Mass culture, class identity and the North Korean movement for the popularization of arts and letters (1945-1955)

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I. Introduction

When the Soviet Union entered Korea in 1945, the population it liberated from Japan's imperial rule was largely rural with an emerging urban proletariat and bourgeoisie. Despite early attempts at political mobilization during the colonial period, neither the Korean peasantry nor the relatively small part of the population engaged in industrial labor did manifest a strong sense of class consciousness or class interests. The collective identities and political role of the different elements of North Korean society still had to be constructed in order to topple the old colonial order and provide the basis for the construction of a new socialist system. Beginning in 1946, in collaboration with local popular constituencies, the North Korean central authorities enacted a wide range of measures to reform the country's social stratification. Because class had to be more than just a legislative term, cultural transformation was seen as essential to the success of the revolution and the social changes it promised. Consequently, the popularization of culture became a political priority and occupied a central position in all of the post-liberation cultural debates. Along with literacy, and political education campaigns to which it was organically linked, the movement for the popularization of culture, defined as arts (music, dance,…), literature (poetry, drama,…) and sports, was part of the North Korean efforts to raise the population's involvement in the country's cultural, political and economic life.

"Popularization of culture" (*munhwa taejunghwa*), "mass culture project" (*kunjung munhwa saŏp*), "cultural movement" (*munhwa undong*), "massification of arts and letters" (*munye kunjunghwa*), "mass line in arts and culture" (*yesulmunhwa-ŭi kunjungnosŏn*)…The various terms used to refer to this task are a testimony to the plurality of actors, ideas and activities that converged into this wide-ranging, protean project. The diversity of names, however, did little to clarify the aims and means of the movement. Did the popularization of culture imply a culture by the mass, or merely for the mass? Were artists and writers to teach people to appreciate their works or rather to adapt their productions to the taste of the people? And who exactly, constituted the people or the masses?

The following paper is an attempt at sorting out these questions, or rather at understanding how North Korean intellectuals and the various parts of the population involved in the movement answered them. I first analyze the origins and the complex organizational structure of the movement, outlining the various actors and their roles in adjusting centrally defined guidelines with local specificities. The second part of this paper looks at the various media (literature, magazines, manuals…) specifically designed for the task of the production of culture. By analyzing the images of class conveyed by these works, I try to understand how they contributed to construction of the post-liberation socialist reality and the definition of the "working masses". I pay particular attention to the way the physical and psychological characteristics of these representation of class fit within the post-liberation economic projects. Finally I turn to the producers of these representations and offer a critical assessment of the actual "popular" participation in the North Korean cultural field. I argue that the movement's shortcomings in regard to its professed goal of raising proletarian intellectuals can be explained by the North Korean artists' view of class hierarchy and their reticence to relinquish a class monopoly on cultural productions. I trace the origins of their social views to the colonial era, arguing that the urban Korean intellectuals' view of workers and the peasantry reflected their absorption of the colonial discourse on culture, civilization and the periphery.

II. Art for the people, art by the people: understanding the movement for the popularization of arts and letters

Birth and origins

In March 1946, the creation of the North Korean Artists' League (*Pukchosŏn yesur ch'ongnyŏngmaeng*)[1], unified all members of the North Korean cultural scene under one institution with a definite set of objectives. Most prominent among them, the creation of a progressive democratic literature and the creation of an "enlightenment movement towards the cultural, creative and artistic development of the popular masses"[2]. In effect, this meant a radical transformation of the national cultural production, with the adoption of a new socialist and national aesthetic inspired by Soviet social-realism, a new relationship to the readership, as well as a decentralization of the cultural apparatus. Under the aegis of the League, writers and artists were urged to go into factories and rural communities to better understand the masses, all the while educating them into being able to consume, appreciate and even produce art through the organization of amateur circles. The goal was not only to make more realistic works through direct observation, but also to understand popular taste in order to produce works that could appeal to the largest readership possible[3]. To sum up the League's objectives of popularization, its Vice Chairman An Mak offered the following quote by Lenin: "Art resides among the popular masses. We cannot but plant its deepest roots among the entire working masses. It must be understood and loved by the masses. And among them we must awake and educate artists."[4]
That An would place the League's actions under Soviet ideological patronage is hardly surprising. After all, the Soviet occupation authorities had very early on devoted their efforts to the construction of the country's culture[5]. The very term for the League's official publication, *Munhwa Chŏnsŏn* was a translation of the Bolshevik expression "cultural front". The inspiration, however, was more than just ideological. The Soviet Union offered practical examples of popularization techniques and institutions to North Korean intellectuals and was actively involved in the country's cultural development. The Soviet-Korean cultural association (*Cho-sso munhwa hyŏphoe*), founded in 1945 was instrumental in the massification of North Korean culture. The association subsidized cultural endeavors such as photo exhibition, lectures and movie screenings and made sure that they reached not only cities but also remote rural locations. It also translated and published Soviet texts in large amounts to be disseminated among the public: political pamphlets, literature, manuals on unionism, physical culture or youth organizations... The travels to the USSR organized by the association also offered writers a chance to witness firsthand the popular culture of the established socialist countries. In his 1947 travelogue[6], the poet Ri Ch'an recounts his visit to Armenia and describes the ways in which writers engage with the masses and how people involve themselves with culture even in rural villages. Reflecting upon North Korea's own cultural mass line, Ri highlights the necessity to learn from Soviet techniques, citing among others the "Writers' brigades" composed of a few dozen people travelling to agricultural communities to organize public readings of socialist works. Considering the "moving brigades" (*idongdae*), the factory circles and the social organizations that came to be at the core of North Korea's popularization movement by the end of the 1940's, it would be hard to deny the strong influence of the Soviet model. However, these efforts cannot be reduced to a mere copy or even adaptation of the Soviet mass culture apparatus.
Indeed, besides the Soviet experience, North Korea could also rely on earlier domestic popularization experiments, such as the ones led by the Korean Federation of Proletarian Artists (Korea Artista

[1] Later rechristened North Korean Union of Writers and Artists (*Pukchosŏn munhak yesul ch'ongdongmaeng*)
[2] "Pukchosŏn Yesul Ch'ongnyŏnmaeng Kangnyŏng" (Program of the North Korean League of Artists), *Munhwa Chŏnsŏn*, July 1946, n. 1.
[3] An Ham-gwang, "Yesulgwa Chŏngch'i" (Arts and politics), *Munhwa Chŏnsŏn*, 1946, n. 1.
[4] An Mak, Chosŏn Munhakkwa Yesul Kibonimmu (The primary duty of Korean Arts and Letters), *Munhwa Chŏnsŏn*, 1946, n. 1.
[5] Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*, Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 168-171.
[6] Ri Ch'an, *Ssoryŏngi*, Jossomunhwahyeopoe Jungangbonbu, 1947.

Proleta Federation, KAPF) during the colonial period. Almost all of the writers and artists who stood at the front of the League were left-wing intellectuals and former members of the KAPF. Ri Ch'an was no exception and despite his laudatory appraisal of Armenia's mass culture in his travelogue, the poet nonetheless mentions the KAPF's efforts as the original source of North Korea's mass line. In the late 1920's and early 1930's, the Federation was the center of debates on the popularization (*taejunghwa*) of art and literature around the figures of Kim Kijin, Pak Yonghŭi and Rim Hwa. The KAPF's ultimate verdict on the meaning of the concept of "masses" and the best way to appeal to them, the "bolshevization" of their action and the role of political tendentiousness can be seen as the ideological forefathers of the post-liberations debates among North Korean intellectuals. Proletarian artists also had concrete practical experience with popularization in the field of drama, under the influence of the Japanese Proletarian Theatre League (PROT)[7]. From the late 1920's on, KAPF's playwrights started to organize mobile theatre troupes in order to reach and spread socialist themed plays by Japanese and Korean writers in factories, mines and remote rural areas. At the heart of this movement was Sin Kosong, one of the most characteristic figures of the continuity between KAPF's popularization movements and North Korea's early mass culture. Born in South Kyŏngsang in 1907, Sin joined KAPF in 1927 as an author of children's literature before turning his attention to drama[8]. His 1931 essay entitled "The Start of the Drama Movement"[9] and published in *Chosŏn Ilbo* outlined the KAPF's position on the link between theatre and the masses. Sin emphasized not only the importance of mobile troupes but also of organizing amateur drama leagues in factories, schools and companies. After liberation, he moved North in the spring of 1946. Appointed Vice Chairman of the Artists' League's drama branch, he became the leading figure in the movement for the popularization of the theatre, penning several articles and manuals on the organization of drama circles in factories and rural areas. He also personally oversaw the organization of professional mobile troupes to tour the countryside.

As evidenced from its wide range of influences, the North Korean's movement for the popularization of arts and letters was anything but a programmatic, monolithic project. Rather, it involved several groups of North Korean society, often proceeding by trial and error and ultimately relying on a plurality local authorities as well as popular voluntarism.

Figure 1: A model democratic propaganda room in Yŏngjung township.
(*Source*: National Archives and Records Administration, Central National Library Digital Collection 2007, 190/16/21/2/E.299/Box863)

[7] Kim Yonggwan, "K'ap'ŭŭi Yŏn'gŭk Taejunghwa Kwajŏng Yŏn'gu" (Study on the KAPF's popularization of drama), *Pip'yŏngmunhak*, n. 25, 2007.

[8] Kim Ponghŭi, "Sin Kosong Munhak Yŏn'gu" (Study of Sin Kosong's literature), Ph.D. diss., Tongguk University, 2001.

[9] Sin Kosong, "Kŭkchangundongŭi Ch'ulbal" (The Start of the Drama Movement), *Chosŏnilbo*, 07/31/1931-08/05/1931.

Structure and infrastructures

The backbone infrastructure of the movement were the democratic propaganda rooms (*minju sŏnjŏnsil*) and clubs (*kurakpu*) where urban and rural communities could gather to receive literacy lessons, read the news, listen to political classes and engage in various kinds of cultural and physical activities. Originally built for the sole purpose of elections (*sŏn'gŏjŏnsŏnshil*), one of the first decisions of the North Korean Provisional People's Committee in February 1946 was to make these facilities, as well as "any other suitable place" available to local residents for their other political, educational and cultural needs[10]. Clubs, which already existed during the colonial era, were communal spaces in factories or villages. Although they were in practice very similar to the propaganda rooms, their design and use seems to have been specially oriented towards entertainment and cultural activities rather than civic duty. The clubs were sometimes built or renovated by local people themselves, who also bore the cost of the operation. In 1947, about 800 peasants in Pukp'yŏng-ri, Yangyang county[11] are thus said to have built a 40 *p'yŏng* club (approximately 130 square meters) at a cost of over 100,000 wons, which they provided themselves[12]. The rooms and clubs were adorned with portraits of Kim Il-Sung and Stalin, slogans, pictures, newspapers and other decorative items chosen by its users under the supervision of a person in charge (*ch'aekimja*) – usually a member of the local branch of a professional league – or someone affiliated with another social organization (Democratic Youth League, Women's League…) or the Workers' party. The clubs were to be located at locations easily accessible for everyone in the community. Additional material such as radios, books and games were donated by local people for common use. Certain model rooms and clubs even had extra facilities such as public baths, dance stages and rooms for physical exercise. By mid-1949, there were an estimated 18,213 propaganda rooms and 983 clubs in rural areas[13] and 4,239 propaganda rooms and 348 clubs in factories[14]. As links between the various social organizations and regular people, the propaganda rooms and clubs had already proven very efficient tools for the mass literacy campaigns[15]. For the task of popularizing culture, they became communal spaces where people with common interests could come together around the cultural activities of their choice.

These amateur groups, known as circles (*ssŏ-k'ŭl*), were the fundamental unit of the movement for the popularization of arts and letters. Comprising at most a few dozen people and sometimes as little as five or six persons, circles brought together members of a laboring community around one particular area of the arts: literature, drama, music, dance, visual arts or photography. Anyone with an interest in the arts could decide to start a circle, provided he or she could find enough comrades willing to join, kept membership open and did not discriminate based on age or gender.[16] Members would meet regularly at appointed times in their local club or propaganda room in order to study, discuss and perform their preferred form of art. Circles also organized free public performances and could compete in local and national art festivals. Members with more knowledge or experience were to tutor beginners, and seminars were also organized by social organizations to provide guidance and training to circle members. The task of leading and organizing the circle, the choice of material, and the mode of operation were at first entirely left to the members, resulting in certain erratic behaviors and

[10] "Sŏn'gŏsŏnjŏnshirŭl Minjusŏnjŏnshil-ro Chonsokshik'ime Kwanhan Kyŏlchŏngsŏ" (Decision relative to maintaining the election propaganda rooms as democratic propaganda rooms), 02/08/1948, in.*Puk'ann yŏn'gujaryojip [Data collection for the study of North Korea]* (Kim Chunyŏp ed.), Koryŏ University Aseamunjeyŏn'guso, 2010.

[11] Pungnongmaeng Chungangwiwŏnhoe Munhwabu, "Nongbŏn'gie Isŏsŏ Kurakpu Saŏbŭn Irŏk'e Haja" (During the farming season, let's further the task of building clubs in this way), *Nongmin*, 1948, n.2, p. 53.

[12] As a comparison, the average monthly salary for a worker varied between 500 and 1,830 wons in 1949. (cf. *"Rodongjaimgŭmp'yo" [Workers' wage table],* Chosŏnminjujuŭiinmin'gonghwaguk Naegakkyŏlchŏng Che 196 ho (Internal Decision n. 196 of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea), Rodongsong, 1949.

[13] Tongmaenggunjungmunhwabu, "Tonggi Kunjungmunhwasaŏbŭi Podanop'ŭn Hyangsangŭl Wihayŏ" (For the improvement of the movement for the popularization of culture during winter), *Nongmin*, 1949, n.10, p.46.

[14] *Chosŏnjungangnyŏn'gam [North Korea Central Yearbook],* Chosŏnjungangt'ongshinsa, 1950, p.336.

[15] Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950*, Cornell University Press, 2013, p. 99.

[16] Jungangnongmaenggunjungmunhwabu, "Gurakbu Mit Minjuseonjeonsireun Eotteoke Unnyeonghalgeonninga" (How to manage a democratic propaganda room and club?), *Nongmin*, 1949, n.8, p. 94.

"reactionary tendencies". As a result, social organizations, professional leagues and state institutions increasingly intervened to provide guidance and police the circles.
As Ri Ch'an noted in an early appraisal of the mass line of North Korean arts and letters, "in the majority of regions [the movement] was not passively started under the guidance of some established institution or artist but came from a spontaneous passion from inside the masses".[17] Right after the liberation, numerous informal amateur circles, in particular theatre troupes, had started to perform freely around the country[18]. In the absence of any other institution able to provide organizational and ideological guidance, the Writers' League had (rather unwillingly) taken upon itself to manage these spontaneous amateur movements. However, as the popularity of circles increased and the number of members grew to reach several tens of thousands, the League considered the task to be an impediment to its artistic production. By 1947, it had transferred the responsibility to professional organizations[19]. The Artists' League nonetheless remained active in the movement through the production of materials (manuals, lectures, plays and novels written for a popular readership). The two largest professional organizations, the Occupation League (*Pukchosŏnjigŏpch'ongdongmaeng*, est. November 1945) for workers and the Peasant League (*Pukchosŏnnongmindongmaengjung*, est. January 1946) thus came to be the main actors of the movement. The two organizations each had a department of mass culture (*Kunjungmunhwabu*) responsible for the proper development of the popularization movement. Each league independently printed the mass culture material produced by the Artists' League to be distributed among their members, and their respective official press organs, the magazines *Nongmin* [*Peasant*] and *Rodongja* [*Workers*], carried reportages, advice and individual testimonies regarding the organization of amateur circle activities. They also coordinated seminars to train circle leaders[20] and established professional mobile troupes to perform and train local circles "on the spot"[21]. Most of the problems arising in a circle, whether of an interpersonal or political nature, were handled by a member of the group's relevant league. However, much like factory clubs in the Soviet Union[22], leadership remained informal. Other associations besides the professional League, such as the Democratic Youth League or the Democratic Women's League established and ran amateur circles. Associations also took part in circle activities by filling up in case of an insufficient number of members or helping gather props and material for a performance. Other institutions, such as the Worker's party, factory committees or school personnel[23] could also intervene through their local branches by providing material and intellectual support.

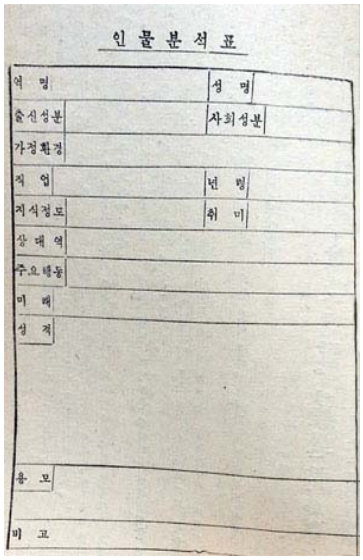
Channeling spontaneity: amateur circles as spaces of freedom and control

All post-liberation texts relative to the North Korean movement for the popularization of culture in general and circle activities in particular, insist upon the spontaneous, bottom-up nature of the

[17] Ri Ch'an, "Yesulmunhwaŭi Kunjung Nosŏn" (The mass line of the arts and culture), *Haebang kinyŏm P'yŏng'nonjip [Collection of essays to commemorate the liberation],* August 1946. In. Ri Sŏnyŏng, Kim Pyŏngmin, Kim Chaeyŏng, eds. *Hyondaemunhak Pip'yŏng Charyojip [Anthology of criticisms of modern literature]*, T'aehaksa, 1993.
[18] Sin Kosong, "Minjuyŏn'gŭgŭi Ch'ejesuribŭl Wihayŏ" (For the establishment of a system of democratic drama), *Haebang kinyŏm P'yŏng'nonjip [Collection of essays to commemorate the liberation],* August 1946. In. Ri Sŏnyŏng, Kim Pyŏngmin, Kim Chaeyŏng, eds. *Hyondaemunhak Pip'yŏng Charyojip [Anthology of criticisms of modern literature]*, T'aehaksa, 1993, p. 80.
[19] An Hamgwang, "Pukchosŏn Minjumunhagundongŭi Palchŏn'gwajŏnggwa Chŏnmang" (Development and perspectives of the movement for a democratic literature) (07/31/1947) in. Kim Chaeyŏng ed. *Munhakkwa Hyŏnsil [Literature and Reality*], Pakijŏng, 1998.
[20] "Hamju-gun Sanghan-ri Sseo-Keuljidoreul Kkeunmachigo" (After finishing providing guidance to the circles of Sanghan-ri in Hamju-gun), *Nongmin*, 1949, n.8, p. 98.
[21] Ri Ch'un, "Nongmin'gŭktanŭi Ch'angsŏlgwa Kŭŭi Saŏbe Taehayŏ" (On the creation of the Peasants' Drama Troupe and its activities), *Nongmin*, 1949, n.1, p. 99.
[22] Matthias Neumann, *Communist Youth League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*, Routledge, 2013.
[23] Mun Myŏngsu, "Kyŏngsŏng-gun Hau-ri Nongwiwŏnhoenŭn Kunjungmunhwasaŏbŭl Ŏttŏk'e Ch'ujinshik'igo Innŭnga?" (How is the peasants' committee of Hau-ri in Kyŏngsŏng-gun furthering the movement for the popularization of culture?), *Nongmin*, 1949, n. 11, p. 86.

phenomenon. Their description of the cultural activities taking place in the country's clubs and propaganda rooms are replete with epithets starting with the prefix cha (자/自: self, by-itself): voluntarily (*chabalchŏgŭro*), spontaneously (*chayŏnbalsaengjŏgŭro*), independently (*charipchŏgŭro*), naturally (*chayŏnchŏgŭro*)… After all, circles were indeed born from the motivation and aspirations of their members, and there were no required formal structures nor legally binding guidelines regarding their organization and management. In the USSR, in the wake of the October Revolution, the Workers' Clubs of Moscow had become spaces of relaxed socialization where "workers generally resisted the intented proselytizing purpose of [the] clubs, instead making them their own"[24]. In the North Korean case, while authorities certainly left circle members some space for agency, they also fought very early on against behaviors deemed reactionary or undesirable.

The process of developing the popularization of culture and organizing circles relied on trial and error, personal experiences and feedback from all parties involved. In this procedure, league members and intellectuals arbitrated between positive innovations and negative deviations through reports, lessons and manual aimed at circle leaders. These judgments in turn, tell us about some of the directions in which working people attempted to take the movement and the ways in which they avoided its political dimensions. One of the most recurring complaints is about circle members who eschew the prescribed materials in favor of other works more to their taste. As the hotbeds of the new democratic culture, circles were supposed to busy themselves with the study of socialist works, however, quite a few members seemed to have preferred old popular tunes (*ryuhaengga*) and "musty vulgar songs" (*komp'angnaenanŭn chapka*) to revolutionary hymns, or colonial era sentimental drama (*sinp'a*) to proletarian plays[25]. Even within the socialist repertoire, the masses were supposed to read works relating to their condition, so that an agriculture circle could be chastised for attempting to read a translation of a Soviet production novel. Another oft mentioned reactionary tendency is "professionalization", whereby circle members attempt to restrict membership to qualified people and monetize their efforts by charging the audience. These circles would travel and perform in neighboring villages in the manner of colonial-era travelling companies (*hŭnghaengdan*)[26]. But besides fustigating them in print, it is however unclear how the local Leagues actually dealt with these tendencies: in 1955, a decade after liberation, complaints about similar complaints were still being voiced[27].


인 물 분 석 표

연 령		성 별	
출신성분		사회성분	
가정환경			
직 업		년 령	
지식정도		취 미	
상 태 역			
주요행동			
미 래			
성 격			
용 모			
비 고			

Figure 2: "Character Analysis Table" to read plays and novels according to socialist-realist standards (Source: *Taejungmunye*, 1955)

On the other hand, circle experiences which were deemed positive were publicized and cited as examples in manuals and other publications of the Leagues. The publication of workers' and peasants' experiences in clubs was part of the post-liberation effort by North Korean authorities to give these hitherto silenced parts of the population a public voice in politics and the arts. People were encouraged to contribute articles, reportages, essays and poetry to the publication of the Leagues. Likewise, circle activities focused not merely on performance and passive learning but rather on discussion and artistic production. The early post-liberation period thus also saw the publication of several anthologies of workers' literature: *Sŭngni* (*Victory*, 1948), *Rodongjaŭi Norae* (*Workers' songs*, 1949), *Rodongja Munyejip* (*Anthology of Workers' Literature*, 1949)… The workers' efforts, however, were place under the supervision of the local writers' leagues who edited and published them. Since

[24] Ali Igmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent: Culture and Power in Kyrgyzstan*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012, p. 40.
[25] Ri Ch'un, op. cit., p. 100.
[26] Munhwabu, "Saehaeeisŏ Nongch'on'gunjungmunhwasaŏbŭl Podanop'ŭn Sujunŭro Palchŏnshik'ija" (This new year, let's develop the mass culture movement to an even higher level), *Nongmin*, 1949, n.1, p.95.
[27] "Kwŏnduŏn" ("Introduction"), *Taejungmunye*, 1955, vol. 1, p.8.

the public condemnation of the poetry anthologies *Ŭnghyang*, *Munjangtokbon* and *Yewon Ssŏk'ŭl* in 1946 for their lack of political content, even professional writers had to follow the Korean Worker's Party's guidelines for a nationalist, socialist type of literature. The same went for discussions, criticisms and reading within the clubs, as league members and circle leaders were taught the "proper" way to read and analyze a work. *Figure 2* provides a visual example of the way circle discussions were oriented: to understand a fictional character, one had to consider the table's categories of "social class of origin", "current social class", "family environment", "occupation", etc… These types of exercises provided not only a way of looking at fiction, but also, as further described in the following chapter, a particular understanding of the new North Korean society.

The economics of mass culture

The adoption of a mass line by the North Korean Artists' League, combined with the switch to a socialist economy and the appearance of a nationwide literate readership radically transformed the structure of cultural production and consumption. The supply of cultural goods became largely monopolistic with the transformation of the Artists' League as a strictly professional, state-backed organization in 1948[28] and the adoption of planned outputs, while demand was stimulated by literacy campaigns and the popularization movement. Rural populations living miles away from a theatre were nonetheless be able to watch a movie through the actions of mobile cultural brigades (*Yesulgongjaktae* ou *idongdae*) and their trucks, described by the poet Ri Chŏnggu as "floating from village to village, carrying the people's art"[29]. A book such as Cho Ki-ch'ŏn's *Paektusan* could be printed at several hundred thousand copies[30], a circulation figure hitherto unheard of in Korean literary history. However, while remarkable, such events nonetheless remained punctual, and it was in clubs and propaganda room around the country that the daily life of North Korean mass culture took place. The use of these spaces was to be made habitual and club leaders would advise strategies to maximize visitors' frequentation and retention (for example by keeping the rooms well heated during winter[31]). By 1955, amateur circles numbered around 700,000 members[32], who frequently organized free recitations, readings and performances of ideologically correct material in their local communities. The decentralized structure of the movement and the reliance on motivated amateurs effectively allowed the state minimize the material and labor costs of massively and regularly reaching out to remote rural populations. Indeed, if factories and the working class received a small stipend for their mass culture expenses (*kunjungmunhwasaŏppi*) from the state[33], there is no evidence of similar subsidies for the rural majority of the population, who were instead incited to build facilities and furnish them at their own expense.

However, to understand the real economic logic of the movement one should not focus on its cost but on its expected return on investment. All publications related to the movement for the popularization of culture agree that the effort was fundamentally linked with the country's plans for economic growth. For example, the introduction to Sin Kosong's *Manual for Amateur Drama Circle Members in Rural Communities* warns its readers that "in rural communities, all tasks of mass culture are related to the completion of the two year plan and must become a great force mobilizing peasant workers towards the completion of the plan"[34]. The magazine *Rodongja* likewise reminded its working class audience that "the project of mass cultural circles and physical education are closely related to the movement for the increase of production"[35]. The movement for the popularization of culture was self-admittedly aimed at reforming the masses' ideology in order to increase their productivity and willingness to

[28] Brian Myers, Han Sŏrya and North Korean Literature, Cornell East Asian Series, 2000, p. 48.
[29] Ri Chŏnggu, "Yesulgongjaktae" (Art brigades), *Saekyejŏl [Four seasons]*, Munhwajŏnsŏnsa, 1947, p. 4.
[30] Park Namsu, *Chŏkch'i 6-yŏnŭi Pukhan mundan* [*Red Flag: 6 years in the North Korean literary world*], Pogosa, 1999, p. 88 and Ho Namgi, "Kōki" (Postface), *Hakutōsan [Paektusan]*, Hato Shobō, 1952.
[31] Tongmaenggunjungmunhwabu, op. cit., p. 48.
[32] *Chosŏnjungangnyŏn'gam [North Korea Central Yearbook],* Chosŏnjungangt'ongshinsa, 1956, p.336.
[33] Ko Ch'anbo, "Kunjungmunhwasaŏbŭi 1nyŏn" (1 year in culture popularization), *Rodongja*, 1949, n. 12, p. 40.
[34] Sin Kosong, *Nongchon Yŏn'gŭkssŏ-k'ŭlunyŏngbŏb* [*Manual for Amateur Drama Circle Members in Rural Communities*], p. 6.
[35] Ko Ch'anbo, op. cit., p. 44.

participate in the new economic system. This meant fostering people's ability to identify with one of the country's designated social classes, so that they could understand and accept the status, role and duties that befell them as members of these collectives.
This objective, in turn, was clearly reflected in the works that the Artists' League produced for the popularization movement. Technically, all works produced by the League were supposed to be part of the new mass culture: popular works reflecting the life of the masses and written for them. In actuality however, the Leagues' output was far from homogeneous, especially in the field of literature, and works composed for the task of the "popularization movement" were only one part of the general artistic production. These works were simpler in language and structure, sometimes published in separate "mass culture" publications or collections and written for a defined target class audience, treating themes specific to that class. The study of these works offers an interesting insight into the ways North Korea represented its two main classes, workers and peasants, in the aftermath of the liberation. It also reveals how the "typical" attributes – in the Social-Realist sense of the term – of these categories were constructed to support the policies of North Korea's nascent socialist economy.

III. From mass culture to class culture: Representations, typicality and the construction of collective identities

My choice of texts for the study in this chapter is composed of publications by the professional association's mass culture departments, in particular the volumes of the "Mass Culture Collection" (*kunjungmunhwach'ongsŏ*) – including the various manuals for the management of amateur circles – as well as the two anthologies *Growing Village (Chalanŭn Maŭl)* and *Collection of Peasant Novels* (*Nongmin Sosŏljip*). I also included the magazines *Nongmin*, *Rodongja*, and *Taejungmunye* (*Popular Arts*). These materials were specifically designed for the ideological edification of mass rural and industrial audiences, instilling them with class consciousness and socialist fervor. The culture popularization movement mirrored efforts on the administrative and legal sides[36] to prompt people to rethink their personal experiences and life paths within the framework of a socialist vision of history and society. In the absence of well-defined class identities or occupational solidarities among the general population, writers had to codify the "typical" representations of the new social strata with which people were to identify. In other terms, mass culture works were to depict, through exemplar narratives and visual representations, what it meant to belong to a certain class. They described the ways a peasant did, or rather should, walk like, talk like and feel like; how a worker must look like, behave like and think like, in a multitude of individualized portraits meant to be performed and imitated. I here use the word typical (*chŏnhyŏngjŏk*), like North Korean authors and critics, in its Socialist-Realist sense, as the individualization of general class characteristics. North Korean "typicality" was necessarily different from the Soviet one in its expressions, but maintained the same prescriptive nature. Its representations of social structures and historical narratives reflected the new symbolic order and directly "contributed to the construction of reality by naming it"[37].

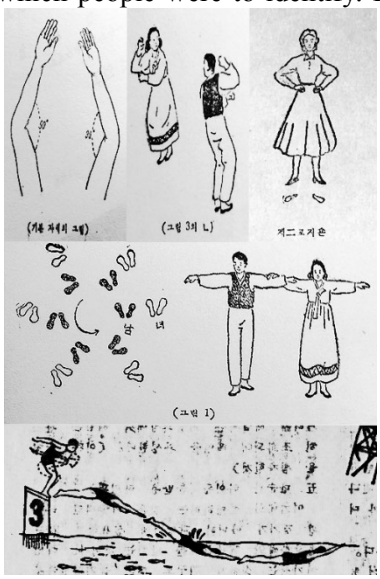


Figure 3: New uses of the body
Sports and dancing
(Source: *Taejunmunye, Inmincheyuk*)

Revolutionary physiology: The body language of class

Much like the practice of writing autobiographies and resumes for administrative purposes instructed their authors to organize their life stories around the date of August 15th 1945[38], works of literature brought the reader's attention to the physical effects of

[36] Charles K. Armstrong, op. cit., p. 72.
[37] Pierre Bourdieu, "Espace social et genèse des "classes" (Social space and the genesis of "classes"), *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 1984, vol. 52, pp. 3-14
[38] Suzy Kim, op. cit., pp. 145-146.

liberation. Bodies carried the marks of a personal history and the stigmas of colonization but also expressed the positive changes initiated by liberation. Yesterday's workers who were starved, short and deprived from sun-light were now supposed to be vigorous and healthy. In Ri Ch'unjin's short story *Pride* (*Charang*), the bodies of the two old protagonists are directly linked to their colonial experience. Dumbed by hard labor as a farmhand, old man Ch'oe Wonsik is small and looks "laughable" with his forehead bald like a gourd. His neighbor Ch'ang Suyŏng was deprived of his field by his landlord after hurting his hip falling from a roof. Upon hearing his landlord's decision, the now handicapped Ch'ang can only "lower his head" in submission. But liberation and the land reform come, giving the two men plots of land which they diligently cultivate. By the end of the novel, the two men are transformed. As they start dancing during a local festival, the narrator offers the following comment: "Before liberation, who would have thought that old man Ch'ang [...] could dance like this with his daughter in front of the stage? Before liberation, who would have thought that, this old man Ch'oe, the 'Dumb' [...] could dance like that?"[39]. The image of a body producing movements that would have been unthinkable for it a few years ago symbolizes the changes brought about by Liberation. The popularization of culture, with its festivals, dance classes, sports clubs and hygienist recommendations, introduced a series of new bodily movements and postures, new "techniques of the body", breaking the bounds of agricultural tenancy, the discipline of factory life and the numerous cultural taboos that had trapped the working body during the Japanese occupation.
Sociologist Marcel Mauss had already noted, in 1934, the relationship between the power structure of a society, representations and a person's physical movements into something he called "social indiosyncracy"[40]. The way someone walks, sits and works are all partly expressions of his or her sociological existence. North Korean authors were themselves quite aware of this phenomena: manuals on acting and drama are full of advice on how to act like a worker or a peasant by mimicking their moves (*tongjak*) or their walking stance. Novels too describe in great details their heroes' minute technical operations. With the goal of teaching North Korean peasants how to act like "typical" peasants, Sin Kosong's *Manual for Amateur Drama Circle Members in Rural Communities* gives the example of the way a farmer lights his cigarette and of the movement of charging a heaving bag on an A-frame (*chige*)[41]. In Ri Songwon's short story *Female driver* (*Ch'ŏnyŏunjŏn*) the narrator describes the meticulous movements needed to operate a locomotive and the physical training the heroine's body must undergo to be able to achieve them[42]. Of course many of these movements are work

Figure 4: "Typical" representations of workers in magazines (Source: *Rodongja*)

[39] *Nongminsosŏljip* (*Collection of Peasant Novels*), Nongmindongmaengjungangwiwŏnhoe, 1949, p.252
[40] Marcel Mauss. "Techniques of the body", *Economy and Society*, 1973, 2:1, pp. 70-88.
[41] Sin Kosong, *Nongchon Yŏn'gŭkssŏ-k'ŭlunyŏngbŏb,* op. cit., p.16.
[42] *Tanp'yŏnsosŏljip (Short stories collection)*, Kunjungmunhwach'ongsŏ 5, Pukchojigŏpch'ongdongmaeng Kunjungmunhwabu, 1949, p. 117.

techniques. Some might already have existed in the colonial period but others are presented as the consequence of a post-liberation voluntary self-training to raise one's productivity for the sake of national construction. Of particular interest is the way these movements, or part of them, came to define the body of the class as whole, how they were abstracted and represented to signify class affiliation.

Workers' bodies, for example, exist in relationship with a tool they act upon, and which in turn, transforms and shapes them. It is therefore unsurprising to find mechanical analogies in literary description of laboring bodies: workers have "strong arms moving like a piston"[43], "hands like a metal drill"[44] and "cherish machines like their own bodies (*chemomkach'i*)"[45]. The relationship is not purely metaphorical. The strong echoing voice, "like a jackhammer piercing rocks", of the factory manager in *Cement Factory*[46] is the direct consequence of his experience with the tool. His joke on being able to become "a human jackhammer"[47] likewise serves as a reminder of the organic relationship linking workers and machinery.

As can be observed on the few samples in Figure 4, this relationship was also depicted in visual representations of workers. Without even delving into Freudian[48] territory and the symbolism of elongated tools, the overly masculine characterization of these "man-machine" images appears quite obvious. Workers are invariably male, exhibiting a type of virile vigor often described in print by the adjective *ssikssik'ada*. It is true that women workers were still a relatively scarce population, making up a little over 5% of the industrial workforce in 1949[49]. However, the problem is not as much about sexual quotas as about the gendering of industrial labor. If we look at literature, fictional accounts of women workers do exist but their entry into the "working class" is conditioned by the acceptance of masculine values and the renouncement to part of their femininity. In Pak Unggŏl's *Sulfuric Acid*, for example, the lack of class consciousness of Sunok, the love interest of the protagonist Hang Sŏki, is symbolized by her use of make-up, love of clothes and the "scent of cream"[50] emanating from her body, even in the middle of the factory's musty dust. Hang nonetheless proposes to her, surmising that, as the daughter of a worker, she should be able to overcome her frivolous tendencies with some education (*kyoyang*)[51]. In Ri Songwŏn's *Female Driver*, the husband of the heroine Ch'eryŏn

Figure 5: "Typical" representations of peasants in magazines (Source: *Nongmin*)

[43] Ibid., p.23.
[44] Ibid., p.82.
[45] Ibid., p. 176.
[46] Ibid., p. 173.
[47] Ibid., p. 190.
[48] "It is quite unmistakable that all weapons and tools are used as symbols for the male organ", Sigmund Freud, "Representation by symbols", in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (trans. J. Strachey), Basic Books, 1965, p. 390.
[49] "3.8 Kukchebunyŏjŏl 39Chunyŏn Pogojegang" (Report for the 39th anniversary of the Internation Women's Day), Pukchosŏnminjunyŏsŏngch'ongdongmaengjungangwiwŏnhoe, March 1950, p.15. RG 242 National Archives Collection of Foreign Records Seized, Captured Korean Documents, Doc. No. SA 2009 II, Item #4-69, Central National Library Digital Collection 2009.
[50] *Tanp'yŏnsosŏljip,* op. cit., pp. 13, 43.
[51] Ibid., p. 77.

dreams of becoming a locomotive driver. When he dies in a colonial prison, she decides to fulfill his dream by becoming a driver, despite her mother's opposition to a woman doing a man's job[52]. The narrative follows the pains and hardships of Ch'eryŏn's body as she trains to be able to imitate the movements of her male colleagues.

Visual representations of peasants, on the other hand, features both male and female characters, usually in traditional clothes. They are drawn with rounder lines and a softer perspective than the angular compositions of workers portraits. Characters have fuller figures and features than the square-jawed, muscular portraits of workers, matching literary descriptions of plump and hearty peasants. Women are often depicted with children, such as on the pictures in Figure 5, or pregnant, such as the daughter-in-law of Yun Sejung's *Mother (Ŏmŏni)*[53], thus emphasizing the link between rurality and traditional ideas of feminine virtues of motherhood and fertility. The gesture of the mother embracing her child is mirrored in the *cliché* posture of a male peasant holding a basket of agricultural products in an offering manner. Peasant representations embodies traditional stereotypes of generous motherhood and bountiful nature. This gendering is reflected in the allegories of the working class and peasantry, like the one in Figure 6, where the former is represented by a male figure standing in front and showing the way with his extended arm, while the latter is figured by a shorter, female figure standing a few steps behind in the typical "carrying" posture. Not unlike in the Soviet Union[54], the gendering of agriculture as female as opposed to the masculine working class, mirrored ideological tenets about the leading role of the latter and the lack of revolutionary initiative of the latter. But they also reused and perpetuated prevalent assumptions about gender and labor division: the hierarchy of classes mirrored the traditional sex hierarchy. In the context of the "primitive socialist accumulation" that followed the land reform of 1946[55], and the heavy tax burden put on peasant to support the industry – and, after 1950, the military – these representations and the values they projected also linked the sense of culturally belonging to the peasant class with the socio-economic objectives of the state. To fulfill its industrialization projects, North Korean authorities needed not only a strong, growing working class, but also a generous, docile and self-sacrificing peasantry willing to give up the product of its labor and newly acquired land.

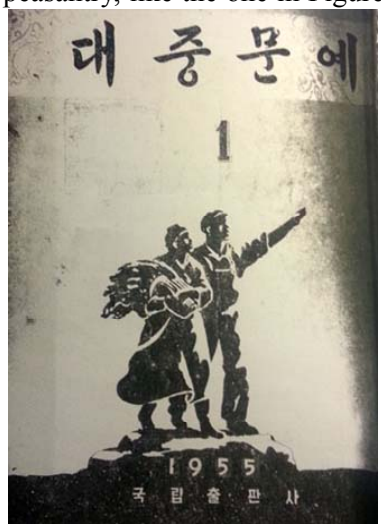


Figure 6: A male working class Leading the female peasantry (Source: *Taejungmunye*)

Dialect and sociolects

The restoration and spread of the national language was an early and important objective of both South and North Korea after 1945 in answer to the assimilationist linguistic policies of the Japanese empire during the colonial period[56]. These efforts were based on the orthography and linguistic prescriptions developed by the Korean Language Society (*Han'gŭl Hakhoe)* in the 1930's as part of its project to standardize the Korean language[57]. In February 1947, the Provisional People's Committee passed a resolution for the creation of a research society on the Korean language and by early 1948

[52] Ibid., pp 139-140.
[53] *Nongminsosŏljip,* op. cit., p.35.
[54] Susan E. Reid, "All Stalin's Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s", *Slavic Review*, vol. 57, No. 1, Spring, 1998, pp. 133-173.
[55] Charles K. Armstrong, op. cit., p. 138.
[56] Ross King, "Language, Politics, and Ideology in the Postwar Koreas", in David McCann ed., *Korea briefing: toward reunification*, 1999, p. 123.
[57] Mitsui Takashi, *Shingminji Chosŏnŭi Ŏnŏ Chibae Kujo: Chosŏnŏ Kyubŏmhwa Munjerŭl Chungshimŭro [Structures of linguistic domination in Colonial Korea: focusing on the problem of standardization of Korean]*, Somyŏngch'ulp'an, 2013.

the society presented its New Korean Orthography (*Chosŏnŏ sinch'ŏlchapŏp*)[58], which defined the country's new standard language. The Seoul-dialect based, standardized Korean spread through literacy campaigns and the developing educational system. In this context, and given the importance attributed to the use of a unified Korean language by intellectuals and politicians since the colonial era, it is hardly surprising that the conservation or promotion or dialects would have been part of the North's cultural policies. Manuals for the management of amateur circles discouraged the use of dialects (*saturi*) in cultural activities, arguing that this would help members learn standard Korean[59].
Dialects nonetheless did not disappear completely from cultural production. Regionalisms and colloquial, non-standard language patterns remained in use in literature and theatre when authors wanted to give a peculiar *couleur locale*, a sense of authenticity to their work. Ri T'aejun's peasant novel *Tiger Grandmother* (*Horangi Halmŏni*), about Youth League members trying to alphabetize a reluctant old widow in an isolated rural village, might be one of the most successful examples of this usage in post-liberation North Korean literature. Himself an artisan and proponent of standard Korean[60], Ri nonetheless saw the use of dialect and spoken speech in literature as an artistic necessity: while the use of standard Korean was a cultural "duty" and the only way to compose finely wrought literary sentences, dialects remained useful in direct speech for the information they could give about a character[61]. In *Tiger Grandmother*, Ri makes his peasant characters use a form of dialect[62] of seemingly indeterminate origin (though the dialect's source or its actual existence are less important here than the fact that it clearly *looks like* a dialect.) which is just close enough to standard Korean to remain intelligible to the reader, yet far enough from it to signify rurality. However, not all characters have the same relationship to the language. Sanggŭn, the member of the Youth League, uses it with the old widow (the Tiger Grandmother) but seems perfectly capable of using standard speech – or rather, standard-based colloquial speech – as his conversation with other League members attests[63]. The grandmother, on the other hand, in incapable of such linguistic code-switching: dialect is her only mode of expression. However her final letter to her son, written after having learn to read and write seems to show a certain standardization of her speech, despite the clear colloquial tone[64]. The association between old people and dialect is not unique to Ri's short story. In Han Sŏrya's *Growing Village* (*Charanŭn Maŭl*) an old woman reluctant to learn *hangŭl* likewise uses dialect[65], just like the protagonist's old mother In Ri Songwon's *Female driver*, who opposes the idea of her daughter doing a man's job. Like the Tiger Grandmother refusing to learn *hangŭl*, she is not merely old physiologically, but also ideologically. In both cases, in the post-liberation ideology of the struggle of the new against the old, dialects are associated with the old, negative side. The dialects that appear in these novels are often hard to identify, and it is very likely that their authors did not intend them to be, or even did not rely on any actual regional languages. As explained above, sentences in dialect are not written just as a native speaker would utter them, but rather in a way that deviates sufficiently from the standard, urban language to signify rurality. Ri T'aejun himself had advised writers not to "mechanically" imitate dialect but rather to "adjust" it enough to give a rural color (*chibangsaek*) to the text, while ensuring that different readers could still understand it[66]. Dialects are not defined

[58] Kim Minsu, "Puk'hanŭi Ŏnŏ chŏngch'aek" (Language Policies of North Korea), *Asea Yŏngu,* 15(4), December 1972, pp.1-53.
[59] Sin Kosong, *Nongchon Yŏn'gŭkssŏ-k'ŭlunyŏngbŏb,* op. cit., p. 53.
[60] An Miyŏng, *Kŭndaemunhagŭl Hyanghan Yŏlmang, I T'aejun [Yi T'aejun and his aspirations towards a modern literature]*, Somyŏng Ch'ulp'ansa, 2009.
[61] Ri T'aejun, "Kŭlgwa marŭi munjedŭl" ("Problems of text and language", 1940) in *Munjangganghwa,* Hyŏndaemunhak, 2009, pp. 38-67.
[62] Among the noteworthy features of the dialect are the use of '*hŏda'* instead of '*hada'* (to do), the regular transformation of '*o*' into '*u*', '*ŏdda'* instead of '*ŏdi*' (where), '*ojŭm*' instead of '*yojŭm*', several modified verbal suffixes: '*-ngabe*' instead of '*-ngaboa*', '*-tŭrado*' instead of '*-torado*', '*-sŏtsu*' instead of '*-sŏsso*', '*-syu*' instead of '*-seyo*' etc…
[63] *Nongminsosŏljip,* op. cit., pp. 25-26.
[64] *Nongminsosŏljip,* op. cit., p. 33.
[65] Han Sŏrya, *Nongminsosŏl Charanŭn Maŭl [Growing Village, A Peasant Novel]*, Pukjosŏn Nongmin Tongmaeng Chungangwiwŏnhoe, 1949.
[66] Ri T'aejun, *Munjangganghwa,* op. cit., pp. 47-49.

positively, according to their own grammar and vocabulary, but rather differentially, in relation to the normative language of the capital and of the narrator. The difference between the "correct" language of the narrator/author, an intellectual, and the colloquial, regional speech of his characters further emphasizes the linguistic borders of class. There is a concession to the fact that regional languages are part of the peasant identity, however this identity is not based on linguistic exceptionality but linguistic deviance. Peasant dialects are marked as peripheral, old and backwards, in need of reform, not unlike the image of the agricultural class itself. An enlightened peasant must be able to navigate between dialect and standard language, while recognizing the superiority of the latter over the former.
The use of dialects in literature remained confined to agricultural novels or characters with a peasant class background in production novels. Rural occupations included in the working class, such as miners and foresters, are not represented, contributing to the construction of the representation of the working class as an urban, central class, distinct from the peripheral peasantry. Workers spoke either in standard Korean or in a colloquial manner[67] not different from other urban characters with a different class background, such as the well-educated antiquarian Han Moe from Ri T'aejun's *Dust* (*Mŏnji*, 1946). This however, does not mean that workers' speech was entirely similar to that of intellectual and urban classes nor that marks of regional dialects was the only thing that differentiated the peasants' speech. Classes, as North Korean intellectuals had been well aware of since the colonial times[68], have their own vocabulary, idioms and diction. There is of course, the technical vocabulary linked to one's occupation: machinery, tools or chemicals for workers (for example *sŭre-t'ŭ*: slate, *ch'iryun*: saw-toothed wheel, *paesoro*: calcinating furnace…) and agricultural lingo for farmers (*mop'an*: seedbed, *suttaebaju*: reed fence, *padi*: yarn-guide…). But the language of a professional group or social class is not reducible to its jargon, rather it constitutes a *sociolect*: a group of lexical and semantic structures particular to a collective and that contrasts with other groups of society[69]. The sociolect is determined by the group's social position (illustrated, for example, by Althusser's comment that "class struggle can sometimes be summed up as a struggle for words"[70]) and by series of semantic relations: argument distribution, lexical distinctions and oppositions (cosmopolitanism vs. internationalism, proletariat vs. bourgeoisie). In this context, expressions specific to the post-liberation North Korean working class' sociolect, or rather to the sociolect represented or fabricated in literature, must be considered within a more general semantic and discursive structure. Words such as "labor law" (*rodongbŏmnyŏng*), struggle for production (*saengsant'ujaeng*), etc… are not mere propagandistic buzzwords but function within a taxonomy, a view of the world unique to the working class and distinct from that of other classes. I will illustrate this with an important word of the workers' sociolect: technique (*kisul*). All of the texts in the anthology of production novels (*Tanp'yŏnsosŏljip Kunjungmunhwach'ongsŏ vol. 5*) published by the Occupational League Mass Culture Department revolve around a technical problem: fixing broken machinery, finding substitute for missing materials, developing new production techniques… But what is interesting is the narrative in which the word "technique" is always articulated. Technique in post-liberation North Korea is a struggle against colonialism and the Japanese. In *Cement Factory*, technique is necessary to repair the machinery broken by Japanese before they left Korea. In *Female Driver*, the Japanese prevented the protagonist's husband to learn the skills needed to drive a locomotive. In *Sulfuric Acid*, the hero studies "technique", once again to repair machinery left broken by the Japanese. In *Slate Factory*, the worker Ch'irryong develops a new technique to make up for the lack of a material only produced overseas. Learning technique is not merely necessary for productivity or the national industry, it is fundamentally defined as an anti-colonial, anti-Japanese activity. The word "technique" also exists in agricultural novels, often used interchangeably with "science" (*kwahak*), but is articulated differently within the peasant discourse. Indeed, technique is not in semantic opposition with Japanese colonialism but superstition (*misin*): the various folk-beliefs and techniques that were deemed to

[67] Marks of colloquial speech including contraction of topic and object markers '*-nŭn*'/'*-rŭl*' into a single consonant '*-n*'/'*-l*' added to the preceding vowel, transformation of '*o*' into '*u*',
[68] Cf. Ri T'aejun, *Munjangganghwa,* op. cit., p.49 or Sin Kosong, *Nongchon Yŏn'gŭkssŏ-k'ŭlunyŏngbŏb,* op. cit., p. 37-72.
[69] Pierre V. Zima, *Manuel de Sociocritique* [*Manual of sociocritique*], L'Harmattan, 2000, pp. 130-133.
[70] Louis Althusser, *Positions (1964-1975)*, Editions Sociales, 1976, p.46.

hamper agricultural productivity. In one sociolect "technique" thus becomes a tool in the national struggle against colonialism and its remnants, in the other a necessity to reform and enlighten a class still trapped in the "ignorance and stupidity" (*mujisŏnggwa ch'ŏnch'isŏng*)[71] of superstition.

Psychology

Summing up the basics of their acting method, the authors of the *Manual for Drama Circle Members* explain that characters' movements are determined by the ideology of their class in the same way that their lines (discourse) are determined by their language (sociolect): both are an outward expression of an inward subjectivity[72]. In a similar way, Sin Kosong illustrates the intrinsic link between body, speech and mind in his examples of "the movement of joy of a peasant after being the first to fully pay the tax-in-kind (*hyŏnsemul*) or the somber pace of someone being instructed of his faults at an assembly"[73]. The movement of joy after paying taxes described by Sin is not just a punctual idiosyncrasy, rather it resonates with the typical image of the peasants' body as a plump, generous, motherly figure stuck in a generous pose. The movement and the feeling of joy express the new psychology of the ever solicited, but never miserly, peasant. However, as part of a collective, the individual's psychology also depends on the collective. The representation of generosity and voluntarism, the eagerness to pay taxes and "patriotic rice" (*aegungmi*), also took into account mechanisms of sociability and peer pressure necessary for the reform of the individual peasant's mind. This is in essence what Sin's second example, the reproaches heard at a popular assembly, refer to. The weight of one's neighbor's opinion appears strongly in literary texts, and the joy felt after performing one's class's duties is always a corollary of the shame experienced in case of failure. In Ri T'aejun's *Tiger Grandmother*, the young Sanggŭn tricks the old widow into learning *hangŭl* by using her sense of shame. After being nominated to a high post at the local school by Sanggŭn, the still illiterate grandmother feels "children, old people, all the students whispering" about her inability to read and overcome with shame (*myŏn'gusŭrŏwŏ*)[74] she decides to join the literacy classes. Similarly, in Han Sŏrya's *Growing Village*, the heroine Kŭmbok manage to shame her mother into learning *hangŭl*. After being rebuked by her daughter and her boyfriend and presented with the possibility of losing to a rival in a literacy competition, the mother "obediently hung her head in shame"[75]. In Yun Sejung's *Mother*, a novel describing the "psychology of a mother as she transforms into a new rural woman (*seroun nonch'on nyŏsŏng*)"[76], the main character struggles to meet the objectives of the plan attempts to hide her difficulties from the local party member who regularly check on her. Worried, she wonders if she could still "show her face in the village"[77] if she failed. The psychology of the new peasant described in these novels therefore relies as much on individual enthusiasm for the system as on old models of social control such as gossip, individual and family rivalry, peer pressure, surveillance and personal appeal.

On the other hand, while the psychology of workers and their attitude towards their work likewise relies on values of honor and pride, the appeal to peer judgment and the fear of public disgrace are almost entirely inexistent. What motivates the actions of workers is not peer pressure but a sense of personal responsibility expressed by words such as sense of duty (*samyŏnggam*), sense of responsibility (*ch'aegimgam*), mission (*samyŏng*), duty (*ŭimu*)… The best example of this psychology appears in Chŏn Mugil's *Slate Factory:* with the factory almost at a halt because the felt needed for

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[71] *"Kwahakkwa Mishin"* [*Science and Superstition*], Pukchosŏn Rodongdang Chungangbonbu Sŏnjŏnsŏndongbu Kangyŏn'gwa, 1949, p. 2. National Archives and Records Administration, Central National Library Digital Collection 2006, 190/16/15/6/E.299/Box429

[72] *Yŏn'gŭkssŏ-K'ŭrwŏnŭi Such'ŏp [Manual for Drama Circle Members]*, Pukchosŏn Chigŏpch'ongdongmaeng Kunjungmunhwabu, 1949, p. 102. q

[73] Sin Kosong, *Nongchon Yŏn'gŭkssŏ-k'ŭlunyŏngbŏb,* op. cit., p. 16.

[74] *Nongminsosŏljip,* op. cit., p. 32.

[75] *Nongminsosŏl Charanŭn Maŭl*, op. cit., p. 11.

[76] Yŏ Min, "Nongminsosŏl Cheilchibŭl Ikko" (After reading the first anthology of peasant novels), Nongmin, 1949, n. 12, p.57.

[77] *Nongminsosŏljip,* op. cit., p. 73.

the machines is unavailable, Ch'irryong, the main character, decides to search for a new way to produce the material. But before starting his research, he asks his manager to let him quit, as his conscience (*ryangsim*) prevents him from asking for another month of salary in the present circumstances[78]. The story unfolds and emphasizes the workers' responsibility and their duty to repair the favors (*ŭnhye*) of the people's government. Unlike peasant subjects who are subject to external control, workers have developed an ideological super-ego signifying their higher level of class awareness.

The representations of the working class as male, enlightened and self-aware group and the peasantry as female, bountiful, traditional and peripheral group drew on existing Marxist and Soviet ideas as well as traditional Korean gender conceptions and helped create a shared view of classes, of the division of the social world that fit with North Korean's government economical and ideological goals. The generous female peasantry led by the male proletariat justified the sacrifices imposed upon the peasantry for the support of the industry in the context of the primitive socialist accumulation. But while workers and peasants were the main characters of works of mass culture, their authors, the people with the power to draw these representations and, thus, to construct classes and decide of the legitimate taxonomy of society, remained elusive. The next part of my analysis will therefore focus on the people who produced the representations and the power relationships that linked them to the political sphere and the masses.

IV. "Mass culture" and just "culture": A dictatorship of the intelligentsia?

Cultural practice and cultural production

To a certain extent, the representations of class analyzed above also influenced the way cultural practices were promoted among the masses, with literature, visual arts and cinema proportionally more prevalent among the working class. The contents of other arts (dance, music…) were divided and their traditional forms, such as *kayo* or *nongak* for music were favored by the peasantry, while Western, "modern" forms were practiced in factories. Literary creation in particular, while also practiced to a certain extent to the peasantry was much more widespread and visible among the working class, with three volumes of workers' poetry published in the years following liberation and positive critical feedback from prominent writers such as Ri T'aejun[79]. Peasant's literature was confined to the pages of the magazine *Nongmin*, and public readings at festivals. There are of course also major practical reasons outside of ideology behind this state of affairs, such as differences in literacy rate or the proximity of urban workers to publishing houses and intellectual centers. But regardless of class differences, where did these efforts by the laboring classes at producing culture fit into the general cultural apparatus of North Korea? What credit can be given to the claim made upon the 1949 Arts Festival Commemorating Liberation that "four years after liberation, the working masses had already become creators of culture"[80]?

Figure 7: A theatrical representation at the 1949 Arts Festival Commemorating Liberation (Source: *Chosŏn Hwabo*, 1949)

The national festivals, one of the main occasions for workers and peasants to showcase their skills give us an idea of the position held by their works in the North Korean literay field. Created in 1947

[78] *Tanp'yŏnsosŏljip,* op. cit., p. 322.
[79] "Rodongja Tongmudŭrŭi Chakp'umŭl Ikko" (After reading the works of our comrades workers), *Rodongja*, 1949, n.3, p. 66.
[80] "8.15Haebang4chunyŏn'ginyŏmyesulch'ukchŏn" (The Arts Festival Commemorating the Fourth Year of the August 15 Liberation), *Chosŏn Hwabo*, 1949, n.2, p. 17.

by Soviet-Korean poet Cho Kich'ŏn, the festival was an important and massive cultural event as well as a legitimizing institution for new artists through its prize system.[81] In the traditional structure of the *tŭngdan* – the process that regulated entries into the field of legitimate artistic production – young writers could only be legitimized through the sponsorship of an established writer or victory in one of the "new spring literary contests" (*sinch'unmunye*) organized by newspapers. Therefore, besides people with connections in the literary world, the newspapers' contest offered a more democratic entry into the world of letters. Although the *tŭngdan* process remained the same until recently in South Korea, the "new spring" contests seem to have disappeared at liberation in North Korea and the festival prizes assumed a somewhat similar function. However the prizes, and the events of the festival itself were separated with a distinct category called "mass culture" for amateurs, effectively annihilating the lack of class distinction that made "new spring" contest democratic. Annals of the country's cultural life in the *North Korean Yearbook* were likewise split between culture – without any epithet – and mass culture. In justifying the transfer of the responsibility of the mass culture movement from the Artists' League to professional organization, An Hamgwang also uses the distinction, arguing that the task of mass culture is preventing artists from their original goal, the creation of culture[82]. Even the magazines of the Peasant and Occupational Leagues, *Nongmin* and *Rodongja*, had a separate section named "our culture" for their members' works while printing short stories by writers' from the Artists' League. In all branches of the cultural apparatus, an impermeable barrier was drawn between amateurs and professionals, workers and intellectuals. As already noted above, the movement for the popularization of culture was seen first and foremost as a movement for the increase of productivity. Attempts by amateurs to become professional artists were systematically scolded in order to prevent the movement for the popularization of culture to become "an obstacle to productivity"[83]. In other words in spite of its achievements in terms of literacy and access to culture, the popularization movement also served to reinforce the monopoly of intellectuals on the legitimitate production of culture and cultural representations. The intellectual output of workers was not cultural production but the output of a cultural practice, a product of "mass culture", but not legitimate art, which remained the prerogatives of intellectuals.

While Kim Il-Sung called for the rapid education and promotion of new writers drawn from factories, farms and fishing communities as part of the promotion of mass culture[84], writers from the League were hardly eager to follow through. No proletarian managed to reach the status of writer as a direct result of the popularization movement. More generally, very few writers from the laboring classes entered the literary field in the post-liberation period. A quick look at the 1947 anthology *Outpost* (*Chŏnch'o*) which claimed to introduce twenty-two new poets to the North Korean public, offers a revealing picture. Among the contributors, the majority had already started their literary activities in the 1930s either in Korea (Kim Pukwŏn, Kang Sŭnghan, Hwang Min...) or in Manchuria (Ri Honam, Ch'ŏn Ch'ŏngsong…), others were young intellectuals with a secondary (Ri Maek) or Japanese university education (Kim Sango, Paek Injun). A few of these young poets did indeed come from peasant families, but the fact that almost all of them had debuted before the liberation suggests – despite the North's otherwise successful efforts at fostering social mobility – that for a member of the laboring masses, becoming a legitimate writer was easier during the colonial period than after the liberation. Unlike other socialist republics in Eastern Europe[85], no "proletarian intelligentsia" of workers and peasants rose to prominence in North Korea. It was not until 1957 that the North Korean Writer's Union opened its ranks and started to actively recruit and train new members from the proletariat[86].

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[81] Pak Namsu. *Chŏkch'i 6yŏnŭi pukhan mundan [Red Flag : 6 years of the North Korean literary world],* Pogosa, 1999, p. 75-103.

[82] An Hamgwang, "Pukchosŏn Minjumunhagundongŭi Palchŏn'gwajŏnggwa Chŏnmang", op.cit., p. 297.

[83] *Yŏn'gŭkssŏ-K'ŭrwŏnŭi Such'ŏp*, op. cit., pp. 7-9.

[84] Kim Il-Sung, "Munhagyesurŭl Paljŏnshik'imyŏ Kunjungmunhwasaŏbŭl Hwalbarhi Chŏn'gaehalde Taehay˘o [On dynamically spreading mass culture and developing the arts and letters] (September 16th, 1947) in. *Kim Ilsŏng chŏjakjip,t. 3* [*Works of Kim Il Sung, t.3*], Chosŏn rodongdang ch'ulp'ansa, 1994.

[85] Justyne Balasinski, "La Pologne : un "cas clinique" ? Autonomie culturelle et régime de type soviétique" (Poland : A clinical case ? Cultural autonomy and Soviet-type regime), *Transitions*, vol. 43-2, 2004.

[86] Yi Hanggu, "Pukhanŭi chakka taeyŏlsogesŏ", *Pukhan*, 1974, n.25, p. 244.

This should hardly come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the history of the KAPF, from which many of the most prominent North Korean artists stemmed. KAPF intellectuals strongly believed in the duty of intellectuals, regardless of their bourgeois background, to enlighten the masses towards emancipation. The figure of Kim Hŭijun, the protagonist of Yi Kiyŏng's 1933 novel *Hometown* (*Kohyang*), a student returning from Japan who takes a leading role in a peasant's dispute with their landlord exemplified the decisive role of educated elites in bringing about social change in Korea. Slogans such as "To the factories, To the farms !"[87], which would later resurface in North Korea, enjoined intellectuals to go into the masses and educate them, while also revealing their exteriority to these two sites of labor. Asserting the leading role of the proletariat for the Korean revolution, KAPF writers did actively seek to hear and learn from workers for their own literary endeavours and even promoted early forms of workers' literature through the genre of reportage[88]. But much like the workers' poetry of the popularization movement visibly followed predetermined stylistic and ideological guidelines, reportage inevitably reflected the gaze of its editors[89]. The working class contributors remained correspondents rather than writers and none would go on to pursue regular literary activities. As for the peasantry, despite increased interest and a more critical examination of its role as a class under the influence of Japanese critics in the 1930s, the KAPF still regarded agricultural regions as being of secondary importance, since "peasants could not play a proper revolutionary role without the guidance of the proletariat"[90]. Unlike other movements such as the Korean Peasant Society (*Choson nongminsa*) who supported and published poetry written by peasants[91], the Federation was more concerned in representing the peasantry than in giving it a voice. Therefore, while the KAPF's proletarian literature certainly was successful in writing of and for the "propertyless classes" (*musan kyegŭp*) in a colonial context, it was much less efficient at fostering or accepting writers coming from them, a fact reflected in its predominantly bourgeois membership. These ideas about the roles of each class and their relationship to the production of a proletarian literature can be seen as the ideological source for the class distinctions organizing the popularization movement.

The monopolization of cultural representations

Having established a symbolic barrier between the production of amateurs and their own output, the cultural elite managed to secure its class interests and its prerogative on the production of representations of the social world. Of course, the productions of the laboring class and the representations they carried, despite being branded as "mass culture", were still published, visible in the public sphere and could have an impact on their readership. But could these works have offered representations competing with those put forth by intellectuals? Could workers and peasants have offered their own vision of class and society within their designated space of discourse? Could the public exposure offered by the movement for the popularization of culture have made these views able to cohabitate, or even challenge the taxonomy of social order promoted by intellectuals?
This seems rather doubtful when examining the contents of workers' and peasants' literature. The involvement of local branches of the Artists' League[92] as well as the clear stylistic and thematic unity of works composed by people working in very different sectors and regions already hints at the fact that all published compositions were done under specific guidance and according to clearly defined guidelines reflecting the current state of literary theory. Themes such as labor laws, liberation and

[87] Kim Kijin, "Nongminmunyee taehan ch'oan" (A draft about peasant literature). *Chosŏnnongmin*, 1929, n.32.
[88] Pak Sŏnyŏng. "Kŭndae Rŭp'orŭt'ajyu munhakŭi yŏksa" (A Forgotten Aesthetic Reportage in Colonial Korea 1920s-1930s). *Pigyohangukhak*, 2011, vol. 19, n. 2.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Paek Ch'ŏl. "Nongmin Munhak Munje" (Issues of Peasant Literature). *Chosŏn ilbo*, October 4th, 1931.
[91] Yi Sangok, Cho Nanhŭi, "Chosŏnnongminsawa K'ap'ŭ Nongminmunhangnonŭi Ch'angjak Chuch'ewa Pangbŏp Yŏn-gu" (Creative subject and method in the peasant novel theory of the KAPF and the Korean Peasant Society), *Ŏmunnonch'ong*, 2012, n. 56.
[92] Choe Homin, "Sŏmun" (Preface), *Sŭngni: Hŭngnamjigu Inmin'gongjang Munhak Ssŏ-K'ŭl Munjip* [*Victory: An anthology of the literary circles of the popular factories of the Hŭngnam Region*], Kunjungmunhwach'ongsŏ 7, Pukchosŏnjigŏpch'ongdongmaeng Chungangwiwŏnhoe Kunjungmunhwabu, 1948, pp. 1-3.

Korean-Soviet friendship mirror the subject prescribed to members of the Artists' League. In poetry, metaphors comparing machines to beasts and work to an epic fight are reminiscent of Korean KAPF works[93] of the 1930s and clichés of Soviet proletarian verse[94]. The heavy use of onomatopoeic expressions to render the sound of factories and references to the "songs" or "music" of agricultural and industrial machines illustrates what former KAPF writer Yi Kiyŏng dubbed "new lyricism": a new type of poetry that eschews descriptions of nature for the sound of jackhammers and tractors' engines[95]. Despite following the rules and trends promoted by the Artists' League, workers' and peasants' literature was not just a mechanistic application of guidelines nor a litany of stale clichés copied from legitimate writers. But it did not depart from the representations championed by established writers, rather it made writers narrate, sing or versify their individual experience within the new class framework. The publication of these discursive identifications, the fact that they were made publicly visible could only reinforce the legitimacy of the new social order. Furthermore, the peculiarities of workers' writings were characterized as "simplicity" (*sobakham*) or dismissed as signs a lack of ideology, making it unlikely for these works to influence or transform the official representations.

Bourdieu theorized that in a Western, capitalist art world, the logic of the field of cultural production would force up-and-coming, dominated artists active in that field to offer politically dominated workers and peasants the tools necessary to break away from the "dominant representations created by social and mental structures which perpetuate the current distribution of symbolic capital"[96] based on a "homology of position". But this logic could not work in North Korea as the types of capital (symbolic, politic, economic…) relevant to the field and their determinants (seniority, official positions, ideological purity, relationship to the USSR…), transformed the strategies of distinction and the range of possible aesthetic positions. When all writers are supposed to speak the language and wear the clothes of the workers[97], there is no possible distinction in claiming to speak for them. Furthermore, as socialist realism was a prescriptive rather than descriptive method, the question of a representation closer to actual reality rather than a representation of reality "in its revolutionary development" was out of the question. There was therefore no incentive within the field itself to produce differing representations or to recruit workers or peasants with a more direct experience of working life than the week long factory visits of the artists and writers.

The Artists' League was therefore an unchallenged producer of largely unified cultural representations. As such, they played an important role in the construction and preservation of the new social order and the distribution of symbolic capital. Along with the politicians, ideologues and statisticians who divided workers into categories of skills, peasants into poor peasants, employed peasants or landowners, they actively took part in the naming, renaming and classifying of reality that determined the post-liberation social order in North Korea. This new taxonomy of society and the representations associated with it were doubtlessly advantageous to those who created and defended it. And while they also gave a strong role to the developing urban proletariat, the position left for the peasantry was much more clearly dominated.

Mass culture or internal colonialism?

In his study of the relationship between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the working class and the peasantry in the 1930's, Alvin Gouldner characterized the Stalinist years as "an urban-centered power elite that had set out to dominate a largely rural society to which they related as an alien colonial power; it was an internal colonialism mobilizing its state power against colonial

[93] c.f. Kwŏn Han's *Chˇongjihan Kigye* (1931) or Yi Pukmyŏng's fiction

[94] Evgeniĭ A. Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 145-150.

[95] Ri Kiyŏng. "Siin Kimsangorŭl Malham" (About the poet Kim Sango), *Munhakyesul*, 1950, n. 6.

[96] Pierre Bourdieu, "Espace social et genèse des "classes", op.cit.

[97] Han Sŏrya. "Yesurundongŭi Ponjilchŏk Palchŏn'gwa Panghyange Taehayŏ (On the basic direction and development of the Art Movement, August 1946) in. Ri Sŏnyŏng, Kim Pyŏngmin, Kim Chaeyŏng, eds. *Hyondaemunhak Pip'yŏng Charyojip [Anthology of criticisms of modern literature]*, T'aehaksa, 1993.

tributaries in rural territories" [98]. Post-liberation North Korea, with its successful land reform and recruitment of the peasantry in the political sphere certainly differs in many aspects from the Soviet experience. However, in effect, existing rural cultures were to be replaced by a new, enlightened and unified culture whose representations favored the urban industrial proletariat, but urged peasants not only to participate in a tax system whose rates came increasingly closer to the colonial ones[99] but also to "generously" give extra produce to the state. North Korea's post-liberation mass-culture redefined traditions and existing cultural practices along new categories (progressive and reactionary, old and new, patriotic and colonial…) which designated the centrally produced culture of the Artists' League as the only legitimate one. The laboring masses had no voice in the representations conveyed by these new cultural products, which were created by an intelligentsia who claimed to understand them and speak for them.

Massive campaigns of literacy, education and the standardization of a Korean language, had, as discussed above, continued colonial era efforts to define rural languages as peripherals and impose the dialect of the country's urban center as the norm. The movement for the popularization of culture further promoted the marginalization of locally specific forms of culture and cultural consumptions in favor of the "high", modern culture of the center. Even the traditional arts, folk dances (*nongak*) and folk songs (*minnyo*)... that the movement promoted among rural populations were not local practices but unified standards, part of a "national" tradition reinvented by the colonial intellectual elite under the influence of Japan's "orientalist" interest for Korea[100]. Traditional audience participation in drama, exemplified by P'ansori's *ch'uimse*, were deemed disrespectful and replaced by a modern attitude of silence modeled after the Soviet Union[101]. Other popular rural traditions were deemed feudal, deviant or reactionary and strongly discouraged. Of course the new North Korean mass culture also drew from rural culture (for example with the composition of revolutionary folk songs based on existing tunes) but the result was nonetheless the replacement of the diverse linguistic and cultural landscape of the countryside by a unified national culture, with folklorized elements of rurality. The representations of a female/motherly, plump/generous peasant in print and visual arts helped legitimize the subservient status given to peasants in regard to the educated elite and working class. In the context of the primitive socialist accumulation, the high taxation and the call to "patriotic" donations placed a heavy burden on peasants while favoring urban industrial centers.

Of course, it is possible to nuance these assertions with the fact that the peasantry enjoyed considerable representation among the ruling party. The inclusiveness of the Workers' Party gave political representation to the peasantry, something often denied to the subaltern. It is true that the political field in general, and the Workers' Party in particular, was more open to the masses than the intellectual field, in no small part because of the strategic importance of popular support. However, to enter the political system, people had to subscribe to its taxonomy in the first place. Identifying one's class background was necessary for membership, while speaking and understanding "standard" Korean was needed to participate in the public debate. Gouldner's characterization of Stalinism as colonialist relied largely on his criticism of the terror politics of the 1930's. It is true that nothing comparable happened in post-liberation North Korea, where land redistribution and collectivization projects were mostly bloodless[102]. Given the willingness of peasants to participate in mass cultural manifestations and the new political life it is also unlikely that the center's cultural policies were resented in the periphery. But internal colonization is not always brutal nor resisted. Studies of pre-colonial and colonial Korea show not only the conceptual proximity of Korean nationalists and Japanese colonialists[103] (thus revealing the proximity between modern nation building and colonial projects[104]) but also how the colonial mindset could be willingly internalized by the urban elite, who

[98] Alvin W. Gouldner, "Stalinism: A Study in Internal Colonialism" *Telos*, 1978, n. 34, pp. 5-48

[99] Charles K. Armstrong, op. cit., p. 147.

[100] See for example,Yim Kyŏnghwa, *Kŭndae Han'gukkwa Ilbonŭi Minnyo Ch'angch'ul* [*The Creation of Minnyo in Modern Korea and Japan*], Somyŏngch'ulp'an, 2005.

[101] *Yŏn'gŭkssŏ-K'ŭrwŏnŭi Such'ŏp*, op. cit., p. 14.

[102] Charles K. Armstrong, op. cit., p. 77.

[103] Andre Schmid, *Korea between Empires*, Columbia University Press, 2002, pp. 101-138.

[104] Partha Chatterjee, "The Colonial State", in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 14

in turn adopted a civilizing, colonial posture in relating to their co-colonized[105]. The early enlightenment movements and the popular adhesion they generated can be seen as the willing absorption and reproduction by the colonized of colonial categories of civilized and uncivilized, enlightened and backwards, center and periphery, etc… In that sense, another reason for the popular appeal of the movement for mass culture are its colonial antecedents: nationalism, enlightenment, proletarian arts, local product promotion… the various intellectual-led movements of the early 1920 century had already paved the way for the classifications and representations that supported the post-liberation social order and symbolic hierarchy.

V. Conclusion

The North Korean movement for the popularization of culture acted in unison with the literacy and political education campaigns, as part of the post-liberation "cultural revolution" that saw millions of North Koreans master *hangŭl,* and learn the skills necessary for an active citizen participation in the country's cultural and political life. Through the extensive net of propaganda rooms and amateur circles and with the involvement of local branches of various Leagues, cultural products conveying a new vision of the social order were read, discussed, performed and consumed even in remote rural communities. People enjoyed a certain level of agency in the organization of their cultural lives, even if they had to abide by the ideological guidelines of the Party and the control of the Leagues. These practices were a radical departure from the illiteracy and working conditions of the colonial period, and marked the beginning of the post-liberation project for the improvement of the people's "material and cultural life".

However, the new mass culture nonetheless maintained a certain continuity with the colonial era. The analysis of the representations of class shows how the working class and peasantry were gendered, drawing upon traditional sex hierarchy to reflect the subordinate role of the latter. This subordinate role, combined with clichés of rural generosity and bountiful nature, legitimized the burden placed upon the agricultural sector as part of the country's primitive socialist accumulation. Depictions of peasants also emphasized their peripheral positions and a level of class consciousness inferior to that of the working class and its strong sense of mission. These representations can be understood in the lineage of the thought of KAPF intellectuals of the colonial period and their interpretation of Marxist class struggle in the Korean context. In particular, the deepening symbolic separation between intellectuals and the laboring masses and the monopoly of artists on cultural representations are clearly reminiscent of the Federation's mode of operation.

In this context, the post-liberation mass culture task appears as first and foremost the diffusion of a unified, "national" and socialist culture constructed through the prism of the intellectual urban elite and the new political leadership. While the working masses were to take an active role in the production of this culture, their efforts remained symbolically marginalized in a cultural apparatus structured by North Korean artists to prevent external challenges to their traditional monopoly. Unlike in the USSR under Stalin, the logic of legitimization and distinction in the new artistic field left did not place much effective value in proletarian credentials and left little room for social mobility outside the traditional channel of education. It would take a decade for the Artist's League to actively start recruiting among workers and peasants, most likely urged by forces external to the cultural field. In so doing, the League judged prospective members based on their existing productions as amateurs, and recruited among the most active centers of the mass culture movement such as Hamhŭng's fertilizer factory; signs that the movement had finally become a path towards official legitimization for proletarian artists. The result was most certainly positive as some of the most popular and unique voices in today's North Korean literature started their careers as factory workers (Paek Namryong) or miners (Han Ungbin).

[105] Yi Hyeryŏng, "Shingminjuŭiŭi Naemyŏnhwawa Naebu Shingminji - 1920~30Nyŏndae Sosŏrŭi Seksyuŏllit'i, Chendŏ, Kyegŭp" (Internalizing Colonialism and Making Interior Colony: Sexuality, Gender and Class in Korean Modern Novels of 1920s~1930s), *Sanghŏhakpo* vol. 8, 2002, n.2, pp-269-293.