

## Twists and Turns in the Life of a Remarkable Scholar

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In the early 1950s, Europe was still marked by the chaos and trauma caused by the world war that had ravaged the continent. Sweden was an exception. Stubbornly clinging to its centuries-long neutrality policy to the extent possible, the country had been spared many horrors other countries had had to endure. With its industrial apparatus intact, Sweden's export of industrial goods and machinery expanded. In early January 1952, Cho Seung-bog (1922–2012), a stateless refugee of Korean ethnicity, knocked on the door of “the safe *Folkhemmet* of Sweden.”<sup>1</sup> He entered the country when the formation period of “the Swedish model” 1920–1950 had gone over into the harvest period 1950–1975. The foundations of the Swedish welfare state were laid, which contributed to the fact that he, unbeknownst to himself at the time, would live here for the rest of his working life, moving to France after his retirement.<sup>2</sup>

Cho's personal archive was donated by his family to Uppsala University Library in 2023. It is a mine of information about his life and career. Among the many documents are four versions of his “Personal history.” The first one is from 1948 and probably compiled when he applied for a visa to the United States to continue his postgraduate studies in philosophy. It gives rudimentary information – his name, birthplace, parents, permanent and present addresses, brief details about his education from primary school in China 1926–39 to Tokyo Imperial University 1942–46 and his postgraduate studies at the same university. The last items listed are his work for the US occupation authorities as a translator and researcher on religious matters.<sup>3</sup>

One item is noteworthy. Cho's permanent address is “No. 9, Nampeing-dong, Zoonam-men, Kyongsung-kun, North-hamkyong-province, Korea.” This entry is rather sad as it does not reflect the actual situation. He lived in Korea (in what is North Korea today) only briefly as an infant. His family moved to Manchuria six months after he was born, and he grew

up there. He attended Korean and Chinese schools, but the province became a Japanese puppet state in 1931, and he attended a Japanese school between 1934 and 1939. Regardless of school form, Cho's results were always excellent, and he always passed the tests that allowed him to advance to the next level. When Cho took the examinations to advance to high school, he secured entry to two schools; these results gave him the opportunity to continue his studies in Japan. He was also one of only three students selected that year for a Manchukuo government scholarship.

Cho entered the elite Dai-ichi kōtō gakkō [High School No. 1] in Tokyo in 1939.<sup>4</sup> After graduating, he enrolled in 1942 at the Department of Western Philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University, Japan's most prestigious university.<sup>5</sup> Cho told me once he wanted to specialize in philosophy because he believed it would best prepare him for serving a liberated Korea after the war. In the thesis that finalized his graduate studies, he wrote about the French philosopher Henri Bergson's central concept, "la durée."

Cho was one of very few students from Manchuria. When he began at the university, he checked how many other Koreans were studying at his department. There was one but he was soon mobilized and had to leave.<sup>6</sup> In 1945, Cho had only one compatriot at the university.<sup>7</sup> "Wasn't you proud to have graduated from Japan's most prestigious university, Tokyo University?" I asked once. "Not particular; anyone can do that," Cho said. "But what I am proud of is having studied at Dai-ichi kōtō gakkō." He had a reason for his view. High School No. 1 was Japan's most elite high school, training the elite of the elite of Japan to become the backbone of the Japanese imperial system.

Cho, as a Korean student in Japan, experienced discrimination. While he got on well with his classmates and made many friends for life while in Tokyo, he was not allowed to forget that he was a colonial subject. The Japanese oppressors wanted to eradicate not only Korea as a country but even to force Koreans to consider themselves Japanese subjects, annihilating their identity as Koreans. Special legislation was introduced to suppress the Korean language, and Koreans were forced to adopt Japanese names.<sup>8</sup> In a directory of the alumni of Dai-ichi kōtō gakkō, the Japanese name Kobayashi Shigeo is added within parenthesis to Cho's Korean name.<sup>9</sup> In our many conversations, he never mentioned it, probably because it was a humiliating experience. He disapproved of having to add a non-Korean name. While studying in the US, he was given the Christian name David, which made

him feel ill at ease.<sup>10</sup> The name followed him to Sweden, where he asked Swedish authorities to delete it.<sup>11</sup>

Imperial Japan lost the war and was occupied in 1945, which made the Japanese have to live under the yoke of foreign masters. The US occupation authorities recruited the well-educated Cho after he graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1946, and he became the head of a group of translators. The Japanese were now losers, and Japanese translators were paid half what Koreans doing the same job received. He worked for a period in the same corridor as the future US ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer.

Longing to be able to serve a liberated Korea, Cho followed the advice of American friends and went to the United States in 1948 to continue his philosophical studies at Minnesota State University. His study results were excellent. When the Korean War broke out, he protested against the US war in Korea. Despite warnings, he continued his criticism, which made the authorities decline to renew his residence permit, and he had to leave the United States. Members of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) helped him by contacting friends in Norway so that he could go to Oslo. The person who signed the document allowing the stateless refugee Cho to settle in Sweden was Signe Höjer (1896–1988), who was the chairperson of the Swedish section of WILPF but also a member of the Aliens Board.<sup>12</sup>

Settling down in the university town of Uppsala, Cho's background made Swedish authorities watch him for years, as reflected in the sizeable dossier kept by Swedish police. Suspicions strengthened when it was found that he had changed his birth year from 1920 to 1922 a bit too clumsily. The copy of his birth certificate from 1942 gives the year as 1920.<sup>13</sup> His explanation was accepted, Cho was born in 1922 and wanted the correct year in the alien passport he applied for; the wrong year had been entered early on, and he had not bothered about it before.<sup>14</sup>

Cho planned to continue his philosophical studies but also applied for a work permit.<sup>15</sup> It was not easy to find a job however and when asked how he covered his cost of living, he said that friends paid for his living expenses.<sup>16</sup> His insecure situation dragged on but improved when the Labor Market Board found that Cho should be treated as a refugee as he, at least for the time being, could not return to his home country.<sup>17</sup> This allowed him to benefit from the Swedish welfare system. Massive waves of refugees had flowed into Sweden from the autumn of 1943. A large-scale apparatus had been established to create jobs for refugees

with a salary paid by the Labor Market Board.<sup>18</sup> In 1934, an archive worker system had been introduced, providing salaried jobs to unemployed office workers. This system was opened up to exile scholars in 1943.<sup>19</sup> In January 1953, Cho, therefore followed in the footsteps of exile scholars who had fled to Sweden during the war, among them internationally famous scholars who earned their living in Sweden as archive workers, with their salaries paid by the Labor Market Board. He became one of the year 1953's ten archive workers at the Uppsala University Library.<sup>20</sup> Cho's job was to transcribe the titles of donated Chinese and Japanese books. Many would have considered this job tedious, but he found it widened his horizons and made him regain his appetite for studying philosophy. Cho began attending seminars in theoretical philosophy. A seminar member knew that the university's professor of Finno-Ugric languages, Björn Collinder (1894–1983), needed a research assistant who mastered Chinese and Korean. They met, Collinder wanted to recruit him, and Cho accepted.

Cho continued his employment as an archive worker but now as a research assistant for Collinder, intensifying his language and linguistics studies. Concurrently, he gave many talks and lectured widely about Korea and the Korean War to awaken the Swedes to what was going on in the Far East and the fate of Koreans in their divided country. He befriended many noted peace activists who were members of the Swedish section of WILFP, like Signe Höjer. A life-long friendship began with Evert Kumm, the editor-in-chief of Social Democratic newspapers, and Cho joined his new friends in peace activities and political demonstrations.

In 1959, Cho finalized the first of a three-part project on the history of the Korean language, covering phonology, morphology, and etymology, and the history of Chinese loan words in Korean.<sup>21</sup> In hindsight, he wrote later that “unpredictable circumstances” from the end of 1960 compelled him to turn to Sinological research and then to Japanological research.<sup>22</sup> He did not specify, but it is a fair guess that he had become aware that specializing in the Korean language was a dead end in career terms. Realizing he had to widen his scholarly palette and improve his Chinese, he began attending the seminars given by the world-famous Sinologue Bernhard Karlgren<sup>23</sup> at Stockholm University College.<sup>24</sup> Cho's receptivity and intellectual capacity allowed him to make rapid advances in his research. In early 1961, after attending Karlgren's seminar for a few semesters, Cho presented his dissertation for the Lic Phil degree (an academic degree that was halfway between a Masters degree and a PhD) to Karlgren, who gave it the highest grade, *Laudatur*. When Cho expressed

his wish to proceed by presenting a PhD dissertation in Sinology during the spring semester however, Karlgren declined the idea as “far too early.”<sup>25</sup>

Cho’s situation in his early years in Sweden was precarious. He applied for Swedish citizenship in April 1959. The reasons given in his application were that he had: “Stayed so long in the country and has adjusted well; understands that he will not be able to return to his native country, so he has decided to apply for Swedish citizenship so that he can stay in Sweden forever. Has not yet a secure position.”<sup>26</sup> Becoming a Swedish citizen raised Cho’s social status. A former stateless refugee, Cho was now a Swedish citizen and scholar working at Sweden’s most prestigious university. However, despite the acquisition of citizenship, his precarious situation remained. In his memoirs he describes his situation in the early 1960s as one where he felt “confident and anchored in a Swedish academic environment as a linguistic researcher.”<sup>27</sup> In reality (as he previously said in his application for citizenship), his situation was not improving in the late 1950s-early 1960s, which he became painfully aware of when an opportunity seemed to open in 1962. Lund University launched a plan to appoint a docent of East Asian languages, and Uppsala University followed suit.<sup>28</sup> Cho began by lobbying in person and writing Uppsala University’s Rector Magnificus, Torgny Segerstedt (1908–1999). Cho’s letter expresses a sense of desperation. He had a family with two small children. At 40, he was Lic Phil in Chinese and had produced a sizeable study of Korean phonology, but it risked becoming an achievement in vain as it was not yet published. The only way, he wrote, to avoid the results of several years of research becoming “fruitless” was to be appointed docent, which would also improve his economic situation. He argued that while he was not a PhD, neither was Göran Malmqvist (1924–2019), who had been appointed docent (non-stipendiary) despite being only a Lic Phil.<sup>29</sup> Segerstedt does not seem to have advised against Cho applying, so he sent in his application.<sup>30</sup>

In a letter to the Language Section at Uppsala University, Karlgren dismissed Cho’s argument as irrelevant. While Malmqvist did not hold a doctorate, he had produced two significant publications equal to a PhD dissertation. In his assessment of Cho’s merits, Karlgren limited his competence to Korean. Karlgren also added that Cho was working on a dissertation in Sinology and, when finished, he could apply to be appointed docent (non-stipendiary).<sup>31</sup> Cho withdrew his application.<sup>32</sup> Cho, however, appeared set on becoming a Sinologist as, after receiving a publication grant in September 1962, Cho asserted that he would shortly obtain a PhD in Chinese.<sup>33</sup> That ambition would not be realised.

Historian Ragnar Björk has pointed out that the university colleges in Stockholm and Göteborg during the pre-war and war years “unhampered by – and rather in opposition to – the established, civil-servant producing universities in Uppsala and Lund, were the ones which offered the human and social science scholars in exile their best opportunities.”<sup>34</sup> Cho benefitted from this aspect of the Swedish university system. Professor Dag Norberg (1909–1996), the dean of Stockholm University’s Language Section, aimed to expand its language program and drew up a plan to establish chairs in Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Indology.<sup>35</sup> After he retired as the Vice-chancellor (Rektor) of Stockholm University (1966 to 1974), he wrote that “we can no longer be without specialists, who add thorough knowledge in the great Asiatic languages to their specialist knowledge.”<sup>36</sup>

Cho’s expertise provided a ready fit for Norberg’s strategy. Norberg phoned Cho and said Stockholm University would establish a Japanese chair and asked Cho to introduce the study of Japanese. Norberg also suggested that Cho apply for the docent position (non-stipendiary) in East Asian languages, which he did. Again, Karlgren assessed Cho’s application, and it was negative. Norberg informed Cho that he was prepared to defy Karlgren and appoint Cho as a docent of East Asian languages. Realizing the implications – it would antagonize the influential Karlgren – Cho did not push his case.<sup>37</sup>

Shortly before, the issue of whether a Chinese chair could be established at Stockholm University when Karlgren would retire had arisen. The government was responsible for establishing chairs and needed to know whether there were potential successors. Karlgren was consulted, and he named Göran Malmqvist, a participant in Karlgren’s seminar. Aware of Cho’s disappointment, Karlgren invited Cho and his wife for coffee and when they met, Karlgren informed Cho and his wife that Stockholm University needed a Japanese chair and suggested Cho should take up studies of Japanese. Then, he revealed that his successor had already been selected.<sup>38</sup> Cho immediately saw the ominous indication. At that time, Swedish universities mainly followed the German tradition, that is, one department – one professor. As Stockholm University would be the only university in the country with a chair in Sinology, there would be no room for him. Cho was thus aware that his ambition to obtain a tenured position after becoming docent in Sinology would not be realised. After a week’s reflection, Cho decided that he had little choice but to accept Karlgren’s recommendation to aim for a career in Japanese studies. Cho knew that he would have “to work ten times as hard as

others.”<sup>39</sup> Amazingly quickly, Cho presented the first part of his two-volume historical study of Japanese phonology the following year, 1963.

Adverse circumstances, notwithstanding, Karlgren became Cho’s benefactor. Cho was appointed docent (non-stipendiary) in Korean in 1963 based on Karlgren’s assessment. This gave Cho a one-year salaried appointment as a researcher in Stockholm University’s Language Section. In 1964, Cho was appointed docent (non-salaried) in Japanese based on Karlgren’s assessment of the first volume of Cho’s Japanese study. As there was no plan to establish a chair in Korean, Stockholm University’s Language Section changed the scope of Cho’s contract from Korean to Japanese, most likely to fit Stockholm University’s plan to establish a chair in Japanese sometime in the not-too-distant future. The Section also extended Cho’s appointment as a researcher for five years.<sup>40</sup>

In 1964, the Department of Japanology and Koreanology at Stockholm University was established with Cho as its head. He had produced Japanese and Korean studies, which were such scholarly achievements that they would have qualified him to become a professor in both fields had there been chairs. Thus, the new department could offer courses in Japanese and Korean, which pleased the Stockholm University leadership.<sup>41</sup> The next step in Norberg’s plan for establishing Japanese Studies at Stockholm University was to appoint a senior lecturer. With the second volume of Cho’s Japanese study not yet completed, an important step was publishing his study of Korean phonology, which he had finalized in 1959 (see Cho Wonhyong’s paper). Norberg secured funds for publishing this study from the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities (Humanistiska Forskningsrådet).<sup>42</sup> Cho was appointed senior lecturer in 1968 and would not have to worry about providing a living for his family; he would also have ample room for research. In 1970 his study on Japanese phonology in two volumes was published by Stockholm University.

The final step in Norberg’s plan was to establish a chair in Japanese and it was established in 1973. Cho took up the duties as chairholder in 1975. According to Tomas Rönström (1938–), who began studying Korean under Cho in 1960, when Cho was appointed professor of Japanese, it was “a day of triumph” for him.<sup>43</sup> The Dean of Stockholm University’s Language Section as well as Cho’s colleague at the university’s Institute of Oriental Languages, the professor of Chinese, who both had objected to Cho’s prospective appointment as a professor, wrote to Cho to congratulate him on his appointment after the government had decided in his favour.<sup>44</sup>

As Sweden's first professor of Japanology, Cho saw it as his duty to promote Japanese studies. He disagreed with his respected mentor Bernhard Karlgren, who had a rather narrow view of what constituted Sinology. Unlike many colleagues in other departments who tried to exercise a monopoly over what should be defined as academic research, Cho was liberal. He saw Japanology as a catch-all research field. PhD candidates in Japanese studies could choose whichever research topic they wanted for their dissertation, provided it lay within the realm of Japan and its culture.<sup>45</sup> The result can be seen in the wide variety of the topics of the dissertations he supervised.

Cho became a senior lecturer and later a professor amidst a historically significant expansion of Swedish universities, with many new departments established and student numbers expanding rapidly. He had reasons to be optimistic as there was booming interest in Japan. Asked in 1970 to present his view of the prospects for Japanese studies, Cho reported that he foresaw 1–2 docents (non-stipendiary) in Japanese within two to four years.<sup>46</sup> In hindsight, it is not easy to understand his over-optimistic estimate. None of the PhD candidates he had in mind in 1970 completed their dissertation and it took until 1982 for Cho's first graduate student to present his dissertation. A conjecture is that Cho's estimate was based was influenced by his own impressive academic record. He had worked exceedingly hard and presumed other would-be academicians did, too.

The same year Cho was appointed professor at Stockholm University, one of its most famous professors, the political scientist and former leader of the Conservative Party, Gunnar Heckscher (1909–1987), retired from the post of Swedish ambassador to Japan and South Korea. After Heckscher's return to the university, he resumed his role of political science emeritus. In 1976, Heckscher and Cho founded the Center for Japan Studies at Stockholm University, together with the university President Staffan Helmfrid (1927–2017). Cho became what Helmfrid characterized as the "door opener" to scholarly bodies in Japan and China. In 1979, Cho was instrumental in Stockholm University and the Royal Institute of Technology signing an exchange and collaboration agreement with his *alma mater*, Tokyo University. The following year, Cho played a large part in the Stockholm University agreement with Peking University and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences on behalf of Swedish universities and the Swedish Academy of Sciences, opening the door to China for Swedish universities.<sup>47</sup>

The efforts and achievements proved decisive in decision making when Cho's Swedish *alma mater*, Uppsala University, awarded him PhD *honoris causa* in 1982. Emeritus professor

of Semitic languages Fritiof Rundgren (1921–2006) took the initiative on this award for Cho in the autumn of 1981. Helmfrid was informed of Rundgren's initiative but also knew that Cho had antagonists at the university. In a rare move, Helmfrid, as Vice-chancellor of Stockholm University, wrote a lengthy personal letter (*handbrev*) to Rundgren, describing Cho's significant contributions as the "door opener" to Japanese and Chinese universities and research institutions. According to Helmfrid, Cho's achievements made him eminently worthy of the honor for which Rundgren worked.<sup>48</sup> Later, Rundgren wrote to Helmfrid thanking him for his letter, which had been crucial. When the Language Section at Uppsala University discussed Rundgren's proposal, he related Helmfrid's letter, which made the opponents stay silent, and the decision was unanimous.<sup>49</sup>

Cho's name and status as an important member of the Korean diaspora came to the fore when he initiated a campaign supporting the release of South Korea's leading opposition politician, Kim Dae-jung (Kim Taejung) (1925–2009), who had been kidnapped by South Korean intelligence agents at a hotel in Tokyo in 1973. Noted Uppsala personalities joined Cho in his campaign. He even wrote a letter to Japan's Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei (田中 角栄, 1918–1993), asking him to take action against the perpetrators.<sup>50</sup> Behind Cho's actions was a sense of justice rooted in his own experiences. Later, he turned the campaign into a drive for Kim to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Cho secured widespread support in Sweden's political, church and cultural circles; many celebrities joined the campaign, which Cho shelved when Kim withdrew from politics to reside in Cambridge as a visiting scholar. Later, Kim returned to politics and was elected South Korean president. Once, Cho told me that Kim while on a state visit to the United Kingdom called him in France and asked him to come to London so they could meet. Cho responded: "If you want to meet me, you can come here."

Cho told me of his aspirations as a scholar. He saw many tasks ahead. One was quite specific – his ambition was to write two scholarly papers on Japan and two on Korea yearly. This ambition reflected how important Korea was to him as a scholar. In hindsight, assuming the chair in Japanology in 1975 might be seen as his day of triumph, as Tomas Rönström describes it. I guess equally important for Cho was that his appointment as professor in conjunction with being the head of the department would enable him to fulfil what he saw as his duty as a Korean patriot: to help build up Korean studies not only in Sweden but also in Europe. As with his central role when the establishment of the European Association of

Japanese Studies in 1973, he was one of the founding fathers of the Association of Korean Studies in Europe in 1977.

Cho's long-term plan was to establish Korean as a university subject equal to other academic subjects. This ambition had its precursors. When Björn Collinder recruited Cho in the 1950s, Cho's task was to research the history of the Korean language. Two years into the project, Uppsala University asked him to teach East Asian languages, a subject with three branches: Chinese, Japanese and Korean. From autumn 1956, he taught these three languages and continued to do so until 1962. After Dag Norberg in 1962 asked Cho to take responsibility for building up Japanese at Stockholm University, the first step was the establishment of the Department of Japanology and Koreanology in 1964. The inclusive name of the new department notwithstanding, courses in Korean were offered only occasionally, but this changed when Cho was appointed senior lecturer in Japanese in 1968. The same year, Stockholm University guaranteed that Korean language courses would be offered regularly in-future. In 1969, the National Board for Higher Education approved study plans for the Korean language at Stockholm University. Proof that Cho had succeeded in his long-term ambition to establish Korea as a regular university subject was that his student Staffan Rosén (1944–) was appointed Sweden's first professor of Korean language and culture the same year Cho retired.

Cho was a Korean patriot, but another identity came to be added to his persona. In discussions with Chinese counterparts in 1980, Stockholm University President Helmfrid noted how Cho "was received by Chinese authorities as an honorable representant of a respected minority" but also was "an eloquent *Swedish* patriot in all our contacts with our partners. His loyalty to our society, especially our university, is moving, considering the unkindness he has faced [from many university representatives]. I consider Cho both undeservedly underrated and mistreated."<sup>51</sup>

Cho was intensely aware of his past as a colonial subject of Imperial Japan, but as time passed, he came to terms with it.<sup>52</sup> Still, an incident revealed his lingering ill feelings. Once, as his assistant, I irritated him by praising Stockholm University's Sinology Professor Göran Malmqvist, who had built up one of the best Sinology collections in Europe. I suggested that Cho use his eminent contacts in Japan to secure support for improving the meagre Japanological library collection. Bringing it up again sometime later, he interrupted me: "I don't go to Japan as a beggar!!!" – the exclamation marks reverberated in the room, so I did

not bring it up again. Several years later, unprovoked, shortly before he retired, he suddenly said: “OK then, I’ll go to Japan as a beggar.” Elsewhere, I have written about this episode and how Cho secured a magnificent prospective donation from friends from his school years in Tokyo. The donation however did not materialize because Stockholm University mishandled the matter.<sup>53</sup>

Throughout his life, Cho’s Korean identity guided his actions. He was a neutralist pan-Korean patriot and, therefore, detested by those who supported the military dictatorship in South Korea and those who supported the communist regime in North Korea. In contrast, both Korean governments were eager to mobilize his support. Already in 1956, when Cho was known in the Korean diaspora as a Korean patriot who had protested against the US war in Korea, he was invited to North Korea. The invitation was authorized by Kim Il Sung (Kim IIsöng), but it took until 1970 for the visit to take place.<sup>54</sup> In 1969, Cho was invited to South Korea in an attempt to persuade him to become a supporter of the Park Chung-hee (Pak Chönghöi 박정희) (1917-1979) regime. What convinced Cho to go to Korea for the first time in 25 years was when friends from his school days in Manchuria, who now were leading officials of the South Korean regime, argued that if he wanted to stand up for reunification, he needed to know the reality in Korea.<sup>55</sup> Once, Cho told me he had been offered the position as the Minister of Education of South Korea. He had asked whether there were any conditions. There was one – he was not allowed to talk about reunification, which made him respond: “In that case, I’m not interested.”<sup>56</sup>

When Cho retired in 1989, he and his wife moved to France; she was born there and inherited a house in the small village of Clionsclat in southeastern France. At long last, he could devote himself wholeheartedly working for the reunification of his divided native country. Focusing on what he saw as the heart of reunification – the unifying power of the Korean language – he founded the Society for Harmonization of the Korean Language. Members were linguists from South and North Korea, who met in Beijing. Cho regularly went to China for these meetings.

Concurrently, Cho began writing his memoirs, summarizing his life and what he had learned. It took him a thousand pages. His emphasis was on political matters, while autobiographical elements formed the background. The title *Pundan ũi Han* is ambiguous, conveying the sense of “The Bitter Partition” and “Divided Korea.”<sup>57</sup> His memoirs were published in 2004.

Cho moved back to Uppsala after his wife passed away. Persuaded by Swedish friends to write his memoirs also in Swedish, he soon began to do so. In a letter to me in June 2005, he mentioned he had produced a concise version in Swedish and asked me to help him find a publisher.<sup>58</sup> But 142 pages would be too slim a book, so he continued working assiduously on the manuscript. Like many other authors, he struggled with a title that would capture his *life report*. In letters to me, he used at first the simple “Memoirs,”<sup>59</sup> tried “A Korean’s Struggle for Life in East and West,”<sup>60</sup> “A Pioneer Japanologist’s Memoirs,”<sup>61</sup> used a rough translation of the Korean title, “Deplorable dichotomy,”<sup>62</sup> at long last settling for “Struggle for Life” with the subtitle “A Korean in the People’s Home of Sweden.”<sup>63</sup> Shortly afterwards Cho changed the subtitle to “a Korean’s memoirs and reflections.”<sup>64</sup> In the book, posthumously published in 2014, “A Korean in the People’s Home of Sweden” was chosen as the book’s title. It captures that although he had lived in Sweden for most of his life, he saw himself as a Korean.

My last meeting with Cho was in 2007, when the *Festschrift* in his honor, edited by me and Staffan Rosén, had been published. I went to Uppsala to hand over 25 copies to Cho. He took a copy, scrutinized it and the list of contributors, looked at me, and, patting the cover, said with a smile: “Now I can die.”

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> *Folkhemmet* means “home for the people/the people’s home”. It is a central concept in Swedish modern history as a metaphor for the Social Democratic welfare state.

<sup>2</sup> Lars Magnusson, *Sveriges ekonomiska historia*. (Stockholm: Rabén Prisma, 1997), p. 445ff.

<sup>3</sup> Seung-bog Cho, “The personal history” (1948). Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.

<sup>4</sup> Considering Cho’s future career as a linguist, it can be noted that 50 per cent of the high school curriculum’s three years were dedicated to English, German and French. Jeong Jonghyun, *Teikoku daigaku no Chōsenjin: Daikan minkoku erīto kigen*. Translated by Watanabe Naoki. (Tokyo: Keiō gijuku daigaku shuppankai, 2021), p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> Cho does not mention it, but students had to pass an entrance examination to enter Tokyo Imperial University, according to Jeong, *Teikoku daigaku no Chōsenjin: Daikan minkoku erīto kigen*, p. 81. At the other imperial universities, students from the governmental elite high schools could enrol without an entrance examination.

<sup>6</sup> Seung-bog Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet* (Stockholm: Podium 2014), p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> Tanaka Tsuyoshi, “Nihon haisen zengo no Chūgokuujin ryūnichigakusei seisaku – Ōchōmei seiken – ‘Manshūkoku’ – ‘Mōkyō seiken,’” in Mori Tokihiko, ed., *Chōkōryū shakai no rekishi keikan*. Research Center for Modern and Contemporary China, Kyoto University, Research Report (2013), p. 248.

<sup>8</sup> Kyōng-sik Pak, *Nihon teikokushugi no Chōsen shihai*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1973), pp. 61-65.

<sup>9</sup> Ichikō dōsōkai, *Dai-ichi kōtō gakkō dōsōsei meibo* (Tokyo: Dai-ichi kōtō gakkō dōsōkai, 1983), p. 557.

<sup>10</sup> Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet*, p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> Uppsala Police, Report, 11 February, 1953. “Cho, Seung Bog, 6.3.22, Korean,” F1B-3342, National Office for Aliens, Administrative Office, Swedish National Archives.

<sup>12</sup> Bert Edström, “Signe Höjer and Hiroshima & Nagasaki as a Mirror of the Future of Mankind,” in Bert Edström and Staffan Rosén, eds, “Contacts and Encounters. Essays in honour of Seung-bog Cho,” *Orientaliska studier* 121 (2007), p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> According to the certificate Cho presented in 1942 when he began at Tokyo Imperial University, his birth date was 6 March, 1920. A copy of this birth certificate dated 14 September, 1942, was certified by Takagi Teiji, Dean of the Literature Faculty, Tokyo University, 13 September, 1947.

<sup>14</sup> Seung-bog Cho, Letter to Criminal Investigation Department, Aliens Section, Uppsala, 14 January, 1953, “Cho, Seung Bog, 6.3.22, Korean,” F1B-3342, National Office for Aliens, Administrative Office, Swedish National Archives.

<sup>15</sup> Uppsala Police, Report, 12 February, 1953. “Cho, Seung Bog, 6.3.22, Korean,” F1B-3342, National Office for Aliens, Administrative Office, Swedish National Archives.

<sup>16</sup> Uppsala Police, Report, 17 September, 1952. “Cho, Seung Bog, 6.3.22, Korean,” F1B-3342, National Office for Aliens, Administrative Office, Swedish National Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Sam Ahlford, “Statement of behalf of the Swedish Labour Market Board,” 15 September, 1952.

<sup>18</sup> Lars Hansson, “Vid gränsen. Mottagningen av flyktingar från Norge 1940–1945,” PhD dissertation, Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Ragnar Björk, “Re-embedding the Historian: German Language Refugee Scholars in Scandinavia, 1933–1945,” in Antoon De Baets and Stefan Berger, eds, “Writing History in Exile,” *Storia della Storiografia – History of Historiography* 69 (2016), p. 52.

<sup>20</sup> Bob Engelbertsson, *Arkivarbetare vid Uppsala universitet 1934–1980. En studie av en arbetskraftsresurs ur ett systemperspektiv*, Forskningsrapport 1997:1. Uppsala: Centrum för handikappforskning, Uppsala Universitet, 1997, p. 41.

<sup>21</sup> Seung-bog Cho, *A Phonological Study of Korean. With a Historical Analysis* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Uralica et Altaica Upsaliensia 2. Uppsala, 1967), p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Cho, *A Phonological Study of Korean. With a Historical Analysis*, p. xii.

<sup>23</sup> Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978) was a celebrity as the founder of modern Sinology in the West. He was a professor at Göteborg University College from 1918 and its president from 1931 to 1936, then became the director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in 1939 and moved to Stockholm. Leaving for Stockholm ended his teaching of Sinology at Göteborg University College and, in fact, all of Sweden, which made Stockholm University College president Sven Tunberg (1882–1954) raise the idea that the world-famous Karlgren should be recruited. Since it did not have a chair in Sinology, he was appointed as an “adjunct professor of Sinology.” Sven Tunberg, *Stockholms högskolas historia före 1950* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1957), p. 188.

<sup>24</sup> Stockholm University College was founded in 1878 and granted university status in 1960, while Göteborg University College founded in 1891 became a university in 1954.

<sup>25</sup> Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet*, p. 123.

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- <sup>26</sup> Uppsala Police, Report, 11 February, 1959. "Cho, Seung Bog, 6.3.22, Korean," F1B-3342, National Office for Aliens, Administrative Office, Swedish National Archives.
- <sup>27</sup> Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet*, p. 147.
- <sup>28</sup> Docent is: 1) the second highest grade in the Swedish academic system; the title indicates that a scholar has been assessed and found qualified to become a professor; 2) a research position (equal to associate professor). When Cho began his academic career in Sweden, there were also stipendiary docent positions at universities, but they have been abolished at Swedish universities (with a few exceptions).
- <sup>29</sup> Seung-bog Cho, Letter to Professor Torgny Segerstedt, 31 July, 1962, Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.
- <sup>30</sup> Seung-bog Cho, Letter to the Language Section, Uppsala University, 5 September, 1962, Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.
- <sup>31</sup> Bernhard Karlgrén, Letter to the Language Section, Uppsala University, 3 October, 1962. Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.
- <sup>32</sup> Seung-bog Cho, Letter to the Language Section, Uppsala University, 19 October, 1962, Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.
- <sup>33</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, "Forskare får kungafondsmedel till stor koreansk grammatik," 28 September, 1962.
- <sup>34</sup> Björk, "Re-embedding the Historian: German Language Refugee Scholars in Scandinavia, 1933–1945," p. 50.
- <sup>35</sup> Bert Edström, *Fyra uppsatser om Östasienstudiernas historia vid Stockholms universitet*, Skrifter utgivna av Föreningen för orientaliska studier 29 (Stockholm: Föreningen för Orientaliska Studier, 2024), p. 45.
- <sup>36</sup> Dag Norberg, "Tendenser inom svensk språkforskning," in Åke Lilliestam, ed., *Humaniora. Forskning och Förnyelse*. Svenska Humanistiska Förbundet 76 (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1967), p. 70.
- <sup>37</sup> Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet*, p. 148f.
- <sup>38</sup> Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet*, p. 149f.
- <sup>39</sup> Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet*, p. 150.
- <sup>40</sup> Edström, *Fyra uppsatser om Östasienstudiernas historia vid Stockholms universitet*, p. 38.
- <sup>41</sup> Edström, *Fyra uppsatser om Östasienstudiernas historia vid Stockholms universitet*, p. 40.
- <sup>42</sup> Dag Norberg, "Letter to Seung-bog Cho, 30 June, 1966," Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.
- <sup>43</sup> Tomas Rönström, Personal information to the author, 28 February, 2024.
- <sup>44</sup> Gustaf Holmér, "Letter to Seung-bog Cho, 21 March, 1975," Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library; Göran Malmqvist, "Letter to Seung-bog Cho," undated, Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.
- <sup>45</sup> Seung-bog Cho, "Japan-studier i Sverige," Unpublished lecture manuscript, 1976, Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.
- <sup>46</sup> Seung-bog Cho, "Letter to Göran Malmqvist, 12 January, 1970," Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.
- <sup>47</sup> Staffan Helmfrid, "A Door-opener to East Asia: Professor Seung-bog Cho and Pacific Asia Studies at Stockholm University," in Bert Edström and Staffan Rosén, eds, "Contacts and Encounters. Essays in honour of Seung-bog Cho," *Orientaliska studier* 121 (2007): 9–18.
- <sup>48</sup> Staffan Helmfrid, "Letter to Fritiof Rundgren, 24 November, 1981," Staffan Helmfrid papers, Stockholm University Archives.
- <sup>49</sup> Fritiof Rundgren, "Letter to Staffan Helmfrid, 13 January, 1982," Staffan Helmfrid papers, Stockholm University Archives.
- <sup>50</sup> Seung-bog Cho, "Letter to Mr. Tanaka Kakuei, Prime Minister's Office, Tokyo, 29 October, 1973," Seung-bog Cho archive, Uppsala University Library.
- <sup>51</sup> Helmfrid, "Letter to Fritiof Rundgren, 24 November, 1981," emphasis in original.
- <sup>52</sup> Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet*, p. 193.
- <sup>53</sup> Edström, *Fyra uppsatser om Östasienstudiernas historia vid Stockholms universitet*, p. 108f.
- <sup>54</sup> Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet*, p. 184f.
- <sup>55</sup> Cho, *En korean i folkhemmet*, p. 167.
- <sup>56</sup> Edström, *Fyra uppsatser om Östasienstudiernas historia vid Stockholms universitet*, p. 52.
- <sup>57</sup> Seung-bog Cho, "Inledning" (manuscript), 2007, Author's archive.
- <sup>58</sup> "Letter to the author, 23 June, 2005," Author's archive.
- <sup>59</sup> "Letter to the author, 23 June, 2005," Author's archive.
- <sup>60</sup> "Letter to the author, 8 June, 2006," Author's archive.
- <sup>61</sup> "Letter to the author, 9 September, 2006," Author's archive.
- <sup>62</sup> "Letter to the author, 9 November, 2006," Author's archive.
- <sup>63</sup> "Letter to the author, 17 September, 2009," Author's archive.

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<sup>64</sup> "Letter to the author, 9 November 2009," Author's archive.