

Article

# Translational Discursive Spaces in Immediate Post-Liberation Korea: Hearsay, Reportage, and Roundtables\*

SHIN Ji-young

## Liberation “Heard”: Hearsay as a Medium

The postwar period in East Asia is often understood as a time of transition between sovereign powers: from the imperial system of the Japanese Empire to the Cold War nation-state system. What were some special characteristics of media during this transitional period and what effect did they have on discursive formations? Here I focus on the reciprocal relationship between the characteristics of hearsay and reportage in liberation-period media to think through this problem. In other words, “liberation” was all of a sudden “heard through the grapevine.” In this situation of uncertainty, people went out into the streets, held meetings and, investigated “in order to hear” whether the news of “liberation” was fact or fiction. The hearsay competed for what would count as “fact” and collective reportage (interview-surveys, declarations, resolutions, and roundtables) and, by corollary, emerged as a form to document what was shared. As the Cold War ideological division between North and South Korea intensified, the weight of the discourse shifted from what was “fact” or fiction to what kind of “assertion” it contained. Hearsay came to contain the reportage form; reportage came to contain the hearsay form. This paper investigates the special characteristics of liberation-period media and discourse through this irresolvably circular relationship.

With regard to the processes and narrations in the building of the state-nation, existing analyses focus on the media and discourses in the period of liberation. Self-criticism against the behaviors and acts in remembering the colonial period from a victim’s perspective and against the ideological bifurcation between North and South in the “hot” cold era has drawn most attention from critics. These viewpoints are useful and meaningful in getting out of the exclusiveness established and entrenched in the concept of *we* but they overlook the experiential complexity in the colonial period.

---

\* This work is based on a chapter from my PhD dissertation titled “Hikaku ni kōshite: 1945-nen zengo no Chōsen, Taiwan, Nihon no Sesshoku Shisō to Taiwateki Tekusuto” (Against Comparison: Dialogical Texts and “Colonial Contact” in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan 比較に抗して—1945年前後の朝鮮・台湾・日本の接触思想と対話的テキスト). This article has been translated from Japanese into English, and significantly modified for this journal. I would also like to make it clear that I submitted this article for the December 2017 issue of the *Review of Korean Studies* on August 30, 2017 before I obtained my PhD on March 20, 2018 and that it was confirmed as “Accept with Revision” for the issue on October 19, 2017. However, its publication was delayed until the June 2018 issue because of the journal’s backlog in accepted articles.

This paper will thus examine the period just before the formation of the separate governments in the South and North. The period has lots of potentialities and complexities yet to be explored in the state-nation discourses. To look into them, this paper will focus on the processes of spreading liberation news through hearing and passing on. It will investigate the peculiar relationship between the hearsay and the reportage (fact) in circulating news related to liberation. This investigation will help characterize the nature of the media in the period and at the same time look into the situational and emotional truth which the people living in that period felt and imagined.

On the Korean peninsula, “liberation” was not a definite fact but hearsay that was “heard through the grapevine.” In East Asia, only Korea and Japan commemorate August 15, 1945 as the date of “liberation” and “defeat,” respectively. Japan commemorates August 15, because it was on this day that the emperor made the notorious “Jewel Voice Broadcast” (announcing Japan’s surrender) (Satō 2005, 8; 18). Throughout colonial Korea, the “Jewel Voice Broadcast” was “heard” throughout the country. But this was not the same broadcast that was heard in Japan. On August 16<sup>th</sup>, Gyeongseong Central Broadcast Station translated the entire broadcast content into Korean. With a newly added explanation about the meaning and implications of Japan’s agreement to the Potsdam Declaration, the Korean version of the “Jewel Voice Broadcast” was heard throughout the country several times (Kobayasi 2005, 142-43). In other words, by having people “hear” through the translated explanation of the voice of colonial power, Korea received the news of its “liberation” from colonization and at the same time circulated it. The reiterative aspect of “hearing and passing on” does not stop here (Shin, Forthcoming). Depending on the countless varied situations of those who heard the news, as well as on the desires of those who heard the news and tried to verify its authenticity, this already transformed “hearsay of liberation,” or “Korean version of Jewel Voice Broadcast” was experienced, passed on, and documented differently.

In the February 1946 issue of *Sincheonji*, a survey was sent to cultural figures: “We want to know your reaction the moment you heard the momentous broadcast of August 15<sup>th</sup>.” Along with joy and expressions of deep emotions, the respondents spoke of doubt and unease (“Is this a dream?”). The following confession is particularly revealing: “When the streets of Seoul were swept up with emotion, I realized that this was not a dream but actually real and

my eyes became hot with tears.”<sup>1</sup> This confession shows that it was by “hearing” and “seeing” the people crowding the Seoul streets and then by documenting it that the respondent came to confirm the liberation as “real” and pass on the news as fact. Hearsay became reportage through the process of “hearing” the fact of liberation in the streets and “passing on” the news. This shows how liberation-period media had the characteristics of both hearsay and reportage.

Through the students’ word of mouth in the countryside, through the guards in prisons, and through supervisors in the Kyushu mine, people learned about “liberation” through the act of “hearing from others.” A few people in Seoul heard the news through the radio, but the exact time and place differed depending on the person.<sup>2</sup> For those who had “heard,” it was through hearsay that they “heard,” and it was by “passing on” the news that they accepted “liberation” as “reality.” “The act of oral transmission” or “hearsay” and the desire for documenting “fact” or “reportage” enabled passing on the hearsay through writing. As these two factors were brought together, liberation-period media and its discursive characteristics were shaped, whose reciprocating relationship could not be simply viewed as “conclusive factuality.” The streets were flooded with flyers, notices, and rumors. And the short-lived magazines that appeared out of the blue published surveys, investigations, proclamations, and resolutions. Hearsay and reportage were intermingled into the existing discursive formation. These were “irresolvable media of hearsay” which were in existence in a time of transition from colonialism to a Cold War nation-state system, when the future could not be foreseen.

This paper examines the characteristics of this “transitional discursive space” which marks the shift from colonialism to a Cold War nation-state system, and looks into newly emerging media and discourse forms, as well as those transformed pre-existing forms. First, I focus on the fact that in the immediate post-liberation, there was an explosive rise in the number of magazines, and in their first issues, there were interview-surveys, as well

---

1. “Seolmun: 815ui pyojeong” [Questionnaires: Impression on August 15<sup>th</sup>], *Minseong* (December 1946): 6-7; “Seolmun: 8wol 15il ui gamgyeokgwa gwageo llbonin ui joeak” [Jubilance on August 15<sup>th</sup> and the Crimes of the Japanese in the Past], *Sincheonji* 1, no. 1 (February 1946): 70-73. The questionnaire items were as follows: 1) “We want to know your emotional state upon hearing the momentous broadcast of August 15<sup>th</sup>”; and 2) “Of the crimes of the Japanese in the past, name the ones you feel were the most harsh.”

2. For further discussion, see Shin 2016, 81-132.

as resolutions and proclamations from various assemblies, which took the discursive form of “hearing-and-writing” or “seeing-and-writing.” Second, I look at how roundtables in the early liberation-period often involved collective reportage or collections of hearsay, presented in a roundtable format.

These themes help us examine the following. First, through the process in which “liberation” is heard in the form of a “command” by a sovereign power and passed on as various forms of hearsay and transformed, we can capture the various meanings of “liberation” and the various co-existing forms of *we*'s that are inscribed in the term *we*. Second, we can investigate what new media and discursive forms emerged during the period of transition between sovereign powers and how they transformed the existing media and discourse forms through the relationship between “hearsay” and “reportage.” From the point of view of literary history, we can investigate some peculiar aspects of hearsay visible in the reportage form which emerged after liberation to search for ways to further enrich the recently thriving form of reportage literature. Third, as the boundary of sovereign power shifted, the boundary that separates out the Other was also reconstituted. During this process, there was an explosive increase in hearsay about the new Others (Japan as the remnant of the colonial period, refugees of war, North Korea [from South Korea's perspective] and South Korea [from North Korea's perspective]). Through this irresolvable tension between hearsay and reportage, we can question the linked ideologies formed within *we* following the liberation period.

Together with investigations, surveys, proclamations, and resolutions, roundtables are an appropriate medium where we can see how *rumors and reportage on the street* were in conflict with each other and how they were being established in the written media and discourses. As roundtables were edited and published after they had been held, they were not free from printing powers and ideological biases. On the other hand, the formal state media were in such an infantile stage that they had to learn how to make reports, magazines, and newspapers in the liberation period. So the media on the street had the power to form most influential opinions, to mobilize the public, and to call for rallies. While the roundtables in the magazines of the liberation period were gradually absorbed in the nation-state discourses and in the new order of the Cold War, they showed the characteristics of collective “reportage” similar to those in flyers and pamphlets, investigations, surveys, proclamations, and resolution.

“Liberation” as a “command” from a sovereign power was not heard in

neat concentric circles, nor was it passed on or documented in this manner. The “hearsay” is heard, interpreted, passed on, and documented, and in the process of repeated hearing, and within the context of social relations where this process occurs, it becomes warped and uneven. If “liberation” in Korea can acquire any specific meaning, it is not through the “liberation” that was granted through a sovereign power’s command, but rather, through the reciprocal relationship between hearsay and reportage on liberation, through the multilayered desires implicated in the process, and through the instability of the *we*’s which were reconstituted through the emergence of the new Other.

### **Characteristics of Hearsay and Reportage in First Issues**

With liberation, there was an explosive increase in the number of magazines, newspapers, and other publications. The reason may be that censorship or publication restrictions set by the Japanese Empire during the colonial period had been lifted (Jeong 2009, 6), but we can also sense the desire (mixed with unease) to understand and question the meaning of this epochal “change” operative. The number of publishing houses increased from 45 in 1945 to 492 in 1948. While there was a sudden increase in magazines and newspapers, “more than a few publishing houses closed their business before publishing even a single book” and most magazines were short-lived (O 2009, 9). Paper was in inadequate supply, and there were not enough Korean-script printing presses, most of which had been outlawed and disappeared during the colonial period. Not only could they not meet the sudden spike in demand for print, they also did not have adequate staff who could write in Korean (O 2009, 24).

The first issues of magazines which emerged from 1945 to 1946-47 were published under such difficult conditions. These issues are distinct in the frequent appearance of surveys, interviews, resolutions, proclamations, resolutions, and speeches from meetings and assemblies. These forms illustrate how the issues in the streets were asked, heard, and discussed. They were the product of a period of tumult and unease, when the publishing industry was experiencing difficulty and there was a transition from one sovereign power to another. They also had an influence on the already established roundtables. Investigations, interviews, proclamations, resolutions, and the like which appear here and there in the roundtables show the processes in which liberation-period

media and discourses were formed and, at the same time, the transformations that established forms and themes of roundtables went through.

Now let us see the forms of media and discourses which happened to appear in the roundtables in the period. The roundtable held on August 8, 1948 “Jwadamhoe: sinmun gijaga gyeokkeun pari-ro” (Roundtable: August 15<sup>th</sup> as Experienced by Newspaper Reporters)<sup>3</sup> shows how liberation-period media and discursive forms were taking shape. Reporters from *Joseon ilbo*, *Hapdong tongsin*, *Joseon tongsin*, and *Seoul sinmun* who participated in this roundtable to discuss the circumstances of August 15<sup>th</sup> responded that they were sensitive to the new media and discursive forms of the period. Let us consider two scenes.

The first scene shows the unfolding of hearsay and inquiry. In a situation where nothing is certain, the reporter contacts his friend for information and runs around, visits a public figure at the YMCA for an interview, hears a speech by a public figure, and finally takes over a newspaper company, which was abandoned by the imperial Japanese.

Jeong:... We wanted to publish the next issue but we were completely in the dark. So Mr. Ju and I went out to collect material for a piece.... We were running around all over the place. During that time, we heard that some Joseon public figures had already headed out. But we don't know who are leading figures.... We just went over to YMCA, but they were in the dark too.... We went to Yeo Unhyeong's residence and they said we should go to An Jaehong's place. So we met with Mr. An and spoke to him for a while. In any case, he said he would be going to the newspaper to... [illegible] and do you have Mr. so and so? Do you have Mr. so and so for the work?... but then it seemed like the heavens were shaking with the sound of “Hurrah! Hurrah!” from everywhere, and from one direction people were falling all over themselves welcoming a car carrying the released... [illegible]. (Reporter 75; emphasis added)

By investigating, they were able to “feel joy for one’s nation” (*minjokjeok kippeum*) for the first time and published *Haebang ilbo*<sup>4</sup> with passion” (ibid.).

3. “Jwadamhoe: sinmun gijaga gyeokkeun pari-ro” [Roundtable: August 15<sup>th</sup> as Experienced by Newspaper Reporters], *Sincheonji* 4, no. 7 (August 1948): 74-81. From this point on, (Reporter page no.).

4. *Haebang ilbo* is a newspaper published as a Joseon Communist Party bulletin starting from September 19, 1945.

The hearsay also included false information. For example, once the false rumor spread that “the Soviets were coming,” the crowd rushed over to the station but the people there said they knew nothing about it (Reporter 78) and when they heard that the Soviets would be coming at different times, the crowd “poured out trying to escape and mindlessly shoved and pushed their way through” (Reporter 79). The reporter from *Hapdong sinmun* described the scene like this: “It was incredibly confusing. Everyone was just moving in herds” (ibid.). The new media and discourse of the liberation-period was searching for answers in the streets without the information with which to predict the future or the means to circulate it.

The second scene shows the use of posters and flyers. On August 18<sup>th</sup> “... in the streets of Seoul, flyers such as ‘It’s time to emerge from the underground, comrade Pak Heon-yeong!’” and “President: Syngman Rhee, Vice President: some guy, The Cabinet: someone or another” were distributed in large numbers, and the reporter commented, “This is the start of postering” (ibid.). It was a strange phenomenon (Jeong 2012, 7-8), in which all kinds of proclamations, resolutions, and flyers containing predictions flooded from the sky; “If you walked around the streets of Seoul, you could read a few thousand pieces” (Bak [1946] 1988, 35-37). People could hear “voices unheard in the newspapers” through the flyers, but there were also “leaflets that had absurd and unfeasible information” (Gim [1945-1946] 2007, 57-58). In a situation where there was no certain information, posters, flyers and leaflets became the new media through which hearsay and assertions were passed on, and at the same time, they were the power that gave birth to new forms of media. In particular, *Geon-gukgongnon* (the first issue of which was published on December 25, 1945) clearly shows how the investigation-model shaped the liberation-period magazine. The publisher Jo Sangwon stood in front of the station all day and would “stop people on the street who seemed knowledgeable and asked ‘what do you think it takes to start a magazine?’ and ‘wrote down what people said on a sheet of paper’” and went on to publish the first issue (Choe 2004, 448-53).

In a confusing period of transition between sovereign powers, when an uncertain future and a past which longed to be forgotten co-existed, the “acts of collection” which meant conducting investigations, putting up posters, scattering flyers, picking them up, and documenting them became the very force behind liberation-period media, and played an important role in its discursive formation. The “interview-survey” which could be called “reportage



with hearsay characteristics” and “posters, flyers, speeches, and proclamations from assemblies” were two forms of media that appeared as distinctive discursive features in the first issues of liberation-period magazines.

First, the interview-surveys: their format was to collect the opinions of intellectuals and public figures regarding various urgent and uncertain situations. Before this period, there had been interviews and roundtables in which well-known public figures appeared, but they were primarily known for asking public figures or actors what their views were on matters such as marriage or womanhood.<sup>5</sup> But in the interview-surveys of the liberation-period first issues, there is a sense of urgency that the uncertain future must somehow be charted and that the colonial past must be uprooted. In other words, unlike previously held roundtables in the colonial period, the liberation-period media could neither provide long and detailed discussions on a single subject nor satisfy the desire of the public in this transitional period by only covering entertaining themes. Thus, the interview-surveys, which originally took the form of asking simple questions and collecting many simple answers, were modified in order to accommodate as many opinions as possible.

For example, let us consider two popular magazines from the period: *Minseong* was published on December 1, 1945 and boasted a range of staff writers, and *Sincheonji* was published on January 14, 1946 and was the longest lasting, with its circulation surpassing 30,000. As general interest magazines, the two magazines included a wide range of topics. Both had the survey format in their first issues. *Minseong*, arguing that it would be “a fair instrument to seek public opinion that would serve as the people of our nation,”<sup>6</sup> carried a survey which asked about one’s reaction to the Jewel Voice Broadcast.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, *Sincheonji* had three different surveys, and the respondents included important novelists, critics, media personalities, musicians, actors, scholars, etc. The first survey is about whether they would agree with the position that “Chinese characters should be abolished and writing should be made

---

5. Roundtables in the colonial-period magazine *Samcheolli* sometimes featured actresses, girls’ high school-educated *gisaeng*, or waitresses, and treated romance problems, roles of men and wives, late marriage and the likes to attract readers’ attention.

6. “Changganholeul naemyeonseo” [Editorial Comments on the First Issue], *Minseong* (December 1945): 2

7. *Minseong* (December 1945): 6-7.

horizontal” (hereafter, Survey A).<sup>8</sup> The second survey asks for “(1) Response to August 15<sup>th</sup>” and about “(2) Crime of the Japanese” (Survey B).<sup>9</sup> The third survey is as follows: “When will Joseon become independent? What form of government would you desire?” (Survey C).<sup>10</sup>

Unlike other magazines of the time, *Sincheonji* did not ask a single writer to share his opinion about the controversial matters in Survey A. Rather, a number of public figures were first asked a yes or no question in the form of a survey and they were then instructed to give a reason for their choice. This discursive distinctiveness of the interview-survey format which tries to resolve pending issues whose outcome cannot be predicted lies in how it collects opinions through a binary framework of yes/no or for/against. In the answers and reasons given in Survey A, we see a dramatic increase in the use of the word “we.” During this time of confusion, through the act of interviewing notable figures and collecting their answers about the yes vs. no or for vs. against binary question, the *we* which came to have such different meanings are being summoned here as a unified *we*. As the term *we* involved the “exclusion” of other opinions through the dichotomous logic of the interview-survey format, it took the form of competition over oughtness as a unified category.

Survey B and C show how the past, present, and future of this summoned *we* came to be shaped through the interview-survey format. Survey B asks about what the respondents were doing at the time of the Jewel Voice Broadcast, along with a survey about what they believe are the “most brutal crimes committed by the evil government of Japan.”<sup>11</sup> It reformulates the past by inquiring into and collecting responses about the two periods of the past that currently influence the present: the colonial experience and the liberation experience. Among the worst cases of misrule during the colonial period are censorship

---

8. “Seolmun: 1. Hanja jeonpye ui gabuwa iyu 2. Gukmun hoengseo ui iyu” [Survey: 1. Yes or No about the Abolition of Chinese Characters and the Reasons 2. Yes or No about the Implementation of Horizontal Writing and the Reasons], *Sincheonji* 1, no. 1 (February 1946): 30-33. The discussion on the abolition of Chinese characters and the implementation of horizontal writing will be omitted here, since it is beyond our scope. For this information, refer to Shin 2015.

9. *Sincheonji* 1, no. 2 (February 1946): 70-73.

10. “Seolmun: 1. Wanjeonhan dongrip sigineun eonjejeum irago bosipnikka? 2. Gwihaneun cotteohan hyeongtae ui jeongbu ga seogileul wonhasimnikka?” [Survey: 1. When do You Think Korea will Achieve Full Independence? 2. What Type of Government would You Like to See Established?], *Sincheonji* 1, no. 1 (February 1946): 138.

11. *Sincheonji* 1, no. 1 (February 1946): 70-73.

policies, suppression of the Korean language, the name-change policy, volunteer and conscription policy, assimilation policy, divide-and-conquer tactics, torture, deprivation of higher education, and suppression of communism.<sup>12</sup> After the liberation period, these issues became common topics when there were discussions about the agonies of the colonial period. Survey C contains questions about the future: 1) When do you think Korea will achieve full independence? 2) What type of government would you like to see established?<sup>13</sup> If Survey B's responses about the Jewel Voice Broadcast show the confusing state of the "present," then the responses about the misrule of the colonial period establish a unified memory of the "past." The answers to the question which asks for a prediction regarding how long it would take for complete independence show a "future"-oriented outlook. They are in agreement in their hope for South-North unification, the purging of pro-Japanese elements and traitors, and a quick establishment of the new government, but the actual content of their opinions shows signs of ideological division.<sup>14</sup> The interview-survey format which addressed the situation of the period, memories of the past, and the specific form of Korean independence, used the reportage form that collected and documented hearsay and assertions. It was amidst these utterances that several *we's* that existed in tension competed over an uncertain future.

In addition to *Sincheonji* and *Minseong, Minjung Joseon* which began in November of 1945 contained the article "Haebang ilgi" (Liberation Diary),<sup>15</sup> "Gakdang gangryeong" (Party Platforms 11-13)<sup>16</sup> and reports, which included an inquiry about pressing issues of the times and attracted attention from readers. In the subsection, "1945nyeon 11wol" (November 1945) of the feature "Tammungi takin" (Experts in Reports),<sup>17</sup> Choe Jonghwan who sided with the movement to abolish Chinese characters (Experts in Reports 49), Choe Gyudong who were very cautious in the movement (Experts in Reports 51), Baek Namun who spoke of what needed to be done by the Academy of Joseon Studies (Experts in Reports 53), and Im Hwa who emphasized how

---

12. Ibid.

13. *Sincheonji* 1, no. 1 (February 1946): 138.

14. *Sincheonji* 1, no.1 (February 1946): 138-39.

15. "Haebang ilgi" [Liberation Diary], *Minjung Joseon* (November 1945): 8-10.

16. "Gakdang gangryeong" [Party Platforms], *Minjung Joseon* (November 1945): 11-13.

17. "Tammungi takin" [Experts in Reports], *Minjung Joseon* (November 1945): 49-57. From this point on, (Experts in Reports page no.)

literature must enter the lives of the people (Experts in Reports 54), among other public figures, are questioned. While the format is not a direct interview-survey, references to hearsay (with actually incorrect information) documenting uncertain rumors,<sup>18</sup> entire texts of letters, petitions and notes of apology<sup>19</sup> sent to unspecified people can be found. It is in the liberation-period magazine that the interview-survey format is forged and becomes widespread, amidst a past that must be cleansed and reconstructed, a future that cannot be predicted and a present caught between practicality and oughtness. These interview-surveys had the effect of producing the factuality of *we* by “documenting in writing” the “hearsay and assertions” about the past, present, and future backed by the credibility of well-known literary figures, actors, musicians, professors, and the dichotomous discursive logic of for vs. against surveys, but the *we* of that period resonated and fractured into multiple *we*'s through different kinds of hearsay and assertions.

In addition to the interview-survey format, there were also flyers, posters and resolutions, speeches, and participation records that seemed to be presented in their entirety in the magazines. These appeared more frequently in leftist magazines, but this phenomenon was also a general feature of the liberation-period magazine. For example, the general-interest magazine *Baengmin*, which was not particularly leftist in orientation and first published in December of 1945, contained “Yeonhappuk ege bonaeneun samcheonman ui gyeoruimun” (The Resolution of 30 Million People to the Allied Powers) in its entirety together with the context that produced this manuscript.<sup>20</sup>

After August 15, there were fifty groups and political parties in Seoul... [so that], with all the disagreements and struggles regarding what ought to be done, the situation was confusing and lacked a clear direction.... [As a result,] citizens responded “there were too many parties, and they were coping with instability and unease,” saying “Why are they fighting so much?” and were concerned about the future of Joseon....[but when

---

18. “Sosik ui jeonseogu” [Light Fare via Carrier Pigeon], *Seonbong* (November 1945)

19. In *Seonbong* February 1946 issue, we can see articles: “Joseon dongmu ege sagwahanda” (Apologies to Joseon Comrades) by a former reporter, Sakamoto Kikaoya; “Jaeil dongpo egeseo bonacon jeonmuneul yeogie sogachanda” (We Introduce the Petition from Koreans Residing in Japan in Its Full Text Form).

20. “Yeonhappuk ege bonaeneun samcheonmanui gyeoruimun” [The Resolution of 30 Million People to the Allied Powers], *Baengmin* (December 1945): 4.

Syngman Rhee returned to Korea and declared] “Let us come together as one to find our strength and discover our Joseon!” all the parties were united as one....[As a result] on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, more than two hundred representatives from different parties gathered for a meeting at the Joseon Hotel, and, with Syngman Rhee at the center, the Organization for Independence and Unification organized the Assembly of Central Association of Promotion of Joseon Independence.<sup>21</sup>

They convened at two o'clock on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and adopted the above mentioned resolution to send to the United Nations.<sup>22</sup> In the same issue, many articles including “Haebanghu jidoja ui sajahu” (The Post-liberation Leader’s Lion Roar) carried reprints of political platforms, meeting minutes, manifestos, and speeches. The rallies, meetings, street corner speeches, and the appeal for free discussion in those events were faithfully reprinted in the liberation-period magazines.

In the leftist magazines from North and South Korea, the presence of such resolutions and reports are especially notable. *Munhak* (*Literature*), which was Joseon munhakga dongmaeng’s (Korean Writers Alliance) official bulletin and was established in July of 1946, published drafts of resolutions (written by Im Hwa) which had been declared on February 8-9, 1946, in “Jeilhoe jeonguk munhakja daehoe gyeoljeongseo” (The Resolution of the First National Literary Conference), “Joseon munhakga dongmaeng undongsaeop gaegwan bogo” (Korean Writers Alliance’s Movement’s Report on the General Condition), and “Jeon-so ban-pasiseuteu jalgadaehoe bogo” (Report from the Soviet Anti-fascist Writer’s Conference), and Gim Taejun’s “Yeonan-haeng 1” (Travel to Yan-an 1), a type of reportage literature. In particular, it is notable that Yi Taejun’s commemorative novel *Haebang jeonhu* (*Before and After Liberation*) was subtitled “Han jakga ui sugi” (One Writer’s Account). In the July 1946 issue of North Korean Arts Alliance’s *Munhwa jeonseon* (*Frontlines of Culture*), articles such as “Gim-jangggun ui norae” (The Song of General Gim), “Gim Ilseong jangggun ui isip-gaejo jeonggang” (General Gim Ilseong’s Twenty Items of Platform), and “Gakdo yeonmaeng e butakhanda” (We Appeal to the Administrative Districts) were published, among others, most of whom discussed the doctrine of Gim

21. *Baengmin* (December 1945): 4.

22. *Ibid.*

Ilseong. We see a variety of other articles and reports.

As we see from the leftist magazines of the period, the novels were also brimming with a passion for reportage, for hearing, seeing, and documenting the state of things. But as we can see clearly in the first issue of *Baengmin*, the manifesto, resolutions, and participation records are different from general reportage. Generally speaking, reportage is “a linguistic product recording a social and historical event or phenomenon from the reporter’s own time in a realistic way.” The objective of such writing is “to report on an important event” and maintain contemporaneity (Bak 2009, 369). In reportage, the writer selectively chooses from his experience, restructures the narrative, and frankly states his thoughts and feelings, introducing “the writer’s ‘subjectivity’: in other words, the writer’s point of view and opinion vis-à-vis the object of his writing” (Bak 2009, 370). But when looking at the reportage of the liberation period, we see that there is no “writer” by whom the different experiences are organized under a single subjective position. Rather, the context, the hearsay and impression from the streets are foregrounded. Or we see the opposite tendency in which the resolutions, speeches, and declaration organized to exclude all emotional elements appear in itemized forms.

In other words, the interview-survey format appeared as a form investigating street information (through the tool of hearing-and-writing) during a time of uncertainty and transition between sovereign powers; in this sense, it was “information marked by characteristics of hearsay.” On the other hand, the resolutions, proclamations, and participation records were examples of “reportage marked by characteristics of hearsay,” in their circulation of the scenes from the streets and assemblies (through the logic of seeing-and-writing).

## **Roundtables as “Collective Reportage” with Characteristics of Hearsay**

What effect did the discursive form with characteristics of hearsay and reportage (such as the interview-survey format, resolutions, proclamations, and participation reports) have on existing discursive forms which relied on hearing-and-writing and seeing-and-writing (such as roundtables, travelogue, and reportage). If we examine the early issues of *Sincheonji* which published relatively more roundtable articles than others, we notice a few differences.

While the procedure of the roundtable from the colonial period was maintained (the presentation of the issue followed by the moderator's introductions and the introduction of the topic following the subtitle), it emerged as a form of "collective reportage" which contained hearsay, interviews, surveys, and resolutions reflecting the narrations of the state-nation. Various forms of media and humane conflicts in them were coexistent in the irresolvable structures.

Let us examine representative roundtables held in both South and North Korea. In the South, we see collective-reportage roundtables that pass on "heard" (via inquiry) experiences of "the past" of those who lived through the events. Let us examine three roundtables that appeared in *Sincheonji*'s first issue in February 1946 through its April issue of 1946. These roundtables collectively heard and passed on the emotional experiences of the near past (the colonial period and the moment of liberation) and converted the memories of the colonial period which had existed in the form of "hearsay" into "facts." To put it more specifically, these roundtables differed from colonial period roundtables in their topics of discussion, participants, methods of speech, and hearsay-aspects of the content.

Generally speaking, the topics of discussion in roundtables tend to be present-oriented in their agenda. But the roundtables that appeared in early *Sincheonji* during the liberation period dealt with recollection of the past. Since the "colonial experience" and "liberation experience" were issues from the immediate past, the emphasis was placed on how we would be "hearing" a "truthful report" about the colonial period from someone who had "experienced" it. "Gwihwan hakbyeong jinsang bogo" (The Truthful Account of Returning Student Soldiers), for instance, begins by claiming that "it is a truthful account and a behind-the-scenes report of the Japanese military,<sup>23</sup> and that the returned student soldier lays out before us all the deceit, discrimination, delusional struggle, demonic cruelty, and hell-like oppression." In the roundtable "Gusailsaeng junggyeong euro" (Narrow Escape from Death in Chongqing) which appeared in April 1946, we hear from student soldiers who were "made into a tool of war by the perverse and cruel Japanese Empire" and "forcibly dragged to the battlefield." The roundtables were held so that these student soldiers could "share their experiences that they suffered ever so arduously on the

---

23. "Gwihwan hakbyeong jinsang bogo" [The Truthful Account of Returning Student Soldiers], *Sincheonji* 1, no. 1 (February 1946): 74. From this point on, (Return page no.).

battlefield.”<sup>24</sup> As we see from the expression “the Japanese military,” Korea which existed within the framework of inner (Japan)/outer (Joseon, Taiwan, China, etc.) and under the dominion of imperial Japan, now exists within its own inner/outer boundaries where the tales of the student soldiers’ return become part of the “colonial experience of Korea.”

In the colonial period, it was common for those who could provide expertise about certain subjects, such as scholars, intellectuals, or specialists to be roundtable participants. But in the early roundtables of the liberation period, there was a “collective” appearance of student soldiers, Korean Volunteers Army, and others who may have suffered during the colonial period. The profile of the speakers, beyond detailing their professional biographies or social statuses, focused on the location where they fought. For example, some twenty student soldiers of various backgrounds were introduced in “Return” in the following order: their names, how (volunteer soldiers, exiles, and soldiers who escaped conscription) and where (Joseon, inside Japan, Yan-an, or North China) they served, and then the names of their colleges (Return 75).

These features also appear in a roundtable of soldiers from the Korean Volunteers Army who fought in General Gim Ilseong’s unit during the colonial period<sup>25</sup> and a roundtable of student soldiers who fought in China (Narrow Escape 118-24). The purpose of the roundtables of student soldiers and soldiers from the Korean Volunteers Army was to investigate the past by directly hearing how these elite young college students were forcibly dragged off to war and made to suffer in the backwoods because of imperial Japan.

Around the time when “Roundtable for Returned Student Soldiers” was held, student soldiers organized the Student Soldier Alliance and published the magazine *Hakbyeong* (*Student Soldier*) in March 1946 (Choe 2007, 469). By sharing their experiences through roundtables and written accounts, these student soldiers, who were once elite students, established the subjectivity of the “young man/student-soldier” (Choe 2007, 463) and positioned themselves as leaders of the new era (Gim 2010, 46). The young men from poor backgrounds

---

24. “Gusalsaeng junggyeong euro” [Narrow Escape from Death in Chongqing], *Sincheonji* 1, no. 3 (April 1946): 118-24. From this point on, (Narrow Escape page no.).

25. “Gim Ilseong janggun budaewa Joseon uiyonggun” [Gim Ilseong Unit and Officers of Joseon Volunteers Army], *Sincheonji* 1, no. 2 (March 1946): 230-37. From this point on, (Volunteer page no.).



who served in Gim Ilseong's unit in the Korean Volunteers Army became the independence fighters of the colonial period, and after liberation, were identified as those who would lead the post-liberation Korean society to full independence.

The collective-reportage roundtables presented these iconic victims of the colonial period as the "collective authors," shared their experiences and hearsays, and reported on them; after liberation, these roundtables became the discursive basis for "historical facts" and the formation of "complete subjectivity." Nationalism was expressed in the narrations of returned student soldiers, which has been under criticism until recently. But when we examine the experiences and impressions that they shared, we find unstable and irresolvable structures in which hearsay exists in ceaseless tension with "fact" and "subjectivity." The experiences they "reported" were marked by characteristics of specious rumor, were inspired by "hearsay," or were actually confessions that they had produced hearsay themselves.

First let us examine the "Return" of the student soldiers and members of the Korean Volunteers Army for parts whose authenticity seems questionable. Regardless of whether their statements were true or false, we should take special notice of the situational and emotional reality of the period which appeared in "Return." In response to the question about what motivated them to become student soldiers, they said, "We believed if going off to war meant Joseon's future would be brighter, then that would be fortunate" (Return 74), or claimed that they enlisted because they could no longer endure life on the run, or that they did not want to enlist but were forcibly conscripted. These statements reflect the situational and emotional complexities they faced when they were drafted. In fact, the motivation behind becoming a student soldier also included "complex causes, such as the desire for honor that would be inextricable from a successful career, or the demands of their family" (Choe 2007, 479) Again, the colonial elites didn't have other choices except for being student soldiers (that meant they might lose their lives on the battle front).

However, we should have a critical view on the repeated statements the elites made. To be more explicit, they repeatedly emphasized that the reason Japan sent student soldiers off to war was because "Joseon students would become a formidable force in the future, and, thus, the diffusing of their power by conscription was the reactionary act" (Return 74-75) and that "We believed that Japan would lose" (Return 77). But the role of the student soldiers during

the Pacific War and the level of national (*minjokjeok*) resistance the student soldiers actually managed to perform remains points of controversy.

These controversial matters are so complex that they cannot be described in a few words. For example, at the roundtable, the “Pyeongyang student soldier incident” is described as an act of resistance by student soldiers, but the motive of the student soldiers involved in the incident cannot be so simply explained. Violence erupted on June 18, 1944, when after the officer service exam, the acceptance rate of Joseon student soldiers was at a low 11%; Korean students viewed it as discrimination and blew up the Pyeongyang Division and fled from the barracks (Pyo 2002, 131-39). In other words, their acts were not primarily motivated by national resistance, but closely tied to their desire for worldly success and maintaining their own livelihood.

The student soldiers made strong complaints against the Japanese Imperial Army by making the statements such as “Koreans were superior to the Japanese in every aspect of military technique, implementation of internal affairs, and academic exams” (Return 81), and “The Japanese military treated soldiers like slaves and thought of them as completely expendable, because servicemen could be replaced when they died but weapons were harder to resupply” (Return 84). According to *Taigi no sue (The End of Cause)* written by Shiroyama Saburō, the Japanese Imperial Army, in fact, valued weapons more than human lives and thus held the disregard for human lives under the guise of service to the Emperor. It cannot be denied that some of the student soldiers, after their return, positioned themselves as imperial victims and that others were strongly inclined to make statements positioning themselves as resistant nationalists, looking to serve in the new independent nation-statehood.

However, their statements also show the disappointing situation in which they could not find a place to work or start a successful career. They suffered war cruelty and racial discrimination as well. Thus it could be said that these complaints brought about national resistance at the same time. In other words, the criticism should not be simply directed toward the student soldiers who positioned themselves as victims to be embraced into the nation-statehood after liberation. Rather, we should consider a great variety of point of views, ask how those repeated statements of returned student soldiers floated widely as hearsay and then were accepted as truth, what situations they brought about, and what kinds of situational and emotional truths they expressed.

In a time of transition when the future could not be predicted and in

situations where information was being circulated secretly, forms of media such as hearsay and flyers were particularly effective in providing information. If we examine the experiences shared in the roundtables, we see that by providing crucial information, the flyers and hearsay often played a pivotal role in deciding whether to volunteer as a student soldier, to go into exile, to escape from life as a student soldier (as well as when to escape), and to enlist in the Volunteers Army.

Heo Ho: At first, because they were going to arrest anyone who did not volunteer, and I believed they would mistreat us, I was planning to cross the border to the Soviet Union or China. But it was something that we all had to think about cautiously... When I heard through rumor about my family that my younger sibling, due to a lung ailment, was on the cusp of death and...[illegible] the...[illegible] who loved me had passed away... (Return 77; emphasis added)

Gim Myeonggun:...The cookhouse was where the officers and petty officers would speak freely so that you could hear all sorts of news. One of the government ministers said that if the Americans landed in Korea, they [the Japanese Army] would exterminate the Koreans, fearing the possibility of Koreans rioting, and one officer even said this secretly. After hearing this, we saw that we were in danger. We were prepared to kill at least three people. (Return 79; emphasis added)

The “stories they hear” when information is being shrouded in secrecy and even the most immediate future is uncertain became a signal for them to depart. The layers of what they overheard are various, including the rumor that spread throughout town about conscription, personal rumors about their family, and information which was meant to be a secret. Interestingly, what is often repeated in these retellings is how they escaped from their lives as student soldiers and enlisted with the independence movement in North China. This part is reproduced as “fact,” linking the student soldiers who were in the Japanese military with those who escaped to become part of the Korean Volunteers Army or the Eighth Route Army.

It is notable that hearsay and flyers played such a key role in motivating the student soldiers into joining the Volunteers Army. The student soldier Wang Ikgweon said he “heard the news that student soldiers who went to China fled to Chongqing or Yan-an and were contributing to the Korean independence

movement” (Return 78), and Gim Byeonghwan said “at least it was a fortunate thing that they were going to North China” and that he saw the flyer from Dongrip Joseon uiyongdan (the Joseon Independent Youth Volunteers Group), which read “Japan is losing the war” and “The Joseon people in North China firmly believe that they will be victorious within the year” (Return 80). He said he was able to draw courage from this news. They learned that when the Eight Route Army captured a Japanese prisoner, they would provide medical aid and sent them back as a spy with leaflets urging them to surrender with Koreans, they sent messages that read, “If you join the Eighth Route Army, we will give you special treatment. Many of your fellow countrymen receive superior treatment and are serving as officers. Koreans should cultivate self-awareness and work hard towards improving their skills” (Return 84).

Early liberation-period roundtables reveal media properties of hearsay through the process of listening and passing-on and documenting rumors. What is interesting is that their emphasis on the factuality of these experiences appears alongside references to episodes in which they exploited the properties of “hearsay” for their own purpose. Those who escaped from serving as student soldiers and went to join Gim Ilseong’s unit posted flyers with the message “Welcome, Organization for Young Men of Joseon!” Through this, the news that Korean men had escaped spread widely and they were able to receive aid from Chinese soldiers. The Korean defectors put on “a theater performance dramatizing their escape” (Narrow Escape 122) to show their appreciation to the Chinese soldiers and to show “the Chinese how the young men of Korea had been struggling”(ibid.). Because the “actors dramatized their own experiences” the “comrades who were playing Japanese soldiers would actually be beaten up by the comrades who were acting Joseon officers so that their faces would swell up and bleed” and because “they were not just acting [i.e., faking the fight] but acting for real, the audiences watched with sweaty palms” (Narrow Escape 122). During the roundtable, they actually referred to this process of actively producing “scenes of theater that pretended to be fact”—and in this process yet another piece of “hearsay” was produced. The experience they spoke of was a record of escape, which they showed in the form of theater to the Chinese soldiers, the narrative they shared at the roundtable, and the “collective reportage” of hearsay would be heard and passed on yet again by those who saw the roundtables.

But what is the process by which such reportage of hearsay solidifies into

facts about student soldiers? This process relies on a particular method of sharing that is distinctive about roundtables of “collective-hearsay reportage.” First, let us look at the relationship between the question and the answer. During the colonial period roundtables, the common format was the colonizer as the question provider and the colonized as the information provider. In the early liberation period roundtables, there was the format of a moderator (from the magazine) as the question provider and a student soldier or volunteer soldier as the experience provider. In the latter, the question-answer relationship is bound by the borders of “Korea,” and as “impressions” become emphasized, those who participate in the roundtables begin to forge an emotional community. For example, what is remarkable about the early liberation-period roundtables is the maximization of the emotional value in their experiences. In “Return,” the moderator asks, “When the student soldier problem first transpired, how did you feel?” (Return 74). The questions mainly focus on their state of feelings, painful stories, and discrimination: “Please tell us stories of your agonizing experiences when you were experiencing exile” (Return 77); “What kind of discrimination did you experience from the Japanese?” (Return 79). The emphasis on emotions can be found in the roundtable “Gim Ilseong janggun budae wa Joseon uiyonggun ganbu” (General Gim Ilseong’s Unit and Officers of the Joseon Volunteers Army) as well. The roundtable is given the following introduction: “We have heard about the painful struggle of the past and impressions about the first birthing kicks of Joseon after August 15<sup>th</sup>.” The moderator asks, “Tell us how you felt when you participated in the revolutionary movement” (Volunteer 230), and “Tell us about the arduous battles” (Volunteer 232). Answers to questions about motivation, state of mind, and stories of struggle are interpolated with extreme rhetoric about anti-colonial resistance and national consciousness.

An Dongyong:...Even though I was an only son, I decided that I would die for Joseon just as a Japanese person would die for Japan, and it was for this purpose that I enlisted.

.....

Gim Myeong-keun:...for over twenty months I was hiding out in the backwoods, but I finally received a letter of conscription. When I saw this, I was already determined, but my blood boiled and I was grinding my teeth. I had a definite hunch that today [the day of liberation, author’s note] would come, so afterwards, my feelings were peaceful. I’m also an only

child. (Return 75-76; emphasis added)

An Gil...For the lofty goal of our national independence, I was determined to fight to the death and stepped up.

Im Chunchu: I would fight even if it meant I would die. (Volunteer 231; emphasis added)

These emotional utterances differ in character from the utterances of the colonial period's roundtable, which sought to appropriate the order of the colonized people by utilizing the format of the roundtables that would constrain emotional expression and keep the inner lives of the participants hidden. By hearing and passing-on the emotionally magnified experiences of the colonial period, the hearsay of the student soldiers became solidified as the unified story and emerged as various fictional clichés (Gim 2010, 47). As the student soldier roundtables continued, the content and utterances became typified. In "Return," for every question the moderator asks, the student soldiers take turns answering at length from their own experience. In "Narrow Escape," the specificity of the moderator's questions and the frequent expression of his sympathy allow the interview to proceed like a natural conversation.

The questions are similar in that they inquire about the soldiers' feelings when they were going off to war, and their troubled experiences, but the questions such as "How were you treated when you joined the political party?" or "When did you begin making plans to escape?" seem to be meant for a specific kind of answer in mind (Volunteer 119-20). In the question, "According to the photographs of the Japanese army, it is said that in the territories taken over by the Japanese, the residents were cooperating with the Japanese soldiers and the zones were peaceful villages. What do you think about it?" (Volunteers 120), we see the specificity of the question, and in the answers of the student soldiers, their emphasis in the "factuality" of the story becomes stronger, and the emotional sympathy intensifies as well. After 1946, there were no roundtables in *Sincheonji* for about two years. There were two roundtables in 1948 after the establishment of the South Korean government where they looked back on liberation and tried to forecast the future: "Gwadamhoe: sinmun gija ga gyeokkeun 8.15" (Roundtable: August 15<sup>th</sup> as Experienced by Newspaper

Reporters)<sup>26</sup> and “Segyeneun eodiro gana?” (Where is the World Headed?).<sup>27</sup>

Hearsay from the streets was also introduced into the roundtables. But in “Segyeneun eodiro gana?” the roundtable brings in experts, and references a number of newspapers, magazines, and broadcast media, and in this respect it is quite distinct from the hearsay-based roundtable format which contains experiences. The roundtables that were published from this point on urged experts to cover important agenda and hear their thoughts; and this was the format that solidified the new standard.<sup>28</sup>

There are instances in which roundtables in magazines with leftist orientation or magazines launched in North Korea had hearsay that did not only restructure the past but also seek to restructure the present. At the end of the roundtable “Gim Ilseong janggun budae wa Joseon uiyonggun” (Gim Ilseong Unit and Officers of the Joseon Volunteer Army), Vice President Choe Changik’s speech, “Tongil, cheongnyeon gwa haksae, imjeong e daehan taedo” (Unification, Youth and Students’ Attitudes about the Provisional Government)<sup>29</sup> appears—one page of which was published as part of the roundtable (Volunteer 237). The format of reading out loud a declaration and resolution at the end of a mass assembly was incorporated into the roundtable. Especially in the roundtables in magazines published in North Korea, there was a tendency to convey the current situation and assertions.

For example, in *Munhwa jeonseon* (*Frontlines of Culture*) published in November 1946, which was the official bulletin for the North Korea Arts Alliance, the representative case is “Buk Joseon gakdo yesul yeonmaeng gwangyeja jwadamhoe” (Roundtable for Representatives of the North Korea Arts Alliance from all over the Country). The roundtable took place in commemoration of the second “Joint Meeting for Public Relations Members” where those involved in the cultural and arts sectors from each region gathered together.<sup>30</sup> The topic of discussion was described by An Hamkwang: “for the

26. *Sincheonji* 4, no. 7 (August 1948): 74-81.

27. *Sincheonji* 5, no. 2 (September 1948): 5-15.

28. For example, *Sincheonji* carried the themes such as inflation, currency reforms, new life, government deficit budgets, and parliamentary politics in the issues published from 1948 through 1953.

29. “Tongil, cheongnyeon gwa haksae, imjeong e daehan taedo” [Unification, Youth and Students’ Attitudes about the Provisional Government], *Sincheonji* 1, no. 2 (March 1946): 237.

30. “Buk Joseon gakdo yesul yeonmaeng gwangyeja jwadamhoe” [Roundtable for Representatives of the North Korea Arts Alliance from all over the Country], *Munhwa jeonseon* [Frontlines of Culture] (November 1946): 72. From this point on (North Korea page no.).

past year, many important issues have been raised, such as the arts movement's verification of business, self-criticism of intellectuals, issue of ...[illegible] ing arts officials, the connection between art and life that would lead to the massification of art, institutional problems, and the desires of writers, among many others" (North Korea 77).

Such comments were focused on the present conditions of various North Korean regions, rather than those of the past. As for the introduction of the roundtable participants, their individual experiences are left out; what is included instead are their duties within each region. The roundtable was loaded with the desire to report on the current field of activities that were unfolding. In this context, the subject *we* ties together each region and the predicate "I believe that" justifies the assertion being made and appeals to a sense of what ought to be done. Also the modifier "as General Gim Ilseong has said..." appears frequently

These kinds of collective-reportage roundtables present "assertions" made in meetings and assemblies; and they show the future-oriented ideology of North Korea.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, as we see in this magazine, the desire to report the "present situation" without leaving out the backwoods stems from the fact that it was in North Korea that this form of reportage was created (Bak 2009, 328)—that is, reportage that was socially critical and would function to transform reality by engaging with assemblies, the state of the people and their struggle, the activities of the party, and organizational activities.

Even after 1946, novels that functioned as various forms of field report and reportage were printed (Bak 2009, 371),<sup>32</sup> and in June of 1946, Gim Oseong set up and published his theory of reportage (Gim [1947] 1991, 373). Furthermore, the Culture and Crafts Organization would tour the entire country and produce reportage that documented arts festivals (Bak 2009, 385). In North Korea, collective reportage was a mix of assertions and on-site reports and expanded beyond the confines of the roundtable format.

The early liberation-period discursive space was formed amidst the tension

---

31. For the sake of space, I will set aside the question of roundtables in North Korea—their tendencies, speech patterns, and the power of hearsay that can produce multi-layered onsite reports that exceed any unified claim.

32. The term "reportage" was used for the first time by an on-site reporter Bak Seyeong in his article, "Hyeonji bogo-reuppeureuttaju dogong Heungnam ilgi" [On-site Reporting: Reportage, Diary from Industrial City Heungnam] in Vol. 2 of *Munhwayesul* (1948).



between hearsay and reportage. The roundtables of South Korea were collective roundtables that mixed hearsay with desire. The roundtables of North Korea were collective roundtables that mixed hearsay with assertions. These formats resonated with their respective political systems and functioned as collective acts of sharing-and-listening, creating new forms of subjectivity, but at the same time, they continued to retain a tension between reportage and hearsay that could not be structurally resolved.

### The Irresolvable Media, Hearsay

The period following Korea's liberation was a world of dichotomies. The division was temporal (colonial past vs. liberated future), spatial (North vs. South divided by the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel), and ideological (left vs. right, our side vs. their side). *Minseong* published in South Korea printed a special issue on North Korea in their January and February double-issue. In the editor's comments in the March 1947 issue, we learn that authorities had discussed discontinuing the publication, but after negotiation, decided on a memorandum.<sup>33</sup> One of the editors lamented that the retaliations between the North and South formed the valley of blood shed by the intellectuals, saying "Some in the North were seeking their revenge against the South; some in the South were trying to settle their grievances with the North. It was the blood of intellectuals that pooled in the gap between this tragic divide." Everyone (not only intellectuals) was inevitably divided in this dichotomous existence. This led to the communist witch hunt in the South and purges in the North, ultimately resulting in the Korean War; in that sense, the hearsays did eventually come to bear the weight of "fact." And what wielded the most influence in the critical moment of decision were liberation-period media and discourses which were marked by hearsay—the interviews, surveys, resolutions, speeches, participation records, roundtables, testimonies, and travelogues—that this paper explored.

Recent studies of the liberation period have analyzed the ideological dichotomy, not as left vs. right, but as moderate vs. extreme right and left.<sup>34</sup> or focused on the multi-layered process that cannot be easily explained in terms of

33. "Pyeonjiphugi" [Editor's Notes], *Minseong*, March, 1947.

34. Gilheop Gim, *Haebang ilgi* [Liberation Period Diary], Vol. 10 (Seoul: Neomeobukseu, 2015).

the post-liberation Cold War order.<sup>35</sup> This paper attempted to analyze the multi-faceted roles played by “hearsay” in media and discourse production during the liberation period. It also analyzed the rhetorical features of the “hearsay” form. First, while trying to represent one viewpoint between the left and the right, the hearsay that frequently appeared in the liberation period media and discourse contained the contradictory formats, themes, and rhetorical forms of the other side and existed in tension with it.<sup>36</sup> For example, the “liberation that was heard” which appeared in the interview-survey format, and in the resolutions, speeches, and participation records was ceaselessly heard and passed on, causing it to be destabilized and modified; this process reveals the complexity within the resulting *we* in Othering each other: I call this “the hearsay characteristic of liberation-period media and discourse.”

Second, this characteristic of hearsay entered into the roundtable format and contributed to the formation of collective memory and desire about the liberation period. In the process, roundtables about the colonial period turned into “roundtables of collective hearsay” that allowed participants to share and pass on the “colonial past”; on the other hand, roundtables about the current situations in the liberation period took the shape of “collective reportage” which propagated the assertions from the opposing parties. In the two types of roundtables, we see testimonies containing emotional rhetoric, insistence of “factuality,” and a wide range of rumors spread during the colonial period.

The collective hearsay/reportage roundtables determined what constitutes the internal identity of the *we* through the act of collectively sharing the memory and desire of the colonial period, but the discursive structure remains destabilized by the fact that hearsay and reportage are found mixed and intertwined. In other words, hearsay and fact existed in tension and were making reciprocal references, while competing with and translating (mistranslating) each other, since Korea’s division along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel line brought about the extreme dichotomization of the discourse and media characterized as left vs. right, South vs. North, and our side vs. their side. The relationship of hearing

---

35. Takeshi Fujii, *Pasijeum gwa jesamsegye sai eseo* [Between Fascism and Third Worldism], (Seoul: Yeoksabipyongsa, 2012).

36. For the further information, refer to the first issue of *Ibuk tongsin* [Dispatches from the North], and “Buk-Joseon dapsagi” [Records of a Visit to North Korea] in *Minseong* (May 1947). Comparative studies on them are needed but they are beyond our present scope.

and passing on between these different forms of hearsay sustained the inter-translational state of the destabilized and the irresolvable.

Hearsay thrives in a time of transition between sovereign powers, when the future is uncertain, when information is restricted, and when people come in contact with unfamiliar others. In such situations, confronting “the factual” can be a terrifying task. Moreover, who could say for certain what is “fact”? “Fact” is that which cannot be documented (or that which is difficult to document). Primo Levi begins *The Drowned and the Saved* with posing a question of “A story that cannot be told.” The question he raises is whether the concentration camps for Jews are something that can be documented. The news about the concentration camps began circulating from 1942: “The massacre described in the news was too enormous in terms of scale, and extremely cruel, and had complicated motives. The public tried to reject the credibility of the rumor because of its enormity” (Primo 2014, 9). According to Primo Levi (2014, 14), the reason why the news about the camps did not become more widespread was because of the German people’s “cowardliness that had seeped into their custom”; they knew about the existence of the camps, but chose to keep quiet. The criticism states that if the news could have traveled farther faster, then the worst could have been averted. In other words, the hearsay that people did not want to believe as actual would not have become “actual,” and that which people are keeping quiet about would have not needed to become “hearsay.”

If we apply Levi’s words to the context of post-liberation Korea, we might say it was an example of “cowardliness that had seeped into their ideology.” In that case, how can we overcome the effects of the multiple ideologized hearsays that are at work? Gim Dongseok, who saw the 1948 Pyeongyang talks and wrote a travelogue<sup>37</sup> about North Korea, alerts us to complicated questions regarding the social function of hearsay’s media and discourse.

So that even when people would tell me “Why don’t you go see it with your own eyes before placing a judgment” I would argue with a sense of confidence of someone who’d already seen for himself when others defamed North Korea (Gim 1948, 111; emphasis added)

---

37. Dongseok Gim, “Buk Joseon-ui insang” [Impressions of North Korea], *Munhak*, (July 1948): 111-13.

When an American asked, “North Korea must have its defects, but people who have returned from the joint meetings only talk about it positively, so what could it mean?” I answered. “It’s not because North Korea is without its flaws, but when a Korean sees how Koreans are living a social, economic and political life comparable to foreign nations, how could they bring themselves to criticize it?” It’s true...Should we be stingy with praise when calling a good thing by its name, just because we are talking about North Korea? (Gim 1948, 113; emphasis added)

Gim Dongseok, who eventually went North, was purged alongside the rest of the South Korean Labor Party. His writing about North Korea became known as one of the representative pieces of leftist hearsay about North Korea, and probably convinced many others to go north, only to end up being similarly purged. However, my motive for referencing his work is not to discuss the truthfulness of his hearsay or to critique the limits of a socialist who could not tell the difference between reality and ideal. We see another condition in the above quote in which hearsay can be believed as “fact.” Sometimes, what many people do not want to believe can become “fact.” This is not only an ideological decision but also an existential one. Without this kind of decision, hearsay is impossible, but at the same time, this kind of decision can make one mistake hearsay for “fact.” Gim Dongseok’s epigram reads, “What is ideal is real and what is real is ideal.” These words resonate within the complex context of our present question.

This paper asked the same complicated question as Gim Dongseok’s poses for us, through the hearsay characteristics of liberation-period media and discourse. How can we construct the kind of hearsay that can effect multiple transformations of a command given by a sovereign power, the kind of hearsay that can go back and forth across existential and ideological axis to create ceaseless questioning and produce an irresolvable discursive structure? I think this is possible by reading liberation-period media and discourse marked by the instability of diverse desires expressed in the process of inter-translational back-and-forth of hearsay and fact, and by capturing the expressions, desires, and emotions inherent in the hearsay that constitutes the multiple *we’s*.

## References

- Bak, Chansik. 1947. "Buk-Joseon dapsagi" [Records of a Visit to North Korea]. *Minseong* (May): 14-17.
- Bak, Jeongseon. 2009. "Haebanggi munhak undong gwa reuporeutaju munhak" [Cultural Movement in the Liberation Period and Reportage Literature]. *Simunhak* 106: 369-92.
- Bak, Nogap. (1946) 1988. "Yeoksa" [History]. In *Haebang gonggan ui munhak 1* [Literature of the Liberation Period 1], edited by Seonghwan Gim and Sin Beomsun, 35-37. Seoul: Dolbegae.
- Choe, Deokgyo. 2004. "Daeguseo naon sisajonghapji geon-guk gongnon" [Current Affairs Magazine *Geon-guk gongnon* from Daegu]. In vol. 3 of *Hanguk-japji Baengnyeong*, edited by Deokgyo Choe, 448-53. Seoul: Hyeonamsa.
- Choe, Jihyeon. 2007. "Hakbyeong ui gieok gwa gukga: 1940nyeonda hakbyeong ui jwadamhoe ui sugi leul jungsim euro" [Memory of Student Soldiers and the Nation: 1940s Roundtables of Student Soldiers and their Memoirs]. *Hangukmunhakyongu* 32: 459-86.
- Fujii, Takeshi. 2012. *Pasijeum gwa jesamsegye sai eseo* [Between Fascism and Third Worldism]. Seoul: Yeoksabipyongsa.
- Gim, Dongseok. 1948. "Buk Joseon ui insang" [Impressions of North Korea]. *Munhak* (July): 111-33.
- Gim, Gihyeop. 2011. *Haebang ilgi* [Liberation Period Diary]. Vol. 10. Seoul: Neomeobukseu.
- Gim, Namcheon. (1945-1946) 2007. "1945nyeong 8wol 15il" [August 15, 1945]. In *Jakgadeul* [Writers], edited by Uihwan Yi, 57-58. Incheon: Incheon jakgahoeui.
- Gim, Oseong. (1947) 1991. "Bogo tongsin munhakjeok munje" [Issues Concerning Reportage Literature]. In *Haebang gonggan ui bipyeong munhak 3* [Critical Literature in the Liberation Period 3], edited by Gihwan Song and Gim Oegon, 373. Seoul: Taehaksa.
- Gim, Saryang. 1946-1947. *Noma malli* [Ten Thousand li on a Slow Horse]. *Minseong*. Serialized from March 1946 to July 1947.
- Gim, Taejun. 1946. "Yeonan-haeng 1" [To Yan-an 1], *Munhak* (July): 187-96.
- Gim, Yaerim. 2010. "Chian, beombeop, talju geurigo yi modeun satae ui jeonhu: hakbyeong romang euroseoui cheongchun geukjanggwa

- ahrown” [Public Order, Violation of Law, Escape, and the Context of these Situations: “Theatre of Youth” and Trilogy of “Ahrowun” as Student Soldiers’ Roman]. *Daejungseosayeongu* 24: 43-77.
- Jeong, Jinseok. 2009. “Haebanggi sidaesa yeongu ui gichojaryo” [Basic Sources for Liberation Period Research]. In *Haebanggi ganhaeng doseo chongmongrok* 1945-1950 [Total Catalogue of Readings from Liberation Period: 1945-1950], edited by Yeongsik O, 5-8. Seoul: Somyeongchulpan.
- Jeong, Seontae. 2012. “Ppira: maeche e matseoneun maeche—haebang jikhu soseol eul tonghae bon jeongchihak” [Flyers: A Medium that Confronts Media—the Politics of the Flyer through Novels from the Immediate Post-liberation Period]. *Seoganginmunnonchong* 35: 5-31.
- Kobayasi, Soumei. 2005. “Soren senryōki Kitachōsen ni okeru kaihō ibento” [Liberation Events in North Korea during the Soviet Occupation]. In *8-gatsu 15-nichi no shinwa: shūsen kinenbi no media-gaku* [Mythology of August 15—Media on the Anniversary of the End of World War II], edited by Takumi Satō and Anseok Son, 142-70. Tōkyo: Chikuma shobo.
- Levi, Primo. 2014. *The Drowned and the Saved*. Translated by Soyeong Yi. Seoul: Dolbegae.
- O, Yeongsik. 2009. “Uhujuksun ui boseokdeul” [Jewels among Sprung up Shoots after the Rain]. In *Haebanggi ganhaeng doseo chongmongrok* 1945-1950 [Total Catalogue of Readings from Liberation Period: 1945-1950], edited by Yeongsik O, 9-31. Seoul: Somyeongchulpan.
- Pyo, Yeonsu. 2002. “Ilje malgi byeongryeok dongwon jeongchaek ui jeongae wa Pyeongyang hakbyeong sageon” [The Process of Late Colonial-Period Policy of Military Mobilization and the Pyeongyang Student Soldiers Incident]. *Hanilminjokmunjeyeongu* 3: 131-48.
- Sakamoto, Kikaoya. 1945. “Joseon dongmu ege sagwahanda” [Apologies to Joseon Comrades]. *Seonbong* (February): 41-45.
- Satō, Takumi. 2005. *8-gatsu 15-nichi no shinwa: shūsen kinenbi no media-gaku* [Mythology of August 15—Media on the Anniversary of the End of World War II]. Edited by Takumi Satō and Anseok Son. Tōkyo: Chikuma shobo.
- Shin, Ji-young. 2015. “Sseuyeojin geot gwa malhaejin geot: ‘ijung coneo’ geul sseugi e natanan tongyeok, daehwa, goyumyeong” [What is Written and What is Said: Translation, Dialogues, and Proper Nouns in Multi-glossic Escripiture]. *Minjokmunhaksayeongu* 59: 407-64.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2016. "Plurality-in-Time and Ethnic Conflicts Found in Pre-and Post-1945 Rumors: Departures and Returns in the Short Stories of An Hoenam and Yeom Sangseop." *Sai Gan Sai* 21 : 81-132.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Forthcoming. "Kikoetekita' Kaihō: Uwasa ni arawareta Fukusū no Jikansei to Izoku to Kattō" [Heard Liberation: Plurality-in-Time and Ethnic Conflict in Rumors]. In vol. 5 of *Shirizu sengo Nihon o yomikaeru dai go kan* [Re-reading Post-war Japan], *Higashi Ajia no naka no sengo Nihon* [Post-war Japan in East Asia], edited by Hideto Tsuboi. Kyoto: Rinsen shoten.
- Shiroyama, Saburō. 1975. *Taigi no sue* [The End of Cause]. Tokyo: Kadokawa.
- Yi, Taejun. 1946. *Soryeon gibaeng* [Travelogue of the Soviet Union]. Gyeongseong: Joseon munhwa hyeophoe [Joseon Association of Culture] and Joseon munhakga hyeophoe [Joseon Association of Literary Writers].
- Yim, Byeongcheol. 1945. "Changganho leul naemyeonseo" [Editorial Comments on the First Issue]. *Minseong* (December): 2.

---

**SHIN Ji-young** (jyshin1881@yonsei.ac.jp) received her PhD in Korean literature from Yonsei University and her second PhD in comparative literature in East Asia at Hitotsubashi University in Japan. She is now an assistant professor at the Institute of Korean Studies at Yonsei University. She is the author of *The Age of Ab-sense* (2012), *Minority Commune* (2016), and numerous articles. Her research includes the colonial encounters and contacts among racial, ethnic, and social groups from the end of the colonial period to the immediate post-Liberation period.

## Abstract

What did the postcolonial mean in Korea? Focusing on the transitional period between the end of the Japanese colonial period and the establishment of the Cold War system, this paper explores a variety of discursive and media spaces—hearsay, rumors, leaflets, rallies, reportage, and roundtable talks—through which Koreans attempted to translate and transform colonial forms of language and interaction into new postcolonial entities. By examining immediate post-Liberation publications like *Baengmin*, *Munhwa Joseon*, *Joseon munhak*, *Munhak yesul*, *Sincheonji*, *Minseong*, and others, I ask the following questions. First, how were Japanese forms of language and interaction translated into Korean within this intermediate historical space? Second, how did this process of translation intersect with the rapid postcolonial proliferation of alternative media and discursive spaces like hearsay, rumors, leaflets, rallies, reportage, and roundtable talks? Third, to what extent did these new forms of interaction and address operate within the temporal (past vs. future), spatial (south vs. north), and ideological (left vs. right or our side vs. their side) frameworks and clashes? By asking these questions, I hope to show how the meaning of the postcolonial in Korea was formed through a dynamic process of translation where the boundaries of the new and the old, the true and the false, and the political left and right crisscross.

**Keywords:** hearsay, fact, reportage, interview-survey format, assertion, roundtable