



Reading Homer's *Iliad* in North Korea: A Study on Lim Hak-Su's Prefaces to His Three Translated Versions of the *Iliad*

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Abstract

This article aims at a comparative analysis of the prefaces in Lim Hak-Su's translations of the Iliad. Lim published three translations of the Iliad, the first in 1940 during the Japanese colonial period, and later in North Korea in 1963 and 1989. The differences between the prefaces in these three editions are noteworthy. While the 1940 preface begins with high praise for the Iliad and the emotional and romantic tone is maintained until the end, the 1963 preface attempts to focus on an objective narrative. Lim defined Homer's Iliad as an "inmin epic." The most noteworthy point of this preface is that Lim cites Engels and Marx to support his evaluation of the Iliad. Finally, in the preface to the 1989 translation, the perspectives of Marx and Engels are gone and Kim Il-sung's teachings appear instead. Such changes show that the communism of Marx and Engels, which can be called a foreign ideology, had finally been overcome in North Korean society and that Kim Il-sung's Juche ideology had been established as the absolute state policy with the highest authority. The case of Lim's prefaces allows us to think about how literary criticism is influenced by national ideologies and what it means to study literature and humanities in North Korea.

Keywords: Lim Hak-Su, Homer, *Iliad*, *inmin*, epic, literature, ideology, humanities, North Korea

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Introduction

What is literature? Why do people compose stories, read them in front of people, perform and publish them? Is the answer different for each individual, group, society, country, nation, and era, such that there can be no objective and universal definition of literature? In order to find the most appropriate answers to these questions, it is necessary to discuss what can be termed a *world literature collection*. A world literature collection aims to broadly understand how the stories of various people with different answers to literature develop and to find the essence and universality of literature, or its individuality and diversity, by pointing out differences and commonalities.

Planning a world literature collection and choosing which works will compose the collection itself already presupposes a certain standard for literature. In this respect, it is very interesting to examine the list of world literature collections of one country or one publisher. For example, the most well-known literary collection in France is the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Éditions de la Pléiade published in 1931 by Gallimard Press. In principle, it is a French literature collection, but it can be seen as a collection of world literature as it includes many non-French literary works. In addition, there is the *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade*, which collects copious amounts of information from various fields. In this collection, the *History of Literatures (Histoire des Littératures)* consists of three volumes: the first volume is *Ancient, Oriental and Oral Literatures (Littératures anciennes, orientales et orales)*, the second is *Western Literatures (Littératures occidentales)*, and the third is *French, Related and Marginal Literatures (Littératures françaises, connexes et marginales)*. This three-volume collection literally attempts to capture a comprehensive view of the literature of mankind as a whole.

Raymond Queneau (1903–1976), the novelist, poet, and playwright, was in charge of compiling the *History of Literature*. He is reported to have said “Every great work of literature is either the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.”¹ According

1. Raymond Queneau, “Preface to Flaubert’s *Bouvard et Pécuchet*,” quoted in Manguel (2007, 1).

to Queneau, we cannot talk about Western literature without mentioning the two epics of Homer, furthermore, no world literature collection can be said to be complete if missing these two works. He thought Homer's two epics to be the root and essence of Western literature.

If one accepts Queneau's view, then the composition of the world literature collection in North Korea would seem to be appropriate, as the top spot in that world literature anthology published in 1963 by the Joseon Literature and Art Federation Publishing House is indeed assigned to Homer's *Iliad*. Its translator was Lim Hak-Su. Prior to publishing this Korean translation in North Korea, he had published another translation version of the *Iliad* in 1940–1941, during the Japanese colonial period. Lim had entered the preparatory department of Gyeongseong Imperial University (Keijō Imperial University) in 1931, majoring in English literature, and after graduation, served as a teaching assistant at that same institution. Thus, one can be certain his Korean translation was not from the Greek original, but rather from an English translation.² It is unknown as to whether he also referred to a Japanese translation, but this is quite possible.

In 1989, when he published his third translation of Homer's *Iliad* through the Literature and Art Publishing House, he indicated the author's name as "Homeros" in the Greek style instead of "Homer" in the English style, but beyond this, it does not appear that he specifically referred to the original Greek text in this translation either. However, unfortunately and oddly, Homer's other epic, the *Odyssey*, is not included in North Korea's World Literature Collection,³ and other Greek and Roman classics have not

2. Lim did not reveal which text or texts he consulted for his translations, but considering the time when he initially attempted this translation, likely candidates are the translations by Alexander Pope (1777), Andrew Lang, Walter Leaf, and Ernest Myers (1898), Edward Earl Derby (1912), and Samuel Butler (1921). Though it seems Lim did take courses in Greek and Latin (G. H. Kim 2005, 55–56), he was not able to read the *Iliad* in its original Greek. He is presumed to have compared key concepts or proper nouns with the original text, but much of his Korean translation relies on English translations.

3. Also interesting is that Homer's *Odyssey* was scarcely dealt with in colonial Joseon either. Further research may be needed to determine why the adventure story of Odysseus returning home after the war was not as attractive to colonial Koreans as the story of the Trojan War itself. In particular, because the scene in which the returning Odysseus kills

been translated at all in North Korea. In particular, the fact that Greek tragedy, which had a significant impact on the history of Western literature, is not considered at all in the North Korean anthology is extremely unusual.

This article aims at a comparative analysis of Lim's Korean translations of the *Iliad*, which tops the list of works in North Korea's world literature collection. In particular, this article will focus on comparing the prefaces attached to each of Lim Hak-Su's three translations. Lim's first translation was published by the Academic and Art Publishing House in 1940 during the Japanese colonial period. After national liberation in 1945, Lim's second translation was published in North Korea in 1963 by the Joseon General Association of Literature and Arts Publishing House. A third translation was published in 1989 by the Literary Art Publishing House. Although revisions can be found everywhere between the first and second versions, there is little difference between the second and third versions. On the other hand, the differences between the prefaces attached to the three editions are noteworthy. While other translators of literary works in the early modern period of Joseon did not pay much attention to the preface, Lim did not hesitate to communicate with the reader through his preface, not only in his translation of the *Iliad* but also in his numerous other translations of works of English literature. In his prefaces, Lim offers his evaluation of the original work and its author, and consistently reveals his own translation consciousness (Park 2015). In this article, I will focus on examining how Lim's attitude towards the *Iliad* changes by comparing and analyzing the prefaces to these three translations rather than the translations themselves. I will also examine in detail how changes in his attitude and perspective influenced his translation of this work.⁴ Through this study may shed greater

the suitors harassing his wife is in many respects similar to the final scene of *Chunhyangjeon*, a comparison of the two works and an exploration of parallels would also prove an interesting topic for research.

4. However, in order to discuss how such changes have affected the Korean translation, it is necessary to compare Korean translations in detail, which will be postponed until another opportunity because it would be most appropriate to treat this subject in a paper written in Korean. In order to highlight the characteristics of his translation further, it will be necessary to compare it to the translation of the *Iliad* in South Korea, but given that this is

light on what it means to read, study, and evaluate a piece of literature in North Korea, and furthermore how the humanities are viewed in North Korea.

The *Iliad* in Korean during the Japanese Colonial Period

First, I will briefly review the history of the introduction of the *Iliad* to Korea during the Japanese colonial period and up to the point when Lim's first translation was published. Following this, I will discuss Lim's literary activities and the characteristics of his translation.

In Joseon under Japanese colonial rule, the *Iliad* was first introduced in the form of an adaptation with plot reconstruction. This first work is *Story of the Iliad* by Ro Ja-Young and published in 1923 by the New Life Publishing Company. This was a somewhat arbitrary adaptation of the plot of the *Iliad*. The second was an abbreviated translation of the *Iliad* appearing in *World Literature Masterpieces* by Oh Chun-Seok in 1925 and published by the Hanseong doseo.⁵ The third is an abridged version of the *Iliad* that was serialized over five issues of the *Chosun Ilbo* in 1929 in a section titled "Digest of Masterpieces of Western Literature" by a writer using the penname Simhyangsanin 心郷山人.⁶ All three of the aforementioned versions appeared in the 1920s, and all of them emerged out of a realization by Koreans that they should avoid being *a frog in a well* amidst the tragedy of the country's colonization by the Japanese Empire. This realization led to the need to understand world civilization, and in particular to understand and translate world literature (S. Kim 2011).

Among these three, what is noteworthy about Ro's *Story of the Iliad*,

also a task that requires a detailed comparative analysis of Korean translations, a full-scale discussion of this will be postponed.

5. Oh's *World Literature Masterpieces* was initially planned in two volumes, but only the first volume was published. In this volume, along with Homer's *Iliad*, are Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

6. It was serialized during October 3–8, 1929.

which comes to 86 pages, is that the sensational phrase “love novel” (*yeonae soseol*) appears above the work's title. In fact, in several parts, Ro reconstructed the *Iliad* to fit the form of a love story.⁷ This reflects the realities of the publishing industry of colonial Joseon in the 1920s. After the March First Movement of 1919, publishers sought works that could increase profits by answering to popular demands, while avoiding the increasingly stringent political censorship. Thus, here *love* was symbolic of the situation of 1920s Joseon, becoming a trend in an era that saw growing enthusiasm for education and culture (Kwon 2003, 16). The notion of *love* was a cultural product of the era that was created and actively distributed by the creative and publishing world in colonial Joseon of the 1920s. Amidst this trend, Ro published the *Flame of Love* (*Sarang-ui bulkkot*), a bestseller in the early 1920s (T. Lee 2008). Indeed, in the 1920s, Ro was “enjoying the highest product value” and “was an icon symbolizing ‘literature’ and a sign symbolizing the desire for ‘love’” (Kwon 2009, 443). *Story of the Iliad*, which seems to have been published immediately following *Flame of Love*, also clearly demonstrated the characteristics and talents of Ro. This tendency is also reflected in the version of the *Iliad* serialized in the *Chosun Ilbo*. The illustrations for that work contain scenes that remind readers of a love story.

But does Homer's *Iliad* really belong to the love story genre as Ro read it and as it was introduced to readers of the *Chosun Ilbo*? Of course, there is clearly room for the entire story of the Trojan War to be structured as a love story, as that war, the background to the *Iliad*, originated from the passionate love between Paris, Prince of Troy, and Helen, the queen of Sparta, and Menelaus' anger and vengeful desire to punish both his wife's betrayal and Paris' adultery.⁸ From the perspective of a love story, the story of the Trojan

7. It is impossible to say with certainty whether this reconstruction is Ro's original creation or an imitation based on another work. That other work is most likely a Japanese book, though the possibility that he also referred to an English work certainly cannot be ruled out. At present, researchers remain divided as to the exact provenance of *Story of the Iliad* as the book contains no preface that otherwise might have provided information about works the author consulted in writing it. For more on this topic, see H. Kim (2019).

8. The tradition of inventing a new story by focusing on the love and romance in the story of the Trojan War has appeared in various forms in the West. See Haight (1947) and Roisman (2008).

War undertakes a romantic development that begins with a duel between two men over the most beautiful woman in the world and escalates into a battle between city and city, nation and nation, and between the large number of Greek and Trojan allies.⁹

However, Achilles is certainly the main protagonist of the *Iliad*, which begins with the poet's order to the muse to "sing of the destructive wrath of Achilles" (Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ ἠλγιάδεω Ἀχιλῆος οὐλομένην; *Il.* 1.1–2). This destructive wrath is usually related to the ancient Greek value of heroism, that is, the honor-oriented value of warriors who are mortal and aim for immortal fame (H. Kim 1997). Therefore, love, as the cause of the Trojan War, is often treated as an incident or incidental element in relation to heroic themes. Paris, who abducted Helen to Troy, is portrayed as an unmanly man and is not valued as a true warrior and his love story is not the driving force or key axis of the *Iliad*. From this point of view, Ro, who reads the *Iliad* as a love story, deviated from Homer's original intention and the original warrior value of ancient Greece. Ro's reading of the *Iliad* is a product of its era—colonial Joseon of the 1920s, when the general public, who suffered political setbacks, longed for freedom and independence through love and consumed love stories as painkillers.¹⁰

It was in 1925 that efforts were made in Korea to read the *Iliad* in a way other than as a love novel. In the preface to his translated version of the *Iliad*, Oh Chun-seok reveals his conviction that it was necessary to introduce a great literary work as it was, thus distancing himself from the effort of Ro Ja-Young, who had adapted the *Iliad* as a love story.

9. Of course, duels and wars are not only the subjects of romantic novels; duels and struggles between protagonists with different values are an important theme in the history of Western literature, along with adventure and love (see J. K. Lee 2014). If the Trojan War itself has elements of a love story, the duel stemming from Achilles in the *Iliad* (unlike what Ro Ja-Young sees), places much greater emphasis on honor and friendship between men than on love between man and woman.

10. In the history of Greek literature, the tendency to appreciate the love between Paris and Helen appears only after the age of epic poetry had passed and given way to the age of lyric poetry. Sappho's poetry (fragment 16) is representative of the latter.

I felt desperately that in order to compete on an equal footing with others on the stage of this advanced twentieth-century life, we must at least read famous texts from around the world. Anyone who says he knows civilization without knowing literature, which can be said to be the core of civilization, is extremely foolish, just like someone who says he has appreciated all the flowers without being able to smell their flowing fragrance. (Oh 1925)¹¹

Unfortunately, however, the *Iliad* of Oh is 52 pages shorter than that of Ro (86 pages). Thus, it is difficult to say that Oh introduced the *Iliad* sufficiently, but compared to Ro's subjective and arbitrary reconstruction, Oh's effort to be faithful to the original is to be highly praised. His work opened the way for Lim's work, which was the first complete Korean translation of the *Iliad*.

Lim's First Translation and Romantic Preface

At this point, we turn our attention to Lim's Korean translation of the *Iliad*. Lim's translation appeared in 1940 (volume 1) and 1941 (volume 2) through the Academic and Art Publishing House. After debuting as a poet when he published a poem titled "Melancholy" ('Uul') in the *Donga Ilbo* in May 1931, Lim was very active in introducing Western literature to colonial Joseon as an English scholar. In particular, he had a deep affection and interest in English romantic literature. From October 1 to 6, 1936, his work "The Trend of Modern English Poetry" was serialized in the *Chosun Ilbo*, and in 1939 he published an anthology of modern English poetry (G. H. Kim 2005).¹² In addition, he translated various literary works, both Western and non-Western, from the English, including the works of the Indian poet Tagore (H. Lim 2005, 54; Park 2015, 223).¹³ Lim also translated and

11. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the Korean quoted in this paper are my own.

12. According to Kim Gwang Hyeon (2005), English romanticism forms the principal backdrop to Lim Hak-Su's literature.

13. His translation of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* was published by Jogwangsa in 1941; published as well were translations of works by English and American writers such

introduced the poetry of Sappho, known as the first female poet of ancient Greece, and finally presented his translation of the *Iliad*, the foremost work in the history of Greek literature. Lim's was the first complete Korean translation of the *Iliad*. As discussed above, Homer's *Iliad*, which contains the story of the wrath of Achilles, a demigod—an intermediate between a human and a god—in a dualistic worldview in which the world of gods and the world of human beings work together, is evidently a heroic epic. Lim's impression of the *Iliad* is a very romantic one. As a literary scholar, Lim honestly expressed how he feels toward the *Iliad* and his unsparing admiration for its genius author. His evaluation of the work's value and the writer's status in the history of literature approaches effusive praise. Evaluating the *Iliad* as one of the most important products of human culture, Lim says that the value of the *Iliad* has remained unchanged, even in the long flow of literary history, where numerous poets and various literary trends have appeared and disappeared, and due to this, all of Greek culture shines brilliantly. On the other hand, it is difficult to find any ideological color anywhere in his preface.

The *Iliad* is, without a doubt, one of the great legacies of human culture. Three thousand years have already passed since the death of Homer, and during that time, various cultural trends have been swept away, and history has changed and numerous poets and writers have been born. Nevertheless, Greek culture shines brilliantly due to the *Iliad*. The saying that life is short but art is long must be an eternal truth. The *Iliad* occupies the highest peak of literature in this way. Although it is an old work, and was created at a time when human culture had not yet fully blossomed, it is by no means handicapped or overestimated, to rate it so highly. Anyone who peruses the *Iliad* over and over again will very often be amazed at many places in the work. In addition, you will realize that modern literature cannot surpass its grandeur, detail, and subtlety. Has there ever been a great poet or great writer in this world who did not love to read the

as John Keats, Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, T. S. Eliot, William Butler Yeats, Thomas Hardy, and Pearl Buck, along with various other writers such as Thomas Mann and Tagore.

Iliad and did not learn literary creation from it? (H. Lim 1940, 1)

After admiring the *Iliad* and its author, Homer, Lim then briefly summarizes its entire contents. First, he briefly discusses the cause of the Trojan War, the abduction of Helen by Paris, before proceeding directly into the contents of the work: Achilles and Agamemnon's feud over Briseis, and how Achilles, angered by it, refuses to participate in the battle; the great difficulties faced by the Greek allies; how in the midst of human discord and war, the gods are divided into two camps and participate in the war, moving with humans. Lim summarizes all of this with excellent skill. He is also adept at piquing the readers' curiosity about what comes next by stopping his summary at the climax of the story's development.

The *Iliad* is a vast work consisting of twenty-four volumes and eighteen thousand lines.¹⁴ The work begins in the tenth year of the Trojan War, when Achilles and Agamemnon's emotional discord causes infighting among the Greeks. This war, of course, took place over a beautiful woman, Helen. First, Alexander, a prince of Troy, kidnapped Helen, the wife of Menelaus, who was a brother of Agamemnon the king of Greece and the most beautiful and chaste of all Greek women, such that she can be referred to as the Jik-Nyeo of the Orient. Then, Agamemnon, king of Greece, led a great army of tens of thousands of soldiers across the ocean to the shores of Troy, spending nine years trying to capture the city of Troy. However, in the tenth year, a dispute with Achilles, the most valiant soldier in the Greek army and one favored by Heaven, started, and in the midst of this, Agamemnon took away Briseis, whom Achilles had taken as a trophy and then made his wife. This greatly angered Achilles, and he withdrew from the battle. Subsequently, Hector, the fierce warrior of Troy, started major trouble for the Greeks. Meanwhile, the various gods of Olympus split into two sides, some striving to save Troy and others helping Greece. In this way, gods and humans became entangled, and the battle unfolded in the heavens and in the world as well. The battlefield was full of blood, and when Zeus of Olympus tousled his dark hair once, the

14. Lim modified the number in the second and third versions to "close to 20,000 lines." However, the *Iliad* actually consists of approximately 15,690 lines.

shores of Troy's gray sea shuddered and the whole earth shook greatly.
(H. Lim 1940, 1)

The story that develops after this summary is omitted, for example how Patroclus borrows Achilles' armor and joins the battle in his place to help the Greek allied forces but loses his life in a confrontation with Hector. Or how Achilles, enraged by the death of his friend, enters the battle, killing Hector, and even dragging his corpse behind his chariot. Lastly, how Hector's father Priam secretly visits Achilles' camp to demand the return of his son's body, recovering it and holding a funeral. Instead, Lim explains how to understand the mythological imagination shown in the epic; for instance, he shows that mythological allegory can be read rationally by analyzing symbols, metaphorical techniques, and religious emotions.

The most representative example presented by Lim is the behavior of Odysseus in the war. He falls behind the front lines and is undecided about whether to rush into the enemy camp or flee to base, but Pallas Athena arrives and warns him to return quickly, and he therefore eventually returns to his base. Perhaps modern readers cannot take this literally, dismissing it as a fictional story devoid of truth. However, if they consider it as a mythological expression and understand it symbolically, they can fully sympathize with and accept the scene. According to Lim's explanation, Homer symbolically used the personality of a god to express Odysseus' change of heart at that time, and this mythological imagination originated from the religious psychology of the ancients. In other words, Homer used the gods symbolically and metaphorically to explain human psychology, events, and destiny.

Lastly, Lim emphasizes Homer's sentences, style, and genius in the *Iliad* and adds high praise:

I think anyone can easily read this poem if they understand its plot and the religious feelings of the Greeks. Now let's say a word about the sentences of the *Iliad*. It is like the Yangtze River convection, which continues to flow, sometimes hitting the cliffs and sometimes permeating the plains. Simple yet majestic and magnificent sentences are expressed in

excellent language, and the elaborateness and beauty of the expressions cannot be matched even by modern realist literature. It covers all of the elements that can be included as literature, such as various emotions, nature, love, and philosophy. Even so, it is quite romantic in dissecting the strange atmosphere of human emotions and people's thoughts about death. It gives later generations an indescribable intimacy; moreover, chivalry and the creation of beauty have reached a climax that no one since Homer can match. Therefore, in addition to the description of nature that flows throughout the poem, especially the mournful passages of Hector saying goodbye to his wife in the fortress of Troy in Book 6, the sensuous depiction of the scene in which Hera seduces her husband Zeus in Book 14, and the beauty of craftsmanship in which Hephaestus carved various figures into Achilles' armor in Book 18, all of which can be said to be prestigious masterpieces that shine in a unique way. (H. Lim 1940, 3-4)

Lim's evaluation of Homer at this point overlaps with his evaluation of 19th-century English romanticism. He summed up the characteristics of English romanticism by saying, "What interested English Romanticism, which emerged prominently in the 19th century, was not nature as the center of beautiful scenery but nature as a force that exerts a beneficial spiritual influence on life" (G. H. Kim 2005, 65). Lim reflects these characteristics of English romanticism in his evaluation of Homer's epic poems. In fact, nature as vividly described in Homer's *Iliad* is not drawn by itself but is usually presented as an element that compares the movements and emotions of warriors, or it is connected with the landscape of the warriors' hometowns away from the exhausting and painful horrors of war. As Lim noted about romantic nature: nature is portrayed in a way that resonates with humans. In addition, his attitude of paying attention to the excellence of the writing appears to have been influenced by the Poetry School (Simun hakpa 詩文學派) of the 1930s, in which he was active (C. Lim 2005, 67).

Finally, the preface concludes with a brief note of thanks related to the publication.¹⁵ Thus far, I have quoted and briefly explained the preface of

15. "Finally, I feel infinite happiness that I can dedicate this great poem to you after a year of work. At the same time, I express my gratitude to the Academic and Art Publishing House

Lim's 1940 translation. This preface forms an important framework for the preface of the second version of 1963 and the third version of 1989. Hence, I have presented here almost the entire contents of that first preface. If we find and analyze the major differences in the prefaces of the second and third versions compared to the first, we can explain what changes Lim displays towards the North Korean political system. Furthermore, it will be possible to highlight the characteristics intellectuals reveal when they study Western literature and the humanities under the North Korean political system. Moreover, if we understand the reasons for such changes and characteristics, we will be able to explain the restrictions on and meanings associated with the study of the humanities in North Korea.

Lim's Second and Third Translations and Ideological Prefaces

After Korean liberation in 1945, Lim became a professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Korea University from 1949, but he was abducted by North Korean forces in 1951 after the outbreak of the Korean War. Following this, he served as the first head of the English courses and the dean of foreign languages at Kim Il Sung University in North Korea. He also taught English literature at Pyongyang University of Foreign Languages, introduced foreign literature to North Korea, and translated Korean poetry into English. Yeom Young, one of his students, remarked, "Lim Hak-Su was the only one who ever mastered the poetic language of ancient and medieval English, and only Lim could translate Shakespeare's plays written in verse or the English literary classics." Lim's position in literary translation in North Korean seems to have been solid (C. Lim 2005, 38–40, 58–59). He published his translation of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in 1955, *Tagore and Lyric Poetry* in 1961, *The Literature of Charles Dickens* in

and to Mr. Lim Hwa, who have entrusted me with this great task without making any consideration of their self-interest. In order for readers to understand this easily, I have added a rough map of ancient Greece and a brief explanation of important characters and places at the beginning of the first volume. I hope this will prove a good reference for your reading." (H. Lim 1940, 4).

1962, and then a revised edition of the *Iliad* in 1963.

Lim's 1963 preface differs greatly from the 1940 preface in several respects. First, the use of Chinese characters has disappeared, with only Hangeul appearing, and many of the somewhat pedantic Chinese-style vocabulary terms were replaced with easier words or with purely Korean words. However, what is more important is the change in tone. While the 1940 preface begins with high praise for the *Iliad* and the emotional and romantic tone is maintained until the end, the tone in the 1963 preface is calmer. He attempts to focus on an objective narrative. The preface, entitled "On the *Iliad*" begins with the following calmly objective statement:

The *Iliad*, along with the *Odyssey*, is the oldest epic of ancient Greece. Nothing is known about the life of Homer, the author of these epics. However, according to later studies, he was a poet born in Ionia, Asia Minor, sometime in the 8th to 7th centuries BC. Incidentally, the word "Homer" means "blind" in the Greek language of Asia Minor. From this it is assumed that Homer was a blind poet. The *Iliad* is based on the legend of the Trojan War, and the *Odyssey* depicts the journey and adventures of Odysseus, a hero who participated in the Trojan War, returning home after the war. (Odysseus is said to have later become the ancestor of the Italian people). (H. Lim 1963, 5)

In the preface of 1963, Lim begins by describing Homer in an objective tone, a contrast to the preface of 1940. In addition, contents not included in the preface of 1940 were added to the preface of 1963. In the first preface, Lim only praised and emphasized the value, status, and excellence of the work, but did not provide any specific information about its author. In the previous preface, only the *Iliad* was mentioned, but in the new preface, the *Odyssey* is also mentioned. When explaining the author and the work, the romantic sentiment shown has disappeared, and only a flat and realistic perspective and tone remain. In other words, an air of socialist realism appears in the new preface.

Next, Lim positions the heroic stories of Homer's two works in the

Greek mythological worldview and history. He also presents a very important concept after explaining that the two epics were initially passed down as a legacy of oral culture and only later compiled as literary works when converted into written language. Lim defines Homer's two epics as "inmin epics" (*inmin seosasi* 人民敘事詩).¹⁶ The concept of "inmin," when understood as "people" rather than "folk," is a very important political concept in North Korea's socialist or communist ideology, and further, in Kim Il-sung's Juche ideology (*juche sasang* 主體思想). It can be identified with the proletarian class as the subject of revolution, and it is a concept that stands in opposition to the bourgeois or capitalist class of the capitalist system. Therefore, when the *Iliad* is referred to as an *inmin* epic, it can be said that an ideological nuance is being added to the *Iliad*.

Both stories of these two epics belong to a later period of Greek legends. However, in the process of reading the work, we find that the legends of the previous period, the ancient Greek heroic stories, are episodically inserted at various places. Therefore, these epics can be said to be vast "inmin epics" that have been compiled and supplemented by adding new materials to the ancient Greek oral songs that were handed down from generation to generation. (H. Lim 1963, 5)

However, what did Lim mean when he used the term "inmin epic"? In the above quotation, the first two sentences and the third sentence are connected by "therefore," suggesting that at first glance, the reason for evaluating the *Iliad* as an "inmin epic" in the third sentence can be found in the previous two sentences. According to him, "inmin" in "inmin epic" is closer to "folk," meaning popular among ordinary people, than to "people," referring to a political subject of revolution. In this case, the meaning of *inmin* epic can be

16. *Inmin* 人民 used by Lim can be translated as "people" in a political sense, or as "folk or folklore" in a cultural sense. Therefore, *inmin* epic can be translated as a "people's epic" in an ideological sense, or as a "folk epic" in the cultural sense. Lim seems to be using both meanings rather vaguely in his preface of 1963. Thus, I do not translate it, but transliterate it as *inmin*, and use *inminic* (*inminjeok* 人民的) for its adjective form. Though no hanmun is found in Lim's preface, I add it here for clarity.

posited as “folk epic,” a story that was recited and consumed among the common people. However, if we emphasize the political nuance of the concept of *inmin*, an *inmin* epic can mean an epic composed of stories in which people are the subjects.

In this context, it is difficult to conclude that Lim means an *inmin* epic in the second sense, as the main characters of the two epics have a heroic lineage, that is, of demigods, as distinct from common people. It is a well-known fact that in Greek mythology, *hero* was a concept defined simply by lineage, not by one's abilities or actions.¹⁷ In fact, Homer's two works are mainly called “heroic epics,” and Lim also keeps this in mind, noting that Greek heroic stories are episodically inserted throughout the epic. Therefore, the stories of heroes—who are completely different from those of common people—cannot be called *inmin* epics in the second sense.

Of course, it is quite possible for ordinary people to be enthusiastic about and enjoy the stories of heroes, completely different from their own, and to pass them on orally and preserve them as precious. In fact, the consumers of heroic epics are not limited to the privileged classes, such as the royal family or the aristocracy; rather, the stories of heroes gain popularity by providing fantasy to the common people, allowing an escape their shabby reality. From such a perspective, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are sufficient as works to be loved by the people. Therefore, in the first sense, it appears that they can be called “*inmin* epics,” to mean “folk epics.” In fact, a Soviet translation, published somewhat earlier than Lim's second translation version, defines the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as “folk heroic epics” (*narodnim gyeroichyeskim eposom*) (Gnedicha 1960, 5). At this time, if we pay attention to the fact that “folk” (*narodnim*) is used side by side with “hero” (*gyeroichyeskim*), it may be interpreted that the two are not opposite or contradictory concepts. In other words, it should be seen as the concept of a heroic epic that was popular among the people and loved by the people.

However, it is highly probable that Lim referred to N. I. Gnedicha's Russian translation and its preface published in the Soviet Union. Therefore, it can be said that Lim brought a concept that was not used in the preface of

17. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 158–160.

his first translation and newly inserted it into the preface of his second translation. He borrowed the concept of Gnedicha but left only the concept of *inmin* (*narodnim*) among them and highlighted it. It is presumed that Lim considered the two (*narodnim* and *gyeroichyeskim*) as opposing concepts and deleted the concept of hero (*gyeroichyeskim*) among them. Therefore, Lim used not only the concept of *inmin* as the first meaning, that is, popular among the people, but also the concept of people as a political subject. However, we will see that Lim also used *inmin* in another sense of the word, which will be examined later.

We hold off at this point on clarifying the meaning of *inmin* and continue to follow the contents of the preface. Lim explains the formation of the *Iliad* as a combination of oral transmission and the writer's adaptation and then defines the *Iliad* as "historical fact described in the form of a myth" while mentioning the historical possibility of the Trojan War (H. Lim 1963, 6–7). This type of objective description of the work is also not found in the previous preface.

Lim also explains the contents, characteristics, and value of the work. After briefly introducing the cause and development of the Trojan War, the first part of the *Iliad*, the main characters, and a brief summary of the work, specific passages containing "extremely impressive scenes in description and technique" were selected in order to explain the important characteristics of the *Iliad*. This is a more detailed explanation added to the parts of Books 6, 14, and 18 mentioned very briefly in the preface of 1940. The other parts of Books 15, 21, and 23 are newly added. The first part is the farewell scene of Hector of Troy with his wife before going on campaign (6.441–443, 472–484). The translation differs considerably from the Greek text, but in any case, this part is evaluated as follows:

Here, the caring yet courageous Hector's warrior-like character is depicted with a high degree of artistry, and the poet's shining example of humanity is shown. Hector is an unrivaled warrior on the battlefield and a good father and husband at home. He has a premonition of his own death and the destruction of Troy, but he bids farewell to his beloved wife and son in order to fight proudly as a warrior to defend his country...In this scene,

we see through Hector, a hero from 3,000 years ago, the intense love for one's own relatives and country that flows continuously in a person's heart. (H. Lim 1963, 7–8)

The important values that Lim emphasizes through Hector are humanitarianism, heroism, and patriotism. This is emphasized once again in Hector's spirit, as depicted in Book 15. Along with this, realism is highly valued, which is natural and unpretentious. This is evident when Homer describes the shield of Achilles in Book 18, when he sets out the personalities of the various characters who show "excellent examples of individuation," and when he describes nature in a concise but majestic manner. In addition, Lim highly praises Homer's excellence in the flamboyant expression as described in the scene where Hera seduces Zeus (Book 14), in the simple humor revealed in Patroclus' memorial game (Book 23), and by the humanitarianism that appears in the warning against indiscriminate slaughter through the personification of nature. This praise can be said to be a restrained and refined form of the romantic praise that was poured out indiscriminately in the preface to the 1940 version.

All of these factors make the *Iliad* an incomparable epic, one of the oldest and greatest treasure troves of human culture. Therefore, ancient and modern writers used it as a textbook for their study of literature and learned all of the rules of literary creation from it. (H. Lim 1963, 10)

The most noteworthy point is that Lim mentions Engels and Marx to support his evaluation of the *Iliad*.

Engels also said that Homer endowed the characters with complete and clear personalities, and Marx argued that although the *Iliad* is a product of the childhood of human society, it still gives us artistic pleasure and, in a sense, preserves significance as a norm and an unrivaled example of literature. (H. Lim 1963, 10)

Such an explanation is completely absent from the 1940 preface. This proves that Lim respects the theories of Engels and Marx—at the time the

ideological pillars supporting the North Korean political system—as the basis for his activities as a poet, translator, literary critic, and professor in communist North Korea. It may be that he had to wrap and position himself, Homer, and *Iliad* in the ideology of Marc and Engels. This attitude was typical of North Korean academies. For example, efforts to establish North Korean history begin with the premise that the Soviet Union is an advanced country and Marxism-Leninism is an advanced theory of history, as clearly shown in the preface to the issue of journal *Questions of History* (*Ryeoksa jemunje*) for July 1948 (Hong 2020, 16). Subsequently, in the preface to a 1955 issue of *Historical Science* (*Ryeoksa gwahak*), a party organ journal, the connection with Lim's preface is revealed more clearly. In this preface, the history of Joseon was analyzed from the perspective of Marxism and Leninism, emphasizing the history of the working masses and people who produced material wealth, not the history of kings, nobles, and generals.

However, immediately after mentioning Marx and Engels, Lim explains more clearly why the *Iliad* is an *inmin* epic, akin to implying that the concept of *inmin* epic is one taken/created from the communist thinkers Marx and Engels. However, Lim finds the reason for the *Iliad*'s “*inminic* significance” (*inminjeok uiui* 人民的意義) from a different angle compared to the two meanings reviewed above. It is explained in terms of Homer's religious and political views. Lim points out that numerous gods intervene in human affairs in the *Iliad*, and that although the gods are different from humans in their origin, affiliation, and lifestyle, “all of their faults and weaknesses are common to humans”: they are “jealous, threatening, seducing, vengeful, quarrelsome and unjust, just like men.” In a word, from a religious point of view, all of the gods in the *Iliad* appear as human beings, so to speak, like *inmin*.

In this way, the gods in the *Iliad* are much more human than those in the Greek religion of the time, where idolatry and animal worship remained, and the view of religion of the *Iliad* completely contradicts the claim of later religions that humans are foolish and gods are perfect. The *Iliad* has nothing to do with any religious fantasies claiming that the rule of God is

benevolent. Also, like other ancient heroic tales, there is no magic or foolish superstition in this story. (H. Lim 1963, 10–11)

The “religious fantasies” Lim refers to are related to the abuse of religion as the opiate of the people (*inmin*), about which Marx urged the people to abandon (Ruge and Marx 1844, 71–72). The *Iliad* depicts a world in which gods greatly resemble humans and interact with them, allowing people to escape the illusion of a religious worldview centered on a perfect and absolute God and to face reality. In that respect, the *Iliad* is humanistic and *inminic* and becomes an *inmin* epic. This view now applies not only to heavenly gods but also to earthly heroes and powerful men. The *Iliad* does not ideally depict kings, who are the most powerful, noble, and elegant. Rather, it breaks the political illusion of ideal elitism by clearly showing their naive, selfish, and greedy sides. Hence, in this sense the *Iliad* can also be evaluated as an *inmin* epic.

This idea also appears in Homer's attitude, which does not regard kingship as absolute. An example of this can be seen in the scene where Achilles reprimands Agamemnon for his unfair treatment and exposes his arrogance and greed. This, of course, comes from the fact that social power separated from the people does not yet exist, as Engels said, and it suggests that Agamemnon, the greatest ruler of Greece, was portrayed as a character with many negative aspects among many heroes. (H. Lim 1963, 11)

In this way, Lim borrowed the religious and political views of Marx and Engels and defined the *Iliad* as an *inmin* epic with them. As pointed out earlier, this view did not appear before Lim worked in North Korea, that is, during the Japanese colonial period. As he worked in North Korea and adapted to its political system, he seems to have hastily incorporated the ideas of Marx and Engels into the preface to his translation of the *Iliad*. In fact, in the 1940 preface Lim explained the intervention of the gods in the human world and mythical and religious phenomena in the *Iliad* as a kind of allegory. That is to say, Homer used the concept of god to describe and

explain the change of human minds or mystical events. Moreover, Lim wrote that all the gods Homer introduced in his works can be understood as personifications of human psychology and destiny. However, this is not an attitude or characteristic unique to Homer but is generalized and defined as the religious psychology of the ancients or the religious feelings of the Greeks. If this is the case, the reason Homer's *Iliad* is an *inminic* epic is that the religious attitudes and ideas of the ancient Greeks can be defined as *inminic*.

However, the part where Marx and Engels are mentioned displays awkwardness in its overall flow. The sentences following the previously quoted passages and the conjunctions that lead to them define the awkward atmosphere well. "In this way, the *Iliad* is a truly extraordinary epic poem with consistent heroism and patriotism, affirmation of life, a humanistic world view, and a canvas of simple primitive realism" (H. Lim 1963, 11), notes Lim, summarizing the preceding content but not directly including the *inminic* significance, which is a very important feature of the work in the 1963 preface. Rather, it is directly related to the contents developed before the explanation of the religious and political views of the *Iliad*, that is, the content that relates to the characteristics expressed in the 1940 preface. In this respect, the demonstrative adverb "in this way" does not match the part explaining the *inminic* significance of the epic and makes it unfamiliar. Therefore, this part gives the impression that elements different from the previous preface were hastily prepared and inserted into the new preface.

The last part of the 1963 preface is filled with the translator's regret about the limitations of the *Iliad*. First, Lim points out that Homer's limitation is that he likens the advance and retreat of warriors to a natural phenomenon or the struggle of wild beasts, explaining that Homer "did not pay much attention to the reproduction and creation of natural beauty" (H. Lim 1963, 9). However, what he meant by the reproduction and creation of natural beauty is not clear. Second, Lim points out that Homer's depiction and description of human worries, actions, and events as interventions by the gods is also an obvious limitation. It is argued that Homer did not consider psychological descriptions important and did not analyze the psychological processes of the main characters in detail. In other words, Lim

points out the ambiguities and limitations of the mythical metaphors and symbols of the *Iliad*. A few more examples are presented in this regard, including the scene in which Hector hesitates as to whether to fight Achilles one-on-one or to retreat, which is explained as Apollo driving him rather than as Hector's personal psychological conflict. Another is the scene in which Paris is nearly killed by Menelaus but manages to survive, which is explained as Aphrodite coming down from the sky to save him rather than as Paris' personal escape effort. There are others as well, representing quite a different attitude from the 1940 preface, which acknowledged these mythological scenes as not literary limitations but unique literary characteristics of that era. After critically appraising Homer's limits, Lim recommends that one understand Homer's limitations positively as the result of "the naiveté of ancient life" and to appreciate the historical circumstances of the time favorably; in this way, the attitude of the 1963 preface differs from the thrilling reaction shown in the 1940 preface. This can be interpreted as a change of position under the influence of socialist realism within the political system of North Korea. Finally, Lim proposes a rational interpretation of the *Iliad*, as follows:

Therefore, for the modern reader who wants to remove the mythological character from this epic and hope for rationality, if he interprets the many cases in which the gods interfere with human lives as a movement of human psychological states or a change in a man's will or a coincidence and a consequence of events in human lives, many problems encountered while reading this epic can be resolved. (H. Lim 1963, 12)

And the 1963 preface closes by mentioning the most visible changes compared to the 1940 version. This represents a change in the way the names of gods and heroes are written. While the 1940 version was mainly faithful to the English pronunciation, the 1963 translation is based on the Roman notation. Perhaps the reason for "taking the more commonly known Roman name" is the translator's own efforts to reflect the *inimic* characteristics of the *Iliad*. He wanted more readers to read the work more familiarly.

Finally, let us examine the preface attached to the 1989 translation. Most of its contents are similar to the 1963 preface, with one striking difference. Here, the perspectives of Marx and Engels are deleted and Kim Il-sung's teachings appear instead. However, this does not mean that Kim Il-sung's teachings replace the earlier passage regarding Marx and Engels. Unlike Marx and Engels, who were mentioned in places where they were positively evaluated Homer's *Iliad*, especially in the scene highlighting the *imminic* characteristics of the *Iliad*, Kim Il-sung's teachings are found at the beginning of where Lim points out the limitations of the *Iliad*, indicating that regardless of how great a Western literary work is, it can be criticized mercilessly according to Kim's teachings.

However, this work also has a series of limitations. The great leader Comrade Kim Il-sung instructed as follows. "For the purpose of discovering national classics, inheriting them, and developing national art, we must not unconditionally glorify the past and fall into the tendency of revivalism to idealize outdated forms of art." (Kim Il-sung, *Theory of Socialist Literature and Art*, 64–65, as quoted in Lim [1989, 6])

This is a remark that makes even the *Iliad*, "the best and greatest epic of mankind" and "one of the important heritages of human culture" and "the highest peak of literature" according to Lim, shrink before the authority of Kim's teachings. In addition, the evaluation of Marx and Engels, who praised the *Iliad*, also loses its light placed before Kim's teachings. Such changes in the preface of Lim's 1989 version show that the communism of Marx and Engels, which can be called a foreign ideology, has finally been overcome in North Korean society and that 'Kim Il-sung's Juche ideology' has been established as the absolute state policy with the highest authority. It is a representative case that allows us to think about how literary criticism is influenced by national ideologies and what it means to study literature and humanities in North Korea.

This attitude had already appeared in North Korea to some extent in the 1960s. Looking back on history, Kim's will to overcome Marxism and Leninism was already expressed in the issue of *Historical Science* published

in 1955. Its preface said that one should not read the books of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin as some type of absolute bible and recite individual phrases by quoting. Instead, it noted, one should creatively apply them to understanding and describing North Korea's history. In a word, it orders people to abandon dogmatic attitudes in all academic areas, including history, and to have independent and creative attitudes. To this end, it adds that it is necessary to study the works of Kim Il-Sung along with a thorough study of Marxism and Leninism (Hong 2020, 27–28). As such, the emphasis on Kim's teachings had been established as North Korea's academic orientation by 1989 when Lim published his third translation. Of course, this passage also does not sound like it connects naturally with the overall context. Rather, it appears to have been inserted into the preface of the 1989 version, just as Engels and Marx were hastily inserted into the preface of the 1963 version, as only the words "Kim Il-sung's teachings" replace the arguments of Marx and Engels, while the remaining content of the preface is hardly modified.

Conclusion

Here we have compared the prefaces of Lim Hak-Su's three translations of Homer's *Iliad*, the first epic poem in Western literature. In the preface of the first version published during the Japanese colonial period, before Lim worked in North Korea, he reveals no political or ideological attitude, focusing only on the literary value and characteristics of the work. In particular, the unsparing praise for the genius of the writer, the style of the writing, and the excellence of the plot composition fully reveal Lim's romantic characteristics as a poet and scholar of English literature.

However, in the prefaces to the two translations he published during his life in North Korea, the romantic atmosphere and tone are muted. This seems to reflect the influence of socialist realism and North Korea's communist ideology. In other words, it appears to have occurred due to the influence or pressure of the communist political system of North Korea, rather than to changes in Lim's literary tastes or perspectives. In particular,

Marxism-Engelism or Kim Il-sung's teachings, which are somewhat awkwardly inserted in the overall context of the preface, read as a forced elucidation of characteristics of the political system in which he was active, rather than representing his political, literary, and academic thinking. This is a representative case showing that in a system characterized by strong political control, the humanities are not a vehicle for revealing one person's individuality or thoughts, but instead serve to support and maintain the overall flow of society or the guidelines of its dictatorial leaders. However, more in-depth studies are needed to determine whether this phenomenon constitutes the suppression of individuality by a social system or voluntary socialization by an individual.

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