

Article

The Public Sentiment of Korean Local Community in Bak Gyeongni's *Land*

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Introduction

In the late nineteenth Korea threw its door open to the world, and foreigners from many other Western countries came to Korea. They were members of different professions—diplomats, missionaries, doctors, journalists, merchants, and so on. Western foreigners observed Korea from their own viewpoints and wrote the things they witnessed, not only the culture and customs, but the politics and social systems as well. These records left by foreigners help to understand Korea and Korean people better.

For all the differences in these various records, there were several things in common. First of all, Western foreigners all agreed that corruption in government was so serious that Korean people really suffered from it. Hulbert (1906, 51), who wrote *The Passing of Korea*, criticizes the buying and selling of official: “Public offices were bought and sold like any other goods. There was a regular schedule of the price of offices. . . . Of course this was a direct tax upon the people.” He specially emphasized squeezing the people from the government official, a pack of wolves whose business is to fleece the people (ibid. 53).

Another thing commonly commented upon in their texts is social inequality in Korea. Griffis (1897, 238) in his *Corea, the Hermit Nation* wrote that hierarchy of Korean social status system, the ladder of which had “four rungs,” had very ancient roots: “The forms of Korean society, to this day, are derived from feudal ranks and divisions, and the powers, status, divisions, and practical politics of the nobles have their roots in the ancient feudalism.” It could be said that to the eyes of Westerners who came from already modernized countries, these systems of Korean society appeared unreasonable: “Its fruit and legacy are seen in the serfdom or slavery which is Corea’s ‘domestic’ or ‘peculiar’ institution” (ibid. 238).

Westerners also commonly criticised the low legal status of Korean women and their isolation. The author of *Korea, and Her Neighbors* Isabella Bishop (1897, 115) wrote: “Absolutely secluded in the inner court of her father’s house from the age of seven, a girl passes about the age of seventeen to the absolute seclusion of the inner rooms of her father-in-law’s house. The old ties are broken, and her husband’s home is thenceforth her prison.”

Although foreigners expressed negative views of Korean government and social systems, they commonly agreed upon the “kind-heartedness” of the Korean people. For Hulbert (1906, 37), “another striking characteristic” of

the Korean is hospitality: “The guest is treated with cordial courtesy, whatever differences of opinion there may be or may have been between them.” Savage-Landor (1895, 281) witnessed that Koreans help each other when emergency time: “. . . when a man’s house has been burnt out it is no uncommon occurrence for friends or even strangers to put him up and feed him in their own homes until he has re-constructed his nest.”

Also, many Westerners saw that the Koreans themselves were very talented and capable in studying, especially, in learning foreign languages: “they always struck me as being extremely intelligent and quick at acquiring knowledge. To learn a foreign language seems to them quite an easy task” (Savage-Landor 1891, 291). Bishop (1897, 13) agreed that “the foreign teachers bear willing testimony to their mental adroitness and quickness of perception, and their talent for the rapid acquisition of language.”

As seen above, Westerners observed Korea with their strange eyes and in their writings are found many facts which are not seen through the eyes of customary. However, if Westerners looked at Korea and Korean people from the viewpoint of the outsider, this article will study Koreans and their inner lives through observing of Bak Gyeongni’s novel *Land*.¹ *Land* is one of the most outstanding novels to represent the communal life of Korea in detail. In this article Korean people will be watched through the public sentiment of the local community in *Land*, in the hope that such a study will add to understanding of them.

Main Issues

The setting of *Land* is Pyeongsa-ri village, in the center of which stands Choichampan-daek (The House of Vice-Minister Choi). *Land* is famous for its vivid description of people’s actual lives, however, it is “not a study of the lives of individual characters, but of the communal life of the people living in this place” (Gim 2016, 42). What is special about this novel is the way people gathers to form a community; that is, for instance, Duman-ne, Imi-ne, Gangcheong-daek, and other women in the village are described as having their own individuality,

1. *Land* is the English translation of the first part of Bak Geongni’s *Toji* 土地 (literally, “earth and land”), which consists of five parts.

but “when they gather together, a new character is created out of the group of village people (*masilkkun*)” (Yi 1998, 48). Likewise, *Land*, with its many different characters, creates a new character out of the community, and this newly formed community has its own communal opinion, which is closely relates to the long history of Korea and its own customs.

Jeong & Han

Jeong 情 is a distinctively Korean emotion which arises among people who have lived together for a long time. Living together and caring for each other draws forth this kind of affection, which Koreans shared and in which they find their emotional satisfaction. Thus, *jeong* is Korean's own special form of affection, so that, “if one cannot understand the emotion of *jeong* it is impossible to understand and communicate with Korean” (H. Bak 2009, 109).² Through their long history, the Korean people have come to realize that sharing *jeong* allows people to live together more harmoniously and affluently.

If *jeong* is a kind of affection, which is shared with the members of the community, this *jeong* is showed by the servants in *Choichampan-daek* when the servant Gucheon runs away with Lady of *byeoldang*, who stays in the separate house. In traditional Korean society, rule for the married woman of the higher classes was so strict that she was almost secluded in the house. So, if she runs away with a servant, it is a serious attack to the laws. However, the servants in *Choichampan-daek* hesitate to blame two lovers:

Loyalty to their master required them to feel hate and anger for this immoral couple who had gone after bringing disgrace on the long and illustrious history of the house...yet their emotions could not be pinned down to this one area of hatred or rage, for some indescribable pain or anxiety still remained in their minds... (Land 1:37)³

The servants hesitate because they share *jeong* with them and have sympathy for them. So, “the feelings of the servants might be summed up as a conflict

between gloom on behalf of their master's house and despair for the couple” (ibid.).

In this situation, it is Gwinyeo rather than the two lovers they criticized because her emotion is not in harmony with theirs: “her elated manner, as if fanning the flames of a house already on fire, was disagreeable to them” (Land 1:37). Emotion is natural thing, so in itself cannot be said good or bad. However, when this emotion coincides with certain situations it is considered good emotion, in other words, “morally harmonious emotion” (Yi 2011, 49), when it does not—bad emotion. In this situation, Gwinyeo's emotion does not accord with the others' and creates disharmony with them.

Then, Samwol blamed Gwinyeo as cold heartedness:

No one could say it was right. Their sin deserves death...but the way that bitch Gwinyeo carries on I just wonder how any human heart could be so cold...Whatever the rights and wrong of it, she was the one who waited on the Young Mistress, wasn't she?... (Land 1:38)

Samwol criticized Gwinyeo as coldness, that is, “lack of *jeong*.” *Jeong* is a kind of warm emotion, so, when *jeong* is deficient, it is expressed as cold heartedness. It is expected to share the *jeong* among the members of community, beyond right or wrong, but when this expectation is not fulfilled, one feels coldness, that is, “lack of *jeong*”: “if Western people enumerated improper behavior and criticized it with reason, Koreans interpreted this as ‘lack of *jeong*’” (Choi 1993, 12). In *Land* people expect Gwinyeo to have sympathy with Young Mistress, whom she waited on, but her behavior does not satisfy this expectation.

If *jeong* is the affection that comes from the act of caring for each other in general, there is some kind of feelings which spring from conflicts and their reconciliations. In fact, it is almost inevitable to have a conflict among people within the community, and when troubles arise between members of a community, some kind of closeness comes into being through their processes of reconciliation. Korean people considered this kind of feeling as *jeong*, calling it *miun jeong*. For instance, sharing ritual food offers a good chance for reconciliation.

In *Land*, after the service on Memorial Day, Gangcheong-*daek* shares ritual food with her neighbor. Then a neighbor woman said:

2. The author of this article translated the citations into English.

3. The citation in the text is taken from English translation (Tennant 2015). However, transcriptions of proper nouns are somewhat changed according to instruction.

"By the way...you won't miss out Imi-ne, will you?"

"However you may have fallen out with her, you must never be unkind with food."

"Neighbors are cousins,' as they say. You can't finish with her in a day..."
(*Land* 2: 471)

In this phrase "neighbors are cousins" (*iutsachon*), it is implied that the neighbor is considered to be the same as family with whom we live together not for "a day," but to the grave. If there is any trouble between neighbors, it must be solved as soon as possible. So, the neighbor suggests not to miss out Imi-ne. And Imi-ne also tries reconciliation, but Gangcheong-daek is not prepared yet, so refuses to compromise: "As she emptied the bowl, Imi-ne tried to make conversation about this and that as a gesture of good-will, but Gangcheong-daek never once opened her mouth until she had piled up all the empty bowls in her basket and turned to go" (ibid.).

Meanwhile, Koreans take it for granted that, when the *jeong* goes, then the *jeong* comes. That is, Koreans take it for granted that, when receiving something, then they have to give anything in return for it. Like this, with its concept of "giving and receiving," Korean people consider sharing of *jeong* important. And it is blamable if it has not been done properly. In *Land*, it is Imi-ne and her husband who are criticized as not properly doing "giving and receiving":

"I'd want nothing more in the world if only I had Imi-ne's sacrificial food! How on earth can she be so mean?...As they say, 'Even love is give and take.' If you want to receive you have to give.

"Husband and wife are just the same. I've never known anyone who had a drink from Imi's father."
(*Land* 1:201)

If this rule of customs "giving and receiving" is well observed, one takes the *insim* (human heartedness). It is good *insim*, which makes "warm and good" relations among members of the community.⁴ When the sharing of *jeong* is

being done properly, then the *insim* is got. But, if it is not being done properly, the *insim* is lost. In *Land* Imi-ne and his husband are the ones who do not take good *insim*. The fact that one fails to take the *insim* does not mean that one is excluded from the community. However, "the negative effect of losing *insim*, which is expressed as indifference and coldness, is very serious in times of emergency" (Gim 1982, 135). Because Imi-ne fails to have the good *insim*, she is afraid of being forced into suicide when her husband Chilseong is arrested for murder: "'What shall I do? What shall I do?' As she walked up and down inside she felt as though the villagers would come rushing up to demand that she also must put a rope round her neck" (*Land* 2:578-79). And she leaves the village with her children stealthily in the night.

However, *jeong* is an emotion prior to judgement, so, when one has the *jeong* relation, one does not suffer "complete ostracism" because the memories can be forgotten but *jeong* remains in people's mind. So, as time goes by, Duman-ne recollects Imi-ne, who, although "vindictive and greedy," "willingly... had helped when there was work to be done," and regrets that she "had not given her as much as a word of comfort" (*Land* 2:599). And, when Imi-ne returns with her children after so many hardships, the Pyeongsa-ri community accepted them.

This process of acceptance is expressed through *bap* (boiled rice). *Bap* is more than food in Korea because people think *jeong* is contained in *bap*. Korean people consider sharing *bap* as sharing *jeong*. In *Land* the collective acceptance of Imi-ne is represented as giving her "much" *bap*: "Duman-ne, filling the bowls with rice and passing them on, did Imi-ne's with extra care, pressing it down and heaping another scoop on the top" (*Land* 2:636).

However, the most peculiar thing about *jeong* of Koreans is its limitlessness. The good affection can be found among the members of community who have been living together for a long time everywhere in the world. But specialty of Korean *jeong* exists in its openness. *Jeong* does not exclude the outsider and can be shared with strangers to the community. So, when Gucheon appears to them "one day," servants in Choichampan-daek feel affection toward him: "One rare occasion he would smile gently...it was a warm and friendly smile...Because of this, not only the girls but even his male colleagues felt for him a strange kind of affection" (*Land* 1:18).

Also, *jeong* can be shared with anyone, regardless of social status. Lady Yun shares *jeong* regardless of social standing with the people, who have kept her

4. Good *insim* is translated as "not only maintaining proper relation with others, but infusing them with a certain amount of warmth and good will as well" (Brandt 1971, 144).

from suicide and helped her to be delivered of a baby: "Who were the people she had loved? There were Doctor Mun, Wolseon's mother and Bau and his wife. She had loved them and had not felt the class barriers" (*Land* 2:662). Doctor Mun is from the middle class, Wolseon's mother is a shaman, and even Bau and his wife are Lady Yun's servants. Despite of their low social status, Lady Yun shared warm affection with them.

Even *jeong* takes its shape from our relations with non-human beings, such as objects and nature. For example, for Yi Dongjin the reason for leaving the country for a great duty comes from *jeong* to the "hills and rivers" in Korea:

"...I have a question...your reason for crossing the river—is it for the sake of the people? Or the king?"

.....
"It would be hard to say for the people—or for the king."

... "If you insist on an answer, perhaps I could say, for the sake of these hills and rivers of ours?" (*Land* 2:511)

Being the novel birth, it would be a lie if Yi Dongjin were to sacrifice himself for commoners. Nor would it be wise for him to do so for a monarchy whose system is already old and out of date. So he answers in terms of the natural surroundings of the land of Korea in which are contained not only the king but nobles and commoners all together.

Han 恨, a kind of emotion similar to sadness, is likewise Koreans' own. *Han* is concerned with the fate of humans considered as limited beings who are born as incomplete. About this sense of *han*, the author of the novel remarks: "*Han* is rooted in the tragic fate of all living things who have to die from birth" (Bak 1994b, 42). So everyone in the world has his or her own *han* and every character in *Land* has his or her *han*, too.

Han, "rooted in tragic fate," appears as the emotion of darkness and sorrow, which can become clear and bright if one treats *han* well. That is, with *han*, one person becomes darker and sadder, but another clearer and brighter—a difference which "depends on how they mitigate their *han*" (Cheon 1995, 192). The love of Yong-i and Wolseon represents *han* in *Land*. Yong-i and Wolseon love each other, but they cannot be united in marriage because Wolseon is a daughter of the shaman. The *han* that issues from their unfulfilled love is expressed as "tears":

"You are the thorn that is stuck in my throat..."

Pulling her into his arms, he rubbed his face against her. As their tears joined in one stream, their bodies became one and, floating higher and higher they performed the ritual of a tragic love that could not be undone for all eternity. (*Land* 1:100)

Wolseon, born as a shaman's daughter, is the woman who "would have wept with a piercing sorrow even more severe than the penetrating chill of the temple hall" (ibid. 95). For Yong-i, who loves her, Wolseon is "the thorn" in his throat, that is, pain and suffering. Although their love is not realized, they accept the suffering which derives from their unfortunate fate. To mitigate the *han*, they shed tears, and these tears purify the *han* inside their minds.

In traditional Korean society there's no secret among the village people which cannot be told, because everybody knows other's business as his own. So, the love affair of Yong-i and Wolseon is known to people when Imi-*ne* witnessed it. However, unexpectedly, when it is revealed, people criticize not the two lovers but Imi-*ne* who announces their relation:

"Then where did it start from? Has someone with nothing better to do been staying up all night to spy on other people's love affairs?"

"They say it was Imi-*ne* that saw her. At dawn on her way back from the privy."

"Even if she did, she could have kept it to herself. Why does she have to make such a noise about it? She is uncommonly wicked herself..."

(*Land* 1:167-68)

Public sentiment is sympathetic to their fateful love because other members of the community knew their *han*, too. So, like the servants of Choichampan-*daek* who criticized Gwinyeo rather than the runaway lovers, the people in village blamed Imi-*ne* who speaks the fact already known to everybody as "uncommonly wicked."

Also, Gucheon, who was born from extramarital and became a servant in mother's house, has deep-rooted *han* in his mind. He emits his *han* with weeping, the sound of which is like "someone's heart being torn apart" (*Land* 1:21). Hearing his weeping, the servant says: "He must have some great sorrow'... 'How could anyone weep like that if he didn't have some great sorrow eating up his bones'" (ibid. 22).

Pyeongnsan, “the fallen gentleman,” who “now reduced to a level no better than that of the market traders” (*Land* 1:65) has *han* too. Pyeongsan is not treated like a gentleman by the people in the village, however, not because “he was from a lower rank of the gentry, but...he went around with outcasts, setting up gambling dens and disgracing the dignity of the gentry” (ibid. 178). Although ignored by the village people, he manages to get along. However, when he visits Chisu in Choichampan-*daek*, Pyeongsan has the feeling of inferiority: “Choi Chisu’s birth, his wealth, his knowledge, and his arrogance—all these became a great lump...he felt he became smaller and smaller” (ibid. 233). Eventually, when he retreats from the house, then, his *han* comes out: “If the waitress at the tavern insulted him, he just smiled. Beaten up by a gang of gamblers, after a fit of screaming, it ended there. Whenever he felt contemptuous eye aimed at him in the village, he just snorted and that was that. But now coming out of the Choichampan *daek*’s house, his eyes were filled with tears of sorrow” (ibid. 234).

Therefore, as an immortal being, everyone in this world has his own *han*. However, if the mitigation of *han* is an inner work, emitting it outside is expressed in Korean traditional customs as summoning dead souls and soothing them to emit their *han*. In *Land*, this *hanpuri* is represented when Bongsun plays *gunmori*, play of shaman ritual as a kind of “street exorcism”: “Spirit of the one who starved to death! Spirit of the one who killed by smallpox!...Spirit of the one who stabbed to death!...Spirit of the one who died wandering to and fro!” (*Land* 1:31). These souls lived unhappy life and died with *han* in their mind. So, shaman, who can communicate with the spiritual world, called them to soothe their mind.

This act of summoning dead soul is represented in *Land* by Wolseon-*ne* “the only true sorceress” among many shamans: “Wolseon-*ne* had long arms. As she raised them, trident in the right hand, bells and fan in the left, and circled the courtyard, people held their breath, awed by her authority” (*Land* 2:437). The bell and the fan in her left hand call the dead soul by sound and by wind. A trident in her right hand indicates the location of her to which the soul can descend. And the “long arms” of Wolseon-*ne* bring the spirit world closer, which closely relates Korean religious ritual.

Traditionally, Koreans sanctified all things in nature because people thought everything in the universe had a soul. While Koreans hold all of the nature sacred, they grant more holiness to the high mountain and the giant tree

because they believed that through them the spheres of earth and heaven united.

In the very act of praying in the mountains or tying cloth to the trees was an expectation of communicating with other world contained. According to the author of *Land*, “sanctifying the old tree with its spirituality, they expected to communicate with other world” (Bak 1994a, 249). That is, the very expectation of communication with another world is the true meaning of Korean’s *han*.

Gwonseonjing-ak

Gwonseonjing-ak (encouraging the good, punishing the evil 勸善懲惡) is the ethical idiom for encouraging good deeds and avoiding evil. *Gwonseonjing-ak* means that if one does good he deserves blessing and that if one does bad, he deserves punishment. But it is not proper to say that *gwonseonjing-ak* is realized in our world because it is more often true that the bad live well while the good suffer. Then is *gwonseonjing-ak* meaningless? No. Although it may look like the bad live well, Koreans believe that the good will be blessed in the end. And this belief in the idea of *gwonseonjing-ak* can be seen in the public mind. Traditionally, Korean people considered evil as inner trait or a state of mind. In *Land* this kind of evil above all is found in Gwinyeo, of whom Bongsun-*ne* thinks as “an evil and malicious girl she always wants to harm someone” (*Land* 1:37). Gwinyeo, bearing a grudge about her social status in her mind, tricks Lady of *byeoldang*, whom she serves:

“Make other people tear and one day it will be your turn! I know all about it. You lured Gucheon into meeting the mistress pretending you cared about her!”

“May I be struck by lightening!”

“Shut up. Then you went to her ladyship to inform on them. Such wickedness!”
(ibid. 30)

“Make other people tear and one day it will be your turn” is the saying, which means, if a person does bad things to others, he will be punished to the same degree or more. And the lightening bolt is considered the most severe punishment from heaven. In her answer, Gwinyeo confesses her sin to be very serious.

Korean proverb “he who steals a pin will steal an ox” means that wrongdoing begins with a small scale but becomes big business. This evil trait of Gwinyeo,

which did harm to her Lady, grows to do harm to Choichampan-*daek*. Also, another two, Pyeongsan and Chilseong, who participate in her plot, show their evil trait before committing the crime.

Chilseong is the man of meanness, who is “not the sort of man who would put up with the loss of a penny” (*Land* 1:215). He tries to skip out without paying a bill in a tavern:

“Let’s get out of here. Come on!”

Chilseong hurriedly stood up, taking Pyeongsan by the arm. Even though they were sober...pretending to be completely intoxicated and leaving not a penny on the table...They carried on like this...swaggering this way and that in a shameful imitation of drunkenness. (ibid. 218)

In this scene the behavior of Chilseong and Pyeongsan imitating drunken men makes a picture as ugly as their minds. And, this malicious behavior of theirs, which takes a poor tavern woman’s money, becomes the bigger plot to steal the property of Choichampan-*daek*.

Above that, Pyeongsan, who kills Choi Chisu later, has violent inclination. His *han* as a fallen gentlemen combined with his bad temper appears as violence. So, when he hears his son is suspected as a thief, he is infuriated: “...whether or not beans had been stolen was not the point...There could never be any question of setting up a dispute between a gentleman and a commoner” (*Land* 1:320). He comes to the Makttal-*ne*, from whom became the talk, and hits her berserk: “Pyeongsan kicked her as she ran. She fell to the ground, bleed pouring from her nose...Those who had gathered round turned away from him as if to avoid a mad dog” (ibid. 321).

However, in this action of village people to avoid him, evil is sensed as somewhat material, or somewhat spatial. Traditionally, people consider evil as something unclean, or a kind of spot, which spreads on the whole community and makes it dirty. So, people avoid contact with dirtiness for fear of infection of the evil, and it becomes the beginning of ethical awareness: “...regarding evil as dirtiness, people thought evil as fearful thing which have to be avoided” (S. Bak 2009, 24).

Another person who is avoided from the village people is Jo Jun-gu, “a gentleman of Seoul in the new style” (*Land* 1:126). Being Korean, he follows Western custom as the Japanese do, and wears “a dark western suit with hat

and shoes to match” (ibid. 126). With his Western custom he looks like a black spot among the people of traditional white clothes, so people disagree with him: “‘Dreadful. A crow would call him uncle!’ ‘A swallow would call him grandad!’ Giggles all round” (ibid.); “village girls coming back from gathering mulberry leaves, seeing Jun-gu, hurriedly turned into side lanes, taking him to be Japanese” (ibid. 137).

The very evil of Jo Jun-gu is “falsehood.” So, the servants do not welcome him when he lives in Choichampan-*daek* as a hanger-on, on their own account: “...the servants also, not only because they sensed that their employers did not welcome him, but on their own account, saw him as disagreeable” (*Land* 1:179-80). However, although unwelcomed in Choichampan-*daek*, “once out of his cousin’s sight, he became a dignified and benign nobleman from Seoul” (ibid. 178). He made great efforts to be friendly with the farmers in the village. Now he wears hemp as fine as the wings of dragon-flies made by Bongsun-*ne*, drinks the rice wine suggested by the people even “sacrificing his obsession with cleanliness,” and says the words easy to hear. So “the village people, who at first had been cautious of him with his western-style clothes...began to fell friendly towards him for his pleasant and kindly way of speaking” (ibid.).

But these false words and behavior of his are soon revealed when Chisu is killed at his instigation and he occupies his place in Choichampan-*daek*. Then people hate him:

(Hum, like a cuckoo in the nest)

...It was an intuitive and fierce hatred...and gradually the villagers too turned against Jo Jun-gu. To them his words sounded like exaggerations and his supposed high social standing pretentions, and they began to treat him as no more than a mere hanger-on at the House. (*Land* 2:609-10)

Jo Jun-gu is the most prominent evil character in *Land* because his falsehood is the external form of evil, which is produced by “a misdirected passion.” The wicked deed of his reaches the climax when he made Samsu, who saved his life, killed. About this the author says:

Poor Samsu...he had committed wicked deeds without understanding the nature of wickedness...A really wicked person avoids another wicked one for he knows the workings of wickedness...However, ultimately the wickedness is foolishness for wickedness is a product of a misdirected

passion...and so fundamentally it is stupidity dressed up in false garments.
(*Land* 3:1130)

Thus, if evil appears in various shapes, *seon* (good 善) has no form because *seon* is the thing that cannot exist in empirical world. And if the existence of *seon* can be sensed, it is sensed “not by reason but by mysterious intuition” (Nam 1992, 76). This mysterious intuition above all can be found in Bongsun-*ne*, a good minded person who has a mysterious intuition and capacity to see a vision. In her vision the late grandfather shows up and says to her: “Bongsun’s mother, I am grateful. Why did you border with grave clothes for a useless old creature like me?” (*Land* 1:36). And, it is Bongsun-*ne* who senses instinctively that Gwinyeo is somehow involved with the death of Choi Chisu and advises to Lady Yun to inquire of her:

It was not that this ordinary good-natured woman had any great reasoning powers or keenness of judgement: it was simply intuition and instinct, like the way in which an animal can feel the presence of an enemy. (*Land* 2:566)

Mysterious intuition also is revealed in Lady Yun, the head of the Pyeongsa-*ri* community, in the form of a capacity to sense evil: “her sensitive intuition for dishonesty” (*Land* 2:657); “Lady Yun was a landlord more generous than any others and never excessively exploited her subjects but if anyone was arrested under her sensitive intuition for dishonesty, everyone knew he would be dealt with mercilessly, more so than with any other landlord” (ibid.).

If a keen sense of dishonest and the punishment appropriate to it are among the tasks of leadership, this capacity is found in little Seohui, too. In *Land*, Seohui uses violence three times. The first is spitting at Gwinyeo, who had been teasing Seohui and Samwol after Gucheon and Lady of *byeoldang* leave; the second is beating Geobok, who hits Bongsun, with her shoe; and the third is wielding a horsewhip against Samsu, who tells dirty jokes to Hong-*ssi* in front of the storehouse in where her mother was kept:

Her eyes were blood-shot. She picked up the horse whip...
“Fiend!”

Carried away in talking lewdly about the Lady of *byeoldang* with base smiles, Samsu felt a sharp pain and turned.
(*Land* 3:838)

It is true that Seohui’s acts are violent, but they do have some excuses. In the first case, the action is undertaken to protect the dignity of herself and her mother. In *Land*, “Seohui is the person who has the strong will to protect her dignity” (Yi 1998, 21). It is also true that when she spits at Gwinyeo, she disgraces another’s dignity to protect her own. But it is soon purified by Bongsun-*ne*: “Bongsun-*ne*’s eyes were stern. ‘That was a naughty thing to do. You mustn’t spit, even at animals. If her ladyship knew, she would call it bad manners and tell me off’” (*Land* 1:43). In the second case, her action is performed for the benefit of another. She beats Geobok because he unfairly insults Bongsun and hits her. And, in the third case, when punished, Seohui does not care her own security and profit: “But what meant far more than his almost being beaten to death was that Seohui had been ready to strike Madam Hong...If the story leaked it would be a serious disgrace that could mar her prospects of marriage” (ibid. 3:840).

A keen sense of evil, a righteous anger against it, and a desire to punish it without any consideration for her own safety—these are the things that give Seohui charisma as a leader and place her high in the community. Seohui, “vicious, wily, suspicious and arrogant” (*Land* 3:1027), reflects the image of the ancient gods of Nature who brutally punished human vice. In *Land* Seohui appeared as a fierce devil, Yaksha, who chastises man violently with his dreadful figure: “Her raised eyebrows and the circular movement of her lips—she was an image of a fierce devil” (ibid. 980).

However, evil sense can be found in oneself, that is, having a pure mind makes it possible to sense evil in one’s own mind. When Young-i comes to live with Imi-*ne* after the death of Gangcheong-*daek* and has a son with her, Wolseon feels envy of her. Good-natured Wolseon feels guilty about her own emotion. When she goes to temple on memorial day of her mother, a vision of Wolseon-*ne* appears to her and presses her for desiring the death of Imi-*ne*:

“In the dream, in my dream I was pleased that she was dead, maybe twice.”
“That’s a reflection of your waking mind! You should not sin with your eyes or with your mouth or with your ears. But you are sinning with your mind...”
“No! No!...I have never wished anyone to die!...”
Her whole body shuddered.
(*Land* 3:940)

When the vision of Wolseon-*ne* touches upon the sin in her mind, it recalls

the Buddhist teaching in which we are advised not to commit sins even in the mind. In Buddhism if evil appears as bad acts or bad words, it is considered that “these behaviors come from the bad mind in the heart” (Gim 1992, 145). So, in Buddhism it is important to take precautions against the *aksim* (bad mind 惡心). Only a pure-minded person can sense evil in his own mind. Wolseon is good-minded enough to sense the sin in her mind before it appears as words and behaviors. *Seon* does influence to evil in *Land*. Gang-*posu*, the master of hunting whose name is known to everybody, is also known as a man of good nature whose “heart is as pure as jade” (*Land* 2:441). He loves Gwinyeo and visits the prison where she is condemned to death. At first Gwinyeo does not accept his love, but being moved by his devotion, at last she sobs and repents of her sin. Seeing Gwinyeo's tear, Gang-*posu* comes out and cries: “When he came out, he pushed his head against the wall and cried like a wild creature. In the sky the stars shone. The Plough was clean and sparkling” (ibid. 3:597). Only a good-minded person could move the heavens. When Gang-*posu* cries, his mind reaches heaven and the stars along with the Great Bear respond to him. So Gwinyeo changes her mind and comes to have a good mind: “Just after the middle of May, in the prison, she gave birth to a son. She died without hating the world” (ibid.).

As have seen, in *Land* there can be found many aspects of good and evil. However, as shown in the death of Lady Yun and the survival of Jo Jun-gu in time of an epidemic, it looks that the idea of *gwonseonjing-ak* is not embodied in *Land*. But it is true meaning of *gwonseonjing-ak* that good is valuable in itself and evil fails of its own accord: “do the good not in order to be blessed but for its own sake” (Bak 2012, 61). And this thought is also reflected in the Korean belief that, although things look wicked in this world, *seon* will be rewarded eventually.

Uibyeongundong

When A. Lincoln said that “public sentiment is everything, with it, nothing can fail,” he emphasized the importance of the public opinion in political decision. Also, in this phrase of Lincoln, there can be found the faith in the rightness of the public sentiment, which consists of “thoughts and desires of majority of the people.” Therefore, this phrase could be accepted to the political situation of Korea in the late nineteenth century when the fate of the country is like

pungjeondeungwaha (a candle flickering in the wind 風前燈火) because, in this critical circumstance of the country, it was people's *uibyeongundong* (righteous army movement 義兵運動) which indicated the path in the chaotic state of the country and played a significant role in modern history of Korea.

The historical background of *Land*, from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, was a time of severe trials in Korean history, caused by the invasion of Western powers through Japan as their representative. Japan, in the midst of a larger trend of *seosedongjeom* (Western power occupying the East 西勢東占), succeeded in modernizing itself earlier than any other countries in the East, and then fulfilled its ambition to occupy the territory of Korea. Reflecting upon this crisis in Korean history, the author of *Land* parodies the Indian poet R. Tagore, who wrote a poem describing Korea as “a lamp of the East,”⁵ as follows:

At present the people of Korea, a small lamp of the East, were not the ones who had wakened from their sleep and risen to come out and watch for the dawn of day. Theirs were the confused faces of those awakened from heavy afternoon sleep; the consternation of those awakened by thunder in the night; those who could not tell night from the day, or even where they were. (Land 3:914)

It was Donghak (Eastern Knowledge 東學) which indicate the way to Koreans, who were confused in the midst of this international situation. Donghak is the Korean national religion, created by Choi Je-u in 1860 to confront Christianity, which is so called Seohak (Western Knowledge 西學). Donghak was ardently supported by the people, quickly spread in whole nation, and rapidly developed into the revolutionary movement. In 1894, under the leadership of Jeon Bongjun, this movement gathered an army of peasants, beginning the Donghak-*undong* (Donghak Movement 東學運動) with justification *cheokyang-cheok-wae* 斥洋斥倭 (literally, “to repulse both Western and Japan”).

The narrative of *Land* begins in 1897, three years after the uprising of the Donghak Movement. At the same time, in this year, the official name of the country was changed from Joseon 朝鮮 to Daehanjuguk (Daehan Empire

5. In 1929, Tagore sent a poem to Korean newspaper *Dong-a* as following: “In the golden age of Asia/ Korea was one of its lamp-bearers/ And that lamp is waiting to be lighted once again/ For the illumination in the East.”

大韓帝國) in the hopes of renewing the country. But, in spite of its expectation of becoming a strong country, Daehan Empire was deprived of its national rights and interests, and at last, in 1905, had its sovereignty usurped by Japan when the emperor signed Eulsabohojoyak (Protectorate Treaty in the year of Eulsa, 1905 乙巳保護條約). *Land* is set in the context of this historical background of Korean history, and in this context *uibyeong-undong* comes to one of the main themes in *Land*.

The invasion of Western powers, by Japan as their representative, is described in *Land* in the figure of Jo Jun-gu, who steals the possessions of Choichampan-*daek*. Besides, the loss of Choichampan-*daek* and later on, the destruction of the Pyeongsa-*ri* community represents metaphorically the historical death of the country. This tragic event occurred in the midst of two disasters—"epidemic" and "famine"—in *Land*.

In *Land*, the cholera epidemic penetrates into Pyeongsa-*ri* and nearby villages. People in the village have nothing to do but die from such a natural disaster, which deprived them of their lives like "autumn leaves." And they sensed this epidemic as somewhat connected with the occupation by Japan:

Since the Japs came over not a thing turns out right. In the end, they would have to bring their disease over and try to wipe out the last seeds of the Korean people. I can't see why a great hero like Samyeong-*daesa* does not appear at a time like this. (Land 2:744)

Samyeong-*daesa* was a Buddhist monk, who raised a *uibyeong* or "righteous army" to join the battle during the Japanese invasion in the fifteenth century.⁶ The people in the village miss the Samyeong-*daesa* because they expect someone to come to save them.

Giminmi (rice for the starving populace 饑民米), which occurs after the cholera outbreak, is the event that sparks the uprising of the *uibyeong*. After cholera wiped out the village, there follows a bad harvest, and many people died from hunger. Jo Jun-gu decides to loosen the provisions and give the people—not to everyone but to assorted ones only: "To cut it short, why did they give it

to a well-off family like you and leave out people who were dying of hunger?" (Land 3:856). Jo's unjust plan divides the Pyeongsa-*ri* community into two groups, and "people were filled with mistrust each other" (ibid. 886). Enraged at this injustice, Yunbo, Yong-I, and Sudong attack Choichampan-*daek* with the existence of Seohui, its true owner, and share the rice among all the people.

In this Giminmi event in *Land*, "there lies hidden the economic history of rice" at the end of the nineteenth century (Hwang 1995, 16). Although the exploitation of land-owners under the federal system was severe, the rice they produced remained in Korea. But, after the Japanese invasion, the rice produced in this country went across the sea to Japan so that the people of Korea went hungry. This historical fact is symbolized in *Land* by the change in the person who manages the production of rice: "The man from Seoul, Ji-seobang or whatever—you can't approach him, can you? As for Gim-seobang, he helped you out when you were really hard up and explained it to him even as he pretended he was angry with you. I can see the tenants are going to have hard times" (Land 3:1054).

Uibyeongundong begins in Pyeongsa-*ri* on a full scale after Eulsa Protectorate Treaty. When this treaty is signed, Gim-hunjang as the senior member of the Pyeongsa-*ri* community gathers the people to announce the loss of the country's authority. He also announces the suicide of "Min Yeonghwan, Jo Byeongse, and others," who have killed themselves in the response to the treaty.⁷ While telling of these things, Gim-hunjang cries out and the people respond:

The Five Articles remained incomprehensible but through the fact that such great characters had taken their lives, and that Gim-hunjang had burst into tears, they could sense the seriousness of the situation. This was outrageous and deplorable, they said and seethed.

"If we are going to fight I will join!"...

"If our country is lost we will lose our land too." (Land 3:1012)

6. When the Japanese army invaded Korean territory in the fifteenth century, it launched a war of the Imjinwaeran (Japanese War of the year of Imjin 壬辰倭亂), which continued for seven years. During this war, Samyeong-*daesa* raised *uibyeong*, which was made up of civil soldiers who voluntarily participated in the war in order to save their country.

7. About the suicide of patriots Hulbert (1906, 224) wrote: "Min Yeonghwan, the most cultured and public-spirited...after desperate efforts to secure a reversal of the forced action depriving Korea of the independence, committed suicide. His monument, and that of other patriots who followed his example, will ever stand before the Korean people as irrefragable proof that...it is as true in Korea as elsewhere that *dulcit pro patria mori*."

Eventually, Gim-hunjang leaves Pyeongsa-ri to participate in *uibyeongundong*, and soon in the talk of village people he became a chief of the army and “gradually turning into a legendary figure” (ibid. 1015). But return of Gim-hunjang with “an extremely shabby and haggard” after the harvest “greatly disappointed the villagers” (ibid. 1074).

In the history of Korea, *uibyeong* was raised with the aim of promoting *geunwang* (loyalty to the monarchy 勤王) in the center of *yusaeng* (students of Confucianism 儒生). With the changed political situation, the aim of movement to promote loyalty to the monarchy dissolves. But the units of soldiers who followed Gim-hunjang consisted of followers of Confucianism, who “did not conceive that they all had to be ready to live or to die together, rather than I, alone, must be ready to die in an honorable way” (*Land* 3:1015). So, they only exposed the limitations of Confucian thought and were doomed in advance to failure.

Although Gim-hunjang's participation in *uibyeong* does not succeed, in the village of Pyeongsa-ri was held self-generated group of young people “simple-hearted and honest”: “The room, containing six young people, felt small and cramped. They were all engaged in one or another kind of work... They talked about what was going on in the world. It would be described as a meeting place for sound-minded youths” (*Land* 3:1044).

In this situation, Yunbo who has the experience of having participated in the Donghak Movement returns to the village. The whole village is in a state of unrest. Although there was seen nothing in their eyes, village people were “in their hearts, anticipating something—some drastic change, with bloodshed” (*Land* 3:1111). The tavern in *Land* mirrors such sentiment: “...they swarmed into the tavern....They spoke about anything without inhibition so that before long the tavern became something like a place for public debate” (ibid. 1112).

At last Yunbo comes to Gim-hunjang in order to gain his agreement to attack Jo Jun-gu. This time he urges the necessity of an uprising for two reasons—for the country and for economic causes:

There are two clear reasons for attacking him. Firstly, he's a traitor who even now would walk out wearing Japanese clogs, fawning on them just for his own prosperity. Therefore we want to set an example by beheading him. Secondly, disregarding the questing of its legitimacy, there is a mound of grain, about to rot, in his storeroom. We must take it and provide for military provision. (Land 3:1122)

In Korean history, if in the beginning *uibyeong* arises out of loyalty, under the protectorate treaty: “the main motive of the *uibyeong* movement is the ‘death of the country,’ or the exploitation of pro-Japanese landowners” (Gang 1982, 187). But in time the command of the movement was given over from followers of Confucianism to ordinary people, from center to local. So, the description of the *uibyeong* movement in *Land* reflects this historical fact, so that when reading *Land* one can understand the process of the *uibyeong* uprising and sympathize with its motives and goals (ibid. 185). The Pyeongsa-ri *uibyeong* troop in *Land*, although it is the fictional story, achieves a “historical verisimilitude.”

Conclusion

As have seen through this analysis of the public sentiment of the local community in *Land*, the Korean people have their own distinctive emotions, such as *jeong*, *han*, and the belief that virtue will be rewarded with blessings in the end. We also see that, when emergencies strike the country, people are prepared to rise for the right. From these facts, in conclusion, we can come to the followings concerning the traits of the Korean people.

First, Korean people attach more importance to the emotion and the mind than to the institutions and norms. The collective sentiment of the people registers sympathy for those who try to keep their mind, not yielding to norms. Although the political, economic, and social system in Korea has been very hostile to its people, the Koreans themselves wisely have not succumbed to these stark regimes but have succeeded in cherishing their own dignity and value as human beings.

Second, universality and openness of Koreans is notable. The emotions and feelings discussed are the things that everyone in Korea has and understands. If this sharing of mental qualities makes Korean people more generous and deeper, it also gives them the capacity to communicate with others. Koreans are inclined to welcome others and accept them willingly. If foreigners noticed that Koreans are very good at learning something new and studying foreign languages, the reason might derive from this capacity they have for acceptance.

Third, Koreans believe the idea of *gwonseonjing-ak*, that is, if one does good, he deserves blessing, and if he does bad, he deserves punishment although it does not look like true in practice. Describing many aspects of good and

evil in the novel, author shows the true meaning of *gwonseonjing-ak* that good is valuable in itself and evil fails of its own accord. And this thought is also reflected in the Korean belief that, although things look wicked in this world, the idea of *gwonseonjing-ak* remains in people's minds as undeniable truth.

Forth, Korean people are ready to respond to history. As seen in the uprising of the local community in the novel *Land*, the Korean people are never indifferent to the currents of history and they readily sacrifice themselves for the sake of the right. This tradition of uprising and sacrifice by the people for the sake of the country has often helped Korea to go the right way when something wrong has happened in their history and continues even into the twenty-first century.

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Abstract

Bak Gyeongni's novel, *Land*, represents the communal life of Korea in detail, and vividly describes the public sentiment of the community. In this novel, Korean's distinctive emotions such as *jeong* and *han* are dealt with. If *jeong* is represented as a kind of affection common to the members of the community, *han* comes from incompleteness of human lives, who are doomed to die. Korean people believe the idea of *gwonseonjing-ak* that virtue will be rewarded with blessings in the end. Koreans have belief in it, although things look wicked in this world, because they understand that the true meaning of *gwonseonjing-ak* is that good is valuable in itself and evil fails of its own accord. At last, Korean people are never indifferent to the currents of history as seen in the Righteous Army movement in late nineteenth century when the country reached a crisis. Koreans are ready to respond to the history and willingly sacrifice themselves for the sake of the country.

Keywords: Bak Gyeongni, *Land*, *jeong*, *han*, *gwonseonjing-ak*, *uibyeongundong*