

Commemoration of Dead Animals in Contemporary Korea: Emergence and Development of *Dongmul Wiryeongje* as Modern Folklore

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This paper looks at the continuously changing nature of contemporary folklore by focusing on the practice of praying for the souls of dead animals in ceremonies referred to as *dongmul wiryeongje* in contemporary Korea. From the 1990s onwards, Korean newspapers have increasingly reported on these ceremonies as held at animal laboratories, zoos, and other locations where animals have died or have been killed in their service for humans.

Attitudes toward animals in Korea have undergone much change in the last twenty years. With the recent pet boom and active animal activism, animals have become a significant subject of debate in Korea. However, there remains a lack of interest in animal-related issues in studies of Korean culture up to the present. Part of the reason for this may be contributed to the human-centered character of Korean society. In addition, preceding studies of Korean animal folklore have mainly focused on long-term continuity of certain cultural elements and symbols, i.e., tradition. By looking into the history and contemporary situation of these *dongmul wiryeongje*, the author will show how focusing on changing human-animal relationships can bring new insights to the ever-changing nature of folk culture in Korea.

Keywords: *dongmul wiryeongje*, animal memorial, non-human souls, modern folklore

***Dongmul Wiryeongje* and Contemporary Korean Society: Alternative Viewpoints**

In modern society we find many customs that are referred to by performers from within a framework of cultural tradition, even though their origin lies in contem-

porary contexts. These customs may take on a traditional air by creating their own history as in Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*; on the other hand, their historical dimension may be lost (or at least hard to recover) and this may make way for individual interpretations by the performers as to the origins and cultural implications of these observances.

This paper considers one such example, by looking into the social, cultural, and historical contexts of commemorative ceremonies for deceased animals that are held in Korea today, and which are referred to as *dongmul wiryeongje* (a term which might be translated as memorial service for animals or animal memorial).

As far as studies of posthumous care for the *human* dead are concerned, there is no shortage in Korean studies on Confucian ancestor worship and the ways human ghosts are dealt with in shamanistic ritual, not to mention Buddhist rituals and prayer for the deceased. These studies give us insight into the narratives and mechanics that are involved in identifying the position of the dead within the society of the living, and through this, give us a view at the central position ancestors have taken in Korean society for hundreds of years.

As much attention as there has been for the human aspects of Korean society, so little does there seem to be for the role that animals play in it. In the foreword to *Animals as Persons*, John Knight defines the direction of the book as "...an interest in animals as *subjects* rather than *objects*, in animals as *parts* of society rather than just *symbols* of it, and in human *interactions* and *relationships* with animals rather than simply human *representations* of animals" (Knight 2005). This approach contrasts with the way the cultural significance of animals in Korean society has been dealt with to the extent that focus lies heavily on the dimension of animal symbols and representations, often combined with views of historical continuity spanning hundreds if not thousands of years. The animal theme has been taken up in folklore studies, for instance, to illustrate the narrow bond between Korean culture and the natural environment (Bigyo minsok hakhoe 2002), to come to the essence of the "unique personality of Korean people" (Kim 2001), or to unravel the "secrets of [Korean] culture" (Cheon 2002). These studies tend to focus on oral transmission and literary reference to animals from myth to folktales, taking a static approach to culture by stressing long-term continuity through time. Such an approach makes it difficult to grasp the continuously changing nature of cultural characteristics and in the case of this paper, the cultural position that animals may have in modern society.

In recent years, mass media have reported on animal issues with increasing

frequency, among which are posthumous rituals and ceremonies for dead animals. I will give an overview of the scope of these memorial ceremonies for animals. In the next section, more detailed data for two ceremonies held at animal test laboratories of biomedical research institutes in Seoul will be provided, and an analysis will be made of the historical background and the context in which these memorial services are being held today. I will point out the historical, social, and cultural properties that give meaning to these contemporary ceremonies, and provide suggestions as to opening up further possibilities for the study of human-animal related issues in contemporary Korean culture.

The Scope of Posthumous Rituals for Animals in Modern Korea

It will be useful to first establish an impression of the contexts in which *dongmul wiryeongje*, or posthumous ceremonies for deceased animals, are held in Korea. Most of these observances are performed in situations that preclude animal death for the sake of the higher goal of human wellbeing or health, and attention for these memorial services and commemorations has risen very recently since the mid-1990s. This recent popularity is confirmed by some of the interviewed researchers as well, who claim a recent increase in locations that perform *dongmul wiryeongje*.

a) Memorial Services for Laboratory Animals

Among the various circumstances in which commemoration of dead animals occurs in present day Korea, most examples can be found for memorial services on the behalf of animals used in laboratory experiments. Commonly referred to as *shirheomdongmul wiryeongje* (lit. ritual to appease spirits of test animals), most are fairly similar in their ritual structure and motives. These memorial services are held all over the country, at locations ranging from the National Toxicological Research Institute (*Gungnip dokseong yeonguwon*, NTRI) that is attached to the Korean Food and Drug Administration (*Gungnip sikipum uiyakpum anjeoncheong*, KFDA), to the medical and veterinary faculties of Seoul National University and other universities, and the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute in Busan. Examples from this category are likely the oldest variation in Korea, and will be described in more detail in the next section of this paper.

b) Memorial Services at Zoos

Although the style of management is of a different character than the laboratories mentioned above, lifelong control of the animals for the sake of human enjoyment is a basic requirement for zoos. Most animals die from natural causes or illness, and are not actively put down while they are still healthy. In spite of this difference, monuments for deceased zoo animals can be found in zoos around Korea.

Among the zoos reported on in newspapers regarding their *dongmul wiryeongje* is the zoo at Seoul Grand Park in Gwacheon, Gyeonggi-do. Here, annual ceremonies to remember the animals that died at the zoo during the previous year are held on May 1, which is the anniversary of the park.

The ceremony is held in front of a monument titled *Dongmul wiryeongbi* that was made out of a rock dug up from the zoo premises, and attended by zoo staff (both management and caretakers) and the general public. The monument was established on March 14, 1995, in the name of the zoo director and the entire staff. On one side of the monument a text is inscribed that says: “To the appreciated spirits, please enjoy your next life in heaven” (*Oneun sesangeun cheongukeseo nuryeodao gomaun neokdeuriyeo*).

In 2007 a separate ceremony was held on Arbor Day (*Singmogil*) by *Daehan bulgyo jogyejong jungang sindohoe* (Central Association for Followers of Jogye Buddhism). In contrast to the zoo’s memorial service, which is religiously neutral on purpose, this ceremony is conducted according to the Buddhist *cheondo-jae* ritual, which prays for the attainment of Buddhahood for spirits of the dead.

At the Everland Zoo in Yongin, Gyeonggi-do, a monument was established in 1992 in front of which annual and occasional ceremonies are observed. According to a zoo employee, annual ceremonies were held for two or three years following construction of the monument, but after that, services have been held only occasionally.

The resemblance in form of these memorial services to ancestor rituals (*jesa*) generally observed among Korean families is enhanced by newspaper articles speaking of “animal family members” attending the ceremony, and also by the occasional commemoration of individual animals (Hankook Ilbo, January 12, 1995).

c) Other Memorial Services for Animals

Apart from the annual memorial services that are held at animal laboratories and zoos, occasionally individuals or particular companies hold ceremonies as well.

In 1996, a *samgyetang* restaurant in Daegu opened for business with a chicken memorial service (*dak wiryeongje*) to appease the spirits of chickens that end up being stuffed with rice and spices in the health-enhancing soup (Donga Ilbo, March 4, 1996). Prayer for the souls of mice and cockroaches (Kyunghyang Sinmun, June 14, 1996) was also reported in combination with events celebrating an extermination company's twentieth anniversary.

In this regard, it is interesting to keep in mind that businesses in Korea will often conduct *kosa* or initial sacrifice to the spirits before they open their doors to the public in order to ensure a thriving business. Typically, a pig's head would be offered, and the guests would place money in its mouth and ears. Although recently the pig's head has often been replaced with consumption-ready cut slices of head meat or *meorigogi*. This animal sacrifice to appease the gods stands in contrast with *dongmul wiryeongje* which expresses gratitude and apology for the taking of animal life (being very close to the intentions of the Buddhist *cheondojae* ritual, for instance; see below), and it is aimed at the animals' spirits themselves instead of other, higher deities.

Finally, two different memorial services held at Buddhist temples reached the press, both of them for the souls of "road kill," i.e., wild animals that were killed by traffic. Hyeondeoksa in Gangneung has been the stage of a memorial ceremony for these animals since 2003, which was initiated because of the environmental concerns of the temple's chief priest (*juji seunim*). Every year, many people travel from the Seoul region to the famous Kyeongpodae area, and many animals are killed by the cars being driven through the mountainous region which separates the capital from the east coast. The motivation for this ceremony is explained as being rooted in the human ability to feel compassion for other beings (*cheugeun jishim*). The *cheondojae* service is held to appease the souls (*youngga*) of these ill-fated animals, and to ensure their safe trip to paradise (personal communication of Hyeonjong, November 2007). The chief priest of Hyeondeoksa also conducted the ritual at Seoul Grand Park's zoo, when that was changed to a Buddhist format in 2007.

In Geoje-do, a ceremony is organized by Tongyeong Geoje Federation for Environmental Movement (*Tongyeong Geoje hwangyeong undong yeonhap*), in cooperation with a temple near the association's headquarters outside the town

of Gohyeon. The ritual was first hosted in 2007, with the intention to conduct *dongmul cheondojae* annually. *Cheondojae* is the Buddhist term for a memorial service similar to *wiryongje* in that it prays for a safe journey to paradise for spirits of the dead, and in this case the ceremony also provides “a place for repentance toward the wild animals that meet a gruesome death because of industrialization and technological development” (<http://www.kojefem.or.kr/>).

From the above examples, we find that the majority of memorial services for animals that are held in Korea are of very recent origin. Furthermore, they seem to share a similar format and are held by people that are directly or indirectly involved in the killing of animals for trade or the improvement of human lives. Next, we will take a closer look at two cases of *dongmul wiryongje* that are held at animal testing laboratories. Memorials for test animals comprise the greater part of *dongmul wiryongje* in Korea, and they clearly embody the various layers of meaning that are given to these memorial services.

Memorial Services for Laboratory Animals

In this section, we examine the details of memorial services for laboratory animals in two Korean biomedical research institutes: the Korean Food and Drug Administration’s National Toxicological Research Institute and the medical faculty of Seoul National University. The accounts below have been constructed from newspaper articles, interviews with institute staff, and documentation provided by the institutes to the author from 2000 to 2007.¹

a) National Toxicological Research Institute

The National Toxicological Research Institute is part of the Korea Food and Drug Administration, a government office that received its current title in 1996, but traces its history back to the National Chemistry Laboratory (*Gungnip hwa-hak yeonguso*) of 1945. The NTRI’s activities focus on “risk management decisions for foods, food additives, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and medical devices” (KFDA pamphlet, March 2005), some of which involve animal experiments.

1. The author would like to thank researchers and staff at all mentioned institutes for being so kind as to answer my questions in great detail, and for the primary materials they provided.

On the premises of the KFDA in Nokbeon-dong, Seoul, stands a monument with the title “*Dongmul gongyang ji bi*” (monument for animal memorial service) inscribed on the front and dated March 23, 1929, on the back. The date of this monument suggests that it was erected during the Japanese occupation (1910-1945), and I will consider its origins in the next section of this paper. The date inscription was plastered over and redone at some point in time and has a different color than the stone itself. It is said that this was done to remove the Japanese *nengō* imperial date (which would have been *Shōwa* 4), but it is not known who made this alteration to the monument and when it was done.

The current researchers at this laboratory do not have a verifiable memory of the beginning of *dongmul wiryeongje*, but according to one article, the ceremony started in 1983 (Iliff 2002). A member of the Laboratory Animal Resource Office recalled that people have been conducting informal prayers (putting their hands together) in front of the monument from the time she started working at the institute in the mid-1970s (personal communication, KFDA staff, March 2005). The annual ceremony is now held around the end of October to the beginning of November, after the *Chuseok* holiday.

At the beginning of the ceremony, a report is read of the institute’s activities and the number of animals that have died in laboratory tests throughout the past year. After that, the following ceremonial address titled *wiheonmun* (address to appease souls) is read.

Beastly and birdly living beings,
 although our looks differ we both enjoy life.
 Your pitiful lives did not evade a virtuous death.
 Please do not bear a grudge against Heaven, and do not bear a grudge
 against us people because it was for the sake of human welfare and the
 health of your fellow beasts and birds.
 We pray in silence for your sad souls and wish for a happy afterlife, so
 you can come into this world again and live eternally.²

Following this address, the attendants place flowers on the altar set up in front of the monument. After the ceremony ends there is an informal gathering with drinks and snacks for the attending staff members.

2. All translations are by the author unless otherwise mentioned.

The altar resembles one used for ancestor ceremonies, with fruit and different kinds of feed and vegetables on it that are also fed to the test animals at the institute. Funds for the ceremony were initially covered by individual contributions, but since 2000 a budget was calculated into the institute's overall expenses.

b) Medical Faculty, Seoul National University (SNU)

Our second case is the memorial service held at the medical faculty of Seoul National University and the SNU Hospital.

In the front garden of the Museum of Medical History, located on the Yeongeon campus of SNU, we find a stone monument for laboratory animals dating from 1922 (the inscribed date is *Taishō* 11). The front of the monument is inscribed with the text *Shirheomdongmul gongyangtap* (stupa for the memorial of laboratory animals).

The history of the Seoul National University Hospital goes back to the early twentieth century and went through several name changes before becoming the Keijō Medical College in 1916. Following the establishment of Keijō Imperial University in 1926, it was reorganized into the Keijō Imperial University Hospital in 1928. Thus the monument was established by researchers during the Keijō Medical College period.

At present, the monument does not play an active role in the memorial service, as it does at the KFDA. Instead, the ceremony is held at the end of the year (in the second half of December but before Christmas) in the lecture hall of the Clinical Research Institute (*Imsang uihak yeonguso*) with up to 300 people attending. This large number of attendees can be attributed to the fact that the service is a joint effort of the Department of Experimental Animal Research (*Jeonimsang sirheombu*) of the Clinical Research Institute, the animal testing laboratory of the College of Medicine, and the Center for Animal Resource Development (*Teuksu saengmyeong jawon senteo*).

The ceremony begins with a greeting, after which there is a minute of silence followed by music. Next, a report is given of the past year's activities by the respective institutes (the number of animals used and their species, workshops, facility developments, etc.). Then, a ceremonial address (*chumosa*) is read.³

3. This ceremonial address is a translation of materials from 2006.

We are here today with all of the researchers in this room to solace the laboratory animals that have been sacrificed to animal experiments, as living beings with feeling and sense. Together we lament the priceless death of the laboratory animals and we bow our heads in front of their souls and pray for their happy afterlife.

As we stand before the spirits of the animals that died a glorious death for the sake of mankind and went through the final cycle of the world of eternal transmigration as laboratory animals, no detailed explanation will be needed as to the value of their sacrifice.

In order not to make the invaluable sacrifice of these laboratory animals a fruitless one, whenever possible we medicine practitioners intend to reduce the number of laboratory animals we plan to use, to consider whether there is a way to experiment without using animals before we plan an animal experiment, and to refine our techniques in handling the animals. We intend to understand and put to practice this basic state of mind toward animal experiments to take away the suffering and anxiety of the animals.

The valuable seed provided by the animals must be turned into a worthy and copious fruit by the researchers' endeavors.

We believe that the laboratory animals who acted as the noble light and salt of this earth will surely enjoy their glory in the other world. We bid them farewell for 2006 and pray that they may rest forever.

After the address, incense and wine are offered, the attendants bow in unison, and a slideshow is presented with messages from staff members who could not attend the ceremony. As is the case with the KFDA ceremony, a get-together is held afterwards.

The spirit of *wiryongje* can also be found in the hall of the Clinical Research Institute's animal laboratory, where a plaque on the wall says: "*Urineun gamsahanda — huisaengdoen sirheomdongmureul girimyeo...*" (We are grateful. — In tribute to the sacrificed laboratory animals...). The presence of a prewar monument does not mean that the ceremony was held continuously up to the present. Unfortunately no precise data are available, but the Clinical Medicine Research Center was established in 1998 and according to the staff, ceremonies were held at least since 1996.

The first animal testing facility at Seoul National University was established in 1978 at the College of Veterinary Medicine, and a monument titled *Suhonbi* (monument for souls of beasts) was established that same year.

Korean Folklore and the Origins of Prayer for Animal Spirits

As mentioned in the first section of this paper, Korean folk culture contains many symbolic references to animals and plants as shown in many folk expressions and folk tales, which are seen by scholars of Korean folklore as ways of getting to the essence of Korean folklore or as a key to the riddles of culture. *Dongmul wiryeongje* presents a phenomenon that is deeply intertwined with social and cultural developments of human-animal relationships in contemporary Korean everyday life, but as of yet no in-depth study has been made on the prayer ceremonies for animals as described in this paper. It should be noted that folklore studies in Korea generally tend to focus on subjects such as “household life, communal village life, everyday life, and rituals” (Kim and Lee 2003:15), defining the discipline through its *subjects* rather than through its *methods*. Combined with a preference for taking on cultural elements that are conceived of as traditional (festivals, rural customs, and so on), the apparent lack of a basis for *dongmul wiryeongje* in Korean culture and the fact that it is part of urban society rather than rural culture may partly explain the difficulty current folklore studies has in taking on this subject.

As far as traditional references to animal funerals or commemorations go, *Hanguk minjongmunhwa daebaekwasajeon* (Korean National Cultural Encyclopedia) mentions horse tombs (*malmudeom seorhwa*) and monuments for loyal dogs (*uigubi / uiguchong*) (Academy of Korean Studies 1995). Providing a decent final resting place to a loyal horse or dog resembles motives similar to the memorial ceremonies mentioned in this paper, but the examples given are limited to gentry and strongly relate to the commendation of Confucian values, rather than being intertwined in a more widespread common belief, as is the case in Japan.

In the examples given in this paper, government-employed scientists who represent the cutting edge of Korean academics bow to altars for dead animals, talk of honorable fish spirits, and express regret for the sacrifice of the pitiful lives of mice. What can we learn about the changing nature of human-animal relations in Korea when we look at the interpretations that are given to the

appeasement of animal spirits in modern Korea? Traditionally, in Korea the souls and spirits of humans have received most of the attention, and Confucian ancestor worship is strictly focused on the souls of forefathers as a symbol of patrilineal descent, while shamanistic rituals cover human spirits that do not fit the Confucian framework. Both do not touch on animal souls. Although Buddhism has been concerned with the wellbeing of all living creatures including animals, it does not seem that any specific attention for animal Buddhahood has left an impression on Korean culture. This stands in stark contrast with Japan, where prayer for animal souls has been an issue with hunters and fishermen in Japan for hundreds of years, and where memorial services for animals are still widely observed in a much greater variety of contexts than is the case in Korea (Veldkamp 2005b).

It is precisely this link to Japan that may give us insight into the initial introduction of *dongmul wiryeongje* to Korea and shed light on the repeated reference to animal spirits and the appeasing souls of dead animals that characterizes these ceremonies. At present, the monument at SNU's College of Medicine is the oldest known sample in Korea, dating from 1922, but I have not found any reference to its use in that period. Therefore we will use reports of the monument at the KFDA's Toxicological Institute dating from 1929 as a starting point to look at the character of prewar *dongmul wiryeongje* in Korea.

In preparation of this paper the author did not find any primary materials mentioning the monument at Seoul National University, but in *Keimu Ihō* (Kor. *Gyeongmu Hwibo*), a magazine issued by the Police Department of the Korean Government-General, we find mention of *dongmul wiryeongje* being held on several occasions. An article titled “*Dōbutsu Ireisai — Ikeda keimukyokuchō ika rinjō shite itomo nengoro ni shikkō serareta*” in issue 331, dated November 15, 1933, describes how a memorial service was held at the Bacteriological Inspection Office (*Sōtokufu saikin kensasho*) in front of a monument for animal souls (*dōbutsu kuyōhi*). One of the photos shows the monument to be the one that remains on the premises of the Korea Food and Drug Administration, explaining to us the origins of this particular monument.

The Bacteriological Inspection Office was originally established as the Bacteriological Office (*Saikinshitsu*) under the Police Department's Hygiene Section (*Keisatsukyoku eiseika*) in 1912 for bacteriological and epidemiological research. This office went through several changes of name and affiliation during the prewar period. After 1945, the organization continued as the Laboratory for the Prevention of Epidemics (*Gungnip bangyeok yeonguso*), and moved to

the current location in Nokbeon-dong in 1957-1960. In 1996 the KFDA was established by merging this laboratory with the National Chemical Laboratories, the National Laboratory of Herb Medicine, and the National Institute of Public Health (Lee and Kim 2000).

The memorial service for animals as it is held at the KFDA's Toxicological Research Institute today has a prewar precedent from the Japanese *dōbutsu irei-sai*, something the present researchers do not seem to have specific knowledge about. The mentioned photograph is from 1933, but we may assume that the date of 1929 on the monument is correct, because similar accounts are found in Japan before and around this date, not to mention the fact that the monument at Seoul National University was erected seven years before in 1922. The KFDA monument is of Japanese origin and was originally erected as a tombstone for laboratory animals that died during the Bacteriological Inspection Office's animal experiments. The ceremonies were apparently held annually, as we find an article in the *Donga Ilbo* from around the same time of year but a few years later (Donga Ilbo, November 6, 1938).

At present, *dongmul wiryeongje* is a marginal phenomenon in Korean ritual culture which has only recently started gaining attention, but memorial services for non-human animals and even for old objects have been widespread throughout pre-modern and contemporary Japan. The origin of this custom lies in a blend of folk belief in spiritual vengeance by unhappy spirits (Jap. *tatari*; including animal spirits killed by people), and the introduction of Buddhist prayer for these spirits to attain Buddhahood (Jap. *dōbutsu kuyō*, Kor. *dongmul gongyang*). Early examples of *dōbutsu kuyō* are transmitted through prayer scrolls (*Suwa no kanmon*) that declare equal ability to attain Buddhahood in man, animals, and plants. These scrolls are found among hunting and fishing villages from the seventeenth century, where men who went out to sea or into the mountains to gather meat or fish with risk to their own lives sought to eliminate potential danger caused by spiritual causes (Chiba 1969). Contemporary cases of the appeasement of animal souls in Japan may be interpreted as adaptations of a foundation laid down by these pre-modern customs, but with the side note that their situational meaning and purpose have changed over the years to include prayer for any category of animals or living beings whose life is consumed in some or other way by humans (among these are game such as bear, boar and deer, insects, fowl, fish, whales and dolphins, and more recently various food-producing beings including eggs). In addition, although these rituals were initially aimed at reducing the danger of spiritual vengeance, modern varieties have shift-

ed toward the expression of gratitude and to honoring the dead animals for offering their lives for the human cause (Matsuzaki 2004).

Such a change in meaning most likely occurred during the early twentieth century, when these rituals were molded to fit the imperial ideology by replacing the belief of vengeful spirits of the dead in traditional customs with the modern and nationalistic goal of commendation for honorable souls of war casualties. Human soldiers of the Imperial Army came to be commended by the nation from the beginning of the Meiji period onwards and were enshrined in sanctuaries as *kami* (deities), a historical issue the repercussions of which continue to the present day, most clearly exemplified by the ongoing political discussions concerning the precise nature of the Yasukuni Shrine and its war hero deities (Murakami 1974).

From around the turn of the century and after the Sino-Japanese War, monuments for horses that died in the war started to emerge. Although many early monuments were erected by individuals, the application of the war hero logic to animal war casualties came to be utilized increasingly by the military to soothe the civilians who had donated their precious animals to the war effort. The format of a memorial service or *wiryongje* tapped into an existing body of folk customs that many people were familiar with. During the late 1920s and 1930s, war horses and war dogs were even mobilized as role models for the general public to exemplify loyalty to the country and the emperor, aiming at elementary school children in particular. In Japanese elementary schoolbooks, heroic stories of war dogs were included in the 1930s and early 1940s (Veldkamp 2008). Interestingly, *Minjongmunhwa daebaekwasajeon* mentions that the story of a loyal dog was already incorporated into a Korean elementary schoolbook (*Choseoneo dokbon gwon 4*) from 1923, ten years earlier (Academy of Korean Studies 1995: vol.17 p. 511), indicating that similar strategies may have been applied to the colonies as well. It is important to realize this historical context to assess the position of animal memorial ceremonies in Japanese contemporary culture, and to consider that such a tradition is not found in Korean culture until its introduction in the colonial period.

For the Japanese imperial government, this way of honoring the war dead — be they human or non-human — was an important tool to keep its citizens motivated for the state ideology and continuing war efforts of the 1930s and 1940s. Monuments for the loyal war dead were erected in the colonies of Korea, China, and Taiwan as well, but the majority of these monuments were destroyed after 1945. For this reason, the KFDA animal monument is unique in two ways. First

of all, it is one of the few monuments outside Japan that was preserved to the present time. Second, it is in use more than sixty years after the people who provided the cultural foundation for its existence left the Korean Peninsula.

Prewar mention of *dongmul wiryeongje* in the *Chosun Ilbo* is found as early as 1925 (*Chosun Ilbo*, April 29, 1925), but articles related to *dongmul wiryeongje* start to appear more frequently from the 1930s. These articles primarily report memorial services for war animals: horses, dogs, and pigeons. Memorials were held on the occasion of the anniversary of the Mukden Incident (*Chosun Ilbo*, September 16, 1933) or as separate events by regional military offices (*Chosun Ilbo*, December 7, 1939 and February 23, 1940). The memorial services for horses became part of festivities surrounding “Horse Day” (*Aemail*, Jap. *Aiba no hi*) starting in 1939, and they were often combined with prayer ceremonies for victory in battle (*Chosun Ilbo*, April 8, 1939).

After 1945, there is no mention in the *Chosun Ilbo* of *dongmul wiryeongje* until 1969, when a memorial service for animals was part of the events for the sixtieth anniversary of the Changgyeongwon Zoo (*Chosun Ilbo*, October 26, 1969). Predecessor to the current Seoul Grand Park Zoo, Changgyeongwon Zoo was established on November 1, 1908, on the premises of Changgyeonggung Palace and opened to the public the following year. Like the Ueno Zoo in Japan, Changgyeongwon Zoo had been the stage of militaristic memorial services for war animals such as horses and dogs from the 1930s onward (O 1993), thus it is not entirely coincidental that a memorial service was held at this location again.

Dongmul Wiryeongje as a Religious Event

With the exception of a few specifically Buddhist ceremonies, the memorial services held at research institutes in general do not feature any religious specialists and are carried out in a more or less Confucianist manner. On different occasions during interviews, the interviewees pointed out the link between human ancestor ceremonies and animal memorials, and it seems to be a common association for the attendants. The typical memorial service for animals focuses on an altar or table with offerings for the animal spirits. These offerings consist of fruit, cereals, feed, and similar items that are thought to be to the animals' liking, the costs of which may run up to 300,000 won. Some attendants may perform a traditional bow or *keun jeol* in front of the altar, similar to the custom in Confucian ancestor rituals, but this is not common practice. The offering of

flowers and the burning of incense refer to Buddhist funeral custom, and carries the connotation of a funeral ceremony.

Thus, some of the interviewees interpreted the nature of these animal memorials as being rooted in the Buddhist (i.e., respect for all living beings) or shamanistic traditions (appeasing unhappy spirits), and this explanation might be tenable if it weren't for the lack of a connection to previous customs regarding the treatment of animal souls within these traditions. In contrast, some replied that "we [the researchers] did not have the peace of mind [*yeoyu*] to even consider this kind of memorial" in the early days of animal experimentation (the early to mid-1980s); thus indicating that these ceremonies are considered to be somewhat of a luxury and a secondary aspect to some researchers.

In the ceremonies, in general, no attachment to a particular religious tradition is claimed. The main reason for keeping these ceremonies religiously neutral is to please those attendants that are of the Christian faith. It would be difficult for people who renounce traditional ancestor ritual to attend a ceremony that is too obviously religious. Therefore, in the cases I have examined, attendance is always said to be voluntary. In fact, quite a few of the ceremony coordinators (usually the head researcher of the animal laboratory) are Christian; but as one of them explained, just being at the ceremony but not taking part in the more religious aspects is not a problem, while it suffices to show one's intentions. By this logic, refraining from placing flowers on the altar or burning incense was enough assurance that his attendance was not of any religious nature, and enabled him to attend the ceremony.

For many participants, rather than literally praying for the unhappy spirits of laboratory animals, the meaning of these ceremonies lies in recognizing the value of life, even of these small animals, and educating students in the moral aspect of animal testing, combined with a certain amount of self-reflection. The growth of animal laboratory infrastructure since the 1990s and the changing social climate regarding attitudes toward animals have played major roles in this development.

Conclusions: Context of the Recent Reappearance of *Dongmul Wiryeongje*

Commemorative ceremonies for laboratory animals are not unique to Japan and Korea. An article in the *International Laboratory Animal Research* magazine

from 2002 discusses examples from around the world, and characterizes this development as the “additional R” of remembering (in addition to the “3R” concept)⁴ that is also mentioned in Seoul National University’s ceremonial address). In this paper, examples from Japan, Thailand, Korea (the KFDA ceremony is mentioned), and the United States are mentioned as examples of a sacred approach to acknowledging animals, next to other observances such as the “Blessing for the Animals” ceremonies held in some churches around October 4, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi (Iloff 2002). While this article should be valued as one of the few to bring animal memorial ceremonies into the spotlight, unfortunately there is little historical background or cultural context that may clear up the reason *why* these ceremonies are being held at present. Providing such historical and cultural background for the case of Korean *dongmul wiryeongje* is the major motivation of this paper.

As we have seen in the first part of this paper, from the 1990s onwards there has been an increasing interest by the media and the public for memorial services for deceased animals. The contexts in which these memorial services are conducted vary from animal testing laboratories and zoos to animals killed in traffic and chickens that end up in *samgyetang*; the common denominator being that these animals all found their death during the fulfillment of a role for the sake of human wellbeing, comfort, or joy. As I have shown, the custom of commemorating animal souls in Korea dates from the colonial period, when the Japanese introduced a cultural phenomenon to the colonies that had developed and evolved its meaning within the particular Japanese historical and cultural context.

From the above descriptions, it is clear that motivations for and interpretations of these ceremonies lie in appeasing the souls of animals that died for (or due to) human causes, and to express gratitude for the fact that they did so on the one hand, and the creation of consciousness regarding the value of animal life on the other. How could the recent reappearance of these memorial services be explained and what animals are considered worthy of commemoration?

To answer this question, we must take into account changes in the views and attitudes toward animals that have occurred in the last twenty years in everyday life in Korea. I believe these changes to have been initiated by the social influ-

4. The 3R concept (replace, reduce, refine) was first introduced in W.M.S. Russel and R.L. Burch’s *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique* (London: Methuen, 1959).

ence of two recent issues in Korean society that are closely related to each other: the rise of animal protectionism and criticism of dog meat consumption on the one hand, and the increasing popularity of western-style pets (mostly dogs) on the other.

Foreign animal protectionism movements started to criticize the consumption of dog meat in the early 1980s when Korea was elected to host large international events such as the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. In response to criticism from the western world regarding the way the Korean government was handling animal rights, measures were taken to soothe the critics and prevent participation boycotts. As a result, in Seoul dog meat was declared “undesirable food” (*hyeomo sikpum*) and a clean up of the streets in Seoul was realized by prohibiting dog meat restaurants, with the concrete effect of merely moving these restaurants to the back alleys and out of sight of visiting foreigners. Following this created momentum, in 1991 the first Korean Animal Protection Society (*Hanguk dongmul boho hyeophoe*) was acknowledged, and in 1992 Korea’s first animal protection law was issued. The following years show an increase in criticism about the consumption of dog meat from within the country as well, and a demonstration against the legalization of dog meat in 1999 became the starting point for the majority of today’s animal protection groups (Veldkamp 2005a). During the 2000s, another big international event brought many foreign visitors to Korea when Korea and Japan jointly hosted the 2002 World Cup. This time, merchants at the largest dog meat market in the Seoul area (Moran market in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do) did not wait for government measures and put the dog cages out of sight during the event to prevent criticism (Segye Ilbo, May 29, 2002).

This period also saw an explosive increase in the popularity of pet dogs and as a result, pet businesses started to mushroom all over Seoul, taking the place of the cardboard boxes full of puppies that could be seen in the streets of Seoul in the years before. The increased visibility of animal protection as well as the new interest in pets provided increased exposure for this point of view. This has helped to create an environment in which the public could identify more and more with animals in their role of cute and friendly beings.

This attention for animals among the general public has also had its influence on animal testing laboratories, which are one of the targets of criticism by animal protection groups. Many of the laboratories that hold memorial services for animals will issue press releases and do not object to publicity, even though the ceremonies themselves are not public events. On the other hand, young students

and researchers nowadays look upon their test subjects with a different view compared to researchers in the 1980s, and they tend to be more empathetic toward the test animals (personal communication, animal testing laboratory staff at Hallym University, November 2007).

In many cases, a promise or intention to decrease the amount of animal suffering is incorporated into the memorial ceremony, for instance, the reference to the 3R concept at the Seoul National University ceremony. We may say that the motivations for conducting *dongmul wiryeongje* at animal testing laboratories in Korea, while their origins are imported customs from Japan, are at present constructed from a combination of factors that include both internal changes within the laboratories concerning the attitude toward animals and external criticism and rethinking of the human-animal relations in Korea by animal protectionist groups and public opinion.

To consider present day *dongmul wiryeongje* in Korea as a direct continuation of prewar precedents created by the Japanese would be overly simplifying the matter, but acknowledgement of this historical backdrop provides a good example of the way foreign cultural influences can be absorbed, adapted, and finally re-emerge, appropriated into local customs by interpreting them in the local context. Some of the interviewees confirm that they came into contact with *dongmul wiryeongje* during their study or work in Japan, making it likely that the changing animal situation in Korea, combined with scholarly exchange between Korea and Japan in recent years, has prepared an environment that made the reappearance (re-importation) of *dongmul wiryeongje* in recent years possible.

The expression by one researcher that “in the early days of animal experimentation, [we] did not have the peace of mind to even *think* about *wiryongje*” is significant in two different ways. First of all, Korean animal experimentation has become sufficiently comfortable with itself that it can now accommodate secondary issues such as *dongmul wiryeongje* and Koreans’ views of animals have changed enough to accommodate these ceremonies. Secondly and more importantly, it implies that these ceremonies are not a culturally defined necessity that is entangled in layers of traditional knowledge and historical developments such as may be the case in Japan, but that it is the result of circumstances (such as the relatively young infrastructure for animal testing facilities in Korea), and a choice being made on whether to observe the ceremonies or not. This illustrates the gap that still exists between Korean thought and the concept of *dongmul wiryeongje*. A certain detachment remains in the people’s attitudes

with regard to this posthumous care for animal souls *in spite of* significant changes in human-animal relations in Korea. Memorial ceremonies for the souls of dead animals in Korea today have adapted hints from the Japanese context and rearranged them by adding Confucian, Buddhist, and shamanistic elements into the mix (this can also be witnessed for instance with pet funeral businesses in Korea, which aim to cater to all religious groups in Korea—Christian, Buddhist and other—while taking hints from their Japanese counterparts and making use of Japanese-style Buddhist symbols) to give *dongmul wiryeongje* a contemporary meaning more suitable to the Korean social and cultural framework.

The aim of this paper was to clarify the modern history of *sirheom dongmul wiryeongje* in Korea, and we have seen that its current form was introduced by the Japanese during the colonial period. This does not mean, however, that the origins of all instances of these rituals today have the same origin, nor does it ignore the possibility that equivalent rituals existed in Korean folklore at that time. Because of the very modern character of many *dongmul wiryeongje*, overemphasizing a historical continuity would not do justice to the ingenious processes that form their social and cultural foundation in present day Korea.

At the same time, a task remains for future research on the relationship between *dongmul wiryeongje* and indigenous folk customs in more detail (including *bangsaeng* or release of life rituals in Korean Buddhism, and ritual attitudes toward animal killing in *baekjeong* communities for instance), and to look into native mentalities that may have accommodated the acceptance of *dongmul wiryeongje* in Korea. It is important to recognize that the examples of *dongmul wiryeongje* mentioned in this paper each carry with them specific socio-cultural baggage before drawing further conclusions regarding the historical continuity or discontinuity of these rituals throughout Korean history.

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