

The Concept of *Sahoe* (Society) in the Practice and Discourse of *Sahoejang* (Public Funeral) in Colonial Korea*

KIM Hyun-ju

Abstract

This article examines the collective ritual known as sahoejang (public funeral) in order to trace the shifting concept of what was understood as society during the colonial period (1910-1945). Major sources of information include original newspaper articles and discursive materials on the funerals of Yu Gil-jun (1914), Kim Yun-sik (1922), Yi Sang-jae (1927), and Yi Seung-hun (1930). Thirteen other sahoejang that took place in various local communities between late 1920s and early 1940s are also briefly examined. In examining sahoejang, in terms of both their practice and discourse, I analyze the trajectory of fluid and changing imaginaries and concepts on social boundaries, about who has social membership, who has the right to represent the membership thus formed, and what is considered socially valuable. I argue first that the notion of society during the colonial period stimulated imaginations and expectations about collective subjectivity of the colonized, and second that collective subjectivity was expressed through the formation of voluntary organizations and activities, which led to social solidarity, rallying of public opinions, and leveling of traditionally hierarchical authorities.

Keywords: society, state, local, *sahoejang*, collective subjectivity, *minjung*, lateral communication

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KIM Hyun-ju is Associate Professor of Korean Language and Literature at Yonsei University, and also serves as a member of the Korea Journal Editorial Board. E-mail: hjkimw@yonsei.ac.kr.

Introduction: *Sahoe* (Society) as a Historically Interpretative Text

Of the various forms of modern sociality,¹ *minjok* (nation) and *gukga* (state) have been by far the most frequently studied subjects in Korea in the past ten years in the field of the history of modern concepts. However, there are some studies that have focused on how *sahoe* (society) developed and facilitated the principle of order and form that are different from *minjok* or *gukga*. Among such studies, Park Myoungkyu's works are pioneering; his works deal with *sahoe* as public sphere and *inmin* (people) as forms of subjectivity of collective activity. Based on the conceptual framework of modern social sciences, that is, the individual-society-state framework, Park reviewed the notion of *sahoe* in Korea from the late 1800s to the 1920s (M. Park 2003). My research on social discourses led by enlightenment intellectuals and writers in Korea in the 1910s, and the political function of their discourse, broadly belongs to the same category of study. I analyzed how the enlightenment thinkers and writers of the time utilized the term *sahoe* to represent Koreans as a community, and how they then obtained the authority to represent the desire of Korean *sahoe* (Kim Hyun-ju 2009, 2010). Yun Hae Dong and other historians focused their attention on the tangible development, after the 1920s, of the subspheres of society, such as economy, bureaucracy, social movement, culture, and religion. Their aim was to delineate the salient aspects of what was political about the activation of such subspheres (Yun 2007). Following previous studies on Korean collective activity stimulated by the concept of *sahoe*, this article focuses on the collective ritual known as *sahoejang* (public funeral) in order to identify the discourse on *sahoe* as an entity as well as a social practice within the context of their respective correlations.

According to *Hanguk minjok munhwa daebaekgwa sajeon* (Ency-

1. For a discussion of the three forms of social imaginary that emerged and developed in Western modernity—i.e., the market economy, the public sphere, and the self-governing people—see Taylor (2010, 111, 133, 159).

clopedia of Korean National Culture) (AKS 2001) published by the Academy of Korean Studies, a *sahoejang* is defined as follows:

Sahoejang is a funeral ceremony that takes place in the name of society by representatives of various sectors of society who come together voluntarily when a socially prominent person who has done great service to the state and society dies.

Sahoejang follows a degree of formality that ranks below state or national funerals, and as such the government is not engaged in directly organizing the funeral procedures or other particulars. However, it may subsidize part of the funeral cost or confer posthumous honor, such as a decorous medal, to the deceased.

Sahoejang has a funeral committee, as does a state or national funeral; it decides on the burial ground and on the funeral procedures and means, and it carries out those plans. However, the funeral ceremony follows the will of the deceased or the wishes of the family, and if the deceased was an adherent of a particular religion, the funeral ritual of that religion may be incorporated in the funeral ceremony.

In defining *sahoejang*, the first quotation identifies *sahoe* as the keyword for determining who qualifies to receive a *sahoejang*, who has the authority to call for and organize it, what qualifies as a legitimate procedure, and who the funeral hosts are. However, the definition still leaves many potentially controversial questions unanswered. For example, what constitutes a service to society and who determines it; how many representatives, from what fields, should come together to determine and proceed with a *sahoejang*; and ultimately, who has the right to oversee the ceremony in the name of society? Furthermore, it is interesting that, in the definition above, the deceased's "great service to the state" comes before service to "society." What would qualify as a "service to the state" that also qualifies as a service to society and be honored in the name of society? Given all these, a separate definition, would be required.

The above definition is a culmination of *sahoejang* practices since

the founding of the nation-state, the Republic of Korea, in 1948. The *sahoejang* culture of today is inscribed with decades of competition and negotiation among various forces (positions) that have taken place along the boundaries separating the sphere of the state and political power, on the one hand, and society, on the other, and the nature of the relationship between these two spheres. If this is the case, then what about during the colonial period? In the *sahoejang* that took place under colonialism, how did social boundaries, membership, representative rights, and social values interact or engage with the sphere of the state?

In the practice and discourse of *sahoejang* during the colonial period, *sahoe* was associated, in complex ways, with various concepts that expressed collective subjectivity, such as *dongpo* (compatriot), *minjok* (nation), *gungmin* (nationals), *danche* (organization), *minjung* (people), *nodong undong* (labor movement), *saeop* (industry), *gyoyuk* (education), *ingyeok* (character), *dodeok* (morals), *yeoron* (public opinion), and *gongik* (public interest). Thus, in defining the beneficiary, the agency, and the meaning of a *sahoejang* during the colonial period shows various factions competing and negotiating with questions of where to draw the boundary of society; who has the right to belong to it and to represent it; and, what values contribute to social unity and solidarity. The *sahoejang* practice was based on a particular set of expectations and imaginations about these questions and an implicit recognition of them. Such expectations and imaginations were further articulated and conceptualized in the process of being absorbed by, and associated with, new practices engendered by them; and the new set of concepts thus generated stimulated yet another set of interlocking practices. What this article tries to do is to trace how *sahoe* was formed and transformed as its concept, imagination, and practice interacted with each other through the discourse and practice of *sahoejang* during the colonial period.

2. In the context of society as an imagined community, the question of membership is a crucial theoretical issue. For further discussion on the subject, see Kim Hyongyong (2007, 265).

The Funeral Ceremony for Yu Gil-jun in 1914: Inchoate Social Boundaries

The first time a *sahoejang* as such took place in Korea was in 1927. However, a *sahoejang* in the sense of the definition quoted at the beginning of this article took place much earlier when Yu Gil-jun³ (pen name: Gudang) died in 1914. Upon his death on September 30, a funeral committee was formed of 65 personalities. It organized the event and announced the date, time, and venue. On the day of the event, the Governor-General, or the head of the colonial government in Korea, members of Joseon nobility, and other prominent persons came to pay their respect. The faculty members and students of schools that Yu either founded or was involved in during his lifetime, and the officers and general members of the Joseon Association of the Practitioners of Chinese Medicine (Joseon Hanbanguihoe), of which Yu had been the president, came and paid their respect. The king of Joseon also sent condolence money. The ceremony took place in the plaza in front of Yongsan Station. A condolence message was read by the head of the funeral committee (a member of the Joseon nobility), by the head of the Political Affairs Office of the Governor-General, and by Kim Yun-sik (also a member of Joseon nobility). Incense was offered at the funeral altar, first by the Governor-General, represented by his official interpreter, various members of Korean nobility, high-ranking civil and military officers of the colonial government, and

3. Yu Gil-jun (1856-1914) is known as a moderate politician and thinker from the late Joseon period. As a member of the Sinsa Yuramdán 紳士遊覽團 (Gentlemen's Observation Mission) to Japan, King Gojong's research and inspection delegation he was sent to Japan in 1881, and later to the United States as an aide to the Bobingsa 報聘使, the first Korean diplomatic mission to the United States in 1883. He exiled himself in Japan when King Gojong took refuge at the Russian legation in 1896 and the Royal Cabinet was dissolved. In subsequent years, he criticized Japanese encroachment in Korea and returned to Joseon in 1907. He then devoted himself to the efforts to promote education and the enlightenment movement, founding, among others, the Heungsadan (Young Korean Academy), one of the oldest civic organizations in Korea still in existence today. After the Japanese annexation of Korea, he refused the baronage title conferred to him by the Japanese imperial government.

finally by the head of the *Maeil sinbo*,⁴ an official organ of the colonial government. The funeral procession following the ceremony was about 7 *ri* (approximately three kilometers) long, and a crowd of about 5,000-6,000 participated in the event. The entire event was reported in great detail in the *Maeil sinbo*.

On the one hand, the funeral ceremony for Yu plainly unveiled the complex power structure of colonial Korea—power was stratified along the lines of ethnicity, class/social standing, and professional position. On the other hand, it also produced ideas about openness and the public. As reported in the *Maeil sinbo*, Yu Gil-jun's funeral ceremony was much more than a family or a clan affair; it was a ritual in which a much wider circle of Koreans participated.

What is interesting about Yu Gil-jun's funeral is that it was never referred to as a *sahoejang* during or after the event. How far removed was his funeral from the expectations and imaginations that later became associated with the term *sahoe* or *sahoejang*? In the early 1910s, a society that could pledge its own discursive and corporeal subjectivity could not develop in Korea. Immediately after the annexation in 1910, the Office of the Governor-General disbanded all voluntary organizations and movements that contained any political tone, including the nation-wide, pro-Japan organization Iljinhoe. The Government-General attempted to control the society of Koreans through the coercive apparatuses of law and order, on the one hand, and through the mobilization of ideological apparatuses such as the *Maeil sinbo* and Gyeonghagwon, an institution for advanced learning in Confucianism, on the other. In a manner identical to that of the judicial and police institutions of the colonial government, the *Maeil sinbo* was also engrossed in portraying Korean society as chaotic and being without order in matters of public security. In the *Maeil sinbo* report of Yu Gil-jun's funeral ceremony, the use of the term *sahoe* was limited to subspheres, or specific sectors, of society, as it is used in the

4. In 1914, the *Maeil sinbo* was the only daily newspaper printed in Korean, and as an official organ of the Office of the Governor-General, its head was also provided in Japanese.

phrase “each *sahoe*.” This is plain evidence of the absence of *sahoe* that is capable of determining and organizing a *sahoejang*, as defined earlier.

It was not until after the mid-1910s that a discursive attempt appeared in the *Maeil sinbo* in creating a sense of collective activity for Korean society. Through his works of fiction such as *Mujeong* (Heartless), and essays such as “Daegu-eseo” (In Daegu) and “Sin saenghwal ron” (An Essay on New Living), Yi Gwang-su imagined Korean society as a community of Koreans in which individuals who share a capacity for moral sympathy would seek solidarity with one another. Such a community also had the right to be protected by the state but also had to be separate and autonomous to a certain degree from the state. Through their activities in various media, such as newspapers, magazines, and other publications, enlightenment intellectuals and writers—Yi Gwang-su included—argued that they had the authority to represent the desire of Korean society in such conditions. The authority they claimed was in fact ratified to some degree by both the colonial state and by Koreans people.⁵

Controversy over Kim Yun-sik’s Funeral in 1922: Negotiating the Social Boundary

By the end of the 1910s, the conceptualization, imagination, and practice of *sahoe* jolted violently, once again, with the eruption of the March First Independence Movement of 1919. The controversy over whether or not Kim Yun-sik⁶ deserved a *sahoejang* is an illuminating

5. For further discussion of an understanding of *sahoe* by the *Maeil sinbo*, Yi Gwang-su, and other enlightenment intellectuals and writers in the 1910s, see Kim Hyun-ju (2009).

6. Kim Yun-sik (1835-1922) served in various high-ranking posts during the last years of the royal government of Joseon. He is known not to have opposed the Japanese annexation of Joseon, and he is one of the 76 Koreans who received a peerage title from the Japanese imperial government after the annexation. However, during the height of the March First Movement, he submitted “Joseon dognip cheongwon” (A

case in this regard. The controversy ended in approximately ten days, but it left a lasting reverberation. Upon Kim Yun-sik's death on January 21, 1922, 87 prominent figures representing the press and educational, judicial, and religious sectors formed the *Sahoejang* Committee for the Late Unyang Kim Yun-sik (hereafter, Funeral Committee). However, following this, a group of individuals associated with the labor movement announced that it opposed the *sahoejang* for Kim. The opposing group included Bak I-gyu, the president of the Korean Mutual Aid Association of Labor (Joseon Nodong Gongjehoe). Approximately 80 people formed the Committee Opposed to the *Sahoejang* for the Late Kim Yun-sik (hereafter, Opposition Committee) and began their campaign in earnest, which involved announcements of resolutions and statements. On February 1, the family of the deceased announced that it would not hold a *sahoejang*, and soon afterwards the Funeral Committee also gave up its plans.

The core argument of the Opposition Committee was that Kim Yun-sik was not qualified to receive a *sahoejang*. Kim Myeong-sik, in his critique of the event, evaluated its meaning as follows: "Kim Yun-sik does not have a particular relationship with Korean society." He further elaborated, "Kim is not a person of Korean society. He is a person of the state, and of the Yi imperial household. It is possible for him to have a *gukjang* (state funeral), or a *hwangsiljang* (imperial funeral), but not a *sahoejang*."

The Opposition Committee also criticized the principal decision-making body, the decision-making process, and the behavior of the Funeral Committee. Bak I-gyu and his supporters criticized the funeral committee members for "passing themselves off as representatives of society and being arrogant."⁷ The Opposition Committee further argued

Petition for the Independence of Joseon), forfeited his title, and was dismissed from his position. For further discussion on Kim Yun-sik's record, see Lim (2005).

7. The Funeral Committee members included: newspaper editors and reporters, principals and teachers of middle and high schools, Christian, Cheondogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way), and Buddhist clergy, Confucian scholars, business leaders, and lawyers. They also included officers of leading social organizations and eight Koreans who received titles of nobility from the Japanese imperial government. For more information on the membership of the Funeral Committee, see Lim (2005).

that a social act that is not based on the free expression of the entire society by no means can be called *sahoejeok* (social), and therefore the term *sahoejang* should not be applied to Kim's funeral.

It is noteworthy that through this criticism, new rules and norms came into being regarding the status, agency, and development of public opinion. First of all, the Opposition Committee raised the status of public opinion to the highest level of authority, commanding final say, on social matters. The court of public opinion had more authority than any other court. Thus, it was possible for the opposition committee to demand that the funeral committee yield to public opinion. Second, public opinion was defined as the opinion of society, and furthermore of the *minjung* (people). Society and the *minjung* were inseparable, and therefore the opinion of the people was the opinion of society. Third, imagination about the formation of public opinion became associated with self-awakening, conscience, justice, and freedom. Supporters of the Opposition Committee argued that public opinion is built upon the *conscience* of self-awakened people and upon their sense of *justice*, and that it is expressed through freedom of speech and freedom of discussion. This conceptualization of public opinion demanded the *minjung's* right of speech in public sphere.⁸

The essence of the controversy over Kim Yun-sik's funeral was that the radical force that emerged in Korea in the wake of the March First Movement wanted to take away the authority to represent *sahoe* and public opinion from such people as Yu Gil-jun and Kim Yun-sik, and from the aristocracy, the capitalists, and the social-reformist intellectuals who organized, or wished to organize, funerals, and give that authority to the *minjung*. Latent in these discursive and practical attempts to redraw the lines of social boundaries and thereby reallocate the membership and representative rights are certain radical expectations and idealized notions of *sahoe*. Such expectations and imaginations stimulated new practices and were in turn incorporated.

8. The analysis of the historical discourse on the controversy over the funeral for Kim Yun-sik in this article is a summary and an update of Kim Hyun-ju (2005a). For bibliographic information on the quotations, see the original paper.

These practices were articulated first through the concept of *sahoe*, but later through notions such as *minjung* and public opinion.

***Sahoejang* for Yi Sang-jae in 1927: *Sahoe* as a Space of Lateral Communication with the People**

After the thwarted attempt to hold a *sahoejang* for Kim Yun-sik in early 1922, news of *sahoejang* came from outside of Korea.⁹ It was not until April 1927 when Yi Sang-jae (pen name: Wolnam)¹⁰ died that a *sahoejang* was organized within Korea. It was a funeral ritual in which voluntary social organizations as agents was combined with the notion of *minjok* (nation). In this funeral, the expectations and imaginations about *sahoe* that were expressed during the controversy over Kim Yun-sik's funeral—that *sahoe* must represent the *people* as a *public sphere*—was widely spread, shared, and materialized.

In the articles written about the funeral, the key words used to define Yi's position were *sahoe* and *minjung*. A brief biography of the deceased that appeared in the March 31 edition of the *Dong-A Ilbo* is

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9. The news of *sahoejang* outside of Korea that expressed the collective activity of Koreans continued in the 1930s. See, for example, the *Dong-A Ilbo* article on the *sahoejang* for Kim Jwa-jin, a leader of armed struggle against Japanese rule of Korea (*Dong-A Ilbo*, February 13, 1930); the *Chosun Ilbo* article on a *sahoejang* for Korean residents in the United States (*Chosun Ilbo*, June 21, 1930); and the *Chosun Jungang Ilbo* article on *sajoejang* for Dr. Yi Chang-uk in the name of the Korean society in Manchuria (*Chosun Jungang Ilbo*, July 3, 1934).
 10. Yi Sang-jae (1850–1927) began his career in government as an aide to the Sinsa Yuramdan dispatched by King Gojong in 1881. In 1888, he became the secretary to the head of a diplomatic mission to the United States and continued to serve in the royal government after his return to Joseon. He founded the Dongnip Hyeophoe (Independence Club) with Suh Jai-Pil (Philip Jaisohn) and led the Manmin Gongdonghoe (Convocation of Ten Thousand People) with him. After becoming a Christian in 1903, he participated in the Christian youth movement. In the 1920s, he served as the head of Korean Christian Youth Alliance and the Korean Education Association. In 1924, he assumed the position of president of the *Chosun Ilbo*, and in 1927 was selected as the president of the Singanhoe, a political organization advocating a unified national front among left and right political groups.

entitled “Minjung-ui seongu, sahoe-ui wollo” (A Leader of the People, an Elder in Society). The *Chosun Ilbo* called him “a good friend of the *minjung*” and stated that he “became a friend to the *minjung* and steadfastly carried out social activities without distinguishing between classes.” It went on to say that his death was regrettable “for Korea, and for the people of Korea,” and that his death meant that “Korean society at large [has] lost a pillar” (*Chosun Ilbo*, April 2, 1927). The status of Yi Sang-jae was measured and expressed from the perspective of his relationship to *sahoe* and *minjung*.

The terms *sahoe* and *minjung* used to define Yi Sang-jae’s position were different from the terms used by radical activists who opposed the *sahoejang* for Kim Yun-sik in 1922. That is to say, the exclusionary/inclusionary boundary of those terms was different. In 1922, when the Opposition Committee raised *minjung* to the level of a real social entity, *minjung* here referred to those who were perhaps not rigorously defined as a class sociologically but who had certain class subjectivity. Accordingly, *sahoe* was segmented by class. In the *sahoejang* for Yi Sang-jae, the borders of *sahoe* and *minjung* shifted again from this definition. In a *Chosun Ilbo* editorial entitled “Sahoejang-ui uiui” (The Significance of *Sahoejang*), it is explained that a *sahoejang* is in substance identical to a *gungminjang* or *minjokjang* (national funeral). It states that the scope of *sahoe* in *sahoejang* is identical to that of *gungmin* or *minjung* (*Chosun Ilbo*, April 7, 1927). In other words, the term *sahoejang* was chosen as a substitute name for *gungminjang* (national funeral), given that Korea was under the rule of a foreign nation. Here, the equation of *sahoe* with *minjung* excluded the foreign nation, colonial authorities while, at the same time, subsumed and homogenized the entire population of Korea, the colonized people.

Thus, in Yi Sang-jae’s *sahoejang*, the boundary of society shifted and was redrawn, which meant that the make-up of its membership was also reshuffled. The major principle for delineating the new boundary for what constituted society was in eradicating the existing lines of partition along class, age, and gender. Donations for the funeral came not only from educational, press, financial, religious, and

social movement organizations but also from various trade organizations, such as the associations of barbers and dry goods merchants, and even from the Hanseong Gisaeng Association (Hanseong Gwon-beon), an association of female entertainers (*gisaeng*). Newspapers also reported in great detail the organized activities of various youth and student groups, such as boy scout groups, male and female student groups, and boys corps, for the funeral event. Members of these organizations were given a prominent role in carrying the casket. Women's organizations also participated in the *sahoejang*. The family of the deceased and organizers of the funeral broke with tradition and allowed women mourners to follow the funeral procession. Funeral banners were also allowed not only in Chinese characters but in Korean, as well as a combination of both. Youth, students of both sexes, and women followed the funeral procession as equals, each with their own funeral banner. One can say that they each confirmed and were, in return, confirmed of each other's membership in society and thereby shared an imaginary of society. Here, Korean society was one in which its membership was composed of *minjung* who had an equal right to be a member regardless of gender, age, profession, or class.

In this process, the press emphasized the ethical and moral value of Yi's life. The *Chosun Ilbo* commented that Yi was a "person whom anyone could love, trust, and respect, beyond national and class boundaries." As a basis for this evaluation, the writer emphasized not only Yi's personal character and morality but also included the universal political values of human rights and justice that the readers were reminded of after the March First Movement (*Chosun Ilbo*, April 8, 1927).

However, apart from his high virtues, there is another reason for the successful observation of a *sahoejang* for the deceased. He was indeed a man of highest integrity, but we cannot but recognize that in comparison to Sun Wen 孫文 of China, or Lenin of Russia, his sphere of activities was wanting. We cannot deny that Korean society has given this unfortunate giant of a man such utmost respect because it is enamored with a desire to achieve a certain new ener-

gy. In having given him a social farewell, we shall delineate the social significance of the situation.¹¹

The above quotation analyzes the social psychology of the time, and the writer argues that apart from respect for the deceased, something else is at work here. In other words, apart from the widespread consensus among Koreans to pay respect to the personal virtues of the deceased, they were pulled by a new *desire*.

As can be seen from the reference to Sun Wen (also known as Sun Yat-sen) and Lenin, the writer interprets the *sahoejang* for Yi as an event that expressed the desire of *Korean society* for not what Yi illustrated but what he could not illustrate, which was the desire to acquire political subjectivity and activity. This was the particular social significance of the ritual that was carried out in the name of *sahoe* in Korea.

As can be seen in the title of a newspaper article, “Gak gigwan mangna, jeon sahoe hyangeung” (Every Institution Included, the Entire Society Responds) (*Chosun Ilbo*, April 2, 1927), the agency of *sahoe* was realized through the practice of various social organizations. In other words, those who made their capacities visible were not individuals, renowned or not. Instead, they were voluntarily organized associations and groups from economic, religious, cultural, and other collective movements. The most prominent aspect in organizing a *sahoejang* for Yi Sang-jae was the active communication between the funeral committee and the various participating organizations, both among and within each organization. They discussed, decided, and delivered on many issues, including various means of participation, how to send messages and receive callers for condolence, and other details of organizing and participating in the *sahoejang*. They met in person, called each other on the telephone, used printed materials, or sent representatives. In this way, opinions were rallied, and new practices and codes of behavior were generated and spread. *Korean society* became visible

11. *Chosun Ilbo*, “Sahoejang-ui uiui” (The Significance of *Sahoejang*), April 7, 1927.

as a space where hundreds of non-status/non-class-based organizations communicated actively with one another. This space was in turn interpreted as the manifestation of a “social consciousness” or “social force” that was “incorporative” and “organic.”¹²

The newspaper also portrayed the *sahoejang* for Yi as a ritual in which Korean people from the entire country participated. A *sahoejang* film was made during the funeral, and it was shown in various local areas throughout Korea, such as Anseong, Daejeon, Sariwon, Gwangju, Yongin, and Ganggyeong. This tour of the film screening surely instilled in the viewer a sense of *Korean society* as a nation and to recognize and imagine him/herself as a member of that society. In this way, Yi’s funeral was symbolized as a ritual in which the “entire population of Korea” participated (*Chosun Ilbo*, April 7, 1947).

A report of the same funeral in the *Maeil sinbo* did not refer to *sahoe* as a public sphere for all the people of Korea. It reported the funeral on the April 7, 8, and 9. In its reports, the term *sahoe* appeared only in phrases such as “a representative from each *sahoe*, a representative from each organization.” In other words, it was used to indicate not the collective agency of the entire Korean population but to refer to a particular sector of society. The people who assembled at the ceremony were called *gunjung* (crowd) or *daejung* (masses).

In the *sahoejang* for Yi Sang-jae, *sahoe* expressed its activity through solidarity among volunteer organizations and movements, the rallying of public opinions, and the leveling of authority. Thus, in this *sahoejang*, *sahoe* was articulated as the line of confrontation against colonial authority and as the line of resistance against political power and the state. At the same time, it was imagined as a space of lateral communication with the people.

12. *Dong-A Ilbo*, “Sahoe uisik-ui balhyeon” (Manifestation of Social Consciousness), April 9, 1927.

The Funeral for Yi Seung-hun in 1930 and Other Activists in the 1930s: Shifting and Changing Social Boundaries

Sahoejang for Yi Seung-hun (pen name: Namgang),¹³ which took place in May 1930, shows that the collective subjectivity of *Korean society* as a homogenous whole had weakened considerably, and that this weakening was due to both pressure from the colonial authorities as well as from factional/ideological divisions within Korean society.

Upon his death, three funeral committees were set up: one in Jeongju, his hometown, a second in Pyeongyang, the capital city of his home province, and the third in Gyeongseong, present-day Seoul. Initially, they were each organizing a separate *sahoejang*, but eventually agreed among themselves that a single *sahoejang* would take place in Gyeongseong. In the meantime, the colonial authorities gave permission for a *sahoejang* to take place in Jeongju and prohibited such an event from taking place in Pyeongyang or Gyeongseong (*Maeil sinbo*, May 14, 1930). The police in Pyeonganbuk-do province initially prohibited then allowed *sahoejang* to take place in Jeongju (*Chosun Ilbo*, May 12, 1930; *Jungoe Ilbo*, May 13, 1930). It was a measure taken by the colonial authorities to isolate the event to the Jeongju area. The authorities were trying to prevent the spread of a collective subjectivity that a large-scale funeral would have surely accomplished.

In the meantime, in Gyeongseong, representatives from approximately 30 labor and social organizations—including the Confederation of Korean Labor Unions (Joseon Nodong Chongdongmaeng), Farmers' Confederation (Nongchong); Women's Association (Geunuhoe), Youth Central League (Jungang Cheongnyeon Chongdongmaeng), and Hyeonpyeongsa, a social movement organization advocating the abolition

13. Yi Seung-hun (1864–1930) was a native of Jeongju, Pyeonganbuk-do province. He was a successful businessman who made his fortune in brassware and international trading. He joined the Sinminhoe, an independence movement organization, in 1907 after attending a lecture given by Dosan An Chang-ho and devoted himself to the enlightenment and education movement. By the time of his death, he was a nationally renowned person.

of classes, and in particular discrimination against butchers—came together to oppose the *sahoejang* for Yi Seung-hun. It was an expression of resistance to what they felt was an erasure of class and ideological divisions that clearly existed among Koreans (*Jungoe Ilbo*, May 16, 1930; G. Kim 1930).¹⁴ Once it was finally decided that Yi's funeral would take place in Jeongju, it was not called a *sahoejang* but a *sahoe danche yeonhapjang* (funeral by the alliance of social organizations),¹⁵ a *sahoejang* in the name of an “alliance of social organizations” (*Chosun Ilbo*, May 13, 1930). It signified that with Yi Seung-hun's funeral, Korean society as a whole, or the people as a whole, were not the participants of that funeral.

Other *sahoejang* were attempted or carried out, either preceding or following Yi Seung-hun's death. For example, the *Dong-A Ilbo* reported on May 25, 1928 that a *sahoejang* for Yu In-sik was pursued but then prohibited. In his lifetime, Yu had devoted himself to the enlightenment and education movement from the 1900s onward and was the head of the Andong chapter of the Singanhoe (New Trunk Society), a Korean national independence organization. The colonial authorities refused to give permission for even a “Singanhoe funeral” for the deceased. Consequently, his funeral took place as a *botongjang* (ordinary funeral). Still, considering that approximately a thousand people attended, and that 130 funeral banners were erected, it was a large funeral ceremony (*Dong-A Ilbo*, May 25, 1928).

The largest of *sahoejang* held for social activists was for Hwang Sang-gyu, who served as the secretary-general of the Singanhoe. Upon his death, representatives of social organizations in Miryang came together and organized a *sahoejang*. Representatives of social organizations from surrounding areas and hundreds of comrades actively participated in organizing the event. Approximately ten thousand people came to this funeral, including onlookers, and the police in

14. See also the Current Affairs Cartoon in *Byeolgeongon* (Another World) 30 (July 1930).

15. This was often abbreviated as *sahoe danche jangui* (funeral by social organizations) or *yeonhap sahoejang* (public funeral by alliances).

Miryang was put on alert. They confiscated some of the funeral flags, banners, and letters of condolence, blocked the funeral procession, and took away the *myeongjeong*, the red casket cloth that commemorates the lifetime achievements and services of the deceased (*Chosun Ilbo*, September 5, 9, 1931; *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 5, 1931).

Sahoejang took place in other locations throughout Korea. For example, in Hamgyeongnam-do province, approximately 500 people participated in a *sahoejang* for Jo Myeong-guk, which had been organized in the name of the Yeongheung Boys Association (*Chosun Ilbo*, March 21, April 1, 1931). In Wonsan, hundreds of comrades broke into a crematorium to seize the body of Kim Cheol-hyeon, a communist who died while being treated in a hospital under arrest. They staged a protest rally afterwards, and those who were most directly involved were arrested immediately and put on trial (*Dong-A Ilbo*, November 29, 1931). Another activist, Bak Hwi-byeong, who died of a heart attack, also in Wonsan while under arrest, was given a *dongjijang* (comrade funeral) (*Chosun Ilbo*, March 18, 1933).¹⁶

In this way, in the early 1930s, the *sahoejang* that took place in the name of *sahoe danche yeonhapjang* became a *dongjijang*. With Yi Seung-hun's funeral, the subject of *sahoejang* was no longer directed at society as a whole but at an alliance of social organizations. By the time of Hwang Sang-gyu's *sahoejang*, *sahoe* also referred to an alliance of social organizations. Such a *sahoejang* was an occasion that confirmed and strengthened solidarity among and between social movement organizations and the respective local residents. However, the scope of such funerals was further reduced, and they became *dongjijang* as public movement activities became targets of closer surveillance and harsher suppression by colonial authorities, and as many of the activists and organizations had gone underground as a result. Of course, *dongjijang* was not a ritual that exclusively confirmed and strengthened solidarity among only the members of a select ideologi-

16. According to the *Chosun Jungang Ilbo* (March 17, 1933), three prosecutors and police detectives were arrested. People who were organizing the *sahoejang* were also arrested temporarily.

cal group. Still, the change from *sahoejang* to *dongjijang* illustrates the conditions in which activists were losing ground in their connection with the masses and were being isolated.

Local *Sahoejang* between 1932 and 1941

On the other hand, between 1932 and 1941, *sahoejang* continued to be conducted for prominent local Koreans who built and ran schools, constructed bridges and public assembly halls, and/or otherwise contributed to securing the public good. However, in these *sahoejang*, too, one can observe differences in the characteristics of and shifts in the local power structure. The Government-General and its local colonial authorities, on the one hand, and influential local Koreans and social organizations, on the other, were often in competition and negotiation for power and influence. Two different local *sahoejang*, one for Kim Jeong-hye and the other for Baek Seon-haeng, illustrate two different types of power dynamics between colonial authorities and the local Korean community.

The *Dong-A Ilbo* introduced Kim Jeong-hye as a “pioneer of women’s education in Joseon” and as a “benefactor of Gaeseong who contributed greatly to the world of women and women’s education in Gaeseong, and women’s education in all of Joseon” (*Dong-A Ilbo*, December 27, 1932). On the other hand, while the *Maeil sinbo* reported that “the residents and local leaders of Gaeseong mourned her death” and that “many organizations” and “various sectors of Gaeseong participated” in arranging the funeral, it also emphasized that Kim was a recipient of “Deokhaengnok” (Record of Virtues) from the Japanese Emperor and Empress, highlighting her many recognitions by the Government-General and the Provincial Office of Gyeonggi (*Maeil sinbo*, December 18, 1932). The readers also learned from the newspaper that at the funeral ceremony, condolence letters were read on behalf of Prime Minister Saito, Governor-General Ugaki, and Governor Song Bon of Gyeonggi-do province (*Dong-A Ilbo*, December 18, 21, 1932; *Maeil sinbo*, December 18, 20, 28, 1932). That is to say, if

the *Dong-A Ilbo* mentioned the “Gaeseong society” as the beneficiary of Kim’s dedication and, therefore, as the subject which was qualified to validate her meritorious contribution, the *Maeil sinbo* framed Kim’s position in society within the colonial administrative system beginning with the Japanese empire, the Government-General of Korea, Gyeonggi-do province, and finally the Gaeseong community (including local residents and prominent persons).

In the case of Baek Seon-haeng, she was much more closely aligned with the local community than Kim Jeong-hye. Baek was instrumental in building and running many schools in the greater Pyeongyang area and promoted education. She was also a supporter of the Pyeongyang-do chapter of the Geunuhoe, a leading nation-wide women’s association at the time. She shared the vision of Jo Man-sik (pen name: Godang), a nationally prominent independence activist from Pyeongan-do province, and built a public assembly hall for Koreans in Pyeongyang, which was bigger than the public hall built by the colonial authority.¹⁷ Twenty-one organizations participated in calling for a *sahoejang* after her death. They were, to name a few, six schools, including Sungin Commercial School, local offices of the three newspaper companies, including the *Chosun Ilbo*, the Overseas Students Association, the Boy Scouts, the Labor Alliance, the Association of Commerce and Industries, the Catholic Boys Club, the Association of Textile Merchants, the Association of Medical Doctors, the Geunuhoe, and the Association of Christian Youth. This long list of participating organizations reflected the close relationship she had with local community-based organizations and leaders (*Chosun Ilbo*, May 10, 26, 1933).¹⁸

17. Refer to the website of the System for Comprehensive Information on Historic Figures of Korea, by the Academy of Korean Studies (<http://people.aks.ac.kr>, UCI: G002 + AKS-KHF_13BC31C120D589B1848X0).

18. The *Maeil sinbo* also reported on the public funeral for Baek. However, unlike its report on Kim Jeong-hye, the coverage of the funeral was brief. The article, however, showed keen interest in the money that was discovered at her house and how her estate might be handled. For more on this, see *Maeil sinbo*, May 11, 15, 20, 1933.

There were two more similar cases. In Sincheon (in what is today Hwanghae-do province, North Korea), there was a *sahoejang* for Wang Jae-deok, a woman who “contributed greatly in various areas of society” (*Dong-A Ilbo*, June 21, 27, 1934), including the establishment of a farmer’s school. Under the title “Sincheon gak sahoe danche chong dongwon” (Full Mobilization of Social Organizations in Sincheon), a newspaper report emphasized the large number of mourners at her funeral, representing various social sectors. The newspaper also reported that the local police chief who came to the funeral ceremony was so surprised by the grandeur of the event that he instructed his staff to film it (*Dong-A Ilbo*, June 21, 27, 1934).

Also, on April 2, 1935, there was a report of a *sahoejang* for Kim Chang-hyeon in Yeongbyeon (in today’s Pyeonganbuk-do province, North Korea), who donated all of his assets to educational causes (*Chosun Ilbo*, April 3, 1935). Earlier in 1934, he had been the subject of another newspaper article in which he was introduced as a businessman who was “a great beacon to Korean society” and illustrated “the power of self-help” by building “a public assembly hall, which the local leaders had been much awaiting” (*Dong-A Ilbo*, June 21, 1934).

Sahoejang that took place in these northern cities and towns away from the capital city of Gyeongseong shows the existence of local Korean leaders who contested and competed with the colonial authorities. They defined and practiced what was public and insisted on their authority to do so. The performance capacity and authority of these local leaders were in part rooted in various lateral communication networks formed through non-status/non-class-based organizations and through collective movements in economic, religious, and cultural spheres. The construction of schools and public halls by influential local Koreans symbolized such efforts.¹⁹

However, in *sahoejang* that took place in the 1930s, the state and

19. See Han (2002). On the subject of the ambivalent power structure between the colonial power and influential local figures, I was helped by this article and further discussions with the author.

social authorities were in a relationship of compromise and collaboration. The *Dong-A Ilbo* emphasized “Gaeseong society” as the agent in Kim Jeong-hye’s *sahoejang*, but the funeral was “flooded with letters and offers of condolence from distinguished figures in government and among the people, beginning with Prime Minister Saito” (*Dong-A Ilbo*, December 21, 1932). As a synonym for the term *joya* 朝野 (in government and among the people), a more direct expression *gwanmin* 官民 (government and people) was used in the report of the Yeongbyeon *sahoejang* for Kim Chang-hyeon. In other words, these *sahoejang* took the form of an event jointly organized by the colonial government and the local Korean community. Thus by 1935, it was no accident that the memory of Yu Gil-jun’s funeral was evoked,²⁰ because his funeral was in fact a *sahoejang* organized jointly by the colonial government and Korean community.

After 1936, there were two more *sahoejang*, reported only in the *Maeil sinbo*. In these funerals, the influence of the colonial government became more prominent. In May 1937, there was a *sahoejang* for Kim Jong-ik in Suncheon, Jeollanam-do province. He “donated 1.75 million won at the time of his death towards improving education and for other social causes.” The newspaper further reported that the “local government and the people” consulted each other and decided to hold a *sahoejang*. A representative of the governor read a memorial address and the local mayor made closing remarks (*Maeil sinbo*, May 5, 1937). The second *sahoejang* reported in the *Maeil sinbo* took place in January 1941, in Seoncheon, Gyeongsangbuk-do province, for Yi Chang-seok. According to records, he passed the imperial military service examination for the special forces during the Daehan Empire (1897-1910) and served as an official in the local imperial government. During the colonial period, he was a councilor of the Gyeongsangbuk-do province and “served in many capacities in various public offices”

20. On celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of its foundation, the *Chosun Ilbo* published a special issue reviewing major issues of the time. In it, the paper reflects on the controversy over the funeral of Kim Yun-sik and comments that “as for *sahoejang*, the first such funeral ever to take place in Korea was the funeral for Gudang Yu Gil-jun” (*Chosun Ilbo*, March 8, 1935).

(*Maeil sinbo*, January 19, 1941). He dedicated his life to “social and educational services” and established and operated schools, kindergartens, and nursing homes for the elderly. The chairperson for the funeral committee was Gu Ja-gyeong,²¹ and two of the three vice-chairpersons were Japanese. In such a government-civilian funeral, neither the deceased nor the organizers had a close relationship with, or support from, local social organizations, either at a personal or organizational level. Rather, the funeral was closely controlled by the government. Also in such a funeral, *sahoe saeop* (social service) is cited as a worthy contribution of the deceased. What is important here is that *sahoe* in *sahoe saeop* did not refer to the performative agent but the recipient of state policy.

Conclusion

This article began with an assumption that one can trace the development and transformation of the concept of *sahoe* in Korea by examining the practices of and discourse surrounding *sahoejang*, which is one form of the modern funeral practice in Korea. A *sahoejang*, as such, in Korea was first publicly suggested in January 1922 upon the death of Kim Yun-sik and was realized for the first time in 1927 with the death of Yi Sang-jae. Afterwards, a dozen or so more *sahoejang* took place during the colonial period. This article examined how the social boundary, membership and representation rights, and imaginaries and concepts about social values shifted and changed in colonial Korea through the practice of a collective ritual called *sahoejang* and through discursive practices associated with it.

The fact that funeral events for Yu Gil-jun and Kim Yun-sik in the early days of colonial rule could not be conducted as *sahoejang* and were not remembered as such illustrates that the concept of *sahoe* as

21. Gu Ja-gyeong (1988-?) was a native of Naju, Jeollanam-do province. He started his career as a policeman of Naju in 1909, was promoted to the position of the police superintendent, and finally became mayor of Yeongam, Suncheon, and Jangheung in the 1930s.

a collectivity capable of performing a *sahoejang* had not been firmly established. It was not until the mid-1910s that the concept of *sahoe* began to stimulate the idea of collective agency of the colonized people that is distinguishable from the colonial state/politics.

After the eruption of the March First Movement and throughout the 1920s, collective Korean subjectivity was expressed through solidarity, rallying of public opinions, and leveling of authority among voluntary organizations and movements. In the *sahoejang* for Yi Sang-jae, *sahoe* was articulated as the line of resistance against the colonial state; on the other hand, it was also imagined as a network of lateral communication with the people. From the late 1920s to 1941, the *sahoejang* in local communities became a *sahoe danche yeonhapjang* (funeral by the alliance of social organizations), which then further bifurcated into a *dongjijang* (comrade funeral) and a *gwanmin yeonhapjang* (funeral jointly carried out by the government and people). Thus by 1941, the form of the *sahoejang* was decided and transformed by the relationship of competition and compromise between the local administrative powers and influential local figures.

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