

A Comparative Analysis of Pro-Japanese Imperialist Poetry in Malaysia and Korea - Seeking to Determine Korean Literature's Identity -

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Abstract

This study examines pro-Japanese imperialist poems from the Japanese occupation period in Korea and Malaysia, comparing their content to understand the perspectives of poets from both countries—whether they accepted or resisted colonization. By analyzing the tone and rhythm of these literary works, we gain insights into the literary landscape during this dark period. Despite the historical connection between Malaysia and Korea, bilateral cooperation in various fields has been relatively inactive. Sharing research on their common colonial past, particularly in literature, can serve as a bridge to enhance mutual understanding. Investigating Korean and Malaysian writers' awareness and expressions regarding Japanese colonization provides a strong foundation for revitalizing literary exchanges and strengthening broader bilateral cooperation. Through this comparative literary study, Malaysia, as a literary hub in Southeast Asia, and South Korea, as a literary center in Northeast Asia, can foster greater literary interactions. Ultimately, such efforts contribute to shaping the identity of Korean literature while promoting cultural and academic collaboration between the two nations.

Keywords: teaching methods, peer review, writing practice, instructor feedback, and language education

1. Introduction

When we looked back at history, we find various actions of nations that were about to be colonized in response to the colonization process by other nations. Those actions can be broadly divided into two categories: 'acceptance' and 'protest'. Meanwhile, the nature of acceptance and protest can be divided into two characteristics,

namely progressive and passive. In Korea and Malaysia, which were once colonized by Japanese Imperialists in the past, we find acts of acceptance or protest in their history. We can evaluate the actions of someone who accepts various priorities from the colonizers in exchange for providing direct assistance and support to the colonizers, as progressive acceptance. Meanwhile, the process of adapting to the colonial system.

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like fate can be said to be passive acceptance. Meanwhile, protests through physical force, including violence and the use of methods and means such as literature to inspire the struggle of the general public, can be considered progressive protests. Additionally, indirect protests can be classified as passive protests. As is well known, the colonized society, including the literary figures, began to experience colonization by other nations, resulting in drastic changes in all aspects. Specifically, poets who always focus their attention on nature and humanity face an alternative path to sing about the colonial situation between 'acceptance' or 'protest' against the colonization by other nations. With that perspective, in this paper, we would like to present the situation of Korean and Malaysian poets who were colonized by Japanese Imperialists for approximately 35

years and 3 years respectively, particularly their acceptance actions expressed in poetry. For that reason, we unilaterally chose pro-Japanese imperialist poetry from Korea and Malaysia to compare the content of the poems, in order to provide an opportunity for us to collectively reflect on the literary history of both countries.

2. Korean Poetry Pro Japanese Imperialism During the Japanese Imperialist occupation from 1910 to 1945, for about 35 years, a large number of Korean poets were inevitably forced into a state of either 'acceptance' or 'protest' against the Japanese colonization. In that situation, Korean poets, such as Han Yong-wun, Lee Yuk-sa, and Yoon Dong-ju, through their creations, worked hard to awaken the spirit of patriotism and nationalism aimed at achieving Korean independence, and those poems are still preserved in the hearts of the Korean people. Meanwhile, there were also Korean poets who accepted Japanese Imperialist colonization either progressively or passively to save themselves under the auspices of Japanese colonization. Before 1940, we encountered several pro-Japanese Imperialist Korean literary works, including

poetry and novels, but from 1940 to 1945, Korean writers produced even more pro-Japanese Imperialist works. Such literary works always emphasize the importance of, among other things, the reasons for the annexation between Korea and Japan, loyalty to the Japanese emperor, and the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Moreover, the work is often used as a propaganda tool to glorify the Japanese Imperialists' torture process, including the forced recruitment of Korean soldiers and laborers. As one example, in the poem titled 'The Japanese Flag Under the Philippine Sky', the Korean poet, Kim Dong-hwan recited it;

*Happy, very happy today
Flying the Japanese flag under the sky
Successfully purifying four hundred
years of suffering
It's not long until the dawn of a new
Pacific Ocean*

In the poem, the poet wants to glorify the Japanese military invasion of the Philippines and distort the historical

fact that the Filipino nation was influenced by Spain for over 400 years. Meanwhile, Noh Chon-myong, a famous Korean lyric poet, recited in her poem 'The Conquest of Singapore';

*How long have I been waiting for this
morning?*

*The entire Asian nation is eagerly
anticipating today.*

*Reminding us of our long suffering
under the Imperialists*

*The Japanese sun briefly illuminates
All the crimes vanish into darkness. While
laughing, the entirety of America and
England.*

When comparing that poem with his poem titled 'Deer', one of the outstanding poems that successfully depicts the lyricism of the Korean literary world, we can realize the drastic changes in the poet's face according to the circumstances of each era. Lee Kwang-su, who is considered a key figure representing modern Korean literature, in his work 'New Year's Prayer' expresses;

May you live a long life.

*May the Japanese Empire be in good health
and well-being.*

*All his limbs remain loyal and devoted.
All the soldiers are sure to win a
thousand times.*

Destroying the enemy within two years
In that poem, Lee Kwang-su conveys a prayer hoping for the prosperity of the Japanese Empire and glorifies the struggles of the Japanese Imperial soldiers, including Korean youth.

In the poem titled 'First Blood', Ju Yohan sings about the blood relationship between Korea and Japan as follows;

*Look
Your blood
Through the pulse
The launch
Hot blood of 23 million souls
Becoming the blood of 100 million souls
Join
First blood
Now it flows through my veins*

Moreover, Mo Yoon-suk, a Korean poet known for her weighty poem 'Women of East Asia,' heralds the absolute victory of Japanese Imperialism and the embodiment of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

*Although a new day has arrived
Do not want to serve food
Let the clothes be.
Let the rice
Only welcoming a new dawn
----- forget to wear a nice skirt
Not wearing makeup
Trying to build a new hill, namely Greater East Asia
Now, apart from all the adornments and happiness
Free
After

We are new women
Greater East Asian Women*

In the world of Korean poetry, we meet a talented poet named Soh Jong-ju. In his poem 'Ballad of the Matsui Soldier', he shares in the mourning;

*-----
You, with your own body, fly and dive.
Like the blooming of a beautiful flower bud
With pleasure, dive in
The American warship has sunk.
----- proud, very proud
Ah! our soldier, Matsui Hideo*

*You bring honor to the homeland, the
Korean Peninsula.*

The sky is becoming increasingly blue

In the poem, So Jong-ju mourns the death of a young Korean who was appointed as a 'Kamikaze' pilot, after he crashed into an American warship like a suicide bomb.

Meanwhile, Korean novelists, such as Choi Nam-sun, Kim Dong-in, and Park Young-hee, who are still respected by the Korean people, inevitably participated in the total war preparations by the Japanese Imperialists. They used the Japanese language when creating their works, which caused a shock to the foundation of Korean national identity. Their pro-Japanese Imperialist ideology is based on imperialism theory and is expressed in their poetry or novels. The actions of that Korean writer, who is considered part of the elite, caused suffering or a vacuum of spirit for other Koreans.

However, there were also Korean poets who strongly opposed Japanese colonization through poetry, stirring

up anti-Japanese sentiment, and these poems are still recited by a large number of Koreans to this day. In that poem, they constantly pray for the immediate realization of independence and the liberation of the Korean nation from Japanese colonization.

But, in reality, the historical evaluation of literature regarding pro-Japanese Imperialist Korean writers has not yet been realized. Therefore, the world of literature Korea inevitably has two dimensions, namely pro and contra towards Japanese Imperialism in the past. This is one of the heavy burdens for Korean literature that must be addressed first.

3. Pro-Japanese Imperialist Malaysian Poetry

Japanese imperialists successfully seized the territories of both Malaysia and Singapore from 1942 to 1945, along with the incorporation of Sumatra as a single colonized zone. Through this, Japan attempted to refine a policy known as 'Greater East Asia Prosperity Sphere' or 'Asia for Asians'. For that purpose, Japan deliberately used various local print media

to persuade and propagate their interests.

For that reason, in Malaysia, the Japanese Imperialists utilized local print media, such as the magazines 'Semangat Asia', 'Fajar Asia', and the daily 'Berita Malai' as their propaganda tools.

Naturally, Malaysian poems at that time were published in those print media. We can find 105 Malaysian poems created during the Japanese Imperialist occupation thanks to the efforts of two officers from the Malaysian Language and Literature Council who collected and published them in 1974. Kamaruzzaman Abdul Kadir once researched those 105 poems and shared their respective themes. According to the research, 80 out of 105 poems have the theme of 'revival of nationalism'.

The theme of the revival of nationalism can be further divided according to sub-themes, namely 15 pieces for love of the homeland, 7 pieces for the fate of the nation, 51

pieces for the spirit of struggle, and 7 pieces for nationalist leaders. Through this evaluation, we can understand the themes of Malaysian poetry during the Japanese Imperialist period and recognize the perspectives of Malaysian poets towards colonization, including 'acceptance' or 'protest'. After reading those poems, we also realized that a large number of Malaysian poems at that time still had a pro-Japanese Imperialist tone. This similar tendency is very different from the state of poetry in both Korea and Indonesia created during the Japanese Imperialist period.

Regarding the background of pro-Japanese Imperialist poetry in Malaysia, we can conclude the causes as follows; First, the Malaysian nation, which consists of multiple nationalities, was relatively unable to perfect its nationalist foundation during the British colonial period compared to the development of nationalism in both Korea and Indonesia.

Secondly, a large segment of Malaysian society views the arrival of Japanese Imperialists in Malaysia as a savior to achieve the liberation of the Malaysian

nation. Third, the Malaysian people want to develop nationalism independently in the face of Japanese Imperialism, which always propagates the motto 'Asia for Asia'. Fourth, the Japanese confiscation of Malaysian wealth was not as strict as in Indonesia, and Japan's attitude of allowing the religious life of the Malaysian people resulted in relatively low anti-Japanese sentiment. Fifth, the period during which Malaysia was colonized by Japan was relatively short compared to Korea, resulting in an insufficient time to create anti-Japanese imperialist poetry.

Based on that reason, the Malaysian poet inevitably recited his song with a pro-Japanese Imperialist tone. For example, through the daily 'Berita Malai', Masuri recited 15 poems that leaned towards Japanese Imperialism. He used the nickname 'Matahari' which is directly taken from the meaning of Japan's name. The pro-Japanese Imperialist Malaysian poets used simple words to aid their

readers' understanding. Most of the poetry themes at that time focused on the 'opening of a new era', the formation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere', and 'praise for Japanese Imperialism'.

Putera Melaka in his poem titled 'Sinaran Matahari' depicts;

Sunlight

Just shine

In the morning

In true Melaka

For the Great Malay!

Oh, Malacca

Heritage land

Here it is when

Showing breed

To Asia Raya!

My people

Please unite

It should be addressed.

New changes

Under the auspices of the Nippon government!

Meanwhile, Hussaini Latiff in the song titled 'The Environment of Shared Prosperity in Greater East Asia';

In the Eastern sky, light stretches out

Illuminating the entire world

*The sign of prosperity has arrived.
For all the people of Greater Asia
Rise, rise, Asian youth

Come, come, let us work
Achieving the prosperity of Greater Asia
O sons and daughters of Greater Asia
Unite in your work.
Under the Nippon Empire
For the construction of Asia Jaya's
prosperity
Happy, happy we all are
Come, come, let us work
Achieving the prosperity of Greater Asia
In addition, Masuri in the poem
'Cherry Blossom' describes;

Bathed in the morning sun
Beautifully radiant, captivating the
heart
Ah! Sakura flowers, the officers' beloved
Blooming everywhere
Proverb in the poem 'Contemplation in
the Middle of the Night';
Young men and women, be enlightened,
please!
United in heart, hand in hand
Dai Nippon, the leader of all Asia*

Let's follow, imitate, and take as an example

4. Conclusions

Until now, we have been examining several pro-Japanese Imperialist poems created during the Japanese occupation in Korea and Malaysia while comparing their content. Through this research, we can understand the views of poets from both countries towards Japanese colonization, whether to accept it or to resist it. With that, we can understand the tone and rhythm of the poets' songs from both countries during the dark period of their literature. The cooperative relationship in all fields between Malaysia and Korea has not been very active lately compared to its relations with other countries. Therefore, sharing and jointly researching the shared experiences of the past, such as being colonized by the Japanese, between the two countries, especially in the field of literature, can serve as a good bridge to enhance and disseminate mutual understanding. Specifically, the work that examines the awareness and expressions of Korean and Malaysian writers towards Japanese colonization will serve as a solid foundation to activate the exchange of

literary works between the two countries in particular, and to enhance bilateral cooperation in all aspects in general. Through this effort, namely a comparative study of literary works between Malaysia and Korea, we can activate bilateral literary exchanges, with Malaysia as the hub of literature in the Southeast Asian region and South Korea as one of the literary centers in the Northeast Asian region. And such efforts can be realized as one way to establish the identity of Korean literature.

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