

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Rituals of Decolonization:

The Role of Inner-Migrant Intellectuals in North Korea, 1948-1967

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
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in East Asian Languages and Cultures

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor John Duncan, Chair

This study is an attempt to break away from *chuch'e sasang* (*Juche*; “ideology of self-reliance”) as the master framework to explain North Korean particularities, such as “ethnocentric nationalism,” “authoritarianism,” and “dynastic rule.” Instead, I employ a historical framework of decolonization to examine how North Korean postcoloniality has been shaped within the multiple contexts of socialism, division, and the Cold War. While conceptualizing colonial-era intellectuals, who chose the North over the South after liberation as “inner-migrant” intellectuals within the larger context of the ideologically divided intellectual communities of the Cold War era, I define “inner-migrant” intellectuals as postcolonial socialist intelligentsias. They were at the heart of the state’s decolonization project, which was to shape state policies and sociocultural articulations of national identity.

Each of the chapters strategically utilizes of the four key words—ritual, rationale, ambition, and allure—as tropes to demonstrate the universal and particular postcolonial features of North Korea. The introductory chapter metaphorically uses the term “ritual’ to define decolonization as the attempts by North Korean intellectuals to discursively wash away colonial

remnants and revive a national essence. The first chapter discusses the term “rational” as part of North Korea’s postcolonial objectives to produce a decolonized knowledge of Chosŏn *minjok* and to build a new socialist state with the ultimate goal of creating a unified Communist nation through examining the semiotic functions of Chosŏn *minsokhak* (ethnography). The second chapter investigates North Korea’s postcolonial ambition to become a leader anti-imperial internationalism while defining the North Korean travel *ocherk* (a Soviet style of literary sketch) in the 1950s as an anti-imperial internationalist praxis. More specifically, this chapter focuses on how North Korean intellectuals’ creation of the imaginative geography of the socialist bloc generated anti-imperialism as the ideological norm of internationalism. The third and final chapter investigates how the postcolonial desire of former KAPF [Korean Artists Proletarian Federation] members to create a decolonized patriotic nation is reflected in the discourse of KAPF and Kim Il Sung anti-Japanese struggle. Through utilizing the term “allure” as North Korean intellectuals’ desire to create a decolonized patriotic nation, this chapter delineates how their postcolonial allure led them to place great value on the narrative of Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, which later became the root of the *chuch’e* ideology.

In sum, “Rituals of Decolonization” offers three contributions. By historicizing the cultural activities of inner-migrant intellectuals from before and during decolonization, it introduces a new approach to the cultural-intellectual history of North Korea and expands upon Cold War cultural scholarship on the inter-cultural networks that shaped the socio-cultural identities of states in the former socialist bloc. At the same time, this study’s emphasis on North Korea’s postcolonial trajectory within the context of the socialist system broadens the scope of postcolonial studies, which has mainly focused on the continued links between colonies and empires after the end of formal colonial relationships.

The dissertation of Elli S. Kim is approved.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents and late brother.

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In my dissertation, I used the word, “ritual,” as a metaphor for the ritual of inner-migrant intellectuals who could not reunite with their loved ones. It is my hope that this work helps in reconciling the souls of husbands and wives and the national histories of the South and North.

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Introduction – Rituals of Decolonization

North Korea is a land of enigmas that has, for the most part, remained disconnected from the age of transnationalism. Reflecting the influence of the mass media, the most common images of North Korea are red banners lauding Kim Il Sung, public performances of mass and in-sync acrobatics, and spectacular military parades. North Korea is not only perceived as a country of mystery, but also as a threat to global security, particularly in relation to its pursuit of nuclear weapons.¹ The mystique of North Korea as a modern hermit kingdom attracts the attention of Western journalists and individuals who often depict it as being ruled by an eccentric Kim dynasty.

The theme of North Korea's peculiarity, however, is not restricted to the popular media as it is also common in the scholarship on North Korea. The production of knowledge relating to North Korea has been subordinated to the politico-economic and military realms. Many scholars privilege *chuch'e sasang* (*Juche*; "ideology of self-reliance") as the root cause of idiosyncratic North Korean characteristics such as "radical ethnocentrism," "Confucianism," "authoritarianism," and "dynastic rule." Such reductive approaches—centered on *chuch'e sasang* or a politico-military framework—limit our understanding of contemporary North Korean society.

After the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, many speculated that the collapse of North Korea was imminent. With neoliberal globalization overtaking Soviet-style socialism, former

¹ Heonik Kwon and Byung-Ho Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics* (Lanhan: Rowman&Littlefield Publishers. INC., 2012). The authors explored unique characteristics of North Korea's leadership, including continuity and succession, by employing the concept of "theater state." Through an anthological approach and cultural analysis, they highlighted how the production of revolutionary art consolidated Kim Il Sung's charismatic power and hereditary authority.

socialist countries underwent significant shifts from socialism to a capitalist political-economic system. Yet, at this time of great uncertainty, North Korea saw a smooth succession in leadership from Kim Il Sung—the “founder” of North Korea—to his son Kim Jong Il. Scholars confidently predicted that North Korea would transition to a market economy, but North Korea has managed to maintain a socialist one-party system and planned economy even in the face significant hardships like the “Arduous March” of the mid-1990s when North Korea suffered through economic deprivation brought on by famine and an energy crisis. Moreover, after proclaiming a state motto of a *kangsŏng taeguk* (“mighty and prosperous great country,” 强盛大國) in 1998, North Korea has continued to display political stability through various spectacles such as colossal buildings, mass performances, and military parades.² Many scholars of North Korea attribute its longevity to Kim Jong Il’s military-first politics (*sŏngun chŏngch’i*), which privilege the people’s military as the basis of the North Korean state and society.³ Beginning in 2006, rumors of Kim Jong Il’s deteriorating health prompted many international relations scholars and political scientists to discuss the possibility of political upheaval in North Korea and East Asian geopolitics. The succession of power to North Korea’s young new leader Kim Jong Un, however, has proceeded more smoothly than expected—once again, demonstrating the limitations of contemporary analyses of North Korean politics and society.

This study is an attempt to break away from *chuch’e* as the master framework to explain the particularities of North Korea’s politics, economy, military and culture. Instead, I employ a historical framework of decolonization to examine how North Korean postcoloniality has been

² Kang Sŏngjong, *Pukhan ŭi kangsŏng taeguk kŏnsŏl chŏllyak* (North Korea’s strategy to build a mighty and prosperous great country) (Seoul: Hanŏl Academy, 2004).

³ Sŏ Oksik, *Kim Jung Il t’ongil taet’ongnyŏng mandŭlgi, Pukahk ŭi sŏn’gun chŏngh’i ron* (Making Kim Jung Il President of a unified nation-state: the theory of military-first politics) (Seoul: Tori, 2006).

shaped within the multiple contexts of socialism, division, and the Cold War.⁴ While conceptualizing colonial-era intellectuals,⁵ who chose the North over the South after liberation as “inner-migrant” intellectuals within the larger context of the ideologically divided intellectual communities of the Cold War era, I define “inner-migrant” intellectuals as postcolonial socialist intelligentsias. The socialist system integrated intellectuals into state sanctioned institutions to create socialist culture and implement cultural policies. Inner-migrant intellectuals, therefore, were at the heart of the state’s decolonization project, which was to shape state policies and sociocultural articulations of national identity.

More specifically, I focus on the discursive acts and cultural activities of intellectuals in academia as well as literary and art circles. Addressing these different areas collectively makes it possible to illustrate how these intellectuals tried to balance the postcolonial concerns of articulating a cultural uniqueness with the need to firmly situate North Korea within a “universal” socialist system led by Soviet Union. In other words, North Korean intellectuals’ contested visions of what constituted the *minjok* (ethno-nation, 民族), *inmin* (people, 人民), and socialist culture. Their efforts reflect the theoretical challenges of applying Marxist universalism to a new socialist state in a world divided between mutually antagonistic capitalist and socialist blocs. In particular, by highlighting the prodigious efforts of these intellectuals to engage in scholarly and cultural exchanges with other socialist countries, I emphasize their constant search for both the specific features of Chosŏn *minjok* and the universal features of “international socialist culture.”

⁴ In fact, *chuch’e sasang* itself can be seen as part of the larger world-wide decolonization project of the post-World War II era, similar to Ba’athism in West Asia and Nehru socialism in India. All three stressed self-reliant socialist economies. Ba’athism is a pan-Arab nationalist ideology that promotes a single-party state for the rebirth of Arab culture, tradition, and values.

⁵ I define the term “colonial-era intellectuals” as those intellectuals who were active in the colonial period (1910-1945). I also include a group of intellectuals who received higher education during the 1930s-40s and actively participated in the public discourse after liberation.

This study strategically utilizes four key words—ritual, rationale, ambition, and allure—as tropes to demonstrate the universal and particular postcolonial features in North Korea. The term “ritual” is used metaphorically to define decolonization as the attempts by North Korean intellectuals to discursively wash away colonial remnants and revive a national essence. The term “rationale” allows for a conceptual understanding of the discursive strategies used by North Korean intellectuals in decolonizing the Chosŏn *minjok* while simultaneously building a new socialist state that would become a unified Communist nation. Thus, the term “rationale” enables us to trace how the Soviet definition of a socialist nation made it possible for North Korea to exercise the geopolitical logic of a nation-state. The term “ambition” describes North Korea’s claim that they represented the vanguard of anti-imperial internationalism by envisioning the imaginative geography of an anti-imperialist sphere where various peoples are conducting anti-imperialist struggles simultaneously. Lastly, the term “allure” illustrates how North Korean intellectuals’ desire to create a decolonized patriotic nation led them to place great value on the narrative of Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, which later became the root of the *chuch’e* ideology.

I argue that North Korea’s postcolonial characteristics of “ethnocentrism,” “nationalism,” and “authoritarianism” reflect the mixed nature of the universal postcolonial legacy that developed in the particular North Korean context of socialism, division, and the Cold War. Most postcolonial countries undertook decolonization within the capitalist system. Moreover, Socialist Vietnam joined the capitalist market economy after the early 1980s. In contrast to other postcolonial societies, after the fall of the Soviet Bloc, North Korea’s unease at the prospect of a return to the world system has accelerated the ideology of *minjok* and Kim family-centered “decolonization” in North Korea. However, the powerful postcolonial rhetoric in contemporary

North Korean society is, in many ways, the latest phase in a long process of decolonization. The postcolonial rhetoric of *minjok*, *inmin*, and socialist culture, which was considered “unorthodox” and abandoned previously, has now been revived and politicized within everyday practice.

North Korean Decolonization in the Socialist Substructure of the World System

Simon During, a noted scholar of postcolonial studies, astutely notes that postcolonial desire is the aspiration of decolonizing communities for an identity.⁶ Decolonization is the ultimate process through which postcolonial desire is realized. Decolonization involves a series of actions not only in pursuing the immediate political task of rebuilding an independent nation-state, but also diverse discursive acts that articulate a national identity, the retelling of national history, and the consolidation of national culture. Thus, Leela Gandhi’s definition of “*postcoloniality*” as a *decolonizing* process rather than a fixed state helps establish a framework through which we can address how North Korea’s postcoloniality, *chuch’e*, authoritarianism, and ethnocentric national identity have been shaped during a long-term decolonization project.⁷

In order to scrutinize how the postcolonial characteristics of North Korea have been shaped by a socialist system that operates within a capitalist world system, this study draws from the theoretical background of both postcolonialism and world system analysis. While incorporating the merits of the two frameworks, I aim to broaden postcolonial studies to include socialist states; at the same time, I attempt to expand a politico-economic analysis of the socialist

⁶ Simon During, “Postmodernism or Post-colonialism Today,” *Textual Practice* 1:1 (1987), 35. See also, “Postcolonialism and Globalization: Towards a Historization of Their Inter-relation,” *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (2000), 385-404.

⁷ See, Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial theory: a critical introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). She explained that some scholars prefer to use the hyphenated form ‘post-colonialism’ to indicate a decisive temporal marker of the decolonizing process. In contrast, other scholars intentionally used the unbroken term ‘postcolonialism’ to emphasize the long history of colonial consequences.

system as a substructure in the world system to the cultural arena by employing a postcolonial cultural analysis.

By offering important insights into the impact of colonialism through a critical analysis of culture, postcolonial studies helps us to investigate how the particular features of North Korean *postcolonialism* developed both before and after liberation.⁸ Postcolonial critics have illuminated how the global capitalist system has been responsible for forcing the continued political, cultural, and economic subjugation of postcolonial countries to their former colonizers.⁹ By contrast, North Korea and North Vietnam complicate the very basis of the postcolonial premise in that these two countries both severed their connections to their former rulers and challenged the capitalist economic structure by joining the Soviet Bloc. North Korea's decolonization project was molded by a Marxism-Leninism framework. Most importantly, different from the western capitalist society where ideology, national culture and tradition were transformed into commodities, socialist societies rejected the market economy. Thus, by investigating the role culture plays in the decolonization process of socialist countries, I highlight the complexity of the postcolonial experience outside the Euro-American capitalist system.

A postcolonial critique of the continuity of western cultural hegemony in the modern/colonial world system is shared by the world system theorists. Postcolonial studies scholars, who focus on cultural analysis, and world system theorists, who employ an economic-based approach, both often overlook the entangling political, economic, and cultural processes involved in decolonization. Although postcolonial theorists acknowledge the impact of the

⁸ In Korea and Japan, the prefix of de/post in decolonization and postcolonialism is translated as (脱, *t'al/datsu*). Since the two terms in Korean and Japanese have a similar translation, their meanings are often confused. I explain the next section how I distinguish these terms, decolonization/postcolonial studies (or postcolonialism) and postcoloniality.

⁹ Bart J Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: New York, 1997).

capitalist economy in the construction of a hierarchical international labor market and gender/racial inequality, their cultural analysis often comes up short in terms of making the connection between the cultural and politico-economic arenas.¹⁰ In contrast, world system theorists, such as Immanuel Wallerstein recognize the importance of culture but the basic premise of the economic-based superstructure model reduces cultural phenomena to a reflection of economic relations.¹¹ More specifically, an economic-oriented analysis hinders the examination of the socio-cultural dynamics inside the socialist system.

Although world system analysis has its limitations, it is a strategic framework that is useful in understanding North Korea's decolonization. As a newly independent country positioning itself within the "universal" socialist system led by the Soviet Union, North Korea's search for a postcolonial identity was shaped by the guidelines of Marxism-Leninism. Thus, North Korea prioritized the recovery of national subjecthood and the pursuit of internationalism. North Korean intellectuals adhered to the concept of a socialist nation, which was redefined by Soviet intellectuals as an agent of internationalism that befit a socialist system within the capitalist world system. World systems theory also helps trace how North Korea fully exercised the geopolitical logic of the nation-state within the Soviet system, which allowed North Korea to demystify claims that its ethnocentric-socialism was an aberration of "orthodox" Marxism. Through an examination of North Korean decolonization as led by inner-migrant intellectuals, this study integrates world system political-economic analysis and postcolonial cultural analysis. The convergence of these two frameworks, then, makes it possible to delineate how the various discursive acts and strategies of North Korean intellectuals created a socialist state in the

¹⁰ Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1988).

¹¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review, 1983), also see, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Essential Wallerstein*, (New York: The New Press, 2000).

“universal” Soviet mode, yet, at the same time, also produced a distinctive *Chōson minjok*.

The Inner-Migrant Intellectuals as Postcolonial Socialist Intelligentsias

Following Lipset’s definition of intellectuals as those who create culture, I focus on inner-migrant writers, artists and academics.¹² Inner-migrant intellectuals represent a specific course of modern Korean history. Through their cultural activities they were active participants and leaders in the public sphere during the colonial period, the “occupied liberation” period (1945-1948), and the early years of North Korea.¹³ They, therefore, embody the very essence of the term, “postcolonial.” Although there is a tendency to identify this group of intellectuals as leftists, the binary of the ideological division between the right and the left is more of a reflection of the political climate of the divided Koreas. In fact, these intellectuals represent a wide ideological spectrum including leftists, centrists, and leftist sympathizers. Their process of inner-migration is an example of the complexity of political events during the immediate aftermath of liberation.

Scholars have used terms such as *wōlbuk* (越北), *nappuk* (拉北), and *chaebuk* (在北) to designate these inner-migrant intellectuals. The dictionary definition of *wōlbuk* means, “go to the North” or “across the 38th parallel.” However, in South Korea, the term *wōlbuk*, connotes communist betrayers of the *minjok*. Under anti-communist dictatorship, family members who remained in the south suffered as the *yōnjwaje* (implicative system, 緣坐制) discriminated against

¹² Seymour Martin Lipset and Richard B. Dobson, “The Intellectual as Critic and Rebel: With Special Reference to the United States and the Soviet Union,” *Intellectuals and Change* 101, no. 3, (Summer, 1972), 136-139. Lipset argued that intellectuals are those who create, distribute and apply culture. But, he placed intellectuals who create culture as core intelligentsia.

¹³ Jonathan Glade, “Occupied liberation: Transforming literary boundaries in Japan and southern Korean, 1945-1952,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2013). In chapter 3, while highlighting the continuity between Japanese colonial rule and the U.S. Military Occupation, he reevaluated the conventional notion of “liberated space” through the examination of the complexities in the construction of a new national literature in the occupied liberation period.

and excised surveillance over them.¹⁴ In order to avoid the stigma of this practice, these remaining family members often claimed that their husbands or sons were taken to North Korea by force (*nappuk*). Additionally, since the *wōlbuk* of prominent nationalists leads to questions about the legitimacy of South Korea, the South Korean government also used the term *nappuk*. These terms *wōlbuk* and *nappuk* thus represent not only a South-centered historical interpretation but also the physical and psychosocial violence of its anti-communist regime.

The term “*wōlbuk chisigin*” (intellectuals who went North, 越北知識人) embraces a particular historicity in relation to modern Korean politics.¹⁵ As a stigmatized term, works associated with those labeled as *wōlbuk chisigin* were shunned for a long time in South Korea. Although the writings and art produced by these intellectuals, which depict anticolonial struggles or the harsh colonial reality of the masses should belong to the canons of national literature and art, they were ignored throughout the decades of authoritarian anti-Communist rule (roughly 1950s–1980s). In the late 1980s, following democratization, public discourse about *wōlbuk* intellectuals began to emerge in South Korea. Kwōn Yōngmin, as part of the 1980s democratization movement generation, initiated the study of *wōlbuk* writers by reevaluating national literature and modern Korean literature through a reinstatement of *wōlbuk* writers’ reputation. He defined *wōlbuk* as an ideological choice rather than a geographical migration; focusing on the *wōlbuk* writers, he categorized the *wōlbuk* process into three periods (I add *wōlbuk* intellectuals of other fields to Kwōn’s three categories).¹⁶

¹⁴ Sim Ŭnhŭi, “Nap/wōlbuk sit’aewa Nam/Pukhan ũi chōngch’aek mit insik pigyo (The conditions, perceptions, and policies toward the people who went to North Korea voluntarily or involuntarily in the two Koreas) (Ph.D. diss., Kyōngbuk taehakyo, 2010). The South Korean government legally terminated the implicative system against the remaining members of *wōlbuk* families on 25 March 1981.

¹⁵ In North Korea, they use the term, *ippuk* (入北), which means those who “come to the North.”

¹⁶ Kwōn Yōngmin, *Wōlbuk munin yōn’gu* (The study of writers who went North Korea) (Seoul: Munhak Sasangsa, 1989).

Kwŏn defined the first group as those who went to the North during the period immediately after liberation from late 1945 through 1946. This group included key former members of the Korean Proletarian Literature Alliance (Chosŏn P'uroletaria munhak tongmaeng, Sep 1945-Feb.1946) and other similar minded persons (e.g., Yi Kiyŏng, Song Yŏng, An Mak. And Pak Seyŏng).¹⁷ Most scholars of modern literature argue that the ideological conflicts that arose within the Korean Writers Alliance (Chosŏn munhakja tongmaeng, Feb. 1946 -1948), a united front organization, caused these intellectual to withdraw and choose to go to the North. Also, scholars and scientists who were invited by Kim Il Sung (e.g., Kim Sŏkhyŏng, Pak Sihyŏng, and Kim Chonghŭi) went north at this time, as did some other individual scholars (Yi Chŏngwŏn).

The second period, 1947-1948, took place during General Hodges' anti-communist military government. The military government outlawed leftist activities, suspended leftist publications, and arrested leftist intellectuals.¹⁸ Many writers and artists in the Korean Writers Alliance (e.g., Im Hwa, Kim Namch'ŏn, Kim Wŏnjo and Kim Sunnam), as well as the Workers' Party of South Korea (南朝鮮勞動黨, NamChosŏn nodongdang) members (Yi Sŏngyŏp, Yi Kangguk, and Cho Tuwŏn) and notable scholars (Pak Mun'gyu, Yi Yŏsŏng, and To Yuho), went north at this time.¹⁹ In addition, some distinguished intellectuals (Hong Myŏnghŭi and Paek Namun) remained in the North after going there to participate in a North and South Korean joint meeting in 1948.

¹⁷ Kim Chaeyong, *Pukhan munhak ŭi yŏksa chŏk ihae* (Historical understanding of North Korean Literature) (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏng sa, 1994). They were former members of the "anti-dissolution of KAPF" (*pihaesop*) who promoted class-based revolution and proletarian literature.

¹⁸ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

¹⁹ They were the former members of "dissolution of the KAPF" (*haesopa*), who formed the Headquarters for Construction of Korean Literature (Chosŏn munhak kŏnsŏl punbu, Aug.1945- Feb.1946).

During the final period, which took place during the Korean War, many intellectuals went to North Korea—for the most part during North Korea’s occupation of Seoul, which lasted from late June through September, the time of MacArthur’s landing at Inch’ŏn. After the establishment of the South Korean government in August 1948, the Syngman Rhee government carried out a witch-hunt for former leftists, left-centrists, or their sympathizers, which caused many to leave the South during the Korean War.²⁰ Many writers and artists, who had been forced to participate in the government’s anti-communist organization known as the National Guidance Alliance (Pobo yŏngmaeng) followed their colleagues to North Korea (e.g., Pak T’aewŏn, Sŏl Chŏngsik, Yi Yongak, Kim Kirim, and In Chŏnsik). Particularly, a large portion of those in the art world went as a group to North Korea (e.g., Kim Yongjun, Yi K’aedae, Ku Ponsŭng). During North Korea’s occupation of Seoul, North Korean authorities tried to recruit former members of the Provisional Government and prominent nationalists and took many of them to North Korea (e.g., Cho Soang, Yun Kisŏp, An Chaehong, Chŏng Inbo, and Kim Kyusik). Most historians tend to agree that these nationalists probably went to North Korea unwillingly. They also took pro-Japanese collaborators north so that they could be put on trial for their crimes (Yi Kwangsu and Pang Ŭngmo). Although these people went North at different times and under differing circumstances, scholars in the South could only dream of inquiring into their whereabouts and their activities during the years of anti-Communist authoritarian rule.

In addition to Kwŏn Yŏngmin’s work on writers, several other scholars began working on *wŏlbuk* intellectuals after South Korea’s democratization in the 1980s. Im Yŏngt’ae, for instance, began to trace the work of “*wŏlbuk*” historians and their contributions to North Korean

²⁰ Kim Tongch'un and Kim Sŏngok, *The Unending Korean War: A Social History* (Larkspur, Calif.: Tamal Vista Publications, 2009). Pak, Myŏngnim, *Han'guk chŏnjaeng ŭi palbal kwa kiwŏn* (The origin and outbreak of the Korean War (Seoul: Nanam ch'ulp'an, 1996).

historiography.²¹ Im provided detailed information about their historiographical work and their whereabouts. The South Korean historian Yi Sinch'öl, part of the generation involved in South Korea's democratization, proposed that the term *chaebuk* intellectuals (intellectuals who reside in North Korea) be used instead of the South-centered term *wölbuk*. While including both *wölbuk* and *nappuk* intellectuals in the term *chaebuk*, he also brought attention to the North Korean unification movement led by *chaebuk* intellectuals from 1945-1961.²² Due to the inaccessibility of North Korean materials on *chaebuk* intellectuals, Yi was unable to give detailed information about their whereabouts or lives in the North. His work, however, represents an important attempt to highlight the contributions of *chaebuk* intellectuals who tried to achieve national unification in North Korea despite their limited political power.

As an example of scholarship done in English, Leonid A. Petrov's work examined the characteristics of the historian community in North Korea and analyzed the historical writings of various colonial-era intellectuals produced during the 1950s-1960s. In his analysis, Petrov tended to highlight the omnipotent power of *chuch'e* ideology in North Korea. Further, he stressed that the transition from a Marxist-Leninist ideology to a *minjok*-centered *chuch'e sasang* was not merely a matter of changing politics but rather a generational shift among North Korean historians. He asserted that during this "shift" the old-generation Marxist scholars such as Paek Namun (1894-1979) and Yi Ch'öngwön (*fl.*1933-1956) lost power to rising scholars such as Kim Sökhöng (1916-1996), Pak Sihöng (1921-2001), and Hwang Changyöp (1925-2010) and that

²¹ Im Yöngtae, "Puk ũro kan Maxüjuüi yöksahakcha wa sahoe kyöngje hakcha tül" [Marxist historians and scholars of socio-economy and their lives in North], *Yöksa pip'yöng* 8, (1989). North Korean historiography written in the 1950s-1960s on the periodization of Korean history, land ownership in feudal Korea, and the origins of capitalism in the late Chosön period further triggered the efforts of progressive South Korean *minjung* scholars to challenge conservative cultural nationalist approaches to Korean history.

²² Yi Sinch'öl, *Pukhak minjokchuüi undong Yöng'gu* (A study on North Korean nationalist movement) (Seoul: Yöksa pip'öngsa, 2008).

these new scholars reconstructed national history so that it would be centered around the ideology of *chuch'e*. He contended that these colonial-era Marxist historians turned into Party scholar-bureaucrats who were subjugated to the party's official line of *chuch'e*.

Petrov's division of old and new historians by nationalist or Marxist orientation is problematic. For instance, Paek Namun adopted Marxism as his political ideology, but also utilized Marxism to "restore" Korean national history, which had been "distorted" by Japanese historians during the colonial period.²³ Thus, Paek was at the same time both a nationalist and a Marxist scholar. In fact, there were many *wŏlkbuk* scholars who thrived as scholars or administrators until they died of old age. While Petrov's goal was clearly to demonstrate how a new generation of scholars supported *chuch'e* ideology through the (re)writing of Korean history, it is important to point out that North Korean historians struggled for twenty years to designate a basic periodization for Korean history because of disagreements over the applicability of the Asiatic mode of production and where to demarcate the division between ancient and feudal as well as feudal and modern. This much overlooked fact implies there is significant room for reevaluating historical narratives about the rise of *chuch'e* as North Korea's unitary ideology. In various journals during the first two decades after liberation, the term *chuch'e* was used to designate historical subjecthood and only began to appear as the name for Kim Il Sung's ideology in the late 1960s. Therefore, it seems likely that the shift to *chuch'e* ideology did not

²³ Pang Kie-Chung, "Paek Namun and Marxist Scholarship during the Colonial Period" in *Landlords, Peasants and Intellectuals in Modern Korea*, ed. Pang Kie-Chung and Michael D. Shin (Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2005), 245-308.

happen overnight, but rather as the outcome of a prolonged period of contestation and negotiation in North Korean academia.²⁴

Starting in the late 1990s, scholars have done a great deal of outstanding work on the lives and whereabouts of *wōlbuk* intellectuals. For example Cho Yōngbok's work examined thirteen *wōlbuk* writers and artists and provides detailed information of their lives in North Korea.²⁵ Many scholars have searched for the works of *wōlbok* intellectuals at an individual level and have contributed to efforts to restore the names and reputations of these intellectuals.²⁶ However, due to the unavailability of materials about these intellectuals and methodological limitations, a comprehensive analysis of the activities of *wōlbok* intellectuals in North Korea has yet to be completed.

By employing the term “inner-migration,” I am able to position these intellectuals within the larger context of ideologically divided Cold War intellectual communities, something that the use of the term “*wōlbok*” makes difficult. The “inner-migration” of intellectuals—their ideological choice to move South, North, East, or West—is a unique cold war experience found in the divided nations of China, Germany, Korea, and Vietnam. The migrations of these

²⁴ The historiography of Vietnam is quite similar to that of North Korea. In *Postcolonial Vietnam: New histories of the national past* (2002), Pelley discussed the creation of a Hanoi-centered historiography from the 1950s through the 1970s. She argued that the construction of official historiography was a central component of the decolonization process, which aimed to correct colonial period distortions and Sino-centric interpretations of Vietnamese history. For this reason, the issue of constructing a historical periodization that would make use of a universal Marxist framework was central to the re-writing of Vietnam's past. Further, she highlighted the difficulties faced by official scholars in their attempts to apply Marxist universal historicism while also preserving the unique characteristics in Vietnam's past. Pelley asserted that the periodization of Vietnamese history is an example of how Marxist hybridity developed in the context of attempts to reconstruct a national history centered on both nation and class. See, Patricia M. Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

²⁵ Cho Yōngbok, *Wōlbuk yesulga" Orae ich 'yōjin kūnūl* (Artists who went to North: The long forgotten shade) (Seoul: Tolbaegae, 2002).

²⁶ Yi Kuyōl, “Pundan 50 nyōn wōlbuk misurin 68 in ūi haengjōk” (Whereabouts of 68 artists who went to North Korea), *Wōlgan misul* (Aug.1998). Yun Pōmmo, “Wōlbuk chakka ūi silch'e wa p'yōngka ūi munje” (The reality and evaluation of artists who went to North Korea), *Wōlgan misul* (Jun. 2005).

intellectuals show how the Cold War political climate configured the topography of an ideologically divided academic and cultural sphere. The socialist system integrated intellectuals into state-sanctioned institutions that produced and implemented various cultural policies.²⁷ In the socialist system, socialist intellectuals lost the classic meaning of intelligentsia, who had a revolutionary role in opposing established authority. Instead, as “socialist intelligentsia,” they were re-defined as intellectuals who served the “people” through creating a socialist culture and cultural support for the Soviet system.²⁸

Although the inner-migration of these intellectuals was an experience shared by divided countries, the intellectual tradition and historical background leading to division in each country is unique. I will briefly outline the historical background of division in Germany, Vietnam, and China as well as the processes of inner-migration for each.

In Germany, a substantial portion of intellectuals experienced diaspora during Hitler’s Reich (1933-1945). Hundreds of German communists and sympathizers found asylum in the Soviet Union: Alfred Kurella (writer, 1895-1975), Wolfgang Leonhard (historian, 1921-2014), and Johannes Robert Becher (writer, 1891-1958). German writers were employed by German-language publishing institutions or participated as members of the German section of the Soviet

²⁷ L. G. Churchward, *The Soviet Intelligentsia: An Essay on the Social Structure and Roles of Soviet Intellectuals during the 1960s* (London, Boston, Routledge & K. Paul, 1973). And Alexander Vucinich, *Empire of Knowledge: The Academy of Sciences of the USSR 1917-1970* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1984). Vucinich demonstrates how Soviet scholars were structurally organized into various research institutes and how their professional knowledge was practically implemented in various fields.

²⁸ Scholars have used the term “intelligentsia” to refer to a distinct social group that developed in Eastern European countries such as Poland and Russia during the 19th and 20th centuries. The term intelligentsia highlights the revolutionary role of intellectuals, who contributed to the establishment of modern nation states in Poland and Russia. However, the Soviet system altered this classic meaning of intelligentsia and defined the “socialist intelligentsia” as a social group who served the “people” through creating socialist culture and supporting the Soviet system. Jay W. Stein “The Soviet Intelligentsia” *Russian Review* 10, no. 4 (Oct., 1951), 283-292. See more information, John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, socialism, and Dissent: the East German Opposition and its Legacy*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

Writers Union.²⁹ However, the Great Purge of 1934-1940 impacted the German immigrant community. Some Germans were executed or imprisoned for being counter-revolutionaries or Gestapo agents. Some went to other European countries, and some German Jews migrated to the British mandate Palestine.³⁰ Many prominent German intellectuals, such as the Frankfurt scholars (i.e. Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse), Thomas Mann, and Hannah Arendt, migrated to America.³¹ The active participation in U.S. universities contributed to the rise of American hegemony in the humanities and science.

The Allies' defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 led to national division. The division of Germany was that of partitions, rather than an equal split between two sides. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was established in the Soviet occupation zone and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was formed by combining the Allied occupation zones. As a consequence, the territory of the FRG was about three times larger than that of the GDR. After the defeat of the Nazis, German intellectuals were faced with the task of reestablishing their German identity via literature and culture while also undergoing denazification (*Entnazifizierung*).³² When these intellectuals returned to Germany, choosing between East and West became an act of "inner-migration." Some of the Frankfurt school scholars, such as Horkheimer, Adorno, and Pollock returned to West Germany and strived to reestablish their

²⁹ David Pike, *German Writers in Soviet Exile, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). Wolfgang Leonhard graduated from the Comintern school, but he denounced Stalinism in 1949 and moved to West Germany.

³⁰ Steven E. Aschheim, *Beyond the Border: The German-Jewish Legacy Abroad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

³¹ Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 28-61. Also see, Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

³² Teresa M. Ganter, *Searching for a New German Identity: Heiner Müller and the Geschichtsdrama* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 46-95.

former institution. In West Germany, though, sharp conflicts arose among the old elite, leftist sympathizers, and émigré intellectuals, as well as between German Jews and anti-Semites.³³

Among those who returned to East Germany was the so-called “Ulbricht Group”—a large group of German Communists who had previously emigrated to the Soviet Union. The leader of the group Walter Ulbricht, who later became the first secretary of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), played a major role in the establishment of a new German socialist state. The SED made efforts to encourage emigrant intellectuals to return to East Germany. Many well-known leftist intellectuals, including Stefan Heym, Arnold Zweig, Johannes Robert Becher, and Bertolt Brecht, chose to go to East Germany. Many of them were loyal to the SED regime but critical at the same time.³⁴ Intellectual dissidents called for party reform throughout the history of the SED; many ended up voluntarily inner-migrating to West Germany, going to other European countries, or being expelled from East Germany.

Of those who escaped Germany during the Nazi period, many did not return to East Germany or West Germany and remained where they had migrated. These included Herbert Marcuse, Franze Nemann, and Thomas Mann, though they some did visit Germany from time to time. Differing from other divided countries, inner-migration between the two Germanys was possible until the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Like other divided nations of the Cold War, the two ideologically competing systems competed for legitimacy. Germany, contrasting with China, Korea, and Vietnam, did not suffer through colonial rule or civil war. Despite forty years of separation, the people of the two Germanys were able to maintain national identity for the most part, with the particular history behind the division and the critical intellectual tradition

³³ Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 146-149.

³⁴ John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and Its Legacy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

that manifested itself in the two Germanys contributing toward eventual unification.

In the case of Vietnam, the victory of the Allied powers led to the reestablishment of France's colonial rule. Thus, although both Korea and Vietnam experienced colonial rule, the nature of colonialism was different, and the aftermath of WWII shaped the course of division as well as the decolonization process in different ways. Unlike the direct colonial rule of the Japanese in Korea, the French government set up different colonial administrations in Vietnam: Tonkin and Annam as French Protectorates (1884-1949) and Cochinchina as a French colony (1862-1949).³⁵ The differences in colonial rule also brought about distinctive intellectual atmospheres in the north, the center, and the south of Vietnam. Northern and central Vietnamese intellectuals were given both a Franco-Vietnamese and a traditional Confucian education. Many eminent anti-colonial nationalists, such as Phan Bội Châu (1867-1940), Phan Châu Trinh (1872–1926), and Nguyễn Thượng Hiền (1865–1925) came from these two regions. By contrast, the Annam elites were less Confucian and had more opportunities to engage in colonial society through commercial activities or as colonial functionaries.³⁶

During the First Indochina War (1946-1954), the Viet Minh (Allied Vietnam) led by Ho Chi Minh called for a general uprising against French colonialism and sought to include rightist nationalists from the south as well as educated returnees from overseas. Thus, the Vietnamese socialist state-making process developed in tandem with the anti-colonial struggle, which united intellectuals from across the political spectrum. As a result, the North Vietnam literary and

³⁵ The State of Vietnam (1949-1954) was founded in the South. Former emperor Bảo Đại (1913-1997) became the head of state. The State of Vietnam supported France and the U.S. In 1954, Ngô Đình Diệm (1901-1963) was appointed as Prime minister. After Ngô Đình Diệm ousted Bảo Đại, he proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Vietnam in 1955. See, David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995).

³⁶ Gail P. Kelley, *Franco-Vietnamese schools, 1918-1938: Regional Development and Implications for National Integration* (Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1982).

artistic communities of the 1950s exhibited strong “bourgeois artistic tendencies,” with many of its members coming from bourgeois Franco-Vietnamese backgrounds.³⁷

French colonial rule officially ended with the Geneva Conference that marked the victory of the Viet Minh (1954). Vietnam was divided along the 17th parallel into north and south zones. During the transitional period of 300 days, many Catholic civilians, anti-communists, and intellectuals who had worked with the Viet Minh inner-migrated to the south. The writings of these inner-migrant intellectuals regarding their experiences with communists contributed to the popular conception of North Vietnam as a land of imprisonment..³⁸ In this way, the anti-communist hegemonic discourse escalated in South Vietnam. In North Vietnam, however, anti-American imperialism was put forth as the dominant ideology. Following Stalin’s campaign against dissident intellectuals, the Party started exercising tight control over North Vietnamese intellectuals in the mid-1950s.³⁹

China, along with Korea, is one of the last places where the Cold War regime still persists. The division of the two Chinas started when the Nationalist (Kuomintang, KMT) Party relocated its regime to Taiwan after defeat in the civil war against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949. Chiang Kai-Shek and about 1.5 million mainlanders fled to Taiwan while proclaiming Taiwan to be “free China.” Following Taiwan’s liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, many Taiwanese elites were hoping to establish some form of self-government within a larger China, but their hopes were dashed when the KMT set up its own government administration in

³⁷ Kim N.B.Ninh, *World Transformed the Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 52-53, See Also, Chapter 2, 27-28.

³⁸ Tuan Hoang, “The early South Vietnamese critique of communism” in *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia: Ideology, Identity, and Culture*, ed. Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17-32.

³⁹ Michael Lin, *Vietnam: The Necessary War-A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 2. Also see, chapter 2.

Taiwan in 1945.⁴⁰ The brutal suppression of the February 28 Incident (1947)— a popular uprising in protest of KMT government corruption led by students intellectuals and the former Taiwanese communist party members—and the KMT’s “White Terror” (1949-1987) repressed and marginalized native Taiwanese elites, leftist intellectuals, and political dissidents. These suppressions also further intensified the issue of Taiwanese identity.⁴¹ Thus, the division of the two Chinas reflects not only the complexity of Cold War geopolitics after WWII, but also the distinctive nature of Taiwan’s postcoloniality: the binary discourses of pro-Chinese nationalism vs. pro-Taiwanese nationalism and mainland vs. local Taiwanese.

The division of the Academia Sinica (中央研究院) into Academia Sinica in Taipei and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (中國科學院, CAS) in the People’s Republic of China represents the bifurcated intellectual community of the two Chinas. The KMT founded the Academia Sinica in 1928 by adopting the Soviet model for the Academy of Sciences.⁴² This was part of the KMT’s state building project, which sought to foster the development of excellent scholars across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The Academia Sinica became the academic hub of Chinese intellectuals regardless of their political stance. When the KMT fled to Taiwan in 1949, a number of Academia Sinica members remained on the mainland with hopes that their knowledge would contribute to the creation of a new society. On other hand, most distinguished liberal intellectuals at Academia Sinica, such as Hu Shih (胡适, philosopher, 1891-1962), Fu Sinian (傅斯年, historian and linguist, 1896-1950), Weng Wenhao

⁴⁰ Hao Zhidong, *Whither Taiwan and Mainland China: National Identity, the State and Intellectuals* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 27-37.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 38-48.

⁴² Shiwei Chen, “Government and Academia in Republican China: History of Academy of Sinica, 1927-1949” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1998), 234-255. Despite the importance of this topic, there are only a couple of English publications on Academy of Sinica or the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

(翁文灏, geologist, 1889-1971), and Li Ji (李濟, archeologist, 1896-1976), left for Taiwan in 1949.⁴³ They reestablished a capitalist liberal academic tradition in the Academia Sinica. The Chinese Communist Party founded the CAS as a new socialist academic center. This resulted in the original members of the Academia Sinica being divided into two ideologically opposed camps that competed for academic hegemony.⁴⁴

The development of these kinds of distinctive academic traditions in divided countries was inextricably connected to the international politics of the Cold War. American academic institutions supported national academic institutions in its allied countries through various forms of financial aid and academic exchange.⁴⁵ Similarly, the divided countries in the Soviet Bloc followed the Soviet model for state institutions headed by the Academia of Sciences and its numerous branches. This can be seen in the East German Academy of Sciences, the Chinese Academia of Sciences, the North Korean Academy of Sciences, and the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences. The Soviet Union actively fostered the building of the Academy of Sciences in these countries by sending experts and scholars.⁴⁶

Due to the similar academic structure among socialist countries, inner-migrant intellectuals in the socialist countries shared a similar role and identity. However, like North Vietnam and to some extent China and Taiwan, the colonial experiences of North Korean

⁴³ Wang, Fan-shen, *Fu Ssu-nien: A Life in Chinese History and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Also see, Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁴⁴ Chōng Munsang, “Naengjōn kwa T’aiwan hakkye ūi Chungguk kūndaesa yōn’gu (The Cold War and the study of modern Chinese history in Taiwanese academia), *Chungguk kūndaesa yōn’gu* 54 (Jun. 2012), 197-217.

⁴⁵ Kim Yongsōp, *Nampuk Haksukwōn kwa kwahakwōn ūi paltal* (The development of National Academy of Science in the Republic of Korea and the North Korean Academy of Sciences) (Seoul: Chisik Sanōpsa, 2005). Kim investigated the origin of the National Academy of Science in South Korea and the North Korean Academy of Sciences. He emphasized how these two academic institutions developed in the Cold War context.

⁴⁶ Alexander Vucinich, *Empire of Knowledge: The Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1917-1970* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

intellectuals produced distinctive “postcolonial” characteristics during the course of decolonization. I define North Korean inner-migrant intellectuals as a “postcolonial socialist intelligentsia.” Drawing from sociologists’ approach to intellectuals, which stresses socio-economic conditions as the fundamental factors in shaping the role and identity of intellectuals, I assert that while undergoing the periods of colonialism, division, and socialism, Korean inner-migrant intellectuals shaped their identity as postcolonial intellectuals, yet functioned as socialist intelligentsias.⁴⁷ I focus on two generations: the first group is colonial era-intellectuals who were active during the colonial period and the second group is those who were born during the 1920s and started their careers after 1945 or were returnees from overseas. I investigate how these intellectuals from diverse fields were at the heart of North Korea’s decolonization project. I attempt to trace the mechanisms by which North Korea’s postcolonial identity informed the development of a hegemonic political ideology and socio-cultural identity as well as contemporary everyday practices. Thus, by introducing a new approach to the cultural-intellectual history of North Korea, this study not only represents a new paradigm in terms of understanding of the discursive and cultural activities of North Korean intellectuals (and how these actions contributed to the decolonization process) but, in so doing, also offers a fuller and more nuanced understanding of North Korea’s postcolonial identity.

⁴⁷ Scholars have developed various definitions of intellectuals and their roles in society. Jean Paul Sartre and Edward Said defined the term intellectual from a moralist tradition. They pronounced the role of the intellectual as a social critic who critically examines the socio-political moment. In contrast, social scientists and sociologists such as Mannheim, Michaels, and Bourdieu downplayed the role of intellectuals in opposing the established authority.

Materials

This study utilizes a multi-disciplinary and comparative approach. I draw from such fields as history, sociology, literature, and folklore/ethnography. As primary sources, I utilize various academic periodicals (e.g., *Munhwa yumul* [Cultural relics], *Munhwa yusan* [Cultural legacies], *Ryōksa kwahak* [Historical science], *Kogo minsok* [Archeology and ethnography], *Chosŏn kogo yŏn'gu* [Korean Archeological Study]), literary and art journals *Munhak yesul* [Literary arts], *Chosŏn munkhak* [Korean literature], *Chosŏn misul* [Korean Art], *Chosŏn ūmmak* [Korean music], and *Chosŏn yesul* [Korean Arts]), as well a number of individual publications. In recognizing how discourse analysis often ignores the important political implications of historical events, I compare these periodicals with state documents, such as *Chosŏn yŏngam* [Korean Almanac], *Chosŏn pŏmnyŏngjip* [Compilation of Korean laws and ordinances], *Chosŏn Nonodang* [the Korean Workers' Party] publications and the South Korean-produced *Pukhan kwan'gye charojip* [Compilation of North Korean related documents]).

Additionally, in comparing North Korea with other socialist countries, I use various secondary sources on the Soviet Union, North Vietnam, and China to further illuminate both the specificity and universality of the postcolonial experience of North Korea within the socialist system during the Cold War.

Chapter Outline

In the first chapter, “Chosŏn *Minsokhak* (民俗學) as the Semiotics of Postcolonial Rationale: From Ethnography to National Ethnography,” I explore the semiotic functions of Chosŏn *minsokhak* in order to understand how North Korea’s ethnocentric nationalism has been continuously reproduced since Korea’s incorporation into the modern/colonial world system.

Specifically, I discuss how North Korean scholars embraced the intellectual tradition of the colonial period Chosŏn Studies movement (國學/朝鮮學) in their construction of Marxist *ethnography* while also strategically rejecting the colonialist representation of Chosŏn *minsokhak* as regional studies. Thus, this chapter aims to show how the semiotics of Chosŏn *minsokhak* that developed from liberation to the 1960s display a distinctively North Korean postcolonial rationale of producing a decolonizing knowledge of Chosŏn *minjok* while also building a new socialist state with the ultimate goal of creating a unified Communist nation.

The second chapter, “Postcolonial Ambition in Travel *Ocherk* of the 1950s: Anti-imperial Internationalism and Socialist Modernity in Imaginative Geography,” looks at the powerful North Korean postcolonial rhetoric of anti-imperialism. First through an exploration of the rise of the discourse of *ocherk* in the socialist orbit of the 1950s, I examine how the impact of Khrushchev’s thaw manifested itself at the local level across socialist countries. After defining North Korea’s claim as a leader in anti-imperial internationalism as postcolonial ambition, I investigate the various discursive strategies of North Korean intellectuals as presented in travel *ocherk* (a Soviet style of literary sketch) of the 1950s. I examine how North Korean intellectuals’ creation of the imaginative geography of the socialist bloc—where people simultaneously engage in both anti-imperialist struggle and socialist economic progress—generated anti-imperialism as the ideological norm of internationalism. Despite the economic reality of North Korea at the time, North Korean intellectuals perceived socialist culture—people’s invincible commitment to anti-imperial ideology—as holding the subversive potential to overtake the leadership of the international movement. Thus, by providing alternative views of internationalism from the periphery (i.e., North Korea), these texts, which portray Korea’s cultural interactions with other socialist countries, serve as missing links in a holistic

understanding of the socio-cultural landscape of the 1950s socialist bloc.

The last chapter, “Postcolonial Allure of the Revolutionary Socialist State: The KAPF Discourse in the Literary and Art World of the 1950s” aims to locate the cultural origins of *chuch’e* ideology. While rejecting *chuch’e* ideology as the basis of North Korean society, I define *chuch’e* as North Korean postcoloniality created during a long period of decolonization. By focusing on its political and historical origins, scholars of North Korea have agreed that Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle is the root of *chuch’e* ideology. However, I take a broader look at the cultural roots of *chuch’e* by looking at the writings of former KAPF (Korean Artist Proletarian Federation, 1925-1935) members about KAPF tradition and its ties to Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese struggle in North Korea. While highlighting the existence of the contested discursive sphere from the transition of KAPF to anti-Japanese revolutionary literary and art traditions (抗日革命文藝傳統), I emphasize how the postcolonial desire of former KAPF members to create a revolutionary tradition also led them to construct a North Korean national liberation narrative based on Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese revolution.

In sum, “Rituals of Decolonization” offers three contributions. By historicizing the cultural activities of inner-migrant intellectuals from before and during decolonization, it introduces a new approach to the cultural-intellectual history of North Korea and expands upon Cold War cultural scholarship on the inter-cultural networks that shaped the socio-cultural identities of states in the former socialist bloc. At the same time, this study’s emphasis on North Korea’s postcolonial trajectory within the context of the socialist system broadens the scope of postcolonial studies, which has mainly focused on the continued links between colonies and empires after the end of formal colonial relationships. My work, therefore, provides new insights

that deconstruct conceptions of North Korea, found both in popular culture and academia, as being ruled by an eccentric Kim dynasty based solely on *chuch'e* ideology.

Chapter One – Chosŏn *Minsokhak* (民俗學) as the Semiotics of Postcolonial Rationale:

From Ethnography to National Ethnography

Introduction

One of the most popular tourist places in North Korea is the Mausoleum of King Tan'gun (檀君) in Pyongyang. This ancient burial site is celebrated for the mythical founder of the Korean *minjok* (民族, ethnic-nation) and the ancient kingdom of Old Chosŏn (Ko Chosŏn, 古朝鮮, 2333-108 B.C.E.).⁴⁸ In 1993, North Korean archeologists announced the discovery of skeletons dating back to about 3000 B.C.E. in a tumulus. They declared that these were the remains of King Tan'gun and his spouse.⁴⁹ The reconstruction of the burial site became completed in 1995. North Korea's "scientific" discovery sparked controversy among academics. While some nationalistic groups in South Korea wrote letters supporting the discovery, others outside of North Korea criticized the discovery as lacking in scientific basis. The Mausoleum of Tan'gun, in turn, came to epitomize North Korea's peculiar ethnocentric nationalism of *Chosŏn minjok cheil chu'i* (朝鮮民族第一主義, the theory of the Korean nation as number one).

Most scholars of North Korea regard *Chosŏn minjok cheil chu'i* as mere political rhetoric necessary for the regime's survival in the 1980s, amid a paradigm shift to capitalism by many socialist countries. They address *Chosŏn minjok cheil chu'i* as a pinnacle of *chuch'e* (*juche*)

⁴⁸ Although the founding of Old Chosŏn is dated at 2333 B.C.E. in the myth, most South Korean scholars believe that Old Chosŏn emerged as an ancient kingdom sometime around the sixth century B.C.E.

⁴⁹ Rŏksa P'yŏnjipsil, *Tan 'gun kwa Kochosŏn e kwanhan yŏn 'gu ronmunjip* (A Collection of the studies of Tan'gun and Old Chosŏn) (P'yŏngyang: Sahoe kwahak ch'ulp'ansa, 1994). This is a collection of studies on the excavation of the Tan'gun tomb. According to their report, the Tan'gun skeletons were discovered in a Koguryŏ styled tumulus that was first found during the colonial period. North Korean archeologists speculated that Tan'gun's skeleton must have been reburied at this site in the Koguryŏ period.

sasang (主體思想, self-reliance ideology or subjecthood), widely regarded as the root of North Korean ethnocentric nationalism⁵⁰. Interestingly, the ideology of *Chosŏn minjok cheil chuŭi* has corresponds strongly with the anti-colonialist discourse of Korean nationalists since the late 19th century. Both discourses claim that an autonomous national spirit has been the driving force behind an exquisite national culture and a “biologically and culturally homogenous” Korean nation that should be superior in leading world history.⁵¹ What accounts for the wide prevalence of late 19th century anti-colonial discourse in contemporary postcolonial North Korean society? Challenging a reductive analytic framework of *chuch’ e sasang*, this chapter analyzes the semiotic functions in “Chosŏn minsokhak (民俗學)” from colonial Korea (1910-1945) to the 1960s in North Korea in order to trace the epistemic origins of ethnocentric nationalism in North Korea.

While broadly defining semiotics as a construction of symbolic meanings in word, sign, or discourse, I pay attention to the semiotic functions generated in a set of academic disciplines concerning ethnicity and culture, such as folklore, ethnography and ethnology.⁵² I argue that these academic disciplines operate in creating the semiotics of a country’s nationalism in a historically specific time and place. Exploring the semiotic functions of Chosŏn *minsokhak* thus enables us to understand how nation-centered knowledge has been continuously reproduced since Korea’s incorporation into the modern/colonial world system.⁵³ At the same time, it offers

⁵⁰ Gi-wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006): 89-91. Also see, Yi Chongsŏk, *Saero ssŭn hyŏndae Pukhan ūi ihae* (Understanding of Contemporary North Korea Revisited) (Seoul: Yŏksa Pip’yŏngsa, 2000), 196-203.

⁵¹ Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

⁵² Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (London: Macmillan, 1976). I follow Eco’s broad understanding of semiotic process as both communication and methodology and his emphasis of how ideological discourse can be considered “code switching” from a semiotic perspective.

us the means to grasp both the continuities and discontinuities in the North Korean intellectuals' envisioning of the nation within a socialist structure.

In the first section, I briefly discuss how semiotics function in folklore/*Volkskunde*, ethnology/*Völkerkunde*, and ethnography developed in different nation/empire/socialist state building processes. I discuss how these academic disciplines come to represent their own semiotic features in specific periods of their countries' history through their definition of subjects, methodologies, and institutional bases. The second part of this chapter explores the semiotic functions of "Chosŏn *minsokhak*" from colonial Korea to North Korea in the 1960s. I demonstrate how North Korean *minsokhak* developed from liberation to the 1960s through the combined effort of multiethnic-centered ethnography and applied folklore. At the same time, I highlight Chosŏn *minsokhak* as an eclectic discipline that encompasses various academic disciplines. It includes not only history, archeology, linguistics, literature, but also the dismantled "bourgeois methodologies" of sociology and anthropology to construct a distinctively Chosŏn *minjok* and socialist state.

I assert that the semiotics of Chosŏn *minsokhak* that developed from liberation to the 1960s display a distinctively North Korean postcolonial rationale of producing a decolonizing knowledge of Chosŏn *minjok* while building a new socialist state for the ultimate goal of creating a unified Communist nation. Strategically rejecting the colonialist representation of Chosŏn *minsokhak* as regional studies, North Korean scholars embraced the intellectual tradition of the Chosŏn Studies movement (國學/朝鮮學) in their construction of *minsokhak* as a Marxist science. However, rejecting the argument that North Korea's radical ethnocentric discourse in

⁵³ I employ the term the modern/colonial capitalist world system as conceptualized by the colonialist/modernity studies of Latin American scholars, such as Walter D. Mignolo, Ramon Grosfoguel, and Anibal Quijano. While defining coloniality as a derivative component of modernity, they highlight the continuation of the "coloniality of power—the hierarchy of race, labor and gender, despite the absence of colonial administration. Particularly, they emphasize how the western epistemological knowledge system buttresses the continuation of coloniality of power.

the 1980s was a sudden shift, I show that it is an outcome of a North Korean postcolonial rationale practiced at the level of nation-state. Thus, North Korean academia has played a key role in producing ethnocentric knowledge. However, the postcolonial rhetoric of *minjok* and *inmin* that had been previously considered “unorthodox” has now been revived to fit the emerging political circumstances since the late 1980s.

The Emergence of Folklore, Ethnography, and Ethnology in the Modern/Colonial World System

Academic disciplines that study ethnicity and culture—folklore, ethnography, and ethnology (or social anthropology)—were institutionalized in the western academic system in the 19th century. Although scholars of these fields reached some basic agreement in defining their identity as academic (sub) disciplines, they readily admitted the complexity of how these disciplines might retain their own definitions according to different places and time periods.⁵⁴ For instance, ethnology is a broader term for designating “the cultural differences and the features which identify the common humanity of the world’s people.”⁵⁵ The United Kingdom and other English speaking countries frequently use “social anthropology” to designate ethnology. And in North America, ethnology coexists with cultural anthropology. Furthermore, defining “folklore” or “ethnography” is even more challenging. But this does not simply mean an institutional discrepancy among countries. The history of these disciplines developed different academic and national traditions while being intertwined with the logics of nation, nationalism

⁵⁴ Dan Ben-Amos, “Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 84, no. 331(1971), 3-15.

⁵⁵ Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 2000), 2.

and colonialism of the modern/colonial world system. Thus, these academic disciplines come to present their own semiotic functions in narrating the nation.

Most folklorists argue that the English term “folk-lore” is derived from German *Volkskunde*, which embodies a romantic way of envisioning folk. Yet, folklore and *Volkskunde* have developed distinctive methodologies to narrate folk/Volk in a nation/empire building process. Uli Linke, a folklorist, for instance, argues that the 18th century’s unique German socio-political context set a different intellectual domain between *Volkskunde* (the study of culture of folk in one’s own country) and *Völkerkunde* (the study of cultures of other).⁵⁶ Germany’s lack of political unity, “cultural backwardness,” and 19th century German intellectuals’ anti-enlightenment trend advanced the notion of cultural plurality or uniqueness. German intellectuals from Herder to Romanticist scholars, such as the Grimm brothers, had developed the concept of national spirit (*volksgeist*) as an essence of *Volk*.⁵⁷ German scholars located *Volksgeist* in language, folk culture and literature and defined a nation/ethno as a group of people who share a language, history, territory and culture.⁵⁸ Thus, the “verbal arts” are an important methodology in *Volkskunde*. Mythology in particular became an important way to distinguish a nation from its neighboring peoples. By the late 19th century, the methodologies and content in German *Volkskunde* studies functioned as the semiotics of the German *Volk*. The representations of

⁵⁶ Uli Linke, “Folklore, Anthropology, and the Government of Social Life,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 1 (1990), 118, *Volkskunde* literally means “knowledge (*kunde*) of the common folk (*Volk*).”

⁵⁷ Jack Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 1988). Zipes demonstrated how the Grimm Brother’s collections (albeit being considerably rewritten) of Germanic legend, folktales, folk songs, ballad, and oral literature forged a sense of German identity. *Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859).

⁵⁸ Jennifer Fox, “The Creator Gods: Romantic Nationalism and the En-Genderment of Women in Folklore,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 100, no. 398 (1987), 565-567. John Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) was one of the first scholars to envision *Volk* as a nation/ethno and people who inherited a language, history, territory and culture. He considered *Volkshlied* (folk songs) as the most important folk literature because he believed that *Volksgeist* was created and transmitted through *Volkshlied* across time.

Volk—myth, legend, and landscape—were integrated into the rhetoric of the modern nation and modern nationalism. *Volkskunde* flourished as a key academic discipline in German academia until 1945. Different from the fate of *Volkskunde*, *Völkerkunde* lost its institutional position after the loss of German colonies, when the state cut its sponsorship after WWI. Instead, after the rise of German Nazism, many German *Völkerkunde* scholars joined Nazi *Volkskunde* and developed the science of biological racism.⁵⁹ During the Third Reich, the semiotics of *Volkskunde* expressed the superiority of German the *Volk*, which many postwar German scholars of *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* struggled to eradicate, but they also strove to establish a new tradition for these academic subjects.⁶⁰

Unlike Germany, the British Empire's building process incorporated folkloric inquiry within the larger context of social anthropology (ethnology). The collection of folk literature and songs had been subsumed under the name of popular antiquities, which had developed in the Scottish nation. Similar to the German case, Scottish intellectuals sought to locate the nation's ancient heritage through a study of cultural antiquities dealing with superstition, legend, and magic in order to establish their own national identity under British rule.⁶¹ In 1845, William J. Thoms, a British antiquarian, coined the term folk-lore, replaying popular antiquity with the influence of the German romantic folklore tradition. At that time, "folklore" broadly referred to the populace's oral art and literary expression, such as folktales, legends, or folk songs.⁶²

The early development of the British Empire advanced anthropological and

⁵⁹ Matti Bunzl and H. Glenn Penny, *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 12-22.

⁶⁰ James R. Dow and Hannjost Lixfeld, ed., *German Volkskunde: A Decade of Theoretical Confrontation, Debate, and Reorientation*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 1-22.

⁶¹ Uli Linke, "Folklore, Anthropology, and the Government of Social Life," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32. no. 1 (1990), 118-120.

⁶² Duncan Emrich, "'Folk-Lore: William John Thoms,'" *California Folklore Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (1946), 355-374.

ethnographical research of the “Other.” British anthropologists founded a strong intellectual tradition in cultural evolutionism. Eliot Orings argued that Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917) made a methodological transition from romantic folklore to social anthropology in Britain.⁶³ In the tradition of social anthropology, folk culture came to represent the survivals of the early stages of mankind and the social institutions of primitive people. In German *Volkskunde*, the lines of ethnicity determined the primary “identification of the Volk.” Tylor’s evolutionary approach to folklore created the class-based concept of folk—civilized people vs. the primitive other. Thus, under cultural evolution, the semiotics of British folk represents cultural possession rather than territory or people.⁶⁴

Soviet Ethnography and Folklore: Semiotics of Multi-ethnic, Socialist State

Both ethnography and folklore are the two main academic subjects concerned with understanding the cultural modes of ethnic groups, as well as the nation’s literature, history, art, and customs in the Soviet Union. While intricately intertwining the Soviet academic structure with the Soviet state building process, ethnography and folklore played unique roles in semiotically weaving the history of the Soviet Union. The creation of a socialist state out of the former multi-ethnic Russian empire led to an unprecedented development of ethnography. After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Lenin’s turn to ethno-territorial federalism was a realistic

⁶³ Elliott Oring, “The Arts, Artifacts, and Artifices of Identity,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 107, no. 424 (1994), 211-233.

⁶⁴ The multi-ethnic and immigrant population of the United States also led American folklorists to invent diverse methodologies to capture the complexities and differences of multiple ethnicities—indigenous groups, European, African, Asian, Hispanic and other minorities—within the boundary of the United States. The study of folklore in the U.S. is usually placed under cultural anthropology. After WWII, American folklorists have engaged various frameworks. Their poststructuralist and transnationalist approach brought out a new set of interpretations of folklore. The theoretical and methodological approaches of American folklorists have also largely impacted folklorists in European and non-European countries since WWII.

strategy to further carry out the revolution by incorporating former multi-ethnic nations of the Russian empire into a new socialist state. On a theoretical level, this Soviet policy based on national autonomy was aimed at providing its own nation with the opportunity to move onto the next stage of Marxist historical trajectory. Each nation within the Soviet Union would modernize and contribute to the economic development of the U.S.S.R. as a whole.⁶⁵

Ethnographical knowledge defined a distinctive ethnic mode of life and culture among the various ethnicities of the U.S.S.R. It provided a crucial factor in creating an administratively and economically autonomous ethno-territorial unit within the Soviet republics. In 1931, Stalin proclaimed that the cultures that were developing in a multi-ethnic state under the dictatorship of the proletariat must be “national in form and socialist in content.”⁶⁶ Stalin hoped to merge the various cultures within the Soviet republics into a uniform socialist culture. National character was not simply an obstacle to be overcome but an urgent task to be accomplished to move forward to the next stage of the revolution. Ethnological knowledge of a particular ethnic group thus served as the ultimate measure of a nation’s progress toward developing into a socialist nation and reaching the ultimate historical stage of communism.⁶⁷

Ethnic demarcation was not only a field of study by ethnographers but a multi-disciplinary effort in the Soviet Union. Different from western countries, which emphasized a separate intellectual domain of a discipline, the Soviet academic system emphasized an eclectic

⁶⁵ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 51-87.

⁶⁶ Marina Frolova-Walker, "National in Form, Socialist in Content: Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51, no. 2 (Summer, 1998), 331-371.

⁶⁷ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 6-9.

and all embracing nature in institutionalizing academic disciplines.⁶⁸ For instance, ethnography, physical anthropology, archeology, and folklore existed as sub-disciplines under the rubric of the history of science and they institutionally connected and shared theoretical and methodological approaches with the given academic inquiry. In the 1920s, Soviet academia aimed to follow a strict sense of historical universalism. For example, N. Ya Marr (1865-1934)'s theory of stages (Marrism or Japhetic theory), which is committed to the Bolshevik ideology of anti-racism and anti-colonialism, was applied to the social sciences. This theory claimed that all societies pass through various socio-economic stages in their progress toward communism.⁶⁹ Under the hegemony of Marxism, academic disciplines and methodologies that were considered "bourgeois sciences," such as cultural anthropology, ethnology, and sociology, were removed. Folklore was also repressed because it was thought to promote the ruling class' ideology of capitalist nationalism.⁷⁰

In the 1930s, the changes in the Soviet strategy of coping with the geopolitics of the world system brought about a new environment in Soviet academia. The geopolitical threat of imperialist encirclement and the ideological attack of Nazi racial theory ended the hegemony of Marxism's internationalist stance. Instead, it brought about nationalistic studies on ethnicity, such as ethnogenetics, which was designed to retrospectively trace the prehistoric lineage in the

⁶⁸ Vladimir D. Kazakévich, "Social Sciences in the Soviet Union," *American Sociological Review* 9, no. 3 (June 1944), 312-318.

⁶⁹ Philip L. Kohl and Clare P. Fawcett, *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 120-138.

⁷⁰ Frank J. Miller, *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudofolklore of the Stalin Era* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 5-7. Many folklorists, cultural anthropologists, and sociologists participated in ethnographic research in the 1920s. Archeology was also renamed "the history of material culture."

formation of ethnos within the territory of the Soviet Union.⁷¹ Against a racist concept of ethnicity in Nazism, Stalin encouraged a new patriotic nationalist policy; Soviet archeologists and physical anthropologists took the lead in ethnogenetics while the influence of ethnographers waned in Soviet academia.

The changes of geopolitics in the 1930s also resulted in the active endorsement of folklore studies in the Soviet Union. Since 1928, Gorki's positive recognition of folk culture embodying the proletarian spirit initiated a revival of folklore. Folklore became folded into ethnography and was restructured under the Institution of Archeology and Ethnography. Soviet folklorists developed application oriented folklore and were closely linked to the development of public policy. For instance, Soviet folklorists collected the legends of Lenin and Stalin along with other oral histories of revolutionary heroes and widely circulated these revolutionary stories to promote Soviet nationalism within the Soviet territory. This, in turn, led conservative folklorists in capitalist countries to criticize folklore studies in socialist countries as state propaganda, or "fakelore."⁷²

In sum, Soviet ethnography and folklore displayed a unique set of semiotics in forging socialist national identity. Ethnographical knowledge was instrumental for Soviet authority to create a territorial ethnic federalism. The prominence of ethnography represents the very identity of the Soviet Union as a multi-ethnic nation and the Soviet's commitment to the Marxist idea of the right of nations to self-determination. Ironically, abundant ethnographical knowledge also

⁷¹ Marlene Laruell, "The Concept of Ethnogenesis in Central Asia: Political Context and Institutional Mediators 1940-50," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 1 (2008), 169-188.

⁷² Frank J Miller, *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudofolklore of the Stalin era* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1990). An American folklorist, Richard Dorson coined this term, fakelore, to distinguish between academic study of folklore and politically-aimed "fabricated" folklore. Similarly, Dundes insisted that on the usage of the term *folkloristic* to distinguish its academic independence as a discipline of "pure social science". Alan Dundes, ed., *International Folkloristic: Classical Contributions by the Founders of Folklore* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1999).

awakened national consciousness and nationalism in Soviet republics. The Sovietization and Russification of folklore also shows how the interaction of the Soviet Union with the colonial/modern world system made it display the same logic of encouraging nationalism as so-called bourgeois nations.

Overview of Scholarship on North Korean Minsokhak as “Folklore”

The inaccessibility of North Korea society prohibited scholars from engaging in an in-depth study of contemporary North Korean folk culture or North Korean *minsokhak*. While North Korean *minsokhak* is roughly translated as “folklore,” South Korean folklorists characterized North Korea folklore as an ultra-nationalistic propaganda that departs from folklore scholarship of the colonial period.⁷³ A conservative South Korean folklorist, Kim Yŏlgyu (1932-2013), has, for instance, argued that North Korean folklore studies followed Marxist universalism up till 1967 and then the *chuch’e* principle afterward. Characterizing North Korean folklore as a policy and pedagogy driven discipline,⁷⁴ he insisted that Kim Il Sung institutionalized and selectively chose and invented folk culture in service to the state’s cultural policies. The notion that South Korea’s scholarship has, in contrast, engaged in “folkloristic,” “pure,” and “authentic” science of folklore since the national division is implicit within his critiques.

⁷³ Chŏn Kyŏngsu, a South Korean anthropologist, has been the only recent scholar to have questioned the identity of North Korean *minsokhak* as an academic discipline. He asserted that North Korean folklore is a translation of the Russian term *ethnografia* and is closer to ethnology than folklore. Chŏn Kyŏngsu, “PukChosŏn hakkye ūi tonghyang: sahoejuŭi minsokhak esŏ *chuch’e* sasang minsokhak ūro” (The trend of North Korean academia: Socialist ethnology to *chuch’e* ethnology) in *Han’guk illyuhak paengnyŏn* (100 Years of Anthropology in Korea) (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1999), 202.

⁷⁴ Kim Yŏlgyu, “Pukhan minsokhak yŏn’gu ūi sŏnggyŏk koch’al (A study of characteristics of North Korean folklore),” *Pukhan hakbo* 10 (1986), 133-148.

Breaking away from Cold War academic rhetoric of labeling North Korea folklore studies as “fakelore” or mere “propaganda,” Chu Kanghyŏn (1955-), within the context of the 1980s’ democratization movement, highlighted the internal dynamics at play in the development of North Korean folklore studies. His groundbreaking work, *Pukhan minsoksa yŏn’gu* (A History of North Korean Folklore, 1991) is the first comprehensive work on North Korean *minsokhak*. His work represents the post-democratization scholarly activism of uncovering the “truth” about North Korea. While accentuating the impact of Soviet academia on North Korean *minsokhak*, he also highlights the basic nature of North Korean *minsokhak* as the history of a scientific discipline.⁷⁵ He argues that Marxism-Leninism and *chuch’e* ideology are encapsulated in the heart of North Korean *minsokhak*.

Despite the differing views of South Korean scholars, their overarching concern for North Korean *minsokhak* is to find the homogeneity of national culture in the two Koreas. Based on a firm belief in *tanil minjok* (單一民族, single ethnic-nation), their inquiry into North Korean folklore is thus an attempt to find an authentic Korean tradition that could unite the two Koreas, regardless of the long years of national division. Or, at the very least, it is to prepare a common ground to overcome the potential cultural conflicts that could potentially result from years of living under different political systems in the event of reunification. For instance, South Korean scholars have welcomed North Korea’s changes towards a more flexible and inclusive policy of defining national culture since the fall of the Soviet Union. Some South Korean scholars perceived this flexible approach as heralding a future reconciliation between North and South

⁷⁵ Chu Kanghyŏn, *Pukhan minsoksa yŏ’ngu* (A history of North Korean Folklore) (Seoul: Iron kwa silch’ŏn, 1991), 31-84. He periodized North Korean folklore into four phases; “The preparation” (Sep. 1948 – July 1953): A transitional society after liberation and war searching for the direction of North Korean folklore studies. 2. “The progress” (July 1953- 1960): Socialist reconstruction through striving for subjective folklore; folklore studies is actively developed. 3. “Establishing *chuch’e* folklore” (1961-1969): A generational cross among scholars after instituting *chuch’e* folklore. 4. “Completing *chuch’e* folklore” (1970-1991).

Korea.⁷⁶ Similarly, North Korean scholars display an identical approach to South Korean folklore in being concerned with the U.S imperialization of South Korean folk culture. In other words, the *minsokhak* of the two Koreas operates as a semiotics of unification and a medium to try to recover the homogeneous Korean nation.

The most fundamental problem in South Korean scholarship on North Korean *minsokhak* is that many South Korean folklorists continue to evaluate North Korean *minsokhak* through a narrow category of folklore that the South Koreans have used since the colonial period. Although North Korea has defined *minsokhak* differently from South Korea, most South Korean scholars use a traditionalist approach to characterize North Korean *minsokhak* without critically investigating the identity of North Korean *minsokhak*. This has not only reinforced the perceived particularity of North Korea but also threatens to once again close off alternative approaches to understanding the socio-cultural history of North Korea.

⁷⁶ Chang Chŏngryong, “Pukhan minsokhak munhwa chŏngch’aek, munhwa yusan silt’ae (North Korean folklore and its cultural policy and cultural relics) *T’ongil munje yŏn’gu* (A study of unification issue) 13 (1997), 16.

Chosŏn Minsokhak in Colonial Korea: Regional Studies vs. Chosŏn Studies Movement

As mentioned earlier, both North and South Korean scholars assert that North Korean *minsokhak* departs from the folklore scholarship of the colonial period. This does not mean North Korea did not utilize the folklore scholarship of the colonial period. It does mean, however, that North Korean intellectuals attempted to remove the Japanese imperialist and pro-Japanese Korean scholarship of folklore in North Korea. At the same time, North Korean scholars did adapt anticolonial nationalists' works in shaping North Korean *minsokhak*, which I elaborate in the following section. In order to understand the genealogy Chosŏn *minsokhak*, I trace its beginning in this section.

Initially, anthropology, ethnology, ethnography, and folklore were imported to East Asia without clear disciplinary distinctions. Many scholars in these fields used various translated terms for these subjects that competed as neologies.⁷⁷ In the 1920s, folklore was commonly glossed as *minzokugaku/minsokhak* by privileging the concepts of people (民, *min*) and popular customs, (俗, *zoku/sok*). This term, which is an excellent example of Lydia Liu's concept of translingual practice,⁷⁸ subsequently circulated widely in East Asia. The term *minzokugaku* demonstrates how a new meaning in a neology acquires legitimacy in reflecting Japan's trajectory from a modern nation state to an empire. Furthermore, Yanagita Kunio (柳田 國男, 1875– 1962 — known as the founder of Japanese folklore studies—consolidated the concept of *minzokugaku* by demarcating ethnology (人種學 *jinshugaku*/民族學 *minzokugaku*) /anthropology

⁷⁷ There were many translated terms for these academic subjects, such as ethnology as *injonghak/minjokhak* (人種學/民族學), ethnography as *tosokahak/minjokchihak* (土俗學/民族誌學), folklore as *hyangt'ohak/hyangt'oji, p'ungsŏkhak* (郷土學/郷土誌/風俗學), anthropology as *insŏnghak/illyuhak* (人性學/人類學) etc..

⁷⁸ Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity-China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996).

(人性學 *jinsēgaku*/人類學 *jinruigaku*) as a study of foreign cultures from *minzokugaku* as a study of culture of the Japanese nation (native ethnology).⁷⁹

In the course of Japan's empire building process, the term *minzokugaku* indicated the semiotics of "people's culture" that encapsulates the Japanese nation from the past to the present. On the other hand, the term "Chosēn *minzokugaku*" also created a dual semiotics in the colonial context. For Japanese imperialist scholars, Chosēn *minzokugaku* served as a form of regional studies within the Japanese empire. Chosēn *minzokugaku* was an outcome of Japanese imperialist scholars' discursive practice of essentializing the Japanese nation by othering Korea.⁸⁰ From the late 1890s, Japanese scholars initiated various research projects on Korean history, folk customs, and religion; particularly, after the annexation in 1910, the Japanese colonial state and individual scholars actively partook in research in Korean archeology and cultural practices under the auspices of the Government-General of Korea (朝鮮總督府, Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1910-1945). And they published their studies in the official journal of the Government-General of Korea, *Chōsen* (朝鮮, Korea, 1910-1945).⁸¹ Japanese folklorists and anthropologists largely operated from Edward B. Tylor's (1832-1917) cultural evolutionary model, which provided discursive power for inventing the binary concept of modern Japan vs.

⁷⁹ Mariko Asano Tamanoi, "Gender, Nationalism, and Japanese Native Ethnology," *Position* 4, no. 1 (1996), 59-86.

⁸⁰ Scholars of modern Japan, such as Stefan Tanaka and Kang Sang-jung (姜尚中), argue that Japan's invention of *tōyō/tongyang* (東洋) essentialized Japan's logic of Orientalizing the other. While adopting western 'scientific' methodologies and theories, Japanese scholars, such as Shiratori Kurakichi (1865-1942) and his followers at Tokyo Imperial University Professor, re-centered Japan as the leader of the East, equivalent to the West in stature, while differentiating Japan from the Orient. Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and Kang Sang-jung, *Orientalizumu no kanata e: kindai bunka hihan* (Beyond Orientalism: critics on modern culture) (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1996).

⁸¹ Yi Pokkyu, "Chosōn ch'ongdokpu kiwanji Chosōnji surok munhak chakp'um mit minsok·kugmunhak kwannyōn charyo nonmun dūl e tahayō" (About Korean folk culture and Korean literature in the official journal of the Governor-General of Korea, Korea) *Kukche ōmun* 29 (Dec. 2003), 421-451.

primitive Korea.⁸² A well-known scholar, Ayukai Fusanosin (鮎貝房之進, 1864-1946), claimed that Korean shamanism (*musok*, 巫俗) was a distinctive Korean national spirit deeply rooted in Korean culture. He asserted that shamanistic practices in Korean contemporary society are the survival of an ancient Shinto practice in its original form.⁸³ In other words, Japan's past existed within Korea's present.

In contrast, Chosŏn *minsokhak* played an important part in the Korean scholarly activist movement called the Chosŏn Studies Movement(國學/朝鮮學, hereinafter CSM). Since the late 19th century, anti-colonialist intellectuals, such as Sin Ch'aeho (申采浩, 1888-1936) and Pak Ŭnsik (朴殷植, 1859-1925), developed a nationalist historiography centered on Tan'gun as Korea's religious and historical origin to refute colonialist distortions of Korean history.⁸⁴ This line of scholarly activism expanded to the fields of Korean literature, language, history, and *minsokhak* in the 1930s. Scholars' different political stances—rightist, leftist, and centrist—and intellectual backgrounds vigorously promoted the production of knowledge on Korea.⁸⁵ Tan'gun

⁸² Roger L. Janell. "The Origins of Korean Folklore Scholarship," *Journal of American Folklore* 99, no 391 (1986), 42-46.

⁸³ Kim Hyŏnchŏl, "Isip segi ch'ogi musok chosa ũi ũiui wa hangye yŏn'gu" Ayukai Fusanosin, Torii Ryūzō, Yi Nūnghwa rŭl chungsim ũro (A study of the limitation and significance of the research of shamanism in the twenty's century: focusing on Ayukai Fusanosin, Torii Ryūzō, and Yi Uūnghwa rŭl chungsim ũro," *Han'guk minsokhak* 42. (2005), 153-167.

⁸⁴ Sin, Ch'aeho, *Chosŏn Sanggosa* (History of Ancient Korea) (Seoul: Iljin sŏjŏk Press, 1998). Em, Henry. "Minjok as a Modern and Democratic Construct: Sin Ch'aeho's Historiography of Korea" in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, " ed., Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 336-62. Anti-colonial intellectuals embraced the western epistemological tradition in narrating nation; they rendered the German *Volk* concept to envision Korean identity through Korean history, culture and tradition. Andre Schmid and Henry Em asserted that Sin's historical writings had a tremendous impact in shaping of Korean nationalism.

⁸⁵ The Chosŏn Studies Movement transcended an ideologically divided Korean intellectual community. Scholars from "uncompromising" nationalists, such as Chŏng Inbo, An Chaehong (安在鴻, 1891-1965), Mun Ilp'yŏng (文一平, 188-1936), Son Chint'ae (孫晉泰, 1900-?), leftist scholars, such as Paek Namun, and cultural nationalists, such as Ch'oe Namsŏn were committed to fostering diverse knowledge of Korea against Japanese scholars' dominance over Korean studies and their colonialist representation of Korea.

mythology and shamanism, however, remained constant topics of discussion in their efforts to locate a unique Korean identity.

Ch'oe Nam-sŏn (崔南善, 1890-1957) pioneered a folkloristic oriented study of shamanism and Tan'gun mythology as a way to revitalize Korean culture. In Ch'oe's seminal work *Purham munha ron* (A treatise on Pälk culture, 不咸文化論), Ch'oe posited that inhabitants of the *Purham* cultural sphere—which extended from the Balkan peninsula through central Asia and Korea, and down to Japan—commonly worshiped the Sun god. Pointing to Tan'gun as the highest Sun god, he located Korea at the “center.”⁸⁶ His concept of *musok* created a counter hegemonic discourse against a set of Japanese theories that negated Korea's autonomous historical traits. At the same time, Ch'oe's acknowledgement of a cultural commonality between Korea and Japan had the ironic consequence of incorporating Korea into the Japanese colonial policy of *nissen dōsoron* (日朝同祖論, common ancestor origin of Korea and Japan), leading him to vigorously advocate the idea of East Asian co-spirituality from the 1930s.

In contrast to Ch'oe, Chŏng Inbo, (鄭寅普, 1893-?) maintained the anti-colonial historiography of Sin Ch'aeho and Pak Ŭnsik in representing an uncompromising nationalist camp. Chŏng rejected the Japanese scholars' view of Tan'gun as a mythical figure. He argued that Tan'gun was the title of an actual ruler.⁸⁷ In contrast, the leftist scholar Paek Namun argued that since the writings of Sin, Pak, and Ch'oe were imbedded in metaphysical idealism and mysticism, they could not overcome Japanese colonialist historiography. Another participant of

⁸⁶ Ch'oe, Namsŏn, *Purham munhwaron* (Treatise on Purham culture), ed. Chŏng Chaesŭng and Yi Chuhyŭn (Seoul: Uri yŏksa yŏn'gu chaedan, 2008).

⁸⁷ Chŏng Inbo, *Tamwŏn Chŏng Inbo chŏnjip* (The Complete works of Tamwŏn Chŏng Inbo), vol 4 of *Chosŏn sa yŏn'gu* (A study of Korean history) (Seoul: Yŏnsei University Press, 1983). Chŏng Inbo sought to advance the nationalist historiography of Sin and Pak in the 1930s. Chŏng emphasized the Korean spirit (*ŭl*) as a driving force of history that superseded the physical component of nation-state.

the CSM, the centrist Son Chin-t'ae (1900-?), also disapproved of treating Tan'gun as a historical figure. He criticized Ch'oe and other historians for honoring Tan'gun as the eponym of Korean *minjok*, which Son referred to as a Tan'gun movement (檀君運動).⁸⁸ Rather, Son argued that the Korean nation was formed through the migration and assimilation of multi-ethnic groups. Rather than simply treating Shamanism and peasant culture as representing the primordial essence of Korean folk culture, Son sought to develop *minsokhak* through various methods, including archaeology, linguistics, ethnographical analysis, and field work, and to build a more grounded understanding of nation and ethnicity.

The knowledge of Chosŏn *minsokhak* was constructed in a dialectical manner between Japanese colonialists and Korean scholars. The production of knowledge on Tan'gun and *musok* transgressed the binary of colonial dominance vs. colonial resistance. Yet, it also demonstrates how modern/colonial knowledge—folklore, anthropology, archaeology and etc.—reinforced the hierarchical concepts of race and nation. Japan's acquisition of knowledge of Korean folk culture constructed the image of an “uncivilized, irrational, superstitious” Korea; in turn, it assisted the systemization of colonial rule and policy.

⁸⁸ Nam Kūnu, “Son Chint'ae ui minjok muhwaron kwa mansŏn sagwan” (The theory of national culture and the Manchuria-Korea historical view in Son Chint'ae) in *Chosŏn minsokhak kwa singminjūjū* (Korean folklore and colonialism) (Seoul: Tongguk taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2008), 61-84.

New Beginning: Chosŏn Minsokhak as Marxist Science for the People

After WWII, the Cold War political climate configured an ideologically divided academic sphere in Korea. Within the politically divided sphere, “Chosŏn *minsokhak*” came to retain distinctive features in terms of its relations to other disciplines, scope of subjects, and institutional niche. South Korea’s decolonization process under U.S. hegemony resulted in maintaining the colonial academic tradition as South Korean scholars kept the identity of *minsokhak* as folklore. Folklore was mostly studied under the discipline of Korean literature, while the American academic tradition impacted the establishment of cultural anthropology as an independent discipline in South Korean academia.⁸⁹ With North Korea’s decolonization within the Soviet bloc, North Korea restructured its academic system to follow the Soviet model. *Minsokhak* gained an important academic niche as a sub-discipline in the field of the Science of History.

North Korean scholars regarded *minsokhak* as a key discipline in the decolonization of the knowledge of Korean history, culture and tradition. As in the Soviet Union, defining national characteristics through tangible and intangible national culture was considered crucial in advancing North Korea to the next stage of historical development, as well as rooting out colonial vestiges. The first task was to establish *minsokhak* as a Marxist science. However, North Korean scholars did not have a clear idea of what it meant to establish Chosŏn *minsokhak* as a Marxist science. Han Hŭngsu (*fl.* 1935-1952), first suggested a new vision of what should be Chosŏn *minsokhak* in terms of its disciplinary identity, role, and subjects of inquiry. Han, who had studied in Vienna and Prague, was one of the most renowned scholars of prehistory at that

⁸⁹ Chŏn Kyŏngsu, *Han’guk illyuhak paengnyŏn* (100 Years of Anthropology in Korea) (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1999), 162-173, 209-238.

time.⁹⁰ Departing from the *minsokhak* of the colonial period, he argued that *minsokhak* was a translation of the Russian term, *ethnografia* and that its scope includes “the study of the cultures of the peoples covering broad research topics from folk cultures (i.e. songs, shamanistic songs, oral traditions, and religions), linguistics, the origins of ethnicity, to socio-institutional relations.”⁹¹ Furthermore, he emphasized that *minsokhak* was not a study of a single ethnic culture but rather that of different ethnic groups. In order to avoid the conceptual confusion of the term *minsokhak*, he suggested using the original Russian term, “ethnography,” as an alternative.⁹²

In addition to his suggestion of redefining *minsokhak* from a Soviet academic tradition, he emphasized the role of Chosŏn *minsokhak* as one of serving the people. He explained that bourgeois *minsokhak* in western countries served to justify colonial expansion by rejecting universal historical materialism. On the other hand, he argued that socialist *minsokhak* as a historical science was to serve the people. He stated that “it (*minsokhak*) is not only to collect its research materials, but also to apply progressive national culture to people’s everyday lives.”⁹³ This implies that he considered application oriented Soviet folklore as part of a larger category of ethnography. It is also possible to conclude that Hwang defined *minsokhak* as ethnography rather

⁹⁰ Han Hŭngsu was born in Kaesŏng in 1909. He graduated from the University of Fribourg in Prague in 1940. He was not trained as an archaeologist or ethnographer initially. After his graduation, he was working at the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna from 1941-42 and then started teaching at a school in Prague. His outstanding work in Vienna and Czechoslovakia provided him with the means to gain Kim Il Sung’s personal endorsement, Han was appointed as Chair of the Committee of Preservation of Material Cultures after he entered North Korea in 1948. Scholars speculated about his death during the Korean War but the exact year or cause of his death is unknown. See Han Ch’anggyun, “To Yuho wa Han Hŭngsu: Kŭdŭl ūi haengjŏk kwa haksul nonjaeng” (To Yuho and Han Hŭngsu: their whereabouts and scholarly debates), *Han’guk kogo hakpo* 87, no. 6 (2013).

⁹¹ Han Hŭngsu, “Chosŏn minsokhak ūi surip ūl wihayŏ” (For the establishment of Chosŏn ethnography), *Munhwa yumul* 2 (1950), 1-3, 14-18.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 3, 14-18.

than folklore or ethnology in order to embody the semiotics of anti-racism and anti-colonialism in Soviet ethnography. Using the term ethnography, he aimed to reinforce Stalin's notion of nation—as “historically constituted and multi-original”—as the basic principle of Chosŏn *minsokhak*.

The Structure of the Institution of Archeology and Ethnography

As mentioned in the previous section on Soviet ethnography and folklore, Soviet Marxist scholars employed a certain theory of ethnography in a specific period of time to align the discipline with the state's political policy. But the Soviet theories and methodologies that were practiced from the 1920s to 1940s, including theories that did not quite fit into the Marxist universal framework, also flowed into North Korean academia after liberation. *Munhwa yumul* (Cultural relics 1949-1950) is the first *minsokhak* journal that shows how North Korean scholars from different fields adopted the Soviet tradition in studying their own national characteristics. The articles in *Munhwa yumul* show how North Korean scholars contemplated ways to connect their disciplines and subjects of study to *minsokhak*. For instance, Hong Kimun (洪起文, 1903~1992), a respected linguist, tried to apply N. Marr's theory to the development of Korean dialects.⁹⁴ Also, Yi Yŏsŏng (1901-?, fl. 1922-1965), a prominent art historian, attempted to interpret Korean arts from the Three Kingdoms period through the lens of historical

⁹⁴ Hong Kimun was born in Seoul and came from an illustrious *noron* (老論, old doctrine faction) family lineage. He was the first son of Hong Myŏnghŭi (洪命憲, 1888-1968), an impeccable nationalist, who wrote *Im Kkŏkchŏng*, one of most beloved novels in the colonial period. Hong Myŏnghŭi remained in the North after he participated at a North and South joint meeting in 1948 to prevent a permanent national division. His family also crossed the 38th parallel. Kim Il Sung's respect for Hong Myŏnghŭi has been well-documented. Hong Kimun taught at Kim Il Sung University and was a leader in North Korea academia until the late 1980s. His sons are also active in North Korea's political and cultural fields.

materialism.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, the journal was discontinued after two issues due to the outbreak of the Korean War. But it seems that North Korean scholars continued to conduct research and publish individual works during the war since Kim Ilch'ul's *Chosŏn ui min'gan orak* (The people's entertainment in Korea), a compilation of folk materials, was published in 1954.

The year 1957 is critical for the development of *minsokhak*. The formal Institute of Material Culture was restructured as the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography (Kogohak mit minsokhak yŏn'guso, abb. IAE). The IAE became an independent research center directly under the Academy of Sciences (科學院, Kwahagwŏn), which is North Korea's highest academic institute. The establishment of IAE opened North Korean scholars' full potential to carry out large scale research. Most leading members in the IAE were renowned colonial-era intellectuals. To Yuho (都有浩, fl. 1935-1964)⁹⁶ served as Chair of the IAE. The IAE's basic structure and



Image 1.1: Cover page of *Munhwa yumul* (Cultural relics 1949-1950)

⁹⁵ Yi Yŏsŏng is a remarkable socialist activist, historian, and left-centric nationalist. Yi went to the North after Yŏ Unhyŏng's assassination in 1948. He taught at Kim Il Sung University but his name disappeared after the purge of the Yanan faction in 1958. His younger brother, Yi K'aedae, the famous oil painter, also went to the North during the Korean War.

⁹⁶ To Yuho was born in Hamhŭng. He majored in Chinese studies at Yenching University in Beijing followed by Chinese studies and sociology at the University of Frankfurt in German and University of Vienna in Austria. After obtaining his doctorate from University of Vienna in Austria, he researched prehistoric archaeology and Ethnology studies at the Institute of Prehistory and Early History at the University of Vienna. He worked closely with the Vienna school of anthropology. He came back to Seoul in 1939 and then left for Japan where he translated archeological works into Japanese. At the time of liberation and shortly after he taught at Kyŏngsŏng University (Keijo Imperial University), he went to North Korea in 1946. He became a professor at Kim Il Sung University.

main participants were as follows:⁹⁷

The Center for Archeology: To Yuho (*fl.* 1935-1964), Hwang Kidök (*fl.* 1957-1990), Chŏn Chunong (*fl.* 1957-1967), Chŏng Paegun (*fl.* 1957-1967), Ch'ae Hŭiguk (*fl.* 1957-1988)

Center for Ethnography: Hwang Ch'ölsan (*fl.* 1945-1967), Kim Ilch'ul (*fl.* 1945-1960), Chŏn Changsök (*fl.* 1957-1967), Kim Sinsuk (1927-1986), Ch'oe Wŏnhŭi (*fl.* 1957-1970s), Hong Hŭiyu (*fl.* 1945-1986)

Center for Art History: Yi Yösŏng (1901-?, *fl.* 1922-1965), Kim Yongjun (1904-1967), Pak Hwangsik (*fl.* 1957-1966)

These scholars represented the first generation of scholars to lead the IAE; some of them worked there continuously through the 1980s. Others, including To Yuho and Hwang Ch'ölsan, disappeared after the mid-1960s. The IAE organization also demonstrates how individual scholars had personal influence over the state policy making process. The outstanding scholarship of Yi Yösŏng and Kim Yongjun was able to keep art history independent, whereas the field of music was absorbed into ethnography due to its lack of influential scholars. The later loss of Yi and Kim, however, significantly weakened the field of art critics and art history from the mid-1960s and the Center for Art history was dissolved dissolved when IAE was reorganized in 1964.

Munhwa yusan (Cultural legacies, 1957-1962) and *Kogo minjok* (Archaeology and ethnography, 1963-1967) provided a discursive sphere in which North Korean scholars could present their research and discuss their methodologies in a lively fashion. A multi-disciplinary and collaborative work between the institutions took place to define the characteristics of Chosŏn

⁹⁷ These scholars' dates of birth and deaths are not well documented. My dating of their "flourishing" period is based on the years of their most prominent publications. Even though they stopped publishing, that does not mean that they were purged or dead. For example, Chu Kanghyŏn found that Ch'oe Wŏnhŭi was working as an assistant professor at the Academy of Science in the 1970s although her work did not appear in periodicals. So it might be possible that some of them were working in related fields or were administrators.

minjok from the past to the present. Scholars at IAE also published their works in other journals, such as *Ryōksa kwahak* (Historical science) or *Chosŏn ōmun* (Korean language). The remaining sections of this chapter will demonstrate the existence of an autonomous scholarly sphere in North Korean academia.

The Intimate Partnership: Archaeology and Minsokhak Decolonizing the Prehistory of Korea

As the title “Institution of Archaeology and Ethnography” indicates, archeology is inseparably interconnected to ethnography. To Yuho repeatedly emphasized the multi-disciplinary effort at the IAE. In an editorial within *Munhwa yusan*’s inaugural issue, To Yuho stated “the colonialist account of Korean prehistory must be removed to further carry out the establishment of Chosŏn *minsokhak*.”⁹⁸ Archeological knowledge was required to rectify Japanese imperial scholars’ periodization of Korea, which provided the foundation for Chosŏn *minsokhak*.

During the colonial period, archaeology was mostly dominated by Japanese scholars such as Hamada Kōsaku (濱田耕作), Torii Ryuzō, (鳥居龍藏), and Fujita Ryusaku (藤田亮策, 1892~1960). These scholars accentuated the aberrational development of Korean history, which was considered to have started from the Neolithic period, without Paleolithic, Eneolithic (金石併用期) or Bronze periods, then to have acquired bronze and iron culture from China in the Three Kingdoms period (1st century B.C.E.—7th century C.E.) on the basis of the lack of

⁹⁸ To Yuho, “*minjok munhwa yusan ūi kyesŭng palchŏn kwa kogohak mit minsokhak yŏn’guso ūi tangmyŏn kwaŏp*” (The development and succession of national culture and relics and task of Institute of Archeology and Ethnography), *Munhwa yusan* 1 (1957), 6.

Paleolithic and Bronze archeological artifacts⁹⁹. They also highlighted external influences in Korean historical development. For instance, “advanced culture,” such as Neolithic technology and bronze and iron, was consistently understood to have been imported from China. Their archeological knowledge was incorporated into the colonial rhetoric of *Mansōnsa* (滿鮮史, *Mansenshi*, inseparable Manchurian-Korean history), stagnation and heteronomy, which underlined Korea’s incapacity to advance socially, economically, or technologically.

North Korea’s profound efforts to rectify the colonial distortion of Korean history included a series of laws to preserve national culture in the period immediately following the liberation. After the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 1948, the North Korean government legislated a policy for the preservation and management of material culture and the establishment of a committee to initiate a range of excavation projects.

¹⁰⁰ North Korean archaeologists successfully evacuated numerous pre-historic sites. They include the first discovery of the Bronze period and Paleolithic period artifacts at Chit’amri of the southern Hwanghae Province in 1954 and Kulp’ori of the northern Hamgyōng Province in 1963, respectively.¹⁰¹ These archaeological sites provided material evidence for North Korean scholars to debunk the colonial myths of Korean prehistory as well as to reclaim its “proper” course of historical development that was parallel with world history.

⁹⁹ To Yuho argued that Eneolithic originally meant “Copper Age”—a transition period when stone and bronze were simultaneous used but Japanese scholars used the term to describe the mixed usage of stone, bronze, and iron tools in Korea’s prehistoric period. To Yuho, *Chosōn wōnshi kogohak (Prehistoric archaeology in Korea)* (P’yōngyang: Kwahagwōn p’ulp’ansa, 1960), 96-97.

¹⁰⁰ *Munhwa yumul (Cultural relics)* (P’yongyang: the Chosōn committee of the preservation and management of material culture and relics) 2 (1950). The full text of the 1948 regulation is written in the second and third page before the contents.

¹⁰¹ To Yuho and Hwang Kidōk, “Chit’apri yujōk palgul chunggan pogo” (An interim report on Chit’apri artifacts), *Munhwa yusan* 6 (1957), 20-37 and Kogo minsok p’yōnjipbu, “Hamgyōng pukto Ongigun Kulp’ori Sōp’ohangdong esō kusōkki sidae yujōk palgyōn” (Discovery of the relics of the Paleolithic period at Kulp’o village), *Kogo minsok* 2 (1963), 54.

After the discovery of Paleolithic and Bronze artifacts, these North Korean scholars needed to provide an appropriate interpretation of the relationship between the artifacts and the cultural strata in the given archaeological sites that was consistent with Marxist historicism. Among the Soviet theories that were introduced in North Korea, North Korean scholars favored Marr's theory of stages because it took an internationalist stance. But, the North Korean archeology community was not unanimous in adopting Marrism. They had discussions about finding the most appropriate method to fit the Korean prehistoric period into Marxist historical materialism since liberation. Heated theoretical debates on prehistoric society between Han Hŭngsu and To Yuho demonstrate the dynamic nature of North Korean academia in the early years. Following Marrist internationalist theory, Han harshly inveighed against diffusion/migration theories because these theories fundamentally equated colonialist rhetoric with cultural superiority.¹⁰² The particular targets of Han were the Austro-German anthropologists (also called the Vienna School of Anthropology) where To Yuho was trained in the 1930s. This school developed the concept of the cultural circle (*Kulturkreise*) that maintains the spread of culture from great cultural areas throughout the globe. This concept buttressed Nazi racial ideology. To Yuho responded to Han that he himself was critical of reactionary concepts within the cultural circle. Nonetheless, he stressed that diffusion and migration theories could help solve basic issues in archeology and *minsokhak*.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, Han's death ended their debate. Afterwards, To Yuho became the leader of the IAE.

To Yuho's leadership created an inclusive academic environment for North Korean

¹⁰² Han Hŭngsu, "Chosŏn minsokhak ūi surip ūl wihayŏ," (For the establishment of Chosŏn ethnography), *Munhwa yumul* 2 (1950), 4-13 and "Chosŏn wŏnsi munhwa e kwannan koch'al (A study of the culture of Korea prehistory), *Ryŏksa che munche* 15 (1950), 4-55.

¹⁰³ To Yuho, "Sŏnsahak ūi yumulsakwan jŏk koch'al ūl uihan myŏtkae ūi kibon munje-sang" (Several basic problems in the study of prehistory in the Marxist material historicism-1), *Ryŏksa che munche* 15 (1950), 56-103.

archeologists to explore various archeological methodologies and theories that would fit into Marxism-Leninism. By emphasizing that Soviet scholars have reconsidered theories of diffusionism/migration in their archaeological study, To Yuho stated that

Our methodology is of course dialectical and historical materialist in the Marxist-Leninist tradition. But, Marxism-Leninism provides only an abstract theory when a concrete methodology is needed for science. Therefore, we must have free and sincere discussions to establish a correct methodology (for Chosŏn *minjokhak*) without dismissing anyone's opinion as reactionary.¹⁰⁴

In fact, Marr's theory of stages—which argues that each region has different archeological sequences from the earliest time to the present—best explains Marxist historical materialism. Yet, North Korean archeologists often faced challenges in applying Marr's theory of stages when they observed inconsistencies between the techniques used to produce artifacts and the geological structure and cultural layers of an archeological site. These concerns were largely shared by Soviet archeologists in the 1920s and 1930s and formed one of the reasons that Soviet scholars revived the obscure diffusionism/migration theory in the 1940s when it was rejected by western anthropologists.¹⁰⁵

To Yuho and his colleagues at the IAE advanced North Korean archeology while partially employing diffusion/migration theory. In fact, To Yuho's study of prehistoric Korea dominated the North Korean archaeological community until he lost his position at the IAE in the mid-1960s. Most scholars of the North Korean field have characterized the 1950s to 1960 as a period of the "strict application of Marxism-Leninism." As we can see, this characterization needs reevaluation. They argue that To Yuho and his colleagues were purged because their

¹⁰⁴ To Yuho, "Minjok munhwa yusan ūi kyesŭng palchŏn kwa kogohak mit minsokhak yŏn'guso ūi tangmyŏn kwaŏp" (The development and succession of national culture and relics and task of Institute of Archeology and Ethnography), *Munhwa yusan* 1 (1957), 6.

¹⁰⁵ Leo S. Klejn and others, "Attainments and Problems of Soviet Archaeology," *World Archaeology* 13, no. 3. (1982), 275-277.

engagement diffusion theory was inconsistent with the official doctrine of *chuch'e*. However, To's theoretical framework—diffusionism and cultural origin—remerged in 1990 when members of the North Korean archaeological community claimed the existence the “Taedong River Cultural Area.” This theory argues that P'yŏngyang was a great cultural area that spread advanced culture to the Korean peninsula and to areas as far as northern Manchuria. Thus, if To Yuho was purged (as most scholars speculate), it was not because he utilized diffusionism or migration theory, but rather, because he persisted in considering China or other foreign places as the cultural origin of North Korea, which went against the direction of decolonization.

It also seems that To Yuho kept his faith in his own scholarship. He was unapologetic in his idea that lithic cutting technology and bronze culture were not autochthonous but foreign, having originated from northern China. Despite his efforts to deconstruct Japanese colonialist archeological knowledge of Korea, his studies, based on the Western epistemological traditions, ended up supporting the logic of Japanese colonialist archeologists. His China-centered cultural origin model of North Korea also defied the North Korean postcolonial rationale, which aimed to remove colonial knowledge from Korea. Similarly, being an “imperialist academic subject,” cultural anthropology could not be rooted in North Korean academia, whereas the Soviet Union and Socialist China had lifted the ban on cultural/social anthropology in 1950s and 1979 respectively from being an “imperialist discipline” in previous years.¹⁰⁶ All these events were an indication of how the rhetoric of decolonization was shaping North Korean postcolonial scholarship and identity.

¹⁰⁶ Arif Dirlik, Guannan Li, and Hsiao-pei Yen, eds, *Sociological and Anthropology in Twentieth- Century China: Between Universalism and Indigenism* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2012). In socialist countries, physical anthropology was widely studied and when they refer to “anthropology,” it usually means “physical anthropology”.

Ethnographical Research: The Socio-Economic Formation of Chosŏn Minjok

The historical formation of the Chosŏn *minjok* is another fundamental subject by which we can understand North Korea's postcolonial rationale. North Korean scholars had to demystify the Japanese imperialist theory of *nissen dōsorōn*. In addition, the racist notion of pure bloodlines, *minjok*, used to express the idea of racial purity in the colonial period, had to be also eradicated. In turn, the Chosŏn *minjok* had to be redefined to align with the Stalinist notion of nation. As Stalin writes, "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."¹⁰⁷

Hwang Ch'ōlsan (*fl.* 1945-1965),¹⁰⁸ one of the leading ethnographers in North Korea from the 1950s to 1960s, pioneered the study on the formation of the Chosŏn *minsok*. From 1956 to 1958, Hwang conducted extensive ethnographic field research on *chaegasŭng* (在家僧, secular Buddhist monk) villages, which were collective communities that existed only in the mountains of northern Hamgyŏng Province.¹⁰⁹ In these villages, all the men inherited the social status of a Buddhist monk. Outside men who married the women of the villages also received the same status. Despite taking on the title of Buddhist monks, they led a secular lifestyle: they had families, practiced farming, ate meat, and paid taxes.

Based on ethnographic research of the 733 village households (each, an average of 5.35

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Stalin, *J.V. Stalin Works, 1907-1913* (London: Red Star Press, 1975), 302-3.

¹⁰⁸ The only facts known about Hwang is that he was born in Hamgyŏng province and he was a faculty member at Ch'ŏngjin Kyowŏn University. He served first Chair of the Center for Ethnography. However, his name no longer appeared after 1965.

¹⁰⁹ Hwang Ch'ōlsan, *Hamgyŏng pukto pukpu sanggan purak chaegasŭng purak ūi munhwa wa p'ungsŭp* (The culture and custom of secular Buddhist monk villages in North Hamgyŏng Province) (P'yŏngyang: Kwahagwŏn ch'ulp'ansa, 1960). He referenced *chaegasŭng* studies done by Korean and Japanese scholars, such as Akiba Takashi (秋葉隆), Imanish Ryu (今西龍), Song Sŏkha, and Yi Ŭnghwa. While critically examining their works. He rejected their findings as being drawn from a colonialist perspective.)

members using comparative philology, empirical analysis of historical texts and archeology, he wrote an ethnography of the *chaegasŭng* village. The following is a short description of Hwang's study of *chaegasŭng*'s history, which the villagers traced back to the Jurchen, the native inhabitants of the Tuman River area. When the Northern regions were incorporated into Chosŏn territory from the late 14th century, some Jurchens incorporated (so called *hyangwain*, 向化人) into the mainstream of Chosŏn society but those Jurchen who continuously lived in the areas could maintain their Jurchen identity until the 17th century. However, after the establishment of Qing China, the Qing government demanded the repatriation of Jurchen from Chosŏn territory. Many Jurchen became Buddhist monks and hid in remote places to avoid repatriation. The populace's contempt and disdain for Buddhist monks, who were despised in the Neo-Confucian society of Chosŏn, made them reclusive and allowed them to preserve their unique culture, customs, and religious practices.

The object of Hwang's study was to demonstrate how the Chosŏn *minjok* was historically constituted; the ethnic formation of the Chosŏn *minjok* paralleled the universal law of Marxism-Leninism. He concluded that "it [Chosŏn *minjok*] had been emerging from close interrelations among various ethnic groups since the prehistoric time and up to the Middle Ages (15-17th) by incorporating Jurchens."¹¹⁰ Hwang followed the basic principle of socio-economic formation based on Marrism, which advocates that a nation emerges from the close interrelations of various populations in the deep past. Similar to North Korean archeologists at the IAE, he also incorporated migration theory into historical materialism to bring a theoretical coherence to his study. He found that the Jurchen custom of wearing dog fur had also existed on Cheju Island,

¹¹⁰ Ibid.,152. In Duncan's pioneering article, "*Hyanghwain: Migration and Assimilation in Chosŏn Korea*," he deconstructs the exclusive notion of *minjok* that developed in East Asia through tracing *Hyanghwain* in the Chosŏn period. Duncan highlights not only the Jurchens but also the Japanese and Chinese in the formation of the Korean nation. In contrast, North Korean scholars tended to focus on the integration of Northern tribes into the Korean Peninsula.

which is located in the southern coast of South Korea. He paid special attention to how the Jurchen's wearing of dog fur clothing spread widely to Hamgyŏng Province and Cheju Island up until the 19th century. Through an empirical analysis of historical texts, he corroborated that the custom of wearing dog fur came from northern China but that the Jurchens were responsible for spreading it to the Hamgyŏng province while Mongols did the same to Cheju Island. Hwang postulated that the custom spread when Mongolians started residing on Cheju to manage horse ranches after the Mongol invasion of Koryŏ in the late 13th century. But, he reasoned that the culture of wearing dog fur was not a simple process of cultural diffusion: economic conditions that reinforced this custom in these two regions were poor soil conditions and scarce cotton.¹¹¹ Furthermore, he explained that the influx of cheap Japanese cotton caused the extinction of the custom in the late 19th century.¹¹² Thus, Hwang implied that the changes in the economic conditions were the driving force of culture reinforcing the coherence of Marx's theory of materialism.

The inquiry of the origin of Chosŏn *minjok* was not only an academic concern but also a legal concern. The term *minjok* and citizen must be distinguished in legal terms. Hwang's study demonstrates how North Koreans closely followed the Soviet nationality policy. The Soviet Constitution (1936) indicates that it protected "the rights of the citizens of the USSR, regardless of their race or previous nationality, in all aspects of life."¹¹³ The construction of the Soviet multi-ethnic state was based on legality, not on the concept of ethnic homogeneity so that a law-based citizenship transcended racism. Yet, in the creation of an ethno-territorial unit, new ethnic

¹¹¹ Hwang Ch'ŏlsan, "Kup'i ūi kwanhan koch'al" (Examination on dog furs) *Munhwa yusan* 5 (1957), 50-58.

¹¹² Hwang does not consider the dog fur custom "primitive." Rather, he thought that dog fur should be utilized for workers in fishery and forestry industry since dog fur was best for wicking away moisture and the cold.

¹¹³ The Politics Forum, "The 1936 Constitution of the USSR," n.d., <<http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/18cons01.html>> (12 December 2012).

groups were artificially formed or some were absorbed into others ethnic groups by the state. Therefore, ethnic identities and boundaries grew sharply in the Soviet Union. Hwang's study of *chaegasŭng* discloses a similar phenomenon in the artificial creation of ethnic identity. He unconsciously imposed the identity of the Jurchens on the descendants of *chaegasŭng* villagers who would presumably not have possessed a Jurchen consciousness at the time. But it was clear that Hwang's intention was to prove that *chaegasŭng* villagers—the Jurchen's descendants—deserved equal rights with Korean citizens. The North Korean Constitution of 1948 clearly indicated the existence of national minorities as it proclaimed “The national minorities are citizens of the DPRK and are guaranteed equal rights with Korean citizens. They have freedom to use their mother tongues and develop their own national culture.”¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the North Korean survey of foreign residency in 1948 demonstrates that there were hardly any ethnic minorities except a small number of Chinese Koreans and Japanese who remained in Korea after liberation. Nonetheless, Hwang's *chaegasŭng* study indicates a strong will on the part of North Korea to demonstrated the status of the Chosŏn nation as an advanced socialist nation by advocating the concepts of the nation, the citizen (公民 *kongmin*), and the constitutional rights of ethnic-minorities.¹¹⁵

Hwang's conceptualization of Chosŏn *minjok* as being derived from a multi-ethnic origin constructed a positive representation of *chaegasŭng* to create a sense of class solidarity regardless of ethnic origin. He stated “these *chaegasŭng* are not typical feudalistic Buddhist monks, who exploited the *inmin* while serving the oppressor. They were oppressed and exploited

¹¹⁴ Chosŏn minjujuŭi inmin konghwaguk naegak pŏpkyu chŏngni wiwŏnhoe (An arranging Committee of the Government Legislation), *Chosŏn inmin minjujuŭi inmin konghwaguk pŏpkyujip* (A Collection of the Legislation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (P'yŏngyang: Kungnip ch'ulp'ansa, 1961), 8-9.

¹¹⁵ Kim Sŏngbo, “*Nam-Puk kukka surip si inmin kwa kungmin kaenyŏm ŭi pyŏnhwa*” (The conceptual divergence between people and citizen during the state formation of two Koreas), *Han'guksa yŏn'gu* 144 (2009): 69-95.

workers (勤勞人民, *kŭllo inmin*).”¹¹⁶ He recommended that the progressive traits of *chaegasŭng* communities, such as unity and egalitarian family relations untainted by Neo-Confucianism, should be preserved and practiced in the creation of a new socialist culture. Thus, despite their backward elements, such as superstition, exclusiveness, and Buddhist customs, he was confident that the “state sponsored evolutionism” of the North Korean state could eradicate their backwardness and transform the *chaegasŭng* villagers into socialist *inmin*.¹¹⁷

Hwang’s article also makes it clear that the concept of *minjok* was very different in the 1950s and the 1960s than it was in the 1980s. Hwang’s conception of *tanil minjok* was not based on race or blood but a historically formed political community. Since the 1980s, however, the production of knowledge in *minsokhak* has focused on proving the Chosŏn *minjok* to be a biologically homogeneous political entity that has existed from antiquity; North Korean *minsokhak* has shifted from a multi-ethnic centered ethnography to a national ethnography. However, I emphasize that this change did not happen overnight. The concept of *Chosŏn minjok* as a homogeneous political entity, which was created during the specific period of colonial Korea’s nation building process, remained in North Korean academia. The next section will provide the epistemological lineage of this concept of Chosŏn *minjok* from the late 19th century to the 1960s in North Korean academia.

¹¹⁶ Hwang Ch’ŏlsan, *Hamgyŏng pukto pukpu sanggan purak chaegasŭng purak ūi munhwa wa p’ungsŭp* (The culture and custom of secular Buddhist monk villages in North Hamgyŏng Province) (P’yŏngyang: Kwahagwŏn ch’ulp’ansa, 1960), 146.

¹¹⁷ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). Hirsch argued that Soviet leaders promoted “state-sponsored evolutionism” in order to foster each nation’s development into a socialist nation economically and culturally, and to bring forth the final stage of communism while operating in the world system led by capitalism.

Minsokhak in Historical Science Ethnogenesis of Chosŏn Minjok: Question of Tan'gun Mythology

From the 1960s, several articles on Old Chosŏn and Tan'gun appeared in *Munhwa yusan*. From 1954, debates raged on Korea's historical stages from slave society and feudalism. A series of discussions on periodization was later taken up by Yŏksa yŏn'guso (Institute of Historical Research) in October 1956. From 1961 to 1963, there were 10 academic forums to settle the issue on Old Chosŏn in terms of historical stage, ethnic composition, the identity of Tan'gun, and its territory. The members of IAE, Hwang Ch'ŏlsan, To Yuho and Chŏng Ch'anyŏng, participated in these discussions. Since the liberation, North Korea's commitment to Marxism-Leninism had led to the decline of the Tan'gun myth in the discussions among North Korean scholars. Nevertheless, in these discussions, the discourse of Tan'gun mythology rose again.

The 1956 official history, *Chosŏn t'ongsa*, stated that Tan'gun and other founding myths are part of the ideology of the ruling class to justify their dominance over the oppressed.¹¹⁸ This interpretation is based on the studies of Paek Namun(白南雲, 1895-1979) on the Tan'gun myth in the 1930s. Adopting Engel's concept of mythology, Paek asserted that the Tan'gun myth was proof of Old Chosŏn's departure from a primitive mode of production to the emergence of a slave state. He rejected Tan'gun as a historical figure.¹¹⁹ Paek's classical studies became the target of scholars in the following discussions.

¹¹⁸ Yŏksa yŏn'guso, *Chosŏn t'ongsa* (The complete history of Korea) (Kwahagwŏn ch'ulp'ansa: P'yŏngyang, 1956), 20-21.

¹¹⁹ Paek Namun, *Chosŏn sahoe kyŏngjesa* (Social and Economic History of Korea), tans. Pak Kwangsun (Seoul: Pŏmusa, 1989). Paek Namun was one of the best known Marxist historians since the colonial period. He was born in Koch'ang of the Chŏlla Province. He graduated from the Tokyo College of Commerce (later Hitotsubashi University) and taught at Yonsei University. Like Hong Myŏnghŭi, Paek remained in the North after his participation in a North and South Korean joint meeting in 1948. He was one of the most politically and academically successful "inner-migrant" intellectuals. He served as Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Chair of

In general, the question of methodology remains one of the main subjects in the folklore tradition (especially in *Volkskunde*). However, the discussions show that the topic of mythology studies fell under the field of classical literature/Korean literature. Scholars at the Center for Classical Literature (Kojŏn yŏn'guso) were responsible for a great deal of the advancement in Tan'gun studies.

Ri Sangho, a respected philologist of classical texts, disapproved of Paek's Tan'gun study.¹²⁰ Instead, citing references from the old texts, which supported the authenticity of the Tan'gun myth, he firmly asserted that Tan'gun represents a national foundation myth. He traced the origin of Tan'gun from the phrase 神壇樹 (*sindansu*), which commonly appeared in historical texts on Tan'gun.¹²¹ He found that the linguistic roots of the Chinese character 檀 (*tan*) of Tan'gun (檀君) meant “*pakt'al*/bright” and mountain (T'aebaek, 太白). Also, using Engel's and Morgan's theory on the emergence of tribe names, he concluded that the tribal name for Chosŏn was *pakt'al* and that Tan'gun meant the king of the tribes of *pakt'al*.¹²² Thus, he emphasized that the overall historical questions of Old Chosŏn must start from the basis of the study of Tan'gun mythology.¹²³

the Academy of Sciences and Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly. See, Pang Kie-chung, *Han'guk kŏn-hyŏndaek sasangsa yŏn'gu: 1930, 40-nyŏndaek Paek Namun ūi hangmun kwa chŏngch'i kyŏngje sasang* (A Study on modern and contemporary Korean thought: Paek Namun's works and political economic thought in the 1930s and 1940s) (Seoul: Yŏksa Pip'yŏngsa, 1992).

¹²⁰ Ri Sangho, “Tanggungo” (The examination of Tangun) in *Ko Chosŏn e kwanhan t'oron ronmunjip* (Collected studies of the debates on Old Chosŏn) (P'yŏngyang: kwahagwŏn ch'ulp'ansa, 1963), 173-287. Ri translated Pak Chiwŏn(1737-1805)'s *Yŏlha ilgi* (熱河日記, Travel diaries to Yŏlha) in 1955-1957 and also participated in translating the Veritable Records of the Chosŏn dynasty.

¹²¹ In a narrow sense, it means “Hwanung (神), the son of the Lord of Heaven and father of Tan'gun, descended from heaven to the top of a tree (壇樹) in Taebaek Mountain.” But, the phrase has been interpreted as “the sacred place’ where Tan'gun performed rituals as a ruler.

¹²² *Ibid*, 254-261.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 287.

In addition, Hong Kimun published *Chosŏn sinhwa yŏn'gu* (Studies of Korean Mythology) in 1964.¹²⁴ He compiled both official and unofficial versions on Tan'gun mythology, as well as secondary sources written from the Chosŏn period to the colonial period. He strongly rebuked Japanese colonial distortions of the Tan'gun myth, such as Shiratori Kurakichi's (白鳥庫吉, 1865-1942) theory that rejected the authenticity of Tan'gun.¹²⁵ Categorizing myth into three types, Hong distinguished the Tan'gun myth from other ordinary myths as a national founding myth. He also placed much value on traditional scholars' evaluation of Tan'gun as a cultural hero as well as praising anti-colonial scholars' studies of Tan'gun within the national liberation struggle. Hong's work on Tan'gun showed the intellectual influence of scholars ranging from "progressive" and reform-oriented Confucian scholars (commonly known as *sirhak*, 實學) to scholars of the Chosŏn Studies Movement (國學/朝鮮學)—Sin Ch'aeho, Pak Ŭnsik and Chŏng Inbo.

Ri Chirin's (b. 1916. fl. 1942-1970s) work on Old Chosŏn also reflected the influence of reform-oriented Confucian scholars, such as Sin Ch'aeho and Chŏng Inbo. Ri was perhaps the most influential scholar of Old Chosŏn in the 1960s and 1970s.¹²⁶ He claimed to have adopted Prk's historical materialism, but he rejected his argument on mythology as a socio-political

¹²⁴ Kang Yŏngju, *Pyŏngjo Hong Myŏnghŭi Yŏ'ngu* (A study of Pyŏngjo Hong Myŏnghŭi) (Seoul: Ch'angjak kwa Pip'yŏngsa, 1999). 92-93. Hong's younger brother got married to Chŏng Inbo's daughter. Hong expressed his gratitude for Chŏng Inbo teaching him Chinese classics through a short essay in *Samch'ŏlli* in 1938.

¹²⁵ Chŏn Sŏnggon, "Ch'oe Namsŏn minsok palgyŏn ūi nonri wa pop'yŏnsŏng" (Logic and universality in Ch'oe Namsŏn's discovery of minsok), in *Ch'oe Namsŏn tasi ilkki: Ch'oe Namsŏn ūiro parabon kŭndae Han'gukhak ūi t'ansaeng* (Ch'oe Namsŏn revisited: the birth of modern Korean studies through Ch'oe Namsŏn).

¹²⁶ Ri Chirin's work impacted South Korean scholarship on Old Chosŏn in the 1980s. In particular, he made a sophisticated hypothesis of the territory of Old Chosŏn. The ancient river, P'aesu (溟洙) was known as the boundary between Old Chosŏn and Han China. North Korean scholars argued about whether P'aesu meant Yalu River, Ch'ongch'on River near P'yŏngyang, or Daling River in Liaoning province at the present time. Ri argued that P'aesu was Daling River in the Liaoning Province of Northeast China. He thus advanced the idea that the territory of Old Chosŏn covered the northern part of the Korean peninsula to northeast China. Particularly, the South Korean historian Yun Naehyŏn's work on Old Chosŏn was heavily reliant on Ri Chirin's study. See Yi Hyŏnggu, "Ri Chirin kwa Yun Naehyŏn ūi 'Ko Chosŏn yŏn'gu' pigyo *Yŏksa hakpo* 146 (1995).

allegory of the emergence of class and adopted Chŏng Inbo's interpretation of myths instead. He argued that the Tan'gun myth represented both historical truth and a myth. Thus, even though he admitted that even though the Tan'gun myth was a social allegory, there was still some historical truth behind it. After critically examining the scholarly work on Tan'gun from the Chosŏn period to the colonial period, he elucidated his own theory of the three phrases of Tan'gun as 1) a representation of a clan totem, 2) a military chieftain, and 3) the King of Old Chosŏn.¹²⁷ His analysis of Tan'gun thus acknowledged an anticolonial intellectual interpretation of Tan'gun as well as the acceptance of a Marxist universalist framework.

Different from historians and philologists, Hwang Ch'ŏlsan's interest in Tan'gun and Old Chosŏn was to define their territorial boundaries in order to trace the origin of Chosŏn *minjok*. Hwang argued that the *tongi* (東夷, Eastern barbarians; Ch. *dongyi*) was not the origin of Chosŏn *minjok* but rather that the origin was to be found in the Ye-Maek (濊貊), identified as the original tribes of Old Chosŏn, Puyŏ, Koguryŏ and Okchŏ. He thus utilized the Tan'gun mythology only to show Ye-Maek as an original tribe of Old Chosŏn, providing corroboration of the belief that the same bear and tiger totem had existed in Ye-Maek and Old Chosŏn through the content of the Tan'gun mythology.¹²⁸

Until the 1960s, Paek Namun's interpretation of Tan'gun was orthodox in North Korean academia. However, anti-colonial nationalist studies of Tan'gun did not become completely discarded. These discussions continued though they did not quite fit the framework of historical materialism. North Korean scholars' Tan'gun studies from the late 1950s to the early 1960s

¹²⁷ Ri Chirin, *Ko Chosŏn e yuch'i e tahayŏ* (On the location of Old Chosŏn) in *Ko Chosŏn e kwanhan t'oron ronmunjip* (Collected studies of the debates on Old Chosŏn) (P'yŏngyang: Kwahagwŏn ch'ulp'ansa, 1963).

¹²⁸ Hwang Ch'ŏlsan, *Ko Chosŏne yuch'i wa chongjok e tahayŏ* (On the location and ethnicity of Old Chosŏn) in *Ko Chosŏn e kwanhan t'oron ronmunjip* (Collected studies of the debates on Old Chosŏn) (P'yŏngyang: Kwahagwŏn ch'ulp'ansa, 1963), 133-134.

demonstrated an intellectual lineage to reform-oriented Confucian scholars and anti-colonial nationalist scholars. This suggests how North Korean scholars' postcolonial identity that impacted the course of decolonization was deeply rooted in anti-colonialism from the colonial period. And the North Korean scholars in the 1980s-90s incorporated these scholars' Tan'gun studies into their works.

Transnational Socialist Culture in Everyday People's Lives: Embracing Sociology under the Umbrella of Minsokhak

As seen above, North Korean *minsokhak* developed as a historically oriented discipline in the process of rooting out the colonial knowledge of Korea's past. At the same time, its objective of building a socialist state created North Korean *minsokhak* as an applied discipline in the present. The socialist building process can be identified with the process of socialist cultural transformation. Everyday people's lives were a key site for the level of socialist culture to be measured. An investigation in people's everyday lives in contemporary society was a vital task in charting the next historical stage. Sociology—a key discipline in the social sciences—specialized in this type of inquiry. However, like cultural anthropology, sociology could not be rooted in North Korean academia due to its driving premise that ideas, social structure and individual agency are the driving forces of history. Ethnographers, however, continued to use sociological methods under the rubric of *minsokhak*.

As indicated in Marxism-Leninism, working class culture is the barometer of socialist culture since the working class is the social class capable of spearheading a revolutionary movement. The rise of a working class and the emergence of a workers' culture in Korea are important elements in demonstrating the existence of a revolutionary agent. Ch'oe Wŏnhŭi's

study of workers' culture and customs in a Taeyudong mining town was a rare study in discussing the formation of the Korean working class and its culture.

Her sociologically oriented case study investigated the labor history of Taeyudong gold mine workers in the northern P'yŏngan Province from the colonial period to 1959.¹²⁹ To summarize, Taeyudong was a small village in the hinterlands in which the British operated a gold mine later taken over by the Japanese in the 1920s. Taeyudong village developed into a major mining town with 3,752 workers during the colonial period. Ch'oe highlighted both the universal and particular features of class formation in Korea. Among the universal features were shift of workers from the countryside from seasonal workers to full-time laborers, serious housing shortages, and poor living conditions.

Ch'oe asserted that class formation in Korea met one of the classic tenets of Marxist theory about the transformation of rural laborers into industrial workers and the rise of secondary social problems. On the other hand, she argued that the semi-feudal capitalist structure under colonialism also brought out distinctive features of class formation. She highlighted exploitative *Tŏktae* (徳大), subcontractors who employed mine workers, instead of the owner of the gold mine. She characterized the *tŏktae* (pit boss/subcontractor) as a byproduct of a semi-feudal capitalist structure that had appeared only in colonial Korea.¹³⁰ In fact, the

¹²⁹ Ch'oe Wŏnhŭi, "Taeyudong Kwangsan nodongja tŭl ūi munhwa wa p'ungsŭp ūi munhwa wa p'ungsŭp ūi myŏt kaji *ch'ŭngmyŏn*" (Several facts on workers' culture and customs in Taeyudong mining town), *Munhwa yusan* 5 (1960), 23-39.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 26. A South Korean scholar, Nam Ch'unho, regarded *tŏktae* as a sprout of innate potential to bring capitalism to the late Chosŏn society. He argues that *tŏktae* were professional managers who had hands-on expertise in running a mine but who lacked the necessary capital to start new operations themselves. Many *tŏktae* were able to accumulate wealth by operating the entire production and the retail process. But he argued that *tŏktae* lost this function and fell to being labor subcontractors after the influx of the foreign capital into Korea. Like *tŏkdae*, Butties also employed their own laborers who were required to bring their own horses and tools. After the 1872 Coal Mines Act, the 'Butty' system disappeared. Nam Ch'unho, "T'angwangŏp Tŏktaeje koch'al" (Inquiry into the Tŏktae system in the coal mining industry), *Sahoe wa yŏksa* (Society and History) 28 (1991), 176-249.

tōktae (pit boss) system originated in the late Chosŏn period and became legally institutionalized in the early 19th century. The British mines also had an exploitive system like *tōktae* called the Butty system in the 17th and 19th centuries. Because of her assumption of the abnormality of the colonial economy, she probably overlooked this in scrutinizing the *tōktae*.

Another important emphasis in Ch'oe's study was the new culture that was created in the process of labor class formation. She explained that before the North Korean socialist revolution, the workers shed their rural customs. Mine workers had less hierarchical family relationships, more nuclear families, and more remarriages among widows because of the frequent accidental deaths of miners. But, due to their strong prejudice against mine workers, the local peasants did not allow their daughters to marry the mine workers. The average mine worker usually married five to seven years later than the peasants. However, after the socialist revolution in North Korea, Ch'oe confirmed the creation of a new socialist culture as "the laborers here spend their leisure time watching movies, participating in art circles, and enjoying their lives".¹³¹ They are also considerably better-off materially in terms of housing and clothing. Most importantly, she pointed out how the women benefitted after liberation in terms of equality and freedom. Despite these changes, Ch'oe argued that gambling, drinking and other bad customs against socialist culture remained. Thus, to complete the socialist transformation, she suggested several strategies: increasing technical efficiency, night school, professional school for mine workers, teaching revolutionary study, and engagement in art activities. Interestingly, what she described as "socialist" culture can also be seen in the development of the capitalist system. She simply meant progressive, advanced, and a materially abundant culture in terms of socialist culture. Like many other North Korean scholars, she displayed her absolute faith in socialist progress, which was a central part of the postcolonial rationale.

¹³¹ Ibid., 31.

Minsokhak as Applied Science: National Culture to Socialist Culture

The socialist notion of folk culture and tradition emphasizes two functional elements in society. First, it is a repository of national characteristics. Second, it is a representation of the living conditions and social relations of previous societies as well as proof of the historical development of a people's consciousness toward socialism. As mentioned earlier, socialist folklore studies are closely related to government cultural policy. Application-oriented folklore is a vital part of North Korean *minsokhak*. North Korean ethnographers enthusiastically promoted progressive folklore culture in the contemporary task of inspiring revolutionary spirit. By contrast, the objects of "backward culture" were exhibited to demonstrate the socialist progress in the present. In other words, ethnographical knowledge became used to further foster socialist culture among the *inmin*.

Since the late 1950s, North Korea's successful collectivization and rapid industrialization have broken down the traditional isolation and conservatism of the rural population in terms of the low position of women, marriage customs, and hierarchical social relation. In addition, socialist cultural policy—cultural clubs, libraries, and the dissemination of technical knowledge—eradicated rural illiteracy and brought rural life closer to urban culture. This social transformation also led to the extinction of some folk customs and tradition. Kim Ilch'ul and other ethnographers collected many folklore materials, such as games, dances, folktales, songs, oral literature, and folk religion. These traditions, they believed, embodied the people's popular resistance to feudalistic *yangban* rule—as can be seen reflected in *t'alch'um* (mask dances), puppet plays, *minyo* (folk songs), and *kunmu* (group dances)—which were collected and disseminated to the public through the radio, cinema, and print media in both rural and urban

communities under the supervision of the state.¹³² They also bolstered folk customs, which coincided with the ideas of workers' solidarity and cooperation. They thoroughly researched and published their works on traditional labor organizations for mutual aid, such as *ture*, *p'umasi*, *hwangdu*, *sogyōri* and *tulgye* and farmer's music (*nongak*).¹³³ They saw these folk customs as brightening the spirits of farmers particularly during times of hard labor by forging village solidarity. Thus, North Korean ethnographers discussed ways to fit these traditions into a new economic environment—agricultural collectivization. In this manner, they tried to preserve certain folk customs as conducive to the goals of socialism.

Many other genres of folk culture encouraged the promotion of patriotism. The IAE's publication, *Chosŏn ūi minsok nori* (1964) (Folk entertainments in Korea) enlisted the endorsement of 64 folk games to be played in contemporary North Korean society.¹³⁴ For instance, Ch'oe Wŏnhŭi advocated *Kanggang sullae* as an embodiment of Korean women's patriotism. She argued that the term, *Kanggang suwŏllae* (强姜水越来) meant "the enemy is coming across the sea" during Hideoyoshi's invasion. She stated that when Admiral Yi Sun-sin (1545-1598) and his naval force fought the Japanese pirates, women near the battlefield gathered in groups on hills and sang songs so that they could both keep watch and convince the enemy that there was a huge army nearby. She explained that they continued to play these games in the evening during a full moon in the fall. Village women also dressed in their best clothing and gathered in clearings whether they stood together in a circle hand in hand to sing *Kanggang*

¹³² Kim Ilc'ul, "Hwanghaedo t'allori wa kŭ inminsŏng" (the people-mindedness of mask dances in the Hwanghae Province), *Munhwa yusan* 1 (1957), 23-40.

¹³³ Chŏn Changsŏk, "Ture e kwanhayŏ" (About *ture*), *Munhwa yusan* 2 (1957), 12-25. As a farmer's music was performed in the weeding period of the sixth month, during breaks and after work, farmers would pick their favorite musical instrument (a gong cymbal, drum, or flute) and play in the middle of the field.

¹³⁴ Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography at the Academy of Sciences, *Chosŏn ūi minsok nori* (Folk entertainments in Korea) (P'yŏngyang: Kunjung munhwa ch'ulp'ansa, 1964).

suwöllae. She mentioned this practice was more widespread on the coast of Chölla Province. She asserted that the continuance of this practice in contemporary society demonstrated Korean women’s resistance to their enemies and love for their country.¹³⁵

As such, North Korean scholars searched for elements of resistance and harmonious spirit in folk culture in order to serve as the basis of socialist customs. In fact, scholars have observed that North Korean people play folk games and dances on a daily basis.¹³⁶ North Korean application-oriented *minsokhak* thus contributed to spreading folk customs and traditions widely throughout North Korean society. In this respect, North Korean *minsokhak* represents the political semiotics of fostering a national and socialist identity. Importantly, the political semiotics of folklore are commonly observed in many modern nations. For example, South Korea has also utilized folklore to create its own vision of the Korean nation. However, North Korea’s attempt to make a socialist culture out of a “national” culture was a practice of Soviet cultural policy that was “socialist in content and national in form.” And this policy fit nicely into their postcolonial rationale—preserving a ‘distinctive’ Chosŏn *minjok* while creating a socialist state.

Reflection

In this chapter, I have aimed to detour from our too-familiar understanding of the origin of North Korea’s ethnocentric nationalism as having its origins in the *chuch’e* ideology. While highlighting the various semiotic functions of folklore, ethnology, and ethnography that operate

¹³⁵ Ibid., 37-39.

¹³⁶ Chu Kanhŏn, “Punkhan tongp’o tŭli chŭlgi nŭn minjok nori” (The folk entertainments that North Korean people have enjoyed), *Chungdŭng ui kyoyuk*, 9 (Nov. 1990), 132-37.

in a specific time and place of a country, I have explored the various semiotics of Chosŏn *minsokhak* in Korea's modern trajectory. I have argued that North Korea's *minsokhak* from liberation to the 1960s represents the semiotics of North Korea's postcolonial rationale—the creation of a decolonized Chosŏn socialist state and the forward movement to communism as a unified nation state. I have highlighted the fact that their socialist strategy is not only rooted in Marxism-Leninism but also in the lineage of anticolonial intellectuals' discursive strategies on *minjok* that have continuously shaped North Korean academia. Thus, this study aims to understand a shift in the study of North Korean *minsokhak*—from a multi-centric oriented ethnography to national ethnography—not from a politically-driven perspective, but from a long process of North Korea's decolonization. More importantly, this study highlights the fundamental issue of the limitation of decolonization within colonial/modern world system. Although North Korean scholars adopted their decolonizing strategies largely from Marxist-Leninism, their socialist strategies were bounded by the logic of the nation state and their realization of decolonization projected through the nation. The nation became the focus of decolonization, thereby reproducing an ethno-centric based knowledge during the course of the decolonization process.

Chapter Two – Postcolonial Ambition in Travel *Ocherk* of the 1950s:

Anti-imperial Internationalism and Socialist Modernity in Imaginative Geography

Introduction

Since 1998, North Korea's state motto has been a "mighty and prosperous great country" (强盛大國, *kangsŏng taeguk*).¹³⁷ North Korea had proclaimed that it would embark on a new stage of *kangsŏng taeguk* by Kim Il Sung's (1912-1994) centennial birthday in 2012. On the day of celebrating the hundredth anniversary of Sun Day (*T'aeyangjŏl*),¹³⁸ instead of delivering their promise of a new economically transformed country, they displayed a spectacular military parade and a set of newly advanced ballistic missiles. The highlight of the event was a speech by the country's new leader, Kim Jong Un (b.1983). Kim stressed how Kim Il Sung strengthened the revolutionary armed forces and led the military miracle of the 20th century to defeat the two most outrageous imperialist countries; full of conviction, he claimed that an invincible military force and a new industrial revolution would allow people to enjoy the wealth and prosperity of socialism.¹³⁹ Scholars in South Korea, the U.S. and Japan identified *kangsŏng taeguk* as a newly invented political rhetoric to facilitate the survival of the North Korean regime. They argued that this unrealistic motto called upon the whole nation to keep its military first politics (先軍政治,

¹³⁷ North Korea defines this term as a powerful country where everything is prosperous and the people have nothing to envy. It also seeks to revive the Ch'ŏllima (thousand mile horse) movement, North Korea's rapid economic development plan of the 1960s.

¹³⁸ Sun Day is North Korea's national holiday celebrating Kim Il Sung's birthday, April 15.

¹³⁹ Minjok ūi sori chaju yŏksa sinbo p'yŏnjipbu, "Puk, Taeyangjŏl ūl maja inmingun yŏlbyŏngsik esŏ Kim Jung-un che 1 puwŏnjang ch'ŏt konggae yŏnsŏl—chŏngch'i kunsu kangguk ūro chŏnbyŏn" (North Korea-the first public address of Kim Jong Un/Jong Un, First Secretary of the Worker's Party of Korea at the march of the People's Army on Sun's Day—The transformation of the politically and military powerful state), April 15, 2012 <http://www.hinews.asia/sub_read.html?uid=1757> (31 July 2012).

sŏn'gun chŏngch'i) amid North Korea's "arduous march" since the late 1990s.¹⁴⁰ This shortsighted analysis centered on contemporary North Korean politics fails to grasp how this seemingly new political rhetoric, which has prevailed since the 1990s, represents the manifestation of North Korea's decolonization process.

The postcolonial rhetoric of *kangsŏng taeguk* forms part of North Korea's postcolonial ambitions. Economic prosperity has been a vital part of North Korea's commitment to socialism, as in other socialist countries. Economic development is considered the ultimate proof of the superiority of socialism over capitalism. Most importantly, the postcolonial rhetoric of *kangsŏng taeguk* embodies North Korea's ambition to lead the anti-colonial/anti-imperial revolutionary forces and people of the global community. In the post-Stalin era, when the Soviet Union detoured from its anti-imperialist stance to one of détente with the West, North Korea stuck to anti-imperialism as the genuine tenant of internationalism. Scholars of North Korea recognized North Korea's rigorous effort to forge solidarity with the anti-colonial/anti-imperial revolutionary forces and people of the Third World countries; but they have tended to highlight how North Korea utilized the non-aligned movement to leverage its unification goal by endorsing anti-American imperialist struggles.¹⁴¹ Thus, rather than recognizing North Korea's anti-imperial internationalism as a course of international socialist movements, they characterize it as a sign of the country's divergence from Soviet-led internationalism. In large part, this interpretation derives from a misconception of "internationalism" and the recognition of the Soviet-centered internationalism as "orthodox." This view has produced a politically-oriented

¹⁴⁰ Kang Sŏngjong, *Pukhan ūi kangsŏng taeguk kŏnsŏl chŏllyak* (North Korea's strategy to build a mighty and prosperous great country (Seoul: Hanŏl Academy, 2004).

¹⁴¹ Charles K. Armstrong, "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspiration," *North Korean International Documentation Project Working Papers Series* no. 1 (Washington, D.C. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars April 2009), 2-7.

discourse on internationalism that accentuates the hierarchical and static nature of the socialist orbit. This chapter, shifting away from the Soviet political centered approach to internationalism, traces North Korea's postcolonial ambition to lead an anti-imperial internationalism and socialist economy through an examination of the travel *ocherk* (a Soviet style of literary sketch) in the 1950s. The travel *ocherk* texts written by North Korean intellectuals reveal how, in the wake of the Korean War, North Korea came to see itself as the world-wide leader of the anti-imperial revolution. Through North Korea's travel *ocherk*, this chapter aims to show how North Korea's anti-imperial internationalism became constitutive of North Korea's postcolonial identity. Thus, by providing alternative views of internationalism from the periphery—North Korea—these texts serve as missing links in a holistic understanding of the socio-cultural landscape of the 1950s' socialist bloc through Korea's cultural activities with other socialist countries.

The first section of this chapter uses a discussion on how Cold War scholars assessed the disintegration of the Soviet bloc in order to challenge conventional conceptual models concerning proletarian internationalism. In the second section, in order to trace how the travel *ocherk* became a mode of praxis for anti-imperialism, I explore the shifting socio-political circumstances in socialist countries like North Korea in the post-Stalin era. In the final section, as revealed in these travel *ocherk* texts, I investigate the strenuous search by North Korean intellectuals' to locate a source of anti-imperialism in socialist countries that had its roots in the history and cultures of those people and that also showed the superiority of the socialist economy as reflected in the every-day lives of common people.

North Korea's claim of being the vanguard of anti-imperial internationalism represents its postcolonial ambition. I argue that the North Korean intellectuals' creation of an imaginative

geography¹⁴² for the socialist bloc—where people are simultaneously conducting an anti-imperialist struggle and socialist economic progress—generated anti-imperialism as the ideological norm of internationalism. Despite North Korea’s economic reality at the time, North Korean intellectuals perceived socialist culture—a people’s invincible commitment to anti-imperial ideology—as holding a subversive potential to overtake the leadership in the international movement; thus, they were convinced that North Korea would eventually triumph in leading the vanguard in the world revolution. In the 1960s and 1970s, North Korea’s active participation in the non-aligned movement can be understood as its effort to actualize this ambition. However, with the rise of the new international order—neo-liberalization of the world since the late 1980s—North Korea’s imaginative geography of the anti-imperialist sphere became invalid; thus, the postcolonial rhetoric of North Korea as an agent of leading anti-imperial internationalism slowly waned in power.

Internationalisms of Socialism in the Modern/Colonial World System

Proletarian internationalism is commonly known as an essential political ideology that signifies the identity of the socialist bloc.¹⁴³ Yet, most leftist and non-leftist scholars scarcely believe that proletarian internationalism was practiced in the socialist bloc during the Cold War period. In Cold War scholars’ discussions of the causes of the failure of proletarian

¹⁴² In *Orientalism*, Said referred to the imaginative geographies as the perception of space created through certain images, writing, and discourse. He argued that imagined boundary of the Orient was invented by western oriental studies and travel writings. Similarly, I used this term to describe how North Korean intellectuals created imaginative geographies of the socialist world through their travel *ocherk*. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 54-58.

¹⁴³ For information on proletarian internationalism, see Lawrence L. Whetten, *The Present State of Communist Internationalism* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1983) and Jonathan C. Valdez, *Internationalism and the Ideology of Soviet Influence in Eastern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

internationalism, most point to the Sino-Soviet dispute as a decisive factor. Lorenz M. Luthi finds the root of the Sino-Soviet split in the ideological and strategic differences between the Soviet Union and China as they sought to chart the course of world revolution and economic development. He argues that Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence policy and his consequent diplomatic decisions ultimately triggered a divergence into two paths for international socialist movements.¹⁴⁴ In contrast, Kathryn Weathersby and Chen Jien emphasize the historical origin of the split before the Korean War. In particular, Weathersby asserts that the Soviet Union's military decisions during the Korean War served its own geopolitical interests and this created deep-seated distrust among the Soviet Union, Socialist China, and North Korea.¹⁴⁵

Shimotomai Nobuo argues that the Sino-Soviet dispute also provided a turning point in North Korean history. Situated between the Soviet Union and China's fierce ideological and diplomatic confrontation, Kim Il Sung was able to establish dictatorial power by purging the Soviet and Chinese factions at home and departed from both Soviet led internationalism and Chinese influence by developing his own highly dictatorial *chuch'e* principle.¹⁴⁶ Thus, North Korea was ready to become "a sun in the heaven." In contrast, South Korean historian, Hongkoo Han, asserts that Kim Il Sung's *chuch'e* ideology originated in the Minsaegdan incident—a "witch hunt" of pro-Japanese Koreans by Chinese communists in Manchuria. In this incident, many Korean "communists" were wrongly accused as being Japanese agents by the Chinese

¹⁴⁴ Lorenz, M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁵ Kathryn Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War" in *Brothers in Arms—the Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1945-63*, ed. Odd Arne Westad. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 998), 92-95. Also see, Chen Jien, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance and China's entry into the Korean War," *CWIHP Working Paper*, no.1 (Washington, D.C. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1992), 5-35.

¹⁴⁶ Shimotomai Nobuo, "Kim Il Sung's Balancing Act between Moscow and Beijing, 1956-1972," in *The Cold War in East Asia, 1945-1991*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011), 122-151.

communists in 1938.¹⁴⁷ Kim's experience of this ethnic conflict deeply inspired him to seek an autonomous diplomacy.

The significant events that took place behind the Iron Curtain—the Soviet invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Sino-Soviet dispute and the Sino-Vietnamese dispute—marked proletarian internationalism as a mere slogan or forlorn hope of the bygone socialist system.¹⁴⁸ Though internationalism is not a distinctive possession of the leftist ideology, the “failure” of Proletarian internationalism is often a target of scholars' criticism due to the inherent ideological conflict between the concepts of nation and internationalism. In contrast, world-system theorists have provided a basic knowledge of why “internationalism” confronted a predicament in the capitalist world system. Chase-Dunn, writing in 1980, explained that “they (socialist countries) have not been able to successfully create a fully institutionalized socialist socioeconomic system because the forces of the capitalist world-economy have shaped the socialist states so that they now play a functional role in the reproduction of capitalism.”¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, he argues that instead of accelerating a socialist transnational mode of production, socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union, chose upward mobility to survive within the capitalist world-economy through rapid economic development.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Hongkoo Han, “Colonial Origins of Juche: The Minsaengdan Incident of the 1930s and the Birth of North Korea-China Relationship,” in *Origins of North Korea's Juche: Colonialism, War, and Development*, ed. Suh Jae-Jung (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 33-62.

¹⁴⁸ Many western Marxist scholars, such as E.P. Thomson, were critical of the Soviet Union's efforts to exploit the Eastern Bloc on the pretext of being the leader of the proletarian internationalist movement as it competed with China for influence in Asia.

¹⁴⁹ Christopher Chase-Dunn, “Socialist States in the Capitalist World-Economy,” *Social Problems* 27, no. 5 (June 1980), 518.

¹⁵⁰ Andre Gunder Frank pointed out, the socialist state became a “trans-ideological enterprise,” which describes how socialist countries returned to commodity production for the world capitalist market and allowed foreign capital investment under the careful control of the state.

Understanding the socialist system as a substructure in the world system provides a key to grasp how the new category of socialist nation has been conceptualized. Soviet intellectuals had to redefine the nation to maintain the socialist system in the capitalist world by setting the perimeter and scope for the socialist movement. Since the late 1920s, the nation has been redefined as a basic political entity to build a socialist nation and to fulfill internationalism. Stalin's declaration of socialism in one country made a significant shift from class-based internationalism to socialist internationalism, nation-state based international relations among socialist countries became the core of socialism. Consequently, it offered an open passage for each socialist country to fully exercise the geopolitical logic of the state. Perhaps, exploring the question of whether class-centered internationalism existed in the Soviet bloc at the level of nation-state might be a consuming effort. Thus, this study offers to change our attention to internationalism forged at the periphery through socio-cultural arenas, which, in turn, sheds light on the shaping of North Korea's postcolonial characteristic within a socialist structure.

Ocherk in the Soviet Union

Ocherk (*Очерк*, *Ocherki* as plural) is a Russian prose genre that was derived from the western European literary tradition, the sketch. The sketch was a minor prose genre but became a popular and distinctive literary genre combining journalistic and Balzac's physiological elements in nineteenth century Europe.¹⁵¹ The sketch is broadly defined as a literary genre that is based on a description of factual reality that ranges in subject from the short story, a landscape, a place, a character, to scientific facts. The sketch is mostly published in newspapers and journals.

¹⁵¹ Victor Terras, *Handbook of Russian literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 421-422. In a sketch, the narrator is the central figure, who aims to deliver the author's perspective. The narrator's authentic description of facts, investigations, episodes, and a character are kernel elements. Yet, the narrator has flexibility to interrupt and imagine the details to add vividness and strengthen the author's purpose.

Thus, the genre shares a nebulous boundary with journalistic writings, and some literary critics regard the sketch as existing between literature (story) and journalism (research).¹⁵²

In Russian, *ocherk* was widely written by many prominent writers of prose fiction, such as Belanski, Pushkin, and Dostoevsky. They used this genre to depict various social layers and effectively portrayed the hard life of the peasantry. However, in revolutionary Russia, *ocherk* was not a simple translated term designating the sketch. It emerged as a hallmark of socialist literary genre. *Ocherk* brought in a new methodology of socialist realism, which ultimately distinguished it from the sketch. The characteristics of *ocherk* not only emphasized the authentic description of “real life and real people,” but also added a militant, agitating, educational, and civil role for the public. The genre’s merits, such as the unrestricted format and the ability for writers to write quickly, enabled authors to swiftly describe a rapidly transforming new socialist culture and society, while offering a hortatory response to public events.¹⁵³ Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), who wrote several *ocherks* himself, such as *Lenin* (1924) and *Soviet Travels*, endorsed the genre as “the most appropriate literary genre in depicting the most important projects like the nation’s consciousness because the *ocherkist* is able to narrate every new product created by the working class in every part of the vast land of the Soviet Union.”¹⁵⁴ Gorky and many other revolutionary writers advocated the genre as a form of ideological literature capable of portraying vividly the people’s revolutionary spirit and their efforts to establish a socialist nation.

¹⁵² Deming Brown, “The *Očerk*: Suggestions Toward a Redefinition: American Contributions to the Sixth International Congress of Slavists,” in *Literary Contribution* vol. 2, ed. William. E. Harkins, (Mouton: The Hague, 1968), 1-13. He categorized *ocherk* into three subcategories: its topics, social functions, and proximity to other fact-based literature.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Sō Manil, “Munhak ūi changrū rossō ūi Och’eūkkū wa kūi yesulsōng” (*Ocherk* as a Literary Genre and its Artistic Value) in *Munhak ūi chipyōng* (Prospects in Literature) (Pyōngyang: Chosōn Chakka Tongmaeng, 1954), 100.

In other words, *ocherk* became a proper socialist realist literary form that embedded the socio-political and cultural code of the time.

Political liberalization slowly led to the rise of the public sphere since 1951; in particular, *ocherk* came to play a special function during Khrushchev's thaw.¹⁵⁵ Soviet writers used this genre to reveal the actual problems of society. For instance, Valentine Ovechkin (1904-1968), a reformed minded *ocherkist*, utilized the power of the genre to raise the socio-political issue of bureaucratism and corruption. He unmasked the new problems on collective farms and hoped to inspire the people to resolve these conflicts or to mobilize people for their solution through his *ocherk* texts.¹⁵⁶ Thus, by inserting the writers' ideological stance in a direct manner, *ocherk* texts helped to form a counter-hegemonic discourse in 1950s Soviet society.

Ocherk: Local Variations

Ocherk, like many other the Soviet arts, was widely introduced to socialist countries in the early 1950s. A number of writers started to explore the potential of the genre. In the People's Republic of Mongolia, the second socialist country founded in 1924, *ocherk* became a widely written literary form by the 1940s.¹⁵⁷ The *ocherk* writing conference of 1955, in Hungary, showed its growing popularity and importance among socialist countries. The discourse on

¹⁵⁵ Karl Edward Loewenstein, "The Thaw: Writers and the Public Sphere in the Soviet Union, 1951–1957" (Ph.D.diss., Duke University, 1999). Anatoly Zorian Pinsky, "The Individual after Stalin: Fedor Abramov, Russian Intellectuals, and the Revitalization of Soviet Socialism, 1953-1962," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2011). Pinsky also discussed the reform effort of the Russian literary intelligentsias, such as Valentine Ovechkin, Aleksandr Iashin, and Aleksandr Tvardovskii and after Stalin's death through analyzing their dairies.

¹⁵⁶ Deming Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature Since Stalin* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 223-225. Ovechkin was a leader of the opposition to Khrushchev's agricultural policy. But, his reformativ effort went unheeded; and under tremendous political pressure, he retired to a mental hospital after his attempted to commit suicide.

¹⁵⁷ Ludmilla K. Gerasimovich. *History of Modern Mongolian Literature, 1921-1964* (Bloomington: Mongolia Society. 1970), 20. Also, a renowned North Korean writer, Song Yŏng mentioned North Vietnamese *ocherk works* in his *Wŏllam ilgi* (Dairies on North Vietnam).

ocherk appeared widely in the socialist bloc in the early 1950s.¹⁵⁸ But the translation of the term, its impact, popularity and its socio-political functions varied depending on each socialist country. Thus, an exploration of *ocherk* offers a unique avenue to grasp both the global and local landscape of socialism during the 1950s. The crux of the issue in the discourse of *ocherk* is not about the Soviet cultural impact on other socialist countries, but about how the impact of post-Stalin liberalization appeared at the local level across socialist countries. In other word, the various discourses and themes explored in *ocherk* in the early 1950s reflected how ruling powers and intellectuals from different socialist countries responded in unique manners, often in response to local socio-political conditions, to the numerous changes occurring within the Soviet Union during the post-Stalin era.

In case of the People's Republic of China (PRC), literary critics identified *ocherk* with reportage. Reportage had been a popular genre in East Asia since the 1930s. In China, reportage emerged as a primary genre among the Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers in the 1930s, when many Chinese struggled to resist Japanese encroachment.¹⁵⁹ Reportage's proximity to *ocherk* was familiar to the Chinese public. Thus, *ocherk* had been broadly categorized within the genre of reportage (報告文學, Ch., *baogao wenxue*, K., *bogo munhak*) or called reportage-*ocherk* (Ch., *texie baogao*). However, in the early 1950s, a Chinese writer, Liu Binyan (刘宾雁, 1925-2005), differentiated the socially critical Soviet *ocherk* (particularly the Ovechkin type of *ocherk*) from

¹⁵⁸ Rudolf. G. Wagner, "Ocherk in the Socialist Camp" in *Inside a Service Trade: Studies in Contemporary Chinese Prose* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1992), 311-324.

¹⁵⁹ Charles A. Laughlin, *Chinese Reportage* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 25-27.

reportage. He translated it into *texie* (特写) in 1955.¹⁶⁰ Chinese writers initiated a vigorous debate on issues of veracity, definition, format, and characteristics of the genre.

An expert on Chinese contemporary literature, Rudolf Wigner, meticulously investigated the special meanings of *texie-ocherk/texie baogao* in the trajectory of the PRC. He scrutinized the socio-political roles of *texie* and *texie* writers during the gradual political liberation of the post-Stalin era. He argues that *texie* served as a literary weapon for reform-oriented intellectuals like Liu Binyan to raise criticism against bureaucratism and conservatism during the Hundred Flowers Campaign of 1956. Wigner concluded that *texie* during the mid-1950s served as “politically programmed writings” for the progressive-oriented, modernist intellectuals. The popularity and impact of *texie* was sensational until the party turned its back on reform and commenced an anti-rightist campaign in 1957. The progressive and critical minded *texie* writers soon became the main target of the anti-Rightist movement.¹⁶¹ The vicissitudes of *texie* writers paralleled the rise and fall of *texie* writings. Today, the term *texie* is broadly applied to feature articles written in newspapers and journals in contemporary Chinese society.

The Rise of the Discourse on Ocherk in 1950s' North Korea

Before the Korean War, Soviet *ocherk* texts and Soviet literary critics of *ocherk* writings were introduced in North Korea. Han Sörya's (1900-1976) noted the rise of the genre's popularity in North Korea after the Korean War. In 1954, he wrote that “a number of writers are getting interested in *ocherk* in this rapidly changing environment. During the Korean War, many *ocherk* writings appeared. On the theme of the people's enthusiastic war reconstruction, the

¹⁶⁰ Rudolf. G. Wagner, *Inside A Service Trade: Studies in Contemporary Chinese Prose* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 259.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 260-268, 301-304.

ocherk genre has been widely utilized and has led to fruitful results.”¹⁶² As in the Soviet Union, North Korea’s specific socio-political conditions—war and reconstruction—raised the popularity of *ocherk* as the most proper form of literary art.¹⁶³ A number of writers, such as Song Yöng (1903-1978), Hwang Kõn (1918-1991), Sõ Manil (b. 1919, *fl.* 1946-1962) and Han Sõrya experimented with this new genre in their writings.¹⁶⁴ Yet, there was great confusion in defining the genre’s characteristics and boundaries with other related literary subgenres. The term *ocherk* was frequently interchanged with fact-based genres, such as reportage, essays, memoirs, and travelogues. Sõ Manil, who studied at the Maxim Gorky Literature institute and was a leading literary critic of the 1950s, attempted to settle the issue on the ambiguity of *ocherk* as a literary genre. He explained that *ocherk*’s characteristics are commonly prevalent in many fact-based literary subgenres, which included reportage, biography, diary, field reporting, documentary literature, front line reporting, explanatory notation, and travelogues. Moreover, he argued that these subgenres could be categorized as *ocherk* when they had publicist, educational, and realistic characteristics cultivating a sense of socialist spirit among the people, while touching the people’s hearts through their artistic value. He also emphasized that socio-political issues must

¹⁶² Han Sõrya, “chonjin hanün Chosõn munhak-1953 nyõndo ch’angjak saõp ùi che sõnggwa” (Advancing Chosõn literature—Results in creative writings), *Chosõn munhak* no.1 (1954), 118. The Korean-Soviet Culture Society published the collection of nine famous Soviet *ocherk*. *Och’erükkü sõnjip* (A Collection of *ocherk*) (P’yõngyang: Cho-Sso munhwa hyõphoe, 1954).

¹⁶³ Ri Hyõun, “Munhak changrũ-och’erükkü e kwanhayõ--ch’anjak bangbõp ùl chungsim ùro” (On the literary genre *ocherk*, focusing on its methodology in creative writing), *Munhak yõsul* 12 (1952), 126-141. This article was the first comprehensive study on *ocherk* written by a North Korean literary critic. Also, Kang Nõngsu, a literary critic, wrote several articles on *ocherk* from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. Kang Nõngsu, “Och’erükkü ùi yesulsõng chego rül wihayõ” (For reevaluating artistic value in *ocherk*), *Sinin P’yõngnonjip* (Compilation of new literary critics) (P’yõngyang: Chosõn chakka tongmaeng ch’ulp’ansa, 1957), 73-96.

¹⁶⁴ Song Yöng, *Hangil ppalch’isan ùi yõn’gung tül*, 1955 (the heroes of anti-Japanese partisans), Han Sõrya, *Fajeyeva na* 1956 (Alexander Fadeyev and I), Pak T’aemin, *Yõsõng kijunggi unjõnsu*, 1955 (the female crane driver), and many others. They classified *ocherk* as an independent literary genre while providing explanation to writers who raised a question about the ambiguity of *Ocherk* as a literary genre due to its unclear boundary. See Yi Yõngmi, “Puhak ùi munhak changnũ och’erükkü” (North Korean literary genre *ocherk*), *Han’guk munhak iron kwa pip’yõng* 6, no. 3 (2004), 409-432.

take precedence.¹⁶⁵ Thus, what defined *ocherk* was its literary function rather than its formulaic structure.

As in China, Khrushchev's thaw breezed into North Korean's literary circles. In 1952, the Soviet's new literary art policy, which partially permitted depiction of conflict and social problems, affected the North Korean literary world. North Korean writers, such as Ŏm Hosök (1912-1975), An Hamgwang (1910-1982), Sö Manil, and Han Hyo (b. 1912, *fl.* 1934-1962) started to raise issues on schematism (圖式主義, *tosikchuï*) and non-conflict (無葛藤論, *mugaltüngnon*) in North Korean literature. Schematism referred to a literary tendency of merely adopting a certain form or structure of a genre.¹⁶⁶ In North Korea, writers first adopted "refined realism" (*kosanghan sasiljuï*) as an official literary and art methodology in 1947. Refined realism was based on the idea that art should represent "positive heroes" among everyday people, while combining romanticism with a deep revolutionary spirit.¹⁶⁷ Bounded by refined realism, North Korean writers started to depict their protagonists as positive and new socialist heroes with no conflict among the characters and plot. In 1949, North Korea adopted socialist realism as a new literary and art methodology, which aimed to portray the reality of the proletarian struggle to construct socialism in everyday life. Both refined socialist and socialist realist literature typically depicted North Korea as a utopia, where social problems and conflict were absent.

¹⁶⁵ Sö Manil, "Munhak üi changrũ rossö üi Och'erükü wa küüi yesulsöng" (*Ocherk* as a Literary Genre and its Artistic Value) in *Munhak üi chipyöng* (Prospects in Literature) (Pyöngyang: Chosön Chakka Tongmaeng, 1954), 99-114. Sö Manil was born in P'yöngyang. His career as a literary critics and writer took off after liberation. He was one of the first state sponsored study abroad students in the Soviet Union. He actively produced many outstanding works. But, he lost his position in the early 1960s.

¹⁶⁶ Regine Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1992). In the Soviet Union, the First Soviet Writer's Congress announced socialist realism as the official methodology in 1934.

¹⁶⁷ Refined realism was a preliminary form of socialist realism that was popular in the early years of the Russian Revolutionary period.

While critiquing the prevalence of schematism in *ocherk* writings, Sō Manil stressed that *ocherkists* must bring dynamic conflicts into their writings.¹⁶⁸ Some journalists or reporters wrote *ocherk* pieces that revealed problems in factories and working places in the major newspapers and journals. However, different from China, no prominent figure rose to take a leading role in the anti-Schematism movement. The reason for this was Kim Il Sung's successful post-Korean War purge of the Workers' Party of South Korea (南朝鮮勞動黨, NamChosŏn nodongdang, Nov. 1946-Jun 1949, abb. Namnodang). The Namnodang had its roots in the Communist Party of Korea (朝鮮共產黨, Chosŏn Kongsandang, 1925-1946, abb. KCP), which led the anti-Japanese independent movement during the colonial period. Under the severe surveillance of the Japanese colonial government, the KCP was repeatedly crushed by the Japanese police and reestablished by its surviving members. Pak Hŏnyŏng, a genuine communist theorist and leader of the KCP, reestablished the Namnodang with other former members of the KCP after liberation from Japanese colonial rule. After 1946, Pak relocated north of the 38th parallel to foster the Party's revolutionary strength in the South. As the leader of the KCP, Pak competed with Kim Il Sung for leadership prior to the Korean War. However, during the Korean War, Kim Il Sung successfully purged many Namnodong members by accusing them of espionage activities. Writers and artists who were closely connected with Pak Hŏnyŏng (i.e. Rim Hwa, Kim Namch'ŏn, Kim Wŏnjo, Ri T'aejun and Kim Sunnam) were executed or purged.¹⁶⁹ The North Korean literary world suffered a tremendous loss of leadership. Thus, the political climate prevented an expansion of the anti-schematism movement, which sought to critically

¹⁶⁸ Sō Manil, “Munhak ūi changrŭ rossŏ ūi Och'erŭkŭ wa kŭŭi yesulsŏng” (*Ocherk* as a Literary Genre and its Artistic Value) in *Munhak ūi chipyŏng* (Prospects in Literature) (Pyŏngyang: Chosŏn Chakka Tongmaeng, 1954), 99-114.

¹⁶⁹ Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 130-136.

reflect on social problems and corruption. In 1958, a short lived “public sphere” in the North Korean literary circle closed with the rise of the campaign called “elimination of bourgeois remnants,” which was the reverse course of the anti-schematism effort. In 1961, *ocherk* was translated as *sirhwa munhak* (實話文學, factological literature). The scope of *ocherk* was narrowed in scope to designate a character sketch. Although North Korean factological literature maintained an element of portraying “real people and real events,” it lost the true characteristics of the genre—offering the writer’s opinion and the emphasis on his role as a publicist.

Travel Ocherk in 1950’s North Korea

After liberation, several renowned intellectuals, such as Paek Namum (1894-1979), Ri Kiyōng (1895-1984), and Ri T’aejun (1904-1956) published their travelogues after trips to the Soviet Union and Socialist China. Ri Hyōun argued that travel *ocherk* has the longest history among the subgenres of *ocherk* in North Korea and categorized their travelogues as *ocherk*.¹⁷⁰ In contrast, Sō Manil argued the history of *ocherk* started only after the war by arguing that *ocherk* texts written after the war clearly portrayed the genre’s militant characteristics.¹⁷¹ As mentioned earlier, the kernel of the discourse on *ocherk* is not about its definition or structure but rather about the historicity of the rise of *ocherk* in a specific domestic and international circumstance. Thus, it would be appropriate to include travel texts written in the post-Stalin era in the *ocherk* genre, since travel texts sought to publicize the issue of internationalism and socialist patriotism in the fields of publicity, education, and realism. The travel *ocherk* texts of this period astutely

¹⁷⁰ Ri Hyōun, “Munhak changrū-Och’erūkkū e kwanhayō--ch’angjak pangbōp ūl chungsim ūro” (On the literary genre *ocherk*: Focusing on its methodology in creative writing), *Munhak yōsul* no.1 12 (1952), 133.

¹⁷¹ Sō Manil, “Munhak ūi changrū rossō ūi Och’erūkkū wa kŭ ūi yesulsōng” (*Ocherk* as a Literary Genre and its Artistic Value) in *Munhak ūi chipyōng* (Prospects in Literature) (Pyōngyang: Chosŏn Chakka Tongmaeng, 1954), 99.

demonstrate the shift of the North Korean intellectuals' perceptions of the Soviet Union, China, other socialist countries, and the Third World, as well as how they responded to Khrushchev's policy of peaceful co-existence.

The authors of these travelogues were frequently intellectuals visiting other socialist countries as international amity delegates, scholars, and artists. After their journeys to other countries, North Korean intellectuals provided their audience with concrete details of real life from other cultures as a means of building a sense of common destiny among the socialist people around the world. As universally observed travel texts, a travel *ocherk* reveals a dual narrative strategy that reflects tensions between self and the other. In the following sections, I will discuss how North Korean intellectuals located the common characteristics of anti-imperialist culture and a new socialist culture out of the specificity of a given national history, culture, and tradition while simultaneously envisioning North Korea as an agent to lead anti-imperial internationalism.

The Soviet Union: the Admirable Friend

During the occupation period, many travelogues on the Soviet Union were widely circulated through publications. These travelogues served a significant role in creating certain images of the Soviet Union in both North and South Korea. In order to demonstrate the changes in the perception of Soviet-Korean relations after the Korean War, I will briefly discuss travelogues written before the war. Ri Kiyōng's (1895-1984), Ri T'aejun's (1904-1974), and Ri Ch'an's (1924-1974) travelogues were published after their trips to the Soviet



Image 2-1: Cover page of Ri T'aejun's travelogue, *Soryŏn Kihaeng* (1947)

Union as members of the cultural delegation sponsored by the Korean-Soviet Culture Society (Cho-Sso munhwa hyŏphoe) in 1946.¹⁷² In their travelogues, the tropes of the Soviet Union as a liberator, socialist utopia, classless society, and true workers' country commonly appeared. Their travelogues endorsed positive images of the Soviet Union in every aspect. Ri T'aejun emphasized the Soviet Union as a true friend of powerless countries and his conviction of the victory of the socialist system, which brought the Soviet people the joys of modernity in their everyday lives—a subway system, advanced technologies, high-rise buildings, and cultural facilities. Anti-communist elites accused Ri's travelogue as leftist and as Soviet propaganda. For instance, Yi Tongbong (李東峰) retorted sharply to Ri's conviction of Soviet society as flawless: “What Ri saw in the Soviet Union is only a small part of the Soviet Union and it might be the best part of the Soviet system.”¹⁷³

Beyond the apparent representation of the Soviet Union, by considering these travelogues in the political context of the occupation, it can be easily assumed that their travelogues projected a vision of a new Chosŏn through the image of the Soviet Union. Ri stated, “in our construction of a progressive democratic national culture, we must gain the greatness of the Soviet Union.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Ri Kiyŏng wrote 4 travel writings on the Soviet Union from 1947 to 1954. The first travelogue was published in *Munhak* in 1947 and later Ri's travelogues were compiled as an individual publication, *Soryŏn Kihaeng* (1960). The first delegation was composed of 25 various spectrums of people in society, intellectuals, artists, writers, farmers, and laborers. The news of Ri T'aejun's trip to the Soviet Union and his travelogue was sensational since Ri T'aejun kept his distance from proletarian literature and pursued a more “art for art sake”, or so-called “pure literature.” Ri Ch'an also visited the Soviet Union with them and wrote a travelogue: Ri Ch'an, *Sso kihaeng* (Soviet Travel) (Pyŏngyang: Chosŏn p'ulp'ansa, 1947). See, Yim Yugyŏng, “Oppekkun kwa Chosŏn Sajŏltan, kŭrigo Mosŭkŭba ūi ch'uŏk: haebanggi Soryŏn kihaeng ūi munhwa chŏngch'ihak” (A Patron and the Korean delegation and the reminiscence of Moscow: cultural politics of Soviet travel in the liberation period), *Sanghŏ hakpo* 27 (2009), 229-273. And Kwŏn Sŏngwu, “Yi T'aejun kihaengmun yŏn'gu” (A study of Ri T'aejun's travelogues), *Sanghŏ hakpo* 14 (2005), 187-222.

¹⁷³ Yi Tongbon, “Isang kwa silch'e: Sanghŏ ūi soryŏn kihaeng ūi ilk'o” (The ideas and reality: Reading Sanghŏ's Soviet Travelogue) *Kyŏnghyang simmun*, (10 Aug. 1947), 3.

¹⁷⁴ Ri T'aejun, *Soryŏn Kihaeng* (Soviet Travel) (P'yŏngyang: Puk Chosŏn ch'ulp'ansa, 1947), 9.

Ri T'aejun believed the Soviet Union to be an ideal model state that the new Chosŏn should follow. Yet, Ri T'aejun's portrayal of the Soviet union as a place where "all evils and old things [are] disappearing" and where "new people, new lives, and new culture [is] arriving," was a reflection of Ri's decolonization desire.¹⁷⁵ On the contrary, Ri's idealization of the Soviet Union under the occupation accentuated the notion of a hierarchical relationship between the Soviet Union and North Korea. Paek Namun's *Soviet Impression* (Ssoryŏn insang, 1949) further indicated how he wished to establish equal relations with the Soviet Union in spite of the Soviet Union's strong influence over North Korea. Paek expressed that his heart was moved when Stalin and other high-ranking Soviet officers treated North Korea as an equal partner and as an autonomous country at a meeting for an agreement on economic and cultural cooperation.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, it suggested how the popular perception of Soviet-North Korean relations as patron and client were prevalent after liberation. However, like Paek, most leftist intellectuals prioritized building an autonomous nation-state. In the divided occupational zone, they believe that Korea's national sovereignty and decolonization would be secured under Soviet led internationalism.¹⁷⁷

After the Korean War, the North Korean intellectuals' perceptions of Soviet-Korean relations significantly changed. Kathryn Weathersby's account on the Korean War suggests its cause. She argued that the Soviet Union and China delayed an armistice treaty with the U.S. because China intended to strengthen its socialist revolution. The Soviet Union strove to tie down the forces and resources of the United States to the Korean peninsula as it sought to secure

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.,7.

¹⁷⁶ Paek Namun, *Ssoryŏn Insang* (The Soviet Impression), ed. Pang Kijung (Seoul: Sŏnin, 2005), 84-87.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 209-210, 122-132.

its European socialist perimeter. Thus, North Korea had to continue the bloody conflict despite its wish to end the war. She asserted that the North Korean ruling party started to perceive North Korea's position as the forefront of the anti-American imperialist struggle; furthermore, North Korea began to believe that it would gain aid from other socialist countries, even though North Korea would go on with its own socialist vision of *chuch'e*.¹⁷⁸

Friendship of Peace (Pyŏnghwa ūi ch'insŏn, 1958),¹⁷⁹ which combined thirteen travel *ocherki* portrays the changes in the Soviet people's perception of North Korea and North Korean



Image 2-2: Delegates marching to the Lenin Stadium*

intellectuals' conviction of socialist solidarity based on anti-imperialism. This compilation included pieces written by North Korean delegates who participated in the 6th World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow in 1957. The delegates perceived the Soviet Union with metaphoric phrases such as "Moscow is the heart of the peoples" and "the vanguard of world peace." The Soviet Union's advanced social facilities and economic development convinced them that North Korea should strive to become like the Soviet Union. Moscow was the object of North Korean

¹⁷⁸ Kathryn Weathersby, "New Evidence: New Russian Documents on the Korean War," n.d., <<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ACF1A6.pdf>> (Feb. 30 2014), 30-124. See also, Kathryn Weathersby, "North Korea and the Armistice Negotiation" *Han'guk chŏnjaeng 60 chuyŏn kinyŏm haksul taehoe kkunaji anŭn chŏnjaeng* (The 60th Years anniversary of the Korean War) (July 27 2013).

¹⁷⁹ *Pyŏnghwa ūi ch'insŏn* (Friendship of Peace) (Pyŏngyang: Minjuch'ŏngnyŏnsa. 1958).

intellectuals' admiration. However, different from previous travelogues, the delegates narrated warm welcomes from the ordinary Soviet people. They felt that the Soviet people treated them like family. Even one of the delegates, Kim Hakkyŏn, reminisced about a touching moment when he met an 84 year-old Russian lady who walked 20 miles just to see the Korean heroes.¹⁸⁰

Yi Chaehun's study suggested how the Soviet Union people's perception of North Korea changed during the war. He contended that the Soviet Union utilized the Korean War to consolidate the identity of a bipolarized world—the Soviet Union as a protector of world peace and the U.S. as an imperialist aggressor. He noted that the Soviet Communist Party's official newspaper, *Pravda* (the Truth) delivered 3,500 articles on the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 and highlighted the U.S. army's air raids, civilian atrocities, and bacteriological warfare.¹⁸¹ Thus, it would be reasonable to conclude that the power of the Soviet Union's mass media formulated the Soviet people's imaginative geography of the land of Korea, where people bravely fought against American imperialism. Likewise, North Korea started to perceive of itself as an equal partner of the Soviet Union, and as a protector of the socialist cause. Through the Korean War, the people in socialist countries imagined socialist solidarity against American imperialism even if it was short-lived.¹⁸²

The text also reflected the international atmosphere created right after the announcement of its antiwar policy. The Soviet Union hosted the festival as a gesture to show their commitment

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 35.

* *Sixth World Youth and Students Festival* (1958)

¹⁸¹ Yi Chaehun, "Soryŏn Kongsandang kigwanji Pravūda e pich'in Han'guk Chŏnjaeng" (The Reflection of the Korean War in the Soviet Communist Party's official newspaper, *Pravda*), *P'yŏnghwa yŏn'gu nonjip* 20, no. 12 (2012), 291-322.

¹⁸² Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung North Korean Leader*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 140. North Korea gained a loan of one billion rubles for post-war reconstruction from the Soviet Union. Sun Zhihwa argued that the Korean War secured North Korea's foreign aids from China and Soviet Union.

to the new policy of peaceful co-existence. They publically announced its invitation to young people in the capitalist countries under the banner of “Peace and Friendship” while taking out the phrase “against the aggressive imperialist pact” from the previous festival.¹⁸³ However, North Korean delegates reported on the strong anti-imperialist spirit in the festival in 1957; they heard peoples from various countries stating “you [North Koreans] are the glorious heroes who defeated the Allied force led by the U.S. We support your cause of national unification” and “The eyes of the world focus on North Korea— the forefront of the anti-imperial revolution.”¹⁸⁴ The North Korean delegates were convinced that anti-imperial struggles were blazing everywhere in the global community. Since the festival was held in Moscow amid an escalating Cold War environment, there was a large number of people who advocated leftist causes and anti-imperialism. Also, there were a quite a few journalists, writers, and tourists from the Western Bloc who came to report and witness what was really going on behind the Iron Curtain. So, there were probably many different voices raised on the issues of anti-imperialism, anti-communism, and anti-war. North Korean delegates, who participated in the festival, did mention some journalists expressed their negative attitude toward the festival. However, their texts diminished the voice of anti-communism at the festival by highlighting many stories about how a number of people from the Western countries earnestly advocated anti-imperialist causes. Although *ocherk* was supposed to describe “real people and real events,” their *ocherki* revealed that the reality they described also reflected their wish for class solidarity and anti-imperial internationalism across national boundaries.

¹⁸³ Youth delegations came from 131 countries and shared their cultural activities and competed for gold medals in the field of athletics and arts. See, G. Alex Jupp, *A Canadian Looks at the U.S.S.R: the Firsthand View of Russian Life During the World Youth Festival* (Exposition Press: New York, 1958), and Committee of Youth Organizations of the U.S.S.R., et al., *Sixth World Youth and Students Festival* (Moscow: the Committee, 1958).

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 37, 49.

New China: An Invincible Friendship Forged with Blood

After the People's Republic of China sent the Chinese People's Volunteer Army across the Chinese and Korean border, it permanently reconfigured Cold War geopolitics. It created a powerful dynamics in the socialist camp. Earlier scholarship on Sino-North Korean relations emphasized how their common experiences in the anti-Japanese and anti-American struggle founded a "teeth and lips" alliance. North Korea represented the "lips" protecting China, the



Workers signing up for the Chinese People's Volunteer Army*

"teeth." However, revisionist scholars of Sino-North Korean relations have rejected the particular historical experience of the "teeth and lips" relationship, while highlighting that the Sino-North Korean alliance followed a normal interstate relationship based on mutual interests with newly de-

classified documentation.¹⁸⁵ Whether the phrase of "*Cho-Chung ch'insŏn*," (朝中親善, Sino-North Korean friendship) was a reality or just political rhetoric utilized by both ruling parties for

¹⁸⁵ Sun Zhihua, "Alliance of "Tooth and Lips" or Marriage of Convenience? The Origins and Development of the Sino-North Korean Alliance," trans. Min Song *Working Paper Series* (U.S. Korea Institute at SAIA: Johns Hopkins University, Dec 2008), 3-28.

*Habanggun Hwabosa, *Kūdŭl I pon Han'guk chŏnchaeng: Hangmi wŏnjo-Chungguk inmin chiwŏngun* (The Korean War from their perspectives: Resist American aggression and aid Korea campaign-Chinese People' Volunteers), trans. No Tonghan et al. (Seoul: Noobit, 2005), 42.

political ends, the results were self-evident. It created an imaginative geography of Chinese and Korean solidarity based on the universal category of *inmin* (people, 人民) in the 1950s.

During the Korean War, Chinese and Korean writers were dispatched to the frontlines as war correspondents, and they wrote numerous war stories, which were widely circulated and translated in both countries. For instance, from

1950 to 1960, the Chinese Communist Party's official newspaper, the *People's Daily* (人民日報, *Inmin ilbo*, *Renmin ribao*) delivered 6,450 reports, news stories, and literary articles on the Korean War. In particular, the *People's Daily* published 185 pieces of so-called "Korean war literature", in the "Resist American Aggression and Aid Korea campaign" (*hangmi wŏnjo munhak*

抗美援朝運動).¹⁸⁶ The Korean War literature functioned as a literary device to construct anti-imperial internationalism. In North Korea, as well, many travel *ocherki*, memoirs, and reports on

China were published in major academic journals and newspapers.¹⁸⁷ Following the Korean War, North Korean writers and artists toured all over China to inspire the Chinese to support the war effort and secure financial aid. This section will focus on travel *ocherki* written by members of



Image 2-3: A Chinese volunteer separating from his Korean host mother*

¹⁸⁶ Chang Bin, "Kangmeiyuanchao wenxue xushi zhong de zhengzhi yu renxing" (The narratives of politics and humanity in Korean War literature), *Wenxue piping* 2 (2007). She is one of the experts on the field of Korean War literature.

¹⁸⁷ The works of famous Chinese writers, such as Ba Jin and Yang Shuo were translated into Korean. *Hangmi Wŏnjo tanp'yŏnjip* (A collection of short stories on the Korean War) (P'yŏngyang: Kungnip Ch'ulp'ansa, 1956).

the People's delegation to China from 1952 to 1954.¹⁸⁸ The three authors of the *ocherki*—Yun Sich'öl, Chu Chin'gyöng, and Hwang Kõn—envisioned a new China as revealing: a heroic anti-imperialist struggle, a successfully transformed socialist economic system, and a harmonious socialist multi-ethnic family state.

These texts are full of heart rending experiences of invincible friendship between the shared histories of the Korean and Chinese people—both in the present anti-American struggle as well as in the anti-Japanese struggle of the past. Compared to North Korea's common metaphor of referring to the Soviet Union as family (*han chiban*), these texts referred to China as *hyölc'hok* (血族, consanguineous folk). Hwang wrote that “we [Chinese mothers and wives] truly appreciate how Korean mothers and sisters took care of our sons and husbands in the battlefields.” By exemplifying the stories of the Chinese and Korean mothers' love and sacrifice for the Chinese volunteers and North Korean soldiers, Hwang emphasized the strong affection between the Chinese and the Koreans. In the literature on the Korean War written in China and North Korea during the 1950s, terms that signified familial and brotherly love were frequently used.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, these authors' description of the Chinese people, whether they were farmers, workers, or cadre members, presented them as family members and dear neighbors.

¹⁸⁸ *Chungguk pangmungi* (Travelogue on China), (P'yöngyang: Kungnip Ch'ulp'ansa, 1956): There three travel *ocherki* and two journals of travel poetry journal (*kihaeng sijip*). Hwang Kõn's “Yukkõk üi moksori” (the Voice of 6 million people), Yun Sich'öl's “Inmin Chungguk üi saemosüp” (New Appearance of People's China) and Chu Chingyöng's “Saeroun Chungguk üi Sõnam (A new Xinan in China). For Travel Poetry, Kim “Pukwõn, Chõnwu üi ttang e só” (the land of arm-in comrades), Pak P'allyang “Chungguk pangmun sich'o” (A Travel Poetry on China).

*Habanggun Hwabosa, *Küdü I pon Han'guk chõnchaeng: Hangmi wõnjo-Chungguk inmin chiwõngun* (The Korean War from their perspectives: Resist American aggression and aid Korea campaign-Chinese People' Volunteers), trans. No Tonghan et al. (Seoul: Noobit, 2005), 241.

¹⁸⁹ Ri Ponggõn, ed., *Cho-Chung ch'insõn midanjip* (Stories of Sino-Korean friendship) (P'yöngyang: Kungnip Ch'ulp'ansa, 1957). It is a compilation of the Korean War literature focusing on reportages and memoirs written by both Chinese and Korean writers. It combines the 13 Chinese writers' works and the 19 Korean writers' works.

Significantly, Korean War literature penned by Chinese authors, though stressing familial love and friendship, accentuated the heroic roles and leadership of the Chinese volunteers and the devotion of Chinese mothers and wives. Similarly, Korean War literature penned by Korean authors emphasized the leadership of the Korean People's Army on the battlefields. For instance, Hwang Kŏn mentioned how on every street-corner he passed, there was a sincere and warm welcoming banner: "Long live the heroic Korean People," and "Our respect to the Korean People" made by the people of New China." Even a young child paid thankful greetings to him by tightly holding his hand and saying, "Because the Korean uncles bravely fought (against Americans), we can study safely at school now."¹⁹⁰ Hwang indirectly expressed how the Korean People's Army's struggle against U.S. imperialism saved the lives of the Chinese. The North Korean official history textbook, *Chosŏn tongsa* (1961), stated that:

American imperialists aimed to invade Korea first and then provoke a war with China and Indochina. . . thus, when American troops reached the Tuman River, they threatened the Chinese defense line. . . the Chinese Volunteers' participation in the Korean War was necessary for China to strengthen its defense. . . it also demonstrated proletarian internationalism.¹⁹¹

This focus on the important roles played by national actors is an excellent example of how the notion of internationalism was practiced in reality.

These travel *ocherki* attempted to validate for their readers how the news of Sino-Korean friendship was in fact true. The texts implied that the depth of the friendship was far greater than what the Korean people had heard from the news and radio. Hwang's utilization of the genre enabled him to vividly describe and authentically capture every moment when the Chinese people expressed their friendship to the Korean people. The phrase an "unbreakable friendship

¹⁹⁰ Hwang Kŏn's "Yukkŏk ūi moksori" (the Voice of 6 million people) in *Chungguk Pangmunggi* (Travelogue on China) (P'yŏngyang: Kungnip Ch'ulp'ansa, 1956), 8.

¹⁹¹ Ryŏksa yŏn'guso, *Chosŏn tongsa 3* (A compilation of Korean History 3) (P'yŏngyang: Kwahakwŏn p'ulp'ansa, 1961), 206-208.

between China and North Korea forged in blood” served as reality.¹⁹² At the same time, in the middle of their texts, the same authors made sure that they inserted many of the stories of Japanese atrocities they had heard from the common Chinese people. To be an *ocherkist* was to educate the people, so they employed literary tactics to share the sufferings of the Chinese people with the Koreans who both had been under Japanese imperialism. This collective memory of the anti-Japanese resistance became the perception of the shared destiny between the Chinese and Korean people.

In contrast to the authors’ emphasis on a friendship based on “familial love”, their aim for friendship was also based on the modern political concept of “*inmin*”. This led them to pay keen attention to the Chinese government’s successful ethnic minority policy. They carefully observed how various ethnological institutions and archival centers were established in many different cities and made efforts to collect folk culture, such as songs, music, musical instruments, oral histories, and dance performances. Hwang believed the Chinese ethnic minority policy could eradicate the old feudal culture of minorities while keeping their national characteristics. The reason why Hwang, Yun, and Chu carefully focused on the ethnic minority policy was because it indicated that China had transformed from its traditional East Asian hierarchical relations between Han Chinese and minorities to a horizontal relationship among ethnic groups; thus this proved that the socialist Chinese government sincerely followed the socialist idea of national-territorial autonomy. Hwang also wrote of the Mongolian tradition of horse riding techniques as a unique national characteristic and the source of strength for them to resist foreign

¹⁹² Hwang expressed his deep appreciation for Chinese Volunteer Army in North Korea and the Chinese government’s generous financial aid. About 20,000 Chinese volunteers stayed in Korea and contributed to post-war reconstruction from 1954-1958. North Korea gained a loan of eight trillion Chinese yuan to be paid in two installment and canceled all North Korean debts to China from 1950-1953. Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 140.

aggression and exploitation.¹⁹³ He was convinced that all ethnic minorities in China had different national cultural traditions, however, there was a universal kernel that testified to the popular revolutionary element; this revolutionary element was to be preserved and re-invented for the creation of a new socialist culture.

When Khrushchev announced peaceful coexistence with the west, North Korea and China could support their shared goal of unfinished national liberation—South Korea and Taiwan under American imperialism. For them, national revolution was still in progress. Both the Chinese and Korean governments enthusiastically promoted the creation of a public space where people could discuss anti-American imperialism. Both governments effectively utilized the discourse on anti-American imperialism to not only create a new socialist *inmin*, but also to mobilize their people for state-led modernizing efforts. Economic development was a part of an anti-imperialist project to demonstrate the superiority of the socialist system.

The creation of an anti-American imperialist discourse was a top down process. However, in the discursive sphere of anti-American imperialism, the Chinese and Koreans broke the old images of their respective nations. Recently, scholarly analysis on 1930s' novels set in Manchuria highlight how conflicting images of the Korean and Chinese were constructed in the colonial space of Manchuria. By the mid-nineteenth century, a number of Korean people started to immigrate to Manchuria. This process accelerated during the colonial period because Japan's East Asian Policy endorsed immigration to Manchuria. Manchuria became a new land of hope for Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese immigrants. Yet, sharp conflicts between immigrants and the local Chinese arose. Korean novels that were written in the 1930s typically portrayed the

¹⁹³ Ibid., 28.

Chinese as stingy land owners who exploited Korean tenant farmers.¹⁹⁴ Similarly, for local Chinese, Koreans were the object of their contempt. As I mentioned earlier, the Minsaengdan Incident demonstrates that the image of Koreans as Japanese collaborators or the second-class citizens of the Japanese empire existed among the Chinese. However, Korean War literature washed out the old, negative images of the Chinese and Koreans. The Chinese and Koreans were reborn as socialist revolutionaries. Through the common experience and memory of the Korean War, the Chinese and Koreans were able to imagine their counterparts as socialist *inmin*.

North Vietnam: The Heroic Nation

The similar political situations of North Korea and North Vietnam tied the two divided countries closely. Both in Korea and Vietnam, political elites pursued different political visions during the colonial period. Caught up in Cold War geopolitics, Korean and Vietnamese political elites had very little room to negotiate and work together to build a common vision in a peaceful manner after liberation. Nonetheless, this common experience led North Korea and North Vietnam to closely observe political events that took place in each other's countries. During the Korean War, North Vietnam expressed its strong support for North Korea by sending a

¹⁹⁴ The following novels set in 1920s-1930s Manchuria and narrated the conflict between the local Chinese and Korean tenant farmers. (Ch'oe Sōhae's *Hongyōm* (Prominence, 1927), Kang Kyōngae's *Sogūm* (Sult, 1924), and Ri T'aejun's *Nonggun* (Peasant Army, 1939). Also see, Chang Noe, "Han-Chung kŭndae sosŏl kwa manju; sosŏl e tuyōng toen Chungguk in kwa Chosŏn in ūl chungsim ūro" (the Korean and Chinese modern literature and Manchuria: Focusing on the reflection of the Korean and Chinese in novels), *Pip'yōng munhak* 48 (Jun. 2013) 347-371. Yi Chunsik, "Manbosan sakŏn kwa Chungguk in ūi Chosŏn in insik" (The Manbosan incident and the conception of Koreans among the Chinese), *Han'guksa yon'gu* 156 (2013) 237-270. Since the Korean and Chinese revolutionaries fought together for the same goal, anti-Japanese imperialism in Manchuria, some novels also portrayed positive images of the Chinese and Koreans.

delegation to the country.¹⁹⁵ Also, North Korea paid acute attention to the events happening in the First Indochina War (1946-1954). North Korean official newspapers and academic periodicals provided a variety of information on Vietnamese history, music, dance, and news



Image 2-4: A North Vietnamese poster depicting the Border Patrol's tight security*

about the battlefields of Vietnam to the North Korean public.

Soon after North Vietnam declared the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) on May 7, 1954, North Korea sent a people's delegation to Vietnam, headed by the

Secretary of Education Paek

Namun in 1955.¹⁹⁶ One of the

North Korean delegates, Pyŏn Hŭigŭn, wrote a travel *ocherk*, the “Heroic country of Vietnam” (Yŏngung ũi nara) about his 40-day experience in North Vietnam in 1955.¹⁹⁷

Pyŏn's work grasped the high point of the anti-colonial and anti-imperial spirit in Vietnam right after the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Through a series of vignettes about various historical sites, he wrote of the dreadful suffering and exploitation of the Vietnamese people

¹⁹⁵ “Wŏllam Inmin taep'yodan irhaeng raejo” (The delegation of Democratic Republic of Vietnam visits North Korea) *Nodong Sinmun* (August 23 1951),1. See, Song Yŏng, *Wŏllam ilgi* (Dairies on Vietnam) (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn Chakka tongmaeng ch'ulp'ansa, 1957), 45, 53.

¹⁹⁶ “Wŏllam pangmun Chosŏn inmin taep'yo Hanoi e toch'ak,” *Nodong shinmun*, August 10 1955, 3.

¹⁹⁷ Pyŏn Hŭigŭn, “Yŏn'gung ũi nara” (Heroic country of Vietnam) in *Kukchejŏk pŏt ũl ch'ajasŏ* (Searching for International friends) (P'yŏngyang: Kungnip Ch'ulp'ansa, 1956).

**Chosŏn misul* 4 (1958), 40.

under both the French colonialists and Vietnamese landowners. He vividly described stories that he heard from Vietnamese farmers and workers, the gruesome details of death by hunger, fourteen to fifteen hour workdays of back-breaking work, and rice extraction during the colonial period. These stories evoked a deep sense of outrage in Pyŏn because they reminded him of the Japanese colonial exploitation of Korea. In turn, he encouraged them by mentioning how the Korean people admired the Vietnamese people's tenacity in resisting the evils of capitalism.

Pyŏn's expression "a widow knows another widow's sorrow" indicates how the two countries' colonial experiences and national division were essential signifiers to foster a link that united the people of North Vietnam with the people of North Korea to fight together against anti-reactionary forces in both South Vietnam and South Korea. North Korean and North Vietnamese tales about revolutionary heroes and stories about atrocities committed by the French and Japanese imperialists circulated across the Vietnamese and Korean boundaries. A well-known Vietnamese writer, Nguyen Xuan Sanh (b.1920) wrote *Phác Kim Tô: Em thiếu nữ du kích Triều Tiên* (*Phac Kim To, a Korean guerilla girl*), a story of a little Korean girl's patriotic deeds.¹⁹⁸ Korean films such as *Pp'alch'isan ūi ch'ŏnyŏ* (*Young female partisan*) were screened in Vietnam.¹⁹⁹ Stories or phrases exposing French colonial exploitation, such as "How Vietnamese Landowners Sold the Sky to Poor Peasants" spread in North Korea.²⁰⁰ Pyŏn's travel

¹⁹⁸ Song Yŏng, *Wŏllam ilgi* (Dairies on Vietnam) (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn Chankka chakka tongmaeng ch'ulp'ansa, 1957), 64. Song introduced two *ocherkists* in Vietnam. Also see, a groundbreaking work on North Korea-North Vietnam cultural relations, Yun Taeyŏng, "1950 nyŏndae Pukhak kwa pukpetŭnam ūi kwangye wa munhwa kyoryu" (the North Korea-North Vietnam relations and cultural exchange: Relating to the activities of North Korean cultural delegation in 1956), *Yŏksa wa kyŏngkye* 87 (2013), 202. Kim N.B.Ninh, *World Transformed the Politics of Cultrue in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 87. She mentioned that Nguyen Xu Sanh taught and wrote abstract poetries in the prewar period.

¹⁹⁹ Song Yŏng, *Wŏllam ilgi* (Dairies on Vietnam) (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn Chankka chakka tongmaeng ch'ulp'ansa, 1957), 254.

²⁰⁰ Pyŏn Hŭigŭn, "Yŏngwung ūi nara" (the Heroic country of Vietnam) in *Kukchejŏk pŏt ūl ch'atchasŏ* (Searching

ocherk clearly shows how the publicist and militant nature of *ocherk* operated in the text. He artistically expressed his sentiment and reflections tactfully making one imagine the existence of a national unification struggle somewhere in South East Asia, and a Vietnamese compatriot encouraging the Koreans by saying, “When we are suffering we think about you”, and we sing the “Song of General Kim Il Sung together.”²⁰¹

Cultural exchanges between North Vietnam and North Korea contributed to foster their socialist revolutionary cause. In 1956, North Korea sent the second North Korean People’s Delegation to North Vietnam.²⁰² Song Yōng led the group and stayed in Vietnam for 37 days. After his return, he wrote *Wōllam ilgi* (Vietnam Dairies, 1957). This travel *ocherk* provided detailed information about how the cultural exchanges—in terms of their methods, content, and participants—operated in a socialist system. Song illustrated that one-on-one interviews, forums, observations, lectures, and workshops were the main tools of scholarly exchange. The exchanges focused on language, literature, dance, art, education, and culture. In their discussions, the key points were the principle of socialist realism, how to define national characteristics, and the popularizing of socialist culture.²⁰³ In the area of art and dance, Ham Sebong and Ri Sōkho

for international friends) (P’yōngyang: Kungnip Ch’ulp’ansa, 1956).121. He explained the actual story as the following “Vietnamese landowners exploited poor peasants on the coattails of the French. They practiced usury and charged exorbitant interest rates. After lending money to a poor peasant, one landlord forced the peasant to sell the sky above his head. Out of desperation, the peasant agreed to sell the sky. After that the landowner started to charge water fee to farmers by saying that since rain comes from his sky, the peasant ought to pay him.”

²⁰¹ Ibid., 116.

²⁰² Song Yōng, *Wōllam ilgi* (Dairies on North Vietnam) (P’yōngyang: Chosōn chakka tongmaeng ch’ulp’ansa, 1957). They stayed in Vietnam from Sep. 3 to Dec. 10. 1956.

²⁰³ Ibid., 64

(1904-1971) personally provided instruction on Korean traditional dance or art techniques for Vietnamese artists. In turn, Ham Seborg also learned a Vietnamese traditional dance.²⁰⁴

An interesting detail to note is that although travel *ocherki* rarely revealed shortcomings in other socialist countries' cultural or economic practices, Söng disclosed deficiencies that he had experienced in the art world. He points out that Vietnamese art lacked a socialist realist tradition while retaining strong elements of surrealism, impressionism, functionalism, and a general weakness in maintaining a cultural policy of 'socialist in content and national in form.' The so-called "bourgeois tendency" was portrayed in the arts during the early years of socialist countries, but the different degrees in the retention of western European artistic tendencies stemmed from the differences in the national liberation and division process in North Korea and North Vietnam. The Cold War quickly overshadowed Korea's liberation and prohibited intellectuals from forming a unified front. Intellectuals instead divided along the sharp lines of leftist/north and rightist/south. By contrast, the North Vietnamese socialist state-making process simultaneously took place with the anti-colonial struggle, which continuously incorporated various political spectrums of intellectuals and oversea returnees from France into the national liberation movement. Particularly, many Vietnamese intellectuals coming from France in the 1950s still kept "bourgeois artistic tendencies" due to their Franco-Vietnamese education and bourgeois backgrounds.²⁰⁵

Although the environment of the North Vietnamese intellectual community was different from that of North Korea, they shared one common characteristic: inner-migrant writers and artists from the South. Thus, North Vietnamese writers showed a strong interest in the situation

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 119, 228-229.

²⁰⁵ Kim N.B.Ninh, *World Transformed the Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 87, 122, 140.

of North Korean writers from the South. Song wrote that he was frequently asked by North Vietnamese writers about the issue of inner-migrant writers and artists, such as “what are the North Korean government policies toward the inner-migrant writers and artists? Or, “when they come to North Korea, how does the North Korean government treat them?”²⁰⁶ Song wrote his response to their questions: “When South Korean writers and artists come to the Republic, the Party and government give them tremendous support and preferential treatment. I [Song] am also one of those who left his hometown in South Korea. Since coming to the Republic in 1946, I have lived my life as a writer happily and energetically.”²⁰⁷ Song’s statement was true for himself. He was an inner-migrant writer who gained fame as a writer in North Korea. However, in the South Korean public, the term “purge” (肅清, *sukch’ōng*) was often used to describe the lives of inner-migrant writers and artists in North Korea. There was quite a number of inner-migrant writers and artists who were purged. As I previously mentioned, the writers and artists who were associated with the Namnodang were expelled in the early 1950s, and Han Sōrya, Sō Manil, Ch’oe Sūnghūi, An Mak, and other well-known writers and artists had their positions and privileges revoked in the early 1960s.

Song’s belief that North Korea was more advanced than North Vietnam, judging by its socialist cultural development, was quite noticeable. However, he firmly believed that North Vietnam would be transformed into a glorious socialist state. This was an indication that although socialist intellectuals pursued internationalism, it did not mean they did not believe in a national hierarchy. Nevertheless, they had faith that Marxist universalism would eventually bring Vietnam into a socialist stage. In other words, Marxist universalism would ultimately erase the

²⁰⁶ Song Yōng, *Wōllam ilgi* (Dairies on North Vietnam) (P’yōngyang: Chosōn chakka tongmaeng ch’ulp’ansa, 1957), 168.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

socio-economic differences between North Korea and North Vietnam. Furthermore, Song's perception of the "liberal" tendencies of North Vietnamese intellectual circles was also a good example of how the Hundred Flowers Movement of China and de-Stalinization affected the two countries in different manners. Although it was a short-lived "public space," Vietnamese intellectuals expressed their resistance against party policy and cultural policy during the *Nhân Văn* and the *Giai Phẩm* (Humanism and Masterpiece) era.²⁰⁸ Compared to North Vietnam, the North Korean literary world was more rigid and closed. Thus, when bombarded with politically sensitive questions such as, "what's the situation of cult of personality in North Korea?" and "how did the Chinese Hundred flowers movement affect North Korea?" Song avoided answering.

Quite different from capitalist societies, where culture, traditions, or ideas came to be turned into market products and circulated freely, the lack of a market economy in the socialist system meant that cultural exchanges were an important avenue to promote socialist culture and ideas. The appreciation of other countries' traditional cultures, and the effort in turn to publicize one's own national culture to the other, was understood as the basis of international friendship. The endorsement of cultural activities and exchanges among socialist countries was a manifestation of internationalism. Thus, cultural exchanges between North Korea and Vietnam contributed to the efforts to permeate anti-imperialist culture into everyday people's lives, and at the same time the North Korean and North Vietnamese people helped to draw an imaginative geography connecting Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia, where the people of both nations bravely carried out their anti-imperialist resistance.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 122, 140. The name of the period came from two short lived journals, *Nhân Văn* and *Giai Phẩm*. Kim N.B Ninh argued that after the crackdown of the *Nhân Văn* *Giai Phẩm* group in 1958, there was no more "gray zone" between state and intellectuals.

The Mongolian People's Republic:

Socialist Brothers where Sun Rises on the Boundless Steppe

Mongolia was the second country that recognized North Korea as the only legitimate state on the Korean peninsula and the two established diplomatic relations on October 15 1948. Mongolia provided free aid of livestock, horses, sheep, cows, and food during and after the war. Compared to China and North Vietnam, North Korea did not have an active relationship with Mongolia. However, since the early years, North Korea had close ties with Mongolia to promote socialist solidarity in Asia.

As a part of cultural exchanges, Yun Sep'yŏng (b. 1909, *fl.* 1936-61),²⁰⁹ a distinguished literary critic and Pak Seyŏng (1902-1989), a well-known poet, visited Mongolia as delegates of the North Korean Cultural Science Committee in 1955. After their return, they published a travel *ocherk* and travel poetry respectively. Yun's efforts to represent Mongolia as a friendly brotherly country pervades his text; he emphasized the history of the Mongolian people's anti-Japanese struggle during World War II and the Mongolian people's brotherly love toward the North Korean *inmin*.²¹⁰ He vividly illustrated the various events that took place during Mongolia-North Korea Amity Week. Yun's writings suggest that he deeply felt the spirit of proletarian internationalism when Mongolia hosted a celebration for the Tenth anniversary of North Korea's liberation, as if the historical event was an occasion for their own national holiday. Korean folk dances, songs, and wrestling matches were performed at this festival.

²⁰⁹ His real name was Yun Kyusŏp, a renowned literary critic since the colonial period. After liberation, he went to North Korea and led the field of literary critics until the early 1960s. Yun's works, display his particular interest in the relationship between *minjok* and literature. His representative works include the following: "The problem in the establishment of national culture" (1946), "The foundation and character in new Chosŏn culture"(1946), and "Opposing reactionary bourgeoisie ideology in literary front line." (1956)

²¹⁰ During WWII, Mongolia supported the Soviet Union vast material aid and fought against the Japanese.

Yun also highlighted the importance of the Mongolian socialist revolution and its impact on the economic lives of the Mongolian people. While Mongolians still maintained a nomadic pastoral economic system born from the country's geographical and ecological characteristics, Yun observed that the onset of modern agricultural and industrial developments would terminate seasonal migration in herding livestock and eventually turn the Mongolian people into a sedentary race. He believed this to be the universal fate of socialist people. Just as industrial progress under socialism had changed the lives of North Korean *inmin*, who used to till the land with hoes and sickles, Yun predicted that socialism would eventually transform the Mongolian steppe into the land of industrialization, since the progress of socialist countries was inevitable and universal. Declared with a conviction that may appear naïve in retrospect, Yun's prediction of Mongolia's future revealed an important moment of tension. Cultural traditions as practiced in the everyday lives of the people are very often the repositories of different pasts and different national characters. Yet, these traditions are also shaped and bound by material conditions. Once factories came to populate the steppe, nomadic culture would necessarily fade. With this in mind, Yun's writings revealed a struggle in regards to how to evaluate the ways in which the rise of a socialist economy would damage, if not destroy, Mongolia's traditional nomadic culture.

One important aspect of Yun's text is that it clearly shows the universal characteristic of travelogues: the process by which a journey through a foreign land could inspire and intensify a writer's love for his homeland. For instance, Yun's itinerary overlaps in part with the journey taken and described in *Yŏrha ilgi* by Pak Chiwŏn, the famous 18th century scholar. The train Yun took to get to Ulaanbaatar was bound first for Peking and just before reaching the border between Korea and China, Yun imagines how Pak must have felt making the same journey almost two centuries before him. "About to step onto the Chinese territory, Pak turned around

toward Chosŏn over and over until he could not see the tip of Mt. Paekma of Ŭiju. I know how he must have felt, I can feel Park's patriotism. Now, I realize how much I miss my country!" A sense of continuity in terms of national identity informed this invocation of the past even as he was poised to cross the physical border that separated one nation from another. Yun displays his patriotism when he experienced the "other."

Travel to India: Pursuing Asian Solidarity

Sŏ Manil's *Travel to India* is a rare travel *ocherk* written outside of the Soviet orbit in the 1950s. The purpose of Sŏ's trip to India was to represent the North Korean delegation at the Preparatory Committee meeting for the Asian Writers' Conference (PCAWC hereinafter) in 1957, which was initiated by the Bandung Conference (or Asian-African Conference, hereinafter AA) in 1955. The PCAWC developed into the Asian-African Writers' Conference in 1958. The AA Conference was initiated by the newly independent countries led by India to advance decolonization and pursue neutrality in the bipolarized world. North Korea shared India's interest in the cause of anti-colonialism and an anti-Cold war system.²¹¹ Thus, Sŏ provided detailed information about how the AA had developed, the contents of its discussions, concerns, and agenda.²¹² He also showed how writers, who came from different political structures, such as

²¹¹ Kim Il Sung praised the Bandung spirit for its stance against anti-imperialism and anti-cold war the Third Congress of the Workers' party in 1956. In 1965, Kim participated in the 10 year anniversary the Bandung Conference at Indonesia. Pak T'aeho, *konghwaguk taewekwangyesa* (Foreign Relations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (P'yŏngyang: Sahoe kwahak ch'ulp'ansa, 1987), 14-19.

²¹² Renowned North Korean writers, Han Sŏrya, Song Yŏng, and Ch'ŏn Seborg attended the AA meetings regularly. However, The AA meetings became the hottest arena for the Soviet Union to compete for their hegemony. After the Tokyo conference, the AA meeting was divided into two headquarters and published its own official line of publications. *The Struggle Between Two Lines in the Afro-Asian Writers' Movement*, Afro-Asian Writer's Bureau (Colombo) 1968. See, Yi Byŏngha, "Sin Chungguk kwa Asia: Asia Afūrik'a chakka hoeūi' (A Legacy of Colombo: A New China and Asia-African Writers' Conference), *Chungguk hyŏndae munhak* 65 (2013), 141-207.

a notable Indian writer, Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), addressed the issue of the role of literature and the freedom of the writer.²¹³ Sō's conversation with the writers of other countries revealed that North Korean writers had wide connections with the writers of other countries. On this trip, he traveled with renowned Chinese writers, who also participated in the meeting, Cao Yu (曹禺, 1910—1996)²¹⁴ and Yang Shuo (楊朔, 1913-1968).²¹⁵

The prevalence of Western culture in New Delhi evoked Sō's strong hatred toward anything which signified imperialism in his travels—British and American soldiers and British styled architecture and other objects. He observed in New Delhi a strong feudal and imperial vestige and class division between British “masters” and the rest of the Indian people, who engaged in low paying jobs. “New Delhi is filled with British styled architecture as if it boasts the power of the British.” He emphasized how Indian national culture was violated by the British. “Indian religion banned the killing of animals. Cows and monkeys are sacred. But, the British people in New Delhi eat any meat except hippos.”²¹⁶ At the same time, although he experienced some quite unique cultural experiences that he had never known before, such as

²¹³ Sō's itinerary started from Beijing on 1957. July 24. He took a flight to Langung, Burma and stayed for two days; and flew to New Delhi after making one stop in Pakistan. He brought an English translator with him. Sō's text showed that an active interaction existed between North Korean and Chinese writers in the 1950s. He deeply appreciated his Chinese comrades' friendship and assistance. During his trip, Sō was assisted by the well-developed Chinese embassy system.

²¹⁴ Cao Yu was born as Wan Jiabao. He is often regarded as China's most important playwright of the 20th Century. His best-known works are *Thunderstorm* (1933) and *Sunrise* (1936). Sō referred to him as China's Ibsen. So described Cao's manner and way of thinking (as being) like a European gentlemen. See also, Helmut Martin and Jeffrey Kinkley, ed., *Modern Chinese Writers, Self-Portrayal* (NY : M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 314.

²¹⁵ Yang Shuo was a Chinese essayist born in Shandong. He produced a number of war stories while participating in the Korean War as a war correspondent. His novel, *The Country of Three Thousand Li* (三千里江山, 1950) was awarded the Medal of the flag of North Korea. Sō portrayed Yang as a traditional Chinese writer and passionate revolutionary. Sō wittily mentioned Yang's love to visit a zoo and botanical garden, he went to those places with Yang quite unintentionally; later he wrote about his experiences in visiting these places on quite a number of occasions.

²¹⁶ Sō Manil, *Indo kihaeng* (A Travelogue on India) (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn chakka tongmaeng ch'ulp'ansa, 1957), 63.

cows' clomping across the street and the caste system, he confirmed that the on-going anti-imperialist activities were a global phenomenon. The banners, "Defend the Sovereignty of Egypt!", "We Oppose the British and French interference in the Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Cannel" were hanging everywhere in India. Thus, he believed India's colonial experience and anti-imperialism would be the foundation for solidarity between North Korea and India, which would further create Asian solidarity which the AA promoted.

Traveling around a neutral state made Sō face the reality of national division. He accidentally ran into a young South Korean ex-prisoner of war, who chose to go to India. The young man told him that he and some of other ex-prisoners of war were leaving for Latin America.²¹⁷ It reminded him of the day when prisoners of war chose to be handed over to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission at the Joint Security Area. Sō wrote, the moment I told him "why didn't you decide to return to your country and instead wander around the world?" I quickly realized that my voice was shaking ... for I knew that they had no choice because of their family members back in South Korea."²¹⁸ But So quickly realized that the fundamental reason they had lost their motherland was the war. He poured forth his heart-wrenching feeling for these people and awaited a unified nation that would soon embrace them in its arms.

Reflection

The literary genre *ocherk* reveals that a great deal of variance and vitality existed in the post-Stalin socialist world. Unlike the popular conception a the static cultural landscape during the Cold War period, the travel *ocherk* demonstrated active cultural activities, such as scholarly

²¹⁷ 72 North Korean prisoners of war went to India and 2 South Korean prisoners of war went to India.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 214-216.

articles, arts, and publications, which served as a medium of international amity. Travel *ocherk* writings were clearly formulaic in one sense, in that they contained the messages of socialist solidarity and anti-imperial internationalism, which ultimately strengthened a utopic vision of a socialist world. Despite the discovered and reaffirmed differences that became manifested in these writings by charting the movement of the North Korean intellectuals across national borders, the final vision that these texts laid out was still one of the massive anti-imperial revolutionary struggles shared in all directions, that is all the different *inmin* of the world marching in lockstep. The North Korean travel *ocherk* provided a unique way to see how the peoples of socialist countries could imagine socialist solidarity. The travel *ocherk* served as the literary praxis for North Korean intellectuals' anti-imperialist internationalism. The production of anti-imperialist culture through mass media enabled the North Korean people to envision a world where people continuously struggled against colonial powers and where North Korea was on the vanguard of anti-imperial internationalism. In this process, anti-imperial internationalism became constitutive of the North Korean national identity. However, after the early 1990s, when neoliberalism swept the global community, the North Korean people found it hard to imagine a world of anti-imperial internationalism, because former socialist countries had become capitalist societies. Yet, the rhetoric of anti-American imperialism still remains as an effective ideological device in North Korea today.

**Chapter Three – Postcolonial Allure of the Anti-Japanese Revolutionary Socialist State:
The KAPF Discourse in the Literary and Art World in the 1950s**

In 1996, North Korea released a series of nine films “The Writers of the KAPF” (Korea Artista Proletara Federatio [Esperanto] 1925-1935, hereafter KAPF) from the collection, *Nation and Destiny*.²¹⁹ The entire collection of *Nation and Destiny* is considered a North Korean masterpiece, highly praised as a classic revolutionary film. Set in Korea, and Japan from the 1930s to the end of the Korean War, it shows the KAPF poet Ri Ch’an and other former KAPF members involved in the proletarian literary movement.²²⁰ It sharply contrasts the former KAPF members’ revolutionary struggles with the lives of pro-Japanese collaborators. Although it emphasized the poignant struggles of the KAPF writers and artists against Japanese fascist rule, its primary goal was to show how the Party lacked leadership and had limited the KAPF’s potential in the art movement. An artist’s true accomplishments could only be realized under the leadership of the Party and Kim Il Sung.

The lives of former KAPF members depicted in this film are quite different from what modern Korean literary scholars remember. For instance, South Korean scholars would not consider the protagonist, Ri Ch’an, as one of the central figures in the KAPF or as an impeccable anti-Japanese revolutionary as the film represents. In fact, Ri Ch’an’s highly profiled pro-Japanese collaboration earned him a spot in the *Dictionary of Pro-Japanese Biography*.²²¹ It is

²¹⁹ *Kapŭ chakka p’yŏn* (The writer of the KAPF), prod. Chosŏn Yesul Yŏnghwa ch’waryŏngso, vols. 34-42, 12 hours, Mokran Video, 1996, videocassette.

²²⁰ Ri Ch’an (1910-1974), a poet, was born in Pukch’ŏng, Hamgyŏng Province. He dedicated many poems to Kim Il Sung. His poem, “The Song of General Kim Il Sung” (1947) is known as an immortal revolutionary song.

²²¹ Minjok munje yŏn’guso, ed. *Ch’inil inmyŏng sajŏn* (Dictionary of Pro-Japanese Biographies) 3 vols. (Seoul: Minjok munje yŏn’guso, 2009).

not difficult for the audience to grasp the political agenda of the film's ending, when the writers and their followers have a glorious encounter with General Kim Il Sung on their way north. Kim Il Sung even embraces the “transgressor of *minjok*,” Yi Kwangsu, and together they all march north.

The film also hides the fact that the KAPF was once officially designated as North Korea's only legitimate source of literary and art production in 1956. North Korea slowly shifted its focus from KAPF to “anti-Japanese revolutionary literature and art (抗日革命文藝傳統, *hangil hyŏngmyŏng munye chŏntong*),” which was supposed to have been created during the partisan activities by Kim Il Sung in Manchuria in the 1930s. This artistic methodology became the foundation of *chuch'e* (Juche, 主體思想, self-reliance ideology or subjecthood) realism, and was made official in 1967. The history of the KAPF was forgotten during the 1970s and 1980s. As the film indicates, North Korea re-acknowledged the legacy of the KAPF in the 1990s as a part of Kim Jong Il's new inclusive cultural policy on national culture and tradition.

Despite North Korea's partial restitution of the KAPF, the progressive scholars in South Korea recognized North Korea's new trend as a hopeful gesture in laying groundwork for rewriting a unified version of modern Korean literary history. It further accelerated the on-going debates by South Korean scholars about the KAPF. Their path-breaking work brought about new perspectives in understanding North Korean literature by examining the works of former KAPF members and the origins of Kim Il Sung's notions on anti-Japanese revolutionary literature and art. However, their work predominantly focused on the linear transition of North Korea's official artistic guideline from the KAPF to the anti-Japanese revolutionary literary and art tradition. Yet, the lack of studies dealing with KAPF members in the art and music fields has hampered our understanding of how the KAPF tradition lost its hegemonic position. Thus, by scrutinizing the

former KAPF member's discourse on KAPF literature and KAPF art, I investigate how the former KAPF members' postcolonial desire to create a decolonized patriotic nation was reflected in the discourse of the KAPF and in Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese struggle. While employing the term postcolonial allure to describe the former KAPF members' desires for decolonization in narrating colonial history as a history of anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, I aim to demonstrate how their postcolonial allure led to identify the North Korean national liberation narrative with Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolution, thus, the former KAPF members significantly contributed to the consolidation of Kim Il Sung's anti-revolutionary struggle narrative, which became the root of *chuch'e* ideology.

First, I will discuss how Korea's specific course of history evolved from "occupied liberation" to national division, how the war intensified the former KAPF members' decolonization strategy by articulating a national hero, and the restoration of the KAPF as the central voice of the literary and art tradition of this new socialist country. Second, I will address the unique characteristics of the literary and art fields, and how the impact of the purge of the domestic party in 1953 unfolded a different discursive sphere for the KAPF tradition. By highlighting the discourse of KAPF art, which accentuates former KAPF artists' revolutionary, socialist realist and internationalist traditions, I demonstrate that a contested sphere existed in the transition from the KAPF to an anti-Japanese revolutionary literary and art tradition. Thus, I argue that North Korean postcoloniality—commonly seen as *chuch'e* ideology—is a transformative socio-political and cultural characteristic that was created in a contested sphere during the long period of decolonization.

Historical Background: The Liminal Sphere of Liberation from 1945-1948, The Former KAPF Members' Inner-Migration Process

Albert Memmi's lucid reflection on the aftermath of colonialism astutely describes the vivid picture of the moment when Japanese Emperor Hirohito announced the termination of the war through a radio broadcast. Memmi notes that the Korean people were deluded in their hopes that "a new world will magically emerge from the physical ruins of colonialism."²²² The trope of independence—joy, hope, and expectations for a new world prevailed in the Korean peninsula. Although liberation meant the end of colonial rule, Korea's liberation was brought about by the victory of the allied powers in WWII. So liberation also brought with it U.S and Soviet occupational forces. The Korean peninsula was quickly transformed into a Cold War frontier; this problematic condition of a "liberated yet occupied" sphere soon forced Korean intellectuals to take sides with the right or the left.

In this newly liberated sphere, the role of intellectuals mostly emphasized the urgent task of nation building and decolonization; they needed to re-define what it meant to form a new Korea, a new national literature and a new culture. The diverse ideological spectrum of intellectuals, "nationalists," leftists, or centrists, served an important function in the effort to critique and analyze the sociopolitical conditions of Korea, while some leftist intellectuals saw themselves as carrying out the revolutionary role of the intelligentsia. There were a large number of literary and art organizations and publishing houses who equally shared similar political visions. They channeled their strategy in overcoming the Japanese colonial paradigm and attempted to construct a new national literature and culture through their literary and artistic

²²² Albert Memmi, *Dominated Man: Note Toward a Portrait* (Orion Press, London, 1968), 88.

practices.²²³ The field of literary criticism emerged as a medium to communicate the intellectuals' contested visions of decolonization.

The former KAPF members were at the center of this discursive sphere of decolonization.²²⁴ Kim Chaeyong argued that the former KAPF members' ideological contentions—in terms of the direction of KAPF literature and praxis as a socialist movement—were carried over from the colonial period and divided into two groups. The supporters of the “dissolution of the KAPF” (*haesop'a*: Rim Hwa, Kim Namch'ŏn and Kim Kijin) formed the Headquarters for the Construction of Korean Literature (Chosŏn munhak kŏnsŏl ponbu, hereafter, Mungŏn) whereas the advocates of the “anti-dissolution of the KAPF” (*pihaesop'a*: Yi Kiyŏng, Han Sŏrya, An Hamgwang) established the Korean Proletarian Literature Alliance (Chosŏn P'ŭroletaria munhak tongmaeng hereafter, Proyemaeng).²²⁵ Other similar minded artists, musicians, and film-makers organized their own groups such as the Headquarters for the Construction of Korean Art and Music, which aligned with the Mungŏn while the Korean Proletarian Music Art Theatre Alliance joined with Proyemaeng.²²⁶

Contrasting views of Korea's revolutionary stages held by these groups brought about different interpretations of the relationship between proletarian literature and national literature. (國民文學, Kungmin munhak). In order to develop a revolutionary strategy, each group had to

²²³ Kwŏn Yŏngmin, *Han'guk minjok munhak ron yŏn'gu* (A study on the theories of national literature in Korean literature), (Seoul: Minmŭmsa, 1988).

²²⁴ Some of the former KAPF, like Han Sŏrya and An Hamgwang, who were originally from the northern region, stayed in their hometowns after liberation and started to build their literary and art organizations in the North.

²²⁵ Kim Chaeyong, *Pukhan munhak ūi yŏksa chŏk thae* (Historical understanding of North Korean literature) (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏng sa, 1994).

²²⁶ For more information, see Han'guk yesul yŏn'guso, *Han'guk yesul sadae kye: Haebang kwa pundan koch'ŏk sigi* (Four fields in modern Chosŏn misul s: liberation and the division of two Koreas) (Seoul: Sigonsa, 1991). An Kwanghŭi, *Han'guk P'ŭrolletaria Yŏn'gŭk undong ūi Pyŏnch'ŏn kwajŏng* (Changes in the development of proletarian theater in Korea) (Seoul: Tosŏ ch'ulp'an Yŏkrak, 2001).

evaluate the current economic and political conditions of Korea. The *Mungŏn* led by Rim Hwa (1908-1953) argued that Korea retained remnants of feudalistic elements, such as the land system based on landowner-tenant farmer relations; thus, it called for a united front to achieve a democratic bourgeois revolution. In contrast, the Proyemaeng supported the former KAPF line of class-based revolution while defining Korea as a capitalist society. These different perspectives on the stages of revolution brought about contrasting visions of what should be the goal of national literature and culture. In contrast to the members of Proyemaeng, such as Han Hyo (b. 1912 *fl.* 1932-1960) and Yun Kijung (1903-1955), who insisted on the continuation of KAPF literature as the direction that should be taken for national literature, Rim Hwa argued that the KAPF's praxis and its ideological radicalization alienated the masses. Thus, Rim Hwa asserted that although national literature represented the ideology of the workers, national literature should not be based on proletarian literature but must also include realist literature that critically reflected colonial contradictions through the depiction of a character's interiority (內省文學, *naesŏng munhak*). An Hamgwang (1910-1982) also prioritized proletarian literature, but he suggested that it was necessary to embrace an inclusive definition of class under current political economic conditions since the remnants of Japanese imperialism and feudalism still remained in a divided Korea.²²⁷ Scholars of modern literature have greatly emphasized how the ideological divisions of the KAPF aligned with their evaluation of national literature. However, their discourse on national and proletarian literature did not exactly follow the dissolution or anti-dissolution KAPF line. Their discourse also reflected their aesthetic differences on the interpretation of national literature, and their vision of Korea's future.

²²⁷ An Hamgwang, *Minjok kwa munhak* (Nation and literature) (P'yŏngyang: Munhwa chŏnsŏnsagan, 1947), 27-46.

Nevertheless, the KAPF members had one shared goal, national sovereignty and independence. Thus, the Mungŏn and Proyemaeng agreed to merge with the Korean Writers Alliance (Chosŏn munhakka tongmaeng) on Dec. 12, 1945.²²⁸ They agreed on Korea's historical stage as being a bourgeois democracy and committed themselves to constructing a national literature and culture under the following platform: the eradication of imperial and feudal remnants, the denouncement of an ultranationalist stance, and the pursuit of partnership between Korean literature and international literature.²²⁹ However, some of the key members who were dissatisfied with the rightist influence in the organization, Yi Kiyŏng (1895-1984) and Song Yŏng (1903-1979), withdrew from the organization a month after the establishment of the Korean Writers Alliance and headed north.²³⁰ Furthermore, after 1946, the U.S.'s new East Asian security policy terminated the short-trial period when the left wing flourished and U.S. cooperation complicated East Asia's path to decolonization and democratization. Japan's re-emergence as a primary U.S. ally in East Asia reversed Japan's de-imperialization and demilitarization course. General Hodge's anti-communist military government outlawed leftist activities, suspended leftist's publications, and arrested leftist intellectuals which accelerated the trend among domestic communist party (南勞黨, Namnodang) members and left-wing artists and writers to head north.²³¹ In the year 1947 to 1948, a substantial portion of the leftist intellectuals' inner-migration to the North took place. Preminent leftist leaders, writers, and artists, such as

²²⁸ Many rightist groups, such as the Central Cultural Association (Chungang munhwa hyŏphoe), emerged and competed for leadership in the "liberated" sphere. But, I will limit the scope of my discussion to the KAPF members' organizations.

²²⁹ Chosŏn munhakka tongmaeng undong saŏp kaehwang pogo" (Overview of the work of the Korean writers alliance movement), *Munhak* 1 (July 1946), 147-148.

²³⁰ Ha Chŏngil and others, "munhak" (literature) in *Han'guk hyŏndae yesul sadae kye: Haebang kwa pundan koch'ak sigi* (Four fields in modern Chosŏn misul s: liberation and the division of two Koreas) (Seoul: Sigonsa, 1991), 35-62.

²³¹ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

Rim Hwa, Ri Wŏnjo, Kim Namch'ŏn, had to relocate their political and intellectual hub to P'yŏngyang.

The Rise of National Heroes from the Past to the Present

Beside the urgent project of constructing a new national culture and literature, the Korean intellectuals' desire to create a new decolonized nation was projected through historical novels about national heroes. As postcolonial critics have shown, the emphasis on and symbolic function of national heroes are an essential discursive strategy in the articulation of a new glorious nation. In Korea, the creation of national heroes was an important decolonizing ritual to wash away colonial remnants and to awaken the spirits of national heroes in order to foster a shared national identity. The leitmotif of national heroes flourished through a variety of print materials. Major Korean newspapers published a series of historical novels on national heroes, such as Pak Chŏnghwa's *Minjok* and *Hong Kyŏngnae*, and Kim Tongin's *Ŭlchi Mundŏk*. In addition, Pak T'aewŏn began to exclusively write historical novels in 1946. In his novels, *Kim Wŏnbong and the Korean Heroic Corps*, *Yi Sunsin*, *Tale of Hong Kiltong* etc., he revealed how the indomitable and enduring spirit of Korean patriots resisted foreign aggression and survived to the present. However, such writings also reflected how Korean intellectuals attempted to atone for what they felt were sins of inactiveness, passive collaboration, or even active participation during the years of colonial rule.²³²

²³² An Miyŏng, "Haebang ihu Pak T'aewŏn chakp'um e nat'an an yŏngung ūi ūi: 1946-1949 ūl chungsim ūiro" (The meaning of heroes in Pak T'aewŏn's works after liberation: focusing on 1946-1949), *Han'guk hyŏndae munhakhoe* 25 (2008). Pak T'aewŏn (1909-1986) was born in Seoul, studied at Hosei University in Japan for two years. A well-known North Korean painter, Pak Munwŏn is his younger brother. He participated in the Group of Nine, a literary organization that promoted "pure literature" with Chŏng Chiyong and Ri T'aejun in the 1930s. He went to North Korea when the people's army occupied Seoul. He taught at P'yŏngyang Literature University. He lost his position due to his connection to Ri T'aejun, but his position was reinstated in 1960. His best work is known as *Kabo Peasant War* (1977-1986).

In these heroic creations, Kim Il Sung became a focal point of the former KAPF writers. After 1946 there were many biographical novels, songs, and poems that focused on Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese, partisan, and underground activities. The most notable works on Kim Il Sung included the following: Han Sörya's *the Blood Road* (1946) *Hero Kim Il Sung* (1948), and *Human Kim Il Sung* (1949), which is written as an *ocherk* to emphasize the authenticity of Kim's biography while also depicting Kim as a kind and generous individual.²³³ Cho Kich'ön's epic poem, *Mt. Paektu* (1947) was highly praised as an ideal model that depicted the archetype, Kim Il Sung, through the use of revolutionary romanticism.²³⁴

As Norma Kriger has shown, the elite's project of creating a national hero was an essential process in reinforcing political legitimation in the course of the national liberation movement and the aftermath of liberation. Furthermore, she argued that a single authority figure often arose in the process of inventing new traditions to create postcolonial legitimacy in many newly independent African postcolonial societies.²³⁵ Although the project of creating national heroes can be commonly seen among many other newly independent countries, there were some crucial reasons why Kim Il Sung emerged as a national revolutionary hero. Following the March 1st movement, the momentum of the liberation movement waned inside the Korean peninsula. The military struggle against Japanese rule had in fact ceased in the Korean Peninsula by the

²³³ Bryan Myers, *Han Sörya and North Korean Literature: The Failure of Socialist Realism in the DPRK* (Cornell University, 1994). Myers showed how Han became "a curator of Kim's personality cult" which came to dominate every aspect of North Korean society. Also, he emphasized Han's literary thought and style, which departed from the principle of socialist realism, which was the "official Stalin-era aesthetic doctrine defining an 'artistic' method." Myers argued that Han used the KAPF to promote his own political position. Also see, Kang Chinho, "Haebang hu Han Sörya Sosöl kwa Kim Il Söng üi hyöngsang" (The representation of Kim Il Sung in Han Sörya's novels after liberation"), *Minjok munhaksa yön'gu* 25 (2004), 270-302.

²³⁴ Ri Chönggu, *Siin Cho Kich'ön ron* (A Thesis on Poet Cho Kich'ön) (P'yöngyang: Munye ch'ulp'ansa, 1953).

²³⁵ Norma J. Kriger, "The Politics of Creating National Heroes: The Search for Political Legitimacy and National Identity" in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, ed. Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger (London: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1995), 139-162.

time of colonization in 1910, and the Korean independence fighters relocated their headquarters to Manchuria. Although the Korean independence movement fought against Japanese imperialism in Manchuria throughout the colonial period and joined the Allied Forces in China proper during WWII, they were not able to advance into Korea to force the Japanese to surrender. Thus, the Korean independence movement suffered from a lack of recognition.²³⁶

In addition, after the sudden event of Korean liberation, Korean intellectuals were even more preoccupied to prove the existence of colonial resistance, and that Korea was entitled to national independence. Thus, former KAPF writers endeavored to create a national narrative in order to highlight the fact that what the Koreans resisted and endured under Japanese colonial rule was a teleological path towards national liberation. In their vision, Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese resistance symbolized the struggle for national liberation.

The Discourse of Proletarian Literature in North Korea

After the former members of KAPF went to North Korea, they led the nation building process. They served in many important positions in literary and art organizations and made cultural policies. In the organizational chart of 1949, the North Korean literary and Art Federation list indicates that many of the former KAPF members or artists and writers from the South served on its Standing Committee.²³⁷ A study of the primary literary journal, *Munhak yesul* (Literary arts) reveals that rather than discussing proletarian and national literature, writers

²³⁶ Yi Tonghwi led anti-Japanese resistance in Russia starting in 1913, Kim *Wŏnbong's the Korean Heroic Corps* (Ŭiyŏltan) and others started anti-Japanese activism in Manchuria in 1919, Kim Il Sung led his anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle in 1930s, Mujŏng and Kim Tubong also fought against Japanese military in Yanan in the 1930s and 40s. The Revolution Army (Kwangbokkun) undertook large-scaled battles against Japanese military in China in the 1940s.

²³⁷ The Standing Committee members are the following: Han Sŏrya, Ri T'aejun, Cho Kichŏn, Pak Ŭngŏl, Ri Kiyŏng, Rim Hwa Sing Kosong, Kim Sunanm, Chŏng Kwanch'ŏl, Kim Chogyu, Pak Yŏsin and Kim Namch'ŏn.

focused on the methodology of “refined realism” (*kosanghan sasiljuŭi*). In 1947, North Korea adopted refined realism as an official literary art methodology, which was based on the idea that art should represent “positive heroes” among everyday people while combining romanticism with a deep revolutionary spirit.²³⁸ In 1949, socialist realism replaced refined realism. Since 1947, North Korean writers’ discussion focused on the establishment of art and literary methodology. Moreover, as discussed in chapter two, after North Korean writers adopted refined realism and socialism, North Korean literature suffered from schematism (圖式主義, *tosikjuŭi*) and non-conflict (無葛藤論, *mugaltŭng ron*). The topic of schematism and non-conflict arose as the central issue in North Korean literature in the early 1950s. Thus, there has been no official discussion of whether or not the KAPF should be recognized as a central part of the art and literary tradition of North Korea.²³⁹

It was the Korean War that completely reconfigured the North Korean literary landscape. After the Korean War, Kim Il Sung and his supporters accused members of the Workers’ Party of South Korea (南勞黨, *Namnodang*) of being “U.S. spies” and purged the most important intellectuals, artists and writers, such as Rim Hwa, Kim Wŏnjo, Kim Namch’ŏn and Kim Sunnam. The North Korean literary and musical world poured harsh criticism on their previous works without any critical examination.²⁴⁰ The writers and artists of the “dissolution of the KAPF” line were purged. However, it was not a victory for the “anti-dissolution” sector either. The loss of these valuable writers had important consequences for the literary community.

²³⁸ See further information on refined realism and socialist realism in the chapter 2, 12-13. Socialist realism refers to an artistic mythology that emphasizes the realistic expression of the proletarian struggle toward building socialism.

²³⁹ An Hamgwang, *Minjok kwa munhak* (Nation and Literature) (P’yŏnyang: Munhwa chŏnsŏnsagan, 1947), 27-46. Ki Sŏkyŏng, “Reallism ŭi che t’ŭkching” (The characteristics of realism”), *Munhak yesul* 5 (1949), 5-22.

²⁴⁰ Munye chŏnsŏn e itsŏsŏ ŭi pandong chŏk pŭrŭjowa sasang ŭl pandae hayŏ charyojip (Documentary on anti-Reactionary Bourgeois Ideology in the Literary Front). This was composed of the five writers’ severe criticism of Rim Hwa, Ri T’aejun and Kim Namch’ŏn. They defined their works as bourgeois literature. The writers are Han Sŏrya, An Hamgwang, Yun Sep’yŏng, Ŏm Hosŏk, and Hwang Kŏn.

Even after the war, the former KAPF members' debate on the continuance of proletarian literature in Korea had not resulted in a clear solution. The political strife against the Soviet-Korea group (Ssoryŏnpa) triggered the rise of the KAPF discourse once again. Besides the Workers' Party of South Korea (Namnodang), there was the so-called "Soviet-Korean" faction (蘇聯派 Soryŏnpa) and the "Yanan" faction (延安派, Yŏn'anpa) that were the other influential political factions involved in a power struggle with Kim Il Sung in the 1950s. The Yanan faction refers to a group of anti-colonial revolutionaries and communists who led the independence movement in China. Due to their activities in China, they were closely connected with the Chinese Communist Party. (i.e. Kim Tubong, 1889-1960 and Ch'oe Ch'angik, 1896-1957).²⁴¹ On the other hand, the Soviet-Korean faction was comprised of returnees from the Soviet Union, such as Hŏ Kai (1890-1953) and Pak Ch'angok (d. 1958) They entered North Korea with the Soviet occupation forces after liberation. The members of the Soviet-Korean faction came from diverse professional backgrounds, such as technicians, writers, teachers, and were Soviet Communist Party members. During the Soviet occupation, they played a significant role in establishing the basic structure of a new Chosŏn, such as a new education system and cultural policies.²⁴² The leaders of these groups served on the Political Committee (Chŏngch'ŏi wiwŏnhoe), which set the basic structure of government. In the middle of Khrushchev's thaw,

²⁴¹ After the Japanese invaded the West coast of China in 1937, they retreated their headquarter from Shanghai to Chungqing, and then Yanan (in 1942), the base of the Chinese Communist Party. This was the origin of the name "Yanan." Furthermore, Kim Tubong, the leader of the Yanan group, was a renowned historian, linguist, and anti-colonial revolutionary leader. After the March 1st Independent Movement in 1919, he went to Shanghai and established the Provisional Government with other Korean nationalist leaders.

²⁴² Ho Kai was the leader of the Soviet-Korean group. Ho Kai and Kim Il Sung's confrontation arose over the issue of party membership. While Hŏ followed a Soviet model of an elite communist party, Kim Il Sung wished to establish a strong mass-based party. In 1953, when Hŏ expelled many low-ranking party members from the Party, Hŏ was attacked by Kim Il Sung and his followers. Hŏ could not survive the political struggle and committed suicide in 1953. See, Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960* (N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 2002). 140-150, and Erik Van Ree: *Socialism in One Zone: Stalin's Policy in Korea, 1945-1947* (New York; St. Martin's Press, 1989).

the leaders of these two factions, Park Ch'angok and Ch'oe Ch'angik, had planned a plot against Kim's leadership while taking advantage of the de-Stalinization and democratization that was occurring in the Soviet bloc.²⁴³

In the midst of this political tension, there was a debate among Soviet-Koreans, Ki Sökkok and Chöng Yul, and the advocates of the KAPF tradition, Öm Ho`sök and An Hamkwang, on when socialist realism emerged in Korea. Ki Sökkok contended that socialist realism only emerged in Korea after liberation. In contrast, Öm and An argued that KAPF literature had already established the tradition of socialist realism before the war. Thus, this debate initiated the 1950s' discourse on the KAPF. However, North Korean writers lost a chance to critically and thoroughly examine why it was required to be the legitimate source of North Korea's literary and art traditions. Instead, their debate died out when the impact of the political strife reached the literary world in 1956. During the August plenum of the Central Committee, the members of the Yanan faction (i.e. Yun Konghüm, Ch'oe Ch'angik and Sö Hwi) openly criticized Kim Il Sung's cult of personality and Kim's overemphasis on a heavy industry economic policy while demanding collective leadership of the party. Furthermore, Kim Ŭlgyu argued that the Korean People's Army should adopt the tradition of fierce agrarian struggle against the Japanese occupation rather than Kim Il Sung's partisan activities in Manchuria.²⁴⁴ Yet, their attempt turned out to be in vain; instead, the Yanan and Soviet factions were purged and expelled from the party. This political struggle impacted the writers' discussion of the KAPF. Their debate ended with the purge of the Soviet-Koreans, Ki Sökkok and Chöng Yul.

²⁴³ Balazs Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2005), 85-112.

²⁴⁴ Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 149-157.

In the wake of the debate, the North Korean Literary and Art Federation proclaimed the presence of socialist realism in proletarian literature and KAPF was officially recognized as the source of North Korea's literary and art tradition in 1956.²⁴⁵ The KAPF tradition was made official through the publication of former KAPF writings in various anthologies and literary works, and through a compilation of modern Korean literature centered on KAPF writings. Finally, it also included diverse individual books on the KAPF.²⁴⁶ The writings of Rim Hwa, Ri T'aejun, and Kim Wŏnjo were expunged. In the *Hyŏndae Chosŏn munhak p'yŏngnonjip* (Anthology of modern Korean literary criticism), the editor wrote that he "apologized for only providing some of the KAPF writers' works. We could only obtain some of the newspapers from the colonial period."²⁴⁷ The content of the anthology predominantly focused on Han Sŏrya and Ri Kiyŏng. Otherwise, they compiled literary critiques and writings that would only relate to contemporary Korea. Writers such as Kim Namch'ŏn and Rim Hwa, whose critical writings were essential for understanding the 1920s and 1930s, were excluded from the compilation. Moreover, they even crossed out Rim Hwa's name when they referenced him in these works.

In celebrating the KAPF tradition, Han Sŏrya and Yi Kiyŏng published their short memoirs, which narrated their old days in the KAPF. Han wrote "Minch'on, Ri Kiyŏng and I" and "Cho Myŏnghŭi and I." Cho Myŏnghŭi (1894-1938) was a distinguished revolutionary poet, who was executed in the Soviet Union after being wrongly accused as a Japanese spy. His honor was restored after the Korean War. Thus, by writing a memoir of his own relationship to the

²⁴⁵ Kim Chaeyong, *Pukhan munhak ūi yŏksa chŏk thae* (Historical understanding of North Korean literature) (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏng sa, 1994), 139-140.

²⁴⁶ Kim Myŏngsu, *Hyŏndae Chosŏn munhak sŏnjip* (Selection in the modern Korean literature) (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn chakka tongmaeng ch'ulp'ansa, 1957) vol. 16. This selection highlights the KAPF writers' works and their activities. It also provides a detailed biography of each writer in the selection.

²⁴⁷ *Hyŏndae Chosŏn munhak p'yŏngnonjip* (Anthology of Modern Korean Literary Criticism) (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn chakka tongmaeng, 1957), 345.

impeccable revolutionary, Cho, Han aimed to reinforce the validity of the KAPF tradition. On the other hand, unlike the works on Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolutionary activities, such as *Mt. Paektu* (1947), the praise of the KAPF writers and their literature was not as widespread as that of the works dealing with Kim. One of the reasons for the lack of recognition for the KAPF tradition in the literary field might be due to the process by which the KAPF gained legitimacy. Rather than fighting for its own hegemony, it achieved that end through the political strife of other groups. From the perspective of former KAPF members, particularly those who represented the anti-dissolution faction, one would have thought that the KAPF should be recognized as the sole literary and art tradition of North Korea. However, not everyone agreed to have the KAPF as the country's only artistic tradition. As noted above the Soviet-Koreans, Ki Sŏkpok and Chŏng Yul, thought the KAPF lacked socialist elements. Similarly, the new generation of writers who had little knowledge about the KAPF did not consider the KAPF as part of their tradition. Most importantly, the eradication of Rim Hwa and Kim Namch'ŏn from the history of the KAPF diminished its legacy and value significantly. The KAPF discourse without Rim Hwa and Kim Namch'ŏn became marginalized. However, the official recognition of the KAPF as North Korea's tradition ultimately indicates the power of the former KAPF writers in the 1950s.

The former KAPF members' desire to narrate the existence of colonial resistance in the Korean peninsula tempted them to search for a way to bridge the gap between Kim Il Sung's ideas of heroic resistance and the KAPF movement. Since the early 1950s, the phrase, "the news of Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese guerilla activities spread out to the entire Korean peninsula in the 1930s," began to appear in literary texts. The presumption of Kim Il Sung's revolutionary activities and their impact on KAPF literature slowly begged the question of whether Kim Il

Sung's own literary and art work could have encouraged KAPF literature. For instance, when Song Yǒng discussed the widespread success of children's proletarian literature under the leadership of Han Sǒrya, Ri Kiyǒng, and Pak Seyǒng, he argued that the "fervent revolutionary spirit (in the children proletarian movement) was intensified by the advancement of the Supreme Commander, Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle in the 1930s."²⁴⁸ Thus, the connection between Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolutionary activism and the KAPF movement slowly began to emerge in the middle of the 1950's. Most South Korean scholars of modern literature deny the impact of Kim's anti-Japanese revolutionary struggles on KAPF writings. However, a South Korean scholar of North Korean literature, Kim Sǒngsu, argued that the KAPF literature may have encouraged Kim's guerrilla groups; at the same time, there may have been a chance that the KPAF writers did hear about the guerrilla activities in Manchuria. Thus, Kim hypothesized that there had been a synergic process between KAPF literature and Kim's guerrilla army.²⁴⁹

After the war, North Korean writers and artists organized an investigating committee to visit the anti-Japanese revolutionary battlefield several times. Song Yǒng visited Kim Il Sung's battlefield in Manchuria for 113 days with other writers, historians, photographers, and painters in 1953. Song later wrote an *ocherk* style travel report titled, *Mt. Paektu Can Be Seen Anywhere*. Song Yǒng described the songs, stories, and plays, such as *Hyǒhae*, (*The Sea of Blood*), that had

²⁴⁸ Song Yǒng, *Haebang chǒn ūi Chosǒn adong munhak* (Children's literature before liberation) (P'yǒngyang: Kyoyuk tosǒ ch'ulp'ansa, 1956), 16. In 1956, Yun Sep'yǒng stated that Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolutionary military struggle had a direct impact on the inspiration of KAPF writers.

²⁴⁹ Kim Sǒngsu, "Pūro munhak kwa Pukhak munhak ūi kiwǒn" (Proletarian literature and the origins of North Korean literature), *Minjok munhaksa yǒnguso* 21 (Dec. 2002), 57-83. And also see, Sin Hyǒggi, *Pukhak munhaksa: Hangil hyǒngmyǒng munhak esǒ chuch'e munhak kkaji* (North Korean literary history: From anti-Japanese revolution literature to *chuch'e* literature) (Seoul: P'yǒngmisa 2000).

been played by Kim's partisan groups and villagers.²⁵⁰ Since the late 1950s, the discourse on the existence of Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolutionary literature and art had emerged in North Korea. The major anthologies and journal editorials began to combine both the KAPF and Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolutionary literature and art as the tradition of North Korean literary and art creation.

The KAPF Art Discourse in the North Korean Art World in the 1950s-1960s

In this section, I will discuss the rise of the KAPF's discourse in the art world. The unique composition, characteristics and dynamics of the art world revealed the KAPF discourse on art to be different from the literary world. The former members of the KAPF art world vigorously proclaimed their anti-Japanese, revolutionary, Socialist realist, and internationalist traditions that constituted the KAPF Lineage. Their discursive strategy in consolidating the KAPF tradition is well-documented in the monthly academic art journal, *Chosŏn misul* (Korean art) after 1957. This journal served as a crucial medium to grasp the contours of the art world. The names of the editorial board members in *Chosŏn misul* demonstrate that the southern-origin artists played a significant role in the North Korean art world.²⁵¹ Among these board members, some were former KAPF members or persons who personally associated with KAPF members.²⁵² Their discussion on the KAPF was part of their decolonizing effort to construct a long history of

²⁵⁰ Song Yŏng, *Paektusan ūn ōdiesŏna poinda* (Mt. Paektu Can Be Seen Anywhere) (P'yŏngyang; Minju ch'ŏngnyŏsa 1956).

²⁵¹ Kil Chinsŏp (1907-1975, b. Pyŏngyang) Kim Yŏngjun (1904-1967, b. Taegu), Yi Yŏsŏng (b. 1901, b. Taegu), Mun Sŏkho (1904-1973, b. P'yŏngan), Mun Haksu (1916-1988 b. Pyŏngyang), Pak Munwŏn (1920-1973, b. Seoul), Sŏnu Tam (1904-1984, b. P'yŏngyang), Chŏng Hyŏnung (1911-1976, b. Seoul), and Cho Ingyo (1917-1994, b. Ch'ŏngjin). *The letter "b" is an abbreviation for "born"

²⁵² Kim Chukyŏng, a former KAPF member, was the first Dean at the P'yongyang Art School.

socialist traditions from the colonial period. Additionally, they aimed to strengthen their own positions in the field.

After the official announcement of the KAPF tradition in 1956, *Chosŏn misul* published a special series of articles celebrating the legacy of KAPF art. A forum on the discussion of KAPF's art by its former members was held on June 10, 1957 hosted by the Central Committee of the Korea Artist Federation. Besides Chŏng Kwanch'ŏl (1916-1983), who served as a moderator, there were thirteen participants in the forum:

Kang Ho (1908-1984, stage art), Ki Ung (1912-1977, oil painting),
Kil Chinsŏp (1907-1975, painter), Kim Iryŏng (1910-1959, stage art),
Ri Kukch'ŏn (b. 1915 *fl.* 1935-1970, sculpture), Pak Sŏkjung (b. 1911 *fl.* 1929-1967,
poet), Pak Sŭnggu (1919-1995, sculpture), Pak Seyŏng (1920-1973, painter),
Pak Munwŏn (1920-1973), Pak Pallyang (b. 1905 poet/literary critics),
Song Yŏng (1903-1979, playwright), Sin Kosong (1907 *fl.* 1927-1960s, playwright),
Ch'u Min (*fl.* 1930-1960s, playwright).²⁵³

In their discourse, the role and work of Kim Pokchin (1900-1941) was greatly emphasized as the leader of the KAPF. Kim Pokchin was an outstanding sculptor, who was known as the pioneer of proletarian art and art criticism in Korea. He was active in many fields of the KAPF. Above all, he exerted himself to foster the next generation of artists in Korea. South Korean art critics highly praised Kim's outstanding works. They recognized the degree to which Kim's works embodied nationalistic characteristics as well as being class-oriented. Many of his students went

²⁵³ Chosŏn misulga tongmaeng, "K'ap'ũ sigi ũi misul hwaltong" (Art activities in the KAPF period), *Chosŏn misul* 4 (1957), 6-10.

to the North and led the North Korean art field.²⁵⁴ Thus, former KAPF members, his students, and colleagues claimed the KAPF lineage through Kim Pokchin.

Socialist Realist Traditions in KAPF's Art

Former KAPF artists traced the origin of socialist realism (the methodology of art production in North Korea) to the works of Kim Pokchin. Seven memoirs of Kim Pokchin were written by his students and colleagues and published in *Chosŏn misul* in 1957.²⁵⁵ Their memoirs provide detailed information on Kim's life and activism in the KAPF. In an editorial article in *Chosŏn misul* titled "The Glorious October Revolution and KAPF Art," it is argued that Kim Pokchin's art thesis was a "proclamation of the draft on a naked form" (nahyŏng sŏnŏn ch'oan, 1927), and had established the tradition of proletarian art. Considering the fact that the editor of this article represented the official voice of the North Korean Artist Alliance, the evaluation of Kim's works and his views on art criticism represented the North Korean Artists' perspective on Kim Pokchin. It states that Kim inspired the concept of class-centered art through the metaphoric term, "naked form," which portrays socialist realist art and reveals the reality of classes by removing "pure art." Thus, it emphasized that Kim's proletarian art thesis guided artists on how to embody class-mindedness in art through socialist realism.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Yun Pŏmmo, *Kim Pokchin yŏn'gu: ilche kangjŏm ha choso yesul kwa munye undong* (A study of Kim Pokchin: The art movement and sculpture under Japanese occupation) (Seoul: Tongguk taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2010).

²⁵⁵ Chosŏn misulga tongmaeng, "Kim Pokjin Hoesanggi" (Memoirs of Kim Pokchin), *Chosŏn misul* 5 (1957), 13-23.

²⁵⁶ Chosŏn misulga tongmaeng, "Ŭidaehan 10 wŏl hyŏngmyŏng kwa K'ap'ŭ misul" (the glorious October Revolution and the KAPF art), *Chosŏn misul* 5 (1957), 6-10. South Korean scholars of modern art tend to agree with North Korean art critics' analysis of Kim Pokchin's works. They also defined Kim's "proclamation of the draft on naked form" as the first systematic art thesis that guided the role, nature and aesthetics in the national art movement; and they considered Kim's proletarian platform and his critics as a monumental achievement in the course of the Korean literary and art movement during modern Korean history.

The article further presents Kim's art works—*The Youth* (1939), the *Young Boy* (1940) and the *Poetry of an Old Man* (1936) as masterpieces in actualizing proletarian art theory through “naked form.” It states “in *The Youth*, we see the spirit of Korea's youth struggle for the nation and people under Japanese rule. The naked youth firmly stands while staring at the future with determination and anger. His glaring eyes express his fervent hatred toward the Japanese aggressors while voicing his hope for future liberation.²⁵⁷” One of Kim's students, Pak Sŭnggu vividly remembered the statue of *The Youth* and wrote: “it reflected the exploited and oppressed working class's demand and aim for a new society. Thus, it created the archetype of the Korean proletariat. The Youth's muscular yet small body shows the determination to gain independence and to reject colonial rule.”²⁵⁸ Through their vivid descriptions and analysis, these memoirs reveal how socialist realism and proletarian art emerged in the works of the KAPF. Yet, their unspoken motive was to show how Kim's legacy was handed down to his students and colleagues; thereby, their works of art reflected a long tradition of socialist realism. This led them to ignore Kim's Buddhist statues, although Kim Pokchin also created many statues of Maitreya (bodhisattva, 彌勒佛). In contrast, South Korean art critics have argued that Kim's Maitreya statues projected the national future through the meaning of Maitreya.²⁵⁹ This indicates that a Buddhist statue could not define the national character in North Korea because it did not fit into the Marxist-Leninist context during the 1950's and 1960's. Thus, there was little interest in promoting Kim's Maitreya works. However, more recently, North Korea's *Chosŏn misul yŏkdae misulga p'yŏllam* (Compilation of history of Korean artists, 1999) treated Kim's Maitreya works

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Pak Sŭnggu, “Kim Pokchin Hoesanggi” (Memoir of Kim Pokchin), *Choson misul* 5 (1957), 8.

²⁵⁹ Yun Pŏmmo, “Kim Pokchin pulsang ūi segye” (The world of Kim Pokchin's Buddhist statues) in *Han'guk kŭndae choso yesul ūi kaech'ŏkja: Kim Pokchin's yesul segye* (The pioneer of modern Korean sculpture: the art world of Kim Pokchin) (Seoul: Ŏl kwa ŏl, 2001), 75-135.

as a central subject.²⁶⁰ It suggests that North Korea's new approach to its national tradition and culture has come to embrace Kim's Buddhist works as a part of the national culture in the 1990s.

The analysis of Kim Pokchin's work reveals the main issues confronting the North Korean art world at the time. There was a deliberate search to determine how Kim's works embodied the national spirit and character. In the process, it became clear that how one defined the nation's character and differentiated it from national culture was an important task for not only the field of North Korean art but for other fields as well. The task in North Korea, as a socialist state, was to define the nation's character in order to strategize how to achieve the next stage of the revolution. In keeping with this emphasis, Pak Sŭnggu argued that Kim's *Paekhwa* represented Korea's national spirit. One hundred and eighty centimeters in length, *Paekhwa* is a wood statue of a Koryo courtesan, who was known as a courageous Korean woman who resisted male oppression. Pak argued that "*Paekhwa* depicts the Korean woman's traditional nature of being 'outwardly strong and inwardly gentle.' "My teacher," he added, "had a deep interest in Korean traditional art and succeeded in bringing Korean traditional wood and stone sculptures into the present. Because of his advice, I majored in wood carving at the Tokyo Art School."²⁶¹ Like Pak, Ri Kukchŏn, Ki Ung, and Pak Munwŏn could not participate in the KAPF since they were born in the 1920s. Hence, while emphasizing Kim as their mentor, they attempted to demonstrate how the legacy of KAPF art was handed down to them and wrote of Kim's strong influence on the art world during the colonial period.

²⁶⁰ Ri Chaehyŏn, *Chosŏn misulga p'yŏnram* (A compilation of Korean artists) (P'yŏngyang: Munhak yesul chonghap ch'ulp'ansa, 1999), 239.

²⁶¹ Pak Sŭnggu, "Kim Pokchin Hoesanggi" (Memoir of Kim Pokchin), *Chosŏn misul* 5 (1957), 8.

Anti-Revolutionary Tradition of the KAPF: Memoirs of Ri Sangch'un

In the discourse of KAPF art, the anti-Japanese revolutionary tradition has been a central leitmotif. The seven pieces of Kim Pokchin's memoirs unanimously accentuated Kim's numerous revolutionary activities. Yet, besides Kim Pokchin, it also highlighted Ri Sangch'un's (1910-1940) revolutionary activities. In Sin Kosong and Ri Kapki's memoir of Ri Sangch'un, they introduced Ri Sangch'un as a staunch anti-Japanese revolutionary and showed how his stage art, illustrations, and graphic art were used to resist Japanese rule. Similar to the emphasis on national characteristics in Kim's works, they stressed the importance of Ri's graphic art in an effort to encourage North Korean artists to produce more of such work. In a previous issue of *Chosŏn misul*, Chŏng Kwangch'ŏl had mentioned that North Korean artists have favored oil paintings and sculpture, and noted that there was a lack of painters who wanted to work on posters and illustrations. Thus, while showing how Ri's graphic art revealed undying anti-Japanese revolutionary spirit, his work also inspired North Korean artists to produce posters and graphic art, which effectively delivered agitational and propagandistic messages. Thus, they highly valued Ri's illustrations on the book covers of Ri Pukmyŏng's *Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory*, the *Seven Member of the KAPF*, and the *Collection of the KAPF Peasant Novels*.²⁶² Notably, the illustrations of the *Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory* received a sensational response from its readers.

²⁶² Ri Kapki, "Ri Sangch'un hoesang" (Memoir of Ri Sangch'un), *Chosŏn misul* 6 (1957), 15.

Sin Kosong, "K'apŭ misulga Ri Sangch'un" (A KAPF artist Ri Sangch'un), *Chosŏn misul* 6 (1957), 14.



Ri Sangch'un' *Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory* (wood printing, 1932)*

Ri Kapki wrote that “the first scene of the illustrations symbolized how Korean workers were exploited by Japanese capitalists under insufficient factory facilities, and the second scene represents the Korean workers’ appeal to fight against the Japanese capitalists while climbing up a high ladder.”²⁶³ Sin also praised Ri Sangch’un who pioneered proletarian theatrical stage art. He mentioned that he took charge of the stage art for the adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on Western Front*, which was produced by the New Construction Company—a part of the KAPF drama troupe. Ri Kapki observed that people were impressed by Ri Sangch’un’s stage art which revealed an exquisite realistic aesthetic. He also argued that Ri’s stage art played a crucial role in the development of Korean state art.

The central emphasis of Ri Sangch’un’s memoir focuses on how Japanese colonialists ruthlessly oppressed the KAPF. Ri Kapki reminisced how Ri Sangch’un and he were severely beaten by the Japanese police because Ri Sangch’un expressed the banned idea of leftism in the

²⁶³ Ri Kapki, “Ri Sangch’un hoesang” (Memoir of Ri Sangch’un), *Chosŏn misul* 6 (1957), 15.

* *Chosŏn misul* 6 (1957), 16

Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory and Ri Kapki published the illustration in the *Chosŏn Daily*. At the end of the memoir, Ri Kapki introduced an anecdote of how Ri Sangch'un never succumbed to Japanese oppression and died as a KAPF revolutionary artist after his arrest in 1936. He stated:

At his trial, judge Ueno asked Ri, "Are you still faithful to communism?" Ri answered, "You are interrogating a communist. What is the point in asking me whether I am a communist or not. If I say 'I am not a communist,' would you believe me?" In response to his answer laughter was heard throughout the courtroom. It was the period when many communists denounced communism (轉向, *chŏnhyang*).²⁶⁴

Writers like Ri continuously stressed that KAPF's art was itself an anti-revolutionary struggle. But, they equally emphasized that they faced limitations because of intense Japanese surveillance and pressure. After the second arrest of KAPF members in the so-called the 'Chŏnju Incident,' the entire organization was convicted and imprisoned from 1934-1936.²⁶⁵ Japanese authority legalized the arrests of leftists and enacted the "Decree Concerning the Protection and Observation of Thought." Thereafter, many KAPF members stopped being involved in proletarian art production. They worked as illustrators for newspaper companies or earned a living by painting signboards. During Japan's Pacific War, many artists started to denounce their communism (轉向, *chŏnhyang*) and agreed to collaborate with Japan's war efforts. They drew war propaganda posters and encouraged young people to join the war. The author of Ri Sangch'un's memoir, Sin Kosong, himself a playwright, actively collaborated with Japan. Among the former KAPF members, there were a quite a few who collaborated with Japan passively or actively. For example, Chŏng Hyŏngung participated in Tan'ganghoe, a Korean-Japanese artists' organization to promote Japan's war effort. Ku Pongsŭng, Chŏng Chongyŏ, and Ri Kukchŏn were some of the fine arts groups who collaborated with Japanese colonial rule.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Kwŏn Yŏngmin, *Han'guk kyegŭp munhak undaonsa*, (A history of the Proletarian Literary Movement in Korea (Seoul: Munye ch'ulp'ansa, 1998).

Contrary to the common view that North Korea's decolonization policy rooted out pro-Japanese collaborators, there are still many former pro-Japanese collaborators who work in many different fields and serve in important positions in the Workers' Party's various art organizations.²⁶⁶ North Korea needed these professionals and technicians to build a new nation. In most cases, their pro-Japanese background did not really create obstacles to their professional careers. But, as seen in the KAPF art discourse, no one mentioned their Japanese collaboration. Rather, by emphasizing their resistance to the Japanese under severe Japanese oppression, they aimed to erase their past wrongdoings. Their Japanese collaboration during the colonial period was buried in North Korea.

The Connection of KAPF Art to Proletarian Internationalism

In the KAPF art discourse, the first Proletarian Art Exhibition at Suwŏn (Suwŏn p'urololetarian misul chŏllamhoe hereafter Pro-mijŏn, 1931) was another significant event that was frequently mentioned. While proclaiming the Pro-mijŏn as a specific moment in the history of KAPF art—where international solidarity was explicitly displayed—it was asserted that this established the legitimacy of KAPF art in the practice of internationalism. The explanation of how this historical proletarian art exhibition came to take place in Suwŏn was given as follows: the reasons that the Pro-mijŏn was held in Suwŏn (a major city adjacent to Seoul) were, 1) to avoid the high level of Japanese surveillance in Seoul, and 2) to maximize the influence of Pak Sŭnggŭk, a member of KAPF, on Suwŏn. Pak formulated a strong community-based socialist organization in Suwon through his strenuous effort to work with the intellectuals and the

²⁶⁶ Yi Kuyŏl, "Pundan 50 nyŏn wŏlbuk misulin 68 in ŭi haengjŏk" (Whereabouts of artists who went to North Korea), *Wŏlgan misul* (Aug. 1998)

Yun Pŏmmo, "wŏlbuk chakka ŭi silch'e wa p'yŏngga ŭi munje" (The reality and evaluation of artists who went to North Korea), *Wŏlgan misul* (Jun. 2005).

working class in Suwon. Pak arranged and managed the exhibition. The following is Kang Ho and Pak Sŭngguk's description of the Pro-mijŏn:

The announcement of holding the Proletarian Art Exhibition evoked a great sensation domestically and internationally. The works of the comrades in the NPAF (Nippona Artista Proleta Federacio [Esperanto], Japanese Proletarian Artist Federation, 1928-1931) arrived in Korea. But, we could not receive twelve pieces of our Japanese comrades' paintings because they were confiscated by the Japanese police.²⁶⁷

Kang Ho stated that works by NPAF artists that were sent to the exhibition were titled, *Coming from Work, Young Factory Worker, Strike, Streetcar Strike, Peasants, Leaflet Factory, Let Us Work, Young Marxist, and Horse Market*. Moreover, Pak stated that "we exhibited agitational pictures like Chong Habo's *Picture Plate* (kurim topan), Ri Sangdae's the *Portrait of Lenin*, and also graphic art and diagrams explaining events in the national liberation struggle... but, the content of the exhibition was insufficient because Japanese police confiscated 70 pieces out of 140 works of art that we had planned to show."²⁶⁸ Although Pak admitted the exhibition's limitations, he strongly asserted that "Today's great revolutionary art comes from KAPF art."²⁶⁹ Thus, he recognized this exhibition as a major historical event. In contrast, Emiko Kita, who discovered the list of art works that were shown in the exhibition as well as the works confiscated by the Japanese among the Governor-General's classified documents, argued that art works which expressed international solidarity were explicitly banned; thus, they were only able to show works that implied worker's solidarity.²⁷⁰ Although she downplayed the importance of

²⁶⁷ Pak Sŭnggŭk, "P'ŭrollet'eria misul chŏllamhoe ūi hoesang (A memoir of the first Proletarian Art Exhibition at Suwon), *Chosŏn misul* 4 (1957), 15-16.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 16.

²⁷⁰ Emiko Kida, "Suwŏn p'ŭrollet'eria misul chŏllamhoe rŭl t'onghae pon misul kaenyŏm" (The concept of art looking through the proletarian art exhibition at Suwon), *Han'guk kŭndae misul sahak* 11 (2003), 77-108.

the exhibition, she noted that the KAPF artists attempted to make an appeal for international solidarity in order to gain legitimacy for the exhibition through the endorsement of the NPAF.

Another example of their international connection was the former KAPF members' active collaboration with the NPAF and the KOPF (the Union of Japanese Proletarian Cultural Organizations, Federacio de Proletaj Kultur Organizoj Japanaj [Esperanto]). Some of the Korean leftists who studied or lived in Japan joined the Japanese proletarian movement. Pak Sökchöng stressed that he and other Korean artists, Chöng Habo, Pak Chinmyöng, and Yun Sangyöl participated in various activities in the Korean Council, a branch of the KOPF.²⁷¹ In the 1950s, North Korea's effort to position itself in the Soviet bloc to pursue internationalism stemmed in part from North Korea's efforts to achieve decolonization. During the 1950s-1960s, North Korea rigorously promoted participation of North Korean artists in international art exhibitions and introduced North Koreans to the art of other socialist countries. By identifying North Korean art with internationalism, both in the colonial and post-colonial periods, Korean artists associated with the KAPF established not only their own tradition of internationalism, but at the same time they were also able to claim the same long tradition for the North Korean socialist state.

²⁷¹ Kang Ho, "K'apü misul üi 10 nyön: K'ap'ü ch'anggön 33 nyön ül maji hayö" (Ten years of the KAPF: On the 33rd year anniversary of KAPF's inauguration), *Chosön misul* 8 (1958), 5-16.



Image 3-2 Chŏng Kwanchŏl at the Kim Il Sung's battlefields in Manchuria (1959) *



Image 3-3 Mun Haksu (right) at the Kim Il Sung's battlefields in Manchuria (1959)*

As we have seen the North Korean art world expressed its strong commitment to the KAPF tradition. However, this did not mean that North Korean artists did not contribute to the creation of Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolutionary art. North Korean artists organized several trips to view Kim Il Sung's battlefields in Manchuria so that they could reflect Kim's struggle realistically and vividly in their works. In 1959, Chŏng Kwanchŏl and Mun Haksu visited the region and afterwards held an exhibition of their works on Kim's life depicting his anti-Japanese struggle in Manchuria.²⁷² After 1961, the next generation of North Korean artists claimed that the works of art that were created by Kim Il Sung in the 1930s had established the most valuable

²⁷² Hwang Kŏn, "Hwaga ūi chŏngsŏng-hangil mujang t'ujaeng chŏnjŏkji tapsa misul chŏllam hoe pogo" (The devotion of artists-A report from the exhibition: anti-Japanese revolution battle field), *Chosŏn misul* 7 (1962), 20-29.

* *Chosŏn misul* 7 (1962), 21

artistic tradition for North Korea.²⁷³ But, this was not the dominant voice until the discontinuation of *Chosŏn misul* in 1967.²⁷⁴

Reflection

We can see, then, that since the early 1960s, anti-Japanese revolutionary literature and art have slowly come to override the KAPF tradition. However, the unique characteristics of the literary and art fields opened up a variety of discourses regarding this tradition. In the literary world, most former KAPF members dominated the literary circle before the war. However, after the purge of the KAPF “dissolution” line, the “anti-dissolution” members, such as Han Sŏrya, Ri Kiyŏng, An Mak and others came to lead the field. By contrast, in the North Korean art world, although there were many former KAPF artists, no one possessed dominant political power like Han Sŏrya or Rim Hwa. However, the art field had people with diverse ideological backgrounds and such individuals were often at the top of their subfields such as oil painting, sculpture and illustration. As we have seen, during the Korean War, many remarkable painters in the right or centrist camp— Kim Yŏngjun, (traditional Asian painting), Ri K’waedae (oil painting), and Ku Ponsŭng (oil painting)—went to North Korea. Furthermore, on many occasions, artists cooperated in large collaborative projects. Most of all, the art world was not involved in a political vortex to the same degree as the literary field. Another different example can be found in the music field. Kim Sunnam was a former KAPF member who was the most prominent composer of the colonial period. He went to North Korea and made a significant contribution to

²⁷³ Ryang Yŏngguk, “Hangil mujang t’ujaeng kwajŏng eso ch’angjo toen hyŏngmyong chŏk musul ūi sŏndong kyoyangjŏk yŏkhal (The agitational and propaganda role of anti-Japanese revolutionary art that created during the military struggle), *Chosŏn misul* 7 (1961), 25-27.

²⁷⁴ Most members in the anti-dissolution of KAPF left Seoul around 1946, and the members in the dissolution of KAPF left Seoul from around 1948.

the North Korean music field. Yet, his involvement in the Southern Workers' Party caused him to lose his position and reputation in 1953. His purge brought about a serious decline in the music field of North Korea. In 1957, for example, the former members of the KAPF's music division decided to hold a forum to celebrate the role of KAPF music in the history of North Korea. Ri Hirim, the moderator of that forum, made opening remarks that reveal that the forum was less interested in the KAPF tradition than in other aspects of North Korean music. Ri observed, "Chosŏn music has developed throughout Korean history. We are proud of the fact that our music has roots in the KAPF as well as in Kim Il Sung's partisan music."²⁷⁵ In 1957, the music field already announced that Kim Il Sung's music, which was created in Manchuria, now served as the lawful music tradition of North Korea.

In sum, the KAPF discourse that took place in the literary and art world illustrates the complexity involved in the transition of KAPF art and music to the anti-Japanese revolutionary literature and art of contemporary North Korea. Former KAPF members' desire to create a postcolonial nation, based on anti-Japanese resistance, enticed them to demonstrate the existence of anti-Japanese resistance by connecting the KAPF movement to Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese struggle. This resulted in the national liberation narrative that was identified with Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle. At the same time, the KAPF tradition, which represented, the KAPF members' socialist, internationalist and nationalist legacy, was slowly replaced by the narrative of Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle. Former KAPF members' creation of Kim Il Sung's ineffable anti-Japanese revolutionary spirit contributed to the consolidation of the state's ideology, *chuch'e*. For this reason, I emphasize that the very root of

²⁷⁵Chosŏn chakkokka tongmaeng, "K'ap'ŭ sigi ūi Chosŏn ūmak" (Korean music in the KAPF period), *Chosŏn ūmmak* 11 (1957), 16.

chuch'e ideology, the anti-Japanese revolutionary spirit, shaped the course of the North Korean intellectuals' decolonization practice.

Conclusion – Rituals for Inner-Migrant Intellectuals

In this age of neoliberal transnationalism, the Cold War period is often described as a bygone historical era, with only East Asia seen as the last Cold War site. Not only has the political reality of divisions—the two Koreas, China, and Taiwan—entangled East Asian countries in complex international relations but the domestic politics and cultures of these countries are still shaped by Cold War rhetoric. Certainly Socialist China has returned to a capitalist economy and allowed some degree of political reform within its one party system. Even though the two Chinas are still divided and face the complex issue of unification, the neoliberal economy is bringing them closer together. On the Korean peninsula, however, the divided political system as the ultimate product of the Cold War continues to operate as a political reality and constantly shapes the state, society, and individual in their everyday practices.

In South Korea, the competing discourses around the highly politicized issue of *chogbuk* (pro-North Korea follower, 從北) and *ch'inil* (Pro-Japanese collaboration, 親日) reflected the ways in which South Korean postcoloniality was shaped in the trajectory of decolonization within the “division system.”²⁷⁶ While Progressive intellectuals, such as Paik Nak-Chung and Han Hongkoo, have been critical of the North Korean regime, they have also acknowledged the legitimacy of North Korea as a political entity and proposed a conciliatory approach towards it

²⁷⁶ Paik Nak-Chung: *The Division System in Crisis: Essays on Contemporary Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). Paik Nak-chung, a cultural and literary critic, is one of most influential progressive public intellectuals in contemporary South Korea. While conceptualizing the “division system” as a particular geopolitical system within the world system that continuously divides North and South Korea, he discussed practical questions of how two Koreas would be unified within the capitalist world system.

for the ultimate task of unification.²⁷⁷ In response, anti-communists from various ultra-right wing organizations have denounced them as “*chogbuk*,” who are blindly following the rogue state of North Korea. In turn, South Korean radical leftists have responded by foregrounding the *ch'innil* issue as a counter discourse. They denounced established authorities with an anti-communist backgrounds as pro-Japanese collaborators or descendants of collaborators who accumulated their economic and political capital through exploiting the *minjok* (ethnic-nation, 民族) while serving Japan.²⁷⁸ Although Koreans must confront the issue of Japanese collaborators in order to critically reflect on their colonial past, the discourses of *chogbuk* and *ch'inil* accentuates the reality of a politically divided system.

In North Korea, by contrast, the “division system” has accelerated a process of Kim Il Sung centered decolonization within the socialist system. The trajectory of North Korea’s decolonization has been configured both by the division and socialist systems. The division and socialist system, designed to maintain the socialist one-party system and planned economy while resisting neoliberal economic force, has been, in turn, shaped by the North Korean postcoloniality. Thus, I trace the process of North Korean decolonization within the contexts of the country’s division, war, and socialist system. Another goal is to challenge the reductionism of analyses that assume *chuch’e sasang* (主體思想) to be the ideological pillar of North Korea’s

²⁷⁷ Han Hongkoo, one of Korea’s most important contemporary historians. Through critical and thorough examination of various South Korean legal documents, he revealed the South government’s violence and repression against individuals and groups of people on the pretext of *minjok*. See, Han Hongkoo: *Chigüm i sun’gan üi yöksa: modün yöksa nün hyönjae ro t’onghanda* (This right moment of history: all histories leads to the present) (Seoul: Hangyöre Ch’ulp’ansa, 2010), Han Hongkoo, *Han Hongkoo wa hamkke kötta: p’yöngghwa üi nunkil ro torabon Hanguk hyöndaesa* (Walking with Han Hongkoo: Reflection of contemporary Korean history through the perspective of peace) (Seoul: Kömdungso, 2009). And, Han Hongkoo, *Taehan Minkuksa* (History of Republic of South Korea) (Seoul: Han’györe Ch’ulp’ansa, 2003-6).

²⁷⁸ Song Yeun-Jee, “Historicizing the discourse on pro-Japanese collaborators in contemporary Korean history from the late 1970s to the late 2000s” (Ph.D. diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 2013).

transformation into a “peculiar” society. In contrast, I aim to open up the multiple ways in which we can understand North Korea by focusing on the role of “inner-migrant” intellectuals in transforming North Korea into their academic, artistic and political hub after liberation. This framework of inner-migrant intellectuals enables us to delineate both continuities and discontinuities in North Korea’s postcoloniality during the course of modern North Korean history.

The experiences of these inner-migrants are both unique and universal in representing the experiences of intellectuals during the Cold War in divided nations including China, Germany, Korea and Vietnam. The framework of inner-migrants thus offers us a way to grasp the role and identity of these intellectuals. In particular, I underline how these North Korean inner-migrant intellectuals were both “postcolonial intellectuals” at that same time that they were “socialist intellectuals” who became incorporated into the hierarchical socialist state institutions as bureaucrats supporting the status quo.

In the first chapter, I aimed to show the deep roots of North Korean ethnocentrism since Korea’s incorporation into the modern/colonial world system. Most scholars have interpreted the discontinuation of academic periodicals and journals from 1967 to 1977 as evidence of the theoretical divergence of North Korea from Marxist-Leninism to *chuch’e sasang* as the root of its ethnocentrism. They have argued that this transformation was undertaken by a new generation of scholars who replaced the old-generation intellectuals in promoting *chuch’e sasang* and leading the North Korean academic world.²⁷⁹ In contrast, I demonstrate how North Korean intellectuals have displayed their anti-colonial intellectual tradition since the colonial period.

²⁷⁹ Yi Kidong, “Pukhan yŏksahakŭi chŏngae kwajŏng” (The process in the development of North Korean historiography), *Hanguk simin kangjoa* 21 (1997).

Several North Korean intellectuals interpreted Tan'gun as the progenitor of Chosŏn *minjok* while trying to fit the Tan'gun myth into a Marxist framework, thus displaying their postcolonial identity. This interpretation, in turn, promoted a concept of *minjok* with a strong historical resonance for the first generation of inner-migrant intellectuals born at the turn of the 20th century. Thus, by removing the colonial semiotics of *minsokhak* as regional studies, these intellectuals embraced the anti-colonial tradition of Chosŏn *minsokhak* while reconstructing Marxist ethnography. Although some of these intellectual studies were excluded from official North Korean scholarship during the 1950s-1960s, the anti-colonial intellectual tradition has been revived as a strong ethno-centric rhetoric after the 1990s. Thus, I argue for ethno-nationalism as a transformative socio-political and cultural characteristic produced during a long decolonizing process.

The postcolonial cultural analysis provides an insight to grasp how the capitalist world system continuously affected postcolonial societies. The meaning of “post” in postcolonial emphasizes the continued connection of former colonial countries to their former colonizers. North Korean postcoloniality, however, complicates this meaning by providing an alternative view of how culture, in terms of the North Korean intellectuals' cultural activities, works within the socialist system. Different from capitalist societies, where culture, traditions and ideas circulate as market products, the lack of a market economy in the socialist system meant that culture was not consumed but created through people's everyday lives. The socialist culture was also created through the everyday lives of people in factories and other collective institutions for promoting socialist solidarity. North Korean intellectuals thus perceived their socialist culture as having the potential to become the leader of the international movement. As seen in chapter two, for instance, North Korean intellectuals are convinced that North Korea will eventually triumph

as the vanguard of the anti-imperial internationalism through its anti-imperial internationalist discourse. Unlike the static cultural landscape of the Cold War period represented in the travel *ocherk*, North Korean intellectuals actively participated in cultural exchange to promote socialist culture and ideas. By examining the cultural exchanges of North Korean intellectuals with other socialist countries, I hope to have contributed to the scholarship on the Cold War by examining the transnational aspects of inter-cultural networks that have shaped the socio-cultural identities and practices of the former socialist bloc.

As postcolonial scholars—Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak— have indicated, postcolonial projects often turned out to be ironic. While they help to diminish the stigma of colonialist history and restore national pride, they also often conventionalize and politicize the tradition, culture, history, and ethnicity of a “nation.” As seen in the last chapter, the desire of North Korean intellectuals to create a perfectly decolonized entity led them to elevate Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle as the master narrative of national liberation. Ironically, former KAPF (Korean Artist Proletarian Federation, 1925-1935) members, who were the leading Marxist intellectuals, were the ones to initiate the project of the national hero. While useful in illuminating the memory of “resistance,” former KAFP members wrote laudatory accounts of Kim’s life after liberation. I argue that Kim’s legendary revolutionary struggle eventually became the basis of a national tradition, which, in turn, became the basis of *chuch’e* ideology. And it further legitimated Kim Il Sung’s cult of personality. Thus, North Korea’s decolonialization project demonstrates how the postcolonial allure often led to the support of the political rulers under the banner of the nation.

Lastly, this study aims to reflect on the role of intellectuals in both North Korea and within our contemporary society. Most inner-migrant intellectuals chose North Korea after

liberation as their ideological front. During the colonial period, their Marxist faith helped them to understand the functioning of the Japanese capitalist/imperial system and to uncover the true nature of capitalist reality. Through their cultural activities, literature, academic writing, and artwork, they tried to be social critics. However, with the transformation of Marxism into a hegemonic ideology and their own transformation into the cultural producers of the state within socialism's one-party system, they were hindered from uncovering corruption and other social problems. Of course, it did not have to be completely impossible. For instance, the Polish intelligentsia contributed to the emergence of the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity" and inspired a social movement for pluralism, equality and self-management since the 1980s. Intelligentsias were the prime agents for the 1989 transformation of Eastern European society.²⁸⁰ At the same time, we have witnessed various shortcomings in the post-socialist transition. North Korea is slowly changing. North Korea has the potential to bring about successful reforms--both political and economic—while avoiding the mistakes of former socialist countries. At this important juncture, the role of intellectuals in North Korea should be examined. As stated by Edward Said, the role of contemporary intellectuals is to question power and authority.²⁸¹ Thus, through a critical reflection of the role of inner-migrant intellectuals, it is necessary to re-evaluate their limitations in order to imagine a new vision.

²⁸⁰ Michael D. Kennedy, "The Intelligentsia in the Constitution of Civil Societies and Post-Communist Regimes in Hungary and Poland," *Theory and Society* 21, no. 1 (Feb., 1992), 29-76. Edward Said, *Representations of the intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993).

²⁸¹ Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: the 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993).

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Chosōn yesul (Korean arts)

Chosōn yōnghwa (Korean film)

Chosōn yōsōng (Korean women)

Cho-Sso munhwa (Korean-Soviet Culture)

Kogo minsok (Archaeological folk culture)

Kogo minsok nonmunjip (Collected works on archeological folk culture)

Kūlloja (Workers)

Munhak (Literature)

Munhak yesul (Literature and arts)

Munhwa yumul (Cultural relics)

Munhwa yusan (Cultural legacies)

Nodongja (The workers)

Ryōksa kwahak (Historical science)

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