

North Korean Historiography in Crisis (1956-1967)

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The sweeping wave of de-Stalinisation, which began unfolding in the USSR after the historic Twentieth Congress of the CPSU (February 1956), could not but resound in academic circles of the respective countries. Soviet scholars of social sciences responded to this sea change by the immediate resumption of theoretical debates which had remained suspended since the early 1930s. The erstwhile controversies over periodisation of history, correlation between the “productive forces” and the “social superstructure”, Asiatic Mode of Production, and many other vexed questions of Marxist historiography were no longer considered dangerous and were even welcomed to contribute to the pluralism of the Khrushchev era.

Radiating from Moscow, this new political whim encouraged scholars from fraternal countries to continue research in the tricky area of Marxist historical theology. Despite having its roots deeply inside the Soviet and Chinese academic traditions, North Korean academic circles arrived at quite an inimitable result: seeking ideological independence from the “big brothers”, historiographical issues in the DPRK were placed on the forefront of struggle against foreign influences. The resolution of old problems in historiography began to be carried out under the banner of ultra-nationalistic *Juch’e* ideology that prompted many significant changes in the understanding of history.

In the chilling atmosphere of struggle for power and with the worsening Sino-Soviet ideological rift, historiographical debates in North Korea could bring little clarity and ultimately put the scholarship in deep crisis. By the mid-1960s, historians in the DPRK found themselves in particularly difficult circumstances. Designed to legitimise the authoritarian power of Kim Il-sung and his family members, research on the national past began to be saturated with semi-religious tales. Finally, in 1967-1968 the leader-centred nationalistic approach of *Juch’e* ideology superseded the class-centred internationalist tradition of history writing. How and why it happened are the main questions to be explored in this paper. Examining the late writings of the Japanese-trained leftist Korean historians, I try to depict the reasons for the demise of the Socio-economic school of Marxist historiography in the DPRK.

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Back in the 1930s, while applying the Marxist historical scheme to Korea’s national past, the founder of the materialist Socio-economic school of historiography, Paek Nam-un, drew a number of crucial but barely justifiable conclusions. Relying on historical sources which merely stated that slaves existed in ancient times, Paek argued that the Three Kingdoms epoch (1st century B.C. – 7th century A.D.) in Korea exemplified the classical “slave-ownership society”, one of the four mandatory stages

on the way to communism. However, Paek was rather ambiguous in describing the formation, development, and decline of this particular mode of production.

Another protagonist of Marxist historical scholarship in colonial Korea, Yi Ch'ng-won, generally supported Paek's hypothesis of the slave-ownership society but assumed that this social order existed in Korean history until the establishment of Koryŏ (918-1392) dynasty, much longer than it was believed by Paek Nam-un. All attempts to clarify the matter only complicated the question and provided no satisfactory resolution. Moreover, when discussing the issues of ancient and medieval history, both Paek and Yi demonstrated strong attachment to the orthodox Marxist belief that feudalism in Asia was based on the state land-ownership. Despite the fact that this assumption had much to do with the idea of intrinsic Oriental backwardness and formed the basis of Japanese colonial historiography, it was adopted by most Korean leftist historians.

After WWII, while the Marxist scholar-politicians such as Paek Nam-un, Ch'e Ch'ang-ik and Kim Tu-bong occupied the highest positions in the DPRK, their scholarly views were adopted by the newly established historical circles and continued to dominate until the crisis of the Korean War (1950-1953). Only then did the North Korean leadership turn its face to nationalism for the first time. To remedy the shortcomings of the "old" historiography and develop a better understanding of the national past, historians and economists in North Korea began exchanging their views. It was at the special conference organised in 1953 by the DPRK Academy of Sciences that Pak Si-hyng, Kim Sŏk-hyng, Ch'ng Hyŏn-gyu and other "new" scholars for the first time raised their voices in disagreement with the finds of their elders.

Their criticism soon acquired the form of a well-coordinated attack on the Socio-economic school and its protagonist, Paek Nam-un. Kim Kwang-jin – Paek's college junior and long-standing opponent – was given full rein to proffer an alternative hypothesis whereby Korea, bypassing the slave-ownership stage of development, proceeded directly from "primitive communism" to "feudalism". But exceptionally antagonistic toward Paek Nam-un and his research was historian Yim Kŏn-sang. Yim's vitriolic review of Paek's *Ancient History of Korea* (1951) was directed at the mechanistic application of the Marxist-Leninist principle of historical "inevitability" [*happopch'iksŏng*, *hapkyuch'ksŏng*, *kyegisŏng*] to national history. Yim Kŏn-sang accused Paek of lacking patriotism and stigmatised his work as a disgrace. Also, Yim complained that Paek used ambiguous language saturated with complicated and rare Chinese hieroglyphs that made the "dry and dull narration" of the textbook hardly comprehensible to the masses.

Only three months later, when delivering a report *On Intensifying Class Education for Party Members* before the April 1955 Plenum of the CC KWP, Kim Il-sŏng vigorously criticised the so-called "formalistic methods" in political and historical education of the Party cadres. Indoctrination work apparently had been conducted without taking into account the level of general knowledge or theoretical education of individual Party members. Interestingly, Kim's report had much in common with the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars signed by Stalin and Molotov in March 1934. This Soviet verdict pronounced the government's disapproval of all "abstract and formal" history textbooks and teaching methods. As a result, the

Pokrovsky's school of Marxist historiography was demolished in the USSR for advocating a "subjective conception of Marxism". The Communist Party held the "old" Marxist scholars responsible for forcing the course of history into the "Procrustean bed of materialism". Because of this campaign, the nationalistic trend began dominating the Soviet historiography and the concepts of "motherland" and "patriotism" returned to the daily Soviet vocabulary. In the 1950s, a similar shift to nationalism in historiography happened in the DPRK.

In April 1955, while suggesting some concrete ways of improvement in historical education Kim Il-sung paid special attention to the question of "correct" [or n] understanding of socio-economic formations, periodisation of history and the "scientific" analysis of inter-connections between economic forms and classes at every stage of historical development. Next year, in April 1956, the duties for historians were again formulated at the Third All-Party Congress. Its resolutions unambiguously suggested that historians were to "eliminate dogmatism, regain *Juch'e*, study and creatively apply Marxism-Leninism, quickly and consistently and with enthusiasm produce scientific achievements, and maintain a diligent attitude toward research". In other words, these two directives mobilised North Korean historians to establish a new, *Juch'e*-style historiography.

Responding to the Congress resolutions, the Institute for History Research (IHR) of the DPRK Academy of Sciences (DPRKAS) produced a *Ten-year Plan for Scientific Development (1957-1966)*. Historians were to focus on the study of socialist revolution and fatherland unification, revolutionary traditions, patriotism, and Korean cultural heritage. Such issues as the socio-economic essence of feudalism, the genesis of capitalism, the formation of bourgeois nation, and the proletarian struggle for hegemony in Korea were mentioned as problems awaiting urgent resolution. The tasks of socialist construction and national unification required consolidation of all national forces under the openly nationalistic mottoes. Once it became important to overcome the conventional Marxist views on Korea's history as "abnormal" and "backward", the legacy of the Socio-economic school of historiography was to be regarded merely as outdated and harmful.

At that time, the complete rejection of Marxism-Leninism was impossible for political reasons and the so-called "creative" [*ch'angjojk*] application of the Marxist historical inevitability concept was stressed. Inspired by the Party-approved vogue for self-reliance in ideology, the "new" North Korean scholars were called upon to launch a resolute attack against the forces of the "old". Historians became involved in a sequence of theoretical discussions which resulted in harsh criticism of "old" scholar-politicians for "dogmatism" and "formalism" in research. Against the background of rampant political purges such search for historical truth soon transgressed the frames of a purely academic discourse and acquired the features of an ideological witch-hunt.

The first full-fledged "discussion" on history periodisation in North Korea took place at the IHR of the DPRKAS on 31 October 1956. Its participants divided into two quarrelling camps that reflected the aggravating conflict between the "old" and "new" forces in academia. One major group, which flocked around archaeologist To Yu-ho and included historians Yim K n -sang, Han Gil- n and Yi N ng -sik, supported the slave-ownership hypothesis in Korea's history. The other group, which argued that there were no conditions for the development of slave-ownership in Korea, was led by

economist Kim Kwang-jin and supported by Ch n S k -tam, Kim Se-ik and m Ch'ang-jong. Despite their striking differences, both arguments confronted many conclusions made by Paek Nam-un and Yi Ch' ng -won in their pre-war writings.

Undertaking active steps in self-defence, Yi Ch' ng -won tried to divert the course of the discussion by encouraging historians to focus their research on the nature of lingering remnants of the “primitive communal system”. By that time any references pertaining to “stagnancy” and “backwardness” in national history had become extremely unpopular. Considered as unpatriotic and destructive, such reckless comments predetermined the early sunset of the Socio-economic school in general and Yi Ch' ng -won's academic career in particular. The text of his speech was never included in the *Anthology of the Debate on the Socio-economic Organisation of the Three Kingdoms* volume published by the DPRKAS two years later.

Anticipating a looming loss of face, Paek Nam-un was prudent enough to reconsider his views and finally acknowledged the defeat. On the final day of the debate, Paek held the floor and conceded that in Korean history the slave-ownership formation, akin to those that once existed in ancient Greece and Rome, could not be confirmed by any historical source. Such revelation, while supplemented by an appeal for assistance, demonstrated the most significant concession Paek ever made since 1945.

I plan to scrutinise and reconsider my views as expressed in the book which was written some twenty-four years ago and which sparked this discussion on the socio-economic organisation of the Three Kingdoms. I would like to appeal for assistance in this task and think that any sort of cooperation would be useful. I firmly believe that such effort can bring some positive results to the development of our academic front, part of the larger ideological front.

This statement marked the first major defeat of the Socio-economic tradition of history writing in North Korea. In the face of reviving nationalism in ideology, official historiography in the DPRK was no longer required to look back at what had been written by the Japanese-trained Marxist scholars. From this moment onward the *Juch'e* principles of self-reliance in earnest began dictating the work of historians in North Korea. Nevertheless, it was still a decade before the last traces of the “old” scholarly tradition were completely washed out from the official version of national history.

In the meantime, enthused by the easy victory the scholars of younger generation continued their campaign against “formalism” and “dogmatism” in history-writing. The new leader of North Korean historians, Academician Pak Si-hy ng, cast doubt on the orthodox Marxist belief that feudalism in Asia had always been based on the state land-ownership. This time it was an attack against Ch n S k -tam's hypothesis of “state land-ownership” [*t'oji kugyu*]. Like Paek Nam-un and other “old” scholars who adhered to the classical Marxist notion of Oriental despotism, Ch n presumed that in feudal Korea a monarch was always the primary landlord. For this, Ch n's theory was slandered as “mechanistic” and “formalistic” in a vituperative editorial of *Yksa Kwahak* journal vilifying Ch' e Ch'ang -ik, Yi Ch' ng -won and other “pseudo-historians”.

While explicating the Marxist theory of the feudalism crisis, Ch n claimed that due to the residues of intrinsic Asiatic backwardness Korean economy of the late Yi dynasty completely missed the appearance of capitalistic relations. In other words, he claimed that the earliest elements of capitalism did not appear in Korea before the 20th century, when the country fell prey to Japan:

The Korean society had not grown enough to become capitalist. ...During the nineteenth century, only sporadic evidences of capitalist relationships were visible but not even a single capitalist mill could be found.

But in December 1956, Ch n S k -tam's beliefs on this issue began to change gradually. At the special conference convened by the IHR of DPRKAS to clarify the time of the formation of bourgeois nation, Ch n presented his research paper where for the first time he dated the inception of Korean capitalism as being by the 19th century. Ch n bitterly criticised anyone who tried to attribute this socio-economic phenomenon to earlier dates. Historian Kim Han-ju, with whom Ch n S k -tam co-authored the *Socio-economic History of Contemporary Korea* (1948), also claimed that before the 1870s Korean economy remained "backward and rural" with only some timid "sprouts" of capitalism.

Fearing reprisals for his landlord origins, Ch n S k -tam kept changing his position throughout the 1960s. First, he claimed that in the mining sector the "capitalistic elements" began developing as early as the 17th century. In April 1964, at the special conference which was held at the newly established DPRK Academy of Social Sciences (DPRKASS), Ch n was ready to prove that "capitalistic relations" in Korea's farming and agriculture also emerged this early. When talking about his research methodology, Ch n especially emphasised the necessity to "rely on scientific understanding of historical regularity and frustrate the so-called 'theory of stagnation' utilised by official bourgeois scholars and revisionists". As the DPRK historiography continued to push all crucial dates back in history, in 1966 Ch n's hypothesis acquired an official status. His last work published in 1970 created the final account on the problem of the inception of capitalism in Korea and exemplified the "correct" vision of history written from *Juch'e* perspective. Ch n insisted that both the decay of feudalism and the inception of capitalism in Korea were solely the results of internal developments and not of any foreign influence.

Along with the controversies on ancient and medieval history, North Korean scholars were also involved in discussions on modern and contemporary matters. As previously, the "old" scholars in such debates were to play the role of live targets left with little choice: to alter their scholarly views in accordance with political necessity or to perish in the carnage of reprisals. In some instances, when the "old" scholars tried to contradict or simply did not hurry to rectify their "mistakes", the heaviest charges were pressed. Controversy over research performed by Yi Ch' ng -won can provide a telling example of how the Marxist scholars of the older generation were eradicated.

In 1955, Yi Ch' ng -won's monograph entitled *Korean Proletariat in Struggle for Hegemony* presented a detailed story of the inception, formation and development of labour movement in Korea. In his book, Yi claimed that not a single proletarian organisation existed in Korea before the Bolshevik revolution and, therefore, regarded

the Korean Socialist Union [Chos n Sahoe Tongmaeng] established in the Russian Far East in 1918 the earliest ideological group of Korean socialist movement. Yi Ch'ng -won lamented that even after that the movement retained its “spontaneous and uncoordinated” character. Instead of praising the anti-Japanese guerrilla groups in Eastern Manchuria, Yi Ch'ng -won emphasised the leading role of Marxist-Leninist organisations in their struggle for proletarian hegemony in Korea and Japan. This could not but irritate Kim Il-s ng and his partisan faction in the KWP. Attempts to present Kim's revolutionary activities in the most favourable light prompted Yi to replete his research with frequent allusions to the Association for Fatherland Restoration [*Choguk Kwangbokhoe*]. But Yi would judge Kim's military and organisational talents only against the guiding wisdoms of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, praising him merely as a “true follower”. After 1956, when Kim Il-s ng rushed to formulate his independent from the USSR and China line, such moderate compliments were by no means satisfactory.

The abortive coup of August 1956 erupted in the KWP under the pretext of a crusade against Kim Il-s ng's rising cult of personality and ended in reprisals against the “old” scholar-politicians. On 30 October 1956, a special panel discussion was convened at the IHR DPRKAS where the first negative comments regarding Yi Ch'ng -won's book *Korean Proletariat in Struggle for Hegemony* were publicly uttered. The outcome of this debate had been predetermined by Yi's affiliation with another historian-politician and the coup culprit, Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik. Thus, in the course of the discussion “serious shortcomings” of the book were disclosed; among the gravest were mentioned the “mistreatment of historical sources”, the “dispersion of research subject”, and the “weakness of theoretical analysis” that altogether would make the book “incomprehensible”.

Yi Ch'ng -won refused to capitulate and the open disagreement took place between him and other participants of the discussion. Firstly, there was a dispute over the date of the ultimate establishment of “proletarian hegemony” in Korea. Where Yi argued that the struggle for hegemony was accomplished well before August 1945, his opponents insisted that it happened only with the proclamation of the DPRK on 9 September 1948. Secondly, Yi Ch'ng -won's evaluation of Sin'ganhoe (1927-1931) was questioned by many discussants. Yi's critics were keen to credit Kim Il-sung's Association for Fatherland Restoration with the merit of the being the first national united front organisation in Korea. For this purpose they tried to despise Sin'ganhoe as simply an anti-Japanese club.

Furthermore, there was a complex debate over the “correct” attitude toward the national bourgeoisie. In his book Yi Ch'ng -won asserted that Korean proletariat, while searching for a coalition with the peasantry, could achieve such alliance only through the “wholesale isolation of the national bourgeoisie from the masses”. In early 1957, this hypothesis sparked another debate which was closely watched by the *Yksa Kwahak* journal. Historian Kim Sang-ryong accused Yi of “mechanistic” application of foreign strategies formulated by Lenin, Stalin and Mao, whereas Korea was a country significantly different from Tsarist Russia or semi-colonial China. “When we discuss the Korean proletariat's struggle for hegemony why should we emulate the policy of bourgeoisie isolation adopted by the Bourgeois-Democratic revolution in Russia?” – questioned Kim resentfully.

An attempt to find an acceptable solution to the problem was undertaken by a young scholar, Hwang Chang-y p. In a short but eloquent article Hwang confirmed that Yi Ch' ng -won's book suffered from serious shortcomings. Hwang used his skills as a Moscow-trained philosopher and dialectically divided every policy into "strategic" and "tactical". He presumed that Yi simply meant the "strategic isolation" of comprador bourgeoisie and, probably, was not against the "tactical union" with national bourgeoisie. This ambiguous explanation allowed the cluster of "new" historians such as Kim Sang-ryong, Hwang Chang-y p, Yi Na -yong and Ch n S k -tam, who sided with them, to accept a joint resolution that officially closed the debate on 16 October 1957. The positions of Kim and Hwang were granted official status while the views of Yi Ch' ng -won were collectively condemned.

Yi Ch' ng -won, the Director of the Modern and Contemporary History Centre of the IHR DPRKAS, was not even present at that final session of the discussion. According to the documents recently declassified in the Russian diplomatic archives, in early September 1957 Yi Ch' ng -won was arrested on suspicion of "involvement in conspiracy against the Party". Along with Yi Ch' ng -won, historians Kim Ch ng -do and Ho Kap were also denounced as the "enemy of the people" and subsequently purged from academia. Analysing the topics and the issues on which Yi Ch' ng -won was working during the last two years of his academic career, one can conclude that Yi desperately tried to rectify his mistake. Most of his writings of that period were dedicated to patriotic themes with particular focus on the partisan activity of Kim Il-s ng. Nevertheless, his association with the rebellious Yan'an faction left him no chance for survival.

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Despite the damage which the "old" Socio-economic school of Marxist historiography suffered during the 1956 crisis, history in North Korea continued to be analysed from the viewpoint of consecutively changing socio-economic formations. However, the earlier trend to stress the backwardness and triviality of economic and social order in pre-1910 Korea became notably emasculated. Instead, the main emphasis in research and education now was placed on national uniqueness and fervent patriotism. The general tendency in research was to present Korea's past as orderly, ancient, and glorious as it could be supported by historical fact.

Simultaneously, a "correct" approach to the vexed issues of national history continued to be developed under the supervision of "new" academics. In the late 1950s and early 1960s there was no topic in Korean history which was not a potential target for revision and correction in accordance with the current Party line. For this purpose, books compiled by the purged authors or defunct research institutions began to be rewritten. For example, designed to override Yi Ch' ng -won's "erroneous" views on the history of labour movement in colonial Korea, *The Communists' Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Anti-Japanese National Liberation Struggle* was published by Kim Si-jung in 1957. To eradicate any memory of Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik and *The History of the National Liberation Struggle in Korea* (1949) compiled under his direction, a completely new book under the same title was published in 1958. In the preface of this book its author, Yi Na-y ng, welcomed the decisions of the Thi rd All-Party Congress (1956) and denounced "dogmatism" and "poisonous legacy of sectarian and anti-Party elements" in historical circles that "deliberately tried to

distort the revolutionary traditions of the Korean people, and underrate, diminish and obliterate the role of Kim Il-sung in this tradition”.

The problem of “distortions” in research on sensitive topics was solved in December 1956 when a new research body – the Institute for the Party History Research [Tang Yksa Yn’guso] (IPHR) – was established under the auspices of the KWP Central Committee in order to concentrate in the Party clutches all materials related to the Korean communist movement and the personal biography of Kim Il-sung. On 13 April 1957, some 4,000 volumes of documents on the national liberation struggle of the 1930s were relocated to IPHR custody. In 1959, the IPHR dispatched its second exploratory team to South-Eastern Manchuria to gather more facts on Kim Il-sung’s anti-Japanese armed struggle.

Based on those carefully selected materials, *The History of the Modern Revolutionary Movement in Korea* (1961) was co-authored by a group of “new” historians led by the Head of the New and Modern History Research Division of the IHR DPRKAS, Chn S k -tam. This book was dedicated to the opening in 1961 of the Fourth All-Party Congresses and the centenary (1860-1960) of Korean revolution. Interestingly, the introductory article in this book, as well as in *The History of the National Liberation Struggle in Korea* (1958), emphasised only the importance of the “ever-victorious” revolutionary tradition created by Kim Il-sung. Despite containing an abundance of the most updated historical data and the relatively high level of research, several years later both books were proclaimed “erroneous” and their authors purged.

Arguably less sensitive to the ever-changing Party line were the topics pertinent to medieval and ancient history. Instead of tempting their fate by investigations in the tricky area of modern or contemporary history, many North Korean scholars voluntarily limited their responsibility to the duties of translator. To facilitate the translation of historical sources from classical Chinese into contemporary Korean, in 1956 the Division of Classical Research [Kojn Yn’gusil] was established within the IHR DPRKAS. However, even the academic publications designed for a narrow circle of specialists, such as *Chronological Tables of Korean History* (1957), were to serve the purpose of ideological indoctrination. The name of Kim Il-sung was placed there on a par with the great rulers of the past.

Discussions on the socio-economic essence of ancient Korean kingdoms were officially closed in 1962, when historical community in the DPRK ultimately settled upon the hypothesis suggested by Kim S k -hyng and Pak Si -hyng. It was presumed that the Three Kingdoms were based not on the slave-holding but on feudal economy. Moreover, their establishing dates were pushed back to the 2nd century B.C. Instead, the mythical Old Chosn (2333 -108 B.C.) was proclaimed the earliest slave-holding power state in Korean history. This newly accepted official position was recorded in the 1962 edition of the *General History of Korea*. Drastic variations from the earlier version of this book revealed another sharp turn in the DPRK historiography. While in 1956 the socio-economic level of Puy and Chinguk tribes were defined as “declining and primitive classless societies”, in 1962 they were treated as the “classical examples of ancient slave-holding”.

Archaeology was also mobilised to function in support of increasingly nationalistic ideology. Trying to present Korean history as the longest and most sophisticated in

East Asia, North Korean historians rushed to find confirmation of the Palaeolithic Age in the peninsula. A large number of field discoveries made between 1963 and 1966 not only established the grounds for such claims, but also significantly expanded the geography of lands supposedly populated by ancient Koreans. The Sea of Okhotsk on the East and the Yangze River on the West now girded the territory occupied by legendary Old Chosŏn, Yemaek and Palhae. Such passion for imperial grandiosity tempted North Korean scholars to presume that their ancient capital, P'yŏngyang, was initially established somewhere in Liaodong peninsula. However, at that time, the myth of Tan'gun was still treated as a "popular legend that reflected some serious changes in socio-economic life".

The necessity to rewrite politically incorrect books and articles provided the ruling faction of the former anti-Japanese guerrillas in the KWP with a unique chance to doctor some details of modern and contemporary history that could not but bring many fantastic elements into its narrative. By that time, Kim Il-sŏng's cult of personality had already reached an extraordinary height: his anti-Japanese guerrilla past was being depicted in the most heroic tones; his monuments and portraits were ubiquitous. Then, North Korean historians began deifying Kim's family members. For instance, in describing the 1866 incident with the American ship "General Sherman", Yi Ch'ŏng-wŏn and other "old" historians usually stated that this attack in the waters of Taedong River was organised and guided by a retired officer, Pak Ch'un-gwon. However, after 1961, Kim Il-sŏng's great grandfather, Kim ŏn-u, began to be credited with this exploit.

The chain reaction of academic fraud, which began after 1956, finally plunged North Korean historiography into the dark ages of the 1960s. The "guiding recommendations" of Kim's eldest son, Kim Jŏng-il, and numerous cousins brought even more havoc into historical scholarship. In 1960, when Kim Jŏng-il began his graduate course at the Kim Il-sŏng University, a number of historiographical articles were published under his name. In one article, the freshman Kim claimed that the kingdom of Silla had never unified the Korean peninsula. In another essay, Kim argued that the northern kingdom of Koguryŏ boasted the more advanced level of socio-economic development than the other two Korean kingdoms. Who stood behind these scholarly experiments is still not clear, but the implication was that historical scholarship had been taken over by the obscurantism of *Juch'e* ideology.

This dramatic overturn affected the course of the last academic discussions. From the diminishing variety of academic opinions the Central Committee would choose one to become the official hypothesis. All other views would be outlawed as anti-Party and anti-revolutionary, leaving their authors little chance for survival. This was the time when even "new" historians, those who for a while assumed the leading role in academia, were removed from the scene. Nevertheless, while decimating the ranks of scholars the North Korean repressive machine normally refrained from immediate executions. Yi Na-yŏng, for example, kept writing a Leader-centred version of contemporary history in his prison cell until the 1970s. Some of them, like Chŏn Sŏk-tam, were later recalled to continue interrupted work, emptying prison space for the new candidates for political re-education.

At the Second Party Conference in October 1966, Kim Ch'ang-man, who for many years had been in charge of the KWP ideological section, was dismissed and put on

trial. Kim Il-s Ņng purged most of his colleagues in the field of ideology and propaganda for being “bourgeois revisionists”. Simultaneously the mass purge of former Kapsan guerrillas took place in the KWP. Thus, the last potential opponents of Kim Il-s Ņng within the Party were successfully annihilated. After all these incidents, the Fifteenth Plenary Meeting (May 1967) warned against “revisionist trends in ideology” which were allegedly caused by the American cultural invasion. In reality, it was the moment when the Marxist-Leninist ideology was effectively superseded by the *Juch’e* ideology of Kimilsungism.

The process of discarding the “old” Marxist vision of national history which first succeeded in 1956, was also completed in 1967, when Hwang Chang-y p was forced to create a philosophical substantiation of *Juch’e* historiography. Historian Kang Chae- n remembers that at that time the portraits of prominent historical figures, except those of Kim Il-s Ņng, were removed from the walls of classrooms and offices of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan [Choch'onngry n]. Every academic publication was expected to start with the words “As teaches the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-s Ņng...” In such circumstances, the normal work of historical journal *Yksa Kwahak* and archaeological journal *Kogohak Yngu* was impossible and their publication was suspended.

As it has been established above, historiographical debates in North Korea of the mid-1950s began with the genuine attempts of the younger generation of scholars to mend the limitations of the “old” Socio-economic tradition in Marxist historical research. The further development of the DPRK official historiography after the 1956 political crisis, however, turned into deliberate demolition of this tradition. Desperate attempts to subjugate the studies of national history to the interests of nationalistic ideology created the situation when historical fact was valued only according to its ability to support the Party line. By 1967, most historiographical debates had been shut down as obsolete, while the atmosphere of constant purges and terror tamed historians and demoted them to the status of obedient scholar-bureaucrats.