Imperial Nationalism Represented in 1940 Colonial Manchuria: *An Examination of Kim Yeong-pal's Play,* Kim Dong-han

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the pro-Japanese discourse represented in the play Kim Dong-han *written by Kim Yeong-pal, who was a member of the Korean Artist Proletariat Federation (KAPF), a socialistic artists group. The historical figure Kim Dong-han (1893-1937) had been a prominent pro-Japanese and anticommunist political figure in colonial Manchuria, though he had spent years as a communist in the Soviet Union. An examination of the dialogue in the play reveals that the arguments for socialism and imperialism share nationalism as a common ground. In Act I, the playwright employs the discourse of nationalism to create a binary in which Joseon is conflated with Japan, while the anticolonial guerrillas represent Soviet Russia. Though first developed in the early twentieth century as part of intellectuals' efforts to preserve Korean independence, within four decades, the concept of nationhood had been largely coopted by Imperial Japan. In Act II, the protagonist Kim Dong-han persuades the communist leader Bi-su with "civilizational" discourse. On the one side is the abundance represented by Kim Dong-han and Manchuria, which is aligned against the poverty embodied by Bi-su and communist Russia. Such rhetoric espousing greater civilization has commonly been used by empires as ethical and universal justifications for invasion. Japan also sought to place all nations of East Asia in this mold, thus assembling an imperial nationalism.*

Keywords: Manchuria, pro-Japanese, anticommunism, appropriation, national discourse, civilizational discourse, imperial nationalism

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Introduction

In the early twentieth century, various intellectuals, reformers, and political critics devoted themselves to constructing a "national discourse" that envisioned Joseon's path to modernity and independence from Japan (Schmid 2002). This conversation could be called the beginning of Korea's modern discourse (Kang 2004, 25). Most political groups preferred the term "nation," while many newspapers and historical scholars enthusiastically suggested the phrase "national discourse." Developing such discourse or ideas of nation was aimed at shielding the Korean people from the predations of colonial imperialism. Generally, nationalism has been defined as the political principle that regards the unity between the political unit and the cultural one as "tradition." Emerging earlier as a nation-state than Korea, Japan was already rapidly approaching the modern capitalistic system. However, the "nations" of Japan and Korea were bound to clash sooner or later as nationalism was an entry point into global capitalism. The process of transplanted modernity often begins with foreign encroachment, followed by nationalist resistance, then collaboration with imperialism; this is the manifestation of nations experiencing modernity in a colonized state. Joseon was no exception. Among the nationalist intellectuals at the time, many adopted socialism as an appealing discourse of resistance. But they were ultimately most enamored of nationalism, which could result in dreams of an imperial utopia and mass conversions to collaboration.

The play *Kim Dong-han* was published in the colonial newspaper *Manseon Ilbo* (Manchuria-Joseon Daily)[1] under the pen name Kim U-seok. Recently Choe Sam-Yong, a scholar on the literature of Manchuria, revealed that Kim U-seok was a pseudonym of writer Kim Yeong-pal (Choe 2008, 60). In the 1920s, Kim Yeong-pal (1902-1950) had been a leftist playwright and a zealous member of the Korean Artist Proletariat Federation (KAPF).[2] But like other artists of his gen-

1. Pro-Japanese daily newspaper published in Manchuria from 1937 to 1945.
2. KAPF was Joseon's first literary organization focused on proletarian literature.

eration, he changed his allegiance from socialism to Japanese imperialism, eventually ending up in Manchukuo 滿州國, Japan's puppet state in Manchuria. In 1932, he took a job as a Korean-language announcer for the Sinkeong (the capital of Manchukuo) broadcasting station where he served as head of the cultural section and drama chief. The play *Kim Dong-han* was written for a literary contest in the spring of 1940; *Manseon Ilbo* had solicited submissions of plays on the subject of Kim Dong-han, the renowned pro-Japanese and anticommunist leader. In this commemorative issue of *Manseon Ilbo* devoted to Kim Dong-han, Kim Yeong-pal was awarded first prize in the literary contest for his play *Kim Dong-han*.[3]

Kim Dong-han (1893-1937) was born in Dancheon, Hamgyeongbuk-do province, Joseon. Once a registered communist party member in the Soviet Union, he was later disqualified from party membership and jailed in 1922 as part of the Trotskyist purge during Stalin's rise to power. After his release from prison, Kim went to China where he worked with Wu Peifu 吳佩孚, the Chinese warlord military leader. In 1925, he returned to Joseon and permanently switched his ideological orientation to collaborate with Japan. From this period on, Kim Dong-han engaged in only pro-Japanese and anticommunist activities. He served as chief of the Jiandao Cooperative Association (Gando Hyeopjohoe), which sought the annihilation of anti-Japanese activists and guerrillas as well as exerted control over civilians under the Japanese Guandong Army in 1934. He was killed by communists in December 1937. Japanese authorities posthumously awarded him the Order of the Rising Sun (Kyokujitsu-sho 旭日章) and in December 1939, erected a statue and monument to his memory in Yeongil Park in Gando, which is now known as Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in China (Choe 2008, 62). Like Kim Dong-han, Kim Yeong-pal also had converted from communism to become a collaborator. Perhaps, for

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After obtaining a staff position at the Keijo Radio Station, Kim Yeong-pal was dismissed from the KAPF. In total, he wrote approximately ten plays and ten novels.

3. This play was performed as part of an event commemorating the "Japanese Calendar 2600" in Manchuria. Kim Yeong-pal directed the performance and also acted in the role of Bi-su (Choe 60-63).

this reason, the playwright possessed greater insight into Kim Donghan's thoughts and actions. Indeed, throughout the play *Kim Donghan*, Kim Yeong-pal set forth the very ideological arguments intended as the conceptual foundation of a new identity for "Japanese" people in Manchuria.

Nationalism and imperialism have been historically and functionally interconnected in the pursuit of dominance and survival in a competitive capitalist world (Duara 2003, 33). That is, nationalism and imperialism cohabitate within a capitalist world system. Thus, when Japanese nationalism took on imperialist ambitions, it involved territorial expansion.

> From early in the Meiji period, Japanese imperialism was justified by nationalism. Mainland northeast Asia was characterized as the outer zone of national defense. The security of the Japanese nation was depicted in popular representations of the Korean peninsula as a dagger poised at the heart of the nation. Japanese expansionism in northeast Asia during the first three decades of the twentieth century was accompanied by the rhetoric that Korea, Manchuria, and Mongolia (successively, Man-sen and Man-mo), represented the "lifeline" of the Japanese nation (Duara 2003, 33-34).

As Duara delineates, the Japanese had employed the rhetoric of nationalism and national interest as justification for their imperialist expansionism beginning early in the Meiji era. Manchukuo, forcibly wrested from Qing dynasty control by Japan, also used national discourse to adapt capitalism within the world system. Although Manchuria had been a multiracial, multicultural East Asian region, Japan contrived to superimpose national unity through deployment of strategic rhetoric. National discourse could function well through the support of cultural discourse. During the nineteenth century, Western imperial nations had invoked cultural signifiers to justify their conquests as a civilizing mission (Duara 2003, 91). Similarly, Japanese colonizers in Manchuria also used civilizational discourse to construct imperial nationalism. However, we should keep in mind that these same concepts of national discourse and civilizational discourse were

the ones first embraced by intellectuals of the enlightenment period in Korea who then shifted their thinking to provide support for Japanese imperialism. This explicitly demonstrates how nation-state discourse can easily be wedded with colonial purposes.

The colonial Manchukuo became a form of nationalism transplanted into Manchuria, a new experimental space of imperial Japan, also influenced by the West. This paper examines how the national discourse and the civilizational discourse were transformed and appropriated for pro-Japanese argument by the colonized intellectual Kim Yeong-pal within his play, *Kim Dong-han*. In particular, a close reading will reveal the phases of appropriation.

Pro-Japanese Appropriation of National Discourse

When the curtain opens on Act I, we can see several people sitting in a drawing room that has been decorated with maps of Manchuria and the world. The characters, represented as "brave warriors for the prosperity of Asia," are gathered to listen to Kim Dong-han speak of his past experiences. Kim Dong-han tells them that he had lived for 20 years in Russia as a communist, later converting to the cause of anti-communism. He emphasizes the necessity of international solidarity in the "anti-Soviet Union" and "anticommunism" movements. Readers should bear in mind that following the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the concept of anticommunism rose in importance and anticommunist rallies became customary in Manchukuo (Han 2005, 172-181). This play was written against the backdrop of such ideological passion. Kim Dong-han reveals that he sent secret letters and messengers to the Chinese general, Wu Peifu that were intercepted by the Soviet police and led to his departure from the USSR.

Sam-taek: So, did you seek asylum in Joseon at that time?

Dong-han: Far from it. It was not the exile but the liquidating of past thoughts and returning to a sense of national oblig-

> ation. That is to say, it was my firm resolution at that time to return to my beloved country and do something for my compatriots, for my nation, until my dying day.

Sam-taek naturally assumed that Kim Dong-han would seek refuge in Joseon as it was his native country. But Kim Dong-han's response was not as anticipated. Rather, he spoke of his responsibility to his nation without referring to a specific country, instead only making reference to "my warm/beloved country," "compatriots," and "my nation." In other words, he returned not to Joseon, his actual native country, but to a patriotic ideal of a nation-state. However, Sam-taek required further clarification and continued, "What is the real meaning of 'compatriot'?" Sam-taek's question was to serve as a device to evoke a sympathetic bond with audiences and is a crucial clue to understanding that audiences in Manchuria would find Kim Dong-han's answer baffling. Common sense would indicate that Kim Dong-han would long for Joseon and its people, yet Kim Dong-han's answer was unexpected. In fact, Kim was choosing imperial Japan over Joseon as his home and called the people of imperial Japan his compatriots, rather than the people of Joseon.

> Dong-han: Those are a billion of our compatriots, the people of great imperial Japan. (pause) To think of it now, I am heartbroken that I lived in blindness and madness for twenty years. If I had awakened earlier, couldn't I also have become a soldier for my nation fighting bravely on the front lines?

The first scene's dialogue between Kim Dong-han and Sam-taek illustrates a process of conceptual clarification. At first, the characters simply listen to a retelling of Kim Dong-han's experiences and his impressions. Then his statements and the questions of others refine the primary justifications for identifying with Japan rather than Joseon. Through these processes, Kim Yeong-pal hones in on the major concepts of the play, intended as building blocks for an overarching discourse on nation. Fully aware that Kim Dong-han's ideology and activ-

ities collided with the prevailing opinions of Korean audiences of the day, the playwright employed an organic question-and-answer structure to lead viewers to a seemingly natural and inevitable agreement with Kim Dong-han's beliefs. This scene lays the groundwork for full development of his discourse on imperial nationalism.

As evident from the playwright's carefully crafted dialogue, Joseon people living in 1940s Manchuria did not view Joseon and Japan as one and the same. Imperial Japan had tried to impose this framework upon Koreans with the promotion of *naeseon ilche* 內鮮一體 (literally, "Japan and Korea are one entity") within the Korean peninsula, and through slogans such as "Five Peoples in Harmony" (*gozoku kyouwa* 五族協和) and "Great East Asian Coprosperity Sphere" (*daitoa kyoeiken* 大東亞共榮圈) in Manchuria. Japanese colonial authorities had schemed to subsume Joseon people under the nation-state of Japan and tirelessly produced propaganda in support of this aim. Nonetheless, they still faced the Joseon people's deep-rooted resistance and reluctance to acknowledge any such merger of identity.

Kim Dong-han said that he returned to "national obligation," as a member of the nation-state of Japan. Here, we can recognize the playwright's method of representation. In this scene, nothing except "nation" gains meaning and only the representation of "nation" glitters in the darkness as an abstract entity, without the need for explanations. His past and present thoughts as well as the reason for and process of his conversion completely vanish as the play focuses on the ideas of "nation" and "people" as unique and absolute values. This new perspective and ideological framework presented by Kim Dong-han are understood by Sam-taek as values that he "cannot but thrill in bowing his head to." Such concepts as "the only value and absolute enthusiasm" are also the core concepts of fascism as well, one might argue. Kim Yeong-pal intended that Act I, Scene I intellectually and emotionally incorporate the play's audiences as members of the nation (Japan) and then arouse their patriotic passion through full explication of his nationalization discourse. His anticommunism is explored to some degree in the second scene of Act I in which Kim Dong-han endeavors to make the Korean communists surrender to Japan.

In the second scene of Act I, Gil-jun describes communist guerrillas like himself as persons who "afflict innocent people and create disorder within society" and "have hateful dispositions." Gil-jun states that they have failed to come to their senses even though Kim Dong-han is an anticommunist activist who has renounced communism despite his having been an important figure within the Communist Party. Here, Gil-jun's role is to inform the audience that although Kim Dong-han had participated as a Bolshevik during the Russian Revolution of 1917, his later change of heart to anticommunism was sincere and complete. Kim Dong-han says, "Now when I think about the past, I wonder why, for whom, for what nation I fought so bloodily," and continues, "I regard my actions in the past merely as the troubles of youth." Here, he reminds the listener that what he should have contributed to was "the nation of Japan" and the "imperial Japan." By delaying this revelation of Kim Dong-han's entities of "nation" and "country" at times, the playwright allows the audience to slowly mull over the arguments for assimilation.

> Dong-han: Now, more than ever, is no time for division. If we can trust each other and join in unison, we can achieve national development and advancement, find happiness and hope. It is not a time for empty jealousies and envy, but for joining hands to go forward and build a future. Of course, those who are ignorant may call us pro-Japanese collaborators. But they don't even understand the meaning of the word "pro-Japanese."

The above dialogue illustrates that Kim is aware of being criticized as a "pro-Japanese collaborator." As a result, the playwright provides an opportunity to elucidate arguments in an attempt to persuade his audience by acknowledging, in part, the public sentiments of Joseon people in Manchuria. Kim Dong-han continues discussing the matter of "pro-Japanese collaborators."

> Dong-han: This is not a simple situation. As we can see from the historical example of Canadians and the British, we

> have no chance of achieving national development or progress if our Joseon people break away from the Japanese. I believe it is only through vigorous nationalization efforts that we can regain the sunniness of hope and return to the path of prosperity and development.

Kim Dong-han emphasizes the importance of unity between the Joseon people and the Japanese, asserting that such a union was the only way for Koreans to develop their country. His reference to the nationalization movement indicates his support for the racial assimilation policies employed by colonial administrators as the basis of the Coprosperity Sphere.

> By the mid-1930s, the enthusiastic embrace of the idea of racial assimilation marked the third phase in the discourse of race and colonialism. Official colonial policy became more overtly racial; it was justified by the blend of mythohistorical, Confucian, and pseudoscientific constructions of race that had evolved over the previous half century. This was apparent in the *kōminka* (imperialization) policy adopted in Taiwan and Korea, which attempted to force racial assimilation through coercive diffusion of Japanese language, Japanese names, and Shinto shrines. The radicalization of colonial policy was also evident in planning for administration of the Coprosperity Sphere (Young 1999, 365-366).

Act I concludes with a threatening letter demanding that Kim Dong-han abandon his efforts to convert communists to his side. We can see how Kim Yeong-pal carefully composed the underlying ideological dichotomy in the opening act of the play. By creating equivalence between the Joseon people, the Japanese nation, and anticommunism, he set these concepts in opposition to Russia and the communist guerrillas. The author started by conflating Joseon with Japan, then dismissed the resistance guerrillas for confusing the value of imperial Japan, and finally rejected Russia and communist guerrillas as the polar opposite of Japan. However, Kim Yeong-pal failed to provide a lucid rationale for why anticommunism was so needed. His protago-

nist Kim Dong-han merely states his belief that national development would be impossible without the unification of Japan and Joseon; therefore, reproaching him for being "pro-Japanese" was anachronistic and misguided. He also insisted that those of Korean descent must reach a resolution and address their "national emergency."

Considering Act I, we can surmise that not only was the influence of criticisms levied against the pro-Japanese collaborators apparent, but so was the discriminative boundary between the Joseon public and the pro-Japanese collaborators due to the former's despise against the latter. Furthermore, the play indicates that communist guerrillas were actively resisting Japanese colonial rule in Manchuria at that point. Given the circumstances, Japan certainly needed a figure like Kim Dong-han, who regarded Joseon as one with Japan, advocated pro-Japanese ideologies, and decried the violence of communist guerrillas. What better ally to persuade Joseon people to collaborate with Japanese policies of assimilation than a Joseon excommunist?

Pro-Japanese Appropriation of Civilizational Discourse

In Act II, Kim Dong-han and Bi-su, a Korean communist, take part in negotiations at Bi-su's home. This scene provides Kim Yeong-pal an opportunity to show audiences the message of Kim Dong-han's naturalization movement. The setting of Act II begins in the bedroom of Bi-su's concubine where Bi-su is lounging; the room's "luxurious decor" and "opium paraphernalia" depict the power and influence Bi-su enjoys in his daily life. Yet Bi-su is discontent.

> Bi-su: Day by day, as the world becomes brighter, I cannot do anything freely.

Above, Bi-su confesses that he has lived, taking advantage of the darkness of the world, but cannot live freely in the present bright world, in which the imperial Manchukuo is developing day by day. In this manner, he implicitly praises the imperial Manchukuo.

Bi-su: One thousand subordinates moved simultaneously in obedience to my command. I never wanted for anything and always acted as I pleased. I was no less of a hero than any general of the Three Kingdoms . . . .

Despite his one thousand subordinates, Bi-su is tormented as the resistance's strength dwindles due to "the police of Manchuria becoming stricter day by day." Indeed, in the years prior to 1940, many anti-Japanese guerrillas were killed on the battlefields of Manchuria.[4]

Bi-su: Is the control of opium all there is? For if Manchuria is a paradise of the "rule of righteousness," then it must be true to think that anything harmful to the people should be eradicated.

During his confessional monologue detailing his doubts and sufferings, the character of Bi-su is effectively promoting Manchuria. Far from creating a rounded character, Kim Yeong-pal is employing Bi-su as a stand-in for the author's view. Once Bi-su's longing for a more virtuous life is established, Kim Dong-han arrives as an invited guest. The former Bolshevik is asked how he came to be a communist.

Dong-han: Yes, but that is nothing surprising. At the time, I was so young that I had little understanding of the meaning of nation or state and was carried along by international trends.

Kim Dong-han describes communism as an oppositional concept to the idea of "state" and "nation." In addition, he deepens his repudiation of his youthful ideology by stating that he realized that "communism or socialism do nothing but destroy the world's peace and human happiness."

Bi-su: But they say that Russia is a country where there is no gap

4. "In 1937, anti-Japanese guerrilla forces in Manchuria suffered 14,203 casualties (including 7,663 fatalities) in 1937; 7,368 losses (of which 3,693 were killed) in 1938; and 5,417 losses (of which 3,168 were killed) in 1939" (C. Lee 1983, 285).

between the rich and the poor, no [social] classes, and all the people lead happy lives.

Dong-han: That's just it. It's wrong to trust rumors or communist propaganda. Over there, people are starving, don't have any clothes to wear, and can't even enjoy their leisure when they want. Is that happiness?

In this scene, Kim Dong-han is using his two decades of experience in Soviet Russia as ammunition to persuade the nearly disillusioned Bi-su to abandon communism himself. He also includes an appeal to "the union of Asian people." Despite these efforts, Bi-su remains unpersuaded because of his concern for his subordinates. Switching tactics from the ideological to the practical, Kim Dong-han now hints at the impending annihilation planned for Bi-su's soldiers by the Japanese and the Manchukuo armies and gently urges Bi-su to take his advice. He lauds Manchukuo's development since its establishment five years earlier. In closing, Kim asks Bi-su to submit to Manchuria and become a leader for the revival of Asia by giving his all for the future progress of East Asia. In the end, Bi-su is persuaded and his wife Yeong-ran rejoices.

Bi-su: The reason I asked you here today is because I have thought this through and have decided to relinquish this life. Henceforth I am committed to taking up my responsibilities as a citizen of this nation. I also ask that the rest of you who have been with me until now to not harbor any disappointment or suspicion, and to also do your duty for our people.

Just as Kim Dong-han sought refuge in the imperial nation after his departure from Soviet Russia, so now does Bi-su return to the honor of "nation" after years of armed resistance with his subordinates. In celebration, Kim Dong-han suggests that everyone shakes hands for "the peace of East Asia."

Dong-han: Nowadays the lives of the Manchurian people are so much happier and more comfortable than during the

> days of the warlords. Above all, daily wages of workers have risen to an average of four to five *won* at the most and one *won* at minimum. A carriageman can earn anywhere from three or four *won* all the way up to 12 or 13 *won*. The streets are filled with the sounds of radios and gramophones. The theatres and motion pictures are so crowded with people, it's impossible to get in. No matter how much money you have, it's difficult to find an available automobile. This is how quickly Manchuria is developing and the lives of its people will naturally be comfortable.

Kim Dong-han presents the quality of life enjoyed by Manchuria's people as part of his argument to persuade Bi-su, who, in fact, had no money to pay his subordinates. In his decision to surrender, Bi-su concludes that to live as a citizen of Manchuria was better than to live as a member of the communist resistance. Threatened annihilation by the Japanese and Manchurian armies also was a deciding factor. Ultimately Bi-su has no choice but to surrender to Kim Dong-han due to financial hardship and inferior military power. "The peace of East Asia" is to be achieved through Bi-su's surrender.

The conceptual binary of Act II portrays Kim Dong-han as the representative of Manchuria and abundance against Bi-su who represents communism and poverty. In Act I, the dialogue invokes Joseon as having the same entity as Japan; in Act II, the characters engage in discourse that invokes Manchuria's superiority to communist Russia through vivid depictions of daily life in developed Manchuria. Bi-su, like other late converts to colonial collaboration, is effectively persuaded.

> The Manchurian paradise depicted by Manchukuo government planners was intended to become the model of state capitalism, with industrialization proceeding in steps according to a well-ordered plan. Influenced by the example of Soviet economic planning in the five-year-plans, architects of the Manchukuo government's "Outline of Economic Construction in Manchuria" claimed

> to be practicing "kingly way economics" (*ōdōshugi keizai*), a name invented to disassociate Manchukuo from Marxist ideology (Young 1999, 200).

According to Louise Young, Japanese authorities endeavored to create a model of state capitalism by combining the discourse of a Manchurian paradise that had been invented by the Manchukuo government and a detailed development plan that mimicked the state-centric Soviet economic planning. In order to insulate Manchukuo from accusations of leaning too closely on Marxist practices, the government employed the concepts of righteousness and royalty. The play *Kim Dong-han* fit this purpose perfectly. The protagonist Kim Dong-han had experienced Russian communism firsthand for 20 years and concrete facts from his life added a level of reliability to the story. Ultimately, the government of Manchukuo, as a Japanese puppet state, regarded the Soviet Union and communists as opponents. Nevertheless, the alacrity and eagerness with which Bi-su easily surrenders are unconvincing. Indeed, dramatic realism suffers from the simplicity of Kim Dong-han's persuasive argument, which hinges on the prosperity of Manchuria.

Contemporaries found the play too one-dimensional. The novelist Bak Yeong-jun made the criticism that Kim Yeong-pal had represented Kim Dong-han too abstractly and failed to reveal his human characteristics and abilities (Bak 1940, 22-24). Although Bak wrote the novel *Millim-ui yeoin* (The Woman of the Jungle) as an answer to the deficiencies in the play *Kim Dong-han*, his novel also employed civilizational discourse (S. Lee 2004). The heroine was half-barbarian who was deceived by communists and was unaware of reality and civilization. Hence, the hero civilized her to become a modern woman. Pro-Japanese writers thought that communists were barbarians and civilizational discourse was the best logical policy to persuade them. This reasoning came from the fact that, in those days, most communists lived in the mountains and had rare opportunities for cultural experiences. But Bi-su's easy conversion weakened the power of conflict that forms the core of drama. For better drama, Bi-su's thoughts

should have been expressed more rationally and Kim Dong-han's vision presented with more complexity. Perhaps this drama was more to memorialize Kim Dong-han and the writer was not able to represent Bi-su's opinion adequately. And Kim Yeong-pal's sole purpose was to enlighten Joseon people that he considered Manchuria the best country and Russia the inferior one. But weak conflict and logics are the explicit defects of this drama.

Japan's use of the rhetoric of "civilization" had ethical and universal implications that were intended to hide their imperial intention of invasion. However, all that occurred in Manchukuo was done for the sake of Japan's utopian desire for imperialism and was possible through the power of the Guandong Army (Tucker 2005, 53-55). Civilizational discourse was a kind of disguise hiding the violence of imperialism.

The setting of Act III is Kim Dong-han's house. At that time, people generally called communist guerrillas "thieves," "horrible thieves," and "villain." Kim Dong-han was a character who tried to persuade the guerrillas to live as Manchukuo's people.

> Dong-han: Life insurance? I don't need life insurance. Contributing my body to the nation for my self-interest is not the way to give my fealty to the emperor of Japan to above, and it is the deception to my compatriots to below. The nation will be responsible for the protection of my life and my family. We should have this kind of life. Artistic life means doing what one wants though it needs one's death. Surely, it can be the material of a novel. So, you, try to live an artistic life!

Kim Dong-han is expressing that a life lived for the nation, even at the risk of death, is the "artistic life." In this manner, the playwright elevates nationalism to the level of art. He also describes Kim Dong-han as the character who devoted himself to the nation, without considering his family or his own welfare and safety. The playwright presents Kim Dong-han as a patriot as well as a fighter for national independence, although Kim, in reality, was a very pro-Japanese collaborator.

As such, the play reflects the inherent ambivalence in national discourse.

The "nation" described at the beginning of the drama gradually becomes represented by the "state." This reveals that the "nation" imagined by Manchuria was a rhetorical strategy created by Japan to further its imperial agenda with other colonies.

Beyond Imperial Nationalism

National discourse that had dominated Europe during the eighteenth century was adapted by countries of East Asia and contributed to forming an ideology of the nation-state. In early nineteenth-century Joseon, utility of national discourse was great. It not only contained the notion of egalitarianism that had, in reality, never been part of the history of Joseon, but the ideology also became a powerful tool for uniting Joseon people, who felt that they had lost their own country. Meanwhile, national discourse connected to cultural discourse made the equation, "nation = civilization." This is the discourse that has generally been applied to colonies by imperialists. Therefore, national discourse has the possibility of becoming an imperial discourse, which can be called "imperial nationalism."

The imperial nationalism of Japan can be seen as encouraging an ideology that promoted war in the Pacific region. In particular, such members of the Kyoto school as Nishitani Keiji, Suzuki Shigetaka, Koyama Iwao, and Kosaka Masaaki pushed forward with their war ideology. In a round-table talk among some Japanese scholars in 1942, Kosaka said:

> Yes, the way of thinking on "nation" was so narrow until now. The "nation" is a living and breathing concept but people have thought of it as unmoving and ahistorical. That only defines a nation in its raw form. It is the same concept as the "nation" when we call "national self-determination." Now, the "Great East Asia Coprosperity Sphere" needs a new concept of "nation." Joseon people can obtain historical authenticity through becoming Japanese people in a broader sense.

> The concept of "state" is the same case. Let's suppose that the Coprosperity Sphere will be organized by several nations centering on Japan. We should deny the concept of "state" that only thinks of isolated countries as were formed in Europe. The "state" should be changed to reflect the standpoint of the "Coprosperity Sphere." It seems we might arrive back to the idea of the ancient oriental will of "state" (Nakamura et al. 2007).

At a glance, the war ideology of Japan looked like an abstruse and complicated philosophy, but, in fact, it was simple. Kosaka was merely urging the nations of the Coprosperity Sphere, including Joseon, to collaborate in Japan's war, as people of Japan. It was in the spring of 1940 that Kim Yeong-pal won the prize in the literary contest of the *Manseon Ilbo*, and in July of that year Japan expanded its theory of the "New Order of East Asia" to one of the "Great East Asia Coprosperity Sphere." Kosaka was anticipating the conception of the "Coprosperity Sphere" in his definition of "nation" and "state." Therefore, we can conclude that Kim Yeong-pal led the vanguard to spread pro-Japanese discourse. Kim Yeong-pal's play, *Kim Dong-han*, was one of the most radical plays of the time.

Japan's imperial nationalism was represented in the literature by connecting and promoting pro-Japanese and anticommunist ideas in its puppet state "Manchuria." Choe Sam-Yong said that the characteristics of the pro-Japanese literature of Joseon writers in Manchuria were that: first, pro-Manchuria and pro-Japanese were the same; second, anticommunism was namely pro-Japanese; and, third, great pro-Japanese writers or works were rare (Choe 2008, 17). The play *Kim Dong-han* typically reveals the imperial nationalism of Manchuria. Kim Yeong-pal first made the equation, "Joseon = Japan (pro-Japanese)," and placed Russia in opposition (anticommunism) and eventually presented the imperial nationalism of Japan. In effect, the play clearly articulated civilizational discourse.

Kim Dong-han is a good example of imperial Japan deftly disguising its imperialistic expansionism using the rhetoric of nation or civilization. In particular, Kim Yeong-pal's drama reveals how an intellectual of colonized Joseon could appropriate Japanese imperial national-

ism. Japan saw that the national discourse of various nations of East Asia could be molded on the model of nation-state discourse, which could serve imperial nationalism. *Kim Dong-han* illuminated that nationalism could easily be brought into collusion with imperial nationalism. After 40 years, originating in the early Joseon period, Korea's dilemma of having to choose between national discourse and colonialism came into flower in this work. In fact, like two sides of the same coin, nationalism and colonialism were the components that supported a capitalist world system.

National discourse that started with the possibility of resistance lost its energy and direction in Manchuria in 1940 and totally changed to pro-Japanese discourse. Like the verses of the Bible "all who draw the sword will die by the sword," exclusive nationalism could also cause wars. It is an important lesson of history. Looking back on the period that has witnessed two World Wars and many regional wars, it is certain that exclusive nationalism has not contributed to the peace of human beings. Nationalism that played an important role as a foundational discourse in both South and North Korea after the liberation from the Japanese colonial rule should open the cognitive horizons. We should remember the lesson of Manchuria; the discourse strategy of imperialism disguised the purity and ethic of sovereignty through using the rhetoric of the "nation" and "civilization."

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