ACTA KOREANA
VOL. 19, NO. 2, DECEMBER 2016: 87–108
doi:10.18399/acta.2016.19.2.004
© Academia Koreana, Keimyung University

THE CLASH OF CULTURES IN KIM NAMCH'ŎN'S *SCENES FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT*

By CHARLES LA SHURE

Kim Namch'ŏn's 1939 novel of manners, *Taeha* (*Scenes from the Enlightenment*), offers a snapshot of Korea at a crucial point in its modern history, the beginning of the Japanese colonial period. The town in which the novel takes place is an ideological battleground as old clashes with new. In terms of the social order, the old guard of the *yangban* aristocrats clings desperately to the last threads of its status and prestige, but the *yangban* must ultimately admit defeat and make way for the rise of the capitalist. Ideologically as well, different philosophies clash, with traditional shamanism and superstitions being denounced by the new enlightenment thinkers and Christian proselytizers. Yet there is one clash that the author deals with only in the subtlest of terms: the clash between the Korean people and the Japanese colonizers. Although this has been seen as a weakness in the novel's historical consciousness, Kim Namch'ŏn's depictions of the clashes between old and new cultures are nuanced; neither side is portrayed as being wholly right and effective. While it is clear that the new is winning out over the old, the picture that we are left with is not a stark black-and-white image but a much more nuanced understanding of this tumultuous transitional period.

Keywords: Kim Namch'ŏn, Japanese colonial period literature, novels of manners, enlightenment period

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK AND ITS AUTHOR

Scenes from the Enlightenment (hereafter, *Enlightenment*)[1] is a full-length novel of

* I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful and constructive criticisms, which were a great help in preparing the current version of this paper.

[1] The original Korean version referred to for this paper is Kim Namch'ŏn, *Taeha* (Seoul: Sinwŏn munhwasa, 2005). All excerpts are taken from my English translation, Kim Namcheon, *Scenes from the Enlightenment*, trans. Charles La Shure (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2014); page numbers at the end of excerpts are from this edition. The Revised Romanization system was used for this translation, so the names of characters mentioned in this paper will be accompanied by the

manners published in 1939 that depicts life in the environs of Sŏngch'ŏn (a town located northeast of P'yŏngyang in modern-day North Korea, and the author's hometown), introducing a cast of characters centered on Assistant Curator Pak and his family. As it is a novel of manners, it does not follow a single, overriding plot, but instead weaves many different threads together to create a vivid tapestry of what life was like at this particular time and place. And an understanding of this time and place are necessary for a full appreciation of the novel and the conflicts it presents.

Although the year the story takes place is not mentioned specifically, when Assistant Curator Pak, or Pak Sŏnggwŏn (Bak Seonggwon), is first introduced it is said the he "just turned forty this year" (p. 16), and on the following page it is noted that he was "a hot-blooded youth of twenty-three or twenty-four" during the Revolt of 1894 (Kabo Tonghak hyŏngmyŏng), making the year either 1910 or 1911—that is, around the time of Japan's annexation of Korea and the start of the colonial period.[2] The setting of the work is also important. Although Sŏngch'ŏn was not a large town, it was a gateway to P'yŏngyang and an area that saw heavy Protestant activity.[3] Thus *Enlightenment* stands on both spatial and temporal thresholds, an ideal site for clashes between old and new, traditional and modern, and domestic and foreign. These clashes are manifested in the conflicts between the traditional, status-based society and a new merit-based and capitalist society; between the old shamanic beliefs and the new beliefs of Christianity; more broadly between the native customs of Korea and the new and wondrous civilization of the West; and, if only very subtly, between Korea as a once-proud nation and Korea under the colonial rule of Japan.

The author, Kim Namch'ŏn, was born Kim Hyosik on March 6, 1911, in Sŏngch'ŏn.[4] As a university student in Japan, he joined the Korean Artists Proletarian Federation (KAPF) and participated directly in the proletarian movement by joining rubber factory workers in a strike in P'yŏngyang. He was arrested by the Japanese in 1931, along with many other members of KAPF. After the Japanese disbanded KAPF in 1935, Kim worked for *The Korea Central Daily*

Revised Romanization version in parentheses at first mention.

[2] This was pointed out by Kim Chonguk, who notes the author's claim that the work is set in 1906; Kim's conclusion is that the discrepancy is most likely a simple mistake on the author's part, but also that it does indicate that the author was not overly concerned with an exact historical or objective retelling of events. "Kim Namch'ŏn ŭi *Taeha* e nat'anan kaehwa p'unggyŏng" (Scenes from the enlightenment in Kim Namch'ŏn's *Taeha*), *Kugŏ kungmunhak* 147 (2007): 107–108.

[3] Kim Chaenam, *Kim Namch'ŏn minjok munhak ul wihan sam kwa chakp'um* (Kim Namch'ŏn: His life and works for a national literature) (Seoul: Kŏn'guk taehak ch'ulp'ansa, 1994), 61.

[4] Biographical information was drawn from the detailed discussion of Kim Namch'ŏn's life in Kim Chaenam, *Kim Namch'ŏn*, 13–30.

(*Chosŏn chungang ilbo*) newspaper. He traveled to his hometown in the spring of 1938 and spent one month researching; he began writing in June of 1938, and the novel was published by Inmunsa the following year. (It was intended to be the first part of a two-part work, but the second part was never completed.)[5]

In addition to being a prominent author of fiction, Kim was also a respected literary critic, and he put forth a number of theories regarding the function and role of literature in society. With the disbanding of KAPF and the trials faced by the proletarian literature movement in general in the late 1930s, he looked for different ways to develop literature beyond the theories of socialism. His theory of "accusatory literature" (*kobal munhak*) sought to expose the petit-bourgeois nature hidden within the author (himself) and then rebuild the self that had been torn down. At its core, "accusation" meant realistically depicting the social contradictions and conflicts of 1930s Korean society. His theory of "customs fiction" (*p'ungsok sosŏl*) defined "customs" as social norms that preserved historical tradition; that is, long-standing social institutions and the ideologies that underpinned them. Also pertinent here is his theory of "novel reconstruction" (*sosŏl kaejo ron*), which was an attempt to revive the form of the full-length novel using family histories that spanned several generations.[6] *Enlightenment* may have its limitations in terms of how successful Kim Namch'ŏn was at putting these theories into practice, but it nonetheless offers us an interesting glimpse into a critical time in Korea's modern history, when various conflicting forces were competing to shape the future of a nation that had, for the time being, ceased to exist.

THE FALL OF THE *YANGBAN*

The novel opens with a contrast between two families, both surnamed Pak. The first is Pak Rigyun (Bak Rigyun) and his younger brother, Sŏnggyun (Seonggyun),

---

[5] While the majority of novels published at the time were first serialized in newspapers, *Enlightenment* was intended from the start to be published in book form, without first going through the serialization process. This was a deliberate choice by both Kim and Ch'oe Chaesŏ, the head of the publishing house, who felt that the serialization process had turned literature into a commodity that was subject to the whims of the public, thus forcing authors and publishers to put commercial appeal before literary merit. Ostensibly, the novel can be seen as a more or less pure manifestation of the author's intentions, less beholden to the demands of the readership than a serialized novel would have been. Ch'ae Hosŏk, *Han'guk kŭndae munhak kwa kyemong ŭi sŏsa* (Korean modern literature and the narrative of the enlightenment) (Seoul: Somyŏng, 1999), 361–362.

[6] A detailed discussion of Kim Namch'ŏn's literary theories can be found in Yi Chinhyŏng, *1930-yŏndae huban singminji Chosŏn ŭi sosŏl iron* (Theories of the novel in late 1930s colonial Korea) (Seoul: Somyŏng, 2013), 245–277.

who represent the old guard. They are *yangban* aristocrats who boast of a distinguished ancestor and a long history in the area. But from the very first paragraph of the text, the author makes it clear that their claims of nobility rest on flimsy foundations: The distinguished ancestor on which their status is based is Lady Sŏng (Lady Seong), a woman who was awarded the title of "virtuous woman" after she followed her husband in death and committed suicide, adhering strictly to the Confucian ideal of a faithful wife. In the early twentieth century, this interpretation of faithfulness is already outmoded, yet the brothers Pak cling to this heritage. The physical manifestation of this heritage is the monument that was erected in Lady Sŏng's honor, along with the pavilion built over it, and the author could not be any less subtle in his symbolism when describing these structures.

> The monument erected in her memory was just outside Visiting Immortal Gate, on the left-hand side, beneath the shabbiest in the long row of monument pavilions. When weeds grew in the furrows between the roof tiles and sparrows nested in the corners of the eaves, the Bak brothers would uproot the weeds and clear away the nests with their own hands. But the roof began to sag and the pavilion began to lean to the right. It would take no small amount of money to repair or rebuild it. They propped it up by putting a single pillar on the right side and, although it was still an eyesore, they managed to keep it standing. It was a forlorn sight as it stood there awaiting its own demise—just like their hollow boasting that they were yangban. (pp. 15–16)

If there were any doubts about their legitimacy, the author sweeps those away in the blatant sentence at the end of this passage. There is subtlety here, though; it is interesting to note that the deterioration of the monument pavilion is not due to any particular outside forces, but is simply the result of the ravages of time. In uprooting the weeds and clearing away the sparrow nests, the brothers are merely delaying entropy. In this way, the author makes it clear that the decline of the *yangban* is simply part of the natural progression of things, and attempting to stop it would be as futile as trying to turn back time.

The fact that the brothers Pak no longer live in the golden age of the *yangban* is also made clear in how they make their living. In days gone by, they would have no doubt led the sheltered lives of scholars with servants to take care of their needs. However, they own no farmland and have no one to work for them; Pak Rigyun, the elder, runs a noodle shop, while Sŏnggyun runs an inn and stable. Rather than look to the future and attempt to better their lives, they are stuck in the past, reciting the text carved into the monument whenever they have had too much to

drink.

When the rich newcomer, Pak Sŏnggwŏn, arrives in the village and claims to be from the same Miryang Pak clan from which they hail, they question his lineage and suspect the worst of him. He has no distinguished ancestors, and nobody knows how he obtained his wealth. Later, though, as the Tano Festival approaches, Pak Rigyun swallows his pride and does the unthinkable: He borrows money from Pak Sŏnggwŏn to start a business and take advantage of the crowds that will flock to the town during the festival period. The exchange between Pak Rigyun and Pak Sŏnggwŏn is telling.

> After looking over the deeds and the check, Assistant Curator Bak placed four hundred *nyang* in front of Bak Rigyun. "You will have to fix up the houses if they are to be used for the Dano Festival. And let's fix the monument pavilion by Visiting Immortal Gate while we're at it."
>
> He expected these last words to disturb Bak Rigyun, but the man unexpectedly replied, "I thought the same at first, but after giving it some thought, I have to fix up my house, and there are many things to fix at my brother's house as well, so I don't think there will be enough money. So we'll fix the monument pavilion next time. After all, we have to take care of the dozen or so people living in the two houses first, right?" He was completely humbling himself in order to curry favor with Assistant Curator Bak.
>
> "Of course, what you say is the truth. The monument pavilion doesn't feed and clothe you, does it?" (pp. 132–133)

Pak Sŏnggwŏn, knowing how important the monument and its pavilion are to Pak Rigyun and his brother, suggests that they use some of the money to fix the pavilion, but Pak Rigyun rejects this idea. He has finally realized what Pak Sŏnggwŏn points out, that the monument pavilion does not feed or clothe them. Or, to put it another way: In the new society driven by the principles of capitalism, lineage and status based on the old system will do nothing to help one survive, let alone get ahead in life. When the Tano Festival arrives at the end of the novel, Pak Rigyun has opened up his new-style inn, hoping to make a profit from the crowds like all the other good capitalists in the village: "He had closed his noodle shop, divided the place into many rooms, and opened up a new-style inn" (p. 227). There is no scene showing the brothers Pak ever repairing the pavilion, and in fact it is not mentioned again in the novel. In the end, even the last stubborn remnants of the old guard admit defeat and join the new order.

THE RISE OF THE CAPITALIST

Pak Sŏnggwŏn stands in contrast to Pak Rigyun and his brother Sŏnggyun. He is, as mentioned above, an outsider, but he is also practically an avatar of capitalism, for better or for worse. He earned his first fortune by buying and selling rice as well as by lending out his own rice at exorbitant interest rates. The first fortune is squandered by his father, who wastes the money on drinking, gambling, and opium, but Sŏnggwŏn makes another fortune during the Revolt of 1894. Instead of fleeing with the rest of the civilians, he stays behind to sell goods to the soldiers, and he uses their Korean brass coins to buy up Japanese silver coins and stash them away. Finally, he takes advantage of the situation in Sŏngch'ŏn after the revolt to establish himself there; as people return from refuge, they are broke and thus forced to sell their houses, and Pak Sŏnggwŏn is able to buy a house on the high street cheaply. In a word, he is able to quickly see the reality of a situation and take advantage of the naive to better himself. He uses this same set of skills to even take the daughter of a debtor as his concubine.

Yet although Pak Sŏnggwŏn is a capitalist success story, he is not satisfied with financial success alone. He is, in fact, obsessed with status. For one, he is known throughout most of the book as "Assistant Curator Pak." This title originally referred to those who took care of royal tombs, gardens or other facilities during the Chosŏn period, but of course in Pak Sŏnggwŏn's case it is only a "courtesy title," similar perhaps to how "esquire" was once used. Pak Rigyun is at first furious, claiming that Pak Sŏnggwŏn has no right to the title: "Now look here! People are calling him Assistant Curator, and it seems like a right proper position, but Assistant Curator is just an empty title bought with money, a bought title!" (p. 21) Nonetheless, this is what people call him, and the author says it is only right to do the same.

His obsession with status can also be seen in how he goes about finding a bride for his son Hyŏnggŏl, the third of four sons. There is little problem finding brides for the first two sons, but Hyŏnggŏl is different—he is the son of the concubine, and thus not officially part of the direct line of descent. Still, Pak Sŏnggwŏn worries: "There don't seem to be any families worth marrying that will take us, only families that look on us from afar, and we have to think of our good name and so cannot just go around begging" (p. 137). The families that look on them from afar are those that Pak Sŏnggwŏn considers inferior, families that he would never dream of marrying into, despite not having any other claim to status himself than his money. He does eventually find a suitable bride, and as he reflects on his good fortune his motivations are clear: "It was the daughter of a Kangnŭng Ch'oe family, who, though poor due to declining fortunes, were from

an illustrious line. He had no designs on their fortune or wealth, so what did it matter if they were poor?" (p. 232) Bak Sŏnggwŏn is concerned only with the status of the family, as he can provide the wealth. Ironically, of course, it is precisely *because* the family is poor that they agree to give their daughter in marriage; had they been well-to-do, they surely would have sought out a family of equal standing. As it is, both parties get what they want: The Kangnŭng Ch'oe family get the financial security they need, and Pak Sŏnggwŏn gets the status and prestige he craves.

Pak Rigyun coming to him to borrow money is also an important moment, and Pak Sŏnggwŏn relishes the conversation that is so clearly agonizing for Pak Rigyun. As a capitalist, of course, he knows that his investment will either pay dividends or at least give him financial power over Pak Rigyun—both of which are acceptable outcomes—but more than anything else he savors the humbling of one who had so long boasted of his status. The crowning moment in Pak Sŏnggwŏn's quest for legitimacy, though, comes during the Tano Festival. As Pak Rigyun leaves behind his attachment to the past and embraces the future, Pak Sŏnggwŏn takes one step closer to his goal.

> He was content, as if he had reached the heavens for the first time in his life or had finally made his mark in the world at the age of forty. It might have been because he had donated five hundred *nyang* to the athletics meet and two hundred *nyang* to the wrestling matches, but he was given the title of vice-president of the athletics meet and thus allowed to wear a large red flower on his chest. There were many who had titles such as licentiate, head clerk, and assistant curator, or who had experience as petty officials, but to the honorarily titled Assistant Curator Bak Seonggwon, being awarded the honorary office of vice-president was of course proof that the times had changed greatly, but it was also a silent witness to the power of money. (pp. 231–232)

At last he has gotten what he always wanted: status, and confirmation that his worldview is the right one after all. It may of course, be worth asking how much the honorary office of vice-president of the local athletics meet is really worth, but there is no doubt that Pak Sŏnggwŏn sees it as one of his crowning achievements. Everything is at last going his way.

AN ATTEMPT TO BRIDGE THE GAP

The Pak Sŏnggwŏn we see at the Tano Festival is at the apex of the arc his character follows through the novel. And though he manages to achieve quite a

bit, he is not successful in all of his endeavors. In particular, his first attempt to join the traditional and the modern and have the best of both worlds is unsuccessful, as has already been pointed out by Korean researchers.[7] This first attempt comes in the second chapter, when he arranges the marriage of his second son, Hyŏngsŏn, to the daughter of Head Clerk Chŏng (Jeong). In a concession to tradition, he appoints Schoolmaster Ku (Gu)—the master of the traditional Confucian school in the village—as the holder of the goose that is to be used in the ceremony. But he also knows that the bride's family has recently converted to Christianity, so he makes a concession here as well.

> A family that strictly observed the old customs would have many reasons not to send Choe Gwansul, who was steeped in Eastern Learning, but as chance would have it, talk was going around that Jeong Bongseok, the bride's father, had started to believe in Jesus and was therefore interested in enlightenment thinking, so Assistant Curator Bak had decided to appoint his brother-in-law, the only one in this village who visited Seoul often, as Hyeongseon's escort. (p. 29)

Taken at face value, this seems like a reasonable choice on Pak Sŏnggwŏn's part, but three very different philosophies are mentioned here in the same breath without any real explanation of what relationship, if any, exists between them. The comment that Head Clerk Chŏng "had started to believe in Jesus and was therefore interested in enlightenment thinking" is indicative of the important social role that Christianity played at the time, not just as a religion but as a conduit for Western ideas, which were often considered key to—if not synonymous with—enlightenment thinking. The capital Seoul is of course the place that an individual would have the best chance of coming into contact with new ideas and new civilization, so Ch'oe Kwansul (Choe Gwansul) might seem to be an obvious choice, but the fact that he is "steeped in Eastern Leaning" is problematic. Eastern Learning (Tonghak) was founded, at least in part, as a reaction *against* Christianity (which, when it was first introduced to Korea, was known as "Western Learning," or "Sŏhak") and other Western thought.

The conflict, however, ends up being not one of ideology or philosophy but of appearances and trappings. While the groom, the holder of the goose, and the rest of the procession are arrayed in traditional Korean clothing, Ch'oe Kwansul is decked out in his "new-style" finest: "Choe Gwansul perched a pair of gold-

[7] Yi Chaein, *Kim namch'ŏn munhak* (The literature of Kim Namch'ŏn) (Seoul: Munhak ak'ademi, 1996), 35; Kim Chonguk, "Kim Namch'ŏn ŭi *Taeha* e nat'anan kaehwa p'unggyŏng" (Scenes from the enlightenment in Kim Namch'ŏn's *Taeha*), *Kugŏ kungmunhak* 147 (2007): 117–118.

rimmed, new-style glasses on his nose, wore a pair of high-laced shoes with his black silk overcoat, and atop his close-cropped hair sat the flat cap. He'd even taken a piece of boxwood, stripped it of its rough bark, burned off the knots, and called it a new-style cane" (pp. 36–37). Pak Sŏnggwŏn had at first thought he would be able to overlook his brother-in-law's appearance, but when he sees him sitting there incongruously on his mule, sticking out like a sore thumb, he tries to convince him at least to take off the ridiculous flat cap, which looks like "some silly rice dish cover." Ch'oe Kwansul is adamant, though, and the procession proceeds as is. The reaction of those who watch the procession arrive at the bride's house is predictable.

> Only the women of lower standing squeezed in among the men, laughing and chattering as they watched the groom on his horse and then laughing again at the sight of Clerk Choe on his mule. He wore leather shoes the likes of which had never been seen in this neighborhood, and on his head sat some strange thing. They had certainly never expected anything like this and found it both surprising and comical. (pp. 39–40)

The juxtaposition of the new-style and the traditional is met with laughter, and Pak Sŏnggwŏn's attempt to fuse the old and new ends in failure. This is due in large part to the fact that what we see of Ch'oe Kwansul here is the full extent of his "new style" or "enlightenment." His adoption of Western civilization is not limited entirely to clothing, of course. In an earlier scene, when smoking with Pak Sŏnggwŏn, he produces cigarettes and phosphorous matches from his pocket and claims that they are much more convenient. Pak Sŏnggwŏn prefers his pipe and flint, though, saying that the cigarettes taste bland and the matches are a waste of money. This is the only time that Ch'oe Kwansul is presented as being even remotely reasonable, and his newfangled implements are dismissed out of hand. He is known primarily for his outlandish costumes, not his new or enlightened ideas. When he takes off his shoes and reveals his Western leather socks, it's hard not to see the sentence that follows as anything but symbolic: "Choe Gwansul had only one pair of these shoe socks made of leather, and when the heels had worn through he had patched them with pieces of thick hemp cloth" (p. 40). Like his garments, his enlightenment thought is just a motley patchwork; he is the author's caricature of those who have little more than half-baked and distorted ideas of the new culture and new civilization, those who mimic outward appearances without knowing anything of the inward substance. Thus it is no wonder that Pak Sŏnggwŏn's attempt to bridge traditional and modern meets with failure. For as much as Ch'oe Kwansul is a target of ridicule in the novel, the choice of him as a representative of the "new style" is equally ridiculous, and lays bare the

superficiality of Pak Sŏnggwŏn's understanding of the new civilization beyond the law of money and the basic principles of capitalism.

CHRISTIANITY, THE NEW RELIGION OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Ch'oe Kwansul's enlightenment might be half-baked, but Christianity is a much more fully realized and powerful force elsewhere in the book. As mentioned above, the family of Head Clerk Chŏng had recently converted to Christianity, and we are first introduced to the religion through his daughter—and the young bride-to-be—Pobu (Bobu). When she finds out that she is to be married to a son of Pak Sŏnggwŏn's family, she mistakenly thinks that Hyŏnggŏl will be her husband. Later, though, she realizes her mistake and feels terribly guilty for having cherished thoughts of Hyŏnggŏl in her heart, as if she had been unfaithful to her husband. She tries to rid her mind of thoughts of Hyŏnggŏl, comparing these thoughts to an evil spirit that has possessed her: "Didn't one need the Bible and Jesus to cast out evil spirits?" (p. 49)

She keeps her faith hidden at first, though, fearing ridicule from her husband, and even lies to her sister-in-law when asked about it, telling the young girl that Christians don't marry "Gentiles."[8] However, when Christianity starts gaining in popularity due to a charismatic teacher at school, her husband Hyŏngsŏn begins to take an interest in the new religion. She opens up to him and proudly shows him her Bible, hymnal, and holy icons. Yet when he suggests that they go to church together, she refuses: "Can I go just because I want to? A young woman must be careful of the company she keeps, after all. … I'll go wearing a hooded coat after I have a baby" (p. 169). Pobu's reaction makes it clear that, while Christianity is a new religion associated with the enlightened West, it is still very much subject to traditional Korean mores. This is also exemplified in the design of the church itself, which has a central pulpit area and two wings running off at a ninety-degree angle from each other, so that both men and women can see the preacher but neither wing can see the other. In this way, the Confucian separation of men and women is maintained.

The charismatic teacher at the boys' school is Mr. Mun, who studied in P'yŏngyang and is a devout Christian well-versed in enlightenment thought. He becomes especially close to Hyŏnggŏl, who, as the son of a concubine, experiences much of the injustice inherent in Korean society that Mr. Mun would

[8] The term translated as "Gentiles" here is "*ibangin*" in the original, which literally means "foreigner" or "outsider." Although the term is humorously misused, it indicates that Korean Christians felt that they were set apart from non-Christians, and thus they adopted the biblical idea of the distinction between Jews and Gentiles.

see wiped out. In private talks with Hyŏnggŏl, he denounces the ignorance and tradition and preaches a new civilization.

> Mr. Mun taught him in great detail that prejudice based on status and discrimination between legitimate and illegitimate children were the dregs of a bygone era, and he told him that there could be no such discrimination in this civilized era. He went on to teach him about the emancipation of menials, the abolition of superstition, the repudiation of the ideology of early marriage, and the improvement of lifestyle habits, and he said that it was the duty of young men to devote themselves to these things. (p. 167)

Naturally, these teachings endear Mr. Mun to Hyŏnggŏl, and the young boy becomes an eager disciple. Other boys are fascinated with the new teacher as well, not necessarily because of the new religion he preaches, but because this religion afforded him the opportunity to come into contact with "enlightened foreigners" in P'yŏngyang: "…his faith in Jesus gave him the opportunity to fraternize with a good number of Westerners, and he had read all sorts of Western books, so it was a given that the students would be wholly taken with him" (p. 165). On Sundays he gathers curious boys together to teach them about Christianity and enlightenment thought, and one day he decides to send the young men out as disciples into the town. His speech is reminiscent of the speech Jesus made to his disciples before sending them out, but with a unique Korean flavor.

> I think a better way of observing the spirit of the Sabbath would be to form evangelism teams to abolish superstition on the Lord's Day, to go to the houses of families you are close to and to flawless families, and hand out Bibles and hymnals. Using examples from our lives, explain just how much of our hard-earned money has been thrown away on shamanic rituals, charmed threads, shamanic incantations, divination, exorcisms, prayers, and other things done in the service of ghosts and demons, offer detailed comparisons with the lives of enlightened foreigners so that you may enlighten people … At the same time, tell them of the things we talk about every day, such as the improvement of our customs and practice, or the emancipation of menials, and counsel them to leave behind their dark lives and move into the world of light. (pp. 170–171)

The contrast here between backward, unenlightened Korean traditions and progressive, enlightened Western civilization is stark, but it goes beyond mere religion. It is interesting, for example, that Mr. Mun does not discuss the spiritual damage done by shamanic rituals, incantations, and divination, but instead focuses on the drain on the nation's finances. And the things that they "talk about every

day" in fact have little to do with religion and much to do with enlightenment thought. In this way, we can see that Christianity is inextricably intertwined with the enlightenment movement.

In perhaps one of the most entertaining passages in the book, Hyŏnggŏl teams up with his friend Taebong (Daebong) to evangelize the masses. Taebong, who started attending church partly because he thought it would be a good place to get a look at the town maidens, leads Hyŏnggŏl to a house he has in mind. When this house turns out to be the house of a *kisaeng*, Hyŏnggŏl is surprised, but he decides to go in anyway and practice his faith. Taebong babbles on, simply repeating things he has heard from Mr. Mun, but Hyŏnggŏl realizes that evangelism is not as easy as it might have sounded at first. When the young men encourage her to believe in Jesus, the *kisaeng*, Puyong (Buyong), replies that she might be able to believe in Jesus, but she would never be able to go to church: "Let's say that I was foolish enough to go to church. From that day forward, not a single decent woman would come" (p. 176). She is right, of course; for all Mr. Mun's talk of doing away with discrimination, discrimination is still very much a fact of life, even within the Christian church. How could a church that doesn't even let men and women sit together ever accept a lowly *kisaeng*?

Perhaps because of his own experience with discrimination, Hyŏnggŏl's sympathy for Puyong and his understanding of Christianity are far deeper than Taebong's superficial interest. His reply to her shows his recognition of the reality of the society in which they live and seeks not a compromise, but a true faith that can transcend the limitations of that society.

> I believe that whether or not one goes to church is not nearly as important as reading the Bible and the hymnal, coming to understand the true spirit of Christianity, and then instilling that spirit into our everyday lives. … I do not know if it is proper to lose a million false believers to gain one true soul, and though that, in fact, may be right, in the world in which we live, it may create difficulties. … We are all the same, and those born fortunate become yangban, while those born unfortunate become commoners…. (p. 177)

While Hyŏnggŏl's interpretation of true faith is impressive, their evangelism does not have the intended effect. Instead, Puyong, touched by Hyŏnggŏl's compassion and understanding, develops feelings for the young man, and the two enter into a relationship that lasts until the end of the story. Tellingly, neither of them ever mentions Christianity again. It is clear from the prominence of Christianity in the book (the entire eleventh chapter deals with the religion and the affect it has on the town) that Kim Namch'ŏn felt it played an important role in Korean society at

the time, but in the end it seems to be little more than just another thread in the new civilization that is contrasted with the old traditions. When the immature faith of the young men comes up against reality, it is the faith that is pushed aside.

THE OLD BELIEFS OF SHAMANISM AND SUPERSTITION

The "things done in the service of ghosts and demons" and other aspects of the "dark lives" of the people that Mr. Mun rails against are a very real part of the world depicted by Kim Namch'ŏn. Perhaps the best example of this is Lady Yun—Pak Sŏnggwŏn's concubine and Hyŏnggŏl's mother—and her family. Her own parents are very superstitious, and when both Lady Yun's husband and her brother die they try all sorts of rituals in an attempt to ward off the ill fortune that has befallen them. "Some said that some old spirit or the spirit of a deceased king had been awakened, so they slaughtered a large pig, held a shamanic ritual, and even faithfully carried the newly spun thread on the first day of the rabbit in the new year to ward off ill fortune, but the household never recovered and things just gradually grew worse" (p. 144). Years later, Pak Sŏnggwŏn comes by to collect an old debt, and when he abandons decorum and openly demands that the debt be repaid, Lady Yun's father is shocked senseless (the book is vague about his precise medical condition, but it appears to be a stroke). Rather than seek a rational explanation, Lady Yun's mother explains the situation with reference to fate and her superstitions.

> This was all his fate and his destiny. The misfortune that has plagued this house for years seems to have finally run its course. I don't know if we buried our ancestors in the wrong place or if we are paying for the sins of a past life, but this is too harsh a disaster. … They say the god of the house has been awakened, the spirits of the earth have been awakened, the spirit of a lord grows angry, or the spirit of King Suro is furious, that some spirit or another is taking revenge on us, and so we have held shamanic rituals and carried the charmed string, and, for the past few years, the sound of the double-headed drum has not stopped, but every day we spend on this earth is doomed, and things just get worse, and now this disaster happens. (pp. 154–155)

While Lady Yun's mother believes that they have done everything they possibly could to avert tragedy, they have in fact done absolutely nothing that might help them out of their situation. She fails to draw the connection between the no doubt tremendous amount of money spent on all those rituals over the years—shamanic rituals were, and remain today, very expensive undertakings—and the

fact that their family is unable to repay a debt. Ironically, it is possible that *not* holding those rituals might have actually prevented her husband's death.

After her father's death, Pak Sŏnggwŏn offers to take Lady Yun—a widow and thus no longer marriageable—as his concubine. She is unaware that her new husband was the cause of her father's death, and she is instead grateful for the comfortable life that Pak Sŏnggwŏn can provide. But she has inherited her mother's superstitions, and she attributes her good fortune to the high spirits.

> At long last, she was able to look on her future with a mind at ease, and the more at ease she was, the more grateful she was for the blessings of the high spirits, so she began to serve all manner of ghosts and spirits, as she had so often seen her parents do at home since her youth. Behind the women's quarters she set up the straw shrine, by the front gate she hung a portrait of the spirit of the gatekeeper general, on the central pillar she hung a symbol of the house god, on all sides of the small pillars she hung symbols of the earth god, in the storehouse she put a jar for the harvest god, and from the ceiling of her room she hung a likeness of the maiden spirit; year-round, she carried the charmed string and, from time to time, held various shamanic rituals, serving more demons than could be named, and she did not forget to hold Buddhist services or pray at the Temple of the Sojourning Immortal.
>
> But for reasons she could not fathom—perhaps Shakyamuni Buddha was angry with her—after she gave birth to Hyeonggeol there were no signs of life in her womb, so every year she held a ritual for Shakyamuni, and she erected an altar to the general of the seven stars and nightly drew water as a libation, but it was all to no avail. (p. 158)

The level of detail in describing the folk religious imagery here is impressive; clearly the author has a great interest in folkways in general and in superstitions in particular. Lady Yun's beliefs, of course, are an absurd mishmash of different religious traditions, just as Ch'oe Kwansul's "enlightenment thinking" is a pastiche of Western clothing styles. The mention of Shakyamuni Buddha, as if he were some shamanic deity who might grow angry at a lax worshiper, indicates a complete lack of understanding of the ghosts and spirits that she worships. Like many of the young men in the village enamored with Mr. Mun and Christianity, she simply repeats what she has learned without any deep insight into the beliefs themselves. It is all ritual with no substance.

Another good example of the belief in superstitions is the character of Ssangne, a servant in Pak Sŏnggwŏn's household and the wife of the farmhand Tuch'il (Duchil). She has an affair with Hyŏnggŏl, and late in the story Tuch'il finds out about this. Being a mere farmhand, Tuch'il cannot confront his master's

son, so he decides instead to leave and seek work elsewhere, taking his wife with him. When Ssangne learns of his plans, she visits a fortune-teller to find out whether her destiny lies with Tuch'il or Hyŏnggŏl. The fortune-teller tosses some coins in the air and, after carefully examining how they have fallen, informs Ssangne that her husband is not her destiny. She reflects on this: "It is clear that all of this is the blessing of the exalted high spirits" (p. 217).

Note that none of this takes into account Ssangne's own feelings about Tuch'il or Hyŏnggŏl. In fact, she was married to her husband against her will and despises him. She does pity him, but pity is of course not a healthy foundation for a relationship. On the other hand, she adores and admires Hyŏnggŏl, and she sees in him all that is good and noble. That her perceptions of both of the men in her life are not entirely accurate is irrelevant; she clearly wants to be with Hyŏnggŏl, but if fate determines that she is to remain with Tuch'il, she is willing to accept that. When the fortune-teller tells her that her destiny lies with Hyŏnggŏl, she is convinced that all of the very real obstacles before her will simply vanish: "I should wait beneath the tree with open mouth until the fruit ripens and falls from the branch, since this relationship has already been blessed by the high spirits, and Tuch'il will leave of his own accord, and the young master will fall into my arms like a ripened piece of fruit" (pp. 218–219). Even at the very end, when it starts to become clear that Hyŏnggŏl is not going to just fall into her arms, she clings to the belief that her destiny will come to pass: "…she still desperately believed that there would be some miracle—no, something even more extraordinary—a sudden light appearing or, as in the storybooks of old, a wizened old man appearing as if in a dream to show her the way…" (p. 241).

When we look at the two characters of Lady Yun and Ssangne, particularly with regard to their superstitious views on life, we see that they have something in common: Both characters believe that what happens to them is ultimately beyond their control. Believing that what happens in life is all the result of destiny and in the hands of the high spirits may provide some measure of comfort, but practically speaking such superstition paralyzes believers; if what happens in life is out of our control, what is the point of taking any action? This is particularly evident in Ssangne's idea that Hyŏnggŏl will simply fall into her arms without her having to do anything to bring about this desired result. Lady Yun and her parents did believe that they were acting, but their actions were completely unconnected to the problems that they faced. The inaction of characters ruled by superstition is contrasted with Pak Sŏnggwŏn's life philosophy, which is active and opportunistic.

However, Lady Yun and Ssangne have something else in common, something that they most definitely do not share with Pak Sŏnggwŏn: They are both women of relatively low social standing. Ssangne, as the commoner wife of a farmhand, is

of course far worse off, but neither character has the social status that would allow them to better themselves. So while at first it may be easy to condemn them for clinging to old superstitions that do little more than waste money and prevent action, it is worth considering that their superstitious beliefs might be the *result* of their inability to act rather than the *cause*. Although the *kisaeng* Puyong is not depicted as being particularly superstitious, her de facto rejection of Christianity is an acknowledgment of the limitations of her social status. Essentially the same thing is happening with Lady Yun and Ssangne.

Scholars have criticized Kim Namch'ŏn for failing to recognize the limitations of the new enlightenment thinking even as he attacked the old traditions (we will look at some of these criticisms in the final section), but his treatment of Christianity and shamanic superstitions seems to indicate that he recognized that lofty ideas and philosophies often did not come out on top when confronted with the cold, hard reality of Korean society. He certainly went to great lengths to contrast the old superstitions and the new thinking, and his mockery of superstition is fairly obvious, but the sympathetic light in which he paints characters like Lady Yun and Ssangne shows that he did not blame the believer for the beliefs. Rather, these beliefs were an inevitable product of contemporary society.

THE REALITY OF COLONIAL RULE

For all the effort that Kim Namch'ŏn put into showing the reality of the times, there is one aspect of that reality that appears to be conspicuously missing: the colonial rule of Korea by Japan. Of course, Kim was writing at a time when overt criticism of the Japanese would have been impossible. As the Pacific War grew more intense in the late 1930s, freedoms on the Korean peninsula were restricted. 1938, the year that Kim Namch'ŏn began writing *Enlightenment*, was the year that the National Mobilization Law—the law that allowed Koreans to "volunteer" for service in the Japanese Imperial Army—was passed. Japan also cracked down on various aspects of Korean culture, including newspapers; *The Korea Central Daily* was one of the newspapers to be shut down that year. The traditional games and pastimes that play such an important role in the novel were actually forbidden by colonial authorities at the time the novel was written. So, in a sense, the simple act of setting the novel in an idealized past could be seen as an act of rebellion, albeit a passive one.

The only prominent Japanese character in the story is a man called Nakanishi, who runs a general store in town. For most of the novel, Nakanishi exists as a background character and part of the scenery of the town. But he and his general

store take center stage toward the end of the novel, when he receives a shipment of wondrous new goods as the town prepares for the Tano Festival. Most, if not all, of these goods are Western in origin: kerosene lanterns (with tins of kerosene from a company in New York), strike-anywhere matches, Western socks, taper candles, paint, parasols, cigarettes, hot cinnamon candies, and porcelain and glass bowls. The last of these stands in stark contrast to the earthenware Korean bowls the townspeople are used to, and "these smooth porcelain and glass dishes looked to them as if they would crack and shatter the moment one put kimchi or soy bean paste soup in them" (p. 181). Quite a bit of time is spent describing the kerosene lanterns as well, and it is no coincidence that these symbols of the enlightened Western civilization are described as being "bright as day" (p. 182). Echoes of Mr. Mun's admonition to his young evangelists to bring people out of the dark and into the light can be heard here. Although these new products are merely the subject of wonder at first, by the time the Tano Festival arrives they have become part of everyday life: "There was not a house without a kerosene lantern, and the young man who did not wear socks was rare. The farmer's hats made from wood shavings had sold out in a flash, and the several cases of cigarettes he had brought in flew out of the store as if on wings and landed in the pockets of people everywhere" (pp. 227–228). Given that these passages are the only direct reference to and depiction of Japanese influence, it is perhaps no surprise that Kim Namch'ŏn has been criticized for missing the point. He presents the Japanese here very literally as the conduit for bringing Western civilization into Korea, and there is little critical consciousness to be found.

If there is any criticism to be found, it is very subtle, and it comes in the chapter after the description of Nakanishi's shipment of goods. Hyŏnggŏl goes to Puyong's house to see her, but he encounters three men on their way out. Two of the men are young and drunk, and "they each wore flat caps, black Western suit jackets, and tabi boots, and their calves above their boots were wrapped tightly with strips of cloth" (p. 201). Hyŏnggŏl recognizes them as surveyors that have recently arrived in the village. The third man, an older man, staggers along behind, having just been beaten severely by the two younger men. When Hyŏnggŏl realizes that this fight took place at Puyong's house, he is infuriated. He challenges the two men and they attack him, still full of adrenaline. They prove to be no match for Hyŏnggŏl, but even after defeating them Hyŏnggŏl fears reprisal: "Hyeonggeol did not want to deal with whatever consequences there might be, so he ran off down the road. He had done nothing wrong, but he was worried that there might be a fuss if a patrolman arrived" (p. 203).

At first, the scene seems self-explanatory. The surveyors are from out of town and, full of liquor, decide to throw their weight around, cursing at the "boorish

yokels" of this provincial town. It would appear that this is a clash between big-city folk and small-town folk, a clash that is and has been as common in Korea as it is anywhere else. This is just the surface element, though. Their clothing, for one, paints a deeper picture. The flat caps they wear call to mind the enlightened motley of Ch'oe Kwansul, but the tabi boots—boots in which the big toe is separated from the other toes—are a distinctly Japanese item of clothing. More important is their occupation: surveyors. Though they may be Korean, they are tools of the Japanese colonial government, as their job is to travel around the countryside and survey the land so that it can be better administered by that government. The patrolman is another Korean who acts as a tool of the Japanese. Despite the fact that Hyŏnggŏl did nothing wrong—he was acting in self-defense, after all—he knows that this will matter little if the patrolman shows up. As a Korean going up against the colonial system, he knows that the odds are heavily against him, and he chooses flight. Although Kim Namch'ŏn offers no overt criticism of the Japanese, as all parties involved are in fact Korean, his depiction of this scene portrays at least part of the reality of life under colonial rule.

However, this is as far as Kim goes in criticizing life under colonial rule. Perhaps more telling than what he does mention is what he doesn't mention. For one, Sŏngch'ŏn is a farming village, yet there is no depiction of what life was like for the farmers at that time.[9] Early on in the story, after Hyŏngsŏn is married, Hyŏnggŏl and Taebong cut their hair at school. This is a rather momentous occasion, as boys traditionally wore their hair in long braids until they were married, at which point the hair was gathered into the topknot worn by adult men. It is hinted that Hyŏnggŏl's actions here are motivated in part by negative emotions dredged up by his brother's wedding, and after he has cut his hair he worries what his mother will think. Yet there is no mention of the Hair Cutting Edict (Tanballyŏng) of 1895, issued by King Kojong. Although the reason given for the edict was public hygiene, it was seen by Koreans as a foul plot of the Japanese to deprive them of their identity.[10] Kim Namch'ŏn does connect the cutting of the hair with enlightenment thinking in an odd myth that Taebong repeats—"They say that cutting your hair helps you do arithmetic better" (p.

---

[9] O Yangho, "Kim Namch'ŏn ŭi taeharon" (A theory on Kim Namch'ŏn's *Taeha*), *Tongsŏ munhak* 5 (1990): 166.

[10] Isabella Bird Bishop devotes an entire chapter to "The Hair-cropping Edict" in her 1897 book on Korea, where she records the outrage that the edict inspired among the Korean populace: "So strong was the popular belief that it was to Japan that Korea owed the denationalizing order, that in the many places where there were Top Knot Riots it was evidenced by overt acts of hostility to the Japanese, frequently resulting in murder." Isabella Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors: A Narrative of Travel, with an Account of the Recent Vicissitudes and Present Position of the Country* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897), 364.

78)—but there is no mention of the Japanese imperialist undertones that would have still been associated with the edict at the time the story took place.

It should be kept in mind, though, that the Hair Cutting Edict was only one of many reforms enacted by Kojong in what were known as the Kabo Reforms (*Kabo kaehyŏk*). When Mr. Mun teaches Hyŏnggŏl during their private talks, he (as seen in a passage already quoted above) rails against "prejudice based on status and discrimination between legitimate and illegitimate children," and he instructs the young boy on "the emancipation of menials" and "repudiation of the ideology of early marriage" (p. 167). While Mr. Mun is presented as having close contact with many enlightened Westerners, the social issues on which he instructs Hyŏnggŏl here were all part of the Kabo Reforms—the abolition of the class system, slavery, and early marriage. Just as enlightenment thought is intertwined with Christianity, so it is also intertwined with Japanese influence. The surveyors do indeed represent the dark side of Japanese rule, but at the same time it is through the Japanese that both Western goods and Western enlightenment thought are introduced.

CONCLUSION

Since Kim Namch'ŏn was active as a literary critic as well as a writer, we are fortunate enough to have his own words on what he attempted to achieve in *Enlightenment*. In perhaps the most straightforward statement of his goals, he said, "I sought to gain a precise understanding of the era and of history."[11] In a newspaper column entitled "Comments on Current Customs," he discussed the relationship between the observer of customs and the critic of customs: "The true observer must never forget that he was always a beautiful and strict critic. In this regard, I am an observer of customs, and at the same time I can also be their critic."[12]

The question is whether he succeeded at being both observer and critic in *Enlightenment*, and many critics feel that he did not. Yi Chaein says that Kim Namch'ŏn "was carried away by excessive realism and thus committed the error of forgetting the author's rational value judgments."[13] Cho Tongil notes that Kim "demonstrated the characteristics of a novel of manners, striving to faithfully depict [social] changes and excluding interpretation or judgment as much as possible," concluding that the author "did not attempt to comprehend the social

---

11 O Yangho, "Kim Namch'ŏn ŭi taeharon," 149.
12 Kim Namch'ŏn, "P'ungsok sip'yŏng" (Comments on current customs), *Chosŏn ilbo*, July 6, 1939.
13 Yi Chaein, *Kim Namch'ŏn munhak*, 34.

structure and took no interest in the course of history."[14] Kim Oegon judges that the author "was not able to produce results capable of supporting his claims," and that this was due to "the limitations in the author's historical consciousness."[15] In a similar vein, Kim Chonguk says, "Ultimately, [the author] merely emphasizes the historical inevitability of that which is collapsing and shows no interest in the historical limitations of that which is rising," attributing the author's failure to properly depict history and offer a vision for the future to the fact that he "turned [his] critical gaze from the possibility that things modern could, on the other hand, also appear as imperialist aggression."[16] Kim Namch'ŏn himself later admitted that he fell short of his goals, citing the "formulaic arrangement of customs," by which he meant that he failed to draw a deep, fundamental connection between the customs and the lives of his characters.[17]

These criticisms are certainly valid in substance, and it is difficult to argue that Kim Namch'ŏn achieved a proper historical consciousness or successfully criticized Japanese imperial aggression, but *Enlightenment* is not a book that takes a simplistic view of the times. In an era when imperial aggression and enlightened reform were sometimes inseparable, a simple denunciation of the Japanese Empire would not have been a true reflection of contemporary society (and, of course, never pass the Japanese censors). It is not just in his handling of Japanese influence that Kim Namch'ŏn is nuanced; the clash of cultures is never presented as being one-sided. While Pak Rigyun and his brother are presented in a very unflattering light, and Pak Sŏnggwŏn and his capitalist ways are clearly the victors in this clash of old guard and new, it is hard to say that Pak Sŏnggwŏn is a sympathetic character. When the author tells how Pak Sŏnggwŏn made his fortune, it is made clear that the man has no conscience to speak of. He is the direct cause of the death of Lady Yun's father, and even then he seizes the opportunity to gain himself a concubine. There are times, when he is presented as the point-of-view character, that the reader can identify with him, but overall he is not a sympathetic character. Also, as discussed above, neither the old guard nor the new guard are completely free of each other: Pak Sŏnggwŏn remains obsessed with status, and Pak Rigyun and his brother conform to the capitalist system even as they despise it.

---

[14] Cho Tongil, *Han'guk munhak t'ongsa* (A complete history of Korean literature), 4th ed., vol. 5 (Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa, 2005), 469.

[15] Kim Oegon, "*Taeha* wa 'Tongmaek' e nat'anan kaehwa sasang kwa kaehwa p'unggyŏng" (Enlightenment thought and enlightenment scenery in *Taeha* and 'Tongmaek'), in *Kim Namch'ŏn*, ed. Yi Sanggap (Seoul: Saemi, 1995), 271–272.

[16] Kim Chonguk, ibid., 121.

[17] Ch'ae Hosŏk, *Han'guk kŭndae munhak*, 365–366.

Each ideology—traditional values and enlightenment values—has its own distorted version. Traditional values have the shamanism and superstition that on the one hand act as an incapacitant, preventing any action, but on the other hand are simply a reflection of the flawed social structure. Enlightenment values have Ch'oe Kwansul's patchwork of symbols with no real substance. Even Mr. Mun, who is held up as a paragon of an enlightened Christian, doesn't achieve anything; for all his preaching to Hyŏnggŏl about abolishing inequality and social ills, nothing actually changes. It is true that this is due in part to the fact that *Enlightenment* was never intended to be a complete and independent story. The novel ends with Hyŏnggŏl deciding to seek Mr. Mun's advice and run away from home, and perhaps in the intended second part a victor in the clash of cultures may have been declared. But running away from home is not an action that generally leads to the resolution of conflict—it is an act of avoiding conflict. And the novel as we have it does not present us with conflicts that are easily resolved.

Ultimately, *Enlightenment* presents us with a snapshot that does leave much out of frame but which captures a crucial time in Korea's modern history. Just like the monument pavilion outside Visiting Immortal Gate, the old order is slowly but inexorably collapsing, yet at the same time it is unclear what shape the new order will take. Capitalism seems to have the upper hand, but it also seems to be without a soul. Christianity offers freedom from the paralyzing bonds of superstition, but it is still subject to the bonds of social conventions itself. Kim Namch'ŏn may have failed to connect modernity with imperial aggression, but to say that he had no interest in criticizing the new civilization is an oversimplification. He realized that the clash of cultures was not a matter of black and white, and that the future was still an uncertain shade of gray.

Submitted: July 27, 2016
Sent for revision: October 19, 2016
Accepted: November 29, 2016

CHARLES LA SHURE (clashure@gmail.com) *is an assistant professor in the Department of Korean Language and Literature, Seoul National University, Korea.*

REFERENCES

Bishop, Isabella Bird. *Korea and Her Neighbors: A Narrative of Travel, with an Account of the Recent Vicissitudes and Present Position of the Country*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897.

Ch'ae Hosŏk. *Han'guk kŭndae munhak kwa kyemong ŭi sŏsa* (Korean modern literature and the narrative of the enlightenment). Seoul: Somyŏng, 1999.

Cho Tongil. *Han'guk munhak t'ongsa* (A complete history of Korean literature). 4th edition. Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa, 2005.

Kim Chaenam. *Kim Namch'ŏn minjok munhak ŭl wihan sam kwa chakp'um* (Kim Namch'ŏn: His life and works for a national literature). Seoul: Kŏn'guk taehak ch'ulp'ansa, 1994.

Kim Chonguk. "Kim Namch'ŏn ŭi *Taeha* e nat'anan kaehwa p'unggyŏng" (Scenes from the enlightenment in Kim Namch'ŏn's *Taeha*). *Kugŏ kungmunhak* 147 (2007): 103–123.

Kim Namch'ŏn. "P'ungsok sip'yŏng" (Comments on current customs). *Chosŏn ilbo* (July 6, 1939).

Kim Namch'ŏn. *Taeha*. Seoul: Sinwŏn munhwasa, 2005. Translated by Charles La Shure as *Scenes from the Enlightenment* (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2014).

Kim Oegon. "*Taeha* wa 'Tongmaek' e nat'anan kaehwa sasang kwa kaehwa p'unggyŏng" (Enlightenment thought and enlightenment scenery in *Taeha* and 'Tongmaek'). In *Kim Namch'ŏn*. Edited by Yi Sanggap. Seoul: Saemi, 1995.

Yi Chinhyŏng. *1930-yŏndae huban singminji Chosŏn ŭi sosŏl iron* (Theories of the novel in late 1930s colonial Korea). Seoul: Somyŏng, 2013.

O Yangho. "Kim Namch'ŏn ŭi *Taeha* ron" (A theory on Kim Namch'ŏn's *Taeha*). *Tongsŏ munhak* 5 (1990): 144–167.

Yi Chaein. *Kim Namch'ŏn munhak* (The literature of Kim Namch'ŏn). Seoul: Munhak ak'ademi, 1996.