

Review of Research on Kim Hak-Ch'öl, A Cultural Warrior Embodying the Entire East Asia

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Abstract

Kim Hak-Ch'öl (1916-2001) was the "last squad commander" of the Korean Volunteer Army as well as being the main intellect within the community of ethnic Koreans in China (*Chosŏnchok*) and a master in the world of Korean-Chinese literature. He lived one half of his life as a hero and the other half as a 'traitor', so research into his work could not help but go through tumultuous times. After liberation, some critics became interested in Kim's novels that dealt with the life and experience as a member of the Korean Volunteer Army, however, after he moved to North Korea thus rendering his works inaccessible, research on his work could not take place. However, his writing activities when in Beijing and Yanbian garnered attention from critics and he was noted for his uniqueness. But as a result of the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957, he ended up living a hellish life for the next 24 years. Research on his work was revived only after reforms were introduced and the writer started to gain attention also in South Korea and Japan. In this article, we will review existing research that had been performed on his life and literature in Korea, Japan and China, and propose some areas that need to be researched further in the future.

Key Words: Kim Hak-Ch'öl, Experience embodying entire East Asia, People's solidarity, Revolutionary optimism, Multiculturalism

Received January 31, 2017; Revised version received June 30, 2017; Accepted September 01, 2017

Kim Pyŏng-Min, in the introduction of *Kim Hak-Ch'öl Literary Collection*, said that Kim Hak-Ch'öl's tumultuous life and his fervent world of literature make us confirm the following few facts:

“Kim Hak-Ch'öl showed the power of faith and determination. During the times of fervor in East Asia, he fought for truth and against injustice and corruption, from the time he was born a boy under colonialism in Wonsan, Korea, throughout his entire life as a monarchy restorationist, an anti-Japan terrorist and an ardent socialist. Because he had unwavering belief and faith, he was able to overcome extreme circumstances several times and create a myth of human victory. Unrelenting, iron-like faith and determination – they were his strength and attractiveness.

Kim Hak-Ch'öl showed the power of warmth with clear distinction between love and hate. He had fought his entire life against pre-modern ignorance and tyranny of authoritarianism, but he accommodated warmly in his heart the weak and the excluded. He showed affection for the rural villagers of Taihang Mountains, and his Chinese colleagues and neighbors in Beijing and Yanbian, and he befriended even Japanese intellectuals who were honest. Multicultural tolerance that went beyond the limitations of narrow nationalism – this also was his strength and attractiveness.

Kim Hak-Ch'öl showed strong historical consciousness and power of craftsmanship. The anti-Japanese struggles of the Korean Volunteer Army, which could have disappeared from all historical records due to the division of the Korean Peninsula, was revived artistically through Kim. He put his life on line to tell the world the evils of the far-left and was faithful to his duty as a “Secretary of History.” Furthermore, through his beautiful world of literature, he enhanced the expressiveness of the Korean language and rose as a master in the global Korean community. His historiographical perspective of being faithful to history and his craftsmanship of impassioned commitment – they too were his strength and attractiveness.”¹⁾

Research on Kim Hak-Ch'öl and his work started in 1946, just after he published

1) Kim Hak-Ch'öl, *Kim Hak-Ch'öl Collection Volume 1* (Yanbian People's Publishing, 2010), 1-2.

his debut work, until September 2001 when he passed away. It continues even now. His work of literature, which was based on his experience of embodying the entire East Asia, garnered interest and was loved not only in China, but also by readers in Korea and Japan, and many researches have been performed on them. Studies on Kim Hak Ch'öl and his work were sorted and introduced by Kang Ok, Choe Sam-Ryong, Cho Söng-II and a few others, so while sufficiently converging the opinions of these scholars, we will try to cover some of the points they had missed and review some of the more recent research with the purpose of introducing the current status of research on Kim Hak-Ch'öl and his work. We will also propose some ways forward and tasks for future research.

1. Research in Korea and Japan on Kim Hak-Ch'öl's Work

Kang Ok gives an overview of the achievements of Korean scholars in regard to Kim Hak-Ch'öl and his work, in the article “Research in Korea into Works by Kim Hak-Ch'öl”.²⁾ According to Kang, discussion in Korea on Kim's work went back to the period just after liberation. Kim, who lost a leg in Nagasaki Prison in Japan, came to Seoul in November 1945. He published a short-story, “Centipede”, in the magazine, *Build*, and during the following year, he published 10 short stories including “Cigarette Soup”, “Cracks” and “Fish Liver Oil Capsules” in *Literature*, *New Literature* and *Hansöng Literature*.

The work that drew interest and discussion among literary circles in Seoul was the short story “Cracks”, which was published in the first edition of *New Literature* together with words of recommendation from the critic Yun Kyu-Söp. Yun showed a positive reaction to the debut of the new writer, commenting, “He wrote with a very robust style – rare for a writer's first work. Some parts that were cut short were done so quite boldly whilst not showing enough attempt to highlight the more important scenes. However, it was quite enough to see the intentions of the writer. I think he needs to train himself more in cutting out parts that are unnecessary.

2) *Yanbian Literature*, Vol.1 (2014): 85-100

Anyway, he pioneered a new frontier in our literature.”³⁾

Later, “Cracks” was discussed further in meetings held by the Novels Division of the Korean Writers Alliance. Writers such as Song Yŏng, Kim Nam-Ch’ŏn, Yi Won-Cho, Yun Se-Chung, Chae Man-Sik, Pak Yŏng-Chun, Yi Heup and Yi Tae-Chun participated in these meetings. Many of these writers later moved to North Korea. Chae Man-Sik, in regard to “Cracks”, was very negative, saying, “It’s like a work by a Japanese, who write pure literature or just popular novels.” “It feels as if it were portraying humans who’ve lost their humanness.” Kim Nam-Ch’ŏn said the piece was “too unnatural” and that “The provision of new subject matters did nothing to contribute to the quality.” Furthermore, Yi T’ae-Chun said, “It doesn’t go beyond the hands of the writer. It’s a form of a reportage.”⁴⁾ However, Kim Nam-Ch’ŏn later changed his position toward recognizing the value of the work, saying, “The scene where bombs were dropping was beautiful. It felt as my own home was being bombed.”⁵⁾

Kim Hak-Ch’ŏl’s writing activity in Seoul only lasted a year because he went to North Korea to evade persecution by the US Military Government. It was only during the mid to late 1980’s that Kim’s work could be read in Korea. The ban on reading literature by writers who had moved to North Korea was lifted, at which Kim Hak-Ch’ŏl’s work, such as *Song of Resistance*, *Times of Fervor* (Volumes 1 & 2), *Speak*, *Hailan River* (Volumes 1 & 2) and *Myth of 20th Century* began to be published in Korea. That all led to more vibrant discussion on Kim and his work.

One of the most notable early studies on Kim Hak-Ch’ŏl was Kim Yun-Sik’s “The Origin of Anti-Japanese Guerilla Literature – A Study on Kim Hak-Ch’ŏl”⁶⁾ and Yi Sang-Kap’s “Desire in Historical Testimonies and the Level of Formation – A Study on Kim Hak-Ch’ŏl”.⁷⁾

In “The Origin of Anti-Japanese Guerilla Literature – A Study on Kim

3) *New Literature*, First edition (1946), 40.

4) *Literature*, First edition (July 1946), 141.

5) *New Literature*, Second edition (June 1946), 160.

6) *Silcheon Munhak* (December 1988).

7) Yi Sang-Kap, “Desire in Historical Testimonies and the Level of Formation – A Study on Kim Hak-Ch’ŏl,” *Korean Studies* (Korea University Research Institute of Korean Studies) (1999) 147-175.

Hak-Ch'ol", Kim Yun-Sik argued that Kim Hak-Ch'ol constituted an unfamiliar legacy in the history of Korean literature and was also the person who triggered the development of guerilla literature. Furthermore, Kim's *Times of Fervor* even made the revision of Korean modern and contemporary history itself inevitable. Kim Yun-Sik pointed out that the work's significance went beyond the context of literary history. He went further to analyze Kim Hak-Ch'ol's literary perspective from the post-liberation period until the 1980's and discussed the characteristics of Kim Hak-Ch'ol's work in four aspects: ① Investigation into the last years of the Chosŏn Dynasty, ② Simple details of humanness rather than ideology, ③ Dealing with people and events based on experience, and ④ Composition of story in episodes. In addition, Kim Hak-Ch'ol never wrote about things that he himself had not directly experienced or heard, and so his work tended to be rather monotonous and two-dimensional, without any ups and downs. However, according to Kim Yun-Sik, when it came to honesty within the scope of those experiences, no one surpassed Kim Hak-Ch'ol, and it was at point that both the strength as well as the limitation of his guerilla literature could be witnessed.

Yi Sang-Kap focused on Kim Hak-Ch'ol's novels, *Speak, Hailan River*, *Myth of 20th Century* and *Times of Fervor*, and pointed out that in these novels also, Kim Hak-Ch'ol tried to be faithful to recording history rather than expressing literary aesthetics and sophistication. Kim Hak-Ch'ol's work was "characteristic in that he enjoyed creating patriotic fighters and members of the Korean Volunteer Army during their struggles against Japan. He mainly introduced people who had actually existed, and made it clear that he was a communist. The biggest reason why he said this was because during Japanese colonial rule, no one fought for their country as hard as the communists. This kind of mindset formed the fundamental aspect of Kim's literature."⁸⁾

A scholar who objectively assessed Kim Hak-Ch'ol's literature in relation to history and society was Yi Dong-Ha. According to Yi, based on the criteria set by modern aesthetics of the West, it would be difficult to give accolades to *Times of Fervor* or *Speak, Hailan River* because they showed neither sophisticated

8) Ibid., 105.

representation nor tragic sentiment while the development of events seemed completely coincidental. However, making a negative critique of the two works just because of this one detail seems self-righteous and too uniform. This is because Kim wrote those works from a set of aesthetic standards that were completely different from those inside the minds of the critics, and had, in fact, made a success based on his own set of standards. And this success comes with a force that can strongly impact far into the minds of even those who maintained a strong belief in the aforementioned set of aesthetic standards. Yi Tong-Ha also identified the standards Kim Hak-Ch'öl's novels were based on as revolutionary, popular (*minchung*) optimism, a sharp contrast to the world of literature that was familiar to Koreans. Kim's work was thus valuable in the sense that they showed the dazzling beauty of "another world."⁹⁾

Sin Kyōng-Lim, in "Reviving the History of Everyday Life of the People and the Roots of Revolutionary Optimism", mentioned that one of the biggest joys of reading *Times of Fervor* was coming across scenes of our past which were thought to be lost or forgotten. Thus, the novel had important value in terms of "reviving the history of everyday life of the people, which was thought to be lost."¹⁰⁾ Song Ha-Chun, in "Overview of Novels from Yanbian," said that the work was not a realist novel that sought to have a singular complete structure by structurally analyzing a particular issue of the 1930's and taking this up as the main theme. Rather, the novel was a type of coming-of-age novel, in which the crises of an era were identified through experience and observation, and the protagonists acted accordingly. He emphasized that significance of this novel lay in its literary recording based on its elaboration of the actual anti-Japanese national independence movement.¹¹⁾

After Kim Hak-Ch'öl passed away in September 2001, Kim Myōng-In commemorated the writer by publishing an article, "Portrait of a Revolutionary Optimist – A Study of Kim Hak-Ch'öl"¹²⁾. Kim Myōng-In analyzed three novels

9) Yi Tong-Ha, *Between Question and Belief* (Seoul: Minumsa, 1989), 75-76.

10) *Quarterly Changbi* (Fall 1988), 216-225.

11) *Korean Studies*, Volume 3 (Korea University Research Institute of Korean Studies) (1991), 41~56.

12) *Quarterly Changbi* (Spring 2002), 250-251.

– *Speak, Hailan River, Myth of 20th Century* and *Times of Fervor* – with the ultimate aim of looking into the path of Kim Hak-Ch'öl's life. Kim Myöng-In pinpointed the writer's openness and global-ness to be the most impressive aspects of the writer. These aspects were the result of not only the writer's life trajectory and areas of action being fundamentally international but also of the act that he sought to overcome the boundaries of narrow nationalism by abiding to the principle of proletarian internationalism or solidarity of people of the Third World, according to the critic.

Aside from these studies, there are many other research on Kim Hak-Ch'öl worth paying attention to. They include Choe Won-Sik's "The Korean Independence Army and the Korean Volunteer Army,"¹³⁾ which analyzed Kim Hak-Ch'öl's thorough people-centered consciousness; Song Hyön-Ho's "A Study into Kim Hak-Ch'öl's *Myth of the 20th Century*,"¹⁴⁾ which discussed the diaspora of the Korean-Chinese living in China (*Chosönchok*), the struggles against dictatorship and the perpetual search for home; "Study into Post-Colonialism as Expressed in Kim Hak-Ch'öl's *Times of Fervor*,"¹⁵⁾ which investigated the post-colonial tendencies found in Kim Hak-Ch'öl's *Times of Fervor* in relation to the identity of Korean-Chinese and post-colonialism, the search for a new home under the recognition of the colonial reality and how the traditional narrative method of the Korean language was used; and Ko Myöng-Chol's "Space for Revolutionary Coming-of-Age Novels, People-Centered International Solidarity and Anti-Colonialism,"¹⁶⁾ which identified Kim Hak-Ch'öl's *Times of Fervor* as being a revolutionary coming-of-age novel as well as pointing out that the novel tried to resolve East Asia's complex interlayered modern issues not from an antagonistic perspective but through post-colonial literature based on the idea of people's international solidarity.

In the case of Japan, the relentless investigation and the empirical work of

13) *Literature and Society* (Winter 1995), 11-24.

14) Song Hyön-Ho, Choe Pyöng-Wu et al., *Study of Post-Colonialism in China's Korean-Chinese Literature*, Volume 2 (Kookhak, 2009), 7-28.

15) Song Hyön-Ho, Choe Pyöng-Wu et al., *Study of Post-Colonialism in China's Korean-Chinese Literature* Volume 1 (Kookhak, 2008), 221-250.

16) Kim Hak-Ch'öl Literature Society, *Kim Hak-Ch'öl Literature Study*, Volume 4 (Yanbian People's Publishing, 2007), 142-165.

Professor Omura of Waseda University are quite notable. Since 1985, he travelled to Yanbian nearly every year and contributed to finding and testifying the trajectories of poets such as Yun Tong-Chu and Kim Cho-Kyu, while befriending and becoming close to Kim Hak-Ch'öl. From April 1985 for one full year, he stayed in Yanbian and visited Kim Hak-Ch'öl at his home every week and interviewed him on his life, and eventually left valuable records under the name of "The Footsteps of Kim Hak-Ch'öl"¹⁷⁾ amounting to 10 recorded tapes. He also translated into Japanese Kim Hak-Ch'öl's stories with the anti-Japanese war as the main theme, such as "There Was This Woman," "Cigarette Soup," and "History of Shoes," which portrayed a young man who was poor but lived honestly. Furthermore, Omura invited Kim and his wife as well as Kim's researcher Kim Ho-Wung to Japan to give lectures and perform research, thereby contributing to making the writer known in Japan.

2. Research in China on Kim Hak-Ch'öl's Work

Kim Hak-Ch'öl started his creative activities in Seoul. However, he left Seoul in 1947 and settled in Pyöngyang to escape persecution by the US Military Government. In Pyöngyang, he worked as a reporter for the *Rodong Sinmun* and as the chief editor for the *Inminkun Sinmun* among other things but due to the eruption of the Korean War, he moved and settled once again in Beijing in October 1950, and worked as a researcher at the Central Literary Research Institute, where Ding Ling was the head. With the establishment of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in September 1952, he moved to Yanbian in October and settled and continued to write in Yanji until his death.

During his early years in Yanbian (1952~1957), he showed immense appetite for writing and wrote numerous works. However, his work from this period did not receive a fair evaluation. Amidst the so-called Anti-Rightist Movement and the ensuing political turmoil, he became an innocent victim and many of his works

17) Kim Hak-Ch'öl Literature Society, *Kim Hak-Ch'öl Literature Study*, Volume 4 (Yanbian People's Publishing, 2007), 427-473.

including the novel *Speak, Hailan River* as well as many short stories were criticized. Kim Hak-Ch'öl was relegated to a “reactionary writer” and his novels to “novels filled with poison”. Due to these left leaning political circumstances, research and critique on Kim Hak-Ch'öl became somewhat biased.

For 24 years from 1957 until 1980 (including 10 years in prison), he was labeled “a reactionary” and “a practicing anti-revolutionary” and underwent political persecution. He was eventually acquitted in December 1980, thus ending the 24 years of political hardship. Research into Kim and his work revived only in 1982 and eventually regained its normal trajectory thereafter.

Kim Hak-Ch'öl's literature started to become more established with the 1982 publication of *Overview of Literature and Arts of Korean-Chinese*¹⁸⁾ by Yanbian Research Center of Literature and Arts. The book was a comprehensive overview of literature by ethnic Koreans living in China, and in one chapter titled “Novels That Prosper and Develop”, the critic Kim Tong-Hun dealt with Kim Hak-Ch'öl and his work. However, not all of Kim's works were researched – it was only the novel *Speak, Hailan River* and its significance in the history of literature that were discussed. Kim Tong-Hun claimed that this work “opened up a new horizon in our literary world of novels in the sense that it dealt with the anti-Japanese movement for the first time in the Korean-Chinese literary community, that it expanded and deepened this idea, and that it showed a unique way of forming characters.”

In 1979, he was acquitted after 24 years of being falsely accused and was thus able to write in a freer environment. He published many works including *Times of Fervor*, *Song of Resistance*, *Collection of Short Stories by Kim Hak-Ch'öl*, *Collection of Works by Kim Hak-Ch'öl* and many others, leading to more vibrant research into his work.

Some of the most notable research of this period include *Study into Literature of Korean-Chinese*¹⁹⁾ edited by Yim Pöm-Song and Kwon Chöl. This book consisted of three parts – Introduction, Main Thesis and Theories on the Author

18) Yanbian Research Center of Literature and Art, *Overview of Literature and Arts of Korean-Chinese* (Yanbian People's Publishing, 1982).

19) Amur River Korean People's Publishing, 1989, China

- and the parts “Overview of Novels and Literature of Korean-Chinese” and “Study on Kim Hak-Ch’öl” in the Main Thesis dealt with Kim and his work. “Study on Kim Hak-Ch’öl” was written by Kim Ho-Wung, who introduced the life of Kim Hak-Ch’öl and then analyzed the main short stories as well as the novels *Speak*, *Hailan River* and *Times of Fervor*. In regard to Kim Hak-Ch’öl’s short stories, Kim Ho-Wung characterized them as “being committed to seeking the true meaning of life and mental beauty of humans regardless of the changes in politics” and then analyzed the ideological aspect of the works according to different themes.

Kim Ho-Wung went on to praise *Speak*, *Hailan River* for its value in terms of literary history, saying that the novel “filled the gap in anti-Japan armed struggles that were not dealt by other Korean-Chinese literature before the founding of the State.” On *Times of Fervor*, he said that Kim Hak-Ch’öl had artistically represented the history of anti-Japan struggles of the Korean Volunteer Army and had reached a peak in humor, thereby making a great contribution to literature in Korean language around the world. However, Kim Hak-Ch’öl’s shortfalls were also mentioned. In some of the novels, the main idea was not articulated through the development of conflicts and events faced by the characters but through direct expression of the writer’s thoughts and emotions or through insertion of episodes from foreign countries, leading to feelings of a sermon being forced upon the readers. Nonetheless, despite such shortfalls, Kim Ho-Wung concluded that Kim Hak-Ch’öl was “a veteran among contemporary Korean-Chinese writers who perfectly combined conscience as a revolutionary militant and skills as an artist”. Kim Ho-Wung’s analysis was meaningful in the sense that he had systematically studied not only Kim Hak-Ch’öl’s novels but also his main short stories. Of course, due to circumstances of those times, Kim Hak-Ch’öl’s *Myth of 20th Century* could neither be read nor discussed.

Kim Hak-Ch’öl’s literature was discussed in the context of literary history for the first time in *Literary History of the Korean-Chinese in China*.²⁰⁾ This book identified the position of Kim and his novel *Times of Fervor*. Under the premise

20) Cho Söng-II, Kwon ChöI, eds., *Literary History of the Korean-Chinese in China* (Yanbian People’s Publishing, 1990).

that the writer was a “revolutionary fighter” and a “famous novelist”, the book said of Kim Hak-Ch'öl that he had “expanded the space of literary subject matter of short stories” and that he was the first to write a novel after liberation. *Times of Fervor* was a novel that compiled all the creative talent and personality of the writer. It was not only an achievement in terms of filling the void in Korean-Chinese literary history but also of being a milestone in Korean-Chinese literature by manifesting through various dimensions the personalities of the characters against the backdrop of the Korean Peninsula and the immense Chinese continent. This kind of positive view of Kim Hak-Ch'öl and his *Times of Fervor* was indeed recognized even by previous critics, however, identifying Kim and his work in the context of literary history is significant in and of itself. Nevertheless, what is unfortunate is that the book, although it dealt with *Times of Fervor* in more than ten pages, was not backed by an empirical research. The significance of this book lies in that even the artistic characteristics of Kim Hak-Ch'öl's literature were dealt with, unlike previously mentioned critique. The book, first of all, found the artistic characteristics of Kim Hak-Ch'öl's literature in the choice of subject matter. Kim Hak-Ch'öl, in general, portrayed everyday life through sincere emotions, with a modest and humorous style, and a lucid tone, at the same time excavating the serious ideologies that lie beneath and bestowing historical meaning upon them. Secondly, when highlighting the formation of the characters, Kim committed himself to searching for the mental beauty of ordinary human beings at the lowest part of the echelon. Thirdly, the simplicity and the dramatic-ness of the composition, and fourth, the humor are worthy to acknowledgement.

In December 1990, the Yanbian Institute of Literature and Arts, led by Cho Söng-Il, published *Study on Kim Hak-Ch'öl*²¹⁾ for the first time. This compilation of ten articles consisted of contributions from Cho Söng-Il, Choe Sam-Ryong, Kim Söng-Ho, Li Kwang-Il, Pang Yong-Nam, Kim Ho-Wung, Chang Chöng-Il, Chönn Söng-Ho, Yi Sang-Pömm as well as from Sin Kyöng-Lim of South Korea. The critics make a detailed investigation of Kim Hak-Ch'öl's life, personality and

21) Amur River Korean People's Publishing, 1990, China.

literature. The novel *Times of Fervor* was the work mentioned the most often in this compilation. For example, Cho Sŏng-Il said that *Times of Fervor*, based on intense ideology and subject matter, was an epic poem and a drama portraying heroism, involving the committed young men of the Korean Volunteer Army, who rose against Japanese colonialism grounded in the unyielding force and spirit of the Korean people. He also commented that *Times of Fervor* played a pioneering role in launching, consolidating and opening a new horizon for novels in the Korean-Chinese literary world – comments agreed by other critics. They all praised that this work was truly monumental in the history of Korean-Chinese literature.

After the death of Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl, the Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl Literature Society was launched in 2002. As of today, it has published seven collections of research papers on Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl and his literature and twelve compilations of Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl's work. Of course, this kind of achievement was possible due to huge efforts exerted by Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl's son, Kim Hae-Yang. The collection is the most recent and greatest achievement in Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl research in China and elsewhere, bringing together Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl's letters whilst in prison, letters exchanged with his friends, posthumous work, commemorative essays, research papers from home and abroad, and a chronology.

Later, *Compendium of Cultural History of Korean-Chinese in China 2 – Literary History*²²⁾ was published by the Korea Culture Research Institute of Peking University as well as the *History of Culture of Korean-Chinese in China*²³⁾ by Oh Sang-Sun, and then in 2011, Kim Ho-Wung, Kim Kwang-Wung and Cho Sŏng-Il published *Complete History of Literature of Korean-Chinese in China* (three volumes). The latter genealogically discussed Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl and his work. Chapter 9 “Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl and His Novels,” in Part 2 of Volume 1, was written by Cho Sŏng-Il, and here, he closely analyzed and discussed Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl's life and his career as a writer, his short stories and his novel *Speak, Hailan River*, and his potential writing. He also detailed *Myth of 20th Century*. He said:

“Kim Hak-Ch'ŏl was an anti-Japan militant who fought bravely to liberate the

22) Minchok Publishing, 2006.

23) Minchok Publishing, 2007.

Korean people and for the revolution in China. He was the leading intellect among the Korean-Chinese who fought against injustice and was a renowned novelist within the Korean-Chinese literary community. The life of Kim Hak-Ch'öl was a turbulent biographical drama, connected directly to China, South Korea, North Korea and Japan. He led a very intense life, which was a journey filled with extreme determination amidst life-or-death situations. Therefore, Kim Hak-Ch'öl's literature is a unique phenomenon amidst Korean literature of the 20th century, in that it encompasses time by spanning across the 20th century as well as space by traversing East Asia including the Korean Peninsula, China and Japan. Thus, his work is transnational or international. He went through vicissitudes due to political systems and ideological barriers internationally and "leftist" political storms and waves domestically, and after numerous difficulties, he was able to showcase his splendor."²⁴⁾

Section 8 in Chapter 3, "Kim Hak-Ch'öl's Novels and *Times of Fervor*", in Part 3 of Volume 3 of *Complete History*, was written by Kim Kwan-Wung, who dealt with Kim Hak-Ch'öl's novels after his acquittal, particularly focusing on *Times of Fervor*, which he systematically analyzed and discussed. Also in Chapter 3 of Part 4, he analyzed Kim Hak-Ch'öl's prose after the economic reform. Here, Kim's autobiography, *The Last Squad Commander* and its historical, cultural and literary values were deeply analyzed and reviewed. He also categorized the themes of Kim Hak-Ch'öl's miscellaneous work into 1) criticism of worship of individuals, one-person dictatorship and centrality of government officials, 2) criticism of submissiveness, 3) advocacy for democracy, human rights and equality, and 4) criticism against perversion and controversies within the literary world, and ideas on debates within the literary community.

Kim Ho-Wung and Kim Hae-Yang published *Biography of Kim Hak-Ch'öl* in 2007 through South Korea's Silcheon Munhak publishing house, and Kim Kwan-Wung and Kim Ho-Wung published *Conversing with Literature of Kim Hak-Ch'öl*, a joint compilation of research papers spanning 20 years. Cho Söng-Il wrote "Research into Literature of Kim Hak-Ch'öl" and "Literary Critique That

24) Kim Ho-Wung, Kim Kwan-Wung and Cho Söng-Il, *History of Literature of Korean-Chinese In China*. Volume 1 (Yanbian People's Publishing, 2011), 527-528.

Opened New Horizon of Kim Hak-Ch'öl Research,” in which he said that the brothers Kim Ho-Wung and Kim Kwan-Wung were the most excellent and highly-achieving critics and researchers with their own unique research styles among the many Kim Hak-Ch'öl critics in China. According to Cho,

“Professor Kim Ho-Wung had great affection for Kim Hak-Ch'öl and published *Study of Kim Hak-Ch'öl* as early as 1989, when circumstances were still quite difficult for research into the writer's works. He was the first one within the Korean-Chinese literary community who attempted a systematic research into Kim Hak-Ch'öl's work and continued to perform academic research into the life and literature of Kim. Through numerous papers and critique, he made original arguments regarding Kim Hak-Ch'öl's work, and was a literary critic who made a huge contribution to vitalization and full-fledged development of literary studies on Kim Hak-Ch'öl. His *Biography of Kim Hak-Ch'öl*, which he recently published in South Korea, is the first and the most comprehensive and systematic biography of the entire life of the writer. The biography's perspective is multifaceted, faithful to historical truths and very knowledgeable. It has academic depth, stylish writing and abundant material. In this sense, this biography opened a new horizon in biographical literature within the Korean-Chinese literary community, and I am certain that that the book will provide much useful resources and enlightenment for research into Kim Hak-Ch'öl and his work from the context of the author.

Professor Kim Kwan-Wung wrote a paper “Context of the International Communist Movement of the 1950's and 60's and Some Aspects of *Myth of 20th Century*”, in which he deviated from the dominant framework of research on Kim Hak-Ch'öl's work. Professor Kim looked into *Myth of 20th Century* from a different angle – from the “context of the international communist movement” – to render a new set of historical interpretation and theoretical focus, and is recognized as a literary critic who had elevated Kim Hak-Ch'öl research onto a new level. His recent thesis, “A Study into the ‘Intertextuality’ Between the *Myth of 20th Century* of Kim Hak-Ch'öl and Foreign Literature and Arts”, based on comparative literature methodology and post-structural literary theory, compared and analyzed the intertextuality between Kim's work and literature and arts of other countries, to verify the foreign origination of Kim's literature, thereby giving new

breath to Kim Hak-Ch'öl research. In addition, “The Value of *Biography of Kim Hak-Ch'öl* as Seen From Neo-Historicism” is a intensive research paper that approached Kim Hak-Ch'öl's work from a new perspective and methodology. Kim Kwan-Wung's on-the-ground critique and research papers can be characterized as having a robust theoretical foundation, open-minded thinking, knowledge traversing time and space, and abundant empirical material. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Kim Kwan-Wung has positioned himself as a pioneer in the field of Kim Hak-Ch'öl research, especially from a comparative literature perspective.”²⁵⁾

Critics aside from the above also include Chŏng P'an-Ryong, Chŏn Kuk-Kwon, Sanchŏn (real name Yim Mu-Wung), Kim Man-Sŏk, Kim Kyŏng-Hun, Li Kwang-Il, Wu Sang-Ryŏl, Cho Il-Nam, Ryu Yŏn-San and others, and also Masters and PhD theses have come out written by younger critics such as Choe Mi-Ok, Li Hae-Yŏng, Kang Yŏng, Kang Ok etc. but they will not be mentioned here.

3. Ways Forward and Tasks for Kim Hak-Ch'öl Literary Research

Research on Kim and his work have gone through tumultuous times but have reached a notable level of success and are gaining spotlight in East Asia, namely South Korea, China and Japan. However, there are still some gaps and thus new research topics need to be established.

First of all, the Yanbian People's Publishing has produced *The Complete Collection of Works by Kim Hak-Ch'öl*, but some works are still scattered here and here due to historical reasons, meaning the collection has to be upgraded by continuously searching for and organizing those works. Works that were written and published in North Korea such as “Political Prisoner 99”, “Long Live Elections”, “Commie”, “Clever Little One”, “Son of the Commune” and “Deluge” cannot be read and Kim's diaries and letters also need to be collected, sorted and

25) Kim Hak-Ch'öl Literature Society, *Kim Hak-Ch'öl Literature Study*. Volume 6 (2009), 69–70.

published. There is also the peculiar situation where *Myth of 20th Century* and *Kim Hak-Ch'öl's Auto-Biography: The Last Squad Commander* have been published in South Korea but not in China. Furthermore, in South Korea, there is a rumor that *The Will of Ko Pong-Ki, Kim Il-Sōng's Chief of Secretary*²⁶⁾ was also written by Kim Hak-Ch'öl, however, the truth has not been verified, and the book is no longer in print.

Secondly, although monuments and statues commemorating Kim have been erected in Yongkamiwon of Tumen City, in Hujiazhuang of Yuanshi Xian, Hebei, and in the Chinese Ethnic Minority Literature Center of Inner Mongolia University, and although Wu Roe's Kim Hak-Ch'öl biography, *Traces Left Under the Metal Walking Stick* (Volumes 1 and 2)²⁷⁾, has been published and Chin Ran-Ok, a translator, is in the process of translating *Times of Fervor*, majority of Kim's work have not been translated into Chinese, let alone into other major languages such as English, German, French, Spanish or Russian. Thus, it is necessary to speed up the process of translating Kim's work into Chinese and introducing them to the 1.3 billion readers in China because the translations can become an important channel for the works of Kim Hak-Ch'öl and those of the Korean-Chinese community in China to dialogue and exchange with the literature of the mainstream Chinese or that of the world at large. There also needs to be research done into the translated work by Kim Hak-Ch'öl, such as Lu Xun's "Storm in a Teacup," "New Year Sacrifice" and "The True Story of Ah Q," and Ding Ling's *The Sun Shines Over Sanggan River*, and Zhou Libo's *Shanxiang Ju Bian*.

Thirdly, as Kim Myōng-In, Ko Myōng-Chol and some others had pointed out in their papers, the writer's life and literature must be analyzed more deeply and his ideas made more clear – the emotional world of the intellect who was quite clear about his likes and dislikes, the depth and width of his experience that traversed whole of East Asia, his trans-national and trans-border universal love

26) Chōnma Publishing, 1989, South Korea. Ko Pong-Ki was born in 1916, and was a member of the Communist Party's Yanan Faction. He was the Chief of Secretary for Kim Il-Sōng and chairperson of the party's provincial committee. During the Korean war, he was the ambassador to Romania and Bulgaria and was also the deputy minister of foreign affairs. Later, he became at odds with Kim Il-Sōng and, in August 1956, was purged during the Faction Incident.

27) *History of Writers and Publishing in China* (Yanbian People's Publishing, 2013).

and multiculturalism, and his yearning for unity, peace and freedom based on people's solidarity in East Asia. Such research will only be possible when accompanied by more study into Kim Hak-Ch'öl's prose.

Fourthly, further studies need to be performed on Kim Hak-Ch'öl's arguments in regard to some of the debates that took place within the literary community. Cho Sŏng-II pointed out, "Under certain circumstances, the satire and criticism of Kim Hak-Ch'öl seem to have been exaggerated. Some groundless criticism and excessive satire had been used to exert negative effect on the unity of the writers community, which should not be overlooked. It seemed that Kim Hak-Ch'öl, during his later years, had developed a biased tendency in his interpersonal relationships."²⁸⁾ Recently, Kim Kwan-Wung, in his paper, "Kim Hak-Ch'öl and Debates Within Literary Circles After Economic Reforms" analyzed the spear-like sharp comments that Kim Hak-Ch'öl had written during debates and tried to sort out their background and his main arguments.²⁹⁾ On the other hand, unlike the abovementioned scholarly approach, Yi Hong-Kyu, Yi Keun-Chŏn and some others did not discard their far-leftist perspective even after the reform and continued to have a negative displeased view of Kim until their deaths. In-depth investigation and research into the truths around events need to be performed to be able to properly differentiate the different arguments within the literary community.

28) Cho Sŏng-II, "Research into Literature of Kim Hak-Ch'öl". *Kim Hak-Ch'öl Literature Study*. Volume 6 (Yanbian People's Publishing, 2009), 73.

29) Paper presented at 2016 International Symposium Conference, hosted by Dalian Nationalities University, Korean Society of Literary Theory and Critique, "Kim Hak-Ch'öl, Master Among Korean-Chinese Writers in China, and Minorities Literature," 23rd August, 2016.

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