Chapter 8

Meditating amid war: Hong Sayong's Buddhist literature in wartime colonial Korea

Introduction

In 1976, when the first posthumous book of Hong Sayong (洪思容, 1900-1947) was released, his eldest son looked back upon the last decade of his father's life.[1] According to his son, Hong Sayong put down his pen long before the Pacific War reached its peak in 1939, at the time that he was given a fixed-term governmental order to write a play about Kim Okkyun (金玉均, 1851-1894) and depict this 19th-century "pro-Japanese" reformer and "Pan-Asianist"[2] as an early advocate of *naissen ittai* 內鮮一體, whose failed dream came true in the early 20th century thanks to the grace of the Emperor. Hong Sayong, however, did not write the play in the way the government dictated. As a consequence, his manuscript was confiscated by the government, and he was punished with house arrest. He even could not have attended his son's wedding if Yi Kwangsu, the president of the Korean Writers' Association, had not asked the colonial government for a favorable arrangement.

This short description of the circumstances surrounding the Hong Sayong's confiscated play *Kim Okkyunjŏn* 金玉均傳 (A biographical tale of Kim Okkyun) was widely accepted among researchers. It was continually reiterated and regarded as evidence of Hong's indomitable nationalist spirit against Japanese colonialism in the late colonial period. However, there are some inaccurate and questionable details his son added to the memoir. The year 1939 was not in the midst of the Pacific War, but more correctly, the second Sino-Japanese War, which was prolonged and extended to the Pacific War from 1941 onward. Few ask why Hong Sayong did not turn down the request from the colonial authorities rather than obeying it and writing the manuscript. The Korean Writers' Association (Chosŏn munin hyŏphoe, 朝鮮文人協會), of which Yi Kwangsu was president, was a pro-Japanese collaborationist organization. When a man like Yi Kwangsu offered Hong to help, Hong accepted it and even let him officiate at his son's wedding. Would not rejection have been a more suitable reaction if Hong was a man of indomitable nationalist pride? The problem becomes more serious when we consider the chronology of Hong's

[1] Hong Kyusŏn 洪奎善, "Yujak ch'ulgan-e chŭŭmhayŏ" 遺作 出刊에 즈음하여 (Nov. 1976). Republished in *Paekcho-ga hŭrŭdŏn sidae: Nojak Hong Sayong iltaegi* 백조白潮가 흐르던 시대: 노작 홍사용 일대기, Edited by Yi Wŏn'gyu 이원규 (Osan: Saemunsa, 2000), pp.83-84.

[2] Sven Saaler, "Pan-Asianism in modern Japanese history: overcoming the nation, creating region, forging an empire" in *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, regionalism and borders* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p.6.

literary activities. Hong's son's claim that Hong Sayong abandoned writing long before 1939, implying that it was as a form of resistance against colonialism when many Korean writers, caught in the vortex of war, had no alternative but collaboration, is far from the truth. Instead of quitting, he wielded his pen more eagerly. Surprisingly, he also contributed a considerable part of his output to the *Maeil sinbo* 每日新報, which was the propaganda mouthpiece of the colonial government. What prompted him to undertake the task of literary creation in that turbulent period of time? Why did the alleged uncompromising writer publish a series of his works in this controversial governmental newspaper, even though Korean newspapers such as *Tonga ilbo* and *Chosŏn ilbo* were still running? Was it not close to an anti-national act of *maesin* (賣身, selling one's soul and body to the colonial government) as some of his contemporaries alleged?[3]

In this chapter, I will explore Hong's later life and literature in order to unravel these lingering questions. My main contention is that Hong was neither simply a nationalist nor pro-Japanese collaborator, but offered a religious alternative. While overemphasizing him as a writer who foregrounded the "national spirit" (*minjok chŏngsin*) or the "national soul" (*minjok hon*) throughout his life and literature, the existing scholarship has neglected his religious belief and labeled these insignificant.[4] As a consequence, the fact that Hong published his works in the *Maeil sinbo* and most of all, that those controversial works were Buddhist essays on his meditative experience and contemplations on Buddhist truth has never been noticed or brought into the discussion. Against the predominant view among scholars, I will show how religion played a significant role in Hong's thinking and writing during the turbulent time of war and will further argue that it was not nationalist ideology but his Buddhist faith that became the most sustained and quintessential element in his work and a source of inspiration to gain insights in colonial society. Recognizing that Hong has been excessively romanticized by nationalist scholarship, it is important first to make it clear that Hong's contribution to the governmental newspaper certainly constitutes compliance with the colonial authorities. However, this does not necessarily mean that his texts became "pro-Japanese" or "anti-national." Examining the matter, I will show that Hong was able to produce a "religious" counter-discourse while interacting with Japanese colonialism. My probing into his idea of Asia versus the West, his Buddhist view of hungry ghosts, and his attempts at folksong-style poems will reveal how his reaction to

[3] Hong Kidon 홍기돈, "Pokkojuŭi ŭijang-ŭl han kŭndaejŏk cha'a ŭisig-ŭi pyŏnmo" 복고주의 의장(擬裝)을 한 근대적 작가 의식의 변모 in *1930-nyŏndae munhak-kwa kŭndae ch'ehŏm* 1930년대 문학과 근대체험. Edited by Munhak-kwa pip'yŏng yŏn'guhoe (Seoul: Ihoe, 1999), p.264.

[4] Yi Wŏngyu, *Paekcho-ga hŭrŭdŏn sidae*, pp.29-31, 43-45, 73-75; Kim Haktong, "Hyangt'osŏng-gwa minyo-ŭi yulcho" 鄕土性과 民謠의 律調 in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*洪思容全集, pp.354 and 381-389; Kim Pongju 金奉柱, "Hong Sayong siyŏn'gu" 洪思容 詩硏究 (MA thesis, Korea University, 1985), pp.53-75; Song Chaeil 송재일, "Nojak Hong Sayong-ŭi hŭigog-e kwan-han koch'al" 露雀 洪思容의 戱曲에 관한 考察 in *Han'guk ŏnŏ munhak* 26韓國言語文學 (1988).

Japanese colonial policies and discourses was far more subtle and nuanced than a simple nationalist representation of anti-colonial resistance.

Hong Sayong and Buddhism

Hong Sayong showed a great interest in Buddhism in his early days, but it manifested itself to a much greater degree once he came to believe in and to practice Buddhism as his personal religion. According to his close friend Pak Chonghwa (朴鐘和, 1901-1981), Hong seems to have turned to Buddhism from around 1928.[5] Like Kim Iryŏp, he came into contact with progressive Buddhists and frequently visited the Kakhwang Temple 覺皇寺 (the predecessor of the Chogyesa Temple, the center of Zen Buddhism in modern day Korea) for research for his literary works, which were to be published in modern Buddhist journals including *Yŏsi* 如是 and *Pulgyo* 佛教. Inspired by Buddhism, he had turned Shakyamuni Buddha's renunciation and Ich'adon's martyrdom into Buddhist dramas.[6] Some of his plays were also staged during the biggest Buddhist festival, the celebration of Buddha's birthday.

On a personal level, physical, spiritual, and financial suffering led Hong to Buddhism. He actually came from a very well-off family, which owned huge tracts of land. Later, he was adopted by his childless uncle, who was an even wealthier landowner.[7] However, when he engaged in literary and theatrical activities, his fortune waned. He failed in everything he did. He was tricked into a fake lump investment and suffered huge losses.[8] The literary magazine *Paekcho* (1922-1923) proved abortive. For the theater group T'owŏlhoe (土月會, 1923-1931) he served as a playwright, acting supervisor and, most of all, financial backer until it was finally dissolved. In 1927, he personally established another theatrical group, Sanyuhwahoe 山有花會, which went on a provincial tour, but as Pak Chonghwa stated, this tour proved a thorny path: "He ran out of money. His dream was shattered. Only contempt and cruelty awaited him."[9] Along with his spiritual torment, he lost his health, and started coughing blood.

When Hong faced physical disease and spiritual despair, it was not nationalism but Buddhism which provided him with a remedy. As his repetitive temple pilgrimages demonstrate, he relied on Buddhism to find answers and explanations about the true nature of pain and suffering; what happiness, misfortune, life and death were; and how he could cope with pain, despair and life. From 1929 onward, he led a nomadic life, drifting from temple

[5] Pak Chonghwa朴鐘和, *Yŏksa-nŭn hŭrŭnŭnde ch'ŏngsan-ŭn mar-i ŏmne* 歷史는 흐르는데 靑山은 말이 없네 (Seoul: Samgyŏng, 1979), pp. 439-444.
[6] *Hŭin chŏt* 흰젓 in *Pulgyo* (1928); *Ch'ulga* 出家 in *Hyŏndae Chosŏn munhak chŏnjip* 現代朝鮮文學全集 (1938).
[7] Hong Kyusŏn 洪奎善, "Yujak ch'ulgan-e chŭŭmhayŏ", p.82.
[8] Pak Chonghwa朴鐘和, *Yŏksa-nŭn hŭrŭnŭnde ch'ŏngsan-ŭn mar-i ŏmne*.
[9] Ibid.

to temple, which was a traditional form of Buddhist practice. According to Yi Kwangsu, by 1940 he resided in a temple in Yŏngnam province, reading sutras or meditating.[10] In 1944, he went on another temple pilgrimage and studied Buddhist scriptures.

What did Hong Sayong learn or realize through his study of Buddhism and practice while roaming restlessly from temple to temple and traversing the border between the secular and religious worlds? Ten years after establishing a relationship with Buddhism, a series of essays were born by the end of the 1930s. Through exploring those texts, we may get a glimpse of Hong's Buddhist life. In those essays, he first and foremost observed an array of nature's objects including the moon, an ox, rains and autumn scenery. This kind of observation of nature expressed in literary works is commonly interpreted as relishing the beauty of nature or empathizing with nature. However, the act of contemplation described in Hong's essays is somewhat different. Far removed from such an aesthetical attitude, it turns out to be entirely religious in nature.

A clear example is Hong's description of the moon in one of the first contemplative essays.

> *The moon is a mute saint. Its clear and clean-looking, perfect shape, solemn but compassionate, is impressive to us even though we are mere sentient beings. It awakes us to a sense of wonder with its all-embracing and all-penetrating power and its lofty, mysterious, awe-inspiring magnificence*.[11]

In the lines, Hong does not see the moon as a beautiful natural object and appreciate its natural beauty. He describes the moon as a personified saint, manifesting essential concepts of Buddhism, such as tranquility (*ch'ŏngsŏngsim*, 淸淨心), unimpededness (*muae*, 無碍), compassion (*chabi*, 慈悲), the unimpeded interpenetration of all phenomena (*sasamuae*, 事事無碍), etc. Although ordinary people do not exactly comprehend what those Buddhist notions signify, he argues, they intuit their meaning while quietly looking up to the moon. He adds that the qualities of the moon appear to be in the eye of beholder. Some might feel sad. Some might instead feel good. In any case, he claims, we need to take time in order to observe the moon at a spiritual or contemplative level and reflect what life is in essence and where we, humans, come from.

It is not only nature which Hong observes from a religious perspective. Interestingly, he deeply contemplated everyday life objects from the same perspective. In his essay "Tubu manp'il" 豆腐漫筆 (A causerie on bean curd, 1939), for example, he praises something as humble as bean curd cake as a bodhisattva, borrowing a Sŏn monk's remark. According to his observation,

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[10] "Nanje'o" 亂啼烏in *Munjang* 文章 (Feb. 1940). Republished in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* 李光洙全集8 (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1971/1973), p.213.

[11] "San'gŏ-ŭi tal" 山居의 달 in *Maeil sinbo* (July 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip* 洪思容全集, Edited by Kim Haktong (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1985), p.302.

bean curd cake is pristine-white and has a simple natural taste, clean and pure as the Buddha nature. Bean curd cake is not self-assertive. It shows the emptiness of self (*mua*, 無我) and seeks harmony with all other ingredients regardless of their kind. However, this selflessness and adaptability do not mean that it loses its original taste or gets stained. Conversely, the author marvels that bean curd cake never loses its mild nature and plain taste and adds flavor to foods, freely changing its form and shape and benefiting both itself and others. Hong sees that bean curd reflects the great virtue of bodhisattvas, in particular, the spirit of harmonious, non-obstructive totality (*wŏnyung muae*, 圓融無碍) and free and unrestricted being (*chajae*, 自在) in the phenomenal world.

Why does Hong observe nature and everyday life objects from a religious point of view? What does this act of observation mean? Is there any religious rationale for it? His vision of things is not designed to excite a sense of relaxation or aesthetic enjoyment. Its focus is to share his reflections on his religious life of which the essence was Sŏn Buddhist meditation. He explains various Buddhist concepts, in particular citing famous Chinese Chan masters such as Huineng (慧能/惠能, 638–713), Daoxin (道信, 580–651), and Linji (臨濟, ?-866).[12] The words and actions of those Sŏn patriarchs which are collected as *kongan* (jp. kōan)[13] are cited in *hangŭl* (Korean) and even in *hancha* (Sino-Korean).

The fact that he meditated with the help of *kongan* makes clear that Hong favored Sŏn meditation among the many strands of Buddhism. His contemplative observation of nature was in line with a long Sŏn tradition and practice. As scholars such as Sŏ Yŏng'ae and Kim Tŏkkŭn elucidate, Sŏn practitioners in Korea, like their Chinese peers, considered nature as already awakened and thus tried to acquire awakening through observing natural objects such as mountains, rivers, grasses and trees.[14] Their study and practice were based upon a Mahayana Buddhist concept which came to become a key notion of Sŏn Buddhism: *chinyŏ* (眞如, true thusness). As Hong himself explains in the essay entitled "Chinyŏ" (1938), natural objects such as the moon reveal that all dharmas (all phenomenal things) are created by the mind and this mind is called true thusness. Seeing from the enlightened mind, all things and human life are one and same. They all are already enlightened, manifesting the true nature of reality. Therefore, Hong suggests to observe all objects as they are.[15] It

[12] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.304-307 and 314.

[13] *Kongan* are enigmatic remarks of previous Sŏn masters concerning the nature of enlightenment, intended as the forms of meditation.

[14] For a detailed discussion about Sŏn literature, see Sŏ Yŏng'ae 서영애, *Pulgyo munhak-ŭi ihae* 불교문학의 이해 (Seoul: Pulgyo sidaesa, 2002), pp. 233-253; Kim Tŏkkŭn 김덕근, *Han'guk hyŏndae sŏnsi-ŭi maengnak-kwa chip'yŏng* 한국 현대선시의 맥락과 지평 (Seoul: Pakijŏng, 2005), pp.15-213; Hong Sinsŏn 홍신선*Han'guk si-wa Pulgyo-jŏk sangsangmyŏk* 한국시와 불교적 상상력 (Seoul: Yŏngnak, 2004), pp.11-22.

[15] In *Maeil sinbo* (August 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.304-305.

is to see their true nature rather than their surface and more essentially, to see one's own true nature and mind, which is not different from that of all things.

Hong did not mention this, but his pursuit of contemplation is associated with another popular Sŏn slogan: *kyŏnsŏng sŏngbul* 見性成佛. It is to accomplish Buddhahood by looking into one's own nature. This Sŏn notion aims to encourage practitioners to seek direct and first-hand experience rather than relying on the words of teachers and scriptures. Facing natural objects is one way to cultivate and actualize one's own Buddha nature by oneself. Yet, although not depending on words, Sŏn and Chan practitioners did not completely exclude words. As Sŏ and Kim remark, their study and practice as well as their awakening were expressed in the written form of verse and then sanctioned, transmitted, and compiled as Sŏn meditation topics (*kongan*). They studied and practiced meditation largely in reference to those topics.[16]

Like other Sŏn practitioners, Hong also expressed his Buddhist experiences, his own thoughtful contemplation of nature and life, and his Buddhist knowledge in a written form in his essays. If we discuss his study of Buddhism and the issue of writing, Kim Sisŭp 金時習 is an important person who may not be overlooked. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hong in his early days had felt affinity with this 15th-century historical figure and his Buddhist assertions. Kim was also frequently quoted in Hong's later Buddhist texts. Kim's *Myobŏp yŏnhwagyŏng pyŏlch'an* 妙法蓮華經別讚 (A commentary on the Lotus Sutra) seems to have been one of the scriptures Hong avidly read and engraved in his mind, as his frequent borrowings from this text attest. This commentary is not the standard one. As Kim himself clarified in the preface of his commentary, Kim saw that this sutra can only be properly understood beyond words and letters and thus approached it from a Sŏn angle.[17]

From this particular commentary, Hong cited a phrase presenting a white ox cart as an important signifier of the so-called one vehicle teachings (*ilsŭnggyo*, 一乘敎), which are said to be identical to the Buddha's true teaching that all people are able to attain Buddhahood,[18] Which is reminiscent of Hong's contemplation of an ox as a sage Buddha I will discuss below. Hong's essay on bean curd ends with Kim's *gatha* verse about Bodhisattva Never Despise (常不輕菩薩, Sangbulgyŏng posal).[19] This humble bodhisattva who practiced Buddhism enduring abuse and insults for a long time told sentient beings about everyone's capacity of becoming Buddha, without making a distinction between the Buddha and sentient beings. Hong did not see this bodhisattva as

[16] Among such *kongan* collections, a Chinese collection *Jingde chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄 and a Korean indigenous collection *Sŏnmun yŏmsong sŏrhwa* 禪門拈頌說話 have been popularly used in Korean temples. See Robert E. Buswell, *The Zen monastic experience: Buddhist practice in contemporary Korea* (Princeton University Press, 1992), p.97.

[17] See *Kugyŏk Maewŏltangjip* 5 국역 매월당집 (Seoul: Sejong taewang kinyŏm saŏphoe, 1980), pp.42-45.

[18] Ibid., pp.55-56.

[19] Ibid, p.81.

existing only in the Buddhist sutra or the commentary, but tried to see it in reality and in his everyday life, for instance in a piece of bean curd.

Meditation in time of war

One of the most controversial aspects of Hong Sayong's meditative essays is the question of when these texts were written and where they were published. Ironically, it was during the Sino-Japanese War that Hong produced these explicitly Buddhist-inspired works. As said, he contributed them to the governmental paper, not to the *Tonga ilbo* or *Chosŏn ilbo*. In July 1938, when he began to serialize his essays in the *Maeil sinbo*, colonial Korea was loudly celebrating the first anniversary of the Second Sino-Japanese War. At the Kyŏngsŏng stadium (Tongdaemun stadium today), all of the era's leading figures and groups gathered and inaugurated a pivotal organ of the war mobilization campaign, called the Chosŏn National Spirit Mobilization League (Kungmin chŏngsin ch'ongdongwŏn Chosŏn yŏnmaeng, 國民精神總動員朝鮮聯盟). There was no end to the war in sight.

Why did Hong publish his works in the controversial medium of the governmental newspaper? Was his meditative writing associated with the historical events and if so, in what way? What was the meaning of the meditation he practiced, especially during the war? Regarding the first question, we may assume that Hong was under pressure from the colonial government to write those essays. Given the fact that he received a governmental order to submit a play on Kim Okkyun around that time (1939), this assumption is likely to be true. Yet, we still need more direct evidence for that, as well as answers to the following questions: why did not he choose to refuse or to quit writing as some non-compromising writers eventually did? Why did he opt to write about his Buddhist meditation and contemplative life, not producing political propaganda in support of war?

Hong Sayong's contemplative writing needs to be placed and examined in its historical context in order to find the answers to questions like the above. Two of his essays are worth taking a closer look at: "Usong" and "Tubu manp'il." In the first essay, Hong admires a white ox as a saint, but his reasoning and description are somewhat different from his glorification of the moon. He depicts an ox that is suffering hardship because of the heavy pack on his back. The ox groans under the stinging lashes while doing his hard work. Nonetheless, the animal never complains nor loses its temper. In spite of the hard work, torture, and pain, the ox simply forgets everything and does not lose its benign, serene, and peaceful mind.[20] The ox is also free from possessiveness and desire and lives in a low-pressure atmosphere, filled with peace and tranquility. According to Hong, the ox in the field is the image of a

[20] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.304.

Buddhist saint who endures hardship and preserves a peaceful and tranquil mind.

In the second essay, Hong Sayong describes another painful process—how a block of bean curd is made—from a Buddhist point of view. He claims that the bean curd deserves high praise for its bodhisattva's forbearance. To become a block of bean curd, beans are first ground on a grindstone, then are heated and compressed into a mold. From the beans' standpoint, this is extreme adversity, causing unbearable pain and suffering. Hong calls it "asceticism" (*kohaeng*). The bones are pulverized and the body is torn apart (*pun'gol soesin*). The pulverized beans are cooked in a hot iron pot, like a pool of fire, like that of hell. The cooked beans are wrapped in rough hemp cloth, like the dead are wrapped in the shroud and then, put in the pressing machine.[21] However, like the ox, fermented bean curd endures this great hardship, and transforms itself into a high-protein food to nourish people.

Hong Sayong's parables of the white ox and the bean curd cake suggests that he does not merely talk about his Buddhist meditation, but also alludes to his and others' experiences of colonial life during the war. The ox, which suffers from hard work and groans under the yoke, seems to represent the colonized Koreans who lived exhausting lives under the colonial yoke as the servants of their Japanese colonial masters. The ox pulling a cart and delivering the heavy load on his back is reminiscent of the Koreans who were mobilized, whether they liked it or not, and were forced to perform extremely hard and laborious farm and factory work under wartime conditions. The hardship that the fermented bean curd undergoes dramatizes the colonial experience during the oppressive war mobilization. Using terms like *pun'gol soesin* (pulverizing the bones and tearing the body apart) and *apch'ak* (compression and repression), Hong reveals that the Koreans living in wartime colonial Korea experienced extreme suffering. The lump of bean curd wrapped in rough hemp cloth evokes a grotesque portrait of the Koreans as living corpses.

Hong's writing is not uncompromising in the sense that his essays were published in the *Maeil sinbo*, in compliance with the colonial authorities. However, this is not mindless war propaganda dictated by the wartime government, either. Wartime slogans and ideologies which used to be prevalent in pro-Japanese collaborationist speeches and writings are mentioned in none of his Buddhist narratives. Hong's specific description does neither support the war effort nor challenge it, but is more focused on revealing people's life experiences in wartime colonial reality.

While attempting to allegorize people's hardship, Hong Sayong faces further questions: How should people in colonial Korea, including himself, live in such an agony-ridden reality? Should they criticize the reality of their lives, condemn it or complain about it? Should they fight against the oppressive and controlling colonial government or rather fight for the Japanese empire? Or

[21] Ibid., p.315.

should they leave the land of suffering? According to the assumptions of the existing scholarship, the answer should be resistance without compromise. In other words, as a writer with the true spirit of nationalism, Hong is simplistically assumed to have told his compatriots to condemn their colonial reality and criticize or oppose the wartime government.

However, Hong's Buddhist resolution to cope with colonial life in wartime seems more complicated than the nationalist scholarship thinks. First of all, his understanding of Kim Sisŭp's Sŏn Buddhist thought seems to have served as a way of discovering an alternative view of colonial reality. Kim Sisŭp is usually known as a recluse who detached himself from the secular world, trying to find inner peace by communing with nature and avoiding compromise in troubled times. However, this was not the perspective Hong borrowed from Kim. He based himself on Kim's later thought, which according to scholars such as Han Chongman shows a strongly affirmative view of reality, as is evident in Kim Sisŭp's *Siphyŏndam yohae* 十玄談要解 (*Annotation of Ten Miraculous poems*, 1475).[22]

In this work, Kim presented an interesting parable about an ox. He stated that if an ox performs its duty properly, it has to endure burning pain. Kim also emphasized the need to turn the great dharma wheel in the mundane world, in the face of both adversity and prosperity. It was to claim that the Buddhist law is dead if it is not practiced in reality. In other words, the secular world may be as unbearably painful and distressful as a pool of fire, but Kim argued that there is no place but reality where one can realize the Buddhist law. To bring the dharma to life, Kim insisted, one needs to acknowledge the realities of life and harmonize adversity and prosperity. One needs to be faithful to secular life without distinguishing between the mundane and religious worlds.[23]It is easy to notice how Hong's own contemplation of an ox is eerily similar to Kim's parable. Hong depicts how objects such as an ox and beans turn the great dharma wheel in their respective realities. The ox turns the wheels of the heavy cart, whereas the beans are crushed to pieces between two grinding "wheels."[24] They are faced with adverse circumstances; however, neither denying nor escaping them, they endure the pain and agony of reality and carry out their duties faithfully. Hong rejuvenates Kim's synthetic (non-dualistic) view of reality, which joins the phenomenal and Buddhist worlds, and his approval of the phenomenal reality and all things. In the end, he applies this Buddhist view of reality to wartime colonial Korean society.

Hong suggests that his compatriots should learn the way how the ox and bean curd exist under hardship. While experiencing hardship and adversity, people are apt to either lament or deny their realities. They would

[22] Han Chongman 韓種萬, "Kim Sisŭb-ŭi Hwaŏm, Sŏn sasang" 김시습의 화엄, 선사상 in *Han'guk Pulgyo sasang-ŭi chŏn'gae* 韓國佛敎思想의 展開 (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1998), pp.339-346.
[23] Ibid., pp.342-343.
[24] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.302.

prefer to escape from their current hard life. In the throes of chaos, many of them seem to turn into "hungry ghosts" (*agwi*, 餓鬼) who fight with each other and whose minds are rife with desires, worries, anxieties, anger, and discontent.[25] Seeing them, he insists on facing reality and enduring hardship taking for an example the ox and bean curd cake, being aware of the Buddhist truth that there is nowhere to escape, but (colonial) reality. Concerning their agonizing reality, he argues, people should not be captured by negative feelings such as state of mind of the hungry ghost but maintain carefree, peaceful, and tranquil minds in order to live harmoniously with others at a time of war. It is the bodhisattva's spirit and practice which is embodied by the ox and bean curd cake people in wartime should search for as the right way to liberating themselves from the hungry ghost in their mind.

Hong Sayong's alternative view of life in colonial reality is no problem from a Buddhist point of view. However, his view can be contested from a sociopolitical angle. It is undeniable that this view inhibited people in wartime colonial Korea from critically thinking about their reality or bringing about change. As Hirata Seikō explains, many Japanese Zen Buddhists misused this Buddhist view of reality to fervently support the wartime Japanese empire. They made people in Japan accept life as it is without complaint and propagated the attitude that "in times of misfortune, misfortune is fine," which according to Hirata prevented sociopolitical reform and a critical look at such an inhumane and agonizing situation as war.[26] Hong did not blatantly support the wartime government as the Japanese Buddhists did. It seems that he did not intentionally distort and misuse Buddhist ideas. But he made the Koreans accept and endure the worsening conditions of their reality and dissuaded them from complaining about their lives and venting their anger. It was in line with the colonial government's attempts at that time spiritual control to alleviate social tension and discontent through the propagation of the "right spirit."[27]

Hong's advocating of Buddhist notions such as *wŏnyung muae* and *chajae* is also controversial from a sociopolitical point of view. Explaining these Buddhist doctrines with the example of soy bean curd, he emphasizes the attitude of harmoniously living and serving others in a cooperative way. He remarks that the bean curd cake is not picky. It does not make a distinction between ingredients, preferring or disliking a certain kind. It harmonizes well with fish and cooperates with meat, too. It is not self-assertive by nature. It adapts itself to any circumstances. When the bean curd cake is served as food and mixed with other ingredients, it does not clash with them, emptying its mind to be compassionate.[28] Hong likewise underlines harmony (*chohwa*) and

[25] Ibid., pp.303 and 313.
[26] Hirata Seikō, "Zen Buddhist Attitudes to War" in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, & the Question of Nationalism*. edited by James W. Heisig & John C. Moraldo (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1994) pp.11-14.
[27] For more details, see Chapter 1 and 2.
[28] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.314-315.

cooperation (*hyŏpcho*) as the way Koreans should live in wartime colonial Korea. He suggests that one should have the spirit of no-self, rather than being led by self-interest.

Surprisingly or not, Hong's Buddhist insistences are analogous to Japanese wartime ideologies. As repeatedly discussed in previous chapters, the service to the Japanese empire and Emperor was a fundamental tenet for conducting the wars against China and the West through the mobilization of the entire population. The pursuit of one's own interests and ends was harshly condemned as Western individualism and egocentrism that shattered harmony among the people and brought about conflicts in society, whereas the spirit of service and sacrifice were glorified as noble and sacred for bringing harmony and peace to Asia and the world. Harmony, cooperation, and selfless service to benefit others were the very political slogans with which the wartime government indoctrinated individuals in both Japan and Korea.

However, Hong does not seem simply end up supporting the colonial authorities. He does not sympathize with all wartime policies, either. Instead, he finds a way out of the troublesome wartime situation and even creates a counter discourse. Taking the example of the bean curd, he does not only emphasize how it exists in harmony with other foods, but also how its inherent taste and flavor are never tainted by them. Although the bean curd is mixed with other ingredients and although its form and body is broken and changed by the grindstones, the bean curd never loses itself. He argues that its true self (*pon myŏnmok*) such as its mild, plain taste cannot be destroyed. The self-empting bean curd looks like sacrificing itself to other foods, but Hong disapproves of the implication of self-sacrifice, articulating that "the bean curd does not kill itself to save the others (to feed others), miraculously saving both the self and non-self."[29]

Hong's insistence on living in harmony with others and adapting oneself to one's present circumstances does not equal mindlessly obeying the colonial authorities. In fact, he stresses that one never should be impeded or tainted by the impure wartime society. It is to live in accordance with the spirit of bodhisattvas: to live in the filth of the world without being tainted by it. The bodhisattva's spirit and practice Hong suggests as an alternative way to grapple with wartime colonial reality agree with wartime slogans such as harmony and cooperation but at the same time, oppose the most basic fundamental tenet of war doctrines: self-sacrifice for the sake of others. It was a political doctrine to which two other prominent Buddhist writers, Han Yongun and Yi Kwangsu, were vulnerable. By insisting on compassion, for instance, they imposed the relinquishing of self on individuals, as the political authorities did. However, Hong seems to be one of the few colonial writers who was able to subvert the doctrine. With his conviction of the indestructible self and free and unimpeded mind, he led his compatriots to life rather than death. He suggested that one

[29] Ibid.

should live under impure and unfavorable conditions without sacrifying any life.

Asia versus the West

One striking feature of Hong Sayong's meditative essays is the background logic of "Asia versus the West." While talking about nature, he particularly expresses abhorrence to modern, material, and urban culture. He states that nature belongs to nature. To add "artificial" beauty to nature destroys it and is a "crime." He also shows distrust of capitalist money worship, arguing that one does not need to "pay" for enjoying the fresh wind and bright moon. He draws a contrast between pure, clean objects in nature and ferroconcrete buildings (*k'ongk'ŭrit'ŭ tach'ŭng kŏnmul*) in modern cities beset by meat smells and smeared with greasy "dirt".[30] His loathing, most of all, is directed at "Western" objects of urban Westernized life. The following phrases, embedded in his essay "San'gŏ-ŭi tal," are a good example of this attitude.

> *Society becomes more and more cold-hearted every moment, to the degree that it would even slash the bright moonlight to death. By now, all youths within the gates of Seoul will be totally mobilized in the dance halls and frantically shake their hips to the rhythms of jazz, sweating heavily. What would they think if they look up at the moon? They enjoy guzzling from a "kŭlaessŭ k'ŏp" [a glass cup] blinded by the dazzling "neon ssain" [neon lights]. It is deplorable that nowhere can we find moonlit refinement, which has lasted for such a long time*.[31]

Notable in this passage is Hong's comparison between Western materials and the Asian spirit. Using quotation marks, in his essay he particularly distances himself from glass cups, neon signs and concrete buildings as Anglo-American objects. The words he uses for there are all loans from English, and parts of Western material culture (interestingly, he does not use quotation marks for jazz music, which is not material). These objects represent Western material civilization and visualize its sophisticated technology (*multchil munmyŏng-ŭi chŏnggyo-han kisul*).[32]

Hong Sayong laments that people are hungry for money, material things and technology and have come to suffer from spiritual panic. Indulging in city life and material culture, they have forgotten their own ancient spiritual practice as *tongyangin* (Orientals).[33] They have lost the way to engage with their higher spirituality through meditation and contemplation. As a consequence, they live in anxiety and nervousness, not knowing what the foundation of

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

happiness is or how to find peace of mind. Hong invites those city dwellers to nature. He suggests they wash their body and mind, defiled by the dirt of Westernized material city life, in a small spring and restore their lost Eastern spirituality while contemplating nature.

"Ch'ŏmha-ŭi injŏng" 檐下의 人情 (Human feelings under the eaves, 1938) is another essay that reflects Hong Sayong's view of the materialistic West versus a spiritual Asia. In this essay, he compares traditional and Western-style houses in terms of eaves. The traditional houses and buildings had eaves under which passers-by could take shelter from the rain. According to him, the eaves were not merely part of the architecture, but the embodiment of human feelings (*injŏng*), of the spirit of mutual help (*sangbu sangjo*, 相扶相助) and of "coexistence and co-prosperity" (*kongjon kong'yŏng*, 共存共榮).[34] While being modernized, the eaves of houses became shorter and shorter. Eaves disappeared without a trace when the luxurious Western-style houses (*yangokchip*) began to be built. These Western-style houses fill so-called civilized cities. Yet, they are merely material objects without humanity. If there is a shower, pedestrians have nowhere to escape, and instead must stand in the rain like drowned mice. People in Western-style buildings coldly look out off the window at the pitiful scene. Hong deplores how contemporary material civilization, epitomized by the Western style house, has cruelly eaten away the heartwarming hospitality of Korea (Chosŏn) and even the "Oriental" (*tongyang-jŏk*) landscape of nature.[35]

Hong Sayong dichotomously separates West and East, the materialistic and the spiritual, city and nature. He does not only separate them, but he places Asian culture in opposition to Western civilization and deprecates the latter as dirty, defiled and polluting, causing disharmony, depravity, inertia and mental derangement. He then suggests the former as a strong remedy for recovering Asians' higher spirituality and energy. The meditation and contemplation he focuses on in his essays are suggested as a way to return to Asian spiritual culture and revive Eastern values and spiritual traditions. This pursuit of traditionalism is held in contrast to modernity, which, most conspicuously in his folksong-style poems, have been understood by nationalist scholarship as an attempt to express nationalism in the dark age of colonialism. Scholars hold slightly different views on Hong; some claim that in his early period, he composed Western-oriented romantic poems, and only later returned to Korean national and indigenous literature, culture and sentiments[36], while others hold that, in contrast to other *Paekcho* coterie members, he was considerably tradition-oriented from early on,[37] and even poeticized the traditional Korean

[34] Ibid., p.311.
[35] Ibid., pp.310-311.
[36] Chŏng Hoch'ang 정호창, "Hong Sayong-ŭi si yŏn'gu" 홍사용의 시 연구 (MA thesis, Sangji University, 1996), pp.36-48.
[37] Kim Haktong, 김학동, "Hyangt'osŏng-gwa minyo-ŭi yulcho" 鄕土性과 民謠의 律調in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip* 洪思容全集, Edited by Kim Haktong (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1985), pp.354-389; Kim

sentiment called *han* (恨, sorrow) in early poems.[38] However, they all equated Hong's traditionalism with nationalism.

Recently, this nationalist understanding has come to be reconsidered. Scholars such as Yi Sŏni take on this kind of re-appreciation of Oriental traditions as an attempt to overcome the (colonial) modernity imposed by the Japanese colonial authorities, and therefore, as an attempt to ultimately take a position against Japanese colonialism as an alternative to "direct resistance."[39] Arguing that anti-colonial nationalism in Korea is problematic in the sense that it tried to overcome colonialism by striving for modernization, which was colonialism's rationale, they find in this supposedly anti-colonial plea for Asian tradition a more thorough way of breaking away from the colonial discourse of hegemonic domination. This postcolonial reading opens up ways to explore more diverse reactions to Japanese colonialism, beyond the single narrative of resistance nationalism. However, together with nationalist scholarship, it fails to take into account the late 1930s historical context and the changing nature of colonial political discourses and overlooks the possibility that the literary tendency of stereotyping Asian tradition in stark opposition to modernity was not intended to overcome the colonial hegemony of modernity, but conversely to be in line with Japanese wartime ideologies.[40]

Hong's idea of "Asia versus the West," as well as his plea for the restoration of Eastern tradition and the expulsion of modern Westernized material civilization, is intimately connected to the Pan-Asian ideology prevalent throughout the 1930s, which was reinforced by Japan's wartime empire as the "New Order in East Asia" in 1938 and the ideology of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere in 1940. Pan-Asianism did not only advocate the solidarity and identity of Asia, assuming commonalities of Asian nations, such as common culture and race, and mutual economic interests in particular,[41] but also expressed aggressive anti-Westernism during the war against the West. This ideology drew upon the distinction between Asia and the West and was directed against Western influence and imperialism.[42] Japanese

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Pongju 金奉柱, "Hong Sayong si yŏn'gu" 洪思容詩硏究 (MA thesis, Koryŏ Univertiy, 1985), pp.53-75.

[38] O Seyŏng 吳世榮, "Nojak Hong Sayong yŏn'gu" 露雀 洪思容 硏究 in *Han'guk nangmunjuŭi si yŏn'gu* 韓國浪滿主義詩硏究 (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1980/1983), pp.353-377.

[39] Yi Sŏni 李善伊, "Manhae Han Yongun munhak-e nat'anan t'alsingminjijuŭi-jŏk insik" 만해 韓龍雲 文學에 나타난 脫植民主義的 인식 in *Ŏmun yŏn'gu* 語文硏究 31:2 (Summer 2003); Kang Chin'gu 강진구, "'Sasir-ŭi segi'-rŭl hwanghan usŭm-ŭi mihak: Ch'ae Mansik non" '사실의 세기(세기)'를 향한 웃음의 미학: 채만식론 in *1930-nyŏndae munhak-kwa kŭndae ch'ehŏm* 1930년대 문학과 근대체험 (Seoul: Ihoe, 1999), pp.237-258.

[40] Kim Yangsŏn 김양선, "Oksident'alijŭm-ŭi simsangjiri-wa yŏsŏngsŏng-ŭi palmyŏng" 옥시덴탈리즘의 심상지리와 여성성의 발명 in *Kŭndae munhag-ŭi t'alsingminsŏng-gwa chendŏ chŏngch'ihak* 근대문학의 탈식민성과 젠더정치학 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2009), p.39.

[41] Peter Duus, "Introduction: Japan's Wartime Empire: Problems and Issues" in *The Japanese wartime empire, 1931-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp.xxi-xxvi.

[42] Sven Saaler, "Pan-Asianism in modern Japanese history: overcoming the nation, creating region, forging an empire", p.2.

Pan-Asian thinkers and policymakers condemned the Eurocentric world order, modernization and Western domination in China and other Asian countries, claimed a return to Asia, Asian culture and values, and sought to establish a new order centered on Asia under Japanese leadership.[43]

As seen in many speeches, in particular in the wake of the outbreak of the Pacific War, Korean collaborationist leaders, too, in line with the dictates of the contemporary colonial wartime government, cried out for such a Pan-Asian ideology, denouncing Anglo-American imperialism, its racial discrimination, its economic exploitation, its shallow arrogance, its money worship, hedonism, and individualism.[44] For example, Kim Tujŏng, a secretary of the Spiritual Patriotic League (Sasang poguk yŏnmaeng), exclaimed in 1939 that the era of the whites was over and the twentieth century would be the heyday of the yellow race, with Japan as its center.[45] During the past three centuries, the white race had dominated the Asian nations economically, spiritually and militarily. As a result, the "Asian spirit" (*tongyang chŏngsin*) had degraded, and huge amounts of raw materials and resources had been taken away by the whites. In addition, the majority of Asians had been enslaved.[46] He claimed that the Asian nations needed to be liberated from the Western imperialists politically, economically and culturally as soon as possible and should be revived as independent, equal countries. Asian countries could not help but accept Japan as the leader of Asia because Japan was uniquely qualified to do so.[47] As far as spiritual culture is concerned, all great religions had their inception in Asia, but at present, Asian spiritual culture had been ruined by Western material civilization (*mulchil munmyŏng*), and had declined and disappeared without a trace – except in Japan.[48] Therefore, Asian countries should admit the completeness of Japanese culture and restore Asian spirituality under Japanese leadership. Kim Tujŏng repeated Japanese wartime ideology like a parrot. He even acquiesced in the Japanese colonialists hiding their own imperialistic nature under the cloak of inspiring the Japanese people to be a liberator of Asian brothers.

Hong Sayong did not emphasize Japan's superior political position as the leader of all Asians, nor did he talk about all the political, economic and military aspects of Pan-Asianism. However, his idea of Asia versus the West, his antipathy toward modern Westernized life, which he saw as devastating to Asian spiritual tradition, and his nostalgic return to "Asian" spiritual antiquity

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[43] Minamoto Ryōen, "The Symposium on "Overcoming Modernity" in *Rude Awakening*, pp.197-229; Richard F. Calichman, *Overcoming modernity: cultural identity in wartime Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[44] In *Tongyang chigwang*東洋之光 (Feb. 1942). Republished in *Ch'inil nonsŏl sŏnjip* 親日論說選集. Edited by Im Chongguk林鍾國 (Seoul: Silch'ŏn munhaksa, 1987), pp.158-204.

[45] "Ashia hutko to naisen ittai" 亞細亞 復興と內鮮一体 in *Tongyang chigwang*東洋之光 (May 1939). Republished in Ibid., pp.123-131.

[46] Ibid., p.123.

[47] Ibid., p.124.

[48] Ibid., p.126.

represented by Buddhist meditation and contemplation, coincide to a surprising degree with the rhetoric of wartime colonial discourse as presented by the Korean collaborators. In particular, the spirit of mutual help (*sangbu sangjo*, 相扶相助) and the spirit of coexistence and co-prosperity (*kongjon kong'yŏng*, 共存共榮) that Hong longed for as the cradle of Asian humanity (*injŏng*) in his essay "Ch'ŏmha-ŭi injŏng" remind one of the then current wartime ideology of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (*Taedonga kongyŏngkwŏn*, 大東亞共榮圈). Up to a point this was because the war ideology had been basically refashioned from old Asian traditions. In this way, his Buddhist essays citing Asian values and traditions were so much in line with the colonial government's wartime policy that they were allowed to be published in the governmental newspaper.

The question remains whether Hong Sayong's meditative writing was a mere disguise for wartime propaganda. His rejection of the West and the advocacy of Oriental values was definitely in keeping with Japanese war rhetoric, but it seems not to have simply been dictated by the colonial authorities, as was the case with the writing of many Korean collaborationist leaders. Beside Hong Sayong, there were more writers who expressed criticisms of modernity and pursued traditionalism in the surge towards the restoration and reevaluation of Eastern culture during the second Sino-Japanese War. Through a postcolonial re-reading, recent literary studies try to illuminate how these tradition-oriented writers struggled with counter-discursive strategies while following the colonial government's ideological line. How was it possible to achieve this balance when placed under tight government control and censorship?

As Peter Duus points out, there was a huge gap between rhetoric and reality during the war against China and the West.[49] Japan's wartime empire set forward high moral goals such as "liberating" China and Asia from the Western powers, harmony and cooperation among Asian counties, and ultimately, world peace under imperial benevolence. In reality, Japanese forces economically exploited those Asian countries, "embarked on a rampage of killing, raping and looting" of civilians in Nanjing,[50] and coerced Asian men and women into physical and sexual slavery for the Japanese military.[51] According to Christopher W.A. Szpilman, Pan-Asian wartime ideology was also not a single doctrine but unsettled and contradictory.[52] It was anti-Western, but also inspired by Western writings. It proclaimed Asian solidarity and equality, but insisted on Japanese superiority, hegemony and leadership.

[49] Peter Duus, *Modern Japan* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), pp.224-225 and 237-238.
[50] Ibid., p.222.
[51] Ibid., p.238.
[52] Christopher W.A. Szpilman, "Between Pan-Asianism and nationalism: Mitsukawa Kametarō and his campaign to reform Japan and liberate Asia" in *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, regionalism and borders* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p.85.

Rhetorically, it stood for peace in Asia, where as practically it was used as a tool to legitimize Japanese militarism and aggression throughout the continent. It was ambiguously positioned at the intersection between nationalism, regionalism, imperialism and universalism.

Like the Japanese civilian populace, Korean colonial writers may have been ignorant of the gap between realities and rhetoric and stood behind their government's vision of the "New Order in Asia."[53] As Han Suyŏng points out, many of them did not know what exactly the unfamiliar slogans and various wartime ideologies stood for, and tried to interpret and understand them at their own discretion.[54] However, there were some who were able to detect logical contradictions and inherent dissonances within colonial discourse and use them to create counter-discourses. The literary attempt to seek Korean indigenous tradition and culture within Asianism is one good example of this tactic. The wartime ideology of the "New Order" in Asia prompted many Korean writers to restore and reevaluate "Eastern" spirituality, traditions and values that were devastated by Western modern material urban civilization. However, this was not intended to promote diverse regional and indigenous Asian cultures. As the collaborator Kim Tujŏng stated, only in Japan Asian culture was preserved and alive, and therefore, Asians should admit the cultural and spiritual superiority and leadership of Japan and assimilate to Japanese culture. Korean writers such as Kim Tongni, Kim Yujŏng, and Pak T'aewŏn were greatly inspired by this Pan-Asian ideology and expressed their contempt for Western modernity and the evil of capitalism.[55] Nonetheless, tradition-oriented writers, in particular Yi T'aejun, Yi Hyosŏk and the associated members of the group around the journal *Munjang* 文章 (1939-1941), did not acknowledge or admire Japanese spiritual culture as "unique" and "complete." Under the disguise of returning to Asian culture, they longed for or revived the Korean cultural heritage, the "indigenousness" and "uniqueness" of which could not be homogenized or assimilated into Japanese and Asian culture.[56]

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[53] Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, pp.224-225.

[54] Han Suyŏng 한수영, *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chae insik* 친일문학의 재인식 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005), pp.17-33 and 81-85.

[55] Han Suyŏng 한수영, "Pak T'aewŏn sosŏr-esŏ-ŭi kŭndae-wa chŏnt'ong" 박태원 소설에서의 근대와 전통 in *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chae insik* 친일문학의 재인식 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005), pp.77-106; ------, "Sunsu munhangnon-esŏ-ŭi mi-jŏk chayulsŏng-gwa pan kŭndae-ŭi nolli: Kim Tongni-ŭi kyŏngu" 순수문학론에서의 미적 자율성과 반근대의 논리: 김동리의 경우 in Ibid., pp.214-239; Kim Yangsŏn 김양선, *Kŭndae munhag-ŭi t'alsingminsŏng-gwa chendŏ chŏngch'ihak* 근대문학의 탈식민성과 젠더정치학 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2009), pp.35-58.

[56] Ch'a Sŭnggi 차승기, "Tongyang-jŏk segye-wa 'Chosŏn'-ŭi sigan" 동양적 세계와 '조선'의 시간 in *Kŭndae-rŭl tasi ingnŭnda* 2 근대를 다시 읽는다 (Seoul: Yŏksa pip'yŏngsa, 2006/2007), pp.219-255; Han Suyŏng 한수영, "Yi T'aejun-gwa sin ch'eje: Singmin chibae tamnon-ŭi suyong-gwa chŏhang" 이태준과 신체제: 식민지배담론의 수용과 저항 in *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi chae insik* 친일문학의 재인식 (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2005), pp.34-51; Yun Taesŏk 윤대석, *Singminji kungmin munhangnon* 식민지 국민문학론 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2006), pp.87-116.

If so, did Hong Sayong, too, create such a counter-discourse while praising Eastern spirituality in his Buddhist essays? Unlike other tradition-oriented Korean writers, he seems not to look for a revival of Korean indigenous culture or Korea's unique spirituality or religious traditions. From his repeated use of "we, Asians" and "Oriental landscape of nature," we can surmise that he only wants to revive the Asian identity and shared spiritual culture, without a particular awareness of Korean indigenous elements.[57] On the other hand, it is noteworthy that nowhere does he mention Japan or the Japanese spirit, or praise Japanese cultural superiority and leadership, which was an important prerequisite for the New Order ideology. His Buddhist essays do not seem to be the genre through which he attempts to revive Korea' distinctive linguistic and cultural heritage, to produce a form of counter-discourse. Instead, his folksong-style poems, which I will examine in the following section, are the medium which he chose for this purpose.

Reconsideration of Hong's folksong-style poems

Hong Sayong's folksong-style poems, which he also wrote most intensively during wartime, are the genre in which we can find the richness of traditional, Korean native, local culture (*chŏngt'ong/hyangt'o munhwa*). As mentioned previously, existing scholarship regards these texts uniformly as "anti-modernist" and "anti-colonial nationalist" because of the fact that they were inspired by Korean tradition, in particular folksongs. Celebrating Hong's poems, however, few further try to inquire if the content of the poems also relates to national circumstances and what is the exact historical background behind the poetic expressions. Most scholars have failed to recognize that Hong's attempt to restore the traditional culture was incorporated into cultural politics under colonial rule. In this respect, Hong's tradition-inspired poems need to be re-read beyond the limited scope of the nationalist perspective.

Hong Sayong was one of the important writers who wrote poetry inspired by folksongs in the colonial period. Before examining his folksong-style poems, it may be helpful to look into his literary criticism of Korean folksongs first, because the essay gives us a clue about how he himself thought about Korean folksongs. In his essay "Chosŏn-ŭn menari nara" 朝鮮은 메나리 나라 (Korea is a country of folksong, 1928), he states that although Korea is a devastated country, it still preserves its rich heritage called "*menari*," which may be rendered as folksong.[58] Hong argues that "*menari* is not a piece of writing. Neither speech nor a poem. It was naturally generated when this people (*paeksŏng*) and this nation (*nara*) were formed. It is our sublime soul, kept in the inmost recesses of our heart."[59] He boasts that Korea is the kingdom

[57] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.301 and 310.
[58] In *Pyŏlkŏngon* 12/13 別乾坤 (May 1928). Republished *in Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.316-321.
[59] Ibid., p.317.

of folksongs in the sense that its people have made singing folksongs a part of their lives and therefore, although everything fades away, he anticipates that Korean folksongs will go on forever.[60]

Korean folksong had been orally transmitted from generation to generation but it was rediscovered and renamed with a homogenizing term, *minyo*, in the modern, colonial period. It was the Japanese novelist Mori Ōgai who had adopted the German concept of *Volkslied* and translated it with the new term *minyo*.[61] Since then, this neologism came to be used as the general term for folk music in Japan as well as Korea. In his article, however, Hong tries not to depend on the imported term, a term coined by a Japanese. Instead of it, he uses the alternative term *menari*. *Menari* actually refers to a certain mode of folk music particularly common east of the T'aebaek mountain area. There is actually no homogenizing indigenous term referring to all Korean folksong. There are a diversity of more or less general designations: *norae* (song), *t'aryŏng* (ballad), and *sori* (song), or names referring to particular types of song such as Arirang, Sanyuhwa and so on. Among those terms, Hong singled out *menari* and generalized it to refer to all Korean folksongs.

To Hong, *menari* does not merely refer to the collection of Korean folk music. In his view, its meaning is not confined to music or sound alone. Also, a certain written or spoken form cannot exactly express what *menari* is because he finds a greater meaning in it: it is an intangible container for Koreans' emotions, thoughts, and lives. He attempts to rediscover Korean folksongs as the voice of Koreans and to reinterpret their presence as an embodiment of Korean national identity. Can his attempt be seen as congruent with his nationalism and be regarded as representing resistance literature against the Japanese as argued by nationalist scholars?[62]

Hong's detailed description of Korean folksong and the Korean identity, concealed in it seems not to resist colonial discourse but rather, to accept or appropriate it. He describes how the songs of this "mysterious calm land" represent the characteristics and sentiments the Korean people have. Their tears, sighs, mortification, woes, sadness, and pitifulness permeate the songs. In his ears, the rhythm of songs is far from cheering, enterprising, and high-spirited, but basically sad, mournful and pensive.[63] Hong's description of a "mysterious calm land" echoes the way in which Western countries typically view and describe their Oriental others, and in particular characterizations of Korea as the "Hermit Kingdom" and the "Land of the Morning Calm."

Interestingly, Japan, which was put under the Orientalist gaze as part of the Orient, re-directed Orientalism toward its colonial vision of Korea. Its view of Korean native folksong was no exception. In 1913, the Japanese Government

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[60] Ibid., p.318.
[61] Keith Howard, "Minyo in Korea: Songs of the People and Songs for the People" in *Asian Music*, pp.1-2.
[62] Cho Tong'il 조동일, *Han'guk munhak t'ongsa* 5 한국문학통사 (Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa, 1997), p.259.
[63] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.318-319.

General in Korea undertook extensive research on Korean folksongs.[64] Recognizing them as a symbol of Korean identity and an expression of the inherent sentiment or spirit of the Koreans, the colonial government investigated Korean folksong, because such knowledge was judged to be necessary for colonial domination. Japanese popular ethnographers such as Okita Kenjō looked to the native Korean folksong "Arirang," which every Korean was accustomed to singing, regardless of age, status and residence, and asserted that this representative folksong has a certain sadness in its rhythm that is the mark of a "doomed country." His colonial gaze implied that the Koreans who used to sing the sad song must have a passive and pessimistic attitude to life and are unable to retain the autonomy of their country.[65]

We see that there is no difference between Hong and his Japanese colonial counterpart on the point that folksong should be taken as the epitome of the Korean national character. Also, Hong agrees on the discourse of Japanese colonialist aesthetics: Korean folksong is characterized by its sad and sorrowful melody. Logically, if he really intends to challenge the colonial discourse and gaze, he should put more focus on discovering a cheerful tone in the Korean songs. However, there is a crucial difference between Hong and Okita. Okita manipulated his knowledge of Korean folksong in order to justify colonial takeover and domination. As Todd A. Henry points out, he did not acknowledge that the national "doom" of Korea was in fact the result of Japan's imperial domination; he closed his eyes and ears to the Koreans' efforts of nation-building and anticolonial nationalism, instead accusing them of spending their time in pure idleness.[66]

Hong's ideas on Korean folksongs had certain things in common with the views of the Japanese ethnographer but he did not aim to justify Japanese colonialism, but rather to tackle it. Korean folk music was disparaged by the Japanese as a token of inferiority of the Koreans. Against this, Hong tried to revalue Korean folksongs, proclaiming that *menari* was a national treasure and source of pride for the Koreans. He claimed that this buried treasure can be found by no one but Koreans. Only we, Koreans, can perceive its value possess, enjoy, and take pride in this wonderful and precious treasure.[67] To the question why Korean folksongs sound sad and pitiful, he gives a different answer, too. It is not because tears, sighs, and complaints were innate in the personality of Koreans, but due to emotions in reaction to maltreatment. He reveals what the Japanese ethnographer tries to hide: the people who sang *menari* were subjected to ill-treatment (*kubak*) and contempt.[68]

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[64] Keith Howard, "Minyo in Korea", p.4.
[65] Todd A. Henry, "Sanitizing Empire: Japanese Articulations of Korean Otherness and the Construction of Early Colonial Seoul, 1905-1919" in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64.3 (August 2005):639-675, p.647.
[66] Ibid.
[67] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.316-317.
[68] Ibid.,p.320.

Hong directly asks who maltreats the Koreans. The answer is easy if it would be Japanese colonialism. Yet, instead of blaming the Japanese colonizers, he tries to point out that it is rather Koreans themselves whose minds are colonized and look down on their own songs as worthless and inferior in a way the colonial power dictates. For ages, Koreans chose to look up to Chinese literature (*hanhak*, 漢學) as superior. In modern-day Korea, they indulge in Western-influenced songs. Arguing that these are all borrowed and therefore, sound unfamiliar and strange, he suggests his compatriots seek something Korean, a natural sound coming from their hearts. *Menari* is given as a way to restore the Korean self and the Korean voices. [69]

In his late 1920s literary criticism, Hong Sayong attempted to reevaluate the meaning and value of Korean folksong in self-reflective manner rather than as a way of resistance as is often assumed. A decade later, he began to write his own poems inspired by folksong. Ironically, it was in the midst of war and turmoil. Because they are *minyosi* (folksong-style poetry), scholars conclude in unison that these poems had their origin in Hong's nationalism and were composed to boost the nationalist spirit at the end of the colonial period. However, we need to distinguish the oral *minyo* from the poems inspired by *minyo*. Although the former may be considered to have a nationalistic meaning, the latter do not necessarily produce the same meaning or play the same role. For instance, many *minyosi* were composed during wartime under the auspices of the government policy as war propaganda to lift military morale among soldiers and civilians on the homefront.[70] Did Hong's folksong-style poems result solely from his uncompromising nationalist spirit or did they adapt *minyo* to the military use of songs for propaganda in wartime?

Hong's poem "Hojŏthan kŏrŭm" 호젓한 걸음 (A lonely walk, 1939)[71] which seems to be, as Ch'oe Wŏnsik argues, a reworking of a traditional Korean ballad, *Maengkkongi t'aryŏng* (The song of a narrow-mouthed frog), is an important poem that provides clue to the question.[72] In this poem, Hong Sayong depicts a lonely walker who walks around somewhere in Seoul, which had been renamed Keijō 京城 by the colonial authorities. The poem basically consists of a question-and-answer conversation between the poet and the lonely walker. In the first stanza, the poet asks the walker if he is afraid of crossing the P'och'ŏng 捕廳 bridge. The walker answers that its current name is Pokch'ŏnggyo 福淸橋, a place where one can hear *salp'uri changdan* (originally a shamanic tune) flowing out from a *yoritchip* (restaurant). The walker says

[69] Ibid., pp.320-321.

[70] Pak Suyŏn 박수연, "Kungmin munhak, sijo-wa minyosi, ch'inil" 국민문학, 시조와 민요시, 친일 in *Ch'inil munhag-ŭi nae-tchŏk nolli* 친일문학의 내적 논리 (Seoul: Yŏngnak 역락, 2003): 85-115; -----, "Naejaesŏn pujae-ŭi chuch'e-wa munhak-chŏk chongch'akchi" 내재성 부재의 주체와 문학적 종착지 in Ibid., p.65-71 and 75-76; Barak Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), pp.21-24 and 30-35.

[71] In *Samch'ŏllli* 三千里 (April 1939) Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.45-46.

[72] Ch'oe Wŏnsik, "Hong Sayong munhak-kwa chuch'e-ŭi kaksŏng", pp.146-147.

further that he has deliberately walked in the snowfall and does not mind getting wet. A large thousand-year-old bell rings silently (*sori ŏpsi ulda*) at the end of the first stanza.

In the second stanza, the poet asks the walker whether he is afraid of passing through Tokkaebikkol (the neighborhood of goblins).[73] The lonely walking man answers that he is just annoyed by the noisy jazz music ringing out there. The walker then repeats what he said in the first stanza, that he has deliberately exposed himself to the snowfall and does not mind getting wet. The dirty water overflows the Sup'yo 水標 bridge at the end of the second stanza. In the last stanza, the poet asks the walker if he is afraid of passing in front of the site of the Hullyŏnwŏn 訓練院. The walking man answers that it is the overworked people and factory sirens in its neighborhood that exhaust him. The walker once more repeats what he said about the snowfall in the previous stanzas, but worries how he will be able to reach Wangsimni 往十里, as he sees the water rise under the Ogan bridge 五間水.

The lonely walker in this poem resembles the many who rambled about in downtown Seoul at that historical moment. Such rambling was called *bura bura* (ぶらぶら), a word adopted from Japanese that suggests strolling aimlessly through modern busy streets. Honmachi 本町 (present-day Ch'ungmuro) as the center of modernity and a Japanese-run commercial and shopping area in Seoul, drew the majority of those ramblers, as the newly coined word *honbura* (本ぶら) attests. The Japanese residents in Seoul seem to have first used this term as an equivalent of *gin bura* (銀ぶら), or taking a walk around the Ginza area, and Koreans seem to have popularly used it, too.[74] In this poem, Hong Sayong imitates the modern colonial experience of *bura bura*, but in such a way as to re-examine colonial society and the power dynamics embodied by space.

The lonely man does not take a walk around the chief Japanese thoroughfare of Honmachi, a place where night was like day, ablaze with bellflower-shaped streetlamps.[75] Instead, he is walking around the opposite side, the chief Korean area, which was geographically separated from the brightly lit Honmachi by a stream (*kaech'ŏn*) which was renamed Ch'ŏngp'ung kyech'ŏn 淸風溪川 by the colonial authorities (presently known as Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn 淸溪川),[76] and administratively discriminated against by the colonial authorities. At the end of the Chosŏn dynasty, festering slums grew

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[73] Ibid., p.146.

[74] Kim Yŏnggŭn 김영근, "Ilche ha singminji-jŏk kŭndaesŏng-ŭi han t'ŭkching: Kyŏngsŏng-esŏ-ui tosi kyŏnghŏm-ŭl chungsim-ŭro" 일제하 식민지적 근대성의 한 특징: 경성에서의 도시 경험을 중심으로 in *Sahoe-wa yŏksa* 57 사회와역사 (June 2000):11-44, p.36; Sin Myŏngjik 신명직, *Modŏn poi kyŏngsŏng-ŭl kŏnilda: Manmun manhwa-ro ponŭn kŭndae-ŭi ŏlgul* 모던보이 경성을 거닐다: 만문만화로 보는 근대의 얼굴 (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa yŏn'gu, 2003), pp.27-31.

[75] Kim Yŏnggŭn, "Ilche ha singminji-jŏk kŭndaesŏng-ŭi han t'ŭkching: Kyŏngsŏng-esŏui tosi kyŏnghŏm-ŭl chungsim-ŭro", p.18.

[76] Son Chŏngmok 손정목, "Tosi 50-nyŏnsa 8: Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn pokkaegongsa-wa kogadoro kŏnsŏl" 도시 50년사 (8): 청개천 복개공사와 고가도로 건설 in *Tosi munje* 37 도시문제 (2002):95-113, pp.99-100.

along the stream. The stream was contaminated and a source of disease. Even the chief Korean thoroughfare, Chongno, contrasted sharply with the clean, highly modernized, cheerful and inviting Honmachi. According to *Chungang ilbo* 中央日報, the Great Depression seemed to affect only the Korean neighborhood. During the day, Chongno looked as if it exemplified the economic crisis in colonial Korea, and at night, it seemed like a street in the underworld, with a melancholic, dark and eerily still atmosphere.[77]

It is noteworthy that the pedestrian in the poem actually does not wander around in a leisurely, aimless manner. The walker in the poem walks along Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn, the very dividing line between the Korean area of Pukch'on (Northern Village) including Chongno and the Japanese area of Namch'on (Southern Village) including Honmachi. His walk starts at the Pokch'ŏng bridge, the beginning of the main stream, and winds through famous historic sites, to the five-arched bridge (Ogansugyo), the end of the main stream. The walker in the poem does not only march around the contemporary city, he also revisits history and travels between present and past, as a number of the archaic stone bridges on the Ch'ŏnggye Stream and those famous heritage sites have their own long histories and legends.

The poet first talks about the Pokch'ŏng bridge 福淸橋. Its original official name was Hyejŏnggyo 惠政橋. This bridge was also commonly called P'och'ŏng tari because the old police bureau of Chosŏn (P'odoch'ŏng, 捕都廳) was situated nearby. Among the many stone bridges on Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn, this bridge was historically, culturally, politically, and ethnographically the most important, as Yi Chunghwa has argued. As its title implied, Hyejŏnggyo embodied the governing ideology of the benevolent ruler. The kings of Chosŏn paid a visit to the bridge in person and listened to the complaints of the common people while passing along it. In 1434, King Sejong installed a sundial on this bridge for the first time, to benefit his people.[78] However, in 1926, the colonial government carried out river conservation work and changed the bridge's name to Pokch'ŏnggyo 福淸橋. As Yi Chunghwa surmises, the government was either ignorant of the real name of the bridge or misunderstood the pronunciation of its popular name, P'och'ŏng tari.[79] Much more likely, the government did not need to respect the old name any more and chose a name more to their liking. After that, the bridge lost its original and popular name, and the stories related to it were also lost. However, Hong Sayong evokes the forgotten popular name of the bridge from the past and revives the stories that the bridge conceals.

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[77] *Chungang ilbo* 中央日報 (November 1931).

[78] Yi Chunghwa 李重華, "Chigŭm-ŭn 'Pokch'ŏnggyo' Hyejŏnggyo-ŭi naeyŏk: Hampuro kaemyŏngdoen kujŏk illam" 只今은 '福淸橋' 惠政橋의 來歷: 함부로 開名된 舊跡 一覽 in *Tong'a ilbo* (Dec. 1926-Jan.1927).

[79] Yi Chunghwa 李重華, "Chigŭm-ŭn 'Pokch'ŏnggyo' Hyejŏnggyo-ŭi naeyŏk: Hampuro kaemyŏngdoen kujŏk illam."

In the same stanza, Hong Sayong revisits another old relic and its gruesome and tragic stories: the big bell housed in the Posingak pavilion. This bell was cast in 1396 and hung in its present place in 1468. The metal of which it was cast failed to fuse until a living child had been tossed into the molten mass, from which circumstance the Koreans claim that the wailing of a child can always be detected in its notes.[80] Its dull, heavy boom is heard in all parts of the city, and its warning tones were the signal for the opening and closing of the gates during five centuries. Formerly at 8 or 9 o'clock, when darkness had fallen, this great curfew was rung as a signal to all the men that they must hurry home, seclude themselves, and give the women a chance to come out and amuse themselves. The custom fell into disuse when foreigners came to live in the capital and the gates were left open. During the colonial period, this great bell lost its function and stopped ringing. As Hong expresses in his poem, it lost its powerful sound and became "mute."

The original Posingak bell, cast in 1395, had been destroyed during the *Imjin* War (Japanese invasions of Korea, 1592-1598) and at the current King Sŏnjo 宣祖's order, the *Tongdaemun chong* 東大門鐘, originally the bell of the *Wŏngaksa* 圓覺寺 Temple, was moved to replace it. In folklore, this bell deeply touched people's hearts as a signal that a day was over and the tranquil night had come; it came to be called *In'gyŏng* or *Indyŏng* because of its newly built pavilion.[81] As it was originally a temple bell, the place where the bell was hang was once regarded as a "sacred place" (*sŏngji*, 聖地).[82] When hearing the bell ringing, the sentient beings in the sea of suffering woke up from their delusions and were led to happiness and bliss. In the older days, it also served as an administrative signal to inform of morning gatherings of the kings and his officials and to control people's customs and behavior, and even was used for political and military purposes to call out armed forces in the case of a national emergency.[83] However, the big bell as well as the temples bells were symbolically and literally displaced in the colonial period. After losing all the functions they had had, most of them were exhibited in museums and seen as aesthetic objects or antiques.[84]

It is noteworthy that in 1928 Hong Sayong wrote a one-act play about this Posingak bell, which he wanted to publish in the Buddhist journal, *Pulgyo*, but its full text was deleted and confiscated by the colonial authorities. According to his colleague Pak Chin, this play, entitled *Pŏngŏri kut* (A shaman ritual of mutes), dealt with a rumor about the bell. After the March First Movement (1919), a rumor was circulated that if the bell rang secretly, everyone should gather on Chongno. In the play, people hear the bell and rally from all

[80] "Posingag-ŭi chŏnsŏl" 普信閣의 傳說, *Samch'ŏlli* (March 1931).
[81] Yi Chunghwa, "Chŏngnu-wa posingak chong-e taehaya" 鐘樓 와 普信閣鐘 에 對하야, *Chindan hakpo* 震檀學報 (March 1937), p.521.
[82] Ibid., p.506.
[83] Ibid., p.508.
[84] Ibid., pp.506-507.

over the country, intending to perform a grand ritual without saying a word. But the Japanese police get wind of the event, storm into the street and arrest the crowd.[85] This was not a rumor but really happened during the March First Movement.[86] That was why the colonial authorities had forbidden to ring the bell, arguing that this was ideologically dangerous,[87] and found Hong's play dangerous because it evoked memories of the national event using the motif of the Posingak bell. With his play Hong failed but in his folksong-style poem, he successfully restored the once lost sound of the archaic bell with its religious, political and cultural functions and histories.

The P'och'ŏng bridge and the five-arched bridge, Ogansugyo Hong mentioned in his poem were respectively the first and last bridges on the Ch'ŏnggye Stream. In the process of modernization and urbanization, they were seen as too narrow and impractical. The colonial authorities took those archaic stone bridges down and instead built strong but ugly concrete bridges (in 1926 and 1907 respectively). The Big Bell, an instrument which indicated time and determined people's way of life for centuries, was discarded as useless and inadequate for modern times and degraded to an antique remnant. However, in the changed historical atmosphere where Western modernity was condemned whereas Asianism was proclaimed as the ideology for the new world order, Hong Sayong rediscovered this lost cultural heritage with all the memories attached to it and revaluated it. His poetic return to the past and rediscovery of tradition and history are basically in line with the anti-Western Asianism in support of the Japanese wartime empire.

At the same time, Hong Sayong destabilizes the dominant Pan-Asian discourse of the Japanese Empire and challenges its assumptions. As one might have noticed in the previous paragraph, it was the colonial authorities who disparaged and destroyed those archaic stone bridges and constructed modern concrete bridges as emblems of modernity. Therefore, Hong's rediscovery of this cultural heritage in its opposition to modernity, implies a distancing from the politics of the colonial government. Furthermore, the revisited cultural objects were indigenous and unique and could not be assimilated into the homogeneity of "Oriental culture." They had their own long histories and distinctive stories. Elsewhere in Asia, including in Japan, one might find a similar story but not exactly the same. While a common culture in Asia under the leadership of Japan was promoted and Japanese culture was mystified as unique and divine, Hong destabilized Japan's new order of Asianism, its myth of Japanese uniqueness, and its assimilation policy by reinstating Korean indigenous traditions.

This happens again in Hong Sayong's comparison of traditional and modern sounds. The poet, for example, confronts *salp'uri changdan* and the

[85] Cited from Yi Wŏngyu, *Paekcho-ga hŭrŭdŏn sidae: Nojak Hong Sayong iltaegi*, pp.44-45.
[86] "Chongno chonggak" 鐘露鐘閣 in *Tonga ilbo* (25 Feb. 1924).
[87] "Tto motch'il posingak" 또 못칠 普信閣 in *Tonga ilbo* (28 Dec. 1932).

thousand-year-old bell's ringing with "tchassŭ" (jazz music) and factory sirens. The poet clearly shows his irritation and discomfort with the modern capitalistic sounds of colonial Korea. The jazz music hurts his ear and the factory sirens exhaust his body and mind. In this way, he expresses his antipathy toward the West, modernity and capitalism that resulted from colonial policies. However, factory sirens are not only modern capitalistic sounds but also the voice of Japan's wartime empire. The wartime government opposed Western materialism and capitalism, but paradoxically accelerated the development of modern industries and factories in 1930s colonial Korea to procure military supplies. Thus, while condemning the modern capitalistic sound of factory sirens, the poet also has a chance to express his antipathy toward the colonial authorities. Meanwhile, the traditional sounds represent the lost voice of the Korean people. The ringing of the bell, *emilele*, and the Ogansu bridge which is personified as being choked by tears reveal the sighs, groans and tears that people should hold back.

Finally, one last question needs to be answered. Why does Hong repeatedly ask "Aren't you afraid?" in this poem? Why does the walker in the poem repeatedly answer in each stanza that he deliberately exposes himself to the snowfall and does not mind getting wet? What on earth is scary? What does the poet mean with walking in the snow and getting wet? The question "Aren't you afraid?" refers to P'och'ŏng tari, Tokkaebip'al (Tokkaebip'alkkol) and Hullyŏnwŏn. These places are associated with the old police bureau, goblins and the old military base, which may have terrified people in older days. The old designations and places also evoke memories of fear. That is why the poet asks the walker if he does not feel afraid of passing by those locations.

The walker does not answer with yes or no, but instead, he denounces modern, colonial materials and sounds such as Pokch'ŏnggyo, Jazz music and factory sirens as terrible as those in the past, or even worse. As the old P'och'ŏng bridge was destroyed and lost its name and story and Pokch'ŏnggyo was constructed by the colonial government, Koreans became spiritually crippled and lost their past memories. Jazz music and factory sirens violently drown out the voices of the people, silencing them. The poet saw the grotesque reality in which colonial modernity and colonialism wielded their violence against people. Yet, he confronts reality instead of avoiding it out of fear. The puzzling gesture that the walker has no fear of getting wet and does not avoid exposing himself to the snowfall seems to reveal this intention.

Hungry ghosts and a grotesque Buddha

Many images appearing in Hong Sayong's wartime writing are deformed and grotesque. In his essay "Ch'ŏmha-ŭi injŏng," he not only presents a comparison between a traditional cottage and a Western style house. The ruined cottage with a torn window, a leaking roof, and cracked mud walls looks like a spooky haunted house. The dilapidated house evokes the incidence and intensity of

impoverishment of wartime colonial Korea. As he remarks at the end of the same essay, the lack of humanity (*injŏng*) in society is not merely caused by modern Western materialism. The hardship of life affects the life of people. He realizes that it is too much to expect the humanity of old and generosity from those who live a hard life moving from one rented room to another.[88]

Poverty was one of the biggest problems people in wartime colonial Korea confronted, in particular in rural area. Of course, as far as the economic crisis was concerned, the people in metropolitan Japan knew hard times, too. As Peter Duus states, "collapsing farm income, rising debt, and food shortages created widespread rural desperation, and in the cities blue collar workers and university graduates alike faced unemployment."[89] From the early 1930s, the Japanese government engaged in active public spending to stimulate the economy in Japan, increased its spending on military procurements and public works, in particular in rural society. This was "to push cash in the hands of the farm population" and as a result, by 1936, Japan somewhat recovered from the economic downturn and enjoyed a mild prosperity.[90]

As Gi-Wook Shin and Do-Hyun Han have made clear, the colonial government in Korea also attempted to deal with rural deterioration, agrarian depression and tenant disputes through new land laws and the Rural Revitalizing Campaign (*nongch'on kaengsaeng undong*, 1932-1940).[91] Compared with the 1920s campaign focusing on increasing rice production, this new policy aimed to raise rural living standards, and moreover emphasized "spiritual regeneration," fostering pride in labor, self-reliance, frugality, social harmony, and gratefulness rather than materialism, by reinventing Confucian traditional virtues. This also strengthened the foundation for material and spiritual mobilization during wartime. Government accounts indicated modest achievements in improving rural economic welfare.[92] About one third of rural households resolved food shortages and repaid usurious debts. More than half of the participants in the campaign increased their land.

However, historians say that the colonial government claims were tendentious and may have been exaggerated.[93] By 1939, 64 percent of rural households still suffered food shortages and 73 percent remained in debt. Those who benefited from the campaign were a limited number of local leaders. Many of the rural poor could not endure the poverty and left for Japan, Manchuria, or urban areas in Korea. There was a huge gap between government statements and the life experience of rural people. Korean writers saw this gap and provided narratives that told how people in rural areas led their everyday lives

[88] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.311.
[89] Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, p.215.
[90] Ibid., p.225.
[91] Gi-Wook Shin and Do-Hyun Han, "Colonial Corporatism: The Rural Revitalization Campaign 1932-1940", p.74 and 77.
[92] Ibid., pp.89-94.
[93] Ibid., pp.89 and 93.

under worsening conditions. Their literary works reflected the everyday experience of the rural poor, a reality filled with hunger and deprivation, characterized by the erosion of human values, gambling, prostitution and women trafficking, all of which gave the lie to the government's statements mentioned above.[94]

Hong Sayong was one of those writers who depicted the distorted and poverty-stricken lives of people in rural areas. However, there is something distinctive about the way he viewed and tackled the problem. From a Buddhist perspective, he envisaged poverty-stricken rural society as the realm of "hungry ghosts" (*agwi*, 餓鬼). These grotesque figures are usually depicted as having a large stomach and a thin neck, and afflicted by extreme hunger and thirst which they can never satisfy. In Buddhism, the realm of the hungry ghosts is one of the lower realms where people are reborn and suffer, or signifies a low state of mind, being caught up in greed, desire and craving. In his Buddhist essay "Usong," Hong remarked that people in his time searched in vain for food and fought over one another's rice bowls like hungry ghosts.[95] In another essay "Kung-gwa tal" 窮과 達 (1939), he deplored the heartless society in which brothers and sisters turned to hungry ghosts upon their parents death and quarreled over the inheritance in court.[96]

In his folksong-style poems Hong attempted to give a more detailed picture of the "hungry ghosts" of the rural population. Many of his poems depict the landscape of spring because poverty, hunger and starvation went to extremes at that time of year. According to Ch'oe Wŏnsik, while composing these poems, Hong seems to have adopted Korean folksongs such as *namul t'aryŏng* and *namul norae*, which commonly describe women going to the field in twos and threes, holding baskets and hoes, to gather fresh vegetables, and singing about the beauty of spring.[97] However, Hong Sayong completely reworked the typical image of springtime from these original folksongs. His poems on spring are far from nostalgic about the pleasures of rural life or the peaceful idyllic beauty of spring, in spite of what some scholars think.[98] As the poet himself satirically states in "Siaksi maŭmiran" 시악시 마음이란 (A woman's heart is, 1938), such a hopeful and beautiful spring landscape and such romantic sentiments are a silly dream (*kaekkum*).[99] This is to say that the bright days of spring do not exist in colonial reality. The spring he depicts in his

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[94] Ch'oe Kangmin 최강민, "Singminji-jŏk kŭndae-rŭl paehoehanŭn yurangin: Kim Yujŏng munhag-ŭi kŭndaesŏng-ŭl chungsim-ŭro" 식민지적 근대를 배회하는 유랑인: 김유정 문학의 근대성을 중심으로 in *1930-nyŏndae munhak-kwa kŭndae ch'ehŏm* 1930년대 문학과 근대체험 (Seoul: Ihoe, 1999), pp.211-235; Kim Yangsŏn, "1930-nyŏndae sosŏl-gwa singminji muŭisig-ŭi yangsang" 1930년대 소설과 식민지 무의식의 양상 in *Kŭndae munhag-ŭi t'alsingminsŏng-gwa Chendŏ chŏngch'ihak*, pp.83-103.

[95] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.303.

[96] *Maeil sinbo* (March 1939). Republished in Ibid., p.313.

[97] Ch'oe Wŏnsik, "Hong Sayong munhak-kwa chuch'e-ŭi kaksŏng", pp.139-140.

[98] Ibid., p.138; Kim Haktong, 김학동, "Hyangt'osŏng-gwa minyo-ŭi yulcho" 鄕土性과 民謠의 律調 in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip* 洪思容全集, pp.372-375.

[99] In *Samch'ŏlli munhak* 三千里文學 (Jan. 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.41.

poems is associated with the hardest time for people in rural areas to survive: the moment of spring starvation (*ch'un'gung* 春窮).

Early spring was a period in which there was insufficient food and the peasant population starved. Spring starvation occurred not only in pre-modern, traditional societies, but also in the "modern" colonized period. There were unending reports in the 1920s and 1930s Korean dailies on the gory details of spring starvation: children and the elderly were lying in the sheets as if they were dead, people barely subsisting by begging or eating the roots of plants and trees, a hungry blind man who committed suicide, a farm woman killing her child before he died of hunger, and rural poor digging up a buried dead cow and eating it. According to a report in the *Tong'a ilbo*, the rural population suffered starvation every spring, and the government authorities did nothing to prevent it.[100]

The government newspaper *Maeil sinbo*, on the other hand, remained silent about what rural Koreans experienced during the murderous spring starvation season. By 1937, the government still repeated that the authorities were considering countermeasures against the spring starvation problem and were investing in research; they anticipated that spring starvation would get better quickly.[101] A report titled "Ch'un'gung-e taech'ŏ" 春窮에 對處 (A countermeasure against spring starvation, 1936) did not talk about how to solve the starvation problem, but instead how to cope with crimes such as robberies due to hunger. Because of a poor harvest, the police in Taejŏn anticipated an increase in crime and, therefore, the government was preparing necessary measures.[102] The newspapers also delivered the "good" news that Ch'ŏrwŏn District planned to plant many chestnut trees to serve a double purpose: reforestation and the provision of an alternative source of food.[103] Japanese professor Hirota Yutaka supported the government saying that *ch'un'gung* might be terrible, but was not always bad because it might give *yangban* women a chance to go outside and be liberated from the inner rooms.[104]

The colonial policymakers avoided telling the heart-wrenching life stories of the rural population during the *ch'un'gung* period, making far-fetched claims for such schemes such as the chestnut tree plan. To counter such absurdities, Hong Sayong wrote a folksong-style poem "Kamch'ul su ommŭn kŏsŭn" 감출 수 업는 것은 (What cannot be hidden, 1939) and satirically asked

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[100] *Tong'a ilbo* (April 1935)

[101] "Ch'un'gung-ŭl mijŏ kŭkpok" 春窮을 微低克服 in *Maeil sinbo* (Nov. 1936); "Ch'un'gung-ŭn chŏmch'a haeso" 春窮은 漸次解消 (Jan. 1937); "Ch'un'gung-e hŭiborae!" 春窮에 喜報來 (Feb. 1937).

[102] *Maeil sinbo* (Dec. 1936).

[103] "Singyul-lo nokhwa: ch'un'gunggi singnyang poch'ung" 植栗로 綠化: 春窮期 食糧補充 in *Maeil sinbo* (Feb. 1937)

[104] Shabshina, F.I., *Singminji Chosŏn-esŏ: Ŏnŭ Rŏsia chisŏng'in-i ssŭn yŏksa hyŏnjang kirok* 식민지 조선에서: 어느 러시아 지성인이 쓴 역사현장 기록. Translated by Kim Myŏngho (Seoul: Hanul 한울, 1996), pp.98-101.

whether the spring starvation could be hidden or not.[105] In the first stanza, an eldest daughter (*k'ŭn agi*) goes to the hill to gather herbs and vegetables, gets distracted and looks at her reflection in the water. In the second stanza, a virtuous woman goes out at midnight instead of staying at home. She first steals fish from somebody's net and goes to a drinking party (*sul ch'unyŏm*) to pour liquor for men. In the third stanza, a *yangban* man goes to steal a chicken in the dark instead of reading Confucian classics.

The three main characters in the poem are two-faced. They all hide something. The young girl picks wild plants but her mind is elsewhere. She looks to the hill in the distance as if waiting for someone. She looks at her reflection in the water. This is a typical gesture before a woman meets a man. The allegorical reference "*soldoch'i-e mondangsor-ŭl kamch'ŏya ssŭji*" (insert the pinewood handle into the axe head for use) is also suggestive of matchmaking or mating (as mentioned in the chapter on Yi Kwangsu's *Wŏnhyo taesa*). She gathers the roots of plants and vegetables in hunger, but she hungers for another things: a man. She tries to hide her face and feelings in shame, showing her back and pretending to gather plants. But neither her hunger nor her love for a man can be hidden, because of the irony that the more she hides her face, the more she shows her buttocks, which the Korean word *kungdung* suggesting *ch'ungung* (spring starvation) and which as a more intimate part of the female body alludes to love and sex.

In the following stanzas, Hong shows us that the *yangban* woman and man in rural areas also are two-faced. Being high class, they save face during the daytime, but when night comes, they show their true colors, engaging in behavior that if discovered would make them lose people's respect. The *yangban* lady goes out in the middle of the night and comes back early in the morning. In between, she steals fish from somebody's net and goes to a drinking party (*sul ch'unyŏm*) to pour liquor for men. During the day, she is a decent, chaste and virtuous lady as Hong called her a *yŏllyŏ* 烈女 or virtuous woman, but at night she degenerates into a barmaid or hostess and a petty thief. She does this because she is deeply indebted, as the poet tactfully tells us, using the proverb *kosŭmdoch'i oemajigo* (lit. a hedgehog carries a cucumber on its back). This proverb compares a person in heavy debt with a hedgehog which delivers a heavy cucumber on its thorny back. Despite her class, she was one of those many in rural Korea who were subjected to usurious debts and food shortage especially during the spring starvation period and who had no choice but to steal and work in the bar in order to survive.

Like the *yangban* lady, the *yangban* man, too, loses his civility and decency in the face of poverty and starvation. In the third stanza, the poet makes fun of the yellow-bearded licentiate Kang (Kang saengwŏn). This Confucian gentleman goes out at night to rob a chicken from somebody's yard because he has a craving for meat. As the medical term *sojŭng* (素症, a

[105] In *Samchŏlli* (April 1939). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.44.

deficiency disease) implies, he is suffering from protein deficiency or a related disease after eating only plant-based foods for so long. This symptom is most often seen in impoverished people. The poet, who was thoroughly familiar with medical terminology and symptoms (because he made a living as a pharmacist of oriental medicine), indirectly revealed the bitter truth about impoverishment and spring starvation.[106]

The *yangban* gentleman, ravished by hunger, loses all sense of shame: as the poet says, shame is "exiled" to a distance place (*kwiyang*). What concerns the gentleman is not the profound teachings of Confucius or lofty morals but, rather hilariously, chicken meat. He spends a sleepless night stealing chickens instead of reading Confucian classics. That he walks around, sleepless, looking at the stars has nothing to do with lofty contemplation. As the phrase "chomsŏng'i ch'ŏn'gi pomyŏ" 좀星이 天機보며 indicates, this Confucian gentleman is practicing the custom of divination: *Chomsaeng'ijŏm* or *chomsaeng'i pogi* (observing small stars). Watching these stars, their movement and positioning in relation to the moon, people in traditional Korea used to predict the outcome of the harvest for the year ahead. The Confucian gentleman in the poem observes the small stars in order to know whether it will be a good or bad harvest next fall.

The Korean seasonal custom *chomsaeng'i pogi* is related to a grim myth associated with hunger. The custom is to observe the distance between the moon and the stars. The moon symbolizes parents (grown-ups) delivering meals or rice, whereas the small stars represent children. When the moon and stars are near each other, it means that the children are hungry and crave rice. It is an omen for a bad harvest. If the moon and constellation are far from each other, the stomachs of children are full. This means a good harvest.[107] Using this ethnographic and linguistic knowledge, Hong Sayong draws attention to the rural problem of hunger and poverty.

However, there is a double entendre in Hong Sayong's use of *chomsŏng'i*. It does not only designate the stars but also a petty little person (*chomsaeng'i* or *chomsaengwŏn*). The poet shows how Kang saengwŏn, a Confucian gentleman who was once a great man, is now degraded into a *chomsaengwŏn*, a small-minded person, who madly looks for a brood hen and secretly steals it. In the eyes of Hong Sayong, rural colonial Korea was a place where hungry ghosts live. People in rural areas were afflicted with an extreme degree of hunger, as hungry ghosts are, and thus fought over one another's rice bowls. Without directly mentioning the terms starvation or poverty, his poem vividly shows the grim details of spring starvation: stealing food and robbery

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[106] "Chakka yŏnbo" 작가연보 in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.401.

[107] Kungnip minsok pangmulgwan 국립민속박물관, *Han'guk sesi p'ungsok sajŏn: pom p'yŏn*한국세시풍속사전: 봄편 (Seoul: Kungmin minsok pangmulgwan, 2004),p.74; Koryŏ taehakkyo minjok munhwa yŏn'guwŏn 고려대학교 민족문화연구원, *Han'guk minsog-ŭi segye 5: Sesi p'ungsok, chŏnsŭng nori*한국 민속의 세계 5: 세시풍속, 전승놀이 (Seoul: Kodae munjok munhwa yŏn'guso ch'ulp'anbu, 2001), p.123.

were rampant as the only means for survival, decent women were degraded into bar hostesses due to high household debts, and innocent and well-educated people were driven to commit crimes.

Hong Sayong did not show the tragedy of rural Korea as it was. He twisted the tragedy into a comedy and dissolved suffering into laughter, as is popularly done in traditional Korean plays such as *p'ansori* and performances such as the mask dance. This comically twisted poem cannot be seen as direct resistance against the colonial authorities. His reaction presented an alternative. Hong Sayong did not criticize the colonial government but mocked and embarrassed it, as symbolically shown through the girl's "mooning." The more she turns around and hides her face in shame, the more she shows her buttock, which was a more intimate part of her body. Hong's characters were designed to reveal what the colonial authorities were busy trying to hide: their true face of a hypocrite and the harsh reality of spring starvation. Hong's folksong-style poem exposed the hypocrisy of the colonial authorities through mockery as the traditional mask dances did with the *yangban* class.

Rural Korea was not merely populated by hungry ghosts. Hong Sayong shows Buddha statues standing calmly next to those hungry ghosts in his literature. Is this to be taken as a promise of salvation? As depicted in the essay "*Kwihwang*" 歸鄕 (Return to home, 1928), people like Hong Sayong himself fervently prayed before a Buddha statue for their wishes to be fulfilled and their anxieties about an uncertain future to be resolved.[108] However, Buddha does not grant their wishes, nor provides answers, even though people's hopes are utterly shattered, their plans fail in the end, and they become as wretched as hungry ghosts.[109] The Buddha statues appearing in his literature do nothing but standing calmly with quiet smiles (*kamjungnyŏn*, 坎中連).

A young woman in the poem "Kakssip'ul" 각시풀 (Reeds, 1938) who gathers plants to still her hunger comes to a temple and desperately asks a golden Buddha how to exorcize the three forms of bad luck, *samsal* 三殺 which befell her during the springtime.[110] *Samsal* in folk belief represent the worst that can happen in one's life such as unnatural and accidental death (*kŏpsal*, 劫煞), arrest, imprisonment (*chaesal*, 災煞), natural disasters, spinsterhood (*sesal*, 歲煞), etc. As far as this poem is concerned, it is clear that the bad luck associated with spring refers to spring starvation. Its consequences for people's lives are equivalent to the forms of bad luck mentioned above: hunger leads to robbery and murder, and then to imprisonment or the death penalty, young women who once dreamt about a happy marriage are sold into factories or prostitution, etc. So, the woman in the poem desperately seeks help from Buddha to cope with spring starvation. However, Buddha does not answer to her prayer. The Buddha statue only stands calmly with a quiet smile. Does Hong want to say

[108] *Pulgyo* (Nov. 1928). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.288-289.
[109] Ibid., p.289.
[110] In *Samch'ŏlli munhak* 三千里文學 (Jan. 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.41.

that the golden or stone Buddha (statue) is nothing more than a lump of material, which does nothing in reality, as some scholars assume?[111] If the sculpture is meaningless, why does it keep recurring in Hong Sayong's literary works?

> *Puch'im pawi gets more and more damaged day after day. Who among the afflicted and distressed in mind came to gouge and scrape the rock so cruelly? In the temple at the back, a stone Buddha undergoes malicious punishment every night, too. His sound nose gets scraped and worn out mercilessly. Nonetheless, with nowhere to plead his grievous case, he stands in deep contemplation*.[112]

This paragraph may give us a hint about what role the stone Buddha plays. What we should note is not its silence but its grotesque body. The stone Buddha does not look great and awe-inspiring. It has a worn-off and broken nose. His whole body is covered with wounds. It is not vandalism of Buddhist property in today's terms. As Hong Sayong mentions, people with afflictions come to the statue and scratch its surface to gain relief from their troubles. In old days, their wishes were mostly related to getting pregnant as the legend affiliated to Puch'im pawi in Segŏmjŏng town describes.[113] As time went by, the content of their wishes may have changed but they did not disappear or diminish. The Buddha's scars reflect people's piteous and painful stories. The stone Buddha does not answer to their prayers, nor solve their problems but it gives voice to them and has their stories carved into its body. In this way, the grotesque body of Buddha statues reflects the grotesque stories experienced and shared by real people in colonial Korea.

For example, the stone Buddha statue appearing in the short story "Ppaengdŏgine" 빵덕이네 (Ppaengdŏk's family, 1938) tells us one family's terrifying story.[114] Chŏmsun's family is impoverished. Her father goes begging and returns home beaten and injured. At the end of her wits, her mother sells herself as a temple servant for thirty wŏn and in practice becomes a monk's wife. After fifteen years, she sells off her own daughter Chŏmsun for hundred wŏn and disappears. Confronted with the story of a woman who remarries to stay alive, leaving her husband, and of a mother who sells off her own young daughter, nobody condemns the woman for an outrage against humanity and motherhood. Rather, people in the village just deplore their ill-fated lives. This horrible story of Chŏmsun's family was nothing out of the ordinary in impoverished rural areas.

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[111] Ch'oe Wŏnsik, "Hong Sayong munhak-kwa chuch'e-ŭi kaksŏng", p.141; Chŏng Hoch'ang, "Hong Sayong-ŭi si yŏn'gu," p.28.
[112] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.83.
[113] The legend says that women can get pregnant with a boy baby or find a lost son if they can glue a stone on Puch'im rock by scrubbing it.
[114] *Chosŏn ilbo* (Dec. 1938). Republished in *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, pp.82-90.

The trafficking of women was legal and rampant in colonial Korea. According to An Yŏnsŏn, in 1925 Japan signed an international treaty that prohibited the trafficking of women and children but this law was not applied to its colonies.[115] The colonial government tried to gloss it over, whereas Korean writers such as Hong Sayong captured the distortions of the colonial experience in their literature. In the short story, Hong describes how year after year more and more young girls and women go to work in factories. For example, a young girl named Puksil runs away on her wedding night and becomes a factory laborer. It is to regain her family farmland by means of her wages but she ends up conceiving a fatherless baby. Another eldest daughter is supposed to go to work as a bar girl. She needs to submit her family registry together with a letter with her father's consent.[116] The mother of Chŏmsun brings girls to the Chinese brokers, including her own daughter. Hong does not only tell how rampant women trafficking was in a destitute village in a remote valley, where they satisfied their hunger on a bowl of cooked millet or boiled barley instead of rice, but also how such an impoverished village was incorporated into the processes of industrialization and military expansion, and how the daughters of debt-stricken farmers were sold as workers in factories or to brothels in urban cities and even the newly-acquired territories of the Japanese empire.

What is remarkable is that as the title of the short story indicates, Hong Sayong parodies the classic Sim Ch'ŏng story to depict the colonial experience of women trafficking. The classic story is about the filial daughter Sim Ch'ŏng who sells herself as a human sacrifice for 300 *sŏk* of rice offered to Buddha in order to regain the eyesight of her blind father. Hong states, "Borrowing the old story of the filial daughter Sim Ch'ŏng, Chŏmsun was renamed Ppaengdŏk and her mother "Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏni" (lit. the mother of Ppaengdŏk).[117] In the classic, Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm is a typical wicked woman who married Sim Chŏng's father for his wealth and runs away with another man. In Hong's story, the modern Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm has two faces. On the one hand, this woman is a bad wife who deserts her original husband and becomes the concubine of a monk and a bad mother who sells off her own daughter. But on the other hand, she has Sim Ch'ŏng's sacrificial spirit as well. As Sim Ch'ŏng in the classic sold herself as a human offering to the sea and demonstrated her filial piety, the modern Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm sells herself as an offer to a Buddhist monk and in doing so, supports her entire family. Her family staves off hunger thanks to her concubinage. If Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm in the classic is condemned as a bad wife, the modern Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm is in a morally ambiguous situation. She is a victim of such trafficking and at the same time, a victimizer. As people in the village do, one cannot but deplore her ill fate in the face of extreme poverty.

[115] An Yŏnsŏn, *Sŏngnoye-wa pyŏngsa mandŭlgi*, p.16.
[116] *Hong Sayong chŏnjip*, p.84.
[117] Ibid., p.90.

It is interesting to see that there was a comedy drama in the 1930s recorded for the gramophone entitled *Modern Sim Ch'ŏngjŏn*. This comedy depicts a modern Sim Ch'ŏng who is a worker in a rubber factory. To pay 300 wŏn for an eye operation for her blind father, she is employed in a dancing hall in the Chinese city of Harbin.[118] Ch'ae Mansik was another writer who adapted Sim Ch'ŏng to the the colonial context. In 1936, Ch'oe wrote the drama *Sim pongsa* (Blind Mr. Sim) and in 1944-45 a novel that took its plot from from the drama.[119] If the classic focuses on the filial piety of Sim Ch'ŏng, Ch'ae focuses on the incompetence of Sim Ch'ŏng's father as a ruined *yangban*. In his way, he castigates incompetent male Koreans (in particular, intellectuals) in colonial Korea, who sell their daughters to go to work in factories.[120]

In his story, Hong Sayong also draws attention to the male protagonist, the father of Chŏmsun and the husband of Ppaengdŏk ŏmŏm. This man is not physically blind like Mr. Sim (Sim pongsa) in the classic story, but spiritually blind and disabled. He actually has a mild temper and healthy body but is "so good-tempered that he is like an idiot, incompetent and dull-headed".[121] Hence, when he loses his wife and daughter, he cannot say a word and is unable to cope with the hardship. Through this man, Hong satirizes the Korean men in colonial Korea, who were incompetent husbands and fathers and who drove their entire family to starvation. Hong's mockery comes to a climax in his serious joke that if this man had been born in the past, he would be a hero. His firm and unimpeded determination, his mind without anger, his achievement of emptiness of mind (*musim*, 無心) embody the virtue of old sages.[122]

There is one other form of patriarchal power Hong Sayong furtively mocks, the Japanese emperor. "When he [the father of Chŏmsun] does not appear, people call him by his nickname "the descendent of the Emperor" (Ch'ŏnhwangssi). But he is not that stone-headed."[123] This mockery astonishingly presents the Japanese emperor as a synonym for foolishness so that even a village idiot is regarded as smarter than the Emperor. The Japanese emperor was the center of imperial power and regarded as a personified god, the "father" or "head" of the big family of the whole Japanese empire. Imperial subjects (Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese and others) had to worship him as divine and show "filial piety" as his children.[124] Such a divine Japanese emperor is ridiculed in this story as most foolish. Hong Sayong laughs at the

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[118] See appendix in Kim Mansu and Ch'oe Tonghyŏn 김만수, 최동현, *Ilche kangjŏmgi yusŏnggi ŭmbansog-ŭi taejung hŭigŭk* 일제강점기 유성음반속의 대중희극 (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1997), pp.363-367.
[119] Kim Tonggwŏn 金東權, "Ch'ae Mansik-ŭi *Sim pongsa*-wa *Sim Ch'ŏngjŏn* pigyo koch'al" 채만식의 <심봉사>와 <심청전> 비교 고찰 in *Mogwŏn ŏmunhak* 6 牧園語文學 (1987):5-27, pp.9-10.
[120] Ibid., pp.13-14.
[121] Ibid., p.84.
[122] Ibid., pp.84-85.
[123] Ibid., p.85.
[124] Ch'oe Yuri, *Ilche malgi singminji chibae chŏngch'aek yŏn'gu*, pp.43-47.

Emperor as an "incompetent father" who sells his "imperial" daughters to hell-like factories and as barmaids in China, as the father of Chŏmsun does.

Conclusion

Hong Sayong at present is a nearly forgotten writer. Once, he was recognized as a prominent decadent poet and a creative playwright. There was a time when scholars and researchers hailed his uncompromising nationalism and tried to understand his life, thought, and literature from that nationalist perspective. Since then, Hong Sayong has been mummified as a "nationalist" writer and displayed as such in the history of modern Korean literature. However, I have tried to show how this forgotten writer deserves to be rediscovered and reconsidered from new perspectives, such as that of religion. I have paid special attention to his Sŏn Buddhist essays, which were written in the controversial period following the second Sino-Japanese War and were published in the controversial medium of the *Maeil sinbo*. In these he practiced what he believed was important in Buddhism. As he strongly insisted in his essays, people in wartime colonial Korea, including himself, should live with an attitude of *wŏnyung muae*. It was to argue that people should not eschew, nor condemn unfavorable circumstances but perform their jobs faithfully and patiently. He recognized the problematic reality surrounding war, but did not overtly support the wartime government, nor all the government policies. Rather, with this Buddhist stance, he produced a counterdiscourse against individual sacrifices for the sake of the Emperor, which were promoted as the pivot of the war ideology.

Rarely using direct political language or war slogans, Hong Sayong produced various sociopolitical discourses which cannot be captured by a single narrative of non-compromise. Both his contemplative essays and folksong-style poems show how vulnerable he was to the contemporary wartime rhetoric based upon Asianism. He approved the Pan-Asian ideology of a return to Asian tradition and the re-evaluation of Asian values to a considerable degree. He expressed antipathy against Western material civilization and capitalism, just as the colonial government as well as its supporters dictated. However, it was not to propagate the wartime ideology itself. He saw logical discrepancies within the colonial discourse and between rhetoric and reality and used them to formulate his counterdiscourses.

Wartime colonial Korea, in particular impoverished rural Korea, was envisioned by the Buddhist writer Hong Sayong as the realm of hungry ghosts. Using this Buddhist motif, he could depict the distorted lives of people and their gruesome experiences and ordeals, which the colonial authorities wanted to hide or gloss over. The tragedy of rural Koreans was ironically twisted into a form of comedy and humor by Hong Sayong. Instead of direct resistance or criticism, he ridiculed the fearfulness of the colonial authorities and derided their hypocritical discourses and policies. His elaborate manipulation of

mockery, laughter, parody, irony, and mimicry, much of which was adopted from Korean traditional music and literature, proved him to be one of the most prominent writers who found alternatives to the colonial discourse.