

A Study on a Korean Novel in Central Asia : *Bum-do Hong*

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1. Introduction

Bum-do Hong is a legendary leader of loyal troops of armed anti-Japan independence struggle during the Japanese colonial period. His life has been veiled along with the painful pre-modern Korean history. Hong, who frequented Manchuria and the Maritime Province, territory of the Soviet Union, was an object of terror for Japanese army.

Hong was highly admired as a hero for Korean Independence Army that had little systematic organization. The study on Bum-do Hong takes a new turning point as the interchange with the Middle Asia has been activated after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the concern with Koreans and their culture around this area has been escalated.

It draws our attention that the first material to give impetus to the study of Bum-do Hong which was limited by political situation until that time was ironically a Soviet-residing Korean Se-il Kim's novel *Bum-do Hong*. The book, a historical documentary novel, is a saga which began to be written in summer in 1959 and completed

in summer in 1965, based on the materials possessed by an independence activist In-seop Lee.

Bum-do Hong was serially published five years(1965-1969) on *Leningichi*, the only Korean newspaper in the Central Asia, and made a great reflection for the Koreans around the area. The novel was later partially made up and it was published in Korea as five-volume novel titled a 'historical documentary novel' through the intermediary act of Song-moo Gho.

This study tries to look into the genre attributes and characteristics of historical documentary novel through analyzing *Bum-do Hong* how a novel, only a fiction, nor a complete historical material, is regarded as an important material of independence movement history.

2. The Sovereignty Ideology of the Soviet Union and Highlighting of a Heroic Figure

As mentioned before, *Bum-do Hong*, as a historical documentary novel based upon proved materials, is a character-centered novel focused on the life of a legendary leader of loyal troops. Therefore it describes *Bum-do Hong's* life in detail from his birth until the time of his death.

The first volume contains these:

As soon as he was born as a child of a servant, his mother dies of delivery aftereffect and his father dies of fever when he was nine. *Hong* joins army as a trumpeter for survival. and the story that he runs away from a paper factory and meets his life-long partner *Ok-nyo* while taking a spiritual training in the Mt. Gungang. And the story that he makes a great military achievement, making a solitary loyal fighting activities with the beginning of fighting at the Gabo Farmers Uprising. The story that he punishes the Japanese

army and pro-Japanese puppets, organizing a righteous army with hunters after being united with his wife Ok-nyo he lost in a flurry. The process that although he loses his wife at the trick of a Japanese army, his son Yang-soon grows up to be a loyal soldier, and gaining a married couple loyal members Sung-gyun Maeng and Young-ran Bak as his comrades, and the story that his stage is transferred to the quarters of Mt. Baekdu because of the burning-out operation of the Japanese army and Iljin-Society armed troops.

The second volume includes:

The process that Hong himself threatens pro-Japanese people, accompanied by his attendants. The story that he adds his fighting achievement by uniting several righteous armies into a grand troop. In the while Hong's son Yang-soon gets killed in the condition of ammunitions and food shortage, and a secret agent sent for bringing arms is captured by the betrayal of his comrade and the military fund gets embezzled.

The third volume has:

The process that Hong's party carries the passion for revolution, communicating with Bolsheviks around Far East and the Maritime Province, while the headquarter is staying in Mt. Baekdu to gain the time of rearmament. The description that shows the reality until his army gets united with Jwa-jin Kim's troops after Bongo-dong Combat and Chungsan-ri Combat.

The fourth volume describes the complicated system of the disintegrated Independence Army before and after the tragic Freedom City Incident, and Hong's agony of worrying about and loving the nation. The fifth volume carries the process that Hong dedicates his life to fighting for his nation in the Far East areas, leading agricultural union after completing the Bolsheviks Revolution, and he moves to Kzylorda in Kazakhstan by Stalin's Forced Immigration policy for Koreans in 1937, and ends his life there. The structures of description are all focused on Hong's

undaunted behaviors and heroic aspects. Hong's mysterious intuition of recognizing Young-ran (Gumdol) as a man disguised in man's wear and his dignity as a general may be associated with heroic figures in ancient Korean novels. As for anti-Japan armed struggle, Jwa-jin Kim, who has been distinguished much higher than Bum-do Hong, is under-evaluated relentlessly compared with Hong. It draws our attention that the independence movement history during the Japanese colonial period is considered in the context of the sovereignty of the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution.

It is the characteristics and weakness of this novel that, blaming the same kind of victim, another independence army organization, it interprets as obviously biased for Hong's position, especially about the process and conclusion of "Freedom City Incident", whose evaluation has been varied even in history academic circles.

In this work Hong's solitary defection, which might look coward, is praised as a courageous heroic act and brings light to the incompetence and cowardice of other independence army leaders. The novel supports the inevitability of proletarian revolution by emphasizing Hong's strategic intelligence and intrepid spirits.

3. Description of Actuality

This work can be named a historical documentary novel. That is, it belongs to the genre of literature documentary as it is often called, recording as real as things happen. So the book may be placed on the same frame as a fictionalized history novel and differentiated with the subjects of historical incidents, characters, and custom and so on. Namely, while history novel centers on fiction with the writer's sense of history according to the historical incidents and proofs, historical documentary novels try to give readers

impression through the expression ability delivered from complete actuality rather than fiction or fantasy.

It can be said that *Bum-do Hong* holds a descriptive method of restructuring diagrammatically simple memoranda of historical incidents with realistic skills. Therefore, unlike novels in general, it doesn't give readers fun of formulated storyline with elaborate plot. The work is presented somewhat boring as if we read a report on the Korean History of armed independence struggles during the Japanese colonial period.

This unfictional diagrammaticity limits the acting areas of characters and makes it hard to create characters. In other words, important characters like Hong in the work don't lead the narrative of the novel in the plausibility of the work, but are lead like a puppet by already fixed story.

All characters, including Bum-do Hong and Joong-geon Ahn, are no more than diagrammatical characters which are not allowed to go over the limit of historical space. Unlike the case of history novel which recreates personality of characters, it puts weight to make nonfictional representation of simple historical facts, with the addition of the author's insightful sense of history in the histrionical time and space.

It is the author's emotional tone for the object of the author that readers should pay attention to in this kind of pro-actuality historical documentary novels in which historical facts are arranged without the author's notes. Namely, some parts are specifically expanded or reduced as needed in the development of the novel while historical facts are described based on actuality, and the writer's prejudiced viewpoint for protagonist and antagonist comes to be evidently revealed.

The author's emotional and prejudiced point of view can be noticed as seen in the phrases like "small guy," "savage deeds," as we look into the parts described about the truth of 'Nicolayevsk

Incident' and 'the Maritime Province Suppression. In addition, the author basically sticks to the category of actuality depended upon historical materials(a variety of documents about Bum-do Hong and anti-Japan loyal troops possessed by In-sup Lee), and sometimes the amount and degree of details are controlled by the author's arbitrary intention. And the accurate cause of Nicolayevsk Incident which has never been mentioned earlier in Korea(The solidarity of an anarchist, Travizzin and a Goryo person Ilaya Bak, commander of partisan fighters), and the complicated power games within the Independence Army before and after Freedom City Incident, the preparation process carried by Joong-geon Ahn which was enormously urgent until the moment of shooting Ito Hirobumi is elaborately and lengthily described as experienced, and the story of the Maritime Province Conquest and Jenddao Conquest suppressed by Japanese army are explained as a summary-these are the evidences of the author's prejudiced viewpoint.

4. The Observance of North Korean Language Rules and Frequent Use of conversational Style

Bun-do Hong is the work published serially on the Korean newspaper *Leningichi* in Central Asia by Korean residents in the Soviet Union. So in the work is Goryo language used which is the mother language of Goryo people around the Central Asia. The Goryo language used by Korean in the Central Asia is based upon Six-post(Yukchin) dialects and the transformed language by Goryo people around the Central Asia within the Soviet Union.

The Goryo language naturally follows North Korean language rules in the political situation during the time.

As the rules of spelling was revised for the second time and standard language(culture language) was separately decided in

North Korea in 1966, *Bum-do Hong* began to be released on *Leningichi* since October 22 or 23, 1965, came to have different spelling systems before and after July, 1966. That is, on the point of July 1966, some of the beginning parts was put space with the unit of basic words according to the North Korean "Josun Language Spelling Rules"(1954-1966), and the latter part was written without putting space in multiple forms according to "Josun Language Rule Book"(1966-).

Here, let's compare the North Korean spelling rules with South Korean ones.

The first sound of "ㄴ, ㄹ" in Chinese letters is kept and pronounced as it is. (년말, 락천적, 량반, etc)

"Between ㅅ" is never used. (나무군, 내가, 바다가, 햇볕, etc.)

In the case that the vowel of word stem is "ㅣ, ㅞ, ㅟ, ㅠ, ㅡ, ㅢ", the ending of word, "-어, -었" is written as "-여, -였". (어리어, 어리였다, 빛내여, 뛰여, etc.)

The Chinese letter for "ㅋ" syllable is just admitted for "계, 례, 예, 헤" and so, "페" is written as "페". (엄페, 페허, etc)

For putting space, noun indicating one object, incomplete noun, supporting words are written without space. (살아나갈것이기 때문이었다, 브리가다수탁식건축작업, etc)

Let alone the North Korean spelling rules, it can be found that the dialect of Northern areas such as Hamgyung and Pyungan Provinces and Russian-borrowed words are cited. It is considered natural that these are related to the hometowns(Gyungheung,

Pyongyang) and their lives of the author Se-il Kim and characters.(Bum-do Hong and the related people)

Jangpyung-ri people saw the loyal troops coming into the village and everyone, man and woman, old and new(로소) came out to the streets and welcomed the army.¹⁾

And main railroads around Siberia(씨비리) and the Maritime Province from Banjaro through Vladivostok and the Yenbyun areas were being occupied by Chehoslovakia(체코슬로와끼야) rebels. Havarovsk only, center of Far East, belonged to the Soviet regime and "Korean Socialist Union" Central Committee authorities were connected to Russia Bolsheviks(볼세위크) and was making vigorous activities with remaining efforts with the determination to keep the Soviet regime.²⁾

Young-ran and old man(령감) Bongshik were walking together lost deep in thought, then they broke the silence when her baby began to cry on her back ...omitted... then Youngran now(인차) stopped her cart around the forest by the road and held down her baby to feed her milk. In the while she began to talk to old man Bongshik.³⁾

This way the last judgment(판가리) fight took place. Partisans (빠르찌산들) destroyed all the military camps in a thorough bombing with a huge cannon. They killed the samurai spirit of the Japanese army though they were in the awful snowstorm of -35. ~ -40. C.⁴⁾

1) Se-il Kim, Bum-do Hong(The Third Literature History) v.1, p.210.

2) Ibid. v.3, pp.136-137.

3) Ibid. v.2, p.274.

4) Ibid. v.4, p.43.

The wind blowing from Sikhote-Alin mountains were freezingly(맷짜게) cold. All the mountains and fields were fully covered snow created a silver world and the snow in the road, stepped a lot, was terribly slippery. The sun was already setting down and the smoke rising from every chimney of the union village showed that they were preparing suppers in every house.⁵⁾

The description situation may be confirmed through these citations.

Another descriptive characteristic which draws our attention in the work described in the Goryo language which observe North Korean language rules is that a considerable amount of dialogue is put in between explanatory descriptions.

The sorrow of wanderers who turned out victims can be well found, though many Goryo people contributed to the sovietization of Russia, in the paragraphs drawn about the forced immigration for Goryo people by Stalin in 1937. Through inserting conversational style, the author expresses more directly and intensely a thousand emotions of Goryo people who were abruptly driven out to the wasteland of Central Asia away from the Maritime Province, their second hometown since they emigrated from Korean peninsula.⁶⁾

It is paradoxically revealed that the Goryo people's emotions of reality driven to the place beyond by unrejectable force, not the true sense of history of mission. To deliver such emotions through the dialogues between characters gains much stronger appeal rather than through explanatory description. It can be pointed out that there is a counteract which weakens the narrative characteristics of the novel by arranging various situations long which can be summarized with

5) Ibid. v.5, p.145.

6) The conversational style is used to formulate a variety of sensations (dissatisfaction, frustration, sense of betrayal, desperation, expectation for a new world) that Goryo people may go through due to the forced immigration.

explanatory descriptions seen in many scenes such as the conversation by the soldiers of the Independence Army who worship Hong to the level of idolization , the conversation by civilians speaking firmly for the superiority of system, and Hong's address to the soldiers in every important paragraph.

Likewise, as historical facts are selectively dealt by the author's arbitrary judgement, the unbalance occurs that some parts are augmented and others are shortened.

The work contains the fatal limitation that the last moment of the protagonist is carried in just two lines without reaching to figuration within the novel.⁷⁾

5. Conclusion

In this study I have so far attempted to look into the characteristics through the analysis of *Bum-do Hong*, the only Korean saga novel in Central Asia titled a historical documentary novel.

Bum-do Hong is the novel that a Goryeo person Se-il Kim, born in the Maritime Province, wrote about Bum-do Hong's life, based upon the related materials provided by a Soviet-residing Korean and an anti-Japan independence activist In-sup Lee.

People got much interested in the novel when it was serially released on the only newspaper *Leningichi* five years in Central Asia since 1965. The novel has drawn attention as an important material of armed anti-Japan struggle history around the Maritime Province during the Japanese colonial period because there has been little actual historical materials related to it.

Then I'd like to make a conclusion by summarizing the

7) On October 25, 1943, one year after Josun Theater left Kzylorda, Bum-do Hong passed away at the age of 75, after being sick in bed. ; op.cit. v.5, p.246.

discussion I have made so far.

First, *Bum-do Hong*, as a historical documentary novel centered on Hong's life, is described focused on the protagonist Bum-do Hong's heroic aspects. It may be noticed in the process that the work is consistently based on the sovereignty ideology of Soviet Union which demarcates Hong's personal boundary.

Second, the work, unlike novels in general, as it is a historical documentary novel restructured characters and incidents realistically according to the proved materials, aims to actuality rather than fictionality. And in the category of actuality the work emotionally diagrammatizes tone for descriptive object with the author's arbitrary intention.

Third, this novel was published in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. So it makes use of the conversational style of Goryo language in the Central Asia based upon North Korean language rules. Besides, it is noticeable that the dialogue style is positively employed as a supportive means of explanatory description.

(국문요약)

중앙아시아 한인소설 『홍범도』 연구

윤 정 헌

洪範圖는 일제 강점기에 활약한 항일무장독립투쟁의 전설적 의병장이다. 만주와 蘇領 연해주를 넘나들며 일본군에겐 공포의 대상이 되었고 제대로 조직적 체계를 갖추지 못했던 당대의 솔한 독립군 병사들에겐 끝없는 흠모의 영웅으로 崇仰받았던 홍범도의 생애는 우리의 아픈 근대사와 더불어 그간 베일에 묻혀 있었다. 그러나 구소련 해체 이후 중앙아시아와의 교류가 활발해지면서 이 지역 한인과 그들의 문화에 대한 관심이 고조됨에 따라 홍범도에 대한 연구도 새로운 전기를 맞고 있다.

그런데 그간의 정치적 상황으로 말미암아 제한을 받을 수밖에 없었던 홍범도 연구에 박차를 가하게 한 일차적 자료가 아이로니컬하게도 한 재소 한인의 소설이라는 사실이 우리의 주목을 끈다. 김세일의 역사기록소설 『홍범도』가 바로 그것으로, 이 작품은 재소 독립운동가 이인섭의 소장 자료를 바탕으로 작가가 1959년 여름, 집필에 착수하여 1965년 여름에야 탈고한 대하소설이다.

중앙아시아 유일의 한글지 「레닌기치」에 5년간(1965~1969) 연재되어 이곳 한인들에게 큰 반향을 일으켰던 소설 『홍범도』는 그후 고송무의 주선으로 일부내용이 더 보강되어 ‘역사기록소설’이란 타이틀의 5권짜리 소설로 국내에서 출판되었다.

이러한 출간배경을 전제로, 어찌하여 순정한 사료가 아닌 픽션에 불과한 한 편의 소설이 독립운동사의 중요한 자료로 관심을 끌고 있는지 본고에서는 소설 『홍범도』의 분석을 통해 소위 역사기록소설의 장르적 속성과 특질을 살펴보았다.

그 논의를 요약하면 다음과 같다.

첫째, 이 작품은 홍범도의 생애를 중심으로 하는 역사기록소설로서 주인공 홍범도의 영웅성에 초점을 맞춰 서술되고 있다. 그 과정에서 홍범도의 신변적 범주를 확정하는 소비에트 주권사상을 일관되게 작품의 기조로 내세우고 있음을 알 수 있다.

둘째, 이 작품은 실증자료에 의해 인물과 사건을 실사적으로 재구한 역사기록소설인 관계로 일반적 소설과는 달리 허구성보다는 事實性(actuality)을 지향한다. 그리고 그 사실성의 범주 안에서도 작위적 의도에 따라 서술대상에 대한 어조(tone)를 감정적으로 도식화한다.

셋째, 이 작품은 1960년대 구 소련에서 발표되었다. 따라서 북한식 언어규범에 입각한 중앙아시아 한인의 고려말을 서술문체로 활용하고 있다. 이와 함께 독자의 감성에 호소키 위해 설명적 서술의 보조수단으로 대화체를 적극적으로 활용하고 있어 주목된다.

Key words : Bum-do Hong, Korean novel in Central Asia, Se-il Kim, historical documentary novel, Goryo language, Leningichi, the only Korean newspaper in the Central Asia

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