

KIM SARYANG'S *TEN THOUSAND LI*
OF A DULL-WITTED HORSE: REMEMBERING
THE ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE

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Abstract

Kim Saryang (real name: Kim Sich'ang, 1914–1950) was among the Korean authors of the 1930s and 1940s who wrote frequently on the issues related to the Korean ethno-national identity, both in Korean and in Japanese. In May 1945, when dispatched on a lecture tour to the Japanese army units stationed in North China, he used this opportunity to escape and join the Chinese Communist Eighth Route Army guerrillas in the Taihang Mountains. His China diary, *Ten Thousand Li of a Dull-Witted Horse* (*Nomamalli*, serialized in Seoul-based journal *Minsŏng* in 1946–47 and published in book form in Pyongyang in 1947), was written in his new status as a North Korean writer; the book is the main object of analysis in this article. The diary was an attempt to systemize the memories of the joint Sino-Korean anti-Japanese struggle, with the continuous process of building new, Socialist subjectivities in Communist-controlled parts of China and Korea. The article deals with the ways in which the new, post-colonial and Socialist Korean identity-in-making are both reflected in Kim's rendering of his battlefield observations and remembrances and further given form through the act of writing on the armed anti-Japanese resistance—in broad meaning, the foundational background of what further was to become North Korean history. At the same time, the article emphasises the role Socialist international ideology played in the articulation of Kim's narrative.

Key words: Kim Saryang, *Nomamalli*, North Korea, post-colonial, Chinese Communist Party, Taihang Mountains

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Introduction: Background of the Escape

Kim Saryang (real name: Kim Sich'ang, 1914–1950) was among the Korean authors of the 1930s and 1940s who wrote frequently on the issues related to the Korean ethno-national identity from the perspective of Korean diasporas in multi-ethnic societies. Many of his writings were based on his own first-hand impressions and observations prior to the Pacific War during his own eight years-long stint in Japan where he studied and eventually launched his literary career as a Japanese-language writer. He provides us with an interesting example of resistance against 'imperialisation', which—while being undoubtedly national in the sense of the author's embeddedness in the Korean ethno-cultural *milieu*—was not simply nationalistic ideologically. Educated at Saga High School (1933–1935)¹ and Tokyo Imperial University (1935–1939, at the postgraduate school until 1941),² equally proficient in Korean and Japanese and able to publish his Japanese pieces in the major literary journals in Japan proper, Kim still forcefully argued against full abandonment of the Korean language in *belles-lettres*, maintaining that an Korean ethnic community needed the sentimental side of its life to be amply expressed in the only language its majority could properly understand.³ Writing on Korea in Japanese could easily end up exoticising Japan's colony in accordance with the colonisers' tastes. Kim Saryang, however, made it clear to his Japanese readers that, even while switching to the empire's language, he still remained a Korean writer, an heir to the Korean literary tradition, and a bearer of Korea's particular sentiments; his language switching was, in his own words, motivated by his desire to contribute to the horizontal, humanism-empowered exchanges across the division line separating the colonial metropole and the colony.⁴

A creative author of the persuasions that can be characterised as a combination of a general leftist—that is, internationalist—worldview with an acute sense of belonging to a vulnerable minority of colonial provenance, Kim Saryang, his Japanese proficiency and literary fame in Japan proper notwithstanding, had no

intentions to spend the war-time as a supporter of the Japanese Imperial Army. When sent on a lecture tour to the Japanese army units stationed in North China, he used the opportunity this trip provided in order to escape and join the Chinese Communist Eighth Route Army guerrillas in the Taihang Mountains in May 1945.⁵ After spending several months there, he returned to now liberated Korea, and spent some months in Seoul in late 1945 before returning to his native city of Pyongyang in early 1946, where he soon became a prominent member of North Korea's nascent literary establishment. His China diary, *Ten Thousand Li of a Dull-Witted Horse* (*Nomamalli*), was serialized in the Seoul-based journal *Minsŏng* in 1946–47 and published in book form in Pyongyang in 1947.⁶ It cemented Kim Saryang in his new status as a North Korean writer. In this article I will attempt to demonstrate how a new, revolutionary formula of Korean-ness was being created in Kim's diary, against the background of a complex international confrontation in which Korea's socialist revolutionaries were allied to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)—itself a temporary ally of its bitter nationalist rival, the Guomindang, and, by extension, of the Western Allies and the USSR in their fight against the fascist states, imperial Japan included. I will emphasise the ways in which the memories of the anti-colonial struggle and Sino-Korean anti-Japanese alliance—in reality, often self-contradictory, their articulation being dependent on the post-Liberation political developments—were used as building blocks for the nation-building task by Kim Saryang in his new capacity as a founding father of North Korean literature.

According to his diary, Kim Saryang started his successful defection to the Communist Chinese forces by arriving in Beijing (then Beiping) on May 9, 1945—quite accidentally on the same day when, unbeknownst to Kim or his travel companions, the fighting in Europe was ended by the Allies' victory. This news was kept secret from the colonial Korean public, although Kim, apparently better informed due to his contacts with Korea's underground resistance—which he mentions in the diary—was in a position to understand that Japan's perspectives were hardly bright.⁷ To be able to come to China, Kim accepted an offer to participate in a 'solacing tour' to the Korean students drafted into Japan's battle lines in northern China by the colonial authorities. The tour was undertaken under the auspices of the Korean League for Total National Manpower (*Chōsen Kokumin Sōryoku Renmei*), a notorious wartime collaborationist group. Events of this kind, however, were the only opportunity to leave wartime colonised Korea, where movements across the border were strictly regimented.⁸

Once in Beijing, Kim Saryang was approached by Yi Yōngsŏn. Yi was a moderate leftist activist and had worked as a liaison between Yō Unhyōng's (1886–1947) inclusive League for Preparing the Establishment of the (Korean) State (*Kŏn'guk Tognmaeng*), then an underground organisation, and he also had ties to the Yan'an-based Korean Independence League (*Chosŏn Tongnip Tongmaeng*) led by such prominent Communist leaders as Ch'oe Ch'angik (1896–1957) and Kim Mujōng

(1904–1951).⁹ Yi offered Kim a passage to the Taihang Mountains area controlled by the Chinese Communist Eighth Route Army and its Korean allies, the Korean Volunteer Army (*Chosŏn Ŭiyongdae*). In May 1945, it was a policy of the Korean Volunteer Army's political leadership in the Korean Independence League to co-opt the Korean luminaries of broadly leftist—although not necessarily exactly Communist—persuasions, with the goal of engaging them in anti-Japanese resistance activities on Chinese territory. As the war against Japan was coming to its end, the Korean Independence League was interested in attracting the prominent Korean intellectuals to its side, and in anticipation of the future competition for power and influence against the right-wing nationalist Korean Provisional Government, then allied to the Guomindang's government in Chongqing. The Korean Independence League's recruitment of Kim Saryang mirrored that of another prominent Japan-educated intellectual, An Mak (1910-?), who was helped to move from Beijing to Yan'an in 1945. These actions were a part of the Left's efforts to strengthen its voice in the public space by attracting more cooperative among the established intellectuals to its side.¹⁰

The Korean Volunteer Army and the Liberated Area

In the beginning of June 1945, Kim Saryang headed to the base of the Korean Volunteer Army in Taihang Mountains. He did so by travelling through the vicinities of Xingtai (then Shunde) by the Japanese-controlled railway, accompanied by an underground operative sent from the Korean Volunteer Army's headquarters. This was an example of Korean national leftist militancy combined with trans-border liberational aspirations and transnational revolutionary activism. As Kim Saryang mentions in his diary, the original nucleus of the KVA was created in October 1938 by the Korean National Front Alliance (*Chosŏn Minjok Chŏnsŏn Yŏnmaeng*), a coalition of mostly leftist nationalist groups led by Korean National Revolutionary Party (*Chosŏn Minjok Hyŏngmyŏngdang*, founded in 1932).¹¹ The KNRP was a relatively large (with initially ca. two thousand members) grouping of the left-wing, China-based Korean exiles; Kim Wŏnbong (1898–1958), an anarchist radical-turned-socialist, as its de facto leader. The two best-known military leaders of the Korean Volunteer Army were Pak Hyosam (1910-?) and Yi Iksŏng (1911-?). While both graduates of Guomindang officer schools, both men owed their primarily political allegiance to the Korean National Revolutionary Party. The latter was open to the collaboration with the nationalists, both Korean and Chinese in the common anti-Japanese struggle; in the first years of its existence, it was doing intelligence and propaganda work for the Guomindang army, utilising the knowledge of Japanese many of its fighters possessed, for agitation among the Japanese troops and more effective interrogation of Japanese prisoners.¹² Some of the fighters of the Korean

Volunteer Army were Chinese and Japanese—both defectors and prisoners who decided to switch sides in the war.¹³ Some of them, as we will see below, appear on the pages of Kim Saryang's diary.

By 1940–41, the Korean Volunteer Army moved to the North, into the operational areas of the Communist Eighth Route Army with which it had entered into a long-standing symbiosis. The unit that operated in Taihang Mountains was known as the Northern China Unit (*Hwabuk Chidae*) of Korean Volunteer Army; in April 1942, it was integrated in the 129th Division of the Eighth Route Army as its regular sub-unit. While the unit did participate in the actual fighting, its main duties were still propaganda and intelligence work, oriented towards Japanese troops and especially towards the ethnic Korean soldiers in their ranks. As Kim Saryang emphasised in his diary,¹⁴ Korean fighters also should organise work vis-à-vis approximately 200 thousands-strong Korean population of Northern China.¹⁵ From Kim Saryang's viewpoint, this work was central, for it was in the crucible of Korean Volunteer Army's political work with the local Korean dwellers and military resistance against the Japanese enemy that the new, modern and independent Korean statehood was being born. Kim contrasts the 'authentic' resistance and incipient nation-building activities of the Korean Volunteer Army to the 'feudal' factional squabbles inside the Korean Provisional Government subsisting off Guomindang's largesse and dreaming of 'receiving' Korean independence from Chiang Kai-shek or Americans.¹⁶

The Taihang Mountains base area, where the Korean Volunteer Army had its headquarters during the later stage of the war, is often mentioned as an example of the positive social changes brought by the reforms on the ground that the Communists were spearheading in the course of the war. The centre of the CCP control in 1940–45 was Zuoquan (Liaoxian) county in Hebei Province. Zuoquan was not very far from the Korean Volunteer Army headquarters under the Wuzhi Mountain where Kim Saryang arrived at the end of his arduous trek through the Taihang area. Especially in 1940–42, the area had been subjected to the devastating 'mop-up' operations by the Japanese troops, the cruelty of which was still vividly remembered in 1945. Kim Saryang therefore had ample opportunity to listen to eyewitness account of the Japanese brutalities. However, despite war, disease and famines, the Communist-led social engineering programs were showing their effectiveness. Mass campaigns for literacy training and post-time winter study aimed at both men and women greatly reduced the illiteracy and positively influenced self-consciousness of the girls who started to demand the right of choice in marriage and more venues for upward social mobility. While the majority of the CCP members in the area were men, the female Communists were strategically promoted to visible positions of responsibility. The Party supervised elections—at that point, still competitive and open to the independents—on all levels, from village to the country, striving for a balanced representation of Communists, progressives (non-Communist 'democratic forces') and neutrals in the elected organs of

power. Taxes were assessed on wealth and represented a relatively light burden for the majority of middle and poorer peasants, while the Party was keeping to the minimum the number of the cadres who were to be supported by public grain. In the climate of the ‘democratic reforms’, the landlords, their properties still not formally appropriated, were already feeling the pressure to redistribute or sell the excess land that they did not till themselves. In the eight years after 1936, the proportion of landlords in the Taihang base area in general dropped from 26 per cent to just 5 per cent, while that of peasants increased from 31 to 65 per cent.¹⁷ The positive results of war-time reforms were astonishing even the Westerners without any particular leftist sympathies—a famed US war correspondent, Jack Belden (1910–1989), who witnessed the life in the liberated areas in 1947, two years after Kim Saryang’s peregrinations there, was shocked by the fact that no soldiers were needed to guard the administrative buildings: the region was free from banditry thanks to an effective and popular government, in contrast with Guomindang-dominated areas.¹⁸ It is hardly surprising that Kim Saryang—with war-time colonial Korea as his main point of reference—found the liberated areas of China a ready-made blueprint for a qualitatively new society, valid for China as well as for Korea.

The Two Worlds in War-torn China

As seen through Kim Saryang’s eyes, China circa 1945 was a conflation of several, mutually contradictory worlds. As the giant country had been engulfed by an eight-years long conflict, large parts of it being under foreign occupation, the different worlds Kim Saryang constructed in his narrative were all of rather international kind, with different ethno-national categories mixed together in a giant spectacle of war-related depredations and corruption contrasted against the heroism of resistance.

The uglier side of war-time profiteering was represented by the luxurious hotel in Beijing where Kim Saryang stayed prior to his departure to Taihang Mountains area. The hotel was populated by assorted opium dealers, pimps, brokers making money on exchange operations with different regional currencies and money transfers, or, at best, rice traders. A rice trader, in fact, happened to be Kim’s roommate for the duration of his hotel stay. A large proportion of the hotel dwellers were resident Koreans who enriched themselves during the Japanese occupation of China and were, Kim wrote, eventually going to share the fate of the occupiers after their defeat.¹⁹

Kim Saryang’s patriotism did not stop him from revealing the more problematic sides of the resident Koreans’ society in China—most typically, war profiteering and collaboration with the hated Japanese occupiers. Recent research reveals that Kim Saryang’s impressions were not necessarily mistaken. Among ca. ten thousand resident Koreans of Tianjin (by January 1942), for example, dozens of richer traders and entrepreneurs are known to have been closely connected to the Japanese

Consulate since the later 1930s. They led the local pro-Japanese Korean organisation, *Chosŏn Inminhoe*, which had been sending Korean volunteers to the Japanese army operating in China since 1937. Even more nefariously, some of them were recruited into the Japanese espionage networks headed in occupied China by notorious general Doihara Kenji (1883–1948), who once himself was responsible for the intelligence gathering in Tianjin in the early 1930s. While the majority of Tianjin Koreans had nothing to do with all these activities, the collaborating and profiteering minority was highly visible.²⁰ Some reminiscences about this minority may be found in the records of Kim T'aejun (1905–1949), a famous Korean (and Chinese) literature scholar and concurrently Communist activist who left Korea in late November 1944 heading for Yan'an, where he was to contact the China-based Korean Communists headquartered there. In Xingcheng (Liaoning), his falsified travel permit was produced by a local Korean broker, a certain Mr. Pyŏn, an opium addict who used to eke out his living by brokering the release of petty offenders in exchange for bribes, using the connections of his son who worked for the Japanese police as interpreter.²¹ For both Kim Saryang and Kim T'aejun, the two major Korean intellectuals who experienced war-torn China of early 1945 on the Communist side, acknowledgement of some Koreans' complicity with the travesties of the world of aggression, occupation and personal opportunism obviously seemed to constitute a necessary step on the way to the national redemption and rebirth.

As Kim Saryang—who officially came to Beijing on a Japanese military propaganda assignment—was pondering his own fate, a defection to the Korean Provisional Government in Chongqing was obviously one possibility. However, the internal rivalry-ridden Provisional Government, which 'followed the (Guomindang) government as a prostitute and lived off the small money thrown to it by Chiang Kai-shek's terrorist gangs, such as Blue Shirts Society or CC Clique', was regarded by Kim Saryang as an organic part of war-time corruption and profiteering rather than an alternative to it.²² The alternative, Kim wrote, was 'the sun rising over the (Communist-managed) Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region where [the revolutionaries] opposed Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorship, resisted his policy of fomenting a civil war, fought against the enemy under Revolution's flag, organised the people's government and saved the masses from the calamities'. As 'Korean patriots' constituted a part of this epochal struggle, Kim hoped to join them, 'observe the life of the Chinese peasants, the conditions of the army and the construction of the new democratic culture, in order to contribute later to the state foundation' back in Korea.²³ Notably, neither 'Communism' nor 'Socialism' were so far an explicit part of Kim's project of learning CCP's experiences in the world of the base areas: 'new democracy' as proclaimed by Mao Zedong and other CCP leaders during the last war-time years was the task of the day. It was the observations over the 'new democracy' experiences in the Taihang base areas that constitute the bulk of Kim's diary.

'New democracy' implied that the grassroots market exchanges would continue undisturbed—even protected—for the time being. In fact, peasants' markets were among the first things Kim Saryang took notice of in the liberated areas. A variety of tobacco products, soap, matches, female accessories and writing brushes, together with grain, millet, and different local fruits (apricots, melons, watermelons etc.) were all in abundant supply already at the first village market he observed on having entered the liberated zone. The prices were on average ca. one-third of what one had to pay in the adjacent occupied areas. As Kim noticed, in a matter-of-fact manner, the economic policies of the Communist government of the liberated areas were in principle autarkic: the CCP wished the liberated areas to produce most of what they consumed. Still, a considerable amount of smuggling took place, and Kim himself could spot the toothbrushes or pens produced in the Japanese-controlled areas, on the marketplace in the first Communist-controlled village he visited. These articles, however, were all extremely expensively priced.²⁴

A difference which Kim Saryang took notice of very quickly, was the absence of soothsayers—'a usual sight in the Chinese marketplaces', as Kim put it—in the market of a Communist-controlled village. Instead, the anti-Guomindang and anti-Japanese placards were highly visible, together with short-haired female Communist troops who were conducting a non-stop, high-pitch agitation-and-propaganda campaign 'on Eighth-Route Army, Mao Zedong and Zhu De'.²⁵ The age-old institution of the town market was employed now to serve new and different politics. In a small town where Kim stayed for a day on his way towards the Korean Volunteer Army headquarters, even a bookshop—obviously, a privately-run one—was in business. However, the highlights there were the Yan'an-produced Chinese translation of Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* (the first edition was published in Russian in 1926, then the book was re-edited and re-published several times; Chinese translation was first published in the USSR²⁶ and then a different translation was printed in Yan'an) as well as Mao's *On New Democracy* (1940) and Mao's newly-printed report to the Seventh National Congress of the CCP, *On Coalition Government* (April 24, 1945).²⁷ Kim Saryang quickly purchased the works by Stalin and Mao, as well as 'some other booklets produced by the CCP' and distributed through the private booksellers.²⁸

The spirit of 'new democracy' was succinctly formulated in the slogans on the 'Ten Main Policies of the CCP', which Kim spotted while entering the town. The 'ten policies' centred on the 'struggle against the enemy', as well as the promise 'to simplify the administration and concentrate on the troops.' The politics were to be dominated by the united front, which included Communists, independents and Guomindang—despite all the anti-Guomindang propaganda Kim Saryang was a witness to, the official wartime policies of Communist-Nationalist unity in struggle were formally in place for the time being. Officials (*ganbu*) were to be subject to controls and checks, while economically, the socialist slogans were substituted by the

tenancy payment reduction to the 25 per cent of the harvest and interest rate reduction to ten per cent.²⁹ Interestingly, Kim T'aejun also spotted a description of the same 'ten policies' on a village wall while on his road to Yan'an, and explained to his readers that the land reform was to be suspended for the duration of the anti-Japanese war of resistance, tenancy and interest rate reductions coming as its temporary substitutes.³⁰

The Shadow of the Sunshine?

Given that in the late 1930s–early 40s, the normal interest rate in the Korean countryside was ca. 20 per cent while tenancy payments averaged 50–60 per cent, Kim Saryang had indeed good reasons to regard 'new democracy' policies in China's liberated areas as a usable policy reference for post-Liberation Korea.³¹ The only reference to the radical politics of any sort in the 'ten policies' slogan were the 'three rectifications'—which, as Kim assiduously noted, referred to the 'movement for the rectification of literature, study and party work that began with February 1942 report by Chairman Mao and was fiercely conducted throughout the whole country and whole army changing thought and the style of work.'³² Most likely, this brief notice by Kim Saryang constitutes one of the earliest mentions of the ill-famed Yan'an 'thought rectification (*zhengfeng*) movement' (1942–44)—which implied the imposition of one-size-suits-all Maoist orthodoxy onto the party—in the Korean literature inside Korea.³³

To which degree was Kim Saryang aware of the implications of Yan'an 'rectifications' that forebode the eventual tightening of the political regime after the ultimate demise of the 'new democratic' age in the early 1950s? In the diary, he mentions a talk with a couple of female CCP agitators about the present state of affairs in Chinese literature, and confidently relays to his readers that since Mao's *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art* (May 1942) were published, 'the position of the writers became more concrete (...) while their activities are rapidly developing in a more precise direction'.³⁴ However, as the diary reveals to us, one of the few masterpieces of China's modern literature that Kim actually read—and which he mentioned in his dialogue with the female agitators—was *Yiwaiji* (The Unexpected Collection, 1934)³⁵ produced by Ding Ling (1904–86), China's premier progressive female writer, on the basis of her experiences in Guomindang's custody.³⁶ Did he know that his favourite Chinese writer had been among these who were explicitly targeted by the Yan'an 'rectification' campaign?³⁷ While Kim was certainly in no position to openly contradict Mao Zedong in his account, he chooses not to elaborate on his vision of an artist as a 'cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine' (*Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*) either.³⁸ Perhaps it constituted a hidden form of resistance.

Instead, it is the popular organisation at the grassroots level that Kim Saryang focuses primarily on. One phenomenon that he witnesses everywhere throughout

the whole liberated areas he traverses, is the omnipresence of *minbing* (Kor. *minbyŏng*)³⁹—the peasant militias under the overall control of the CCP authorities, but organized with a high degree of voluntary participation ‘from below’, as guarding the villages from the rampaging Japanese or warlord troops, or bandits, was indeed an urgent task. Quoting an official CCP report, Kim Saryang mentioned that the number of local militia members in all the liberated areas totalled almost two million, two hundred thousand.⁴⁰ While he was in no position to check these figures independently, he could himself witness the armed local peasants at every corner in the villages he and his co-travellers went through. *Minbing* were checking the documents of Kim and his travel companions;⁴¹ they were also guarding Kim and his comrades through the countryside roads in heavily mined areas making sure that they safely arrive to the next village.⁴² Indeed, a good organisation of village self-defence and order maintenance witnessed by Kim Saryang could have been the key to the outsiders’ testimonies on the relative safety of travel in the Communist-dominated areas mentioned above. Helping to organise the villagers was one task of the CCP leaders in the liberated areas; enlightening them was yet another one. In fact, Kim Saryang mentions that the greatly increased availability of the primary education was one of the most noticeable traces of the peasant life in Communist-controlled Taihang Mountains region.⁴³ Still, the literacy was far from universal. As Kim remarked, the main method of the political education he himself witnessed were oral speeches in front of the peasant public, as well as theatrical performances often utilising the Hebei region’s tradition of *pingju* opera. ‘Korean comrades,’ multilingual and keen to build bridges with the local Chinese population, were often employed in such propaganda operations delivering songs and theatrical performances in Chinese on the basis of their own unique anti-Japanese resistance experience.⁴⁴

Kim Saryang’s fluency in Chinese was limited mostly to reading—throughout the diary, he confesses that he lacked the ability to understand the local dialect of spoken Chinese. His sojourn in the liberated areas did not exceed a couple of months, which he mostly spent in the company of the Korean Volunteer Army activists rather than locals. Pyongyang in the year 1947—when Kim’s diary was published there—was not exactly the most convenient place to criticise Maoist practices, even if one wished to do so. After all, Kim Il Sung (Kim Il-sŏng, 1912–1994), the foremost figure among the local leadership of the Soviet-controlled Northern Korea already by 1947, had been a Chinese Communist Party member while fighting the Japanese as a Manchurian guerrilla in the 1930s.⁴⁵ Kim Saryang met Kim Il Sung soon after his return to Pyongyang in February 1946, and keenly needed Kim Il Sung’s political protection in his new quality as one of North Korea’s most prominent authors. Moreover, the author’s social background (a scion of a family of wealthy industrialists able to receive prestigious Japanese education) could potentially expose him to hostile attacks by his competitors in the literary world.⁴⁶ Some evidence exists that by the

end of the 1940s, Kim Saryang's real—as opposed to declarative—appraisal of Kim Il Sung was no longer as salutary as it had been during the first post-Liberation years. Kim Hakch'öl (1916–2001), a Taihang Mountains guerrilla-turned-Chinese-Korean writer, whilst living in Pyongyang before the Korean War, befriended Kim Saryang and developed a rather critical assessment of Kim Il Sung's character and abilities by the end of the 1940s, mentions in his memoirs that Kim Saryang completely shared his views. He adds, however, that neither he nor his friend Kim Saryang had any doubts about the desirability of the socialist project of Chinese or Soviet kind in principle.⁴⁷ At this stage Kim Saryang tended to perceive his writing activities as first and foremost a contribution to the cause of socialist nation building.⁴⁸ Therefore his narrative of the CCP's organisational and educational work in the liberated areas as an essentially 'democratic' affair, conducted in the best interests of the local if not by their own independent volition, cannot be simply taken at the face value. There was an obvious element of political propaganda in it. Indeed, the contemporary research in the history of the liberated areas demonstrate that the CCP labour mobilisations or attempts at devising cooperative enterprises at the village level could sometimes be intrusive and quite coercive;⁴⁹ in some places in Taihang area they could, in fact, end up in violent clashes with the local religious groups. Still, while Kim Saryang's account obviously glosses over the top-down aspects of the CCP organisational and political work in the areas it dominated, his eyewitness accounts of the popular enthusiasm for the 'new democratic' system instituted by the CCP at the grassroots level, are nevertheless not to be ignored. In any case, they help the researchers to understand what aspects of CCP's 'new democratic' political practices could be seen by Korea's left-of-the-centre intellectuals as an important reference for Korea's own state-building after the long-awaited Liberation.

Internationalist National Identity—Forged in the Battles

The diary, while geographically limited to Kim Saryang's experiences in China, deals at the same time with a highly internationalised battlefield. Chinese Communist troops, officially a part of US-allied 'United Front' coalition with the Nationalist government of republican China, battled the Japanese army with Koreans to be found on the both sides of the frontline. The international cauldron of the anti-Japanese resistance, soon to provide the ground for the establishment of both the People's Republic of China and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), was the place where contemporary national identities, both Chinese and Korean, were being formed. In Kim Saryang's account, the new Korean identity-in-making is being both reflected in Kim's battlefield observations and further pro-actively given form through the act of writing on the armed anti-Japanese resistance—in broad meaning, the sacred formative background of what was further to become the North

Korean history. The new Korean identity Kim was observing in its infancy and also simultaneously attempting to help to shape, was concurrently internationalist and deeply national. Koreans fought Japanese in China as a part of their alliance with Chinese (the CCP)—and, despite the obvious asymmetry of the strength in such an alliance, Kim Saryang makes a point of defining Korean fighters as equal allies of their Chinese comrades, rather than CCP's foreign dependants.

He makes a point about Korean fighters' contribution by writing in great detail about the engagement near Hujiazhuang (Hebei Province) on 11–12 December, 1941, when 29 fighters of the Northern China Unit struggled valiantly against more than 300 Japanese (and puppet Chinese) soldiers killing or wounding almost half of their opponents in the process. The engagement took place after the Korean unit opened a 'people's meeting' in a Chinese village conducting the propagandist work there on CCP's behalf, and symbolised the dedication of Koreans to their joint cause with the Chinese comrades, as well as the Korean Communists' willingness to sacrifice themselves in the common fight.⁵⁰ And, of course, Kim Il Sung and his fighters' contribution to the great anti-imperialist cause was the very symbol of Koreans' ethno-national dignity as a party to the international anti-Japanese alliance. Kim Saryang registers his 'joy and pride' when a Chinese Eighth Route Army officer asked him about the current whereabouts of 'general Kim'—that is, Kim Il Sung—with whose guerrillas he used to fight side by side in Manchuria in the early 1930s. Kim Saryang confesses that, prior to this encounter, he knew little about 'legendary general (...), an eagle flying high in the sky while battling in the mountains and a tiger when it comes to a fight in a forest'—except for his name, 'which all Koreans knew.' So, he 'felt happy' while listening to a Chinese Communist officers' tales about Kim Il Sung's 'arduous patriotic struggle, great sagacity and superhuman bravery.'⁵¹ While the episodes of the diary where Kim Il Sung is mentioned are narrated in a clearly propagandist tone (and, indeed, we have no ways of verifying whether the Chinese admirer of Kim Il Sung was real or fictitious personage), one thing is obvious: Kim Saryang emphasises Kim Il Sung and his guerrilla's unit in the anti-Japanese resistance as a guarantee of Korea's proud and dignified place in the anti-Japanese alliance with the Chinese—and, further, Soviet—comrades. On the battlefields of 1930–early 40s China, a new Korean identity, simultaneously accentuating the equal participation in the worldwide anti-imperialist struggles and Korean ethno-national (*minjok*) patriotism, was being forged.

Where was the Sun?

Given the circumstances under which the diary was published, it comes as a little surprise that Kim Saryang—at least, on the surface—puts the de facto supreme local leader of Soviet-occupied northern part of Korea and his political patron,

Kim Il Sung, into the very centre of this new Korean identity formation. However Kim Saryang's personal attitude vis-à-vis Kim Il Sung could be by the end of the 1940s—and, as Kim Hakch'öl's memoirs (mentioned above) indicate, it could be in reality much more critical than it could look on the surface—Kim Il Sung was the very personalisation of the socialist project for Korea and had to be given the honoured place at the very top of the symbolic hierarchy of leadership. Indeed, Kim Saryang uses an extremely telling metaphor in the fragment of his diary dealing with the overall history of anti-Japanese Korean resistance in China, calling Kim Il Sung's guerrilla unit 'the Sun', around which 'the Solar system' of diverse Korean resistance groups in exile has been coalescing.⁵² This particular fragment, however, stands in sharp stylistic contrast with the rest of the book. It employs a formal, dry and highly didactic style of a historic narration, while generally, Kim Saryang's diary is written in rich, colourful, sometimes almost colloquial language peppered with folksy Pyongyang dialect words and expressions. The fragment gives a strong impression of a later—perhaps editorial—addition, while the natural culmination of the diary narrative is the scene in the headquarters of the Korean Volunteer Army, which Kim Saryang reaches at the end of his journey through the liberated areas in the Taihang Mountains. There comes what Kim Saryang himself calls 'the most unforgettable day in my life': in the club room nearby the office of the headquarters, he sees Korea's flag standing side by side with the flag of the Chinese Communists, talks to Yi Iksŏng and other military and political leaders of the Korean Volunteer Army and listens to their plan of militarily liberating Korea 'when the right moment comes'—that is, when the triumph of their Chinese or Soviet allies allows them to 'cross the Yalu River at last together with the forces of General (Kim Il Sung)'.⁵³ In a word, Kim Saryang witnesses the Korean nation-making at its incipience—the Korean Volunteer Army, enriched by the experience of 'new democracy' in the Chinese liberated areas, was to become a nucleus of the new, proud, 'democratic' and simultaneously internationalist Korean nation, which was to take its rightful place in the sun, side by side with the USSR and 'new China.' Such a vision of the new Korean-ness—being forged in the Korean Volunteer Army's struggles in Hebei and Shaanxi, in the crucible of propaganda and military work undertaken in a close alliance with the Chinese comrades—was still acceptable in Pyongyang when Kim's diary was first published there in 1947. It became much less acceptable after some of Kim Saryang's interlocutors—including such prominent political leaders of the Korean Volunteer Army as Kim Ch'angman (1907–66) or Sŏ Hŭi (1916–93) whom Kim Saryang mentions by their names⁵⁴—were purged from power by Kim Il Sung's own faction in the mid-1950s–60s.⁵⁵ It is hardly surprising that Kim Saryang's diary was not republished in North Korea until 1987, when the purges against the majority of the former leaders of the Korean Volunteer Army ('Yan'an faction') long became history.⁵⁶

Japanese Prisoners of War and the Role Reversal

As might be expected, the main negative Other against whom the new Korean identity is to be formed was imperial Japan—including even the rank-and-file Japanese ‘masses’ in the military uniforms as long as they were still not ‘re-educated’ into acquiring ‘class consciousness’ needed to liberate themselves from the malaise of the ‘imperialist ideology.’ A number of Korean voices in the diary testify on the discrimination, abuse and beatings they habitually suffered in the hands of the Japanese—both army officers, administrators and Japanese subalterns all included.⁵⁷ It looks as if this conceptualisation of Japanese as racist abusers draws heavily on Kim Saryang’s own unpleasant experiences from his stay in Japan. However, the diary concomitantly emphasises that Korea’s liberation through internationalist armed struggle implies the possibility of an essential shift of roles. The diary includes a chapter on a Japanese POW camp Kim visited together with his Chinese hosts. In a sort of psychological compensation for the discrimination he experienced in his preceding life in imperial Japan, Kim vividly describes the obsequiousness of the Japanese prisoners, ‘wishing to survive despite all their samurai ideas’ and thus sycophantically currying favor with their Chinese guards. He himself, a Korean speaking fluent Japanese, was treated ‘as the goddess Amaterasu’ by the former colonisers, now hoping that the former Tokyo student would help them to survive and return home. The roles are completely reversed now. The supposedly ‘superior’ Japanese, notorious for their abysmal cruelty towards Chinese prisoners, are treated kindly by the ‘inferior’ Chinese and Koreans who hope to achieve a genuine ‘homogenisation’ between themselves and ‘Japanese workers and peasants’ and ‘strengthen the democratic forces of Japan.’ The colonial underdogs, Koreans, take the new role of the teachers of proletarian internationalism in such encounters. The faux imperial internationalism is exposed for what it was and contrasted with the ‘proletarian’ combination of ‘patriotism and internationalism,’ which Kim associates with ‘the two great teachers of all the humanity, Teacher Lenin and Generalissimo Stalin.’⁵⁸

In Place of Conclusion

In a word, Kim Saryang’s diary is an attempt to utilise the memories of the anti-colonial struggle in order to re-formulation Korean-ness as an ethno-national identity born in the whirlwind of emancipatory struggles—simultaneously ‘proletarian internationalist’ and deeply national. The space of these struggles, in Korea’s case, is mainly China, and the new Korean statehood, to be created by the Korean Volunteer Army fighters after the anticipated ‘liberation of fatherland’ (*choguk haebang*), was obviously expected to draw on the Chinese ‘new democracy’ experiences that moved

Kim Saryang so strongly by their combination of modern enlightenment with the avowed emphasis on ‘voluntary mobilisation of the masses’ and clever employment of market and other pre-existent institutions for the progressive purposes. Chinese and Koreans are to ally themselves against the Japanese imperialist barbarity—and in an attempt to ‘re-educate’ at least some Japanese (prisoners of war) into becoming a part of the worldwide ‘democratic camp.’ A special emphasis is being placed on the equalitarian nature of the Sino-Korean revolutionary alliance, sharply contrasted to the ethnic abuse that Koreans had to incessantly suffer in the Japanese hands. While it is hard to deny that Kim Saryang’s account retouches the actual memories of the events the author himself witnessed and gives a rather idealised picture of the circumstances he himself observed in the liberated areas of China in May–August 1945, it is important for understanding the hopes that such progressive Korean intellectuals like Kim Saryang, who chose allying themselves with the Communist cause in the final months of the war and/or immediately after the Liberation, pinned on the new fatherland, to be built in North Korea under the leadership of ‘general Kim’ and other heroes of the anti-Japanese resistance. They hardly could anticipate that, contrary to their modernist and democratic expectations, the North Korean modernity would take a regimented, disciplinarian turn as new wars—the Korean War (1950–3) and the ensuing confrontation with the Cold War enemies of China, USSR and North Korea—would dictate the agenda to the North Korean society.

Notes

1. On Kim Saryang’s days at the Saga School, see Shirakawa Yutaka, ‘Saga Kodūng Hakkyo Sijöl ūi Kim Saryang’ (Kim Saryang in the Time (of his Studies) at Saga High School) In *Kim Saryang, Chakp’um kwa Yŏn’gu* (Kim Saryang, Works and Research), edited by Kim Chaeyong and Kwak Hyŏngdŏk, 325–381 (Seoul, Yŏngnak, 2008), Vol. 1.
2. On Kim Saryang’s studies at the Tokyo Imperial University, see Kwak Hyŏngdŏk, ‘Kim Saryang ūi Tonggyŏng Cheguk Taehak Sijöl’ (Kim Saryang’s Time at the Tokyo Imperial University) in *Kim Saryang, Chakp’um kwa Yŏn’gu*, 381–411.
3. On Kim Saryang’s mode of resistance against the full-scale, forcible assimilation policies, see Kim Chaeyong, ‘Ilchemal Kim Saryang Munhak ūi Chŏhang kwa Yanggŭksŏng’ (Resistance and Ambivalence in Kim Saryang’s Literature in the End of the Japanese Colonial Rule) in *Kim Saryang, Chakp’um kwa Yŏn’gu*, 411–429.
4. See Kim Saryang’s own article in *Yomiuri Shimbun* (February 14, 1941), ‘Naichigo no bungaku’ (Literature in the Metropolitan Language), translated into Korean and published in: *Kim Saryang, Chakp’um kwa Yŏn’gu*, 263–264.
5. On Kim Saryang’s war-time resistance strategies, see Kim Chaeyong, *Hyŏmnyŏk kwa Chŏhang* (Collaboration and Resistance) (Seoul: Somyŏng, 2004), 241–261.
6. Kim Saryang, *Nomamalli* (Ten Thousand Li of a Dull-Witted Horse) (Pyongyang:

Yangśogak, 1947). This text, later re-published without significant changes in Kim Saryang, *Kim Saryang Sŏnjip* (Kim Saryang's Selected Works) (Pyongyang: Kungnip Ch'ulp'ansa, 1955), provided the basis for the post-1990s South Korean editions of *Nomamalli*, one of which (edited by Kim Chayong, Seoul: Silch'ŏn Munhaksa, 2002) I use here as the main reference.

7. For the perspective on the end of World War II in Europe from Tokyo see: Erich Paver, 'The Broken Axis—8 May 1945 in Japan,' *Japan and Germany: Two Latecomers to the World Stage, 1890–1945. Volume III*, Kudo Akira, Tajima Nobuo and Erich Paver eds. (Kent: Global Oriental, 2009), 530–550.
8. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*. Edited by Kim Chaeyong (Seoul: Silch'ŏn Munhaksa, 2002), 19–21, 315.
9. An Usik. *Kim Saryang P'yŏngjŏn* (Critical Biography of Kim Saryang). Translated by Sim Wŏnsŏp (Seoul: Munhak kwa Chisŏngsa, 2000), 362.
10. Son Yŏmhong. *Kŏndae Pukkyŏng ũi Hanin Sahoe wa Minjok Undong* (Korean Society and National Movement in Modern Beijing) (Seoul: Yŏksa Kong'gan, 2010), 344–345.
11. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 228.
12. Kang Man'gil. *Chosŏn Hyŏngmyŏng Minjoktang kwa T'ong'il Chŏnsŏn* (Korean National Revolutionary Party and the United Front) (Seoul: Yŏksa Pip'yŏngsa, 2003), 56–81, 268–279.
13. Among them was included Nosaka Sanzo. See Kim Il Sung, 'Talk with Nosaka Sanzo and his Party' 21 December 1945, *Kim Il Sung Complete Works Vol. 2 (August 1945–December 1945)* (Pyongyang: Foreign Language Publisher House 2011), 410–415.
14. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 230.
15. Han Sangdo. *Chungguk Hyŏngmyŏng sok ũi Han'guk Tongnip Undong* (Korean Independence Movement amidst China's Revolution) (Seoul: Cimmundang, 2004), 258–62.
16. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 228–9.
17. David Goodman. *Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China: the Taihang Base Area in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937–1945* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 30, 61–2, 83–100.
18. Jack Belden. *China Shakes the World* (New York: Harpers, 1949), 72.
19. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 35–9.
20. Hwang Myohŭi, 'Ch'imnyak chŏnjaeng sigi Ch'ŏnjin ũi Ch'in'il Han'in chojik yŏn'gu' (Research on the Pro-Japanese Korean Organizations in the War-time Tianjin) in *Ch'imnyak chŏnjaengi Ch'in'il Chosŏn'in tŭr ũi haewae hwaltong* (The Overseas Activities by the Pro-Japanese Koreans in the Period of the War of Aggression), edited by Kang Taemin et. al, Vol. 2, 36–70 (Seoul: Kyŏng'in Munhwasa, 2013).
21. Kim T'aejun's record of the travel to Yan'an, *Yŏn'anhaeng*, was originally serialised in quarterly *Munhak* (July 1946 to April 1947). Currently the text is also available in Kim T'aejun, *Kim T'aejun Chŏnjip* (The Complete Works of Kim T'aejun) (Seoul: Pogosa, 1998), Vol. 3, 433–67.
22. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 40.

23. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 42–3.
24. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 119.
25. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 120.
26. Iosif Stalin, *Lieningzhuyi wenti* (Problems of Leninism) (Moscow: Foreign Workers' Publishing House, 1935).
27. The first edition was published in Russian in 1926, then the book was re-edited and re-published several times; Chinese translation was first published in the USSR and then a different translation was printed in Yan'an. Iosif Stalin. *Guan yu Liening zhu yi di wen ti* (On the Problems of Leninism) (Yan'an: Jiefangshe, 1943).
28. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 158.
29. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 156–57.
30. Kim T'aejun, *Kim T'aejun Chŏnjip*, Vol. 3, 461.
31. Pak Kyŏngsik. *Ilbon chegukchu'i Chosŏn Chibae* (Japanese Imperialism's Rule in Korea) (Seoul: Haengji, 1986), 497–500.
32. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 156.
33. On this movement, see, for example, Gao Hua's seminal *Geming Niandai* (Revolutionary Times) (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 2010), 177–207.
34. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 140.
35. See a contemporary edition: Ding Ling, *Yiwaiji* (The Unexpected Collection) (Beijing: Zhongguo Guoji Guangbo Chubanshe, 2013).
36. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 139.
37. Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker. *Ding Ling's Fiction: Ideology and Narrative in Modern Chinese Literature* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1982), 102–5.
38. Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1965), Vol. 3, 86.
39. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 191–2.
40. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 103.
41. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 105.
42. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 111–2.
43. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 104.
44. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 231–3.
45. Andreĭ Lan'kov. *From Stalin to Kim Il Song: The Formation of North Korea, 1945–1960* (London: Hurst, 2002), 52–4.
46. Yu Imha, 'Kim Saryangnon: Inmin Munhak ūroŭi Mosaek kwa Chŏnhoe' (On Kim Saryang: Metamorphoses and the Search for the People's Literature) In *Pukhan Munhak ūi Chihyŏngdo* (The Landscapes of the North Korean Literature), edited by Ihwa Yŏja Taehakkyo T'ongilhak Yŏn'guwŏn, 19–43 (Seoul: Ihwa Yŏja Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 2008).
47. Kim Hakch'ŏl. *Ch'oehu ūi Pundaejang* (The Last Squad Commander) (Seoul: Munhak kwa Chisŏng, 1995), 337.

48. Yu Imha. 'Sahoejuũjök Kündae Kyehoek kwa Choguk Haebang ũi Tamnon: Haebang Chõnhu Kim Saryang Munhak ũi Tojõng' (The Socialist Modernity Project and Motherland Liberation Discourse: The Road of Kim Saryang's Literature after the Liberation) *Han'guk Kündae Munhak Yõn'gu* 1.2 (2000): 174–99.
49. Pauline Keating, 'Getting Peasants Organized: Grassroots Organizations and the Party State in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region, 1934–45' In *North China at War: The Social Ecology of Revolution*, edited by David Goodman and Feng Chongyi, 25–59 (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999); See also David Goodman, 'Resistance and Revolution, Religion, and Rebellion: The Sixth Trigram Movement in Licheng, 1939–1942.' In *North China at War: The Social Ecology of Revolution*, edited by David Goodman and Feng Chongyi, 131–55.
50. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 158–66.
51. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 113–5.
52. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 226.
53. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 250–2.
54. Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 251–2.
55. On the ultimate defeat of the 'Yan'an faction' of the former Korean allies of the CCP in the North Korean politics see Jin Guangxi, "'The August Incident' and the Destiny of the Yanan Faction' *International Journal of Korean History* 17.2 (2012): 47–76.
56. Yu Imha, 'Kim Saryangnon: Inmin Munhak ũroũi Mosaek kwa Chõnhoe', 25–6.
57. See an account of especially gruesome abuse against the ethnic Korean soldiers in the Japanese military ranks here: Kim Saryang. *Nomamalli*, 122–5.
58. Kim Saryang, *Nomamalli*, 166–189.

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