

THE TEMPLE OF WORDS

The Temple of Words: An Anthology of Modern Korean Buddhist Poetry

Published by Publication Committee of the *Collected Works of Modern Korean Buddhism*, Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism

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55 Ujeongguk-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, 03144, Korea

T. 82-2-725-0364 / F. 82-2-725-0365

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The Samboryun (Three-Jewel-Wheeled) symbolizes the ideas of Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism: this symbol involves the faith in Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṃgha and Two Traditions of Seon (Meditation) and Gyo (Doctrine); and means harmonizing all the clergy and laypeople and realizing the Pure Land of Buddha by way of religious propagation.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Temple of Words: An Anthology of Modern Korean Buddhist Poetry / Written by Gyeongheo, Yongseong, Han Yongun . . . [et al.] ; Translated by David McCann - - Seoul : Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2017

xxiv, 262p.: ill. ; 23.2cm.--Collected Works of Modern Korean Buddhism Series:

ISBN 978-89-7801-539-4 94220

978-89-7801-457-1 (set)

1. Buddhist poetry, Korean 2. Buddhism in literature. I. Kyŏnghŏ=鏡虛, 1846-1912. II. Yongsŏng=龍城, 1864-1940. III. Han Yong-un=韓龍雲=衲海, 1879-1944. IV. McCann, David, 1944-. V. Title. VI. Korean Buddhism Library. *Collected Works of Modern Korean Buddhism Series*

PL976.5 .K86 2017

294.366 / 895.712 - DDC22

811.922 / 220.8 - KDC5

Korean Buddhism Library's *Collected Works of Modern Korean Buddhism*

Series Editor: Kim JongWook, Dongguk University, Seoul, Korea

Books in Korean Buddhism Library's *Collected Works of Modern Korean Buddhism Series* are printed on permanent and durable acid-free paper. This book was printed on environment-friendly paper. Printed in the Republic of Korea.

The Publication Committee of Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism expresses its appreciation to Dongguk University Press working for the publication: Dongguk University Press arranges the whole process of designing, copy-editing, printing, and distributing this *Collected Works of Modern Korean Buddhism Series*.

This project has been supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea.

Korean Buddhism Library
Collected Works of Modern Korean Buddhism

THE TEMPLE OF WORDS:
AN ANTHOLOGY OF
MODERN KOREAN BUDDHIST POETRY

by Han Yongun and others
Translation by David McCann
Introductions by Yun Jaewoong and Kim Jongjin

Series Editor
Kim JongWook, *Dongguk University*



Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism

Foreword

Culture communicates. Culture flows smoothly just like the wind blows, clouds drift, and the birds fly in the air. So it did, even in the old times when lofty mountains and deep valleys interrupted the course of people's mutual exchanges. Culture flows in like a stranger, but as people share it, their individual gazes, touches, and breaths embody it with different appearances. Furthermore, it brings their gazes, touches, and breaths to their neighbors in a way that is meaningful to them. The culture exchanged is one and yet two; two and yet one.

Such is the case with Korean Buddhism. Buddhism, having originated in India, came to be one of the East Asian religions as Buddhist literature was translated into literary Chinese in China. Korea, a land neighboring China, acquired literary Chinese from the third to fifth centuries of the Common Era, which enriched its cultural vitality. Importing the translated Buddhist scriptures, Koreans established a Buddhist tradition themselves and expressed the essence of Mahāyāna Buddhism in their own way. Korea also played a dynamic role as a cultural messenger in transmitting Buddhism to Japan.

In this manner, Korean Buddhism was formed and continually evolved through lively exchange with Chinese Buddhism, and in the process developed the characteristic form of Korean Buddhism.

Buddhist culture flourished in the Unified Silla period (668–935) and this early Korean state established itself as a center of contemporary East Asian Buddhism. The Goryeo dynasty (918–1392) adopted Buddhism as the state religion and employed it as the state ideology. As a result, Korea currently has various forms of Buddhist cultural treasures, such as Bulguksa 佛國寺 Temple, the Dabotap

多寶塔 and Seokgatap 釋迦塔 Pagodas, Seokguram 石窟庵 Grotto, and exquisite statues of Buddhist figures seated in the pensive pose (半跏思惟像), as well as *Essentials of the Buddhas and Patriarchs Pointing Directly to the Essence of Mind* (*Buljo jikji simche yojeol* 佛祖直指心體要節) which is the earliest extant text printed by metal type, the *Goryeo Buddhist Canon in Eighty Thousand Woodblocks* (*Palman daejanggyeong* 八萬大藏經), and paintings of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara which are the acme of religious aesthetics.

In the Joseon dynasty, in which the Korean alphabet (Han'geul) was invented, a foremost state project was to translate the whole corpus of Buddhist scriptures into Han'geul. In the second half of the fifteenth century the Office for Sūtra Publication (Gan'gyeong dogam 刊經都監) was eventually established and published Buddhist canonical texts in the Korean language.

In 2010, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism published the *Collected Works of Korean Buddhism* in thirteen volumes, English translations of *Han'guk jeontong sasang chongseo*, for the purpose of introducing the excellence of Korean Buddhism to the world. This collection was compiled by carefully selecting representative works from the *Complete Works of Korean Buddhism* (*Han'guk Bulgyo jeonseong* 韓國佛教全書) from the Unified Silla through Joseon periods. These include *Wonhyo*, *Chinul*, *Hyujeong*, *Hwaŏm* (I, II), *Doctrinal Treatises*, *Gongan Collections* (I, II), *Seon Dialogues*, *Seon Poems*, *Korean Buddhist Culture*, *Exposition of the Sutra of Brahma's Net*, *Anthology of Stele Inscriptions of Eminent Korean Buddhist Monks*. Although the works in the collection are not enough to reveal the whole picture of Korean Buddhism, I hope that the collection helps people understand main features of premodern Korean Buddhism.

Now we have selected ten works of modern Korean Buddhism and translated them into English to introduce them to an international audience. During the early twentieth century, a turbulent era in East Asia, such Korean Buddhist monks and laymen as Gyeongheo 鏡虛 (1849–1912), Yongseong 龍城 (1864–1940), Seokjeon 石顥 (1870–1948), Manhae 卍海 (Han Yongun, 1879–1944),

Choe Namseon 崔南善 (1890–1957), Yi Neunghwa 李能和 (1869–1943), Go Yuseop 高裕燮 (1905–1944), published many works in various fields. This period in East Asia witnessed the influx of Western civilization and the imperial expansion of Japan, which was then ahead in the modernization process, resulting in some countries becoming colonized by Japan. As Korean Buddhism endured along with Korean people and shined its capability at every crisis in history, it developed its own identity accepting the current of the modern times on the one hand and confronting external challenges on the other. The efforts made in the darkest times in Korean history to maintain the Korean tradition will be not only a precious asset of Korean Buddhism but also a significant record of East Asian Buddhist history.

For the current project of English translation focusing on modern Korean Buddhist works, we have selected ten documents that have significance in terms of the modernization process of Korean Buddhism as well as being representative works in their own right. These works include the writings of Buddhist lay thinkers as well as the discourse records or treatises of Buddhist monks, cover various subjects such as comparative religion, editorial writing, criticism on current affairs, literature, history, art, and so forth. A Korean proverb says that “even the easy pace of a cow finally makes a thousand miles” (*ubo cheolli* 牛步千里) or that “a journey of a thousand miles must begin with the first step.” Although it is impossible to express the rich and complicated features of Korean Buddhism through only these ten volumes, I hope that readers will regard the project as a second step taken by the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism toward the globalization of Korean Buddhism.

Most of the writings from the period covered by this series are written in literary Chinese, but some employ Korean vernacular endings along with literary Chinese, and some are written all in the Korean vernacular script. The importance of modern Korean Buddhism lies in the fact that Korean Buddhism was conducted through the Korean language. The full-fledged usage of Korean

language in Buddhist activities was the achievement of modern Korean Buddhism, and Korean culture was thereby enriched. However, it is not easy for non-Koreans to understand such works in their original form. Therefore, the translation of the works into English—the international language—is an unavoidable task in our cultural communications, just as medieval East Asians shared literary Chinese—the common literary language of the time—to communicate and understand each other.

I really appreciate the translators who have sympathized with the aspiration of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism and have completed their translations despite various difficulties. I also would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the other contributors to each volume for their valuable comments, reviews, and corrections. Lastly, I would like to thank the members of the Editorial Board for spending time and effort at the initial stage of planning the project and selecting the works and to Dongguk University Press for their constant support in the publication of the series. My special thanks go to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea for providing strong support to the Publication Committee of Modern Korean Buddhism.

With the Palms of My Hands Joined in Reverence

Haebong Jaseung 海峰 慈乘

The 34th President of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism
President, Publication Committee of Modern Korean Buddhism

Editor's Preface

One thousand seven hundred years have passed since Buddhism, which originated in India, arrived on Korean Peninsula via China. The goal of Buddhism in ancient India was the attainment of enlightenment with respect to the dharma and the realization of Buddhahood, which was based on consistent religious practice in the repetitive cycle of birth and death. When Buddhism was transmitted to China, the goal of Indian Buddhism was accepted in a transformed form. For Chinese people, who also aspired to attain Buddhahood but, unlike Indians, were both temporarily and geographically separated from the Buddha, the Buddhist doctrine that all living beings have innate Buddha-nature emerged as one of the most efficient ideas. It is in this context that in Chinese Buddhism “enlightenment” (覺) is mostly interpreted as “original enlightenment”(本覺); “Buddha” is often regarded as “Buddha-nature”(佛性); and the fundamental doctrine of dependent origination (緣起) is sometimes replaced by the “the (unconditioned) arising of the (original) nature” (性起). The unique transformation of Buddhism in China, which is oriented to the idea of original Buddha-nature, led to the emergence of distinctive Chinese Buddhist schools, such as the Tiantai and Huayan schools that focus on doctrines and the Chan and Pure Land schools that emphasize practices.

These Chinese schools, along with the foundational doctrine of original Buddha-nature, were accepted in Korea and Japan, neighboring countries that also used classical Chinese as their literary language. In the case of Korea, the way in which Buddhism was adopted has a distinctive feature, which is an ecumenical tendency to synthesize various teachings or harmonize contrasting doctrines of the schools as much as possible. We see this ecumenical

tendency of Korean Buddhism in several cases. For example, Wonhyo 元曉 (617–686), the pioneer of Buddhist scholasticism in Korean Buddhism, sought to harmonize various schools. Jinul 知訥 (1158–1210), the founder of Korean Seon school, also advocated the unity of Buddhist practice and doctrine (禪教一致). The attempt to unite Hwaeom and Seon teachings in Buddhist educational system during the Joseon period (1392–1910) is another example. If Chinese Buddhism is marked by its establishment of individual schools on the basis of the idea of original nature, Korean Buddhism may be characterized by its consistent attempts to synthesize the schools by embracing their doctrinal distinctions.

The decline of the Joseon dynasty and subsequent colonization by Japan, however, brought contemporary Buddhists a double task: they had to preserve the identity of Korean Buddhism on the one hand and accommodate traditional Buddhism to Western modernity on the other. Until the liberation day arrived, Korean Buddhists endured nationwide hardships together with all Korean people and also steadily carried out the challenging task by inheriting traditional Buddhist culture as well as transforming it into a modern form. In spite of such problems as incessant foreign incursions and disruptions at the end of Joseon period and an identity crisis in Korean Buddhism derived from the forced importation of Japanese Buddhism, prominent Buddhists of those days left remarkable writings. In this way, they contributed to the process of developing the received Korean Buddhist tradition and shaping the ground for modern Korean Buddhism after liberation.

In 2012, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism published the English Edition of the *Collected Works of Korean Buddhism* as a project promoting the globalization of Korean Buddhism with the support of Korean government. This is a collection of representative Buddhist works selected from the *Han'guk Bulgyo jeonse* 韓國佛教全書, a compilation of three hundred and twenty three Korean Buddhist writings from the Silla to Joseon periods. To succeed and further develop upon this project, we are translating and publishing

representative Buddhist writings by modern Korean intellectuals in English and introducing them abroad. The fruit of this initiative is the Translation-Publication Project with Representative Works of Modern Korean Buddhism, which the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism has been administering since 2013 with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. The collection contains selected works of modern Buddhist literature written by eminent Buddhist monks and scholars, such as Gyeongheo 鏡虛 (1849–1912), Yongseong 龍城 (1864–1940), Seokjeon 石顥 (1870–1948), Manhae 卍海 (1879–1944).

The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism established several organizations to facilitate the project: a publication committee chaired by Ven. Jaseung, a management group chaired by Ven. Jin-Gak, and an editorial board chaired by me, Prof. Kim JongWook. In particular, the editorial board, which was entrusted with the work of translation and publication, surveyed more than three hundred and twenty Korean Buddhist writings written between 1900 and 1945 and carefully selected significant works in several genres, compiling them in ten volumes. For instance, *The Gyeongheo Collection*, *Sun Over the Sea of Enlightenment*, and *An Anthology of East Asian Commentaries on the Nyāyapraveśa* belong to the genre of philosophy or intellectual thought; *Sheaves of Korean Buddhist History* to history; *A Study of Korean Pagodas* to art; *Harmonizing the Hundred Teachings* to comparative; *The Temple of Words: An Anthology of Modern Korean Buddhist Poetry* to literature; *Essential Compendium for Buddhists: A Modern Buddhist Liturgy* to rituals; *Tracts on the Modern Reformation of Korean Buddhism* and *A Collection of Modern Korean Buddhist Discourses* to social criticism. The broad range of materials selected from various genres is intended to exhibit a dynamic picture of modern Korean Buddhism in multiple aspects.

The Gyeongheo Collection, the collected dharma-talks and Seon poetry by Gyeongheo, the figure responsible for reviving modern Korean Seon Buddhism, is a significant text in that it shows us the mode of the transformation of Korean Buddhist thought during the interim period until modern times. Yongseong's *Sun Over the*

Sea of Enlightenment, one of the most representative works of this time, represents the author's earnest intent to reform and modernize Korean Buddhism. This work also elucidates essential points of Seon practice and Buddhist doctrine. Seokjeon's *An Anthology of East Asian Commentaries on the Nyāyapraveśa*, a variorum text on Buddhist logic, is an important Buddhist philosophical text that shows the research level of modern Korean Buddhism in Buddhist logic. Gim Yeongsu's *Sheaves of Korean Buddhist History*, a Buddhist historiography, provides chronological accounts of Buddhist history since the first transmission of Buddhism during the Three Kingdoms period. The text also provides a systematic description of the history of Korean Buddhist orders and schools, including the "Five Doctrinal [schools] and Nine Mountains [traditions of Seon]" (Ogyo Gusan 五教九山) and the "Five Doctrinal [schools] and Two [Meditative] Traditions" (Ogyo Yangjong 五教兩宗). Go Yuseop's *A Study of Korean Pagoda*, which contains explanations of Korean stone pagodas from the perspective of their architectural style, is a monumental work in the field of Korean Buddhist art history because it not only established in scholarship the standard style of Korean Buddhist pagodas but also created the basic framework in the periodization and appreciation of Korean pagodas.

Yi Neunghwa's *Harmonizing the Hundred Teachings*, a work that compares Buddhism to other eleven religions, such as Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, Islamism, Brahmanism, and so on, reveals the level of religious studies during the modern period in Korea. Choe Chwiheo and An Jinho's *Essential Compendium for Buddhists: A Modern Buddhist Liturgy*, the earliest modern text on Buddhist rituals, shows not only how Buddhist rituals changed during the modern times but also how Buddhism was popularized and modernized. *The Temple of Words: An Anthology of Modern Korean Buddhist Poetry*, a compilation of Buddhist verse written by modern Buddhist poets such as Han Yongun, Seo Jeongju, and Jo Jihun, demonstrates that the Buddhist spiritual world served as the foundation of poetic lyricism for the modern intellectuals. *Tracts on the Modern Reformation of*

Korean Buddhism is a collection of essays written by modern Buddhist reformers, such as Gwon Sangro, Han Yongun, Yi Yeongjae. These writings reflect these Buddhists' awareness of the contemporary need to respond the changing times with the appropriate transformation of Buddhism. These texts show us the social and historical situation that Korean Buddhism had to confront in modern times. *A Collection of Modern Korean Buddhist Discourses*, written by such modern Korean thinkers as Choe Namseon, Kang Yumun, Gwon Sangro, Gim Beomnin, Gim Yeongsu, Gim Taeheup, and so forth, is a collection of editorials that discuss issues related to the Korean Buddhist tradition and its modernization. These writings may be said one of the most representative Buddhist works of the time because they contain discourses on immediate social and ideological problems of the day.

For each of the ten volumes, the Editorial Committee invited a specialist in each subject and entrusted them with the responsibility of the translation. Both domestic and foreign scholars participated in proofreading and reviewing the translation, by comparing the draft to the original and checking the appropriateness of English expressions. In this way, the Editorial Committee has done its best so that both accuracy in translation and the translators' intention are preserved. The translators of the volumes include David McCann, John Jorgensen, Tonino Puggioni, Seonjoon Young, Pori Park, Suh Junghyung, Kim Sung-uk, Lee Seunghye, Ham Hyoung Seok, and Dan B. Jung. Those who worked as the proofreaders and reviewers are Richard D. McBride II, Mark Nathan, Cho Eun-su, Yun Woncheol, Kim Yongtae, Kang Hosun, Lee Sumi, Koh Seung-hak, Kim Jongjin, Park Inn-Suk, Kim Sooyoun, Hyeon Seo Seunim. Kim Junghee, the coordinator of the current project, has been devoted to her role throughout the process of translation and reviewing. Yi Deokyeol carried out the editing work during the final process of publication. Shim Jongsub worked for binding and printing the volumes. Yoo Hanrim, head of the publication department, supervised the whole process of publication. The project was only possible with the enthusiastic effort and selfless dedication of all of

these people.

I cannot let this opportunity pass without saying about the consistent interest and support from Ven. Jaseung, president of the Jogye Order, and Ven. Hyeoneung, president of Education Bureau of the Jogye Order. Ven. Jaseung, as president of Publication Committee, superintended the entire project in a responsible way. Ven. Hyeoneung particularly spared no pains to offer his helpful advice from the beginning stages of planning through the final publication. I would like to express my gratitude for his insightful assistance and encouragement whenever we were in need. Ven. Jin-Gak, chair of Executive Committee, and Ven. Su-Kyoung, director of Research Institute of Buddhist Studies, served as consultants to facilitate the process of planning, editing, and publication. Lee Seog-sim of Department of General Affairs contributed to maintaining a cooperative relationship with the government during the planning and implementation phases of the project. Park Yong Gyu and Ko Sang-hyun, and Choi Ae-Ri as well, resolved administrative issues and problems in a timely manner.

Without the dedicated participation and concerted effort of all these people, this project would not have been completed successfully. At this moment, we cannot but contemplate the Buddhist truth of dependent origination that everything comes to arise through mutual relationships based on numerous conditions. Lastly, as chair of the Editorial Board, I sincerely hope that the publication of the *Collected Works of Modern Korean Buddhism* contributes to the rediscovery of the value of Korean Buddhist culture by informing the whole world of the fact that Korean Buddhism absorbed the impact of modernity in its own way and thereby preserved its traditional identity throughout one thousand and seven hundred years of history.

Kim JongWook

Professor, Department of Buddhist Studies, Dongguk University
Series Editor & Chair of the Editorial Board,
Collected Works of Modern Korean Buddhism

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Translator's Note

The poems in this collection, written by Korean Buddhist poets in the last decade of the nineteenth and first five decades of the twentieth centuries, create and occupy a space of their own, far away from the busy streets and avenues, the intense political circles, the markets, and the sales and circulations of other modern poetry or fiction. The city and the markets are back there, as in Hanyeong's "Han'gang River, Duposa Temple Poetry Association," where fishermen and firewood gatherers ". . . loading their boats, hurrying off to Seoul." The contemporary publishing world appears in Kim Iryeop's poem commemorating the journal *Bulgyo*'s 100th issue, which included her poem. Han Yongun's poem "Upon Reading Tagore's 'The Gardener'" builds around Rabindranath Tagore's impact and position in world literature, which included the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature.

These poems, however, all reflect Buddhist practices, most often away from the city and its market places, up into the hills and mountains, into the natural world. There, the reader, like the active Buddhist practitioner, will be able to find a small house or shrine to stop by, or a temple, or just the vast landscape extending from one point of observation all the way to that moment of comprehension, and a sense of shared purpose and practice. Out there too, over and over, the poem will find itself, as the poet takes a contemplative position in the space the poem creates. The reader too will find a place in the poem, wherever the poem happened to have been written, whether up in the mountains or down in the city.

Some of the poets in this collection wrote in Classical Chinese. This Classical Chinese round of modern Korean Buddhist poems comprises the first part of this collection, six poets with forty-three poems. Their works, published from the later years of the nineteenth

century and on into the twentieth, remind us of several things. Classical Chinese literary practices continued into the modern period, and through them we discover a sense of connection to broader Asian Buddhism. The carved wooden nameplates over the entry doors and gateways, the Buddhist scriptures as well as the records in the temples, were all inscribed in Chinese characters, and these poems occupy the same medium. The printed poems remind us in turn that many readers in Korea have also been very well versed in Classical Chinese.

The poems in part I, originally written and published in Classical Chinese language and form, were later translated into modern Korean by famous contemporary poets.

The second part of the collection comprises forty-eight poems by Manhae Han Youngun, Buddhist monk practitioner, nationalist independence leader, and poet, novelist, memoirist. While Manhae is best known and admired for the modern, free verse in his *The Silence of the Beloved*, published in 1926, he also wrote *sijo* poems, the three-line, Korean vernacular verse form, as well as poems in Classical Chinese. Manhae created poems for a reading audience characterized by a very broad range of literary interests and engagements.

The third part is a group of eight poets and forty-one poems, some of whom wrote in Chinese, some in the *sijo* form, some free verse. One, Seo Jeongju, was a poet I came to know quite well as I translated several collections of his poems. At one of our meetings he gave me a silver pen, saying I had translated enough of his poems and should get started on my own path, with that pen to lean on. His gift was my command, though I did not comprehend it at the time, to undertake this journey, with his pen my staff.

So I have come to this journey, to read and to translate these modern, Korean Buddhist poems. To the editorial committee, professors Yun Jaewoong, Kim Jongjin, and Peter H. Lee, and the staff, notably Park Hyeran and Kim Junghee, at Jogyesa Temple in Seoul, I can only say that I am very grateful for the chance to undertake this pilgrimage, as I am also for the patient guidance I

have received along the way, and the helping hands reaching out when I have stumbled.

David McCann

- The poems in this book have been translated by David McCann. The “Introduction” has been written by Prof. Yun Jaewoong and translated by Steve Capener. The introductions to each author and the poems have been written by Prof. Kim Jongjin and translated by Tonino Puggioni. Therefore, there might be discrepancies in the translated sections of the book.

THE TEMPLE OF WORDS

Introduction

Yun Jaewoong

1

One of the methods Korean Buddhism uses to communicate with the public at large is embedding content in poetry. This tradition stretches back more than one thousand years and the main medium of this poetry was the *hansi*, or Chinese poetic form. Due to this, the creation of such traditional Buddhist poetry was limited to those acolytes who were versed in classical Chinese, and the production, reception, and circulation processes corresponded to high literature.

From the time that Korea started moving in the direction of a nation-state at the end of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century, Korean Buddhism underwent the same type of upheavals that the country itself was encountering. After the 500 year policy of “uplifting Confucianism and repressing Buddhism” of the Joseon dynasty that had greatly weakened Korean Buddhism, it set out to revitalize itself and, in response to the Japanese colonial control of Korea (1910–1945), served the role as the pillar of national spirit.

This movement of self-revitalization was propelled by monks and leaders. These individuals, after being enlightened to the truths of the universe through quiet meditation, would poeticize the wisdom and self-discipline they had learned in the process. These poems are different than the ones that were written by government officials or literati during the Joseon dynasty for the purpose of gaining promotion. The main difference is that these poems concentrated on expressing the world of truth arrived at through Seon meditation.

The poetics of the ten monks introduced in this volume all correspond to this category of poetry. Five of the poets were not monks; however, they made great contributions to introducing and disseminating Buddhist content to the lay populace by eschewing classical Chinese versification and using the Korean vernacular script Han'geul in their efforts to depict the profound world of Buddhism. One poet who was capable of creating outstanding works in both Chinese verse and Han'geul verse was Han Yongun. Han, whose pen name was "Manhae" (Vast Ocean), was simultaneously a monk, a poet, and an activist for Korean independence. It is no exaggeration to say that Han is the single most important figure in Korean Buddhist poetry. This book is an overview of Korean Buddhist poetry. With Han Yongun as the central figure, major poets and works of periods both previous and subsequent to him will be illuminated.

2

Manhae Han Yongun (1879–1944) was a pivotal figure in the world of Korean Buddhist poetry. He was able to convey the daunting tasks confronting early modern Korean Buddhism to the people at large in relatively easy language. For instance, his 1926 poem "The Silence of the Beloved" (Nim ui chimuk), which depicts the narrator's touching plea to his lover, is written in the form of a letter thereby imbuing the language of everyday people with new value.

Whose footprint is it, paulownia leaf quietly falling though windless,
empty air, vertically rippling?

Whose is the face of blue skies that peer through clouds, vanished
after the forbidding dark clouds of the rainy season have gone
away with the west wind?

Whose breath, the unknowable fragrance that flows over the
green moss of the deep, flowerless forest reaching into the
quiet heavens above the ancient pagoda?

Whose song, that small stream that rises who knows where and
 ripples past jagged stones?
 Whose poem, evening glow that steps across the endless ocean,
 touches the boundless skies with jade-like hands giving the
 fading day its beauty?
 Burnt ashes become oil again. My heart that burns on, not
 knowing how to cease—Whose faint lamp am I?

In the above poem titled “Cannot Understand,” truth is depicted as existing within nature through various metaphors and sensuous images. When compared with traditional forms of expression such as those found in the canonical sūtras like the *Hwaeom-gyeong*, the unique characteristics of Han’s poetry become all the more clear.

The Buddha’s body is abundant in the universe,
 And it is present in all living things.
 Responding according to karma, he is everywhere
 And always sits in the seat of wisdom.

Compared to poetry, the message of the sūtra is abstract. Expressions like universe (*beopgye*), karma (*yeon*), emotional response (*gameung*), and seat of wisdom (*borijwa*) are not everyday expressions but difficult philosophical terms. However, as poetry uses metaphors derived from familiar objects, it is more effective in conveying the underlying message than the sūtras. Fallen leaves, the sky, fragrance, a stream, a sunset are all objects that point to truth.

According to the poet, the truth can be found anywhere and this can help to overcome the difficulties encountered in everyday life. The realization that the truth exists in all of nature can bring peace to the heart and fill the soul with courage. And this can have a greater impact on the psychology of the masses than lectures by monks on the minutiae of the Buddhist writings. This is also similar to the use of metaphor made by the Buddha or Jesus Christ when they spoke to the people. And this serves as evidence of the effectiveness of using

metaphor expressed through everyday language to reveal profound truths.

The traditional Korean form of verse known as *sijo* is also another good example of an effective means of communication.

Deeper than spring waters,
Higher than autumn mountains,
Brighter than the moon,
Firmer than stone.
If some one asks what love is,
This is all you need say.

This *sijo* speaks of a love unlike that of the ascetic. However, the love described here is not “Eros’s” physical love but rather is closer to the concept of a “passion for truth.” On the surface, this poem seems to be about two lovers describing the importance of their love; however, a deeper look reveals that this poem can be interpreted as speaking of the earnest desire for the “beloved” who has reached the stage of total freedom through enlightenment. “Spring waters,” “autumn mountains,” “the moon,” “stone” are all everyday expressions. It can be said that alluding to complex metaphysical phenomenon through the use of simple, everyday language was something made newly possible by modern Korean Buddhist poetry. Han Yongun did not favor the traditional method of composing *hansi*, which relied on the observance of nature. Rather, he used it to express the deep suffering of the modern intellectual. While he was imprisoned he composed several *hansi*. One titled “Thoughts in Prison” reads as follows:

Mind as pure as water on a flawless eve
The moonlight coming in through the bars is beautiful.
Pain and pleasure are both illusions, only the heart is real
Even the Buddha was once just an ordinary man.

While in prison, the poet realized anew that all things in this world

are moved by the heart. One of the most important teachings of Buddhism is that whether something is worrisome or enjoyable depends on how we think about it. So there is nothing novel about the above poem borrowing this teaching. What is important here is that he did not come to this realization while meditating in the mountains but while in prison having been deprived of his freedom by the Japanese authorities for engaging in independence activities. It is also important to pay attention to the attitude of understanding the Buddha's teachings in connection with the situation of being in the here and now. The knowledge that all thought and action must go together with the pain of humankind is important aspect of the inherent nature of modern Korean Buddhist poetry.

The line "Even the Buddha was once an ordinary man," is the internalization of the radical recognition that "I, therefore, am a buddha (an enlightened being)." The propagation of this knowledge to the readers giving them the courage and wisdom to stand fast in the face of injustice and contradiction, is one of the greatest contributions of modern Korean Buddhist poetry.

3

Just as Manhae Han Yongun left a large number of *hansi* poems, other monks of the time typically wrote in classical Chinese. They were members of a class that was accustomed to composing both prose and verse using Chinese characters. Characteristic of these were Gyeongheo (1846–1912), Yongseong (1864–1940), Hanyeong (1870–1948), Guha (1872–1965), Man'gong (1871–1946), Hanam (1876–1951), and Hyobong (1888–1966). Kim Iryeop (1896–1971), who was active in women's rights and journalism before becoming a Buddhist nun, preferred to contribute *sijo* or free verse poems rather than *hansi* to the magazine *Bulgyo* (Buddhism). Among these priests, the most notable are Gyeongheo, Hanyeong, and Hyobong. At the age of thirty, Gyeongheo became enlightened. After that he lived freely without any attachments, travelling about and spending a set

amount of time in different places. Due to his eccentric behavior he was at one time frowned upon, but his importance came to be recognized as he trained many fine disciples and promoted the traditions of Seon meditation.

Gyeongheo was known to teach children and the illiterate using Buddhist writings composed with simple Korean script, and he brought peace to the elderly and sick by teaching them how to pray and chant. He reopened meditation centers that had been closed and established a new tradition in Seon meditation. He set the standards for the correct performance of ritual meditation and, in this way, helped establish a firm foundation for modern Korean Buddhism. From these perspectives, he is seen as an important figure in the development of early modern Korean Buddhism.

Suddenly hearing the words “having no nostrils”
 I immediately realized that the entire world is my home,
 On the road in June below the Yeonamsan Mountain,
 The wild ones, nothing else to do, sing a song of peace.

A “song of enlightenment” (*odosong*) was a poem that spontaneously sprang forth at the moment of enlightenment. The above poem was Gyeongheo’s “Song of Enlightenment.” At the age of thirty, Gyeongheo suddenly attained enlightenment when he heard the following expression used by commoners: “If you have to become a cow, become one that has no nostrils.” After hearing that, he went to the Cheonjangam Hermitage on Yeonamsan Mountain where, after intense meditation, he “attained full enlightenment.” It is common through the “song of enlightenment” to express in language the point at which the boundary between the self and the world disappears and to describe the world of feeling wherein the distinction between a part and the whole dissolves. At this stage, one’s personal experience is more important than “transmitting meaning through language.”

Most “song of enlightenment” or Seon poems are the “unavoidable attempt to express through language” that which “cannot be expressed

with language.” This is both the unique aspect of Seon poetry and its limitation. In this way the Seon poem comes to confront the internal contradiction that it is a “poem that attempts to transcend through language the notion that one’s fate is tied to language.”

Compared to Gyeongheo’s “Song of Enlightenment” poem, Hyobong’s “Laud to the Beopgiam Grotto on Geumgangs Mountain” is even more unique.

Beneath ocean waves a deer clutches an egg in a swallow’s home.
Under the water, fish prepare tea in a spider’s home.
But in our home, who knows this?
Clouds fly to the west while the moon runs to the east.

The above is very much reminiscent of a surrealist poem. Hyobong has combined images that naturally occurred to him in a surrealist way to create a sense of defamiliarization. This type of defamiliarization uses unconventional and shocking new images that force the recipient to a new perception of reality that is both revealing and enjoyable. Compared to China or India, the Seon tradition has been much better preserved in Korea. While it is true that the Buddhist tradition in Korea has experienced setbacks over that last 500 years, still it has an unbroken history of 1,700 years. The cultural custom of Seon meditation practice is the most important element of Korean Buddhism.

The Seon tradition in Korean Buddhism is based on the practice of *ganhwa* Seon. This consists of using *hwadu*, or struggling with riddle like questions or phrases, to force the practitioner to break through the limitations of language in order to reach enlightenment. While wholly concentrating on phrases such as “What’s this?” “Dogs have no Buddha nature,” or “The big cone pine tree in the front yard,” the instant comes when one can apprehend the world that exists before language. All divisions disappear and the boundaries between “me” and “that which is not me” are erased leading to feelings of peace and happiness. And it is in that moment that the

poem is spontaneously born, albeit in a special form that transcends the normal use of language. The above poem is one case in point. It contains special characteristics including the automatism and free association of surrealism.

The imagination of the poet is intentionally deconstructing the linguistic order of our world of lived material experience. Put another way, this is calling our attention to the word that exists before language, to the originally existing world before the one constructed by a conventionalized cognition. This is a call to not become attached to hollow phenomena, but to experience natural life's eternal freedom.

Hanyeong was one of Korean early modern Buddhism's greatest scholars and sages. He was commonly called Seokjeon. Seokjeon means the "forehead of the stone," in other words "wisdom that shines like a diamond." The name "Seokjeon" was given to Baekpa (1767–1852), seven generations before Hanyeong as gift by the prominent Buddhist scholar Gim Jeonghui (1786–1856), also known as Chusa. The name "Seokjeon" was passed down by Baekpa to disciples from among his relatives until the time that a worthy successor should appear. Finally, one with such qualifications was found among the seventh generation of disciples.

Hanyeong was an exceedingly widely read intellectual versed in all manner of knowledge. He was a Buddhist priest and Seon master who had a thorough knowledge of both classical learning and Seon meditation. What is more, he was so proficient with *hansi* that he was very popular with the scholarly men and writers of the time. Hanyeong was very much admired by Han Yongun and they were "poetry friends" who enjoyed sharing with each other the *hansi* they had composed. In addition, he was a teacher of Seo Jeongju, one of the greatest Korean poets of the twentieth century.

Among the most important features of Hanyeong's poetry was that the style had a distinct yet subtle Seon flavor and that his experiences of travelling around the country and keenly observing the places he visited were reflected in his poetry. To him, poetry was

more than “a means to convey the truth,” it was a “vehicle” with which to approach the world of the Buddha using “strong feelings of devotion arrived at through love of the land.”

Arriving again at Birobong Peak

The blue clouds form a roof beneath my legs.

The vast ocean fills the glass with dark blue

The rugged mountains fling off blackness (ink) and the clouds
part.

The cranes grown thin on crooked, frost-tinged branches

The dragon's cry echoes through the weeping rock canyon.

I forget all the anguish that has flowed to me

And chant long while I sit in the bright emptiness.

“Climbing Again up Birobong” is a poem about ascending the summit of Geumgangsan. The feeling of reaching Birobong, the highest peak of the Geumgang range, perhaps, the most beautiful in the whole country, is expressed through this poem. This is not merely a poem describing idyllic scenery, but one that vividly portrays the vital energy of these rugged mountains to clearly convey a Seon flavor. The last lines of this poem bring together the previous descriptions of vitality and life into something of a teaching.

Confronted by this majestic scenery, the poet forgets the anguish of the material world and “sits in the bright emptiness.” “Bright emptiness” is an abstract notion, but it is through this that the wisdom of the sage can be expressed in ideographic form. “Emptiness” is the image of the temporality or transitory nature of the material world, while “brightness” represents the mind of wisdom that observes this world. This is a good example of the unique characteristic of Buddhist poetry.

4

Among non-monk poets, the one who wrote using Korean script (Han'geul) and had the highest level of literary achievement was

Seo Jeongju (1915–2000). Those poets who brought a distinct and powerful Buddhist flavor to early modern Korean poetry include O Sangsun (1894–1963), Shin Seokjeong (1907–1974), Gim Daljin (1907–1989), and Jo Jihun (1920–1968).

Including Seo, all of these poets studied at the Buddhist established Dongguk University (est. 1906). O Sangsun was originally a Christian adherent but converted to Buddhism after which he lectured at the Joseon Central Buddhist School and was well known for roaming the country visiting its various temples and practicing meditation. Shin Seokjeong immersed himself in the deep countryside where he composed highly lyrical poems. Gim Daljin was well known for his translations of traditional *hansi* and Buddhist Seon poetry as well as his many volumes of poetry with their distinctive Buddhist characteristics. Poems with a strong Buddhist flavor can be found in much of the early poetry of Jo Jihun. At the age of twenty he debuted with “Nun’s Dance” (*Seungmu*), which would also become known as his best work. *Seungmu* is the dance performed by Buddhist nuns. This is one form of traditional Korean dance wherein the worries of the mind are artistically sublimated through dance.

Seo Jeongju was the student of the famous scholar of Buddhist texts Hanyeong. In his youth, under Hanyeong’s tutelage, Seo spent some time preparing for the Buddhist priesthood, and while he did not pursue this course, that course of preparation would greatly affect him. Seo’s poetry was clearly enriched by the Buddhist influence among which was “the power of leadership of the teacher.” In this vein, the influence of Han Yongun, one of Seo’s seniors, was undeniable.

These two teachers (Hanyeong and Han) imparted to Seo, one of the greatest poets of the so-called “Korean script generation” (writers using Korean and not Chinese characters), the technique and the mind required to write poetry, along with the means of Buddhist awakening. While the method they used was not the traditional Buddhist practice of passing down knowledge from teacher to

disciple, they used a similar method known as *isim jeonsim* wherein truth is passed intuitively from the teacher's heart to the student's. In this way, the lineage of early modern Korean Buddhist poetry naturally took shape. Seo Jeongju respected these two teachers deeply and, in later years he translated their Chinese character poems into Korean script using his unique writing style. Han's poems were published in Korean in 1938 in a volume titled the *Manhae Han Yongun hansì seonyeok* (Translated Hansi of Manhae Han Yongun) and in 2006 the volume titled the *Seokjeon Bak Hanyeong hansì-jip* (Collected Hansi of Bak Hanyeong) was published using manuscripts Seo had compiled before his death in 2000.

For much of his career, a Buddhist worldview was prevalent in diverse forms in Seo's poetry. He actively used main Buddhist concepts, images, and symbols in creating a sophisticated style. This new style produced a fresh, unique poetic aesthetic that went beyond what had been possible using religious diction.

Seo Jeongju has been highly evaluated as a poet who created a new realization of the importance of how language is used. One of the main doctrines of Buddhism, that of the fateful or karmic interconnectedness of things, is prominent in his poetry but is rendered in simple and graceful language. His most well known work, "Beside a Chrysanthemum" renders the universal aspect of this notion of cause and effect into easily approachable yet graceful everyday language thus achieving an even greater effect than the classic moral teachings of the great Buddhist masters.

To bring one chrysanthemum to flower
the cuckoo has cried
since spring.

To bring the chrysanthemum to flower,
thunder too has called
from dark clouds.

Flower like my sister
 returned from youthful, distant byways
 of throat-tight longing
 to be seated now by the mirror,

for your yellow petals to open,
 last night such a frost fell
 and I could not sleep.

The chrysanthemum only blossoms after all the other flowers have wilted and the late autumn frost has descended. This flower demonstrates the resilience and earnestness of life as seen in the fact that it relies on other life forms to help it survive in and overcome harsh conditions to flower as a late bloomer. The harsh environment and the help received can be seen as “hardship” and the “surmounting” of that hardship. The symbols of these things are the owl’s cry in spring, the sound of thunder in summer, and the frost of fall. These images of nature are combined with that of “my sister returned from youthful, distant byways of throat-tight longing to be seated now by the mirror,” to create the enhanced attribute of universal human life. The notion of the chrysanthemum blooming with the help of things around it is an example of the basic structure of the Buddhist doctrine of dependent arising (*yeon’gi beop*). The concept of mutual dependency arises from the abstract idea that because A exists, B can therefore also exist; however, in this poem, through the sensual representation of the linkage of the chrysanthemum with the older sister, the notion of mutual dependency becomes apprehendable. There are some common sayings in the Korean language to the effect of “After suffering comes reward,” or “Doing one’s best can move the entire world.” However, such expressions do not appeal to an aesthetic linguistic structure and therefore are not as effective as poetry in eliciting an emotional response.

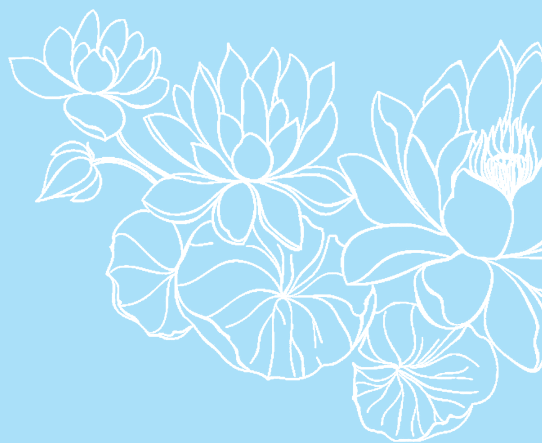
This poem effortlessly demonstrates the desire for completion

or perfection. The code for the linkage of the chrysanthemum, the sister, and the self is completion or perfection. Self-observation through looking in the mirror and the period of self-reflection while unable to sleep are organically linked and show a contraction of the process of approaching enlightenment. In other words the two things resemble each other. The principle at work here is that of metaphor.

Metaphors work by comparing an easily understood or common image with one that is more difficult to grasp in order to facilitate understanding. This is a basic element of literature but is also used in religious discourse. Grand truths are only perceived as truths when they are conveyed grandly. In this context, early modern Korean Buddhist poetry had the great fortune to be blessed with such outstanding poets.



I



Gyeongheo
1846–1912



Pen name Gyeongheo, religious name Seongu, family name Song. He is also called Song Gyeongheo. He was born in Jeonju, Jeollabuk-do, and embraced monastic life at age nine at Cheonggyesa Temple in Gwacheon, Gyeonggi-do. He studied the classics with Master Manhwa at Donghaksa Temple on Gyeryongsan Mountain, Gongju, Chungcheongnam-do. At twenty-three he began lecturing at the same temple. At thirty-two he crossed a village plagued with an infectious disease and he realized the impermanence of life. Therefore, he let go of his disciples and the people around him, shut the doors and began meditating, finally reaching a state of subtle realization. At thirty-two he inherited the line of Master Yong'am of Cheonjangam Hermitage, in Seosan, Chungcheongnam-do, and stimulated Seon discourse considerably. At the start of the year 1900, he visited Haeinsa, Beomeosa, and other temples, invigorating the spirit of Seon to the extent that he came to be called the patriarch of the revival of the Seon sect. However, in his last years he broke the monastic rules, and at age fifty-six he was observed living as a civilian donning long hair in Hamgyeong-do, at Gapsan, Ganggye, and other places; ergo, assessments about his character are conflicting.

In his circles, we find people such as Man'gong, Hyewol, and Hanam, among others, and their disciples form the mainstream of Korea's Seon sect today. He left a collection of his writings called *Gyeongheo-jip* (transcribed by hand by Hanam in 1931. Seoul: Seonhagwon, 1943). The nine poems introduced here have been selected from *Gyeongheo-jip*.

Song of Enlightenment

Hearing “Become a cow, no place for a nose,”
 All at once realized the three thousand universes* were my
 home.
 Sixth month, the road below Yeonamsan Mountain;
 Someone somewhere singing “Song of the Great Peace.”

- A song of enlightenment (*odosong*) is a realization poem sung by Seon practitioners when reaching enlightenment after sitting for a long period meditating on *hwadus*. It is a critical work that estimates the strength of the practice of each poet. Generally, Seon poetry of the *odosong* variety conveys the meaning of realization—which is inexpressible through common words—by distorting language poetically, and it is thus viewed as containing a highly symbolic and fresh meaning. Yeonamsan Mountain, mentioned in the poem, is located in Seosan, Chungcheongnam-do. At the foot of the mountain is a temple that is a branch of Sudeoksa Temple. This is where Gyeongheo sat in meditation with his disciples Man’gong, Suwol, and Hyewol.

* See *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.v. “trichiliocosm.”

Haeinsa Temple, Gugwangnu Pavilion

Elegant Tripitaka Pavilion facing the mountain;
 All past deeds nothing more than a dream.
 Pilgrim who swallowed then spat out all of creation
 Upon Gugwangnu balances the thousand peaks.

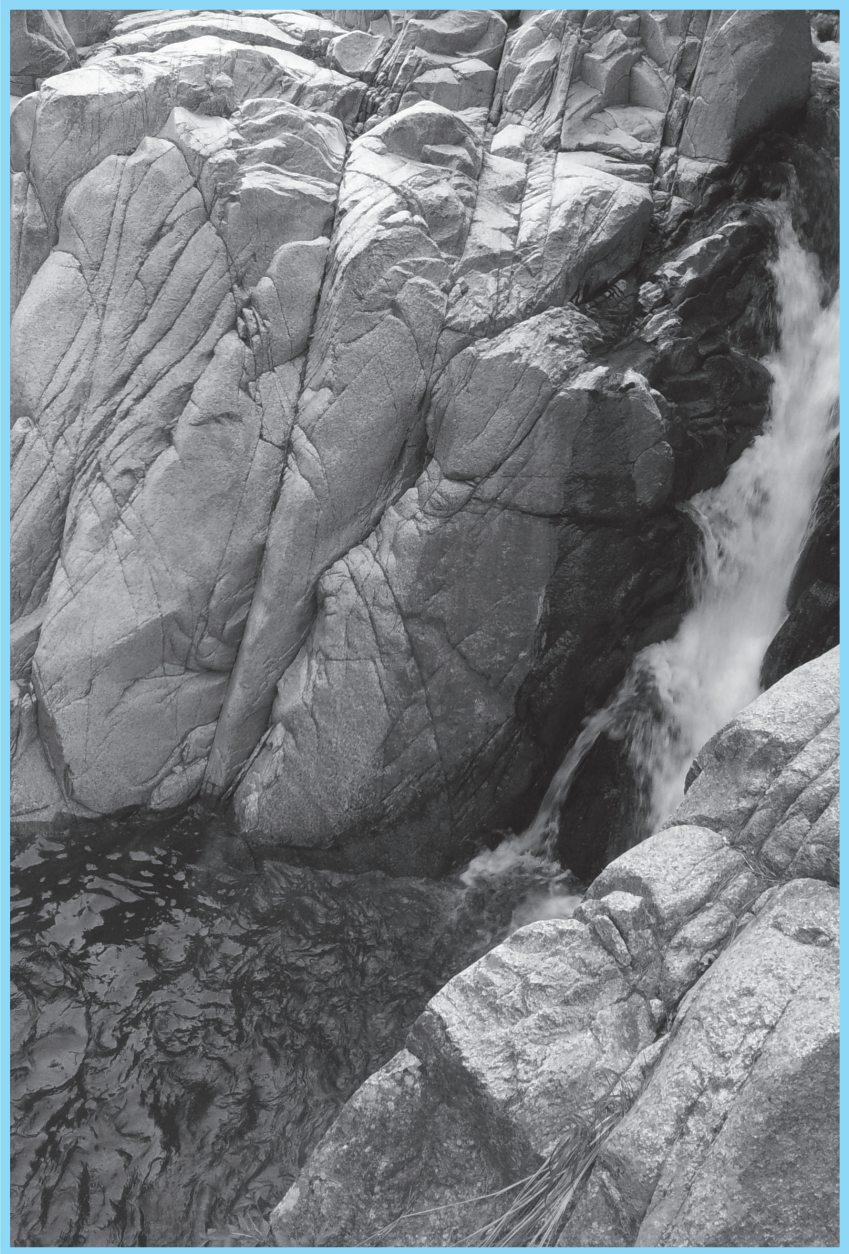
- Haeinsa is the temple where the author stayed in his old age, providing a powerful stimulus to the revival of Seon. This is where he guided monks and laypeople, without distinction, to pursue the practice of meditation. Gugwangnu is the name of a tower at Haeinsa, and it is located at the entrance of Tripitaka Pavilion (Janggyeonggak), where the tripitaka are preserved. To access Tripitaka Pavilion, people must first bypass the pavilion through a flight of steep steps. If one observes the view from above, he can see that the pavilion is surrounded by the peaks of Gayasan Mountain. Even if someone gazes downward from Gugwangnu, he can espy a series of peaks down the valley, which lends the impression of being surrounded by mountains in all directions.



Hongnyudong Valley, Gayasan

Which is water, which mountain?
 Mountain inside clouds, between water and stone.
 Beyond the border of The Great and Clear Illuminations,
 Opening my heart, I look and see the waters, mountains.

- This is the name of a small valley that encircles Haeinsa. If one wants to reach the temple, he has to follow this trail for quite some time, and in going up one can sense the sounds of water and the wind blowing among the trees, and in this place one can wash away the troubles of the outside world. The meaning of *hongnyudong* is a valley where autumn colors fall gradually, and it is therefore a highly evocative name. The rocks in the valley emit a clear sound when hit by running water, and, together with the trees perched atop the high cliffs, they form a breathtaking view.



Gongnimsa Temple

Walking deep, deep into the mountains
 Unto the temple, here, as in another world.
 Jade ridge rises from the blue mists below,
 Where the deep fragrance of the ancient temple is free and
 away.
 Short walking stick left hanging, I've grown older,
 The great work completed, but with whom shall I return?
 Ah how the stream rushes off through a life!
 Downhearted, I try, here, to rest on the moss-grown rock.

- Gongnimsa is a temple in Goesan, Chungcheongbuk-do, and it is a branch temple of Beopjusa. It is located in an extremely remote location deep in the Songnisan National Park.

Visiting Eunseondong Valley

Mountains and people; no words.
 Clouds follow the birds and fly.
 Where waters flow, flowers bloom.
 Content with only a little, I'd live here.

- The location of Eunseondong is unclear. It could potentially be identified with Eunseon pokpo Waterfall on Gyeryongsan Mountain. However, it is not at all important where the place is. It is instead important to understand its definition, that of “a valley where celestial beings are hiding.” The atmosphere of this mountain, where, according to legend, celestial beings hide in its remotest spaces, where mountains and people, clouds and birds, rivers and flowers are dwelling separately, nonetheless forming a unique backdrop, is expressed poetically in these verses.

At Bojeru Pavilion of Beomeosa Temple

Divinely spirited, enlightened traveller
 Leaving the world, climbing Geumjeongsan Mount,
 Tattered sleeve covering the whole sky,
 Short staff splitting the earth.
 Lone cloud rises from the faraway cave,
 White bird settles onto the long reach of shore.
 Is this not all someone's dream?
 Lean there on the balustrade, if only to be mind vacant.

- Beomeosa is one of the temples presided over by Gyeongheo, and it is located at the feet of Geumjeongsan, Busan. If one passes the three gates at the temple entrance and climbs the steep stairs, this building will be the first to be found halfway up the steps, at the courtyard.



At Bongcheondae Terrace

Forgetting the search for the temple entry,
 I played with a herd of deer deep in the mountains.
 Early in the day paid heed to Confucius and the king,
 Evening, awakened to Śākyamuni's teachings, renounced the
 world.

Deep mountain, spring arriving; strange birds are many.
 Sand spit, empty; day warms, few the clouds passing by.
 Elderly monk offers the rice, hospitality most sincere;
 Of admirable charity, all that need be said.

- Bongcheondae is one famous spot of Gayasan with Haeinsa, Hapcheon, Gyeongsangnam-do. It is an extremely steep incised rock, and the view from this rock is unrestrained and clear. Some say rain propitiation rites were held at this spot.



Climbing to the Nammullu Lookout

At the water's edge, the fog, a picture, opening.
 Leaning on the balustrade, mind at ease.
 Forest thick, houses all hidden.
 Washed in the rain, mountains stand forth one by one.
 Tasks all but wind and frost; and the poetry, still.
 Traveller's wine, cups, with a pledge to keep the mind free.
 Turn to the window, calm mountain peaks, wandering mind
 finds rest.
 Someone on the a reed pipe plays "Song of the Fallen
 Flowers."

- This name of *nammullu* (literally south gate) is usually found at the south gate lookout of a city; therefore, it is not possible to understand the location of this specific lookout. In the case of Ulsan-si, the lookout at the south gate was used as a guesthouse (mainly for traveling public officials). Perhaps it does not refer to the inn of a mountain temple, but is the name of a town guesthouse where the traveler is expressing his feelings of melancholy.



Nearby is a creek where the clouds shed their shadow, and it appears as if, climbing the lookout, the surrounding mountains would fill one's view. Moreover, poets would write their poems on the hanging plaques of the lookout as a way of sharing their poems with others. "Song of the Fallen Flowers" of the last line is a flute adage, an object endowed with a poetic relation that stimulates the sadness of the traveler.

In Farewell

To the one going on, I would give this poem,
As tears first fall.
Life's journey seems one hundred years,
And at the end one wonders, Where is home?
From a distant cave a bit of cloud emerges,
Sun falls at the long river's shore.
Trying to count the things of life on the fingers;
Far away, only the sorrows, the cares.

Yongseong

1864–1940



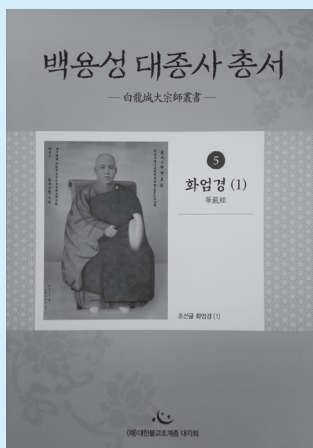
His pen name was Yongseong, and his religious name is Jinjong. His family name is Baek, and he is therefore also called Baek Yongseong. He was born at Namwon, Jeollabuk-do, and embraced monastic life at sixteen at Haeinsa. He studied both meditation and doctrine and inherited the tradition of Hwanseong. He experienced enlightenment at Bogwangsa Temple, in Yangju, then at Haeinsa, Songgwangsa, as well as at other temples, and continued to practice the faith. In 1907 he visited several temples and sacred sites in Beijing. In 1911 he witnessed the preaching of other faiths in Seoul, namely Protestantism, and was deeply impressed, and thus, he organized a Seon assembly and founded Daegaksa Temple in order to spread the faith decisively.

In 1919 he participated in the peaceful March First Movement against the Japanese occupation as one of the thirty-three representatives of the Buddhist community, and was jailed for three years.

After his release in 1921, he formed the Association for the Translation of the Tripiṭaka and translated Buddhist sūtras such as the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* into Korean. That same year, he founded the new sect Daegakgyo. In 1927 he founded the Hwagwawon on Baegunsan Mountain, Hamyang-gun, Gyeongsangnam-do, where the pursuit of meditation was practiced alongside land cultivation. His various initiatives were consistently directed at the

reform of Buddhism and its popularization, and this is the spiritual backdrop for the founding of the Daegakgyo. He left many works, among which are *Gwiwon jeongjong* (Returning to the True Religion), *Gakhae illyun* (The Sun over the Sea Enlightenment), *Susimnon*, and *Yongseong seonsa eorok* (Sayings of Seon Master Yongseong), among others, which have been compiled in the *Yongseong daejongsa jeonjip* (Complete Collection of Great Master Yongseong) in 18 volumes (Seoul: Jeil munhwasa, 1991).

After the founding of the Daegakgyo



Movement, he used to chant a few hymns during rituals, such as “Admonition Chant” (Gwonsega), “World First Arising Chant” (Segye gisiga), “Entering the Mountain Chant” (Ipsan’ga), “Chant of the Sentient Beings First Arising” (Jungsaeng gisiga), and “Chant of the Sentient Beings in Succession” (Jungsaeng sangsokga), five poems in all. Written in Han’geul, they follow the traditional Korean *gasa* style. Composed in a single style, they were adopted as Buddhist hymns.

The poems included here have been selected from *Yongseong seonsa eorok* (Samjang hakhoe, 1941).

Seon Master Yongseong: Self Portrait

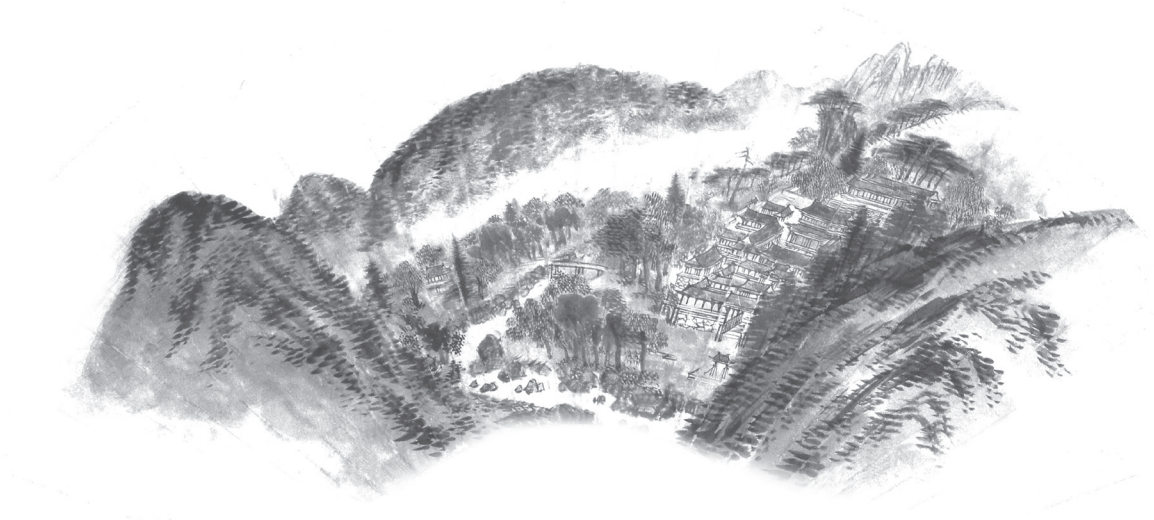
Mountains mountains, waters waters, your appearance.
 Flowers flowers, grasses grasses, your purpose.
 Neglectful comes, neglectful goes.
 Bright moon's illumination, clear winds blow gently away.

- This is from a series of fifteen verses composed by Master Yongseong upon viewing the portraits of several monks. This poem is the last of the fifteen, and he composed it after looking at his own portrait. Traditionally called “*yeongchan*,” or “laud to the image,” it is customarily written on the white background of the image and contains a reference to the personality and the religious potential of the monk. We can consider this a way of judging one’s own life.

Returning to Haeinsa Temple

Gayasan's name is lofty even in this land of green hills.
 Mind clear Buddhist practitioners, how many have come and
 have gone?
 High aloft, stones stacked one atop the other.
 Gathering close, cypress trees grow green against themselves.
 Infinite, white clouds enclose the whole valley.
 The huge sound of the bell pierces the skies.
 Turn the head and look at the mountain, growing tipsy on
 Flowing Mist.*
 Resting against a tree, turning to sleep, the sun already gone
 down.

- Haeinsa is located in Hapcheon-gun, Gyeongsangnam-do. It sits on the edges of Gayasan, facing Hongnyudong. The mountain valleys are deep, and the atmosphere is serene. It is one of the three greatest temples of Korean Buddhism. In Korea we have the expression “Three Treasure Temples” after the three Buddhist treasures Buddha, dharma, and saṅgha. The temple that represents the Buddha is Tongdosa, at Yangsan, Gyeongsangnam-do; the temple that represents the dharma is Haeinsa; whereas the saṅgha



is represented by Songgwangsa Temple at Suncheon, Jeollanam-do. This temple houses the collection of eighty-thousand tripitaka woodblocks carved during the Goryeo period. It is an important meditation center, and it is also famous for the many poets who leave their poems during their visits.

* Wine for the immortals.

Passing Along the Nakdonggang River

Geumosan Mountain, moon of a thousand autumns.
 Nakdonggang waves ten thousand *ri* along.
 Fisherman's boat, where has it gone?
 As ever moored in the reeds, asleep.

- The Nakdonggang is the longest river in South Korea. It begins in Taebaek, Gangwon-do, and crosses the Gyeongsang buk-do and nam-do to flow into the Namhae (South Sea). Geumosan is west of Nakdonggang, in the provincial park of Gumi-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, and it rises 977 m above sea level.



The True Teachings 1

Nor Buddha nor mankind do I know.
 Many years so, this drunken crazy monk.
 As time and no tasks allow, taking a long look.
 Beyond clouds, distant mountains, blue, layer upon layer.

- These two poems (“The True Teachings 1,” “The True Teachings 2”) are formal discourses held by the abbot at the Sumeru altar of sermon hall. This happens on the first day of the month as well as on the fifteenth day, at the beginning or end of a meditation retreat, on the birthdate of previous masters, or on special celebration days. During the sermon, at the middle or toward the end, the preacher condenses into a few verses the meaning he intends to convey. “The True Teachings 1” introduced herein is the abstract of a sermon read at the inauguration of the main school of the Imje sect at Daesa-dong (present-day Insa-dong), Seoul. “The True Teachings 2” is an abstract from a sermon read at Naewonam Hermitage, at the outskirts of Cheonseongsan Mountain (922 m), Yangsan, Gyeongsangnam-do.



The True Teachings 2

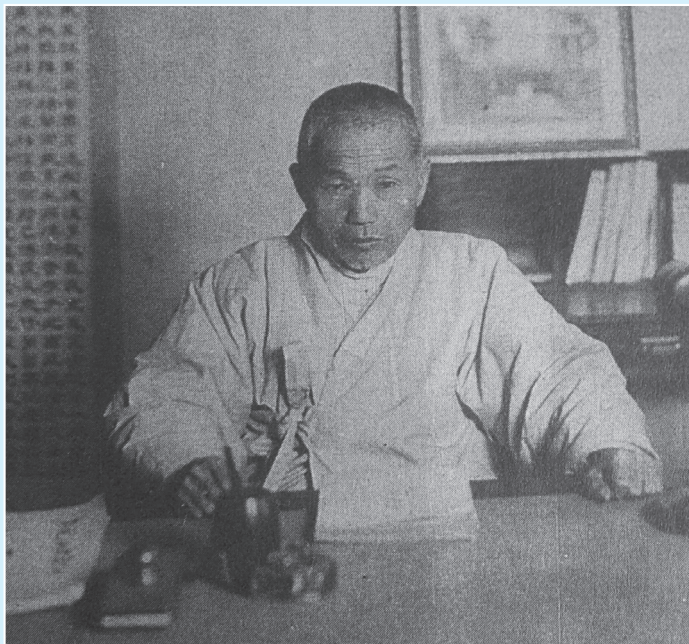
So many clear streams surrounding the temple.
Green stemmed, bamboos grow thick outside the window.
The sea wide, a bird flies over the skies.
Mountains high, sun emerges from a distant hill.

Without Title

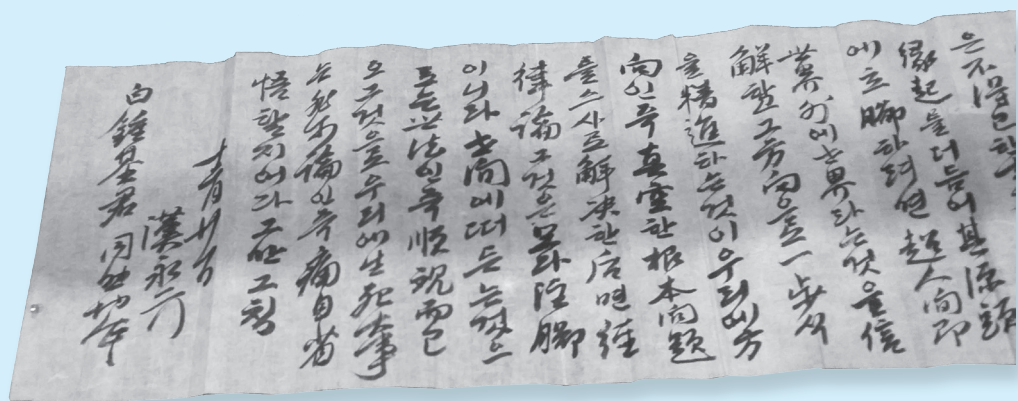
Knowing neither Buddha nor ancestor,
 I have nothing attained.
 Spring deepens, peach blossoms bloom,
 Clear winds come to Vulture Peak.

- When this type of title is used by monks in poetry, the object is not external, but the monk writes his sentiments and thoughts in the poem directly and with sincerity. In many cases, during the practice of meditation, monks find themselves immersed in deep thought and they express these thoughts through poetry. This poem was composed at Haeinsa, on Gayasan; *Yeongsan*, literally meaning “sacred mountain,” refers to “Vulture Peak” (Kor. Yeongchwisan), where the Buddha used to preach. Gayasan is compared here to Vulture Peak in India, where the Buddha used to preach the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Hanyeong
1870–1948



His pen name was Yeongho, and his religious name was Jeongho. His family name was Bak, and his name as a youth was Hanyeong; therefore, he was called Bak Hanyeong. He also used Seokjeon as another pen name. He was born in Jeonju, Jeollabuk-do. At age nineteen he embraced monastic life under the care of Reverend Geumsan, of Wibongsa Temple. In 1890 he studied the fourfold teaching course (*sagyogwa*) with Hwaneung of Unmunam Hermitage, Baegyangsa Temple, and inherited the religious tradition of Seoryu of Guamsa Temple, Sunchang. He began teaching at twenty-six at Guamsa, and then at Haeinsa, Beopjusa, Daewonsa, Hwaomsa, Beomeosa, and other temples, thereby gathering many disciples. He is praised for having a wide and in-depth knowledge of Buddhist literature. In 1908 he embraced the notion of reforming the Buddhist sangha and traveled to Seoul, where he became involved with the publication of periodicals and presided over Central Buddhist Specialization School (Jungang Bulgyo jeonmun hakgyo, later Dongguk University), acting as an important spiritual support for both Korean students studying in Japan and young Korean reformer monks, whose most representative figure was Han Yongun. He lectured on Buddhist sūtras in 1926 at Gae'unsa Temple, near Seoul, and his courses produced many poets. He traveled to famous symbolic posts of Korean patriotism such as the Geumgangsan and Baekdusan mountains, which had been encroached upon by foreign powers, and transmitted his knowledge of Buddhism to scholars including Choe Namseon, Yi Gwangsu, and Jeong Inbo, among



others. Among his works are *Seokjeon sicho* (Poetry Collection of Seokjeon) and *Seongnim supil* (Stone Forest Essays). The poems translated herein are the product of his travels around the country, and have been selected from the *Seokjeon sicho*, a work that includes many of his poems in classical Chinese.

On the Way to Yaksaam Hermitage

Juniper and yew, their shadows, refreshing even in May;
Fog and mist, bending, winding down the valley.
Sound of the bell sliding off every green rock.
Across the water, Bangnyeongam Hermitage; human voices
fragrant.

At the Yaksaam Hermitage*

Strong winds press across the green plantain, the Buddha
refreshing.
Above the spring leaping, the rains run on and on.
Record the names, see the very place where clouds rise.
Forest, flowers fallen like pellets of snow turn the traveller's
robes fragrant.

- “On the way to Yaksaam Hermitage” is followed by “At the Yaksaam Hermitage” in the original collection. The author was the abbot of Guamsa in Sunchang, Jeollabuk-do. This place is approximately half a day’s travel from Baegyangsa Temple at Jangseong, Jeollanam-do, and roughly the same distance from Naejangsa Temple at Jeongeup, Jeollabuk-do. The author began to study the sūtras (among which was the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra*) with the monk Hwaneung, who was abbot of Unmunam, at Baegyangsa, at age



twenty-one (1890), and he would later teach at the same temple. It is well known that when climbing up Baegamsan Mountain, alongside the road sit nutmeg bushes, and halfway up one finds the Baengnyeonsam Hermitage. From there it is possible to acquire a full view of Baegyangsa. This location is famous for being the meditation grounds of many Seon masters.

* Hermitage of the Healing Tathāgata Buddha, located in Jeollanam-do.

Han'gang River, Duposa Temple Poetry Association

Spring, river's waters surging; temple smoke clean.
 Such joy! So many striving to walk on together.
 Flowers once heaped in place now fly up with the heavenly
 maiden's spirit.
 Willows reaching down along the river banks tie friends' spirits
 together.
 Arbor shining in the evening glow as a friendly gull hides.
 Beyond, green fields, where spring's spirit comes to life again.
 Rooster's cry follows out after.
 Fishermen, firewood gatherers loading their boats, hurrying off
 to Seoul.

- The poems of Hanyeong are classified according to those composed when he traveled around the country against those that were composed at poetry meetings with friends who shared the same tastes. This poem was written during one such meeting held at Duposa Temple, on the Han'gang. Below the original title is an inscription denoting that the poem was written in March 1917. Duposa is not a well-known temple. However, the term



Dupo, or Dumopo, references a famous dock on the Han'gang, across the northern end of Dongho daegyo Bridge, near Oksu-dong, Seongdong-gu, Seoul. The name is said to have originated from the fact that the Han'gang and Jungnangcheon Creek intersect at this point. The location is deemed to be where one can easily spot Bukhansan and Dobongsan mountains in the distance, to the north of Seoul.

Junghyangjeong Arbor Poetry Association

Maple leaves falling, first snow reaches the mountain.
 Stepping, stepping, the walking stick does not rest.
 Chrysanthemum flowers hold their fragrance and fade;
 Startled, the geese are gone, leaving their footprints behind.
 Worn but warm clothes, who would not wear them as the ice
 takes hold?
 Not much flavor, yet still warm, wine under the leaf-bare tree.
 Lest this gathering disperse as well and be gone,
 I turn up the lamp, late though it is, face warm, red.

- The poems composed by Hanyeong during his travels and at poetry gatherings with his friends for consumption by the intellectual elite of his time were a way of digesting feelings of discontent, and their main medium of expressing their dissatisfaction was Chinese poetry. In this case, the place is also not readily identifiable, and we do not even have a list of people who participated in the gathering. Junghyangjeong's location is unclear, but it appears that it was a typical location where his poet friends would gather.

On the Road in Yeongpyeong, at the Home of Shin Wisa

Crossed three rivers, four, and entered the woods;
 Heard a dog's voice, a rooster's call from a mile or more away.
 On the pavilion's wall, in back, the cloak robe hanging;
 Landscape over the hilltop, the shade of paulownias.

Over the water the scent of rice plants, autumn clear sky.
 Listening on the balustrade, the wanderer, wine, heart full, full.
 Chance or fate, though recently met, so much like a dear friend.
 White clouds, hidden stone—all neighbors, so near!

- Yeongpyeong is located in Pocheon-gun, north of Gyeonggi-do. The title “Shin Wisa” refers to Shin Seokhui (1808–1873), a man who occupied several important posts as a literatus of the latter Joseon dynasty, such as minister of rites and governor of Hwanghae-do. He was a famous calligrapher, and he is said to have written the name plaque of the hall where the king used to work (Geunjeongjeon). Hanyeong was also well versed in calligraphy, and it appears that he composed this piece of poetry while passing the night in the study room of this noted calligrapher.

Entering Naejangsan Mountain in March

Head of the mountain, spring deepening; Naejangsan is here!
 Over thousands of peach blossoms, dusk is falling.
 O mountain seeker, can these be traces of the Buddha's steps?
 There is no way to make written record of the red mist's long,
 long path.

- This poem was composed by Hanyeong in March 1918, at age forty-nine. Naejangsan is located in Jeongeup, Jeollabuk-do, and it is famous for its autumn colors. Naejangsa Temple is located directly at the center of Naejangsan National Park.



Bogaesan Mountain, Simwonsa Temple

Red leaves all fallen, the mountain green.
 The temple buildings a six-fold opening screen.
 Light of the thousand buddhas on the cleansed earth;
 Shadow of two monuments falling into the stream.
 First snow on stones lined up like tablets;
 The sound of powerful winds heard beyond the pine trees.
 My gait, steps borrowed ahead of the season;
 Within the courtyard, chrysanthemum and the bright moon
 at their peak.

- Simwonsa is located on Bogaesan, Cheorwon-gun, Gangwon-do. According to tradition, it was founded in 647. It is difficult to discern the vestiges of its past because it had been destroyed several times by foreign armies. In modern times, it can be reached traveling from Seoul to Wonsan by train, and it was a famous hill station on the tourist course of Geumgangsan, but currently,



due to the separation between the South and North Korea, the course is interrupted at Cheorwon. From this point on, Geumgangsan is just seventy to eighty kilometers away. We believe this was an important stopover in the past, when monks used to travel from Seoul to Geumgangsan.

Stone Terrace

Stone peak, one hundred levels high;
 Across, the solitary cell of the monk.
 Along the northern ridge line, our land and theirs;
 To the south, the cloudy sea.

Beyond the sanctuary's space, a rainbow appears;
 Fallen stones, overgrown with moss.
 As in the old tales, at the well head
 The Buddha has assumed the lotus position.

- This poem is included in *Seokjeon sicho*. Considering that it follows “Bogaesan Mountain, Simwonsa Temple,” it appears that it refers to Seokdae’am Hermitage, which is connected to Simwonsa on Bogaesan. Seokdae’am was founded in 720 (King Seongdeok of Silla, nineteenth year) by the hunter Yi Sunseok, after he embraced monastic life. The story is told as follows: “One day the two hunters Sunseok and Sundeuk shot their arrows at a gold-shining wild boar. The boar fled toward Gwaneumbong (Avalokiteśvara Peak), shedding blood. They followed its traces until they came across a fountain, but could not find the boar. However, inside the pool they espied a stone statue of Mahāsthāmaprāpta with an arrow on his shoulder. At this sight, the two realized what they had done, repented,



and embraced monastic life to follow the Way. Afterward, the two, with a following of three-hundred disciples, founded this temple, and they used to gather stones in the woods, building stone terrace and practicing the Way on top of them. Therefore, the temple was called Seokdae'am (Stone Altar Temple). It is currently situated inside a civilian-restricted area, and is therefore difficult to find. In addition to Bogaesan, like the Geumgangsan and Odaesan mountains, this mountain is a spirit mountain that cannot fall into evil ways, and because many stories are related to the figure of Mahāsthāmaprāpta, it is widely revered as the prayer grounds to Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and is also believed to be his permanent abode.

Naewonam Hermitage, Suraksan Mountain

Deep fall, chill maple breezes brushing the hair under the ear;
 Straw sandals on, to climb the stone path is hard.
 Stream water's clear, sounding as of purple jade vibrating;
 Steep ridge stones arrayed like scholars in their hats.

Village smoke, mountain chestnuts, far from the human
 world.

Temple rice, clear bell, even in the forest is plenty and more.
 Seated on the mountain looking away, the setting sun seems
 close.

Raised up, my mind, my spirits know only joy at the prospect.

- Suraksan is located in Namyangju-si, 638 m above sea level, at the northeastern end of Gyeonggi-do. It is a rocky mountain that faces the Dobongsan and Bukhansan mountains.

Jogye pokpo Falls

Angry waves have snapped the rocks' ribs,
 Clear echoes in the high groves.
 Samyeon might be said to be artful,
 But how can we quarrel over the Manpok?

Many kalpas ago, so distant, so deep.
 A mirror, cleansed and polished, shows the heavens.
 Perhaps a connection to Vulture Peak? *
 I hear again the water's voice, under the moon.

- This is a waterfall on Baegunsan Mountain at Pocheon, Gyeonggi-do. Baegunsa Temple, which is believed to have been founded by Silla's national master Doseon, is located to its north.

* Also see "Without Title" by Yongseong at 47.

Encountering Rain on Birobong Peak, Geumgangsan

After all the difficulty of the climb, reaching at last the clouded
peak

Where rocks stare back down at people and the rains fall hard.
The silver sea is far and wide, not an inch of land anywhere;
Forgotten, that where I sit could be so very high.

- Hanyeong traveled, together with Yi Gwangsu and Yi Byeonggi, to Geumgangsan in July 1923, and revisited it in October 1924 with Choe Namseon. He ventured to Geumgangsan also at age seventeen and again at age twenty-three, this time following his master to study there. However, these two poems were composed perhaps when he was fifty-four (or fifty-five), when he visited Geumgangsan's Birobong Peak (1,638 m) with a few important cultural figures of his time.



Climbing Again up Birobong

Once again to the very top of Birobong;
Clear blue clouds rise from under my feet.
Wide sea turns the glass full and green,
Mountains splashed with ink rain, rinsing clear.
Thin frosty branch the crane bends down;
Sounding stone valley, a dragon's long call.
Forgotten, the anxiety at leaving all behind.
Seated I hear empty brightness, and I whistle long.

Sitting in the Bungnim, Thinking of Companions

Having made my way through this land, time to rest this
 walking stick.
 Lofty mountain, blue sea, all press their seal upon the eye.
 Engaging conversation, like a swallow's seeking a home.
 Those bees seeking flowers, whose difficulties do they sound?
 Quiet window opening, rain and wind; the lamp goes dark.
 With the bond of poetry, how should I yet follow?
 The moon, so bright, so clear, passes over the clear river reflecting,
 While all the way from the mountain temple we two hear the
 bell's voice.

- We do not know the location of Bungnim (North Forest). The word “companions” (*dongin*) refers to his poetry fellows. From the *Seokjeon sicho* we know the names of roughly ten spots where these gatherings took place. We are unable to identify the participants, but we know that sixteen people participated in the Sanbyeok sisa (Association of Coral Poetry), and their names are introduced in his poems. Here we have the names of Choe Namseon, O Sechang, Go Huidong, Yi Bosang, and others, including some of the most important figures in the scholarly, artistic, and media realms. These people do not necessarily bear a relation to Buddhism. Hanyeong was not only a Buddhist monk but also an educator, a man of letters, and an artist.

Late Fall

The geese fly far, clouds passing before the eye.
Bearing the cold, waiting for the moon; snow has dusted my
head.

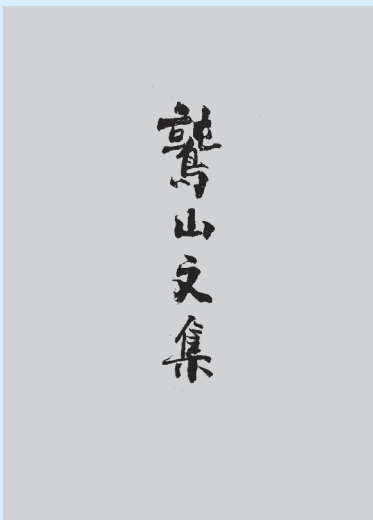
Rain, wind from the upper valley, autumn's voices;
Thatch-roofed cottage, so still, where a single chrysanthemum
rests blooming.

- This poem is composed of two verses. The one introduced here is the second.

Guha
1872–1965



Guha was his pen name, and his religious name was Cheonbo. He used to call himself Chwisan. His family name was Gim, and he was also called Gim Guha. He was born on Yangsan, Gyeongsangnam-do, where he embraced monastic life, at Tongdosa Temple, on Yeongchuksan Mountain, in 1884, at the age of thirteen. He became abbot of Tongdosa in 1911, and in 1917 he was elected president of the Commission of the Office of the Federation of Thirty Main Temples of Joseon as well as director of Central Buddhist School (Bulgyo jungang hangnim, later Dongguk University). In 1920 he founded, as abbot of Tongdosa, a journal entitled *Chwisan borim* (six issues in all). In 1949 he became head of the General Administration Institute of Korean Buddhism, and from October 1950 until his death he practiced the Way at Bogwang seonwon Cloister, Tongdosa. Sometime after his passing, *Chwisan munjip* (Collected Works of Chwisan) was published (Yangsan, Gyeongsangnam-do: Yongchuk chongnim Tongdosa, 1998). The poems introduced herein have been selected and translated from *chwisan munjip*.



The Swing

One moment soar as if reaching the skies,
 Suddenly behind only all at once to be ahead.
 Swing the cords, fly into the heavens,
 And who could know, suspended by a tree, what eyes first saw?
 Laughter sounds, gazing up, hands and feet swaying,
 Fluttering clothes like winds, like fog flying.
 People from all directions have come to watch
 On this one day, born to encounter the spirit master.

- This poem was composed following his poetic inspiration at Geungnak hoguk seonwon (Seon Institute of Supreme Joy and Protection of the Country), where he, alongside Meditation Master Gyeongbong, would enjoy spending time observing people playing on the swings. This is a Korean tradition where a rope is tied to two high pillars, and people sit on it going to and fro. People enjoy it in great numbers, especially during the Dano festival. Many poems by a great number of poets share the same title, and among modern poets Seo Jeongju's "The Song of Pushing the Swing" (Chucheonsa) is particularly famous. Every poem obviously has a distinct flavor of its own.

Man'gong
1871–1946



His pen name was Man'gong, and his religious name is Wolmyeon. His family name is Song, and he was also called Song Man'gong. He was born in Taein, Jeollabuk-do. At age fourteen he embraced the saṅgha at Cheonjangam Hermitage, Seosan, Chungcheongnam-do, under the guidance of Reverend Taeheo. He received the vows from Gyeongheo after a period of practicing with him. Afterward, for roughly ten years he stayed with Gyeongheo, studying the principles of Seon and inheriting the master's message. He revived the religious creed through his cultivation of the faith at Sudeoksa Temple, near Deoksungsan Mountain, Yesan, Chungcheongnam-do. In 1947 the Man'gong Stūpa was erected at Sudeoksa. His works have been compiled in the *Man'gon eorok* (Recorded Sayings of Man'gong) (Yesan, Chungcheongnam-do: Sudeoksa seonhagwon, 1968). The poems introduced here have been selected from *Man'gong eorok*.

Portrait

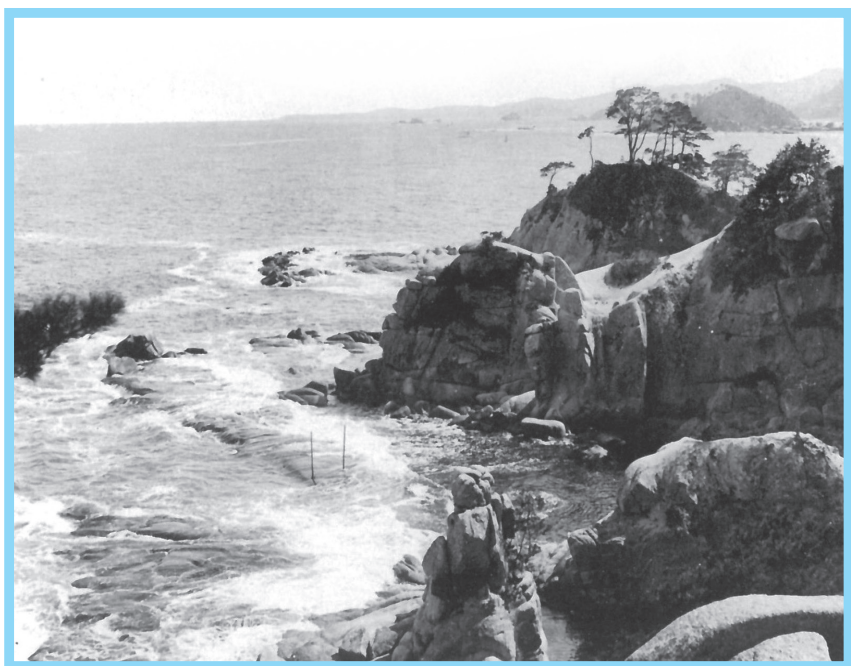
I left you not
Nor you left me.
You nor I born before
Neither can know “What is it?”

- This poem was written after he observed a portrait of himself. It contains the same character as the poem written in similar circumstances by Yongseong (see “Seon Master Yongseong; Self Portrait” at 39).

Passing by the Blue Sea

One who swallows down the multiple universe then spews it
 forth,
 Climbs aboard the Dragon-Horn boat, passing along the blue
 sea.
 Geumgangsán at the sky's edge; the Dharma Arising there;
 Vast reach of the river's waters, the Buddha's mind and spirit.

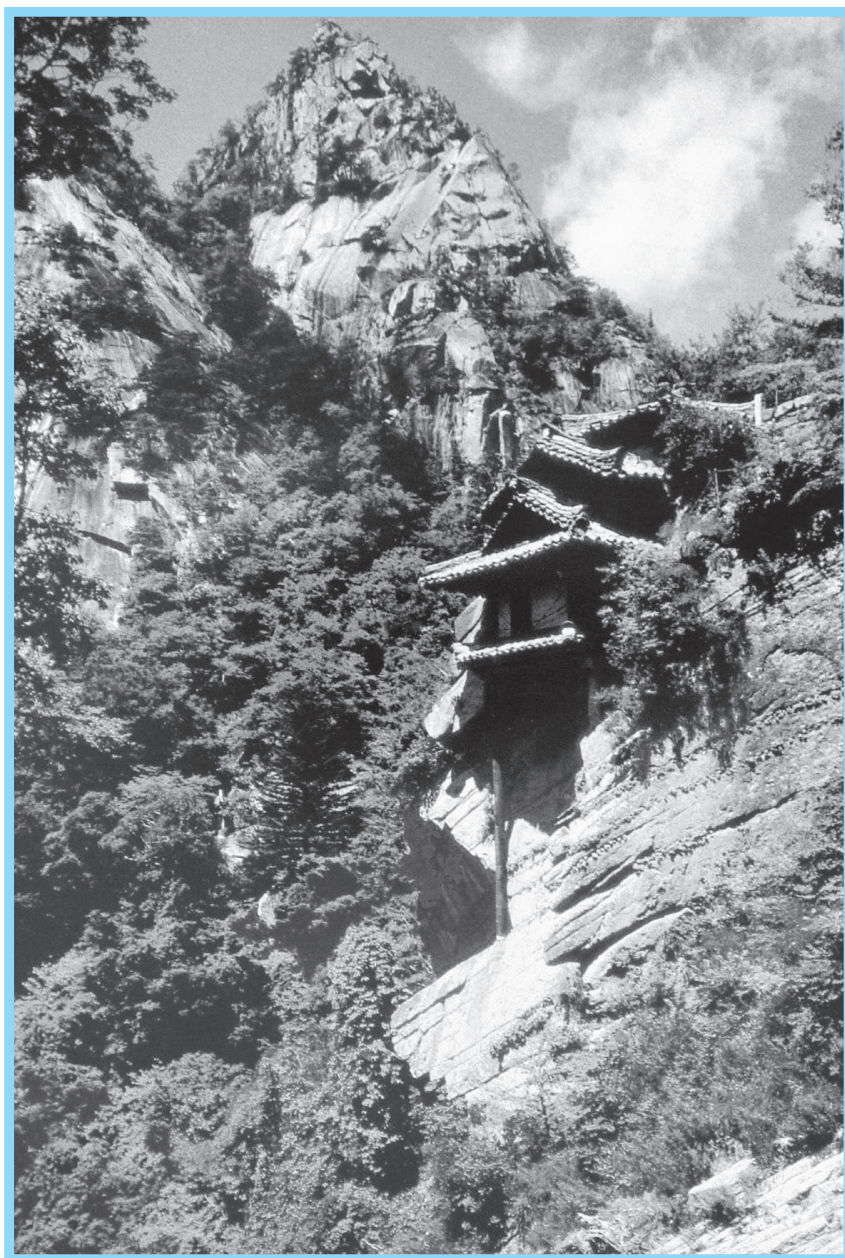
- This poem was perhaps composed when looking at the Donghae (Eastern Sea) from Geumgangsán. Geumgangsán is located in Gangwon-do and boasts the most breathtaking view in Korea. Well beyond its natural appearance, this mountain is also the object of religious faith, because since ancient times it has been considered the permanent abode of the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata. This cult has its origins in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, which states the following: “In the middle of the sea is a mountain called Geumgangsán. Since ancient times, the bodhisattvas have resided there, and now Dharmodgata, with his following of 1,200 bodhisattvas, preaches the dharma on the mountain.” Dharmodgata is called Dammugal bosal in Korean.



At Bodeokgul Grotto

Pilgrim, I give my walking stick no rest,
 Just now reaching the Bodeokgul.
 Though the traveller and temple master see not each other,
 Their closeness is that of water and the water's sound.

- This poem was composed during a visit to Bodeokgul on Geumgangsan. Bodeokgul is a small hermitage of Pyohunsa Temple, on Geumgangsan. It is currently designated North Korea's National Treasure No. 98. It was built dangerously on top of a steep cliff. It was originally a small grotto, and people say its base is still extant. According to legend, a doll personifying Bodeok (i.e., Avalokiteśvara) used to practice the faith in this location, which would later go on to become famous for the cult of Avalokiteśvara.



Gazing at the White Clouds

Do not claim that clouds are travellers free of wordly desires.
They come again, not forgetting the aged monk.
Know that the white clouds are not my friends.
But that distant village rooster's cry— There, my dear friend!



At Eopgyeongdae Terrace

Fifty years of washing karma mirror, this old man;
 No point to placing it, hanging it so high.
 One step, collide and the eyes of the four great sages open.
 Karma mirror! Nothing at all! Hear it!

- The original meaning of *eopgyeongdae* is karma mirror terrace; upon someone's death, in the presence of the judges of the afterlife, this mirror reflects the karma accumulated in life. In Buddhist halls, a round mirror encased in a round wooden frame is a common sight. It serves the function of conveying the message that good deeds are praised, whereas bad deeds are punished. On Geumgangsan sits a beautiful rock called Myeonggyeongdae, which resembles the karma mirror, and is therefore also called Eopgyeongdae. This poem is known to have been composed on Geumgangsan.



Ganworam Hermitage

One never close to Buddha as founder,
 What has led me close to these blue waves?
 Peninsular person, I am
 Led here naturally, to wonder.

- Ganworam is located on the seashore of Seosan, Chungcheongnam-do, and it was built on an island as large as the palm of a hand, called Ganwoldo. Great Master Muhak, the national preceptor under Joseon's first king, Taejo, achieved enlightenment while watching the moon on this small island, and therefore, it was called Ganworam (Moon-Watching Hermitage). At low tide, this island is connected to the mainland, and the hermitage is famous for its view, but it has long since fallen into disrepair. It is also known as the place where Gyeongheo reached enlightenment. Man'gong had it repaired in 1941, and people say that he inaugurated one thousand days of prayer to rid the country of foreign rule.



Fan

Paper no paper bamboo no bamboo.
Where does the clear wind come from?
Where no paper, no bamboo is,
The clear wind comes, goes on its own.

- The fan in East Asian tradition is not merely a means of moving air around. A long and light bamboo frame is first carved, to which white Chinese drawing paper is stuck, and it is then used as a type of drawing backdrop. Landscapes or calligraphy are then drawn on them, and they become real works of art, which at the time were exchanged among the cultured elite, thereby becoming an object of artistic appreciation among the literati class in East Asia.



To Bowol Seongin

Form emptiness to emptiness also empty.

Emptiness form all are empty.

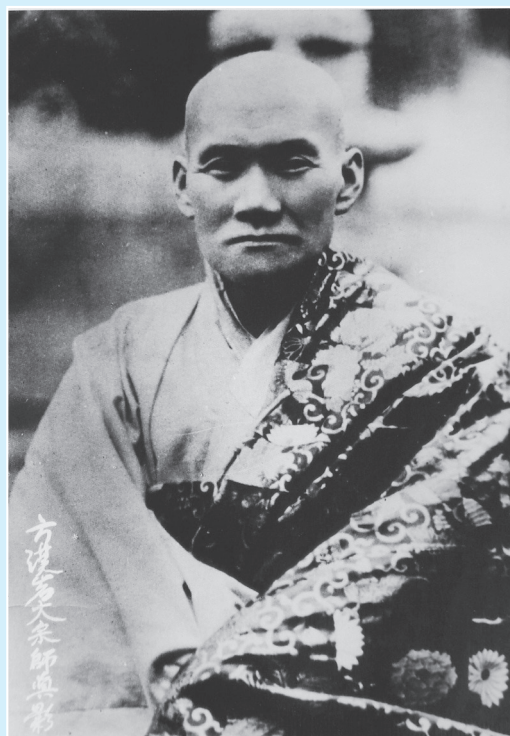
Say what this is.



Midwinter fierce and cold.

- Seongin (1884–1924) is known as a disciple of Man'gong who inherited the religious line of Gyeongheo. The first of the four lines is a circle, and it is called *wonsang* (circular form) or *irwonsang* (unitary circular form). Its meaning is that nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess, but instead constitutes a perfect and full state. It is drawn by Seon masters as a simple means to convey the essential elements of Seon doctrine. Among Seon practitioners, the *irwonsang* is often employed when instructing disciples regarding the representation of absolute true emptiness.

Hanam
1876–1951



His pen name was Hanam, and his religious name is Jungwon. His family name was Bang, and he was also called Bang Hanam. He was born in Gimhwa, in Gangwon-do. He embraced monastic life in 1897, at age twenty-two, under the tutelage of Reverend Geumwol of Jangansa Temple, on Geumgangsan. He initially studied the canon, but after reading Bojo Jinul's *Susimgyeol*, he became considerably awakened and dedicated himself fully to meditation. In 1899 he heard Gyeongheo's preaching, and after practicing meditation for a long period, in 1902 he experienced enlightenment after hearing Gyeongheo's speech on the principles of Seon. Alongside Man'gong and Hyewol, he is a typical Seon master who inherited Gyeongheo's line. In 1929 he entered Sangwonsa Temple on Odaesan Mountain, firm in his intention to spend the rest of his life there. He concentrated on meditation and revived the Seon faith. He became the first president of the Jogye Order from 1941 to 1945. The works he left behind have been compiled in *Hanam ilballok* (One Bowl of Records of Hanam) (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1995. Extended edition 2010). The poems, in addition to the explanations provided herein, are selected from *Hanam ilballok*.

Song of Enlightenment

Skies underfoot while overhead hills rise;
 Within, without, at the very center, nothing.
 The lame one who takes a step, the blind one who sees.
 Mountains north look only to mountains south, without
 words.

- This poem was composed by the master two years after entering the temple, at Haeinsa's Seon institute, in 1899, while he was strenuously practicing meditation. This is the first *odosong* (song of enlightenment), composed by Hanam. *Odosong* is a poem in which the author describes his enlightenment experience. At the time, Hanam donated this poem to his first master, Gyeongheo. This event occurred when Hanam was twenty-four and Gyeongheo was fifty-four.

Song of Enlightenment 2

Village dogs bark, always suspicious of strangers;
Mountain birds cry out in mockery.
Eternal enlightened mind, rising moon of the mind
One morning sweeps the winds of this world away.

- Seon Master Hanam chanted this song in 1912, after reaching enlightenment in the kitchen of Uduam Hermitage, on Maengsan, where he was kindling the fire. Of the two verses that compose the poem, only the second is introduced here. At the time, Hanam was thirty-seven. The one provided before is the first of the *odosong*; this strophe corresponds to his fourth enlightenment experience.



For the Venerable Gyeongheo

Chrysanthemum frost, apricot in snow all have passed.
 Being close and serving—How can there ever be time enough?
 Since ages ago, there has been the heart's bright moon.
 In this life so brief, what does it matter the promise to meet
 again?

- Gyeongheo is the mentor of Hanam as well as the figure who revived *ganhwa* Seon tradition in modern times. In 1903, after concluding his summer retreat at Haeinsa, Gyeongheo requested, through a poem, that Hanam join him on his journey northward, to the remote Gapsan. This is the response by Hanam to the master's request, where he refuses to express his feelings of regret.

In Reply to the Venerable Gyeongbong

In realms of the Buddha, numerous as dust, flowers of empty
sky.

A thought arises, just as quickly contradicts.

However many, the clusters of flowers, blue and pink,

How could they ever compare with the rootless bud, just here?

- This poem was included in a letter he wrote to Seon Master Gyeongbong of Geungnak hoguk seonwon at Tongdosa. Originally, it did not bear a title. In *Hanam ilballok*, the first line is quoted as the title. It is indicated as the title of the letter here.

In Reply to the Venerable Gyeongbong 2

Distant traveller forgets about going home;
 Potatoes sweet, herbs even more fragrant.
 The moon rises, each mountain peak is still;
 Wind blows, cooling every tree.
 At the mountain pass, white clouds, unhurried;
 Over the garden yellow leaves lie fallen and scattered.
 Every single thing shows its true form;
 Triumphantly, my spirit soars toward the sky.

- This is a piece of poetry Hanam sent as a response to Venerable Gyeongbong's letter. At the end, he wrote, "Your younger brother Hanam, October 17, 1946." He sent two poems along with his greeting. The poem quoted here is the second. The last sentence is a Seon simile: "All things show themselves in their true reality, and the nostrils aim at the sky." The nostrils in Seon phraseology indicate one's duty.

名阻情作任承 惠翰至
喜恒少何重

性體大言安中一俱為
若手作金可具祝行身
妙達之公不修安以是事
上茅提道所師之世信達
信室為希有身是勝之
便處道之乃言為註然身
然免為 言行賢徒必同
淨眼而身之何更受塗
法印一只能信名堅固不
退古取而己不為物化

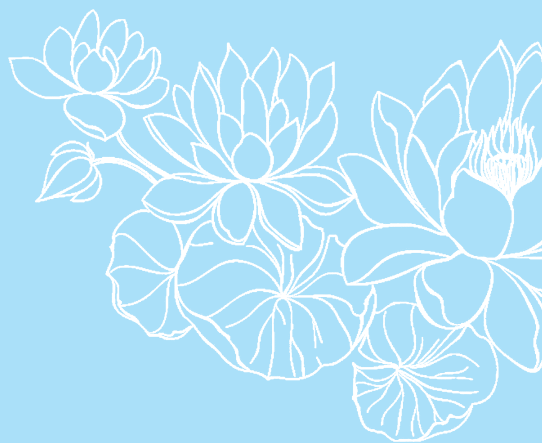
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言

鏡峰 謙師 道榻



II

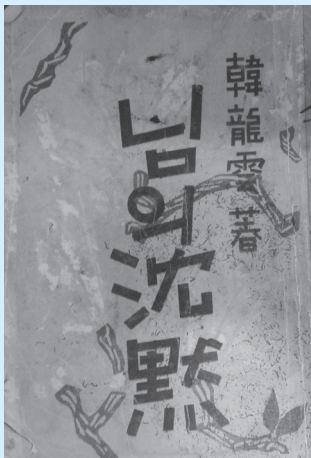


Han Yongun
1879–1944



His pen name was Manhae, and his religious name was Yongun. His family name was Han, and he is therefore known as Han Yongun. He was a poet, monk, and pro-independence activist. He was born in Hongseong, Chungcheongnam-do. In 1905 he embraced monastic life under the care of Reverend Yeon'gok, at Baekdamsa Temple, on Seoraksan Mountain. After entering monastic life, he concentrated on studying the canon and exerted himself in the translation of the scriptures from ancient Chinese to modern

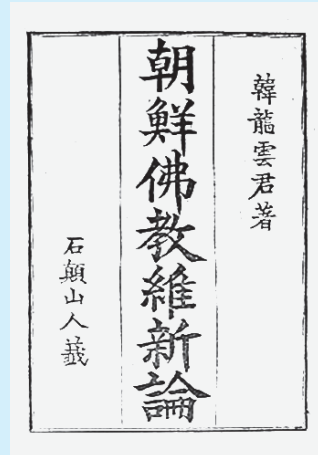
Korean in order to spread their knowledge among the people. In 1918 he published a Buddhist journal, *Yusim*, where he quoted a poem of his, "Heart," thus making his debut as a writer, mainly by composing poems and religious love songs that reflected his philosophical quest and the mysteries of the world of meditation as grounded on Buddhist thought. Among his works, we have *Nim ui chimmuk* (The Silence of the Beloved, 1926). The 1920s was a period when scores of literary journals were published. Paradoxically, he wrote his poems while rigorously practicing his daily religious meditation routine alone on the mountains, shedding sweat and exerting effort at every moment, but his poetry is considered the highest literary achievement of his time. He was arrested for reading the Declaration of Independence during the peaceful 1919 March First Movement against the Japanese occupation. He was sentenced to three years in jail, which he spent at the Seodaemun penitentiary. As a Buddhist reformer, he wrote *Joseon Bulgyo yusinnon* (Essays on the Reformation of Korean Buddhism, 1913), which



became the central theme of discussion among Buddhist circles of the time. From 1931 to July 1933, he became editor of the journal *Bulgyo* (Buddhism), where he oversaw the column Forum of Buddhist Poetry, through which the majority of Buddhist poets of that time came to be known. If we consider the Buddhist journals in his period, he was an important spiritual reference for Bak Hanyeong, who emulated him, and, as a Buddhist reformer, he was undoubtedly a spiritual pillar for all young scholar monks of the time. If we are to quote an interesting episode, no. 93 of the journal *Bulgyo* (March

1932) ran a poll asking who best represented Korean Buddhism. In total, 477 readers responded, having chosen Han Yongun (422), Bang Hanam (18), Bak Hanyeong (13), and Baek Yongseong (4). This episode provides us with a hint regarding the expectations of the Buddhist community and the popularity he enjoyed. The name of his old-age abode in Seongbuk-dong, northern Seoul, is Simujang (Searching for the Bull). People believe that he hated seeing the Japanese administration building that housed the Governor General of Japan, and thus, instead of building this abode facing southward, as is customary, he had it erected looking northward. The house remains standing to this day.

“The Silence of the Beloved” is included in the collection of his writings, *Han yongun jeonjip* (Complete Collection of Han Yongun) (Paju, Gyeonggi-do: Taehaksa, 2011) as well as in *Han yongun si jeonjip* (Complete Collection of Han Yongun’s Poems) (Seoul: Munhak sasangsa, 1989). The forty-eight poems introduced herein include thirty-two pieces of modern poetry from *Han yongun jeonjip*, vol. 1, and sixteen compositions from *Manhae Han Yongun hansi seonyeok* (A Choice of Manhae Han Yongun, Translated Poems from Classical Chinese) (Seoul: Yejigak, 1983). The translations from the original Chinese as well as the selection of poems were conducted by one of the most representative Korean contemporary poets, Seo Jeongju, and the annotations



he provides separately for each poem are of great help to the reader.

The poems composed in Korean are mostly written in the form of free verse. The last three of them, “Love,” “Spring Day,” and “Untitled 6,” occupy three lines and six phrases in the *sijo* style. Han Yongun wrote poems in Korean free verse, in the *sijo* style, as well as in classical Chinese. The poems in the *sijo* style are those that received less acclaim compared to his other poems. He quoted *sijo* poems also in the heading of the journal *Bulgyo*, but most of them are parodies of traditional *sijo* poems.

Cannot Understand

Whose footprint is it, paulownia leaf quietly falling though
 windless, empty air, vertically rippling?
 Whose is the face of blue skies that peer through clouds,
 vanished after the forbidding dark clouds of the rainy
 season have gone away with the west wind?
 Whose breath, the unknowable fragrance that flows over the
 green moss of the deep, flowerless forest reaching into the
 quiet heavens above the ancient pagoda?
 Whose song, that small stream that rises who knows where
 and ripples past jagged stones?
 Whose poem, evening glow that steps across the endless ocean,
 touches the boundless skies with jade-like hands giving the
 fading day its beauty?
 Burnt ashes become oil again. My heart that burns on, not
 knowing how to cease— Whose faint lamp am I?

The Silence of the Beloved

The beloved has gone. A-ah, the beloved, the one I love has gone.

Shattered the clear mountain light, walking along the narrow path to the maple grove, just broke away and is gone.

The old vow once firm and bright as a gold flower has become but dust and flown off in the soft breeze of a sigh.

The memory of the sharp first kiss that reversed the compass needle of my fate turned, stepped away, and vanished.

My ears went deaf at the fragrant voice of the beloved, and my eyes went dim at the flower-like face of the beloved.

Love it is true is human fate, and while we do not fail to prepare for parting when first we meet for fear of the leaving, parting comes without expectation and plunges the astonished heart into renewed sorrow.

Because I know that to make parting an endless source of tears would be to shatter love, I did move the weight of unbearable sadness to pour out its clear waters into new hope.

I believe we shall meet again after parting just as we worry at meeting that we shall part.

Ah, the beloved has gone away but it was not I that sent the beloved away.

The song of love that will not surpass its own melody wraps itself round the silence of the beloved.

靜의沈黙

靜의沈黙은 다 아아 사랑하느니라의沈黙은 것음
 다 후를산빛을 깨치고 단풍이나무 숲을 향하
 어 단풍은그를끌어서차마떨치고갔음다
 황송의꽃말이되고빛나던영광들은차디찬
 리를이되어서한숨의微風에날아갔음다
 다 단풍으로산뜻키스의遺情은나의運命의指
 針을들려놓고뿔길을쳐서사라졌음다
 다 단풍그대은나의말소리에귀먹고있다오
 나의沈黙에나를일었음다다 사랑도사람의일이
 라만날때에미리떠날것을일려하고정계하
 지아니한것은아니지만이별은뜻밖의일
 이되니를관개소는새로운술뜰에터진다
 그러나이별을슬데없는노들의源泉으로만
 들관만는것은스스로사랑을깨치는것
 인
 초월이단과말의근원을주었음술뜰의인
 음에서새술의정수박이에를이브었음
 다다우리는단과말때에떠날것을일려하
 고
 것과말이모두말해다시말한것을일려하
 다아아나의沈黙은다단풍을보내자
 오
 하얗을다다저곡조를쳐이그는사랑
 의노래를그대沈黙을일사(一掃)한다

My Path

In this life there are many paths.
 In the mountains, the stone path; the sea, the ship's path. In
 the skies, the path of moon and stars.
 On the riverside, the person fishing leaves footprints in the
 sand.
 In the field, a woman pulling wild greens steps down upon
 fragrant grasses.
 The wicked person walks the path of guilt.
 The righteous person steps down upon the sword's blade for
 justice's sake.
 The sun setting over the western mountains walks down upon
 a red glow.
 The clear dew of a spring morning slides down the flower's
 head.

For me, there are but two paths in this world.
 One path is to be held in the beloved's embrace.
 If that is not to be, there is the path to death's embrace.
 If the beloved's embrace is not to be, there are other paths
 more steep and perilous than death's.
 Ah, who set out my path?
 In this life, if not my beloved then none can.
 But if my beloved should lay out my path, why then lay out
 the path of death?



Artist

I am a clumsy artist.

Lying awake in my sleeping place, putting my fingers to my chest I sketched your nose and your mouth, even the dimples that well in your cheeks.

But I have drawn and erased a hundred times the tiny smile that lights up your eyes.

I am an anxious singer.

When people next door have gone away and the insects' voices grown still, I tried to sing the song you taught me, but shy of the sleeping cat I could not bring myself to song.

As the passing wind rustled the paper of the door I quietly sang along.

I have no aptitude to be a lyric poet.

I would hate to write of joy, sorrow, or love.

I would write only your face and your voice, and the way that you step.

And I shall write of your house and your bed, and the small stones too, in the flower garden.

Please Become One

Beloved one, if you go away with my heart then take me as well. So let me become one with you.

If that is not to be, then may you not give to me only the pain but all your heart.

And to me may you give the heart you have taken. So let it be, that I from you with you become one.

If that is not to be, then may you give back my heart, and give to me also the pain.

Let me have my heart and shall I love the pain as well that you have given me.

Ferryboat and Traveller

I am the ferryboat,
you the traveller.

You step down on me with muddy feet.
I hold you and cross over the water.
When I hold you, then shallow waters or deep or swift rapids I
do cross over.

If perchance you do not come, then exposed to the wind,
facing snow and rain from night into day I wait for you.
Once you have crossed over the water you do not turn to look
back at me.

But I always know of your coming.
Waiting for you day after day I go on growing older.

I the ferryboat,
you the traveller.



My Song

My song's melody has no center to its rise and its fall.
 It has no resemblance to melodies of this world.
 But it causes me no concern at all, that my song does not align
 itself with the melodies of this world.

It would not do for my song to be no different from every-
 day's.
 Melody it is that corrects the defects of a song.
 Melody divides up the unnatural song with human delusion.

Setting true song to melody is to dishonor its true nature.
 Just as it would be disfigurement to put make-up on the
 beloved's countenance, to put my song to melody would
 be to blemish it.

My song makes the god of love weep.
 My song presses the young woman's loveliness to clear water,
 rare to see.
 My song enters my love's hearing, becomes heaven's music,
 and entering her dreams turns to tears.

I know that my song crosses mountains and fields to be heard
 by my love so far away.
 When at last my song of a sudden falters and its voice cannot

be heard, I know clearly it has entered into love's quiet reveries and disappeared.

When I think of love hearing my song, my small heart is flooded with joy and beating, beating, draws out the notes of silence.

Life

Anchor lost, and wheel, life's boat adrift on the turbulent sea, golden land yet undiscovered, that dream, that single hope becomes compass, course, favoring wind, to cross the frightening sea whose waves on one side beat at the heavens and at the other, pound the land.

O love, may you hold with all your strength this small existence offered to you.

Though this small life be dashed from your embrace, from the sacred land of joy, pure and simple, life's fragments become noblest jewels, the pieces an emblem of love in your heart.

O love, endless, tree-less desert, bird with no tree to rest in, my life, hold it tight that it break into pieces.

And of a life broken in pieces, may you, may you kiss each fragment piece.

The Secret

Is it a secret? A secret, you say? What secret could I keep?
Though I would have kept the secret from you I could not
keep the secret so pitilessly.

My secret went by tears and came into your sight.
My secret went by sighs and came into your hearing.
My secret went by my beating heart and came to your touch.
And one part of the secret became this red intention and
entered your dream.
And at the very last is one secret. But that secret, like the
voiceless echo, cannot be spoken.

Dream and Worries

Night's worries so prolonged,
I came to think they were as long as dreams.
But on the road to see my love,
I awoke not halfway there.

And dreams at dawn, so short!
I thought worries too might be so short.
I do not know when an end will come
to such worry leading to worry.

If you too, love,
should have both dreams and worries,
how much better to let
worries become dream, and dream worries.



「？」

Startled from dim drowsiness by the sound of your footsteps,
struggling to lift my heavy eyelids, I opened the window
and looked out.

A shower of rain driven by spring winds passed the mountain
by, while the sound of raindrops rose in waves from the
plantain leaves.

Feeling collides with reason, the demon in human form or the
angel in beast form, appearing and then vanishing.

In the quavering melody of the beloved's song the young ape
sleeps only to be awakened from its sad dream by the
sound of flowers falling.

The lonely lamp guarding the dead of night, its bead-like
flower cannot be held but falls, quietly.

Burning in the mad fires, the piteous spirit seeks a new realm
in the northern-most pole of despair.

O desert flowers, O full moon of the last day of the month, O
visage of the true beloved.

Not a rose, my lips, their unpolished white jade has not
touched yours with their smiling turn.

On the window pressed by the stationary moonlight, the
shadow of a cat licking its fur, up and down.

Ah, then, is it the Buddha? Or demon? Is the world but dust,

or golden dream?
Small bird, O tiny bird asleep upon the slim branch swaying
in the wind.

I Saw You

After you left I could not forget you.
The reason is not so much of your making but my own.
Having no land to plough nor plant, I have no autumn
harvest.
Nothing for the evening meal, so I went to the neighbor's
place to borrow a potato or millet. The owner told me,
“Beggars, they have no character. People without character
have no souls. To assist you would be a sin.”
As I heard his words and turned to leave, through the tears
welling up, I saw you.

I have no home, and for this and other reasons I have no
census register.
“Unregistered means without rights. Without rights, without
chastity,” the commander was saying, about to violate me.
I resisted, and as my rage against men turned on its own into
sadness, just then I saw you.
Ah, true, I knew only of morals, ethics, or the law that they
are but smoke that rises with the ceremonial offering, at
worship of the sword and of wealth.
Shall I then accept the love of the eternal, make a stain of ink
on the first page of human history, take a drink? And as I
hesitated, then it was I saw you.

Obedience

Others say they love freedom but I love obedience more.
It is not that I do not know freedom but I long to submit to
you.

Longing to submit, submission is far sweeter than lovely
freedom. This is my happiness.

But if you tell me to submit to another, that I cannot obey.
Obeying another, I cannot obey you.

Patience Please

There is no way not to leave you. My love, please endure my
parting from you.

As you cross over the hill, do not look back at me. My body
will be entering one grain of sand.

My love, should there be no way to be patient at parting, then
be patient at my dying.

My life ship is about to explode and sink in a sweaty sea of
shame.

My love, let your breath melt it so it may sink away and
vanish. And may you laugh.

My love, with no way to bear my death, do not love me. And
let there be no way that I may love you.

As my body withers away leaving no trace at all, I shall vanish
within you.

My love, endure that we become one, in your love and mine.
And so love me not as you would bring me not to love
you. O my love.

First Kiss

Do not. Kindly, do not.
Seeing, do not pretend not to see.
Do not. Please do not.
Lips closed, please do not speak with your eyes.
Do not. Kindly, please do not.
Smiling in heated love, please do not weep in cold shyness.
Do not. Kindly do not.
Alone, picking the flowers of the world, do not shake with
 violence.
Do not. Kindly, please do not.
A smile dances on the island of my fate. Do not turn suddenly
 shy.

The Seon Master's Sermon

I listened to the Seon master's sermon.

“You are bound in the chains of love. Break those bonds and be free of sorrow. Then will your minds be glad.” So he spoke, in his loud voice.

That monk is rather a fool.

To be tied in love's bonds may be painful, but to break love's bonds is more painful even than death, this I know.

To tighten love's bonds is to be freed.

True deliverance is thereby found in being bound.

My love, worried the ties binding me to your love may be weak, I have redoubled the bonds of my love for you.



The Flower Knows First

I left their old home and found spring in another village.
Dreams follow once in a while, follow spring winds to the
ancient temple place.
My walking hidden in green, the green of the grasses, far away
where my shadow goes.

On the roadside seeing flowers I did not know the name for,
I sat down and thought at least I might forget my cares.
Morning dew had not yet dried on the flowers, but the
flowers,
they knew first that it was only my tears falling.

Hymn of Praise

Beloved, you are gold tempered one hundred times over.
Receive heaven's love, till the mulberry's roots turn to coral.
Beloved, O love, you are the first step of morning sun.

Beloved, you know righteousness is heavy and that gold is
light.
Plant blessing's seeds in the beggar's poor earth.
Beloved, O love, you are the secret voice of the old paulownia.

Beloved, you love peace, hope, the spring.
Become a Bodhisattva of Compassion, shed your tears on the
hearts of the weak.
Beloved, O love, you are spring wind on a sea of ice.

Called “Dream”

If love's bonds be called “dream,”
deliverance from worldly attachment is a dream as well.
If laughter and tears be called “dream,”
then attaining detachment is also a dream.
If the Buddha's teachings are but a dream,
I shall find immortality in love's dream.

Cause and Effect

You break an old pledge and you go.
How true was your promise? I cannot believe the promise
broken, the departure to come.
I understand, I do, that to break the promise and go is but to
return by an earlier promise. That is the unbreakable law of
cause and effect.
Before your lips have dried after the parting kiss, I shall be
awaiting your return and kiss.

But I know that in leaving it was not your purpose to break
the old promise by your parting.

Even should you never break off the separation now, my lips
that first touched yours in parting cannot again be pressed
to another man's lips.

Inverse Proportion

Is your voice then silence?
When you are not singing your song, I do hear the melody of
your song clearly.
Your voice is silence.

Is your face then darkness?
When I have closed my eyes I see your face distinctly.
Your face is darkness.

Is your shadow then illumination?
Your shadow lights upon the dark window after the moon has
set.
Your shadow is illumination.

Wherever

Up in the morning, when I pour the water into the basin to
wash my hands and face, you become the ripples that hold
the shadow of my unhappy child face.

When I walk the flowering mountain to be free of my cares,
you become the spring wind moving among the flowers,
filling my anxious heart with their scent.

As I lie in my sleeping place unable to wait for you any longer,
you become a dark, quiet light, and fondly you cover over
my awkwardness.

You can be seen everywhere, so I closed my eyes and sought to
find you above the clouds and under the sea.

You become a smile that hides away in my heart, who kisses
my closed eyes and playfully asks, "Do you see me now?"

Tears

Among all the people I've seen, there's not a one so crazy as the
one who said tears are pearls.

That one is crazier than whoever said that blood is ruby.

If that isn't the elderly spinster who wanders the dark
crossroads after love has failed, then it must be the words
of some deformed poet.

If tears are called pearls, then setting aside the ring the beloved
gave as a keepsake I shall bury all that is called "pearls" in
the dust.

I have never seen a jade belt decorated with tears.

I have never seen the wine of tears being drunk at a celebration
of peace.

Among all the people I have seen, there is none so foolish as to
say that tears are pearls.

But no, the tears of the beloved's giving are pearls.

Until my shadow leaves my body I shall weep pearl tears for
the beloved.

Ah, day after day I listen as the jade flute of tears sighs its
breath away.

My tears, a hundred, a thousand streams they may be, every
drop become creation.

Beads of tears, spring wind of sighs, love's sanctuary—awe-
inspiring, matchless treasure!
Oh, and when will space and time fill with tears, love's
universe fulfilled?

Love's Face at Parting

The scent of flowers falling is most beautiful.
The setting sun's light is loveliest.
The melody of the song that tightens the throat is exquisite.
The face of the beloved leaving is most lovely of all.
The face of the beloved after parting, a vision so lovely I
cannot see it without weeping.
Love's face upon leaving, I shall grave upon my eyes.

Though it may seem cruel, how love's face causes me to weep,
there is yet no way to make my heart gladden that I may
love the beloved.
If perchance that beautiful face were gone from my eyes
forever, that would be yet more painful than these tears.

Upon Reading Tagore's "The Gardener"

Friend, my friend, you cause me to weep like the flowers
blossoming on a loved one's grave.

Friend, you gladden me like love suddenly met on a night in
the empty desert, not even birds near.

You are the fragrance of ancient bones breaking forth from the
grave and reaching toward heaven.

You are the song of hope, gathering flowers fallen to make into
a wreath and drape upon the boughs of the tree.

Friend, my friend who weeps over love broken.

Tears cannot bring fallen flowers to bloom again on the old
boughs.

Do not scatter tears on the fallen flowers but on the dust
beneath the tree they fell from.

- Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was an Indian poet who received the Nobel Prize in 1913 for his *Gitanjali*. His great contribution concerns the introduction of the gist of Indian literature to the West and of Western literature to India. He wrote the poem "The Lamp of the East" to commemorate the founding of the newspaper *Dong-A Ilbo* (April 2, 1924). This strophe is from his poem:

Friend, my friend.
 However sweet the fragrance of death, one cannot kiss the lips
 of white bones.
 Do not spread the golden web of song there on the grave, but
 plant instead the flag stained with blood.
 The spring wind yet tells of how the poet's song moves the
 dead earth.

My friend, I am ashamed. When I hear your song, shame
 overwhelms me.
 That is because I hear the song alone, far from the love I left
 behind.

In the golden age of Asia
 Korea was one of its lamp-bearers,
 And that lamp is waiting to be lighted once again
 For the illumination in the East.

The poem's translation by the poet Ju Yohan (1900–1979) evoked strong emotions among Koreans, who were then under Japanese occupation, although he is not believed to have merely expressed feelings of displeasure of vanquished peoples under foreign domination.

GITANJALI

(SONG OFFERINGS)

BY

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

A COLLECTION OF PROSE TRANSLATIONS
MADE BY THE AUTHOR FROM
THE ORIGINAL BENGALI

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
W. B. YEATS

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1913

Embroidery's Secret

I finished the sewing of your clothes.
I sewed your vest and gentleman's suit and your night clothes.
Only the embroidery of this small pouch— That is the one
thing I have not done.

That pouch has been much stained by my fingers
because I sewed and then set aside, sewed it and set it aside.
Others think it is because I have no skill at sewing, but I alone
know the secret reason.

When my heart hurts, when it aches, if I work at the
embroidery on the pouch, my heart follows the golden
thread, entering the needle's eye, and the clear song that
emerges from the pouch becomes my very heart.

There is no treasure in the world that might be tucked into
that pouch.

This small pouch—I have not finished embroidering, not
because I do not like embroidery, but because I do.

Flower Fight

When it was time to plant the azalea you said to me, “Let’s have a flower fight when they bloom.”

But now the flowers have bloomed and started to wither, have you forgotten your old pledge, and is that why you do not come?

I hold a red’s stem in one hand, in the other hand a white one’s, and letting the flower fight happen, the winning one is yours, the loser mine.

But if we were to meet and have the flower fight, I would take red, and you would have the white’s stem.

And so you would always lose to me.

That’s not because I like to win but because you always like to lose to me.

Winning all the time, I can tease you for the prize.

Then you will smile and plant a kiss on my cheek.

The flowers have blossomed and started to wither. Have you forgotten the old pledge, then? Is that why you do not come?

Come to Me

Please come to me, it is time for you to come. Hurry.
Do you know it is time for you to come to me? Your time to
come to me is when I am waiting.

Come to my flower bed. The flowers are blooming in my
flower bed.
And if there is someone searching for you, then enter into the
flowers and hide.

I shall be the butterfly and settle down upon the flowers where
you hide.
There shall be no way for the person searching for you to find
you.

Come to me, come. It is time. Hurry.

Come into my bosom. In my bosom is a gentle heart.
And if there should be someone chasing you, then lower your
head and be hidden in my heart.
My heart is soft to the touch, soft as water, but against danger
to you it can be a sword of gold, a shield of steel.
Though my heart be a petal trampled by horses, you cannot
fall from my heart.
Someone coming to seek you cannot touch you.

So come to me, come quickly. It is time.

Come into my death. For you, death is always ready.
If there is one who seeks you, stand behind my death.

In death, omnipotence and emptiness are one.
Love of death is eternal and it is infinite.
Facing death, battleship and cannon are but dust.
Facing death, the weak and the strong become friends.
No one chasing you will be able to seize you or hold you.

Come, then, it is time. Hurry. Come to me.

Half Moon and the Girl

Old willow new branch,
light trembles, breaking apart
through the clouds; the half moon.

Lovely girl playing in the garden
calls out, "Over there, that's my comb!"
Scuffing her heels, she steps
lively, raises her fern-frond hands,
skips, leaps about, chasing the moon.

Chasing and never catching,
looking aside, raising her hand
she strokes her doll's hair
and whispers
"Sleep now. Sleep."

Love

Deeper than spring's waters,
higher than autumn mountains.
Brighter than the moon,
more solid than stone.
There is one who questions love,
so I describe it this way.

Spring Day

1

Warm light on my back
 reading the sūtra* and
 flower comes,
 signs “flower.”
 The letters there, under “flower,”
 what is to be made of reading?

2

Spring night so still,
 I settle down, light the incense,
 wooly dog dreams a dream,
 spider weaves its threads.
 Somewhere, a cuckoo’s voice
 carries over the mountain.

* In the original text, the author quotes the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*.



Untitled 6

In the sun on the ox's back,
a child playing the reed pipe.
Your ox has no burden,
so let him carry my troubles.
Loading them up was not hard,
but there is no place to set them back down.

Cold Solitude

1.

The days now colder, I close the door;
Mountains, waters, where are they now?
Snow and wind fill the house while the silence is still as it was.
As if drinking a cup of spring wine and seeing a fallen plum,
I am drunk on the flavor of meditation.

2.

Lately the days grow cold and more cold.
What blocks what's ahead, silver mountain! iron wall!
Body that would climb the sky is not the heron;
Sadly the mind's clouds do not open.

- “Cold Solitude” and all the following poems are in Classical Chinese. They have been selected from *Manhae Han Yongun hansì seonyeok*.

Thoughts of Home

My river-land home, two hundred fifty miles;
My writing, thirty years.
Mind may try to reach far, but this monk's hair is short.
Wind, snow, driven to the sky's edge.

Dawn

Far forest, fog settling like the willows;
Old tree, snow fallen, like flowers blooming.
Is this not then a poem of nature?
This harmony of the heavens, no end to it at all.

The Old Idea

Night clear, lean on my sword and stand.
Thousand autumns, emptied; only the frost and snow.
Red flowers, green willows, just snap them off?
Turn the head, turn and face the spring wind.

Seeing as Feeling

Touch the snow where sunlight lingers;
Far-away grove, spring-like mind passes.
Starting up suddenly from illness at the mountain home;
Feelings, new, rising up, too glad to manage them.

Unoccupied

Deep mountain, distant dream sent on.
Cliff temple, thoughts going far to an end.
Cold, the clouds, the clear mountain waters;
A new moon crosses over the hill.
Landscape so vast, I have forgotten "I";
Forgetting even the body that is or was there.

Thoughts of Journey

For one year I could not get home;
Spring came, started out on the journey.
I see the flower, but the mind does not bloom;
But deep into the mountain, as I enter, I see!

Distant Thought

South, where chrysanthemums bloomed; north, where the
wild geese;
Sitting, today, aimless thoughts come . . .
If the snow stops, landscape, moonlit lovely;
Trees and grass bend, resounding like bells in the wind.
The border, beyond a thousand *ri* the plains turn dream;
the heaven's end, pavilion, body lying inside!
Thin, cold as the bamboo.
My soul's realization so far away, yet so far!

Spring Dream

Dreams, like fallen flowers; fallen flowers, dreams.
If human somehow becomes butterfly, does butterfly then
become human?
Butterfly's flower, the human dream, the same.
Gone together, after the sun; but let there be one more spring,
one more.

Clear, Clean Song

Water, stream far away from the lone flower.
At the temple bell, the bamboo groves grow chilly.
Even in constant meditation, how to know, ever?
Should not all things seem as if for the first time.

Feelings Upon Seeing a Fallen Plum

A life of one hundred years in the universe?
Plum blossoms have bloomed in the temple as before,
But is eternity such as this? I would ask.
Fallen flowers, half the pages of the sūtra* I have read.

* In the original text, the author quotes the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*.

Oseam Hermitage

There are clouds, there is water; such neighbors near.
 Bodhi, supreme enlightenment, may be forgotten, so much
 more the benevolence.
 Market far distant, let pine tea serve as medicinal.
 Mountains so deep, birds and fish encounter suddenly the
 human.
 However little work to be done, it is not true stillness.
 Not wavering from first meaning is to realize true tranquility.
 The rains may fall but the plantain still, still as it is.
 Why hold back, then from hastening out into the dust of the
 world?

- Oseam is the name of a small hermitage belonging to Baekdamsa, in the Seoraksan National Park. It is famous because figures such as the famous poet of the Joseon period Gim Siseup (1435–1493), Seon Master Bou (1509–1565), and Han Yongun have stayed there. The founding story is related to the tale of the pure heart of a five-year-old boy as well as to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. This story is so moving for people that it has resurfaced as a children's story, as a movie, and as an animation.



Snow Night

Surrounding the prison, only mountains, snow, like an ocean.
In the iron hard bed become cold as ash, and dream.
No way to close the steel window
As somewhere the night's bell sounds.



Thoughts in Prison

Night, of thoughts not a trace;
Moon rises, beams through the steel-barred window.
Joy, sadness, nothing but the mind.
The Buddha once and always human.

To an Old Friend

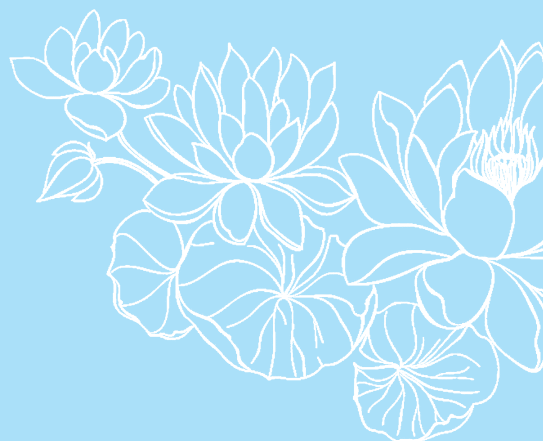
See the beauty of all the flowers.
On my own, then step, step the green grass glow.
I may not encounter the apricot,
But is the snow and wind over the land not fine enough?

Poem on the Lamp Shadow

Cold night, window where lamp light is like flowing water,
Where I lie down, looking at the light reflected.
Lamp light, shadow not reaching.
I am ashamed at being the monk.

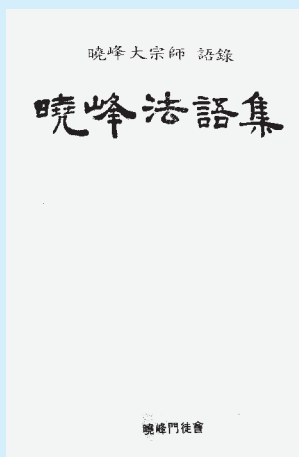


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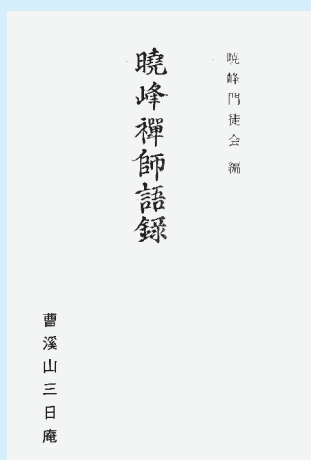
Hyobong
1888–1966





His pen name was Hyobong, his religious name Hangnul, and his name as a layperson was Yi Chanhyeong. He was born in Yangdeok-gun, Pyeongannam-do, and became a judge after graduating in Jurisprudence at Waseda University. At age thirty-six he relinquished his position as a judge and wandered about for three years until he became a monk in 1925, at thirty-eight years of age, under the tutelage of Reverend Seokdu of Sin'gyesa Temple, on Geumgangsán. He visited many monasteries until finally settling in the summer of 1937 at Songgwangsa, where he resided until 1946, practicing the faith and

instructing his disciples. From the winter of 1946 until 1950, he became abbot of Haeinsa, concentrating on educating his pupils. In 1962 he became the first president of the new religious Jogye Order. In 1966, at age seventy-nine, he moved to Pyochungsa Temple, at Miryang, Gyeongsangnam-do. After serving as the abbot for some time, he passed away there. Among his works are the *Hyobong eorok* (Sayings of Hyobong) (Seoul: Buril chulpansa, 1975). His disciples included people the likes of Gusan (1909–1983), Beopjeong (1932–2010), and Ko Un (1933–), among others. Beopjeong was famous for his essays, and he left behind a collection of essays entitled *Musoyu* (Non-possession), and others. Ko Un is famous for his stories, such as *Hwaeomgyeong*, as well as for his poetry (e.g., *Maninbo* [Ten Thousand Lives]). The poems here were originally in Classical Chinese and selected from the *Hyobong eorok*.



Sermon on the Dharma 1

One step, two steps, three, four steps,
 Go, not falling left, right, forward or back.
 Reaching there, closed off by mountains and waters,
 One more step, and be there in that well-found place.

- As explained, this expression, “sermon on the dharma” (*sangdang beobeo*) refers to the sermon read formally by the abbot of a temple at Sumeru altar of the sermon hall. This is a sermon believed to have been read by the abbot to the practitioners who would assemble at the start or conclusion of a period of retreat, one that lasted three months at a time, both throughout the summer and winter months. The *Hyobong eorok* records that he composed it at Haeinsa in 1948.

Laud to the Beopgiam Grotto on Geumgangsan Mountain

In the swallow's house in the sea the deer broods on eggs.
 In the spider's house in the fire a fish boils tea.
 In our house, who would know this news?
 The white clouds west, soaring moon east, as they fly.

- After abandoning his post as a judge, Hyobong sought after an accomplished master until he found one at Beopgiam, on Geumgangsan. This figure was Reverend Seokdu Botaek (1882–1954). Within this context, “grotto” refers to a small cave (in actuality, a small dugout or hermitage) where Seon monks make fervent attempts to understand *hwadus* after having broken all ties with the outside world. He is said to have dwelled at Beopgiam for a year and a half, consuming only one meal a day and dedicating himself strenuously to meditation until he reached enlightenment. This work was composed in the autumn of 1931, and it is the *odosong* he chanted upon reaching enlightenment.

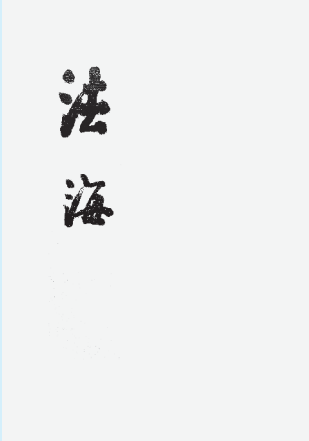
Sending on to the Master Gyeongwol

Mirror moon
Today I send you on.
Lacquer black moon.
To speak, one must know what news.

- This is a poem he wrote for his disciple Gyeongwol in October 1946. Based on its content, it is a poem that is passed on when the master is transmitting the dharma to his disciple.

Gyeongbong
1892–1982





His pen name was Gyeongbong, and his religious name was Jeongseok, and his name as a layman was Gim Yongguk. He was born in Miryang, Gyeongsangnam-do, and he embraced monastic life at age sixteen (1907) under the tutelage of Seon Master Seonghae of Tongdosa Temple, Yangsan. He studied the classics by attending the Buddhist Specialization Institute at Tongdosa. During this course, he studied the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* from Han Yongun. Afterward, he traveled around the country to spread the faith, and in 1925 he began overseeing religious

gatherings called “Ten-Thousand-Days Buddha Prayer to Help the Aged,” which he would organize for thirty years.

In 1932 he became director of the Buddhist Specialization Institute at Tongdosa, and in 1949 he became abbot of that temple. In 1953 he was proclaimed director of the Geungnak hoguk seonwon of Tongdosa, a post that he presided over for thirty years until his death. He was exceptionally skilled in classical Chinese poetry, *sijo*, and calligraphy, and has left behind many works. Among his works is the collection *Beophae* (Dharma Ocean) (Yangsan, Gyeongsangnam-do: Tongdosa, 1975). The poems that follow were originally in Classical Chinese and selected from this text.

The Word before Speaking

This sun does not merely pass to the west
 But sheds its light on the nine openings in humans.
 From now on, observe the summer retreat; be quiet; not one
 single task.
 Nor allow recondite thoughts to trouble the mind.

- Humans have in all nine holes in their bodies; these are the eyes, the ears, and nostrils, which make six holes, then the mouth, the anus, and the urethral orifice. *An'geo*, or retreats, are three-month periods in which monks, during the summer months (from April 16 to July 15 of the lunar calendar) and during the winter months (October 16 to January 15 of the lunar calendar) do not leave the temple but practice the faith as one in a shared location.

Fourth Month South Wind

The writing, how truth may be revealed
 In the five thousand scriptures hidden away.
 Unable to uncover the root's meaning.
 Why gaze idly, yellow leaves at the branch tips?

- The fourth month of the lunar calendar marks the beginning of summer. The south wind blows in the summer. According to our calendar, this is May. It is uncertain whether any relation to the poem is purely coincidental, but the eighth day of the fourth month according to the lunar calendar also happens to be the Buddha's birthday.

The Way

Hwaangnu Pavilion, fragrant grasses growing thick all around
 it;
 Like fine rain, the cattails dancing in the air.
 However clearly seen, to explain is so difficult.
 Smiling in the moon's light, I stand leaning against the rail.

- “*Dori*” generally means “what one should do” (i.e., the Way one should follow). Here it would be better to interpret it according to Buddhist thought; that is, as a translation of the Sanskrit word *yukti*, which is defined as the rule that is valid for all phenomena. It is the principle and the truth that encompasses all phenomena. It is the principle that lies behind the birth, extinction, and mutation, and penetrates all things. It is a general trend of Seon poetry to understand this principle in nature and to express it in verse.

Red Sun That Rises in the East

White clouds clear all away;
Red sun rises up in the east.
Lift the face and see the skies;
Lower the head, gaze down at the ground.
East west south north;
See the light as you will.

One's Own Task

1

Green bamboo, yellow chrysanthemum flower; not a border;
 White clouds, flowing waters but the truth of heaven.
 Each and every piece is part of my house.
 Let the hand pick up and try to carry—it is not dust.

2

Eyebrow so close to eyelash,
 Nose and lips so very near.
 So close, how can they not see each other?
 All is the same body, that is why.
 Today seven, tomorrow will be eight—
 Know this, and that here,
 Here the hearts of old lie buried.

- In the phraseology of Seon, we have expressions such as “one’s own task,” “our imminent, great job,” and so on. In other words, the most important task is that which one must engage in at this very moment. This refers to the basic problem; that is, the reaching of enlightenment.

The World as Sand and Dust

This day, hour, all is fresh colored;
Worlds, numerous as dust.
Vast blue ocean rain melts last winter's snow.
In the winds, the garden trees, last night's mist fades away.

- The title refers to the worldly sand and dust at the Ganges. This refers to the grains of sand of the Ganges in India, which are innumerable. A similar expression is the dust of the earth, where its particles are so many that they cannot be counted. There is also the saying that in the infinitesimal grains of dust, we find the earth.

True News

Moon's color, more white than the clouds;
 Pine wind's voice, fragrant, moist with dew.
 How very fine it is, this true news.
 Turn the head and reflect on it with care.

- The light of the moon and the clouds go well together, the sound of the wind among the pine trees and the frost meet into a harmonious whole, and the poet finds in there the world of truth he had been seeking. We understand that the harmony of nature that surrounds us is the very same harmony that permeates the world of realization and enlightenment.

The Great Way

The great Way is deep, so deep and yet no more.
 Following such beauty I step into the clouds forest.
 In the brilliant sun of this world, such a feeling of spring;
 In the snow, red apricot flowers, and the jade green heart.

- The word *do* (Ch. *dao*) takes on extremely differing meanings in the East according to religion. Here it means “great awakening,” or “great truth.” The truth expounded by Buddhism has no specifically defined form, and there is no specific method to follow in order to attain it.

Song of Enlightenment

I find “I” everywhere, in all things.
 Before my eyes, right there is the master’s tower loft.
 “Ha!” Meeting at last, no trace of doubt.
 The flower light of the *udumbara* scriptures fills the world.

- A note beside the poem reads, “02:30 a.m. November 20, 1927” (lunar calendar). *Udumbara* is a tree whose flowers blossom once every three-thousand years. According to a saying, upon the appearance of the Buddha, the king who turns the wheel of the dharma, these flowers blossom.

Scarecrow

(Outside the window is a small bean field. Wild birds and mountain creatures would get into it, so I built a scarecrow out of dried reeds and set it in the middle. The mountain creatures thought it was a real person and stopped coming in. But one day a wild ox came into the field and ate up all the beans and the scarecrow too. I laughed and clapped my hands. And I wrote this poem.)

Built a scarecrow of dried reeds and old clothes and set it
standing.

The birds and hill creatures thought it was real and stayed
away.

O worry not, scarecrow, even in hard times!

In times of upheaval, for those who do not fall into
conscription.

The situation may be reason to dance for joy,
Yet at night such a figure is all the more distinct.

As when a wild ox, eyes clear and bright,
Came right into the field and gobbled that the scarecrow up.

Poem Written at the Close of the Summer Retreat

The whole world was once exactly this, this place, home.
 Open the eyes and see, all is fragrant.
 When someone comes to this temple, boil up some mountain
 tea;
 The moon cake is fresh there upon the guest's table.
 The waters turn from their trying journey and go back to the
 sea.
 Paddy fields turn deep golden yellow as the days pass into
 autumn.
 Since long ago, there has been nothing else in this hermit's
 hut.
 Pine and bamboo bend toward heaven, all one color.

- A note on this poem adds: 1946, after ending the summer retreat at the Geungnak hoguk seonwon, Tongdosa. It is a poem given as a sermon to monks who had practiced meditation alongside him at the summer retreat.

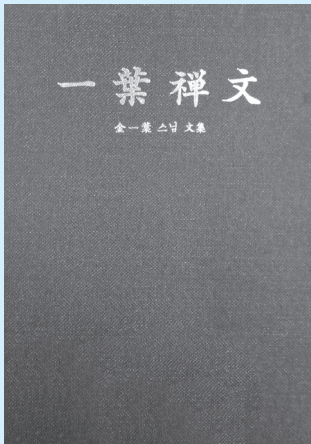
Kim Iryeop
1896–1971



Her pen name was Iryeop, and her name as a laywoman was Kim Wonju. Therefore, she came to be known as Kim Iryeop. She was born in Yonggang-gun, Pyeongannam-do, to a protestant family, and she studied at Ehwa School (Ehwa hakdang, later Ehwa Girl's High School) in Seoul, the first educational institution for women founded in Korea by protestant missionaries. She traveled to Japan to study at a time that was difficult for women to engage in any form of social activity, and in 1920 she began the first women's journal *Sin yeoja* (New Woman), taking charge of the culture section of *Dong-A Ilbo*. She started a movement as a new woman claiming free love and freedom for women, calling for their emancipation and the enhancement of women's position in society. Later on, she left a failed marriage and began having doubts about life, so she converted to Buddhism, and under the care of Man'gong, she embraced monastic life and took up her abode at Sudeoksa Temple.

She mainly wrote essays and published them in several journals. It seems that, because she was writing at a time when women's rights were suppressed, as a woman activist on the frontline she enjoyed considerable popularity. She is credited with having opened the path to the emancipation

of women and their participation in society as well as cultural activities. *Bulgyo* was the representative journal of Buddhist circles in the 1920s. She entered their company in 1928, enriching the cultural section of the journal and submitting short stories, essays, and ten submission pieces of *sijo* poetry. The works introduced here all published in the journal *Bulgyo*. Poems were originally in Korean, many in the three-line Korean *sijo* form, sometimes rearranged in six lines. The pertinent numbers of the journal are provided below.



Youth

Warm friend, O coverlet! Woven grass mat, lie down there.
Tiny bird makes its song, a passing wind, a kiss.
Wholly detached, those clouds seem to know nothing of envy.

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 95 (May 1, 1932).

The Road is Hard

The beloved's call—
 Was it a thousand years ago? Ten thousand?
 As if about to hear the beloved's voice,
 and see the beloved right at this moment,
 leap up in rapture!
 Only know, I am just here.

So, writing poems in heaven's palace?
 Or on earth, where flowers are plucked?
 Love's voice, calling out,
 hearing it, just heard
 somewhere, not certain where—
 I just turn round and round.

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 94 (April 1, 1932). A poem with the same title was written by the Chinese Tang poet Li Bai (701–762). The contents of the poem also resemble those of Li Bai; the poetess laments the difficulties of living one's own life.

O love, young soul!
The beloved's words, nourishment.
Know nothing of sorrow
and keep on, keep going on,
plodding steps, a baby's,
wondering "When will I see the beloved?"

Devoted to the Teachings

Wandered, body bewitched, lean on Buddha's teachings.
Serve the true Buddha; joy will be unending.
But for me, who have no clear hearing in my ears, I only
wonder.

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 95 (May 1, 1932). The term *seon jisik* (translated here as “true Buddha”) is a Buddhist expression. It indicates the master who explains the principles of doctrine according to the Buddha's Way, someone endowed with great wisdom. A wise person who shows us the right path and teaches us the real meaning of things.



Love's Touch

Space all filled, love's very reach,
"Take hold, take hold," love's voice, welling up, spilling forth,
blind and deaf, sentient beings pawing at the air.

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 95 (May 1, 1932).

Falling Flowers, Flowing Waters

Flowing waters time, flowers falling, human life.
Not even one turn and the flower collapses.
Let the soul held in your arms be carried out over the sea.

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 96 (June 1, 1932).

Falling Flower

Where fine fruits lie hidden deep in the leaves
leaving its old love, O most lovely flower—
Flying, flying away, a butterfly.

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 96 (June 1, 1932).

The Path to Buddha

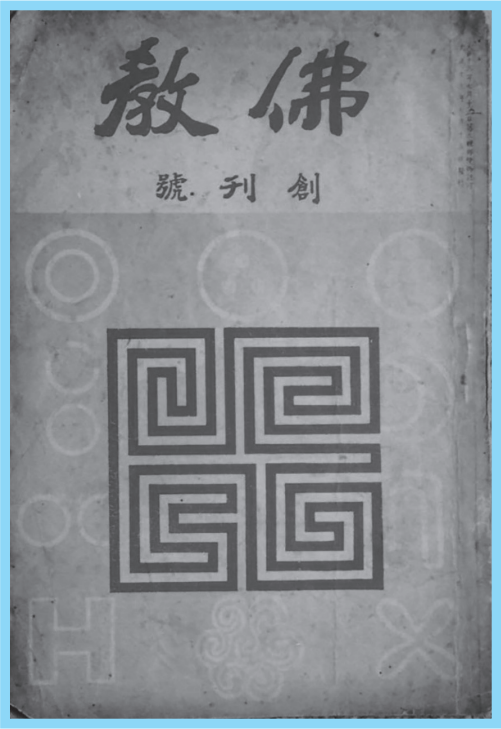
When the Śākyamuni lived
 I was not born into the world.
 Śākyamuni path
 before,
 the path is before us.
 How can I not follow?

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 100 (October 1, 1932). The *sijo* style is a poetic form that has a long history in Korea. It was extremely popular among the literati, who used to express their feelings and thoughts through this poetic genre during the five-hundred years of the Joseon dynasty. In actuality, this composition mimics the ninth poem of the “Twelve Motives of Dosan” by Yi Hwang (1501–1570), the most typical of Confucian scholars of the mid-Joseon period. In this poem, the expression “the ancients,” as written by Yi Hwang, is supplanted with “the Buddha,” and has a parodic zest.

Bulgyo Journal

One hundred issues, a thousand, ten thousand thousand issues
 before reaching the very end,
 may you be the beacon fire
 for troubled human beings.
 Even more, eyes still blurry—
 What else shall open them?

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 100 (October 1, 1932). This poem was included in a special issue commemorating the 100th issue of the journal *Bulgyo*. At the time, *Bulgyo* played a role as an official organ of the Buddhist community, but its publication ended with the 108th issue (July 1924–July 1933). Other than religious journals, it is extremely difficult to find any journal publication that spans such a lengthy period. In the case of artistic journals, the first issue would often also be the last. *Bulgyo*, based on the considerations of Korean Buddhism at the time, which lacked many essential conditions favorable to publication, actually played a crucial proselytizing role. Moreover, because it published a great number of literary works, it was not merely a religious journal, but it warrants attention for having carried the banner of a cultural magazine.



Fall

Leaves green, birds singing,
I think it must be summer.
Rising cold winds,
leaves wither and fall, the bird flies away.
Let them be.
It is what Time does.

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 100 (October 1, 1932).

Late Awakening

Spring flower and autumn moon
come every season.
My youth as well, somewhere
flown away, no matter how much I wished for spring.
Cheated by time, called later,
how could I have lingered so long?

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 100 (October 1, 1932).

Untitled

Wonder about what life means, unending dream.
Dream of a dream, this life. Believe it?
The great way, grasp it, and let the mind rush on.

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 101·102 (December 1, 1932).



Before the Mirror

Lady Xi Shi, beautiful she may have been,
 but now, nothing more than the subject of idle chatter.
 Even more so with all of us,
 so plain, our faces, our style.
 We may embellish,
 but at heart we know not our selves,
 as woman, after all, as woman.

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 100 (October 1, 1932). Xi Shi was a striking lady who resided in the country of Yue during the Spring and Autumn period, in fifth century BCE. Many stories have been passed down through history relating to her. The term “Xi Shi” in East Asia is synonymous with great beauty.

Snow out of Season

Life's turbulence,
seasons out of order.
Spring season seeking this earth
snow snatched away, away.
Enough! Let the snow melt
and urge the flowers on.

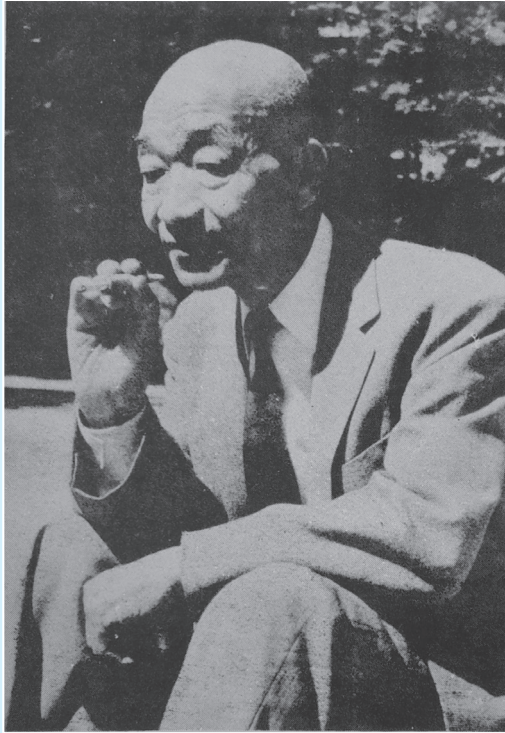
- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 106 (April 1, 1933).

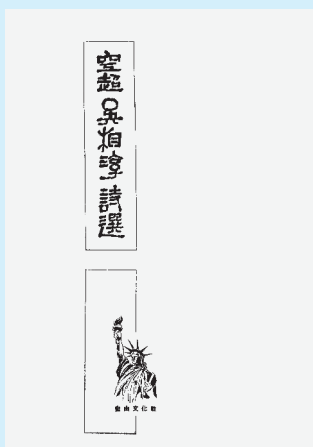
Watching the Pendulum

Night or day, it goes, returns, returns, goes.
 Just to repeat, always repeat, how very dull, the pendulum
 existence.
 Gone, returns; returned, is gone. Returning, gone, always the
 same.
 Feeling how this always going being going away
 Tense expression, no rest all life long
 “tick tock tick tock” step by step
 existence of the clock pendulum
 How can I can I ever qualify to scorn,
 neither coming nor going in such an existence?
 Life does move on does move on then past, present, both.
 Having noted the difference every day
 every day going on older and old—isn’t that life?
 Growing older to dying having died, being born—such is life?
 Growing older is it not an eternal traveller?

- Published in *Bulgyo*, no. 108 (July 1, 1933). All the poems introduced thus far follow the *sijo* style. This poem breaks with the traditional fixed-verse form, instead turning to modern free verse.

O Sangsun
1894–1963





His pen names were Seonun and Gongcho. He is more famous as Gongcho. He was born in Seoul. In 1906 he graduated from Gyeongsin School, and in 1912 he traveled to Japan to study after graduation. In 1918 he graduated with a degree in religion from Dōshisha University. He returned to Korea in 1919 and became active as a protestant missionary, but would later convert to Buddhism. In 1921 he taught at Joseon Jungang Buddhist School, and in 1923 he taught at Boseong High Normal School. At the time, Boseong School was run directly

by the Buddhist saṅgha. He changed temples several times, dedicating himself to meditation and wandering, but concurrently also publishing numerous works. In 1920 he participated in the registration of the journal *Pyeheo* (Ruins), and thus started his activity as a man of letters. His works have the tendency of depicting the emptiness of life. He is valued for showing the futility of life, and a nihilistic undertone is present in his poetry.

From 1945 onward, he lived mainly in Seoul, spending his time between the Sūtra Translation Institute (Yeokgyeongwon), Jogyesa Temple, and other places. One story alleged that he could smoke twenty packs of cigarettes in one day. He did not publish a collection of his verses. However, in 1963 his disciples published the *Gongcho O Sangsun sijip* (Collection of the Poems of Gongcho O Sangsun). His tomb is located in Suyu-dong, Seoul and in 1963 a stele was erected in front of his tomb carrying a poetic inscription.

“The Last Night View in Asia” is considered his most representative work. This poem



has a wide breadth, and in order to make the subject stand out, he uses the technique of presenting several facts in order. This poem is believed to have been composed in 1922, and is a lengthy composition comprising twelve verses in free-verse form. He extolls the lengthy history of Asia and its culture as well as the affinity and subtleness of its spirit, comparing them to the night, to the spirit of the West, and to the beginning of the plight of the East.

The composition “Life’s Puzzle” included here appeared in *Pyeheo*, no. 2 (January 1921). It is from *Gongcho O Sangsun si jeonjip: Asia ui majimak bam punggyeong* (Complete Collection of Gongcho O Sangsun’s Poems: The Last Night View of Asia), edited by Gu Sang (Seoul: Han’guk munhaks, 1983).

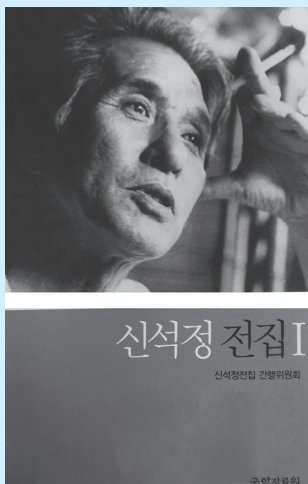
Life's Puzzle

Onto the page of the book I was reading,
didn't know the name didn't notice the shape
a bug a dayfly, some minute organism
blown by the wind flown down and landing
while without thinking, I flicked it away
with a fingernail, image of one moment
vanished, traceless!
Every once in a while it brings my heart such agony—.

Deep night
when stars dance silently in their rounds
in a room quiet as the dark's sea,
only the newborn's voice
worrying for mother's breast
can be heard, so loud.

Shin Seokjeong
1907–1974

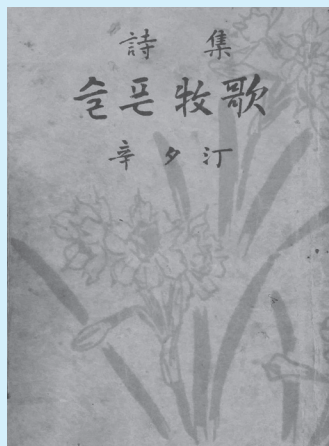
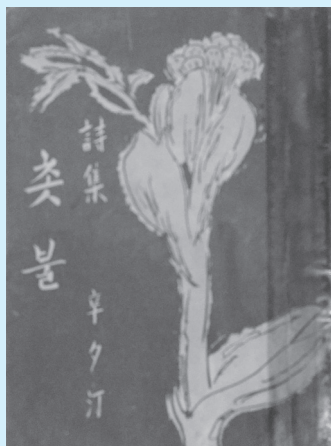




His name as a layman was Seokjeong, as was his pen name. He was born in Buan, Jeollabuk-do. He graduated from primary school and would go on to study the Confucian classics back in his hometown.

In 1930 he traveled to Seoul, where he studied under Hanyeong at the Buddhist Specialization Institute, learning the Buddhist sūtras for a year. In 1954 he taught at Jeonju High School, at Jeonju Commercial High School, and at certain other places. In 1939 he composed the first collection of poems *Chotbul* (Candle), and in 1947 the second collection was published, entitled, *Seulpeun mokga* (The Sad Shepherd's Song). In 1970 he published his last collection, *Daebaram sori* (The Sound of the Wind among the Bamboo Trees).

He was deeply imbued with the philosophy of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Dao Yuanming, and his poetry is characterized by an emphasis on antisocial and natural tones. To a considerable extent, his poems contain polite expressions, and this is thought to be the influence of Han Yongun. Gim Girim (b. 1908)



appraised him as “a bucolic poet in search of utopia, who sets himself apart from modern civilization.” His poetry has been judged as a search to negate and overcome the dreaded plight of the times by striving toward a bucolic depiction of an ideal world.

The three compositions included here are from *Seulpeun mokga* (1947): “Stopping on the Field Path” (1936), “Landscape” (1936), and “Sad Composition” (1937). The selections are from *Shin Seokjeong jeonjip* (Complete Collection of Shin Seokjeong) (Seoul: Gukhak jaryowon, 2009).

Stopping on the Field Path

Just as green mountains carry white clouds
above my head the blue heavens always are there.

Simply sublime, to be able to raise the two hands up
like the forest facing the heavens.

Though the two legs be tired, follow the young mountain
peaks, their example,
stepping on the earth even as it turns ceaselessly round and
round.

What a joy to live to step down firmly as a mountain on the
earth!

Let life be sad as that, down into the bones, it is still good.
Stand here on the path through the fields and let us look up at
the clear stars . . .

To live under heaven and look up at the clear stars, my sacred
task . . .

Landscape

—Mountains, Waters, a Painting

Forest path dense moss green
tree by tree between, river's waters a white wash . . .

Mountain bird lights at the tip of a sunlit branch
white clouds stroll lazily through the skies.

Mountain crow voices fill the gorge
over the dingle winds go over drawing near . . .

Forest path overlooking turned back turned back
creek waters clear as transparent jade.

Green blue mountain blue green mountain a thousand years
river waters flow, flow ten thousand years.



Sad Composition

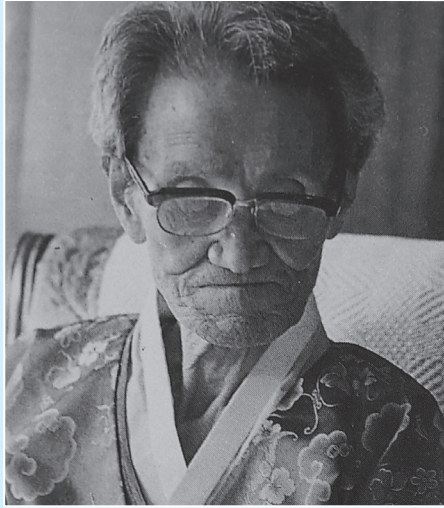
I and
the heavens and
blue mountains under heaven are all

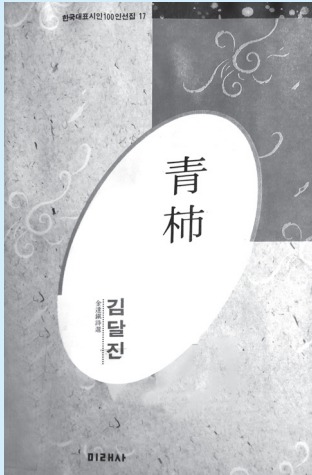
no earth where a single flowers blooms
no place where one bird gives out its cry
no place where the fawn leaps about

I and
night and
numberless stars, that is all

washed along flowing night is all
though it flows, flows, it is only the dark night
a place to center my mind, star in the night sky

Gim Daljin
1907–1989





His pen name was Wolha. He was born in Changwon, Gyeongsangnam-do. He became a monk in 1934 at Yujeomsa Temple, on Geumgangsán. After Yongseong inaugurated his movement for the cultivation of the land along with the practice of meditation, he participated in the movement. In 1939 he graduated from Jungang Buddhist Specialization School (later Dongguk University).

In 1929 he was recommended by the Anglicist, poet, critic, and Korean literary expert Yang Judong (1903–1977) to participate in *Munye gongnon* (Cultural Agora), thus making his debut in the literary world and going on to compose poems regularly. Among his collections are *Cheongsi* (Blueberries, 1940), *Keun sonamu neun byeonhaji anneun ma'eum* (The Big Pine Tree does not Change its Mind, 1983), and *Olppaemi ui norae* (The Song of the Night Owl, 1983), and he also translated the *Dhammapada*, *Zhuangzi*, *Poems of Hanshan*, and *Korean Seon Poems*, among others.

After 1960 he became active as a member of the Dongguk Sūtra Translation Center at Dongguk University, and he dedicated himself to the translation of Buddhist sūtras and to poetry written by eminent Korean monks. He composed Korean poetry based on the spirit of the East and on Buddhism. In the beginning, he would discuss only nature, where humans and all things live in harmony, where the original nature of humans brightens, and things assume their proper form, thus basing his outlook on the essence of Asian thought. He is said to have deepened this Eastern spirit further in his poems later in life.



The three poems selected here are from *Cheongsi* in *Gim Daljin si jeonjip* (The Complete Collection of the Poetry of Gim Daljin) (Seoul: Munhak Dongne, 1997).

Springwater

I look into the forest spring.
In the water, the sky white, clouds drift, winds pass by
as the tiny spring grows wide as the sea.
As I look into the tiny spring
I am seated on this island, the round earth.

East Sea

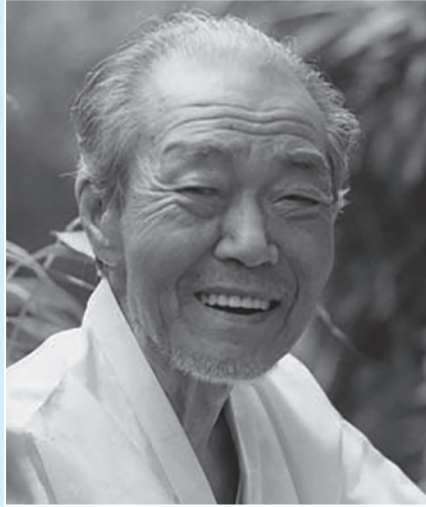
Looking at the boundless East Sea,
having the thought that my love is just that much;
then looking up as the blue skies entered my sight,
I knew my love, greater even than life.



Love

Deep night, went out into the garden.
Thinking of a far distant love,
I saw the countless stars that have lived a million billion years.

Seo Jeongju
1915–2000



her schedule to be
should will be up to
July, therefore, I think
that she should visit
you early in the winter.
I wish your good wishes
tion to her, as that
requested her to try
only within late my
poetry that these
named "The poems of
days of my of Chinese
을근로 할것다, and
things without foreign
인 우리는 일을"

But I think if you
like to translate any
in the two books, I
without such poems
should let her translate
and other wise she
your attention. There
should be said of
Macaulay.

Under separate cover
sent two my foot-
sentaching; one is in
my poetry "조국애는
other is the complete
my whole poetry with
people

With best
to good your friend
sincerely
Miss J. J.
of 1871

His pen name was Midang. He was born in Gochang, Jeollabuk-do. He was accepted to Jungang High Normal School, and through the good offices of Hanyeong, he began studying at Jungang Buddhist Specialization School in 1936. He became a professor of Department of Korean Literature at Dongguk University, and many poets came to light under his guidance. Among his poetry collections, we can cite *Hwasajip* (Flower Snake, 1941), *Gwichokdo* (The Cuckoo, 1948), *Sillacho* (Silla Transcriptions, 1960), *Dongcheon* (Winter Sky, 1968), *Jilmajae sinhwa* (The Legend of Jilmajae, 1975), and *Tteodori ui si* (The Poems of a Wanderer, 1976), among others.

Song of the Avalokiteśvara at Seokguram

I have come here through longing,
longing like the tides,

between this cold stone and the stone
beneath tangled arrowroot vines,
the azure breath that is mine.

The times that see me as useless dust
send me away, a wave welling up
into the empty sky, the empty sky
such love as mine.

- Seokguram is a grotto on Tohamsan Mountain, Gyeongju, Gyeongsangbuk-do. It was completed in 751 by Gim Daeseong. In the small grotto is a seated statue of Śākyamuni that stands 3.4 m tall. A remarkable twelve-faced Avalokiteśvara is carved into the wall surrounding the statue, which has a three-dimensional effect. The face dons a mild smile, the dress sits naturally, the hands and feet are highly refined, and the figure sits on a refined lotus flower base, giving the statue a distinctive presence. Seokguram has received recognition for its artistic value as well as for its architectural features, and, together with Bulguksa Temple, UNESCO has designated it a World Cultural Heritage Site.

In wind that comes and goes, O sun and moon.
Capital city Seorabeol, radiant,
men, women, like flowers buried in the ground.

And O, if born, if born,
one who loves “I” more than I,
who loves one thousand years, one thousand years
were to be born again into the sun’s light

born and emerging in the sun’s light
taking me into darkness

to say I love . . . to say I love . . .
lifting these words to the one, to say them out, even I
would go back to my home place!

But I have stopped here.
Beside the seated Buddha,
small incense pouch resting on the back,

and from within this cold stone
each day breathing in, breathing out

clear breath
Ah! still that is mine.



Beside a Chrysanthemum

To bring one chrysanthemum to flower
the cuckoo has cried
since spring.

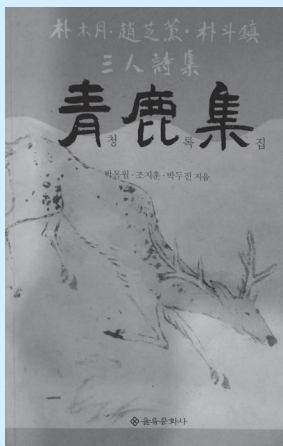
To bring the chrysanthemum to flower,
thunder too has called
from dark clouds.

Flower like my sister
returned from youthful, distant byways
of throat-tight longing
to be seated now by the mirror,

for your yellow petals to open,
last night such a frost fell
and I could not sleep.

Jo Jihun
1920–1968





His pen name was Jihun, and his original name was Dongtak. He was better known as Jo Jihun. Jo was his family name and Jihun his pen name.

He was born in Yeongyang, Gyeongsangbuk-do. He studied the Chinese classics with his grandfather, and later, in 1939, he entered Hye-hwa Specialization School (later Dongguk University). He is one of the poets of the Pure Green School (Cheongnokpa), and he extolled an aesthetic sense of traditional life. After learning the classics with his grandfather, he attended Yongyang Primary School for three years. In 1939 he began his studies at Hye-hwa Specialization

School (later Dongguk University), graduating in 1941.

He lectured for some time at the Buddhist Specialization Institute of Woljeongsa Temple, on Odaesan, where he enjoyed reading *Geumgang-gyeong oga hae* (Explanation of the *Diamond Sūtra* by Five Scholars), the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and Tang poetry. If we are to characterize his poetic inclinations, we should say that he chants the essence of tradition and the *han* (sadness) of the country in a classical rhyme scheme based on a nostalgic spirit of the East. He published, collectively with Bak Dujin (1916–1998) and Bak Mogwol (1916–1978), the book of poems *Cheongnok-jip* (Pure Green Collection) in 1946, and he is therefore also called the poet of the “Pure Green School.” Other than the works mentioned, he also published *Pullip danjang* (A Formal Dress of Grass Blades, 1952) and *Yeoksa apeseo* (In Front of History, 1959), among others. In 1947, after he left his lecturing post at Dongguk University, he became a professor at Korea University, where he concentrated on researching Korean culture and on cultivating the minds of young scholars. A poetic inscription dedicated to him can be found on Namsan Mountain, Seoul, as well as at Dongguk University. The four poems included herein are from *Cheongnok-jip*. The current translation is based on *Jo Jihun jeonjip* (Collection of the Complete Works of Jo Jihun), vol. 1 (Seoul: Iljisa, 1973).

Ancient Temple 1

Tapping the wood fish,
overcome by drowsiness

the handsome young monk child too
has fallen asleep.

Wordless, the Buddha
smiles

while along the myriad-league western regions,

under a dazzling evening sky,
peonies fall.

Mountain Retreat

Closed gate
petal drops

house cloaked in clouds
sound of the water sinks in.

Rain washed orchid petal
vines leaning

sun lightly sliding door
honey bee bumps and goes.

Stone in its rightful place
and doesn't budge

green moss, its covering
so proud.

Broken in pieces, swaying
bleak chilly wind

the fern's new sprouts, roll up in curls.

Plantain Rain

Single blossom of cloud flow off alone—
Where would it rest, this night?

Raindrops widely scattered
pattering plantain leaf, evening, dusk

open the window the green mountain
I sit facing.

Never tiring, to hear the water's sound
the mountain seen each day and still longed for

clouds that graze past my dreams all morning
rest somewhere, this night.

Nun's Dance

This gossamer white cowl,
folded carefully as the butterfly's wings.

Blue shaved head
hidden in the gossamer cowl,

light flowing on her cheeks,
so lovely and sad.

At night the candles melt on the empty terrace
and the moon drops lower with each paulownia leaf

while her sleeves grow long, extending as the heavens are wide,
while white stockings turn and lift in flight.

Black, her eyes gaze far away,
seeing but one star in the distant heaven.

Two teardrops color her cheeks, their dappled peach;
daily cares turn to nothing but starlight.

Bending, folded hands extended,
reaching out from the heart's sacred depths,

and the cricket is awake still, third watch of the night,
as gossamer white, the cowl folds, folding butterfly's wings.



Illustrations List and Credit

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- 25 Hongnyudong Valley, Gayasan. Photograph © Kim Seongyeon.
- 29 Bojeru Pavilion of Beomeosa. Photograph © Bulgyo sinmunsa.
- 31 Bongcheondaec Terrace, Gayasan. Photograph from blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=bee1478&logNo=100195278810.
- 33 Yeonghwaru Lookout, the south gate of Eonyang eupseong Town Castle, Ulju-gun, Ulsan. Photograph from Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea, http://www.cha.go.kr/korea/heritage/search/search_photo_list.jsp?VdkVgwKey=13,01530000,26&queryText=%EC%96%B8%EC%96%91%EC%9D%8D%EC%84%B1&mc=NS_04_03_01.
- 35 Yongseong (1864–1940)
- 36 *Baek Yongseong daejongsa chongseo* (The Comprehensive Collection of Grand Master Baek Yongseong's writings), vol. 5 (Seoul: Dongguk daehakgyo chulpanbu, 2016).
- 41 “Haeinsa” by Joseon dynasty artist Jeong Seon (1676–1759) for fan painting. National Museum of Korea Collection, <https://www.museum.go.kr/site/main/relic/search/view?relicId=1158#>.
- 43 The Nakdonggang River in Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do. Photograph from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AKorea-Andong-Hahoe_Folk_Village-Nakdong_River-02.jpg. By Robert at w:Picasa (2005-11-03-Andong) [CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons.
- 45 The *Tripitaka Koreana* in storage at Haeinsa. Photograph from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AKorea-Haeinsa-Tripitaka_Koreana-03.jpg. By Joone Hur [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons.
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- 57 “Sugyedo” by Joseon dynasty artist Yu Suk (1827–1873). It depicts a poetry association of the middle people. National Folk Museum of Korea Collection, http://nfm.museum.go.kr/nfm/getDetailArtifact.do?MCSJGBNC=PS0102001001&MCSEQNO1=078996&MCSEQNO2=00000&SEARCH_MODES=KEYWORDS&SEARCH_STR=.
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- 143 Title page for *Gitanjali*, the collected poems of Tagore. Photograph from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AGitanjali_11_title_page.jpg. By macmillan and company, London [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.
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- 167 Inside the Seodaemun Prison where Han yongun was held in 1919. Photograph from Wikimedia Commons, https://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/%EC%84%9C%EB%8C%80%EB%AC%B8%ED%98%95%EB%AC%B4%EC%86%8C#/media/File:DSC_0472.JPG. By WaffenSS [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://ko.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=166783>)] via Wikimedia Commons.
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- 199 Sudeoksa Temple. Kim iryeop remained there as a nun until she died. Photograph © Ko Sang-hyun.
- 205 The first issue of *Bulgyo*. Photograph © Minjoksa.
- 209 Sudeok yeogwan. It was in front of the Sudeoksa Temple. While Kim iryeop remained in the Sudeoksa, her son, and Na Hyesook, who was also famous for *sin yeoseong* (new woman), came to visit her and stayed in this inn. Photograph from Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea, http://www.cha.go.kr/korea/heritage/search/Culresult_Db_View.jsp?mc=NS_04_03_01&VdkVgwKey=23,01030000,34&flag=Y.

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- 219 Shin Seokjeong (1907–1974)
- 220 *above* *Shin Seokjeong jeonjip*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Gukhak jaryowon, 2009).
below left The collected poems of Shin Seokjeong, *Chotbul* (Seoul: Daejisa, 1952).
below right The collected poems of Shin Seokjeong, *Seulpeun mokga* (Seoul: Nangju munhwasa, 1947).
- 225 “Sansudo” by Joseon dynasty artist Jeong Seon (1676–1759). National Museum of Korea Collection, <http://www.museum.go.kr/site/main/relic/search/view?relicId=387#>.
- 227 Gim Daljin (1907–1989)
- 228 *above* *Cheongsi* (Seoul: Miraesa, 1991).
below *Gim Daljin si jeonjip* (Seoul: Munhak dongne, 1997).
- 233 Hae manmulsang of Hae geumgang. Photograph from Tokuda Tomijirō, *Manni senpō no kongōzan: Chōsen*.
- 235 Seo Jeongju (1915–2000)
- 236 *above* The collected poems of Seo Jeongju, *Gwichokdo* (Seoul: Seonmunsa, 1948).
below The collected poems of Seo Jeongju, *Sillacho* (Seoul: Jeongeumsa, 1961).
 Letter from Seo Jeongju to David McCann. Photograph © David McCann.
- 239 A image of the twelve-faced Avalokiteśvara at Seokguram Grotto on a postcard published during Japanese colonial control of Korea. Seong Nakju Collection.
- 241 Jo Jihun (1920–1968)
- 242 *Cheongnok-jip* (Seoul: Euryu munhwasa, 1946).
- 247 *Seungmu*. Photograph © Yun Jaewoong.

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