

The March First Movement Centennial in Integrated Korean Studies

The publication of the March 2019 issue (Vol. 5, No. 1) of *S/N Korean Humanities* coincides with a truly remarkable landmark in modern Korean history—the centennial of the March First Movement. Grounded in our singular commitment to integrated Korean studies by bridging *Hangukhak* and *Chosŏnhak*, the special theme of this issue—The March First Movement Centennial in Integrated Korean Studies—was conceived in order to bring together scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, personal histories, and historiographical interpretations. This was intended as a platform for promoting historiographical commonality in remembering the struggle for national independence by *all* Koreans, in South Korea, North Korea, and including Korean diaspora. In this connection, we are particularly delighted to present the work of a scholar from the Academy of Social Sciences of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), in addition to scholars from the United States, Japan and China.

The first article by Hope Elizabeth May (Central Michigan University/Kyunghee University) offers a discussion of the March First Movement (MFM) through the lens of moral development. May utilizes the framework known as the “life-course perspective,” blends it with Martin Buber’s notion of “genuine encounter,” and shows how this framework can be applied the moral development of the MFM’s most well known participant, Yu Kwan-sun. May’s fresh perspective departs from the traditional narrative which frames the Movement as an “anti-Japanese” and nationalist one. Instead, May proposes to look at how the MFM affected the moral development of its participants. Such an analysis, she claims, reveals that the stories of the individual participants in the MFM are important resources for international ethics because “[a]s a story of the virtues and moral energies of

ordinary people who tilled the seedbed of human dignity, the story of the MFM is an important resource for moral education in a cosmopolitan era.” May also discusses Namgang Lee Sŭnghun (1864-1930) and Louise Yim (Im Yŏngsin) (1899-1977) partly in order to contrast Yu Kwan-sun’s moral development with the moral development of other participants in the MFM who had longer life-courses.

The second article by Kang Seong Eun (Korean University of Japan) elaborates on the historical meaning of the March First Movement and central role of the masses as true Korean national representatives. The Korean independence movement during the Japanese Military Rule during 1910s was definitively not occlusive. Movements toward Korean independence continued both within and outside the peninsula during this period, and the energy of resistance was continually accumulating. Because of the capabilities for autonomy, the March First Movement could respond more efficiently to international context after the end of World War I. Compared to the May Fourth Movement of China or the Rice Riots of Japan, the March First Movement was peculiar in that it was a relatively large-scale, pan-Korean independence movement. However, analysis of the specific plans for independence movements and the actual activities of the Korean national representatives vis-à-vis records of examination from the police, prosecution, and each level of the judicial court as well as previous studies demonstrates that at the outset, the plans for the movement did not envisage pan-Korean demonstrations or coalition with students. The limitations of the independence movements by the national representatives were in fact overcome by the actual conduct of the masses that began at T’apgol Park on March 1, 1919.

The third article by Li Yongzhi (Yanbian University) examines the Korean people’s activism for independence in China. The March First Movement propelled demonstrations to be held as well in Northern Jiāndǎo (“Puk-kando”), situated north of the Tumen River. Thousands of demonstrators gathered on March 13 in Lóngjǐng to read the Declaration of Independence as part of the demonstration. Although dozens of people were injured due to the suppression by the Chinese armed forces (seventeen were killed), numerous demonstrations (currently known are fifty-eight) took place throughout Northern Jiāndǎo. A frontier region, Northern

Jiāndǎo was a unique cultural space wherein Koreans who crossed into this borderland formed their own communities; with active ethno-nationalist education and religious propaganda, the region served as a nexus of ethno-national and anti-Japanese consciousness. In addition, due to the frequent exchanges between the Korean peninsula and the Maritime Province, Lóngjǐng in particular served as the cradle of ethno-national independence movements.

The final feature article by Sök Kūmch'ōl (Academy of Social Sciences, DPRK) discusses the conflict between progressive and reactionary literature on what is termed the March First Peoples Uprising in the DPRK. After the March First People's Uprising, writers that included progressive patriots, independence activists and the broader masses created progressive literature that reflected the heights of the Korean people's patriotic fervor and the national anti-Japanese struggle. In contrast, bourgeois writers went down the path of becoming reactionaries as their disappointment, sense of failure, weariness and despair led them to a literary world that was at once both empty and degenerate. These works, which reflect historical fact but are in sharp contrast to the *Chuch'e* ideological direction, portrayal of art and characters, and description of life in both content and convention, show how sharp and complicated the confrontation between progressive and reactionary literature was in Korea's modern literary world in the time leading up to and following the March First People's Uprising.

In addition to the special feature articles, the March 2019 issue of *S/N Korean Humanities* also presents an article by Balázs Szalontai (Korea University, Sejong Campus), which analyzes the diplomatic aspects of Egyptian-North Korean relations, with a brief overview of the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser and with a focus on Anwar el-Sadat's presidency. On the basis of Hungarian, U.S., and Romanian archival documents, it investigates why the post-1973 reorientation of Egyptian foreign policy toward a pro-American position did not lead to a breakdown of the Egyptian-North Korean partnership. The article describes such episodes as North Korea's military contribution to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Egyptian-North Korean cooperation in the Non-Aligned Movement, Kim Il Sung's equivocal reactions to the Egyptian-Israeli peace process, and the militant Arab states' dissatisfaction with Pyongyang's unwillingness to condemn the "treacherous" Camp David Accords.

It concludes that the main pillars of the Sadat-Kim Il Sung partnership were their simultaneous cooperation with China, their shared enmity for the USSR, and their fear of diplomatic isolation. Still, the North Korean leaders, anxious as they were to prevent an Egyptian-South Korean rapprochement, were more often compelled to adapt to Egypt's diplomatic preferences than vice versa. The ambivalence, vacillation, prevarication, and opportunism that characterized Pyongyang's interactions with Cairo belied the common image of North Korea as an iron-willed, militant state cooperating with other revolutionary regimes on the basis of equality, mutual trust, and anti-imperialist solidarity.

The article co-authored by Shin Sunghee (City University of New York) and Kim Booyuel (KDI School of Public Policy and Management) is a study of North Korean refugee college students' hopes and anxieties about learning English in South Korea. Based on in-depth interviews with twenty-four North Korean refugee college students who participated in a six-month non-credit English program, this paper examines their meta-thinking about their own English learning experience. With Gibbs' reflective process, North Korean refugee college students' reflections on English education were categorized into the following themes: education and meaning of life, importance of post-caring, determinants of motivation for class, and ambivalent view on English education. Then, this research investigates the ways to improve future English program for North Korean refugee college students by suggesting intensive post-study caring, more tutoring assistance, and customized English education between an integrative approach and a short-term test-oriented instrumental approach based on students' learning goal.

Jo Changho (The New School for Social Research) and Michael Buckalew (Pacific Forum, Young Leaders Program) contributed book reviews for this issue. Jo Changho reviewed Han Suk-jung's *Manjumodŏn: 60Nyŏndae Han'guk Kaebal Ch'ejŏi Kiwŏn* [Manchuria-Modern: The Origin of South Korean Developmental Regime in the 1960s]. Analyzing the relationship between Manchukuo and South Korea, Han Suk-jung puts forth a rather radical argument that Manchukuo constituted "the model for East Asian developmentalist regimes of bureaucratic authoritarianism." Through the juxtaposition of Manchukuo and the South Korean *jaejeon* (reconstruction) regime of the 1960s, we learn a story of how the memory

of Manchukuo, in both direct and indirect ways, played a crucial role in the development of South Korea. The book is a formidable study of the origins of the Korean developmental state and a must-read for anyone interested in the subject. Yet it leaves unanswered several theoretical questions including that of the specific significance of Manchukuo as the origin of Korean modernity if, as the book implies, modernity must accompany fascism and the path of developmental authoritarianism for the Korean nation-state building was predetermined.

In his reading of Yang Yoon Sun's *From Domestic Young Women to Sensitive Young Men Translating the Individual in Early Colonial Korea*, Michael Buckalew assessed the work as a thorough, well-researched account of the inflection period between pre-modern and modern Korea literary fiction. Yang analyzes a series of novels written in the early 20th century, during the transition from the end of the Josŏn dynasty to Japanese colonial rule on the Korean Peninsula. Several works covered by Yang's study focus on female protagonists struggling against oppressive Confucian social norms as the power structure that upheld them was in collapse. Other novels analyzed in this study looked at the internal suffering of formerly elite young men, stripped of their social and economic standing during the colonial era. This was a period when old norms and forms of literary expression were collapsing, but new ones had yet to form. Yang's work challenges assumptions of male-centered historical and literary narratives as representing the transformation to modern Korean literature. Her work has the potential to open avenues for future cross-case scholarly analysis of other nation's modern literary traditions.

The centennial of the March First Movement, coupled with the improvement in inter-Korean relations in the last year, provided an opportunity for Koreans everywhere to gather around the themes of peace, justice, and human rights. For all the controversies and division that separate North and South Korean understanding of the independence movement, we harbor a common appreciation for the legacies left behind by the March First Movement. Despite the deep-seated conflict and mistrust between the two Koreas, there remain certain values, sentiments, and ideas that might bind and motivate North Koreans, South Koreans, and overseas Koreans

to long for shared peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. It is this underlying—and in many cases, under-explored—commonality that, if identified, will place our hopes and expectations in the “process” of approaching unification. In the future, *S/N Korean Humanities* will remain committed to establishing a vibrant platform for discussing how we can build “unification as a process” through communication, healing, and integration.

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