Sijo Revival

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1. Introduction

The sijo form, one of the most popular poetic forms of the Chosŏn Period, traces its origins to the end of the Koryŏ Dynasty, and together with the kasa form enjoyed popularity throughout the Chosŏn Period. It gave the Confucian scholars of Chosŏn, whose primary literature was that of classical Chinese, an opportunity to express in their native language the feelings and emotions of their lives. Unlike the kasa, the sijo is a fixed form, with four feet per line, and as such demands emotional restraint and poetical concision, thus adding to the tension. It was greatly loved by the Confucian scholars, as it was a fitting form in which to express their Neo-Confucianist world view.

In the latter Chosŏn Period, the popularity of sijo-ch’ang, the formation of the long-form sijo, and the emergence of middle class sijo poets weakened the characteristic aspects of the form, and brought variety to it. Then, at the turn of the 20th century, the arrival of freer poetical forms typified by the “New Poetry”, along with the external factor of the invasion and colonization of Chosŏn by the Japanese, combined to reduce sijo writing significantly.

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However, publications such as the Taehan Maeil Shinbo, Sonyŏn, and Ch’ŏngch’un continued to print new sijo, and the Taehan Maeil Shinbo in particular showed the potential for sijo to become a vehicle for the emotions of the changing times, while maintaining its traditional characteristics, in such poems as Hyŏl jukka, Chaganggyŏk, Han-Pando, and Aeguk cho.

The revival of sijo began with the publication of 108 Evil Passions (108 pŏnnoe), by Ch’oe Nam-sŏn, in 1926. Choe’s lead was followed by such poets as Ch’unwŏn, Karam, Nosan, and Widang (The above are all pen names). Newspapers such as The Dong-A Ilbo and The Chosŏn Ilbo, as well as such magazines as Shinmun and Chosŏn Mundan published many new works and critical articles.

Sijo came fully into the spotlight around 1923, when Proletarian Literature by radical writers started appearing, and many literati were stimulated into creating a theory of citizens’ literature. These literati generally espoused the continuation of traditional literary forms and the traditional literary spirit, as well as the encouragement of love for country and race. These ideas took concrete form in the sijo revival movement. This movement gained new vigor in the 1950s, with the increase in research into Korean literature, and attempts were also made to create a “modern sijo”, virtually indistinguishable from other modern poetry.

This paper will discuss the progress and nature of the debate surrounding the sijo revival, and will use this discussion to suggest a path that sijo might take in the future.

2. The Sijo Revival Debate

1) The Debate of the 1920s and 1930s

In May, 1926, Ch’oe Nam-sŏn published an article entitled “Sijo as the Citizens’ Literature of Chosŏn” in the journal Chosŏn Mundan. In this article, he claimed that sijo contains the essence of the Chosŏn land, people, spirit, language, and rhythm. Following Ch’oe, Yŏn Sang-sŏp and Yi Pyŏng-ki led the sijo revival movement, claiming that the sijo should be revived as the “bowl” containing the Chosŏn people’s lifestyle, thoughts and feelings. Along with this discussion, a new

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3 Ch’oe Nam-sŏn, “Sijo as the Citizens’ Literature of Chosŏn”, Chosŏn Mundan, May, 1926 issue
4 Yŏn Sang-sŏp, “Concerning Sijo”, The Chosŏn Ilbo, October 6, 1926.
5 Yi Pyŏng-ki, “What is Sijo?”, The Dong-A Ilbo, December 9, 1926.
kind of *sijo* breaking out of the mold of the *ko-syo* was created by such poets as Yi Pyōng-ki, Widang, and Nosan.

As mentioned above, the *sijo* revival movement of this period was largely a response by nationalistic literary figures to the emergence of Proletarian Literature with the formation of “KAPF” in July, 1925. This group produced no great controversial works, but nevertheless became a significant force in literary circles, stimulating the leaders of the *sijo* revival movement to argue for a literature valid for all social classes, a literature for the people, as part of the nationalistic citizens’ movement. They felt that the Proletarian Literature was nothing more than the “noisy clanging of proletarian literature arising” from “deviant” or “sick” artistic ideology, that *sijo* alone could express the Chosŏn mind and spirit, and that if the *sijo*, like all other traditional forms, were abandoned that nothing would be left.

The *sijo* revival movement gained momentum as newspapers and journals became directly involved in leading the discussion. Ch’oe Nam-sŏn raised the subject of the revival of the *sijo* as a citizens’ literature of Chosŏn in the May, 1926 edition of *Chosŏn Mundan*, and Shinmin published a survey in March, 1927 posing the question “To Revive or Not to Revive the *Sijo*?” In its “1932 Literary Forecast”, the *Dong-A Ilbo* asked if and how the *sijo* should be developed, and twenty people responded with articles. Of these, Yi Pyōng-ki submitted a series of 11 columns with the heading “Let’s Renovate the *Sijo*”, published immediately after the “Literary Forecast”, thus giving shape to the discussion on *syo* revival.

Of the twelve respondents to the February, 1926 survey by Shinmun (Yi Pyōng-ki, Yi Sŏng-hae, Yŏn Sang-sŏp, Min T’ae-won, Chu Yo-han, Son Chin-t’ae, Kwŏn Tŏk-kyu, Yang Chu-dong, Yi Eun-sang, Yi Yun-jae, Chŏng Chu-ying, and Ch’oe Nam-sŏn), Yi Sŏng-hae and Min T’ae-won expressed negative views, but Son Chin-t’ae, Kwŏn Tŏk-kyu, Yang Chu-dong, and Chŏng Chi-ying also voiced the opinion that in order for the *sijo* to be revived, renovations in form and content would have to take place. Out of the twenty articles submitted in response to the *Dong-A Ilbo*’s 20-issue “1932 Literary Forecast”, published from January 1-22, 1932, only seven people (Yi Pyōng-ki, Yŏn Sang-sŏp, Kim An-sŏ, Yun Paek-nam, Shim Hun, Hong Hae-sŏn, and Pak Yong-ch’ŏl) gave relatively positive responses, whereas the twelve people who expressed doubt on the question (Kim Chin-sŏp, Yi Ha-yun, Ham Il-don, Ch’oe Tok-kyŏn, Yi T’ae-jun, Song Yong, Yi Hŏn-gu, Yang Chu-dong, Han Sŏl-ya, Hwang Sŏk-u, Kim Ki-rim, and Chŏng In-sŏp) show the

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6 Yŏn Sang-sŏp, “Concerning *Sijo*”, *The Chosŏn Ilbo*, October 6, 1926
hesitancy of the intellectuals of the time regarding *sijo*.

The reasons that the *sijo* revivalists gave included the views that the *sijo* is “the form most characteristic of Chosŏn and the Chosŏn people, and best suited to the Chosŏn language” (Yŏm Sang-sŏp), and “a native Chosŏn poetic form, and the expression of the Chosŏn sentiment” (Yi Pyŏng-ki). Thus the revival of the *sijo* means the establishment of “Chosŏn literature” Ch’oe Nam-sŏn claimed the *sijo* to be nothing less than “the expression of self-awareness”.

The important thing to note is that these people believed that the *sijo* could be used to lead a “New Poetry” movement. Ch’oe Nam-sŏn showed the potential for *sijo* revival to lead to the development of a new, freer poetical form, Kwon Tŏk-kyu also emphasized the fact that *sijo* revival has great significance for the development of new forms, Chu Yo-han stated that *sijo* revival would affect even the “New Poetry” movement, and Yi Ha-yun believed that *sijo* was the only crucial source and reference for the discussion of indigenous poetical forms, particularly for the forms of the “New Poetry” to be researched.

However, even most of the nationalist writers who worked actively for the revival of the *sijo* in opposition to Proletarian Literature believed that the revived *sijo* could not follow directly in the footsteps of the old *sijo*. First of all, many articles claimed that the *sijo* form was too stiff and constricting, and thus had to be altered. Yi T’aehun asked “How narrow-minded will the young poets become due to *sijo*?” and seemed to imply that the form of the *sijo* should be made less rigid.

Kim Ki-rim led the movement for a new nationalistic literature based on objective self-criticism in the “1932 Literary Forecast”, but he dismissed *sijo* revival as backwardness, and implied that literary forms should change with the times.

As for how to change the form of the *sijo*, Ch’oe Nam-sŏn, in “*Sijo* as the National Literature of Chosŏn,” stated that the content of the *sijo* should be made more up-to-date and true to reality, and that phrasing and word formation should be chosen accordingly. Son Chin-t’aeh described the insistence of *sijo* poets on short forms, and on traditional meter and language as “an attitude that hinders the development of poetry”, and suggested that they 1) not follow the old form blindly

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7 *Shumun*, March, 1927
8 Yi Ha-yun, “1932 Literary Forecast”, *The Dong-A Ilbo*, January 8, 1932
9 “1932 Literary Forecast”, *The Dong-A Ilbo*, January 3, 1932
10 Kim Ki-rim, “1932 Literary Forecast”, *The Dong-A Ilbo*, January 10, 1932
11 Ch’oe Nam-sŏn, “*Sijo* as the Citizens’ Literature of Chosŏn”, *Chosŏn Mundan*, May, 1926 issue
in matters of numbers of syllables and lines and terminology, and 2) use a longer syo form capable of expressing of thoughts and emotions more fully.12

On the other hand, there were also many writers who claimed that the lifeblood of the sijo lay precisely in its traditional fixed form, and that the renovation of the sijo should take place only with regard to its content. They suggested that those writers who objected to the revival of the syo due to the confining nature of its form should write free verse,13 and declared that the renovation of the syo should take place not in its form, but in its content. Yi Pyong-ki wrote that renovation should occur in six areas: faithful expression of feelings and emotions, expansion of the range of subject matter, elimination of trite expressions, variation of rhythm, creation of “sijo cycles”, and deliberation into reading and writing methods.14 Yang Chu-dong considered only the form of the sijo to be from Choson, and the thoughts therein thoroughly from Chinese literature, and claimed that the way to improve the syo was to do away with any content “smelling” Chinese.15

These writers can all be said to have wanted to renovate the content of sijo. They emphasized that a modern esthetic sense should be incorporated into the sijo to make it true and new, and viewed the sijo as being more beautiful than the “new poetry” when it got away from the old-fashioned style of lackadasically singing the praises of nature, and offered brief glimpses of real life.17 Chong Chi-yong said that the emotions and thoughts of the feudal period should be discarded and new ideas adopted.18 Chu Yo-han said that syo should express the spirit of the times and the new emotions, and Yun Paek-nam that they should capture the life-emotions of the times.20

At the same time that these men were discussing the theoretical aspects of sijo,

12 Son Chin-t'ae, Shunmun, March, 1927 issue
13 For example, Yum Sang-gep said, “If anyone says that he will not accept the limitations of such a fixed form, due to the free spirit of modern man, let him write free verse or prose poems. No one will force him to write syo exclusively” (Shunmun, February, 1927), and Shum Hun also said, “There is no need to discard a form just because it is old. Let those poets accustomed to the syo form write syo, and those who would write in the new forms be free to do so” (The Dong-A Ilbo, “1932 Literary Forecast”), January 15, 1932
14 Yi Pyong-ki, “Let’s Renovate the Sijo”, The Dong-A Ilbo, published in eleven installments from January 23 to February 4, 1932
15 Yang Chu-dong, Shunmun, March, 1927 issue
16 Kim An-so, “1932 Literary Forecast”, The Dong-A Ilbo, January 3, 1932
17 Shum Hun, “1932 Literary Forecast”, The Dong-A Ilbo, January 15, 1932
18 Chong Chi-yong, Shunmun, March, 1927 issue
19 Chu Yo-han, “To Revive or Not to Revive Sijo?”, March, 1927
20 Yun Paek-nam, “1932 Literary Forecast”, The Dong-A Ilbo, January 9, 1932
they were also striving to make them a part of modern literature through actual composition. Nosan experienced and made use of the sijo as an active genre, focussing on the idea that it was an indigenous form of the Korean people, using the Korean people’s thoughts and feelings as poetic material, and the power and beauty of the Korean language as a medium. Yi Pyŏng-ki concentrated on creating plausible scenes and human attitudes in the reader’s mind, and constantly strove to create vivid new poetic language. Nosan published the Nosan Sijo Collection in 1932, Yi Pyŏng-ki the Karam Sijo Collection in 1939, and Ch’unwon, Suju, Widang, Ilŏk, P’albong, and others also published sijo.

In addition to these established writers, new writers began to appear in the late 1930s, making their debuts in Munjang and The Dong-A Ilbo through competitive selection and recommendation systems. The Dong-A Ilbo Shunch’un Munye saw the advent of Yi Ho-u, Chang Ha-bo, Oh Shin-hye, Kim Sang-ok, Hong Yŏn-ŭi, and Yi Muk-ju, Munjang published sijo by new writers Cho Nam-ryŏng, Oh Shin-hye, and Yi Ho-u, and such magazines as Chogwang, Chosŏn Mundan, and Shin Dong-A also printed many sijo.

Meanwhile, in order to expand their influence, the Proletarian Literature advocates began to attack sijo, concentrating on labelling sijo as a decadent and overly nationalistic artifact of the feudal period. They even went so far as to call sijo the passive song of feudalists and lazy scholars, making the people’s minds revert back to a former romanticism in a fascistized society. Han Sŏl-ya claimed that both the form and the content of the sijo belonged to the past, and that it was "an antique" ill-suited for the realistic ideas of today, and he set forth a fairly logical argument.

According to him, during times of relative social stability, in which a particular ideology is dominant, technique and craftsmanship dominate over content in the arts. Ideology is generally uniform and balanced, so content does not present a great challenge, but refinement of technique and polishing of form take on greater significance. Such were the circumstances under which the sijo developed. However, in times such as the early 20th century, in which society was undergoing

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23 Song Yŏng, "1932 Literary Forecast", The Dong-A Ilbo, January 5, 1932
24 Ham Ton-ŭi, "1932 Literary Forecast", The Dong-A Ilbo, January 2, 1932
rapid qualitative change, content and ideas become more important than form, and one must not be tied down by the rigid forms of the past. Rather, the power and energy inherent in the realism of the content lead to new horizons, and eventually to the creation of new forms and techniques.25

In addition to the members of the Proletarian Literature movement, some completely unrelated scholars and literati also were against the ‘revival via renovation’ of the syo. They felt that the form and content of sijo were by nature old-fashioned and despondent, and that any attempt to change the sijo would only destroy its nature. Because the syo could not become a truly modern form,26 and should therefore be preserved as a literary form of the past,27 Yi Ha-yun felt that the value of syo was as material for research and reference.

I believe that sijo is too classical, too despondent, too old-fashioned, and too weak to contain the true nature of modern emotion. It is appropriate for dealing with historical topics or travel poems (especially those pertaining to historical sites and famous places of natural beauty), but it has become self-evident that the syo is too old and worn a vessel to hold our new and free emotions. Therefore, while the syo will retain its value as material for research and reference, and it will continue to exist as described above, it is my belief that there is nothing more we may expect from this form in the future.28

It seems that there was no large-scale debate over sijo after 1932, but syo continued to be composed and discussed, and sijo collections were even published. Karam had suggested a renovation in the form of the sijo to include sijo “cycles”, and Tonam published an article expressing opposition to this idea in 1940. He claimed that to break from the sijo’s traditional pattern of small, independent three line verse and connect several verses in an attempt to achieve unified expression of ideas was not only fruitless, but would destroy the syo. He maintained that the sijo’s significance was as a fixed form.29

KAPE, the group that had ignited the debate over the revival of sijo, officially disbanded in 1935, and newspapers such as the Chosôn Ilbo and the Dong-A Ilbo and magazines such as Munjang and Inmun P’yŏngnon, which had led the debate, were forced to close by the Japanese colonial government, so the debate over sijo did not surface again for many years.

26 Chŏng In-sŏp, “1932 Literary Forecast”, The Dong-A Ilbo, January 16, 1932
27 Yi Ha-yun, “1932 Literary Forecast”, The Dong-A Ilbo, January 6, 1932
28 Yi Ha-yun, “1932 Literary Forecast”, The Dong-A Ilbo, January 8, 1932
2) The Debate of the 1950s and Afterwards

The sijo revival movement that arose in response to Proletarian Literature reached its peak in the 1930s. Then, after the popularity of Proletarian Literature declined, the movement fell under hard times due to the “Korean Language Obliteration Policy” of the Japanese colonial government. Composition of modern syo, and debate about sijo revival did not start again until after the liberation from Japan in 1945 and the Korean War (1950-1953). Several new sijo writers came to prominence through sijo sections in newspapers like the Dong-A Ilbo, the Chosön Ilbo, the Seoul Shunmun, the Hankuk Ilbo, and the Joongang Ilbo and in magazines such as Shunch’un Munye. Sijo collections and sijo histories were published, and in 1960 a magazine devoted to syo, Siyo Munhak, was even created. Together with this, serious debate over sijo revival also continued through major newspapers and magazines up till the 1980s.

Looking first at the scholars who supported the revival argument, they felt that the syo was alive as a modern poetical form, and as an excellent example of an art form which crystallized the Korean spirit deserved to have a continued existence. The reason, they claimed, that syo was not treated as within the category of poetry, was that the sijo was a native Korean form and the dominant, but incorrect, literary trend of the time considered only forms of Western origin to be modern poetry. They saw sijo and other poetical forms as not basically different, but merely as two alternative ways in which the poet could choose to treat his poetic idea.30 There is also at least one scholar who views the syo of the Chosön Dynasty as having a structure opposing t’asŏl and chasŏl, and that modern sijo have discovered and altered with modern imagination the potential emotions and continuous “personality” of Koreans denied by Chosön Dynasty syo.31

There are several important differences between the sijo of the 1920s and 1930s and ones composed since the 1950s. The syo writers of the 1920s and 1930s expressed modern ideas through subject matter and language, and attempted such form changes as sijo “cycles”. In the 1950s, there were two main tendencies. The first, as exemplified by Kim Sang-ok, was mentalist sijo, making

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use of metaphorical description and symbolism, and requiring intellectual effort on the part of the reader.\textsuperscript{32} The second, including the works of Yi Ho-u, broke completely with the sijo tradition of reclusiveness, idleness, enjoyment of nature, and such, and turned instead to historical consciousness, critical thinking, and even philosophical theories about human existence.\textsuperscript{33}

As far as form is concerned, Kim Sang-ok did away with the samjang-samhaeng (three-stanza, three-line) form and used something similar to free verse, while Yi Ho-u maintained the samjang (three-stanza) form, but destroyed the basic meter of the sijo and wrote sijo barely distinguishable from modern poetry. The thirteen works in Kim Sang-ok's Samhaeng-si (Three-Line Poems) are each made up of three "lines", but all three lines are extended, the middle line being quite long, and the meter of the third line is also broken.

One day suddenly a ringing in my ears, do I think I am in your room?

On one side a bush clover blooms, the cobalt butterfly brought on the wind, and the iron ore that has been in kindergarten for 500 years, and you before my knees, your three-k'\text{"an} room and your wife and children, a powder keg and a box of matches, your look, your beard, your love, and hide-and-go-seek and a land without even the slightest crack. Your mother, who caries that land's dust, flowers, and dragons. And the long, lazy river of destiny

How could you? How could you think of trading me for a few silver coins? Just because my teeth have fallen out, and my back is stained with soy sauce?

Instead of using the name "sijo", Kim Sang-ok showed the three-line form of the sijo with the name samhaeng-si. This has been analyzed as a removal of the song-like elements of sijo incorporated in the line division, and reinforcement of the poetical nature of sijo, as opposed to the musical, in order for sijo to survive as a modern form.\textsuperscript{34} Yi Ho-u used a meter close to that of free verse, especially in the controversial "Flag".

\begin{verbatim}
Flag! You are strength. You pushed ahead of everything.
You always flew high, filled with confidence in victory.
Even today the earth trembles at the boasts of your fighting.
Exposing my body to the sun's heat, I scream at the flag.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{32} Ch\'ing Hye-\textsuperscript{won}, "The Traditionality of the Sijo of Kim Sang-ok", p 453
\textsuperscript{33} Shon Yong-hy\textsuperscript{op}, "Modernness in the Sijo of Yi Ho-u", Research on Modern Korean Poetry, p 552
\textsuperscript{34} Ch\'ing Hye-\textsuperscript{won}, "The Traditionality of the Sijo of Kim Sang-ok", pp 455-456.
Behold! How blinding is the whiteness of absoluteness!
Our rivers are hot to the eye, like flames

Which dawn was it? Above the torch
The clean and innocent lives upheld for the first time.
The unfinished youth that even time could not touch.

The only aspect reminiscent of traditional syo is the division into three lines; the rhythm and meter are almost completely destroyed, and the form is close to free verse. In the middle line of the second "verse" ("Behold...") the pause that should come after the second syllable group is not permitted.

In spite of this effort, scholars who would distinguish between "modern sijo" and "modern poetry" have put forth a quite logical argument, separate from the point of view of Proletariate Literature. Their main point is that in a literary generation seeking new spiritual supports everywhere it is only natural to demand new literary forms, and so each genre has its own historical "fashion".

In the case of syo, the supporting ideology was that of Confucianism, the scholars who perfected the sijo form Confucian scholars, and syo the clearest and most consistent expression of the Confucian world view Therefore, these thinkers claim, so long as a scholarly class reliant on a clear and simple Confucian philosophy does not exist in modern society, the traditional sijo form can not exist either. They believe that the sijo "cycle" suggested by Yi Pyŏng-ki is the product of the mindset of the technique-conscious Sajang-p'a scholarly class, and as long as no one of this mindset is alive, it will be difficult to revive this poetic form.

It is hard to claim that there is no one belonging to either of these scholarly classes alive today, but the fixed form of the sijo has come under criticism as going against modern trends "How", it is asked, "can the turbulent modern consciousness and complex emotions of modern life be forced into such a rigid and limited mold?"

However, even the scholars who support sijo revival express doubt over the appropriateness of calling modernized syo, which violate the fixed meter, by the traditional name "sijo".

Kim Yun-shik warns that in the above cited "Flag", Yi Ho-u is at the point where he must decide between destroying the sijo form and proceeding to the world of modern poetry, or else maintaining the sijo form at the cost of some poetical

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36. ibid. p.100
vividness. There are also some scholars who believe that the attempts to “modernize” the form of the sijo have been influenced by contact with modern poetry, and that this has caused syo to be seen as a second-rate part of modern poetry. They believe that the revival of syo would promote chaos in modern literary history, and would go against the potential formation of contemporary thought.

There are also those who claim that any syo revival movement that does not respond to the needs of the times, and that does not set forth a theory suitable to an era which demands new modes of thinking and behavior in order to deal with reality, is nothing more than mere reactionism. They claim that the leaders of the syo revival movement made convenient use of the syo out of the vague nationalism of the colonial period and their own reactionary tendencies, and criticize this kind of attitude as the excretion of excess emotion, or a lazy and sentimental sympathy towards poverty and tradition. Above all, they label the fact that a genre of the past was able to be revived and systematized by means of slogans as insincere, and the fact that there needed to be discussion of the “revival” of sijo in the first place as indicative of the fact that the syo was not welcome as a modern literary form.

In response to those who would claim the sijo as a unique literary form of the Korean people, they say that this kind of thinking is confusing subject matter with art.

### 3. Future Outlook

Missing from the above discussion is an overall examination of the special nature of the sijo and the change it underwent during the Chosŏn Period. In the debate of the 1920s and 1930s, the advocates of Proletarian Literature viewed the sijo as the legacy of the Yangban class, but they ignored the fact that writers of sijo in the latter Chosŏn Period included commoners as well as the elite, and the relatively free forms of the sasŏl-sijo and the ḍt-sijo were very popular. The arguments since the 1950s claiming that the sijo is suitable only for the Confucian world view, and not for the complex lifestyle and thought of modern times, can be criticized in the same way.

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40 Lim Sŏn-muk, *Syo Poetics*, P 73.
Those in favor of sijo revival were no different in the respect that they too did not pay attention to this kind of historical change of the sijo. They did not argue against the Proletarian Literature advocates with the idea of the sijo as a form that adapted itself through history to the mood of the times, but rather connected the sijo with such abstract concepts as “national spirit” and “Chosŏn-shim”.

In response to the claim that the restrictive form of the sijo is not appropriate for the expression of modern ideas, they did not raise the argument that the sijo published in the Taehan Maeil Shinbo were successful in expressing rebellious material resisting the brazen invasion of the Japanese, thus showing that the usefulness of the form was not limited to historical themes and travel poems.

The important thing, however, is the fact that in the 20th century, since before the beginning of the sijo revival debate and continuing to the present day, sijo have been written and published. Because of this, there are those scholars who look negatively on the sijo revival argument, but it seems that no one is in favor of abolishing sijo composition altogether.

As discussed above, there are two basic views in the sijo revival movement: the introduction of a modern sense and consciousness to the old form, and the abandonment of the traditional meter to make the sijo more like other modern poetical forms. However, these days it seems most scholars agree that the life of the sijo lies in its nature as a fixed form, and altering the form endangers the very existence of sijo, so that renovation should occur in the content rather than the form.

However, “fixed form” should not be taken to include only the p’yon-sijo with its rigid meter. It includes the Sadaebu sijo, with its flexible application of meter within a rigid frame, and also the saesol-sijo and the òl-sijo, which broke the traditional form and meter to a certain extent.

The problem is that the sijo, which has inherited the historical function of the past and continually grown and developed, should perhaps not be called “modern poetry”. This is not unrelated to the fact that some critics of sijo revival have mistakenly thought that revivalists wanted to make the sijo the unchallenged Korean poetical form.41 It is necessary to listen to the argument that sijo should be separated from the current poetic field, a separate “sijo field” be created, sijo writers be actively encouraged and sijo writing be fostered as an independent activity.42

It goes without saying that the sijo is important not only as a full-fledged literary form like modern poetry, but also as an important part of a Korean citizen’s

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41 Yi Hŏn-ku, “1932 Literary Forecast”, The Dong-A Ilbo, January 6, 1932
42 Chŏng Pyŏng-uk, “Reflection on and Predictions for the Sijo Revival Movement”, p 81
education. I need not mention how beautifully the sijo has grown as a result of the efforts of many sijo writers since the beginning of the sijo revival movement in the 1920s, and we must not exclude the possibility that further efforts and experiments will make the modern sijo the leader of modern Korean poetry. Regardless of the debate concerning its revival, sijo continues to be written and enjoyed today, and will continue to be in the future as well.

(Translated by David Baxter, Seoul National University)

GLOSSARY

Aegukcho 愛國調
Chagangryŏk 自強力
chasŏl 自説
Cho Hŭn-sun 曹希醇
Cho Nam-ryŏng 曹南嶽
Cho Yun-je(Tonam) 趙潤濟(陶南)
Ch'ŏng Ch'ŏng 朝光
Ch'oe Nam-sŏn 崔南善
Chŏng Ch'ŏg-yŏng 鄭芝溶
Chŏng Han-mo(Ilmo) 鄭漢模(一茅)
Chŏng In-bo(Widang) 鄭寅普(為堂)
Chŏng In-sŏp 鄭仁燮
Chŏng Pyŏng-uk 鄭炳昱
Ch'ŏngch'um 靑春
Chosŏn Ilbo 朝鮮日報
Chosŏn Mundan 朝鮮文壇
Chosŏn-shim 朝鮮心
Chu Yo-han 朱耀翰
Dong-A Ilbo 東亞日報
Hyŏljukka 血竹歌
Ham Ton-il 咸敦逸
Han-pando 韓半島
Han Sŏl-ya 韓雪夜
Hankuk Ilbo 韓國日報
Hwang P'ae-gang 黃源江
Hwang Sŏk-u 黃錫禹
Inmun P'yŏngnon 人文評論
Joongang Ilbo 中央日報
Kasa 歌辭
Kim An-sŏ 金岸曙
Kim Ch'ŏng-sŏp 金晉燮
Kim Ki-jin(P'albong) 金起林(八峯)
Kim Ki-rim 金起林
Kim Sang-ok 金相沃
Kim Yŏl-gyu 金烈圭
Kim Yun-shik 金允植
ko-sijo 古時調
Kukmunhak San'go 國文學散稿
Kwon Tŏk-kyu 權德圭
Lee Sang-taik 李相澤
Mn T'aewon 閔泰瑗
Munjang 文章

43 Professor Chŏng Pyŏng-uk has stated, "I believe that it is right for the sijo to be revived, as traditional poetry has yielded its place as true literature to modern poetry, and sijo has ceased to be first-level literature and has become a sort of morality—a sort of Korean citizen's education" ("Reflections on and Predictions for the Sijo Revival Movement", p 81) 1, however, do not agree with this opinion