

Korean Patriot and Tea Master: Hyodang Choi Beom-sul(1904-1979)

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This paper surveys the life of Hyodang Choi Beom-sul. When he was only 15, he was actively involved in the 1919 Independence Movement. Going to Japan to study, he met the most famous anarchists of the time, the Korean Park Yeol and his companion, Kaneko Fumiko. They drew him into a plot to assassinate the Japanese crown prince, but the great earthquake of 1923 put an end to that. From 1928, he was the head monk of Dasolsa temple in the hills behind Jinju. He turned it into a focal point of resistance to the Japanese occupation, then to the dictatorial regimes that followed Liberation. There, too, he began to develop his own practice of tea, planting more and more tea bushes, drying his tea each spring, and drinking it with those who visited him. He was a great Buddhist scholar, he established several schools and in his later years, especially, he was acquainted with many leading intellectuals and writers, to whom he communicated his love of tea, his own vision of a specifically Korean Way of Tea. It is suggested that certain aspects of the teaching of Wonhyo provided the fundamental inspiration for his entire life.

Key words: Hyodang Choi Beom-sul, Buddhism, Tea, Wonhyo,
Independence Movement.

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I. Introduction

It is truly amazing that until now so little has been published about the Venerable Hyodang (whose civil name was Choi Beom-sul), even in Korean, let alone in English. No comprehensive account of his life exists, although Hyodang's life story is a remarkable one in many ways. He played a major role in the Korean Independence Movement; he held leading posts in Korean Buddhist circles at an immensely difficult time; he saved Haeinsa from destruction during the Korean War; he was active in founding schools both during the Japanese colonial period and after Independence; and he played the leading role in the modern development of a specifically Korean Way of Tea.

Of course, any really authoritative, objective study of Hyodang's life would need to be written by a professional historian able to consult the original materials that would serve as a basis for a full, scholarly biography. That task is currently being undertaken by Professor Kim Sang-Hyeon, together with a few other fine Korean scholars. In this paper, I can do nothing more than offer in English the main outlines of his life and actions, and an interpretation of them, as they have been reconstructed, recorded and reported by those who knew him best, his former associates, and especially the person who was his constant companion during the last ten years of his life, Chae Wonhwa (Jeong-bok), his wife and the inheritor of the traditions embodied in the *Panyaro* Way of Tea that he developed.

II. Hyodang's childhood

Choi Beom-sul was born on the 26th day of the 5th lunar month of 1904 in Yulpo, Sacheon, South Gyeongsang Province. This village stands very near the temple of Dasolsa, of which he was destined later to become the *Juji* (head monk); but when he was five, his family moved to So-ri in Seopo-myeon (now part of Sacheon-si) and there he began his studies in a traditional Confucian school. In 1910, after years of gradual encroachment,

Japan finally annexed Korea. Although he was still only a child, Choi Beom-sul rejected the Japanese yoke like so many of his compatriots. When he was only nine years old, he was expelled from Gaejin Primary School with several other pupils after playing a leading role in the boycott of a brutal Japanese teacher there.

That precocious act of autonomous choice was only a start. After completing his primary school studies at another school in 1915, he was so impressed by the Buddhist scriptures he heard being chanted during a visit to Dasolsa that he received his parents' permission and became a Buddhist monk at Dasolsa early in 1916, enrolling in the monastic school at Haeinsa Temple the following year. He was still barely twelve years old when he made that decision! At Haeinsa he received consecration from the Venerable Im Hwan-gyeong. His original monastic name was Geumbong; he later adopted the name Hyodang to indicate his resolve to dedicate his life to making more widely known the teachings of the greatest Korean Buddhist thinker, the monk Wonhyo (617-686).

The third sign of his early maturity was an act that might have cost him his life. Although he was still only fifteen, when the Independence Movement was launched on March 1, 1919, Hyodang encouraged the student monks in Haeinsa to make thousands of copies of the Declaration of Independence that he had been sent. These they distributed throughout the south-eastern regions of Korea. As a result he was arrested and so severely beaten that he could not walk, then transported in fetters to Jinju. In early July of 1919 he was able to return to school at Haeinsa, where he and the other student-monks were glad to exchange news on what had happened to them. His account of what they had done was later published in a collection of testimonies about the early days of the Independence Movement, a book titled *Dongnip bihwa*.

III. The years in Japan 1922-1933

In 1922, after studying many of the major Buddhist sūtras as well as the Indian logic known as *Hetu-vidyā*, and having completed 100 days of prayer, he set off for Japan for further studies. In this he was following the example of many other young Korean intellectuals of the time, for whom Japan's schools and universities offered a depth of learning both modern and traditional not to be found anywhere in Korea. He and a fellow-monk arrived in Tokyo on the morning of June 6, 1922 and went to live with his nephew Choi Won-hyeong, who was 3 years older and had already been studying in Tokyo for several years. It was this nephew who had sent a copy of the Independence Declaration to Hyodang at Haeinsa; a couple of years later he smuggled Manhae Han Yong-un (1879-1944)'s *Letter on Korean Independence* (*Joseon dongnip jiseo*) out of Seodaemun Prison. He continued to be active in the Independence Movement and died a martyr's death in prison in Daejeon only a few months before Liberation in 1945. He is buried in Daejeon National Cemetery, not far from Hyodang.

In Tokyo, Hyodang began to work delivering newspapers over a wide area. Hearing one day of a Korean living on his route, he visited him and so met the noted anarchist Bak Yeol (1902-1974), who was living there with his remarkable, equally celebrated Japanese wife, Kaneko Fumiko. After that, he would often visit and discuss with them. Bak Yeol later introduced Hyodang to a group of nationalistic Koreans who were making and selling taffy in order to support high-school students all over Korea. Hyodang soon joined them as a taffy-seller, but also did many other lowly jobs as he learned more about Japan and the Japanese. Also at this time he happened to visit a small temple, Fusenji, where he met a Japanese monk, Sakato Chikai, who welcomed him kindly, introduced him to the Tendai teachings, and in later times helped him when he was in difficulty.

Hyodang was admitted to the 3rd year class of Rissho Middle School, and also became involved in the struggles of the many poor Koreans living and working in the surrounding industrial area. Bak Yeol had founded the

Black Current Society (Kokutokai) in 1920 but in 1922 that had split, giving rise to the Black Fellowship Association (Kokuyukai), while the first anarchist labour union among Koreans in Japan, the Black Labour Association (Kokurokai), was established in August 1923 by the same group. Soon Hyodang (who was known at this time as Choi Yeong-hwan) became a member of a group of Koreans established in May 1923 by Bak Yeol, called the Futeisha (Society of Rebels), who published two numbers of a review and generally encouraged a resistant, disrespectful attitude toward the Japanese authorities.

Bak Yeol and his anarchist companions in the Futeisha developed a plan to detonate a bomb during the wedding of the Japanese Crown Prince (later the Emperor Hirohito) planned for September. Hyodang received some money from Bak Yeol and, although utterly innocent of the ways of the world, went across to Shanghai. With help from a young sailor brought back explosives. Finally, some details about the plot leaked out and most of the conspirators were arrested by the Japanese police on September 3, just after the terrible Kanto earthquake of September 1, 1923. News of the planned assassination, declared an act of high treason, made a great impression in Japan and in Korea, the case having been amplified by the Japanese authorities as part of their attempt to justify a violent crackdown against the Korean population in general and especially the anarchists, who had begun to cause trouble in the factories. They were accused of having “caused” the earthquake and thousands of Koreans were massacred by frenzied crowds in the following days.

At the time of the great earthquake, on September 1, 1923, Hyodang had been out delivering newspapers, and escaped harm. He escaped detection and was able to hide in Fusenji temple until October 5, when the police came and took him to Shibuya Police Station. Legally, a person could not be detained for more than 29 days, but in his case he was regularly re-arrested the moment he was released and he effectively spent the next 3 years in prison without ever being charged.

In March 1927 he was admitted to the preparatory courses in the

Buddhist Studies Department of Taisho University; in 1930 he moved to the main course of studies and graduated in March 1933. During his years in Japan, he was not only active in the Korean resistance movement, especially through his involvement with the anarchist groups, he also supported himself by doing a great variety of often very humble, dirty and menial jobs, which brought him in close touch with many different aspects of Japanese society, and in particular gave him a profound insight into the realities of the working classes. He was especially interested in the writings of the Indian founders of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Nāgārjuna, Asanga, Dignāga and Vasubandhu. His graduation thesis was about “Hīnayāna and the teachings of Vasubandhu” and it received high praise from the five professors who examined it. All the while, he continued to nourish a special interest in Wonhyo, whose teachings he had first read about in Haeinsa when he was only 16.

The years when he was studying in Japan were a time when many world-famous figures came to lecture there; Hyodang was thus able to attend a week-long course of lectures by Albert Einstein on the Theory of Relativity, and listen to Tagore reading his poems in Bengali and English, which impressed him deeply. Another fateful meeting was with Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), the Sri Lankan who devoted his life to the restoration of the great Buddhist temple of Bodhgaya in northern India. He was traveling round the world bringing minute particles of relics (*sari*) of the Buddha to every country. For Korea, he entrusted three fragments to Hyodang; these were later enshrined in a special pagoda at Beomeosa Temple in Busan. But equally significant were lectures about current social issues he heard given by great Japanese scholars who were socialists, anarchists, and activists. Perhaps the most impressive among these were the speeches given by the radical anarchist Osugi Sakae (1885-1923), which greatly inspired Hyodang in his social vision. Yet he never disregarded the vision comprising his identity as a Buddhist monk, nourished by Zen meditation practice.

In the meanwhile, he had been appointed head monk of Dasolsa in July 1928, despite his youth, so was obliged to spend his summer and winter vacations in Korea; at the same time he was active in the ongoing

Independence Movement among Buddhists. In 1932 he joined the *Mandang* Squad that had been founded in 1930 under the inspiration of Manhae by noted Buddhist Korean independence fighters such as Gim Beop-rin, Gang Yu-mun, Bak Yun-jin etc. He also published a review with other Buddhists studying in Japan, *Geumgangjeo*, which was destined to help rekindle the vitality of the Buddhist community in Korea.

IV. Service in Korean Buddhism under Japanese rule

Hyodang had barely graduated in 1933 when he received news that he had been chosen as chairman of the central executive committee of the Joseon General Buddhist Youth League (other committee members included Yi Jeok-eum, Yi Jung-geon, Yi Sang-gyu, Yi Byeong-hong etc) so he was obliged to travel quickly to Seoul and that marked the end of his years in Japan. Henceforth, Korea was to be the scene for his activities. The main inspiration for the Buddhist Youth League, as for so much of what happened in the anti-Japanese Buddhist circles around Hyodang, was provided by Manhae Han Yong-un, the great Buddhist monk, leader of the Independence Movement and poet. It is a pity that no record seems to indicate just when Manhae and Hyodang met for the first time.

1. Manhae, Buddhist revival and the marriage of monks

Ultimately the Buddhist Youth League derived from Manhae's much earlier initiatives designed to revitalize Korean Buddhism, that were expressed in his *Joseon bulgyo yusillon* (*Proposal for revitalizing Joseon's Buddhism*) which he had started to write in 1909 and had published in full in 1913. Manhae's first experience of dramatic social issues came through his family's involvement in the Donghak revolt in 1894. After it was brutally crushed, he continued to reflect on how it might be possible for Koreans to advance toward a hopeful future without losing the essence of their traditional Korean

identity.

In 1908, during a visit to Japan, he was struck to see that Japanese Buddhism seemed alive and well-integrated in the modernized society that was evolving as the result of the Meiji reforms of recent decades. He had already become a Buddhist monk at Baekdamsa in 1904, but was disturbed by the lethargy of the Korean Buddhist clergy in comparison with the energy of the newly arriving American Protestant missionaries and of Japanese Buddhist monks eagerly recruiting Koreans to the various sects of Japanese Buddhism. Korean monks had no tradition of “missionary” proselytizing outreach, and in fact mostly continued to avoid the towns, from which they had been banished for centuries.

After his visit to Japan, Manhae began to insist that the rule of celibacy for Buddhist monks was an unnecessary obstacle to renewal, and that monks should be allowed to marry. It can be quite confidently asserted that he had no thought of simply imitating Japanese Buddhist practice in doing this; he felt convinced that too many good candidates for office in the Buddhist clergy were being discouraged by the need to remain celibate, and that the modern understanding of marriage needed to be integrated into the Buddhist vision of life. At first, few heeded his call and it is often claimed that the permission for monks to marry, that was finally granted by the Korean head abbots in 1926, was entirely the result of malicious Japanese attempts to corrupt true Korean Buddhism. Certainly, the Japanese did everything they could to move Korean Buddhism away from its own traditions and into the Japanese model. Equally, many temple heads were surely obliged by their position to collaborate with the Japanese civil authorities in various ways, some of them more readily than others. It would be irresponsible to condemn them all outright for this now, for what else could they do in such a situation? Contemporary Korean attempts to identify “pro-Japanese collaborators” often look like nothing more than ill-documented witch-hunts based on no material evidence. The fact of the matter is that, within a few years of the head monks having given their consent, marriage had become the norm for those monks who did not wish to devote themselves fully to meditation and study.

In 1945, it has been estimated that only about 700 Korean monks were unmarried, compared with over 7,000 married clergy. In 1946, married monks controlled 900 monasteries (temples) while only 100 belonged to the celibate monks.

After Liberation, and especially after the Korean War, the minority celibate monks launched what they called a “purification movement” against the married monks. Their claim that married monks were essentially un-Korean, a sign of Japanese corrupting influence, was also the main argument put forward by Syngman Rhee in 1955, when he ordered “Japanized” monks to resign from monastic positions and gave his support to the celibate clergy. He may well have known that the claim was not true, but many married monks, like Hyodang formerly active in the Independence Movement, were by then active in the opposition to him and he was always quite ruthless in quashing any kind of obstacle. Some also suspect that he saw conflict between Buddhists as a way of helping the Protestant churches grow.

2. Manhae and the Buddhist Youth League

In 1910, an Association of Young Buddhists (Joseon bulgyo cheongnyeonghoe) had been founded under the direct influence of Manhae, as a means of helping launch a Buddhist renewal; in the following years efforts were made to establish an organization uniting the country’s main temples, the “Union of the 30 Main Temples” (30 Bonsan yeonhap samuso), with offices at a temple Manhae had founded, known as Gakhwangsa, in central Seoul. This temple was later renamed Taegosa, moved a few yards and after Liberation received the name Jogyesa in 1954, becoming the central offices for the national organization of temples run by unmarried monks. In Gakhwangsa, courses of lectures were organized for young monks and lay Buddhists living in Seoul, prior to the establishment of the Central Buddhist Study Center (Bulgyo jung-ang hangnim) that was later to become Dongguk University. Out of these grew a new Buddhist Youth Association (Joseon

bulgyo cheongnyeonhae) that was active in the 1919 Independence Movement.

In 1931 this association, its members having spread throughout Korea and into Japan, changed its name to the Joseon General Buddhist Youth League (Joseon bulgyo cheongnyeong chongdongmaeng), and at the same time, the Central Buddhist Study Center was renamed the Buddhist School (Jung-ang bulgyo jeonmun hakgyo). The members of the underground *Mandang* Squad were at the same time leaders of the new Buddhist Youth League. All their efforts were inspired by a wish to liberate Korea and Korean Buddhism from Japanese domination and the League was therefore a hotbed of anti-Japanese activity. Hyodang was chosen to be the 3rd chairman of the central executive committee of the Buddhist Youth League, having been active in its Tokyo branch during his years in Japan.

3. Hyodang's activities in the 1930s

This was a difficult time for Korean Buddhism, with conflicts arising among the monks who were teaching at the new Buddhist School, and tensions about the financial support to be provided by temples for a centralized administration. At the same time, Japanese supervision and control was growing increasingly strong and restrictive. Manhae seems to have hoped that Hyodang might be able to find solutions to these problems and that seems to be part of the reason why he was selected. Since some of Hyodang's most trusted friends and colleagues had recently been forced out of the central Buddhist administration, he invited them to move, together with their families, down to Dasolsa, where he would provide housing and food, although it was hardly a large or wealthy temple. Among them was the very talented scholar Gim Beom-bu and his brother, the future novelist Gim Dong-ri. Already it was Dasolsa that was covering the living expenses of Manhae. In addition, they were in constant confrontation with monks who actively supported the Japanese.

Meanwhile, members of the Buddhist Young Women's League had been demanding the establishment of an educational facility for Buddhist girls. In

June 1933, Hyodang established Myeongseong School for Girls in Seoul and he was installed as its first principal for 2 years. The school grew rapidly, counting 300 students by the start of its third year. This school still exists, the only middle and high school for girls directly run by the main Buddhist organization.

The arrival of a whole series of known opponents of Japanese rule at Dasolsa meant that the temple was under constant police supervision. In April 1933, Hyodang proposed that the *Mandang* Squad should be dissolved, since it had been infiltrated by pro-Japanese elements. Some members dissented, but finally it was dissolved while its former members remained active in the Buddhist Youth League. The large number of intellectuals gathered at Dasolsa needed to be justified, and the suspicions of the authorities set to rest, so in 1936 Hyodang set up a Buddhist Academy there, with Gim Beom-bu, Gim Beop-rin and Gang Go-bong as lecturers.

In March 1934 he had already established Gwangmyeong Institute at Wonjeon, a few miles from Dasolsa, to provide primary education for the children of the local farmers. Gim Dong-ri, the younger brother of Gim Beom-bu worked as a teacher there for a time, and his experiences provided the material for some of his most famous novels, written in later years. Soon after this, Hyodang was arrested and remained in custody for some 8 months. Still, he frequently met with monks, including Yi Dong-seok and Jo Jong-hyeon, and with them decided that a national umbrella organization of Buddhist monks was needed; those monks purchased a hall in Jeong-eup (North Jeolla Province) that had belonged to the syncretic religion known as Bocheon-gyo and turned it into a temple that might serve as its headquarters. The role later fell to Jogyesa in Seoul.

Among those frequenting Dasolsa in those years were some of Korea's first Communists, Bak Rak-jong, Jeong Hui-yeong, Ha Pil-won; in fact the "Goryeo Communist Party Manifesto" was composed there. Later, in 1935, when those founding Communists were involved in incidents at Daejeon and Imsil, Hyodang was detained for 3 months at Imsil Police Station. Ha Pil-won in particular lived for a number of years at Dasolsa with his Russian

mistress Agnya. With many other significant figures in the Independence Movement coming and going, the temple played a major role in the anti-Japanese movements of those years, especially in the south-eastern regions.

4. Hyodang and the purification of Haeinsa

Hyodang had become administrative head (*Beommu*) of Haeinsa at the start of 1934, at the request of the head monk. A gang of some twenty or more corrupt monks associated with the temple, men in their forties and fifties, had set up their homes inside the temple compound and were using them as restaurants, taverns, and inns. Hyodang could not endure this corruption of monastic life and the values represented by the temple area. One day, the new Japanese Governor General, Ugaki Kazushigei, came to visit Haeinsa and suddenly asked Hyodang how he saw “the development of the individual,” which was a slogan being used in a campaign by the Japanese authorities at that time. Hyodang replied that the compassion of the Buddha needed to be poured forth on the dry ground of Korea, and that meant that the temples, places specially consecrated to that compassion, should be purified of all worldly defilement.

He then invited him to see what he meant, and took him on a tour of the buildings in which the corrupt monks were conducting their business. As a result, Ugaki Kazushigei issued a national decree ordering that the boundaries of every temple should be clearly defined, and that within those boundaries no such private buildings or businesses should be allowed. This led to the demolition of all the private homes and buildings that had accumulated within many of the main temples of Korea. The monks affected by this were furious with Hyodang, and filed nearly thirty legal suits against him in the months following.

At that time, Hyodang also supervised the tenth complete printing of the Tripitaka Koreana from the temple’s 80,000 printing-blocks. In addition, for the first time he examined and printed out the texts contained on the blocks preserved in the smaller western and eastern chambers of the Haeinsa library,

that no one had ever bothered with, and this led to the discovery of hitherto unknown works by Wonhyo, among other treasures, with some of the blocks being of great antiquity.

5. Hyodang's relations with Japanese Buddhism

1938 saw many young Koreans being drafted to fight for Japan in the Sino-Japanese War, and an increased crackdown on every kind of dissent. Dasolsa, with its group of known dissidents, was particularly scrutinized. In August, several members of the group residing there were incarcerated at Jinju Police Station and in October, Hyodang and other leading monks were incarcerated at the Gyeonggi Province Police Station, having been arrested in Seoul.

One incident that has sometimes been misrepresented as a sign of Hyodang's alleged pro-Japanese activities happened soon after that. Perhaps because he felt a need to establish his credentials as a devout Buddhist in the eyes of an increasingly suspicious civil administration, in September 1939 he invited 48 scholar-monks of the Japanese Tendai sect for ceremonies in the *Ha-an-geo* at Dasolsa, where Master Gim Beom-bu lectured for 7 days on esoteric thought (*Hyeolli sasang*). Outwardly, it seemed to be a time of religious retreat and sharing but we may think that inwardly Hyodang saw this as a chance to affirm the superiority of the Korean Buddhist tradition over the Japanese by direct confrontation. That is surely a far more probable interpretation than any claim that Hyodang had suddenly become a turncoat siding with the Japanese attempts to corrupt Korean Buddhism by introducing Japanese influences. During the ceremonies, some of the greatest singers of Korean traditional Buddhist chant, "Beompae," were present.

The long-lasting, close relationship of Hyodang with Manhae Han Yong-un was marked by a visit the latter made to him and the other former *Mandang* members living at Dasolsa in 1939, to celebrate his 61st birthday (a major celebration in Korean tradition), that fell on the 12th day of the 7th lunar month that year; this visit was made just a few days after the main

celebration organized in Seoul. There is a fascinating vignette in a memory of his visit that Hyodang transmitted: in the evening, after the celebrations were over, the two men sat together in Hyodang's room, and composed poems in Chinese characters until late at night, as Korean scholars and monks had always done. A page of their compositions written that night has survived. This visit gives us a very clear indication that, so far as Manhae was concerned, Hyodang was as strongly involved in the independence struggle as ever, and was in no sense compromised with the Japanese.

The following year, in April 1940, Hyodang returned the visit of the Japanese monks, and was invited to give a special lecture at the conference hall of Kanon Temple in Asakusa, Tokyo. Some 5,000 people attended and heard Hyodang explain how the temple enshrined a statue originally made by Korean craftsmen; he then went on to remind them that throughout history, many kingdoms, particularly Chinese, had attempted to crush Korea, and all had failed and been crushed in turn while Korean culture and language had survived. He compared that to Israel's providential survival in Old Testament times. Now Japan might, he feared, be making the same mistake as the enemies of ancient Israel and Korea. This lecture, too, serves as a manifest sign that Hyodang was in no way prepared to acknowledge Japanese claims of superiority, and rather saw his visit as part of an effort on behalf of Korean Buddhism and Korean national culture, stressing its importance for Japanese Buddhism.

After this, Hyodang visited a number of major Japanese temples before making the classic, immensely gruelling 3-week pilgrimage of Hiezan (Mount Hiei) outside Kyoto, that all great monks are supposed to complete (if they cannot make the full 1000-day pilgrimage, which usually takes about 7 years). The courageous way in which Hyodang completed the pilgrimage despite the physical difficulties he encountered impressed the Japanese monks. The first Buddhist temple on Hiezan was built by the founder of the Tendai Buddhist school in Japan, Saicho, who is also sometimes credited with introducing tea to Japan, when he returned from a visit to China in 805. After the rigors of the mountain, Hyodang visited some of the main temples in Kyoto, and also

some of the famous tea-plantations there.

There is no sign in all this that his fierce opposition to Japan in its attempt to deprive Korea of its national, cultural identity had in any way weakened. One of the most important keys to any defensive strategy is often formulated as the simple command, “Know your enemy.” Hyodang knew Japan, his nation’s enemy, intimately; that does not mean that he has surrendered to it in any way, on the contrary. In 1941 Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7 marked the beginning of the Pacific War. Hyodang’s numerous spells under arrest in the wartime years also testify to the completely negative view of him held by the Japanese authorities.

6. Hyodang’s activities 1940-1945

With the beginning of the Pacific War, the Japanese authorities launched a fierce crackdown on all aspects of Korean culture; people were obliged to take Japanese names, publications in Korean language were banned, and all books recording independent Korean history were confiscated. Hyodang had in his possession manuscript copies of Danjae Sin Chae-ho’s *Ancient History of Korea (Joseon sanggosa)* and *History of Ancient Culture (Joseon sanggo munhwasa)* when Japanese police suddenly raided Dasolsa in September 1942. Fortunately, a Japanese woman living at the temple who had just given birth was able to hide the books under her baby’s bedding and they were saved. But Hyodang’s project of publishing Danjae’s works never came to fruition and a 4-volume edition of his “complete works” only appeared in South Korea in 1972. Hyodang’s interest in his work is symptomatic of his own strong nationalistic views and reminds us of his anarchist links during the early years of his life in Japan; it is also in a sense prophetic of the difficulties he experienced under Syngman Rhee’s rule. For the ideas expressed by Danjae were also anathema to Rhee and much praised in North Korea. For many years, his work was virtually banned in South Korea. It was only later, among the resistance to Park Chung-hee’s rule, that historians in South Korea rediscovered his work and raised him to his present level of fame.

In July 1942, a notorious case had involved the arrest and imprisonment of many members of the Korean Language Society (Joseoneo hakhoe). The ultimate sign that Hyodang was in no sense a pro-Japanese collaborator is the fact that he and his companions at Dasolsa, as well as many other leading monks, spent much of the war under arrest in atrocious conditions at the South Gyeongsang Province Police Headquarters; others confined there included a number of Protestant pastors and lay-people who had refused to perform the obligatory Shinto rituals in honor of the Japanese Emperor. The buildings were overcrowded, prisoners were mistreated and tortured. Many died.

It should be obvious from all this that by the end of the Japanese period, Hyodang had come to occupy an outstanding position among the ranks of those who resisted the Japanese attempts to bring Korea to its knees and rob its people of their values, culture, and language. He had been closely connected with Manhae, who died on June 29, 1944, and with the leading Buddhists associated with him, as well as with many other intellectuals, and he had already shown his interest in improving the educational facilities available in Korea. At the same time he was known nation-wide as an outstanding scholar and social thinker, as a devout Buddhist in his practice, as well as an unconditional defender of Korean identity and of its independence from Japan.

In the end, the strongest, most compelling reason for rejecting any suggestion that Hyodang ever did anything that could be considered “pro-Japanese” is a very simple one. Hyodang, more than any other figure involved in the independence struggle, perhaps, never lived alone and never acted alone. The Dasolsa community, by its very nature, is the strongest guarantee of Hyodang’s integrity. The people who gathered there, as we have seen, lived close together for sometimes years on end. They were in some cases more radical in political thought and action than Hyodang himself; we must recall them, sometimes over a hundred at a time, sprawled on the temple’s grassy lawn, seemingly relaxing and sun-bathing in positions designed to mislead the Japanese observing them through binoculars from far off, while they debated the ways and means of their ongoing anti-Japanese struggle. It

is perfectly obvious that none of them would have remained there if there had been even the slightest suspicion concerning Hyodang's attitude. To suggest otherwise is quite ridiculous.

V. Hyodang's activities after 1945

On August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered and the Japanese soon began to leave Korea, as demanded in the surrender document. At once, in another indication of his anti-Japanese credentials, Hyodang was appointed the General Secretary of the Sacheon National Foundation Association, for the region around Dasolsa; in 1946 he was selected to be a member of an Emergency National Assembly. On February 2, 1947, he was nominated to represent Korean Buddhist groups on the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission and on February 15, 1947, he was selected to be head monk of Haeinsa.

The interest he had manifested in earlier times in promoting education continued. In July 1947, he and Haegong Sin Ik-hui took the first steps toward founding Gookmin College (that was later to become Gookmin University) in Seoul. Hyodang became the first chairman of the college's board of governors. It was to be an entirely Buddhist establishment, with funding coming from a variety of Buddhist foundations including Haeinsa. In April 1950, Hyodang even found himself appointed the president of the college as well, for a brief time before the outbreak of the war. On May 10, 1948, Hyodang had also been elected a member of the Constituent Assembly that inaugurated the Republic of Korea. At a period when many people were establishing political parties, he remained firmly independent and was elected as such.

We have seen the close links that united Hyodang with some of the most significant anarchists, idealists, and communists of his age; he was obviously a revolutionary by temperament, or at least a radical, if by that we mean a person who dreams of establishing a society far different from that in which he finds himself; Hyodang nourished a strong hope of helping to found

a single Korea, independent, socialistic and democratic, where all would share freely in the construction of a new national identity, a land where a privileged few would not be allowed to dominate and oppress the masses who made up the general population. This dream, common to many Korean idealists, was anathema to Syngman Rhee and the corrupt politicians around him. Hyodang was certainly seen by them, not as a heroic independence fighter, but as a dangerous extremist.

The North Korean army attacked South Korea on June 25, 1950, and on June 28, as the invading forces entered Seoul, Hyodang was captured by them, transported around Seoul concealed in a cabinet, until finally he found himself installed with fifty other National Assembly members in the Seongnam Hotel. On September 15, the allied forces landed at Incheon, in a dramatic, unexpected move that threatened to cut the North Korean lines of communication with their army, that had moved very rapidly further south. Control over the territory in and around Seoul shifted in a flash, and, in a dramatic change of situation, on September 19 a liberated Hyodang went north with the American fleet. There he was put in charge of the *Hamheung ilbo* newspaper for 3 months before being evacuated southward on December 12. He moved to Haeinsa, of which he had been made head monk, and on July 25, 1951, as the war came close, his well-known nationalistic credentials were such that he was able to convince the leaders of the Communist militia who had captured Baekryeonam hermitage, just above Haeinsa, not to bombard the main temple, so saving the temple and the wood blocks of the Tripitaka Koreana.

His interest in education had not abated, and that same year, in the midst of wartime turmoil, he established Haein Middle / High School; then early in 1952 he obtained permission from the then minister of education, Baek Nak-jun, to re-establish Gookmin College at Haeinsa under the name of Haein College, for which he was appointed college head. Soon the incursions of partisans from Jiri Mountain made life there too dangerous and Hyodang moved the little college to Jinju. Unfortunately, in the following time there arose an intense conflict, as the Chairman of the Board set out to take the

college to Masan, and entirely away from Hyodang's control and influence, finally succeeding.

This and other deeply painful episodes in the following years probably have their explanation at least partly in the political differences that existed between Hyodang, who to some degree at least supported the opposition Democratic Party, and those connected to Syngman Rhee's ruling Freedom Party. Hyodang went so far as to advocate the need for revolution in his opposition to Syngman Rhee's dictatorial regime. Rhee personally disliked Hyodang and all that he stood for; thanks to the enmity of the notorious Gim Chang-ryong, head of Syngman Rhee's intelligence services, that earned him 6 months' imprisonment in Seoul's Seodaemun Prison, until early in 1953.

Other painful conflicts were to follow in the 1960s, involving legal struggles over a property in Busan belonging to Dasolsa. Hyodang had long dreamed of establishing a new, Wonhyo-inspired Buddhist order, Wonhyojong, that would be centered on Dasolsa. It was to be a kind of Utopia, open to people irrespective of their social, political orientation, or class. For this, a source of funding was essential and Dasolsa had little beyond that one property, that had been the site of a Japanese temple. Intent on wresting this wealth from his control, his adversaries set out to blacken Hyodang's reputation by spreading reports that made him appear as the unreasonable party, guilty of greed if not of dishonesty, while newspapers published lurid reports distorting his true intentions.

VI. The later years, 1957-1979

From 1957, Hyodang lectured at Dasolsa to large groups of monks and students on Manhae, and later on the thought of Wonhyo. That was the prelude to the project to collect and publish the complete writings of Manhae, a task that took him and a team of scholars many years and that was only finally completed with the publication of seven volumes in July 1973. All through these years, from the later 1950s, Hyodang resided mainly at Dasolsa,

and his practice of tea, which he had long been developing, became a familiar part of life there. In particular, he planted very many new tea bushes on the slopes above the temple.

In November 1966, a Korean residing in Japan, Gim Jeong-Ju, came to visit him and asked him to write about the Korean practice of tea. The result was a small booklet that Hyodang had duplicated, and later printed, *Hangukui chasaenghwalsa* (History of Korea's Tea-life); in the course of the following years, he developed that into his major work on tea, *Hangukui chado* (The Korean Way of Tea) that was published in its final form in 1973. This book was destined to serve as the foundation text of the great revival of interest in Korean tea he had initiated. Some 300 pages in length, it covers every aspect of its subject in detail.

In addition, beginning in early May 1974, he started to publish a series of sixteen articles about tea in the *Dokseomin sinmun*. In August the same year, he published a more general book about his vision of life: *Sarameun eottoke saraya hana* (How should people live?). But it was above all through a constant series of lectures, presentations, and personal conversations that he stimulated a widespread tea revival that bore its main fruits in the years after his death, with the multiplication of tea-rooms, tea study associations, tea makers and tea-lovers. He could hardly have imagined that tea would soon be taught as an integral part of Korea's traditional culture in at least a large number of Korean high schools.

Hyodang had lived as a celibate monk for many years, following the traditional way common to both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism; finally, however, he followed the example of Manhae and, in the early 1940s, married a woman 20 years younger than himself. They had two daughters but they proved to have no shared interests and finally his wife filed for divorce, which was granted in 1964. Several years later, in 1969, Chae Jeong-bok, a student from the history department of Yonsei University in Seoul, came to ask for Hyodang's help in writing her graduation thesis and she finally remained with him for the next ten years, until his death. To her, as to no-one else, he transmitted his experience and vision of tea in all its aspects.

During the 1970s, the rule of Park Chung-hee grew increasingly harsh, with the promulgation of the “Yusin” (Revitalizing) Constitution at the end of 1972 provoking widespread opposition to which the regime responded with arrests, torture, prison and even death on trumped-up charges. At the heart of the struggle were students and figures from all sections of society, writers, artists, churchmen, monks, workers. Many of these found their way to Dasolsa and to Hyodang, some looking for support, some for help, and for shelter. A number spent months there in hiding and Hyodang’s reputation as an independence fighter and a member of the Constituent Assembly surely helped to keep the police at bay.

Following the philosophy of Wonhyo, Hyodang believed that the Buddha requires that compassion should be shown especially to those in trouble; he therefore gave monastic ordination to quite a number of people who were in deep disfavor with the ruling powers, and to the children of people who had been condemned as communists. Another specific characteristic of Wonhyo’s vision of Buddhism is its stress on practical realities. For Hyodang, being a monk did not mean chanting sūtras while pious rich women looked after his every need; he demanded that everyone residing at Dasolsa do a full day’s manual labor out in the fields and around the temple, so constituting a truly communitarian Utopia, during the years of anti-Japanese struggle as during the decades of military dictatorship.

Other visitors to Dasolsa simply came looking for instruction in Buddhism and whenever Hyodang lectured to groups of students, he would always include the Way of Tea among his topics. In the early 1970s, Hyodang’s wife, now known with her tea-name as Chae Wonhwa, began to suggest that he should launch an association devoted entirely to tea, in order to regulate and support the growing public interest in the topic, but it was only in 1976 that he finally agreed and preparations for the first meeting of the Hanguk chadohoe (Korean Association for the Way of Tea) began to take shape. In those days, very few Koreans had ever drunk tea, and it was agreed that only people who had at least once drunk tea with Hyodang should participate. That still meant about 100 people, and the resources of the

temple were insufficient for such numbers; food would be already a problem, and there was very little room for them to sleep. The meeting was therefore limited to the space of a single day, and entirely depended on the efforts of Chae Wonhwa for its success. The establishment of the Association dates from January 15, 1977.

Hyodang's troubles were still not over, however. As mentioned previously, after Liberation in 1945 the order of unmarried monks (soon to be known as Jogyejong) received government support in its often violent attempts to gain control of the temples that were, almost entirely, being controlled by the married monks (today known as Taegojong). In the late autumn of 1977, Hyodang finally found himself obliged to leave Dasolsa. He went up to Seoul, where he had many friends. Using his home there as his own school, he continued to teach, and drink tea. Many old colleagues and friends were now university professors, artists, writers and professionals of various kinds in the new urban society. Many came to share tea with him and deepen their understanding of Buddhism, especially of the thought of Wonhyo.

After a series of weekly lectures, in May 1978, a group gathered around Hyodang in Seoul decided to establish the Chaseonhoe (Tea-Zen Association). Not long after that, in June 1978, he fell sick and underwent major surgery but his days were numbered and his life came to an end one year later, just after midday on July 10, 1979. He was cremated and his remains were at first placed in a stone urn near the entrance to Dasolsa but with the passage of years his family and friends came to feel that, given the violent way he had been expelled, this was not the right place. Finally, in 1996, his remains were transferred to a grave in the National Cemetery at Daejeon where he rests alongside many others whose lives were dedicated to the Independence Movement and who, often, had to suffer like him in the years after 1945.

VII. Conclusion

What, we might ask, forms a unifying bond between Hyodang's various activities, beyond the pain they brought him? The Buddhist monk, the advocate of an independent Korean cultural, national identity, the founder of schools, the quiet opponent of dictators, the friend of dissidents, the communitarian visionary, the tea master ... From time to time we have noted his attachment to the teachings of Wonhyo. Wonhyo is, I believe, the key to Hyodang's entire life. This immensely popular Buddhist figure from ancient Silla is hardly known in the West, for obvious reasons. Even in Korea, the difficulty of his many writings makes his teaching hard to grasp. His life-story is more accessible, but the deeper vision underlying the tales of his various strange and excentric acts is not always well understood. One of the most characteristic features of Hyodang's life is his openness to everyone, but especially to those who are suffering. We may cite his welcome at Dasolsa of so many different kinds of marginalized people, his readiness to accept as monks people who did not conform to standard models, his ready mingling of monks and ordinary people in the community there, his conviction that monks too should work with their hands and perform menial tasks. Even his readiness to reach out in positive ways to Japanese monks, although clearly part of his conviction that Korean Buddhism had as much to offer as any Japanese tradition, can also be seen as showing his universal compassion.

Wonhyo was convinced that all human beings were utterly equal since each and everyone had an inalienable, fundamental Buddhist nature, the potential of attaining buddhahood (*Ilsim*). In his own life, Wonhyo stressed that freedom (*Muae*) and compassion were the two essential qualities of a Buddhist (or human) life. He stressed the need to struggle to overcome false distinctions (*Hwajaeng*), rejecting all the we would term "clericalism" and even reckoned total enlightenment was a potential snare, if it were seen as dispensing those monks who had attained it from practicing compassion toward suffering humanity. The socialist or anarchist radicalism observed by Hyodang in his youth must surely have appealed to him above all by its rejection of

divisive, elitist attitudes. Like Wonhyo, Hyodang refused to practice a distinction between the monastic life and ordinary life. Unlike him, he was not inclined to sing and dance in the streets, banging on a gourd in an eccentric lifestyle; but like Wonhyo, he placed his monastic vocation firmly on the side of those poor and suffering under the demands of current social and political realities, as a challenge to the powerful and privileged. Hyodang's sympathies clearly lay, from his earliest days in Japan, with the exploited victims of society.

When we see how often he wrote the four characters 茶道無門, “the Way of Tea has no doors,” we are reminded of that same deep, universal, all-embracing vision. His assertion that to prepare and drink a cup of tea is in itself a practice of Zen, a search for enlightenment, challenges the need for years of practice in monastic seclusion. Like Wonhyo, he is affirming that anyone, monk or lay, here and now, in this present life, no matter what their education or status or morality even, can fulfill their essential Buddha nature in the simplest possible ways. Tea drinking becomes a school of compassion, so of enlightenment, and therefore the tea is named *Panyaro*, the dew of enlightening wisdom (Prajñā). For Hyodang, as for Wonhyo, no pretension or ambition to special privileges had any place in Buddhism or in human society, and for Hyodang that was expressed in the openness of his tea practice. Not for him, the claims of this or that “tea expert” to special veneration or superior authority in the world of tea. Perhaps that helps explain why, although in his later years he had certain very close tea-friends, he left no one who could claim to be his “*jeja*” (disciple) in the common Korean manner. For if he had, then he himself would have been claiming the role of “master” and the total equality of each and all in tea would have been undermined.

In conclusion, rather than try to evaluate separately Hyodang's achievements in the many very different areas in which he was active, we would do well to stress their common quality as manifestations of the Wonhyo thought to which he had dedicated his whole life: the inner oneness of all beings, their essential interconnectedness, the compassion of Buddha by

which we are rendered free of all determining bonds. And we can be grateful, if that already sounds complex, for his realization that everything that matters can be experienced by means of a very simple cup of tea, the sign that indeed we all are one.

Glossary of Chinese Terms

(K=Korean, C=Chinese, J=Japanese)

30 Bonsan yeonhap samuso (K) 30本山聯合事務所

Baek Nak-jun (K) 白樂濬

Baekdamsa (K) 百潭寺

Baekryeonam (K) 白蓮庵

Bak Rak-jong (K) 朴洛鍾

Bak Yeol (K) 朴烈

Bak Yun-jin (K) 朴允進

Beommu (K) 法務

Beomeosa (K) 梵魚寺

Beompae (K) 梵唄

Bocheon-gyo (K) 普天教

Bulgyo jung-ang hangnim (K) 佛教中央學林

Chado mumun (K) 茶道無門

Chae Jeong-bok (K) 蔡貞福

Chae Wonhwa (K) 蔡元和

Chaseonhoe (K) 茶禪會

Choi Beom-sul (K) 崔凡述

Choi Won-hyeong (K) 崔垣亨

Choi Yeong-hwan (K) 崔英煥

Danjae (K) 丹齋

Dasolsa (K) 多率寺

Donghak (K) 東學

Dongnip bihwa (K) 獨立秘話

Fusenji (J) 普泉寺

- Futeisha (J), Bulryeongsa (K) 不逞社
 Gang Go-bong (K) 姜 高峰
 Gang Yu-mun (K) 姜 裕文
 Geumbong (K) 錦峯
Geumgangjeo (K) 金剛杵
 Gim Beom-bu (K) 金 凡父
 Gim Beop-rin (K) 金 法麟
 Gim Chang-ryong (K) 金 昌龍
 Gim Dong-ri (K) 金 東里
 Ha Pil-won (K) 河 弼源
 Ha-an-geo (K) 夏安居
 Haegong (K) 海公
 Haeinsa (K) 海印寺
 Hamheung Ilbo (K) 咸興日報
 Han Yong-un (K) 韓 龍雲
 Hanguk chadohoe (K) 韓國茶道會
 Heo Yun-jin (K)
 Hetu-vidyā (S) 因明
 Hirohito (J) 裕仁
 Hwajaeng (K) 和諍
 Hyeolli sasang (K) 玄理思想
 Hyodang (K) 曉堂
 Ilsim (K) 一心
 Im Hwan-gyeong (K) 林 幻鏡
 Jeja (K) 弟子
 Jeong Hui-yeong (K) 鄭 禧泳
 Jo Jong-hyeon (K) 趙 宗玄
 Jogyejong (K) 曹溪宗
 Jogyesa (K) 曹溪寺
 Joseon bulgyo cheongnyeong chongdongmaeng (K) 朝鮮佛教青年總同盟
 Joseon bulgyo cheongnyeonhoe (K) 朝鮮佛教青年會
 Joseon bulgyo yeoja cheongnyeong dongmaeng (K) 朝鮮佛教女子青年同盟

- Joseon bulgyo yusillon* (K) 朝鮮佛教維新論
Joseon dongnip jiseo (K) 朝鮮獨立之書
Joseon sanggo munhwasa (K) 朝鮮上古文化史
Joseon sanggosa (K) 朝鮮上古史
 Joseoneo hakhoe (K) 朝鮮語學會
 Juji (K) 住持
 Jung-ang bulgyo jeonmun hakgyo (K) 中央佛教專門學校
 Kaneko Fumiko (J) 金子 文子
 Kokurokai (J), Heungnohoe (K) 黑勞會
 Kokutokai (J), Heukdohoe (K) 黑濤會
 Kokuyukai (J), Heuguhoe (K) 黑友會
 Mandang (K) 卍黨
 Manhae (K) 卍海
 Muae (K) 無碍
 Osugi Sakae (J) 大杉 榮
 Panyaro (K) 般若露
 Park Chung-hee (K) 朴正熙
 Rhee Syngman (K) 李 承晚
 Saicho (J) 最澄
 Sakato Chikai (J) 坂戶 智海
 Sin Chae-ho (K) 申采浩
 Sin Ik-hui (K) 申翼熙
 Taegojong (K) 太古宗
 Taegosa (K) 太古寺
 Tiantai (C) , Tendai (J) 天台
 Ugaki Kazushigei (J) 宇垣 一成
 Wonhyo (K) 元曉
 Wonhyojong (K) 元曉宗
 Yusin (K) 維新

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