A Comparative Study of Nationalist Poetry in Korea and the Philippines

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Introduction

The two Asian countries, Korea and the Philippines, hardly share anything in common in culture, geography, people, and climate, except their past unhappy experience of colonial rule and foreign oppression. Korea has been harassed by foreign powers throughout her long history and finally became a complete colony of Japan for thirty-five years (1910-1945); the Philippines was ruled by three different imperial powers for over three centuries—Spanish (1571-1898), American (1900-1946), and Japanese (1942-1945).

Perhaps, the history of the ceaseless resistance of the people of Korea and the Philippines against foreign oppression was the most consistent trait providing a common denominator of the two different Asian countries. Renato Constantino says, "Filipino resistance to colonial oppression is the unifying thread of Philippines history"(Constantino 11). Of Korean history says Japanese historian, Takashi Hatada, specialist on
Korean history:

The history of Korea from its beginning to the present day is a history of suffering and destruction caused by foreign oppressions and invasions. . . . Korean history, being so much a story of hardship brought about by foreign nations, has caused the Korean people to nurture a fierce resentment against external enemies (Hatada 142).

The two countries, however, scarcely had any close interrelationship until a few decades ago. The first indirect, but very significant, relationship between Korea and the Philippines, changing the course of the history of the two countries as well as the international scene, was an ironical one which clearly manifested the helpless situations of the two countries in the hands of the imperial power. It was on July 29, 1905, that the United States government endorsed Japanese suzerainty over Korea in exchange for the pledge that "Japan does not harbor any aggressive designs whatever against the Philippines (Tewskbury 21-23)."

The second relationship was a pathetic one which was the consequence of the first indirect relationship as Japan did not keep the aforementioned pledge of not harboring any aggressive designs against the Philippines: a number of Koreans as conscripted soldiers were forced to come to the Philippines along with the Japanese to fight against the Filipinos in 1942-1945.

The third relationship was the reversed one: the Filipino soldiers were dispatched to join U.N. Troops when the Korean War broke out on June, 1950.

Only the recent years have witnessed some dynamic interrelationships and exchanges in politics, economics, and technology. Yet there remains almost a vacuum state in the literary field to be filled