Collective Historical Experience, Memory and Social History of Monument*

Jung Keun-sik**

1. Introduction

In any society, state and social assemblages take on the responsibility to engage in activities of praise and commemoration of their historical past. In recent times, revolution, war, or liberation from colonial rule have been the main themes of grand commemorative projects. On the one hand, such projects are an expression of a collective identity and on the other hand, they have a political and ideological intention to gain social unity and legitimacy of political authority by presenting prudently selected symbols of its historical

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**Professor of Sociology, Chonnam National University

Translated by 반병윤(Byung Yool Ban, assistant professor of graduate school of International Area Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies) 퍼런규(Christian J Park, M A of Graduate School of International Area Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

tradition, sufferings and triumph, and hopes of a bright future. The symbolic materials by which this collective identity is constructed and strengthened are diverse. Such symbolic materials may be formed anew according to collective memory or created, by using the former one in a different context and giving it new symbolic meaning in the changing history.

After the liberation, South Korea on state level carried out commemorative activities like awarding patriots who have fought for the independence of Korea (tongnip yugongga), construction of the Independence Hall, etc while social organizations and local authorities have produced commemorative monuments of persons and events worth commemorating. However, cases where residents initiated the commemorative project were rare. In fact, official memory and popular memory should be distinguished. Taking into consideration that in South Korea there exists limited research with a socio-historical approach on the formation of commemorative objects such as commemorative halls and monuments, this paper examines how


2 The State Patriots and Veterans Welfare Programs in South Korea started with the promulgation of "Military Relief Act" in April, 1950, while the "Welfare Programs Concerning Patriots" related to the Japanese colonial period began in 1962 with the enactment of "Special Relief Act on Patriots and Veterans and North Korean Defectors." Afterwards, "Veterans of the Independence Struggle Commemoration Project Fund Act" was passed in 1967 and the "Law Concerning Treatment of State Patriots and Veterans" was legislated in 1985. By August, 1991, decorations to the Veterans of the Independent Struggle were given to 5,493 people after the first conferment of decoration on President Syngman Rhee and Vice-President Yi Si-yöng in March, 1949. In 1989, the qualification was expanded to include those who were 'Kidnapped by the North.' For detail, see The Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, Pohun 30-nyöreja (30 Year History of Patriot and Veteran Affairs), 1992

3 Overall, there is a need to distinguish the processes of popular memory from official state, and ruling class forms of memory Rowe, W and Schelling, V., Memory and Modernity, Verso, 1991, p. 229

4 Ham Han-hin analyzed the memorial monument for the anti-Japanese movement during
historical communities remember their own history and reconstruct them in the present time and place as for collective mental history. For this, I will analyze in detail the case of Soan Island, a small island off the southwestern coast.

Residents of Soan Island carried out a very strong national movement during the Japanese colonial period. During the 5 year post-liberation period, they became one of the main currents of the movement to establish a nation-state as an extension of the national movement. Already in the early 1950s, a collective thought to initiate 'commemorative projects' began to take form in the minds of the residents, but concrete results from such a thought crystallized in June of 1990. These are 'Soan Monument Commemorating the Anti-Japanese Movement (Soan Hang'il Undong Kunyǒmt'ap)' and 'Soan Historical Archives of the Anti-Japanese Movement (Soan Hang'il Undong

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5 General conceptualization and historiography on Mentalité history, see Kim Yong-bum, "Mentalité-sa Simch'ingsa-ui han Chup'yŏng (Mentalité History A Horizon of Deep History)," Han'guk Sahoea Yŏn'g'uhoe Noumump 31, Munhak-kwa Chusōngsa

6 Soan Island is an island that belongs to Wando County in South Cholla Province, 20 km south of Wando Port. Nearby lie islands such as Pogul Island, Nolwa Island, Ch'ingsan Island, Samnul to Ant'ac Island, Haǔ Island, Chaǔ Island, and Tochi'o Island. Soan Island was a rare strong base for anti-Japanese national movement on a myǒn (面) level. About 800 of the 4,000 total residents of the island were suspected as 'disloyal Koreans (pulyǒng sŏnun 不還鮮人)' See Chosŏn Ilbo, 16 October 1928. By 1994, 53 people in Wando County received meritorious medals from the government (the highest number on a county level in South Korea) and among them, 12 were from Soan Island.
Saryōjip)’ The epitaph on the Soan Monument is as follows.

Soan Monument Commemorating the Anti-Japanese Movement is constructed with black and gray stones commonly found in nearby coastal areas in a very special shape pointing toward the sky. The base in white stone symbolizes the Korean (white) ethnicity, the upper part in dark color represents the dark age. The white line that cuts across the upper part symbolizes the light that shines through the dark age. The 4 peaks that compose the tower symbolize various forms of the resistance movement against the Japanese.

Residents of Sinji Island, a island nearby, were also inspired by this and built a similar monument in August, 1994. The dedicated poem written on Sinji Monument Commemorating Anti-Japanese Movement (Sinji Hang’il Undong Kinyōmt’ap) was equally moving as the Soan Tower’s inscription.

Who says this monument is just a rock
It is an endlessly burning torch light
Made by your and my hearts
which are piled and united

Why were these kinds of monuments commemorating the resistance movement against the Japanese being built nearly a half century later since the liberation? Why were these monuments erected consecutively in two islands near each other? During the process of building the monuments in 1990, the residents came to know the facts that Soan Island was a bulwark of the nationalist movement and the leader was Song Nae-ho. On the other hand, having participated in

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7 Such a monument was also built in Amt’ae Island in 1997
9 Sohn Hyong-hu, "Sikmung Sidae Song Nae-ho and Song Ki-ho Hy’ongs’eg’un Minjok Haebang Undong (Song Nae-ho and Song Ki-ho Brothers’ National Liberation Movement During the
a comprehensive study on Soan Island by a research team from the Research Institute of Island Culture, Mokp’o University, I found that while many of the residents had great pride in the monument, some also expressed dissatisfaction.

From these examples we can draw the past historical experiences of the general population of the Korean society, their collective memories about such experiences, and much more general questions concerning the methods of expressing the collective memories by whom, where and when were these symbols expressing the collective identity created? In addition, how do the conditions of present time apply to these acts of expression? Furthermore, what relationship do the history and collective memories have?

As it is commonly acknowledged the general population of the Korean society lived a certain period in resistance and other periods in submission to the oppressive rules of the colonialism and in division. Especially, in the fast pacing history, from colonial mobilization, social tensions and struggles after the liberation, to the war that led to a creation of political terrain swinging in two extremes, the Korean people encountered numerous cross roads of life and death. One can say that they experienced great suffering whenever they stood at the cross roads and always had to think of their own safety and the safety of their families. Therefore, in such political and social contexts, their memories of the past and the expression of them can only be in restrained forms. Thus, the general population indeed accumulated the ability to sensitively grasp the changing political terrain of power in the Korean society. If so then how are they

Japanese Colonial Period)," Kuksa’gwan Nonch’ang 40, Kuksa P’yö’inch’yan Wiwonhoe, 1992

making terms with the present political terrain of the Korean society? In the writings on the Sinji Monument Commemorating Anti-Japanese Movement, one can find a clue that will help to predict ahead the spatial and temporal context of the monument making which is one of the themes dealt by this paper.

A half century since the chain of the Japanese Colonialism was broken, having dashing forward without knowing where to go, we are now barely standing in the sun of Enlightenment to make sense of ourselves.

First of all, it can be said that the residents of the Islands experienced dual movements of the resistance movement against the Japanese and of the attempt to historically restore the experiences of the resistance movement. Secondly, the social and political conditions of the contemporary Korean society affected greatly the process of building the monuments. Thirdly, as the political system became more democratized in the latter half of the 1980s, the opportunity for mass people to symbolically represent their inner worlds or deep collective consciousness has expanded. However, the methods of representation and the degree of representation are important subjects of sociological study.

The sources used by the paper include historical facts from the precedent studies and mostly from surveys and oral statements. Oral statements are very useful in researches of the history of mass people.

11 'Movements for clarifying the truth and rectifying history' are common phenomena visible around us. Kwangju Uprising in May, 1980, and subsequent May Movements which were intended to clarify the truth of the uprising are prime examples.


The oral statements were collected during the field researches on Soan Island carried out in June and August of 1992 and May of 1993. Especially, focusing on the situations in the 1950s, Interviews were carried out with current myôn (面) leaders or elders who led the monument making movement in August, 1993. A supplementary field research was done in September, 1995.

2. Monument Building Movement

Commemorative monuments originate from none other than collective memories of residents. Halbwachs further developed the idea of collective memory using Bergson's temporal concept. He argued that collective memory is not an exact record of the past but socially reconstructed. Collective memories vary as much as the number of diverse groups and institutions in the society. Members of diverse classes, families, groups, corporations, armies, etc. hold their own memories. All collective memories require support from spatially and temporally limited groups.

Durkheim thinks historical creation is more based on collective phenomena (collective zeal) than on a domain of individual accomplishments, then a question arises about what holds people together in 'time of serenity.' Durkheim mentions arts and totems as bridges between individual personalities and social groups, and suggests that the creative force of art is heavily dependent on the spiritual state of societies.

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13 Bergson thinks that internal and subjective time is abundant and diverse, but objective time is poor and limited. He also thinks that intuitive and subjective understanding about internal time is the source of knowledge about self. Mechanical and objective time calculated by a clock does not guarantee the creativeness and spontaneity and only the continuity resulted from the intuitive understanding of internal time can make it possible to have an access to the philosophical and spiritual knowledge.

that link the dynamic phase and the declining phase of collective life. However, it is an incomplete explanation since in many cases there is no physical evidence of such in reality. Halbwachs fills the gap with the concept of 'collective memory.' Collective memory exists in various forms of commemoration or ritual in honor of heroic actors as it connects the period of ardor and everyday life. He sees social memory as reconstruction of the past. He tries to show how the current circumstances affect selective cognition of the past history.

Recollecting historical events and the work of reviving such events spatially and temporally are in themselves new historical, social and collective acts. Historical experiences are not replayed as it happened but they are realized in different forms according to the ideological terrain of the subject and period of replay. Furthermore, the period of replay decides the characteristics and the degree of the revived contents. There exist desired memories of national movement to be replayed and still collective experiences not wanting to experience it again. The replay of historical experiences includes sociological principles that are not simple. Attention to how regional identity, place and memory are reconstructed in new contexts is necessary.

The historical act of erecting monuments is only realized when the problems of raising the fund together with forming the project committee and the political problem in a sense that there is a "struggle with invisible people" are solved. Here, the invisible people refers to the political force in control of the power and the political regime at the time of the project's initiation. The first official debate on the monument project in Soan Island began with the formation of myŏn council in the 1950s.16

15 Ibid., p. 33
16 The first myŏn council election took place in April 1952, the second election in August, 1956, the third in 1960. In all three times, 8 council members were elected.
Testimony 1. A few people, graduated from private school in 1920's were elected in the first myön council elections and they started the talks about the monument project. The Council Chair was also with private school education but sued with the police tabling the talks. In the second term, the issue was raised again when the police's hampering decreased but failed to decide on the issue. It was economically difficult and the government authority disapproved the project. Chŏng Nam-guk who himself participated in the national movement during the Japanese colonial period was elected to the second National Assembly, but because of economic reasons failed to start the project. After May 16 Coup d'état 1961, the local councils were dissolved and subsequent circumstances prevented the talks from continuing.

In March, 1963, when the government accepted the benefit application for veterans of Independence Struggle, only Song Nae-ho was applied at the myön office. Others were not thought too much of it and if possible they avoided mentioning the subject all together. Song Nae-ho was the only one to have already become a historical person for the Wando County identity. This was possible because he died while he was involved with Sin'ghanhoe (新幹會), therefore, he was not caught up in the ideological whirlpool that took place after the liberation.

Testimony 2. In Wando, whenever there were National Assembly elections both majority and minority candidates called to follow "Mr Song Nae-ho's will." Literally, every candidate wishing to rally up the vote had to mention Mr Song Nae-ho.

In December, 1968, the Republican Party at Wando held the 40th Remembrance of Mr. Song Nae-ho's Death. Chŏng who was a National Assemblyman at the time, tried to organize the event, but his political agenda failed due to the 'mood' of the residents. The residents did not wish their experiences of the national movement to be used politically. At the time, 'government officials' could not even think about attending the event. Every one knew that the Indepen-
dence movement in Wando had very close relationships with socialism.

There were attempts to build a commemorative museum in the first half of the 1970s and in the end of Yusin Regime.

Testimony 3 In the middle of October, 1979, the Senior Citizens Association (Nomhoe 老人會) requested to the Association of Ex-Residents of Soan Living in Seoul to build a senior citizens' hall. In the planning discussion, a talk of joining the monument project and the construction of a senior citizens' hall began and a delegation of the representative of the senior citizens association, myön mayor, post office manager, etc set up an appointment to meet the representative of the Association of Ex-Residents of Soan Living in Seoul. However, the event was retracted due to the October 26 Incident of the President.

In the 1980s, myön mayor and the project initiators gathered to restart the planning discussion. There were two main issues to be dealt with. One is the question of including the victims of police brutality in the period between the liberation and the Korean War in the commemoration list. They had to seriously think about the sensitive political repercussion from the police if they did. The other is the question of fund raising. Specifically, there was a suggestion to take up a small amount of collection from every household.

It is interesting to note from the above testimonies that temporal units were expressed as "the time of so and so myön mayor." This goes to show that in the projects like building monuments the power structure of local community is important. It also indirectly shows the role of myön mayor. In addition, the question of where the monument will be built is important. Soan residents had strong beliefs that Soan was the center of Wando Resistance Movement against the Japanese, therefore, they believe the location of the monument should be Soan.
Testimony 4 One time there was a suggestion to build the monument in Wando. A businessman living in Wando pledged to donate a huge amount of money. And it seemed the monument would be built in Wando but residents in Soan protested saying the monument should be built in Soan and not Wando. Eventually, the monument was never built and the donation disappeared.

However, the another reason why the project never took off the ground at the time is indeed the problem of political terrain.

Testimony 5 In the middle of the 1980s, a Mr. Kim brought up the issue in a concrete way to start the monument project. However, someone personally advised him ‘you may hurt yourself if you proceed the project thoughtlessly,’ so Kim stopped any further talk. Even if the mood in the myeon is ripe to start the project, you cannot ignore the politics.

Eventually, when the political terrain shifted in December of 1987, the talks of starting the monument project formed around the Senior Citizens Association. This was a period when democratization of the Korean society no longer seemed able to be hindered thanks to the June Uprising in 1987. Furthermore, in the local community, in this period, 9 anti-Japanese activists were awarded as the veterans of the independence struggle. What was important was that most of them were associated with ‘ideology movement (sasang undong)’ but the government recognized them to be part of the independence movement. The Senior Citizens Association formed a 7 member Monument Project Preparation Committee and began raising the fund needed for the project through the New Year Stepping Ceremony (地神踏기, chusin papki or pölgung ch’igi) as a start. Based on this, they were able to make a contract to purchase the lot for the monument. When a financial difficulty arrived ex-residents joined in assistance. The term ‘Soan residents’ included not only the people who currently live in Soan but also the people who left their hometown. The fund raising campaign started by the Senior Citizens Association became
active as social interests toward the redress of distorted history and
toward history from below increase after the latter half of the 1980s.

Furthermore, as the roles of the media and intellectuals are impor-
tant in today's social movement, same thing can be said of this case.
More likely when the residents saw their experiences being reported
by the press they interpreted to have gained anonymous supporters
and out of that they gained self-confidence. In the case of Soan, a
mass media reports not only reaffirmed Soan national movement to
the outer world it also solidified the monument building movement
The participation of intellectuals increased the subjective confidence of
their work In light of such changes in their condition, the Senior
Citizens Association increased their target and was successful in
getting a promise of financial cooperation from the Wando County
office

Amount and formality of the support from the county office are
very important in redressing historical experiences placed in the
periphery of the system It changes sensitively with the political
situation. What is interesting in this case is that the residents decided
on the size of the "proper assistance" from the county office by
comparing their project with other monument projects designed to
advocate the division system.

Testimony 6 At the time I read a news paper report that the Wando County
Office would fund 7 million won to erect anti-communist monument in
Yaksan-myeon So I went to see the County Chief, Pak Chu-won and questioned
him "how can you fund 7 million won for an anti-communist monument when
you gave mere 4 million for our anti-Japanese struggle monument and that you
could not have been where you was without those anti-Japanese fighters?"
Eventually, we got extra 4 million, totally 8 million won

They were able to raise 30 million won through such a process.
Fund raising from the governmental organizations expanded to reach-
ing the Provincial Office, Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, newspapers, etc. Surviving families of those independence activists also made donations. The collection continued even on the day of unveiling ceremony reaching 60 million in total. The monument in commemoration of the anti-Japanese movement was transformed from the memory of Soan residents' collective experience to real history becoming the medium in the process.

On the other hand, Sinji Resistance monument was greatly influenced by Soan monument. Like the case of Soan, Sinji anti-Japanese movement began with the private school movement and many of the teachers of Sinji school were from Soan. The two schools had active fellowship with each other. In June, 1990, the Sinji people who participated in the building of Soan monument agreed to build one for Sinji. In July, 1992, 'One meal fasting movement' was launched to raise the fund and Sinji Prosperity Association initiated the formation of the Monument Project Preparation Committee. In July, 1993, Donga Ilbo, Wando County, and South Cholla Province came to support the cause and with participation from the ex-residents and surviving families, the monument was built and have unveiling ceremony in August, 1994 17

What are these two monuments trying to represent? The residents of Soan thought that they were expressing their identity by regarding themselves as the bearer of the national spirit and their island as the base of the national movement. However, this identity carries polysemous meanings. In one sense, for Soan residents, especially the older generation, building of the monument meant repaying the debt they owe to the forefathers of the anti-Japanese movement. On the

17 This monument commemorates anti-Japanese activists including Im Chae-gap, Chang Sok-ch'ŏn and Kim Ch'ung-sang.
other hand, people believed the resistance movement activists finally were able to transcend the current world through the monument. Not only that, residents themselves reaffirmed their pride in the local history. Furthermore, the monument project can be understood as an attempt to secure a superior position in invisible competition of pride amongst the islands. This was evident in the building of the monument in Sinji in 1994. In other words, after the construction of the Soan monument, neighboring Sinji Island residents followed suit. Finally, Soan residents considered the monument as a educational medium for the future generation. They tried to expand the historical experience into the future time. Such desire was strongly expressed by the older generation.

On the other hand, even though the project was carried out in the name of the whole myön, the process had internal problem of hegemonic competitions. The main actor of this movement was the Senior Citizens Association while some ex-residents also exerted significant influence. The Senior Citizens Association wanted to demonstrate to the younger generation that they have more and clear memories of collective experiences and at the same time that they are the product of the movement. The Senior Citizens Association keeps distance from the people who belong to the same generation but were involved with activities of the Right. There were people of minority voice. They were mostly the surviving families of those who participated in the anti-Japanese movement and then in the anti-government movement during the Korean War.

3. The World of Monuments : Collective Experience Exposed

The inscription on Soan Monument describes the historical tradition
before the national movement launched in the 1920s and lists the names of participants of various anti-Japanese organizations in the 1920s, education movement, night school movement (Yahak undong, 夜學運動), labor movement in Japan, Sin’ganhoe, Kwangju Student Movement, The Provisional Government, and the Restoration Army. These represent the restored part of the collective experience. This is the directly unmasked world of monuments. The image of the monument is the symbol intensively expressing such a world. However, the world of monuments also includes an area of indirect expressions. They are expressed in the coordination of space and time such as the location of monuments, the day of commemoration, etc.

The mass movement restored by the Soan Monument traces back to the Tonghak Revolution. The legacy of Tonghak Revolution continues to the Attack on Japanese at Chaji Island Lighthouse in 1909. This incident influenced greatly the anti-Japanese sentiment of Soan residents but fell short of mobilizing the entire myŏn people collectively. The birth of collective action towards the history of Soan residents came with the 13 year protest struggle on land ownership from 1909. The struggle started when Yi Ki-yong, a pro-Japanese high ranking official who became viscount later, claimed to the ownership of Soan Island after finding out that the island belonged to Yŏnryŏng Palace (延齡宮) However, the entire residents vehemently protested and eventually won the case in 1921. This clearly showed that the residents were in one communal destiny, thus, provided an opportunity for the formation of the collective identity of Soan residents afterward.

On the other hand, encouraged by the efforts of Kŏmun Island and Wando to build modern schools, Soan built a private academy called

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18 Soan residents asked for the curtailment of feudal taxes collectively in 1864 (Wandokunji P’yŏnch’an wiwonhoe, The History of Wando, 1990, p 1101)
Chunghwa hakwon in 1913 After winning the land ownership dispute, residents searched for the ways to celebrate the victory and suggested to the 4 representatives of the struggle to build a monument in honor of those people but they declined and instead agreed to promote the academy to a regular school. This was possible because 2 of the representatives served as the dean of the academy. The fund was raised immediately and a private school was found in May, 1923.

Soan Private School was the fruit of the collective action of the entire myŏn. Therefore, the school became a strict target of Japanese authorities' strict observation. Seizing the opportunity when Song Nae-ho and other activists were arrested during the Workers' and Peasants' Association for Complete Achievement (Nonong Taesŏnghoe) Incident in October, 1924, the Wando County Chief suggested transforming the school into a public school. Most of the residents rejected the offer. The people who welcomed the suggestion are the people who took the position of rich farmers in the debate concerning the management of Soan school. In 1926, the Japanese colonial government established a public school with 30 students. At the time, Soan Private School had 150 students. In the process, tension between the two schools intensified and finally, the Japanese colonial government forced the closure of the private school in May, 1927. Against this measure, residents made fierce struggles quickly developing into a nationwide movement. Associations of former Wando residents in various regions in Japan also continued protest gatherings.

The inscription of the monument underscores Song Nae-ho as the leader and clearly indicates that the Soan national movement was an anti-imperialistic and anti-feudalistic struggle. The role of leaders in the Soan national movement was very much noticeable. Their affiliation with the nationwide movement and their unity with the residents were very strong. In the 1920s, various youth organizations and
secret underground groups were formed and expanded the range of regional solidarity in Soan Island. In this process, in 1924 and 1926, many Soan activists were apprehended by the Japanese colonial police. The Soan national movement reached its high point with the closure of the Soan Private School and the protest against it but most of the underground organization members were arrested. Song Nae-ho, a leader of Sin'ganhoe, was also arrested during this time and died in December, 1927, due to illness from the long-term imprisonment. This meant the loss of a leader for Soan residents.

The death of Song Nae-ho and the closure of the Soan school inscribed in the memories of Soan residents the fact that they were formed through their own yearning to be the subject of a historical community. It is important to realize that the process in which Soan Island became a historical community began with the colonization of Korea which started simultaneously with the dispute over the land ownership and had the private school as the agent of self formation as the subject. Considering the aspect of natural conditions, it was far from the center of the Japanese colonial control, instead of having an agrarian sectional division, it enjoyed equality and interdependence coming from the economic basis of a fishing community, and being an island with a natural boundary provided a fortification of livelihood. Having frequent contacts and exchanges with Seoul and Japan through the coastal routes also led to frequent ideological provocation. The fact that the death of a leader and the closure of the private school which functioned as the base for communal solidarity were caused by the outside force ascribed an eternal moral superiority to the historical community.  

19 Pak Chi-an-sang by classifying anti-Japanese movements in the 1920s into secret society movement, youth movement, labor movement, ideological organizations, education movement.
Afterwards, the Soan anti-Japanese movement led to the labor movement of Koreans in Japan, Kwangju Student Movement, the South Cholla Province Committee (Chönnam Hyöpũhoe) Incident, etc., but they fell short of being a collective action. However, the fact that there were activities in the Provisional Government and the Restoration Army at the end of the anti-Japanese movement provides a clue to the recollection of the experiences afterwards.

Testimony 7 The person who concluded the Soan anti-Japanese movement was Kim Chang-gyun. In Japan, he heard the news of the [Korean] Provisional Government in 1943, he voluntarily responded to the Japanese government's mass labor recruitment program and went to Guǎngdōng (廣東 in China). There he escaped to arrived at Zhōngqīng (中慶) after 6 months. He served in the Restoration Army Headquarters and saw the liberation [of Korea] as a lieutenant. That was the end of the Soan anti-Japanese movement.

Such a fact of Kim Chang-gyun's participation in the Restoration Army functions as a leverage locating the balancing point between the restoration of historical experiences and the ideological tendency in collective and organizational movement. However, the collective mentality of the residents remained publicly silent by the oppression and the repression of the Japanese imperialism and only after the liberation, did it come out once again into the public sphere.

The world revealed by the monument is precisely the world of experiences before the liberation and even though the collective etc., suggested that such factors as homogeneous class composition of the island population whose majority were commoners and owner cultivator, historical experience of the last period of Chosŏn Dynasty and the 1910s and the existence of excellent leaders, contributed to the fierce anti-Japanese movement in a small island like Soan Island. See Pak Ch'an-sŭng, "Ilchëha Soando-ŭi Hang'il Minyŏk Undong [Anti-Japanese Movement in Soan Island Under the Japanese Imperialistic Rule]," Tosŏ Munhwa no 11 (Dec 1993), Tosŏ Munhwa Yŏn'gusŏ, Mokp'o University.
experiences after the liberation are the continuation of the movement before it, they remained only in the memories and were not expressed in personal history, recollection of actions before and after the liberation is clearly distinguished also.

Even in the world of the representations, tensions are not completely resolved. The tensions remain on the issue of the list of names to be included in the inscription. The talks about the list went on right up to the last stage of the monument construction and still remains the focus of dissatisfactions even after the construction. The people on the list are considered to be historically worthy to be remembered. Reasons for the dissatisfaction with the list are either people who should be on the list or the list included unqualified people. The examples and cases of dissatisfactions often involve the family members or relatives. Because so many residents were involved with the 'national movement' the issue of deciding where to draw the line became the biggest issue. For this, a selection committee was formed. Their qualification for the selection carried two problems. One is that they categorized two groups of activists, leaders 'worthy to be recorded' and 'people who were too ordinary to be mentioned.' The other is that they selected out the people who crossed over to the side of the colonial regime at the end of the colonial period\textsuperscript{20} and the people involved in the leftist activities unacceptable by the current political system. These two problems are intermingled at the heart of the discontent toward the list. It is very difficult to make a call on the problem of crossing over to the other side seen in the end of the colonial period. On a different level, there existed a rightist per-

\textsuperscript{20} The discontent toward the list of names in the inscription is in line with the discontent toward the amnients. As of 1993, there were 12 amnients in Soan Island, but some of them were problematic.
spective that the list should go through ideological filtering. Contrary to this, there existed another perspective that leftist victims of the political tension during the liberation period should also be included.

Deciding on the list while satisfying such diverse opinions is still difficult as much as the reality at the time. Eventually, the evaluation of the last political choice made by the Independent activists was postponed since it would be incomplete considering the current relativity and fluctuation of the reality and the final decision was to include in the list the people participated in the independence movement regardless of "what they did at the end."

The memory of the Soan national movement is not shared by all residents. The memory of residents consists of directly witnessed memories and stories heard from the previous generation. The fact that one can tell more stories shows in one sense that the story teller was standing at the center of the movement. As indicated by the terminology "generation gap effect," generally the older they are the more memories they have. The Senior Citizens Association have its own communication network and through repetitive recollection of the past, they possess more memories. Therefore, the more the discourse on the independence movement becomes the center in the formation of the Soan residents' livelihood, the more the authority of the Senior Citizens Association increases. Testimonies that go beyond the accepted memories of the Senior Citizens Association are often rejected.

In the case of Soan Island, the testimony of Yi Wol-song who participated in the national movement in the 1920s and the preceding generation of the current members of the Senior Citizens Association was decisive in bringing back the beginning period of the movement experience. For a long time he was in reclusion from the community. Especially his testimony concerning the existence of the Association
for Observing Righteousness and Filial Piety (Suū Wich’in-gye) goes beyond the accepted recollection of the current members of the community. His testimony revived a part of forgotten collective experience. However, the residents, especially the members of the Senior Citizens Association, did not want to take his testimony on face value. Furthermore, there were some who felt unhappy arguing that his testimony was too much ‘self centered.’ Even though this is due to the gap created between the generation who experienced directly and the generation with indirect experience, it meant that the generation gap in experience is inevitable in the case of the resistance movement against the system where it is impossible to publicize and share the movement experience.21

Testimony 8  Strong distortion exists because many people tell stories centering on their ancestors or themselves. The real independent fighters could not afford to take care of their own children. When the children have been killed or do not exist, it is impossible to have testimony about the ancestors.

Therefore, very few people can understand the possibility of historical facts that go beyond the accepted memories. An opposite view to what has been mentioned above came to my attention by a central figure in the construction of the monument.

Testimony 9  He was a great person and played a huge role in publicizing the Soan anti-Japanese Movement to the outside world. Testimony by its virtue must be self-centered. How can we know everything about other people? People often misinterpret this.

The knowledge about the past is often maintained by organizing.

21 In their study on the relations between generation, life course and collective memory, Schuman and Scott concluded that human-beings keep strong memory of their experiences which they had in their teens or early twenties. See Schuman, H. and Scott, J., “Generation and Collective Memory,” ASR 54 (June 1989)
recorded facts or oral tradition into a chronology, but that does not mean these events are treated the same way. Among the past event many parts fail to receive attention if the potential messengers of the events disregard them.

The location of the monument often becomes the subject of political struggle because it carries a symbolic meaning closely related to the historical origin to a particular social force. The location represents the visualization of the past. Soan Island also had a dispute over where the monument should be built. However, the issue was resolved quietly because the residents did not have the economic means to look for other choices. After the completion of the monument, objections on the location were further raised. Many people were not happy about the location of the monument being true to the historical meaning, they felt that it should have been located in the original site of the private school. The location of the monument was decided by the Senior Citizens Association. The issue of location came up during the site selection for the private school during the Resistance movement and during the site selection for the Soan Middle School after liberation. Here also people argued that the location should have been the site of the private school. The site was very important to Soan residents. However, the final decision was made emphasizing the future meaning justified by "the place always visible to young students" instead of the historical meaning of the past.

The day of commemoration is also very symbolic. First two years

22 Harvey's research focuses on the struggle between different social forces on the issue of the location of the monument, Basilique du Sacre-Coeur on top of Montmartre in Paris, France. He says it was a historical location for the French Revolution and the Paris Commune and the building process of the monument is the struggle to symbolically occupy a particular place. Harvey, D., "Monument and Myth: The Building of Basilica of the Sacred Heart," *The Urban Experience*, 1989
after the completion of the monument, Soan residents observed the
day of commemoration on June 5, the day of unveiling, but changed
to Memorial Day (June 6th) in 1993. However, there was a criticism
about the changing of the date to Memorial Day since that would
combine the nationalists who fought in the anti-Japanese movement
and those who died for the state after the liberation.

Commemoration ceremonies assist in collective remembering of the
past great events which hold the community together. Periodic com-
memoration ceremonies are important mechanisms in maintaining the
community through institutionalization of the collective memory. Therefore, residents led commemoration ceremonies easily take on
ritual characteristics. In Soan, the commemoration ceremonies after the
construction of the monument carried a meaning of "myôn ritual" with
a ceremony and sharing of simple feast. Commemoration ceremony was
like a communal ritual. However, after the date change to Memorial
Day, the format of the ceremony changed. There was no food, and
only flower were dedicated. The feast took place at a different location.
The change of date resulted in the lost of the temporal meaning of

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23 Halbachs clearly differentiated historical memory from biographical memory. The former
reaches a social actor only through written documents or other records in photographic or
other forms. However, that preserves its life only through rituals like ceremony and festival.
Ceremony contributes to strengthening the memory of the event. A periodical ceremony plays
a key role in a drama of revived temporal participation. Compared to this, a biographical
memory is the memory of personal experienced events in the past. This also strengthens the
unity between the participants, but this unity is likely to disappear unless it becomes
strengthened periodically through contacts between participants. Once a historical memory is
formed, the past is accumulated and interpreted by the social system. When people gather to
memorize the acts or achievements of members who remain temporally or spatially far away,
they are encouraged indirectly through reading and listening to commemorative speeches at a
ceremony or festival. Albach believes that the current generation came to be conscious of
themselves by pairing their present with the past which they recreated. By participating in a
ceremony, members of the current generation can recreate the past through imaginably
reactivating the past which was likely to disappear unless they attend the ceremony.
the ceremony and diluted the characteristics of communal ritual

4. Unrepresented World

It is wrong to perceive that the content and format of the inscription on the monument express everything about Soan residents' mentalité. There exist parts of residents' memories which are not yet mentioned. Reconstruction of past is done through the mechanism of modification, connotation, and exclusion. The collective experiences which the Soan monument does not say include the situation where it was necessary for the residents to distance themselves from the movement due to the harsh condition at the end of the Japanese colonialism, sufferings from the historical experiences between the period immediately after the liberation and the Korea War, etc. There are people's experiences often found on the regional level. Those experiences can be considered as a continuation of the anti-Japanese movement, but at the same time, they refused to be revealed as they are. However, these are also the factors which made it possible to construct the monument as late as in the late 1980s.

The unrepresented world begins with the situation right before the liberation. The memories are vivid because that was when the residents' sufferings were extreme. The memories of the actions carried out by the myön office which was the basic governmental authority during the difficult period as the Japanese Colonialism came to an end were relatively clear in the minds of the residents. Among them, forced labor was the most painful memory. Every month, tens of


25 In the memory of the residents, there exists an episode which soothes these sufferings. At the end of World War II, the residents could frequently see American fighters in south-
people were mobilized to do forced labor and the residents hated and feared the myŏn officials. For such reasons, myŏn officials ran away being branded as pro-Japanese after the liberation. Those officials were the myŏn mayor, 26 labor affairs officer who was the coordinator of the forced labor and industrial affairs officer who took charge of the war provisions collection, etc.

This liberation became a new beginning for the residents to revive the experiences of the anti-Japanese movement. The community needed to be once again rebuilt in public sphere. Songs that expressed the collective mood during the colonial period were kept alive by women’s efforts to preserve those songs and after the liberation, they were reintroduced to the public. 27

After the liberation, a Preparation Committee for Nation Foundation (Kŏng’guk chunbi wiwonhoe : Kŏnjun) was also formed in Wando. Here, two of the leading members of the organizations like the committee’s chairman and the head of the peace preservation corps (ch’iąndae) were from Soan Island. They are the leaders of the Korean Race Youth Association (Paedal ch’ŏngnyŏnhoe) organized in Soan Island and participated in the movement refusing to pay

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26 Last myŏn mayor of the colonial period did not flee the island after the liberation, but his half brother was lynched by the myŏn youth family problems overlapped with political problems.

27 Treng his eyes upon the fact that Soan residents were remembering the songs of the activists, Na Sŏng-man saw the way of their historical existence in “folk song society.” Relying on this, Na Sŏng-man traced the process of adopting national movement songs and assimilating them, which can be seen in a transition from a traditional folk song society to a modern folk song society with the Japanese forced occupation of Korea as a momentum. See Na Sŏng-man, “Soundo Muyo Sahoe-ja Yoka (History of folk Song Society of Soan Island),” Issŏ Munhwa Yŏngguso, Mokp’o University.
homage to Japanese Shinto shrine. The administrative organization of Soan established immediately after the liberation did not refer to itself as the 'Preparation Committee for Nation Foundation', but the myŏn mayor and the head of the public security preservation corps (poandae) were ex-movement activists. The public security preservation corps arrested five or six people accused of being pro-Japanese. They were mostly administrative officials under the Japanese colonial rule and secret informers. They were all driven out of the myŏn A youth organization was also formed.

Three American soldiers landed on Soan Island immediately after the liberation, but there were no conflicts. With the increase of the military government's control after February, 1946, the self-established myŏn administrative organization was destroyed and the myŏn mayor was appointed from the above. However, instead of the myŏn mayor, the police and the youth organization was the center of the myŏn level regional power structure. Therefore, the residents' memory focused on the police.

Testimony 10  At the time of the liberation, people did not know the difference between democracy and communism, but they just hated the police for sure. After the liberation, at the first recruitment of the Soan police, 5 people were accepted and most of them worked in Wando. At the time, the Police Chief of Wando was Kim Chang-ryŏl and the rest of the officers were mostly ex-officers during the Japanese colonial period. I joined the police wanting to serve the new state, but when I found out how the system worked, I regretted becoming a policeman, so I quit.

The following is the testimony of a rural intellectual.

Testimony 11  After the liberation, the left were mostly created by the police. In the police of Soan only the superintendent was literate and the rest were illiterate. The mobilization of the people were done through the 'rice ration' at the time. When advocates and opponents of the Allied trusteeship fought
viciously in other regions, Soan was peaceful. We had the first confrontation on May Day of 1947 surging the tensions. It would be better to say that was the beginning of full repression.

On an organizational level, the rightist youth organizations like a Korean Youth Corps (Taehan ch'ôngnyŏndan) indeed took a major role in other regions as well. They assisted the police. The first political confrontation in Soan was the May Day Incident in May, 1947. myŏn residents gathered at the Soan Elementary School for the commemoration ceremony, but the police came and dispersed the crowd. The person who organized the gathering was Kim Yong-gyun but after the incident he went underground until the period of occupation by the North Korean army when he came back to the public. The political terrain of this period is remembered around the election for the Constitutional Assembly (Chehŏn ŭihoe) held on May 30, 1948.

At the 1948 Constitutional Assembly Election, four candidates ran and Kim Chang-ryŏl, Police Chief of the Wando Police, was elected. 60% or so of the Soan population participated in the election but most of them voted for the defeated candidates. Soan residents did not like Kim Chang-ryŏl because he was in opposition with the members of the Wando County Preparation Committee for Nation Foundation from Soan. However, the election was a completely government-controlled election. The residents remember the election as the confrontation between the 'government' and the 'people.' Aside from the administrative connection, the 'government' utilized the Christian network. Because of this, Soan residents were mostly anti-Christian at least until the 1950s.

In 1950, Chŏng Namguk from Soan ran for the Constitutional Assembly at the second election and won against Kim Chang-ryŏl, who was then a Constitutional Assemblyman with a small margin of votes. Soan residents overwhelmingly supported Chŏng Namguk. Chŏng,
Nam-guk was one of the leaders of the anti-Japanese movement, was involved with the Wando Town Labor Cooperative (Wando Haet'ae Chohap) after the liberation, and was accused of being a socialist at the end of 1947.

At the outbreak of the Korean War, the police executed the members of the National Guidance Alliance (Podo yŏnmaeng). In case of Soan, about 50-100 people who were the leading members of the youth movement in the past were killed because of this incident. It was a great shock to the residents. The residents said that there were more killings other than the National Guidance Alliance Incident, but they could not remember. However, the people who had been arrested at the second wave of attack returned safely with a help from Chŏng Nam-guk.

At the moment of the North Korean People’s Army occupation during the Korean War, people from Soan once again played leading roles in Wando County. During this period, the ‘enemy of the people’ were classified into three levels in Soan. The first was the myŏn mayor, the second was the people who crossed over to the other side and the third level was the myŏn officials. The people to be punished were divided into several groups but none were executed. The leftists mostly considered the police as the people to be executed but they were mostly outsiders and they had already escaped. After the brief period of occupation by the People’s Army, the police executed the people who were believed to have assisted the North Korea Army’s landing operation on Namch’ang in Wando as traitors. These two attacks on the residents brought great pain and discontinuation of the tradition of activism that traced back to the anti-Japanese movement. At the same time, it was the starting point where the historical experience of the residents was interrupted and two different forces of remembering and forgetting began to be at work.
When asked about the ancestors or relatives who participated in the Independence Movement, many of the residents mentioned the names. By the same token, many people talked about the sufferings they went through during the Korean War. Especially, in the stories about the pain and sufferings from the Korean War, they talked mostly about how people were beaten or killed by the police 'being accused of being leftist' or 'innocently.' All those deaths and pains they witnessed and experienced were so deeply buried deep in them that the stories did not surface easily.

During this period, the affliction from the class conflict in the Korean rural society was not carried out in the name of ideology or political organizations, but more likely, it assumed an aspect of competition between the traditional villages in the region or competition between the powerful families or relatives. In Soan, the tension from the contradiction of land ownership provided a glimpse of the residents' division, but it is difficult to conclude that the tension was a major problem. The tension between the land owners and the sharecroppers did not fully develop because of limited land. For this reason, there was not many land to be redistributed, except a part of school property and a small amount of privately owned land during the land redistribution period.

Looking at the regional society on a myŏn level, there is a high possibility that the tension was between the influential village resisting the other village where located the police branch office and the myŏn office were located which were the basic outposts of the state power. Often these competitions between different villages rested on the hierarchy of traditional social status. On a village level, if one overwhelmingly dominant family group took the winning position or several insignificant family groups might follow community order, there might have been relatively little damage. However, in case
where two dominant family groups are in competition, both will get hard blows from accumulated mutual revenges. In case of Soan Island, the political battlement took a form of a confrontation between the police 'without' and the residents 'within,' but within the village there existed tension between groups. In other words, competitions and tensions between family groups in the village influence the attitude toward the national movement and during the war it was easy for distrust to develop into revengeful disputes. Such phenomena were clearly evident in Wolhang-ri, Soan Island. In case of Wolhang-ri, residents were composed of two family groups. One group relatively participated more in the national movement and the private school movement, whereas the other group in competition actively participated in the Japanese public school system of the Japanese colonialism. Residents themselves admitted that in the running the village competition drive between the families mattered more than the economic differences. These family competitions continued even to the Liberation Period and they started to take different ideologies. If one family group participated in the rightist youth movement and the myŏn office then the other family group would mobilize their members and connection to the leftist activities. The two family groups in this town eventually entangled themselves in series of revenge and counter revenge when small misunderstandings took sacrifices as the political terrain changed from the National Guidance Alliance Incident to the People's Army occupation period, and to the coming-back of the police. Both parties claimed that it was the police repressing them both but they were wrong in thinking 'the other' reported them to the police. These two groups still live in the same village and exactly the tension and sacrifice of this period, exposing its collective identity in 1990, became an important factor in making the process of reconstructing the past difficulties.
The limited local autonomy system implemented after the Korean War provided breathing room for the desire to bring back the nationalist movement experiences under the Japanese colonialism. In reality, the power to rule the myŏn came from the above and the local autonomy system was very new and distanced from the residents. However, the election brought an opportunity for a glimpse of the oppressed experience to surface and that was the issue of commemorating the Resistance Movement. But, this issue could not overcome the silence imposed by the divided system of Korea.

Resident’s memory of the society at the time is surprisingly political. Relatively, not only the 3rd National Assembly election in 1954 but also the 3rd presidential election in 1956 was clearly imprinted in the memory. Wando was the only rural area in South Chŏlla Province excluding cities like Kwangju and Mokp’o where Cho Pong-am received more votes than Rhee Syngman in the 1956 election. This election had two confronting structures of the government party versus the opposition party and of the oppression of extreme right versus progressive elements overlapping each other. Among them, the resistance to the government party was the most psychologically decisive factor.

Oppression of resident’s desires and deepening of historical memory are closely connected to the regional power structure. In Soan as well as in other regions, ‘influential figures (yuji)’ existed. Their origins go back to the 1950s. Despite numerous changes of regime, they maintained their social status through the state’s support on the one hand and through the family ties on the other hand. Their influence significantly decreased after the 1980s.

Such a basic frame of regional power structures and the residents' psychological structures were formed during the Korean War. However, residents' collective desires to expression their identity and comme-
morate their past history were intermittently demonstrated whenever the favorable political terrain existed. Especially, the success of the 1987 Democratic Movement brought realization of increase in people’s power and with the state recognition and award of the medal of merit to the anti-Japanese activists for their contribution to independence, the monument project took on an appeal that it was ‘officially authorized by the state.’ Democratization makes the expression of oppressed people’s experience easy. However, since democratization is a gradual process and always limited, it allows the expression of limited historical memories. In this sense, monuments do not belong in the actual realm but still exists in the historical realm.

5. Conclusion

Through the monument, conversations take place objectively between the subject who carried out the anti-Japanese movement, the subject who built the monument and the subject who read the inscription about their activities. However, their conversations are not completely subjective and the history is explained through inner structure of the monument. The inner structure of the monument is as it is told by its shape, the collective efforts of millions of stones rising out tall by themselves toward the light in the dark age. These stones are not rough or jagged, instead they are smooth and shiny from being washed by the waves for a long time.

The people who built the monument are oriented toward the ancestors and forefathers of the past, toward other contemporaneous residents of the region, toward themselves, and toward the future generation who will live there. What did they want to say to their ancestors? The religious connotation of expiation is not strong in Soan residents’ desire to commemorate the Resistance Movement activists.
Instead, it is more like a duty to them. This goes to show that they have formed a historical moral community with the Resistance Movement as the medium. The closure of the private school which is the symbol of the historical community and the foundation of its reproduction and the death of Song Nae-ho became the occasion for the realization of the sublimation to the history of reality. The death is something that distances and breaks off from the reality but it makes the collective memory permanent and firm. The closure of the private school is the end of one phase of the history making of a community and the beginning of a new phase.

The desire to represent the past collective experience is defined by economical and socio-political factors. However, such representation is bound to be reconstructed by real conditions. The reconstruction is influenced by the relationship with more complex and nebulous ruling power. In other words, the public representation of identity is the result of self-censoring which the residents carry out on daily basis under the current political system. If the level of democracy of the political terrain of the current Korean society is the major factor influencing on the public expression of identity, then the divided system of Korea is a structural factor deciding the very limitation of that representation.

The change of interpretation of cultural and political characteristics of particular space reveals the change of regional identity of the community members. This comes from the change of communicative conditions, and the change of perspective on cultural heritage, but more importantly it comes from the change of political and economic terrain. The change of regional identity itself is important, but the change of the condition of expression of identity is very important.

Collective symbol includes regional basis and content basis. In case the meaning given to a collective symbol is more than one within the
same region, in other words, if historical tension and struggle within the region were strong and the evaluation of them is not unilateral but negotiated, symbolic struggle could continue to exist. This is much more evident in the temporal dimension. Since the historical evaluation of particular events changes or even overturned, it is possible for contradicting symbols to coexist in the same region. If one side clearly takes on the regional identity, even though that collective symbol might have similar orientation, the residents of other region will build similar monuments in competition.

Collective memory shows generation difference. The collective memory of the past people is inherited by the present people. However, since the tendency that only the parts meaningful to the present are selected and inherited, it is inevitable that the memories of the past and present be different from each other. Therefore, collective memory is accumulative while having an aspect of presentism at the same time. Collective memory presents a new insight according to the present time perspective together with the continuity of generation.

According to the Social Construction theory’s historical perspective, the past is often a social composition created mainly by the interest toward the present. In other words, belief, interest, and passion of present change the perspective on the past. This in turn implies that the social reconstruction of the past is an important factor in the process of domination, obedience, resistance, and tension.28 However, Schwartz posits that if presentism is pushed to the extreme then history will lose any continuity and argues that “the past is always a composition of continuation and change and extension and new.”29

Memory of the past is a complex composition of the 'histories which one wants to erase and express'. These two form not a separate and independent current but a current mutually influencing each other. The past which Soan residents relentlessly tried to restore was an ideal collective community and that was not only a historical experience but was also based on subjective and inner temporal experience. This is remembered as beautiful even though it was painful. However, the current socio-political terrain and living conditions fragmentize the whole of such experience into numerous unrelated events. Therefore, in picturing the past memory, the worlds which one wants to expose and veil are divided. Through this process, the world which one wants to express is reconstructed. As we can see, in case of Soan, the division system of Korea has structuralized the common people to fragmentize their world of experience.

However, even the decisive power of this structural factor is weakened by the change of the political terrain and the temporal lapse of the division system. This change brought self-confidence to represent the memory of the collective experience as it is. It enabled the people to change the suffering into a kind of pride as the suffering is expressed outwardly starting with the period of inner suffering. Of course the revealed is not the whole but just a part. They divided their past experience into exactly two parts. The boundary is the point of the 1945 liberation and the divided worlds are the world before the liberation and that after. The expressed world was only a mere part of the historical memory and not completely 'liberated' from the past. It was free from the colonial system in form only.

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30 A resident of Soan gave a book of folk songs, which he had secretly kept, to Professor Na Shing-man in 1993. If the book had been found out by Japanese police, he would have been exposed to great sufferings. Even after the liberation, the fact that he had the book might have made the police put him under hardship accusing him of being leftist
but it was partially free from the division system which was the historical heritage left by the colonial system. However, the boundary of remembering and forgetting, and expressing and hiding is not immobile but instead it is fundamentally influenced by the former. In other words, it seems they are pulled by the self-expressive desire. In case of Soan, one can read the invisible world of today to carry the desire to restore in the future.

The monument is a discourse fixed in its shape. The realized monument is given a new audience and surrounding. This monument will have some independence from the subject who participated in the anti-Japanese movement and the people who built the monument. Hybridization and de-territorialization is inevitable. Therefore, new interpretation must oppose getting farther away from the value system which is the basis of the monument and the temporal gap. In light of this, the reading of the monument must be open to the future. There is the difficulty of reading not only the history of the anti-Japanese movement but also the self-control and limiting of the people who built the monument, the expressed world, and the invisible world simultaneously.

Accordingly, he had kept the book buried in a mountain, or in the ground under a wooden floor, or inside a bundle of firewood. He thought that it was his duty to introduce the book to the public. Na Sŏng-man, op cit

31 Rowe and Schelling, op cit, p 231