

The Dream of the Solidarity of the Downtrodden: Yi Yeoseong (1901–?) and His Work on Global Anti-Imperialist Movements*

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Yi Yeoseong (1901–?) exemplifies the hybridity and complexity of Korea's ideological landscape in the colonial age. During his lifetime Yi, a scion of a Confucian-turned-Christian family, evolved from a nationalist into a Marxist. His Marxism, however, was of a strongly "national" kind, as Yi's main concern was the preservation and development of Korea's indigenous cultural tradition in the era of colonial modernity. This article aims at demonstrating that Yi's paradigm of national liberation was at the same time profoundly internationalist. Parallel to his concerns for Korea's fate, Yi was deeply interested in a range of anti-colonial movements internationally. His interests spanned French Vietnam, British India, Indonesia under Dutch control, but also the situation in the Philippines and even the Jewish-Arab struggles in Palestine and the anti-racist struggles of US Blacks. In Europe, Yi focused on the history of the Irish independence movement. This article will demonstrate that Yi's manifold writings on the global anti-colonial struggles combined Marxist methodology with a nationalist thrust to find abroad some analogies for Korea's own colonial predicament. It is to be hoped that this article will contribute to rediscovering Yi as one of the major colonial-era Korean Marxist thinkers with a global reach.

Keywords: Yi Yeoseong, Marxism, anti-colonialism, internationalism, Vietnam

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