

# Oriental World and the Time of “Joseon” (Korea)

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The goal of this study is to review how “things Korean” (*Joseonjeogin geot*) became important when the significant, the “Orient,” was connected with a new signifié by emphasizing a traditional literary magazine, *Munjang* (Literature), published in the late Japanese colonial period.

*Munjang*, published under the influence of “the movement for Korean studies” that tried to newly find and emphasize the cultural tradition of *Joseon*, was often evaluated as a typical example of preserving the cultural identity of *Joseon* in the history of Korean literature during the late period of Japanese colonial rule. But the period between February 1939 and April 1941 when *Munjang* was published was also the time a narrative about the collapse of the Occidental and the rise of the Orient was very popular in public cultural discourse. Of course, this narrative was closely connected with the political ideology of Japanese imperialism that tried to justify rule over East Asia, rejecting the Occident and emphasizing “the sameness of the Orient.” However, without doubt “the inversion of modern values” and “the rise of Oriental values” resulting from this narrative placed the inquiry and revival of “things Korean” in a different context from erstwhile ones.

The leaders of *Munjang*, Lee Byung-gi, Chung Ji-yong, and Lee Tae-joon made it a traditional magazine, putting “things Korean” on an equal semantic value to “things of the past” and “typical natural things.” They not only took a traditional attitude to “things Korean = the past = nature,” but raised the attitude up to the creative mind. The difference of how to revive “things Korean = the past = nature” was basically related to their differences of time consciousness. This study shows that their differences of time consciousness and revival are classified by “the epiphany” and “the nostalgia.” While “the epiphany” tries to realize the potentiality of forgotten and extinct things of the past by repeating past lives, “the nostalgia” tries to stand aloof from modern daily lives, participating in the aesthetic aura through an irresistible yearning for the past.

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But in the attitude of *Munjang* toward “things Korean = the past = nature,” there appears in particular an ironical inversion to substitute superiority for incompetence. Not to speak of “the nostalgia” coming from the completion of ruling over nature, even “the epiphany” that the oppressed past intrudes upon the present can result in enlarging the scope of its identity in case it repeats in defense mechanism provided by self-duplication. Thus, such an enlargement of identity will serve as momentum to integrate “things Korean” into a larger scope, “Oriental culture.”

*Keywords: Peculiarity, time consciousness, the epiphany, the nostalgia, traditionalism, irony, the inversion of modern values*

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## Modern “Crisis” and the Rise of Cultural Peculiarity

In the modern history of Korean literature, the latter part of the 1930s is often called a “turning point.” It is not too much to say that there was not any moment they did not feel they were living in a transition period with rapid daily changes in modern times. But during the latter half of the 1930s when KAPF (the Korean Proletariat Artists Federation) was dissolved in 1935 and the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, the transitional consciousness appeared in a basically different situation from that of the rapid-changing modern times.

The dissolution of KAPF had more symbolic meaning beyond a literary internal incident that a promising power in the literary world was dissolved. The incident was “a signal that historical thought capable of ideological and practical intentions toward modernity, i.e., the historical thought that modernization should be understood as an indispensable development of history and that its progressive aspects should be respected could no longer exist” (Hwang Jong-yon 1992: 4). The dissolution of KAPF not only resulted from the external oppression, the control of thought by the colonial ruling power, but it was also a symbolic incident showing that the cultural hegemony of future planning based on modern values, standards, and belief deteriorated.

The symbolic meaning of the dissolution of KAPF appeared in an enormous reshuffle of the present order after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Of course, the subject of the reshuffle was Japan. Japan was ambitiously experimenting in uniting the different nations and states in East Asia into a Japan-cen-

tered sphere of influence. Moreover, this experiment was tried in rejecting completely the planning for western modernization that had been continued even in conflicts in East Asia, nay, in the whole non-western areas. The slogans, “the East Asian Communal Society” (*Dongahyeopdongche*) and “the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” (*Daedonga gongyeongweon*) that aimed at abolishing western modernization in Asia and establishing a new order and principle came into effect through “a discourse distinguishing far-off recent times as a past era from modern times as a new era” (Yonetani 1997: 73). This discussion had a ripple effect beyond simple systematic ideology while connected with the symptoms of crisis prevailing in Europe at that time. The field of cultural discourse in the latter part of the 1930s, identifying “the crisis of recent times” with “the crisis of the Occident,” and criticizing the times and awaiting the restoration of Oriental values simultaneously was prescribed by the worldly environment such as the rise of fascism in the West and all-out social construction in Japan.

The traditionalism or tradition-oriented tendency in literature in the late Japanese colonial rule did not have anything to do with this worldly environment; moreover, it must have been a positive response to “the crisis of recent times” at that time. This study will review how “things Korean” (*Joseonjeogin geot*) became important when a significant, the “Orient,” was connected with a new signifié, laying stress on a traditional literary magazine, *Munjang*.

Since the middle of the 1930s, “the movement for Korean studies” had been actively directed as a nationalistic academic movement in colonial *Joseon* (Korea). This movement was part of nationalistic movements developed during the transition period of then recent times and throughout the colonial period. Particularly, this movement aimed at establishing and preserving the national identity from a cultural viewpoint, concluding that an uncompromising political movement against Japanese imperialism would be impossible.<sup>1</sup> When the narrative on the collapse of Occidental times and the rise of the Orient became very popular in the public discussion around the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War,<sup>2</sup>

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1. Refer to Lee Ji-won (2004) for nationalistic cultural movements directed by the nationalists including “the movement for Korean studies” from the transition period of recent times throughout the colonial period.

2. It is not too much to say that the 1930s was a period of cultural peculiarity, considering that it was part of important cultural projects to identify and verify “things Oriental (Asian),” “things Japanese,” and “things Korean.” But this cultural phenomenon reflected the Japanese military and economic projects trying to realize “the unification of the Orient” in the real world. When

the interest and inquiry about “things Korean” was placed in another different context. When “things Korean” became aesthetic objects for particular reproduction, it seems that the meaning was not simply confined in the context of the nationalistic cultural movement.

Though Korean peculiarities were taken into consideration in the literary and cultural projects in colonial *Joseon*, there was basically no doubt about the universal prescription for the classes in an atmosphere of “internationalism” before the dissolution of KAPF at least. But in an atmosphere where “things Oriental” were newly evaluated during the Sino-Japanese War, “things Korean” seemed to have rather privileged values. Characteristic discourse or cultural peculiarity was formed as the main stream in the field of literature and culture. Moreover, the tendency of inquiry about “things Japanese” led by “Japanese romanticists” in the Japanese literary world became an important reference to nationalistic literary figures seeking for “Korean peculiarity” (Kim Yoon-sik 1978). In the meantime, the abolition of Korean language education at secondary schools in 1938 and Governor-General Minami’s policy, “*Naeseon ilche*” (Japan and Korea are one entity), were regarded as a serious threat to the identity of the “Korean people.” Accordingly, the redemption of “things Korean” disappearing one by one was accomplished by means of a strong sense of duty. On the one hand, a favorable condition urging the privileged values of “things Korean” was set up through enhancing the superiority of “Oriental values” and criticizing Occidental recent times. On the other hand, national identity was threatened in a Japan-centered “Oriental world.” In view of the then situation, such an attempt as to put privileged values on Korean cultural peculiarity and to draw out the resources of cultural identity of the community seemed to be locked in stalemate. It is because an attempt to discover the cultural peculiarity of “things Korean” from the past may result in confirming the facts of “things Oriental” at the same time.

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the Sino-Japanese War was locked in stalemate after the fall of Uhan, Japan tried to build an inter-national and inter-state community in East Asia based on cooperation with China. In the process, a lot of discussion on cultural identity of “the Orient” was generated. Refer to Yonetani Masafumi (1997), and Choi Won-sik and Baek Yeoung-seo ed. (1997) for “the East Asian Communal Society.” Refer to Miki Kiyoshi (1938) 6 and (1938) 12, and Koyama Iwao (1942) for the discussion about the sameness and differences of “the Orient.”

## The World of “Nature = the Past = Things Korean”

*Munjang* was a literary magazine published in the cultural atmosphere to save the peculiarity of the Orient during the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>3</sup> *Munjang* was characterized by a tradition-oriented tendency and was a literary magazine centered on creation.<sup>4</sup> *Munjang* was published in close connection with “the movement for Korean studies” that had been directed just before. Lee Byung-gi, leader of so-called *Munjang* faction, had already joined “the movement for Korean studies” in a study of *sijo* (three-verse (-stanza) Korean ode (poem) while his original works such as “Hanjungnok,” “Inhyeonwanghujeon,” “Dogangnok,” and so on were introduced in *Munjang*. The production of *Sijo* poets through a recommendation system was due to not only continuous discussion about tradition and classics but also the interest in “things Korean” since the middle of the 1930s.

Above all, *Munjang* had antipathy to modern daily life. Though the representatives of *Munjang*, Lee Byung-gi, Chung Ji-yong, and Lee Tae-joon had distinctive personal histories and characters; they were the very same in their negative attitudes toward modern life. The fact that they agreed in criticism on modern times in spite of the discrepancy of their ways and viewpoints shows well that “the crisis in the Occident (modern times)” and “the rise of the Orient” formed a specific discussion site inverting modern values.

The modern age had been prescribed in relation to “anti-modern” elements from the very beginning. When one of the most important formal characteristics that modern thought kept was “basically an aspiration for a new start” (Wolfgang Iser 2001: 186),<sup>5</sup> it was premised on abrupt severance from the past. Of course, this severance was needed not as a purpose to justify “the new

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3. This *Munjang* refers to not only the literary magazine of the same name first published in February 1939 and discontinued “in accordance with national policy” in April 1941, surviving two years and two months, but also refers to the representatives leading the publication of the magazine. But the aesthetic sense of the representatives based on tradition-oriented tendency and their creative minds could not be internally all the same. Up to now, every study treated *Munjang* as an organization with a united intention. However, as it is shown afterward, the differences among the representatives, Lee Byung-gi, Chung Ji-yong and Lee Tae-joon are by no means trifling. In particular, it is important that their differences were caused by their attitudes toward “tradition” that could unite *Munjang* in intention.

4. Needless to say, the tradition-oriented tendency of *Munjang* was conspicuous by the main current of its edition and the consciousness of the representatives (Kim Yong-jik 1995).

5. Iser prescribed that “an aspiration for the new start” together with “a demand for universality” were two formal characteristics of modern thought.

beginners” so much as a yardstick for “new things” to apply to everything. So to speak, it was a severance to reevaluate “old things” with a yardstick for “new things.” Together with this severance, the hierarchy of modern values was established in order for the hierarchy of “new things = the Occident = the future” as a privileged yardstick for values to evaluate that of “old things = the Orient (Korea) = the past.” It is needless to say that these two hierarchies had inter-prescriptive relations, but in modern ideology they are classified as regulator (perceiver) and the regulated (the perceived).

It was from the middle of the 1930s that such a one-sided and regulated relations broke apart and were inverted. In particular, the “old things = the Orient (Korea) = the past” were positioned as a new yardstick during the Sino-Japanese War.

Now, I'm writing with a fountain pen, and maybe I'll be indebted to it afterward until I die. But no matter how many times I call it by name, I'll never get intimate with it. ... Without inconvenience to prepare black writing fluid and dyed water, I can use it anywhere if only I open its cap. So to speak, its merits depend on convenience rather than on longevity. This fountain pen deprived modern scholars of an important thing. ... It was no other than an ink stick., which was the most elegant and devoted thing of study. What can be fragrant like an ink stick on paper? What can be true and copious light like an ink stick? The ink stick that makes paper everlasting and supplies paper with blood is disappearing from paper and us because of this fountain pen...

A writing brush is considered an instrument worth appreciating. ... A writing brush maker completes the brush, puts it on the end of the shaft, plums the brush with his lips, and undertakes writing again and again on his narrow nail. It's a marvelous wholeheartedness. After he leaves aimlessly and disappears over the mountain, the writing brush he made looks rather sad. (Lee Tae-joon 1939. 12: 154-155)

In this quotation, Lee Tae-joon misses an ink stick and writing brush taken away by a handy implement, the fountain pen. It is a well-known fact that Lee Tae-joon was greatly attached to antiques, whose attachment is shown in sharp distinction between a fountain pen and an ink stick and writing brush. In spite of the continuity and convenience of a fountain pen whose utility lasts literally for ten thousand years and does not lose its value as a writing implement, Lee Tae-

joon never gets intimate with it. It is because the convenience of a fountain pen deprives us of the preciousness of the past “*Munbangu*” (the precious things of the study). What precious things did a new implement from the Occident take away? It is elegance, sincerity, fragrance, true and copious light, and a source of vitalizing paper (“an ink stick that supplies paper with blood”). It is also the time and devotion of the brush maker spent in making a writing brush, that is, the uniqueness of a writing brush made by the brush maker’s lips, hands, and wholeheartedness.

It was the very Korean “uniqueness” that the products of modern technological civilization took away after bringing in “effectiveness”. The reason an ink stick and a writing brush are regarded as unique is that they accompany a trace of life to the past. An ink stick is used through rubbing it devotedly, and a writing brush is created through hands and lips of the brush maker. The act of rubbing down an ink stick and devotedly making a writing brush is unique because they can never be repeated. An ink stick and a writing brush are not perceived as what they are before our eyes so much as the connection with the lives of people (scholars).

What makes strange (“not intimate”) the highest virtues of the products of modern technological civilization appears only when we are locked inside a fence named intimacy. Of course, this intimacy is analogous to “things of the past = things Korean.” But the real inversion of modern values can hardly happen only by relying on this intimacy. “Things of the past = things Korean” must have both intimacy and “superiority.” In this sense, “things of the past = things Korean” becomes a noble style we must imitate.

At first, I wanted to put out the work to contract. The budget was tight, and above all, I have no time to meddle in everything. The carpenters said they were not interested in the work in terms of a contract system. In that case, they had to worry about a loss, and think about profits besides labor costs. If they were not interested in the work, they could not do the work skillfully. I was deeply moved by their frankness. I wanted to have a typical Korean house built because I longed for the taste of simplicity and the profundity of the architecture of the *Joseon* Dynasty. Without the hands of the old-fashioned architects interested in the work itself rather than money, it would be impossible to revive the tradition. So I decided on the day-rate system.

...They are not agile like young carpenters, but ceaseless. They are sin-

cere as if they were doing their own work. Their tools do not moved quickly. But they plane off freely as they like. The traces of their tools look dull but less powerful and natural. I'd like to have my house with less coquetry built by their hands even though it is one of the most common houses. (Lee Tae-joon 1939 (9): 178-179)

Lee Tae-joon had the old carpenters build his house because he was desirous of “the simplicity and profundity of the architecture of the *Joseon* Dynasty.” These carpenters were worthy of the descendants of traditional “artisans.” Lee Tae-joon was generous with his money to revive a traditional “typical Korean house” and had the artisans use their “skill” thus wanted to realize a lost and past style of building. In fact, “the absence of style” characterizes the modern daily world. Rapid changes and reconstruction in accordance with modernization result in the lack of “an established form” because they make it impossible for a unified form to exist. Thus, there appears a tendency to verify the stable reversion of existence through “the efforts to use old styles and to stay in the remnants, the ruins, and the memory” (Henri Lefebvre 1995: 64). The “agility and sharpness” of the young workers can not transmit such a reversion. Nor can it make substantial profit by receiving their wages for the labor without any loss. It can not reproduce the style to imitate the past architecture through technological reproduction. The “taste” of a “typical Korean house” can be realized only through the hands of the “artisans” who can be indulged in the work itself.

The style Lee Tae-joon wants to realize is not simply classical and formal obstinacy. But it is rather a *modus vivendi* rejecting artificial stereotype. It looks like the old carpenters are rubbing as they like, but in fact it is “dull but less powerful and natural.” The materials carpenters use come from nature. When giving “formality” to the materials too artificially, “the tastes of simplicity and profundity” naturally disappears. It is the skill of an artisan that treats natural things naturally. It is also the essence of “superiority” no less than “familiarity” that “things of the past = things Korean” have.<sup>6</sup> Here, “new things = the Occident = civiliza-

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6. Since an inquiry into “Korean peculiarity” became very popular in the middle of the 1930s, there were many attempts to seize the essence of “things of the past = things Korean” as a particular notion. For example, Shin Seok-cho who swung from proletariat literature also tried to seize the basic characteristics of “things Korean” as a notion of “*meot*” (zest). According to him, “*meot*” is the tradition of non-practicality, uselessness and the propensity to consume that can be found in the elite youth corps of *Silla* and retired scholars of *Choson*. But it does not mean sim-

tion = the future” are overcome by “old things t he Orient (Korea) = nature = the past”.

Regarding “things Korean” in the same light with “typical natural things” (i.e., “things Korean=typical natural things”) distinctively appears not only to those who contemplate and appreciate things of the past but also basically appears to the peculiar creative mind kept by *Munjang*. For example, Chung Ji-yong refers to the attitude of writing a poem, and writes as follows:

Poetic technique unexpectedly becomes impotent when depending on poetics, an essay on poetry, or prosody. Rather, it comes from practice and mastery...

At last, forget technique. Make a pleasant tour in open-mindedness. It will be technique spontaneously when a swordsman just moves or stands in a drill hall...

An oriole makes only a sound of oriole but it is always fresh. It will be a dishonor when an oriole cries through mastery. It cannot be a hackneyed song only when it is just the first sound coming from life.

Above all, do not try a mutation. A variation against nature can not be novel... A poet can leap again in complete natural attitude.

Excellent tradition can be nothing more than a leaping board (Chung Ji-yong 1939. 6: 126).

Writing a poem in witty rhetoric is compared to a natural life activity. Here, we need to pay attention to the fact that “nature”, “poetry” and “tradition” are in a relative relation. Short as the above quotation is, it shows directly how the tradition-oriented tendency and creative mind, the characteristics of *Munjang* are united. Taking into consideration the context referring to spiritual attitude when writing a poem rather than how to write a poem, the poetic “technique” does not make any sense as a poetic implement which can be rationally explained and effectively transmitted. The reason is that Chung Ji-yong does not look down on “technique” but aims at unity in “*techné*” and “*physis*.” The “technique” of

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ply an overflow of intemperate emotions, but a “law of neutralization.” As it was expressed like “make a sound and be suitable to a stanza” or “be suitable to one’s status,” formality should be placed under the control of ideology. However, this formality is not a subjectively given form so much as one conformed with “form of nature.” Shin Seok-cho illustrates the form of tense rhythm of *Sijo* as a model of this form (Shin Seok-cho 1941: 151-153).

Chung Ji-yong during the *Munjang* period is not an isolated technique in modern meaning, i.e., a neutral implement (way) that a human being tries to make profit from by taking advantage of *natura naturata*. On the one hand, this “technique” in the modern sense is isolated in that it belongs to neither the subject nor the object of an act and is independent and of neutral value. On the other hand, it is regarded as a yardstick for rationality in that it is equally open to its users, implying that they can get the same things by using it. But this modern “technique” becomes a symbol of isolated rationality and conceals its real nature as an implement for governing nature by the subject. The “technique” is not the product of neutral value so much as the product of desire for governing nature by the subject. Chung Ji-yong’s understanding of the “technique” implies the criticism against this concept of modern “technique.”

In the context of Chung Ji-yong, the “technique” can make a real poem only when it becomes “nature” and can be united with what it tries to govern. Otherwise, every “technique” cannot help producing a “mutation” and a “variation to deceive nature.” The man-made “technique” is nothing but an implement to serve the subject’s purpose, however disguised it may be as neutralization and openness. When the character of an implement is forgotten, the “technique” cannot help forcing a variation of “nature.” Accordingly, Chung Ji-yong demands to transcend the “technique’s” character as an implement rather than to forget it. In his writings, he said that “At last, forget technique.” This indicates the highest state of serenity where “technique” becomes “nature” and vice versa, not to speak of overcoming the “technique’s” character as an implement. Accordingly, when just moving and standing becomes “technique” and reaches “complete natural posture,” it can be said that a real poetic leap will be accomplished.<sup>7</sup> Because this “technique” is not isolated like “an essay on poetry” or as “poetics” is applicable to the creation of poems and is dissolved in the spontaneous activity of a poet, it cannot be separated from the unique process of writing each

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7. Refer to Chung Ji-yong 1939. 10 for another writings that regarded writing a poem in the same light with the “natural character” of life activity based on a kind of romantic organicism. Here, Chung Ji-yong thinks highly of spontaneous outflow of life rather than useless prolificacy in writing. He makes it clear that “a poem can crystalize the heart’s blood and soul after waiting for impulse, delight, activity and inspiration” (190). In particular, he prescribed that those days were “a period of prose.” He also said “the posture of a poem will catch fire more transcendently” (190). To him, a “poem” is not of modern literary genres so much as the place of the “anti-modern” mind opposite to “modern times = typical prosaic things” in values

poem. This training process reminds us of educating apprentices in the past, aiming ultimately at overcoming artificiality of “technique” and reaching unrestricted circumstances in which a poet and nature cannot be distinguished. To a poet, the “tradition” becomes a base of unrestricted circumstances. In other words, the “tradition” of Chung Ji-yong is not only a long poetic tradition aiming at unrestricted circumstances but also the “nature” of a poet.

Thus, it is an outstanding characteristic that the tradition-oriented tendency of *Munjang* is inseparably united with the creative mind. It does not make it a reality of “typical Korean tradition” through the notional understanding of a “typical Korean peculiarity” from the past, but it dissolves tradition into the process for artistic achievement. In particular, the tradition is regarded in the same light as the “character of nature.” Beyond restoring “typical natural things” to an element or essence and including them in the writings according to contents and subjects, it chooses the way to realize the “character of nature” in relation to the subject of creation and poetic (literary) object.<sup>8</sup> When *Munjang* is said to repeat things of the past, it means the repetition of these relations. The special perception and consciousness of time should be set forth as a premise in order to make possible the repetition of things of the past.

### Time Consciousness of Traditionalism

Every individual in the modern world cannot help keeping “primarily” homogeneous and vague linear time flowing objectively as a way of expressing his own experience. Modern time showing as a spatial emblem often called the movement of a clock is quantitative time that can be strictly divided, and an individual experience is turned through this time emblem. In this progressive modern time,

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8. A short story. “*Sanjeong*” (The Essence of Mountain) written by Lee Hyo-seok is a negative example of content inclusion. In this novel, Lee Hyo-seok shows the process three professors become “men of nature” when climbing a mountain. After eating meat and drinking too much on the mountain, they dropped in “a ‘suspicious house’ in the back street” and spent a night with girls. They overemphasized its meaning as follows: “It was completely a wild day. It was a day a wild cry ordered away from civilization. It was not a crime of mountain but a virtue of mountain. It was thanks to the essence of mountain that we got into a profuse perspiration. It was not a dirty page of history, but a right page of history.” As it is called, accepting “unity with nature” in the sphere of a subject, they defend a deviate act in the name of “nature” (Lee Hyo-seok. 1939. 2: 85-91).

the past is thoroughly regarded as “the passed.” It is because the past is exceeded by the present, and the present is also exceeded by the future.

But from the traditional point of view, the past is not simply the passed, nor is it overcome and extinguished by the present. To the traditionalists, the past is not “*das Vergangene*” or “the disappeared” so much as “*das Gewesene*” (the things that have existed). Accordingly, the things of the past have as much authority as they have existed. When the past is newly restored and comes to gain superior status through the inversion of modern values, the restoration of the past can be accomplished not only by the attitude to restore the past things and to upgrade them as valuable, but also the attitude to think of the things of the past as the present things continuing until now. This study will take the latter attitude as the epiphany and the former one as the nostalgia.<sup>9</sup>

### 1. Time Consciousness of the Epiphany

The leader of *Munjang*, Lee Byung-gi, joined in the inquiry into “typical Korean peculiarity” in the middle of the 1930s,<sup>10</sup> and in particular indulged in the study of *sijo* and is considered a literary figure that contributed to the establishment of modern *sijo* from the standpoint of cherishing and transforming it (Lee Byung-gi 1935 (1): 1; 1935 (5): 10; 1935 (9): 2-5). To him, *sijo* was not only the target of study as the essence of “things Korean = things of the past” but that it was also an essential form as it should repeat itself in the present. This clearly appears in the distinction between Cho Yoon-je’s and his opinion on the form of *sijo*.

Cho Yoon-je, a leading nationalistic literary historian, defined *sijo* as a strictly fixed form of verse of three stanzas and six phrases that had existed from the past and also defined this rule as the principal form of *sijo*. Accordingly, he

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9. Refer to Dipesh Chakrabarty (1998: 289-290) for the distinction between the epiphany and the nostalgia. In this writings, he distinguishes the epiphany from the nostalgia as follows: the former is “the attitude regarding tradition as something omnipresent but invisible without a poetic and unrealistic gaze—a kind of perpetual vision itself. The latter is the attitude situated in an experience of loss and demanding the politics of restoration and recovery.” This study will accept only the basic definition but will not accept his evaluation of both values.

10. Lee Byung-gi is considered center of *Munjang* both in name and reality who other writers of *Munjang* looked up to. Chung Ji-yong said in an epilogue of “*Garam sijojip*” (Collections of *Garam’s Sijo*) that “This is a precious book. It seems to give off very spiritual, faultless and elegant fragrance. I’m so overwhelmed with shame I can not attach any word to this book.” He also compares Lee Byung-gi with *Chusa*, Kim Jung-hi (Chung Ji-yong 1988: 300-301).

thought that the form of *Yeonsijo* that Lee Byung-gi tried as modern *sijo* would destroy the completion of the form of *sijo*.

···(*Yeonsijo*) externally seems to have two or three pieces of poetry. In content, each piece of poetry is not independent and becomes a complete *sijo* depending on the previous or the next piece of poetry. In this case, the content cannot be united in a fixed form of three stanzas, fulfilling the united expression in six or nine stanzas which ultimately destroys the fixed form of *sijo*. Accordingly, the life of *sijo* will be lost. It must not be forgotten that these writings are not worth being called *sijo*. (Cho Yoon-je 1940(2): 31)

According to the opinion of Cho Yoon-je, a literary historian, *Yeonsijo* that Lee Byung-gi tried to write was nothing but “fruitless merits despising the historical character and the values of the fixed form of *sijo*” (Cho Yoon-je 1940. 2: 31). In Cho Yoon-je’s opinion, *sijo* is a *sijo* and is artistically valuable if only it observes a strictly fixed form of verse of three stanzas and six phrases. *Yeonsijo* only loses the unique cohesion and tension of *sijo* in that a poetic inspiration must completely match a piece of *sijo*; accordingly, the artistic and formal completion of *sijo* cannot be found. This viewpoint can be adopted only when *sijo* is regarded as something that wholly existed in the past and belonged to the passed, in completed and irrevocable time.

On the contrary, the *sijo* of Lee Byung-gi, a poet of *sijo*, is a form where a poet expresses his emotions naturally. In his writings, “Let’s Renovate *sijo*” (1932) he explained the formal characteristics of modern *sijo* that he tries to write. The most distinguished “renovation” here was to transform *sijo* as music into *sijo* as literature.

···From today on, *sijo* should be *sijo* as literature and poetry rather than *sijo* as music. In other words, *Sijo* should be *sijo* to write rather than *sijo* to sing. Accordingly, its tone will be refined. (Lee Byung-gi 1966: 325)

Lee Byung-gi urges the need of transforming *sijo* as a song into *sijo* as literature. This explains that he thinks much of the form of *sijo* under the modern condition different from the past social condition under which *sijo* was created, circulated, and enjoyed.

Strictly speaking, he regards *sijo* of the past as a piece of “writing” beyond

an object to conceptualize and systemize according to its essence, formality, and regularity. Accordingly, it is not applicable to him to talk about the essence of *sijo* or the typical taste of *Joseon* in accordance with a series of conceptual results abstracted from the past *sijo*. This is because, he says, that “however excellent a masterpiece a song of the past may be, it exists as nothing but itself. It is of no use for many people to imitate it” (Lee Byung-gi 1935. 9: 4). To him, a “typical Korean peculiarity” or *sijo* exist not as a concept of *sijo* but as the one and only literary work.

The moment a poet writes *sijo*, he suddenly experiences that he “is in the tradition.” In the creating and polishing processes potentiality implied by the form of the past, i.e., a rule of *sijo* becomes a natural form of his emotions, there appears a certain essential aspect of past life. This can be called a moment of the epiphany.<sup>11</sup> Of course, the lives of the past appearing at this moment are directly connected with the so-called “typical Korean peculiarity.” Until a poet experiences it as vivid in life by repeating the essential form of “typical Korean peculiarity,” he does not realize that he exists in the tradition. Moreover, repetition is the one and only means of this because it is concentrated on a literary work. Every literary work is self-sufficient and the one and only thing in that it cannot be substituted with another, and in that, a literary work cannot be finished by another literary work.

When the lives of the past appear through an internal experience in the process of creating *sijo*, the moment is no longer vague time shown on a clock or a calendar. This moment is not passing in the course of time but is a stopped and remaining moment by an intruding power outside time. In this stopping and remaining, the linear time image flowing from the past, through the present, and into the future does not make any sense. Moreover, the world of a “timeless” *sijo* aims at the world of eternal experiences, i.e., the time of realization and abundance becoming extinct from vague modern times counted quantitatively. The consciousness of the epiphany is connected with the consciousness of romanticism in that it results in a “specialization of the self” aiming at its own unique truth unrelated to the outside world.<sup>12</sup> But this specialization comes true by join-

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11. “Transcendence and outside tendency are attributes of the epiphany in that homogeneous time suddenly breaks, and the hidden essence of a thing is suddenly revealed” (Nam Jin-woo 2001: 48).

12. Refer to Nam Jin-woo 2001: note 25 in 48. Of course, this “realization of self” is nothing more than the isolation of the self (Frank Kermode 1971: 13-42).

ing in the things of the past in that it is not satisfied with the outflow of emotions but that the emotions should take the form of a style of *sijo*. The essence of the “Korean peculiarity” that Lee Byung-gi tries to find out in the lives of the past is surely the style of *sijo*, but it must be connected with his life itself rather than an artistic act in a narrow sense.

I have grown orchids for nearly twenty years, and have thirty pots of twenty different species. The neighbors call my house a house of flowers or a hospital of orchids. It is most difficult to grow orchids among the flowers. There are many who ask for an orchid but few who grow them well. When they get one, they usually make it die or become sick. An orchid lives on sand and water. It usually dies or becomes sick by inappropriate fertilizing. It should be exposed to the sun only in the morning and evening. One can master the knack of growing orchids after more than ten years” growing because he must know first how to water, secondly how to fertilize, and thirdly how to keep off the cold. It catches cold when wet and cold slightly, and soon dies when the roots are frozen. (Lee Byung-gi 1966: 195)

The growing of orchids by Lee Byung-gi is on a different level from growing vegetables. It really means growing his mind and himself rather than growing orchids.<sup>13</sup> One who grows an orchid must understand the nature and physiology of an orchid. To Lee Byung-gi, understanding the nature and physiology of an orchid is analogous to understanding the basic form of *sijo*. An orchid and *sijo* belong to the world where one who grows or writes cannot implement things to his advantage. Just as one can complete literary works when he girds up himself to reach the situation of spontaneous outflow of his own emotions, it does not collide with the fixed rule of *sijo*, so he can bloom flowers when he understands the physiology of an orchid and approaches the life rhythm of an orchid. In the above quotation, “—know how to—” is not a mere acquisition of knowledge. It is an accumulation of experiences and also the stage of spiritual awakening “know-how” becomes “nature” and vice versa.<sup>14</sup>

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13. Bread only grows a body but an orchid grows a sound mind! (Lee Byung-gi 1966: 196).

14. “I grow (vegetables) after spiritual enlightenment.” (Lee Byung-gi 1966: 186).

Today it is raining all day long.  
 An orchid scattering flower sprouts a stalk again  
 It consoles my lonesome mind not a little.

I can not forget it, either. Will it follow me?  
 Sitting the other way round, I put a book before me.  
 While I turn the pages over, it emits fragrance.

“Orchid (3)” (Lee Byung-gi 1966:21)

As the above *sijo* shows, “orchid” and “I” come to a mutual good understanding irrevocably as a subject and object. While the vitality of an orchid and “my” heart come to a mutual understanding in silence, “orchid” and “I” come to the inseparable stage. The fragrance emitted when I alone turn the pages over is not important whether it is the fragrance of an orchid, a book, or “mine.”<sup>15</sup> What romantic mutual understanding shows as an image is nothing more than the attitude of a classical scholar.

It is the proud and lonely life of a classical scholar that Lee Byung-gi tries to reach through writing *sijo* and growing orchids. So to speak, he tries to bring the life of the scholar to the present by regulating his life. It is not only the life of reaching spiritual enlightenment in the process of adjusting himself to the order and rhythm of nature, to moderation, and to formality but also a poetic response to the prosaic modern world. The tradition-oriented tendency and creative mind become an attitude of life itself to Lee Byung-gi. He tries to bring to the present “things Korean = things of the past” not as narrative memory but as traumatic memory by repeating the life of the classical scholar anachronistically and making the past as “the passed” appear in the present (Judith Lewis Herman 1992; Martin Jay 2002: 197).<sup>16</sup>

15. As he says that “when looking at the green leaves and smelling the strong fragrance, I attain a spiritual state of perfect selfishness and freedom from all thought” (Lee Byung-gi 1966: 195).

The growing orchids by Lee Byung-gi is related to the experience of the epiphany.

16. In particular, taking into consideration the critical situation for colonial *Joseon* to preserve itself at the end of the Japanese colonial rule which was different from the soaring value of “things Korean = things of the past,” in other words, “the past = the Orient (*Joseon*)” that derived from “the inversion of modern values,” this repetition of the past can be regarded as an excellent method to bring the oppressed things to the present. In this respect, the moment of repetition of Lee Byung-gi is analogous to “Jetztzeit” (Walter Benjamin 1988: 353).

But the past that “*Munjang*” including Lee Byung-gi “remembers” is confined to *Hyangga*

While Lee Byung-gi repeats things of the past through *sijo*, orchids, and a scholastic life, Chung Ji-yong brings “the past” to the present through a peculiar poetic achievement represented by so-called “samsusi” (landscape poems). It seems that Chung Ji-yong took a negative and critical attitude to modern time symbols in that such regulate individual consciousness.<sup>17</sup> But the most distinguished poetic achievements were concentrated during his *Munjang* period that tried to cut off modern time and begin a new time in a poetic moment.

Into the intestines of an old master  
At any time flows water that swallowed honeysuckle tea.

A big fire of white birch  
Was made red again,

Throwing a shadow over the corner  
Radish was sprouted green,

Smell of earth steaming nice and warm  
I indulged in the sounds of snow and wind outside.

Without a calendar in the mountains  
The three winter months are white.

“Honeysuckle Tea” (*Munjang* 1941. 1:118-119)

In this poem, time is thoroughly expressed as a movement of nature and life.

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(old Korean folk ballads) and *sijo* they think highly of as the essence of “things Korean” and the culture of the ruling classes as it shows in the “scholastic tradition” that Lee Byung-gi tries to match in his life. Accordingly, their “traumatic memory” conceals another “defense mechanism” at the bottom.

17. Refer to Kim Shin-jeong (2000: 215-220). According to Kim Shin-jeong, Chung Ji-yong was critical to modern time symbols from the period that distinguishes the beginning from the middle period, in other words, the modernism stage from the stage of religious poetry. Chung Ji-yong’s thought that the “continuous flow of time is moving not in the direction of progress and development but toward collapse and destruction and that time is not the source of creation but the existence to threaten one’s identity, followed by an attempt to deny time. Accordingly, the self, to maintain one’s identity, aims at restoring not the fragmentary time of reality but the pure time of infancy or the beautiful and perfect time when God exists” (Kim Shin-jeong 2000: 220).

The expression is very meaningful that honeysuckle tea flows into the intestines of an old master “*musiro*” (at any time). Of course, “*musiro*” is an adverb in a lexical meaning that modifies an activity occurring frequently at any time. But in this context, it can be understood as “absence of time”. It can be understood that time cannot be measured with an objective standard even though it takes time for tea to flow into the intestines and emit fragrance. In the world of this poem, time that is not connected with life movement is meaningless. Even a “calendar” indicating objective time is of no use. In this “mountain,” an “old master” drinking tea, “white birch,” “radish,” “snow and wind” and an unknown poetic speaker who smells “smell of earth” coexist following the rhythm of life. Their rhythm of life is so-called their unique “*durée pure*.”<sup>18</sup> And their rhythm coexists peacefully in the larger order, i.e., the time of nature such as “three winter months.” When the time of nature and life lie as an absolute ground of existence, the existing beings can “maintain” themselves.

The world of harmony found in the time of nature is the world of “things Korean = things of the past” to Chung Ji-yong. Of course, the world of “things Korean = things of the past” of Chung Ji-yong like that of Lee Byung-gi does not exist as a fixed concept or symbol.<sup>19</sup> It can just be realized in the practical process. The “practical process,” as was mentioned above, means the process of practicing to attain a “natural posture” and also the process of repeating the world of the past through literary works. When “technique” is in accord with the physiology of “nature” spontaneously to reach the stage of complete control that “technique” and “nature” cannot be distinguishable each other, “things Korean = things of the past” can be brought to the present. Thus, it is not to objectify the past with the eyes of the present but to see the present with the eyes of the past. To Chung Ji-yong, these “eyes of the past” are nothing more than the form of *sansusi*. While “the eyes of the past” can appear not through implemental acquisition but through the process of refining oneself to be in accord with “nature,” it can correspond to the idea of *sansusi* that “there must be an agreement between an object and myself to forget the boundary and become one, not attracting the

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18. Refer to Henri Bergson (2001: 135-137). In this book, Bergson explains the concept of “continuance” catching qualitative pluralism in comparison with the concept of succession based on quantitative thought.

19. Chung Ji-yong criticizes a halfway attitude to maintain a fixed symbol of “things Korean” for a leisurely “taste of *Joseon*,” nothing more than “amateurish decoration” (Chung Ji-yong 1988: 174-175).

landscape to me but approaching the landscape” (Chung Min 1997: 410).

This is a rocky mountain where no blades of grass move, while stones are winding around the twelve valleys in a mass. The cold sky separately covers each valley, and thick ice becomes a reliable stepping-stone. When I step on the same trace as a pheasant and a bear do, and the flow of a stream sounds vigorously like a cricket. In the flickering sunlight, snow is covered on snow. Snow-covered white branches breathe while oppressed by other white branches. But bending branches do not hurt themselves in the mountain. I collapsed abruptly. I took my seat at a place to see a cliff red with the shadow of azalea once.

“*Jangsusan 2*” (A Mountain of Longevity 2), *Munjang* (1939(4): 121)

“Blanks” that are used to give the same effect as landscape painting make conspicuous the existence of the various cast in this poem, filling the role of an intaglio (Kim Shin-jeong 2000: 161-162). But each cast is not separated. A world of “*Jangsusan*” is composed of “stone,” “the cold sky,” “ice,” “pheasant,” “bear,” “I,” “snow,” “azalea,” etc., however scattered they may look like the cast in a landscape painting. Just as each individual cast in a landscape painting is expressed in a painting in Indian ink, so does each individual cast in the world of “*Jangsusan*” correspond one another. The world in which “twelve valleys” are composed of “a mass,” and “ice” becomes a “stepping-stone” for “me” can no longer know about the division between a subject and an object. There is an eye for organic relations with natural and live things, and the eye is just in the world of *Jangsusan*.

In particular, objective time is stopped in *sansusi*. Strong as the pictorial image may be, the timelessness is ultimately connected with an idea of *sansusi*. For example, “I” “step on the same trace as a pheasant and a bear do.” Logically speaking, a “pheasant,” a “bear,” and “I” merely passed the same path at a different time. But such a time difference disappears in the united world this poem describes; moreover, it arouses unity that cannot distinguish one from the other. Accordingly, though it is snow-covered winter, “I” am looking at “a cliff red with the shadow of azaleas.” Logically speaking, it can be understood as the desire of a poetic speaker waiting for spring at the end of winter, but in the world of “*Jangsusan*,” a different time seems to coexist.

To Chun Ji-yong, like Lee Byung-gi, the past is not the passed, nor the fixed, but the continuous repetition at the present. Moreover, this “repetition” is united with the process of producing literary works. A literary work itself is the one and

only autonomous world. Accordingly, if only “things Korean = things of the past” can appear in labor to “create” writings, the one and only character and autonomy of literary works will be a principal condition to preserve lively “things Korean = things of the past.” It is evaluated that they tried to monopolize the past again through “a means to reveal peculiarity in the process.” Above all, this kind of monopolizing the past again has superiority to bring the past to the present beyond the epistemological distance that notional discussion implies. At least, the crystallized past in their literary works, if any, is not the dead past but the past that can revive repeatedly joining in the process of creation and reading.

## 2. Time Consciousness of the Nostalgia

While Lee Byung-gi and Chung Ji-yong try to repeat life of the past, look at the present with the eyes of the past mainly through the creation of *sijo* and *sansusi*, and find out the deficiency of reality in comparison with an abundant moment shown by “the eyes of the past,” there is “a feeling of loss” in Lee Tae-joon’s attitude toward the past. The reality of Lee Tae-joon is still deficient like that of the traditionalists, and the desirable past is also far from repeating itself. This distance arouses a feeling of yearning for things of the past. This attitude accompanies a painful feeling of destructive power of time. A paradox of time seems to be felt very keen to Lee Tae-joon, that it is an absolute condition producing the creation and movement of all living things on the one hand while it is irresistible power causing inevitable extinction of all living things on the other.

It is an outstanding characteristic feature that Lee Tae-joon’s attitude toward the past is different from that of monopolizing the past by Lee Byung-gi and Chung Ji-yong. Time consciousness that arouses yearnings for the past can be called the nostalgia. The time consciousness of the nostalgia is a modern product in that it longs for “another time.”<sup>20</sup> Because this desire is premised on the divi-

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20. There has been emotion of nostalgia since the ancient times. But there is also a basic difference between ancient nostalgia and modern nostalgia. Ancient nostalgia that can be found in literary works after the seventeenth century from the period of Homer is mainly a desire for home or “homesickness.” For example, when Ulysses was wandering about and remembered his hometown Ithaca, it was “*nostos*,” i.e. a keen desire for recurrence that Homer described. So to speak, the ancient nostalgia meant a desire for another “place.” Though it can include a desire for another place, modern nostalgia means a desire for another “time.” The nostalgia of romanticists toward the medieval period and the nostalgia of Robert Frost toward the early days of his life are good examples (David Gross 1992: 75-76).

sion and loss of time, there lie dormant two basic elements in the time consciousness of the nostalgia. First, there is a keen desire to return to a certain abundant time of the past, or the background. Second, there is also a tendency to crystallize the elements of the past selectively and realize them by making the previous period more attractive than in the past (David Gross 1992: 75). In particular, restoration of the “past” caused by the “inversion of modern values” arouses a keen desire for both the lost and the disappearing, idealizing things of the past.

It was three years since I left Tokyo and dropped in “Myeongweolgan” that night. This was the first *gisaeng* (a female entertainer) party for me, who had a longing for the mood of *Joseon*. Two *gisaeng* entered the room. I was nearly enraptured with a graceful bearing when they shut the sliding door and greeted me with heads dropping slightly. Even their *beoseon* (traditional Korean socks) looked beautiful when walking unsteadily. But seen closely, they became an eyesore. The two *gisaeng* wore belts of rubashka string. One of them parted her hair aslant, and the other in the *mimigakushi* style. I asked her why she parted her hair in the *mimigakushi* style. She only smiled, saying nothing. A customer beside her asked back if their styles were up-to-date and much better than that of a maiden of *Joseon*. He also said that it was fashionable to wear a belt of rubashka string or a necktie. Immediately, I felt that when a *gisaeng* lost her own unique beauty, it resulted from not only her rash attempt but also from the fault of her customers and the situation of the period. At the beginning of the merriment, another *gisaeng* entered. I could be enraptured with this *gisaeng* until the end. She was called *So-ok* (Little Jade) from *Yeongnam* (South-Eastern Province of Korea). It seemed charming that she spoke in poor Seoul dialect, unfamiliar with the manners and ways of the age. She wore *jeogori* (a Korean-style short coat) and *chima* (a skirt) of white ramie fabric with a shining embroidered purse. The refined maiden was bedecked only with a jade hairpin and a jade ear-pick and without a powder puff and paper the other two *gisaeng* often used. The two *gisaeng* with belted rubashka strings on could sing only a song like “*Gagonodori*” (籠の鳥), but *So-ok* played the *gayageum* (a twelve-stringed Korean harp), singing a song by herself with no one singing in the room. (Lee Tae-joon 1944: 135-136)

Even taking into consideration that the observed *gisaeng* is a vanishing existence of the past in this literary work, “new things” to Lee Tae-joon are regarded as damage to “the things that have existed” thoroughly. The “up-to-date” and “fashionable” symbols of “*rubasigga* string,” “*mimigaggusi*,” “necktie,” “powder puff,” etc., injure “her own unique beauty” immensely, inharmonious with the traditional image of *gisaeng*. Of course, the unique beauty of *gisaeng* to Lee Tae-joon is nothing more than that of traditional “things Korean.” Lee Tae-joon recognizes that the tendency for peculiarity of “things Korean” to be injured and vanish is an irresistible trend, indicating that such a shallow disharmony of *gisaeng* is not the fault of *gisaeng* themselves so much as that of “customers” and “the situation of the period.” But unlike other customers asking “if their styles were up-to-date and much better than that of a maiden of *Joseon*,” Lee Tae-joon misses the beauty of “things Korean = things of the past” all the more vanishing in the process of irresistible time.

Accordingly, it is regarded as purity unstained by “the manners and ways of the age” “that she spoke in poor Seoul dialect.” *Jeogori* and *chima* of “white ramie fabric” with a shining “embroidered purse” and “a jade hairpin and a jade ear-pick” are regarded as reviving the beauty of a refined maiden of *Joseon*. The appearance of “playing the *gayageum* and singing” is regarded as the air and as evidence of arts of a traditional *gisaeng*. It is because all of these characteristics belong to the past. In other words, the fact that Lee Tae-joon could be “enraptured with this *gisaeng*, *So-ok* until the end” results from the fact that there were two “up-to-date” *gisaeng* who “parted the hair aslant,” wore “a belt of *rubasigga* string” in the “*mimigaggusi*” style, and could sing “only a song like ‘*Gagon-odori*’ (籠の鳥).” Thus, the nostalgic attitude of Lee Tae-joon is premised on the distance from the past, and the recognition not to exceed this distance result in making the past more mystical or ideal.<sup>21</sup>

“Things Korean = things of the past” to Lee Tae-joon cause desire because they have the distance of time, and “being far-off” deriving from the distance of

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21. This distance from the past is mixed with spatial distance. As it shows in the first part of the above quotation, it is very significant that it was on the very evening of the day after three years’ absence that Lee Tae-joon returned from Tokyo, dropped in *Myeongwolgwang*, and met *gisaeng*. The distance between Seoul and Tokyo implies not only a spatial meaning but also the meaning of time. It can be assumed that the *gisaeng* of *Myeongwolgwang* take on the meaning of “character of the past” very strongly to Lee Tae-joon who returned from Tokyo’s life after three years.

time gives a new halo to things of the past.

I like classics as they are far-off.

Being far-off in time is more exotic and mystical than being faraway in distance. The state of *gogyeongjosin* (古鏡照神: seeing the gods through an old mirror), like the hoary moss of an old tower, is deepened by the value of the nature of time and tide. Hoariness! Fragrance of dry mushroom boiled long! This is a kind of halo that only the classics can have and even the classics cannot describe in a day. (Lee Tae-joon 1944:135)

As it shows directly in the above quotation, a “feeling of loss” precedes in Lee Tae-joon’s attitude toward things of the past. The fact that the “classics” far-off in time can be more “exotic” than “exotic things” is because a nostalgia longing for the past is premised on a “feeling of loss.” It proves that a consciousness of the “passing of time” produces a deep emotion toward things of the past. The hoary “halo” of classics is nothing more than an effect that a trace of the “passing of time” makes. Lee Tae-joon is absorbed in “relics” like old kitchen utensils including a “water dropper” and “ceramics,” giving himself up to the mystery of this trace. He wants to preserve the “halo.” Accordingly, it can be said that Lee Tae-joon is looking at the past, not the “relics,” as things that take up space. Thus, relics are of significance not with a spatial meaning but with a meaning of time.<sup>22</sup>

But all the things of the past do not have meaning to Lee Tae-joon.

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22. It can be said that reading the past from the “relics” Lee Tae-joon takes part in the aura Walter Benjamin prescribes. Benjamin prescribes his aura as follows: “... What is an aura? It looks like a dexterous web time and space get entangled each other. In other words, however close it may look, a thing faraway appears only once. Suppose we are taking a rest in broad summer daylight and are looking at a mountain on the horizon casting a long shadow, or small branches of a tree. This momentary time is mixed with these phenomena, and they become one. At this moment, we can breathe auras the mountain and branches create” (Walter Benjamin 1988: 245).

Even though a famous phenomenon in summer broad daylight, what Benjamin suggests as an example, is regarded as a spatial metaphor, an aura is interpreted as a “phenomenon of spatial distance” on the whole. But an aura also has the side of time. Time is “mixed with spatial spheres in close proximity to the distance,” and the fact that space and time get entangled with each other makes an aura a peculiar phenomenon of the distance. Refer to John McCole (1993: 4) for the side of time of an aura.

It cannot be valuable only because it is old, nor can we enjoy only the things made with technique and effort. The real value of an ancient thing becomes distinguished because it has a trace living together with ancient people. Foreign artifacts are so delicate that they lose value the moment they are cracked slightly. They become hateful as they advance in years like a handicapped man with silk clothes on. But the artifacts of the *Joseon* dynasty are born so unsophisticated that they become beautiful the more hand-stained they become and are used to eat food. They are not only ceramics but also woodwork. A wooden pillow, wooden shoes, and a wooden dining table become beautiful the more hand-stained they become in daily life. New foreign books are destined to become dirty and hateful from the very day they are bought. But the cover of Korean books become beautiful and the pages are turned over smoothly when they become hand-stained. (Lee Tae-joon 1944: 240)

Relics become valuable to “appreciate” only when they get hand-stained. This is an important difference to distinguish the artifacts of *Joseon* from those made with up-to-date and refined techniques. While the “hand-stained trace” is a natural trace speaking of the long passing of time, the “trace of life” on “foreign artifacts” only makes them ugly. It is because the artifacts of *Joseon* are natural in themselves. Lee Tae-joon maintains that the artifacts of *Joseon* do not conceal natural character and double their beauty when they are “born so unsophisticated” and get entangled with the trace of life naturally in the process of time; on the other hand, foreign artifacts are changed so exceedingly in accordance with the principle of technique and efficiency that they cannot harmonize with the natural rhythm of life. Thus, Lee Tae-joon tries to seek from the past the values taken away by the control of the present “technique” that cannot be found in foreign artifacts.

In view of this situation, what Lee Tae-joon tries to find out from the things of the past is the “life of the past” his nostalgic attitude longs for. When he experiences “appearance of the distance” through a medium of “relics,” the very thing beyond the distance is nothing but the time of typical past life. Of course, “relics” before Lee Tae-joon’s eyes lie as “relics” left by the past. The reason they can mediate typical past life is because they are “the things that have existed.” It is said that Lee Tae-joon understands time as “passing of time.” It is also said that it is connected with the nostalgic consciousness of time. However, the “relics” Lee Tae-joon appreciates lie before his eyes. They survived the “passing

of time"; therefore, they are not "past things." But without "past things," the nostalgia never occurs. Then what are "past things"? They are nothing but "life of the past." The things before his eyes are nothing more than "relics," however, where his eyes reach is the past world the "relics" belonged to. So to speak, the world of daily implements and artifacts of the past is a "past thing";<sup>23</sup> and Lee Tae-joon longs for the very "past world."

The structure of the nostalgic consciousness of time in which Lee Tae-joon could appreciate "relics" and find out beauty from them can be ascertained. The past life Lee Tae-joon longs for has already passed. He only experiences the haloing "long distance" when looking at the implements used in the course of past typical life as "relics." The "relics" he is looking at can exist as "relics" because the world they belonged to has already passed. On the other hand, the "relics" can be objects of "appreciation" only when they are separated from the relation of life. In other words, when these "relics" are in relation to life and are inside the world that they belonged to, they cannot be objects of "appreciation." Lee Tae-joon symbolizes as beauty the world of typical past life he longs for and the world shining faraway in the background of "relics." In reality, the world betrays the beauty Lee Tae-joon appreciates. In a strict sense, the nostalgic attitude of Lee Tae-joon contains basic ironies. It is because they are beautiful and nostalgic when faraway, but no longer cause beautiful emotions when getting closer and closer. Then, the "beauty" of Lee Tae-joon becomes an ideology to bridge the gap of time between "typical past life." It means that the implements have already lost their usefulness when they become "objects of appreciation" far from living implements of the past. Lee Tae-joon tries to fill the gap the loss of function implies with "beauty".<sup>24</sup>

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23. It is worth referring to Martin Heidegger's explanation about a "historical object." "Then what passed in the implements? What were the "things" that are no longer themselves nowadays? ... What "passed"? It is nothing more than a world. Inside the world they were used by the actual being, the being ?inside-the world touched by the hands and considered as implement relations. The world no longer exists" (Martin Heidegger 1999: 497. Emphatic marks follow the original text).

24. The nostalgic consciousness of time of Lee Tae-joon is the same traditionalism but is conspicuously different from the epiphany consciousness of time of Lee Byung-gi and Chung Ji-yong. It is regarded as the difference of vision between a novelist and a poet. So to speak, Lee Tae-joon, a novelist is accustomed to "epic memory" rather than "traumatic memory."

## Traditionalism and Aestheticism

*Munjang* played a role in literary history at the end of the Japanese colonial rule, showing a spiritual intention of traditionalism conspicuously. As stated above, a special intent to look for authority over tradition in “the things that have existed” for a long time in which the tradition is revived and monopolized can be prescribed as traditionalism. It can be said *Munjang* has an attitude of typical traditionalism. For example, traditionalism appears conspicuously in the following story.

Men and writings are the same when they reach old age. The writings that survived long periods are not restless like old men. They must have lost those days if they had been dangerous. The writings that people have thought highly of up to now have worth as precious implements. First of all, they are good for us to read without anxiety. (Lee Tae-joon 1944: 135)

An attitude to secure a “stability of values” depending on facts recognized by “many people” in the course of time forms a remarkable contrast with an individual belief like Descartes believing firmly in results derived from the rational use of reason. Though tradition can exist by giving “stability,” criticism against western modern times and the rise of “oriental values” during the Sino-Japanese War together with a series of ruling policies threatening national identity triggered a desire for seriously confirmed “stability” and “reversion.” Under these circumstances, the traditionalism of *Munjang* can appear. But unlike previous historical inquiries including “the movement for Korean studies,” *Munjang* made the peculiarity (not concept) clearly appear in literary works by making traditionalism transparent in the process of creation. Thus, it can be said that *Munjang* suggested a remarkable method to save things of the past.

However, the “things Korean = things of the past” that *Munjang* tried to save were thoroughly nothing more than objects of classical beauty.

Only “*Hanjungnok*” (A Record of Sorrowful Days) is a classical prose of *Joseon*. The existence of “*Hanjungnok*” is a monumental work of our prose. What an ecstasy it was when I first read the preface of *Maehwaok* (The House of Apricot Trees) written by *Garam* (Lee Byung-gi)! I read it four or five times over and over again with its owner, copied it, and brought it with me.

What an attentive and thrilling taste like silk! There is a simple and ele-

gant ancient flavor, while the stanzas are long and depend on emotions in detail. It is a Goryeo ceramics of a sentence born during the *Joseon* dynasty. (Lee Tae-joon 1944: 134)<sup>25</sup>

It was evaluated that “an epistolary style” in prose and “*hyangga*” (local songs) and *sijo* in verse were forms of classical beauty. The praise and reproduction of these classical forms characterizes an aesthetic sense of traditionalism of “*Munjang*.” An aesthetic sense of *Munjang* can be found in careful attention to the outward form and edition of the magazine. The title of *Munjang* came from specimens of handwriting of *Chusa* (Kim Jeong-hi). Artists Kil Jin-sup and Kim Yong-joon drew the cover pictures and illustrations. In particular, such plants and ceramics as an orchid, an apricot tree, a lotus, etc., that had special meaning in the context of scholarly tradition were adopted as cover pictures. It is notable that editors tried to reveal a refined aesthetic sense not only in the writings and works but also in all the elements of the magazine. It was because an aesthetic sense throughout *Munjang* played a role of uniting *Munjang* into one.

The irony of *Munjang* can be regarded as the spiritual expression to deny aesthetically the reality of a modern colony in the circumstances of a dominant narrative, i.e., the collapse of western modern times and the rise of the Orient (Kim Yoon-shik 1978). In particular, the “dualism of self” in the process constitutes a basic form of the irony of “*Munjang*.” As it is clearly shown by Lee Tae-joon, he thinks he is passing through modern time and the past has gone. He also thinks he will be able to join in the world, appreciating “the past world” on the basis of this consciousness.<sup>26</sup> The anachronism of Lee Byung-gi and Chung Ji-yong also takes on romantic irony in that “things of the past = things Korean = natural character” clearly appear in a poetic moment, unlike Lee Tae-joon, to a certain degree. The experience of clear appearance through repeating such aesthetic forms as “an orchid,” “*sijo*,” “*sansusi*” and the experience of peculiar dis-

25. Lee Tae-joon distinguishes artistic language from daily language and takes an epistolary style as a model of artistic language. Accordingly, it is evaluated by him that “a writing of colloquial style is a writing of people and not a writing of artists” (Lee Tae-joon 1944: 136).

26. This can be prescribed as an “epistemological irony” in the relations between authors and characters who are equal to authors or superior to authors in his writings. Seo Yeong-chae divides the irony of Lee Tae-joon as an aesthetic device into three categories: 1) irony as epic constituent technique, 2) emotional irony, and 3) the irony lying in the consciousness of the world (Seo Yeong-chae 1993: 69-70).

tance coming from the contemplation of “relics” can be attained when transcending the self in modern daily life, and in the present and more oppressing pain of reality. Just like romantic irony, the “transcendence” found in *Munjang* is “the inversion to change one’s incapacity into superiority” (Karatani Kojin 1999a: 144). Accordingly, among the duplicated selves, the transcendental self that joins in “things of the past = things Korean = typical natural things” holds priority. In this respect, it can be said that the aestheticism of *Munjang* comes from a superior situation based on this structure of irony.

I love the classics as an avant-garde artist because “the classics” is an avant-garde art of the age. The strange trend of today supplied us with ugly drawing materials like paint, a hard canvas, and a brush. While our life was contemplation and nature, they enjoyed themselves in drawing the opposite sex and finding out beauty in a naked body. But we, the Oriental tribes, created and reproduced an imaginary world, cultivated noble characters by describing the noble poetic tastes of nature, and drew with smooth touches a beautiful piece of secret natural landscape that was a distinguished art eluding all attempts at imitation...

These artists that made a new record were naturally the avant-garde artists of the age. Therefore, in order to understand the classics we must be avant-garde. (Cho Woo-shik 1940. 9: 135)

“Avant-garde” is basically anachronistic. In a customary sense, it is the name given to the men who were in the vanguard of the era and took the future first. But under the situation of “the inversion of modern values” at the end of Japanese colonial rule, it could be “avant-garde” to reproduce and monopolize things of the past.<sup>27</sup> From the viewpoint of Cho Woo-shik, an abstract artist who wrote this article, “the classics” cannot be cultural assets transmitted and shared from generation to generation. Those who have an aesthetic sense and delicately

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27. Of course, behind this statement there is still lying the “future.” Cho Woo-shik argues that “we” must know about “our classics” because the “avant-garde arts” of the Occident were actually inspired and formed by the past Oriental arts. Here the eyes looking at “the classics” are entirely those of the Occident.

This phenomenon matches the characteristics of the “tradition-oriented tendency” in the Japanese literary world of the 1930s. For example, such modernists as Tanizaki Junichiro, Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, etc., were inclined to tradition at a certain period because they took it as “avant-garde” (Karatani Kojin 1999b: 305-306).

keen sensibilities and who can create and reproduce an “imaginary world” and “the noble poetic tastes of nature” can monopolize the classics exclusively. From the same point of view, an aesthete who joins in the beauty of “things of the past = things Korean” can say in a superior position that “literature cannot but be thought highly of in an unfortunate situation where one does not receive favors of a “fine art” in spite of all kinds of literary implements” (Chung Ji-yong 1939. 10: 178-179). This can be an utterance that comes from an ironic attitude “despising his self in great pain and showing off the high-level self proudly” (Karatani Kojin 1999a: 140).

As it was mentioned previously, “the form of beauty = natural character” symbolized by “things Korean” in *Munjang* aims at uniting artificial technique with nature. When the form of “technique = nature” is recognized as tradition from an aesthetic literary viewpoint, the trace of “technique” comes to disappear in the tradition. When a sense of belonging in the tradition of “things Korean” can acquire mysterious “natural character,” traumatic memory comes to circulate itself in defense mechanism. That is, the epiphany of things of the past is not a clear appearance of the oppressed others but can be a dominant repetition.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, nostalgia is a feeling aroused when the dominance of nature is finished and comes to incapacitate the past in the contemplation of “beauty”.

If literature contains an opportunity for the epiphany and an opportunity to restore the oppressed past, the emotions coming from it must arise “a feeling of electric current going through the body” (Adorno 1989: 133-135). Realizing that the “transcendental self” adhering to an ironic attitude is nothing but mere imagination, and experiencing the electric current to destabilize the high-level self will not fade away the critical meaning of “restoration of things of the past.” In this sense, the “repetition” of *Munjang* is not a repetition to save the historical others so much as a repetition to enlarge the scope of one’s own identity. This enlargement of identity becomes an opportunity to unite “typical Korean peculiarity” with a broad scope, “Oriental culture.”<sup>29</sup>

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28. In particular, the forms of classical beauty *Munjang* tries to reproduce are relics of dominant culture in the past. Accordingly, others of history cannot be saved forever in the context of “tradition = natural character.”

29. Cho Woo-shik said that the western avant-garde arts were inspired by the Oriental arts. Strictly speaking, they were the ceramics and paintings of China and Japan. But he naturally puts the Oriental arts into “our tradition” (Cho Woo-shik 1940. 10: 202). Lee Tae-joon substantiates the formal conflicts between the Occident and the Orient and finds out the subjectivity in “Oriental culture” (Lee Tae-joon 1944).

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