



3.2 2013

# Korean HISTORIES



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# The initiation of the 1728 Musin rebellion

ASSURANCES, THE FIFTH-COLUMNISTS AND MILITARY RESOURCES



View of Sangdang mountain fortress, (Sangdangsansŏng) seized and held by Yi Injwa's rebels in 1728

## THE CENTRAL PROBLEM: THE TIMING OF THE MUSIN REBELLION

In 1728, a rebel organization launched the largest military rebellion of the eighteenth-century in an attempt to overthrow King Yŏngjo's 英祖 government.<sup>1</sup> During the Musin rebellion 戊申亂 (Yi Injwa's rebellion 李麟佐의亂), the government lost control of thirteen county seats to the rebel organisation, including Ch'ŏngju 淸

州 and Sangdang sansŏng mountain fort 上黨山城 in Ch'ungch'ŏng province, and other parts of Kyŏnggi and South Kyŏngsang provinces. In these areas, the rebel organisation killed local officials, installed their own magistrates, and expanded its army thanks to local popular support. Despite a short period of gains, the rebel challenge was brutally crushed by government suppression forces within three weeks.

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Anders Karlsson, James Lewis, Martina Deuchler, Don Baker, Lars Laamann, Kim Byŏngnyun and Peter Kilborn for their help with this paper. This research could not have been carried out without the financial help of the *Korea Foundation*.

The rebel organisation was led by extremist members of Namin 南人 (Southerners) and Chunso 峻少 Soron 少論 (Young Disciples) factions.<sup>2</sup> The political links of the rebel organisation are strong evidence that the roots of the Musin rebellion lie partly in the bloody court factional conflicts that erupted between 1689 and the late 1720s. These conflicts arose over whether Kyŏngjong 景宗 or his younger half-brother Yŏngjo was the most suitable candidate to succeed their father Sukchong 肅宗; later clashes arose over Kyŏngjong's controversial death.<sup>3</sup> The Musin rebellion erupted just a few months after the 1727 removal of the Noron 老論 (Old Disciple) faction from political power and the restoration of the Soron to office (Chŏngmihwan'guk 丁未換局<sup>4</sup>); Yŏngjo's attempt to mollify the type of factionalism that had afflicted his brother's court.<sup>5</sup> Many Soron, removed from office or exiled, were restored to military and civil posts in the capital and provinces. The 1727 Soron restoration means that many Musin rebels were, in fact, rebelling to seize power from their *own* faction.<sup>6</sup> But factional conflict is not the whole story; something more was required for violence on such a level. Factionalism had often been bloody, and there had been periodic crises; for example the 1659 and 1674 rites disputes.<sup>7</sup> However, this is one rare example where factional conflict, which had dominated the Chosŏn court for over two centuries, broke down into open and widespread armed conflict.<sup>8</sup>

## SCHOLARLY UNDERSTANDING OF THE MUSIN REBELLION

Most scholars recognise that the Musin rebellion was more than an extension of factionalism and account for the eruption of violence by emphasizing, not a unitary political crisis in court, but a dual political and structural crisis. The explanations of these scholars are remarkably similar to those found in Chalmers Johnson's structural (systems/value-consensus) theory of rebellion. According to Johnson's theory, balanced societies have values that synchronize and 'routinize' the population into coherent roles and maintain order.<sup>9</sup> However, the equilibrium of institutions and values in society are significantly destabilised after some form of 'shock' to the system or crisis point. These shocks to the system can occur as a result of internal conflict, or external threat.<sup>10</sup> The result of the crisis is an increasing sense of 'disorientation' amongst members of society.<sup>11</sup> In order for a successful rebellion to develop there needs to be a movement centred around ideologies containing 'programs of action intended to achieve resynchronization,' and en masse recruitment of followers.<sup>12</sup> In other words, a successful rebellion is created by an ideological movement. 'Disequilibrated conditions' make 'men receptive to ideologies,' and without ideology the various rebel groups will fail to influence directly the 'social structure.'<sup>13</sup> The systems/value-consensus approach also stresses the self-preservation ability of political systems to respond to systemic changes; in other words, governments can correct imbalances in

2 In addition to the extreme Chunso, the Soron had a more moderate sub-faction Wanso 緩少. For major differences in their attitudes towards opposing factions, see Andrew Jackson, "The causes and aims of Yŏngjo's Chŏngmihwan'guk," in BAKS (British Association of Korean Studies) Papers 13 (2011) pp.17-34.

3 In this article, for the sake of convenience I use the posthumous titles of Kyŏngjong and Yŏngjo rather than other titles. Different factions clashed over the successor to Sukchong. The Namin and Soron supported Kyŏngjong and Noron supported Yŏngjo, and the different factions attacked the legitimacy of the chosen candidate of rival factions; the idea was that if their candidate took the throne they would be in a favourable position in government. Kyŏngjong died after eating crab and persimmon allegedly sent by his brother, who was implicated in Kyŏngjong's death. Yŏngjo had also been implicated by pro Kyŏngjong factions in plots to kill and overthrow his brother; notably, the Lady Kim memorial (Kim Sŏng gung'inso 金姓宮人疏); for more in-depth analysis of this conflict see Jackson, "The causes and aims Yŏngjo's Chŏngmihwan'guk."

4 Chŏngmi refers to the year 1727 and hwan'guk means change of administration.

5 When Yŏngjo took the throne in the eighth month of 1724, he was immediately jettisoned into a problematic relationship with the Soron and Noron and their vendetta politics that threatened the stability and legitimacy of Yŏngjo's rule. The 1727 Soron restoration has to be understood in the context of an ongoing attempt by Yŏngjo to reduce factionalism. The 1727 Soron restoration was probably a short-term means (a temporary exclusion of the Noron) to a long-term end (a joint Noron-Soron administration). Yi Chae-ho claims the aim was to split the power of the Noron and Soron. Yi Chae-ho 이재호, *Chosŏn chŏngch'i chedo yŏn'gu* 조선정치제도연구 (Seoul 서울: Ilchogak 일조각, 1994): p., 229. Yŏngjo probably also hoped to win the cooperation of the Soron, prevent attacks on his legitimacy, and stabilise his throne. This was a rational attempt to make government function in both the short and long term.

6 The Soron loyalists who fought on the government side were mainly Wanso like Ō Myŏnghang, while many in the rebel side were Chunso Soron. There were kinship links between some of the Soron fighting on opposite sides of the conflict. This fratricidal aspect to the Musin rebellion is mainly significant because many Soron loyalists were never able to shake off their association with rebels.

7 Mark Setton, "Factional Politics and Philosophical Development in the Late Chosŏn," *The Journal of Korean Studies* 8 (1992) pp: 37-79. For in-depth analysis see JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Constructing the Center: The Ritual Controversy and the Search for a New Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea," in *Culture and the state in late Chosŏn Korea*, edited by J. K. Haboush, and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard-Hallam, 1999) pp.46-91.

8 The other example was the overthrow of Prince Kwang'hae by the predecessors to the Noron faction, the Sŏ'in or Westerners faction, in 1623, see Andrei Lankov, "Controversy over Ritual in 17th Century Korea," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 3 (1990) pp. 49-64.

9 Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (London: Unipress, 1968): p.35.

10 Ibid., p.61.

11 Theda Skocpol, *Social revolutions in the modern world, Cambridge studies in comparative politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): pp. 104-5.

12 Ibid., p.84.

13 Johnson, quoted in Skocpol, *Social revolutions in the modern world*, p.105.



systems to prevent occurrences of violence.<sup>14</sup>

1980's *minjung* (oppressed peoples) movement scholars, Yi Chongbŏm, and Chŏng Sŏkchong carried out the most in-depth analysis of the Musin rebellion.<sup>15</sup> Yi and Chŏng stress key aspects of the systems/value consensus theory including the notion of a systemic breakdown, an increasing sense of disorientation and the ideological movement.<sup>16</sup> These scholars see various reasons for the structural crisis: an extrinsic structural shock, internal political and social conflict during a period of economic and agricultural development. Chŏng Sŏkchong believes the 1592-8 Hideyoshi and 1627-37 Manchu invasions set in motion this period of destabilisation.<sup>17</sup> Yi Chongbŏm identifies political imbalances, particularly the 1710 rise of the Noron, which resulted in increasingly vicious Noron/Soron factional conflict. Factionalism paralysed government and failed to prevent social dislocation.<sup>18</sup> During economic expansion, conditions actually worsened for the *minjung* who became discontented and disorientated. The total result of these social changes, according to scholars, is systemic change, or the 'breakdown of feudal society'.<sup>19</sup> For these scholars, the Musin rebel organisation was led by a coalition of elites, some of whom had forward-thinking ideas and were able to mobilise 'disorientated' elites and non-elites.<sup>20</sup>

The structural approach is persistent because it answers the question of why the rebellion was more than factional conflict, and it is consistent with a teleological



View of Sangdang mountain fort, with Ch'ŏngju in distance

view of Korean history. Such an approach positions the Musin rebellion in the context of the development of Korea towards modernity. For Yi Chongbŏm, the Musin rebellion is important, not so much for the fact of the rebellion itself, but for what the rebellion says about the direction in which an increasingly destabilised Korean system was heading. The rebellion failed because it came at an immature stage of development; the ideology of rebel leaders was not forward-thinking enough and non-elites were not sufficiently disorientated. The Musin rebellion is a temporary bridging stage to a later time when more effective challenges could be mounted by the *minjung* movement.<sup>21</sup> This time comes in the nineteenth century, which sees increasingly violent rebellions (1811, 1862, 1894) that contribute to the eventual collapse of the Chosŏn dynasty.<sup>22</sup> The fate of the Chosŏn dynasty system

14 Barbara Salert, *Revolutions and revolutionaries: four theories* (New York: Elsevier, 1976): p. 11.

15 The *minjung* movement privileged the role of the *minjung* in leading late Chosŏn society to modernity.

16 These scholars never acknowledge Johnson, so it appears that they have arrived at their own version of Johnson's theory through their own research. Many other Musin rebellion scholars like Cho Ch'anyong 조찬용, *1728 nyŏn Musinsat'ae koch'al* 1728 년 무신사태 고찰 (Seoul: iolive, 2003) and Kŏch'anggunsa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 거창군사 편찬위원회, *Kŏch'anggunsa* 거창군사, (Kŏch'anggun, Kŏch'anggun munhwawŏn 거창군문화원 1997): 558-613, argue for a regional dynamic behind the violence, but all largely adopt a structural approach in their analysis.

17 Chŏng Sŏkchong 정석중, "Yŏngjo Musillan'ui chinhaenggwa kŭ sŏngkyŏk 영조 무신란의 진행과 그 성격," in *Chosŏn hugi'ui chŏngch'i'wa sasang* 조선 후기의 정치와 사상' (Seoul: Han'gilsa 한길사, 1994): pp. 119-171.

18 Yi Chongbŏm 이종범, "1728 nyŏn 'musillan'ui sŏngkyŏk 1728 년 무신란의 성격," in *Chosŏn sidae chŏngch'i sa'i chaejomyŏng* 조선 시대 정치사의 재조명 edited by Yi Taejin 이태진 (Seoul: T'aehaksa 대학사, 2003) pp. 228 & 283-9.

19 Susan Shin, "Economic Development And Social Mobility in Pre-Modern Korea: 1600-1860," *Peasant Studies* 7 (3) (1978) pp. 187-97.

20 Chŏng Sŏkchong, "Yŏngjo Musillan'ui chinhaenggwa kŭ sŏngkyŏk," pp. 164-5. George Rudé uses the term 'forward-thinking' to indicate ideas of social emancipation or the rights of man. George F.E. Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985): p. 234.

21 Ibid. 1997, p. 209.

22 The 1811 Hong Kyŏngnae 洪景來 rebellion, the 1862 Chinju 晋州 rebellion, the 1894 Tonghak 東學 rebellion.

was inevitable because the government is incapable of correcting the destabilised system.<sup>23</sup>

There are notable problems with this approach; for example, there is much rebel testimony in the *sillok* and other sources, but scholarly explanations for the initiation of the rebellion are barely supported by rebel testimony.<sup>24</sup> While there may have been a structural crisis, rebels never discuss an unravelling class system, an economic crisis, or a lack of confidence in the government. In other words, there is little in Musin rebel testimony that might lead us to conclude any kind of structural crisis caused violence in 1728. Another problem is the notion of the extrinsic shocks to the system; with many intervening incidents between the 1592/1710 crisis points and the rebellion, it is difficult to link the crises and the 1728 violence. In addition, if systemic breakdown and permanent social disequilibrium resulted from certain crisis points, and structural scholars deny the ability of the government to correct the imbalances, then why was there a sole outbreak of violence in 1728, why not after? Finally, very little in rebel words (either spoken or in propaganda) or deeds can lead us to assume the rebels had a forward-thinking agenda and scholars struggle to present a convincing case that the Musin rebel leadership was progressive. Rebels expressed their discontent with

the incumbent king and expressed their suspicions over the demise of Kyŏngjong, but there is no evidence of a plan for the radical overhaul of society.<sup>25</sup> The focus in rebel discourse is organizational; in other words, rebels discussed how they were organising to take power, how they would recruit, how they would defeat the government.

I analyse textual evidence from government records using Charles Tilly's political conflict approach, which is well-suited to answering the question of why the Musin rebellion occurred in 1728. Tilly developed many of his ideas partly as a response to perceived failings in Johnson's systems/consensus explanation of rebellion, ideas Tilly continued to develop until his death in 2008. The political conflict approach begins with the assumption that rebel contenders for power are ever present in political systems, and that the central problem of interpretative frameworks is to explain *when*, *how* and *why* contenders escalate political conflict into violent conflict. Rather than focussing on abstract notions of systemic change to explain the outbreak of violence, the political conflict approach can be used to examine organisational variables like mobilisation that are essential to the initiation of rebellion. In my analysis, I focus on testimony about the composition of the rebel leadership, their plans for a military assault on Yŏngjo's court and consider this information in relation to the political context around 1728.

I use government records such as the *sillok*, 英祖實錄, *Kamnannok* 勘亂錄, *Musin yŏgok ch'uan* 戊申逆獄推案 and unofficial histories like the *Yakp'amallok* 藥坡漫錄. These sources are rich with information about rebel military strategy, recruitment drives and links between rebels since these were essential concerns of the government interrogators.<sup>26</sup> Overall, my analysis suggests a different reason for the initiation of violence.



View of P'yoch'ungsa shrine to officials killed by Yi Injwa's rebels in Ch'ŏngju

23 Yi Chongbŏm, "1728 nyŏn 'musillan' ūi sŏngkyŏk," pp. 216. Chŏng Sŏkchong and Yi Chongbŏm differ from Johnson in their belief that governments are incapable of 'resynchronizing' society and averting revolutionary situations. They also emphasize the importance of a growth of a resistance consciousness amongst the minjung in creating rebellion.

24 Scholars very rarely take their evidence for structural change from the mouths of Musin rebels. See Yi Chongbŏm, "1728 nyŏn 'musillan' ūi sŏngkyŏk," pp. 215-228.

25 For more on Musin rebel ideology see Andrew Jackson, "Rebel ideology in the Musin rebellion of 1728," *Cahiers d'études Coréennes 8 Mélanges offerts à Marc Orange et Alexandre Guillemoz* (Institut d'études Coréennes, Collège de France, 2010) pp. 221-31.

26 This information was vital because an understanding of how the rebels mobilised, and prepared for battle may have helped the government prevent further outbreaks of violence. The rebel testimony I analyse is found in heavily edited official sources like the *sillok* (veritable records) and the *Kamnannok* (the official record of the rebellion), but also the *Musin yŏgok ch'uan* (Trial record of the Musin rebels) that contain 'unfiltered' interrogations of rebels. The *Yakp'amallok* is a Noron-penned diary of the period.



## OPERATIONAL SECURITY, THE REBELS AND ASSURANCES

An analysis of rebel testimony reveals a curious contradiction in rebel strategies over secrecy. There are many examples of absolute secrecy between rebels at rebel meetings; for example, rebels confessed that at meetings rebel leaders concealed their names, and some only used their childhood appellations (cha 字) to disguise their identities.<sup>27</sup> In addition, under interrogation one rebel claimed he had only known the identities of a few other rebels and had been warned not to reveal the names of his brothers.<sup>28</sup> Senior rebel leader Yi Sasöng 李思晟 also talked about a rebel strategy of not revealing the identities of fellow conspirators at meetings.<sup>29</sup> However, rebels also testified that at other meetings rebel leaders openly revealed apparently sensitive information. Testimony A reveals how one rebel came to join the rebel organisation's military campaign:

Testimony A ...Chöng Seyun 鄭世胤 is my cousin, and this year in the third month, he came to my house claiming to be in mourning... While we were sleeping, four men all eight ch'ök (over two metres) tall and carrying big swords came into the room from somewhere, and I got scared. Chöng Seyun said, 'We have certain plans, and if you don't do as we say, then we will kill you.' I replied, 'How can you say something like that?' Chöng said, 'We have plotters working in the capital [inside court] and in the provinces, and you shouldn't be the least bit worried or suspicious. The court plotter is Nam T'aejing 南泰徵 and Yi Sasöng is plotting in the provinces, and we are going to win. I've come with agreements from the T'aein 泰仁 magistrate [Pak P'ilhyön 朴弼顯] ...'<sup>30</sup>



Interior of P'yoch'ungsa shrine to officials killed by Yi Injwa's rebels at Ch'öngju

There are other such examples of testimony where rebels deliberately dispensed with good operational security and revealed sensitive aspects about their plotting. One rebel confessed he was threatened with a sword, told the T'aein (north Chölla province, Pak P'ilhyön) magistrate was raising troops, and encouraged to join the rebellion.<sup>31</sup> In testimony B, we are told that one rebel leader had boasted about the important and powerful people who were involved in the rebellion:

Testimony B: *At the time I was in T'aein, there was someone called Chöng with a big face, whiskers, and hair turning grey at the temples, and he called himself licentiate*

*Chöng from Karwön 葛院. He visited me and said, 'Nam T'aejing, Yi Sasöng, Pak P'ilmong 朴弼夢, his son and Yi Yuik 李有翼 are all in on this [rebellion] as well as the commander of the Northern Approaches Kim Chunggi, since he is related to Yi Yuik 李有翼 by marriage.'*<sup>32</sup>

There are commonalities to these interactions between rebels in terms of the function of these exchanges and their content. Rebels appear to be offering assurances of victory to other rebels and reveal sensitive details about the identity of those men who would be playing the most significant roles in the victory. In other words, rebels offered other rebels assurances of success in the rebellion by revealing their trump cards- the identity of senior rebels who would be leading the attack.

Elizabeth Perry, in her study of both pre-modern and modern regional rebellions in China, states that assurances are a very important way rebel leaders ready rebel organisations for conflict. One of the primary tasks of rebel leadership is to solidify and expand the rebel organ-

27 *Yöngjo sillok* 英祖實錄 (hereafter YS) 42 04/05/01 (sinhae) 18:1b-3a, edited by Kuksa p'yönch'an wiwönhoe 국사편찬위원회 (Seoul 서울: Tonggukmunhwasa 東國文化社, 1955) pp.52-3 (which refers to the forty-second volume of the modern day printed set of the *Yöngjo sillok* edited by Kuksa p'yönch'an wiwönhoe, which is from the original *sillok* volume eighteen, the fourth year of Yöngjo's reign, the fifth month, the first or sinhae day, '1b-3a' refers to the folio number and position on the page. This can also be found on pages 52-3 of the modern version).

28 Cho Tonggyu 趙東奎; YS 42 04/05/09 (kimi) 18:9b-10a, pp.56-7/.

29 YS 42 04/03/25 (ülhae) 16:27b-29a, p.27-28. In addition, rebel leaders with loose tongues were criticised by other rebels *Musin yögokch'uan* 戊申逆獄推案, in *Kaksa tūngnok* 各事登錄 75, edited by Kuksa p'yönch'an wiwönhoe 국사편찬위원회 (Seoul 서울: Kuksa p'yönch'an wiwönhoe, 1994):p.154-5, hereafter, *Musin yögokch'uan* 75, 04/03/25 pp.154-5.

30 Söng Tükha's 成得夏 confession; YS 42 04/05/09 (kimi) 18:10a-b, p.57.

31 Yi Hanch'o's 李漢楚 confession; YS 42 04/05/09 (kimi) 18:10a-b, p.57.

32 The rebel leader is probably Chöng Seyun; YS 42 04/05/21 (sinmi) 18:17a-b, p.60.

isation by bolstering the confidence of success of potential members. Rebel leaders need to help create the conditions in which rebels find 'it in their individual interests to allocate resources to their common interests...';<sup>33</sup> so leaders use assurances, incentives, or coercion.<sup>34</sup> Perry's research indicates assurances are effective strategies employed by rebel leaders to transform locally based groups into rebel organisations capable of operating on a larger national scale.<sup>35</sup>

The exposure of sensitive information about the identity of senior rebels appears to be evidence the Musin rebel leadership was providing assurances to convince other rebels of the imminent success of their plans. Even when rebel leaders dropped their guard there was a deliberative, purposeful aspect to the widespread exposure of names and information about the military strategy as in testimony C:

Testimony C: *Me (Im Hwan 任環) and Yi Yuik knew each other. Yi Yuik lured me into this evil plot. As for the kind of person he was, if he didn't drink alcohol he was strong-willed and coarse, and he didn't say much. But when he drank his favourite alcohol, and he was with people who felt the same, then he revealed his innermost feelings, and he always talked about Nam T'aejing and Yi Saju 李思周 who were plotting in court (in the capital).*<sup>36</sup>

Even while drunk, the rebel leader above revealed the names of senior rebels to lure other rebels deeper into the plotting.

Assurances are often used in slightly different contexts; for example, as a recruitment device in testimony A. This rebel was coerced into committing to the rebel organization's violent ambitions with a mixture of threats of violence and assurances of senior rebels. In addition, assurances were used between rebels when one lacked confidence as in testimony D:

Testimony D: *Around the second or third month, Han*

*Sehong 韓世弘 came to the house of Yi Yuik and said, 'We don't have enough troops on the inside [in the capital] what are we going to do about it?' Yi Yuik said, 'Commander Yi and General Nam are enough. We don't need that many.' After Han Sehong left, because I had no idea who Commander Yi was, I asked Yi Yuik, and Yi Yuik replied with a laugh, 'It's Yi Saju.' Yi Yuik said Yi Saju was related to Lord Milp'ung 密豐君, and had just been made the commander of the elite palace guard.*<sup>37</sup>

The timing of this incident, which was just prior to the takeover of Ch'ŏngju, suggests last minute nerves about the commitment of rebels to the rebellion. But in the majority of cases, higher ranking rebels used the names of senior leaders to assure lower ranking rebels. What is common to all these uses of assurances is a desire to reassure rebel misgivings about what was a dangerous enterprise. This use of assurances can help explain the apparent contradiction in the rebel practice of operational security.

#### REBEL LEADERSHIP AND THE FIFTH-COLUMNISTS

The frequent use of assurances amongst rebels explains how sensitive information about the identity of the leadership and the military strategy was widespread amongst even lower ranking rebels. When arrested, tortured and interrogated, many rebels revealed names and rebel strategies to their interrogators. Betrayed in interrogations were rebel leaders whose names have become synonymous with the rebellion like Yi Injwa and Pak P'ilmong. All of these men were Namin or Chunso marginalised elites, men from famous clans excluded from power because of factionalism.

However as can be seen in the above examples, in addition to these marginalised elite rebels, frequently mentioned were military and civil officials occupying senior positions in court and the provinces. These men were operating undercover within government and therefore acting as fifth-columnists,<sup>38</sup> and they include central government officials Yi Sasŏng, Nam T'aejing, Kim Chunggi,

33 Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980): p. 253.

34 Daniel Little, *Understanding peasant China: case studies in the philosophy of social science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): pp. 145-50.

35 Elizabeth Perry, *Rebels and revolutionaries in North China*, pp. 175-80.

36 YS 42 04/05/01 (sinhae) 18:1b-3a, pp.52-3.

In addition, Yi Yuik claimed that Yi Saju would be involved on the rebel side YS 42 04/05/02 (imja) 18:4a, p.54.

37 Im Hwan's 任環 confession YS 42 04/05/02 (imja) 18:4a, p.54.

38 The term was originally used in relation to the Spanish Civil War; Nationalist general Emilio Mola Vidal said he had four columns of a rebel army attacking government forces, and a fifth-column of clandestine rebels inside government. Although a very different temporal, geographical and political context, 'fifth-columnist' seems the most appropriate term to describe rebels clandestinely using their official positions to aid a rebel challenge to government.





Sangdang mountain fortress, near Ch'ŏngju, captured by rebels

and Yi Saju.<sup>39</sup> Yi Sasōng was P'yōng'an 平安 army commander, a powerful military official charged with defence against northern invaders. Nam T'aejing was Chief of the Capital Gendarmes. Kim Chunggi occupied the most powerful position of anyone accused of collaboration with the Musin rebel organization. Kim was commander of the Northern approaches and in direct command of an army responsible for protecting the king, court, and capital from outside attack. As an official he gave advice on the suppression of the rebels; he was close to the king and the inner circle of officials during the 1728 crisis and was present in the king's emergency council when details about the rebellion were first revealed to the court. Yi Saju served as general of the elite palace guard, a key position responsible for protecting the king and the capital.<sup>40</sup>

The above confessions also reveal the names of provincial officials like Pak P'ilhyōn the T'aein magistrate

(Chōlla province), Shim Yuhyōn 沈維賢 the Tamyang 潭陽 magistrate (Chōlla province), Nam T'aejōk 南泰績 the T'ongjin 通津 (Kyōnggi province) magistrate, Nam Su'ōn 南壽彦 the Ch'ip'yōng 砥平 magistrate and Chōng Sahyo 鄭思孝 the Chōlla province governor. Many were associated with the higher echelons of the central rebel leadership; for example, Pak P'ilhyōn was a founder member of the rebel organisation. There were also a large number of more minor provincial officials implicated, and used as assurances by rebels. These men were not those opportunists who switched sides and joined the rebels when it was evident the rebels were in the ascendancy at a local level.<sup>41</sup> These men were implicated as provincial fifth-columnists prior to the start of the rebellion and included Shin Husam 慎後三, Cho Munbo 趙文普, and Han Saōk 韓師億.<sup>42</sup> According to rebel leaders, all of the above regional fifth-columnists had pledged their support to the rebellion.

The above information means that the rebel organisation had a small but significant group of fifth-columnist rebels allegedly working undercover in both military and civil posts, in central and provincial government, and this information was widely known by rebels throughout the rebel organisation prior to the outbreak of violence.

## THE MILITARY PLAN

These fifth-columnists are frequently mentioned in assurances with regard to the military plan as in testimony A, B, C and D. The main crux of this plan involved the creation of a diversion, so fifth-columnist military generals like Yi Sasōng could attack the court. Rebel troops planned to create a 'disturbance' in a strategic location near the capital. Yi Sasōng would then mobilise his government troops in the name of the king to crush the disturbances, but in fact, Yi Sasōng's troops would be diverted to the capital to join with other rebel troops and seize control of court.<sup>43</sup> In addition to Yi Sasōng, Nam T'aejing would be playing a vitally important role in the rebel military takeover. Lower-ranking rebels testified that the Chief of the

<sup>39</sup> The charges that Kim Chunggi, Chōng Sahyo and Yi Saju were fifth-columnists were never universally accepted. However, the names of these officials were used by rebels as assurances guaranteeing success in the rebellion. Kim Chunggi is identified as a rebel fifth-columnist in other sources, see *Musin yōgokch'uan* 75, 04/03/25 p. 167; the *Yakp'ammallok* mentions that Kim Chunggi's name appeared in rebel confessions and then he was arrested and replaced *Yakp'ammallok* p. 6 lines 68-9 (author's pagination).

<sup>40</sup> Records indicate that Yi Saju was made the general of the gendarmes on the fifteenth day of the second month of 1728, but it is unclear when he took up his post.

<sup>41</sup> *Musin yōgokch'uan* 75, 04/04/17 p. 599

<sup>42</sup> Like Shin Manhang 慎萬恒 the Samga 三嘉 deputy magistrate (Chwasu 座首) who chased the magistrate out of town and sided with the Hapch'ŏn 陝川 rebels; *YS* 42 04/03/27 (chōngch'uk) 16:35a-36a, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> See *YS* 04/06/17 (pyōngsin) 18:26b, p. 65/42 & *YS* 04/04/10 (kyōng'in) 17:13a-b, p. 41/42 & *Musin yōgokch'uan* 75, 04/04/16 p. 580. Further testimony that Pak P'ilhyōn as magistrate mobilised his T'aein government troops for the rebels can be found in *Musin yōgokch'uan* 75, 04/04/07 pp. 392-3. Pak P'ilhyōn is also described as a rebel leader in *Kamnannok* 勘亂錄 from *Chosŏn Tangaeng kwangyeja charyojip* 朝鮮黨爭關係資料集 accessed online at <http://www.krppia.co.kr/pcontent/?svcid=KR&proid=68> [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012]: p. 48a-b.

Capital Gendarmes Nam T'aejing was charged with the task of seizing the capital.<sup>44</sup> Rebel leaders confessed that Nam would be leading the capital rebellion and would hold the capital to give Yi Sasöng time to bring his government troops down from P'yöng'an Province.

Testimony E: *Shin Yunjo will enter from Tongdaemun 東大門 gate, and Yi Sasöng will come from the western road, and Nam T'aejing's troops will rise up from inside the city and start firing.*<sup>46</sup>

There are some variations; for example, one rebel leader predicted disturbances in the capital as well, which Nam T'aejing would pretend to suppress.<sup>47</sup> This means both Yi Sasöng and Nam T'aejing would crush 'disturbances' inside, and close to the capital. It is unclear who would be causing these capital disturbances; however, rebels mentioned a plan to infiltrate the capital at night by sabotaging a gate.<sup>48</sup>

The use of diversion and the Yi Sasöng/Nam T'aejing assault on the capital appears to have been the basis of the rebel organization's strategy. There is evidence that the rebels attempted to implement this military strategy. When Yi Injwa seized the town of Ch'öngju, he attempted to activate the 'government' response of Yi Sasöng. Yi Injwa's first action after the takeover was to send out appeals for support from Yi Sasöng, and other rebel leaders as we see in Testimony F:<sup>49</sup>

*On the evening of the fourteenth, I arrived at Ch'öngju. Kwön Söryong and Yi Injwa had led their troops from town and stationed them in a valley around five li away.*

*On the evening of the fifteenth day, Yi Injwa was made commander and Chöng Seyun vice-commander, and they led the troops into Ch'öngju, killing the military commander. [...] When I was with the rebels, I drew up three rebel appeals (kyöksö 檄書). One was sent to Chöng Hüiryang 鄭希亮 in Kyöngsang Province. Im Kungnyang, who was a strong and robust man from the P'yöng'an commander-in-chief's camp and acting as Yi Injwa's lieutenant, was ordered to take another dispatch to Yi Sasöng. Another one was sent to Honam to Na Manch'i 羅晚致.<sup>50</sup>*

Further evidence that the rebel organization was serious about this plan can be seen in Yi Sasöng's confession where he admitted his intention had been to use rebel movements as an excuse to mobilise government troops.<sup>51</sup> Other fifth-columnists are also mentioned in relation to rebel military success; particularly Nam T'aejök, Kim Chunggi and Yi Saju.<sup>52</sup> Rebels are sketchy about both Yi Saju and Kim Chunggi's precise military involvement, or the resources they would be contributing to the rebellion; there are no details about their involvement in the plan, or whether units of their men would be mobilised. Testimony only indicates that these men would be involved in some way, and acting as generals. Overall, the names of Yi Sasöng and Nam T'aejing are the most frequently betrayed names during the main period of government interrogation. Yi Sasöng and his rebel activities are mentioned in twenty-five different *sillok* confessions; Nam T'aejing is mentioned by fourteen different rebels in confessions, mostly in relation to their assault on the capital.<sup>53</sup>

44 See YS 42 04/04/22 (imin) 17: 26b-28a, pp. 47-48 & YS 42 04/04/22 (imin) 17: 26b-28a, pp. 47-8 & *Musin yögokch'uan* 75, 04/04/14 p. 531. Testimony of Yi Sasöng's military plans can be found in other sources *Musin yögokch'uan* 75, 04/03/18 pp. 71-2. Further evidence that Yi Sasöng's planned mobilisation was used as an assurance can be found in *Kamnannok* p. 27b. One rebel indicated that Yi Sasöng's troops would be disguised as Ching troops, but it is unclear why; perhaps to give the impression that the rebels had Ching backing, see *Musin yögokch'uan* 75, 04/04/16 pp. 579-80.

45 Yi Ha 李河 claimed he was aware that Nam T'aejing was involved. *Musin yögokch'uan* 75, 04/03/18 pp. 75-6, and Yun Hüigyöng 尹熙慶 claimed capital plotting was organised by Nam T'aejing YS 42 04/03/29 (kimyo) 16: 41a, p. 34. Other sources provide testimony about Nam T'aejing's involvement: *Musin yögokch'uan* 76, 04/05/01 p. 103

46 Cho Myönggyu's 趙命奎 confession YS 42 04/06/03 (imo) 18: 21a, p. 62. Rebel leader Na Sungdae also revealed this information *Musin yögokch'uan* 75, 04/04/06 pp. 386-7. Also Yi Injwa revealed that Nam T'aejing was involved in the capital plotting YS 42 04/03/26 (pyöngja) 16: 31b-33a, p. 29-30. Han Sehong confessed Nam would be mobilising gendarmes YS 42 04/04/09 (kich'uk) 17: 11b-12a, p. 40. Shim Yuhyön also had information about Nam T'aejing's proposed movements YS 42 04/05/08 (mu'o) 18: 8b-9b, p. 56. It is difficult to find any more information about the case of Nam T'aejing because Nam was one of the few rebel leaders who refused to confess during interrogation.

47 YS 42 04/05/01 (sinhae) 18: 1b-3a, pp. 52-3.

48 Several different plans were devised by rebel leaders to open the capital gates. For example, Yi Ha claimed that Pak P'ilhyön that the gates of Tonhwamun 敦化門 and Hong'hwamun 弘化門 could be opened using rockets YS 42 04/04/09 (kich'uk) 17: 11b-12a, p. 40.

49 Unbeknownst to Yi Injwa, Yi Sasöng and Nam T'aejing had been arrested.

50 Wön Manju's confession. YS 42 04/05/24 (kapsul) 18: 18a-b, p. 61.

51 Although Yi confessed his government troops would really suppress the rebels, and not attack the crown YS 42 04/03/25 (ülhae) 16: 27b-29a, p. 27-28.

52 Nam T'aejök was a frequently betrayed fifth-columnist. For example, Nam was betrayed by Yi Pae 李培 who alleged that Nam T'aejök was one of the capital plotters alongside Nam T'aejing and Yi Sasöng *Musin yögokch'uan* 75, 04/03/27 pp. 186-7. Nam T'aejök was also betrayed by Kim Chungman 金重萬 and Shin Kwang'wön 慎光遠 YS 42 04/03/18 (mujin) 16: 14a-b, p. 20, Pak P'ilhyön YS 42 04/03/19 (kisa) 16: 15b-17a, p. 21, Pak Migui 朴美龜 YS 42 04/05/08 (mu'o) 18: 8b-9b, p. 56 and Yi Injwa YS 42 04/03/26 (pyöngja) 16: 31b-33a, p. 29-30.

53 YS 42 04/03/25 (ülhae) 16: 29a, p. 28. Both Yi Sasöng and Nam T'aejing were mentioned in relation to their activities as fifth-columnists in a variety of sources also; for example, *Kamnannok* p. 31b-32b, Yi Sasöng is also identified as a fifth columnist in *Musin yögokch'uan* 75, 04/04/10 p. 463 & *Musin yögokch'uan* 75, 04/04/24 pp. 681-2



As can be seen from the above testimony, Yi Sasŏng and Nam T'aejing are invariably placed at the centre of the strategy, and this is particularly significant for two reasons. First, it appears that a large number of rebels were familiar with the Yi Sasŏng/ Nam T'aejing section of the plan; whereas none had any idea of the proposed movements of ordinary rebel leaders like Yi Injwa, or Chŏng Hŭiryang (who were eventually more successful in the rebellion). This is an important detail because it means the Yi Sasŏng/Nam T'aejing assault was widely associated by the rebel leadership as the strategy that would bring victory in the rebellion.<sup>54</sup> Second, there is a degree of consistency about the centrality of Yi Sasŏng and Nam T'aejing to the military plan across rebel testimony. This was testimony induced under duress and compiled by government scribes with a vested factional interest in disparaging the rebel case.<sup>55</sup> However, many rebels corroborate the evidence of other rebels about the participation of the fifth-columnists. The 'overlapping' of these essential details lends some credibility to the information in the records.

### MILITARY RESOURCES OF THE FIFTH-COLUMNISTS

To understand the central role of the rebel fifth-columnists in this plan, it is important to bear in mind the significant military resources rebels believed fifth-columnists would be contributing to the rebel cause. Official figures indicate that Yi Sasŏng would have commanded up to fourteen thousand able-bodied troops.<sup>56</sup> Rebel testimony reveals that Nam T'aejing commanded around four hundred troops.<sup>57</sup> Nam T'aejŏk was supposed to commit three hundred troops.<sup>58</sup> Rebels confessed Pak P'ilhyŏn in



Monument erected in honour of government officials like Yi Pongsang killed by Musin rebel forces at Ch'ŏngju

T'aein led eight companies (almost eight hundred men) from T'aein.<sup>59</sup>

Other fifth-columnists used in these assurances also commanded significant military resources. Kim Chunggi was in charge of between seven thousand and twenty thousand troops.<sup>60</sup> Yi Saju may have commanded anything between seven hundred and a thousand troops. There are also several minor provincial officials like Shin Husam and Han Saŏk<sup>61</sup> who were planning to mobilize unclear numbers of troops.<sup>62</sup>

It is easy to see how the fifth-columnist led military plan would appeal to many rebels as a powerful assurance. First, many fifth-columnists controlled powerful military resources – resources marginalized, rural rebel elites like Yi Injwa could never hope to mobilize. This is because fifth-columnists had access to resources of the most powerful resource holder in the land – the state. By placing fifth-columnists at the centre of the military plan, rebels were essentially tapping into the power of the state. Second, many of the fifth-columnists shared political and kinship links with other rebels.<sup>63</sup> For example, Nam T'aejing was related by marriage to fellow fifth-

<sup>54</sup> This may also indicate that the actual rebel seizure of territory was not the intended course of events but a rebel response to contingency.

<sup>55</sup> Susan Naquin calls this 'overlapping information.' Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976): p. 286.

<sup>56</sup> *Pipyŏnsa Tŭngnok* 國譯備邊司謄錄 27, edited by Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 국사편찬위원회 (Kwach'ŏn 光文印刷, 2006) YJ 04/05/18 (Mujin) pp.275c-276d.

<sup>57</sup> YS 42 04/05/08 (mu'o) 18:8b-9b, p.56.

<sup>58</sup> *Musin yŏgokch'uan* 75, 04/03/28 p.201

<sup>59</sup> YS 42 04/03/25 (Ŭlhae) 16:27a-b, p.26-27.

<sup>60</sup> YS 42 04/03/17 (chŏngmyŏ) 16:10b-11a, p.18-19.

<sup>61</sup> YS 42 04/04/10 (kyŏng'in) 17:13a-b, p.41.

<sup>62</sup> YS 42 04/06/17 (pyŏngsin) 18:26b, p.65.

<sup>63</sup> YS 42 04/04/10 (kyŏng'in) 17:13b, p.41 & YS 42 04/04/14 (kap'o) 17:20b-21a, pp.44-5.

columnists Pak P'ilhyŏn and Nam T'aejŏk.<sup>64</sup> Both Shim Yuhyŏn and Kim Chunggi were related by marriage to one of the founding members of the rebel organisation Yi Yuik;<sup>65</sup> In addition, Yi Saju had marital connections to the figurehead of the rebellion, Lord Milp'ung.<sup>66</sup> These bonds amongst rebels and the fifth-columnists were never questioned in testimony.<sup>67</sup> Third, there was historical precedent for the fifth-columnist led military strategy. A plan based on the use of fifth-columnists and their resources had been used in the previous century during the Injo restoration. In 1623, Sŏin members managed to seize power with around seven thousand troops led by Yi Sŏ 李曙, Yi Chungno 李重老, and with the Military Training commander Yi Hŭngnip 李興立 acting as fifth-columnist.<sup>68</sup> Prince Kwanghae 光海君 was toppled and Injo restored in his place.<sup>69</sup> Thus, the fifth-columnist led military plan had a proven track record.<sup>70</sup> Finally, many rebels expressed their doubts about the capacity of the ordinary rebel leaders and their troops to succeed in the rebellion, but there is no evidence of any criticism or doubts about the capacity of any of the fifth-columnists.<sup>71</sup> Overall, there is strong evidence that the fifth-columnists and their the military plan was generally accepted as the winning rebel strategy.



Map showing county seats seized by Musin rebels

## THE INITIATION OF THE REBELLION

The assurances in testimony A-D are very revealing of the identity of influential members of the rebel organisation, the military strategy, and the way rebels believed they would succeed in the rebellion. When considered within the immediate political context the information from these assurances provides vital clues to the

<sup>64</sup> *Musin yŏgokch'uan* 75, 04/03/22 p.106 & Cho Ch'anyong, 1728 *nyŏn Musinsat'ae koch'al* 1728, p. 156. A similar marriage link was given as evidence that Chŏng Sahyo was involved on the rebel side, since Chŏng was related to Pak P'ilhyŏn *YS* 42 04/04/14 (kabo) 17:20b-21a, pp.44-5) In another example, rebel leaders Na Sungdae and Yi Ho stated Chŏng Sahyo and Pak P'ilhyŏn were plotting together to mobilise troops *Musin yŏgokch'uan* 75, 04/04/05 pp. 386-7.

<sup>65</sup> *Musin yŏgokch'uan* 75, 04/03/27 p. 190. Cho Sang confessed that Kim Chunggi's marriage links to Yi Yuik was evidence of his commitment to the rebellion *YS* 42 04/04/10 (kyŏng'in) 17:13b, p.41. See also *YS* 42 04/03/26 (pyŏngja) 16:31b-33a, p.29-30 & *YS* 42 04/03/25 (ŭlhae) 16:27b-29a, p.27-28. *YS* 42 04/04/11 (sinmyo) 17:14a, p.41.

<sup>66</sup> Rebels planned to put Lord Milp'ung on the throne to replace Yŏngjo and bring legitimacy to the rebellion. Lord Milp'ung was the great-grandson of Sohyŏn, the oldest son of King Injo Yi Kyech'ŏn 2003, 24. The links between other more minor fifth-columnists like Shim Husam, Cho Munbo, and Han Sa'ŏk and the rebel organization are vague. One scholar claims there were political links, Yi Chongbŏm claims that they were all members of extreme Soron or Namin factions (Yi Chongbŏm, "1728 nyŏn 'musillan' ŭi sŏngkyŏk," p. 251) but this cannot be verified in the sources. There could also have been marriage links. It is unlikely that rebel leaders would have approached provincial officials they felt were unsympathetic to the rebel organization.

<sup>67</sup> In actual fact, the loyalty of many fifth-columnists was not so strong and many reneged on agreements to fight for the rebels. Some like Yi Saju even fought against the rebel organisation *YS* 04/03/17 (chŏngmyo) 16:12b, p.19/42.

<sup>68</sup> Yi Hongjik 이홍직, ed. *Kuksadaesajŏn* 國史大辭典 (Seoul, Minjung sŏgwan 民衆書館, 2007): p. 1139.

<sup>69</sup> James Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions: Yu Hyongwon and the Late Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996): pp. 93 & 6.

<sup>70</sup> There is no testimony from the lips of rebels about the Musin rebellion fifth-columnists having used the model of earlier rebels, for example in the Injo restoration. However, the king and his officials compare the actions of Nam T'aejing and Yi Sasŏng to rebels from earlier periods, some of whom had used the fifth-columnist model to mobilize troops against the crown, so we can assume that this military strategy would have been known by the rebels as well. For example, the king compared the activities of Nam T'aejing and Yi Sasŏng to that of the 1624 Yi Kwal 李适 rebellion. *YS* 42 04/04/22 (imin) 17:26b-28a, pp.47-8.

<sup>71</sup> Yi Yurik *YS* 42 04/29 (kiyu) 17:34b-35b, pp.51-2), Yi Injwa *YS* 42 04/03/26 (pyŏngja) 16:31b-33a, p.29-30), and Yi Sasŏng *YS* 42 04/03/25 (ŭlhae) 16:27b-29a, p.27-28) all expressed their doubts about the military capacities of non-fifth columnist rebels and/or their troops.



initiation of the rebellion. Many of the fifth-columnists from the 1728 Musin rebellion had been restored to office by Yǒngjo in the 1727 Soron restoration. For example, Nam T'aejing and Kim Chunggi were exiled by the Noron around 1725 and then returned from exile by Yǒngjo in 1727 and given important military posts. Yi Sasǒng was also out of office and restored to a senior post after the 1727 Soron restoration.<sup>72</sup> Pak P'ilhyǒn's career went 'silent' around 1725, but he was back in office after 1727.<sup>73</sup> The timing of the rebellion, a few months after the 1727 Soron restoration when many fifth-columnists were restored to office, may be more than coincidence; there appears to be a direct link. The rebel use of assurances gives clues as to why the rebellion occurred when it did. Many in the rebel organisation believed that thanks to the fifth-columnists, the rebel organisation had acquired sufficient military resources to launch an assault against the largest and most powerful resource holder in the land, Yǒngjo's court.

## CONCLUSION

Previous Musin rebellion scholars recognise more than a political crisis was required to turn factionalism into widespread military violence. However, most scholars sought answers to the question of the initiation of the rebellion from information extrinsic to the textual data and identified systemic crises.

In my study of the initiation of violence I focus on rebel testimony. Thanks to the rebel use of assurances, vital data about the military strategy was quickly betrayed to government interrogators, and this information is revealing about the Musin rebellion. The fifth-columnists were widely claimed by rebels to be playing significant roles in the military plan. The rebel organization was using prime assets like Nam T'aejing and Yi Sasǒng, as well as other rebel fifth-columnists to expand and solidify rebel membership. Many rebels appear convinced that the rebellion would be led by fifth-columnists who could mobilise powerful military resources for the rebels. Put simply, the rebel organization initiated the rebellion because it



Monument commemorating the government suppression of the Musin rebellion in Ansǒng, Kyǒnggi province

believed it had sufficient resources to attack the government. The rebel organization believed it had acquired sufficient resources because the fifth-columnists had come to power, and the fifth-columnists were only in power because of the 1727 Soron restoration.

Placing fifth-columnists and their military resources at the centre of the rebellion provides a more concrete account of the initiation of violence than structural explanations for two reasons. First, this is an explanation that relies on textual evidence from the lips of the rebels themselves. Second, rather than a temporarily remote crisis point that destabilised the system, I see a moment of crisis that fatally unbalanced the political institutions a few months before the outbreak of violence. This is the 1727 Soron restoration, the moment Yǒngjo unwittingly empowered rebel fifth-columnists and the rebel organisation.

But placing the fifth-columnists at the centre of the Musin rebellion also has two important implications. The first is the role of Yǒngjo in creating a military challenge to his own rule. Men, who prior to the 1727 Soron restoration had been in exile or unemployed, were placed in positions they could exploit to launch an attack on the crown. Yǒngjo both literally and figuratively handed the keys of the armoury to fifth-columnist rebels he had restored in the 1727 Soron restoration. Second, to mount a serious attack on the state rebels required resources of the state; forward-thinking ideology was not enough to initiate rebellion against the government.

<sup>72</sup> *Sūngjǒngwǒn'ilgi* 承政院日記35, edited by Kuksa p'yǒnch'an wiwǒnhoe 국사편찬위원회, (Seoul 서울: Op'uset insoeso 서울오프셋印刷所, 1965-6) YJ 03/08/05 (Muja) p.148a.

<sup>73</sup> *Sūngjǒngwǒn'ilgi* 35, YJ 03/11/12 (Kapja) p.562a.

This paints a very different picture of the eruption of violence in 1728. Important political interventions/contingency like the 1727 Soron restoration and organisational factors like fifth-columnist involvement, military strategy and resources have been forgotten in the rush to show that systems were moving societies towards modernity and that these same systems were sending the rebel participants to an inevitable conclusion. These were not participants being propelled to some inevitable rebellion by systemic forces beyond their control. The forces that led to rebellion were firmly in the hands of the participants themselves, in the hands of the rebels and the king.

My study also raises an important point about historical approaches to the Musin rebellion in particular and rebellion in general. In most historical coverage the Musin rebellion is known as Yi Injwa's rebellion, because Yi Injwa played a leading role in the rebel seizures of county seats in Kyōngsang, Ch'ungch'ōng and Kyōnggi provinces. The problem is the focus on the main 'action' of the Musin rebellion provides little or no clue why the Musin rebellion actually occurred in 1728. By focussing on rebel seizures of power, most historical coverage overlooks important forces that lay behind the rebellion; in this case, the military plan, the fifth-columnists, their resources, and the 1727 Soron restoration. In this article, I have argued that to understand why the Musin rebellion occurred when it did, we have to look at what the rebels intended to do rather than what they actually achieved. This raises questions about some of our assumptions underlying complex events like rebellions, where it cannot necessarily be assumed that the path taken was the path chosen. Other researchers like Susan Naquin have also remarked upon the phenomenon of 'unintended consequences' in their studies of eighteenth century Chinese rebellion.<sup>74</sup> Historical researchers armed with such awareness may be able to make fruitful inroads into understanding the causes of other late Chosŏn rebellions.

It is important to note also that the Musin rebellion was not a one-off case and that central aspects of my research can also be seen in different temporal and cultural contexts. In particular, one important strategy for resource mobilisation is evident in other rebellions.

Rebels realised a vital platform for rebellion involved having rebels on the 'inside' or securing coalitions with disaffected members of the polity. In the late Chosŏn Hong Kyōngnae rebellion of 1811, rebels exploited some close connections with local government to mobilise material resources. For instance, many rebels held positions at the Kwaksan county office and some thirty-nine out of forty-three mobilised at Chōngju were clerks or officials in the local administrative structure.<sup>75</sup> Some of these same officials exploited their position within the administrative structure to mobilise troops for the rebels. These fifth-columnist officials were able to identify the able-bodied men of certain villages, and had the administrative authority to mobilise them.<sup>76</sup> In addition to human resources, fifth-columnist officials used were able to seize material resources like grain from local state granaries to help supply the rebels.<sup>77</sup> Thus, rebels exploited local level connections to mobilise government resources against government forces. In the case of the period of internal rebellion against the Ch'ing, the White Lotus Rebellion of 1796 heralded a long period of serious domestic rebellion. Rebels converted wealthy rural elites and also found support within provincial offices to the extent that observers believed most officials 'supposed to ferret out the sect are in fact members of it.'<sup>78</sup> In her study of the Eight Trigrams uprising of 1813, Susan Naquin explains that rebel leaders were reliant upon coalitions with discontents inside court as part of their strategy for victory. Leaders cultivated links with eunuchs and Chinese bondservants as a way of infiltrating and seizing the Forbidden City.<sup>79</sup>

In all the above cases, as in the case of the Musin rebellion, the rebel cultivation of links with fifth-columnists as a way of mobilising resources was not a strategy that succeeded, but did form part of a success-oriented strategy; i.e., a strategy that rebels believed would lead to success. The notion of the fifth-columnist and the fifth-columnist's ability to mobilise state resources for rebels does not explain all the permutations of rebellion. However, an awareness of these issues can help shed some light upon the mechanics of rebellion not only in 1728, but in East Asian rebellion in general.

<sup>74</sup> Susan Naquin, 'Millenarian Rebellion in China,' p.210.

<sup>75</sup> Anders Karlsson, *The Hong Kyōngnae rebellion 1811-1812: conflict between central power and local society in 19th-century Korea*, (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2000), pp.156 & 183.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161 & 165.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-205.

<sup>78</sup> Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and its enemies in late imperial China: militarization and social structure, 1796-1864*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970), p.40.

<sup>79</sup> Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China*, p.148.



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# Modern Utopia or 'Animal Society'?

THE AMERICAN IMAGINARIES IN WARTIME COLONIAL KOREA, 1931-45

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Historian Iriye Akira writes that a “cold war” took place for several years between the United States and Japan before the eruption of the Pacific War on December 7, 1941. According to Iriye, this cold war did not originate in a fundamental disparity of ideology and interests, as in the postwar Cold War between the United States and the USSR. Rather, the belligerent discourse and antagonism between Japan and the United States belied the deeper “undercurrents” of compatible interests and international vision observed in their relations before 1929.<sup>1</sup> Iriye highlights the inconsistency within wartime Japan’s rhetoric and diplomacy for a Pan-Asianist order and its ambivalence toward American power, culture, and foreign policy. This emphasis on ambivalence provides a context in which to understand Japan’s swift reconciliation with America in the postwar era. But it discounts the intensity of the wartime confrontations in East Asia and their historical legacy beyond the postwar US-Japan rapprochement.

During the wartime period, Japan’s perceptions of a desirable society and world sharply diverged from American ones, and Japan’s mobilization to enforce this vision altered the ideological and political landscape of the region under Japanese rule. Harry Harootunian writes that the anxiety of Japanese intellectuals toward Anglo-American culture made them acknowledge the war as an occasion to criticize “the meaning of modernity” entrenched in Japan since the Meiji era. They assigned

Japan a “civilizational mission” to “overcome” the problems of modernity, attached prominently to the “negativity of American materialism and its superficiality” that was collapsing Japanese culture into “mediocrity and triviality.”<sup>2</sup> Cemil Aydin calls this alternative worldview “Pan-Asianist internationalism” and argues that Japanese intellectuals and public figures became receptive to this vision after Japan’s conflicts with the League of Nations.<sup>3</sup>

How, then, did Koreans under the Japanese conceive of this new civilizational mission of Japan and its wartime narrative seeking “new moral principles different from those that had governed Europe”?<sup>4</sup> How did Koreans respond to the ongoing imperialization, or Japanization, that Japan undertook so as to change its colony according to this Pan-Asianist vision? This article explores the Korean imaginaries of America in wartime colonial Korea and examines their implications in terms of answering these questions. In defining the term “imaginary,” I use Charles Taylor’s concept of the social imaginary. Taylor differentiates social imaginary from philosophy or social theory because (1) “imaginary” refers to “the way ordinary people imagine their surroundings,” which is “often not expressed in theoretical terms” but “carried in images, stories, legends and other media”; (2) “theory is often the possession of a small minority but the social imaginary is shared by a larger group of people”; and (3) “the social imaginary is a common understanding” that makes people engage with common practices invoking a shared sense of normal expectations.<sup>5</sup>

1 Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 1.

2 Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), Chapter 2, pp. 34-94.

3 Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 161-166.

4 Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 43.

5 Charles Taylor, “On social imaginary,” 2001, quoted from [blog.lib.umn.edu/swiss/archive/Taylor.pdf](http://blog.lib.umn.edu/swiss/archive/Taylor.pdf), pp. 18-19.

The Korean wartime discourse on America included diverse types of writing, such as stories, reports on events, columns, statistics, miscellaneous essays of tourists, and imaginary claims about America's characteristics. Although their authors were mostly educated élites, they seldom supply sophisticated analyses of the United States and lack the theoretical coherence to be a subject for "intellectual history." Nevertheless, these writings still convey the positions of the authors "interwoven with an idea of how [their society] ought to go."<sup>6</sup> America, in this sense, was the topic *via* which these Korean authors discussed their ideas and desires about a "model society" for Korea, or their criticism of the country's ongoing "imperialization" without ever mentioning Japan – a realistic approach, given the harsh colonial censorship.

Japan's Pan-Asianist discourse in the 1930s advocated an alternative civilization, or "utopia," as opposed to Anglo-American imperialism at a time when Japan still wanted to avoid the war with the US.<sup>7</sup> The Korean wartime narratives on America did not endorse this Pan-Asianist turn. On the contrary, some authors depicted the United States as an "ideal place" and sought a solution for Korea's problems in American experiments. Such Korean narratives made a sudden transition in 1941 when Japan, expecting the Pacific War, closed down the major Korean newspapers and filled the remaining journals with Japan's wartime messages. This shift became acute when the famous Korean journalist and Columbia University Ph.D. Chang Töksu (1895-1947) called America "an animal society" in his speeches mobilizing Koreans for the Pacific War.

This article is a preliminary attempt to identify the areas of ideological contention and convergence among different élite groups in wartime colonial Korea. The war-



Chang Töksu and his friends in London, 1930. From left to right: Kim Söngsu, the founder of the *Tonga Ilbo* newspaper, Yi Hwal (1907-1986), who joined the Syngman Rhee government after 1945, Sin Söngmo (1891-1960) and Chang Töksu. The photo was taken in 1930 when Kim visited Chang in London. The original photo is from *Sajin ūro ponŭn Han'guk paengnyön*, (Seoul: Tonga Ilbosa, 1978), Vol. 2, p. 351.

time discourse on America in Korea contains elements that revisit the thesis of an ideological schism between cultural nationalists and revolutionaries that Michael Robinson analyzed in his work on Korean nationalism in the 1920s.<sup>8</sup> Bruce Cumings, the author of *The Origins of the Korean War*, also argues that preexisting schisms in colonial Korea were released into a civil war situation after 1945 when the formidable colonial administration abruptly disappeared from Korea.<sup>9</sup>

Such ideological schism in the 1920s changed its characteristics during the wartime period. In their wartime discourse on the United States, Korean nationalists and socialists indicated not so much contention as agreement, especially in their positive appraisal of America under Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945). The sharpest ideological divide appears between the Japanese Pan-Asianist discourse and some Korean narratives on

<sup>6</sup> Charles Taylor, "On social imaginary," p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture*, pp. 8-35; Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); and idem, "Ideological Schism in the Korean Nationalist Movement, 1920-1930: Cultural Nationalism and the Radical Critique," *Journal of Korean Studies*, vol. 4 (1982), pp. 241-268.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of the Separate Regimes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. xvii-xxix and 3-38.



America printed before Pearl Harbor. The sources used in this article are the essays in Korean-language journals published between 1931 and 1945. I selected the four major journals *Chogwang* (The Morning Light), *Chungang* (The Central Post), *Pip'an* (Criticism), and *Samch'ŏlli* (The Korean Peninsula), since they voiced the relatively distinctive positions of the cultural nationalists (*Chogwang*), socialists (*Chungang* and *Pip'an*), and Pan-Asianists (*Samch'ŏlli*). The journals were not strictly divided along distinctive political lines, but their general editorial directions are distinguishable from one another. Some essays from other journals, including *Sijo* (Trends) and *Sahae Kongnon* (Cosmopolitans), are occasionally used as points of reference.

## 2. CULTURAL NATIONALISTS: AMERICAN CIVILIZATION AS THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE

Not America but Europe was central in the Japanese intellectual discourse before World War II, according to Peter Duus and Kenji Hasegawa, the editors of *Rediscovering America: Japanese Perspectives on the American Century*. Fascinated with European debates on Marxism in the 1920s and National Socialism in the 1930s, the Japanese magazines remained indifferent to America's New Deal in coping with the crisis of capitalism.<sup>10</sup> The Japanese essays collected in *Rediscovering America* include some positive observations on America's modern lifestyle and its global influence but never name the country "an ideal land." In contrast, the Korean essays on America in the 1930s and early 1940s increasingly acclaim American development. Both Korean nationalists and socialists paid close attention to Franklin D. Roosevelt's reforms and to the American acts to grant independence to the Philippines.

A Christian journal *Sijo* (Trends) found in America a "model society" that agreed with the journal's conservative ethics. The journal was created by the American missionaries of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in 1910, and was widely read by non-Christians due to its coverage of nonreligious subjects.<sup>11</sup> *Sijo*'s July 1937 edition reprints an article from a magazine called *Segye chisik* (World Knowledge). Titled "On Utopia in this World: Keene Village, Texas, United States," the article insists

that this village has brought into reality all the elements that Thomas More imagined in his book *Utopia*. All the residents in Keene, the article says, have occupations and carry "peaceful, idealistic, angelic" lives, with no prison, police, mayor, or court, and virtually no crime in the past 42 years, except for a young boy's theft of snacks from a store. The Keene villagers neither join labor movements nor receive relief from others.

*Sijo* ascribes this utopia to the ethics of the village residents, who curtail their secular desires and suspend the consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, meat, lipstick and manicures for women, and so forth. If the villagers violate this suspension, they are called to the church council to receive some reproach. But this regulation is not forceful, the article claims, because villagers are free to leave if they dislike such rules. The article celebrates the fact that the village has no houses for gambling, movies, dancing, and no film posters encouraging an "objectionable" desire for romance between men and women, or drinking alcohol.<sup>12</sup>

While this *Sijo* article presents the Christian sect's conservative vision and its criticism of the modern lifestyle, the timing of the article, 1937, and the location of the ideal village, America, represented increasing Korean interests in the United States and its material and cultural capacities. Many Korean intellectuals, especially cultural nationalists, considered America a sensible and non-Soviet example to emulate in modernizing Korea, and recognized a glimpse of "utopia" in America's development. Before Pearl Harbor, the journal *Chogwang* exhibited such an orientation.<sup>13</sup> *Chogwang* covered America's technological and economic advancements, the American decisions on the independence of the Philippines, the labor movements under the Roosevelt administration, American women, America's foreign relations and its conflicts with Japan, and more. Many authors of *Chogwang* articles on America were meticulous in delivering objective details on the subjects concerned but cautious in giving their explicit opinions. Nevertheless, those articles associate America with images of enormous wealth, progress, and power. One of the journal's most opinionated authors depicted the country as representing a "future civilization for the human race." After Pearl Har-

<sup>10</sup> Peter Duus and Kenji Hasegawa, eds., *Rediscovering America: Japanese Perspectives on the American Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> "Sijo," *Han'guk Minjok Munhwa Taebaekwa Sajŏn*, www.encykorea.com.

<sup>12</sup> *ijo*, July 1937.

<sup>13</sup> The Chosŏn Ilbo Company published *Chogwang* as a monthly magazine between November 1935 and December 1944, and continued the journal even after the colonial government banned the daily newspaper *Chosŏn Ilbo* in December 1940.

bor in December 1941, *Chogwang*'s articles changed tone, calling the United States "the enemy," "the imperialists," and "the racists." This betrayed the journal's main contentions between 1935 and 1940, which esteemed America's system and practices as a "standard" or a "destination" in reforming the present circumstances of colonial Korea.

Several writers who had studied in the United States set the tone of *Chogwang*'s coverage of America in the late 1930s. Han Poyong (1901-?) was a key American expert. He was originally from Chŏngp'yŏng, South Hamgyŏng Province. After majoring politics in Japan's Meiji University and graduating from New York University, Han worked as the chief editor of *Chosŏn Ilbo*'s politics section for seven years. After the liberation in 1945, he became the mayor of Taegu City in 1946, under the American Military Government.<sup>14</sup> Another contributor, Chŏng Ilhyŏng (1904-1982), published an essay on "American civilization" based on his firsthand experience in the United States. Originally from P'yŏngan Province, Chŏng had graduated from Yonsei College (current Yonsei University), studied theology and sociology in the United States for seven years, and earned a Ph.D. in 1935 at Drew University in New Jersey.<sup>15</sup> After returning from America, he taught at Seoul Methodist Church Seminary (Kyŏngsŏng Kamni Kyohoe Sinhakbu). He joined the American Military Government in 1945 as a high-level administrator and then became a leading politician in South Korea.<sup>16</sup>

A third author, Han Ch'ijin, contributed two articles on the foundation of "American civilization," rendering the country's pragmatic and humanitarian characteristics. His family lived in Yonggang, South P'yŏngan Province. Han studied in the middle school affiliated with Jinling (Kŭmgŭng) University, established by American missionaries in Nanjing, China, and received a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California. After his return to Korea, Han taught at Ehwa Women's College but resigned in 1936 due to Japanese objections to his professorship. The Japanese colonial government had recorded Han's profile on a list of "suspicious Koreans" (yongŭi chosŏnin) and jailed him in 1944 due to the tenor of a speech he gave at a school on Japan's (probable) defeat in

the Pacific War.<sup>17</sup>

In the later issues of *Chogwang*, between 1937 and 1942, Ham Sanghun, the editor-in-chief of *Chosŏn Ilbo*, covered the wars in Europe and the Pacific and articulated the significance of American moves for the Japanese empire. Born in Songhwa, Hwanghae Province, Ham had graduated from the College of Politics and Economy at Waseda University and been the politics section chief at *Tonga Ilbo* before becoming editor-in-chief at *Chosŏn Ilbo*. During the final years of the war, Ham joined various pro-Japanese collaborative organizations as a major journalist. After liberation, he chaired the Public Relations Bureau (Kongbobu) of the Korean Democratic Party (Han'guk Minjudang).<sup>18</sup> It merits notice that these main authors on America were all from Korea's northern region, that Chŏng Ilhyŏng and Han Ch'ijin were Christians, and that they all cooperated with the American Military Government after 1945.

When *Chogwang* published its first issue in November 1935, the independence of the Philippines prompted strong interest among Korean journalists. The US negotiation with the Filipinos added to America an image of a "benign" power, which preempted the Japanese wartime messages reiterating the colonial Philippines as evidence of American imperialism. When the US passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act (Philippine Independence Act; Public Law 73-127) on March 24, 1934, both Korean nationalists and socialists treated this subject attentively. The leftist Pae Sŏngnyong published an article in *Sahae Kongnon* when the Philippines passed its new constitution by popular vote following the US Act. Pae spells out the conflicts of interest that the plan for independence could entail for Filipinos and Americans alike. He suspects that the US wanted to liberate the Philippines for economic reasons but could not yet do so from a military viewpoint, given the numerous US military bases there. Pae hopes that the newly elected President Manuel Quezón will manage the situation well during the ten years assigned before independence, and revise the country's economic terms with the United States more to the Filipinos' advantage. Nevertheless, he sincerely celebrates the agreement, calling

14 "Han Poyong," *Han'guk Kŭnhyŏndae Inmul Charyo*, in Han'guksa Database, db.history.go.kr.

15 "Chŏng Ilhyŏng," in *Han'guk Minjok Munhwa Taebaek kwa Sajŏn*, www.encykorea.com.

16 "Chŏng Ilhyŏng," *Han'guk Kŭnhyŏndae Inmul Charyo*, in Han'guksa Database, db.history.go.kr.

17 "Han Ch'ijin," *Han'guk Kŭnhyŏndae Inmul Charyo*, in Han'guksa Database, db.history.go.kr; "Han Ch'ijin p'an'gyŏl sohwa 20nyŏn hyŏnggong che 353 ho," in *Chae'p'an Kirok*, Kukka Pohunch'o Konghun Chŏnja Saryogwan, [http://egonghun.mpva.go.kr/portal/url.jsp?ID=PV\\_DJ\\_A012\\_007.079.000.000](http://egonghun.mpva.go.kr/portal/url.jsp?ID=PV_DJ_A012_007.079.000.000); Hong Chŏngwan, "Ilcheha haebanghu Han Ch'ijinui hangmun ch'egye chŏngnipgwa minjujuiron," *Yŏksa Munje Yŏn'gu*, October 2010, pp. 159-160.

18 "Ham Sanghun," *Han'guk Kŭnhyŏndae Inmul Charyo*, in Han'guksa Database, db.history.go.kr.; Ch'ŏn Panminjok Haengwi Chinsang Kyumyŏng Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Ch'ŏn Panminjok Haengwi Kwan'gye Saryojip*, vol. X (Seoul: Ch'ŏn Panminjok Haengwi Chinsang Kyumyŏng Wiwŏnhoe, 2009).

it "a historic event at the corner of the West Pacific" and hoping that all Filipinos will unite and cooperate for their independence.<sup>19</sup>

Han Poyong also covered this subject in *Chogwang* in December 1935. His article provides a fuller history of the Philippines: the years under Spanish colonial rule; the country's independence movements led by the patriots Jose Rizal and Emilio Aginaldo in the mid-1890s; the US occupation of the island during the Spanish-American War; the failure of the Filipino guerrilla movements against the US occupation; and the subsequent "Yankee imperialism" on the island for thirty years. Despite this US aggression, Han argues that US rule was more "generous" than that of the Spaniards, "achieving much more for the islands in thirty years than Spain accomplished in its three-hundred-year rule." Han continues that, right after the occupation, US President William McKinley, Jr. (1843-1901) had promised the future independence of the Philippines. Filipinos could discuss their independence in public because the US had already implemented the self-rule (*chach'i*) of the islands and established the Philippine Congress in 1907.

Han then notes that the US politicians had discussed Philippine independence, including President Woodrow Wilson's 1912 inaugural speech and the US Congress approval of the Jones Act in 1916 on Philippine independence. This discussion was suspended under the Republican government between 1921 and 1929 but resumed during the Great Depression, when Americans resented the entrance of agricultural products from the Philippines, as well as immigration of Filipinos to the United States. President Franklin Roosevelt completed the American procedure with his signature on the Philippine Independence Act in March 1935. The Filipinos approved the act by plebiscite in May, elected the nationalist leader Quezón president in September, and declared the foundation of the Republic in November 1935.<sup>20</sup> Han introduces the specific contents of the Tydings-McDuffie Act and other bills, and the way Americans transferred sovereignty to the Philippines.<sup>21</sup> These details informed Korean readers of the procedure through which the two countries reached agreement, and of the exact terms of

the conditions that both sides considered significant.

While Philippine independence distinguished the United States from other powers, *Chogwang* carefully followed America's position on the Sino-Japanese conflict. In 1936, a year before Japan's full-scale war against China, *Chogwang* published several articles on this subject. The journalist Sō Ch'un, for example, called attention to President Roosevelt's address on November 11, 1935, quoting Roosevelt's statement, "We are acting to simplify the definitions and facts by calling war 'war' when armed invasion and a resulting killing of human beings take place."<sup>22</sup> Sō comments that this speech offered a new reference point in applying the Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928), which objected to the use of a war as a means of solving international conflicts. Sō interprets the Roosevelt speech as the American objection to military acts by anti-status-quo countries, projecting the possibility of a second world war between the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union on one side, and Germany and Japan on the other side.<sup>23</sup>

In the same January 1936 issue of *Chogwang*, Han Poyong discusses "The Crisis of 1936," which at the time had strong currency in Japan. Criticizing the Japanese rationale, Han identifies the crisis not as one that was internationally provoked but as a crisis created by Japan. According to Han, Japanese journalists assumed potential international retaliation in 1936 in response both to Japan's occupation of Manchuria and to its withdrawal from the League of Nations. This might cause Japan to lose its Mandate on the South Pacific islands<sup>24</sup> and the transfer of the Mandate to the United States, the Japanese journalists estimated, and would be a great threat to Japan. They also suspected that the British and Americans behind the scene were assisting China's anti-Japanese struggles.<sup>25</sup> Han criticizes such arguments for the following reasons: Japan's withdrawal from the Naval Conference in 1935 had occurred without serious international conflict; Japan's South Pacific Mandate was not revoked; and China's anti-Japanese struggles were meager. Han estimates that the emergence of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy has further reduced the possibility of international retaliation against Japan. The Western powers are less

19 Pae Sōngnyong, "T'aep'yōngyang sange saero tongnippan piyulbin konghwagugūi changnae: migugūi kūktong chōngch'aegye yōn'gwan haya," *Sahae Kongnon*, December 1935.

20 Han Poyong, "Sin tongnip piyulbin taegwan," *Chogwang*, December 1935, pp. 139-146.

21 Han Poyong, "Sin tongnip piyulbin taegwan," pp. 142-144.

22 The original excerpt is quoted from Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy 1931-1941* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 289.

23 Sō Ch'un, "Che ich'a segye taejōnnon," *Chogwang*, January 1936, pp. 94-98.

24 These islands now make up Palau, the Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands.

25 Han Poyong, "Sinch'un kukche chōnggugūi tonghyang: sisa munje," *Chogwang*, January, 1936, pp. 306-319.



interested in solving the problems of the Far East than in dealing with Hitler's violation of the Treaty of Versailles and Italy's military action.

However, Han writes, the international focus had again moved to Northern China in October 1935 because a "so-and-so" country (*moguk*) had established a "self-rule" government in Northern China.<sup>26</sup> Due to censorship, Han does not name this country, though from the context he is apparently referring to Japan.<sup>27</sup> Han thus identifies Japan's actions in Northern China since October 1935 as the true cause of the "Crisis of 1936." While Han recognizes that Japan's actions have aroused concern in the UK, US, and USSR, he doubts that these countries will take immediate military action against Japan's move in Northern China. Han concludes that a major international military conflict will not occur in 1936, and that the Northern China incident will, for the time being, result in what Japan intended. He nevertheless expects that a "self-rule government" in Manchuria controlled by Japan would cause, rather than solve, a lot of problems in China.<sup>28</sup>

After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937, Han published the article updating the potential choices of the British and the Americans in the Far East. Han still does not think they will intervene immediately but pinpoints the signs of America's more active engagement with China.<sup>29</sup> The British feared that their repression of Japan in North China would force Japan's expansion in the South Pacific. Thus, Han argues, the British will stand still as long as they are concerned about both the South Pacific and China, and restrained by more urgent problems in Europe. The US interests in China were not bigger than those of the British. But the US had become China's number-one trading partner, and its Open Door Policy had helped China preserve its territory. American missionaries also wanted to expand their Christian mission in China. Under such conditions, Han argues, both the US government and American citizens were willing to help China, as long as such commitment did not come at a great cost to the US. Upon the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Han notes, the US should have put into effect the Neutrality Act (*chungnippŏp*) between China and Japan, but did not do so on the pretext that the law

could harm the weaker party in favor of the country with a strong navy. Han estimates that the US claimed neutrality in word but denied it in action. If a country (America) has such a mindset, Han insists, it is just waiting for an opportunity (to act against Japan).<sup>30</sup> After this article, for whatever reasons, Han's columns did not appear in *Chogwang* until the end of the World War II.

While speculating on potential US-Japan military conflicts, Chogwang also published a series of essays on the nature of "American civilization." Chŏng Ilhyŏng's essay after his recent return from America voiced his amazement and dismay about the "grandiosity," "modernity," "brilliance," and "decadence" of that civilization. Chŏng diagnoses that the "tide of material civilization" is moving from London and Paris to New York. At the sunset of those European cities, New York has emerged as the capital of the "Yankee Empire" and the "Holy Grail (*kŭmjat'ap*) of twentieth-century material civilization." It is impossible, Chŏng asserts, to describe in words the magnitude, luxury, and flamboyance of New York, the "Golden Castle of the Twentieth Century" equipped with so many cultural facilities, concrete buildings, iron walls, and web-like transportation networks.<sup>31</sup>

Chŏng counts "modernism, democracy, and pragmatic philosophy" as the essential characteristics of American civilization, repeating "modernity" as the thrust of this American lifestyle. Just as the Empire State Building symbolizes the essence of modern scientific knowledge, so America is a "barometer" of modernism and the "center" of modernity, leading the world by the invention of new ideas and values. Chŏng acknowledges that this modernity has also brought anxiety and tragedy to the American lifestyle. People in New York, for instance, carry on lives that are acutely diversified and intense enough to "numb" human nerves.<sup>32</sup> Chŏng attributes this life-style to America's "economy of prosperity" founded upon mass production, standardization, and mechanization. This economy produces wealth but generates social problems as it forces people into an artificially restrained lifestyle, beset as they are by machines.

Chŏng appreciates American democracy, as articulated in the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's 1863

26 This "self-rule" government seemingly refers to the East Hebei Autonomous Council and the Hebei-Chahar Political Council established by the Japanese at the end of 1935.

27 Han Poyong, "Sinch'un kukche chŏnggugŭi tonghyang," p. 319.

28 Han Poyong, "Sinch'un kukche chŏnggugŭi tonghyang," pp. 317-319.

29 Han Poyong, "Ilchi punjaenggwa yŏngmiŭi tonghyang," *Chogwang*, October, 1937, pp. 52-59.

30 Han Poyong, "Ilchi punjaenggwa yŏngmiŭi tonghyang," pp. 57-59.

31 Chŏng Ilhyŏng, "Amerik'a munmyŏngŭi chonghoenggwan," *Chogwang*, October 1936, pp. 136-149.

32 Chŏng Ilhyŏng, "Amerik'a munmyŏngŭi chonghoenggwan," pp. 139-140.

Emancipation Proclamation, as a “most remarkable ideological achievement in modern liberal thought.” He calls this idea of democracy the “highest form of American nationalist thought” and “the essence of Americanism,” guiding the country’s education, the arts, intellectual thought, and religion. Chŏng also views this democracy as a source of American expansionism undergirding the Monroe Doctrine and its transition to pan-Americanism. At the stage of pan-Americanism, Chŏng argues, American democracy has lost its authentic characteristics as a manifestation of the Puritans’ liberalism, and has been transformed into a “liberal expansionism” in pursuit of external freedom. Concurrently, this liberal expansionism has directed the US to propose the League of Nations and the Permanent Court of International Justice, not to speak of relieving the Philippines of its colonial rule.<sup>33</sup>

Chŏng praises some specific features of everyday life in America: its wealth, the hygienic lifestyle and convenient housing, the transportation networks with their speed and size, and the excellent educational system. He particularly admires American public education, its “perfect” institutions and tremendous scale, and the quality of higher education that he observed at Columbia University and other colleges in New York. Chŏng finds an “unbridgeable gap” between this US education system and the Korean situation, describing American college campuses as “euphoric spaces where young men and women enjoy their beautiful youth, obtain learning and discipline for their future, and experience a cradle for romance and love marriage.”<sup>34</sup>

Chŏng foresees that there will be a “revival of the Roman Empire” in the future of American civilization as its materialism creates a luxurious life side by side with sexual disorders and moral decadence. Nevertheless, he anticipates the arrival of an “American era,” placing great hope in Roosevelt’s reforms. The “frantic individualism and worship of gold” in American civilization, he writes, will be corrected with the “birth of a new social system,” initiated by the leadership of President Roosevelt and his “fight against big business.” Whether Roosevelt succeeds or fails, Chŏng argues his efforts will lead Americans to acknowledge the urgency of reforming the country’s eco-

nomic system and encourage cooperation among them. Once this American reform succeeds, Chŏng insists, the world will see a “morning” when this “Holy Grail of the beaming material civilization will renew its face and dominate the coasts of the Pacific.”<sup>35</sup>

This affection toward the Rooseveltian reforms is also found in other *Chogwang* essays. The aforementioned Han Poyong in his June 1937 article cites the 1936 Peace Conference in Buenos Aires initiated by Roosevelt, and calls this pan-American assembly of the North and South American republics a “ridicule” of the militaristic regimes in Europe, which constantly invade each other.<sup>36</sup> Han evaluates America’s labor movements in the Roosevelt era as a non-Communist road to solve working-class problems, and contrasts the Rooseveltian “promise” with the “dark prospect” of Fascist Europe. Han argues that labor movements are constrained where the “spiritual movements couched in statism and nationalism” prevail and antagonize foreigners.<sup>37</sup> Because of such Fascist oppression, Han continues, the working class in Europe, suffering from high inflation and no wage increase, never dared to conduct labor movements for fear of being labeled “anti-statist” or “anti-nationalistic.” Han sees a very different development in Rooseveltian America. The president is still making efforts to find a compromise, since the American business class opposed his policies and the Supreme Court judged some laws unconstitutional. Despite such obstacles, Han reports, the leftist CIO (Committee for Industrial Organization) and its leader John Lewis have achieved concessions from business on the rights of the working class to collective action, a minimum wage rate, and minimum working-hours. The Supreme Court has also ruled that these labor laws are constitutional.<sup>38</sup>

Han seems to suggest America’s labor movement as an alternative to Communist movements. Given America’s freedom of the press, he argues, the American Communists can circulate their official newspaper (*The Daily Worker*) and other publications for the working class. However, their radical position is unpopular in the US because the life of American laborers is not as miserable as that of the European working class. Although the Third Communist International has opened a branch in the US,

33 Chŏng Ilhyŏng, “Amerik’a munmyŏngŭi chonghoenggwan,” pp. 140-141.

34 Chŏng Ilhyŏng, “Amerik’a munmyŏngŭi chonghoenggwan,” p. 143.

35 Chŏng Ilhyŏng, “Amerik’a munmyŏngŭi chonghoenggwan,” pp. 148-149.

36 Han Poyong, “Sŭngsehan migugŭi nodong undong: CIO ŭi yakchin’gwa AFL ŭi mollak,” *Chogwang*, June 1937, p. 163.

37 Han Poyong, “Sŭngsehan migugŭi nodong undong,” pp. 163-175.

38 Han Poyong, “Sŭngsehan migugŭi nodong undong,” pp. 164-165.

Han continues, American citizens tended to regard them as “alien” or “anti-American.” Han introduces in detail the reform proposals of the American Union of Automobile Workers (UAW), including a six-hour work day and a minimum wage system and the articles of the Wagner Act (the National Labor Relations Act of 1935), called the “Magna Carta” of the working class.<sup>39</sup>

A systematic presentation of America as a “model” country is articulated in Han Ch’ijin’s two articles published in 1940 in *Chogwang*. In his May 1940 essay on American sociology,<sup>40</sup> Han defines the discipline as the knowledge for constructing the “happiest human society on earth.” Distinguishing this knowledge from socialism, Han calls American sociology as a philosophy for praxis, combining “the utopian ideals of the human race” with the Comptian methodology of positivism. According to Han, American sociology made a transition from Spencer’s social Darwinism to the theory of Lester Frank Ward (1841-1913), who revised sociology from a “psychological” perspective. Han summarizes Ward’s theory as arguing that culture is produced by willful activities of human beings and that it is constructed not just from individual efforts but also from social control and cooperation.<sup>41</sup>

Han relates this “psychological” theory of culture to American idealism and values. According to Han, Americans are idealists (*yusimnonja*) rather than materialists who consider the mental power of human beings critical in their domination of nature and their organization of society. He maintains that this “idealism or subjectivism” makes “independence” a unique American spirit and the foundation for American social life; that the spirit of independence in turn promotes democracy and individualism; and that this idealism also encourages positive activism and makes the US the space where ideas can be most easily transformed into actions and politics.<sup>42</sup>

Repeatedly, Han identifies American social philosophy with humanism, which he defines as the ideas that “human beings are the masters of all creatures and the standards of all values” and that “humans are autonomous and independent, in that they voluntarily reform and control their

environment.” This humanism leads Americans to think that people can do whatever they want and should never surrender to obstacles rising from the environment. Han calls Americans the most idealistic of people, who believe in achieving tasks that have been considered impossible in the past. He relates this “humanism” to Americans’ religious belief that men do not belong to any man-made state and should revere not the state but God, the sovereign of the world.<sup>43</sup>

Han Ch’ijin published a second article in July 1940, making a sweeping argument on “American civilization.”<sup>44</sup> In it he maintains that American humanitarianism is a “savior” of civilization in the then-current international crisis and that “no country but America” can stop the surreal reality that the people of the world are all facing. Readers should understand, Han asserts, that there is more than materialism to America’s leadership and power, and that pragmatism constitutes the “deeper base” of its materialism. Han ascribes the characteristics of American civilization to the culture of immigrants. The first Americans, as exiles from foreign countries, did not fear borrowing foreign ideas and systems, tested the merits of those systems, and evaluated their truth or falsity. Han argues that this tradition has made America a “laboratory of the world” and that it has imbued American history, culture, religion, and ideologies with the conviction that “if you have will to do so, you can achieve anything.”<sup>45</sup>

Han thus designates pragmatism as the American philosophy, as synthesized by the thinker William James (1842-1910). According to Han, this pragmatism prefers experiences to abstract theories, domination to being dominated, an open and public world to an exclusive and closed society, and practicing imperfect knowledge to holding out for its faultlessness. This philosophy values outcomes, nurtures “epicurean” attitudes on life, and has humanism as its key feature and democracy as its political expression.<sup>46</sup> Han defends the contradictions that Korean intellectuals found in America between its humanism and its racial discrimination, between the country’s wealth and the great poverty of the weak, between its isolation-

39 Han Poyong, “Sungsehan migugui nodong undong,” p. 173. Other short articles in *Chogwang* published in 1937 and 1940 also reveal this Korean “amazement” at America’s progress. An essay entitled “The Memory of Washington Days” indicates that this admiration for America life existed among Korean students. The author of this essay writes that Americans live in a peaceful, secure, and orderly society, create the conveniences of life from scientific knowledge, and enjoy their freedom in the land of liberty. Simdang Hagin, “Wosingt’ongui ch’uok,” *Chogwang*, November 1938, pp. 60-65.

40 Han Ch’ijin, “Miguk sahoejok sasangui hyondan’gye,” *Chogwang*, May 1940, pp. 122-129.

41 Han Ch’ijin, “Miguk sahoejok sasangui hyondan’gye,” pp. 123-126.

42 Han Ch’ijin, “Miguk sahoejok sasangui hyondan’gye,” p. 126.

43 Han Ch’ijin, “Miguk sahoejok sasangui hyondan’gye,” p. 128.

44 Han Ch’ijin, “Amerik’a munmyongnon,” *Chogwang*, July 1940, pp. 146-155.

45 Han Ch’ijin, “Amerik’a munmyongnon,” pp. 147-148.

46 Han Ch’ijin, “Amerik’a munmyongnon,” pp. 148-150.



ism and interventionism in foreign relations, and between utilitarianism and vulgarity in American popular culture. Han attributes these contradictions to pragmatism itself, the overarching American ideology, which accepts the conflicts in things and in the world. From this viewpoint, such contradictions in American culture are a correctible problem and even a source of progress.<sup>47</sup>

Perceiving America's contradictions as a source of progress, Han is optimistic about America's future. Since Americans have been experimenting with all sorts of human ideas and practice, their current culture is a "product of what men achieved with their free will in a free land." Thus he is very generous about America's problems, writing, "If American culture has a defect, it is because human nature has a defect. If there is strength in the country's culture, it proves that human nature has such a character." Han is eager to see how this America will exert its leadership in the future world. Regarding Pan-Asianist claims about the relief of Eastern civilization, Han adds that American ideals are not simply Christian but consistent with the Confucian theorem in *The Analects*, "Do not do to others what you do not desire [for yourself]." Han concludes that Americans have not yet achieved this ideal, and that their global destiny will change depending on whether or not they in fact accomplish this vision.<sup>48</sup>

It is surprising that some *Chogwang* authors defended America in such bold and optimistic terms while Japan intensified its Pan-Asianist propaganda and rapidly mobilized Korea for the war in China and, potentially, in the Pacific. Approaching the Pacific War, *Chogwang* began printing anti-American essays.<sup>49</sup> It is striking how these new essays contravene the journal's earlier recognition of America, and indeed admiration of its civilization. The new anti-American authors criticize the history of American imperialism in East Asia by recalling the memory of the Korean-American War in 1871. They emphasize America's "hypocrisy" on the grounds that America's imperialism in Asia and Latin America violated the country's idealistic rhetoric. These anti-American authors also appropriate leftist critiques of capitalism in projecting an "evil" image of America as the most threatening enemy of "East Asian Co-Prosperity."

Ham Sanghun, who had generally reported on international relations in an empirical attitude, was among those who transmitted Japan's justification for the war to his readers. In *Chogwang*'s December 1941 issue, published right before Pearl Harbor, Ham wrote that war with the United States was imminent, given the tense situation in the Pacific and America's unyielding position toward Japan. After the Second World War broke out in Europe, Ham argued that Japan, as a "hegemon of East Asia," "naturally" demanded the areas under the domination of France, Holland, and the UK, and tried to establish the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Referring to the US-British "ambition for world domination," Ham writes that Americans wanted to connect the British, Dutch, China, and the Soviets in a ring, and confine the Japanese empire. Ham maintains that only "power" can solve this US-Japan conflict, and that Japan should avoid being (uselessly) induced to follow the appeasement measures of the United States.<sup>50</sup> Although this article delivers Japan's rationale for war with the United States, it is fair to mention that Ham's wording remains less enthusiastic than that found in other Pan-Asianist articles.

Anti-American essays in *Chogwang* after 1941 were stereotyped replications of Japan's wartime messages. Makino Kōichi (Yi Hongjo), a Tokyo University graduate and official of the Yi Royal House Library, published an article after Pearl Harbor on America's imperialist history in Asia. Makino argues that the US dropped its Monroe Doctrine after completing the development of the West Coast and became a modern imperialist country. The US colonized the Philippines and wants to transform China into a semi-colony. America has aimed its Open Door Policy at preventing other powers (Japan) from obtaining exclusive privileges in China, so as to better wield America's own power there. Because the US fostered its "sinister ambition" in the East and the Pacific, Makino asserts, the Japanese empire smashed Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941 (December 7 in the United States). Makino agitates that it is time to "eliminate the invasive footprints of Western imperialists in East Asia," and that Japan will in the near future expel whites from the region and establish the "Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere."<sup>51</sup>

47 Han Ch'ijin, "Amerik'a munmyōngnon," pp. 150-151.

48 Han Ch'ijin, "Amerik'a munmyōngnon," p. 159.

49 On the 1871 Korean-American War, see Ch'a Sangch'an, "Sinmi tae yangyoran: yuwōl sahwa," *Chogwang*, June 1940, pp. 66-71; Ch'a Sangch'an, "Sasangūro pon chosōn'gwa migugūi kwan'gye," *Chogwang*, May 1941, pp. 98-107. A more critical history of America also appeared; see Yi Myomuk, "Migugūi ōjewa onūl," *Chogwang*, June 1941, pp. 64-71.

50 Ham Sanghun, "T'aep'yōngnyang t'ūkchip: migugūi t'aep'yōngnyang chōngch'aek," *Chogwang*, December 1941.

51 Makino Kōichi, "Ilmi oegyo p'alsimnyōnsa," *Chogwang*, January 1942, pp. 58-67. Makino Kōichi followed Japan's name change policy. His original Korean name was Yi Hongjo.

*Chogwang* also printed the public speeches organized by the war support organizations. The language of these speeches is repetitive, reciting the “evil ambitions of American imperialism and its hypocrisy.”<sup>52</sup> For example, Chu Yohan says that America’s “Open Door, Equal Opportunity, and Preservation of China’s Territory” slogans are all good lies for its plan to invade Asia. Chu declaims that Japan’s war is a “just war” to save Asians from this Western exploitation, and that Japan alone is fighting the war that all Asians should fight altogether.<sup>53</sup> The journalist Yu Kwangyŏl also attacked America’s Open Door Policy a selfish excuse for “sucking China’s blood and flesh, while other Western powers wanted to butcher China into pieces.” Quoting America’s “New Immigration Act” against Asian immigrants, Yu argued that the US wanted to keep the Monroe Doctrine within America but demanded the Open Door Policy in China. He called this American contradiction a “*nolbu simppo*,” referring to the heart of the greedy older brother in the traditional Korean tale who says, “What is mine is mine, and what is yours is mine, too.”<sup>54</sup>

*Chogwang*’s articles after Pearl Harbor thus blatantly demonized Americans, naming them “modern barbarians” and “schizophrenic Yankees.”<sup>55</sup> One author of such articles, Han Hŭkku, used a leftist logic in demeaning America’s “greed.” He argued that only a small number of “Yankee” millionaires possessed America’s wealth, and exploited the proletarian class; more than 85 percent of Americans were living in serious poverty without any security measures. As evidence of this inequality in America, he quoted excerpts from the literature of American leftists, such as Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* and Carl Sandburg’s *Chicago Poems*. Han argued that America’s democracy and freedom were established on a “system coercing the subordination of powerless people” and on America’s free media and journalism functioning as an “instrument of the powerful.” Han had once lived in the United States,<sup>56</sup> and his article contains a strong racist tenor, describing the “disgraceful” physical appearance of Americans, such as their “lax” noses, “flippant” lips,

and “licentious” eyes.<sup>57</sup> This hatred sharply countered the pre-1941 *Chogwang* discourse on America as an ideal country signaling the “future of the human race.”

### 3. SOCIALISTS: AMBIVALENCE TOWARD ROOSEVELTIAN AMERICA

Two tendencies are found in the Korean socialist writings on America published during the wartime period. On the one hand, the leftists apply a Marxian analysis of imperialism and predict the inevitable fall of the American capitalism. On the other hand, like some authors in *Chogwang*, the leftists sympathetically observe the New Deal of the Roosevelt administration and its impact on the working class. While some authors in the early 1930s, in parallel with the Great Depression, carried out a typical socialist criticism of American society, the articles published in the mid- and late 1930s were more ambivalent.

The journal *Chungang* (The Central Post) existed between 1933 and 1936. The leftist leader Yŏ Unhyŏng (1886-1947) launched this journal as the chairman of the Chosŏn Chungang Ilbo Company. Reflecting Yŏ’s own nationalism and his broad social relations, *Chungang* did not strongly advocate a leftist critique but manifested a moderate position in its coverage of America. During the journal’s short life, *Chungang* frequently reported the progress of the Rooseveltian reform and its prospects. For example, Hong Sŏngha’s<sup>58</sup> article on the National Recovery Administration (NRA) begins with a Marxist take on the destiny of American capitalism, yet also introduces the basic details of the NRA and their implications for the working class. Hong reports that the government reduced the average work week from 50 to 60 hours to 40 hours, increased the minimum wage, and legalized workers’ collective action. He also explains that the Roosevelt government set out to organize advisory committees of industries, consumers, and laborers in order to represent their interests and opinions in the NRA. In his conclusion, Hong expresses skepticism as to whether these committees can collectively manage the concerned agendas and effectively moderate the different interest groups despite

52 Chu Yohan et al., “Tae miyŏngjŏn’gwa uriŭi kago,” *Chogwang*, January 1942, pp. 72-74. The names of the speakers are written in a Japanese style following the name change policy.

53 Chu Yohan et al., “Tae miyŏngjŏn’gwa uriŭi kago,” p. 72.

54 Yu Kwangyŏl, “Wae miyŏngjŏn ch’ina,” *Chogwang*, January 1943, pp. 37-42.

55 Han Hŭkku, “Munhak sangŭro pon miguginŭi sŏnggyŏk,” *Chogwang*, April 1942, pp. 142-147.

56 Han Hŭkku wrote his memory of his years in America in “Chaemi yungnyŏn ch’uŏk p’yŏnp’yŏn,” published in *Sinin Munhak* in March 1936. Han’s recollection of his years in the United States is not negative in this essay.

57 Han Hŭkku, “Munhak sangŭro pon miguginŭi sŏnggyŏk,” p. 142.

58 Hong Sŏngha graduated from Chuo University in Japan and taught at Posŏng College (current Korea University) for 18 years. After the liberation in 1945, he joined the Korean Democratic Party and was elected a member of the first national assembly for drafting the South Korean constitution. “Hong Sŏngha,” *Han’guk Kŭnhyŏndae Inmul Charyo*, in Han’guksa Database, db.history.go.kr.

the increased presidential power granted by the NRA.<sup>59</sup>

In 1933, an author using the pen name “Chaha Sanin” deemed the New Deal the “Fascistization” of the American economy. This article puts forth a bizarre conceptualization yet reveals the mindset of a Korean socialist who applies the analogy of the socialist revolution in understanding the New Deal. Mentioning Mussolini’s Fascist statement in October 1932, the author associates this European event with the election of Roosevelt, calling him a “dictator” chosen by the “leftist majority.” According to the author, this event indicates the “transformation of American democracy into a dictatorship” and becomes “one of the most interesting subjects in world politics.” The author still distinguishes Roosevelt’s “dictatorship” from other forms because it did not involve a coup d’état, received the legal authorization of the US Congress, and observed the four-year limit of incumbency.<sup>60</sup>

The author “Chaha Sanin” thus seems to use the term “dictatorship” in order to compare Roosevelt’s social control to the USSR’s planned economy. He (or she) introduces the major legal acts of the Roosevelt administration and calls the “Blue Eagle Revolution” (referring to the NRA) a “crucial experiment of world economy” comparable to the Soviets’ development plans. This author defines this Blue Eagle Revolution as a dictatorship because it takes the form of free choice but involves “psychological violence” in reality. The Roosevelt government allocated Blue Eagle marks to companies that participated in the government program, and organized patriotic campaigns urging citizens to buy products with this label. According to the author, such measures embody the essence of a “dictatorship” because they force citizens to comply via moral and psychological threats. The author identifies three types of dictatorship, one in the Soviet Union, one in Italy, and one in America. In comparison to the Soviet one, the author evaluates the performance of the American “dictatorship” as “imperfect” because it mainly depends on moral persuasion. Given the strength of the opposition party, the author argues, the Blue Eagle marks will be insufficient to solve America’s “fundamental” social problems.<sup>61</sup>

*Chungang* neither depicted America as a model society

nor provided unrelenting socialist critiques of the country as an imperialist country. The journal’s position might be found in its recognition of social progress under the Roosevelt government and of America as a useful reference for reform in Korea. *Chungang* even published the essay of Sō Chaep’il, the famous leader of the Independence Club, on America’s transformation over the 50 years he had lived in the United States.<sup>62</sup> Sō deems America’s change an “incredible evolution” and a “massive social experiment for developing an equal and fair society and economy” without a bloody revolution. In the past 25 years, he writes, the United States has transformed itself from an agricultural to an industrial society, and its wealth has reached the highest level in human history. While this wealth is concentrated among a small number of people, he still sees that the growth has provided “good opportunities to most Americans in seeking prosperity and happiness for their families.” If the people are to a degree satisfied with such evolution, Sō argues, Communism and Fascism will not be able to take root in that soil.<sup>63</sup>

Another *Chungang* article in 1935 reports on the victory of Roosevelt in the general election when Democrats occupied two-thirds of the seats in both the US Senate and House of Representatives. The author writes that the New Deal failed to garner enthusiastic support among the business or working classes, but that this lukewarm attitude from both sides functioned as a factor in favor of Roosevelt’s victory. The author argues that this victory would secure Roosevelt’s reelection as president and continued Democratic rule until 1940 because the Republican Party failed to propose any constructive alternative to the New Deal. This author criticizes the idea that Roosevelt is establishing “Fascism” like Hitler and Mussolini because he finds Roosevelt exercising only partial control in order to maintain the “laissez faire” of the entire society, the general character of his country.<sup>64</sup>

*Chungang*’s reports on Roosevelt’s experiment turned pessimistic when the US Supreme Court decided in January 1936 that his Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) was unconstitutional. Pae Sōngnyong comments that the Supreme Court decision eliminates one of the two pivotal measures of the New Deal following its 1935 decision

59 Hong Sōngha, “Sanōp puhūngbōpgwa miguk kyōngjeūi changnae,” *Chungang*, January 1933, pp. 23–24.

60 Chaha Sanin, “Miguk kyōngjech’aegūi p’asyohwa: ch’ōngch’i hyōngmyōngūi naeyong kōmt’o,” *Chungang*, February 1933, pp. 19–21.

61 Chaha Sanin, “Miguk kyōngjech’aegūi p’asyohwa,” p. 21.

62 Sō Chaep’il, “Chaeryu osimnyōn: miguk sahoeūi tongt’ae,” *Chungang*, April 1935, pp. 12–14.

63 Sō Chaep’il, “Chaeryu osimnyōn,” p. 14.

64 Chin Uhyōn, “Nyu ttūil migugūi tonghyang,” *Chungang*, January 1935, pp. 21–25.



that the NRA violated the US Constitution. Pae argues that the Court's decision reveals the serious contradiction between Roosevelt's "control economy" and America's liberal institutions. Although the Roosevelt government might devise new policy measures to compensate for the loss of the AAA, Pae speculates, it would encounter other accusations of being unconstitutional as long as America maintains its current institutions and political system.<sup>65</sup> Pae hands down a socialist verdict on the NRA, saying that it is impossible to revise capitalism with the methods of the middle class or to accomplish the new economy with incomplete control. He adds that this would disappoint social reformists (in Korea or in the world).<sup>66</sup>

Another socialist journal, *Pip'an* (Criticism), was published between 1931 and 1940. In comparison to *Chungang*, *Pip'an* gave less attention to America. The article in *Pip'an* that was most critical of America was published in October 1932. Titled "The Other Side of the Gold Country, America," it describes the poverty of American workers in the shadow of the Great Depression.<sup>67</sup> The author, Kim Hoch'öl, sent his article to the journal from America, briefing Koreans on the communist movements in the Chicago area, the misery of an unemployed worker in New York and his death by starvation, and the then-current labor strikes and racism in the United States. Kim quotes the newspaper of the US Communist Party, writing that twelve million workers were then unemployed, living homeless and surviving on food offered by philanthropists.

Another article in an early issue of *Pip'an* (January 1932) criticizes American missionaries and their management of mission schools. The author, Yi Ch'ön, appreciates the historical contribution of American missionaries to Korea's cultural and medical developments. But he estimates that the missionaries have become more "reactionary" since the ideological climate of Korea changed in the past several years and youth with anti-religious attitudes emerged. According to Yi, in the past the missionaries considered education a self-sacrificing task for God but now they use schools to increase the numbers

of Christians, attaching material strings to students. Yi writes that one college in Seoul expelled 90 students for a trivial reason and kicked out others who made comments against Christianity. He calls on missionaries and their Korean staff to manage their schools better, by understanding Korea's reality and the ideological sentiments of the Korean youth.<sup>68</sup>

Despite such sharp criticism in the early 1930s, *Pip'an* during the wartime period did not publish many articles about America. However, *Chungang's* coverage of Rooseveltian America influenced the agenda for *Pip'an* editors and their readers. For example, the article in *Pip'an* by An Pyöngju, titled "Where is America headed? A debate on Roosevelt," reveals that the leftists were affected not only by *Chungang's* ambivalence toward the New Deal but also by *Chogwang's* discourse on democratic America.<sup>69</sup> An wrote this article in the form of a debate between two critics of American politics. Critic B in this article may represent the author's position.<sup>70</sup> An scripted the debate under the four topics: America and Fascism, the evaluation of New Deal, the personality of Roosevelt, and the future of America.

An's first topic questions whether or not the Rooseveltian reform could be called Fascistization. Critic A confirms that Roosevelt established a "presidential dictatorship," disturbing America's "unique" balance of power between the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of government. Critic B disagrees because America has no social embryo that could breed Fascism; its strong democratic tradition is irreconcilable with Fascism; and a few presidential documents cannot change the whole system. In any case, Critic B insists, American "Fascism" could be a temporary political regime to survive the Depression, but has no background for establishing a strong and stable dictatorship. Critic B diagnoses that Roosevelt's reform cannot cure the "fatal disease" of its "dying capitalist economy."

Critic A rejects this diagnosis, estimating that America may prosper more than before, given its abundant natural resources and Roosevelt's "luck" as a leader. Critic B

65 Pae Söngnyong, "Miguk nongjoböpp'ajönggwa nyu ttüirüi unmyöng," March 1936, pp. 38-41. Pae's negative view is comparable to Han Poyong's article, "Süngsehan migugüi nodong undong: CIO üi yakchin'gwa AFL üi mollak" in *Chogwang*, published in June 1937.

66 Pae Söngnyong, "Miguk nongjoböpp'ajönggwa nyu ttüirüi unmyöng," p. 41.

67 Kim Hoch'öl, "Hwanggümüi nara migugüi imyönsang," *Pip'an*, February 1932, pp. 74-76.

68 Yi Ch'ön, "Miguk sön'gyohoeüi chosön kyoyuk pangch'ime taehaya," *Pip'an*, January 1932, pp. 66-70.

69 An Pyöngju, "Migugün ödiro kana: Rujübelt'ü ron," *Pip'an*, September 1937, pp. 18-24.

70 According to Japanese records, An Pyöngju was accused of having contacted the USSR Consulate General, as detected by the Seoul Chongno Police Station in January 1938. "Soyönbang ch'ongyöngsagwan ch'ulipcha kömgöüi kôn," *Kyöngchongkyöng kobi*, no. 13087, January 14 and 15, 1938, from *Kungnaeoe Hangil Undong Munsö*, in Han'guksa Database, db.history.go.kr.

refutes A's evaluation, referring to the violent strikes at General Motors and other labor struggles in the US. He accuses Critic A of being confused by phenomena on the surface without understanding the fundamental logic (of America's economy). Critic A does not give in, asserting that Roosevelt has improved the lives of Americans; workers and farmers support Roosevelt and reelected him as president; and Roosevelt has a very promising future. Citing the negative data of the New Deal, Critic B comments that the New Deal has only benefitted the big capitalists, increased the number of unemployed workers, and added to the burdens on small and middle-sized companies.

Critic A partially admits this but still defends Roosevelt and his future, defining him as a "man on the side of workers." Critic B then responds with long quotes from Joseph Stalin's interview with a British reporter. The article does not name Stalin but refers to him as the secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. It is unclear whether this interview with Stalin actually occurred or whether the author of the article crafted it for his argument. The British interviewer asks the question posed earlier as to a convergence between the New Deal's economic control and the USSR's socialist system. The Soviet secretary replies that the New Deal attempted to alleviate the Depression without changing the liberal economy whereas the USSR has a fundamentally different objective. Critic B finally silences Critic A by borrowing Stalin's authority and his denial that Roosevelt could save capitalism. Thereupon Critic A asks when the Roosevelt government will perish.<sup>71</sup>

From there, the debate takes an interesting turn. Critic B answers uncertainly that another depression or an international war may cause a moment for great transformation in America. But he also predicts that, due to its advanced capitalism, America could manage the disorder of the interim period within a very short period of time. Alluding to the Spanish Civil War, Critic A questions the possibility that a protracted civil war might occur among different social, class, and racial groups within America or that the government might establish a Fascist regime after subduing them. Critic B casts doubt on this scenario, arguing that "advanced America" differs from "feudalistic" Spain. Even if Americans experience a temporary dictatorship for a transition, they will quickly terminate this

process. Critic A's narrative from here on resonates with the notion of democratic America expressed in *Chogwang*. Critic A argues that American tradition would not allow Americans to bear a political dictatorship for long. Americans are deeply rooted in their passion for freedom and equality and their conviction about democracy. Therefore, they will quickly eliminate the dictatorship and open the final road (for a socialist utopia) for themselves.

Critic B is optimistic about a socialist revolution in America. He doubts that Americans could survive another Depression without creating a "new New Deal," and hopes that this "new New Deal" will be an ideal one (i.e., a socialist revolution). Critic B thus expresses his conviction about socialist revolution. But the overall debate discloses that the Korean leftists valued the Rooseveltian measures for the working class and discussed whether or not the American model could replace a socialist revolution. The leftists shared assumptions about "democratic" America with some authors of *Chogwang* articles published before Pearl Harbor. The socialists counted America's democracy, its active citizens, and its technological advancement as good resources for building a "democratic socialism" for a utopian future.

#### 4. THE KOREAN PAN-ASIANISTS: ANTI-IMPERIALISM, ANTI-RACISM, AND PRO-DEMOCRACY?

It is not exact to characterize the journal *Samch'ŏlli* (The Korean Peninsula)<sup>72</sup> as Pan-Asianist. *Samch'ŏlli* is also a limited source when it comes to studying the wartime Pan-Asianists comprehensively.<sup>73</sup> After the Second Sino-Japanese War began, however, *Samch'ŏlli* accommodated Japan's wartime messages and mobilization. At least before 1941, the authors published in *Chogwang* or *Pip'an* remained reserved in their reporting on the war. With less caution, *Samch'ŏlli* allocated pages to the colonial government's statements on the war and to the wartime speeches of pro-Japanese Koreans. But *Samch'ŏlli* also printed many essays for casual pleasure, including gossip about elite society. Merging its pro-Japanese tone with carefree entertainment, *Samch'ŏlli* covered Japan's battles in China, Chiang Kai-shek's whereabouts, and even the accounts of Kim Il Sung's guerillas. In compari-

71 An Pyŏngju, "Migugŭn ōdoro kana: Rujūbelt' ū ron," *Pip'an*, September 1937, pp. 21-23.

72 *Samch'ŏlli* (The Korean Peninsula) changed its name to *Taedonga* (The Great East Asia) and was published in Japanese between 1943 and 1945.

73 A separate essay would be required to do a comprehensive study of wartime Pan-Asianism.

son to *Chogwang*'s "international" perspective, *Samch'ŏlli* focused more on what was going on in the Sino-Japanese conflicts on the continent. In this sense, the journal had a Pan-Asianist voice.

*Samch'ŏlli*'s Pan-Asianism did not establish a clear enemy before 1940. America is obscure in the journal between 1937 and 1940. The wartime pro-Japanese speeches in *Samch'ŏlli* sound as though they are insulated from the Korean discourse on America of the same period. This "disjuncture" in communication is unlike the dialogue between the authors published in *Chogwang*, *Chungang*, and *Pip'an*, who cross-referenced and debated one another despite their different ideological positions. A few ideological threads still penetrated the two disjointed discourses, the wartime pro-Japanese speeches and the Korean narratives on the "advanced America." Anti-imperialism, anti-racism, and pro-democracy are such underlying themes found in the stereotyped language of the wartime Korean speeches. A few speakers advocated Japan's "moral" mission to rejuvenate East Asia. But more speakers centered on "universal values" in condemning Japan's enemies. The wartime speeches thus failed to offer a stable logic to rationalize the Japanese empire when they criticized the British or Americans in terms of their imperialism, racism, and hypocrisy in violation of freedom and equality.

One *Samch'ŏlli* article, published in January 1937, reveals a cynical Korean response to this ideological poverty of the wartime Pan-Asianist discourse.<sup>74</sup> It presents a debate between the eminent Chinese intellectual Hu Shih (1891-1962) and *Nihon hyōron* (*Japan Commentary*) editor Murahuse Kōshin (1892-1970). The author Wŏn Sehun,<sup>75</sup> who reportedly studied Russian literature at Beijing University, translated and edited this debate.<sup>76</sup> Wŏn writes that he simply wants to introduce the debate, rather than criticize Hu or Murahuse's positions or submit his own viewpoint. However, Wŏn's clever edition renders this debate a critique of Japanese Pan-Asianism. The contents of the debate are sharp in the context of early 1937, right before Japan's full-scale war with China.

According to Wŏn's introduction, Hu and Murahuse had met in Beijing in the summer of 1936 and agreed

to exchange their thoughts on Japan-China relations. Hu's article and Murahuse's counterargument were published in *Nihon hyōron* in November and December 1936, respectively, and were also printed in several Chinese journals. In this exchange, Hu asks, first of all, that the Japanese stop talking about "Japan-China friendship" (*ilchung ch'insŏn*). He cannot bear this term when the relationship between the two countries for the past four years has been something (here the word is censored) other than "amity." Second, he requests that the Japanese recognize the Chinese psychology. The Chinese people were excited by the Ethiopian resistance against Italy, and also ashamed (of their own inaction). Mentioning the Japanese slogan of "scorched-earth diplomacy" (*ch'oto oegyo*), Hu warns Japan not to drive China onto a narrow road. If so, the Chinese will fight against Japan like besieged animals and with their own strategy of annihilation. Praising the Meiji Restoration as Japan's glory and a miracle for the human race, Hu recommends that Japan consider Germany's rise and fall during World War I as a cautionary tale, commenting that Japan's current move helps neither China nor the world.<sup>77</sup>

To Hu's first request (not to mention friendship between Japan and China), Murahuse replies that Japan and China should recover trust for each other despite the unpleasant events in Manchuria. He claims that Japan truly intends to save East Asia and its cultural heritage. Chinese intellectuals, including Hu, received the influence of Western civilization and accepted the idea of enlightenment. Meiji intellectuals took the same road and buried the heritage of East Asian civilization in the name of eliminating reactionaries. Murahuse considers this trajectory limited because men (human beings) are not free from their geographical environment and historical legacy. East Asians ultimately originated from the East Asian region's history and tradition. Although materialism, Judaism, German militarism, and British imperialism have left strong influences (in Japan or in the region), Murahuse argues, Japan now faces a moment for deep self-reflection and self-criticism. He calls this moment "the time for a verdict."<sup>78</sup>

Murahuse insists that Japan is taking on the "burden"

74 Wŏn Sehun, "Ilchung yangguk aegukchaui nonjŏn," *Samch'ŏlli*, January 1937, pp. 82-94.

75 Wŏn Sehun, "Ilchung yangguk aegukchaui nonjŏn," pp. 82-83.

76 If Wŏn really earned a diploma from Beijing, his years on campus may have overlapped with Hu's tenure at the university. Wŏn spent his youth in China and Russia and reportedly joined in the Korean Provisional Government. After the liberation of Korea in 1945, he participated in the construction of the Korean Democratic Party. "Wŏn Sehun," *Han'guk Kŭnhyŏndae Inmul Charyo*, in Han'guksa Database, db.history.go.kr.

77 Wŏn Sehun, "Ilchung yangguk aegukchaui nonjŏn," pp. 84-86.

78 Wŏn Sehun, "Ilchung yangguk aegukchaui nonjŏn," pp. 88-80.



of this self-reflection because the Japanese nation is now pressing a “most advanced step” toward a “golden age unprecedented in human history.” He brags that “those who curse Japan will be cursed, and those who oppose Japan will be crushed to pieces.” Why? Because Japan has such power and the Japanese recognize their mission. Murahuse blames China for treating Japan with the tactic “Constrain barbarians with other barbarians” (*yi yi che yi*) – that is, by allying with America, the “evil” British, and the Soviet Union. He asks that the Chinese remember their (earlier) suffering and never fall into this (British) seduction.<sup>79</sup>

Hu sharply repudiates Murahuse’s contention that Eastern civilization has been buried under Western influences. Hu argues that the great and valuable cultures never disappear easily. The recent Japanese visitors to Beijing worried too much about the loss of Eastern heritage. To Hu’s eyes, they want Eastern youth to read Buddhist or Confucian texts but never become fascinated with historical materialism or believe in liberalism. Hu never worries that the East Asian heritage will collapse, but grieves that Eastern nations barely begin their contacts with the new cultures of human civilization before they quickly withdraw to protect their old customs or rush to exaggerate about themselves. Most urgently, Hu anguishes as to whether or not Eastern nations will create the ugly scene of killing each other and elicit the ridicule of the world.

Regarding *yi yi che yi* – which, translated into a modern world, means “Borrow one friendly country’s assistance and restrain one enemy country” – Hu calls this a common practice of nations, and notes that Japan has been successfully practicing this in its alliance with the British and Americans.<sup>80</sup> Hu states that China is not prepared to be a friend of others, and even less so to be a friend to an enemy of others. With respect to China’s forgetfulness of British deeds, Hu quotes the Chinese old proverb, “Don’t be anxious about old evils” (*pulgŭp kuak*). “Beauty and sly seduction” can easily make people forget old pains, whereas “armed fists” are the most magical antidote to this “amnesia.” If you (Japan) were to fire a cannon today, send bombers, and dispatches trains of soldiers, Hu asks, wouldn’t this threat wake China from its “amnesia.”<sup>81</sup>

Wŏn cuts the debate here at Hu’s reply and does not add any comments. It is obvious that he translated this debate from Hu’s viewpoint.

Wŏn’s clever criticism of Pan-Asianism did not dominate *Samchŏlli*’s articles. It is juxtaposed in the journal with the wartime speeches cheering the Japanese army in Northern China and Shanghai. *Samchŏlli*’s October 1937 issue published the speeches delivered in the Youth Hall (*ch’ŏngnyŏn hoegwan*), Chongno, Seoul. Yun Ch’iho gave the opening remarks and Yi Tonhwa, the Chŏndogyo leader, recapped in his speech the Chŏndogyo religion’s earlier Pan-Asianist rhetoric.<sup>82</sup> According to Yi, Japan shed blood not only for its own interests but also for the peace of East Asia. Yi identifies the “greedy forces of the white race” and Red Russia as the enemies who are creating “chaos” in East Asia. He argues that without the Japanese empire, China will be reduced to being a market for Westerners because China’s state formation is “not yet complete.” Yi denounces the Chinese for rejecting Japan’s leadership and demands that Koreans support the “cause” of “Japan and Korea as one” and the Japanese empire.<sup>83</sup>

An Insik, another speaker, claims a “Monroe Doctrine for Asia,” since Europeans govern Europe and Americans rule America. Unlike other wartime speakers, An identified himself as a Japanese subject, saying that in Asia, only “our Japan” has a long history, a strong national body, and preserves the “samurai spirit,” crystallized in the values of loyalty and filial piety. An glorifies Japan’s withdrawal from the League of Nations as an act to protect “the independence of Manchuria” and a “great resolution” according to the “new East Asianism,” saving Asian comrades (*tongji*) from the “evil hands of Europeans.” At this early stage of the Second Sino-Japanese War, An’s Asianism antagonizes Communism, castigating it as “the enemy of the human race and a reckless robber.” He warns that the Chinese anti-Japanese struggles, “poisoned by Communism,” have disrupted the progress of this East Asian “ideal.” He demands that Japan punish the Chinese so as to awaken them from such “dismay,” and that Koreans not separate Korea from Japan but exert genuine efforts for this “ideal.”<sup>84</sup>

Although it printed such war-promoting speeches,

79 Wŏn Sehun, “Ilchung yangguk aegukchaui nonjŏn,” p. 90.

80 Wŏn Sehun, “Ilchung yangguk aegukchaui nonjŏn,” pp. 91–94.

81 Wŏn Sehun, “Ilchung yangguk aegukchaui nonjŏn,” p. 94.

82 “Chŏnsihaii siguk yŏnsŏl,” *Samchŏlli*, October 1937, pp. 6–9.

83 Yi Tonhwa, “Tongyang p’yŏnghwaui kŭnbŏnch’aek,” from “Chŏnsihaii siguk yŏnsŏl,” p. 6.

84 An Insik, “Sigukkwa oinui kago,” from “Chŏnsihaii siguk yŏnsŏl,” p. 8.

*Samch'ŏlli* did not call America the enemy before 1941.<sup>85</sup> Expecting a war with the US, however, such ambiguity disappeared. In March 1941, Mitarai Tatsuo (1895-1975), the owner of the Japanese settler newspaper *Keijō Nippō* (*Seoul Daily*), published a *Samch'ŏlli* column entitled "Tense Political Situation in the Pacific, Recognize the Enemy State America!"<sup>86</sup> Mitarai argues that the war in Europe has transformed world politics and almost overthrown Anglo-Saxons' global domination. Despite the Japanese army's "progress" in China, Mitarai resents the fact that Japan has not yet destroyed Chiang Kai-shek's government. He attributes the tenacity of China's resistance to the military assistance of the UK, US, and USSR, calling Chiang a "robot of the three Western powers." Mitarai argues that Germany, Italy, and Japan have become allies in order to modify the "exploitative regime of the British and Americans" and construct a "fair and new world order." Mitarai calls on the "nation" to make up their minds to fight to the death against America's "arrogance, arbitrary and greedy ambition, and its hypocritical humanitarianism."<sup>87</sup>

After Pearl Harbor, *Samch'ŏlli*'s January 1942 issue printed a set of several speeches made at war-mobilizing assemblies. Famous Korean figures had appeared at those assemblies and assailed America with aggressive words. The report under the title, "Destroy the Invaders of the East, the British and Americans!," included speeches by Yŏ Unhong,<sup>88</sup> Yi Kwangsu, Chu Yohan, and others. Yŏ scorned America's racism and imperialism; Yi criticized American individualism, commercialism, and democracy narrowly centered on their own rights and happiness; Chu ridiculed Roosevelt and America's hypocrisy.<sup>89</sup> Ch'ae P'ilgŭn, the principal of P'yŏngyang Presbyterian Seminary, called the war a mission for "the Great East Asian Restoration," and for rescuing Asians from the Anglo-Saxon racism and imperialism they had suffered since the Opium War.<sup>90</sup>

The same January 1942 issue of *Samch'ŏlli* published another set of speeches under the title "The Great East Asian War and the Armament of the Korean Peninsula."<sup>91</sup> At this assembly, the speakers included Yun Ch'iho, Chang Tŏksu, and Sin Hŭngu,<sup>92</sup> famous Korean leaders who had once studied in the United States. Yun Ch'iho sounds genuinely excited about this war against America and frames Pearl Harbor as a "racial war." He recalls the humiliation of his first visit to Shanghai, 55 years before. When he entered the city's British district, he saw the sign on the gate of a park reading, "Dogs and Chinese, do not enter here." Yun excoriates the British, who came to China as guests yet degraded the Chinese people to the level of dogs. He also mentions that arrogant Anglo-Saxons in Canada erected such signs as "Do not enter, yellow race." In the Pearl Harbor attack, Yun exclaims, we (the yellow race?) finally had a chance to wreak vengeance. With enthusiasm, he calls the Pacific War the "holy war of holy wars" and demands that everyone join this effort. He expresses his joy at this "retaliation," saying that he feels ten years younger than before.

Chang Tŏksu gave a speech entitled "The Real Face of the Enemy State." Chang was the former editor of *Tonga Ilbo*, and a leader of the Korean Democratic Party after liberation. He was assassinated in 1947 by a member of the South Korean police.<sup>93</sup> Chang's speech, at least in its printed version, does not transmit the enthusiasm of Yun Ch'iho but focused on criticizing the British and Americans for the inconsistency between their liberal values and their actual conduct. Chang describes the UK and the US as the wealthiest countries in the world, in possession of the strongest navies. Chang's criticism first targets the identity of the UK and US as "Christian states" which do not follow the "love of Christ" but regulate their conduct according to the needs of a secular power state.<sup>94</sup>

Chang then criticizes the history of slavery and racism in the two countries, introducing his own experience of

<sup>85</sup> For example, Pak Indŏk, a female leader who had studied in the United States, published an essay on two black American women educators and their school for black students. Pak Indŏk, "Miju kangyŏn'gi: hŭgin hakkyowa widaehan yŏin kyoyukka," *Samch'ŏlli*, August 1938, pp. 59-62.

<sup>86</sup> Mitarai Tatsuo, "Kinjanghan t'aep'yŏngnyang hyŏngse, migugŭi chŏksŏngŭl pora," *Samch'ŏlli*, March 1941.

<sup>87</sup> Mitarai Tatsuo, "Kinjanghan t'aep'yŏngnyang hyŏngse," pp. 8-15.

<sup>88</sup> Yŏ Unhong was Yŏ Unhyŏng's younger brother. He joined the independence movement in the 1920s but, as shown in this speech, joined various collaborative acts in the wartime colonial period. He graduated from a college in Ohio and taught at Posŏng College (Korea University). After liberation, he helped organize a moderate socialist party, the Social Democratic Party (Sahoe Minjudang), and was elected a national assemblyman in South Korea. "Yŏ Unhong," *Han'guk Kŭnhyundae Inmul Charyo*, in Han'guksa Database, db.history.go.kr.

<sup>89</sup> "Tongyanguŭi ch'imnyakcha yŏngmi t'adoŭi taesajahul," *Samch'ŏlli*, January 1942, pp. 44-59.

<sup>90</sup> "Tongaŭi yusin, miyŏng kyŏngmyŏrui p'yŏngnyang taeyŏnsŏlhoe sokki," *Samch'ŏlli*, January 1942, pp. 38-43.

<sup>91</sup> "Taedonga chŏnjaenggwa pandŏui mujang; kyŏlchŏn taeyŏnsŏl kirogŭi t'ŭkchip," *Samch'ŏlli*, January 1942, pp. 18-36.

<sup>92</sup> Sin Hŭngu was Christian and studied at the University of Southern California. After the liberation in 1945, he worked as a diplomat in the South Korean government. "Sin Hŭngu," *Han'guk Kŭnhyundae Inmul Charyo*, in Han'guksa Database, db.history.go.kr.

<sup>93</sup> "Chang Tŏksu," in *Han'guk Minjok Munhwa Taebaek kwa Sajŏn*, www.encykorea.com.

<sup>94</sup> "Taedonga chŏnjaenggwa pandŏui mujang; kyŏlchŏn taeyŏnsŏl kirogŭi t'ŭkchip," *Samch'ŏlli*, January 1942, pp. 24-27.

racial discrimination at a barbershop in Oregon, where the barber refused to cut an Oriental's hair. He continues to question whether countries with a history of slave trading can truly establish individualism, which cherishes the value of each human being, or practice liberalism, with its respect for individual freedom. Chang then tells his audience, "If you deny the value of the human being, you cannot create a foundation of morality," and "Where morality is destroyed, you cannot build a house for individualism or liberalism." Chang thus argues that individualism and liberalism in the UK and US are none other than "selfishness" and "self-indulgence."

Chang also problematizes British and American industrialism, where workers are seen primarily as the means of production rather than as human beings, and capitalists function primarily as businessmen rather than as citizens. In this circumstance, capitalists and workers fight each other over their own interests with no sympathy toward the other side; the stronger survive but the weaker collapse. Chang asks, in this "animal society of the survival of the fittest," how one can discover liberalism or individualism? He concludes that this "utilitarian civilization" does not extend virtuous or benevolent hands (to others), and that its exploitation and violence have dried the blood of the Eastern nations and bent their bones.<sup>95</sup>

There Chang finishes his speech. Regardless of its harsh rhetoric at the ending, Chang's speech is nevertheless moderate and intelligent, expressing his reflections on British and American society. It is difficult to tell whether Chang was forced to support the war or whether he had personally begun to accept the Japanese Pan-Asianist messages. Be that as it may, this is a speech in which Chang criticizes the UK and US not because he rejects their values of Christianity, individualism, and liberalism but because their own history has betrayed such values.

Another speaker, Sin Hŭngū, also spoke along these lines, berating the Anglo-Saxons for their racism and colonialism. Sin argues that "global chaos" has been instigated by those who have colonized the world over the past several hundred years. They invaded and exploited other races and countries with wicked means and brutal violence, yet fancied they were benefitting others. Sin depicts Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) and his term "the White Man's Burden" as symbolizing Anglo-Saxons'

"delusion" about being "burdened" with "guiding colored races." Due to this arrogant perception, Sin argues, the Anglo-Saxons propagate humanitarianism or democracy but actually reject racial equality. Sin criticizes that this hypocrisy endangers not just East Asians but all colored races.<sup>96</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

John Lewis Gaddis emphasizes "peripheral origins" and "inadvertence" in the development of the Cold War in Asia. He argues that the US and USSR had "barely" started the Cold War in the region before the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949.<sup>97</sup> He identifies the Korean War as a case in which the local civil war, "which would have existed in any event," drew the US and USSR into their "unintended confrontations."<sup>98</sup> Bruce Cumings, in contrast, finds an earlier symptom of the Cold War in the postwar US intervention in the Far East and its reversal of the "Korean revolution," which he regards as imminent at the time of Korea's liberation in August 1945. The characteristics of this "civil war" or "revolution" are still unclear because historians have insufficiently examined the *transition* from wartime colonial Korea to this postcolonial "civil war." To clarify the nature of this "revolution," this article has made an initial attempt to map out the ideological landscape of late colonial Korea, reviewing the wartime discourse on America.

Several observations from this investigation modify the notion of severe ideological splits in colonial Korea and their extension into the postwar era. The Koreans who wrote on America during the wartime period maintained different ideological positions, but their disagreements were more complicated and ambivalent than the antagonism of the 1920s between nationalists and socialists. To my own surprise, the wartime Korean imaginaries of America strongly countered the Japanese Pan-Asianist discourse. While the Japanese expressed the urgent need to overcome modernity and the superficiality of Americanism, some provocative Korean authors called American civilization a "barometer of modernity" or the "future of the human race." Not all leftists gave up their socialist criticism of capitalism, but many of them were impressed by the progress for the working class in Rooseveltian America.

<sup>95</sup> "Taedonga chŏnjaenggwa pandou'i mujang," pp. 24-27.

<sup>96</sup> "Taedonga chŏnjaenggwa pandou'i mujang," pp. 28-29.

<sup>97</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 55.

<sup>98</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p. 71.



On the eve of the Pearl Harbor, a sharp ideological split was indeed established between this Korean sympathy for Rooseveltian America and the wartime Pan-Asianist narratives criticizing the British and Americans and their exploitation of “colored races.” The Korean speeches for Japan’s war effort delivered a mixture of several ideological elements, including a Pan-Asianist history framed in terms of the strife of East against West, a leftist critique of Western capitalism, and a denunciation of America’s hypocrisy in not fulfilling its promise of freedom. Loyalty to the Japanese emperor and the ideology of “Japan and Korea as one body” (*naesŏn ilch’e*) remained marginal in the Korean wartime speeches at least printed in the journals analyzed here. The Koreans who gave these speeches drove their points home to their audience primarily by invoking the ways in which American racism and exploitation contradicted the notion of a “humanitarian America.”

Finally, many authors analyzed in this article continued their political careers after liberation. The most outspoken writers on America in *Chogwang* cooperated with the American military occupation. Although Ham Sanghun had a record of collaborating with the Japanese, Han Poyong and Chong Ilhyŏng were silent during the peak of wartime mobilization and Han Ch’ijin was jailed at the end of the Pacific War. As mentioned earlier, Han Poyong worked as the mayor of Taegu, and Chŏng Ilhyŏng was high in the administration of the American Military Government in Korea. Han Ch’ijin, the admirer of American pragmatism, also worked with the American Military Government as a staff member of the public relations bureau, edited the bureau’s official journal *Minju Chosŏn* (Democratic Korea), and published his theory of democracy there. Han was later taken to North Korea during the Korean War. Chang Tŏksu and Ham Sanghun became leading figures of the Korean Democratic Party. Chang and Ham could not avoid responsibility for their collaborative acts. Yet they had been more reserved in the language they used to promote the war than more enthusiastic Pan-Asianist speakers such as Yun Ch’iho, Yi Kwangsu, and Chu Yohan.

I have yet to consolidate the postcolonial trajectories of the socialist authors covered in this article. Hong Sŏngha, the economist who wrote on the NRA in *Chungang*, participated in the Korean Democratic Party. I have been

unable to establish the identity of authors who used the pen name “Chaha Sanin” in 1933 or the records of the socialists Pae Sŏngnyong and An Pyŏngju in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>99</sup> While these leftists showed ambivalent sympathy toward the Rooseveltian America, many other Korean socialists faced charges of collaboration, given the massive wartime thought-conversion directed by the Japanese colonial authority. This suggests that the splits of the 1920s and early 1930s between nationalists and socialists changed their forms during the wartime period and did not straightforwardly transfer into the confrontation (or “civil war”) between collaborative nationalists and leftist revolutionaries after 1945.

The wartime discourse on imaginary America did not convey the entire range of ideological, political, and socio-economic agendas in late colonial Korea. The journals reviewed here omitted the voices of underground revolutionaries within Korea and anti-Japanese guerrillas abroad. However, this wartime discourse on America leads me to question whether Korean nationalists and socialists were indeed on the verge of war with each other before 1945. Their discourse on America sounds not so much like a call to armed conflict as a sign of intense dialogue. I hypothesize that wartime colonial Korea was different from Greece, the Balkans, or mainland China during World War II, where rightists and leftists were already waging armed conflicts against or in alliance with foreign powers. Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese guerrillas had only limited connections with the political groups within Korea, and reflected the civil war situation in China more than such a split in Korea itself at the time. If the temper of the times, as reflected in the journals reviewed here, was less one of civil war than of an ideological rearrangement within wartime colonial Korea, then it is important to revisit the characteristics of postcolonial Korean revolution and the sources of the violence, rebellions, and armed conflicts that swept South Korea under the American military occupation.

99 Pae Sŏngnyong wrote an article in the first issue of *Minju Chosŏn* that Han Ch’ijin edited and published. See *Minju Chosŏn*, November 1947.

# Revisiting the Developmentalist Era Mother in 2000s South Korean Film

DOMESTICATING MATERNAL EXCESS<sup>1</sup>



*Mother* (2009)

We introduce three South Korean films from the 2000s – *Mother* (2009), *My Mother the Mermaid* (2004), and *Family Ties* (2006) – to consider transformations in the contemporary social gaze at motherhood. We appreciate these films historically in that they offer a re-narration of developmentalist era mothers: historically, it is the excesses of motherhood that have so easily stood for the melodrama of South Korea's recent past (see also Abel-

mann 2003). Interestingly, however, the developmentalist mother has been virtually absent from film, which in the 1970s and 1980s turned its primary attention away from domestic drama to the sexually charged figures of the hostess and the prostitute (see Kim 2000: 196). Into the 1990s, moreover, South Korean women were typically either invisible or depicted as monsters or gangsters while male homosociality – army, intelligence agency,

<sup>1</sup> The completion of this work was supported by the Academy of Korean Studies Grant funded by the Korean Government (MEST) (AKS-2010-DZZ-2101). Nancy Abelmann is grateful to helpful feedback she received at her October 19, 2009 presentation at Leiden University as part of the Korean Historiography as a Social Process Project (funded by the Academy of Korean Studies).

organized crime syndicate – became the era’s foremost protagonist (Kim 2007: 495-7). All three films we discuss here take up the image of excessive or even crazy mothers from the yesteryear of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the peak of South Korea’s developmentalist modernity. Even as they are often vilified, the extremes to which a mother will go to nurture, protect, educate, marry, employ, or save her child comprise a veritable cultural grammar in developmentalist and post-developmental South Korea.

We are then interested in the ways in which these three films intervene in this pervasive cultural gaze at maternal excess: the near oedipal, penny-pinching, and morally compromised. These are the mothers who would go to any length to shelter their children from the harsh external world, be it murder, crass materialism, or dubious relationships that they must resort to. It is through the filmic technique of suture that for each film both the child protagonist and the film viewer are made to inhabit an intimate gaze at the mother figure. This intimacy is such that viewers are able to feel, “yes, that’s me,” the sensibility of suture as described by Kaja Silverman (1983: 205). With this suture, the maternal excess in the lives of an acupuncturist, bath attendant, former hostess, and shopkeeper is rearticulated as the effects of social marginality and the ravages of developmentalism (see Cho 2005: 103). Excess then is historicized and what can appear to be matters of personal proclivity take on new meaning in the light of the social. While we are primarily interested in these films’ revisionist approach to developmentalist era mothers, we also appreciate their salience for the gaze at contemporary motherhood. In the current era of ever increasing competition and an ever expanding and intensified role for mothers in the raising of competitive children, a social gaze at the excesses of motherhood is alive and well (see Park 2007). These films’ revision thus achieves a critical and contemporary intervention as well.

Previously, some observers however have suggested Korean films’ relative tolerance of maternal excess. Kathleen McHugh (2005), for example, notes that in South Korean Golden Age cinema the figure of a laboring woman stands for the domestic, in contrast with the Western image of the bourgeois household in which toil is invisible. We agree with this observation in that maternal excess is an entirely legible feature of South Korean developmentalism. Nonetheless, we suggest that maternal excess has been vilified in ways that resonate with the West. One robust stream of Western feminist film criti-

cism describes the representational contest between a dominating “phallic” and an idealized “sacrificial” or “nurturing” mother (Kaplan 106). E. Anne Kaplan offers that the classical Hollywood maternal melodrama “foregrounds the [ideal] familial, the domestic,” as a “relatively ‘innocent’ terrain of individual, familial relations” (173). For South Korea, this works somewhat differently because the sacrificial mother can be dominating, or phallic, because her labor is necessarily social, inextricable from the work of familial reproduction. Likewise the domestic is not so easily innocent in that it is shot through with the social. In one sense then there is nothing really troubling about maternal excess at all. In another sense, however, the romance of the bourgeois family – of the innocent domestic and the nurturing mother (beyond the social) – is also robust in South Korea’s modernity tropes such that, although legible and even culturally validated, the excessive mother is not necessarily “pretty” – as the mother figures in *Family Ties* are described – or desirable (Abelmann 2003; Kim 2001). Anthropologist Cho Han Haejoang (2002), for example, describes the genealogy of South Korea’s modern motherhood in which three generations of women have all vowed – and failed – to live differently from their excessive and excessively instrumental mothers. We suggest then that the work of these films is to domesticate and beautify even these quite legible women.

Although the sutured gaze intervenes in pejorative portrayals of women, we do not think of these works as feminist interventions. We argue instead that it is through the spectacularization of “innocent” domesticity as familial care that maternal excess is revisited. Important to this innocent domestic, are the ways in which domestic space is staged – at the dining tables, the beds, and the doors and gates that demarcate the familial from the external world. This demarcation also makes home a survival unit where familial care is safe and sound: in contrast when care exceeds the domestic things run amuck. For example, when a woman takes the place of the law (the police in *Mother*) or that of another woman (adultery in *Family Ties*), care turns destructive. That public caring roles are less troublesome in *My Mother the Mermaid* is perhaps because the mother never leaves the company of women both in the sea (as a diver) and at the public bath (as an attendant). For *Mother* and *My Mother the Mermaid*, we conclude that maternal excess is effectively pardoned through the (re)constitution of the patriarchal family:



1. *Mother* (2009)

ironically, this occurs even though in both cases the father is absent. In *Mother*, an apparently mentally disabled son becomes “normal” and as such a “filial son” who in turn hails a normal mother. In *My Mother the Mermaid*, an emasculated father is resuscitated so that the viewer witnesses the romance of the normative family. In contrast, in *Family Ties*, family takes shape outside patriarchy; per the film’s original Korean title, “the birth of family,” family is born anew, against the patriarchal grain, however, not apart from the domesticity that prescribes Korean motherhood.

## MOTHER

In an interview about *Mother* (*Madō*, Bong Joon-ho, 2009), director Bong Joon-ho explained that the film answered to a curiosity of his childhood: the crazed dancing of middle-aged mothers on tour buses. In his words, “When I was a college student I visited Odae Mt. I could not overcome my astonishment at the *ajumma* (middle aged women) who spent the whole time dancing on the bus, never coming out to enjoy the beautiful mountain scenery. But as I grew older and have witnessed this so often, I have come to think that each of those women have their own life stories, their own reasons – which saddens me.” Interestingly, the film begins with and comes full circle to the same woman – the “mother” dancing on just such a bus. It is in fact her body itself – with which the film so poignantly begins – that bespeaks her excess: from her nearly grossly contorted facial expressions when she dances to

the extremes to which she hurls her body (see Figure 1) such as in the scene when she chases the police car as her son, To-jun, is being arrested for the murder of a girl in their village. In the course of the film, the viewer is led to follow the mother’s sleuthing to absolve her wrongly-accused son from this crime, only to find out later that the mother’s point of view had been, and understandably so, distorted and wrong (it was To-jun’s actions that killed the girl) (see Figure 2). By the film’s end when the mother dances again, the suture in this film has guided the viewer to appreciate this very enigmatic dance – the signature mark of the mother’s excess – anew as entirely legible and even justified.<sup>2</sup>

Mother, who remains nameless, is a woman of many maternal excesses. Perhaps most obviously or grossly excessive is the film’s flirtation with the sexuality of the mother and son. In the immediate aftermath of his murder, for example, To-jun fondles his mother’s breast as he falls off to sleep, and again as he wakes the next morning. To his buddy Chin-t’ae’s taunting, “Have you ever slept with a woman?” he answers that he has – his mother: as he does again at the police interrogation, about his activities that fateful evening. To-jun’s sexuality then is intimately tied to maternal excess. In perhaps the film’s moment of greatest (and grossest) maternal and Freudian excess, the son pees against a village wall as the mother pours Chinese medicine into his mouth and we watch these fluids spill together at his feet; and afterwards as she literally brushes the fluids away (see Figure 3). We watch,

2 Compare Kim Kyung-Ae (2010) for an analysis of the close-up of the mother’s face as a psychological space that discloses the process through which the mother is driven to madness and ruin beyond redemption.

even as we feel we should turn our heads in some sort of voyeuristic embarrassment. Ground zero of this film and of the crazed mother-as-detective – hell-bent on proving her son’s innocence – is the rooftop railing on which To-jun hung the dead girl’s body after her accidental death.<sup>3</sup> It is from the same building that a junk dealer – a man who the mother eventually murders – sees the accident that leaves the girl dead. We know that the girl was headed there to have paid sex with the junk dealer, another marginal figure in his own right; living literally on the margins of the township in a dilapidated old mill, an icon of yesteryear prosperity. With the mother, we look into the sordid social sexual economy of the teen sexual exploitation of this rural town where the mother-less victim was pimped by her toothless drunkard grandmother to a cadre of teen boys and an occasional adult. We are made voyeurs: listening in to pubescent boys who taunt that it was To-jun, a boy who (ironically) didn’t sleep with the victim, who ended up getting caught for her murder. We trudge up the hill with the mother who has figured out the sexual skein and knows that the tell-all cell phone, fixed to make no sound when it takes a photo, is with the grandmother who for-a-price will relinquish the phone which holds the photos of all who have exploited the girl. It is from among those photos, we are led to believe, that we will find the real criminal and absolve To-jun.

That we would share the mother’s distorted point of view, however, is made clear from the opening scene in which as aforementioned the mother dances alone in a field of golden grass. In a striking pose, she wipes her hands across her eyes to leave a blank stare which we come to appreciate as the signature look not of the mother, but of her son in the film. This opening scene signals to the viewer that she will be and wills herself to be blind to truths (about her son and herself) through the course of the film. The long take in the scene establishes the viewer’s gaze at the mother and hints at her obstinate refusal to accept the truths that lead to her murder of the man who claims to be an eye-witness to her son’s crime.

We argue, however, that the viewer’s identification with the Mother’s point of view only lasts for a short while. The film’s perhaps most remarkable scene is one in which maternal excess and truth are precariously balanced: when the mother visits the film’s “other” disabled young man, one with Down’s syndrome, who we by then know will serve prison time for To-jun’s crime. By this point in the film there is in fact no reason for the mother to visit this boy as she knows who the real culprit is. The scene, instead, deviates from necessary plot development arguably to show the moment in which her falseness/blindness is laid bare. Through the bars of the nameless boy’s cell, the Mother asks about his – Mother: “You have par-

ents [her fret mounts, she pauses]; no mother?!” and he consoles her, “Don’t cry.” The mother’s query about the boy’s filiation is rhetorical: we as well as she know that he has no mother. Hence the exchange: this mother-less child for her son. This is also the beginning of the exchange of point of view: when she visits To-jun in jail, we see him over her shoulder, through *her* eyes as it were; now we see this boy directly from the



2. *Mother* (2009)

3 See Kim Kyung-Aae (2010) for an analysis of physical space in this film that creates a dystopic vision.



camera's point of view – and we see her (hers is the crime that has gone unseen). At first, we are anguished with her: she is wallowing in the extremes to which she has been propelled in the name of motherhood. The temporary suture cracked, we cry for the injustice suffered by the other disabled boy. We too have perhaps been partners in crime, mothered children or mothers ourselves who have been protected or protect



3. *Mother* (2009)

in a harsh world, and in a South Korean social reality in which the mothers' role is itself extreme. We might ask, "Who are we to name excess when *this* is the fate of a mother-less child?"

The moment when we are made to gaze at, not with, the *Mother*, another spell is broken; we are sutured instead to To-jun's no-longer-dumb gaze at his mother who gives way to the "law of the father" (in this case, the son). Our suture to To-jun's gaze normalizes *her* crime and we accept her as a mother like any other in the final moments of the film. In the penultimate scene of the film, we meet To-jun sending his mother on a trip. In a single take, as if it were a passing remark, To-jun buys a bagful of snacks and hands it to his mother. This is, however, a critical moment in which the patriarchal family is reconstituted. To-jun is now the one who assumes the role of nurturer unlike the night before the trip when the mother served him dinner upon his release from prison. We have just learned that To-jun who found his way to the charred mill – his mother burned it down to hide her crime – found his mother's acupuncture kit there. We know that these are his mother's needles, the tools of her own illicit economy. It was with the needles that she coaxed the junk dealer to remember what he had seen *that* evening. To-jun returns the needles to his mother – who has just tucked away the bag of snacks – the needles that reveal her crime. To-jun chides, caringly, that she needs to be more careful. Ironically, it is in the midst of these sordid crime remnants that

To-jun enacts a very "normal" role: the loving son who chides his forgetful Mom, as if to say, "You are tired Mom – it has been quite a stretch and this is a much needed break – I am happy to indulge you this little trip."

The mother-son dyad normalized, we are readied for the film's final scene in which again the mother has become one of those dancing *ajumma* "with her own life story," the kind who intrigued Bong Joon-ho in his youth. In the final scene we witness the mother on the bus, alone, unable to join the fray. We then look on as she hikes up her skirt to self-administer the acupuncture that will let her forget – her crime, her son's guilt, and her son's knowledge of the architecture of his freedom. She has joined the ranks of *apparently* "normal" women. We note here, however, that the mother herself has not changed much from when she danced in the aftermath of her murder of the junk dealer – in the opening scene in which we first have encountered her. She appears as dumb and otherworldly as in the first scene. What has changed is our tacit understanding that it is permissible for the mother who would do anything to save her son to lose herself in wild dancing in the company of other mothers who perhaps also desire to be similarly amnesiac. A twisted *mother* story, if ever there was one, has literally faded into the banality of *mothers* dancing (wildly) in public.



### MY MOTHER, THE MERMAID

"My mother, the mermaid" (*Inŏ kongju*, Park Heung-sik, 2004) is crass and peeved and we fill in the pieces: her meek and sentimental husband, a paragon of the handy ineptitude (*munŭngham*) of Korean men (see Abelman 2003), squandered the family's hard-earned possibility of passage to middle class trappings by securing a now-departed friend's loan-gone-bad.



4. *My mother, the mermaid* (2004)

Thereby sacrificed was all that the mother had dreamed of for her daughter Na-yŏng, (predictably) foremost her education. We meet the mother as near stereotype of her social position, a bath house attendant, dammed if she will pander to the wealthier among her, some of whose backs she must literally scratch, "one at a time," as her daughter once put it, to earn her keep. We wince as we witness the grubbiness of it all: how she spits as she counts her money, how she hoards sidewalk give-aways, how she grubs extra side dishes at a rare evening out, and so on. Hers is a familiar portrait of a kind of excess born of hard living, and developmentalist desires fostered by arguably the very ethos of South Korean modernity.

The suture in this film is the most radical of the works we introduce: the daughter is literally sutured into her mother's past, as are we – transported into an island childhood. The body of the film is this suture, and with it the daughter's sustained visit to her mother's youthful days. Her mother-past, to whom she becomes "elder sister" or *ŏnni* is as charming, youthful, and generous, as her mother-present is tough, jaded, and pinched. Working as notes-towards-the present, the viewer is asked to close the arc, to ponder the transformation or, as convincingly, to revisit the way in which the gaze of the present fixes just such a woman. The viewer wonders, en retour, about her own lens. Like *Mother* then, this film revisits or rescripts the excess of a developmentalist woman, the sort of woman who embodies South Korea's developmen-

talist project with her: crass materialism, naked mobility schemes, and unflinching instrumentality.

The camera sutures Na-yŏng to Yŏn-sun, her childhood mother, letting the daughter see her mother as if in a mirror. This work of suture is at its most dramatic in the scene in which Na-yŏng enters the gate of her mother's old house in the island village in the South. She has come to see if her father fled to the village after learning about his terminal illness. It is, however, Yŏn-sun, who – looking just like the young woman in her photo album – comes to greet her across the laundry line that curtains the space between them. The camera closes up on Na-yŏng who recognizes her mother from her old photographs. The reverse shot then follows with her childhood mother who fails to recognize the striking resemblance between the guest and herself. An ordinary shot-reverse shot then reverts to the face of the beholder. Before returning to the shot of Na-yŏng, however, the camera turns ninety degrees to stage an imaginary mirror that frames the mother and daughter – played by a single actress – as if in reflection. It is this make-believe mirror (for there is nothing in between them) through which Na-yŏng enters and identifies with, rather than directly as, her mother.

Yŏn-sun is a diver, a *haenyŏ*, which indexes a very particular homosocial women's cultural space. Much like that of To-jun and his mother in *Mother*, Yŏn-sun's household is a tiny survival unit: Yŏn-sun and her mischievous younger brother whose city schooling she is supporting

with her diving. And this young diver now takes a perfect stranger into her home where everything – the old dresser, photographs, and so on – is too familiar for comfort to the guest. When Na-yŏng wakes after spending her first night in the village in utter disbelief, Yŏn-sun, as real as real can be, enters her room with a small breakfast table. The seaweed soup that Na-yŏng had refused at home and the pickled crab that her mother had embarrassingly demanded at the aforementioned evening out quietly lets us know that Yŏn-sun is and always has been a kind and generous woman.

The film is propelled, as we wind the exquisite island paths of yesteryear (interestingly, entirely different than the crime-ridden dusty ways in the village in *Mother*), by the ever-so-innocent love story of Yŏn-sun and the man who we know will become Na-yŏng's father – the island postman. In what Korean cinema scholar Steven Chung describes as the "spectacularizing enlightenment" (18), theirs is an enlightenment story in which the postman teaches illiterate Yŏn-sun, opening her world, allowing her, literally, to name it (see Figure 4).<sup>4</sup> And Na-yŏng is there to test her mother from the primers that her father-to-be has given her mother. In a nearly classical developmentalist spectacle, we look on as Na-yŏng witnesses the arrival of the island's first bus, and we are there to capture (in a photograph) Na-yŏng, Yŏn-sun, and, yes, the postman who has peeped out from behind the bus, in the nick of time for posterity (see Figure 5). How then does the film allow us to thread time: from literacy and the first village bus to the hardened antics of a middle-aged laboring woman? Are we to wax nostalgic for the days of yore before the ravages of advanced doggy-dog capitalism – times in which the Yŏn-sun could innocently marvel at the rural postman's knowl-

edge and worldly ways? Are we to nod knowingly that the kindness of Na-yŏng's father's variety, a throw-back to island days and ways – somehow out of step with the times – is enough to drive a woman crazy? Indeed, the film opens on the adult mother at the funeral of her husband's buddy who has died leaving her husband the guarantor of his debt: we see all of the antics of mourning, but in her case the nearly humorous mourning of her husband's ill-founded generosity through which he no doubt squandered her hard earned savings.

The climax of Na-yŏng's suture is the moment in which Na-yŏng and her child-mother are most integrated, a moment in which the time traveler seems to touch, not just witness, her mother's past. This is also the moment when Na-yŏng will call Yŏn-sun, "Mom," instead of her name. Yŏn-sun has nearly drowned, diving one too many times in the throes of her mourning the news of the postman's relocation. As Na-yŏng nurses her mother at the sickbed, Yŏn-sun confides in Na-yŏng that it wasn't until she learned from a neighbor that she had been an orphaned child, picked up by her late non-biological mother. Yŏn-sun continues that for a time she thought that this explained her sometimes hollow heart and frightening sadness. But she goes on, "[In fact] it wasn't that at all, I felt all that because I wanted to see my [biological] mother." And with the remarks that follow this comment,



5. *My mother, the mermaid* (2004)

<sup>4</sup> We cite this idea from Steven Chung's 2008 presentation at the University of Illinois Korea Workshop, "Enlightenment Discourse and Korean Peninsular Cinema," in which he argues that many films from the postwar era staged an "enlightenment spectacle." A revised version of this presentation is forthcoming as "Modalities of Enlightenment in 20th Century Korean Cinema" in *positions*.

the broken relationship between the child and adult mother are most seamlessly mended: “If I am born again, I don’t want to dive; I just want to go to school like a regular kid.” Na-young, of course, is that “regular kid” who Yŏn-sun has labored so hard to mother. Yŏn-sun then sincerely thanks Na-yŏng for being there, and for *caring* for her; it is here that we cannot but think that it is Na-yŏng who will need to return the gratitude to this will-be mother/nurturer. To Yŏn-sun’s moving confession, Na-yŏng offers her own soliloquy:

*My mother scours women’s skin for a living. Everyday, all day, she makes her living from the ttae [dead skin cells] of young women. 10,000 won for one woman, 100,000 won for ten. What matters most to her is money. And she swears. And she knows no embarrassment. And she is harsh with my Dad. That’s my Mom. I hate my Mom. And all along I’ve thought, “No matter what happens, I don’t want to become like her.” But why? My mom is so pitiable, so pathetic. I can’t stop thinking about my Mom. [By now we are to assume that Yŏn-sun has fallen back to sleep] And even as I am looking at my Mom now, I keep thinking of my Mom.*

By this point in the film, it is the adult mother she misses, in all her (resuscitated) humanity. Bared is what we have known intuitively: that Na-yŏng’s mother’s intimate labor was all along for nothing other than to give Na-yŏng that “regular kid’s” life that she never enjoyed. This is a kinship or excess that is entirely legible, if not clichéd, in South Korea’s developmentalist narrative. There comes a moment in the film when Na-yŏng names her extraction: her mother’s name, her father’s name, her name. The filiation that she has long tried to turn away from stares her in the face: like the words and names that came to life with her child mother’s fledgling literacy. Named, the filiation is conjoined: and, yes, Na-yŏng can return to the gritty present and to her dying father whose final days’ refuge to this countryside was what had occasioned Na-yŏng’s travels.

Na-yŏng finds her father and coaxes her mother to join him, “Mom, I know you are kind!” she insists on the phone. We note, however, that the change of heart toward her mother indexes more than her newly found appreciation of her mother’s labor. Na-yŏng’s return to the present likewise allows her as well as us to face once again the material realities that had so repelled her in her mother.

On the boat south, Yŏn-sun nods knowingly to Na-yŏng’s boyfriend that he is an orphan – and as such, excluded from the web of kinship care – and hardly skips a beat to say that to marry Na-yŏng he will need to make money. Filiation, care, and money (the instrumental) are conjoined, as are excessive mothers, like this one, like To-jun’s in *Mother* as well. We are no longer distant onlookers on Yŏn-sun’s crass materialism but understand it to be a product of familial care. It is as if it is not Yŏn-sun who has really changed, but that we have changed our view toward the woman who has always been kind and generous.

*My Mother, the Mermaid* ends with Na-yŏng with a small daughter of her own; it is the day of her father’s *chesa* (ancestral services) and she is showing her daughter the family photo album. They come to the photo of the arrival of the village bus and look for Na-yŏng’s father there; Na-yŏng’s own presence in that photo, however, is gone. Of course this makes sense; the healing has already happened. This narrative closure, however, can be read doubly for its biological or patriarchal logic in which Na-yŏng inserts her daughter in a patrilineal genealogy just as she reminds her mother to come home early for her late husband’s memorial service. With this scene we are also reminded that the mother grieved the lack of a son – who would have been in charge of the memorial service – at the father’s sickbed. The film’s mirror-imaging visual economy is such that the father’s sickbed recalls the mother’s own after the drowning incident. In that scene Yŏn-sun grieved the loss of the postman, not a son. We would submit that the film uses the sickbed – perhaps a sobering rendition of the marriage bed – to paint romance *and* reality at the same time: the sometimes contradictory values that constitute an ordinary patriarchal family. In the time travel, even as the mother and daughter reconcile, an emasculated father is resuscitated that so that we come to observe the romance of the normative family. While the patriarchal logic of this film remains open to interpretation, it is a more difficult task to imagine the working class mothers of Yŏn-sun’s generation as anything other than at once phallic *and* nurturing, both of which relied on maternal sacrifice in South Korea’s developmentalist past.



6. *Family Ties* (2006)

### FAMILY TIES

"The birth of family" (*Kajogŭi t'ansaeng*, Kim Tae-Yong, 2006) offers an appealing and at moments playful meditation on "family" as a web of care beyond normative or biological reckoning and configures non-biological homosocial female care as a veritable post-family. The film, perhaps to a fault, effects its own "birth of a family" by weaving together three story lines in the mode of omnibus film (See Diffrient 2012): that of a twenty-something young couple in a serendipitous budding romance; that of another twenty-something young professional woman and her mother (a shopkeeper in It'aewŏn, a shopping and tourist hotspot near an American army base also known for its bars and sexual service industry, who is also the mistress of a family man and mother of their young child together); and finally that of a thirty-something provincial town spinster whose life is shaken by the sudden appearance of her no-good younger brother and his much older girlfriend (and with the girlfriend soon after comes the young child of her ex-husband from an earlier relationship). We will discover that the two children in these strands – the young professional's half brother through her mother's apparent dalliances; and the child of the ex-husband (by another woman) of the provincial woman's younger brother's girlfriend – are the twenty-something romantic couple (of the first strand) on which the movie begins.

As with the other films, we are interested in the work

this film does to suture the viewer into new perspectives on maternal figures. We are led to identify with the perspective of characters in the film who themselves gaze upon these maternal figures anew. At the heart of the film are the two middle-aged women who can be easily typecast in relation to their sexuality: women who share the dispositions (the look, the abode, the trade) of "loose" women. More spe-

cifically, the two older women in question are revisited through the radically transformed gaze of women nearest to them, the daughter in the case of the It'aewŏn mistress and the provincial spinster shopkeeper in the case of her brother's (quite quickly) ex-girlfriend. Through the film, these sexually suspicious women are named "pretty women" – a code for kind women who care liberally. As the film's streams merge, the viewer feels embraced by that very net of care and female sociality.

We meet the It'aewŏn mistress as the young professional (a tour guide) Sŏn-gyŏng's mother through her daughter's dismissive gaze: a mistress and tainted woman, dirtied by her poverty, her connection with the American military milieu (and hence sexually tainted), and her maternal failure. Our meeting is a cynical one in which Sŏn-gyŏng charges that her mother has likely only shown up – at her doorstep – because "[yet] another man has left her" (see Figure 6). Profoundly, Sŏn-gyŏng even refuses to be hailed, named by her mother: when her mother utters her name, she quips: "Strange, you were even wondering about me!" She pushes her mother out the door and subsequently her mother's lover who has come to tell her that her mother is deathly ill. Sŏn-gyŏng dismisses that visit as well, "Oh, it is money you have come for?" (as with *My Mother the Mermaid*, here too money is at issue). Not long thereafter, we see Sŏn-gyŏng visit the humble store, nestled in the sullied landscape of the camptown, and demand the thousands of dollars

her mother owes her; she is brash with her half-brother and crass with her mother and her mother's lover, shouting that they disgust her. In her dramatic exit, she yells at them to "live well!" (a tongue in cheek way in which she seems to be offering a final goodbye).

After an ugly and violent scene with her own ex-boyfriend, however, we find Sŏn-gyŏng visiting her mother again. After having virtually cut ties with her family, the significance of this visit is that Sŏn-gyŏng has now come to see her mother anew as a woman, not merely as her mother. Having signed papers with a company to work abroad, she goes back to her mother's shop perhaps for the last time. Sŏn-gyŏng, however, witnesses her mother having a row with her lover at the door of the shop. She hides herself and watches them at a distance but her vision – like Na-yŏng's in *My Mother the Mermaid* – resembles that of the camera that bares all that she had not wanted to see, now larger than life. After her own episode with her ex-boyfriend earlier that evening, she must have revisited her mother as a woman with troubled romances not unlike herself. The next day, fittingly we see Sŏn-gyŏng walk through the very door where she had seen her mother block her lover from entering; with Sŏn-gyŏng we peek in at the quiet scene of her mother helping her young son with his coloring book. To Sŏn-gyŏng's quip, "Aren't you ashamed [i.e., of your life]," her mother inquires calmly, "Have you been singing these days?" From the crass to the sublime, the mother picks up

what she knows to be her daughter's love, singing. Sŏn-gyŏng is furious and announces that she will be leaving for a while to which her mother replies, quietly, "That's good; I know you've always wanted to do that." Sŏn-gyŏng persists, asking and accusing if her mother's lover has after all only been after her for money. Again she replies quietly, "Men don't come here for my money but *because I'm pretty*." It is here that affect and instrument are conjoined. As Sŏn-gyŏng mutters on about her mother's pitiful and disgusting existence, her mother inquires if she might go to her half-brother's kindergarten festival. And she does: reaching out to a lovely and needy little boy in a beautiful *mise en scène* of children dressed in sunlight yellow, the boy who she eventually takes into her home after her mother's death.

It is this little boy who years later, as a twenty-something man, will meet a young woman who hails from an even more unconventional household – one with absolutely no blood ties at all. This young woman, Ch'ae-hyŏn, we will learn later, has a connection to Mi-ra, the provincial owner of a small snack bar and loving keeper of the family home (we guess that her parents are departed). We first encounter Mi-ra about to meet her wayward, hapless brother after many years (see Figure 7). In much the same way that we are sutured to Sŏn-gyŏng's gaze at her mother, we meet the brother's lover, Mu-shin, through Mi-ra's gaze at a tainted woman, a woman with ribald sensibilities and a "past." At a restaurant the three are joined

by Mi-ra's boyfriend, a "company president," and the conversation turns off-color: the lovers joke about the liquor they'll sell in the evening at the *hanbok* store they would like to open and Mu-shin jests that Mi-ra need not worry because it won't be a brothel. It is not that long after this awkward evening that Ch'ae-hyŏn, the little girl (the daughter of Mu-shin's ex by another woman), appears at the door. In



7. *Family Ties* (2006)

a dramatic sequence, we witness her brother's absurd overtures to the child which we recognize as absurd because by then it is so clear that he would not be able to care for *anyone*; Mu-shin's quiet and resigned decision to leave with the girl; and the unspoken solidarity of the two women as they knowingly register the irresponsible figure of this man-child and become the girl's "mothers."

There are several scenes in the film which dissolve into slow or fast motion or fantasy: each film-within-a-film spectacularizes the maternal. In one instance, Mi-ra and Mu-shin look out from the dining room table into the courtyard where Mi-ra has lovingly tended to the orchids – an index of domestic care. As the child is frolicking, the scene slows down and fades as if through a screen filter; the child plays in slow motion even as the scene races to index the passage of several days. In this para-cinematic vision, both women envelop this (biologically) unrelated child in their maternal gaze. Perhaps more importantly, however, they look at each other even as they turn their eyes to the child. In the awkward of moment of having to eat a meal with strangers, the two women are united and dissolved is the gaze at the pretty but unwelcome guest as a tainted woman.

The matter of the pretty or good woman takes on again in the next generation of women, with Sŏn-gyŏng and Ch'ae-hyŏn. Shortly after Sŏn-gyŏng's mother dies, she informs a cruise ship owner that she will, after all, not be traveling with them as a tour guide; the owner then proclaims her "crazy" to which she retorts, "You're telling me that I'm crazy!!" incensed, we sense, at having thus herself become the object of a demonizing gaze at women. Shortly thereafter, we find Sŏn-gyŏng at home, prying open the suitcase that her mother had deposited the day that she had coldly purged her from her apartment, the scene in the movie where we first met her mother. The loving paraphernalia of Sŏn-gyŏng's babyhood spills out of the suitcase and there begins another scene of film play: together with Sŏn-gyŏng we watch the items literally dance on the ceiling in a festival of maternal nostalgia – her mother was indeed a kind and pretty woman (as her mother had once told her how it was that men came her way). The film then fast-forwards into the present of now forty-something Sŏn-gyŏng and her now twenty-something half brother, the yesteryear kindergartner: Sŏn-gyŏng tells him that

she will be on TV (in her chorus). "Why," he asks. Wryly she replies, "Because I'm pretty" (we smile and think, 'like her mother'). It is moments later that he says, "You're the strange one... you're just like Mom... Everything about her was a mess." Matter-of-factly Sŏn-gyŏng replies, much as her mother had to her, "Not a mess – it was only that she had so much love (*chŏng*)." Here we have come full circle, from the strange and messy to the loving, pretty, and nice.

In the film's final scene, we return to the household of the two women, and now we know that Ch'ae-hyŏn is Mi-ra's brother's ex girlfriend's daughter – the little girl who once danced in the courtyard and made a "family" of the two women. Ch'ae-hyŏn has come home with her now ex-boyfriend: Sŏn-gyŏng's little brother, Kyŏng-sŏk. Ch'ae-hyŏn is greeted by Mi-ra who is positively mirthful: she warmly, playfully, and even coquettishly insists that Kyŏng-sŏk must stay for dinner – all the while calling laughingly to Mu-shin that Ch'ae-hyŏn and her boyfriend have arrived – even as Ch'ae-hyŏn explains that they have broken up. Mi-ra seems to be saying, "Details, details, there is young life here, an adorable young boy and our precious Ch'ae-hyŏn to be fed, coddled." Kyŏng-sŏk is welcomed there as another child, neither linked by biology nor necessarily by romance with Ch'ae-hyŏn. In the final minutes of the film, the warm, "loose," and even crazy three women nest Kyŏng-sŏk.<sup>5</sup> And, as if to finally obviate the conventional biological family, Mi-ra has occasion to once and for all cut ties with her "real" and uncaring brother; he is literally prevented from entering the gate even as Ch'ae-hyŏn is welcomed back home at the same gate. It is in this fine company and cloth of women – a "women's sphere" (Kim 2007) if ever there were one – that Kyŏng-sŏk watches his half-sister Sŏn-gyŏng singing with her choir on television.<sup>6</sup> As they watch the choir on a rooftop framed by a fireworks-lit sky, we all, protagonists and viewers alike, come to share Kyŏng-sŏk's loving gaze on his half-sister. In the film's final film-within-a-film, we watch her float away from the chorus into the lit sky, as if beatified.

This saintly figure intervenes in much the same way that suture operates in all of these films: celebrating women who have been prey to the most pernicious of gazes. In *Mother* which most explicitly features a "crazy" woman,

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that this family with two mothers, one of whom has a questionable reputation, has raised the adopted daughter to be "too easy," the reason why Kyŏng-sŏk breaks up with Ch'ae-hyŏn.

<sup>6</sup> Kim Soyoung's notion of a "women's sphere" (*yŏsŏngjang*) (in which women's public sphere [*-jang*] and women's funeral [*-jang*] coincide) is an "uncertain zone of political society" (502) which recognizes the socially illegitimate and unseen labor of women as well as "a space open to both semiotic experiment and feminist politics" (490).



we witness that craziness dissolve in the banality of the female sphere of dancing women, the sphere that had been anathema to director Bong in his youth. *My Mother, the Mermaid* closes the arc of a mother's life by suturing the daughter into her past, in apologia. In *Family Ties* we come full circle to crazy women, enshrined in their care work, for one another, and stretching beyond blood ties. As a group, these films offer more than simply narratives about the generation of women who championed through the developmentalist past of South Korea. More importantly, they spectacularize a particular way of looking at these mothers, one that reminds us of the vilification that has been part and parcel of even the highly culturally validated portrait of the excessive mother. It is suture, a technology essential to film, which works to recast these women and in part to appreciate them as the scapegoats of developmentalism (even as they are also its authors).

While we have appreciated these films as important revisionist works, particularly as they take up women in somewhat marginal social positions, we have argued that they cannot so quickly be considered a feminist oeuvre. This is because the films at once reconstitute a particular "innocent" domesticity within the (patriarchal) familial space that romanticizes feminine care; this is even the case in *Family Ties*, which steps furthest outside the frame of biological, heterosexual family. Although beyond the scope of this paper, it is interesting in this regard to consider South Korea's longstanding romance with Western domesticity and the bourgeois family. Indeed, in film historiography, we can think of these films in dialogue with classic films from late 1950s and 1960s Golden Era cinema that imagined a new, modern Korean family. Central to those films, such as *Romance Papa* (Shin Sang-ok, 1960), *The Housemaid* (Kim Ki-young, 1960) or *Mr. Park* (Kang Dae-jin, 1960) was the spectacularization of the domestic. The visual economy of the three films we have discussed here imagines a domestic space in which people care together; as we have examined, the *mise en scène* features beds, dining tables, and doors and gates as veritable protagonists in family life.

Taken as a corpus, and remembering the striking absence of the family in South Korean feature film until quite recently, it is noteworthy indeed that the first decade of the 2000s became a moment for a transformed gaze at the South Korean developmentalist mother figure. There are many ways to think about the recent appearance of the maternal figure in contemporary South

Korean cinema. As Cho Han Haejoang has said of *Mother*, we can consider that these films were born in an era in which the family is becoming an ever more important survival unit. That these films imagine a more forgiving space for excessive women perhaps suggests that cinema – and other similar media – are ripe for this cultural work. We might also surmise that feminist scholarship and cine-feminism, although still marginal, have born fruit in films like the ones discussed here. Finally, perhaps more prosaically and personally, is the reality that the mothers in these movies hail from the generation of the mothers of the young directors themselves (*My Mother the Mermaid*, for instance, was somewhat modeled after the director's own mother). Whatever the constellation of reasons, we note the powerful constant in the South Korean social imaginary: namely that the realm of the personal and social are intricately and intimately connected.

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*Family Ties* (*Kajogŭi t'ansaeng*, Kim Tae-Yong, 2006)

*Mother* (*Madŏ*, Bong Joon-ho, 2009)

*Mr. Park* (*Pak Sŏbang*, Kang Dae-jin, 1960)

*My Mother the Mermaid* (*Inŏ kongju*, Park Heung-Sik, 2004)

*Romance Papa* (*Romaensŭ Ppappa*, Shin Sang-ok, 1960)

*The Housemaid* (*Hanyŏ*, Kim Ki-young, 1960)

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# The impact of 1945 on a north Korean family

AN EXPERIMENT IN HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

## I. SOURCES AND FRAMEWORKS OF HISTORY

What does it mean to be a historian? A historian is interested in others: real other people who are not ideas or motifs or tendencies or signifiers or forces or trajectories or texts or mass phenomena or tropes or icons or any sort of representation, but who have lived real lives in real places at specific times. We ask a historical question about historical matters in which historical people are implicated, and then we have to think how we could possibly answer the question. Given that the people are or were real, how can we know whether the imprints they have left are real, and what indeed are these imprints?

This is where literary critics have made life more difficult for historians. Literary criticism has for a long time included historical studies, and history, in its English language tradition, used to be deemed a branch of literature, thanks to such as Macaulay and Carlyle, and perhaps also Gibbon (Herbert Butterfield, *History & Human Relations*, 1951). And with the rise of New Historicism in literary studies, the two fields became more entwined, and became entirely fused in literary-historical works such as Catherine Gallagher's 1985 book, *The industrial reformation of English fiction: social discourse and narrative form, 1832-1867*. And whereas previously such a work might have been regarded simply as a literary history, by now the array of ideas, theories and methodologies that had been categorised with literary critical theory as a distinct discipline began to call historical methods directly into question, and in particular the area of source criticism.

And so in my abstract I remarked that one of the many effects of the rise of New Historicism in literary critical

circles on historians has been to revive in an acute form the question how or whether one can draw boundaries between the contents of what we deem to be archival records and the mindsets and assumptions held by the composers and intended recipients of those records. The question is no longer confined to when, where, by whom and for whom archives are composed. It now includes (or includes once more, since among others 17th-century European thinkers debated this) the questions whether a whole culture or historical unit is a text and if so whether we can continue to make distinctions between texts and their contexts, as assumed in the very idea of representations or interpretations of events. If we make a distinction, is that not clearly an event? What then do we mean by "finding out" in history?

Now, when it comes to memoirs, diaries, and (auto)biographies we have always tended to consider them less reliable in telling us about events than government or other official archives, presumably because we view them to be under far less stringent disciplinary or public constraints. And so we give them less probative value when endeavouring to find out what might have happened and how and why. But we need to consider the claim that they are simply more obviously representational texts than some others, and the greater value as sources we give the other texts is possibly arbitrary. Why is one representational or interpretive imprint more dependable for historical narratives than another? Indeed, the personal testimonies might leave a deeper and more lasting imprint, and influence ideas about and historical responses to the events or situations they claim to recollect than, say, police records about



the same things. Even if, perhaps especially if, the personal testimonies are deliberately false, as, in his inimitable way, Umberto Eco shows us in his essay titled “The Force of Falsity” (in his *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy*, 1999).

But we have to pause before continuing down this road. After all, the very idea of forgeries and the like in historical studies has depended precisely on drawing heuristic boundaries between historical events and their representations, and we therefore consider source criticism to be an ineluctable item in a responsible attempt to find out things historical. What this means is that whether or not an entire culture or historical unit is a text, we still believe that out of the consequently vast array of historical traces this imposes on our research we must distinguish between texts that are fictitious (whether deliberately or not) and those which might help us find out about events themselves. For the reliable and unreliable texts continue on side by side through all phases and periods, and so it is only in the rare case where we find ourselves studying a period or situation for which there is a sheer dominance of personal testimonies that a real problem arises. All texts may be events, and may influence subsequent non-textual events, but not all texts represent other events, whatever their claims. After all, counterfactual histories are a recognized literary genre.

To return a moment to Catherine Gallagher, on re-reading the 2001 publication she wrote with Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, I am reminded that the impulse behind their creation of New Historicism was a “simultaneous fascination with theory and resistance to it” when undertaking literary history. They both remained “deeply skeptical of the notion that we should formulate an abstract system and then apply it to literary works” (p. 2). Hayden White attempted just that in his long book, *The content of the form: narrative discourse and historical representation* (1987). I remember when reading it that the further I got the more I wondered where it could possibly lead, and was not terribly surprised to find the author concluding, not, I should say, in the spirit of Wittgenstein, that it had changed nothing substantial about doing history and left us all basically where we had started. I prefer Gallagher and Greenblatt: there is no “overarching theory, prior to or independent of individual cases” (p. 3), there remains historical and human value to even the single voice (p. 16), which, even if it is somewhat lone in its particularity, cannot be dismissed from the story (p. 17). Therefore, they asserted, one cannot know in advance of immersing oneself in research whether the method or approach

one is following is appropriate (p.18). To this I would add that any narrative a historian produces will not simply be incomplete, as it must be in any case, but also distorted if it does not include the story of resistance to that which is deemed to be the “outcome.”

I might possibly go further with the methodological ramifications, when I take the position that there is no universal method of history that we can find or follow. We have to find a way to answer the particular questions we ask; that is why a very fluid and open-ended practice of heuristics remains at the heart of doing history.

So when we carry out research on memoirs, diaries, and (auto)biographies—and let me here add interviews—we have to work out what we can glean from them as we go. From my experience in the case I wish to talk about today, I have found them to be valuable windows on history in the making and in some instances may be considered a dialectic of text and event. In cases of family histories, they can provide us with a means of studying large events on a small scale and may even compel us to adjust or even revise the generalizations drawn from more established research on the big events.

So now I turn to the records of a Korean family, whose members were implicated in and to some degree contributed to some of the major historical developments and phenomena that we associate with the Korean peninsula in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The records include court records, two biographies, and one autobiography, as well as many hours of taped interviews of family members. These records are difficult to fit within precise boundaries. Indeed, they transgress boundaries not only of event and representation but also of individual experience and world-historical significance, and compel us to consider whether our appreciation of history is the poorer for putting such records in the shadows or distant background of our historical narratives. And although I suggested these sources may be understood as a dialectic of text and event, what this meant in their actual experiences was a dialectic of conflict and solidarity: an internal familial conflict and solidarity to be sure, but nonetheless for that, thoroughly grounded in and shaping the markers of conflict and solidarity in the history of their times.

To this family belongs Kim Sŏnhyŏk, who forms the centre of this talk today. I do not give all the names and some that I give are not their real names, since I am not quite sure whether I have their permission to cite their names at this stage.

Kim Sŏnhyŏk's extended family is very extended, globally, and the main reason many of its members seek to maintain solidarity via an internet cousinry web-page is that they are family. Of course, there is alongside this a notion of a Korean national connection, but the principle of desired solidarity is all in all the fact of family. For this family is not a unity on some important fronts: it is divided on lines of religion, politics, and cultural identity.

To cite just politics, one of the cousins, who is a UN-certified simultaneous interpreter between English and Korean, is also admired or disapproved for certain dissident activities that landed her in jail at the end of 1997. To be precise: as a member of a left-wing student organization in South Korea, she attended an International Youth Festival in Cuba, where she met with delegates from North Korea. I might add that she appears as an interviewee in the film, "Rushing to Sunshine," the sequel to "P'yongyang Diaries," by the Australian free-lance film director Solrun Haas, in the year 2000.

But if we jump back in history to 1946, we discover that her great-uncle, Kim Sŏnhyŏk, was arrested at the age of 17 for student activities opposing the UN Trusteeship that had been agreed to at the December 1945 Moscow Conference, and railroaded off to the USSR prison-camp system. His father, her great-grandfather, Kim Hyŏnsŏk, was arrested the following year for similar reasons and was executed on the eve of the capture of P'yŏngyang by the South Korean and UN forces in November 1950, during the Korean War of 1950-53. Moreover in 1981, one of her uncles was arrested for his involvement in student groups opposing the regime of General Chun Doo-Hwan. Does something run in the family? What is their relation to what we generally call history? What relation do they bear towards the wide-ranging sea of change that affected the world from the conclusion of World War II in 1945? How do their experiences relate to both the domestic strands of their nation's division and the global tensions that framed it?

The division of Korea into two states is one of the more serious legacies of the colonial period. It was, of course, the direct result of the manner in which the USSR and the USA chose to disarm and expel the Japanese from the peninsula in August 1945, but the need to disarm the Japanese only arose in the first place from the fact of Japan's colonial rule over Korea. The manner of the division itself can be characterised as artificial and arbitrary, unrelated to the actual conditions on the peninsula. But there has

been some confusion caused by this accurate observation, for it has been taken by some to infer that there was not a natural ideological division among the Korean people, no other basis for their participation in the Cold War, and no active complicity in the division by Koreans. None of these common extrapolations is entirely accurate.

The year 1945 was of course a matter of considerable moment to much of the world, and ever since there has been a scattering of large numbers of people around the globe. For Korea, the end of W.W.II meant liberation from 36 years of Japanese colonial rule, quickly followed by the political division of the peninsula into two nationalistically and ideologically hostile states, between which Cold War stakes were raised terribly high in a devastating war between 1950 and 1953.

August 1945 marks a kind of temporal combustion in Korea, and in particular in P'yŏngyang, and the ripples became the stuff of life for Kim Sŏnhyŏk's and a multitude of other families. But Kim's family had already participated in and in some instances initiated some of the profound transformations that the peninsula experienced in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the embrace and energetic propagation of a new religion; advancement of new sources and objectives of education, including for women; a revolution in gender relations; introduction of new industries, occupations, technology and medicine; nationalist and anti-imperialist movements; and ideological conflict. Already, well before the year 1945, their own records of this period of transformation are expressed in terms of conflict and solidarity.

But to return to 1945 and after: two implacably divided states, millions of divided families, now scattered across the globe. Kim's family was reunified, in a sense, partly physically, and partly electronically in 1994. But the reunification only occurred in a sense in which the history, the 50 years in between, remained intact, meaningful, and consequential.

What historical framework should we employ? Normally, an epic framework is assumed: big, even global movements and transformations, the tumult of warfare, the power of armaments, government policies backed by money and police forces, industrial expansion and the spread of mass society, nationalist movements and so on. In this respect, the family's experiences must be understood in relation to the particular big issue that was attached to Kim Sŏnhyŏk's arrest, his father's subsequent execution, his family's flight south and their move around

the world, namely, the Allied Powers' Trusteeship Agreement and the left-right ideological divide on a grand scale.

## II. THE BIOGRAPHIES

Once Kim Sŏnhyŏk was arrested in October 1946 and his father Kim Hyŏnsŏk in 1947, the history of the division was for them a family affair. In 1982, Kim Hyŏnsŏk's eldest surviving son in South Korea wrote his father's biography. And after Kim Sŏnhyŏk's eldest sister Kwihyŏk met him in Kiev in 1994, she wrote his biography (although it is published under his name as if it were an autobiography). She had over a decade earlier written her autobiography, which refers to related and other family events. These books are:

Kim Kihyŏk, 김현석장노 전기 (*Kim Hyŏnsŏk Changno Chŏn'gi* [Biography of Elder Kim Hyŏnsŏk]), Seoul, MacMillan Press, 1982

Kim Kwihyŏk, 평양에서 서울까지 47년 (*P'yŏngyangesŏ Sŏulkaji* [From P'yongyang to Seoul]), Seoul, Hongŏngsa, 1996

Kim Kwihyŏk, 평양에서 예루살렘까지 (*P'yŏngyangesŏ Yerusallēmkkaji*) [From Pyongyang to Jerusalem]), Seoul, Yŏnggwang Tosŏ, 1983

The biographies of Kim Hyŏnsŏk, the father, and Kim Sŏnhyŏk, the son, tell us the following. The father was born in a village near P'yŏngyang, in fact in Man'gyŏngdae, in 1903. He married a woman who had recently converted to Christianity and he too converted soon after marriage. In 1933 he became founding president of the Northwest Christian Youth League, and founded a church the following year. He managed a rubber company and mosquito net factory, basically cottage industries at first, but they expanded and were regarded as new industries. Later he moved into a hosiery manufacturing plant, which developed into a wool textile factory. In 1939, he opened his own textile factory. He was thus considered a "new man," not in this case by virtue of a new education but of running new industries. His son Kim Sŏnhyŏk was born on 26 January 1929. He had an elder sister and brother and three younger sisters and one younger brother. They all received a modern education, the eldest daughter going to Seoul for higher education. With the exception of Kim Sŏnhyŏk, they all married into families likewise firmly identified with the new religious, educational, industrial/professional and national movements of the time.

In spring 1942, Kim Sŏnhyŏk entered Kwangsŏng Middle School, a private school in P'yŏngyang. When WWII started, the Japanese School Board formed the 'Poguk-tae' (National Defense Corps) and required all students to engage in many kinds of manual labour as part of the war effort. At school, Sŏnhyŏk became a member of anti-colonial associations, conscious of the students' duty to work for the future of the nation. In the words attributed to him by his sister:

"On 17 August [1945], the South P'yŏngan branch of the Reconstruction Preparation Committee [Kŏnguk Chunbi Wiwŏnhoe] was formed under the leadership of Kodang Cho Mansik. He had also been an Elder along with my father in Sanjŏnggyŏn Church. The committee, not yet capable of exercising any administrative power, pleaded for support through radio broadcasts to all the students in the schools.

"The students in P'yŏngyang worked in a well-organized manner. The city was divided into several segments and was policed by groups of students. We each had a trainer's gun without bullets. It was better than nothing but it was really our bodies that stood against the unrest. We kept the city in order for 10 days until the so-called 'Red Liberation Army' arrived in P'yŏngyang. The USSR army that had declared war against Japan and started moving south in great numbers, entered P'yŏngyang on 25 August. The citizens welcomed the army, giving them flowers. General Chitchiakov, who led the 25th Unit of the 1st Army of the USSR Far Eastern forces, arrived in P'yŏngyang and established 'The USSR Army Headquarters in North Korea'. As people saw the red flag on top of the headquarters building, certain sentiments of an ill omen were muttered among the crowd. The political commander Romanenko formed the 'P'yŏngnam Peoples' Political Committee' [P'yŏngnam Inmin Chŏngch'i Wiwŏnhoe] with 16 members each from the two main camps. The National camp, P'yŏngnam Kŏnguk Chunbi Wiwŏnhoe, was led by Cho Mansik and the Communist camp, the Chosŏn Communist Party, by Hyŏn Chun'gŭk.

"On 19 September 1945, Kim Il Sung arrived in Wŏnsan on the USSR naval ship, the Pugachev. When he arrived in P'yŏngyang, the church members suggested a welcoming service for him at our house. In late September, a big party for the 'welcome service for Kim Il Sung on his homecoming' took place in our house in Shinyang-ri. Two military jeeps arrived. One had USSR army security commander Petrov, his interpreter and a few attendants. The other



had Kim Il Sung with a shiny medal on his chest, Ch'oe Yonggŏn, and a few attendants."

Kim Sŏnhyŏk recalled that the general mood of the people was expressed in a saying that was passed around: "Don't be deceived by the USSR and don't trust the Americans either."

### **Sammindang activity**

The Sammindang, meaning Three People's Party, is a name borrowed from the party established in China by Sun Yat-sen during his drive to abolish the Chinese Ch'ing monarchy and replace it with a republic. Kim Sŏnhyŏk's biography does not mention the origin or any other background details of the party, but goes straight to Kim Sŏnhyŏk's account of its purpose: opposition to the Trusteeship Agreement forged at the December 1945 Moscow Conference. "The issue of trusteeship seemed more urgent than [preparing for] our university education," the biography cites him. "Five years of trusteeship sounded so unfair and so long for us young people. We had been waiting for our independence for such a long time and here was the chance, but the unexpected intruders came in, destroying our land and attempting to divide this already small country in two! It was unacceptable.

"During the March First commemoration some of the students had been arrested for staging an anti-trusteeship demonstration. One of my classmates was released after three days in the P'yŏngyang police station. He excitedly shared his experience during a recess at school. 'You have no idea what it is like to be in captivity. You all need to taste the experience for a few days if you want to be a 'true man' in the future.'

"Well, it turned out that I ended up following his advice, not just for a few days but for many decades. But I am not sure whether I became a 'true man'. I suppose the definition of 'true man' is rather subjective.

"But we were young people with hot blood. We thought little of death. It was worth dying to fight against the trusteeship, to let the world know that Chosŏn youth are not afraid to die when fighting against injustice. "The patriotic youth in India can do it, why not we?"

"Sammindang members printed out leaflets and made posters opposing the Communist party and Kim Il Sung. My job was to distribute the leaflets and to put up the posters. Because we were educated in Japanese it was difficult sometimes to think up good slogans in Korean. My father said nothing. He may have guessed what I was

doing. I felt that he would not oppose me even if he knew about it."

### **Arrest**

On 5 May 1946, about 4 o'clock in the morning, Sŏnhyŏk was startled from his sleep by persistent banging on his gate along with a dog's barking. He arose with a sense of unease, and was met by his elder brother, Kihyŏk, who warned him to flee. Since the roof of the adjacent house was joined to theirs, he briefly considered doing so, but changed his mind, thinking that would only prove him guilty and would surely bring harm on the whole family. It so happened that his parents had gone to Man'gyŏngdae with the youngest boy, Tohyŏk, and only his elder brother's family and three younger sisters were in the house. But the visitors were policemen. "They said that I was needed as a witness for a certain incident and that I would return home that day after a few questions. I put on my school uniform and took an English-Korean dictionary. My brother's face was grim as he followed us out to the gate. 'Sŏnhyŏk, be careful.' I looked back at him standing there in dark. That was to be my last memory of him."

There was no trial, but the interrogation accompanied by physical violence lasted three months before Sŏnhyŏk and a large number of his fellow students and many he did not know were carried by train across the northern border into Russia and its GULAG. He himself was sentenced to 7 years' hard labour, to be followed by 10 years of exile. His prison camp life took him from Khabarovsk to Irkutsk, Novosibirsk, Serov, and, on Christmas Eve 1946, to the notorious camp of Vorkuta in the Arctic Circle.

Fortunately for Sŏnhyŏk, shortly after his arrival in Vorkuta, the Russian prison command was ordered not to locate youth under the age of 20 to such places during winter, and he was shuttled south to Yekaterinburg, and thence, over time, to Kamensk-Uralskiy, Nizhniy Tagil, and Nizhniy Novgorod. Nizhniy Novgorod, where he arrived in September 1948, is not too far east of Moscow, conditions were comparatively good for the prisoners, and Sŏnhyŏk himself was able to gain a rather privileged position in the camp's supply office.

### **Release and rediscovery**

In February 1953, his sentence expired, and Sŏnhyŏk was sent to work in exile for 10 years in Yeniseysk and Krasnoyarsk in the Central Siberian Plateau. There he worked mainly as a carpenter on numerous construc-

tion projects. Upon serving out his exile term, he stayed in the region, trained as a motor mechanic, and became the operator and maintenance officer of a fire brigade truck. Meanwhile, he married a Russian woman, Tatiana, with whom he had three children, of whom two survived, a daughter named Natasha and a son named Alexeyev. In the 1960s he applied successfully for rehabilitation, and gained Russian citizenship soon afterwards. On retiring, Sŏnhyŏk and his wife bought a bungalow in the town of Volsk on the Volga River, some 90 miles upstream of the city of Saratov, which is a 16-hour train-ride southeast of Moscow. In 1989, his wife passed away, and some years ago Kim Sŏnhyŏk moved to a retirement village not far north of Moscow.

When in 1989 Gorbachev announced the new era of *perestroika* in Russia, two of Kim Sŏnhyŏk's sisters who were at that time living in LA, decided to search for their lost brother, on the off-chance he was alive and still in Russia. To cut this remarkable part of the story short, he was finally located late in 1993 and was able to meet his sisters in Kiev. The following year, he traveled to Seoul, where he met his then 90-year-old mother.

### III. THE INTERVIEWS

Upon reading Kim Sŏnhyŏk's eldest sister's account, one finds a great deal of detail about her brother's experiences in the camps and after his release and some reference to the political context. When the broader context does appear, it looms daunting and decisive in its immediate affects. This is perhaps a narrative strategy, for it renders the denouement—Sŏnhyŏk's discovery and reunion with his mother and siblings in Seoul—more dramatic and thereby more victorious. Yet one finds little attempt to fuse the large and the small scale; rather, the details of his life in Russia are a kind of interlude between his arrest and his return, which frame the biographical account and give it its providential significance.

But this biography was read before travelling to Russia and staying with Kim Sŏnhyŏk, alone in his home in Volsk on the Volga River. It was before observing how he lived and how he remembered, and recording a dozen hours of interviews and taking copious notes; before realising that the 50 years in between was no vacuum in the story. This experience led me to recognize the completeness in themselves of human experiences and the inadequacies of the usual categories whereby we attempt to get a handle on history. The circumstances of his life, of which

we tend to regard him as a victim, were to him the raw materials of his life, and to call the "big events" the conditions of his being is probably the strongest sense we may concede to their importance.

In order to consider how the records of the interviews relate to and affect our understanding of the big picture, let me first briefly remind ourselves of the normal view of events surrounding the trusteeship agreement.

Late in November 1943, Roosevelt from the USA, Churchill from the United Kingdom, and Chiang Kai-shek from China met at what is known as the Cairo Conference, and agreed that in the event of an allied victory, Japan would be stripped of all its colonies. Then at the Tehran Conference in December 1943, at which Stalin agreed to attack Japan once the European war was concluded, the policy of placing Korea under a trusteeship was adopted in principle. But when, at the Yalta Conference of February 1945, Roosevelt suggested a twenty to thirty-year trusteeship over Korea, Stalin countered that the shorter the trusteeship the better. Britain, France and The Netherlands, for their part, fumed over the possibility that trusteeships might by extension be applied to their own colonial possessions, so that the trusteeship agreement stood on very shaky ground until it was agreed that only those possessions held by axis powers would be considered.

At the Potsdam Conference of July 1945, which Truman attended in place of Roosevelt, who had died in April, disagreements between Churchill and Stalin over how to deal with colonial territories, especially the Italian colonies in Africa, left the question of a trusteeship over Korea hanging once more. But after the USA dropped its atomic bombs on Japan on 6 and 9 August, the Soviets began disarming the Japanese in Manchuria with the greatest of ease, whereupon the US State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee decided for the first time that it was advisable to participate more actively in the occupation of Korea and again pressed for a trusteeship. Thus when the Moscow Conference was convened on 16 December, the United Kingdom, USSR and USA agreed on a four-power trusteeship over Korea for five years, and at the urging of the USSR, they agreed also that a Korean government should be put in place before, not after, the trusteeship period ended. As it happened, growing mistrust between the USA and USSR in the final stages of the Pacific War prevented either this or any other "agreement" from being carried out.

The December Moscow Conference agreement that Korea be placed under a four-power trusteeship for five years threw the southern region into political turmoil. The rightists were adamantly opposed to it, as was General Hodge himself, and by late January the USA revoked its agreement to the trusteeship proposal—on grounds that it favoured USSR expansionism! General Hodge used the widespread Korean antipathy to the trusteeship resolution to portray the communists as anti-national, and favoured the new Korea Democratic Party (KDP) led by Rhee Syngman, even though the outspoken Rhee by this stage was *persona non grata* in the US State Department. In the process, thousands of Koreans suspected of left-wing sympathies were jailed and many were later executed, particularly in relation to armed insurrections in the southern provinces from 1947 and the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950.

In the north, matters were quieter but far from peaceful. The Soviet and Chinese Communist parties instructed Korean communist leaders to stay north of the thirty-eighth parallel and to support the Trusteeship Agreement. Provisional People's Committees were established throughout the northern regions, to be centralised under a "Democratic National Front" under the leadership of Yŏ Unhyŏng and Pak Hŏnyŏng. The non-communist nationalist bodies, which were numerically stronger than the communists, resisted the order to submit to the trusteeship arrangement, and Cho Mansik's Chosŏn Democratic Party doggedly refused to budge on the issue. Throughout 1946 and 1947, Cho and a considerable number of opposition people were imprisoned and later executed, while by some accounts up to 200,000 Koreans were delivered into the USSR prison camps, of whom few survived and fewer returned.

How important was the trusteeship issue? Bruce Cumings has described the Trusteeship Agreement as a compromise, because a Korean government was to be established before, not after, the trusteeship: "In truth," he wrote, "it was barely a trusteeship agreement at all, in the sense that it did not question Korean competency for self-government or suggest that Koreans necessarily needed tutelage." He then adds: "In the north, in contrast to the actions taken by the Americans in the south, the Soviets had obtained, by whatever means and at the expense of Cho Mansik's leadership, Korean agreement to the Moscow decisions." (*The origins of the Korean War* vol. 1, c1981, pp 217ff)

That the trusteeship agreement was a compromise, "barely a trusteeship agreement at all," is perhaps technically correct. Yet insofar as the trusteeship agreement had been a compromise, it was far less a compromise between the Allied Powers and the Koreans, than between conflicting views of the members of the Allied Powers themselves. The nub of the problem was not whether Koreans were ready for independent self-governance so much as whether demands would arise from colonial possessions of the British and French and Americans that the trusteeship logic be applied to them. There is here an ironic twist of fate, for the Korean Independence Declaration of 1919 had failed because, Japan at that time being a member of the Allied Powers, Wilson's national self-determination principle was applied only to non-allied nations.

Whether the USSR and its North Korean friends viewed it as "hardly an agreement at all" is by no means clear. Yet it is clear that this was not how Kim's family and those who opposed it saw the issue, and most certainly not how they experienced it. According to the interview record, Kim and his father proceeded on the understanding that the trusteeship had definitely been agreed to, but was not something the Koreans needed or wanted. Moreover, when we place the judgment that "in the north, in contrast to the actions taken by the Americans in the south, the Soviets had obtained, by whatever means and at the expense of Cho Mansik's leadership, Korean agreement to the Moscow decisions," against the record of this family's experience of precisely that process of obtaining "agreement", it becomes nigh impossible to characterize this development as a side-issue of only passing importance. Viewed according to what has become accepted as the big picture or the larger epic narrative, the above judgment, again, seems technically correct. But perhaps our broader narrative is at fault and might even radically distort the historical meaning of the process, a meaning that is not confined to experiences of some at the time but continues through to the present. Suppression of the resistance of the vanquished has been the hallmark of both regimes in divided Korea, but the memories live on, actively so, and historians should be careful not to aid in their suppression. That the Kim family's experience is replicated in different ways by tens of thousands of Korean families suggests that one could justifiably characterize the process whereby the trusteeship issue was "resolved" as the centerpiece of the national and political struggle that developed in the north. To be sure, it cost Cho Mansik his



leadership, but it entailed far more than that: it contributed substantially to creating the momentum that cost Korea the possibility of avoiding the division that was finally sealed in 1948.

For the position, or intention of the opponents of the trusteeship agreement in the north was that Cho Mansik, Yŏ Unhyŏng, and Kim Ku would join hands and prove precisely the point that Cumings attributes to the so-called trusteeship compromise: that Koreans were capable of self-government. As far as the participants of the anti-trusteeship movement were concerned, the trusteeship agreement was an unambiguous statement by the Allied Powers that “Koreans necessarily needed tutelage.” The forceful and for many Koreans lethal way in which the USSR compelled the northern Koreans to accept the Moscow Agreement strongly supported this view. Kim and all his immediate family lend support to the charge that whereas the Japanese wore swords and guns, especially during the Pacific War period, they did not fire them off nor did they engage in wanton pillage. When the Russians came, on the contrary, gunfire was frequently heard, people were killed, and individuals were stripped openly in the streets of their personal effects. Although this charge is sometimes construed as a post-division rationale for their decision concocted by those Koreans who fled south, it is generally known that, as Cumings noted, the early behaviour of the occupying Russian troops was deplorable (p. 438). The fact that Kim Sŏnhyŏk, who had taken no part in the flight south or the development of refugee culture in the south, nor partaken in the Cold War animus toward the USSR, recalled this contrast in the Japanese and Russian behaviour in his interview, gives the perception considerable authenticity.

In short, the interviews and other sources revealed that the anti-trusteeship campaign in the north was not considered to be an anti-people’s movement or even anti-People’s Republic movement until it was forced into that position by the Korean communists and their Russian overseers. Once it was so forced, however, it was too late for the likes of not only Cho Mansik but also the Kim family and thousands of others.

Kim Sŏnhyŏk indicated in his interviews that he was under no illusions that it was this contrived casting of the anti-trusteeship movement as an anti-people’s movement that was to blame for his arrest, with its life-long consequences. But he is not in any sense a bitter man. He does not regard himself as a victim in any categorical

sense. The interviews show him also to be refreshingly free from a Cold War atmosphere. They include no smearing and no belittling of Kim Il Sung, and almost no political axe grinding; instead, he shares measured, reasoned, considered judgments. He had, he said, written letters to Stalin at one point. He spoke approvingly of some political figures in the former USSR and shared perspectives on President Putin (in his first term) that were possible only for someone fully in touch with the Russian mind. Whereas he did not appear to hold negative views of the “other side,” to which belonged South Korea as well as America, neither did he express any dissatisfaction with his lot in the Russian Federation. On one occasion, when he was stopped and ordered out of his car by a soldier while driving me through Saratov, then a particularly sensitive region because of the troubles in Chechnya and Georgia, he conversed with this soldier in a fully articulate and natural manner, with flashes of humour, that reminded me how long he had been raised on Russian soil and how at home he was in this environment. The soldier looked through his papers, shared his humour, nodded approvingly at him, and directed him back to the car.

Kim Sŏnhyŏk indeed came across as a remarkable instance of self-reliance, a whole person, in control, determining his viewpoint, his meaning. He calls himself a lucky man. When asked to come and live in South Korea, he observed that whereas his brothers there seem not to know how to be happy, he, this man with the delightful laugh, knew how to be happy.

Until contacted by his sisters, Kim Sŏnhyŏk had no knowledge of what had happened to his father. What did the court judgment say of his father, when sentencing him to imprisonment? (My translation of a copy in my possession.)

1 April 1948: North Korean (북조선) High Court; Chief Judge Kim Sŏnbae (Sinbae?) affirmed the finding and the sentence of 31 March 1948, regarding Kim Hyŏnsŏk (46) and Cho Yŏnch’ang (26) [曹然昶]

The two are accused of conscious and deliberate opposition to the people’s power in North Chosŏn, and to the decisions made at the Moscow Conference. They are accused of spearheading the anti-trusteeship movement in cahoots with the anti-people stance of Kim Ku for the purpose of perpetuating a political and economic form of government, state



Kim Sŏnhyŏk in his home in Volsk in 2001

power, that differed not one jot from that of the Japanese imperial order.

#### Kim Hyŏnsŏk

In February 1947, as a Christian, he went to Seoul, where he was introduced to Kim Ku through Hwang Ŭn'gyun [黃殷均] and instructed to engage in the anti-trusteeship movement. Kim Ku introduced him to Cho Sŏnghwan, Head of the Committee for Immediate Independence [독촉위원장], to whom he reported on the situation regarding Christians in the north, and was charged by Cho with the mission of inciting Christians in P'yŏngyang on the anniversary of the March First Movement to campaign against the trusteehip. Kim Hyŏnsŏk was thus given responsibility for the campaign in the north.

Kim returned to P'yŏngyang and passed on these matters to Cho Mansik through some leaders there.

On March First, between 7 and 9:30 AM, Kim gathered about 1000 Christians at P'yŏngyang Changdaehyŏn Church and opened an anti-trusteeship speech meeting, which was followed by chanting of "TaeHan Tongnip Mansei!"

Around the middle of May 1947, Kim again visited Seoul, where he met Kim Ku and Hwang and reported on the movement in P'yŏngyang. Hwang instructed him to continue the movement to the end, and Kim learned that

through Rhee Syngman's diplomacy the USA had been persuaded to grant Korea independent statehood. On 20 May 1947, learning of the opening of the US-USSR joint deliberations, and with the object of obstructing these deliberations, Kim contacted Cho Mansik and his associates through the Youth Society for the Advancement of Christianity [기독교먼려청년회], which included Kim Tuyŏng.

In June, Kim was a member of the organizing committee for a secret society called the Freedom Party [자유당] and of its funding committee, in order to destroy the joint deliberations. He abused his position among the Christians, as a member of the reconstruction committee of the Encouragement Youth Association and a Presbyterian Elder in P'yŏngyang, to try and destroy the North Korean people's power. He served as an adviser to a secret society organized by the Youth Society for the Advancement of Christianity called the Hwalmindang [活民堂], from the Liberation to July 1947.

**Kim Sŏnhyŏk, of course, was already in the Russian gulag when these events, according to the charges, took place. But Kim recalls that it was already a very common idea after the liberation that a good arrangement would be for Rhee Syngman to be President, Kim Ku Minister of Home**

Affairs, and Kim Il-Sung Minister of Defense. There was a generally favourable impression of Rhee at this point. Perhaps we need to place ourselves back at that point, when the outcome was unknown, and consider Rhee's image as the tireless campaigner on the world stage for condemnation of Japan's colonial rule of Korea, and indeed his book published in 1942, titled *Japan Inside Out*, in which he went so far as to accuse Americans who had advocated a soft approach to the expanding Japanese empire of being fifth columnists in their own country. Rhee was not, as should be reasonably well known by now, a person the Americans particularly liked: they ended up supporting him with clenched teeth.

What of Kim Il Sung? According to Kim Sŏnhyŏk, disillusionment began to set in when he proved unable or unwilling to do anything about the looting and violence the Soviet Army indulged in. But here again, Kim's view is a considered one: he noted that Kim Il Sung was probably in an impossible position, for had he tried to do anything about it, his standing with the Soviets would have plummeted and he would have possibly gone the way of Cho Mansik.

It was, in fact, a time of little trust, when trusting someone could be fatal. Kim himself learned early not to trust anyone too much. At the time of his arrest, it dawned on him with some shock that he might have been betrayed to the police by stooges within the anti-trusteeship movement, even in the Sammindang, a suspicion he now holds as a high probability, and regrets his youthful trust. Although it appears that the Russians had a policy of restricting communications between ethnic or language groups inside the prison camps by separating them out into different camps, Kim quickly learned not to trust other Koreans in camp. On his release into his ten years of exile, his caution was only deepened by attempts by North Korean agents to contact him and lure him into vague meetings. Despite the loneliness it caused, he made it a principle, which he kept assiduously, never to enter into any "understandings" with Koreans who approached him. Even after his rehabilitation by the Soviet authorities following his freedom from exile, agents from the DPRK Embassy in Moscow vainly approached him to join a project that on the surface appeared completely innocuous. Such caution, vigilance and solitude was the price of survival, and survive he did.

Kim's caution and suspicion affected his family. On hearing the news that Kim's sisters had found him, his

daughter found it hard to believe. Even after she saw the letters from his brother, her uncle, in Seoul (the Korean language of which she was not in any case able to read), it did not seem real and her suspicions lingered. Kim, of course, had always told his children, as he believed, that his family were in North Korea. He harboured a feeling of guilt that because of him they might have suffered badly, perhaps been killed. Was this a trap? Nevertheless, his daughter confided, she always believed that if he kept at it he would one day make contact with his family. As it happened, it was his sisters who made contact first.

### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

We can learn a number of things from the combined record of the biographies and interviews.

The nearly fifty years between Kim Sŏnhyŏk's arrest and his discovery by his sisters are decisive years. They are his life, a life he forged from what most would regard as the worst of raw materials but which he regarded as an environment sprinkled with tests and signs from God. He is very Russian in his outlook. He views folk like Brezhnev, Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin from an informed and sympathetic Russian perspective. He has refused all urgings from his family to move to Seoul or the USA. He is a remarkable instance of self-sufficiency, banished from the land whose central dogma is self-reliance.

How does Kim Sŏnhyŏk regard his place in history? Only those who succeed in history, he demurred, should proffer opinions on history. Is history the record of those that succeed, who manage to catch hold of the hem of the coat of history as it rustles past, as Bismarck is supposed to have put it? Is it true, as Hans Hillerbrand maintained back in 1969, that those "who fail are hardly ever attractive figures in the narratives of history," and that "success is, after all, what counts in history"? (Hans J. Hillerbrand, *Men and Ideas in the Sixteenth Century*, 1969, pp 37 & 18-19)

Yet after reading Kim's biography and the record of his interviews, one loses confidence in such easy and supposedly telling phrases as "casualties of history," that are commonly applied to such people. The category slips through the lines of his narrative. He is an outstandingly successful individual. What then the relation between this individual and that totality we call history? How in this case can we relate microhistory – which in so many ways is the substance of meaning for human life – to macrohistory?



In his preface to the biography of their father written by Kim Sŏnhyŏk's elder brother, the academic and family friend Kim Kisŏk ponders this same question of an individual's place in the unfolding of what we call history. Let me summarize him.

*Who constructs history?*

*Many think that certain leaders construct history.*

*But not a few leaders destroy history...*

*There is also the view that history is constructed by the masses. This may be a sounder position than that which makes history revolve around specified leaders, but there is also the possibility that a foolish crowd may drive history along an unfortunate path.*

*We have certainly seen numerous cases of this.*

*Then, who are they that construct history?*

*They are those who seek truth amidst falsehood, who oppose injustice and abide by justice, who reject glamorous evil and strive after unseen good...*

*At times they are sacrificed because of their pursuit of truth and liberty.*

[Kim Kihyŏk, *Kim Hyŏnsŏk changno chŏn'gi*, Preface by Kim Kisŏk]

And so the words victim and casualty still exist, along with their normal import. Kim Sŏnhyŏk certainly feels that his father was a victim of Kim Il Sung's rise to power, even a casualty of the trusteeship confrontation. Nevertheless, the words lose their effect as categories in which to place people we deem unimportant and by which to frame our understanding of history. History does not consist of history-makers at one pole and casualties of history at the other. Kim Sŏnhyŏk certainly was a maker of history and so even was his father, whose choices, positions and activities and, indeed, his death, were socially and historically consequential in their time, and remain so now.

In history we often speak broadly of change and continuity, but what comes through in the biographies and interviews I have used is usually a matter of conflict and solidarity. But individual lives and their varied relationships to other individuals, communities, institutions and events present conflicts and solidarities along so many axes that construction of a model is very difficult. That during war axes are more definable and fewer might be because proper human activities are suspended and because war is a brutal thing, and a whole variety of motives and hopes of those involved is submerged under

a logic that is practically irrelevant to whatever is being fought over, and irrelevant to the ways in which humans should work to a conclusion, through reasoning, mutual learning, and so on.

Yet even in wartime, and certainly during the virtual wartime of the 1945-48 period on the Korean peninsula, the record of individual lives, such as that of Kim Sŏnhyŏk and his father Kim Hyŏnsŏk, resist a single explanatory framework. Paradoxically, perhaps, it is the singularity of the individual experience, an experience that forms a complete whole in itself, that is too large for any theory to encompass.

A look at individual lives is not simply or even fundamentally a matter of filling in the big picture with information about various individuals' personal experiences of the grand developments. My brief look at these individual lives is not at all a matter of filling in with a personal account what we claim that we already know of the trajectory of history on the Korean peninsula after 1945. At the very least, it should encourage us to encompass all the heterogeneous outcomes, and hesitate to consign them to some trapdoor of history or minimize them as attendant features of political results. To be sure, for a micro-history, one needs to examine as many individuals at the starting point as possible. But this is a start, and a family that within an era of extraordinary conflicts and change maintains or regains solidarity and continuity is by no means a small matter. Individually and together, they are what make this world.

In this regard it is of some importance that I have chosen a family in which the father is executed and his son is shipped off to the Soviet prison-camp and exile system and remains in Russia. For what could seem more a non-result, a story of passive recipients of history? But neither in the one's death nor the other's life is it quite this way. If one wishes, or if one prefers a kind of literary interpretation of this case, one can contrast the North Korean theory of *chuch'e* with an individual exemplar of it, contrast the totality of the North Korean ideological hold with the totality of a family's experience, and of one man's triumph. But for all that, we can see that in post-W.W.II Korean society and beyond its political borders, there were instances of importance – matters of moment – and these were the conditions, the raw materials out of which people molded their present, made the times what they were. An adventure of 55 years, the details of which are highly particular, evinces the plurality but neverthe-

less representative experiences of this era—the ways of thought, of acting on convictions, of placing selves in relation to events – and perhaps we can see in the non-conspicuous, non-self-publicizing or self-aggrandizing particularity of one family, an enactment of history that not only contributes to the nature of the modern world, but creates the conditions which the dominant forces, too, must use as raw materials in their choices, limiting them.

Finally, I return to the question how we might evaluate the relation of biographies and interviews to the task of creating historical narratives. I do believe we can profitably understand this relation if we consider these sources in terms of an ongoing dialectic between historical text and historical event, reflecting in part the fixed, changing, or envisioned social and cultural environments of the authors of these texts, and no less of the historians who encounter them. Understanding this dialectic, by which I mean also perceiving the dual nature of these sources as text and event, may help us work out a reasonably responsible use of them.

From time to time during the interviews of Kim Sŏnhyŏk, disagreements arose between his accounts and those already written in his biography. For example, he cast doubt on the claim made in his biography that a welcome dinner was held at his house for Kim Il Sung soon after he returned to Korea with the Soviet armed forces. He certainly recalled the welcome in P'yŏngyang, and confirmed his father's presence at it, but explained it was an outdoor event and involved far too many people to host in his or any other house. Nor did he support the claim that his parents were closely acquainted with the parents of Kim Il Sung. One further clear difference is the place given to religion, particularly the Protestant faith of his family, in the unfolding of his story. Whereas his elder sister made religion almost an organizing theme in her biography of him, Kim Sŏnhyŏk made very little of it, and it was clear that though he subscribed to the general tenets of Christianity he had hardly darkened the door of a church of any persuasion even after the relaxation of the official disfavour of religion in the USSR after the mid-1960s.

The biographies of the father and his son, by the elder brother and eldest sister, need to be seen as formalized ritual accounts in the realist tradition, in this case, the tradition of religious rights of passage. The biographies are both a record of a pilgrimage and a testimony to the providential workings of the Christian God through the lives of faithful believers. The biographies are lives of saints. But

they have a national and political edge to them, as they reflect the experiences and social positions of Protestants in South Korea who belong to the tradition surrounding the flood of Protestant refugees from the north between 1946 and 1953 (possibly 80% of the Christians in the north), who identify with the late Reverend Han Kyŏngjik, a former pupil at Osan College under Cho Mansik.

The titles of Kim Kwihyŏk's autobiography and her subsequent biography of Kim Sŏnhyŏk explicitly evoke pilgrimages: hers from P'yŏngyang to Jerusalem (where she made her pilgrimage in the early 1980s), and his from P'yŏngyang to Seoul, a belated completion of his family's move there and an example of the recent "Christian passage" of growing numbers of North Korean refugees to Seoul. A pilgrimage is a ritual, and so is formalized; in written form it has certain accepted and expected modes of expression. They must testify to God's power, plans, grace, and promise of restitution of all things and reconciliation of all people. Hence in her writings, Kim Kwihyŏk is writing the testimony of her family, whose fortunes have been related in a direct and costly way with the politics of a divided nation. The passage claiming her father put on a welcome dinner for Kim Il Sung at their house, though she might genuinely believe it to be factual (she was not there: she was at school in Seoul), is a required passage, as are the countless allusions to God's guidance, her brother's piety, and so on. When it comes to testimonies, these also are part of life narratives, and in their ritualized form they certainly take on elements of hagiography. But they are no less real for that: they are part of the process of belonging, not false, certainly very meaningful.

When encountering the subjectivity of religious people, it is important to consider that they might in fact believe their beliefs and attach primary meaning to their rituals, in relation to which other matters must find their place or meaning. In these biographies, we discover that the author holds to a religious perception of the structure of the world and has a religiously inspired expectation of outcomes within it; rather than seeing religion politically, she sees politics religiously.

Yet in their ritual realism, one can hardly mark these sources out as peculiar. The summary of the court judgment on Kim Hyŏnsŏk that led to his execution is of a similarly ritual nature and engages in its own species of socio-political realism. The summary abounds with the expected and required phrases. It testifies to the purity of the regime and its causes, its protective relation to the

people, and to the righteousness of its indictment of the accused. As in the case of the biographical writings, much of its content is a forced construction, but it too, is historically real.

Both the biographies and the court record clash with the interviews. Kim Sŏnhyŏk endows his father with a different purpose and places him on a higher moral plane than the court or the regime, and his memories of his father from his youth are a story I cannot include here. But the break with his sister's biography is more emphatic and relates directly to the question of history. His journey to Seoul fails to complete his family's pilgrimage; in a way, he breaks it.

How might we understand this break? It is not possible to dismiss 50 years of one's personal history by recourse to a desired fulfillment of an assumed providential order held by persons whose lives have taken a radically different course and who regard those 50 years on his part to be nothing but loss, an aberration, at best a marking of time. Many ends remain untied and it would be rash indeed to pretend to know how the weave will end up. The Korean story on the big scale is also unfinished business. And even those of us who might pride ourselves on a less ritualized framework and a more open-ended perspective have to acknowledge that in the final analysis even the best-documented life remains a mystery.

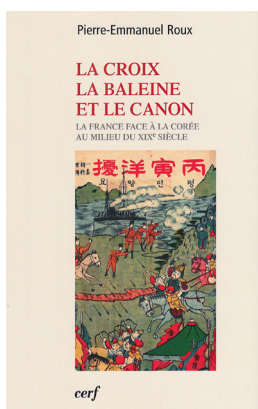
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BOOK REVIEW



**Pierre-Emmanuel Roux, *La croix, la baleine et le canon: la France face à la Corée au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*** (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2012), 460 pp., ISBN 978-2-204-09508-2, ISSN 0769-2633.

French-Korean relations in the nineteenth century, the topic of this book by Pierre-Emmanuel Roux, most likely will call to mind the French missionaries who illegally entered the country and had to pay for this with their lives, as well as the 1866 French attack on Kanghwa-do that is supposed to have been a reprisal for their deaths. Yet, as Roux shows, there was more to the relations between the two countries, and that is why in his title to the cross he has added the whale (*la baleine*) and the cannon. In his book, the whale stands more generally for commercial interests and the cannon for geo-political interests promoted through diplomacy backed up by military force. Roux's study is based on extensive and thorough research with the help of materials in Korean, Chinese, Japanese and English, and above all, of course, in French (including the archives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense, and of the French missionaries). The book is divided in three parts, of which the first, entitled "the first disillusionments," deals with the early relations of Korea with Europe in general, and France in particular. The first chapter analyzes several failed attempts to open up Korea in the 1840s and 1850s by the French navy. These attempts were motivated by the French

desire to strengthen its influence in East Asia in order to gain commercial and geo-political advantage, in competition with other occidental powers. Korea was but one of the possible targets of these policies and, luckily, failed to receive as much attention as Indo-China, which ended up as a French colony. The execution of three French missionaries in Korea in 1839 had little to do with French efforts to establish relations with the Koreans and mainly served as a pretext to enter into a dialogue. On the Korean side, however, the missionaries were seen as agents of the French government preparing for French interference in Korean affairs. Therefore any reference to the missionaries by the French would tend to confirm these fears. The missionaries for their part were quite eager to make use of French military might to further their purposes. The result of all this was that the French approaches to the Korean government, far from aiding the Korean Catholics, whose religious practice often was tacitly condoned, rather prompted renewed persecutions, because suspicions that the western religion was a menace to the state seemed to be confirmed. This is also what happened in 1866.

In a groundbreaking second chapter Roux draws attention to the importance of whale hunting in the global economy until the middle of the nineteenth century, at a time when the oil extracted from whales had not yet been replaced by mineral oil extracted from the earth. The whalers of the western powers increasingly transferred their hunting grounds to the Pacific and consequently the Korean government noted a disturbingly large number of foreign ships near the Korean coast. Western nations felt the need for ports where whalers could take in water and food, and sought assurances that whalers in distress would receive assistance from the East-Asian powers.

The French also were engaged in this industry and the supposed presence of large numbers of whales in the waters around Korea (partly based on the narratives of Hamel and the other Dutch castaways in the seventeenth century!) encouraged efforts to open up Korean harbors. Whale hunting, Roux points out, was the only real commercial purpose pursued by the French in the efforts to establish relations with Korea, but the opening of Japanese harbors that provided an alternative in 1854 (particularly Hakodate) and the decline of the French whaling industry soon after that meant that this motive for opening Korea disappeared before any result had been achieved.

The second part of the book is entitled “a failed invasion” and reconsiders and contextualizes the dramatic events of 1866, when nine French missionaries were executed and the French naval force attacked Kanghwa-do, the island at the mouth of the Han River that might be considered to be the entrance to the capital. The contextualization continues in the third part (“the hidden side of the cards”), which focuses on the larger international context, while the second part concentrates on the background of the events of 1866, on the events themselves and on the divergent ways they were seen from the French and Korean points of view. Sarcastically calling it “a course in applied civilization” Roux highlights the barbarity of the attack, which was justified with the noblest motives but ended in the pillaging of the Royal Library and the destruction of precious cultural artifacts and burning down an entire village. The interpretation Roux presents is quite different from the standard versions. The invasion was not simply punishment for the killing of the missionaries (although this argument was used as a justification), the first step toward the colonization of Korea or a *maladroit* attempt at opening up Korea. Roux convincingly argues that geo-political considerations in which Korea did not play a central role were to a large extent responsible for the actions undertaken on the peninsula. First of all there was the French desire to check the expansion of Russia, which had already extended to Alaska and recently had made Russia a direct neighbor of Korea. There is a parallel here with the “Great Game,” the rivalry of Great Britain and Russia for dominance in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Secondly, there was the idea that an intimidating show of French force was needed to protect French residents of China, who at the time were confronted with a menacing rise in virulent anti-foreign

sentiments among the population. (Not surprisingly, the invasion had exactly the opposite effect.) In other words, a proper understanding of the events, Roux contends, is impossible if one only looks at the bilateral relations between France and Korea, which also applies to earlier phases in the relations between Korean and France. He also adds nuance to the usual interpretations by carefully delineating different attitudes and interests on the French side and significant changes in these over time.

The book is very well-written and nicely illustrated. It is a most welcome addition to our understanding of the establishing of relations between the western world and Korea, making clear that the “opening of Korea” was not an event, but a gradual process, with many nuances that do not easily fit *idées reçues*. More generally, this study invites reflection on the motives behind western imperialistic expansion.

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