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.