Dis/Locating an Intellectual in Colonial Korea: The Case of Yi In-hwa in Mansejŏn (1924)

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ABSTRACT

My thesis is an examination of the ways in which Korean intellectuals, who were caught between tradition and modernity, and between familial obligation and individualism under the oppression of Japanese colonial rule, are represented in the modern Korean novel during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945). Yŏm Sang-sŏp (1897-1963) demonstrates one prototype of the Korean intellectuals as spectator in his novel, Mansejŏn. Yi In-hwa, the protagonist of the novel, faces two problems, which are the oppression of Japanese colonial rule and of the traditional family. First of all, In-hwa is oppressed by familial obligation that he cannot reconcile with his Western individualism. His negative perspective on the traditional family extends to his criticism of the backwardness and the impracticality of Korean tradition. Yi In-hwa also recognizes that the Japanese colonial rule reshapes Korean society into an effective colony, but does not bring the progress and development of modernity. During his time in both countries, he criticizes Korean people's victimization and their subjection by the Japanese colonial rule in the process of colonial modernity. Moreover, this colonial reconstruction of Korean society destroys Korean indigenous cultures and depicts them as inferior and uncivilized, in order to seize cultural hegemony. However, In-hwa's recognition does not lead to confrontation with the inequity of Japanese colonial rule or with the backwardness of Korean tradition. He turns away from the Korean intellectual's obligation to make a mission of the search for the paths to Korean modernity. He escapes into the little freedoms and privileges of an intellectual, which include an indulgence in decadent café culture and free love relationships allowed by the Japanese colonial rule.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Yŏm Sang-sŏp(1897-1963) was a renowned novelist, journalist, and reform-minded social critic in modern Korean history. He was one of many Korean intellectuals who studied in Japan and learned Western knowledge there. As an intellectual educated in Western knowledge, he was in the front line of a conflict between modernity and Korean tradition, Japanese colonial rule and nationalism, and socialism and nationalism within Korean intellectual circles during Japanese colonial period (1910-1945). With the bloom of modern Korean Literature in the 1920’s inspired by partial relaxation of press and publication law of Japanese colonial rule, he organized the literary circle, P'yehŏ(Ruins) and published a magazine in 1920. During the Japanese colonial Period (1910-1945), Yŏm Sang-sŏp adheres to a realistic and objective perspective to describe Korean people and society under Japanese colonial rule. As a social critic as well as a literary critic, Yŏm Sang-sŏp also wrote for the compromise of the conflict between the modern and the traditional, and between nationalism and socialism rampant in Korean society. His main theme is how Korean society accomplishes Western modernity without loss of its identity and traditional moral principles. He also represented nationalistic literary groups against socialist literary groups that tended to view literature as a means towards communist revolution. However, he was flexible in his views. Although he disagreed with socialists’ ideas on the political use of literature, he still regarded socialist literature as a valid movement.

Yŏm Sang-sŏp is regarded as a pioneering writer in the field of modern Korean literature. He paved the way for the construction of modern Korean literature during the
Japanese colonial period and introduced Western realism and naturalism to Korean literary society by depicting the reality of Korea in his objective observation of Japanese colonial rule. Yŏm sang-sŏp's novella, Mansejŏn, the subject of my thesis, is considered one of the representative works in which the predicament of the Korean intellectual in colonial Korea is successfully depicted. In previous studies of Korean literature, the main character, Yi- In-hwa, is often regarded as a nationalist intellectual who criticizes Japanese colonial oppression. However, I see him as an irresponsible spectator who indulges in decadent pleasures. In my thesis, I examine Yi In-hwa's formation as a modern Korean intellectual who is in conflict with Korean tradition. I also show that his status as a modern intellectual gives him space to free himself from the oppression of Korean society and Korean tradition under colonial authority in that he ends up as an irresponsible spectator.

My thesis examines the representation of the predicament of Yi In-hwa, a Korean intellectual in Yŏm Sang-sŏp's novella Mansejŏn (Days before the March First Movement, 1924), who is caught between tradition and modernity, and between familial obligation and individualism under Japanese colonial rule. The type of Korean intellectual presented in Mansejŏn is a decadent and irresponsible spectator, who places himself in a neutral position to guard his individual freedom in regard to both the oppression of the Korean people under Japanese colonial rule, and the backwardness and impracticality of traditional Korean authoritarianism. The individual freedom that In-hwa cherishes is morally deformed and descends into mere justification of his decadent and irresponsible lifestyle due to his neutral position.
Yi In-hwa, the protagonist, is faced with two problems: the oppression of Japanese colonial rule and his perception of the backwardness and impracticality of Korean tradition. First of all, Yi In-hwa is very much bound by familial obligation and the coercion of patriarchal authority upon him that are irreconcilable with his Western individualism. His negative attitude toward Korean tradition manifests itself in his criticism of its backwardness and of impracticality, and of its loss of identity to Korean people under Japanese colonial rule. In-hwa often connects Korean people's ignorance and servility to Japanese colonial expansion with the Korean people's character molded by Korean tradition. Although he shows hostility to Korean tradition, he also recognizes that modern transformation of Korean society led by Japanese colonial rule is not so much progress and development as the creation of an effective Japanese colony.

However, In-hwa's recognition of it does not make him confront either the inequity of Japanese colonial rule or Korean tradition. Yi In-hwa avoids confrontations with these problems. He is not outspoken in his criticism. In the conflict between Japanese colonial oppression and the impracticality and backwardness of traditional Korean society, he maintains a neutral position by criticizing both of them without any real confrontation. His status is ambivalent, and his decision to reject both sides stems from his desire to be free from both Japanese colonial rule and Korean tradition. The individual freedom that he cherishes cannot be shared with other Korean people, not even with his family. His return to Japan signifies his avoidance of the reality of his country under Japanese rule.
In Chapter I, I examine the significance of Yom Sang-sop and his works in Korean literature, a brief summary of my thesis on Mansejŏn, and the thesis content of each chapter.

Chapter II briefly examines Yŏm Sang-sŏp's biography as a socio-historical representation of Korean intellectuals during the Japanese colonial period. Yŏm Sang-sŏp was one of many Korean intellectuals who studied in Japan and acquired Western knowledge through a Japanese prism. Japan is significant as the address-or of the Western knowledge which gives Yom- Sang-sop's his identity as a modern intellectual. He was in the front line of a conflict between modernity and Korean tradition. I also examine his literary characteristics throughout brief analysis of his representative novels and criticisms.

Chapter III examines the narrative strategy and structure of Mansejŏn. First, I present the distinction between different versions of Mansejŏn. Since Yŏm Sang-sŏp changed the novella at different times due to Japanese colonial surveillance on the publication, the comparisons of the versions show how Japanese colonial rule influenced the content as well as the narrative structure of Mansejŏn. Second, I present the summary of the plot and the novella's motif. The salient feature of Mansejŏn is its journey motif because the novella starts with Yi In-hwa's journey to Korea due to his wife's death, and ends with In-hwa's return to Japan. Third, I compare the narrative structure of the Japanese "I-novel" with that of Mansejŏn. Yŏm Sang-sŏp is influenced by modern Japanese literature due to his study in Japan and the Japanese adoption of Western literary tradition. In this sense this comparison shows how Yŏm Sang-sŏp built up modern Korean literature by adapting Western literary tradition through the prism of
modern Japanese literature. Despite the influence of modern Japanese literary tradition, his novella contains a unique feature of narrative structure, differentiated from Japanese and Western literary tradition, by creating the literature of the reality of Korea under Japanese colonial rule.

In chapter IV I begin my literary analysis on Mansejŏn. Chapter IV examines how Yi In-hwa’s study in modern Japan molds his characters and value of a modern intellectual. Yi In-hwa’s experience in metropolitan Japan forms his thoughts and values and puts him in conflict with the Korean traditions that had nourished him culturally. Yi In-hwa’s education in Japan is possible because of the support of his family members, who want him to have a stable economic and social status in colonized Korea. Ironically, his belief in individual freedom, formed by his education in Japan, clashes with his family’s expectations of him. For In-hwa, his indulgence in the decadent pleasures of cafe culture is a way of resisting familial obligation.

Chapter V examines In-hwa’s conflict with Japanese colonial rule. First, I examine the Japanese colonial surveillance on Yi In-hwa. Yi In-hwa’s pride is crushed by his encounter with the Japanese colonial surveillance system. Throughout his experience of Japanese surveillance, Yi In-hwa is made to feel inferior because he is Korean. Second, I examine Yi In-hwa’s criticism of the modern transformation of Korea brought by Japanese colonial rule. In Yi In-hwa’s perspective the purpose of modern transformation changes Korean society into a colony that can more efficiently be exploited for Japanese colonial interests. Koreans who fail to assimilate into this new transformation lose their economic foundation. However, Yi In-hwa also criticizes Korean people’s character as impractical, and ignorant of the intentions of the Japanese in this modern transformation.
Chapter VI examines Yi In-hwa’s conflict with Korean tradition. First, Yi In-hwa attacks his traditional family. The patriarchal family system is the core of the problem because such a system ignores other members’ opinion and interests. Yi In-hwa’s father’s patriarchal power obstructs Yi In-hwa in the cultivation of his own life’s course and the development of his Western knowledge. His father’s distrust of Western medical care causes the death of his wife. In-hwa also criticizes the formalism of Korean tradition in his family such as the emphasis on burial ritual and producing sons. Second, I examine the victimization of traditional Korean women in the traditional family system. Even Yi In-hwa participates in this victimization through his irresponsibility towards his wife. Third, I examine In-hwa’s view of the proponents of tradition who collaborated with the Japanese government because their alliance with the colonial power interfered with the independent development of Korea and their subservience to and collaboration with the Japanese nullified the upholding of moral principles and personal identity of Korean people. Lastly I examine the destruction of Korean tradition under Japanese colonial rule. The colonial modernization destroys a traditional life style without enough of a socio-cultural transformation process. With the destruction of Korean indigenous culture, the Japanese colonial authority seized cultural hegemony. With this cultural imperialism, In-hwa observes that Koreans degrade their own culture and prefer Japanese culture; these things support the supposed superiority of Japan over Korea.

Chapter VII examines the meaning of Yi In-hwa’s return. Yi In-hwa concludes that Korea and his family are “a tomb” that can never be changed. I will examine how his disillusionment with Korea and his family justifies his irresponsibility and selfish individual freedom. His return to Japan after his wife’s death gives Yi In-hwa freedom.
from familial obligation. He also can be more comfortable and safer in Japan, and can be free from Japanese surveillance and oppression. By sending the letter to the cafe woman, Shizuko, he implies the end of his relationship with her and attains further freedom from responsibility.

In Chapter VIII, I conclude my examination of Yi In-hwa's character as a modern Korean intellectual under Japanese colonial rule. First, I examine his conflict with the traditional family and the Japanese oppression of the Korean intellectual. Second, I examine his indecision when he is caught between Korean tradition and Japanese rule. His attempt to guard his individual freedom through avoidance of confrontation makes him indecisive. Third, I examine the characteristics of the individual freedoms that he cherishes. Yi In-hwa's individual freedom is expressed in his irresponsible and decadent lifestyle and his concern for his own welfare and he is therefore uninvolved in reality.
Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s Youth (1897–1912)

Yŏm Sang-sŏp was born in 1897 in Seoul toward the end of Chosŏn. In his childhood, he experienced the collapse of his country as well as his family. The Chosŏn dynasty was collapsing and facing the discontent of the Korean people with government officials and the scholarly aristocracy, called yangban. There was also the threat from foreign nations, who sought the opportunity for colonial expansion in Korea. Yŏm Sang-sŏp was the third of eight children born into an upper-middle class family. Under the Chosŏn dynasty his family had been middle class until his grandfather and his father raised the status of the family by becoming a high ranking governmental officials. However, once Korea became a protectorate of Japan in 1905, his father lost his governmental post and his family fortune went to ruin little by little.¹

Around the age of ten Yŏm Sang-sŏp experienced the defeat and occupation of his country by Japan while he was learning the Confucian Classics from his grandfather. Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905. Japan forced King Kojong to yield his throne to his son Sunjong in July 1907 and the Korean military was disbanded. The same month saw the uprising of Korean military in Seoul, prompted by their disbanding and replacement by Japanese troops, and the unpopular submission of the throne of King Kojong to the Japanese colonial rule.² Yŏm Sang-sŏp recalled the Korean military

¹ Kim Yun-sik, Yŏm Sang-sŏp yŏn’gu (Seoul: Sŏul tae hakk’yo ch’ulp’’anbu, 1987; 1999), 3–12.
uprising in his autobiographical writings. He thought the uprising of the Korean military was as natural as the mourning of a family for their dead. Through his childhood experience Yŏm Sang-sŏp recognized that his country was subjugated to Japanese colonial rule and that he was losing his country.

Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment was deepened through his childhood experiences of Western school in Korea, which was mostly managed by the Japanese colonial rule. In August 1907, he had been admitted into a government teacher training school (Kwannipsaŏnhakkyo). At this school, he felt hostility toward the Japanese colonial school system for not teaching Korean history and emphasizing only Japanese language and culture. When Ito Hirobumi (1842–1909) returned to Korea in 1909, the school forced all students to participate in the welcoming ceremony, while for the sacrificial rites of King Sunjong for the year’s harvest, the school only sent the student representative. Yŏm Sang-sŏp participated in a student protest against the school’s policy. In 1909 Yŏm Sang-sŏp finally transferred to Posŏng School because of his objections to the school’s collaboration with Japanese colonial rule. Posŏng School was founded by Ch’ŏndogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way) which was derived from Tonghak (Eastern Learning). He was satisfied with the nationalistic environment of the school. He finished the elementary program and attended the second year of the middle school program before leaving for further study in Japan in 1912.

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4 Ito Hirobumi was one of the foremost statesmen in modern Japan. He was deeply involved in the foreign affair of Japan and her colonial expansion. He led the protectorate of Korea to Japan and served as a resident general in Korea. He also paved a way of the annexation of Korea but was assassinated by a Korean nationalist, An Chung-gun in 1909 in Manchuria; see Michael Edson Robinson, Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920–1925 (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988), 37.
In 1910, while Yŏm Sang-sŏp was attending Posŏng School, Korea was annexed by Japan. Under the annexation treaty, Korea became a colony under Japanese colonial rule, headed by a Governor General of the rank of the military generals in Japan, and administrated by Japanese officials, police and gendarmes. Governor Generals seized legislative, executive, and judicial power in Korea. This incident also determined Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s future status as a colonial intellectual, and the subject of his writing, which would be Korea and its people under Japanese colonial rule.

**His Studying Abroad in Japan (1912–1919)**

On September 12, 1912, Yŏm Sang-sŏp went to Japan for his studies with the help of his elder brother Yŏm Ch’ang-sŏp, who was a student at Japanese military academy. His study in Japan exposed him to Western knowledge and thought, through the prism of Japan. With its successful transformation into a modern nation state, Japan had become a colonial power in East Asia. During Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s study abroad, the new political era of Taishō democracy (1912–26) in Japan improved individual rights and freedoms, such as the right to vote, and the rights of the working class excluded from the benefits of industrialization. The liberal mood of the Taishō democracy was propped up by the optimism which accompanied the economic prosperity during World War I (1914–

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5 Yŏm Ch’ang-sŏp had a significant influence on Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s study in Japan. Since Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s family had experienced their downfall with the decline of the Chosŏn dynasty, his study would only be possible by his older brother’s reputation, as having been a student at a Japanese military academy and having served then as a Japanese military officer during Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). After the war, he continued to serve as a Korean military officer. However, after the disbanding of the Korean military by Japan, he remained in the Japanese military. Yŏm Ch’ang-sŏp’s career had helped to assure Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s status in Japan, but his brother’s collaboration also gave Yŏm Sang-sŏp a sense of guilt. Yŏm Ch’ang-sŏp later on became a vice principle at Osan School and helped Yŏm Sang-sŏp to become a teacher there in 1920. See Kim Yun-sik, *Yŏm Sang-sŏp yŏn’gu*, 12–14.
Japan's economy prospered through its trade with the Western nations that were engaged in the war.\textsuperscript{6}

For Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Japan represented a new world that he had never experienced in Korea. His view of life in Korea was pessimistic and despairing, because he had experienced the ruin of his country. His uninspiring education in Chinese classics in Korea did not encourage him to further intellectual curiosity. However, when he came to Japan, he later wrote, he experienced an elimination of this negative perspective. His first wearing of glasses, purchased in Japan, symbolized his entry into a new world that would give him new insight and a new future. In Korea, glasses for the near-sighted child were not available, although there were glasses for the aged. His new insight came from his experience of Japan as a metropolitan nation in East Asia where he could experience the benefits of advanced, Western science, intellectual trend and thought. The glasses could have symbolized advanced technology at the time.\textsuperscript{7}

He also encountered modern Western literature through the prism of Japanese contemporary literature, which had been heavily influenced by the Western literary tradition. During his studies in Japan, Yŏm Sang-sŏp came to regard literature as his future career. Japan was internalizing the Western literary tradition, and developing modern Japanese literature. By reading Japanese translations of Western literature, Yŏm Sang-sŏp became familiar with Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Shakespeare, and Dante. He also read the literary works of Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), the father of modern Japanese literature and especially the Japanese “I-novel”. He also read the famous Japanese literary

magazine *Waseda bungaku* regularly and so developed a deeper knowledge of literature and a critical insight into it. However, he regretted that he could not base his literary talent on Korean traditional literature. He read modern Japanese literature before reading classical Korean literature. On the other hand, he later wrote that his learning literature from Japan and other literary traditions was not a transplant of a foreign culture and literature. He strongly insisted that Korean modern writers, including himself, created their own literary tradition in Korea because they wrote about the specific life of Korean people. Despite his literary heritage, that of Western literature encountered in Japan, he formed nationalistic literary thought.

 Yöm Sang-sŏp began his education in Azabu Middle School in Kyoto in 1913 and transferred to Christian Mission School in 1914. After finishing the course of study in Christian Mission School, he transferred to Kyoto Second Auxiliary Middle School (*Kyoto furitsu dai chūgaku*). He was the only foreign student in the school, because this school was attended by the aristocratic class of Japan and it was almost impossible for a foreign student like Yöm Sang-sŏp to get in. He had managed it due to his elder brother’s support. In 1915 his older brother Ch’angsŏp served as a first lieutenant in the 14th Division of the Japanese army stationed in Kyoto. His elder brother’s status as an officer in the Japanese army helped him to be offered a place at the school. His literary talent was recognized in the school. He became well-known for his essay *Urijip chŏngwŏl* (New Year’s Day in My Home) written in Japanese in his school. After graduated from

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Kyoto Second Auxiliary Middle School Yŏm Sang-sŏp entered Keiō University at Tokyo as a preparatory student, but resigned of his own accord on March 15th, 1918, due to financial problems. Although he had assured status because of his older brother, he was now faced with financial problems since his family could not support him with enough money.¹⁰

During Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s studies in Japan, he was isolated from the activities of other Korean students in Japan. Most Korean students studied in Tokyo, not Kyoto. This distance isolated him from the activities and organizations of other Korean students in Japan. Such students led the Korean intellectual movement in Korea itself, because they were in the front line of world society, and so provided a bridge for other Korean people. He did not publish any writings in the Tokyo magazine Hachigwang, which was from its foundation in 1914 the magazine organized by leading circle of Korean students in Japan.¹¹ This magazine addressed various aspects of Western knowledge and was used by many literary students to publish their writings and circulate the Western literary tradition. Many of those who participated in the publication of Hachigwang came to be prominent writers in Korean literature; for instance Yi Kwang-su, Hyŏn Sang-yun, Na Hye-sŏk, and Kim Ók. Yŏm Sang-sŏp, however, was not in the main circle of Korean students’ literary activity in Japan, and in fact one short story he submitted to Hachigwang was rejected by Kim Hwan of the editorial staff, and so he was never published there at all.

Yŏm Sang-sŏp was involved in the independent movement through the March First Movement in 1919. There was the declaration of independence by Korean students in Tokyo on February 8, 1919 which was considered to have triggered the March First

¹⁰ Kim Yun-sik, Yŏm Sang-sŏp yŏn'gu, 23–50.
Movement three weeks later on March 1, 1919. Yŏm Sang-sŏp was in Osaka after touring many different Japanese cities and had a job temporarily. Inspired by the March First Movement, Yŏm Sang-sŏp planned a political demonstration and wrote the declaration of Korean independence to be held on March 19, 1919 in the name of the Korean workers at Osaka. However, he was arrested by Japanese police the day before D-day and was sentenced to ten months in prison. He served less than three months, however, after being found innocent in a second trial and acquitted on June 6, 1919. Inspired by the Socialist movement, which was very popular in intellectual Japanese society, Yŏm Sang-sŏp became a worker in printing factory to learn about the life of workers. However, during this time, he was watched by the Japanese because he had been classified as a dangerous intellectual in the eyes of the Japanese government.12


**Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s Activities as a Nationalist, Social Critic and Literary Writer: The First Phase of His Literary Life (1919–1924)**

The March First Movement forced the Japanese government to adopt their colonial policy and motives. “Cultural Policy” had been prompted by tow reasons: to relax the widespread of hostility of Korean people to the Japanese colonial rule, in the interests of maintaining a long term colonial control over the country, and in order to present the result of Japan’s colonial rule there as fair and just for the eyes of the world. This new “Cultural Policy” partially freed the Korean press, as long as the journalism did not have political aims. Newspapers such as Tonga ilbo (Tonga Daily, 1920) and Chosŏn ilbo (Chosŏn Daily, 1920) as well as Kaebŏk (The Beginning of the World) began their publication. On the other hand, the Kōtō keisatsu (high police) was also organized to
monitor the activities of Korean intellectuals. Since one task of this Department was to pre-approve and censor publications, despite enjoying partial relaxation of publication, Korean intellectuals had still to deal with a discriminating colonial censorship of their writing. The Japanese replaced their gendarmes with policemen, in less military uniforms, but meanwhile they increased the number of policemen, and expanded their intervention into public matters.¹³

The new toleration of publication caused a boom in Korean literature. Various literary circles—including Ch'angjo (The Creation, 1919), P'yehŏ (Ruins, 1920), Chanmich'ŏn (Rose Village, 1921) and Paekcho (White Tides, 1922)—began publishing literary magazine in which their members could publish. Korean writers tried various literary experiments, using such Western literary concepts as romanticism, realism, naturalism, modernism and aestheticism. Yet despite this boom in Korean literature, Korean writers faced Japanese censorship which limited their freedom of expression, eliminated text, confiscated magazines, banned publications, imposed fines and restricted funds, so that these literary magazines were mostly short-lived.¹⁴

After working in printing factory as a worker in Osaka for couple of months, Yŏm Sang-sop started his new career by becoming a political journalist for Tonga ilbo in 1920, when it prepared its publication. He showed enthusiasm at his job, interviewing Japanese intellectuals and government officials in Japan about the forthcoming “Cultural Policy” for Korea. Early in 1920 he returned to Korea to write articles for a special number in celebration of the newspaper’s publication. It was as a journalist that Yŏm Sang-sŏp became an intellectual in the front line of cultural nationalism. In the 1920s, newspapers

¹⁴ Yun pyŏng-no, Han'guk kînhyŏndaemunhaksa (Seoul: Myŏngmundang, 1991), 95–107.
were almost the only mass media outlet for the education and inspiration of the people
towards nationalism, under the oppression of Japanese colonial rule.\textsuperscript{15}

Yŏm Sang-sŏp started a more purely literary life by organizing the literary circle
P’yeĥō, with his return in 1920 from Japan. He returned to Korea in order to become a
writer. He resigned from Tonga ilbo at June 1920 to concentrate on the publication of
literary Journal P’yeĥō.\textsuperscript{16} The characteristics of P’yeĥō can be summed up as nationalistic
and experimental with nihilistic tendencies. Yŏm Sang-sŏp explained the name P’yeĥō—
which translates as Ruins—as representing the atmosphere of Korea which followed the
March First Movement. He and other members of the literary circle could see the
oppression of the Japanese colonial rule hidden behind the “Cultural Policy.” The
nationalistic movement had been blocked, while the nationalistic project of Korean
economic growth had failed, because of Japanese colonial exploitation. Driven by the
despair of Korean intellectuals under the Japanese “Cultural Policy,” Yŏm Sang-sŏp and
other literary figures engaged in the modernism and nihilistic dadaism which in the
Western world followed the terrible devastation of World War I. They connected their
sentiments of despair with those of Western intellectuals amid the ruins of their nations
after World War I. In their case, Korea after the March First Movement was the “ruin.”
However, Yŏm Sang-sŏp also stated his hope that out of the ruin could come a new state
of civilization and renewed national construction. He hoped too to build a modern Korean
literature from the ruin. The experiment with “isms” was part of a valuable endeavor to
build a new literary tradition in Korea.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Yŏm Sang-sŏp, “Hoengbo mundan hoesanggi,” Yŏm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip,12:228.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 229.
\textsuperscript{17} Yŏm Sang-sŏp, “Na wa p’yeĥō sidae,” Yŏm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip,12:207–210.
However, *P’yeho* could not last long, due to financial shortage and the literary immaturity of the circle’s members. Yŏm Sang-sŏp confessed that the circle’s members including him did not have enough funds and were unable to produce literary works to fill a monthly literary magazine. The second issue of *P’yeho* came out in 1921, almost six months after the publication of its first issue, and they could not publish any longer. In 1924 Yŏm Sang-sŏp managed to reorganize the circle and published the magazine under the new name of *P’yehoih (After the Ruins)* but that was the last of the literary magazine. However, most members participated in the creation of *Paekcho (White Tides)* in 1922, which produced historically prominent writers of Korean literature.\(^{18}\)

Yŏm Sang-sŏp attained fame after the 1921 publication of one of his short stories, “P’yobonsil-ui ch’ŏnggaeguri” (“The Green Frog in the Specimen Room”) in *Kaebyŏk* (no. 14) in 1921. Before this publication, he had published no literary works, instead writing criticism and participating in the activities of his literary circle. After the publication of the first issue of *P’yeho*, he became a teacher at Osan School in P’yŏngyang where his elder brother Ch’ang-sŏp had become vice principal after finishing his service in the Japanese military. During this time, he finished his first short story, and began to think of himself as a writer. When “P’yobonsil-ui ch’ŏnggaeguri” was published, the very prominent novelist Kim Tong-in described it as “the emergence of Hamlet in Korean literature,” referring to the agony and despair of the young intellectual in transition. Kim considered Yŏm Sang-sŏp as important Korean writers. He insisted that Korean people do not have exactly the character of Hamlet since they explain their


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suffering in fatalistic terms, as appears in Korean literature. However, Yŏm Sang-sŏp had finally created in fiction the young intellectual in that agony and despair which had so far been lacking in Korean literature.¹⁹

In “P’yobonsil ŭi ch’ŏnggaeguri”, Yŏm Sang-sŏp experimented with subject matter and techniques that had not been seen before in Korean literature. In terms of plot, the story is about “I” who confesses his interior suffering from the depression and despair which has not clear reason in the story. “I” is an intellectual who has returned from study in Japan. Other important character Kim Ch’ang-ŏk is a former school teacher, who becomes mentally ill by his experience in prison at the time of the March First Movement and also by his wife’s leaving him. Through these two characters, Yŏm Sang-sŏp shows the intellectuals restrained and made powerless by Japanese colonial rule. Kim Ch’ang-ŏk is an alter-ego and he was himself treated as mad because of his idealism about the world peace. In terms of technique, Yŏm Sang-sŏp makes use of a confessional first person narrative to show the interiority of “I,” and a third person narrative voice to present Kim Ch’ang-ŏk. He also uses the epistolary narrative form when “I” sends a postcard to his friend P to reveal his impression of Kim Ch’ang-ŏk and when “Y” sends a letter to “I” telling more of Kim Ch’ang-ŏk. It was very exceptional at that time in Korean literature for a writer to use various narrative viewpoints in a single short story. To show the interiority of the main character Yŏm Sang-sŏp uses the first person narrative voice, a confessional manner and the epistolary form, while he used the third person narrative to tell the parts of the story that take place outside of narrator’s perception.

With the success of “P’yobonsil ūi ch’ōnggaeguri”, Yŏm Sang-sŏp resigned from Osan School in July 1921 and went to work in Seoul. He started work at Tongmyŏng as a journalist in the literary and culture column. Tongmyŏng was founded and managed by Ch’oe Nam-sŏn (1890–1957) who was leading scholar and writer in Korean literature. With Ch’oe Nam-sŏn holding preeminent status among Korean writers, many famous Korean writers worked or published their literary works in this magazine, including Hyŏn Chin-kŏn, Pak Chong-hwa, Pyŏn Yŏng-no, and Kim Tong-in. During this period, Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s literary writings increased and flourished.

The success of his first novella brought him fame as an outstanding writer, and he published “Amya” (Dark Night) in Kaehyŏk (no.19, January 1922)\(^{20}\) and Cheya (Night in Seclusion) in Kaehyŏk (no.20, February–no.24, June 1922).\(^{21}\) “Amya” is a short story written in the third person about one day in the life of a young artist, who seeks self-emancipation through literature. Although Yŏm Sang-sŏp tries to portray the struggle of a young artist to find himself through the conflicts within himself and the political and social oppression, the story does not give enough social context to show what the young artist’s despair is about and what caused his troubles. The novella Cheya takes the form of a suicide note sent to a former husband asking forgiveness for her adultery. Yŏm Sang-sŏp shows a Korean new woman engaged in a free love relationship and struggling with the traditional value imposed on Korean women. She has bowed to family pressure and married against her own wishes to oblige them. The combination of her free love relationship and her marriage makes her a filthy woman in the eyes of society. After her


abandonment by her husband she is brought to suicide. Although this novella is partially successful by presenting the anguish of the new woman in conflict with the traditional values which force her to be sexually pure and obedient to her family’s decision, the novella displays a conservative moral perspective on a new woman engaged in a free love relationship.

In April 1922, Yŏm Sang-sŏp published “Kaesŏng kwa yesul” (The Individual and Art) in Kaebyŏk (no.22). In this article, he clarifies and organizes his thoughts on literature. Yŏm Sang-sŏp introduces the concept of the individual liberated from the influence of authority and tradition. He defines the realization of the individual as the discovery of humanity and of individual character and emphasizes its role in resisting the oppressive force of traditional values without defining any particular authority. Yŏm Sang-sŏp cites the movement in Western history towards humanism and against religious oppression as an example of the conflict between tradition and individual freedom. He also introduces the concept of naturalism as a way to illustrate the realities of the oppressed individual adopting skepticism towards the conventions of Korean society. He regards naturalism as a Western concept capable of accelerating the realization of the individual. Alongside his ideas about individual character, Yŏm Sang-sŏp defines the creation of literature as the writer’s expression of individual character. He also expands his concept from that of the individual character to that of the national character since individual character has been shaped under the influence of such conditions as the national historical background, climate, and general environment.22

In spite of the novelty of this literary article for Korean literature at the time, there are in it ambiguities and distortions: humanism, individualism, and naturalism. He tends to equate these “isms” when he discusses the realization of the individual, the discovery of humanity, and the discovery of individual character. Yet each of these “isms” emerged in different eras and against different social historical backgrounds. Humanism emerged during the Reformation in the sixteenth century against Christianity while political individualism emerged during the eighteenth century to limit state intervention and protect the freedom of the individual, as exemplified by Rousseau’s conception of the social contract. Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s individualism, however, neglects the political element, since he fails to address the issue of political authority and limits himself to pitting individualism against tradition. He also defines naturalism as the disclosure of disillusionment to reality, which is only one aspect of naturalism, to reveal the oppression of the individual. However, his concept does not address the scientific, methodical aspects of naturalism associated with the French novelist Zola. Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s distortion and misunderstanding of naturalism has caused scholars to debate the naturalistic characteristics of his works.

In July 1922 Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s Myoji (A Burial Ground) was serialized in Sinsaenghwal. It was banned by the Japanese after three months because of its anti-Japanese themes. So, he experienced Japanese censorship of his writing’s publication. However, he serialized Myoji again by changing its title to Mansejôn (Days before the

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23 We cannot neglect the effect of Japanese colonial rule on Korean society, which was that of a harsh authority with power to oppress the individual in Korean society. The power of Japanese colonial rule could even limit and change Korean traditions, to perpetuate Japanese control over Korea. The absence of the definition of political power and authority seized by Japanese colonial rule gives his ideas ambiguity and distortion.
March First Movement) and publishing it in Sidae ilbo from April to June 1924. In September 1924, he published Mansejón as a book in Koryōgongsa. In Mansejón, Yŏm Sang-sŏp presents the social context of the life of Koreans and the predicament facing a Korean intellectual with his country under Japanese colonial rule. It is a very notable novella because Yŏm Sang-sŏp could finally write about the society in which he lived, which had not been seen in his previous literary writings.

The Second Phase of Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s Literary Life (1925–1945)

In 1926, Yŏm Sang-sŏp went to Japan again and his stay in Japan resulted in a new phase for his literature, which can be summed up as his accomplishment of a full length novel and the formation of his nationalistic criticism through literary debate against socialist literary opinions. In Japan, he was able to learn the techniques and atmosphere of current Japanese literary society and so to develop a new phase in his literary career.

Under the influence of Marxism, Korean writers began to pay attention to lower class people like tenant farmers and factory workers, uneducated and isolated from the mainstream of society. A group of writers that included Pak Yŏng-hŭi (1901–?) and Kim Ki-jin (1903–1985) organized the KAPF (Korean Artists Proletariat Federation) in 1925. With the organization of the KAPF, Korean literary society split into two groups, the nationalists and the socialists. These two groups limited the possibilities of Korean literature in their debates. However, they also helped to develop their own theories of literature through these same debates. Socialist groups felt that the function of literature
was to change society drastically, while nationalist groups felt that literature should be purified from any political purpose and means.\textsuperscript{24}

With the publication of his article “Kyegŭmmunhaksibiron” (“A Critique of Socialist Literature”) in \textit{Kaeböyk} (no.56, February 1925) right before he went to Japan, Yŏm Sang-sŏp triggered debates opposing the circle of socialist writers and began to build up his nationalistic perspective on literature by differentiating his literature from that of socialist writers. In his article, Yŏm Sang-sŏp criticizes socialist literature for its one-sided focus on specific political theories and its exclusive attention to have-nots. He talked about the haves, who were also part of the social structure in Korean society and insisted that Korean literature must also include the haves’ point of view. He rejected the socialist writer’s slogans about literature for the masses because in his perspective, it was nonsense for a writer to lower the quality of his literature so as to be understood by the uneducated. However, he showed enough flexibility to adopt socialist literature as part of the literary movement as long as it did not force the one-sidedness of socialist literary trend onto other literary writers.\textsuperscript{25}

Through this debate, Yŏm Sang-sŏp overcame the abstract ideas on literature shown in his previous article, “Kaesoŋ kwa yesul” and paid closer attention to the social context of Korea. After he went to Japan again in January 1926, Yŏm Sang-sŏp published “Munye wa saenghwal” (Literature and Life) in \textit{Chosŏn mundane} (\textit{The Literary World of Korea}; no.19, February 1927). In this article, he developed a realistic point of view on literature and proclaimed that literature is meaningless if it is isolated from the life of its

\textsuperscript{24} Chang Sŏk-chu, \textit{20segi han’guk munhak ui t’amhŏm}, 1:354–360.
people. Literature, he maintained, is the expression of life as well as the expression of individual character. In “Minjŏk, sahoeundong ūi yusimjŏk koch’al” (“Spiritualistic Perspective on National, Socialist Movement”) published in Chosŏn ilbo (Chosŏn Daily; Jan. 1-15, 1927), he developed his ideas on literary tradition. He distinguishes the natural and instinctive part of tradition from the backwardness of the traditions that oppressed the individual. He asserts the need for unification between socialists and nationalists to fight against the backwardness of Korean tradition. He emphasized the importance of distinguishing the negative aspects of tradition from its positive aspects to preserve the identity of the Korean people under the harsh oppression of Japanese colonial rule.

Yŏm Sang-sŏp published “Sosŏl kwa minjung” (The Novel and the People), serialized in Donga ilbo from May 28th to June 2nd, 1928 in which he presented his ideas on literature from a reader’s perspective. He stated that the novel can be a good genre for the Korean masses. However, he rejected the socialist novel, just written for mass popularity or to be understood by uneducated people. The novel, he wrote, should convey the life of the people, and inspire and encourage the reader to have a deeper understanding of their own lives.

In his article, “Munyesang ūi chiptanŭisik kwa kaein ūisik” (Collective Consciousness and Individual Consciousness in Literature), published in Munyegongnon (Literature and Criticism; no.1, May 1929), he stated his own realistic perspective as it related to his individual character. According to his theory, literature is the expression of the individual character of a single writer. However, it should not simply be the subjective interpretation of the society that the individual is living in.

Rather, the writer should try to present an objective perspective. The writer, as one individual, should bring deep thought and consideration of life in relation to himself and convey the objective perspective on it so that it can be understood by readers.\(^{29}\)

*Sarang kwa choe (Love and Crime)* began its serialization in September 1927 in *Donga ilbo* during his stay in Japan, and finished its serialization on May 1928 after 257 installments. A full length novel, *Sarang kwa choe* is the story of two different kinds of people in Japanese colonial Korea.\(^{30}\) One type is the corrupted person who gives in to a greed for money and sexual desire. The other is the young and pure intellectual who recognizes the realities of Korea under the Japanese. Although the main plot line is about Yu T’aek-su’s efforts to make Chi Sun-yōng his concubine by using his money, and Yi Hae-ch’un’s efforts to save her from Yu T’aek-su, Yŏm Sang-sŏp shows by the richness of his descriptive power the society of Korea. The plot line has the characteristics of a popular novel in its clear distinction between good and evil, the conflicts of love, conspiracy, greed, and its third person narrative. However, the setting of the novel, in the scenery of the desolate Korea after the huge flood of 1924, symbolizes the exploitation of Japanese colonial rule. It features discussion between Yi Hae-ch’un and his friend Kim Ho-yŏn, and Japanese socialists and anarchists. Through their discussion, Yŏm Sang-sŏp indirectly reveals his idea of eclecticism between nationalism and socialism rather than the extremist line of socialistic and anarchistic idealism.

With Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s completion of his serialization of *Sarang kwa choe*, after his return to Korea in February 1928, he serialized *Isim (The Treachery)* in *Maeil sinbo*.


Isim is a story about a new woman, Pak Ch’un-kyŏng. She is ousted from her school as well as her family because of a scandal involving Yi Ch’ang-ho. She lives with Yi Ch’ang-ho. However, after he is put into prison for a suspicion on his involvement in anti-Japanese movement, she works in a hotel and has an inappropriate relationship with a Japanese manager in exchange for money. Ch’un-Kyŏng is sold out to the prostitute quarters by her husband Yi Ch’ang-ho, who is angry about her extramarital affairs and finally she kills herself. In this full length novel, Yŏm Sang-sŏp shows the ruin of a new woman who is morally impure, and his abomination of the new woman, previously shown in Cheya, is repeated in this novel. The father of the heroine regrets ever having educated his daughter, which also suggests a prejudice that the education of women brings about their sexual corruption.

At September 1929, Yŏm Sang-sŏp became a as the managing editor of literature and culture section in Chosŏn ilbo and serialized Samdae (Three Generations) in Chosŏn ilbo from January to September 1931. Samdae, as its name suggests, is a story about three generations of grandfather Cho Úi-kwan, father Sang-hun, and son Dŭk-ki. Dŭk-ki, as the main character of the novel, has a neutral position between the grandfather and father. However, we see his own efforts to combine and harmonize the polarization between the traditional values represented by the grandfather and the Western values represented by his father. As an intellectual educated in Japan, Dŭk-ki can see both the positive and negative aspects of tradition and modernity, and tries to develop this positive perspective into being an intellectual fit to be the new leader of his family after his

31 Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Isim, Yŏm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip, 3: 11-301.
32 Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Samdae, Yŏm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip, 2: 11-418.

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grandfather’s death. With the *Samdae* main plot as a family saga, Yŏm Sang-sŏp also showed the various intellectual characters and their thought. In the novel, he presented Korean nationalist leaders like Kyŏng-ae’s father and P’il sun’s father, as well as socialists such as Byŏng-hwa. He also showed his criticism of radical socialists by having P’il sun’s father killed by radical socialists due to ideological disagreements. However, Yŏm Sang-sŏp also showed sympathy toward socialists through his presentation of Dŭk-ki’s friend Byŏng-hwa. Dŭk-ki reveals a neutral perspective to ideological conflict but disapproves of radical socialists.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Yŏm Sang-sŏp gave up writing due to the strengthening of thought control and censorship in Korea by the Japanese colonial rule with the rise of the militarism and imperialism in Japan which followed that country’s invasion of Manchuria. In the name of the unification of Korean and Japanese (*Naisen ittai-ka*), they prohibited the use of the Korean language in public, and the use of Korean in schools. They also closed down most of the newspapers and journals published in Korean, especially those involved in the nationalist cultural movement. With this change in Japanese colonial rule, Yŏm Sang-sŏp abandoned his writing after 1935. In 1936, he went to Manchuria to work in *Mansŏn ilbo* as an editor, and in 1939 he resigned from *Mansŏn ilbo* and worked in the public information section of a Japanese construction company until the liberation of Korea from Japan in 1945.

*Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s Life Following Korea’s Emancipation from Japan (1945–1963): The Third Phase of His Literary Life*
After the liberation of Korea from Japan in 1945, Yŏm Sang-sŏp experienced the political turmoil in Korea. He returned to Sinŭju, in the north part of Korea, from Manchuria in October 1945 and came back to Seoul in June 1946 by crossing the 38th parallel. After the liberation of Korea from Japan, Korea underwent serious conflicts of ideological division between socialists and democratizers. With the intervention of foreign forces, and the victory of World War II, the Soviet Union occupied North Korea and the United States South Korea, and Korea divided at the 38th parallel.

Yŏm Sang-sŏp renewed his literary life by producing short stories from 1948 based on his experience of returning from Manchuria to South Korea. In January 1948, he published *Samp’alsŏn (The 38th Parallel)*, a collection of short stories. The title story is based on his own experiences of crossing the 38th parallel, and “Moryak” (The Plot) is based on his experience of the conflict in Manchuria among Koreans, Japanese, and Chinese after the end of World War II. In January 1948, he also published “Ihap” (Parting and Meeting) in *Kaebyŏk* (No. 76, January 1948), which deals with an ideological conflict between a neutral husband and his socialist wife. In “Chaehoe” (The Reunion), the successor to “Ihap,” published in *Kaebyŏk* in August 1948, he emphasized the significance of familism over ideology by presenting the reunion of husband and wife in South Korea. In October 1948 Yŏm Sang-sŏp revised *Mansejŏn* and published it in *Susŏnsa*. In August 1949, he published *Tup’asan (Two Bankruptcies)* in *Sinch’ŏnji*, which deals with former Japanese collaborators who collaborate with the Americans again after the liberation from Japan, and continue their privileges, and nationalists during the Japanese colonial period who are now economically ruined and have a miserable life. The short story shows two kinds of bankruptcies: the spiritual bankruptcy
of the former Japanese collaborator and the economic bankruptcy of the nationalist in the turmoil of Korea after liberation.

The Korean War also influenced Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s life. At the outbreak of the war, he could not escape from Seoul. He survived by going into hiding until the reoccupation by the South Korean military of Seoul on 28th September 1950. In December 1950, he joined the South Korean navy and in March 1951 he began to work as a major in the department of information and education of navy. With his experience of the Korean War, he serialized Ch’wiu (A Passing Rain) in Chosŏn ilbo which deals with Koreans in Seoul during the Korean War. He had an honorable discharge at the Korean War Armistice Agreement in 1953.

After the Korean War, he concentrated on his writing but tried not to become too involved in literary society. For this reason, although he was appointed as Dean of Sŏrabŏl Art College in 1954, he did not work at his office there. In 1960, he published the short story collection Iltaeui yuŏp (Unfinished Work of One Generation) and “Hoengbomundan hoesanggi” (Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s Memoir of the Korean Literary Circle) in Sasanggye in 1962. He died in March 1963 of cancer.
CHAPTER III
SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE NARRATIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF MANSEJÓN

Socio-historical Background of Mansejón

The time of the publication of Mansejón, the 1920’s, was a period during which the Japanese conducted intensive surveillance on Korean publishing. The High Police (Kōtō keisatsu) enacted strict censorship on the publication of such themes as opposition to the Japanese colonial government or calls for Korean independence. In July, 1922, Yŏm Sang-sŏp encountered the Japanese surveillance of his novella, Myoji (A Burial Ground), serialized in Sinsaenghwal. After three installments of Myoji, Yŏm Sang-sŏp had to stop writing because Sinsaenghwal was suspended permanently in 1922. Moreover, his third serialization was subjected to total erasure by the High Police for its anti-colonial themes. Out of three installments on Yi In-hwa’s life in Japan and his returning to Korea, the part that enraged Japanese censorship is the conversation between Japanese ferry boat passengers, and the Japanese investigator’s humiliating surveillance of In-hwa. The Japanese passenger is mockingly discussing the Korean people sold in Japan as cheap workers. The investigator’s surveillance is an illustration of the Korean intellectual’s predicament under Japanese colonial rule. This reveals the writer’s opposition to Japanese colonial rule, by showing a Korean man’s experience of Japanese oppression. 33

However, Yŏm Sang-sŏp serialized Myoji again by changing its title to Mansejón (Days before the March First Movement) in Sidae ilbo in 1924 where he worked as the

editor of the local news sections. In September 1924, he published Mansejön as a book in Koryōgongsa. These two versions had only minor differences because Yŏm Sang-sŏp only changed the sentence structure and the words. The part serialized as Myoji in Sinsaenghwal was not changed much in these two versions. It is not clear how Mansejön, banned only two years before, could have been republished. It may have been the change of title that made the difference, or the fact that Sinsaenghwal was a magazine, and Sidae ilbo was a newspaper. Moreover, Sinsaenghwal was a nationalistic magazine heavily surveilled by Japanese censorship system from the beginning of the publication. 34

He published Mansejön again in Susŏnṣa in 1948 in the free atmosphere of the liberation period (1945-1950). This version has big changes compared with the previous three versions although the plot line is about the same. Including the changes of the sentence structure and tense, the addition of the anti-Japanese themes and ideology is the salient feature of this last version. This shows that Yŏm Sang-sŏp could not express his thoughts on Japanese rule in Korea, until the liberation period, and that he had exercised self-surveillance on his writing before that time. The studies of Mansejön have been focused on the version published in 1948, because of the richness of the nationalism and the anti-Japanese theme in the text. However, the version written 24 years after the original text was published does limit its nationalistic and anti Japanese themes, although the 1948 version is valuable in the way it shows us what Yŏm Sang-sŏp thought about

34 Ibid., 86-87.
Japanese colonial rule and his experience of censorship. In this reason, my thesis will be based on the 1924 version published in *Koryōgongsa*.\(^3\)

**The Significant Difference between the 1924 and 1948 Versions**

To analyze the salient feature of the different versions, it would be better to compare the version of 1924 published in *Koryōgongsa* and the version of 1948 in *Susōnsa* because the version of 1924 is very similar to the version of 1922 serialized in *Sinsaenghwal* as *Myoji* and the version of 1924 serialized in *Sidae ilbo*. In this sense, the version of 1924 published in *Koryōgongsa* would be the representative version of the Japanese colonial period, and the version of 1948 would be the only version written after the liberation of Korea from Japanese rule.

One of the representative differences between the version of 1924 and the version of 1948 is the importance of sarcasm toward Japanese society in the novel. First of all, In-hwa’s pessimistic observation of Japanese people in a competitive society are shown in both versions. However, the parts that indicate the distinctive historical and social background of Japanese society are omitted in the version of 1924:

a. It is the winter before the March First Movement. The First World War has just ended, and peace has been signed, so that the world seems changed. Even in Asian societies, there is clamor for the idea that the world must be reconstructed. Japan has no reason for delight at the end of the war, because, overnight, she has become rich, caught up in a craze known as ‘making money’; This money has been made, and is being made, by having joined the winning side in the Great War. Japan is still making efforts for ever-greater prosperity. I, In-hwa, who am a student at W University, have heard news that has made me stop my final exam mid-way through, and I will have to return to Korea. This is...  

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 87-91

\(^{36}\) My thesis is based on *Yōm Sang-sŏp*’s completed works 1, which includes the 1924 version published in *Koryōgongsa*. See *Yōm Sang-sŏp, Mansejŏn, Yōm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip*, 1: 11-107.
because I have received a telegram saying that my wife, who was sick after giving a birth to a son, was dying. (1948 Version)  

b. It was the winter before the March First Movement. At that time, I received news that made me stop my final exam mid-way through return to Korea. This was because I received a telegram saying that my wife, who was sick after giving a birth to a son, was dying. (1924 Version)  

The description of Japanese society right after the First World War has been added into the version of 1948. This beginning of the novel in the version of 1948 clearly depicts the economic prosperity and optimism of Japanese society spurred by the production of military supplies during the World War I, and the subsequent intellectualism rampant in European nation, which warned the danger of colonial expansion. When the novel describes Japanese society as money-minded and money-worshipping society (overnight rich in a craze known to be rich, to be rich), the author’s derisive attitude toward Japanese prosperity is revealed. This passage also implies that while the idea that “the world must be reconstructed” is circulating in intellectual circles, Japan is still longing for pursuing economic prosperity by every available means. However, in the version of 1924, the beginning of the novel plainly depicts the situation of “I” who is a student in Japan and has to return to Korea due to his wife’s illness. This omission can be interpreted as the writer’s attempt to refrain from attacking Japanese society, in order to avoid direct criticism and to escape Japanese surveillance.  

The discrimination that In-hwa experiences as a colonial student in Japan was added to the version of 1948 while it is not shown in 1924:  

Since Korean students studying in Japan still have good reputation in Tokyo as the handsome descendents of wealthy families, even Korean liberal arts students like me are  

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38 Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Mansejŏn, Yŏm Sang-sŏp chŏnji (Seoul: Minûmsa, 1987)1:11.
welcome in places like this hostess bar. After my fellow students dragged me here the
first time, I have been frequenting this place for about six months. I am tempted to come
here often because I feel comfortable at least in the freedom of this world, which is less
discriminating and disdainful of my being Korean.(1948 Version)39

This passage shows that In-hwa goes frequently to this hostess bar because it is a place
where he experiences less discrimination as a Korean in Japan. Yŏm Sang-sŏp is also
criticizing the decadent pleasures rampant in Japanese society. Money-can-buy-anything
capitalism dictates the operation of this café, where Korean students from wealthy
families are welcome to indulge in corrupt entertainments, and, as long as they have the
money to pay for them, they will not experience discrimination.

Secondly, the version of 1948 depicts the main character as more sympathetic,
and as a nationalist intellectual, while In-hwa, in the version of 1924, is more selfish and
individualistic. Most of all, In-hwa’s attitude after his wife’s death differs in the two
versions. In the 1948 version, although In-hwa experiences a sense of freedom as a result
of his wife’s death, he also shows sympathy. In addition to this ambivalence, he connects
his wife’s death to his impatience with Korea’s failure to develop along with the rest of
the world. The 1924 version is primarily concerned with the guilt and discomfort he feels
about his wife. He is selfishly angry about the inconvenience of her death, and the
gloomy atmosphere after the funeral:

a. While I lie down in a gloomy living room, I feel as if a heavy stone or a slug of lead is
pressing upon my heart. I feel a choking sensation because Korea is wasting what it has,
and lies down by falling behind. Korea is covered by a lid, tightly, while the world has
come to have hope for a new future after the end of the World War I. However, when I
think of my wife, I cannot get rid of the scene of my wife’s death, and I feel regret and
sympathy for my wife.(1948 Version)40

40 Ibid., 664-665.
b. While I lie down in a gloomy living room, I feel as if a heavy stone or a slug of lead is pressing upon my heart. ... [Here there is a description of an exorcism after In-hwa’s wife’s death, when a shaman spreads salt in front of In-hwa’s room, in order to exorcise a bad spirit]. I felt angry but I closed the door and lay down. I felt no energy but my heart was boiling. Why did I return to Korea? (1924 Version)  

The version of 1948 depicts In-hwa in deeper contemplation of his wife and his country. However, since most of In-hwa’s disillusionment and selfishness remains in the 1948 version, this greater sensitivity seems like an incongruous and abrupt shift in characterization. With the free atmosphere of the liberation period, the writer tries to make In-hwa a more responsible nationalist intellectual and this treatment is inconsistent. 

The content of the letter sent to Shizuko contains the significant difference between two versions. The content of the letter in the version of 1948 consists of the political and nationalistic comments while the letter in the version of 1924 is about how he finds his own way after his wife’s death:

a. The time is coming soon when I will have to face up to my responsibility to save myself and to my obligation to find a way of my own. Right now I feel surrounded by the public cemetery. How can I wish to breathe and dance among “the flowers of Seoul” when I am in a public cemetery, surrounded by Koreans dressed in traditional white, sapped of the energy to live, like ghosts and bogies haunting the broad daylight? Not one of the things that I see and hear can console me or give me courage and hope; a weak person as I am could be suffocated. It would not be the happy suffocation of intoxication by the fragrance of the flowers, but rather the suffocation of maggots, becoming a fossil in a tomb, separated from the air. First of all, I have to escape this suffocation. Have you ever been a country where the elementary school teacher teaches the fastening of the sword? I am from a country like that. I really appreciate your respect for my agony and my predicament. However, do you feel respect and sympathy toward a castrated being who lies down under covers rather than face the predicament which seriously disrupts his life? If someone is ugly, you can sympathize with him first, but you will eventually hate him. You may have sympathy for me. But the sympathy cannot save anyone. People say that the smell of blood from cruel killing has been eliminated from Europe, because a

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peace treaty has just been signed. They have eliminated the meaningless weaponry that they have pointed at each other and are thinking about the future of human beings. However, I do not know when the elementary teachers in this country will eliminate the sword from their waist. Whenever I think about it, I am suffocated. (1948 Version)

b. The time is coming soon when I will have to face up to my responsibility to save myself and to my obligation to find a way of my own. Right now I feel surrounded by the public cemetery. How can I wish to breathe and dance among "the flowers of Seoul" when I am in a public cemetery, surrounded by Koreans dressed in traditional white, sapped of the energy to live, like ghosts and bogies haunting the broad daylight? Not one of the things that I see and hear can console me or give me courage and hope; a weak person as I am could be suffocated. It would not be the happy suffocation of intoxication by the fragrance of the flowers, but rather the suffocation of maggots, becoming a fossil in a tomb, separated from the air. First of all, I have to escape this suffocation. I feel an obligation to save myself. I have an obligation, imposed by myself, to find my way and cultivate it. My wife’s pitiable life has ended. However, I cannot say that she died. This is because she taught me: "save yourself! Cultivate your own way". She died with this instruction to me who should love her most but love her least. Whenever I think about this truth, I cannot think that she just died. Her body is buried in the tomb but her spirits marry me again. (1924 Version)

In the version of 1924, the letter concludes with the individual awakening to the necessity of self-cultivation. He also feels pity and guilt about his wife’s death. In the version of 1948, the letter is full of nationalistic sentiment. The letter in the version of 1948 presents a sudden conclusion without the process by which to reach this conclusion. The beginning part of the novella, which is the same in both versions, is about his disillusionment with Korea. However, in the version of 1924, In-hwa is focused on his idealistic mission to cultivate the self. This is his excuse for deciding that a continued relationship is impossible. However, in the 1948 version, he tells about his status as a colonial intellectual, and his suffering as a colonial subject under Japanese rule. This distance between In-hwa as colonial subject and Shizuko as the colonialist is the excuse

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Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Mansejon, Yŏm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip, 1:104-105.
for his irresponsibility toward Shizuko. This nationalistic sentiment is pretty much due to the free atmosphere of the liberation period.

Summary of the Story

It is the winter before the March First Movement. The main character Yi In-hwa, who is studying in Tokyo, Japan receives a telegram from his older brother in Korea telling him that his wife is dying. After his elder brother requests that he returns to Korea, In-hwa feels annoyed that he will have to miss the final examination of the year. He stops at the university to inform his professor, wanders to the barbershop and the bookstore, and finally stops by the café to see Shizuko, the café woman he has teased during his subsequent visits. During this postponement of his return to Korea, In-hwa conveys his impression of the scenery of Japan.

In-hwa also shows his interior consciousness in the process of his justification of the freedom he has enjoyed during his love affair with Shizuko. In the course of this justification, In-hwa expresses his concept of individualism and the significance of the self free from any oppressive thought or moral value, which reveals Western influence on his character as a modern intellectual.

He eventually leaves Tokyo by taking a train from the Tokyo train station. In the train station, In-hwa meets Shizuko again when she comes to bid him farewell, and receives a box from her containing a letter and a bottle of whiskey. In the train, In-hwa reads the letter, in which Sizuko confesses her love for him. However, In-hwa does not want the responsibility of a serious relationship with her.
The postponement of his return to Korea continues as he stops in Kobe to meet Ulla, a Korean student with whom he has had a past relationship which never developed into a love affair. He suspects she is involved with Byōng-hwa, his cousin. He rejects her proposal to return to Korea with him.

In-hwa also experiences the Japanese colonial surveillance system in the port at Shimonoseki, where he is about to take a ferryboat to return to Korea. In-hwa feels humiliated for his ethnicity when he is picked up and investigated by Japanese police. Moreover, on the ferryboat, he overhears the Japanese passengers discussing the Korean people who are sold to Japan for cheap labor, and he realizes that his thoughts have been superficial and removed from reality. The overheard conversation and his experience of Japanese surveillance inspire his hostility towards Japanese colonial rule, and he awakens to his true identity as a Korean intellectual experiencing discrimination and degradation at the hands of the Japanese people.

When In-hwa arrives at Pusan, he encounters the police and their Korean assistants, who watch the ferryboat customers. He is also approached by a Korean rickshaw driver who implores him, in the manner of a beggar, to take his rickshaw. He even wishes he could pass as Japanese to avoid this surveillance. However, he is sent to the police station and investigated again. After In-hwa is released from the police station, he wanders around Pusan, which he thinks of as a miniature of Korea. He sees that the Japanese business and residential district has expanded into the center of Pusan, while Koreans have been forced to move to a marginal area, because of the transformation of Korean society into a colony of Japan. While In-hwa criticizes what he sees as the backwardness, laziness, and poverty of the Korean people, he is also skeptical about
the Japanese colonialists and their colonial reform efforts. In a Japanese noodle shop, In-hwa encounters a half-Japanese/half-Korean geisha who honors her Japanese heritage, but is ashamed of her Korean origins. In-hwa realizes that the hierarchies of ethnicity and culture have penetrated the lives of the common people.

In-hwa finally arrives at Kimch’ŏn and meets his older brother, who is wearing a Japanese military costume and carrying a Japanese sword, when he comes to welcome him at the train station. In-hwa is sarcastic about his older brother's attitude. The older brother, who is a teacher in public school, has assimilated into the new order of Korean society under Japanese colonial rule. In Kimch’ŏn, the brothers have an argument about the older's concubine and about a burial site. In-hwa criticizes the older brother's hypocritical conservatism in regard to producing a son, and about the ancestor's burial site, while In-hwa is criticized for being selfish and irresponsible about his family matters.

In-hwa again takes a train to see his family in Seoul. In the train, he encounters a traditional hat seller and they have a conversation on the issues of new burial regulation enforced by Japanese colonial rule. The hat seller criticizes the new colonial burial regulation that neglects the traditional Korean emphasis on the burial of ancestors. In-hwa is offended by the backwardness of Koreans who, while facing poverty, are preoccupied with traditions concerning the dead. However, he recognizes the Japanese colonial intention hidden behind the burial regulation, which is to exploit Korean land to their own benefit. In Taejŏn, the train is temporarily stopped, and the traditional hat seller is arrested by Korean police assistants. The passengers, including In-hwa, are afraid because of the presence of these officials. In Taejŏn, In-hwa sees a group of Koreans, including a woman with a baby on her back, chained together by Japanese gendarmes,
ostensibly to avoid random arrests. He experiences complete disillusionment with Korea, and exclaims that Korea is "a tomb where maggots swarm."

In-hwa finally arrives in Seoul and sees his dying wife, who, on her deathbed, cares only about her husband and their son. He feels sympathy for his wife. After seeing her, In-hwa sees his father and his father's friend Kim. In-hwa's father, who desires political power within the Japanese colonial system, brings on the collapse of his family by spending its wealth bribing colonial government officials. His absolute power does not allow for other family members' opinions. His mistrust of Western medical treatment deprives In-hwa's wife of the medical care that could have saved her life. However, the father and his friend Kim still pursue the positions of perfunctory status that the Japanese colonial government gives to the upper class of the Chosôn dynasty who collaborate with them. They participate in the organization "The Korean Aristocracy Association", which claims "harmony" and successful assimilation between the Japanese and the Korean. This group consists primarily of the yangban class of the Chosôn dynasty, but they never attain any real position.

In-hwa is bored. He spends time in Seoul where he visits Byŏng-hwa, who he suspects of having an inappropriate relationship with Úlla. In-hwa sees Byŏng-hwa's stable home with its extravagant furniture and his comfortable status as governmental official. He presents Byŏng-hwa in a negative light for having no feeling for the confusion and agony of his society, while he enjoys an ideal life style after joining the bureaucracy of the Japanese colonial system.

In-hwa's wife finally dies, as her family condemns In-hwa for his coldness and indifference toward his wife's death. In-hwa insists on only three days' ritual period and
buries his wife in a public cemetery. After his wife's death, he leaves his son in his elder brother's care and writes a letter to Shizuko, indirectly rejecting Shizuko's proposal to develop their relationship seriously. And he returns to Japan again.

Symbolism and the Narrative Techniques of Mansejŏn

One of the notable narrative strategies in Mansejŏn is the journey motif. The novel's purpose is to reveal the process of the journey rather than the destination. In the novel, In-hwa's stated purpose is to return to Korea to see his dying wife. However, the main goal of the novel is to reveal the character of a Korean intellectual through his reactions to the social contexts in which he finds himself. In this sense, the main emphasis is on the reflections, in the character's consciousness, of the scenes, the people, and the conversations he experiences during his journey.44

His detour from his destination is the most significant part of the novel, because it best displays the social context of the main character's conflicts. His wanderings to the bookstore, the barbershop, and the cafe, and his visit to Úlla in Kobe play an important role in revealing who In-hwa is. His postponement of the journey reveals the conflict between individual freedom and responsibility to his wife within In-hwa's consciousness. The scene of his wanderings, in modern Japan, and his encounters with Shizuko and Úlla, show us how In-hwa distorts the idea of individual freedom in order to justify his decadent life and irresponsibility. Moreover, his experience in Japan with a "new woman" triggers his conflicted feelings about his responsibility towards his wife, and towards the traditional values that his marriage represents.

His detour from the main journey happens in Korea. In-hwa either wills his detours, or they happen by accident. In Pusan, when In-hwa postpones his journey to Seoul, we see how colonial Korea is perceived by a Korean intellectual educated in Japan. To In-hwa, Pusan is Korea in miniature, and in his wanderings there, he can comment on colonial reconstruction under Japanese rule. He also presents his criticism of the general backwardness of the Korean people, as seen from a reform-minded Korean intellectual's perspective. In Taejŏn, an accidental detour of the train allows us to see the scenery of Korea under surveillance and under public enforcement of the Japanese.

The most unusual characteristic of the journey motif in the novel is that the main character Yi In-hwa does not attain insight and closure. The journey motif, in novels of the Western tradition, shows the main character challenged by the journey, and he often acquires a new perspective and attains a higher level of insight.45 However, In-hwa does not show any new commitment or awakening. In the beginning of the novel, In-hwa has been a self-centered character indulging in individual freedom and intellectual pride. Yet, because of his experience of the surveillance by the Japanese investigators in Shimonoseki, he becomes an active observer. He begins to reflect on his former indifference to Korean society. By reflecting on his past attitude, he begins to realize that his intellectualism has been idealistic and unrealistic. However, this awakening does not bring about major changes in his character. Instead, he becomes disillusioned with Korea itself. He distances himself from his own country. In his disillusionment, he begins to see Korea as a tomb full of dead people, and he has to escape from this miserable country. When he returns to Japan, he does so with no real insight or change of personality with

which to confront the Japanese environment differently than before. He returns to the same place, as the same person, in essentially the same stage of development.

This absence of insight can be interpreted as the writer's attempt to avoid the sudden generalization of making In-hwa a nationalist throughout the journey. Instead, the writer tries to convey modern Japan from the perspective of a Korean intellectual, and to show the predicaments of an anti-hero. The writer may be attempting to convey what is, rather than what should be.

Yŏm Sang-sŏp's narrative technique in his literary works, including *Mansejŏn*, is deeply related to the Japanese "I-novel" (Shishōsetsu). In the first phase of his career, his novel was regarded as exotic and new to Korean writers, because he clearly understood Japanese literature, and used its techniques in creating his novel. Kim Tong-in praised Yŏm Sang-sŏp because his use of Japanese literary techniques had rarely been seen in Korean literature at that time. His study in Japan gave him chances to study modern Japanese literature, and especially "I-novel" and Japanese naturalism. His concept of individualism as individual freedom, and naturalism as a means to emphasize individualism introduced in "Kaesŏng kwa yesul" (*Kaebyŏk*, no.22, April 1922) is influenced by the Japanese versions of individualism and naturalism circulating in Japan at the time. Moreover, the "I-novel" flourished in Japanese literary society during the Taishō period (1912-19), the time that he studied in Japan. In his autobiographical writings, he mentions the influence of Japanese naturalistic writers and literary magazines, and cites naturalism as an important characteristic of his work.46


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The Japanese "I-novel" developed out of the Japanese adoption of Western naturalism, but with an important difference. The "I-novel" is an autobiographical novel written in the first person or the third person point of view. Western naturalism's attempt to objectively and scientifically analyze society through literature was converted, by Japanese authors, into an analysis of individual interiority. It is written in diary style so that it oftentimes becomes confessional to reveal the interiority of the self in the novel. Moreover, the techniques of stream-of-consciousness and interior monologue effectively reveal the self's psychology and consciousness. One shouldn't equate the writer with the narrator, although there is autobiographical material mixed with the fictional elements. The most significant feature of the Japanese "I-novel" is that the self is completely alienated from society, and is determined to avoid a confrontation with it. While confessional autobiography, in Western literature, presents the self as a heroic archetype standing for morality and discipline, the "I-novel" represents the self as completely isolated from society.\(^{47}\) This phenomenon is often interpreted as the limiting effect of Japanese militarism and imperialism on intellectual freedom. Because of Japanese nationalism, intellectual movements proclaiming individual rights and freedoms were neglected, and writers became more focused on their own interiority rather than on social concerns.\(^{48}\)

One of the features in *Mansejōn* influenced by "I novel" is the confession. Since Japanese naturalism focused on the interiority of the individual more closely and


deliberately, "I-novel" is mostly written in such confessional forms as the memoir, the diary, and the letter, which are meant to carefully reveal emotion, thought, and consciousness. *Mansejôn* also has this confessional characteristic in the form of a memoir style, through which the "I" narrator confesses his past. With the first person point of view, the novel is a memoir of the journey by the "I" narrator. Moreover, *Mansejôn* also uses the letter form to allow the main character to reveal his interiority, and to reveal the interiority of other characters as well, such as Sizuko's letters to In-hwa and vice-versa. Through these letters, Sizuko reveals her feelings for In-hwa, and In-hwa shows his hypocrisy in attempting to hide his selfishness and irresponsibility.

The autobiographical feature of *Mansejôn* is also influenced by the "I-novel". To get closer to the interiority of the individual, Japanese writers brought autobiographical material into their novels. Like In-hwa, Yŏm Sang-sŏp had studied in Japan during his youth. The writer's background is as an intellectual studying abroad in Japan, and In-hwa, like the writer himself, is in conflict with Western knowledge and traditions. Yŏm Sang-sŏp proclaims the need to fight against the negative parts of Korean tradition from the perspective of the intellectual who prefers Western knowledge, although he wants to preserve the positive parts of the Korean tradition. In-hwa criticizes early marriage based on familial contract, the patriarchal system, and the general backwardness of the Korean people. This is exactly what Yŏm Sang-sŏp criticizes in his writings. Finally, In-hwa's older brother, the school teacher, who pursues his egotistic and familial welfare under Japanese colonial rule, is very similar to Yŏm Sang-sŏp's older brother, who graduated

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from a Japanese military academy, and served as a Japanese military official, before becoming a teacher at Osan School. Although Osan School was nationalistic, there is an obvious similarity between In-hwa's brother and the author's. The author may have been ashamed of his brother, just as the fictional In-hwa was ashamed of his. The novel is not necessarily the life story of Yŏm Sang-sŏp, but the autobiographical features are prominent.

The separation between the "I" as narrator and the "I" as narrated main character is the notable feature in Mansejŏn influenced by “I-novel” techniques. The novel begins in the winter of 1918, before the March First Movement, which the narrator presents from the present time. The self that narrates the past has a different state of mind from the self depicted in the novel. This separation enables the narrator to explain the background of the main character effectively, while also describing his state of mind. The novel was mostly written in the past tense because the narrator tells us of his life in the past. However, when the main character's thought and interiority is revealed by self-monologue, it is written in the present tense. So tense plays a significant role in distinguishing the narrator from the narrated. Once In-hwa returns to Korea, the narrator's interventions diminish, since In-hwa becomes an active observer of the incidents of his journey. From this point, the narrator lets his past self play the major role in describing what he sees. From the scene of In-hwa's encounter with the Japanese investigator in Shimonoseki, to his experiences in Korea, the narrated In-hwa becomes independent of the narrator in his observations.

50 Kim Yun-sik, Yŏm Sang-sŏp yŏngu (Seoul: Sŏul taeakkyo ch’ulp’anbu, 1987;1999), 12-14
Despite the influence of the Japanese “I-novel”, Yŏm Sang-sŏp's novella, *Mansejŏn*, has a significant difference. The main character of the Japanese “I-novel” is mostly a spectator rather than a participant in society. Moreover, the Japanese “I-novel” does not clearly show a social context. The main character is always totally isolated from the society in which he lives. The Japanese “I-novel” focuses primarily on revealing and interpreting the interiority and psychology of the main character. In-hwa has a strong similarity to a main character in a Japanese “I-novel” because he is described as a spectator. In-hwa, who has pretensions of being a modern Westernized intellectual, isolated from society in Japan, and alienated from society in Korea, is forced, by the experience of his journey back to Korea, to face the reality that defines him as a colonial subject. Although he remains a spectator at the end of the novella, the novella successfully displays the reality of the Korean intellectual in colonial Korea.
In-hwa, the novella's main character, is a Korean intellectual studying in Japan. His studies allow him access to Western knowledge and thought as well as to Japan's version of a Western life style. His studying in Japan places him in the forefront of the Western thought and values that he never experienced in Korea. Japan is the place where intellectuals such as In-hwa go to learn about the world and modern trends of Western thought, culture, knowledge, and news. The novella presents In-hwa in the landscape of modern Japan especially Tokyo, a metropolitan city with modern conveniences. Throughout his stay in Japan, In-hwa's lifestyle is deeply connected with modern amenities. For example, he learns of his wife's illness by telegram. The telegram, a modern scientific invention, also enabled money to be sent across national borders, like the money In-hwa's elder brother sends from Korea to a post office in Japan. The trolley car, which appears throughout the book, is another important and widely used mode of modern transportation. Whenever In-hwa rides a trolley car, it is crowded. Western clothing is also widely worn by the Japanese in the novel. The worker who wears Western pants and a blue Japanese traditional jacket shows that modern clothing has become part of the lifestyle of the Japanese worker. In-hwa, in this cityscape of Tokyo, seems like a modern man with all the modern conveniences.

However, when In-hwa is in the city, he is described as being displaced from the society. In-hwa's relations with Japanese society in the novella are limited to the café woman, the housemaid, and the owner of the boarding house. During his stay in Japan, he is only wandering in the corner of the urban night life. The reflection of the city in In-hwa
is very lonesome and gloomy. In-hwa describes the night scenery of Tokyo as “the shallow and thin lamplight hung on the store”, which is “shining as if it is sleepy and dying out and looks very lonesome.”51 This vision of the city, isolated and lonesome represents In-hwa’s interior condition of loneliness and isolation living in the city. In-hwa, who is wandering around the city, is surrounded by the presence of others that he cannot talk to, and from the vantage point of an outsider, In-hwa observes the people living in Japan.

Throughout his wandering, In-hwa begins to analyze these others around him. From his stance of isolation, he criticizes the social trend of dehumanization, distrust, and mammonism without the true relationship between people:

At any rate, what I saw were the faces twisted by hard labor, hunger, and cold. They raised their withered faces, looking absent-mindedly at others across them, and peeping at others sitting next to them. Because of their weakness, human beings strive to win small victories and pride, and crow about their insignificant accomplishments. Because of their weakness, human beings put up barriers to protect themselves and watch others. Of course, there exist human instincts to satisfy their vulgar curiosity by observing how others look, how others dress, how others act, and how others speak. However, there were other reasons for observation. First of all, for their protection, they had to judge their social status: Whether they were more powerful or not and whether they were richer or not. And after that, they paid attention to how others dress, speak and act to compare themselves to others because these things represented social status in city life. Because they strove to flatter and deceive others, and because they wanted to have a sense of superiority, caution, and a determination not tendency not to be exposed for their desire to exploit others, they were proud of their sensitivity to others’ ordinary state.52

In-hwa during his wandering around the city takes the trolley car and observes Japanese people in the city of Tokyo. According to the passage, the people on the way home are tired of their everyday life. Their gloomy and tired faces demonstrate that the everyday

51 Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Mansejŏn, Yŏm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip, 1: 21.
52 Ibid., 22-23.
life experience of the common people in Tokyo was to work hard to sustain themselves in the city. Their way of looking at other passengers in the trolley is to assess cautiously whether they may be harmful or beneficial, and to put a barrier against them. The basis for observing a person is that person’s relative wealth. People’s emphasis on materialistic values is exposed in their categorizing each other on the basis of financial means. In-hwa recognizes that the intention behind the observation is embedded in materialistic vanity. Others are simply judged as rich or poor. Based on this judgment, one can look down on others or feel humiliated in their presence. The rich can be classed as “beneficial” and the poor can be classed as “useless”. People’s judgment is based on “how to dress, how to speak and how to act” which indicates their relative social status for the materialist. The relationship between one and another is one in which a person can only exploit, or be exploited, to survive.

In-hwa with his modern education, however, went through the struggle with the different values and thoughts of his traditional family. In contrast to his family’s expectation that In-hwa will attain social betterment under Japanese colonial rule and carry on his obedience and responsibility for family’s sake, In-hwa cherishes the freedom to make his own decisions and determine the course of his life, which he calls individualism. In Japan, In-hwa can build up his own values and thoughts based on Western knowledge, in temporary freedom from the intervention of his family in his course of life. In-hwa’s conflict with his family in regard to his major, study of literature also tells how In-hwa’s thoughts and values are different from those of his family:

“What use is studying literature these days?” I hear this kind of question each time I return to Korea, twice a year, once from my father and once from my brother. Sometimes
I am sick and tired of hearing it from them. At first I used to argue vehemently against their opinion. I used to defend myself by saying, “Education improves a person’s character and perfects the self rather than producing machines, providing a salary, or getting a dung band indicating your status as a government official (I used to call the gold band a “dung band”). A person’s individual character is very precious, so the purpose of an education would vary with the individual character.” However, I realized that I had to give up. There were no bridge between my world and their world.53

According to this passage above, In-hwa’s family wants him to finish his education and find a good job, because the Japanese system allows its colonial intellectuals to attain a social reputation under Japanese colonial rule. However, the subject of literature, In-hwa major at W University, has no practical application to social betterment for In-hwa under Japanese colonial rule. However, In-hwa has a different idea about education as “perfecting the self” and “improving individual character”. In this sense, his studying in Japan is to search and find himself and the way to develop his individual character, independent from finding a stable job or any other practical usage. In-hwa’s concept of “the self” and “individual character” is very foreign and new in traditional Korean society, which emphasizes the common good of the collective such as family, society, and the country. In-hwa’s individualism makes him strive to separate himself from the grasp of his own family. From In-hwa’s perspective, the family limits and oppresses his individual character and the course of his life.

Traditional marriage based on a familial contract rather than on love between spouses causes In-hwa distress throughout the story because it does not comply with his individualistic need to decide his own course in life. His own marriage denies him the happiness of family unity while forcing him to carry the burden of moral responsibility for his wife. His studying abroad in Japan can be interpreted as an excuse to escape from

53 Ibid., 62-63.
his familial obligations, and specifically from his wife. However, throughout the novel, his wife is a big burden to him. His indifference toward his wife, and the postponement of his departure after receiving a telegram telling him that his wife is dying, is a pretense to alleviate his burden concerning her. In-hwa’s emphasis on the self and individual character is much damaged by his unwanted early marriage.

In-hwa is an intellectual with modern liberal values, which are in opposition to the dehumanization in city life. Ironically, he falls into a predicament that is centered on his conflict between his individual freedom and familial obligations related to his dying wife. With the truth that his wife is dying, In-hwa’s predicament comes to the surface. He wants to be free from his familial obligation, especially his wife, whom he married at an early age based on familial contract. His stay in Japan gives him a chance to escape from his wife. However, when he receives a telegram from his older brother in Korea, telling him about his wife’s final illness, In-hwa again has to face his bonds to his wife which limit his course of life. While wandering around the city of Tokyo, he falls into a pattern of thought and self-justification, signifying the conflict between his individualism and traditional morality:

When my conscience raises its head, I ask myself ‘how dare I get drunk while my wife is dying? But this is not true conscience, it is only the devil morality pulling on the rope around my neck. A human being is the slave of the moral idea. To emancipate oneself from idolatrous worship of the moral idea is to find one’s authentic life. If you do not love, then I do not even glimpse at it and if you want to love, then, nothing is wrong in doing so.54

According to the passage, In-hwa’s individualism has the character of a liberalism that pursues emancipation from any merely legalistic morality. In In-hwa’s perspective, the

54 Ibid., 20.
Coerciveness of morality is one type of oppression, which limits "one's authentic life" because the established morality loses its authenticity, if one is to cherish one's individual character. The problem is that this morality controls the individual by means of conscience. In In-hwa's case, the morality "pulling on the rope around my neck" is traditional morality, especially as it pertains to his wife. And his conscience produces feelings of guilt when he leaves his wife in Korea and does not take care of her. Moreover, he postpones his departure by wandering around the city, and enjoys his time in cafés with café women. However, In-hwa justifies his irresponsibility toward his wife by defining his guilty feelings and conscience itself as the cause of the traditional morality that is in conflict with the concept of individualism and liberalism.

His consciousness still works on the self-justification that he does not feel anything about his dying wife. He retains a lingering consciousness of his wife's life. Notably, he describes morality as an injustice imposed by tradition. Under the influence of individualism, In-hwa rejects all morality associated with formal tradition. According to the Korean traditional familial system, one married as one's family directed. His responsibility toward his wife is based on familial obligation rather than on any conjugal love between them. The familial request for his return is based on his family's vanity and concern for honor. The husband is supposed to observe his dying wife. If he does not, it will seem immoral and irresponsible in the eyes of traditional morality and of all observers.

In-hwa justifies his irresponsibility as an act of an individual emancipated from traditional morality, but his need to convince himself betrays the fact that he is not free from his familial obligation. He confesses that he is still bound by a bad conscience over
being in a café, while his wife is dying. He describes his conscience as “the devil morality pulling on the rope around my neck.” He rejects his conscience’s oppressiveness and he even says that “it is not true conscience.” Since he does not love his wife, he does not have to be bound by any moral responsibility toward her. His concept of an authentic life means the freedom of the individual to decide and actualize his true emotion and mind.

The problem at this point is whether we can see In-hwa’s conscious opposition to traditional morality as the emergence of the modern individual. His struggle against traditional morality expands into the Western concept of the emancipation of the individual, as follow:

But the more I wanted to emancipate the bond planted deep inside me, the more frantic I became; I became impatient, and in my frenzy had I writhed as if in desperate agony. That was to say, here was my fury, my self-pity and my self-defense: although I could see clearly that if I did not free myself from all the concrete and abstract foundations, all the contradictions, and all the entanglement, I would be suffocated. I could not act on that knowledge. 55

In-hwa describes his inner struggle as a “desperate agony” that makes him “frantic” and “impatient.” “Desperate agony” in the context of the novella comes from the conflict between his desire to be a free individual and his traditional morality. In-hwa claims his struggle against all these established ideas as an apologia for his indifference, or the pretense of indifference, toward his familial obligations. Although In-hwa tries to conceptualize his irresponsibility as the fight against all the established ideas oppressing the individual, it becomes apparent that by “established ideas” he means nothing more than Korean familial obligation.

55 Ibid.,22.
In-hwa's liberalism and individualism, however, is only expressed in his decadent pleasure with café women and the inappropriate relationship with a Korean "new woman" educated in Japan. While his wife is dying, In-hwa visits cafés, and his relationships with café women in Japan has continued throughout his study in Japan. With little freedom allowed in Japan, In-hwa's dedication to freedom from responsibility reveals itself as an intoxication with the culture of intellectual freedom in café and a pretense of total indifference to reality. In-hwa's antagonism toward Korea's totalitarian family traditions converts his emphasis on individualistic values into a selfish yearning for absolute individual freedom, which makes him avoid rather than confront his predicament.

However, In-hwa's free love relationship also does not have any seriousness. In-hwa does not show any responsible character in his relationship with Shizuko. In-hwa has a chance to become intimate with Shizuko, who is a high-school graduate. She wants a serious relationship with In-hwa and plans to apply to a women's college by quitting her job as an entertaining woman. Although In-hwa is attracted to Shizuko's intellectual and yet naïve character, he does not want any responsibility. In-hwa is worried that the development of his relationship with Shizuko would jeopardize his life of freedom from responsibility. His life in Japan can be summed up as the attainment of absolute freedom, which means the freedom from responsibilities such as his familial obligation, as well as his preference for flirtation over commitment:

I am, by nature, shrewd and self-interested, so that I hate to be involved in any entanglement. It is not because I am nationalistic or that I dislike Japanese girls but I want to chose my type so I can enjoy my prime of life with foreign girls. 56

56 Ibid., 26.
When In-hwa reads the letter in the train that he receives from Shizuko at Tokyo station, In-hwa finally realizes that Shizuko regards him as a serious lover. In this situation, In-hwa reveals his irresponsible character in the response of the letter by his internal reactions. According to the passage, In-hwa does not want any responsibility for Shizuko. He rather enjoys his flirtation and times in the café with Shizuko. Shizuko is not even his type of women. In this sense, In-hwa’s free love relationship is not romantic but decadent and immoral. He even confesses that he naturally does not like to be in a situation that forces him to have responsibility for anything. In-hwa sympathizes with Sizuko’s situation: her ex-lover left her and she has had trouble with her stepmother. Her job as a café women is a phase of the rebellion of her youth. However, In-hwa cherishes Sizuko’s intellectual ability and literary sentiment. But, his sympathy towards Sizuko is only momentary.

In-hwa defines his lack of interest in a serious love relationship as his intellectual ability to analyze his emotion rather than indulge in romantic emotion. He says “A person such as me, who analyzes the taste of saliva while kissing a woman, is incapable of loving others.”57 His self-analysis reveals In-hwa’s character as an observer even of his own emotion. He even analyzes the kiss which is usually a romantic indulgence. His observation and analysis break down any fantasy and romanticism of the established ideas of love, even the idea of free love between a man and a woman. With his insights into look into his interiority, In-hwa keeps distancing his emotion from Shizuko. While he indulges in flirtation, he observes and analyzes the character of Shizuko with pride and arrogant intellectuality and with a rebellious character. In-hwa also does not romanticize

57 Ibid., 27.
his emotion toward Sizuko. Rather he sharply analyzes his attitude as mere flirtation rather than a serious love relationship. Even though he is seriously attracted to Shizuko, I do not want to sacrifice my free life for my relationship with her. Throughout his monologue, In-hwa confesses that his attitude toward his relationship with Sizuko is to have a fun without any serious responsibility.

His status as an observer and analyst makes him deeply analyze his intention and motivation but does not change or influence his selfish and irresponsible attitude toward the woman with whom he becomes involved. First of all, his excuse for his flirtation without sincere love is only to keep a mental distance from Sizuko, in order to preserve his life centered on his individual freedom. As for In-hwa, the romantic indulgence will be another attempt to place limits on his life with the moral requirements with which he would be bound, as in his relationship with his wife and burden to give him limit and morality that he has to be bound like his relationship with his wife. For the excuse of his irresponsibility toward the relationship with Sizuko, In-hwa introduces his concept of individual freedom and a life untouched and uninfluenced by any morality and responsibility, just as he excuses his irresponsibility towards his wife. However, he also admits that “his mentality of flirtation” has no difference from “that of a prostitute”. And he also says that his inability to love others is a mental corruption. In this monologue, In-hwa recognizes that his flirtatious attitude towards women is similar to the mentality of a prostitute, who takes advantage of men by flirting with them without love. However, this insight does not bring about a change in his attitude. When he finishes his observation and analysis of his mentality, he thinks about stopping by Kobe to see Ülla.

58 Ibid., 28.
who is another woman In-hwa has flirted with in his past. His self-awareness does not diminish In-hwa’s moral corruption, and he persists in his irresponsibility, in the name of individual freedom.

In-hwa’s attitude toward Úlla is one of avoidance of any involvement in unwanted responsibility. In-hwa also visits Úlla in Kobe, and had a slight affair with her, but it couldn’t develop into a serious relationship because he suspicion that she has been involved with his cousin Byŏng-wa. of his suspect on Úlla’s relationship with his cousin Byŏng-hwa. Úlla is a student at a music school in Japan. In-hwa has heard many rumors of Úlla’s immorality, including a relationship with a Buddhist priest and with In-hwa’s cousin Byŏng-hwa. In-hwa describes these women as morally corrupted in their free love relationships. However, In-hwa’s criticism of Úlla’s immorality does not make sense in that he is one of the people who help her to be immoral since he flirts with her as a married man. His criticism is about jealousy concerning Úlla’s suspected relations with his cousin Byŏng-hwa. Moreover, his criticism of her immorality gives him an excuse for his flirtation with her. In-hwa feels more intimate with these women than with old-style women such as his wife. He can flirt with them due to the freedom of their minds from traditional morality. However, In-hwa is irresponsible and selfish with them, in the name of his individual freedom, just as he is with his wife.

In Japan, In-hwa is an intellectual, with a belief in individual freedom who studies in the metropolitan city of Tokyo. He criticizes the dehumanization of city-dwellers in Japanese society. However, his idea of individual freedom is in conflict with the traditional values of his family in Korea. Japan is a temporary shelter from the intervention of Korean familial obligations such as his unwanted early marriage, and the
discord with his father and older brother. In Japan, In-hwa idealizes his conflict as an individualist that pits a spirit of insubordination against anything that oppresses his individual freedom. However, throughout his indulgence in decadent pleasures, he shows that his individualism is selfish and irresponsible.
CHAPTER V
IN-HWA’S RETURN TO KOREA AND CONFRONTATING COLONIAL REALITY

Returning to Korea, In-hwa experiences his status as a colonial intellectual more clearly. While in Japan, In-hwa did not have to face the oppressions of Japanese colonial rule directly. Because of his isolation from society and the partial freedom given to him, in Japan he can live in a world of his own construction, that of absolute freedom from patriotic and familial obligation. However, upon his return, he is forced to recognize the reality of being a colonial intellectual whose country is subjugated by Japanese colonial rule. His experience of humiliation and discrimination under Japanese colonial surveillance, and his observation of modern transformation, happens in Korea. He must deal with this fact whether or not he wants to do so. However, In-hwa tries to distance himself from participating in colonial Korea. His criticism of colonial Korea allows him to evade decision and confrontation. In-hwa’s criticisms cut both ways, presenting both the inequity of Japanese colonial rule and the ignorance of Koreans. This balanced position helps In-hwa, as the narrator as well as the main character, to convey an objective perspective on his country’s situation. However, it also highlights In-hwa’s avoidance of any decision or necessary confrontation in regard to the perceived problems. In-hwa is always placed between two sides, and cannot cope with either of them. In-

59 Kim Yun-sik sees In-hwa’s neutrality as a mature and objective perspective from which to convey his sense of life in colonial Korea. By being neutral, In-hwa gives us both sides of Japanese colonial rule from a dualistic perspective. Moreover, In-hwa has more than one perspective when he describes characters and incidents in the novella, and is able to convey their various aspects in this way. See Kim Yun-sik, “Yŏm Sang-sŏp ãê sosol kujo,” in Kim Yun-sik, ed., Yŏm Sang-sŏp (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 1977), 46-48.
In-hwa's neutral position is that of a spectator. In this sense, In-hwa's experiences in his home country can be summed up as the conflict between his self-designation as a neutral spectator and his empathy for, and a feeling of solidarity with, those who suffer the colonial reality of Korea.

Under Japanese Colonial Surveillance

Because of his experience of humiliation under Japanese colonial surveillance in colonized Korea, In-hwa's social conscience is awakened. Returning to Korea, In-hwa first encounters Japanese colonial surveillance of Korean intellectuals at the port of Shimonoseki. Japanese surveillance follows him while he stays in Korea. By encountering this surveillance, In-hwa realizes that he cannot escape from his identity and status as a Korean and colonial intellectual. In the novel, this is his first experience of having his identity determined by the Japanese colonial authority. No matter what his intellectual identity, In-hwa is labeled as a Korean and colonial intellectual. This experience brings home to him the reality of the surveillance system, and the conflict between the feeling of solidarity with the Korean people and his intellectual status as a neutral spectator. In-hwa feels that he becomes a Korean through his experience of

60 Pak Chong-ae tries to prove the partiality of In-hwa's "neutrality". To do that, Pak Chong-ae distinguishes the insight of In-hwa toward himself from the insight of In-hwa toward others. She asserts that In-hwa sees himself as being bound with the backwardness of Korea such as the familial obligation and the marriage of familial contract. In this sense, In-hwa's perspective is not neutral, but, rather, the perspective of a modern intellectual. Moreover, throughout criticizing colonial Korea, In-hwa attains his own space to distinguish himself from other Korean people. However, her perspective excludes In-hwa's sympathy toward Korean people and how his endeavor and desire to be neutral is molded and is destroyed by Japanese colonial authority. My thesis emphasizes In-hwa's intention to be neutral in his decision and to position himself as a spectator. However, his intention to be neutral is disturbed and even destroyed by his position as the colonized and the colonial intellectual under Japanese colonial authority. See "Kundaejok chuch'e ül sisone p'och'aktoen t'ajadül," Han'guk yösōng munhakhoe 6 (2001): 59-64.
humiliation as a Korean and a more dangerous Korean due to his intellectuality to the perspective of Japanese colonial rule. He begins to recognize other Korean people under Japanese colonial rule.

In-hwa comes to realize that being Korean is inconvenient and troublesome through his confrontation with the Japanese investigator. At the port of Shimonoseki, he encounters harsh treatment that he has never experienced in Japan. In contrast to the indifference of the Japanese surveillance system in Japan, In-hwa is heavily scrutinized because Shimonoseki is a gateway to Korea so that the flow of Koreans requires constant scrutiny. In this sense, In-hwa’s experience of colonial Korea begins with his journey to Korea. In Japan, In-hwa can be an individual, invisible to the Japanese colonial government. However, upon his return, In-hwa cannot escape being Korean. When In-hwa arrives at the port, a police investigator picks up In-hwa and asks about his nationality and his place of registration. The attitude of the investigator implies that he looks non-Japanese. In-hwa’s ethnicity as a Korean is a very serious matter for the Japanese police investigator.

When the Korean investigator takes In-hwa from the ship for further investigation, he feels humiliated because other passengers, who are Japanese, recognize him as a Korean and look at him as if he is despicable. He feels inferior because he is picked up for investigation and noticed as a Korean by the other passengers:

I could say that he was a Korean based on his body structure, worn by student clothing with a cloak, as well as his accent, although he tried to speak like a native speaker. His nervousness about his ethnicity as a Korean being revealed while he spoke Japanese made me suspect him, and be disgusted with him. The sight of the Japanese who recognized us as Korean by listening to my name and his accent moved me to him and

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61 Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Mansejŏn, Yŏm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip, 1:34-35.
him to me. In other words, we were like actors who performed a play in front of the
Japanese... The despising eyes of the Japanese in the ship still staggered me...
Unpleasant thoughts were poking into the base of my neck from inside, and my energy
was drained and my shoulders were sinking.62

In-hwa feels inferior because he is picked up for investigation and is noticed as a Korean
by the other passengers. The Korean investigator himself fears that his accent will reveal
him to be a Korean when he calls In-hwa out in Japanese. In-hwa comes face to face with
another Korean intellectual who collaborates with the Japanese. Both In-hwa and the
Korean assistant investigator feel inferior to the Japanese when they speak Japanese with
a Korean accent. It is impossible to pretend to be Japanese because it is impossible for
them to speak Japanese perfectly. This revelation also brings shame to them. “The
despised” is In-hwa’s true identity as constructed by Japanese colonial dominance. In-
hwa is not merely discriminated against and surveilled but an object to be despised. A
Korean’s personality, ability, or intellectual life does not matter; they are inferior to the
Japanese because of their ethnicity. The Japanese colonial system has deprived In-hwa of
pride. His pride in his intellectuality cannot be sustained, since he is a subject of Japanese
colonial rule.

The ferryboat is a place of epiphany, revealing to In-hwa his position from the
perspective of Japanese colonialists. The most important thing is not his identity as a
Korean, but how he is identified from a Japanese perspective. In-hwa cries after the
experience of humiliation and the investigation causes the breakdown of In-hwa’s pride
and self-dignity. In-hwa’s place as a Korean colonial subject disturbs his self-positioning

62 Ibid., 41-42.
as a modern intellectual. What remains is his Korean identity, which is regarded as inferior by the Japanese:

I felt rather comfortable that I did not have to worry about surveillance when traveling from Tokyo to Shimonoseki because I did not pretend to be Japanese and there was no need to present myself as a Korean. However, whenever I boarded a ferryboat, I usually felt threatened and pressured, as if held from behind. But this time I felt more offended, since my hand baggage was searched. I lay down with my eyes closed. But the anger in me still rushed up to my neck so that I had to bite my lips tightly. However, I could not find a way to give vent to my indignation. Even if I found someone who was in the same shoes as me, I could not complain to them because I was in a ferry boat, where Japanese, whose status was higher than mine, were hanging around. 63

In Japan, In-hwa was neither Japanese nor Korean. But in Korea he must be Korean, the subjugated, the colonized, and the inferior. For his convenience, In-hwa would rather not “present himself as Korean,” but neither can he be Japanese. In-hwa’s indecisive status as neither Korean nor Japanese is not simply forced on him by the Japanese colonial mechanism that motivates the inferiority of the Korean people, but rather, is a result of his decisions and attitudes. In-hwa cannot escape from his own identity as an oppressed Korean. In Japan, he regards himself as a modern intellectual much like the Japanese modern intellectuals. He even places himself as higher than Japanese modern intellectuals, because he can observe and analyze Japanese modernity from a distance. However, In-hwa comes to realize that his pretense of neutrality does not make him neutral in reality. In the ship, In-hwa’s humiliation is the realization of his true position in society. Moreover, In-hwa also recognizes the fundamental difference between himself and the Japanese in the ferryboat, all of whom are higher than him because of their ethnicity. He cannot even complain of his unfair situation to other Koreans because he is in a ferryboat,

63 Ibid., 47.
which upholds the dominance of Japanese authority. In-hwa cannot ignore that to the Japanese he is the one of the “yobo” after overhearing a Japanese customer complaining to the crew of being treated as a “yobo” and hearing other Japanese merchants, recruiting Korean labor, discussing Korean people as ignorant and backward but easy to tame as slaves, and calling them “yobo.”

Another oppression and surveillance of Japanese colonial rule on In-hwa is due to his status as an intellectual. The Japanese colonial government tries to control Korean intellectuals’ thought and social activity even more closely than that of the general populace because they pose a potential threat to Japanese colonial rule. From the perspective of the Japanese authority, In-hwa is a modern intellectual who could be an anti-Japanese nationalist or a communist. In-hwa is in a bad position. When he is searched at Shimonoseki, the Japanese police note down the titles of the books, whether In-hwa has books on communism and writings about anti-Japanese sentiment. To the Japanese, what a Korean intellectual reads and writes is very important subject to be investigated.

In-hwa’s position under Japanese colonial rule as a possibly dangerous intellectual is very different from how he seems himself: as someone who desires absolute intellectual freedom. When the Japanese investigator searches his baggage at Shimonoseki, he sneers at the investigator’s guesses about him because he is not a dangerous communist or a radical nationalist. Although he has anti-Japanese sentiment, they cannot find proof since he is doing nothing about it; he is not involved in any anti-

64 Yobo” is the expression to indicate Korean that originally means “primitive”, “uncivilized”, and “backward”.
65 Yöm Sang-sŏp, Mansejôn, Yöm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip, 1:49
66 Ibid., 36-40.
Japanese activities or groups. However, although he tries to position himself as an intellectual with no relation to politics, he is still treated by the Japanese as a dangerous intellectual. His endeavor to position himself as a free intellectual, who floats above politics, as well as above family conflicts, is just a pipe dream. The Japanese viewpoint of his place in society prevails over his view of himself, and he can no longer simply be a spectator.

Japanese surveillance of Korean intelligentsia includes keeping track of their activities. In Korea, In-hwa is followed in thought as well as in social activity under colonial rule. An investigator follows him throughout In-hwa’s journey in Korea to watch his activity and he is required to report to police station in Seoul when he moves outside of central Seoul. When In-hwa converses with the seller of traditional hats about new burial regulations in the train to Seoul, he guards his speech because he recognizes that one of the investigators is tailing him and an expression of his true opinion of Japanese colonial policy might get him into trouble. In this sense, his very intellectuality is maimed by Japanese colonial oppression. His feeling of impotence and helplessness comes from this tight surveillance of Japanese colonial rule.

Throughout In-hwa’s experience of Japanese surveillance, In-hwa feels closer to and pays attention to other Koreans under the oppression of Japanese colonial authority. In-hwa hears the Japanese in the ferry describe Korea as a country of order and safety from the point of view of the Japanese. They praise the policies of Terauchi Masatake.\(^67\)

\(^{67}\) Terauchi had been Governor General in Japanese colonial government from 1910 to 1919. His governing time is often called as Military Rule (mudan chŏngch’ı) in Korean and budan seiji in Japanese because he used police and gendarme to suppress discontent of Korean people toward Japanese colonial rule. He resigned taking responsibility for the March First Movement (1919) in Korea. With his resignation,
the Governor General who pursues public order and safety for Japanese by using the Japanese police and gendarmerie. 68 However, In-hwa sees that Japanese surveillance is a policy to make Korean people servile and obedient through humiliation after seeing it from a Korean perspective. As he hears in a ferryboat, when In-hwa arrives in Pusan, In-hwa begins to realize that the Japanese police and gendarmerie suppress Koreans by capitalizing on their fear. The widespread presence of the Japanese police instills fear in Koreans. When In-hwa gets off the ferryboat at Pusan port, what he sees is the armed gendarmerie, policeman and their Korean assistants. When In-hwa encounters them at the port of Pusan, he becomes afraid of being humiliated. In-hwa even hopes that they will view him as Japanese, which indicates his sense of inferiority as a Korean, in addition to the injustice of his being singled out and investigated because of his ethnicity. 69 In-hwa’s feeling of inferiority reaches a point where he wishes to pass as Japanese in order to avoid police scrutiny. In-hwa has no identity but that of the oppressed who will do anything to avoid oppression. The absolute individual freedom that he cherished in Japan becomes useless, and he becomes a subject of Japanese colonial rule.

The Japanese intentionally construct an oppressive environment to manage Korean people effectively. When the seller of traditional hats is arrested by the Korean police assistant, the passengers, including In-hwa, show fear at his mere presence. When a Korean assistant comes to the train, the Korean passengers freeze whether they are criminals or not. 70 Their attitude indicates that colonial rule is not just; you can be

68 Yom Sang-sŏp, Mansejon, Yom Sang-sŏp chŏnjip, 1: 37.
69 Ibid., 50-51.
70 Ibid., 80-81.
arrested and put into prison on mere suspicion. In-hwa also sees Koreans chained by
Japanese policemen, including a woman with a baby on her back, and a young Korean
intellectual flattering the Japanese gendarmerie for avoiding making random arrests when
the train stops temporarily in Taejŏn. These scenes of colonial Korea show that Japanese
colonial rule achieves the subservience of Korean people by coercion and oppressive
surveillance. 71

However, with his hostility toward Japanese surveillance, there is also In-hwa’s
criticism of Korean people’s servility and weakness under Japanese colonial surveillance
from the perspective of superior intellectual:

Being treated contemptuously is better than being hit. It is so. By pretending to be a mad
person, as he prostrates himself in the rice cake on the wooden board, he can set the
Japanese at ease and make them laugh, and then he can avoid immediate molestation. If
you put a smile on your face, even saying you bastard on the inside, you can avoid
immediate abuse. Fear, precaution, temporizing, pretense, submission, concealment, servility... these factors are the wisdom of the Korean people, hidden behind oppression.
If Korean people have a sneaky character, this is not the fault of the common people but
the fault of the politics in Korean history that nourish this character. 72

The traditional hat seller explains that he keeps his traditional hair style in order to avoid
Japanese surveillance, because Japanese police regard a Korean with a traditional hair
style as a rural character. He will escape harsh surveillance, although the Japanese

71 Chulwoo Lee states that “although modernization may have taken place in form, in the sense that law and
justice were systematized, no modernization occurred in content, since power was exercised in a “brutal”
way and the people did not enjoy democratic protections”. Japanese colonial rule’s proclamation of
“modernization in legal form” is mere reconstitution of Korean legal system into the colonial legal system
managed by police and gendarmerie based on the arrest and the punishment. In this sense, “growing
number of Koreans found themselves placed under systematic behavioral control, close surveillance,
direction informed by professional knowledge, and complex arrangements of observation and registration”.
See Lee Chulwoo, “Modernity, Legality, and Power in Korea Under Japanese rule,” in Gi-wook Shin and
Michael Edson Robinson, eds., Colonial Modernity in Korea (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press,
1999),35.

72 Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Mansejon, Yŏm Sang-sŏp chŏnjip, 1: 78
despise and neglect him as low and ignorant. This worldly wisdom, common to Korean people under Japanese colonial surveillance, makes the hat seller as an example of the degradation of the Korean people. Although In-hwa goes through the humiliation and degradation by the Japanese surveillance system, he still judges and criticizes from the perspective of a privileged and superior intellectual. In-hwa explains the cause of the Korean people's degradation as the result of an obedient and servile philosophy of living molded by a long history of Korean politics. It is this history which nourishes this character, rather than the oppression of a Japanese colonial surveillance system forcing Korean people to adopt a servile attitude in order to survive. In-hwa positions himself as the critic to point out a negative aspect of the character of Korean people connected with their history and tradition. In-hwa's criticism helps him to distinguish him from other Korean people. Although his experience of discrimination and humiliation by Japanese surveillance makes In-hwa hostile to Japanese colonial rule and forces him to pay attention to the people under Japanese colonial system, his determination to maintain a neutral position does not change.

Yi In-hwa's View of Development of Korea under Japanese Colonial Rule

In-hwa's insight into the nature of a colonial Korea managed by fear and the menace of surveillance is deepened by his direct experience of the Japanese delivery of modern convenience and development. In-hwa realizes that he is much distanced from the reality of his country under the grasp of Japanese colonial rule and begins to observe the transformation of Korean society into an effective colony under Japanese colonial rule systemically throughout his intellectuality. In-hwa is basically skeptical about the
changes made in Korean society by Japan. From his point of view, the transformation of
Korean society into new social and economic system such as the construction of modern
facilities, new institutions and the introduction of new economic system, are intended
only to bring about the reconstitution of Korean society into a colony that can be
exploited even more effectively, in line with Japanese colonial interests. And this
transformation is changing the whole way of life of the Korean people who were
accustomed to an agricultural society. During this process of modernization, Koreans
who fail to assimilate into the new system are degraded. However, In-hwa also displays
another side of the criticism of Koreans as well as the criticism on Japanese colonial rule
and the problems of colonial modernity. He criticizes Korean people’s ignorance and
backwardness as they indulge in consumption and commercialism and are unable to
recognize the intention of Japanese colonial rule to bring these changes. By presenting
two different sides, In-hwa distinguishes himself from other Koreans in the stance of a
superior intellectual, and stays in a neutral position.

In-hwa comes to know the situation of colonial Korea from the conversation of
Japanese that Japanese brokers are making profits by exploiting Koreans who are in debt
through their ignorance and inexperience of the new economic order. In the ship, In-hwa
listens to the conversation between Japanese people about colonial Korea. He learns that
one of the Japanese passengers is making money by selling Korean workers to Japanese
mine. Because the Japanese dominate southern Korea economically and politically,
Koreans in southern areas are having to leave their hometowns in debt, a result of their
failure to assimilate into the new social and economic order. Koreans have a fantasy that
a better life exists in Japan, and are easily convinced to emigrate and work there.
However, the reality they encounter is harsh labor, poverty and suffering. When one passenger who is going to Korea for the first time is worried that the countryside may be dangerous, the passenger who sells Korean workers says that the system of police and gendarmerie controls Korea effectively. The order and stability of Korea, however, is to the benefit of the Japanese people in Korea, not the Koreans.

In-hwa has an epiphany of the reality of Korean people in colonial Korea in a ferryboat where he experiences the revelation of his identity as a Korean, which is humiliated and discriminated by Japanese surveillance system. Through the overhearing of the conversation of the Japanese in a ferryboat, In-hwa finally recognizes the distance between his intellectual knowledge and the reality of Korea:

Since I was just a twenty-two or -three- year-old intellectual who had been naïve, inexperienced, and stuck in books at that time, I was very surprised when I heard this. I had discussed life, the nature of the human being, and society. But those discussions were just an academic discussion led by intellectual fervor and beguilement. Although I talked about life, nature, poetry, and the novel because of my family’s ability to support my education, it was the lamentation of the rich boy. My idealistic idea might not be from real life and society.

During his overhearing of the conversation of the Japanese ferry passengers, In-hwa ponders his realization that his dissatisfaction in Japan is the lamentation of a rich boy who has become isolated from real life and as imprisoned himself in abstract thought and ideals unrelated to reality. This realization shocks him and forces him to change his attitude. In-hwa’s realization of his ignorance and inexperience makes him a more active observer of colonial Korea. In-hwa realizes how much he is ignorant of and isolated from the reality of Korea. When In-hwa hears about the situation of Koreans, through the

73 Ibid., 38-40.
74 Ibid., 40.
conversations in the ship, he realizes that for all his knowledge he has not recognized the real plight of the agricultural Korean population. He wrote once about his dreams of life in the country. He thought that farming was a beautiful art. However, he now asks himself how it can be beautiful when Korean farmers are starving. The land takes the sweat and the blood of the farmers and gives them back only hunger. His intellectual idea of the Korean people, he now realizes, was just fanciful romanticism. Their reward for their harsh labor is poverty, and despair for the future.\textsuperscript{75} Their fate as poor tenant farmers was predestined at their birth. In-hwa's sympathy toward poor Koreans emerges from this recognition that his intellectuality has distanced him from the real situation. In-hwa might read a book and discuss the problems of the Korean people, but such intellectualized political debate is a mere game resulting from a comfortable life.

In contrast to his realization of his naivete and ignorance about the reality of poor farmers in colonial Korea, he also shows a sarcastic and negative viewpoint toward Korean intellectual's movements to participate in real society and try to change it:

Whenever I saw the lower class people, I tried not to reach out and communicate with them. This was not because they were merely Japanese who were higher than I was. Rather, I just did not want to mingle with these poor laborers. I theoretically understood the intellectual morality and the books saying that the intellectual should be a friend with the proletariat and help them. However, whenever I met them, I could not help frowning. The more I felt an aversion toward them, The more I should have made up my mind that I should work for them, and the more I should have concluded by that their unsophisticated manner and aggressiveness was not their fault. However, I had to admit the truth: I could not reconcile with them because my emotions and sentiments are different from theirs.\textsuperscript{76}

When In-hwa sees Japanese proletarians in the third class of a ferryboat, he shows his fundamental attitude toward the poor. His sense of superiority over the poor proves that

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 40.
his sympathy for the lower class is very superficial. When he observes the third class space in a ferryboat, he shows his contempt for lower class people. He admits that he does not want to mingle with lower class people and thinks that there is no way for there to be an empathic understanding between him and the lower class, even though he sympathizes with the idealistic theory that intellectuals should be friends to the poor. In this sense, despite of his realization of the poor Korean people under Japanese colonial rule, his empathic understanding and his side-taking in regard to the poor Korean people under Japanese colonial rule has its limit.

In-hwa sees that the transformation that Korean society undertakes is the construction of modern facilities that change the scenery of Korea into that of a modern city:

‘Mr. So and so’s house will turn into roads,’ they whispered, smoking pipes they had filled with leaf-tobacco. Overnight there would be the messy sound of a pickaxe and spade for a few days. After that, the road would be laid down for trolleys and cars would run, honking and splashing mud.\(^7\)

The passage above describes colonial Korea under its development process under Japanese colonial rule. Modern-style roads are built and “trolleys and cars” emerge in Korean society. The arrival of electric light has also helped to bring Korean society into a new era. New conventions of sanitation are also being introduced to Koreans. In-hwa is accustomed to such modern facilities through his experience in Japan. Now Japanese modernity is being duplicated in Korea. However, this modern development has happened so fast by destroying the pre-existing conventions of Korean society. “[T]he messy sound of a pickaxe and spade for a few days” changes the whole landscape of

\(^7\) Ibid., 54.
traditional Korea. Long secluded and agricultural, Korean society is now transformed by the sudden onset of modern conventions, without enough of a period of transition. The statement that “Mr. So and so’s house will turn into roads” is representative of many Korean peoples’ loss for the sake of the construction of a modern road system. It indicates that this process of modernization is forced, without the consent and understanding of the Korean people concerned. The people talking about the changes with “smoking pipes they have filled with leaf-tobacco” do not seem to know what the modernization process is about or what kind of influence they will have. Their use of “leaf-tobacco,” suggests that they are unused to modern conventions, since they persist in an old way of smoking, rather than using paper cigarettes. Their comments on the new changes are superficial and limited. They cannot analyze the changes brought on by the process of modernization. Their “whispering” also suggests that they are afraid and distressed at the changes, but cannot express anything because the changes are beyond their understanding. They worry about the unprecedented, painful changes but the changes themselves are beyond their power.

What In-hwa notices is that modern development comes with the colonial institution to manage it as the following: the post office would be built, and a branch office of Japanese gendarmerie would replace a police office of the Chosön government, overseeing the town. 78 In-hwa first notices that the Japanese modernize their colony in order to rule it. The new branch office of Japanese gendarmerie, and post office, indicate that the purpose of the modernization process is to reorganize and reconstitute their Korean colony along lines more beneficial to the Japanese. The establishment of the new

78 Ibid., 54.
post office in Pusan is part of a Japanese attempt to strengthen communications between Korea and Japan, as well as to build a strong web of communications within Korean society, so that they may control it effectively. Moreover, the replacement of the police branch office of the Chosŏn government by a branch office of Japanese gendarmerie signifies an increase in the effectiveness of the Japanese control of her colony by a modern police system.

This construction and development of modern convenience is deeply connected with the expansion of Japanese colonial rule and Japanese people in Korea while forcing Korean people to undeveloped and marginal areas:

Korean families leave their town one by one, a traditional and ragged house is deconstructed, and a new style house is built. In other words, the traditional one story house becomes a two-story Japanese-Western style house, the Korean under-floor heating system changes to a Japanese floor mat, and an oil lamp to an electric lamp.79

According to this passage, the construction and development of Korean society comes with the replacement of Japanese people in the place where Korean people lives. Korean-style houses are not in evidence in Pusan. Japanese-style houses occupy the town center. In-hwa asks a passerby where the town of Korean people is. He finds that Koreans live in a marginal area, which is dirty, stinking and undeveloped.80 Looking at Pusan, In-hwa discovers that the modernization process there has pushed Koreans into undeveloped, marginal areas. While the Japanese occupy the developed cities, the Koreans have fallen behind the benefit of the development.

79 Ibid., 54.
80 Ibid., 53.
In-hwa also points out that the significant reason for the Korean people's isolation is that the modern development also brings about an increase of consumption and commercialism and the marketing and manufacture of new modern conveniences.

Business would be poor in the traditional Korean taverns and bars, while there would be a red-light district full of samisen sounds in some corner of town. When country guys, newly acquainted with two problems like syphilis and gonorrhea, encounter the lack of a modern hospital to treat them, a fake doctor would appear as if apologizing for his late arrival. The world became so convenient. "Electric light has arrived in our town and a trolley car is opened. Come and see. A couple of nice restaurants have newly opened. Have you ever seen a Japanese prostitute? Let me show you." Things unheard of for hundreds or thousands of years have happened. This was the age of consumption. While one is enjoying these times of convenience and entertainment by spending the value of one bag of rice, others are paying double in debts saying, "We have more two-story houses and Western-style houses. Japanese floor mats are very convenient in summer, and very sanitary." However whose two story houses are these, and who is the sanitation for? 81

What In-hwa calls the "age of consumption" is represented as the introduction of an entertainment industry and of new modern conveniences such as "a red-light district full of samisen sounds" and "Western-style houses." Koreans, who are mostly involved in agriculture, are attracted to the new possibilities for consumption achieved by modern convenience. As if to a drug, Koreans are treated to a new economic system and new patterns of consumption, while their local economic systems fall into collapse. While they spend their money to entertain themselves with Japanese prostitutes, and to turn their houses into Western-style houses and buy Japanese floor mats, Korean business in the taverns and bars slows down, and the economic foundation of the Korean people is destroyed. The spread of syphilis and gonorrhea, representing the bad effects of Koreans' new habits of consumption, makes them even more dependent on such modern

81 Ibid., 54.
conventions as modern hospitals, to heal their newly contracted diseases. Through this process, Koreans become increasingly subjugated to the modern conveniences that Japan is introducing to Korea, and especially to Japanese colonial rule itself.

Due to this consumption and commercialism based on modern convenience and development introduced by Japanese colonial rule, Korean people lose their economical foundation, which is mostly landholding:

While a business man who wears Western clothing asks to pay a debt in front of his house, owner of restaurant threatens them to sue if he does not pay his bill, he is forced to pay bill of the electric bill, the bill of a newspaper which is in arrears, and he has to spend money to buy a cigarette when visiting his friend and to pay a trolley, until his house deed is handed over to a Japanese colonial bank. 82

According to the passage, modern convenience motivates Korean people to spend their money and it finally plays a role in turning over the land of Korean people to Japanese colonial rule. The modern financial system, brought by the Japanese, changes the whole way of life of the Korean people who so far have mostly been engaged in agriculture. Without enough socio-cultural transformation, in the new economic system, Korean people fell into consumption and commercialism so that they have the burden of debt to pay. Moreover, the Japanese colonial bank's seizure of the land deed proves that this degradation of Korean people is not accidental but shrewdly planed by Japanese colonial rule. 83

82 Ibid., 54.
83 Cadastral survey under Japanese colonial government during 1910-1918 forced Korean people to register their land brings about new relationship of social class. The middle class farmer who occupied small landholding did not know the concept of registration and, through the changes of land ownership under Japanese colonial system, lost his land and became a tenant farmer. Throughout this new land reform, most of Korean land was transferred to East Company, which was a Japanese corporation representing Japanese economic dominance of the colony. The reconstitution of Korean land under Japanese colonial rule also helped that Japanese people occupied their economical dominance of Korea since the land was the most
In-hwa regards the isolation of Koreans under the Japanese reconstruction of Korean society from a double position. He has sympathy for Koreans, but also harshly criticizes the ignorance and optimism of the Korean national character, and emphasizes the difference between himself, an intellectual, and the Korean lower classes. His contradictory views prevent him from belonging to either side. His opinion, suspended between sympathy and criticism, positions him as a spectator. His sympathy toward Koreans is the result of his experiencing being categorized by the Japanese colonial system. Although he does not want to be judged as a Korean, especially as the Japanese colonial authority views them, In-hwa cannot escape such classification of, and discrimination against, Koreans. His sympathy toward Koreans under Japanese oppression is also a pity for himself, as one of the Korean people. However, by differentiating himself from other Koreans and thinking of himself as an intellectual, he can both salvage some pride from the humiliation of Japanese colonial rule, and evade his responsibility for his fellow Koreans.

In-hwa also points out that it is the ignorance and the backwardness of Korean people that causes their isolation in the face of the new changes:

When they abandon to strangers the land their ancestors have cultivated for hundreds and thousands of years, and with such hard labor, and are forced to flee to the outskirts of the city, they think they are the only ones to be driven to the countryside. Even when they have to leave their houses after their house deeds have been passed to others several times for ever-increasing interest on the loans they can not pay, they never think, even in dreams, that they have lost their lands and houses under pressure or for lack of self-control and patience. Instead, their attitude is that this is my fortune I was

important economical means in the agricultural society of Korea and new industrialization had happened throughout the land taken from Korean people. See Pak Sang-jun, Han 'guk kiindae munhak ìi hyöngsöng kwa sin'gyönghyangp' a (Seoul: Somyöngch'ulp'an, 2000), 30.
in this passage, In-hwa expresses the ignorance and optimism of Koreans exposed to the consequences of Japan's imperial ambition. They never question why they are pushed to the outskirts of the city. From In-hwa's point of view, Koreans have been losing their economic foundation because of their high consumption of new modern conveniences. However, the ignorance of Koreans about the aims of the Japanese colonial government in modernizing makes it worse. Moreover, their intrinsic optimism makes them give way rather than confront their problems. However, In-hwa's view is flawed. What he criticizes as a defect in the national character can be blamed instead on the degradation of Korean people by Japanese colonial exploitation. Rather than pointing to Japanese colonial policy in Korea as the fundamental reason for Koreans' isolation and retrogression, In-hwa only criticizes the ignorance of Koreans and their inability to recognize how the introduction of modernity and a new governmental system expands Japan's colonial domination of the country. Moreover, his criticism of their optimism casts Korean people as unfeeling and dull, incapable even of anger and anguish. His analysis of colonial Korea shows that it is his own assessment of the country that leads him to distinguish himself from other Koreans, calling them ignorant and foolishly optimistic. His outlook also suggests that it is only he who has the power of recognition to penetrate the colonial intentions of Japanese colonial rule, while others are spellbound by a Japanese colonial policy of expansion embroidered with modernization and development.

84 Ibid., 53-54.
Traveling through colonial Korea, In-hwa is confronted by the actuality of his country and people under Japanese colonial rule. His criticism of the colonial system brought by Japan such as public order maintained by surveillance, the process of modernization, as well as the Korean people on their ignorance and optimism is unaccompanied by any decision or change in his thinking. In-hwa rather remains a mere critic, without taking any responsibility. In-hwa is powerless to prevent the Japanese authorities from making derogatory assumptions about him, and so he criticizes other Korean people in turn.
CHAPTER VI
KOREAN TRADITION AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF JAPANESE COLONIAL RULE

During his visit to his colonized homeland, In-hwa is in conflict with Korean tradition. His Western education and values are the main reason for this conflict. From In-hwa's perspective, Korean tradition, in its backwardness and impracticality, can only oppress him and interfere with his freedom to decide the course of his life. However, Korean tradition is still a powerful influence, and it conflicts with In-hwa's individualism. Moreover, In-hwa concludes that Korean tradition does not effectively sustain and nourish the Korean people's pride and identity. However, In-hwa's criticism of Korean tradition tends to favor the Japanese colonial discourse, which degrades Korean traditions as a justification for their colonial rule. This is because In-hwa does not try to find a way to harmonize his Western values with tradition in order to affirm the good that is in it. Rather, In-hwa rejects any possibility of the value of Korean traditions still significant in the minds of Korean people. In this sense, In-hwa remains a spectator who does not participate in the construction of unity in Korean society but differentiates himself from his own society and escape from his former identity as a Korean and as a part of Korean society.

Yi In-hwa's Conflict with the Traditional Family

After In-hwa returns to Korea, he has to face the fact that he wants to escape from the oppression of family obligation again. As is revealed in In-hwa's life in Japan, the traditional family never leaves his consciousness, although he is far way from his family.
His return to Korea presents In-hwa’s conflict with the traditional family in detail. In contrast to his neutrality towards the oppression of Japanese colonial rule and the Korean people under it, In-hwa positions himself as an aggressive critic of patriarchal familial system which is irrational, backward, and mired in mere formalism. However, his disagreement and disharmony is only expressed by his sarcastic attitude toward his family members and his avoidance of communication with them. His silence is due to his past experience that it is impossible for him to communicate with his family. However, his avoidance of confrontation with the inequity of the values of his family makes him an irresponsible family member and, also, merely a spectator. The only family issue that In-hwa cares about is how he can get as much money as possible for his studies in Japan. In-hwa takes advantage of his family.

In-hwa’s father is backward and impractical. In-hwa’s father’s judgment brings disaster rather than prosperity to In-hwa’s family. However, In-hwa’s father still has the patriarchal power with which to control the family. In-hwa, first of all, criticizes the inequity of the patriarchal family system. In In-hwa’s view, his father’s adherence to the patriarchal family system is irrational and backward, because patriarchal power tends to ignore other members’ opinions, to the detriment of the whole family. In-hwa’s father, who desires political power within the Japanese colonial system, brings on the collapse of his family by spending its wealth bribing colonial government officials. In-hwa’s father and his friends have been trying to obtain political power under Japanese colonial rule. In-hwa’s father is the politically-minded person who wasted the property of the family due to his political ambition of getting a colonial government post during the Japanese
annexation of Korea. With his patriarchal power in his family, however, no family member can prevent him from wasting family property, or confront him in any way. His patriarchal power, without the wisdom and knowledge to lead, causes financial difficulties in In-hwa’s family.

In-hwa also criticizes his father’s conservative bias against progressive Western knowledge. Even though the father tries to assimilate into the colonial system, he distrusts the Western medical treatments promoted by the Japanese. His decision to deprive In-hwa’s wife of Western medical care leads to her death. It is ironic that In-hwa’s father distrusts Western knowledge introduced by Japan while he pursues political power under Japanese colonial rule. From In-hwa’s perspective, his father’s mere distrust of Western knowledge is backward and impractical. In-hwa’s father represents the worst example of the conservative who loses his own identity by collaboration, but also neglects the benefits of the good side of modern development. The problem is that his father misleads his family members through his patriarchal power. Although In-hwa’s wife would survive with Western medical treatment, In-hwa’s wife dies due to In-hwa’s father’s stubbornness.

In-hwa’s reaction toward his father is to neglect him. For In-hwa, his father cannot be a person to communicate with, due to his father’s stubbornness as the patriarchal power at the head of the family and because of his distrust of Western knowledge. In-hwa shows a superficial obedience to his father, which does not destroy the familial hierarchy. Although In-hwa’s superficial obedience is a convenient way to avoid argument and conflict, he also neglects other family members still under father’s

patriarchal power. When In-hwa points out to his father that his wife could be effectively
treated by a Western hospital, In-hwa’s father gets angry, saying, “What does a Western
doctor know? When your elder brother also says that, I tell him that I will take care of my
daughter-in-law whether she is dead or alive.”86 In this conversation, In-hwa stops talking
to his father and is silenced. In-hwa knows that this is the matter of saving his wife’s life.
However, In-hwa, in his attitude of a spectator, does not want to be involved in any
conflict with his father, or to give him trouble. From In-hwa’s perspective, his father does
not do anything for him but is just a patriarchal and dictatorial figure with whom it is
impossible to communicate or gain a mutual understanding. However, In-hwa’s
avoidance of confrontation victimizes his own wife and he becomes a spectator in the
matter of his own wife’s life and death.

Although In-hwa’s older brother is in conflict with In-hwa, because of his
attachment to traditional family like his father’s, In-hwa’s criticism of his older brother is
more complicated because he also saves the family from bankruptcy and offers economic
stability to the family with his realistic disposition towards survival under Japanese
colonial rule:

My older brother is a rural Confucian scholar who is trained in Confucian principles but
who also has Western learning. He is the most important person in my family. My
studying in Japan would be impossible and our family could have long starved to death,
had not my brother managed the property of the family effectively, which was declining
due to my father’s political fever and renowned name around the Japanese annexation of
Korea. It is easy to imagine his financial state by the fact that he saved two thousand wŏn
through his salary as a teacher. I respect my brother but he is not like me. My father,
brother and I are so different from each other. It is ironic that both my brother’s
conservative and orthodox character and my emotional and hedonistic character come
from same father, who regards political power as the most important.87

86 Ibid., 87.
87 Ibid., 61-62.
According to the passage, In-hwa actually admits his elder brother’s contribution to his own family and he even respects his older brother. Due to In-hwa’s father’s inability to manage family property, In-hwa’s family depends on the older brother for family matters. Without In-hwa’s older brother, In-hwa could not go to Japan to study. In this sense, it is In-hwa’s older brother who has the real power in In-hwa’s life, since the older brother is the source of the money that In-hwa needs in order to study in Japan. For In-hwa’s wife, while In-hwa is irresponsible towards his wife by avoiding the conflict with his father, In-hwa’s older brother really takes care of In-hwa’s wife. He sends a telegram to In-hwa, telling him to return Korea, and even prepares the burial site for his sister-in-law during the emergency.

However, In-hwa’s older brother has his limits in his acceptance of the patriarchal family system. His older brother, who is educated in Western knowledge and traditional Confucianism, obeys the patriarchal order of the family even though he recognizes that it is not practical and sometimes absurd. However, In-hwa’s older brother accepts the father’s stubborn refusal to provide Western medical treatment for In-hwa’s wife. Moreover, his older brother dares not confront his father for continuing to waste money in order to attain a post under the colonial government. While In-hwa does not confront his father to tell him not to interfere in family matters, his older brother obeys his father whether it is right or wrong, due to his traditional belief in obedience to one’s family. In this sense, In-hwa classifies himself as an “emotional and hedonistic character,” while In-hwa classifies his older brother as “conservative and orthodox” in his character. His concept of “conservative and orthodox” implies that his older brother is boring and
backward to In-hwa. In-hwa’s description of his older brother as “not like me” is very ambivalent points of view. His older brother is responsible for his family but he is still dependent on tradition and opposed to In-hwa’s individual character and freedom independent from family.

In-hwa’s argument with his older brother on burial regulations also reveals that In-hwa’s family goes through the same confusion:

Aren’t you grown-up enough to understand this? Whether it is right or wrong, we have no choice but obey the Japanese governor-general’s new burial regulation. If an ancestral burial ground falls into the hands of others, what should we do for our old parents when they die? Do you think we should bury our parents in a public cemetery? How would you face the disgrace in other people’s sight, even if we don’t consider our obligation as sons? As for your wife, if she dies, we should bury her in our ancestral ground. If the graves of our family are scattered everywhere, how will it look? 88

In-hwa’s older brother tries to find a way to protect his traditions from Japanese colonial policy without direct resistance. Through his connection with public officials, In-hwa’s older brother tries to bury his ancestor in the mountain that the family owns. What In-hwa’s older brother does is to acquire the privilege and the space that he can get from Japanese colonial rule, and he uses those spaces to protect the traditional rituals.

In-hwa criticizes the backwardness of his older brother’s adherence to the formalism of traditional ritual. In-hwa shows no interest in the older brother’s concern for the family burial site, even when his older brother worries about his wife’s burial site too. For In-hwa, worrying about the burial site before they die does not make sense. From In-hwa’s perspective, the older brother’s efforts to save the burial site for the family is mere formalism; In-hwa’s older brother only cares about how his family is reflected in others’

88 Ibid., 70.
sight. The older brother’s concept of “disgrace” is still connected with the traditional belief that disloyalty to the traditional rituals is a degradation of their reputation and a public dishonor.

In-hwa’s indifference and avoidance of the family issues is, however, challenged by his argument with his older brother. The older brother wants to discuss family matters with In-hwa, because In-hwa is his only brother, as well as an intellectual with a Western education. Since their father lives in a dream and does not care about family matters, In-hwa’s older brother wants someone with whom to discuss with the hardships he experiences in his attempts to manage the family. However, In-hwa only shows indifference to his older brother’s predicament. In this sense, In-hwa’s criticism becomes irresponsible because he rejects any involvement with family matters. In-hwa pushes all his responsibility onto his older brother and is not involved in any troubles. When the older brother mentions the unsolved problem of the burial site again, In-hwa cuts him off. His older brother is disappointed with In-hwa’s lack of concern about family matters, and this is only natural, because In-hwa is his only brother.

The conflict between the older brother and In-hwa comes to the surface in the matter of his elder brother’s new concubine. In-hwa’s older brother has acquired a young concubine, approximately 19 years old, who is In-hwa’s childhood friend. She is the daughter of Ch’oe’s family who was once one of the richest men in In-hwa’s hometown. However, he wasted the family property in gambling and died. Due to the collapse of the family, she became the concubine of In-hwa’s older brother. In-hwa criticizes his older brother’s greedy determination to have a son with the concubine, in order to carry on the family bloodline in keeping with the concept of the traditional familial system, since the
older brother's wife has not been able to produce a son. However, In-hwa's older brother justifies his actions by explaining that he has taken her as a concubine in order to save her from poverty, and to fulfill their parents' desire to have a grandson.

In-hwa reacts to his older brother's justification by saying, "True love comes from the heart, in wishing someone's happiness, not in controlling someone's life and fate."89 In his pursuit of absolute freedom unlimited by morality based on formalism and hypocrisy, In-hwa almost hates elder brother's morality that is used to justify his greed. To In-hwa, the desire to save others is only arrogance and pride, because of the imperfections of human beings. In-hwa's belief is that human beings have a selfish nature and can only care about themselves. The concept of benevolence often falls into the formalism and hypocrisy.

However, In-hwa's older brother attacks In-hwa's irresponsibility and indifference to family matters. In-hwa's older brother's reaction to In-hwa's comment is to point out In-hwa's selfishness. From the elder brother's perspective, In-hwa's study would only be possible with his financial aid. The older brother's moral determination to take care of his family is partly to support In-hwa in his studies and lifestyle, since In-hwa is not working. However, to the older brother's criticism of In-hwa's sarcasm and irresponsibility, In-hwa replies that the older brother's aid to In-hwa is the obligation. As it is an obligation for one to save the child from falling into a wall, the older brother's financial aid for In-hwa is also an obligation rather than an act of benevolence.

The older brother's comment on In-hwa's dependency makes In-hwa angry. In-hwa's theory moves into sarcasm directed towards the intention of human benevolence:

89 Ibid., 68.
The obligation means what human beings should do or should not do. Raising children and educating them, saving the children from falling into a wall is not an act of benevolence. Excluding the former example, saving one from killing himself is not an act of benevolence or an act of wishing one’s happiness. In other words, the one who cherishes life assimilates the others who want to die into his own opinion. Therefore, saving one from killing himself is also self-centered act... there are selfish instinct behind every human act.  

Throughout his attack on the hypocrisy and formalism of human benevolence, In-hwa points out his older brother’s intention of helping In-hwa due to his selfish desire to have a Western-educated intellectual as a family member. By helping him, the elder brother wants to control and assimilate him into his own interest. The older brother’s influence on In-hwa’s career bothers him greatly. In-hwa’s older brother does not want In-hwa to study literature. According to the passage, In-hwa also criticizes the older brother’s selfish control over his career and life by using his financial power over In-hwa. However, In-hwa’s sarcastic theory of human benevolence has its contradictions, in that In-hwa defines his older brother’s financial aid as an obligation while he does not meet any obligations toward his own family. According to his theory, he does not have to appreciate and care about the elder brother’s support, because his older brother supports him for his own benefit. This conflict between In-hwa and his older brother reveals In-hwa’s selfishness and the justification of his irresponsibility toward his family.

Yi In-hwa’s Neglect of Korean Traditional Women and their Victimization under the Patriarchal Family System

In-hwa’s perspective on female family members is also important points since the women in In-hwa’s family are also victimized and sacrificed by the traditional familial

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90 Ibid., 68.
system of which In-hwa regards himself as a victim. However, In-hwa totally neglects the situation of female family members. With his relationship with “new women,” In-hwa alienates his wife from him. For In-hwa, the traditional woman is also the chain that binds him. In-hwa’s ambivalent status shows his perspective on “new women,” and traditional women. The old-style women shown in the novel are presented as victims of the traditional family system. They internalize traditional women’s value and selflessly serve their husband and their children at the expense of their identity and welfare. On the other hand, the “new women” educated in Western knowledge are also described negatively, as morally corrupt and selfish. It is very interesting that In-hwa does not prefer one to the other. In-hwa regards “old women” as backward and uneducated, as well as a burden to him, while In-hwa detests “new women” because of their immorality and selfishness. In-hwa’s critique of old women and new women symbolizes his displacement and undecided status in that he criticizes the old through the prism of new and criticizes the new through the prism of the old. Moreover, his criticism of the inequity of the traditional family is that it isolates the traditional women who are victimized by the patriarchal family system. In-hwa also leaves his wife who serves him and takes care of his family and his son. In-hwa’s irresponsibility towards the traditional women of his family reveals that his criticism of his family is his justification for his own freedom from his family.

In-hwa’s wife, who represents a traditional woman, worries about her son and husband even while she is dying. Ever since she married In-hwa, she has worked for the family, despite his indifference:
We only spent a couple of months together. When I was thirteen and she fifteen, we began our newly-married life in a tiny room like a dovecote. Although she lived in her husband’s home for almost ten years, we had only been officially husband and wife since I fled to Japan at the age of fifteen.91

According to the passage, In-hwa’s early marriage with his wife does not bring the affection between husband and wife. Since In-hwa can be free from his unwanted marriage by going to Japan, In-hwa’s wife stays with her in-laws to do her obligation for husband’s family. For ten years, she has waited for her husband to come back temporarily for vacation, while In-hwa lives freely in Japan and has had affairs with other women. In-hwa’s wife also shows absolute loyalty to In-hwa. Whenever In-hwa comes back to home for vacation, she shows her happiness by crying in her room. When In-hwa comes back again, she cannot move due to her sickness but is only worrying about their son, Chung-gi, and his welfare after her death. In-hwa’s wife is dying of breast cancer after childbirth. Although she can be cured by Western medicine, she is unable to go to the hospital because of her father-in-law’s distrust of Western medicine. In-hwa, the elder brother and Byōng-hwa know that In-hwa’s wife needs to be treated by Western medical care. However, they neglect this possibility, in order not to offend In-hwa’s father. For all this, she does not take charge of her fate, caring only about the welfare of her son and husband. However, except for her mother-in-law, nobody really cares about In-hwa’s wife.

On the other hand, In-hwa’s reaction toward his wife is also very irresponsible and even immoral. When he sees his wife lying in the bed after he comes back, he feels that he cannot stand the smell of his wife’s excrement and of the Eastern medicine. When In-hwa’s wife cries and worries about their son, In-hwa thinks that his wife is ignorant.

91 Ibid., 97.
because she worries about their son while she faces her own death. Moreover, In-hwa shows boredom while waiting for his wife’s death. In-hwa wishes that his wife would die as soon as possible.\(^{92}\) When In-hwa’s wife is dead, In-hwa shows fear rather than a troubled conscience:

My wife suddenly opened her eyes, looked sharply at me, and closed her eyes again. Startled. I felt my hair bristle up. I felt fear, because I thought she was holding a grudge against me. My mind relaxed when a smile appeared on her face, and her mouth opened as she was choked with her own breath.\(^ {93}\)

In-Hwa wants to be free from the moral hypocrisy forced upon him by the Korean familial system. When P, an entertaining woman in a café, criticizes him about his staying in café while his wife is dying, he defends himself by saying that any moral responsibility without true emotion is hypocrisy. In this sense, he tries to reject any system of morality or custom that he does not agree with. In-hwa tries to reject the obligation toward his wife. However, In-hwa feels guilty toward his wife who was left in Korea with his family. When In-hwa observes his wife’s death, he fears that his wife has a grudge against him for her misfortune although In-hwa’s wife does smile in order to console her husband. When his wife dies, In-hwa consoles his guilty conscience by giving her rice cake soup before she dies. After she dies, In-hwa completes his wife’s funeral in an abrupt manner:

I rejected the idea that my family would bring the corpse of my wife to the family burial ground in Chŏngju, and had her buried in a public cemetery instead. My wife’s family was disappointed at my decision, thinking that I was happy about my wife’s death. But I forced my decision through.\(^ {94}\)

\(^{92}\) Ibid., 85-86.
\(^{93}\) Ibid., 98.
\(^{94}\) Ibid., 98-99.
In-hwa’s decision neglects the traditional formalism of the burial. However, his attitude seems unfaithful toward his dedicated wife more than it seems progressive in its rejection of formalism. After his wife’s burial, In-hwa feels two contradictory feelings. He eventually attains freedom from his guilt and his obligation toward his wife, but he is sorry that he has not taken good care of her, and has left her alone with his family. In-hwa only exploits his wife, to avoid conflict with his family, and his wife takes responsibility for taking care of the family during his absence. Although he rejects and escapes from the backwardness of tradition, he does not reject the benefits from this traditional familial system.

Collaboration and Traditional Opponents

In-hwa also criticizes the collaboration of proponents of tradition because their subservience to and collaboration with the Japanese robs them, as Koreans, of that sense of national dignity, autonomy, and identity that the observance of national tradition ought to inspire. In-hwa’s father and his friend Doctor Kim have been trying to acquire political power under Japanese colonial rule. They pursue those positions of a perfunctory status that the Japanese colonial government gives to the upper class of the Chosŏn dynasty who collaborated with them. These people are still subject to their desire for social respect as well as to traditional values.

Doctor Kim, who is an Eastern medical doctor and the friend of In-hwa’s father, changed his status from anti-Japanese conservative to collaborator. Before the Japanese annexation of Korea, Doctor Kim was a proponent of anti-Japanese sentiment. He does
not cope well with the Japanese police, who charge him a fee for the new public sanitation facilities. Doctor Kim argues with Japanese police, and demands to know why he has been forced to pay the fee. However, during the annexation of Japan, Doctor Kim is released by the Police without the confidence and pride that he is used to have. Because of this incident, In-hwa remembers why anti-Japanese Koreans like the doctor have become powerless. He is forced to assimilate to and obey Japanese colonial rule. With the abandonment of his pride, he buys Western clothing. Buying Western clothing symbolizes that he realizes that the Western knowledge is necessary. He even builds a school that teaches Western knowledge. However, all his activity turns out to be failure.  

He can only cultivate a parasitic relationship with In-hwa’s father, by promising him that he can get a government post to In-hwa’s father through his connections to Japanese officials. However, Doctor Kim’s claim seems to be mere boasting. Doctor Kim is humiliated by Japanese investigators because Japanese investigators hate his exaggeration for his connection to a higher authority. However, his connection does not protect him from the investigator’s harassment. Doctor Kim reveals how Korean people are humiliated by Japanese colonial rule and are forced to become collaborators.

However, the conservative collaborators, represented by In-hwa’s father and Doctor Kim, do not gain any benefits or results, even though they strongly desire to collaborate with the Japanese. They are totally isolated from the mainstream of Korean society managed by colonial rule:

The Korean Aristocracy Association, slightly better than the groups of the pagoda park, sings of harmony and of successful assimilation between Japanese and Korean. They spend their time playing Korean checkers and chess and having late-night drinking

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95 Ibid., 74-76.
parties. The only business of this association is to sponsor concerts of Korean entertaining women, or to engage in propitious and conspicuous mourning for prominent people who had passed away.

"The Korean Aristocracy Association" is the organization claiming "harmony and successful assimilation between Japanese and Korean" that consists of the Yangban class in the Chosŏn dynasty. In-hwa's father, previously of the aristocracy, carries on his representative status as a Korean who proclaims Korean's complete subjugation to Japanese colonial rule. However, he does not have the strong status and power to carry on his proclamation. Instead, he wastes his time in useless entertainment and formalism. They are completely outside of the mainstream of Korean society under Japanese colonial rule. In-hwa's father's other friend, called Ch'achi, also symbolizes the conservative class who merely pursues the shadows that they will never attain. In this sense, despite their collaboration, they are isolated from the mainstream of society.

In-hwa also criticizes his older brother, who has collaborated with Japanese colonial rule and is also very successful, unlike other collaborators who adhere to the traditional formalism. Despite his traditional formalism and hypocrisy, In-hwa's older brother is of a very practical mind, so that he uses the Japanese colonial system and knows how he can be successful under it. First of all, he is a teacher at a school managed by the Japanese colonial institution. By forcing public officials to wear military uniforms, the Japanese colonial government wants to construct a Korean society of order and obedience. In-hwa's older brother successfully assimilates to the new system of Japanese colonial rule by attaining the right to wear a military uniform by being a teacher:

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96 Ibid., 89.
My elder brother's right hand automatically shows his military salute, when he puts his hand to the end of his hat. My elder brother's unnatural motion looks funny but I also sympathize with him. I did not have any more trouble with Japanese gendarmerie. He carries a Japanese sword embroidered with gold, which must not strike the ground, and he must walk carefully, since he is so short.  

When In-hwa sees his older brother in Kimch’ŏn, his older brother's appearance is that of a Japanese colonial official. When he arrives in Kimch’ŏn before Seoul, his older brother comes to pick him up. He is dressed in military costumes and had a Japanese sword (Japanese colonial government coerce school teachers to wear the costume of the Japanese military). With his stable social status as a teacher, he knows the new economic system and he protects the family by managing the family's property successfully. However, he does not care about Korean people and colonized Korea. He shows happiness for the rise of the economic value of his house since Japanese people began to occupy the central area of the city, while he does not show any recognition of, and does not worry about, the Korean people who are pushed into marginal areas. His morality only applies to his family, that he has the elder son’s responsibility to protect, but not to his people and country. His practical mind does not oppress Korean people but is parasitic upon the Japanese colonial system. In-hwa's description in the passage above shows that In-hwa's older brother's appearance in a military uniform looks funny but sad. The older brother's uniform gives him respect and social status under Japanese colonial rule and even In-hwa benefits from his older brother's military uniform, because the gendarmerie does not try to investigate In-hwa, due to his older brother's credibility.

97 Ibid., 60-61.
98 Ibid., 63.
However, his older brother’s attempt to assimilate into Japanese colonial rule is desperate, and it is hard for his middle-aged brother to wear a military uniform. His military salute to the gendarmes looks unnatural, and the Japanese sword that In-hwa’s older brother must struggle not to allow to touch the ground, due to his short stature, is also unnatural. In-hwa is very cynical about his older brother’s desperate attempts to be assimilated into Japanese colonial authority.

**Cultural Imperialism in Koreans under Japanese Colonial Rule**

With the destruction of Korea’s indigenous culture, Japanese colonial authorities seize cultural hegemony and present Japanese colonial rule as modernity. Japanese cultural hegemony insures that Koreans will degrade their own culture and will prefer Japanese culture; these things support the supposed superiority of Japan over Korea. In-hwa recognizes that Japanese colonial rule destroys Korean tradition in order to reconstitute Korean society to a colony that they can effectively manage. However, In-hwa focuses on the formalism and hypocrisy of Korean tradition that cannot play any role in the development of Korean society. The Korean people’s adherence to mere formalism and the hypocrisy of Korean tradition bring negative influences rather than positive influences. From In-hwa’s perspective, Korean people, under Japanese colonial exploitation and poverty, stick to their traditional way of life but do not find a way to solve their poverty and backwardness. Moreover, In-hwa also criticizes Korean people’s submission to the greater power of the Japanese. In the paradigm of In-hwa, Korean people who side with Korean tradition fall into formalism and hypocrisy, while Korean people who side with Japanese culture and tradition only degrade their own culture.
Firstly, In-hwa notices that the colonial government is destroying traditional ways of life. However, his stance is an ambivalent one. He criticizes the intention of Japanese colonial rule to destroy Korean traditions for its own interests, but at the same time, he also criticizes the traditional formalism that prevents Korean people from making progress. In-hwa sees as backwardness the Korean preference for tradition and formality over practicality.

Discussing Koreans’ reaction to the Japanese regulation of burial practices, In-hwa says that Koreans worry too much about the burial of the dead and not enough about their own problems of poverty. However, he also recognizes that the new regulations on burial are less meant to change the impractical customs than to exploit the land of Korea for the interest of Japanese colonial rule. When Koreans bury their ancestors in public cemeteries, the land saved will be handed over to the Japanese. Although In-hwa has the insight to recognize the good and bad aspects in Korean formalism as well as in Japanese colonial rule, his actions only aid Japanese colonial rule because he does not dare confront Japanese colonial policy.

When In-hwa encounters the seller of traditional hats in the train, the hat seller complains about the Japanese regulation of burial culture. He thinks that Japanese policy neglects Korean culture, with its emphasis on ancestral burial, and asks In-hwa how he can possibly bury his ancestors in a public cemetery. In this part of the novella, In-hwa’s contact with the hat seller represents the relationship between Korean intellectuals and the common people. When the hat seller asks about new burial regulations, he assumes that In-hwa, as an intellectual, will be able to give him some instruction because intellectuals are considered leaders of society. However, In-hwa ignores or tries to ignore
the hat seller's expectations. In-hwa recognizes that the land freed up by the new burial law will be used by Japanese colonialists, but to the hat seller, he only criticizes the narrow-minded impracticality of Koreans who are concerned solely with tradition. When the hat seller asks about the inequity of colonial policy between Korea and Japan, In-hwa replies that there is a public cemetery in Japan too. In-hwa also says that since the economic value of land is getting higher because there is not enough to go around for the living, it is a waste to use all the land on the dead. He thinks that Koreans are less concerned about loyalty to their ancestors than about showing off their loyalty as well as their social and economic power by burying their ancestors in expensive burial sites with extravagant tombs. 99

In-hwa's position is fundamentally that of a spectator. What he says about the new burial law makes sense as a criticism of tradition, but what he does not say is also important. What he does not mention is that the intention of the new burial law is to expand the exploitation of Korean land for Japanese colonial interests. His silence on this aspect is due to his concern that public criticism of Japanese colonial rule might get him into trouble, especially since there is a private investigator following him. In this context, In-hwa's criticism of the impracticality of Korean traditional formalism means that intentionally or not, he helps colonial policy to destroy the identity of the Korean people. In-hwa tries to be neutral by stating the backwardness of Korean tradition as well as revealing Japanese colonial intentions by his narration and self-utterance. In reality, however, In-hwa cannot present his ideas about the inequities of Japanese colonial policy.

99 Ibid., 76-80.
He can only criticize the backwardness of Korean tradition because he is afraid of Japanese reprisals.

In addition, In-hwa’s fundamental attitude toward this new burial regulation is indifference. When the hat seller asks In-hwa about the new burial law, In-hwa says to himself, “I guess that this new burial regulation is a hot potato for Korean people when I hear again about new burial law from the traditional hat seller after my elder brother’s long lecture. But I don’t want to know, and I do not care, when it is constituted and how it will be activated”.\(^{100}\) In-hwa distances himself from the matter of the new burial regulation law. Despite the hat seller’s strong feelings about the new burial law, In-hwa does not care. He can theorize about Japanese colonial policy and the impracticality of Korean tradition, but the real circumstances do not matter to him. He has opinions, but does not want to become involved in society in any way that can cause him trouble. In-hwa becomes an unwitting collaborator of Japanese colonial rule because he is only free to criticize Korean traditions, not colonial policies. His indifference is really selfishness; by avoiding bringing trouble upon himself, he publicly justifies Japanese colonial rule.

Through his experience of Japanese colonial surveillance and the modernization process in colonial Korea, In-hwa observes the Japanese cultural hegemony over traditional Korean society. In-hwa observes that Japanese colonial rule in Korea undertakes to degrade Korean tradition and identity within the culture. Japanese colonial rule promotes the idea that Japanese-style modernity is progressive and Korean culture and tradition is backward. As an agent of modernity, In-hwa criticizes the backwardness of Korean values and culture. However, at the same time, In-hwa also recognizes that

\(^{100}\) Ibid., 78.
traditional Korean ways of life are being destroyed without an accompanying socio-cultural transformation process. With the destruction of indigenous Korean culture, Japanese colonial authorities seize cultural hegemony that makes them have contempt for their own culture and prefer to the Japanese culture and character. The supposed superiority of the Japanese character over the inferior Korean character also dominates the Korean mentality. In-hwa tries to position himself neutrally on this matter of the cultural domination of Japan. While he criticizes the expansion of Japanese cultural domination over Korean tradition, he also criticizes Korean people attitudes to respect Japanese culture as the superiority over their own culture. By remaining what he thinks of as objective, he avoids responsibility for having to side with either the Japanese or with the Koreans.

First of all, imperialism is instilled in the language; speaking Japanese in colonial Korea attests to one's intellectual and higher social status. When In-hwa encounters the Korean assistant in the ferryboat full of Japanese nationals, neither of them can speak Japanese perfectly. Their accent signals their foreignness and inferiority. The traditional hat seller also says that a Korean with a Western hairstyle looks like a modern intellectual and will attract Japanese surveillance. If that person cannot speak Japanese to show his level of education, he will be slapped or humiliated by Japanese police or their Korean assistants. If the person had kept the traditional Korean hairstyle, they would neglect him as an ignorant countryman.

In this context, the Japanese language represents a power and intellectual ability that Japanese colonialists respect, but it also alerts them to a possible danger of anti-Japanese activity. Intellectuals can disrupt Japanese colonial rule. People who have no
knowledge of Japanese language are often disregarded and even despised by Japanese colonialists because in their view, they are not dangerous, only inferior. The worker in the train keeps speaking Japanese to In-Hwa although he is Korean, trying to show that he has a higher social status. The worker in the train is uneducated and ignorant, and only knows a few words of Japanese, but he thinks that speaking Japanese makes him look more educated and sophisticated. Cultural imperialism is instilled in the common Korean people. Their belief in the superiority of Japan makes them feel inferior, a belief caused by Japanese cultural hegemony during the process of colonization.\textsuperscript{101}

In Pusan, In-hwa encounters a half-Korean and half-Japanese geisha who honors her Japanese heritage and culture, speaking Japanese and wearing a Japanese costume. She is ashamed of her Korean heritage. This attests to the hierarchy in ethnicity and culture imposed by the Japanese.

She spoke Japanese rather than Korean, although she was raised by a Korean mother. She wore Japanese, not Korean, clothes and she wanted to find her Japanese father rather than her Korean mother, even though as a daughter she should be feeling closer to her mother. She seemed to want to find her father, who parted with her about seven or eight years ago, on the grounds of self-interest, that a Japanese father whose whereabouts she does not know would be more beneficial than a Korean mother, rather than on the grounds of her filial feeling for her father. So my sympathy goes to the mother rather than to the daughter.\textsuperscript{102}

In-hwa, too, feels that this geisha is lower status than the full-Japanese geisha, due to her contamination. When one of the other geisha reveals her ethnic history, she turns red with shame. Her half-Korean blood is a loss rather than a benefit, so she tries to be as Japanese as she can. Her Japanese father who abandoned her becomes a fantasy to her since he

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 58.
gives her the Japanese heritage that makes her more Japanese. Although she has a mother living in Taejön, she only imagines her father. When In-hwa suggests that she marries a rich Korean, she disdains the idea. “Korean” means the half of her that makes her inferior. The geisha’s complete rejection of her Koreanness signifies the inferiority and humiliation of Korean identity that runs throughout Korean society.

The Japanese colonial government uses Korean police assistants to control Koreans most harshly, exploiting the psychology of collaborators who are willing to be cruel in order to be part of the colonial system:

Japanese police are more generous than Korean. Where Japanese police will merely glare, Korean police will slap your cheek and growl. This reveals an ill nature like that of a son raised by a stepmother. It is human nature that people pity others who are in the same shoes. However, the more they are unsatisfied with their situation and hate themselves, the more they detest and dislike others in their shoes. 103

This passage shows how the colonized pursue their individual interests under Japanese colonial rule. Koreans oppress other Koreans through the power given by Japanese colonial authority. In-hwa doubts that this mechanism of oppression of Koreans by other Koreans was devised alongside Japanese colonial intentions. However, their status as mere police assistants means that they cannot ever rise to significant positions within the Japanese colonial police system. In the novel, there are no Koreans who are formal police or gendarmerie. They are just secondary assistants, and, as is revealed in In-hwa’s encounter with police assistants in the port of Shimonoseki, their status is not stable. They are also colonial subjects and are inferior to the Japanese. To strengthen their status within the colonial system, they become harsher to Koreans than the Japanese are. In the

103 Ibid., 72.
colonial mechanism, these collaborators are more tractable since they do not have education or other skills. They become absolutely obedient to their masters, and crueler to their subjects than their masters are.

In-hwa tries to see these Korean collaborators from a neutral point of view. He criticizes Koreans who oppress other Koreans in the service of Japanese colonial authority. However, he also comments on the Japanese colonial mechanism that makes Koreans hate their own people. Balancing the blame for the situation between Koreans and the Japanese colonial system, In-hwa points out that the Japanese treat him better than their Korean assistants. Since In-hwa is an intellectual, many Japanese regard him as more Japanese than Korean. When In-hwa leaves for Seoul from Kimchōn, a Japanese official working in the station lets In-hwa stay warm in his office until the train arrives, but the same official humiliates Korean workers in front of In-hwa. When the workers report that a light in the rail will not turn on because of the dripping water from melting snow, the Japanese official shouts at them and pushes them outside to fix it. He then smiles apologetically at In-Hwa, saying that Koreans are hopelessly irresponsible. The official’s treatment of the Korean in front of In-hwa, who is also Korean, signifies that the official thinks of In-hwa as Japanese, or at least as not Korean. In-hwa is not comfortable with the official’s treatment of the worker, but is happy to have been treated well himself. While he takes stock of the hardship and humiliation meted out to a Korean worker under a Japanese supervisor, In-hwa also likes the small acts of generosity that he receives from Japanese people, which he does not receive from their Korean assistants.\textsuperscript{104} However, since he remains silent about Korean people’s humiliation, he collaborates with

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 71-72.
the Japanese occupation. In this sense, In-hwa is as much a collaborator as the Korean assistants are.
CHAPTER VII
IN-HWA’S RETURN TO JAPAN

In Korea, In-hwa becomes a spectator of his own family as well as his country. As an observer and analyst of Korean society, In-hwa brings his criticism to the problem of the backwardness and impracticality of tradition in Korean society, and Japanese colonial expansion in Korea. His sympathies, between colonial Korea and Japanese colonial rule, are ambivalent in that In-hwa always tries to position himself neutrally by criticizing Japanese colonial rule as well as the backwardness and impracticality of Korean society. However, In-hwa avoids publicly expressing his criticism of Japanese colonial rule, due to his avoidance of any unwanted confrontation with Japanese colonial rule, but only reveals it in his internal monologue, while he explicitly expresses his criticism of the backwardness and impracticality of Korean tradition except to his father who would force In-hwa into a confrontation. In-hwa’s neutrality proves that he does not want to have any responsibility and confrontation for his criticism and for the criticism of Korean society.

In-hwa’s conclusion on Korea can be summed up as a disillusionment and a desire to go to Japan. Because of his experience of colonial Korea’s miserable situation under Japanese colonial rule, he feels disillusioned with Korea, described in the novel as a tomb. In-hwa’s disillusionment about Korea’s future comes from his conviction that his homeland is an impossible place to change. His disillusionment implies that In-hwa regards himself as the member of Korean society and distinguishes himself from other Korean people in Korea. In-hwa’s neglect of Korean society under the oppression of Japanese colonial rule also reveals that In-hwa is reluctant to become involved in any
activity that may risk his freedom. For his family, In-hwa also avoids any involvement in any family matters. Throughout his previous conflict with his father and older brother on his major and future career, In-hwa draws the line between him and his family and becomes a spectator. His return to Japan is an evasion of his responsibilities, both to his family and to Korean society.

When In-hwa observes the situation of colonial Korea, he declares the country a grave full of maggots. He is disillusioned about Korea’s future, regarding his homeland as a horrible place, impossible to change. It seems a land where the backwardness of tradition restrains the people from developing, and where they are oppressed by Japanese colonial government:

Do they want to compensate for their lives by being buried in a good burial ground? But this is a tomb where maggots swarm. All of us are maggots. You are a maggot and I am a maggot too. Out of this mess, the process of Darwinism would take its course. There would be competition for survival, there would be natural selection, and they would wrangle with each other to survive. But the maggots will fall apart and become basic elements. We will all become maggots, and then become elements and soil. Die, you damned. Die without a sprout or a bud. Die without hope. Go to ruin as much as you can. If one of two is decided, whether it would be total landslide (the destruction of the earth) or utter ruination, a better people may emerge from the ruins.\footnote{Ibid., 83.}

When In-hwa sees the woman with a baby on her back chained up by the Japanese police in Taegǒn, In-hwa feels disillusionment about colonial Korea. His disillusionment comes primarily from the backwardness of the Korean people and Korean society, rather than from Japanese colonial rule itself. His criticism is of Korean people’s backwardness and traditional formalism, and their problem with burial regulations. During his conversation with hat seller, he experiences his disappointment with the Korean people’s servility and
ignorance under Japanese colonial rule. However, In-hwa himself is not too different from other Korean people. Despite In-hwa’s recognition of the servility and ignorance of Korean people in colonial Korea, he is not that different from them. When he sees the woman with a baby on her back chained up by the Japanese police, he thinks that she should at least be released long enough to breastfeed her crying baby. However, he is too scared of the Japanese police even to say what he is thinking. When In-hwa converses with the seller of traditional hats, who seeks the opinion of an intellectual about the new burial law, he is silent about his belief that it is a trick by the Japanese to exploit the Koreans’ land because he fears the police who are following him. Although In-hwa has the intellectual ability to recognize the expansion of Japanese colonial rule as well as the defect of the formalism in Korean tradition and Korean people’s servility and ignorance under Japanese colonial rule, he himself becomes servile. His awareness of these issues is only a further reason to distance himself from the reality of Korea. To defend his weakness and irresponsibility, he depicts Korea as an impossible place to change or progress, and a place where tradition and Japanese colonial rule oppress and limit his freedom. His distancing himself from the reality of Korea further demonstrates his pessimistic belief that as an intellectual he can do nothing to change either Japan’s oppression or Korea’s backwardness. He sees Korea as place so hopeless that he longs for escape.

In-hwa’s relationship with his family shows how his modern ideas are rejected by his family members, who are more conservative. In-hwa’s individualism is regarded by them as dangerous and fantastic, as is his whole purpose in studying. In-hwa avoids confrontation with his conservative family members so that they will continue to
support him financially in his studies. He does not agree with the collaboration and impractical Confucian values of his father and elder brother, but he never challenges them on these issues. In-hwa’s attack on his family ends up with his determination to distinguish himself from his family:

There were no bridges between my world and their world. It was like the difference between the inside and the outside of a tomb. Therefore I decided that I would not say anything except to make general conversation between father and son, and between brothers, and to ask about the money that I need to study in Japan. There would be no conflict if I dealt with my brother and father just as I dealt with my mother, wife, and younger sister. I thought that trying to express my opinion only made trouble. However, after my decision I felt alone in my family, so that my house has come to seem just an inn where I eat and sleep. Of all inns, it was the most uncomfortable one.  

In-hwa draws the line between him and his family so that he will never communicate with his family members. He defines his family as “the inside of a tomb.” His thinking indicates that In-hwa regards his family as so backward and uncivilized that they are already dead. In this sense, there are pride and arrogance towards his family members in his consciousness. His criticism of his family about the backwardness of the traditional family system is well-founded. However, In-hwa himself cannot be free from those problems of the family. As a spectator, he neglects all efforts to rescue his family from the backwardness. Moreover, his study in Japan is dependent on his family. In-hwa takes money from his older brother who wants In-hwa to benefit the family with his education. In-hwa’s definition of his family as an inn tells us he is irresponsible to his family while he keeps asking the money from them.

At the end of the novel, In-hwa’s return to Japan signifies his flight from reality; He runs away from colonized Korea and his family rather than confronting them and

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106 Ibid., 62-63.
trying to change them. In-hwa’s return indicates his pursuit of freedom from his country, family, and his love affairs. Throughout his experience of Korea, and the injustice he sees during his journey, he becomes utterly disillusioned about his country. His return signifies that he gets out of the tomb and is free from it. His country is nothing more than the tomb that he has to get away from. His return also means that In-hwa becomes free from the intervention and obligation of his family as during his previous stay in Japan. Moreover, he also eliminates his obligation to his family, after the death of his wife. He feels free from familial obligation as a husband and father since his wife has died and her son is in the care of his elder brother, despite his wife’s final wish that In-hwa should take care of their son sincerely. With his return, In-hwa sends the money to Shizuko and ends the relationship with her in response to Shizuko’s letter saying that she wants to develop the relationship with him. In-hwa’s enjoyment of freedom as an intellectual does not bring about the freedom of the individual because to some extent he cannot be separate from the society in which he lives. His seclusion from the turmoil of his family and people cannot solve the inequity that he has encountered and will encounter. He can only be an opportunist caught in the limited freedom allowed by the Japanese colonial rule.
CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

Throughout Mansejŏn, Yi In-hwa is presented as an egoistic and decadent Korean intellectual under the Japanese colonial rule. In-hwa's Western individualism formed by his Western education in Japan is in conflict with his traditional family members. In-hwa's family sees him as being irresponsible for familial obligation and selfish for caring about his own freedom, while In-hwa sees his family as impractical and backward. Yi In-hwa is also limited and controlled by the Japanese colonial rule. He is maimed by the Japanese surveillance system so that he cannot function as an intellectual in Korean society. In-hwa actually is stuck in these dual oppressions from his family and the Japanese colonial rule. However, In-hwa avoids any confrontation with these oppressions pursuing instead the protection of his own individual freedom. However, because his own personal freedom is unrelated to the individual freedoms of other Korean people under the Japanese colonial rule, he becomes a detached spectator and a morally deformed hedonist.

In-hwa and other Korean intellectuals educated in Japan bring modern thought and value to Korea. However, to actualize their thought politically, they have to deal with the prejudice of conservative Korean people as well as the surveillance of Japanese colonial rule. In-hwa's relationship with his family shows how his modern ideas are rejected by his family members, who are more conservative. In-hwa's individualism is regarded by them a dangerous and fantastic, as is his whole purpose in studying. In-hwa considers his traditional family as obstructing him from cultivating his own life along with his Western knowledge. In-hwa also cannot communicate with traditional family
members with his Western knowledge because they are narrow-minded to be concerned with social stability for the sake of protecting their privilege. In In-hwa’s view, his father’s adherence to the patriarchal family system is irrational and backward because patriarchal power tends to ignore other members’ opinion to the detriment of the whole family. Moreover, In-hwa sees his traditional family member as backward in their emphasis on traditional formality rather than practicality on the issues of new burial regulations, emphasis on producing sons and the distrust of Western medical care.

The novella shows that In-hwa is unable to actualize his ideas politically and is maimed under Japanese colonial rule. In-hwa’s pride is crushed by his experiences with the Japanese colonial surveillance system. Throughout his experience of Japanese surveillance, In-hwa basically feels a sense of inferiority in being Korean. As In-hwa observes, the Japanese colonial authorities use a different strategy on Korean intellectuals than on the uneducated masses. While Japanese police and gendarmeries use the feeling of fear to control Korean masses, the Japanese colonial government tries to control Korean intellectuals’ thought and social activities more closely because Korean intellectuals pose the potential threat of jeopardizing Japanese colonial rule. In-hwa is skeptical about the benefit of modernization for Koreans under Japanese colonial rule. From his point of view, such modernization as the development of capitalism, industrialization, and legal reform, are intended only to reconstitute Korean society into a colony that can be exploited even more effectively, in line with Japanese colonial interests. During this process of modernization, Korean people who fail to assimilate into the new system are retrograded so that they lose their economic foundation, which is mostly land holding. In-hwa also recognizes that the Japanese colonial authorities seize
cultural hegemony and present Japanese colonial rule as modernity with the destruction of Korea's indigenous culture. However, In-hwa cannot speak out with his criticism because of the Japanese surveillance on Korean intellectual's thought and their social activities. Korea is the place where In-hwa is forced to be an intellectual without thought and opinion against the Japanese colonial rule.

In-hwa avoids confrontation and involvement with the inequity of Korean tradition and the Japanese colonial rule. He does not agree with the collaboration and impractical Confucian values of his father and elder brother, but he never challenges them on these issues. However, In-hwa distances himself from his family members and never tries to challenge them. Since he has enough financial support from his family and avoids the intervention of his family in his life, the impracticality and backwardness of his family is not particular concern to him. Though In-hwa sees injustice rampant in Korea under Japanese colonial rule, he is not brave enough to act upon his recognition of it. Rather he avoids confrontation and refrains from any involvement that might jeopardize his freedom. When he sees the woman with a baby on her back chained up by the Japanese police, he thinks that she could at least be released long enough to breastfeed her crying baby. He is too scared of the Japanese police even to say what he is thinking. When In-hwa converses with the seller of traditional hats, who seeks the opinion of an intellectual about the burial law, he is silent about his belief that it is a trick by the Japanese to exploit the Koreans' land because he fears the police who are following him.

In-hwa's enjoyment of individual freedom in Japan does not bring about true freedom because at some level a person can never be entirely separate from the society in
which he lives. Although In-hwa pursues absolute freedom from the oppression of both Korean tradition and Japanese colonial rule, his attitude prevents him from making any decision. He is a spectator of life rather than a participant. His seclusion from the turmoil of his family and Korean people under the Japanese colonial rule cannot resolve the inequity that he has encountered and will encounter. He can only be an opportunist caught in the limited freedom allowed by the Japanese colonial rule. He can be more comfortable and safer in Japan, free from the oppression of Japanese colonial rule and traditional family. However, he can only be an opportunist trapped in the limited freedom allowed under Japanese colonial rule. In-hwa’s return to Japan signifies his flight from reality, since he runs away from the colonized Korea and his family rather than confronting them and trying to change them.
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