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.