 6 牧園語文學 (1987):5-27, pp.9-10.
[120] Ibid., pp.13-14.
[121] Ibid., p.84.
[122] Ibid., pp.84-85.
[123] Ibid., p.85.
[124] Ch'oe Yuri, *Ilche malgi singminji chibae chŏngch'aek yŏn'gu*, pp.43-47.

Emperor as an "incompetent father" who sells his "imperial" daughters to hell-like factories and as barmaids in China, as the father of Chŏmsun does.

Conclusion

Hong Sayong at present is a nearly forgotten writer. Once, he was recognized as a prominent decadent poet and a creative playwright. There was a time when scholars and researchers hailed his uncompromising nationalism and tried to understand his life, thought, and literature from that nationalist perspective. Since then, Hong Sayong has been mummified as a "nationalist" writer and displayed as such in the history of modern Korean literature. However, I have tried to show how this forgotten writer deserves to be rediscovered and reconsidered from new perspectives, such as that of religion. I have paid special attention to his Sŏn Buddhist essays, which were written in the controversial period following the second Sino-Japanese War and were published in the controversial medium of the *Maeil sinbo*. In these he practiced what he believed was important in Buddhism. As he strongly insisted in his essays, people in wartime colonial Korea, including himself, should live with an attitude of *wŏnyung muae*. It was to argue that people should not eschew, nor condemn unfavorable circumstances but perform their jobs faithfully and patiently. He recognized the problematic reality surrounding war, but did not overtly support the wartime government, nor all the government policies. Rather, with this Buddhist stance, he produced a counterdiscourse against individual sacrifices for the sake of the Emperor, which were promoted as the pivot of the war ideology.

Rarely using direct political language or war slogans, Hong Sayong produced various sociopolitical discourses which cannot be captured by a single narrative of non-compromise. Both his contemplative essays and folksong-style poems show how vulnerable he was to the contemporary wartime rhetoric based upon Asianism. He approved the Pan-Asian ideology of a return to Asian tradition and the re-evaluation of Asian values to a considerable degree. He expressed antipathy against Western material civilization and capitalism, just as the colonial government as well as its supporters dictated. However, it was not to propagate the wartime ideology itself. He saw logical discrepancies within the colonial discourse and between rhetoric and reality and used them to formulate his counterdiscourses.

Wartime colonial Korea, in particular impoverished rural Korea, was envisioned by the Buddhist writer Hong Sayong as the realm of hungry ghosts. Using this Buddhist motif, he could depict the distorted lives of people and their gruesome experiences and ordeals, which the colonial authorities wanted to hide or gloss over. The tragedy of rural Koreans was ironically twisted into a form of comedy and humor by Hong Sayong. Instead of direct resistance or criticism, he ridiculed the fearfulness of the colonial authorities and derided their hypocritical discourses and policies. His elaborate manipulation of

mockery, laughter, parody, irony, and mimicry, much of which was adopted from Korean traditional music and literature, proved him to be one of the most prominent writers who found alternatives to the colonial discourse.

Conclusion

The Buddhist writers addressed in this thesis were active agents within the colonial history of Korea. Indeed, they were in no way marginal. They carved their names into national history as top nationalist leaders and giants of literature, as a major religious leader, as a pioneering but scandalous New Woman, and as an eventually controversial collaborator. The historical master narrative which tends to equate justice with patriotism and human dignity with national identity politically separates this group of writers into either nationalists or collaborators, and morally judges them as good or evil. Han Yongun represented the good and was glorified as a symbol of national pride; in contrast, Yi Kwangsu exemplified evil and was demonized and depicted as a disgrace to the nation. Moreover, these two were assumed to have nothing in common and to be fiercely opposed to each other.

Despite the pervasive depictions of these writers, a focus on their Buddhist beliefs and Buddhist-inspired texts shows us how their own emotions, experiences, voices, and reactions to the colonial and national discourses and policies were far removed from what we have habitually believed under the influence of the nationalist historical discourse. Considering their fame and reputation within national history, this divergence is not something we can simply ignore. Consequently, I have attempted to uncover what is behind the divergence between the writers' own voices and interpretations and our pervasive assumptions and ascriptions with regard to them. In the process I have found even more levels of divergence, between their interior and exterior acts, between their writing and their acting, and between their earlier and later views. I have attempted to reconsider their lives, thought, and literature from new perspectives, such as the religious, postnationalist, and postcolonial and feminist perspectives. In this way, I have tried to add detail and greater depth to the current picture of colonial history and reveal the complexity and diversity that hides behind the politicized and polarized debates on colonial history.

The first author, Han Yongun, has been admired as a source of national pride for championing both humanity and nationalism. However, my examination revealed that he was keenly aware of the disparity between human dignity and national identity. From the outset, he claimed that Buddhist ideas and goals could never be equated with political (i.e., national) goals. While the Koreans suffered under colonial domination, he was against the idea of marrying Buddhism (i.e., religion) with nationalism (i.e., politics) and the subordination of Buddhism to nationalist interests and goals. In his eyes, Buddhism, directed as it is toward humans and sentient beings, and its vision of universal salvation for all men were much bigger than the goals and vision of nationalism. He criticized the colonial overlords, for infringing upon human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the human dignity of individuals, although

he failed to see that another political power, such as Korean nationalism, could also infringe on those same rights while struggling against the dehumanizing colonial power. In that sense, other Buddhist writers were much perspicacious than Han with their critical views of Korean nationalism.

Kim Iryŏp and Hong Sayong developed a critical view of Korean nationalism by focusing on diverse social agents in colonial society, such as women, *kisaeng*, and butchers. They saw that these historical subjects were marginalized, controlled, manipulated, and discriminated against by the dominant male nationalists. Although Kim did not react to colonialism as critically as her male counterparts, as a woman she could arguably have held the most critical view of Korean nationalism by disclosing how it harshly punished those who searched for individual interests and freedom, distorted the lives of individuals if their pursuits were irrelevant to national undertakings, and condemned basic human endeavors as egoistic and anti-nationalistic. In contrast, Hong was a writer who offered critical views about both Japanese colonialism and Korean nationalism. He claimed that the Japanese promises of protection and progress were a sham and were offered under deceitful pretenses in order to disguise a reality that was fraught with aggressive domination and racial discrimination. Additionally, he ridiculed the hypocrisy of Korean nationalism by revealing the discrimination or prejudice toward people of lower status that lurked under the campaign for oneness of the Korean nation.

These Buddhist writers also questioned the general assumption that Korean nationalism always took the side of justice and human dignity, presenting diverse and divergent attempts to tackle the problem. Their writings demonstrate that despite their apparent political differences, they actually shared many similarities, including their religious views and insistences, social interests, experiences with the dilemma of morality and politics, and even their covert responses to political affairs. Han Yongun, Hong Sayong, and Kim Iryŏp all expressed a great affinity with the concept of self in Sŏn Buddhism. From this concept, Han derived concepts of self-reliance, self-criticism, and self-reconstruction and elaborated them as ideas for the benefit of the nation. This attempt he shared with the cultural nationalists. Hong Sayong used the concept of self first to allegorize the colonial experience of losing national sovereignty and becoming colonial others. He also derived the notion of non-dependency from this concept to challenge the colonial discourse on Korean identity and subvert the colonial relationship. Showing the disabled, distorted, and lost self (including both body and mind), Kim Iryŏp gave voice to more personalized and diversified experiences in the face of colonialism, nationalism, and modernity. She further emphasized Sŏn meditation as a way to regain self-control, to replenish self-regulatory strength, and ultimately to restore the self to its true identity.

In spite of their similarities, a comparison of Han Yongun and Yi Kwangsu reveals difference to a far greater degree. Han Yongun has been

considered a heroic nationalist who was loyal to the Korean nation throughout his life and indeed, he refused civil registration and changing his Korean name to a Japanese one. He never joined an imperial organization or gave a collaborationist speech. Conversely, Yi Kwangsu was a fervent pro-Japanese collaborator. He discarded his honorable position as a nationalist and betrayed the Korean nation, leading the imperial campaign to adopt a Japanese name and holding important posts in various imperial organizations. He visited imperial armies to give morale-boosting speeches. Han Yongun and Yi Kwangsu went their separate ways and made vastly different political choices.

Nevertheless, the literature of these writers did not match what actually occurred in reality. The obvious political differences between Yi Kwangsu and Han Yongun have led us to assume that they were completely different persons, but their literature informs us that they had many things in common. In their novels, they singled out the bodhisattva's practice of compassion and forbearance among many Buddhist themes and concepts, and presented it as the ideal attitude and *modus vivendi* in wartime. The Buddhist insistence on compassion was deeply associated with their autobiographical experience of the dilemma of morality and politics. They both experienced a situation in which loyalty to the Korean nation clashed with the virtue of humanness. Faced with the Suyangtonguhoe incident, when cultural nationalists were arrested and imprisoned by the wartime colonial government, Yi Kwangsu had to choose between the Korean nation and individuals and between nationalism and the lives of those individuals. In a less dramatic situation, Han Yongun also had to face a similar inner conflict when his benefactors became increasingly involved in collaboration. Han had to choose either his patriotic integrity or the moral imperatives of gratitude. On the basis of their Buddhist beliefs Yi and Han chose morality instead of patriotic duty. This choice was controversial because it led them to literary collaboration.

Obviously, Yi Kwangsu produced a number of collaborationist works and deserves his notoriety as a pro-Japanese collaborator. No one in wartime colonial Korea glorified the Japanese emperor more than he did. No one explained problematic wartime political ideologies more extensively or in greater detail than he did. However, did not the national hero, Han Yongun, perhaps also collaborate with the Japanese through his writings? An examination of some neglected texts of Han, mainly those written during the second Sino-Japanese War, reveals that nowhere did this alleged national hero express his anti-Japanese resistance or criticize the wartime government. For this censorship may be held responsible, but there was more important to his writings from this period. Han advocated self-criticism and self-blame of the Korean people and dissuaded the Koreans from blaming others, such as the Japanese colonial authorities. He even encouraged them to avoid resenting and condemning the colonial government, thereby indirectly advocating accommodation to colonial policies. In many Buddhist essays, he preached how to live and think during wartime. These directions were not opposed to

colonialism or the expansionist war and military aggression. He kept insisting on wartime spiritual practices that were no different from what the colonial government and Korean war collaborators propagated.

Of course, Han Yongun's literary collaboration may be relatively insignificant when compared to that of Yi Kwangsu, but its very existence can threaten Han Yongun's reputation. As Pak Suyŏn has suggested, the myth of Korean patriotic nationalism is characterized by its insistence on purity; thus, it never allows for, let alone forgives, even one single compromise or act of collaboration.[1] For example, Im Hyebong classified the abbot of the Magok Temple, An Hyangdŏk, as a "pro-Japanese" monk because of a single collaborationist act.[2] We might then question if Han Yongun still deserves to be honored as a national hero in spite of the suspicion that has arisen from his literary collaboration. Indeed, when applying the mainstream nationalist's yardstick, he should undoubtedly be disqualified from the position of national hero and condemned as a "pro-Japanese" figure, much like other Koreans.

However, putting Han Yongun and Yi Kwangsu on the blacklist of nationalist scholarship should not be the end of the story. Upon careful reading, their wartime literature did not merely deliver propaganda messages, but also offered counter-discourses against wartime ideologies and discourses. So, their multilayered texts cannot be simply labeled as "pro-Japanese" or "collaborationist" as nationalist scholars often do. Ironically, Yi Kwangsu who was so well acquainted with wartime political ideologies and discourses could detect the ambiguity and logical fallacies in the colonial discourses better than anyone else. When the dominant authority asserted its unique, "pure" race and culture, he was able to subvert the myth of the Japanese identity by creating a Korean hybrid.

Among Korean Buddhist writers, Hong Sayong seems to most prominently employ strategies of subversion. Yet, Hong did not directly criticize or condemn Japanese colonialism, either. Instead he concurred with the Japanese Pan-Asianist ideology of the return to Asian tradition and culture and the rejection of Western civilization. Although this might be considered to be literary collaboration, through this maneuver, he saw the possibility of restoring indigenous culture, the Korean traditional heritage, including its music and sounds, which ultimately defied assimilation into the Japanese-dominated culture. This Korean tradition provided him with opportunities for mockery, laughter, and irony and enabled him to ridicule the overwhelming force of colonial power.

While Han Yongun is evaluated as the most outspoken thinker in existing nationalist narratives, he seems to less prominently formulate a

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[1] Pak Suyŏn 박수연, "Hwaŏm-jŏk p'yŏngdŭng-ŭi minjok-kwa segye" in *Manhaehak yŏn'gu* 2 만해학연구 2 (Inje: Manhae hakssurwŏn 만해학술원, 2006), pp.63-65 and 78-81.

[2] Im Hybong 임혜봉, *Ch'inil sŭngnyŏ 108-in: Kkŭnagi anŭn yŏksa-ŭi murŭm* 친일승려 108인: 끝나지 않은 역사의 물음 (P'aju: Ch'ŏngnyŏnsa, 2005), p.258.

colonial counter-discourse than the other writers. His emphasis on the Buddhist concepts of *inyok* (forbearance) and *chŏngjin* (strenuous effort) dissuaded the Koreans from resenting and resisting the wartime colonial government, but these areas he focused on were not intended to support the colonial government. The notions were advocated by Han as alternative ways to contribute to the preservation of life and to tactfully preserve his initial goals, which probably included national independence and national identity in spite of political oppression. However, his insistence on gratitude and the image of the heroic Buddha were in congruence with dominant colonial ideologies. He could not extract any counter-discourse from his interaction. In some cases, he was not even aware of the possibility that his tradition-oriented ideas for the nation's sake could be captured by the colonial authorities for their own political purposes.

As scholars such as Theodore Jun Yoo have conceded, colonial history and its legacy are still quite important and sensitive issues in contemporary Korean society.[3] The Buddhist writers who were investigated in this study are closely associated with this history and legacy. For example, in sync with the popular acceptance of his role as a national hero, Han Yongun's birthplace has been restored and memorial museums, parks, and monuments have been constructed in his memory. The temple where he composed his masterpiece *Nim-ŭi ch'immuk* and a cultural village that was built in memory of his exploits have emerged as popular tourist attractions. Every year, a cultural festival is held and various awards in honor of him are given to writers, scholars, and a host of eminent leaders. To commemorate Hong Sayong, who is said to have been forced to stop writing by the colonial government, the Hong Sayong Literature Hall and Literature Award have been established in Hwasŏng where his family register is located. Recently, the Kim Iryŏp Cultural Foundation has been launched by her disciples and temple to establish a memorial hall in an effort to commemorate her literary and Buddhist activities.[4]

On the contrary, in memory of Yi Kwangsu, who was branded a representative of the pro-Japanese collaborator group, only one monument has been erected by some of his close literary colleagues, in the backyard of the temple where he spent his last years. Despite his unrivalled literary achievements, no literature prizes or memorial buildings in his name have been allowed by Korean society. Because of his pro-Japanese collaboration, the very mention of Yi Kwangsu is still a hot issue. In recent years, the contemporary novelist Han Sŭngwŏn has asserted that it is wrong to continue to publish the problematic novel *Wŏnhyo taesa*, because the pro-Japanese writer slandered the eminent monk Wŏnhyo and glorified war; the related publishing company

[3] Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor and Health, 1910-1945* (University of California Press, 2008), p.202.

[4] "Ch'ŏngch'un-ŭl pulsarŭdo, Iryŏp sŭnim yuji pattŭnda" 청춘을 불사르고, 일엽스님 유지 받든다 in *Kŭmgang sinmun*, http://www.ggbn.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=16859

responded to his criticism by invoking the freedom of interpretation.[5] Recently, Pusan citizens with a signature campaign have pushed for the removal of a monument on Haeundae inscribed with Yi Kwangsu's poem, because they thought that Yi and his poem represent a disgraceful legacy of the colonial past; indeed, they could see no reason for such a pro-Japanese writer's poem to be placed in a location that represents the heart of tourism in Pusan.[6]

Yet, as this study has shown, the problem of colonial history and the colonial legacy cannot simply be solved by either glorifying or vilifying the people who lived in that period. This politicized and polarized agenda will not settle or resolve the troubled colonial legacy, but rather blind us, distorting our ability to recognize the complexities and ambiguities of the colonial era in Korea. The novel of Yi Kwangsu, which was neither simply pro-Japanese nor nationalist, his literary collaboration that at a certain level subverted colonialism, Han Yongun's collaborationist writing during the war against China, Kim Iryŏp's Buddhist insights, revealing the hidden violence in modernity and Korean nationalism and Hong Sayong's criticism of Japanese colonialism and Korean nationalism all offer opportunities to recognize that the history of colonial Korea was far more nuanced and complicated than is generally believed in today's Korea.

[5] "Chŏnjaengjuŭija, panjŏnjuŭija…Wŏnhyo nollan" 전쟁주의자, 반전주의자…원효 논란 in *Chungang ilbo*, http://article.joinsmsn.com/news/article/article.asp?ctg=15&Total_ID=2278433

[6] "3.1-chŏr-e ullyŏ p'ŏjin Yi Kwangsu sibi ch'ŏlgo moksori" 3.1절에 울려 퍼진 이광수 시비 철거 목소리 in *Omai nyusŭ*,
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Samenvatting

Mijn dissertatie onderzoekt, voornamelijk aan de hand van een studie van religie en literatuur, zowel de diversiteit als de complexiteit van de koloniale geschiedenis van Korea (1910-1945). In eerste instantie bespreek ik het probleem van de nationalistische geschiedschrijving. Het nationalistische perspectief reduceert koloniaal Korea tot een enkel en homogeen thema dat zich uitsluitend toespitst op het nationale verzet tegen de Japanse kolonisatie. Om de ingewikkelde koloniale geschiedenis van Korea te bevatten, heb ik verschillende benaderingen gebruikt waaronder, post-nationalisme, post-kolonialisme, feminisme en religie. Tevens verlaat ik het geijkte pad van de "traditionele" geschiedenis door me niet uitsluitend te richten op de politieke en economische gebeurtenissen in koloniaal Korea. Diverse sociale actoren ontplooiden elk (op zichzelf georiënteerde) activiteiten in verschillende domeinen van de koloniale gemeenschap. Daarbij valt echter steevast op dat religie, politiek en literatuur erg met elkaar verweven waren. Zo toonde de groep van Boeddhistische schrijvers die ik bespreek, zich erg bewust van hun rol in de gemeenschap. Zij worstelden met de politieke (zowel nationaal als koloniaal) implicaties van religie (in het bijzonder het Boeddhisme) als de drijvende kracht achter de geschiedenis. Door op deze groep schrijvers in te zoomen, was het mogelijk de invloed van religie en literatuur op een breed thematisch spectrum, van nationalisme tot pro-Japanse collaboratie, en het begrip van de koloniale realiteit in kaart te brengen. Mijn onderzoek toont aan dat literaire en religieuze lezingen nieuwe en alternatieve manieren opleveren om de koloniale geschiedenis beter te begrijpen. Tevens geven deze alternatieve lezingen een genuanceerder beeld van de koloniale realiteit.

Dit onderzoek is onderverdeeld in vier delen, waarvan elk deel aan één auteur is gewijd. Het eerste deel heronderzoekt de zeer gerespecteerde Boeddhistische schrijver Han Yongun (韓龍雲, 1879-1944). Post-kolonialistische en post-nationalistische herlezingen van Han's non-canonieke - genegeerde of vergeten - werken laten toe het overheersende beeld van hem als een nationale held en de aannames over zijn "Boeddhistische nationalisme" bij te stellen. Zijn nationalistische ideeën en blik op de samenleving weken af van het gebruikelijk beeld. Zijn nationalisme legde nadruk op zelfreflectie eerder dan op verzet. Zo uitte hij amper kritiek op de koloniale autoriteiten. Het Boeddhisme dat centraal moest staan in het leven, de afwezigheid van politieke doelen, zijn dralen rondom het Confucianisme, zijn ambigue en controversiële uitspraken die leken op collaboratie en de tot nog toe niet vertelde verhalen over de morele conflicten en dillema's die hij onder ogen zag in oorlogstijd; al deze aspecten tonen enerzijds aan dat het beeld van nationale held bijstelling behoeft, en anderzijds dat religie en religieuze overtuigingen niet zomaar gepolitizeerd mogen worden..

In het tweede gedeelte behandel ik de meest controversiële schrijver uit de koloniale geschiedenis van Korea: Yi Kwangsu (李光洙, 1892-1950). Ondanks alle aandacht en controverse die hem al te beurt is gevallen, is het merkwaardig hoe weinig aandacht er in de wetenschap is voor het religieuze leven dat hij geleid heeft. Mijn analyse van zijn Boeddhistische werken toont aan dat Boeddhisme een belangrijke rol speelde in zijn leven, zowel in zijn literaire werken, als in zijn cultuur-nationalistische en latere collaboratie-activiteiten. Zijn religieuze opvattingen waren niet zomaar een aangemeten politieke overtuiging om nationalisme of collaboratie te prediken. Een analyse van zijn religieuze opvattingen geeft een veel duidelijker en bovenal genuanceerder inzicht in zijn politieke handelen. Dit blijkt uit de aanpassing van zijn vroege nationalistische ideeën, zijn kritiek op de ontmenselijkende aard van nationalisme en het dilemma tussen nationale politiek en menselijkheid. Het feit dat Yi een tegendiscours creëerde dat de grondbeginselen van de Japanse kolonisatie ondermijnde terwijl hij de taal van de collaborateurs gebruikte, dwingt ons nogmaals na te denken over het begrip collaboratie dat we hanteren

In deel 3 ga ik in op Kim Iryŏp (金一葉, 1896-1971), die een vrouwelijke stem toevoegde binnen de, door mannen gedomineerde, Boeddhistische literatuur. Ze had publieke faam in de koloniale gemeenschap vanaf 1920 als één van de voorvechtsters van de moderne "Nieuwe Vrouw" (sin yŏsŏng). Toen net zij een Boeddhistische non werd, keken veel mensen haar met argusogen aan omdat ze ervan overtuigd waren dat ze haar toevlucht zocht in het Boeddhisme om haar aardse problemen te ontlopen. Mijn onderzoek wijst echter uit dat ze, terwijl ze actief was als een Boeddhistische vrouw, nog actiever en productiever was dan voordat ze een Boeddhistische non werd. Ze gebruikte het Boeddhisme als een fundamentele oplossing voor haar koloniale ervaringen. Het was een alternatief voor het dominante politieke paradigma. Toen veel van haar mannelijke collega's hun toevlucht zochten in het nationalisme of het socialisme om het koloniale probleem op te lossen, zag zij hoe deze politieke opvattingen vaak een andere vorm van onderdrukking jegens individuen en vrouwen werden. Toch was ze ook kritisch tegenover het Boeddhisme. Zo merkte ze op dat de toenmalige Boeddhistische gemeenschap overheerst werd door mannen waarin vrouwen geen stem hadden. In plaats van het blind opvolgen van Boeddhistische overtuigingen, was ze kritisch tegenover het Boeddhisme en poogde ze om de vrouwelijke stem, die vaak geen plek had in het conventionele Boeddhisme, te laten horen.

Hong Sayong is de vierde auteur die deze dissertatie behandelt. Hij zag het Boeddhisme als de duurzame en ultieme ideologie, terwijl hij tevens begrip had voor de "1 maart Beweging" en de Pacifische Oorlog. Toen hij de koloniale strategie en de psychologie ervan doorzag, was het niet langer het kolonialisme of het nationalisme, maar het Boeddhisme dat hij gebruikte om de gekoloniseerde geest van de Koreanen te wakker te schudden, de Koreaanse identiteit zoals gedicteerd door de koloniale autoriteit uit te dagen en de het koloniale band te ondermijnen. Het kolonialisme was niet het enige dat hij

kritisch bekeek. Hij ridiculiseerde ook de hypocrisie van het Koreaanse nationalisme door de vooroordelen en discriminatie jegens mensen met een lagere status, zoals *kisaeng* en slagers, aan de kaak te stellen. Hij veroordeelde het Japanse kolonialisme niet direct, noch bood hij direct verzet. Hij stemde integendeel in met de Japanse ideologie, om die te ondermijnen door een subtiele strategie spot, parodie en satire.

Mijn onderzoek naar Boeddhistische schrijvers laat diverse emoties, ervaringen, geluiden en reacties zien met betrekking tot het koloniale en nationalistische debat en politiek. Deze verschillen van het gangbare beeld, dat sterk beinvloed is door nationalistisch historische denkbeelden. Deze divergente aanpak brengt detail en verdieping in het bestaande beeld over de koloniale geschiedenis. Dit onderzoek toont de complexiteit en ambiguïteit van het leven onder koloniaal bewind en tast de grens tussen kolonisator en gekoloniseerde af. De resultaten van dit onderzoek verdiepen het inzicht en begrip over het Koreaanse koloniale verleden. Dit is met name van belang op een ogenblik dat het onverwerkte koloniale verleden, van pro-Japanse collaboratie over het vraagstuk van de troostmeisjes, het dispuut over de (Japanse) handboeken geschiedenis en de territoriale disputen met Japan, nog steeds heftige emoties losweken in de Koreaanse samenleving. Dit onderzoek suggereert dat de verwerking van het complexe koloniale verleden niet te vinden is in het verheerlijken van een Koreaanse nationalistische geschiedenis of het veroordelen van het Japanse kolonialisme, maar enkel in het overwinnen van de gepolitizeerde dichotomie die Koreanen tegen Japan opzet.

Curriculum vitae

Jung-Shim Lee was born on 6 November 1974 in Seoul, Korea. She graduated in 1993 from Tŏksŏng High School, Seoul. In 1998, she received her BA degree in German Language and Literature from Ewha Womans University, Seoul. Between 1996 and 1997, she participated in a "junior year programme" at Bonn University, Germany. In 1999, she received a Swiss Government Scholarship to study religion and philosophy at Luzern University, Switzerland. In 2002, she received her MA degree in Korean Studies from the Graduate School of Ewha Womans University. In September of the same year, she received an Advanced Master's degree from the Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies (CNWS), Leiden University. She subsequently started her PhD project at Leiden University supported by a four-year Korea Foundation scholarship.