

CLIO

HISTORY



YU GUAN SOON

BIRTH: By Lunar Calendar, 15, March 1903

DEATH: 12, October, 1920. 8:20 A.M.

She is born of one mother and one father.

女

男

She makes complete her duration. As others have made complete theirs: rendered incessant, obsessive myth, rendered immortal their acts without the leisure to examine whether the parts false the parts real according to History's revision.

Truth embraces with it all other abstentions other than itself. Outside Time. Outside Space. Parallels other durations, oblivious to the deliberate brilliance of its own time, mortal, deliberate marking. Oblivious to itself. But to sing. To sing to. Very softly.

She calls the name Jeanne d'Arc three times.
She calls the name Ahn Joong Kun five times.

There is no people without a nation, no people without ancestry. There are other nations no matter how small their land, who have their independence. But our country, even with 5,000 years of history, has lost it to the Japanese.

"Japan at once created an assembly, in the name of the King, for the 'discussion of everything, great and small, that happened within the realm.' This assembly at first met daily, and afterwards at longer intervals. There were soon no less than fifty Japanese advisers at work in Seoul. They were men of little experience and less responsibility, and they apparently thought that they were going to transform the land between the rising and setting of the sun. They produced endless ordinances, and scarce a day went by save that a number of new regulations were

issued, some trivial, some striking at the oldest and most cherished institutions in the country. The Government was changed from an absolute monarchy to one where the king governed only by the advice of the Ministers. The power of direct address to the throne was denied to anyone under the rank of Governor. One ordinance created a constitution, and the next dealt with the status of the ladies of the royal seraglio. At one hour a proclamation went forth that all men were to cut their hair, and the wearied runners on their return were again dispatched in hot haste with an edict altering the official language. Nothing was too small, nothing too great, and nothing too contradictory for these constitution-mongers. Their doings were the laugh and the amazement of every foreigner in the place.

"Acting on the Japanese love of order and of defined rank, exact titles of honour were provided for the wives of officials. These were divided into nine grades: 'Pure and Reverent Lady,' 'Pure Lady,' 'Chaste Lady,' 'Chaste Dame,' 'Worthy Dame,' 'Courteous Dame,' 'Just Dame,' 'Peaceful Dame,' and 'Upright Dame.' At the same time the King's concubines were equally divided, but here eight divisions were sufficient: 'Mistress,' 'Noble Lady,' 'Resplendent Exemplar,' 'Chaste Exemplar,' 'Resplendent Demeanor,' 'Chaste Demeanor,' 'Resplendent Beauty,' and 'Chaste Beauty.' The Japanese advisers instituted a number of sumptuary laws that stirred the country to its depths, relating to the length of pipes, style of dress, and the attiring of the hair of the people. Pipes were to be short, in place of the long bamboo churchwarden beloved by the Koreans.

Sleeves were to be clipped. The top-knot, worn by all Korean men, was at once to be cut off. Soldiers at the city gates proceeded to enforce this last regulation rigorously."

Guan Soon is the only daughter born of four children to her patriot father and mother. From an early age her actions are marked exceptional. History records the biography of her short and intensely-lived existence. Actions prescribed separate her path from the others. The identity of such a path is exchangeable with any other heroine in history, their names, dates, actions which require not definition in their devotion to generosity and self-sacrifice.

In Guan Soon's 16th year, 1919, the conspiracy by the Japanese to overthrow the Korean Government is achieved with the assassination of the ruling Queen Min and her royal family. In the aftermath of this incident, Guan Soon forms a resistant group with fellow students and actively begins her revolutionary work. There is already a nationally organized movement, who do not accept her seriousness, her place as a young woman, and they attempt to dissuade her. She is not discouraged and demonstrates to them her conviction and dedication in the cause. She is appointed messenger and she travels on foot to 40 towns, organizing the nation's mass demonstration to be held on March 1, 1919. This date marks the turning point, it is the largest collective outcry against the Japanese occupation of the Korean people who willingly gave their lives for independence.

The only daughter of four children she makes complete her life as others have made complete. Her mother her father her brothers.

“ ‘I saw four places where engagements had been fought. At one place it had been a drawn battle, the Japanese retiring with five killed. The other three were Japanese victories, owing to the long range of their rifles and their superior ammunition; and only one of their victories was obtained without casualties to themselves. I saw enough to realise that it was no picnic for the Japanese.

“ ‘One is forced to ask who is in charge of these men who are nothing more than brigands. Their mode of warfare seems to be purposely designed to stir every honest man into a frenzy. Is this their object? If not, why do they practice so wicked, so mad a policy? Let the authorities either police the whole disaffected districts effectually and properly, or else confess their incapacity for controlling Korea.’ ”

SUPPRESSION OF FOREIGN CRITICISM

September 26, 1907

“We are informed that a bad fight took place about eight miles from Su-won on Sunday, September 12th. Thirty volunteers were surrounded by Japanese troops, and although no resistance was offered, they were shot down in the most cold-blooded fashion. This not being quite enough to satisfy the conquerors, two other volunteers who had been captured were brought out

and were decapitated by one of the officers. We may mention that this news does not come from native sources; it comes from European."

The "enemy." One's enemy. Enemy nation. Entire nation against the other entire nation. One people exulting the suffering institutionalized on another. The enemy becomes abstract. The relationship becomes abstract. The nation the enemy the name becomes larger than its own identity. Larger than its own measure. Larger than its own properties. Larger than its own signification. For *this* people. For the people who is their enemy. For the people who is their ruler's subject and their ruler's victory.

Japan has become the sign. The alphabet. The vocabulary. To *this* enemy people. The meaning is the instrument, memory that pricks the skin, stabs the flesh, the volume of blood, the physical substance blood as measure, that rests as record, as document. Of *this* enemy people.

To the other nations who are not witnesses, who are not subject to the same oppressions, they cannot know. Unfathomable the words, the terminology: enemy, atrocities, conquest, betrayal, invasion, destruction. They exist only in the larger perception of History's recording, that affirmed, admittedly and unmistakably, one enemy nation has disregarded the humanity of another. Not physical enough. Not to the very flesh and bone, to the core, to the mark, to the point where it is necessary to intervene, even if to invent anew, expressions, for *this* experience, for this *outcome*, that does not cease to continue.

To the others, these accounts are about (one more) distant land, like (any other) distant land, without any discernable features in the narrative, (all the same) distant like any other.

This document is transmitted through, by the same means, the same channel without distinction the content is delivered in the same style: the word. The image. To appeal to the masses to congeal the information to make bland, mundane, no longer able to transcend their own conspirator method, no matter how alluring their presentation. The response is pre-coded to perform predictably however passively possible. Neutralized to achieve the no-response, to make absorb, to submit to the uni-directional correspondence.

Why resurrect it all now. From the Past. History, the old wound. The past emotions all over again. To confess to relive the same folly. To name it now so as not to repeat history in oblivion. To extract each fragment by each fragment from the word from the image another word another image the reply that will not repeat history in oblivion.

PETITION FROM THE KOREANS OF HAWAII
TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

Honolulu, T.H.

July 12, 1905

To His Excellency,

The President of the United States

Your Excellency, —The undersigned have been authorised by the 8,000 Koreans now residing in the territory of Hawaii at a special mass meeting held in the city of Honolulu, on July 12, 1905, to present to your Excellency the following appeal:—

We, the Koreans of the Hawaiian Islands, voicing the sentiments of twelve millions of our countrymen, humbly lay before your Excellency the following facts:—

Soon after the commencement of the war between Russia and Japan, our Government made a treaty of alliance with Japan for offensive and defensive purposes. By virtue of this treaty the whole of Korea was opened to the Japanese, and both the Government and the people have been assisting the Japanese authorities in their military operations in and about Korea.

The contents of this treaty are undoubtedly known to your Excellency, therefore we need not embody them in this appeal. Suffice it to state, however, the object of the treaty was to preserve the independence of Korea and Japan and to protect Eastern Asia from Russia's aggression.

Korea, in return for Japan's friendship and protection against Russia, has rendered services to the Japanese by permitting them to use the country as a base of their military operations.

When this treaty was concluded, the Koreans fully expected that Japan would introduce reforms into the governmental administration along the line of the modern civilization of Europe and America, and that she would advise and counsel our people in a friendly manner, but to our disappointment and regret the Japanese Government has not done a single thing in the way of improving the condition of the Korean people. On the contrary, she turned loose several thousand rough and disorderly men of her nationals in Korea, who are treating the inoffensive Koreans in a most outrageous manner. The Koreans are by nature not a quarrelsome or aggressive people, but deeply resent the high-handed action of the Japanese towards them. We can scarcely believe that the Japanese Government approves the outrages committed by its people in Korea, but it has done nothing to prevent this state of affairs. They have been, during the last eighteen months, forcibly obtaining all the special privileges and concessions from our Government, so that to-day they practically own everything that is worth having in Korea.

We, the common people of Korea, have lost confidence in the promises Japan made at the time of concluding the treaty of alliance, and we doubt seriously the good intentions which she professes to have towards our people. For geographical, racial, and commercial reasons we want to be friendly to Japan, and we are even willing to have her as our guide and example in the matters of internal reforms and education, but the continuous policy of self-exploitation at the expense of the Koreans has shaken our con-

fidence in her, and we are now afraid that she will not keep her promise of preserving our independence as a nation, nor assisting us in reforming internal administration. In other words, her policy in Korea seems to be exactly the same as that of Russia prior to the war.

The United States has many interests in our country. The industrial, commercial, and religious enterprises under American management, have attained such proportions that we believe the Government and people of the United States ought to know the true conditions of Korea and the result of the Japanese becoming paramount in our country. We know that the people of America love fair play and advocate justice towards all men. We also know that your Excellency is the ardent exponent of a square deal between individuals as well as nations, therefore we come to you with this memorial with the hope that Your Excellency may help our country at this critical period of our national life.

We fully appreciate the fact that during the conference between the Russian and Japanese peace envoys, Your Excellency may not care to make any suggestion to either party as to the conditions of their settlement, but we earnestly hope that Your Excellency will see to it that Korea may preserve her autonomous Government and that other Powers shall not oppress or maltreat our people. The clause in the treaty between the United States and Korea gives us a claim upon the United States for assistance, and this is the time when we need it most.

Very respectfully, Your obedient servants,
(Sgd.) P.K. Yoon
Syngman Rhee

March 1, 1919. Everyone knows to carry inside themselves, the national flag. Everyone knows equally the punishment that follows this gesture. The march begins, the flags are taken out, made visible, waved, every individual crying out the independence the freedom to the people of this nation. Knowing equally the punishment. Her parents leading the procession fell. Her brothers. Countless others were fired at and stabbed indiscriminately by the enemy soldiers. Guan Soon is arrested as a leader of the revolution, with punishment deserving of such a rank. She is stabbed in the chest, and subjected to questioning to which she reveals no names. She is given seven years prison sentence to which her reply is that the nation itself is imprisoned. Child revolutionary child patriot woman soldier deliverer of nation. The eternity of one act. Is the completion of one existence. One martyrdom. For the history of one nation. Of one people.

Some will not know age. Some not age. Time stops. Time will stop for some. For them especially. Eternal time. No age. Time fixes for some. Their image, the memory of them is not given to deterioration, unlike the captured image that extracts from the soul precisely by reproducing, multiplying itself. Their countenance evokes not the hallowed beauty, beauty from seasonal decay, evokes not the inevitable, not death, but the dy-ing.

Face to face with the memory, it misses. It's missing. Still. What of time. Does not move. Remains there.

Misses nothing. Time, that is. All else. All things else. All other, subject to time. Must answer to time, except. Still born. Aborted. Barely. Infant. Seed, germ, sprout, less even. Dormant. Stagnant. Missing.

The decapitated forms. Worn. Marred, recording a past, of previous forms. The present form face to face reveals the missing, the absent. Would-be-said remnant, memory. But the remnant is the whole.

The memory is the entire. The longing in the face of the lost. Maintains the missing. Fixed between the wax and wane indefinite not a sign of progress. All else age, in time. Except. Some are without.