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The Rationale of Korean Economic Nationalism Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1922–1932: The Case of Cho Man-sik's Products Promotion Society

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Economic nationalism may seem rather too grand a term for the contents of this paper. And indeed, I have not attempted any analysis of the economics of economic nationalism. My concern is with the nationalist element in the equation, in particular the basic perceptions of nationalists inside Korea who responded to the plight of their colonially oppressed nation. The question, 'Is economic nationalism viable under colonial occupation?' may be answered negatively in Korea's case. But one may equally assert that all nationalist movements and all economic action, of left or right, were not viable in Korea at this time. Even if a certain theory of the determinative role of economic superstructures is employed, I suspect this question of viability may generate only fruitless dispute over whether we strictly mean non-viability or simply failure. Hence I willingly leave the theoretical aspects of the case to those equipped to deal with them.

The political context of the Korean nationalists' struggle during the period 1922 to 1932 was a Japanese Government-General which in its restrictions on any Korean attempts to direct national affairs was inflexible and unyielding.¹ But there was nothing illusory about their struggle, which involved issues broader and more long-term than immediate opposition to this administration. The nationalists not only perceived a harsh present but also envisaged a new or future possibility and here, I believe, we approach the dynamics of Korean self-recon-

¹ See K. M. Wells, 'Spencer and Mahan in Kimonos: Japanese Colonial Theory', in *Journal of East and West Studies*, Seoul, Yonsei University, vol. 10, no. 1 (April 1981), pp. 43–58.

struction nationalism:² its endeavour to create and promote an ethically responsible course of action for all levels of society and the strong religious influence on this endeavour. The Korean Products Promotion Society (朝鮮物産獎勵會), inaugurated in 1922 by the Presbyterian nationalist Cho Man-sik (曹喚植), was the largest and most explicit example of this nationalism and as such engendered considerable thought and debate among the Koreans. Before examining the movement itself, I shall briefly present its economic context.

Economic Background

Few scholars have disagreed³ that in terms of Japan's avowed strategic interest in Korea since the late nineteenth century, commercial interests ranked high, or that the economic benefits of trading and industrial activities in Korea since 1910 were intended for Japan. Results often disappoint intentions, but in colonial situations the imperial power has greater control over results than in even its own nation. Certainly Schumpeterian and catalytic theories of industrial development have been applied to colonial Korea (1910-45),⁴ but to the Korean nationalists the economic harm of colonialism far outweighed any even real gains.

The Government-General's land policies as implemented by the Land Survey Bureau and the (pseudo-) private Oriental Development Company had early caused intense resentment and suffering among Koreans. The Development Company had begun acquiring land from December 1908⁵ and by 1910 Japanese holdings amounted to 3% of arable land.⁶ In 1912 the Japanese *Minhō* (民法) was applied to Korea

² The self-strengthening (自強) movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries re-emerged under colonial occupation as a reconstruction (改造) movement. In both instances, ethical beliefs and theories were influential, and 'ethical nationalism' may be an appropriate label for the two movements. However, 'reconstruction' was to be carried out through self-reliance, thus 'self-reconstruction nationalism' is justified, as well as being a more familiar term in modern East Asian history.

³ Alleyne Ireland is one of the few. His book, *The New Korea* (N.Y., E. P. Dutton, 1926), was based only on the Government-General's English-language *Annual Reports*, and was an apology for the regime written during its second decade of rule.

⁴ E.g., Yong Iob Chung, 'Korean Investment under Japanese Rule', in C. I. Kim and Doretha E. Mortimore (eds), *Korea's Response to Japan: The Colonial Period 1910-1945* (Centre for Korean Studies, Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University, 1977).

⁵ *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chōsen, 1910-1911*: 'The Oriental Development Company'. Records of the U.S. Department of State relating to internal affairs of Korea, 1910-29, Document 895.602.

⁶ Yun-sik Chang, 'Planned Economic Transformation and Population Change,' in Kim and Mortimore, *Korea's Response to Japan*, p. 54.

as the Chōsen Minji Rei (朝鮮民事令) with the aim of establishing a private ownership system. However, the land-ownership surveys that followed were based on self-assessment⁷ with no concession made to the confused Korean farmers to whom the system was so new. These land surveys thus facilitated ‘legal’ confiscation of land on technical grounds. The Japanese professor, Yoshino Sakuzō, commented in the Tokyo *Chūō Kōron* after his stay in Korea in 1916: ‘Without consideration and mercilessly [the Japanese] have resorted to laws for the expropriation of land, the Koreans concerned being compelled to part with their family property for nothing.’⁸ Certainly, the Oriental Development Company’s holdings increased dramatically between 1910 and 1931 as Table 1 illustrates.⁹

Total Japanese holdings in 1930 accounted for 60% of arable land,¹⁰ while Korean landlords were required by law to have Japanese landlords.¹¹ Considering that during the period under examination the Japanese in Korea represented only 3% of the total population (of 17–19 million: about 80% being rural) and these mostly officials, bureaucrats, patrolmen and soldiers, it is clear that a small number of Japanese directly controlled the larger part of Korean agriculture and supervised the remainder.

Until the operation of the Yen Bloc economy of the 1930s, priority was given to agricultural industry. The most intensive agricultural develop-

TABLE I
Oriental Development Co. Holdings in Korea, in Hectares

1910	1920	1925	1929	1930	1931
11,000	77,000	85,500	96,000	105,000	123,000 (Approx.)

⁷ ‘Order No. 2 of the Governor-General of Chōsen, 13 August 1912: Regulations for Land Investigation’, and ‘Ordinance No. 6 of the Government-General of Chōsen, 13 August 1912: Regulations for the Enforcement of the Order of Land Investigation’, in *Orders and Regulations relating to Land Tax, Urban Land Tax, Tobacco Tax and Land Investigation* (Government-General of Chōsen, Keijo (Seoul), July 1914), pp. 62–9.

⁸ Quoted in Henry Chung, *The Case of Korea* (N.Y., Fleming H. Revell Co., 1921), pp. 110–11.

⁹ Ch’oe Ho-jin, *Han’guk kyōngje sa* (An Economic History of Korea) (Seoul, Pak yōng sa, rev. and enlarged edn, 1981), pp. 220–1; ‘The Oriental Development Company (see note 5) gives a figure of 27,035 acres (10,945 hectares) for 1910. This and the figures given in the text reveal only a portion of the Company’s actual activities, for in 1910 also the Company rented a further 18,335 acres from the Government-General.

¹⁰ Chang, ‘Economic Transformation’, p. 54.

¹¹ C. A. Fisher, ‘The Role of Korea in the Far East’, *Geographical Journal*, vol. 120 (1954), p. 290.

ment occurred during the 1920s when the Rice Production Expansion Plan was implemented in Korea following the 1918 and 1920 Rice Riots in Japan. This plan was consciously designed to achieve imperial self-sufficiency in rice and to solve the problem of rising rice prices after the first world war.¹² Hence although rice output in Korea almost doubled between 1910 and 1938, export of rice to Japan in the same period increased twenty-fold, accounting for 40% of Korea's annual yield; the average rice consumption declined by almost one half, replaced mainly by millet imported from Manchuria.¹³ The Japanese had noted in 1913 that Korean farmers even in the capital province of Kyōnggi often subsisted on 'the roots of grasses and the tender bark of trees,'¹⁴ and Governor-General Ugaki observed the same situation in the 1930s.¹⁵ As agricultural development progressed, the proportion of Korean farmers tilling their own soil declined and tenancy increased. Between 1922 and 1933 tenancy increased from 40.6% to 55.2% of rural households.¹⁶ But excluded from land or labour opportunities, Korean farmers were obliged to emigrate in large numbers from the 1920s, to Manchuria, Mongolia, North China, Hawaii and Japan. Nearly 140,000 Koreans emigrated to Manchuria from 1920 to 1929,¹⁷ while the number of Korean labourers in Japan (mainly Osaka) rose from less than 30,000 in 1920 to over 230,000 in 1933.¹⁸

Non-agricultural industry showed a steady quantitative increase from before the annexation with the construction of railways and development of mining. Zaibatsu firms—Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Nagoya—established themselves in Korea in the mid-1920s to augment beer, paper, flour, cement, magnesium, nitrogen, tungsten and hydro-electric industries, as well as to develop the existing textile, iron and coal industries.¹⁹ It was not until after the period examined in this paper that the Government-General implemented rapid industrialization through

¹² Y. Hayami, 'Rice Policy in Japan's Economic Development', *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 54 (1) (February 1972), pp. 24–5.

¹³ Fisher 'Role of Korea', pp. 289–90; A. J. Grajdanzev, *Modern Korea* (N.Y., John Day Co., 1944), pp. 118ff; Joong-Gun Chung, 'Japanese Colonial Administration in Korea, 1905–1919', doctoral dissertation, Claremont Graduate School and University Centre, 1971, p. 163.

¹⁴ *The Seoul Press*, 30.4.1913.

¹⁵ Wonmo Dong, 'Japanese Colonial Policy and Practice in Korea, 1905–1945: A Study in Assimilation', doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University, 1965, p. 319.

¹⁶ Ch'oe Ho-jin, *Han'guk Kyōngje sa*, p. 223.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

¹⁸ *Shakai undō no jōkyō*: Naimushō keihōkyoku, December 1933: 'Zairyū Chōsenjin undō' (Published in Tokyo, Sanichi Shobō, 1971).

¹⁹ Chul Wong Kang, 'An Analysis of Japanese Policy and Economic Change in Korea', in Andrew Nahm (ed.), *Korea Under Japanese Colonial Rule* (Centre for Korean Studies, Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University, 1974), p. 80.

its North Korea Exploitation Plan (Hokusen Kaitaku Keikaku), and so social unease derived from structural change in industry was not a prominent feature of the 1920s.²⁰

The overriding economic grievance and concern of Korean nationalists in the 1920s was the Japanese strangle-hold on enterprise—rural and urban. The Government-General gave financial assistance only to large businesses and offered loans to Koreans at a rate one third higher than to Japanese.²¹ The only large-scale Korean enterprises which succeeded without openly pledging loyalty to Japan were the Kyōngsang Textile Company (Seoul), the Kyōngnam Bank (Pusan), the Honam Bank (S.W. Korea), and the Paeksan Trading Company (Pusan): even the latter two were ordered to dissolve or merge with Japanese enterprises in 1941 and 1927 respectively.²² (Small and medium enterprises fared a little better in Seoul and P'yōngyang, as will be noted below.) Grievances were exacerbated at employment level by a discriminatory wage system which, as Table 2 demonstrates,²³ left

TABLE 2
Wages by Nationality, 1921

		Seoul	Mokpo	Pusan	P'yōngyang	Shinūiju	Sōnch'ōn
Carpenters	Japanese	4.29	3.30	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.65
	Korean	2.98	2.50	2.50	2.65	2.10	3.60
Plasterers	Japanese	5.50	3.40	3.50	3.85	4.50	4.20
	Korean	3.63	2.52	2.63	2.65	2.50	3.00
Stone-Masons	Japanese	5.30	4.00	4.00	4.17	4.50	4.30
	Korean	3.48	3.50	2.00	2.453	2.50	2.50
Coolies	Japanese	2.50	2.20	1.70	1.12	2.11	2.53
	Korean	1.48	1.35	1.35	.85	1.10	1.73
Dockers	Japanese	2.83	2.75	2.38	2.40	2.75	2.83
	Korean	2.13	1.50	1.53	1.90	2.00	2.03
Barbers	Japanese	2.58	1.94	2.13	2.50	2.25	3.65
	Korean	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.75	1.75	1.58

Source: *Annual Report* (1918-21), p. 223.

²⁰ Yong Iob Chung, 'Japanese Investment in Korea 1904-1945', p. 94, and Chul Won Kang, 'Japanese Policy', p. 84, both in Nahm (ed.) (see note 19).

²¹ Yong Iob Chung, 'Korean Investment under Japanese Rule', in Kim and Mortimore, *Korea's Response to Japan*, pp. 35-6.

²² Daniel S. Juhn, 'Nationalism and Korean Businessmen', in *ibid.*, pp. 49ff.

²³ From Joong-gun Chung's doctoral dissertation (cited in note 13), p. 164.

Korean workers at least 40% poorer than their Japanese counterparts in Korea.

Korea's economic dependence on Japan is illustrated by the fact that by 1931, 95.1% of Korean exports—grain, cotton silk and minerals—went to Japan, whilst 80% of her imports came from Japan to absorb Zaibatsu surplus production.²⁴ In short, the Korean economy was a colonial economy: its determining features were controlled by and for the Japanese while Koreans supplied relatively under-paid services and labour. Without political powers, the Koreans could do little about inequities or the export of food and new materials to Japan. But one avenue did appear to be open in Cho Man-sik's view: Koreans could refuse to spend the wealth that remained to them on imported daily necessities and instead patronize such goods as Koreans produced or were able to produce.

The Korean Products Promotion Society. Formation and Activities

The Korean Products Promotion Society was born in P'yŏngyang amidst a widespread growth of numerous smaller movements promoting frugality, purposeful work and ethical life-styles, such as temperance societies and savings clubs, mostly initiated by Protestant Christians.²⁵ The idea was not entirely new to the region. A 'Love Korean Products' movement had arisen in P'yŏngyang in 1909, urging Koreans to patronize Korean products in order to promote a national economy based on native industry.²⁶ Indeed, the north-western provinces (North and South P'yŏngyang and Hwanghae) were commercially and industrially far more active and more socially mobile than the conservative, *yangban*-dominated southern areas.²⁷ Cho Man-sik was a Presbyterian Elder, General-Secretary of the P'yŏngyang Y.M.C.A., an organizer of the nation-wide March First Movement of 1919, for which he had been imprisoned for ten months, and former principal of the Christian and openly nationalist Osan Boys College in Chŏngju, South P'yŏngan Province. He was a graduate in Law of Meiji University, the son of a medium owner-cultivator in a relatively poor and strongly

²⁴ Fisher, 'Role of Korea', p. 289.

²⁵ *Shakai undō no jōkyō*, 1931: 'Minzokushugi undō'.

²⁶ *Shinhan Minbo* (新韓民報), 28.7.1909.

²⁷ Lee Kwang-rin, 'Kaikaki no Kansei chihō to Kaishinkyō', in *Kan*, vol. 8, no. 2 (February 1979), pp. 9–10, 20.

Christian village in Kangsŏ-gun near P'yŏngyang. In July 1922, Cho recruited support from among Christian youth and from colleagues Han Kŭn-jo, Kim Kwang-su and O Yun-sŏn, proclaimed the formation of the Society and established its headquarters in the P'yŏngyang Y.M.C.A. offices. The Society was immediately supported by sixteen businesses in and around P'yŏngyang.²⁸

Although the Korean Products Promotion Society was generated by the P'yŏngyang Christian nationalists, Cho intended it to be a national movement supported by all social groups and religious organizations. Cho described its purpose in simple terms implying that it was a commonsense response to a threat all Koreans suffered in common:

The present indigence among Koreans is due to mindless contempt of and failure to cherish their own goods. So without realizing it, Koreans are suffering under foreign economic invasion. Beginning with trivial daily merchandise, Japan's capitalistic economic invasion has now ravished our very centre. The way to block this invasion is to increase production of native foods and to develop and raise products to a high level of excellence. These goods must constantly be patronized in order to promote further production.²⁹

Cho re-tailored the traditional male costume a little to simplify it for an active working life, shod himself in native straw sandals and shaved his head. He dwelt in P'yŏngyang city in a two-room bungalow which an acquaintance described as being 'like a peasant's for frugality.'³⁰ As all types of people from regional personalities to failed examinees and distressed labourers made their pilgrimage to visit Cho, he became something of a symbol of 'new Korea.'³¹ In his blending of traditional commoner's values with the practical elements of the Western religious and scientific outlook, Cho Man-sik was representative of a new approach to Korean national problems which had its roots in the first generation of Christian nationalism of the 1890s. In particular, Cho's practice of influencing the nation through personal moral example rather than political or social authority gained him respect, even from critics, and earned him the title: 'Gandhi of Korea.'

Cho was not disappointed in his expectation of the national appeal of his movement. Within months, an enthusiastic lobby had formed in Seoul. In mid-December 1922, fifty Seoul students under Yŏm T'ae-jin organized a Self-Support Association (自作会). After presenting statisti-

²⁸ *Kodang Cho Man-sik* (Seoul, P'yŏngnam minbo sa, 1966), p. 103; Han Kŭn-jo, *Kodang Cho Man-sik* vol. 12 in series, 'Widaehan Han'gukin' (Seoul, T'aegŭk ch'ulp'an sa), p. 156.

²⁹ *Minjok undong ch'ongsŏ: Taejung undong* (Seoul, Minjok munhwa hyŏphoe, 1981), p. 245.

³⁰ *Tong Kwang* (東光), no. 17 (January 1931), p. 43.

³¹ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

cal evidence of the serious trade imbalance caused by importing daily necessities, the Association published a three-point programme.³²

1. Koreans must unite in using only Korean goods and in rejecting imported goods;
2. Koreans must immediately begin to manufacture necessities with their own hands;
3. Koreans must unite in refusing to sell or mortgage land and strive rather to purchase it.

To this end, the students planned to form 'large, English guild-style industrial co-operatives to produce and supply goods Koreans eat, wear and use, and to make these the organs of production and consumption for the whole of Korea.' This development stimulated debate in the nationalist newspapers, especially the *Donga Daily* (東亜日報), while lecture tours proceeded in the provinces to propagate the idea, attracting reported crowds of five to six thousand.³³

The Korean Youth Association (朝鮮青年聯合會), founded in 1920 as a federation of 113 youth movements by the editor of the *Donga Daily*, Chang Tök-su, and described by a Japanese report as 'the main stream of the nationalist movement,'³⁴ spearheaded the movement in Seoul from November 1922. An article commemorating the Youth Association's second anniversary which appeared in the *Donga Daily* on 1 December, stressed the pressing need to support a Korean-based economy. Three weeks later the Association published an appeal for a 'national contract', a 'sacred covenant' of the Korean people to practise the principles of 'self-support and self-sufficiency' (自作自給).³⁵

The Government-General reacted quickly. Lecture tours, or 'circuit lectures' were forbidden and one campaigner was arrested in the north-western border town of Ŭiju.³⁶ Forewarned, supporters in Seoul decided to establish branches in Seoul and other districts in order to present the Japanese with a *fait accompli*. This strategy succeeded.

On 9 January 1923, ten or more people met in Seoul and formed a preparatory committee.³⁷ On 20 January, 160 persons met at Hyöpsöng College to elect twenty directors and resolve on a three-point interim policy statement:³⁸

1. Men and women are to wear Korean cotton clothing;

³² *Donga Daily* (東亜日報), 17.12.1922.

³³ Cho Ki-jun, *Han'guk Chabonju'i Söngnip Saron* (History of the Formation of Korean Capitalism) (Koryö University Press, 1973), p. 505.

³⁴ *Shakai undö no jökyö*: Naimushö keihökyoku, 1931: 'Minzokushugi undö.'

³⁵ *Donga Daily*, 26.12.1922.

³⁶ Cho Ki-jun (see note 33), p. 505.

³⁷ *Donga Daily*, 11.1.1923.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 and 23.1.1923.

2. Use native food and drink (excepting sugar, salt, fruit and cool beverages);
3. Use other native products as far as possible.

Thus the Korean Products Promotion Society became established in Seoul. From there, the Japanese later conceded, the movement 'mushroomed.'³⁹ Early in February, the Presbyterian Lee Kap-sŏng and methodist minister O Hwa-yŏng, both organizers of the 1919 March First Movement, lectured before about 2,000 people at the Seoul Ch'ŏndogyo (Heavenly Way Religion) Hall with two others on the importance of Koreans developing respect for Korean products.⁴⁰ Within a week, a concerted membership drive added 400 financial members to the Society, bringing the Seoul branch total to 817.⁴¹ Yet a week later, regional branches had been established in all the larger provincial cities besides P'yŏngyang, as well as some smaller towns: Pusan, Taejŏn, Masan, Hamhŭng, Kwangju, Miryang, Taegu, Yangsan, Tongnae, Anju, Yŏngdong, Yŏnghŭng and Kŭmje.⁴² Despite immediate Government-General opposition, the movement had become nation-wide and continued to spread to the smallest rural villages from February to October 1923.⁴³ Support came from the youth groups, the Christian, Ch'ŏndogyo and Buddhist groups, women's clubs, businessmen and industrialists,⁴⁴ while in P'yŏngyang the unusual national unity of the Society was illustrated by its support by the P'yŏngyang Labour League (勞働同盟).⁴⁵ Support also came from an unexpected quarter. In Miryang (South Kyŏngsang Province), the *Kisaeng* or 'entertainment' girls adopted the slogan, 'Korea for Koreans' and made a pact to wear only simple, native Korean clothing. In Masan (South Kyŏngsang), 40 *Kisaeng* girls formed a league declaring that since they, too, were Koreans, indeed Koreans forced into their present occupation by poverty, they were well aware of the need to live frugally and use native goods and clothing only.⁴⁶

Encouraged by this initial response, the Seoul, P'yŏngyang and several provincial branches prepared to use the approaching Lunar New Year holiday (i.e. 16 February) for highly visible rallies and parades. But at 1 p.m. on 13 February, the Seoul directors were summoned to the Central Police Station and threatened with dire consequences should the arrangements go ahead, on the basis of laws regulating assembly and public peace.⁴⁷ Alternative arrangements were

³⁹ *Shakai undō no jōkyō*, loc. cit.

⁴⁰ *Donga Daily*, 3 and 5.2.1923.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 9.2.1923.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 5, 8, 13, 14, 16, 19, 21, 23.2.1923; *Sōtokufu kampō*, 16.2.1923.

⁴³ Cho Ki-jun (see note 33), p. 511.

⁴⁴ See note 42.

⁴⁵ *Donga Daily*, 13.2.1923.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5 and 14.2.1923.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.2.1923.

promptly made. A 'social' gathering took place at the Ch'öndogyo Hall at 2 p.m. on the Lunar New Year's Day, attended by several thousands all in plain Korean costume. The eight provinces were represented by special flags depicting their district products, manifestos were distributed, and Kim Pyöng-hüi of the *Chosön Daily* (朝鮮日報) and the manager of the *Donga Daily*, Song Chin-u, gave short speeches. From 7 p.m. lectures were given at the Central Y.M.C.A. and Youth Association buildings by noted nationalist figures and religious leaders on the theme, 'The Self-Support Movement shall be accomplished by the united strength of our twenty million people.'⁴⁸

In P'yöngyang, the streets had hosted pre-New Year rallies of up to seven thousand people. The police complained that such gatherings were too large and ordered Kim Söng-öp, Chairman of the P'yöngyang branch, to limit the New Year's Day parades to two separate corps of fifty marchers each. The parades took place as instructed, but reportedly 10,000 people representing over sixty groups gathered afterwards in the P'yöngyang Christian College grounds to hear the Rev. Kim Tong-wön speak on the subject of self-sufficiency.⁴⁹ Rallies were held also by several other district branches, in Söngch'ön and Suan in South P'yöngan, Talsöng and Yangsan in South Kyöngsang, and Sunch'ön in South Chölla. In Kunsan (North Chölla) and Pusan, large parades were led by the *Kisaeng* girls.⁵⁰

In the wake of such resounding success, a Seoul director, Na Kyöng-sök, a bright student fresh from studies in Tokyo, proposed immediate action on two fronts: formation of consumers' co-operatives and propagation of the movement's theoretical basis.⁵¹ The Seoul Board of Directors met on 22 February and commissioned Na, Lee Sun-t'aek, an economist trained in Japan, and the Youth Association leader Kim Ch'öl-su, to examine the co-operative movements of a variety of countries.⁵² They reported a month later that in Korea's situation it would be advisable initially to establish co-operatives from above and steadily encourage mass-participation until the movement became spontaneous. An estimated 5,000 Yen would be required to initiate the scheme, for which a tax on members was proposed.⁵³ At this stage, however, not enough financial support was pledged. In June 1924, the Seoul branch directors perceived that education was the first

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 16 and 18.2.1923.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 16, 17, 18.2.1923.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.2.1923

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 22.2.1923.

⁵² Cho Ki-jun (see note 33), p. 513.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 514; *Journal of the Korean Products Promotion Society* (朝鮮物産獎勵會會報), vol. 1, no. 2 (February 1930), p. 65. (Hereafter: *Journal*.)

priority and accordingly decided to supply villagers with information demonstrating the art and desirability of consumers' co-operatives.⁵⁴

In accord with Na Kyöng-sök's second proposal, the Seoul branch did succeed despite considerable Government-General opposition in producing a journal, *Sanöb Kye* (産業界: 'Industrial World').⁵⁵ The first issue appeared in November 1923, and with some lapses and several changes in name, continued until forced to terminate late in 1932 by Japanese pressure and the strain of the Great Depression. In January 1925, Kim Ch'öl-su announced that the Journal would henceforth turn from theory and principles and concentrate on practical issues.⁵⁶ Possibly on account of the developing depression, the whole movement turned from 'enlightenment' of the public to encouragement of specific industries in late 1929, and the Journal, renamed as *Journal of the Korean Products Promotion Society*, attracted wider readership by carrying articles on the practical operation of national industries.⁵⁷

Reports on the Society continued to appear almost every week until late 1924 when enthusiasm flagged. Lecture rallies held in the Ch'öndogyo and Y.M.C.A. buildings in Seoul and at P'yöngyang Christian College on lunar New Year's day, 1924 (5 February), attended by several thousands,⁵⁸ appeared to be the last big event the Society could muster in face of rising Japanese intolerance. One disappointed contributor to the nationalist journal *Creation* (閃閃) judged that the movement had fizzled out by the end of 1923. Indignantly, he demanded to know how it was that 'this fervent movement which so shook the whole country had become so desolate within six or seven months.'⁵⁹ This judgement was certainly too hasty of a movement whose very nature and aims made appraisal reasonable only on its long-term performance. Indeed, the wording and tone of this criticism fulfilled precisely the apprehensions expressed by the Seoul directors in February 1923. The chairman, Yu Söng-jun, explained that the movement could not maintain its present feverish energy nor could it accomplish its aims in just a few years.⁶⁰ The Ch'öndogyo youth leader, Lee Chong-rin, further stressed the need for perseverance,⁶¹ while Kim Ch'öl-su expressed the hope that Koreans had by now overcome their tendency to latch euphorically onto a new thing but desert the cause

⁵⁴ *Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2 (February 1930), p. 65.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; Cho Ki-jun (see note 33), pp. 516-17.

⁵⁷ Cho Ki-jun (see note 33), p. 523.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Chin Tök-kyu, '1920 nyöndaek Kuknae minjok undong e kwanhan koch'al,' in Song Kôn-ho and Kang Man-kil (eds), *Han'guk Minjokju Ron* (Essays on Korean Nationalism) (Seoul, Ch'angjak gwa pip'yöng sa, 1982), p. 148.

⁶⁰ *Donga daily*, 18.2.1923.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 20.2.1923.

⁵⁶ *Donga Daily*, 1.1.1925.

⁵⁸ *Donga Daily*, 3, 5, 7, 8.2.1924.

when the initial noise died down.⁶² Despite these pleas and warnings, support did slump. Japanese harassment of the movement was probably the most important external factor, but the rise of a radical left in 1923 caused internal debates and defections, a subject I shall treat below.

In 1925, the Seoul directors attempted a revival of the former support. Kim Ch'öl-su severely criticized the 'inexcusable' Korean habit of following emotional surges in disregard of practical steps towards a goal, and estimated that only one-tenth of the 2000 members in each province were at all conscientious.⁶³ In July the Board of Directors drew up a plan for revival:⁶⁴

1. Visit each of the 3000 [Seoul?] members, clearly outline the situation, and form a support group of consenting members.
2. Should the number of supportive members reach 100 or more, announce a revival meeting and entrust arrangement to members elected for the purpose.
3. Encourage non-members who are in accord with our objectives to join the Society.

Although one hundred and twenty members indicated active support, only thirty-seven attended the meeting convened on 3 October 1925 at Tongdök Girls' School in Seoul. Nevertheless, a promotional campaign followed which enabled the Society to clear its debts and to operate once more from its own premises.⁶⁵

The Society struggled on for another two years without great support. At the Seoul Annual General Meeting of April 1927, the Board of Directors was requested to submit after one month's investigations and deliberations its opinions on the causes of failure and their proposals to remedy this. Accordingly, they despatched a questionnaire to three hundred leading members throughout the nation.⁶⁶ The reasons given included suppression by the Japanese; threats against members and supporters; the critical stance of a section of the Youth Association; factionalism; resignation due to destitution among the common people; and the refusal by merchants importing goods to co-operate.⁶⁷

In April the next year, the Seoul branch finally received permission to hold a Bazaar at the Central Y.M.C.A., designed to rectify the problem of unawareness of what Koreans produced from one province or district to another. The *Chosŏn Daily* published an extensive list of items of native produce prior to the Bazaar and called for a nation-wide response to the ideas and spirit it symbolized. The newspaper warned that Koreans were fast losing even nominal participation in the economy and urged

⁶² *Ibid.*, 21.2.1923.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1.1.1925.

⁶⁴ Cho Ki-jun (see note 33), p. 521. ⁶⁵ *Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3 (March 1930), p. 47.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 5 (May 1930), pp. 40-3. ⁶⁷ Cho Ki-jun (see note 33), p. 522.

all to promote 'the maximum growth possible under the various actual political and economic conditions now prevailing.'⁶⁸ All this was, apparently, too subversive, for the Government-General censored the whole editorial.

The bazaar marks an upswing in the Society's fortunes. The Seoul Annual General Meeting in April 1929 adopted a six-part programme which essentially concerned practical measures towards founding industries through commercial and industrial leagues or guilds. A newly-elected director, the architect Chông Se-Kwôn, acquired new premises for the Society as well as arranging free printing of the Journal.⁶⁹ Another very successful bazaar was held in the Seoul Y.M.C.A. in April 1930, attended by unprecedented numbers and presided over by the famous Christian nationalist, Yun Ch'i-ho.⁷⁰

The P'yöngyang branch was no less vigorous at this point and had enjoyed greater freedom from its inception. It held New Year parades most years: a successful parade in 1928⁷¹ was followed in 1930 by an enthusiastic march of six hundred persons led by Cho Man-sik. Again, the Y.M.C.A. served as centre of operations.⁷²

This new lease of life at the onset of the Great Depression raises questions that will be left aside in this paper.⁷³ Renewed or intensified interest in economic problems, especially in co-operatives and tenancy reforms, featured in the newspapers and other journals such as *Tong Kwang* (東光) throughout the depression years. The Government-General's industrialization programme for Korea after 1923 involved even tighter control over the economy, so that this heightened economic consciousness was deprived of any outlet. Up to 1923, the Society did influence or establish a few small and medium native industries in P'yöngyang, Seoul and some other provincial centres,⁷⁴ while co-operatives began to be established more or less independently in some

⁶⁸ *Chosön Daily* (朝鮮日報), 6.4.1928.

⁶⁹ Cho, Ki-jun (see note 33), p. 523.

⁷⁰ *Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (May 1930), pp. 28-31.

⁷¹ *Donga Daily*, 6.1.1928.

⁷² *Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (March 1930), p. 50.

⁷³ I mean, for example, the question of what economic factors (depression effects on Japan, China and Korea and on trade; effect of dropping silver or gold standards) may have prompted new interest in the Society. It should be added that the depression hit China and Japan a little later than the West and was probably not a factor in Korea until late 1930.

⁷⁴ In P'yöngyang: Kyöngshin Trading Co., Chosön Products Trading Co., Ch'a Yun-söng Co., Chön Chwa-yong Co., Lee Tök-hwan Hosiery Factory (*Kodang Cho Man-sik*, pp. 103 and 107). In Seoul: Kyöngsöng Spinning Co., Kyöngsöng Weaving Co., Kyöngsöng Leatherworks, Chosön Paper Co., Chosön Cotton Co.; in Taegu: Koryö Ceramics; in Mokp'o: an ironworks company. *Donga Daily*, 'Chosön chingmul hyönhwang gwa saengsan chinhüng ch'aek,' 1-16.8.1923.

numbers from the late 1920s, peaking at thirty-eight major co-operatives formed in 1931⁷⁵ alone. In short, the Society's activities enjoyed relative success in its limited ventures (bazaars and parades), but its accomplishments diminished dramatically in proportion to the scale of its practical industrial ambitions, i.e., wherever it conflicted with Japanese interests or required sizeable capital outlay. Yet despite the modesty of these economic results, the Product Promotion Society was an important focus and expression of a major stream of nationalism inside Korea.

Nationalist Basis of the Products Promotion Society

The explicit rationale for this economic nationalism was self-support, self-sufficiency, self-reliance (自作自給: hereafter I shall italicize 'self-sufficiency' whenever it occurs as a translation of these four characters). This principle was almost an article of faith among, especially, Protestant nationalists. The idea, historically, had its roots in the 1880s when Yun Ch'i-ho, Sŏ Chae-p'il and other mainly Protestant 'self-strengtheners' developed a critique of Korean national and social weakness.⁷⁶ This critique was further systematized between 1907 and 1926 by An Ch'ang-ho, another Christian nationalist and friend of both Yun Ch'i-ho and Cho Man-sik, as a 'gradualist' movement of national reconstruction (民族改造). This approach demanded moral and mental training, unity among all classes of Koreans, and long-term commitment to reconstruction of all areas of life, from individual to family and nation.⁷⁷

An Ch'ang-ho represented a well-defined ethico-spiritual theory of Korea's colonial fate already found in Yun Ch'i-ho and held by the 1920s by important national leaders such as Lee Kwang-su, Chu Yo-han (editor of *Tong Kwang*) and, of course, Cho Man-sik. This theory was not confined to Christians, for the principal Buddhist nationalist and reformer, Han Yong-un, clearly subscribed to it,⁷⁸ as did a

⁷⁵ Of the 97 major co-operatives (mainly consumer) formed between 1920 and 1932, 83 were established in the final four years, 1929-32. From a survey in *Tong Kwang*, no. 33 (May 1932), pp. 170-1.

⁷⁶ For an examination of this earlier movement, see K. M. Wells, 'Civic Morality in the Nationalist Thought of Yun Ch'i-ho, 1881-1911', in *Papers on Far Eastern History* (A.N.U.), No. 28 (September 1983), pp. 107-51.

⁷⁷ An Ch'ang-ho, 'Kaejo' (改造), c. 1919, in Chu Yo-han (comp.), *Collected Works of An Ch'ang-ho* (安島山全集) (Seoul, Sammin Tang, 1963).

⁷⁸ Han Yong-un, 'Anguish through Spiritual Poverty' (靈的貧乏으로苦痛), in *Donga Daily*, 9.1.1923.

prominent Buddhist member of the Korean Products Promotion Society, Kim T'ae-hyöp.⁷⁹ Briefly, this theory was as follows.

Korea's colonial fate was a result of a lack of the material requisites of a functioning modern state. But this material lack was itself a result, a consequence of a lack of a moral fortitude and spiritual integrity which was manifested in egotistical factionalism and absence of public ethics, chronic inability to unite against crises and threats, and sheer lack of will to persevere in practical action in place of sporadic bursts of emotionalism. What if Japan left tomorrow? She or another would be back again the day after. Hence the *sine qua non* of all else was to reconstruct the nation spiritually and morally and thereby lay durable foundations on which to reconstruct its social and economic framework. This position represented a thoroughgoing dissatisfaction with all ready-made recipes for putting the nation to rights in three steps in three months. In economic terms, reconstruction meant self-sufficiency, or at least preparations for such—not, in the foreseeable future, the overthrow of Japanese imperialism or the destruction of capitalism. Indeed, political activity was regarded as only one form of nationalism and the least practicable under the circumstances.⁸⁰ The Korean Products Promotion Society's leadership stood more or less in this tradition.

Cho Man-sik laid the blame for the 'Japanese capitalistic invasion' squarely on Korean ignorance born of thoughtlessness concerning the basic conditions of their economic survival. In December 1922, the Korean Youth Association adopted Cho's theme in an article titled: 'My life by my means.'⁸¹ Morality, instincts and the like, the article stated, referred to the universal concern of people to preserve their welfare. But Koreans blindly allowed themselves to be 'buffeted by wind and wave', living 'lives without foundations'. It lamented the plunder of Korean land and commerce by foreigners, and taking the bull by the horns most emphatically declared that economic activity was 'the most direct and most vital' means of ensuring Korea's survival: politics could come later. Early in January 1923, a member of the nationalist Minu Hoe (民友會), Söl T'ae-hüi, wrote a bold article for the *Donga Daily* on Korea's slavery.

⁷⁹ Kim T'ae-hyöp, 'The Spirit of Self-Reliance' (自活의精神), *Changsan* (獎聲), vol. 2, no. 3 (March 1931), pp. 8-12.

⁸⁰ Lee Kwang-su, 'Minjok Kaejoron', *Complete Works of Lee Kwang-su* (Seoul, Ŭlshin Sa, 1979), vol. 10; Chu Yo-han, 'Tongu Hoe Muöshinga?', *Tong Kwang*, no. 36 (August 1932), pp. 36-7. The *Donga Daily* printed four editorials from 2 to 6 January 1924 under the heading, 'Minjok üi kyöngryun' (Rule of the People), which presented the same theme, and was probably written by Lee Kwang-su. See also, Ko Jun-sök (comp.), *Chösen Kakumei te-ze: Rekishiteki bunken to Kaisetsu* (Tokyo, Tsugeshobö, 1979), p. 89.

⁸¹ *Donga Daily*, 26.12.1922.

Not even the masters of their own food and clothing, he complained, Koreans were reduced to playing games with 'movements for the right to political participation'. Yet what was urgently needed was concerted action to reverse the process of borrowing money in order to eat and relinquishing land in order to live: without this all else was soap bubbles. In one aphorism, Söl encapsulated the mood of the mounting economic nationalism: 'At present we live off others' labour and goods; before long we shall be living off their rubbish tips.'⁸²

The Manifesto of the Korean Products Promotion Society spelled these ideas out for the general public:⁸³

If there is nothing for us to eat and nowhere secure for us to dwell, then our very livelihood will be destroyed. Then what rights, freedom or happiness can we expect and what hope may we have for any truly human development? The first condition of life is food—clothing—shelter, which is, to put it another way, our industrial base. If through the destruction of this industrial base nothing remains to our name, it is only to be expected that we should become utterly impoverished and fail to enjoy a livelihood fit for human beings . . .

Food, clothing and shelter—i.e. the industrial question—is the most urgent problem facing us. . . . Simply take a hard look at the clothes we wear, the food we eat and all the goods we use. Are any of these wrought with our own hands or produced by our own efforts? (. . .) Can we possibly sell our houses, land and even our own bodies for things other hands supply, and still lay claim to our rivers and mountains and manage our households as before? If the destruction of one's industrial base incontestably involves the destruction of one's livelihood . . . the present economic situation of the Korean people will certainly consign us all to the dark pit of ruin . . .

In order to promote Korean Products we must make it our aim to buy and use goods made by Koreans, and also unite to manufacture and supply those goods we need. Unless we come to our senses and exert ourselves in this way, how can we expect to maintain our livelihood and develop our society?

The 'Three Policies of Action' under Article 2 of the Seoul by-laws confirm the programme of intellectual and moral enlightenment suggested by this Manifesto: (1) promotion of industry through cultivating industrial knowledge; (2) promotion of love and use of Korean products; and (3) economic guidance through investigating the people's life-styles and circumstances with a view to training them in reform of their economic customs.⁸⁴ Although the Annual General Meeting held in April 1929 resolved to focus its activities more on practical issues, the Society by no means dropped theoretical discussions from its journal, and the contents differed in no important respects from its initial statements. *Self-sufficiency* remained the guiding principle. Lee

⁸² *Ibid.*, 12.1.1923.

⁸³ *Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2 (February 1930), p. 55.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 2 (February 1930), p. 57.

Kŭng-no published an explanation of the concept in February 1930. Since Korea was not some Robinson Crusoe cut off from the international market, he argued, *self-sufficiency* was clearly a relative concept only. It was not an ideology of 'primitive' economics or a refusal to be involved in the modern world. But nor was it a temporary expedient. It had to become the permanent rationale of Korean economic activity, unless Koreans were to face dire want forever. *Self-sufficiency* implied constant development of skills and technology: it was profoundly practical. Lee then turned to the moral theme. The former *self-sufficiency* of the home unit had vanished, replaced by a short-sighted, suicidal opting for present convenience. It is easier, at first, to let others produce goods and simply buy them—but after that, the deluge: no land, no nation. *Self-sufficiency* meant being responsible for one's own and the nation's economy.⁸⁵

Articles continued to drum out this theme up to 1932, attacking the 'underlying hedonism' of Koreans, their fatalism, short-sightedness, and contempt of movements that require stamina and perseverance or that are not 'political.'⁸⁶ Sŏl T'ae-hŭi commented that the Great Depression underlined the urgency of *self-sufficiency* by demonstrating that industrially underdeveloped people are left utterly resourceless in such cases. With some sarcasm he asked whether Koreans imagined that four or five hundred horse-power engines were necessary to produce any of Korea's daily requirements (excepting transport and electricity). He pointed out that because of mutual regional ignorance, Koreans in one province were buying imported goods when such were being produced locally in the next province.⁸⁷ The spiritual theme also remained. The Buddhist Kim T'ae-hyŏp asserted that Koreans could choose between self-extinction and self-survival ultimately only on the basis of spiritual health: 'If we lack the inner resources of *self-sufficiency*, no additional factor introduced from outside will be of any use.'⁸⁸

This theoretical position of the Korean Products Promotion Society places it firmly in the tradition of self-reconstruction nationalism, and as such, in the mainstream of the nationalist movement of the decade. Not

⁸⁵ Lee Kŭng-no, 'Chajak Chagŭp ūi ponŭi,' in *ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 2 (February 1930), pp. 12-14.

⁸⁶ E.g., A Reporter, 'Saengsan t'onggye ro pon Chosŏnin ūi hyŏnhwang (3)'; Ch'oe Hyŏn-pae, 'Chosŏn mulsan changnyŏ hoe ūi immu'; Sŏl t'ae-hŭi, 'Chosŏnin sanggon-gŏpjadŏl ege', in *Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3 (March 1930), pp. 27-33; vol. 1, no. 12 (December 1930), pp. 2-4; and *Changsan*, vol. 2, no. 3 (March 1931), pp. 2-4.

⁸⁷ Sŏl T'ae-hŭi, 'To Korean Traders and Industrialists' (Chosŏnin Sanggongŏpjadŏl ege), *Changsan*, vol. 2, no. 3 (March 1931), pp. 2-4.

⁸⁸ Kim T'ae-hyŏp (see note 79).

only did it enjoy support from the Christian, Ch'öndogyo and Buddhist movements which, according to Government-General documents, still dominated nationalism at the end of the 1920s,⁸⁹ but the movement was itself a national symbol and the popularity of Cho Man-sik has never been questioned.⁹⁰ Thus the Society appears to have given expression to an ideal and objective shared by a significant number of Korean people. Although its active membership was not very great after 1924, not all or even a majority of supporters could be expected to be financial members, and membership of 16,000⁹¹ in 1925 (following Kim Ch'öl-su's estimates) was not inconsiderable for a subsection of the wider self-reconstruction movement. Its representation can be clarified somewhat by examining the leadership as a social group.

Details on Cho Man-sik have already been given. Of the twenty directors elected by the Seoul Society in 1923 the following details have been found.⁹² Paek Kwan-su, Kim Ch'öl-su, Lee Kap-söng, Pak Tong-wön, Chöng No-sik and Lee Sun-t'aek were prominent Christian leaders, all but the last having recently been released from prison for their organization of the 1919 March First Movement. Kim Ch'öl-su had been a principal organizer of the Korean Tokyo Students' Declaration of Independence of 8 February 1919, and leader of the Seoul Youth Association since 1922. Lee Sun-t'aek studied economics in Japan and in 1923 lectured at the Presbyterian Yonhüi Special College. He was a critic of capitalism, publishing a series of ten or more articles on its contradictions in the *Donga Daily* during January 1923. O Hyön-ju was a Christian prominent in the Seoul Women's Club, while Lim Kyöng-ho and Lee Chong-rin were Ch'öndogyo adherents, the latter a youth leader.

Söl T'ae-hüi, critic, journalist and educationalist, had been involved in the 'enlightenment' movement as a member of the Söbuk Hakhoe

⁸⁹ *Government-General of Chösen: Kei kō hi*, no. 8036, 'Himitsu kessha Chösen kyösanto narabini Kōrai kyösan seinenkai jiken kensha no ken', 27.10.1928 (published in 1966 by Misuzu Shobō, Tokyo: *Gendaishi shiryō: Chosen*).

⁹⁰ See note 161. His effectiveness is another thing, and has been questioned, e.g. by Kim Kyu-hwan (*Ilje üi öllon sönjön chöngch'aek* (Seoul I-u Publishing Co., 1978), p. 176), who nevertheless remarks that it was possible to influence the formation of 'public opinion' among the masses to quite a large extent through such movements as Cho Man-sik's.

⁹¹ See note 63. Kim was reported as saying there was an average of 2000 members in each of the eight provinces—obviously not a precise figure.

⁹² Unless acknowledged otherwise, these details are gleaned from nationalist journals such as *Tong Kwang* and the Society's *Journal*, the *Hank'guk Inmyöng Taesajön* (Dictionary of Korean People) (Seoul, Shingu Munhwa Sa, 1980); Cho Ki-jun (see note 33), pp. 506–7, and Chin Tök-kyu (see note 59), p. 147.

(西北学会), 1907-10, and the Taehan Hyöphoe (大韓協會), 1908-09⁹³ and had also been involved in the March First Movement. Le Tük-nyön, Kim Tong-hyök and Lee Si-wan likewise belonged to the enlightenment tradition. Kim Yun-su was a Seoul businessman and Kim Tök-ch'ang had established the first Korean spinning and weaving plant. The theorist Na Kyöng-sok had studied Marxism in Japan and was known as an 'ethical socialist.'

The Chairman of the Board of Directors in the early years was Yu Söng-jun, brother of the famous politician and liberal reformer of the late nineteenth century, Yu Kil-jun,⁹⁴ who had become a Christian possibly through Yun Ch'i-ho. Arrested for his involvement in the Independence Club (1896-99), Yu Söng-jun had emerged from prison in 1904 a committed Christian and together with Yun Ch'i-ho, Yi Sang-jae, Syngman Rhee and others, established the Korean Y.M.C.A.⁹⁵ Yu served as Chief of the Educational Bureau and held other posts in the Ministry of Education during the Protectorate,⁹⁶ and became Councillor of North Ch'ungch'öng Province under the Government-General in October 1910.⁹⁷ Yu soon withdrew from government service and became increasingly nationalistic. His nephew, Yu Ok-kyöm, was an accomplished lawyer, protégé of Yun Ch'i-ho, Y.M.C.A. leader, and a conservative Christian nationalist.⁹⁸ Yu Söng-jun was thus a member of an illustrious and well-known aristocratic family.

These brief biographical details suggest that the Society was managed by a well-educated group of proven nationalists with some influential connexions and good representation of youth and religious, especially Protestant, groups. If the Self-Support Society mentioned earlier be reckoned among its supporters, then this together with the two businessmen on the Board of Directors in Seoul and the sixteen business establishments supporting the P'yöngyang branch indicates definite commercial representation. It is precisely this nature of its leadership which drew criticism in its day from radical socialist groups and which has prompted some historians today to portray the movement as non-popular, irrelevant to, and rejected by, the masses. The reality

⁹³ See, for example, Söl T'ae-hui, 'Hönböp sö-ön', in *Teahan Hyöphoe Hoebo*, no. 3, 25.6.1908, pp. 28-31.

⁹⁴ See Wells, 'Civic Morality' (see note 76), pp. 134-6.

⁹⁵ Lee Man-yöl, *Hanmal Kidokkyowa minjok undong* (Seoul, P'yöngmin sadang, 1980), p. 128; Lee Kwang-rin 'Kaikaha no Kaishinkyö kan', in *Kan*, vol. 7, no. 11-12 (November-December 1978), p. 38.

⁹⁶ *Kongnip shinmun* (共立新聞), 5.7.1907.

⁹⁷ *The Seoul Press*, 7.10.1910.

⁹⁸ Kim Ül-han, *Chwaong Yun Ch'i-ho Chönon* (A Biography of Chwaong Yun Ch'i-ho) (Seoul, Ülsö Munhwa Sa, 1978), pp. 155-7; *Tong Kwang*, vol. 2, no. 7 (July 1927), p. 24.

seems to have been rather more subtle, and an examination of the debate between the Society and its contemporary critics reveals its complexity—and produces some surprises.

The Ideological Debate

The hope of the leaders of the 1919 March First Movement had been that national self-determination might be applied to Korea at Versailles should Koreans demonstrate their will for independence. Their demonstration was certainly unambiguous, but Woodrow Wilson had not thought of Korea and no-one at the Peace Conference was willing to admit a 'problem [that] did not come within the purview of the Conference,'⁹⁹ and which would annoy Japan. The extensive involvement of Christianity in the Movement and the consequent destruction of Christian churches, schools and villages, slaughter of whole congregations, random imprisonment and injury of Christians, engendered a respect for the faith among Koreans that survived the political failure of the March First Movement.¹⁰⁰ But hopes in diplomacy and international opinion faded quickly. The abrupt turn towards Moscow by Kim Kyu-sik (the Christian nationalist who had taken Korea's case to Versailles) after the failure of Korean representation at the 1921–22 Washington Conference, and his condemnation of the Western democracies as 'bloodsucker nations,'¹⁰¹ most dramatically mark the change in mood developing by 1922. Whereas traditional nationalists such as An Ch'ang-ho and Cho Man-sik saw in the March First Movement confirmation of the need for spiritual and material self-reconstruction before risking political action, others, particularly the generation which had grown up under colonial rule, turned with high hopes to Marxism.

Marxist movements began entering Korea from Japan in 1922 with Korean students returning from study. Japanese reports noted that the increase of Koreans in Japan from 3,635 at the end of 1913 to 59,722 by the end of 1922 was accompanied by a 'disturbing deterioration in their

⁹⁹ Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants: The Little Nations at Versailles* (published diary, N.Y., Prentice-Hall Inc., 1946), p. 220.

¹⁰⁰ See K. M. Wells, 'Korean Independence Movements Under Japanese Colonial Rule 1919–1937: A Study in Nationalism', master's thesis, University of Canterbury, New Zealand, 1979, chs 5 and 6.

¹⁰¹ Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement 1918–1948* (Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 39–40. See also: Ryu Kùn-il, *Isǒngŭi Han'gukin Kim Kyu-sik* (Seoul, Tongso munhwa sa, 1981), pp. 106–7; Joungwon A. Kim, *Divided Korea. The Politics of Development, 1945–1972* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 1976), p. 29.

thought.’ Korean socialist societies began forming from November 1921, and Kim Yak-su’s communist group, the North Star Society (北星会), commenced lecture tours of Korea in July 1923.¹⁰² As the socialists infiltrated Korea, the ‘pure’ nationalists began to lose their privilege as unchallenged leaders. The crack first occurred in Chang Tök-su and Kim Ch’öl-su’s Korean Youth Association:

[In 1921] this Youth Association sprang up everywhere in all districts and served as the main stream of the nationalist movement. However, a faction which espoused Communism and harboured resentment against Chang Tök-su’s arbitrary manner . . . disrupted the Korean Youth Association and organized the All-Korea Youth Party Conference in March 1923, which was attended by 174 groups from throughout Korea. Hereby clear-cut boundaries have been produced between the two major streams—nationalist and socialist—of the youth movement in Korea.¹⁰³

In practice, the boundaries were not so rigid and it is questionable whether ‘nationalist’ and ‘socialist’ ideologies were as distinct as this Japanese report suggests.

The ideological debate began shortly after the Korean Products Promotion Society was established in Seoul, and was opened by a Korean residing in Tokyo, Chu Chong-gŏn, whose articles criticizing the Society were published in the *Donga Daily* from 6 to 23 April 1923. The main thrust was that the venture was impossible: native industry could not develop under colonial rule without political power. Even if some commercial development took place it would be plundered by Korean capitalists, which meant exploitation in the end by foreign (Japanese) capitalists. Chu was further unimpressed by the assurances of his former fellow-student in Tokyo, Na Kyŏng-sŏk, that the masses would win out in the long run.¹⁰⁴ If the process began wrongly, i.e., in reliance on bourgeois and capitalist activity, then there was no guarantee the proletariat’s sufferings would be rewarded later.

Other critics attacked the class composition of the Society leadership. The split in the Youth Association involved this very issue. As a ‘product of the leadership class’ the Society was judged incapable of tapping ‘the central strength of the Korean people.’¹⁰⁵ One Lee Sŏng-t’ae wrote an article in the leftist journal, *Shin Saenghwal* (新生活), imputing corrupt motives to the Society’s organizers: they were after all the intelligentsia

¹⁰² *Shakai undō no jōkyō*—Naimushō keihōkyoku, 1931: ‘Kyokusa undō jōkyō’.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Naimushō keihōkyoku, 1931: ‘Minzokushugi undō’.

¹⁰⁴ *Donga Daily*, 13.3.1923.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Michael E. Robinson, ‘The Origins and Development of Korean Nationalist Ideology, 1920–1926: Culture, Identity, National Development and Political Schism’, doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1979, pp. 243–4.

and so their activities were simply a plot to maintain their leadership and support bourgeois society.¹⁰⁶ There was more to this than flinging mud, for it was feared that any success of the Society would only weaken the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat. It is natural if one follows Marx's desire to lessen the 'birth pangs' of the just society that one should oppose any development which may postpone the flowering of proletarian consciousness. Nevertheless the attack on motives was surely misplaced and unconvincing, for its authors among the Youth Association were objectively in precisely the same 'leadership class' of intelligentsia they impugned. Hence in their response, Society members were concerned more with Chu Chong-gŏn's treatment of the issue on its own merits.

Cho Man-sik's biographer claims he treated the criticisms with disdain.¹⁰⁷ This is not convincing for Cho viewed Marx with respect.¹⁰⁸ No recorded response has been discovered by myself apart from some comments he made in 1937 of a more general nature.¹⁰⁹ It is possible that the criticisms had little point in northern Korea where social conditions differed in important ways from the south and where Christianity was strong and radical socialism weak. Whatever the truth of the case, in Seoul two Society members immediately leaped to the defence: Na Kyŏng-sŏk and Yun Yŏng-nam. From their defence based on Marxist analysis we learn something of the complexity of the nationalist movement following the March First Movement.

In a long article of some 10,000 words,¹¹⁰ Yun Yŏng-nam took the critics to task for sloppy, vague use of terminology: capitalist, proletariat, bourgeois and so on. He pointed out that Korean society differed clearly from the social situation such words had been coined to describe. In Korea they were mere words and one could not inspire genuine class-consciousness by opposing phantoms. Since the critics (Chu) argued that there is no true capitalist class among Koreans, they ought logically to conclude that there exists no real proletariat, i.e., a class defined in contrast and opposition to capitalists. Or if the proletariat is taken (erroneously) to mean the impoverished, then almost all Koreans belong—or very soon will. Yun proceeds with possibly a 'heads-I-win-tails-you-lose' argument.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹⁰⁷ *Kodong Cho Man-sik*, p. 106.

¹⁰⁸ *Tong Kwang*, no. 29 (January 1932), p. 58.

¹⁰⁹ Cho Man-sik, 'Kidok ch'ŏngnyŏn ū isang' (Ideals for Christian Youth), in *Samch'ŏlli*, January 1937. Here Cho comments that the Marxist view that material conditions determine ideals is incomplete, for ideals can be changed very easily by almost anything.

¹¹⁰ 'Chamyŏl inga, tosaeng inga?'—*Donga Daily*, 26.4.1923.

To be really consistent, one should say that apart from a minority group of workers (the proletariat?) all Koreans are 'idlers' (petit bourgeois and above?). Surely then, any means of wiping out the idlers would be welcomed by that minority group of workers who pour out their blood and sweat? It is not certain whether these idlers, after displaying all-round improvement in efficiency, will change into a [true] propertied or unpropertied class. Yet if they become unpropertied, that is well; and if unpropertied, that should cause no harm. . . . For to the degree they may become a propertied class, they will become material of a substance worth contending against.

Not surprisingly, Yun feared he might be accused of twisting the Marxist argument. He pleaded serious-mindedness and argued that though some (like Chu) maintained that proletarian ends must be pursued by proletarian means, according to Marxist method the desired end could not be attained without travelling through each stage of the journey.¹¹¹ He challenged his opponents to do some real research into the Korean situation, to pay heed to the material context of thought and harness theory to reality. Consciousness had to be practical, and the Society was able to produce this for it would 'more or less clarify the distinctions between the propertied and productive classes.' The reality was that 60% of land and at least 80% of wealth was in Japanese hands. Since statistics indicated that this trend was accelerating as Korea's overall wealth increased, it is here that action could be taken. In effect, Yun appeared to be stating that the classic Marxist prediction, that economic misery of the proletariat must increase as the capitalist economy advanced, was being fulfilled in Korea between Koreans and Japanese, and that this was the origin of the Society. (To have been so specific would have invited certain censorship of the article. But it requires only a little imagination to glean the intended import.)

Yun granted that the Society had very little connexion with the real unpropertied class (urban proletariat) as far as promoting industry was concerned. But it involved the ordinary person in its campaign to promote the use of native products. But more importantly, it was clear that Korean labourers, farm labourers, and tenant farmers were being forced to emigrate insofar as Koreans—from landlords to owner-cultivators—lost land to the Japanese. Since the extinction of the so-called bourgeois and propertied classes meant the extinction of the lower classes as well, opposing economic nationalism was a policy of

¹¹¹ This does seem to conform with Marx's own words: 'When a society has discovered the natural law that determines its own movement . . . even then it can neither overleap the natural phases of its evolution, nor shuffle them out of the world by a stroke of the pen.' *Capital*, Preface to the First Edition, quoted in K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, vol. 2 (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 86.

self-extinction. Again, Yun suggests that Koreans were all 'proletarian' together. But supposing there were a bourgeoisie, Yun explained that the Society should properly be understood as a warning to them and a demand that they make sacrifices and work for the good of all. They alone had the know-how and funds to establish the economic base for any economic movement at all.

Na Kyŏng-sŏk published his reply under the name Kong-min (公民) in four articles printed in the *Donga Daily*.¹¹² He opened his argument by countering Chu Chong-gŏn's charge that the Society's aims were impossible. The Society, he maintained, was 'a movement generated by the undeniable actual problems in Korea' whose urgency Chu in Tokyo had failed to understand. The movement did exist, and the fact that Koreans had rallied to resist approaching economic extinction could not be irrelevant to the question of the possibility of success. Despite the obvious severe limitations imposed by political powerlessness, doing nothing was not an adequate response. Na implied that this economic movement was not just one but the only alternative, and an incontestable duty.

Na Kyŏng-sŏk admitted that the movement could be construed as an alliance imposed by a bourgeoisie threatened with ruin on a proletariat lacking clear class-consciousness. But like Yun Yŏng-nam, he believed that the Korean bourgeoisie had perforce become proletarian in effect. Endowed with relatively good intellectual training, they could be the heralds of a real proletarian movement even if as a bourgeois swan-song. The unpropertied class was always the most vulnerable, but it was a *non-sequitur* to conclude that the Korean Products Promotion Society was therefore harmful to proletarian interests. For one thing, Korea had to progress from manual, cottage and non-diversified rural industries to mechanized industry to survive, and this was not in violation of any socialist principle. For another, the Society was not simply a boycott movement, but aimed to awaken consciousness of economic facts and issues. The practice of selling one's labour to industry was one of the real defects of the basic social structure, but was a problem as yet remote from the common people's present plight: corpses cannot unite. If the critics would only take the formulae of historical materialism seriously they would realize that the suffering of the proletariat and the intense development of the productive forces were expressly stated to be necessary phases. Proletarian consciousness cannot develop in solo; that would not be dialectical.

¹¹² 'Sahoe munje wa mulsan changnyŏ', *Donga Daily*, 26 to 29.4.1923.

Finally, Na accused Chu of confounding social and political revolutions. Russia experienced a political but not a social revolution because the conditions of the latter did not exist. Therefore Russia had to impose state capitalism to generate the missing necessary productive power. All three of Trotsky's requisites of a successful social revolution¹¹³ were also lacking in Korea, where a growth in consciousness accompanying increased productive power was a necessity. Na failed to see how a movement to use and produce native goods would threaten this growth rather than promote it. The greatest threat to the proletariat lay in proposing political confrontations when it was in no position to carry them through.

To summarize, Yun and Na argued that political, not economic, action was impossible in Korea's circumstances; that, in any case, political change did not equal or guarantee socio-economic transformation; that since Koreans had lost virtually any semblance of an economic base, the Society was a direct and most relevant response to Korean realities; and that rather than undermining the consciousness of an as yet hardly existent proletariat, the movement was the only hope of any such consciousness appearing at all. Thus the primary tasks were to encourage people to use native goods where practical and to transform the 'idlers', those with capital and skills, into producers.

Evaluation of the Debate

The defence of the Society given by Na Kyŏng-sŏk and Yun Yŏng-nam could make it difficult to identify the precise ideology of the movement. What does one make of an organization that was not officially socialist yet defended itself with Marxist analysis, and not anti-socialist yet to all intents encouraged capitalistic economic relationships? The arguments of Na and Yun do suggest the following solution of this anomaly. It is erroneous to imagine that true capitalistic, bourgeois and proletarian classes existed in Korea in the 1920s. It is likewise erroneous to conceive of capitalism and socialism as two distinct alternatives leading in opposite directions: they are both part of the same process and the capitalist phase must, according to Marxism, precede socialism. This represents the gist of their defence and is certainly the point of Na's

¹¹³ Namely: 1. real material capacity for class-struggle among the proletariat; 2. the morale and determination necessary to persevere in the struggle; and 3. an internationally favourable situation. The absence of this final condition was blamed for the failure of 1919, and Na believed no improvement was in sight.

assertion that Soviet Russia was *compelled* to institute state capitalism rather than immediately implementing socialism. However, three other more practical factors fashioned the Korean Products Promotion Society: the demand for unity, anti-nihilism, and religious beliefs.¹¹⁴

It was noted earlier that Cho Man-sik intended the Society to be a truly national movement supported by all classes and persuasions. Unity had been the one grand positive achievement of the 1919 March First Movement which nationalist leaders were anxious to maintain.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the call for unity had been a major tenet of the Protestant nationalists Yun Ch'i-ho and An Ch'ang-ho. An himself ranked the struggle for unity among the highest and most urgent tasks of the nationalist movement, while reserving the strongest condemnation for the chronic lack of this quality among Koreans.¹¹⁶ From the mid-20s this theme was propounded in the Journal *Tong Kwang* in articles emphasizing 'sound personality' and 'firm solidarity.'¹¹⁷ Finally, the Shingan Hoe (新幹會), a semi-legal Korean organization operating from 1927 to 1931, was founded as a kind of national united front on the explicit understanding that ideological hatchets were to be buried until after the primary task of restoring national rights was achieved.¹¹⁸ The Products Promotion Society also clearly subscribed to the view that conflict in Korea's present condition between ideologies, classes or anything else was a recipe for extinction. Hence Na Kyöng-sök himself declared that the only 'ism' of the movement was 'death-escapism'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ There is, of course, the very important factor of the Japanese economic superstructure, but treatment of this is beyond the purpose of this paper. Nationalists did consider this factor, of course, when planning their movements, e.g. *Tong Kwang*, no. 31 (March 1932), pp. 57-61.

¹¹⁵ See, for example: Letter from Sö Chae-p'il to Yi Tong-hwi, 24.12.1919, in *Tongnip shinmun* (獨立新聞), 1.3.1920; Record of the speech delivered by Yi tong-hwi in the Provisional Government, 2.3.1920, in *Tongnip shinmun*, 6.3.1920; Record of the speech delivered to the Kungmin taep'yohoe (Shanghai) on 12.5.1921, in *Tongnip shinmun*, 14.5.1921; *Sōtokufu Keimi Kyoku* (Government-General Police Affairs Bureau), Kōkei no. 1581, 23.5.1922: 'Kokumin daihyōkai no keika ni kansuru ken'.

¹¹⁶ An Ch'ang-ho, 'Ch'ōngnyōn ege puch'inūn kül', written about 1926 in Peking, *Collected Works of An Ch'ang-ho*. Published in *Tong Kwang* in December 1926, January 1927 and February 1931.

¹¹⁷ Such articles are too numerous to cite them all, but include Kim Ch'ang-se, 'Yōngguk ūi saram gwa mal', *Tong Kwang* no. 2, June 1926; Lee Sun-t'aek (Society director), 'Sekaji mug'i' (no. 8, December 1926); Changbaek Sanin (pseudonym), 'Kaein ūi saenghwal ūi kaehyōki minjok chōk palhūng ūi kūnbon ida' (no. 1, May 1926); Kim Yun-gyōng, 'Ingyōk ūi hangni chōk haeūi' (no. 4, August 1926); Kim Yun-gyōng, 'Mu.shil.yōk.haeng.shinūi.yonggi' (no. 10, February 1927); Kim Kyōng-sök, 'Minjok kaejoron tokhugam' (no. 29, January 1932).

¹¹⁸ Song Kōn-ho, 'Shingan Hoe Undong', in Yun Pyōng-sök, Shin Yong-ha and An Pyōng-jik (eds), *Essays in Modern Korean History* (Han'guk kūndae saron), vol. 2 (Seoul, chishik sanōp sa, 1977), p. 448.

¹¹⁹ *Donga Daily*, 26.2.1923.

Yet if Na and Yun did not argue against socialism itself, they certainly attacked the radical left for the strong current of nihilism they perceived in it. Much of their counter-attack can only be understood in the light of the popular nihilism which began to emerge as one reaction to the failure of the March First Movement and the continuing intransigence of the Government-General. The Nationalist leader, Shin Ch'ae-ho, in self-exile in Peking, took up the principle that 'without destruction there can be no construction',¹²⁰ a clear disagreement with the gradualist reconstruction movement in Korea. Against a background of despair expressed in Korean drama, novels, poetry and songs,¹²¹ a small, short-lived Nihilist Party (Hōmu Tang) was formed in southern Korea in January 1926.¹²²

Within the leftist movement this nihilism took on a more serious ideological and practical form. Nihilism, or 'destruction' (破壞) was posited as a negative phase in revolutionary tactics, a necessary programme of sabotage of the existing order. This possibly accounts for the lack (initially) of involvement by the radical left in co-operative movements in favour of supporting rural tenants' disputes. Yun attacked this position as muddled thinking. If anything was impossible in colonial Korea it was this 'destruction.' Revolution had to be carried out from a position of genuine strength and by some real means: for the desperately vulnerable Koreans, economic nihilism meant self-annihilation and destruction meant destruction full stop.¹²³ Na also took Chu Chong-gŏn to task for offering no alternative other than economic nihilism: 'To say "it cannot be done" is to command a race without means of future livelihood to sit and wait for death.'¹²⁴ Ironically, the radical left was accused of being a negative force, of being reactionary in Metternich's sense of the term.

The attack on nihilism had strong ethical inspiration, and here the religious background of the movement demonstrates its importance, and throws light on the problem of the Society's relationship to socialist ideology. The reasons for the strength of religion, particularly Protes-

¹²⁰ Shin Ch'ae-ho, 'Chosŏn Hyŏngmyŏng Sŏnŏn', 1923, in *Anti-Japanese National Declarations* (Tae-II Minjok Sŏnŏn) (Seoul, Il ūl Mungo, 1972).

¹²¹ Cho Yong-man (ed.), *History of the Cultural Movement under Imperial Japan* (Iljeha ūi Munhwa Undong Sa) (Seoul, Minjung sŏgwan, 1970); and essays by D. P. Mesler and Chanbok Chee in Nahm (ed.) (see note 19), and by Seok Choong Song, Andrew Nahm and Oh Kon Cho in Kim and Mortimore (eds) (see note 4).

¹²² 'Hōmu Tang', 1.1.1926, in *Anti-Japanese National Declarations*.

¹²³ *Donga Daily*, 26.3.1923.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* Needless to say, the radical left did not consider themselves to be advocates of such a position, but the charge that they were preaching both despair and escapism was a major part in the Society's counter-attack.

tant Christianity, in Korean nationalism are doubtless complex. But the historical cause of interest in Christianity was similar to the cause of interest in socialism/communism: both were viewed as rallying points for opposition to Japan and as sources of a new Korea. Christians had been excited by Woodrow Wilson's principle of national self-determination because it seemed to own legal and moral grounds. Now socialism seemed to have scientific grounds—and moral grounds, too, for socialism was a response to oppression. Thus some Christians were naturally attracted to socialism after the disappointments of 1919–21. The first Korean Socialist Party was founded by Yi Tong-hwi in Khabarovsk in 1919,¹²⁵ and with Yō Un-hyōng he established a communist party in Shanghai in 1920;¹²⁶ both men were well-known Christian evangelists and educators before leaving Korea.¹²⁷ Indeed, some South Korean Buddhists today blame Christianity for opening Korea to communism.¹²⁸

This affinity between causes of interest in Christianity and socialism explains one aspect of the particularly Korean flavour of economic nationalism between 1922 and 1932. Cho Man-sik himself illustrates the blend. Among politicians, thinkers, scientists and novelists, Cho wrote that he most admired Bismark, Marx, Darwin and Hugo.¹²⁹ Here we have the synthesis: Bismark, the nationalist unifier; Marx, the anti-imperialist and preacher of economic dignity; Darwin, the (unwitting?) source of a social-Darwinist concept of struggle for survival; and finally Hugo, the believer in its application to social issues of Christian compassion as the most powerful influence for beneficial change. This

¹²⁵ Dae-sook Suh, *Korean Communist Movement*, pp. 7–8.

¹²⁶ R. A. Scalapino and Lee Chong-sik, 'The Origins of the Korean Communist Movement (I)', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1 (November 1960), p. 16.

¹²⁷ Yō Un-hyōng was officially 'evangelist' in Seoul Sūngdong Church in 1912, renowned for preaching on the 'way of the Lord.' He studied for 2 years at Dr Moffett's P'yōngyang Theological Seminary before the outbreak of the first world war when he went to Nanking. Yō was active in the Versailles Conference campaign, and was a colleague and co-youth leader with Chang Tōk-su from mid 1918. *Chungwe Daily* (中外日報), Howe (号外), 11.3.1930. Censored report, Yi Tong-hwi was an energetic Christian educationalist. He was Principal of school in Kanghwa Gun in 1907, worked with An Ch'ang-ho in the Sōbuk Hakhoe (North-west Learning Society) from 1908, and in July 1909 toured the northern province of P'yōngan and Hamgyōng where he inspired a number of educational groups. *Shinhan Minbo*, 20.9.1907, 12.2.1908 and 28.7.1909. He maintained links with the editor of the *Donga Daily*, Song Chin-u in the 1920s.

¹²⁸ I am indebted to my colleague John Jorgensen for this information which he learned in conversation with Korean Buddhists while carrying out research on Buddhism recently in Seoul.

¹²⁹ *Tong Kwang*, No. 29 (January 1932), p. 58.

may appear to be a confusion of contradictory positions,¹³⁰ but if one steps from the realm of theory into the Korean historical arena of the 1920s it is not difficult to see that it was the moral factor which made working sense of the synthesis.

But the affinity must not be pushed too far, for there were real differences which prevented most Christians from becoming genuine Marxist socialists (or communists) and which suggested a Christian/communist antithesis. Koreans who were Christian and socialist held Christianity to be 'true' in a way socialism was not. A distinction was made between Marxist analysis, and Marxist philosophy which was interpreted as rigid economic determinism and monistic materialism involving propositions of necessary historical laws. Na Kyŏng-sŏk clearly spoke of these 'laws' with tongue in cheek when challenging his critics to take their communist creed seriously; he called himself after all an *ethical* socialist. As a movement, the Society rejected a political-revolutionary or a social-revolutionary approach. If some were socialists, none were at that time communists.¹³¹

The very moralism which turned Christians to socialism as a specific position they could well adopt, was at the same time a hindrance to their accepting the Marxist metaphysic. As discussed above, their moral viewpoint extended to the origins of Korea's present plight, which they attributed to moral and spiritual decay. Given such a divergence between this religious and the communist explanations of the causes of Korea's problems, some incompatibility between their respective solutions to the problems was inevitable. The issue between these solutions was a sensitive moral one. For radical socialists subscribing to Marx's prediction that revolution would proceed only after intensified misery

¹³⁰ One must allow for the fact that in citing these persons Cho was answering a *Tong Kwang* questionnaire and was given no space to explain what he meant. It is clear from his 1937 comments on Marxism mentioned in note 109 that Cho did not agree with historical materialism or economic determinism. Probably, it was Marx's vision of a just society that appealed to Cho (and other Korean Christians) rather than his political programme, and this reminds one that Marx did not of course invent socialism, and did not ever claim to have done so. The 'moralism' of Cho and his colleagues is not problematic as it is for Marxists, unless they were strict social-Darwinists. Yun Ch'i-ho had been something of a social-Darwinist and this had stuck like a bone in the throat. (See my article, 'Yun Ch'i-ho the Quest for National Integrity', *Korea Journal*, vol. 22, no. 1 (January 1982), pp. 46-7.) But An Ch'ang-ho appears to have dropped this problem and Kim Yun-gyŏng, a philosophy graduate from Tokyo, rejected a Darwinist view of society in favour of Kropotkin's concept of society as a community of mutual aid. Kim Yun-gyŏng, 'Kaein gwa sahoe', *Tong Kwang*, no. 9 (January 1927).

¹³¹ Some did become members of the North Korean Communist Party after 1945, like Lee Kŭng-no. Conversely, some leading communists became involved in the South Korean administration, like Kim Yak-su and Cho Bong-am.

(economic and psychological) of the workers, anything which may improve their lot had to be opposed as a delaying factor in the liberation of the oppressed; the worse the lot of the workers the better, as far as the promised inevitable revolution was concerned. But for the Christians (and Buddhists and Ch'öndongyo adherents) who did not accept this meta-historical prediction, who favoured reconciliation over confrontation and who believed in the possibility of radical change through positive spiritual renewal, the communist method appeared shockingly immoral.

One might have thought that if they were so bent on moralizing, the religious nationalists would have perceived that the commonest motivation of industry was possibly greed—or would become so, once things improved. Yet excepting some avowed socialists such as Na Kyöng-sök, the Korean Products Society members seem to have shared the same benign view of capitalism and the same reliance on the altruism of propertied individuals as Yu Kil-jun, Sö Chae-p'il and Yun Ch'i-ho had subscribed to in the 1890s.¹³² On their own showing, this was not entirely unwarranted. Cho Man-Sik often worked without any remuneration, living in humble circumstances;¹³³ Yun Ch'i-ho supported numerous young Koreans in higher, 'useful' education and his Songdo dairyfarm and textile plant were local boons;¹³⁴ Cho's wealthy colleague, O Yun-sön, funded nationalist movements, as did Kim Söng-su;¹³⁵ the merchant, Yi Süng-hun, had put his money into founding Osan College; and under Cho's influence a library, community hall and an orphanage were constructed on P'yöngyang through sizable donations.¹³⁶ The possibility of using private capital for the public good seemed vindicated. Nevertheless, there is in this regard definite naivety evident in some articles in praise of capitalism that appeared in *Tong Kwang*, for instance.¹³⁷ Entailed here is a problem possibly inherent in nationalism, including economic nationalism, viz.

¹³² K. M. Wells, 'Civic Morality' (see note 76), pp. 132–6.

¹³³ *Tong Kwang*, no. 17 (January 1931), p. 43.

¹³⁴ Yi Kwang-su, 'Kyumoüi in—Yun Ch'i-ho Ssi', *Tong Kwang*, No. 10 (February 1927), p. 10; The *Donga Daily* ran a series on Korean industry, in which the Songdo textile plant, 'Songojik', established in connexion with Yun's Hanyöng College, was noted for the high quality of its products, which were being exported. (*Donga Daily*, 'Chosön chingmul hyönhwang gwa saengsan chinhüng ch'aek', 1–16.8.1923.) Yun had a son, Yun Yöng-son, trained in the U.S.A. in Agricultural Science, who established a dairy farm near Songdo which supplied milk even to Wösan, on the north-east coast. Kim Ül-han, *Chwaong Yun Ch'i-ho Chön* (Seoul, Ülsö mumhwa sa, 1978), p. 118.

¹³⁵ *Kodang Cho Man-sik* (P'yöngnam minbo sa edition), p. 62.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 109–21.

¹³⁷ E.g., Ch'a Ri-sök, 'Sanghae sangmuin sögwan', *Tong Kwang*, no. 12 (April 1927).

the idea that whereas the nationalism of the underdog may be pure and a moral duty, among strong peoples it easily becomes corrupt and aggressive. Thus in certain nations in certain circumstances, heavy emphasis on economic mobilization, national unity and the leadership principle might be construed as fascist; whereas though An Ch'ang-ho, Cho Man-sik and Lee Kwang-su, among others, emphasized precisely these things, the same label sticks very poorly.¹³⁸ But what if they had succeeded? There was, after all, some point to the radical left's concern that the Society's proposals, if they succeeded, would not be in the interests of the majority of Koreans.

Some Christian nationalists did indeed consider communism might prevent or abolish the ravages of economic individualism. But they came to fear that it would abolish freedom also. In short, social contradictions were deemed preferable to social tyrannies. Again, this stemmed from a moralistic and spiritual conception of society; where personal, inner liberation was absent, revolutionary social change would simply prolong and render more hopeless the old captivities. This anxiety about communism was expressed by Han Kyōng-jik, Cho Man-sik's 'star pupil',¹³⁹ and founder of a Christian socialist party in 1945 in Shinūiju, North P'yōngan Province. Han believed that Christianity itself was unequivocally on the side of the worker, and was quite able to pursue its aims through any political programme such as socialism. The Christian-communist clash was unfortunate, partly the fault of corruption in the Eastern Orthodox Church and the enormous mistake it made in identifying itself with the government, and partly the fault of the

¹³⁸ The case of Shin Hūng-u, Y.M.C.A. leader and former Principal of the Methodist Pae Chae Higher Common School, highlights the ambiguity, or at least the differences in perceptions, of nationalist movements. When Shin organized the Chōkkūk Shinang Tan (Positive Faith Corps) in 1933, a Japanese report claimed it was modelled on the 'Hitler Youth' movement, on Hitler's idea of creating a 'positive Christianity' geared to weld Germans together as one body to surmount post-first world war difficulties. (*Sōtokufu hōmu kyoku*, 1938: Chōsen dokuritsu undō no hensen'.) However, one finds Shin in 1934 lamenting that in 'these days of dictatorships and Fascisms, liberalism seems to have received a setback', and expressing the view that Christian thought, the 'soul of liberalism' and democracy, was the surest foe of such. (Hugh Heung-wu Cynn [Shin Hūng-u], 'Laymen and the Church', in *Within the Gate* (Jubilee publication of the Northern Methodist Mission in Korea, 1934), p. 119, in the Archives of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Australia, Mitchell Library, Public Library of New South Wales, Sydney.)

¹³⁹ Han Kyōng-jik fled south in 1946 and founded Young Nak Presbyterian Church, the largest of that denomination in Korea, with about 35,000 members currently. I approached him in 1981 while in Seoul for an interview, and he referred me to some early sermons and speeches now published. These begin in 1946, but are consistent with his views before the liberation.

unreasonable root-and-branch approach to religion of communism and its merciless persecution of the churches. But Han recognized a definite metaphysical obstacle to Christian–communist reconciliation in the latter’s materialistic social philosophy. It was a pity, he opined, that socialism was coming to mean communism, for the latter was destructive of human freedom.

I do not know whether it is possible for all to eat equally, free from every care. But in times past people who without any choice simply worked as ordered and ate only what they were given were called ‘slaves’; it seems that only in a communist society are they called citizens. We are told also that there are no classes in communist societies. The Devil there aren’t! Maybe the noun has changed, but classes clearly continue to exist. They are the ruling and the ruled classes or the Communist Party Members and the citizens.¹⁴⁰

The distrust of thorough-going communism by Christian nationalists grew out of experience as much as theoretical differences. A Government-General police report of 1928 reveals that once they began to gain support, Korean communists attacked religion harshly, as they thought they were supposed to do.¹⁴¹ This needs some interpretation. In that they wanted not clarification but rejection of tradition, the Christians had been the first modern revolutionary force in Korea. Yet what characterized the Christian nationalists from early on was the idea, held as a self-evident axiom, that genuine reform could not realistically precede reform of the inner self. However, as mentioned earlier, the political failure of both the March First Movement and the Washington Conference campaign was taken by many to signify the failure also of the former underlying axiom. The materialist approach of Marxism owed its appeal to its confronting a more or less established nationalist orthodoxy with something that once again was iconoclastic. For their part, the radical communists did not regard their ideology as an extension of former principles: one had to convert to it, or be rejected by it. Yet in opposing religion, the communists found themselves taking on nationalism itself, and were directed, too late, to tone down their attacks.¹⁴² Yō Un-hyōng could not reconcile himself to the atheistic tone of communism and withdrew from the party from the mid-20s;¹⁴³ Yi Tong-hwi remained a committed socialist but turned against bolshevism in 1921 and maintained cordial links with the management

¹⁴⁰ Han Kyōng-jik, ‘Kidokkyo wa Kongsanjui’, Sermon, 1947, *Han Kyōng-jik Moksa Sōlgyojip*, Tae Han Yesu Changno hoe Ch’onghoe Kyoyuk Buk, vol. I, 1971.

¹⁴¹ *Government-General of Chōsen: Kei kō hi*, no. 8036, ‘Himitsu kessha Chōsen kyōsantō narabini seinenkai jiken kensha no ken’, 27.10.1928.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Yi Kang-hun, *The History of the Korean Provisional Government* (Tae Han Min’guk Imshi Chōngbu Sa) (Seoul, Sōmun mungo, 1975), p. 121.

of the *Donga Daily*;¹⁴⁴ and Kim Kyu-sik also became disenchanted with communism.¹⁴⁵

The communist attack on religion in Korea was a strategic blunder. The religion, if it can be called such, which had been behind the Korean government and supported the *status quo* was Confucianism, and this had lost its authority among Koreans as early as 1905. In the colonial context, Christianity was valued by many nationalists for being antipathetic to Japanese rule, while Ch'öndogyo shared a similar image. Moreover, Ch'öndogyo claimed that its membership was 99% rural,¹⁴⁶ while Protestantism had begun as a village movement penetrating the remotest areas of the land.¹⁴⁷ The Protestant Church was also strong in the cities, especially in the north. In 1930 it was estimated that 10% of P'yöngyang attended Presbyterian Churches alone, while in Sönc'h'ön to the west fully half of its 13,000-strong population was reckoned to be in churches on Sundays.¹⁴⁸ The communist attack on popular religions which also visibly inspired much of the nationalist leadership could not have greatly impressed the ordinary Korean.

Conclusion

The basic, consistent rationale of the economic nationalism of the Korean Products Promotion Society was the belief that through moral, mental and practical training together with a campaign for responsible unity among all classes of Koreans, the people would avoid economic extinction and gradually reconstruct a viable economic base from which to influence society and politics, that is, achieve 'self-sufficiency'. The Society comprised the economic arm of the national reconstruction or 'gradualist' movement which was largely inspired by religious, particularly Protestant, perceptions of individual and society. Its relationship with socialism was complex, but clearly differed significantly from stricter communist theories on the cause and solution of Korea's distress, and the future envisaged for Korean society. The pronounced moralism

¹⁴⁴ Scalapino and Lee (see note 126), p. 22.

¹⁴⁵ Ryu Kün-il, *Kim Kyu-sik, Korea's Man of Reason* (Isöng üi Han'gukin Kim Kyu-sik) (Seoul, Tongso munhwa sa, 1981), pp. 166-7.

¹⁴⁶ Kim Il-tae, 'Ch'öndogyo nongmin undong üi iron gwa shilje', *Tong Kwang*, no. 20 (April 1931), p. 41.

¹⁴⁷ Lak-Geon George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832-1910* (Seoul, Yonsei University Press, 3rd edn, 1980), ch. 4.

¹⁴⁸ R. E. Shearer, *Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea* (Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966), p. 142.

of Society spokesmen appeared to leave little room for any consideration of autonomous laws of social institutions or structures, but on the other hand enabled them to investigate the realities of Korea unobscured by doubtful applications of social terminology and pseudo-scientific historical predictions.

In terms of historical results, one might say that the Society's case rests less on its rationale than on the success of the experiment. It is evident that in economic terms the movement succeeded very little. A Korean scholar has put this down to popular rejection of the movement, but on hardly adequate grounds.¹⁴⁹ The imputation of élitism is too facile. Cho Man-sik, An Ch'ang-ho and many of the Society's leaders were well-educated, but so were their critics and so have been many successful national leaders. Having posited an ethical basis of national and economic revival, they and their organizations had to set and maintain a high standard. For this reason, An Ch'ang-ho in particular has been charged with moral élitism,¹⁵⁰ but this was not intended, and differed from the self-limiting élitism of intellectuals, artists and sportspersons in that it aimed to make responsible citizens of everyone. Finally, one cannot dispose of problems raised by the movement's fate by recourse to the so-called compromise versus non-compromise factionalism of the period.¹⁵¹ Not only do the relevant documents relativize this contro-

¹⁴⁹ Chin Tök-kyu (see note 59). Defining true nationalism as popular movements, Mr Chin in effect concludes that if a movement fails it is because it is not supported by the people. This is obviously questionable in itself. Mr Chin then puts the decline in enthusiasm after 1924 down to the Society's faulty ideology, i.e., it was not 'populist'. No mention is made of the crucial objective conditions limiting the movement, not even of the Government-General's harassment. According to Mr Chin's reasoning, one would have to conclude from the lack of success of any movement in the 1920s and 1930s that none at all was supported by the people, *ergo*, that there was no nationalism. Mr Chin cites (p. 148) in support of his position a Government-General Police Affairs Bureau summary of reports for 1933-38, dealing with the Japanese divide-and-rule policy against nationalism then. Such reports do refer back to earlier periods, and while they note a decline in nationalist movements in the mid-1920s, the decline is *relative to socialist movements*. As I argue in this paper, it is misleading to dichotomize 'nationalists' and 'socialists' in Korea at this time, and a rise in socialism did not mean nationalist sentiment was discarded. The Japanese paranoia about the 'red threat' in the 1920s must be allowed for: socialists and labour leagues were lumped under statistics on communism and some statistics are quite indiscriminate. Japanese reports also note a decline in radicalism by 1929 and the resurgence of 'pure' nationalism: *Shakai undō no jōkyō*, Naimushō keihōkyoku, Minzokushugi undō, 1931, 1935 and 1937 (Tokyo, Sanichi Shobō, 1971). These reports cover Korean nationalism in both Korea and Japan.

¹⁵⁰ Kim Yang-su, 'Tosan ūi suyang undongŭl chaesik', in Chu Yo-han (comp.), *An Ch'ang-ho Chōnjip* (Complete works of An Ch'ang-ho) (Seoul, Samjungdang, 1963).

¹⁵¹ The controversy began with the publication of the series 'Rule of the People', in January 1924 in the *Donga Daily* (see note 80), which seemed to stop short of demanding complete independence and to call for self-government, pursued by legal or constitu-

versy tremendously,¹⁵² but examination also of organizations to which leaders of the Korean Products Promotion Society belonged demonstrates that these factions, in this connexion at least, were functionally inoperative—as the communists perceived clearly enough.¹⁵³ The causes of the economic failure of the movement were most likely mainly external. The Society was actively hampered at every turn by the Government-General which, through its close direction of the Korean economy, exaggerated the tendency emerging in Japan proper of increasing government control and a diminishing share of the private sector in modern industry.¹⁵⁴

As a social movement, the Society's failure was relative only. If judged by comparison with concurrent movements in Korea, it emerges as perhaps the most successful—certainly the most durable—of any clearly-defined organization with specific aims. The radical left presented its most serious challenge. It lost ground to communism by 1925 after Park Hŏn-yŏng established his Korean Communist Party in Seoul, but only in southern Korea and, it seems, only temporarily.¹⁵⁵ Nor did

tional means. The idea was immediately opposed by several groups, nationalist and communist. Mr Chin (*op. cit.*), in order to advance his theory that the Society suffered a fatal lack of popular support, tries to link it with the 'flawed' ideology of legal, or 'compromise' nationalism.

¹⁵² For example, *Chōsen Sōtokufu Keimukyoku Tōkyō shūchōen*, May, 1924: 'Zaikyō Chōsenin jōkyō', reveals that whereas various Korean groups in Toyko, where they had relative freedom to speak plainly, met to censure the *Donga Daily* line in February 1924, by April, talk of this censure was rarely heard. Sometime in mid-March, *Donga Daily* manager Song Chin-u had secretly conferred with the communist youth leader, Han Wi-gŏn, through an intermediary, and apparently some understanding was reached.

¹⁵³ Cho Man-sik was affiliated with the 'non-compromise' side. When the Shinganhoe, a united front movement, was launched early in 1927 with a strong statement that it rejected all opportunist or compromise movements (*Chosŏn Daily*, 20.1.1927), Cho became Head of the P'yŏngyang branch. Moreover the Shinganhoe's first national President was the Christian nationalist Yi Sang-jae (*ibid.*, 16.2.1927), who was a leader of the movement to establish a Korean university in 1924, which Mr Chin places on the 'non-popular' side. Founding members of the Shinganhoe included the following founding members of the Korean Products Promotion Society: Lee Sun-t'aek, Lee Chong-rin, Pak Tong-wan and Myŏng Chē-se; Yu Sŏng-jun's nephew Yu Ōk-kyŏm; and the communist leader, Han Wi-gŏn. (*Donga Daily*, 20.1.1927). Chang Tŏk-su was an editor of the *Donga Daily*, while Cho Man-sik was at one time manager of the *Chosŏn Daily*; the two newspapers were supposedly 'compromise' and 'non-compromise' organs in the 1920s and 1930s. That the communists were aware of the lack of clear definition of the factions is evident from the Korean communist 'theses' of March 1928. See 'Chŏngch'i Rongang', in Ko Jun-sŏk, (compiler), *Chōsen Kakumei te-ze*, pp. 81–8.

¹⁵⁴ The said pattern is supported by statistical tables in an unpublished seminar paper presented by Professor Sydney Crawcour, Far Eastern History Department, Australian National University on 15 November 1983: 'War and Industrial Development in Modern Japan: The Sino-Japanese War to World War I'.

¹⁵⁵ Scalapino and Lee, 'The Origins of the Korean Communist Movement (II)',

communism ever achieve the grass-roots support given the 'traditional' nationalists.¹⁵⁶ By 1929 the co-operative movement appealed as the only positive means of protection to villagers,¹⁵⁷ while at this point also the Korean Products Promotion Society regained some impetus. Doubtless a good deal more research is required before a firm conclusion can be made (for historical materials are frequently contradictory and the Japanese seemed unable to make up their minds on nationalist/communist issues),¹⁵⁸ but there is already warrant for the judgement that the nationalists' social and economic programmes took the wind out the communist sails.¹⁵⁹

Journal of Asian Studies vol. 20, no. 2 (February 1961), p. 161; *Government-General Police Affairs Bureau*, 'Chōsen kyōsanto jiken no kenkyō temmatsu', August 1926. Subsequently three more short-lived Communist Parties were established in Seoul in 1926, 1927 and 1928 (Suh Dae-sook, pp. 77–80; *Government-General of Chosen: Kei Kō hi*, no. 8036, 27.10.1928). Further attempts to establish a party in Korea in 1929, 1930 and 1931–1932 failed completely (Suh Dae-sook, pp. 118ff).

¹⁵⁶ Thus Suh Dae-sook, p. 332: Communism 'never got to the grass roots'. Of the 175 arrested on the fall of the fourth Communist Party in October 1928, the majority were students (*Government-General of Chōsen: Kei Kō hi, loc. cit.*). Examination of the documents and trial records relating to the 1926 Six-ten Incident and 1929 Kwangju Student Uprising reveal also that radical leftism was mainly the domain of intellectuals—inside Korea, that is. The 1926 Incident was an attempt to re-stage the 1919 movement and was designed 'to test the revolutionary potential of the masses', in line with Comintern instructions: students led some demonstrations but nothing came of it. (*Government-General Police Affairs Bureau*, 'Chōsen kyōsanto jiken no kenkyō temmatsu', August 1926).

The Kwangju Student Uprising began on 3 November 1929, sparked off by an altercation between a Korean and a Japanese student but planned since September 1928 by student 'Reading Societies' which under Chang Chae-sōng had become Marxist. The uprising became nation-wide after the President of the Shingan Hoe, the Ch'ōndogyo Old Faction leader Kwōn Tong-jin, arranged a speech rally in Seoul with *Donga Daily* manager Song Chin-u and the Buddhist nationalist Han Yong-un, and notified Shingan Hoe branches in the provinces. In all, 335 Koreans were sentenced to imprisonment, of whom 232 were students and 14 were teachers. (*Kwangju District Court Criminal Records Bureau*, vol. 5, no. 46, 8.10.1930; *Government-General Police Affairs Bureau*, no. 1237, 'Shinkankai no gakusei sōjō ni saishi fuon keikaku jiken yoshin shūketsu no ken,' 11.9.1930; *Seoul High Court Investigation Bureau, Thought Department*, Shisō Geppo no. 6, September 1931).

¹⁵⁷ See note 75.

¹⁵⁸ The series of Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs reports headed *Shakai undō no jōkyō* reveal increasing uncertainty about the actual force of Korean nationalism from 1935 to 1940. After the discovery in 1937–38 of two major nationalist organisations—Tonguhoe and Hūngōp Kurakbu—the Japanese reassessed 'pure' nationalism and concluded that while it seemed at times to die down, it was extremely resilient, simply lying in wait for the slightest opportunity.

Sōtokufu hōmu kyoku, 1938: 'Chosen dokuritsu shisō undō no hensen'; *Sōtokufu keimukyoku*, 1939: 'Saikin ni okeru Chōsen chian jōkyō'. The same is evident in the *Shisō ihō* of the late 1930s, put out by the Seoul High Court Prosecutor's Office. These can be found in Pak Kyōng-shik (comp.), *Chōsen mondai shiryō sōsho* vol. 8, '1930 nendai minzoku undō' (Tokyo, Sanichi shobō, 1983).

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Lee Chong-sik, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (University of California Press, 1963), p. 178.

From 1932 the Society suffered strict containment as the Government-General implemented the North Korea Exploitation Plan. The architect Chŏng Se-kwŏn was forcibly prevented from funding the Society, members were threatened with reprisals, and the journal ceased publication.¹⁶⁰ In Korea, any explicit nationalist movement became impossible from 1937, and the Society was dissolved. Cho Man-sik's leadership, particularly in the north, nevertheless remained secure and his popularity after the 'liberation' in 1945 has been acknowledged recently by a North Korean communist as 'sensational'.¹⁶¹ The movement he inspired epitomized the Korean self-reconstruction movement and embodied the strong religious inspiration peculiar to Korean Nationalism in the colonial period.

¹⁶⁰ Cho Ki-jun (see note 33), p. 524.

¹⁶¹ Lim Ŭn (pseudonym), *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea* (Tokyo, Jiyusha, 1982), p. 133. The author of this very interesting book also maintains that Cho was the Soviet Command's first choice for leader of North Korea (he was Head of the Interim Government until January 1946), dropped only because he refused to accept the idea of a protectorate over Korea (pp. 149-51).