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THE APPROPRIATION OF SIN SAIMDANG AS A SYMBOL OF MODERNIZATION DURING THE PARK CHUNG HEE ERA

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ABSTRACT. ***The Appropriation of Sin Saimdang as a Symbol of Modernization during the Park Chung Hee Era.*** In the aftermath of her death, Sin Saimdang (1504-1551), mother of Neo-Confucian philosopher Yulgok Yi I, was gradually transformed into a symbol of motherhood and female domesticity, an image which, in time, overshadowed her accomplishments as a painter. Little personal details are known about her, other than the brief characterization made posthumously by Yulgok. Everything else in her biography is anecdotal and was added by Yulgok's followers, even centuries after her death. All these layers of interpretation have made Saimdang an abstract symbol, not a real historical person. The present study investigates how this symbol was instrumented by the Park Chung Hee government (1961-1979) in order to mobilize housewives to participate in the developmentalist projects of the state. The paper argues that Sin Saimdang has been promoted by the state, with the contribution of women's organizations, as a symbol of modernization, used in gendered national mobilization. Various commemoration practices–a memorial day and a national prize honoring Saimdang, statues erected in the 1970s, the restoration of her ancestral home–stand as evidence of the coordinated efforts made by the state and women's associations to disseminate Sin Saimdang as a model for the modern Korean woman.

Keywords*: Park Chung Hee, Sin Saimdang, Yulgok Yi I, commemoration practices, modernization, gender.*

REZUMAT. ***Transformarea lui Sin Saimdang într-un simbol al modernizării sub regimul lui Park Chung Hee.*** După moartea sa, Sin Saimdang (1504-1551), mama filosofului neo-confucianist Yulgok Yi I, a fost transformată treptat într-

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un simbol al maternității și al feminității domestice, o imagine care, în timp, i-a umbrit realizările din domeniul artei picturale. Puține detalii personale sunt cunoscute despre ea, cu excepția scurtei caracterizări realizate postum de Yulgok. Toate celelalte amănunte din biografia ei sunt elemente anecdotice, adăugate de discipolii lui Yulgok, chiar la secole distanță după moartea lui Saimdang. Toate aceste paliere de interpretare au făcut din ea un simbol abstract, nu o persoană reală. Studiul de față investighează modul cum acest simbol a fost utilizat de guvernul dictatorului Park Chung Hee (1961-1979) pentru a mobiliza gospodinele casnice să participle la proiectele de dezvoltare ale statului. Lucrarea argumentează că Sin Saimdang a fost promovată de către stat, cu ajutorul organizațiilor de femei, drept simbol al modernizării, folosit pentru mobilizarea națională diferențiată pe genuri. Diverse practici de comemorare – o zi memorială și un premiu național onorând numele lui Saimdang, statui ridicate în deceniul 1970, restaurarea casei sale părintești – reprezintă o dovadă a eforturilor concertate ale statului și organizațiilor de femei să o promoveze pe Sin Saimdang ca model al femeii coreene moderne.

***Cuvinte-cheie**: Park Chung Hee, Sin Saimdang, Yulgok Yi I, practici de comemorare, modernizare, gen.*

Introduction

Remembered as the mother of Neo-Confucian philosopher Yi I (pen name Yulgok, 1536-1584), Sin Saimdang (1504-1551) is considered one of the most – if not the most – representative women in Korean history. She is unanimously regarded as a paragon of motherly and marital virtue and also a talented painter – an image which has been carefully constructed over the centuries. Meanings embedded in Saimdang's image have been constantly produced and used, especially during the twentieth century. In fact, her image has been so over-interpreted, that the individual disappeared and only a very powerful, very enduring "fictional trope" (Ko et al. 2003, 1) has remained.

The present article investigates the gendered narratives that were constructed about Sin Saimdang during the Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏng-hŭi)[1] era (1961-1979) and analyzes the shaping of social roles through the image of Saimdang. I argue that Sin Saimdang has been promoted by the state, with the contribution of women's organizations, as a symbol of modernization, used in gendered national mobilization. The meanings embedded in Saimdang

[1] The present article uses the McCune-Reischauer system for the Romanization of Korean language, except for proper names commonly Romanized in a different system, such as 'Seoul,' 'Park Chung Hee,' and names of authors who have chosen to Romanize their names differently.

transformed her into an instrument for the education of housewives as loyal citizens who participate in the developmentalist projects of the state from home, through domestic work and the education of their children. The present paper documents invented commemoration traditions from the Park era, using as evidence presidential public speeches, newspapers, and heritage management reports.

The premodern invention of a symbol

Like most women from Chosŏn (1392-1910) who are known, Sin Saimdang is remembered thanks to her kin relationships. As the mother of reputed Neo-Confucian scholar Yulgok, she was included in the memorialization practices dedicated to her son by his followers, who praised her for having raised such an exceptional son. The Confucian values which dominated the social, political, and cultural life of Chosŏn dynasty confined women to rigidly prescribed roles solely within the family and the household, and commitment to these roles was of paramount importance in judging a woman's moral standing. Sound, orthodox Confucian education discouraged women from engaging in social activities beyond the domestic realm, and from seeking to make a name for themselves, for fear it would ruin their character (Deuchler 2003; Pettid 2011). As a consequence, very few women from Chosŏn times are remembered today, and most of them are known simply because they were mentioned in memoirs, biographies and historiographic works written by men and embedded in the Chosŏn patriarchal system of values. Moral virtues were the cardinal criteria for appreciation and mention of women in a male author's work. The fact that names of famous women from the past are always preceded by a qualifier explaining who they were reveals how difficult it was for women to gain recognition (Kim 2013).

Sin Saimdang is a case in point: we do not know her given name, because women's names were not recorded in the family registers during Chosŏn times. Sin was her father's family name, and Saimdang – her pen name, chosen by her father in hope she will become a virtuous mother (Yi 2004, 59). We know more about her, however, thanks to Yulgok's "Biography of my Late Mother" (*Sŏnbi haengjang*) (Pokorny and Chang 2015, 189), in which he praises her filial piety, humility, sense of propriety, and artistic talents, particularly in painting. She was born and educated in the family of a scholar-official, and became a learned woman who wrote poetry, was knowledgeable of the Classics, and executed ink monochrome paintings, landscapes emulating An Kyŏn's style, genre paintings (birds and flowers, grass and insects), and unique paintings of grapes. She became famous for her artwork among her son's contemporaries, to the point that, Yulgok notes in her biography,

"Screens and scrolls based on copies [of her paintings] are abundantly spread across the world" (Pokorny and Chang 2015, 196).

This biography has represented the departure point for an array of interpretations of Sin Saimdang over the centuries, polarized between virtuous mother respecting the gender norms of her time and exceptional painter who transgressed gender restrictions, a woman ahead of her time. Lee Sook-in has argued that the image of Saimdang is the layered product of sixteenth to nineteenth-century intellectual discourses on her identity, inseparable from processes of production of knowledge, gender and power relations in Chosŏn society (Lee 2008, 4). In the aftermath of her death, Saimdang was initially praised for her talent as a painter, a status seemingly unrelated to her son (Lee 2008, 7), but by the seventeenth century, the focus moved to the Confucian moral virtues that could be illustrated through Saimdang's persona: she became the epitome of 'womanly virtue' (婦德 *pudŏk*) (Lee 2008, 15), a Confucian concept which encapsulated the ideal woman. According to this ideal, virtuous women were expected to manifest spousal and motherly devotion, filial piety, frugality, chastity, diligence in the performance of daily duties, and the ability to maintain harmony within the domestic realm. Gradually, the Confucian literati who commented on Saimdang's artwork preferred to stress the connection to Yulgok, instead of emphasizing her talent (Kim 2008, 227). Viewed through the lens of Confucian-prescribed norms, her paintings became an illustration of the ancient wisdom of the great Chinese sages, not products of intellectual work with intrinsic artistic value. In the eighteenth century, Saimdang was mostly revered as a symbol of motherhood, an extremely influential image which has been since inseparable from her name and identity. In this context, Confucian intellectuals, strict guardians of patriarchal systems of value, interpreted her artwork as a form of prenatal care or fetal education (*t'aegyo*) of the great sage Yulgok (Lee 2008, 17-18), the supreme proof of motherly love. This moved the focus on her identity as a devoted educator of her children, an image which will be intensely exploited in the twentieth century.

The interpretation of Sin Saimdang during the colonial period

Although it is now associated with Chosŏn era femininity and gender identity, the concept actually originates in the gender ideology of Meiji Japan (1868-1912) and was propagated in Korea through the colonial education system (1910-1945). Choi Hyaeweol has argued that "wise mother, good wife" is not a mere reflection of the patriarchal Chosŏn society, but a "transcultural discursive construct" that incorporates, beside Confucian-prescribed gender norms, Japanese and Western ideologies of domesticity (Choi 2009, 1-4).

During the last years of the nineteenth century and the Japanese colonial period, Korean intellectuals imported the gender ideology of "good wife, wise mother" (Jap. *ryōsai kenbo*), developed in Meiji Japan. The concept was coined by Nakamura Masanao, a Japanese Christian intellectual who got his inspiration from Western ideas of female domesticity. While today the concept brings to mind outdated, conservative Confucian ideas about the role of women in society, it was quite revolutionary at the end of the nineteenth century, because it advocated more power for women within the household, as educated managers of domestic affairs and significant educators of children (Sievers 1981, 603-604). The Meiji and prewar Shōwa (1926-1989) governments then transformed the concept into a slogan, and instrumentalized it to designate women-citizens who participated in the "modern project of nation-building and industrialization" (Choi 2009, 7) by supporting their husbands from home and by rearing future generations of educated citizens (Smith 1983, 75). The colonial education system propagated this ideal in Korea, aiming to turn young women into future "wise mothers, good wives" (*hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ*), "with the aim of producing obedient imperial subjects and an efficient, submissive workforce." (Choi 2009, 8)

During the colonial period, Sin Saimdang emerged among the female models promoted within society. The media promoted historical figures which expressed national identity, and, in this context, the name of Sin Saimdang appeared among famous women of the past. She was revered first and foremost as Yulgok's "esteemed mother" (*modang*) (*Tonga Ilbo* 1934) and as a female painter (*Tonga Ilbo* 1930). However, she had not yet become the epitome of "wise mother, good wife," the attributes which are now inseparable from her name. This transformation happened under the influence of postwar gender ideology aiming to inculcate in women a certain type of domesticity and femininity. The Park Chung Hee government and women's organizations in the 1970s exploited the image of Sin Saimdang already established during the colonial period, and appropriated her as a symbol of the nation, adding "mother of the nation" (*kyŏre ŭi ŏmŏni*) to her identity.

Gendered mobilization during the Park Chung Hee era

Originating in the assumption that in the first half of the twentieth century foreign, evil superpowers distorted the history of the Korean people, military dictator Park Chung Hee's postcolonial government created a very enduring trope about correcting the historical views of the past and establishing a "correct view of the nation" (Park 1974, 166). The president had his own personal understanding of what "independent", "correct" history was (Park 1974, 166), and especially of how it could be used in order to persuade citizens to willingly, indiscriminately engage in the modernization projects of

the state. By the mid-1970s, the state had developed a certain vision about "a history of overcoming national adversities" (*kungnan kŭkpoksa*) (Kim 2012, 196), which attributed to the Korean people the historic, innate strength necessary to defeat all enemies and prevail over any crisis (Sîntionean 2014). The discourse about this determination, allegedly ingrained in the very identity of Koreans, was essential in the context of postwar economic crisis and perceived constant threat from North Korea. National heritage, monuments and commemoration practices were instrumental in disseminating this view of the past, and the state-led Office of Cultural Properties (*Munhwajae Kwalliguk*) started to identify and refashion historic sites so that they supported and illustrated the concept of overcoming difficult times.[2] The government further employed history and heritage to provide models to be emulated by the citizens, emphasizing values such as dedication to one's country, self-sacrifice, patriotism, loyalty, hard work, and frugality.

Gender played a major role in this educational process, as the government urged men and women to perform their roles, prescribed in the ideology of developmentalism. The state pursued gendered national mobilization, asking men to join military service and to contribute to industrialization and economic development, promoted by the government as prerequisites to national defense against North Korea, the communist enemy. The "masculinization of skilled labor in heavy and chemical industries" (Moon 2005, 58) was accompanied by "women's marginalization as workers in the industrializing economy, along with the modernizing state's call for women to be wise mothers" and housewives (Moon 2005, 69). In her provocative study of "gendered citizenship" in postwar South Korea, Seungsook Moon notes that "economic marginalization of women became visible in their persistent exposure to domesticating instructions and their exclusion from vocational training programs during the period of heavy industrialization in the 1970s and 1980s" (Moon 2005, 69).

Women were seen solely as domestic figures who contributed to the development of the state by executing the domestic roles the state prescribed for them. For this purpose, the state tailored educational programs and public campaigns addressed to women, focusing on family planning, children's education, hygiene, domestic management, modern housekeeping, frugality, etiquette, and traditional womanly virtues. For women who worked in factories, the Ministry of Labor designed a curriculum that was disseminated at the workplace (Moon 2005, 76), while for middle-class women, these educational principles were propagated through national women's associations. These organizations, sanctioned and financially supported by the state, were

[2] This view of "a history of overcoming national adversities" still persists in the presentation of historic heritage in South Korea today – a consequence of the influential historiographic discourses and heritage practices developed under the Park rule.

actually instruments of control of the female population, since their educational programs were highly influential in modelling a new class of women who identified primarily as housewives and mothers.

Building on the powerful symbolism embodied in Sin Saimdang during the colonial era, the Park government selected her as a role model for women. Yi Ŭn-sang's biography of Saimdang (Yi 1994), first published in 1962 and reprinted several times ever since, has been the fundamental reference work about her in the modern period and has been extremely effective in popularizing this female symbol. Drawing on Yulgok's memories of his mother, Yi further collected anecdotes from various other Chosŏn sources and built a very influential discourse about Saimdang. Yi Ŭn-sang represented her as a paragon of filial piety, emphasizing the importance of Saimdang's family relations in her formation. Saimdang was born and lived, quite atypically for that age, in her paternal house, called Ojukhŏn. She lived there in order to take care of her parents, because they did not have any sons (Pokorny and Chang 2015, 191), despite the fact that it was customary for women to move with their in-laws after marriage. In Yi Ŭn-sang's view, this parental, protective environment shaped Saimdang considerably, because it allowed her to become an educated woman and talented painter, besides being a virtuous wife, dedicated mother and paragon of morality (Yi 1994). The influential writings of Yi Ŭn-sang contributed to the dissemination of Saimdang's image as a model "wise mother, good wife" in 1960s South Korea.

During this period, state-led normative discourses about the ideal woman further simplified and reduced Saimdang's stereotyped image to the phrase, now inseparable from her name, "wise mother, good wife" (*hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ*). However, "wise mother, good wife" Sin Saimdang was not revived by the Park Chung Hee government as a symbol of patriarchal oppression and submissive roles; on the contrary, she was discursively invested with empowering agency. The new ideal woman, like Saimdang, had to be educated and highly concerned with the education of her children ("wise mother"), because knowledge enabled women to contribute to the modernization of the nation-state at work, and also raise the ideal future citizens at home (Park 1965). The new Saimdang myth did not discard the patriarchal norms about women's domestic roles, but instead artificially infused new meaning in them: paradoxically, the traditional roles of women as obedient wives and patient mothers became instruments of economic development and modernization (Park 1965). In an attempt to create new identities, state-led educational practices urged women to be dutiful wives and diligent, tenacious mothers who overcome the obstacles to modernization and educate their children in the spirit of self-sacrifice and loyalty to the nation-state. As Cho Haejoang notes, this represented a transition "from traditional patriarchy to modern patriarchy" (Cho

2002, 167) and, "although the women of this generation were able to use their new economic resources to advance family interests and to strengthen a distinctively matrifocal family culture, the subculture they made was not in serious conflict with modern Korean patriarchy, whose values they reproduce by ultimately identifying themselves, like the women of the grandmother generation, as the mothers of sons." (Cho 2002, 177-178)

Commemoration practices dedicated to Sin Saimdang

Sin Saimdang was reinterpreted not only by the state, but also through women's movements. The Korean Federation of Housewives' Clubs (Taehan Chubu K'ŭllŏp Yŏnhaphoe) established a commemoration day dedicated to Sin Saimdang (*Sin Saimdang ŭi nal kinyŏm haengsa*), first celebrated on July 1, 1969, at Kyŏngbokkung Palace's throne hall, Kŭnjŏngjŏn. As a reaction to the "decadent trends" of the day, particularly the westernization of social mores and attire, organizers requested that all participants wear a traditional costume (*hanbok*), in order to foster endurance (*innae ŭi him*) among women (*Maeil kyŏngje* 1969, 7). The event included a competition of artistic talent, artistic skills, and scholarly abilities, divided in five categories: needlework, calligraphy, ink monochrome paintings, poetry, and essay. Three housewives (*chubu*) were selected for each category as "Sin Saimdang's successors" (*Sin Saimdang hugyeja*) (*Kyŏnghyang sinmun* 1969, 5). The purpose of the competition was "every year on this day to choose and commend a mother who is closest to Sin Saimdang," who was respected as a virtuous woman and excelled at painting and calligraphy, while raising her seven children (*Kyŏnghyang sinmun* 1969, 5). For this reason, the Korean Federation of Housewives' Clubs created the Saimdang Prize, which has become an established annual tradition.[3] The first person to receive the Saimdang Prize in this competition was calligrapher Yi Ch'ŏl-gyŏng, mother of three sons and two daughters. At the time, she was the author of a writing primer for elementary school children and had authored five private exhibitions. Since her artwork was known in France, she was commended for introducing Korean art to a Western audience (*Kyŏnghyang sinmun* 1969, 5).

The invention of these commemoration practices (the memorial day, the prize bearing Saimdang's name) transformed Sin Saimdang into a modernized hero, "a 'superwoman' leading modernization at home and in society" (Kim 2008, 215). This interpretation of Saimdang, fostered by the Korean Federation of Housewives' Clubs, is all the more paradoxical and surprising, since Saimdang, as a typical female of aristocratic background in Chosŏn society, would have

[3] Since 1969, the Sin Saimdang Commemoration Day has been an uninterrupted tradition for more than fifty years, held annually on May 17. The fiftieth edition was celebrated in 2018 (Kim 2018).

never gotten out of the house for social interactions or work or even for her education. Likewise, the image of mother-educator, invested in the education of her children, has been heavily exploited, despite the fact that we don't actually know how she raised her four sons and three daughters. Based on the premodern tradition of interpreting her life and achievements, the fact that she raised Yulgok automatically transformed her into a success story. Kim Wŏn suggested that Sin Saimdang represented a new type of femininity, intertwined with a new national identity. In the context of discussing anti-models of womanhood appearing in popular culture (particularly the movies of the 1970s), Kim situates "the new Korean women symbolized by Sin Saimdang" (Kim 2012, 223) as opposed to women who were influenced by immoral, decadent Western culture.

The infusion of modern values into Sin Saimdang's figure by the Korean Federation of Housewives' Clubs was supported by the state, as evidenced in the repetition of such practices during a wide-scale heroization movement during 1968-1972. The state-driven "Statues Construction Movement" (*Tongsang Kŏllip Undong*) selected historic figures (mostly from the distant past) and projected upon them traditional values that played a key role in the state propaganda of the 1970s. These were (in order of unveiling between 1968 and 1972) : Yi Sun-sin (1545-1598), King Sejong (1397-1450), Samyŏngdang (1544–1610), Yulgok Yi I, Wŏnhyo (617–686), Kim Yu-sin (595–673), Ŭlchi Mundŏk (7th century), Yu Kwan-sun (1902–1920), Sin Saimdang, Chŏng Mong-ju (1338–1392), Chŏng Yak-yong (1762–1836), T'oegye Yi Hwang (1501-1570), Kang Kam-ch'an (948–1031), Kim Tae-gŏn (1821–1846), and Yun Pong-gil (1908–1932) (Chŏng 2007, 346). The list includes notable Chosŏn intellectuals, eminent Buddhist monks, colonial era independence fighters, but, most prominently, military heroes who became paragons of patriotism and sacrifice. The commemoration practices dedicated to these heroes in the "Statues Construction Movement"–the unveiling ceremonies, the biographies and dedication texts engraved on the statues–were part of a larger commemoration strategy designed by the Park government. Also, they were congruent with other state-led practices, particularly in heritage management and the restoration of historic sites (*sajŏk*), which I have explored elsewhere (Sîntionean 2014). The message conveyed through the statues focused on educating citizens about loyalty and filial piety, Confucian values which were appropriated by the state and used to shape citizens' consciousness and adherence to developmentalist projects. The concepts of loyalty and filial piety were reinterpreted to suit governmental agendas, and used to inculcate citizens' commitment to economic development, industrialization, and anticommunism. For instance, Yulgok's statue and the associated commemoration practices communicated him as a symbol of economic development, modernization, anticommunism, unification, and national security (Chŏng 2007, 352).

Fig. 1. President Park Chung Hee (standing in the middle) attends the unveiling ceremony for Sin Saimdang's statue in Sajik Park, on October 14, 1970.
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Sin Saimdang was one of the only two female historical figures who were commemorated in the "Statues Construction Movement" (the other being Yu Kwan-sun, a martyr of the March First Movement for independence from the colonial regime). The Committee for Erecting Statues of Patriotic Martyrs (*Aeguk Sŏnyŏl Chosang Kŏllip Wiwŏnhoe*) erected Sin Saimdang's statue on October 14, 1970, in Sajik Park, next to Yulgok's statue, in the presence of President Park Chung Hee, government key figures, and women's associations (Fig. 1). The selection of Saimdang had nothing to do with making women visible in history, but rather conveyed gender roles in support of development projects. The meanings imbued in this statue and the other two statues erected for Sin Saimdang during the Park era[4] did not change the discourse widely disseminated by women's

[4] In October 1974, another statue of Sin Saimdang was erected in Kyŏngp'odae, Kangwŏndo, complete with Park Chung Hee's writing of her name and Yi Ŭn-sang's presentation of her life. Another statue was erected on November 1977, when the girls high-school Saimdang Training Institute (*Saimdang Kyoyugwŏn*) was launched in Chumunjin, Kangwŏndo (Kim 2008, 234). Both of these statues represent Saimdang reading a scroll, reiterating her image of a learned woman, dedicated to the education of her children.

organizations such as the Korean Federation of Housewives' Clubs. The state appropriated a historical figure who was already an over-interpreted symbol, the so-called "Saimdang myth" (Yi 2004, 70), and adapted concepts of female domesticity from the Chosŏn dynasty to the modernization and urbanization period of the 1960s and 1970s. Sin Saimdang thus became a model modern woman, with the two key-roles prescribed for women by the state (breeder and housewife) already ingrained in her identity as a "wise mother, good wife."

However, Lee Sook-in has aptly observed that there is no Saimdang without Yulgok (Lee 2008, 19). From the very beginning, she was revered as the philosopher's mother, and wouldn't have been remembered and reinterpreted over time, were it not for her strong familial connection to Yulgok. Nowhere is Lee Sook-in's observation clearer than in the treatment of Ojukhŏn by the Park regime. Ojukhŏn was the famous birthplace of both Yulgok and his mother, yet the site was excessively reconstructed in the 1970s in order to prioritize the figure of the son, transformed into a paragon of loyalty, sacrifice, and civic duty that was to be emulated by all patriotic citizens. Originally, in its search for national role models, the government took interest in Yulgok and the ability of this historic person to represent high moral virtues and academic achievement. It was only as a side effect of this focus on Yulgok that Saimdang started to be commemorated by the government, and always in connection to him. Commenting on the low visibility of women in history, historian David Lowenthal notes that "male forebears remain more memorialized and better remembered; women are victims of genealogical amnesia" (Lowenthal 1968, 51). The memorialization practices dedicated to Yulgok since the early 1960s stand as evidence for this: President Park Chung Hee himself paid a visit at Yulgok's birthplace, Ojukhŏn, in 1962, and in the following year, the Office of Cultural Properties designated Ojukhŏn as national heritage (in the category *pomul*, lit. "treasure" no. 165). The fact that the eponymous *yangban* mansion was also Saimdang's birthplace and paternal house was of secondary importance. It was Yulgok, not Saimdang, that started to be commemorated here by governmental and local authorities, who created a Yulgok Festival (originally called Yulgokche Haengsa) in 1962[5]. The festival was a celebration of academic achievement and tradition, as it included a writing contest, traditional music and dance, and fireworks.

Then, in 1974, Park Chung Hee instructed local authorities and the Office of Cultural Properties to restore Ojukhŏn, which resulted in a massive reconstruction project in 1976, with sweeping alterations made to the entire complex (Kangwŏndo Chibang Munhwajae Kwalliguk 1976). The project included the reconstruction of a bigger Yulgok Memorial Hall (Yulgok Kinyŏmgwan) which

[5] The first edition of the Yulgok Festival took place on November 6, 1962. In the following years, the festival was organized in October and lasted for up to three days. It has been an uninterrupted tradition since 1962, as Kangwŏn Province still organizes this event every year. The last edition took place in October 25-26, 2019.

holds the belongings of Yulgok, his mother and his brother and sister, who were also talented painters. The restoration plan included no particular memorial hall dedicated to Saimdang alone, even though Ojukhŏn was her birthplace and the house where she lived for most of her life. Even today, Ojukhŏn remains centered on commemorating Yulgok and his achievements. Perhaps the most telling monument, representative of the meanings embedded in Sin Saimdang, is her statue, bearing the inscription "mother of the nation" (*kyŏre ŭi ŏmŏni*). This phrase, imbued with nationalism, is widely known in Korea, and in some contexts, she is even called "the eternal mother of the nation" (*kyŏre ŭi yŏngwŏnhan ŏmŏni*).

Conclusions

Today, Sin Saimdang is still revered as a modern woman ahead of her times–a symbol of modernization in another sense than in the Park era discourse: she was an educated woman and she excelled at painting, so for contemporary Korean women and feminist movements, she represents a woman who did not respect the gender roles of her age. Saimdang is still a national symbol (hence her selection for the fifty thousand wŏn bill in 2007), but civic society, through the contribution of feminist civic groups, is now redefining the values represented by Saimdang. Today, she stands for something added to "wise mother, good wife": she is not only a paragon of motherhood, but most of all a remarkable artist.

Therefore, the meanings projected upon Sin Saimdang, about whom we actually know very little, continue to evolve through time. The present paper has analyzed the contribution of the Park Chung Hee era to the continuous creation of the "Saimdang myth" (Yi 2004, 70). By the 1960s, after centuries of reinterpretations of Saimdang, she had become a symbol of traditional gender roles and of the patriarchal order of Chosŏn dynasty. The Park government did not set to challenge these roles, but instead infused new meanings into the symbol Saimdang and used it to promote its own agenda about modernization. Ultimately, the Park government, through its commemoration practices and with help from women's associations, used traditional female domesticity to shape housewives as loyal citizens contributing to modernization.

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