ABSTRACT

With Confucianism as main ideology of the kingship that ruled in the Chosŏn period, Korean funerary culture was systematized and codified to a strong degree. Mourning periods were long, wailing underlay strict rules, and lavishness was prevailing to an extent that it could potentially ruin families financially. Burial was restricted to earth burial that was to be done in auspicious places, which had to be determined by geomancers following feng shui (kor. p’ungsu) principles.

With the opening of Korea to the West and Japan from 1876, Western missionaries started to challenge traditional ancestor rites, while Japan, slowly turning Korea into a colony, attempted to align the Korean funerary culture with that of Japan. With public graveyards and cremation, traditional Confucian practices were challenged by Buddhist practices that had been almost extinct in Korea since the 14th century.

This paper seeks to outline how, in the wake of all these changes, different actors created taboos that finally clashed to create a pluralism of rituals on the peninsula. Whilst Christians tabooized ancestor rites, Japanese authorities ridiculed Korean folk belief and traditional thought as superstition, all the while introducing Japanese Shintō as a non-religious ritual of state that then again clashed with Christian reasoning. The workings of taboos will be illuminated through the diary of Yun Ch’i-ho (1864-1945), a Korean who had embraced Christianity while studying in the US, but came from a traditional family that was keen to keep old traditions alive. His diary is a useful resource because, written over a period of more than fifty years, it gives insight into how Japanese changes affected the everyday of the Koreans and holds many instances where such influences are contemplated.

KEYWORDS: Yun Ch’i-ho, Korean funerary culture, Japanese colonial policy

1. Introduction

In premodern times, due to the undeveloped state of medicine and lacking conceptions of hygiene, life spans were shorter and death was a rather common sight. Caring for the dead, such as organizing the wake, holding the funeral and ensuing memorial ceremonies, was the task of the family
and took place in the homes of the local community (Richter 2010; Ariès 1991). Modernity brought along processes of secularization and rationalization that changed this situation. During the 20th century, death was pushed to the boundaries of human perception and turned into a societal taboo. Since the end of World War II, death and dying became less visible in the everyday for it became common practice that people died in care facilities or hospitals. At the same time, the handling of the dead came to be increasingly provided by the undertaking profession, which was evolving into a full-fledged industry (Elias 2002; Walter 1991). As a consequence, people did not further confront themselves with their own demise, and death came to be widely accepted as a fact of life that cannot be changed. But now, in the first decades of the 21st century, as the phenomenon of aging societies grows into a global issue, mortality is moving back into the focus of personal and public interest. Preparing one’s own funeral is gaining momentum in many parts of the world, and debates about euthanasia are non-abating. This arguably led to a de-tabooization of the topic of death, if not to a discussion about the validity of long-standing taboos concerning death in a wider sense.1

Thus, the concept of taboo is a useful tool to see how modern scientific views and traditional thought, often motivated by religious motifs, clashed and competed with each other.2 It further can serve as a means to outline the impact of reform programs on the mindset of the people subjected to them. The modernization of the dealings with death and dying was not limited to the Euro-American context introduced above and can be applied to the East Asian case in order to verify if these changes in the perception

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1 The academic inquiry into taboos started from anthropology. In 1911, Frazer outlined issues of taboos including their role in Japanese Shintoism (1913: 19), categorizing taboos in acts, persons, things, and names. As the "highest form of superstition," taboos came to be understood as social mechanisms for obedience, their restricting power described by Steiner in his study on the Polynesian origin of the term (1956: 20, 60-61). George Bataille followed suit by connecting taboos to procreation and death (1957, Engl. Translation 1962), thematizing Christian tabooization of violence and incest. Mary Douglas’ Purity and Danger (1st edition 1966) outlined the issue of pollution and ritual purity/impurity as formative powers of taboos, presenting ideas that are very applicable to the case of Japanese Shintō as it challenged Korean conceptions. Finally, the legislative power of taboo and tabooization and the political force that is created by their application was described by Abrar (2008), who argued that by tabooizing customs, modernity could be reinforced in terms of morality, leading up to legal measures to outlaw taboos.

2 In this paper, taboos are understood in their wider connotations as normative rules accepted and unchallenged by most members of society. Culturally motivated, taboos control the actions of a human being to the extent of triggering or forbidding certain actions. Taboos are as strict and as unconditional as law, but stronger in their influence on the human being than the latter for they are not as explicit and often irrational. The Korean case actually shows that laws were often ignored in order to adhere to taboos. See also the introduction to this special issue.
of death are of a global character. Here, the case of Korea is of special importance because it shared Confucian values with its neighboring countries, but more than China and Japan came to embrace the Christian faith.

While Christian values obtained from the West challenged Korean funerary rites and burial practices from a moral standpoint, the incorporation into the Japanese Empire led to severe restrictions on Korean ritual life in terms of the law. Prior to Japanese reforms, funerary rites were held according to Confucian codex, and burial practice kept to the principles of geomancy (Horlyck & Pettid 2014). The foreign influence exerted by Christian missionaries and Japanese colonizers then challenged Korean traditional customs while creating sets of taboos concerning death and funerary culture that were ridiculing old Korean ways as superstitious, pagan, or heretic.\(^3\)

This paper approaches the issue of taboos by considering the experience of Yun Ch’i-ho (1864-1945), a central figure in modern Korean history.\(^4\) Yun, a stout Christian Methodist trained in the US, wrote his diary in English for nearly half a century.\(^5\) In it, he gave witness of his struggles between

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\(^3\) Superstition was a potent label to Japanese authorities for contrasting Korean "savageness" and "backwardness" with Japanese "civilization" and "modernity." Everything not suitable for Japanese modernization efforts, and the Japanese belief/value system became ridiculed as superstition. Branding Korean folk religion, as well as newly rising alternative religions, as superstition was tantamount to tabooizing, with laws against certain behaviors following suit. On the other hand, Korean arguments calling Japanese Shintō equally a superstition were always refuted. This shows the formative power that Japan held by reserving its right as colonizer to the definition of superstition. See Murayama, C. (1931, 1932).

\(^4\) Yun (1865-1945) was born into a politically and financially well-established family. In 1881, he was a member of an early delegation to Japan. Afterwards, he advocated rapid modernization after the Japanese model and became involved in an attempted coup d’état by pro-Japanese forces in 1884. Fearing for his life, he moved to Shanghai, attending the Methodist Anglo-Chinese College, where he was baptized two years later. He continued his education at Vanderbilt University from 1888 to 1891 and then pursued a doctorate at Emory University from 1891 to 1893. He then returned to Korea as an interpreter to US minister Lucius Foote (1826-1913). Active in politics, he became magistrate of Wonsan city. Due to his activity in the Korean Enlightenment movement (\(\text{aeguk kyemong undong} \) 愛國啓蒙運動) and the Independence Club (\(\text{tongnip hyŏphoe} \) 獨立協會), Yun was arrested after Korea became annexed to Japan, in the so-called incident of the 105, a roundup of supposedly anti-Japanese elements. He was found guilty of conspiracy. He served his sentence until 1917 and then started to work at the YMCA. Developing his personal ideas about Japanese rule, he stayed critical but also held welcoming views. Over time, his stance became more and more collaborative, which led him to adopt a Japanese name and made him participate in patriotic events to support the war cause. For more detailed biographical information, see Lee, E. (2012), and De Ceuster, K. (1994).

\(^5\) Yun did not comment on why he chose to write his diary in English. It is argued Yun did first embark on writing in English in order to practice it during his education abroad. He then kept writing in English in order to not forget the language. He might have considered English also as
Confucianism and Christianity, and Korean nationalism and Japanese collaboration. By analyzing and contextualizing Yun's diary entries concerning death, funerals, graveyards and the afterlife, this paper aims to outline the clash of long-established traditional taboos with new, emerging taboos created by the spiritual and worldly restrictions created by Western and Japanese influence.6

2. Yun’s Reaction to His Wives’ Deaths and The Organization of Their Burials
Yun’s parents arranged his first marriage according to Korean custom. This marriage ended in divorce in 1879 when Yun left for a self-imposed exile to Shanghai due to the political conditions in Korea. After finishing his doctorate in the US, he returned to Shanghai to teach, where he fell in love with a Chinese Christian named Ma Su-jin 马秀珍. They married in 1894, but after only ten years, Yun lost her due to ectopic pregnancy.7 Feeling guilty because he had not been able to spend much time with his wife, his grief was immense. Yun at first set out to prepare a Korean funeral for his Chinese wife, with a gravesite close to his house, as custom demanded. When Horace Allen (1858-1932), an American missionary and diplomat, offered Yun a gravesite at Seoul’s Yanghwajin Christian foreigner cemetery, Yun agreed to a funeral that was more in line to his personal beliefs, which he also had shared with his wife. Before the advent of Japanese influence in Korea, gravesites were nearly unrestricted by law. The Korean government allowed its people to build graves as they deemed fit according to Confucian and geomantic necessities. The government agreed to allow Yanghwajin’s foreigner graveyard mainly out of remorse for the killing of Catholic missionaries back in 1866, disregarding Confucian requirements. The missionaries decided to limit Yanghwajin exclusively to foreigners, mostly out of mistrust of Korean policy toward Christianity. This meant that Yun, as Korean, was not eligible for a grave at means of protecting his thoughts from the eyes of family and Japanese authorities. Yun's English was overall very proficient and came natural to him, with only a few remarks in either Japanese or Korean mixed into the text. See Lee, E. (2012), and De Ceuster, K. (1994).

6 This paper made use of the online version of the diary, accessible at the Korean History Database (http://db.history.go.kr/). Diary entries are given in the format of YYYYDDMM throughout this paper. The database was last accessed on December 20th, 2019. All entries cited are direct citations. The style of noting down names in Chinese characters directly into the English text is kept in the same manner, as are transcriptions of Korean by the hand of Yun. Where necessary, alterations by the author to clarify the meaning are marked individually. 7 See entries 18950102, 18940321, 18940822, 18940824, 18941223, 18941224, 18941225, 18950102, 18950117, 18950212, 19050210.
Yanghwajin, thus could not be laid to rest at the same site after his own death. Still, Yun accepted the offer, for it allowed him to completely adhere to the Christian ceremonial as well as Christian values such as decency and modesty, because the grave was incomparably cheaper than a Korean grave (19050210). The funeral service was held in Severance Hospital, with a Christian mass that only close, foreign friends attended. In his diary, sadness and depression are evident. Convinced that he could never love again, over the following year, he went on to describe Ma Su-jin as his guardian angel (19050210, 19050213). Together with his children, he regularly visited the grave, offering prayers, but refraining from Confucian ancestor ritual (19160827, 19180901, 19250412). Christian conceptions of idolatry were tabooizing Confucian ancestor rites. When Yun chose a Christian-style funeral, he could avoid conflict with his personal consciousness concerning ancestor rites. While the funerary culture and remembrance of the dead were very different in Confucianism and Christianity, it is of interest to note that regarding burial practice itself, the freedom of burial Koreans had enjoyed during the Chosŏn dynasty extended to Christian custom, since it required earth burial as did Confucianism and geomancy. What is more, the very tone of the funerals was different. In the Confucian rite, crying and wailing had to occur at certain intervals. The actual funeral procession was rather a happy occasion that gave an impression of overall cheerfulness (Bishop 1897: 287-288). Yun despised these formalities. Given his state of mind after the death of his wife, the solemnity of a Christian funeral was helping him to cope with his situation.

Ma Su-jin’s death in 1905 coincided with the time Japan turned Korea into a protectorate, a fact that further aggravated Yun’s depression. Yun described this metaphorically as the death blow delivered to a country that already was on its deathbed. This "double loss" of wife and country drove him further into depression. In his diary, he confessed that he will always be comforted that after his own death, he would be reunited with his wife, professing his very Christian notions of the afterlife. He continued to contrast the afterlife in heaven with the "hell" of Korean reality. Upon his wife’s death, Yun considered suicide but already had internalized that suicide was a taboo according to the Christian faith. After Min Yŏng-hwan (1861-1905), a government official who was also related to the late Korean Queen, had killed himself out of protest against the protectorate
treaty, Yun commented on Min’s suicide as cowardice, an easy way out, but barring salvation. After the advent of Japanese rule, Korean graveyards were put under state control while Yanghwajin remained untouched by Japanese authorities. This was partly because Japan granted religious freedom to Korea, but mainly because leniency towards foreign missionaries was necessary in order not to upset Japan’s allied Christian countries (Chŏn, U. 2009: 215-218; Ch’oe, Y. 2003: passim). Next, Yun married a Korean Christian named Baek "Mary" Maeryo 白梅麗 (1890-1943), who was around 30 years his junior. It was only when she was on her deathbed that Yun spared positive thoughts about her, even admitting that he had loved her (19430710, 19430727). Before that, he kept complaining about her at every instance: she was of bad character, extravagant and wasteful, lazy, a bad mother, uneducated, egoistic, unpleasant to be with. Immediately after her death, Yun did not lament or wail for her, but expressed her death as welcome relief: She now was free from a world of worry about Hitler and war (19430410, 19430411, 19430414). As it was the case with his former wife, funeral and memorial services for Baek were held exclusively in a Christian manner. The burial took place at Yun’s private graveyard in Asan, where his grave was later erected as well. With her funeral, he decided to leave the bad memories of her behind, for she had blessed him with five sons and three daughters. He now described her as a self-sacrificing person but lacking any education or interest in the intellectual (19430426). Adhering to the Christian concept of not speaking ill of the dead (de mortuis nil nisi bonum), Yun, now in high age, obviously had forgotten about Ma.

3. Witnessing The “Death” of a Dynasty – State Funerals of Former Korean Rulers
Yun witnessed the deaths and state funerals of Queen Min (contemporary Korean title Myŏngsŏng hwanghu 明成皇后, 1851-1895), her husband, King and later Emperor Kojong 高宗 (1852-1919) as well as their son and last Korean emperor, Sunjong 純宗 (1874-1926). Due to his career, Yun had personally met the former King and his Queen on some occasions. He

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8 For his series of thoughts see diary entries 19050214, 19050310, 19050321, 19050420, 19050704, 19050725, 19050804, 19051130, 19051225.
9 For criticism against Baek, see 19170719, 19180905, 19190203, 19251103, 19290103.
10 Yun’s grave is not marked with a name. According to his family, this was in order to prevent grave desecration, for many Koreans still consider him as a traitor to the nation.
also knew other members of the royal family as well as some of their personal staff. This is why he was able to know about their respective deaths before they were made public, and also the reason why he reacted intensely upon learning about their deaths.

Queen Min was killed in a Japanese coup after the end of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895. Yun heard about the events that led to the murder of the Queen in the early morning hours of October 8th, mere hours after the actual murder. He was shocked to hear that the Queen was stabbed and her body burned by Japanese assailants. Yun wrote that even though he had criticized her policies, he did not consider this a fair way to die for the Queen of a nation. He also condemned that it took the Japanese several attempts, and thus the lives of many of her attendants before they could make sure they indeed had killed the Queen (18951008). The next day, Yun continued that this act of violence against the Korean dynasty, at the hands of Japan, was a clear sign of the weakness of Korea but even more clearly showed the barbarism of the Japanese, extending their influences in Korea (18951009). This line of thought hardened further. In November, with the matter still unresolved, Yun wrote that Kojong and Sunjong had to fear for their lives as well. Japanese "civilization" just meant murder and assassination, and Korean society had learned that by murder, politics could be made (18951117). These diary entries show how the death of the Queen had rekindled his nationalism, while he despised Japan for this incident because it was an immoral break of the taboo to utilize violence and murder for political means. When Yun traveled to the US in the following year and experienced that the public held a very favorable image of Japan, he was disgusted that the Japanese crime against the Korean Queen had already been forgotten (18960509, 18960825).

It took two more years and the declaration of the Korean Empire in 1897 for Kojong to be in a position to finally hold the funeral for the Queen. Yun mused that one of the King’s consorts, who wanted to use the occasion of the Queen’s death to gain personal influence, was responsible for the delay of the funeral because it prevented the King from remarrying (18970110, 18970701). However, the reason was instead that Kojong first had to find a way to curb the political influence that his father Taewŏn’gun had regained after the assassination.12

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11 Japanese assailants entered the palace in the early morning, killed the Queen, and burnt her body. This action was clandestinely supported by elements in the Japanese government and never adequately resolved. The father of Kojong, prince regent Taewŏn’gun 大院君 (1820-1898) also had backed these plans and helped the assailants. For more detail, see Kim, M. (2009).

12 One day after the murder, the Queen was demoted to commoner status (pyein) by Kojong’s
The ashes of the Queen were lost, but her cut finger had remained intact and now was given the burial deemed for a deceased empress (Pratt & Rutt 1999: 289). On the day, Yun complained about the lavish spending for the funeral and expressed his anger about the disrespect shown by many onlookers of the funeral procession. Not only was there disrespectful talk, but even fruit offerings were stolen. Stealing was already a Christian taboo, stealing fruit offered to the deceased, an even bigger one in Confucianism. To Yun personally, the immense waste of money was against his conviction of austerity that stemmed from his faith (18971121).

The actual funeral took place the following day at 7 am, with a "series of sacrifices and wailing up to 2 pm." (18971122). Only three weeks later, the King announced a reburial because his geomancers had found a more auspicious site. Yun was surprised that the King had intended the first grave to only be temporary and instead of waiting another few weeks had been willing to waste immense amounts of money. Yun was soon to find out that the primary court geomancer as well as his staff of more than a hundred men had not worked properly, choosing a stony site for the grave. This led to a series of tortures and the banishment of the erstwhile head geomancer (18971214).

Even though Yun, given his Christian conviction of austerity, was highly critical of the King, it has to be noted that the King was only acting in line with the geomantic and Confucian principles of Korean tradition. Kojong had always taken care of ritual and ceremonial procedures to present himself as a legitimate and virtuous ruler. Furthermore, he and the Queen had a cordial relationship and were governing together (Simbritseva 1996: 52). While honoring his wife by giving her the closest attention according father Taewŏn’gun, with Kojong only able to revoke this by elevating her to the rank of consort (bin), due to the pressure of his father. It was only after his and Sunjong’s infamous “escape” to the Russian legation (agwan p’ach’ŏn) that he could curb the influence of Japan. Staying at the legation for a year, with Russian help a pro-Russian government could be established. In order to cement his newfound power, Kojong left the legation and announced the Korean Empire on the 12th of October 1897. Mere days later, a declaration followed to restore the Queen’s honor by giving her the posthumous title of Empress Myŏngsŏng. The Taewŏn’gun retired and now on his deathbed, could no further prevent this. Chosŏn wango sillok (The Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty), Kojong, book 33, year of Úlmi, 22nd day of the 8th month, sections 1-2 (Sillok 2019). Yun himself was skeptical about rumors telling of the denouncement of the Queen. Knowing their relationship, he did not believe that Kojong acted on his own behalf (18951914). Chosŏn wango sillok (The Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty), Kojong, book 35, year of Chŏngyu, second day of the 3rd month, section 5. For details about the flight to the Russian legation and the establishment of the Korean Empire, see Han 2010: 68-72; Simbritseva 1996.

Lavishness in funerals over time also became considered a problem in the Confucian discourse. See Hetmanczyk, Philipp (2018).

For the king’s reinforcement of ritual life in the Korean Empire, see Pak, Hŭi-yong (2010).
to Confucian rite, he showed the people what the Queen had meant not only to him but the whole nation. On the other hand, he did not visit his mother nor father when they were on their deathbeds and did not allow for funerals befitting their ranks. Here, Yun was shocked that the King did not adhere to the Confucian concept of filial piety, which was also rendered in the Christian ten commandments. Nevertheless, the masses had been affected as well. "This unnatural omission of duty on the part of H.M. has given rise to much of popular displeasure. People naturally contrast his devotion to his late Queen and the indifference to his mother." (18980115).

Obviously, the King distanced himself from traditional behavior out of personal reservations toward his parents, who were responsible for much hardship during his life. Concerning the King’s father, Yun stated his disappointment as follows: "H.M. is much and justly reproached for not having visited Tai Won Kun [Taewŏn’gun - Clarification by author] before or after his death. Nothing good can be hoped of him." (18980226). Upon the death of the Taewŏn’gun, Yun commented, "One of the disturbing elements in Korean politics gone." Although Yun understood the power relations, he was still amazed that the King did not heed traditional protocol (18980223). It is to be argued that the King behaved as such not only to take revenge upon those responsible for the demise of his wife and personal unhappiness but to show he had not forgiven those who, by their misrule and intrigue-ridden political ambitions, had turned Korea into such an unfavorable position. The King, by intentionally breaking a taboo, was employing the performative power of this act to show his stance toward his parents, but this "modern" behavior disgusted Yun and many of his peers.

Twenty years later, Kojong himself died in the morning hours of January 21st, 1919. Yun knew on the day due to his connections to the palace, but it took until the next day that the King’s death was announced in the newspapers, a stroke being given as the cause. Yun was told that the King had been poisoned on behalf of the Japanese Governor-General, which he thought of as highly plausible, with the rumor gaining currency among the overall population as well (19190121). Yun’s diary is often cited as proof that Kojong indeed was poisoned by his medical attendant by secret orders from Japanese authorities, because it contains a witness account of how the

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15 H.M. is short for His Majesty.
16 These and more rumors Yun discussed in his diary during the following days: 19190128, 19190210, 19190220, 19190224.
King died painfully of stomach ache after drinking his evening dessert tea and stomach medicine (19190211). At the time of the King’s death, Korea had been a colony of Japan for ten years. Still, the death of Kojong held a symbolic power high enough to stir nationalist feelings, which had been subdued by harsh Japanese policies in the first decade of their rule (Robinson & Shin 1999: 7-8). Religious leaders in Seoul started to prepare a declaration of independence in order to use the opportunity of the funeral to start an independence movement. Many people, also from remote parts of the country, were expected to come to Seoul to witness the funeral, so leaders had hoped that news of the independence movement would spread to the countryside (Eckert 1990: 277-278). Out of respect for the King’s funeral and Christian disapproved of using a Sunday to initiate the independence movement, March 1st was chosen (Baldwin 1969: 63-65). Yun also took part in the rehearsal for the funeral procession, complaining about the perceived necessity of keeping up with 2000-year-old rituals, somewhat ignoring the fact that the ceremonial was partly styled akin to a Japanese state funeral:

The rituals and dresses used in the Funeral Ceremonies are picturesque but childish. These were formulated and fixed 20 or more centuries ago when the human society was in infancy or crawling stage. The idea of sticking to these absurd formalities when other people are flying—actually flying like birds—nay better than birds. How dare we speak about independance [sic!] when we only crawl while our neighbors fly? We who can’t run a bathhouse talk about running a modern state! (19190228)

The funeral allowed Yun to judge about the political state of the country. Yun here gives a rather negative verdict about his fellow countrymen. The actual funeral, held on March 3rd, occurred among the independence demonstrations, with the masses kept in line by arrays of Japanese soldiers. To Yun, this clearly showed the political realities of the country: next to all the soldiers, many Japanese onlookers did not draw their hats, some even laughed and joked when the hearse passed them (19190303). Even

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17 19201013 is also often cited as proof of poisoning at Japanese hands. If so, this means that Japan strengthened its government in Korea also through political murder. Yun, aware that Japan did not even care about such taboos as murder, was now convinced the Japanese would do everything necessary in order to gain a foothold in Korea.

18 Drawing hats as a sign of respect was custom in the West, but not in Korea, where, for the
though Koreans were demonstrating for their independence, to Yun the farce-like funeral clearly showed that Japanese had no respect for the Koreans. Given the mood of the funeral, Yun was inclined to think that Koreans did not earn any from the beginning. Yun’s tone intensified when the last ruler of the Yi Dynasty, Sunjong, son of Kojong, died of heart failure in April 1926. Ousted from political power because of the annexation in 1910, and with a republican exile government active in Shanghai since 1919, Sunjong had not been a political, unifying symbol for Korean resistance comparable to his father, neither had he been a symbol of resistance as his father was. Nevertheless, Sunjong’s death led to a final realization that there was no going back to a Korean monarchy. Yun went to the funeral procession aware that it was the last of its kind in Korea. He also noted that because of this, "every Korean seems to manifest special interest in the event." (19260607).

Heavily guarded by Japanese police and military, the actual funeral procession took place on the 10th of June 1926. "The Japanese authorities left no loophole for an attempt at a disturbance on the part of the Korean agitators," Yun wrote after attending the ceremony. Korean students had been giving out handbills while shouting for independence but were on the spot rounded up by police. Yun further remarked he had to cry when the bier passed by him (19260610, 19260611). Attending the actual burial on the following day, it took him another day to realize in his diary that "(...) whether a Korean emperor lives or dies, the Japanese are the only people benefitted while the Koreans only are the losers" (19260612). When reviewing Yun’s stance at those state funerals, it becomes evident that, on the one hand, he dismissed such lavish and overdone ceremonies for their cost and perceived meaninglessness. His Christian convictions backed such thought; still, he clung to the nationalist element of these ceremonies, well aware of how it was a staged reminder by the Japanese that Korea had ceased to exist.

4. Experiencing The Changes in Funerary Customs under Japanese Rule

Colonizing Korea, Japanese authorities followed a practical reasoning. Due to the spatial importance of graves, many lawsuits about gravesites and land ownership rights were jamming the colonial legal system. Because most good burial spots had already been taken, the practice of illegally burying somebody in another family’s graveyard (milyang) was also
commonplace. Another phenomenon created by Confucian order was the emergence of abductions of corpses and bones – a lucrative crime for those without piety. Taboos created by Confucianism and geomancy enticed to criminal offense – either in order to conform to the rules or in order to gain benefit out of those who complied. Next to such issues, problems of deforestation, shortage of space, public health, and general hygiene also gave rise to the necessity of reform in the eyes of the Japanese authorities (Chŏng 2014: iix-ix, 120; Lee, Hyang Ah, 2014: 408).

In Korea, with graves everywhere, it was hard for Japanese authorities to build roads and rails, impossible to mine on mountains rich in resources. Be this as it may, the Japanese did neither properly prepare their law, nor did they heed the culture of the Koreans in any respect when enforcing it (Chŏng 2015: 10). In 1912, the "Ordinance to control graves, crematories, burial and cremation" (bochi, kasōjō, maisō oyobi kasō torishimari kisoku, 墓地、火葬場、埋葬及火葬取締規則) was announced by the Japanese General-Government (Order No. 123), introducing public cemeteries and legalizing cremation. Cremation had been forbidden since the early years of the Chosŏn period but hence became a common practice among the Japanese living in Korea. The fact that cremation was now legal did not mean that Koreans considered it as an option for themselves. During the colonial period, which saw steady growth in population, only three more crematories were built in the Seoul area, with demand staying low (Lee, Hyang Ah, 2014: 405-407; Maeil sinbo 19100916; Chŏng 2014). In short, the new burial law foremost gave a legal basis to the realities Japanese settlers had created.

What is more, the emphasis on public cemeteries and cremation was a Japanese effort to extend their funerary culture to the colony, unifying the system with that of the mainland. In effect, by forbidding the use of private graveyards, the new law stood in direct opposition to the established Confucian values deeply rooted in Korean society and was another reminder to Koreans that Japan was the unquestioned ruler. Because of this cultural clash, Korean non-acceptance of the 1912 ordinance was stronger than the colonial authorities had anticipated. Yanaihara Tadao 矢内原忠雄 (1893-1961), a Christian Professor of Colonial Studies at the Imperial University of Tōkyō, understood that Japanese policy was incompatible with the Korean mindset. Koreans themselves were aware that the modernization that Japan was promising had not been established for a long time in Japan proper. Japan had been a thoroughly Confucian society during the Edo period, but during the Meiji Restoration rid itself of Confucianism in a more consequent fashion than in Korea. Yanaihara went
as far as claiming that Korean non-acceptance of burial practices was so immense that it became one of the main issues of the independence movement (Yanaihara 1937: 392-393).

The law was amended twice in reaction to the discontent voiced by Koreans, once in January 1918, and once again in September 1919. Nevertheless, amendments were only an improvement in as much as they now aimed at winning the sympathies of old Korean elites. Japanese authorities did not acknowledge that Koreans would never bow to Japanese rules in this respect. Therefore, they styled the change as a favor to the people, a benevolent act towards the old elite. With the September 1919 amendment, it became legal to uphold private graveyards on one’s own ground if they did not exceed 3000 pyŏng (approx. 9930 m²) of space. For those who had not already owned a private graveyard and those without substantial land holdings, nothing changed: the masses still had to be content with a lot in a public graveyard that in no sense adhered to geomantic or Confucian principles, let alone requirements of Korean aesthetics (Yi 2007: 59-62; Takamura 2007: 246; Chŏng 2014b: 119-120).

In a sense, there was no independence from Japanese rule even after death. The law meddled deep into the everyday of individuals, which is why Korean non-acceptance continued. Every year, between 3000 and 4000 cases of violations of the law occurred (Chŏng 2015: 11-13). According to the newspapers of the time, the only positive reason a Korean could find in the new way of fire burial was the relative cheapness of it, but it remained considered the highest taboo according to Confucian rite (Tonga Ilbo 19200602).

The case of Yun Ch’i-ho shows how these laws exerted influence on the everyday. Concerning ownership rights and the upkeep of a graveyard, Yun came into conflict with Japanese interest despite the law being on his side. Close to the clan elder (munjang), Yun was responsible for most dealings with burial in his family. While, as shown above, Yun on a personal level despised these old customs, for the sake of his family and its reputation, he gladly adhered to them. He justified this by arguing that there were also shared values between Confucianism and Christianity, such as filial piety. Fulfilling his role as chief mourner on many occasions, and as the planner of graveyards and burials, he was often confronted with different opinions among fellow clan members. Considering his official business concerning the wider clan, Yun behaved Confucian-conservative. However, from a Christian standpoint, he argued against lavishness to himself and complained about the noisy and extravagant Korean traditional burials in all the occasions he had to deal with death or burial.
It was because of his father’s gravesite that Yun came into conflict with Japanese policy and laws. In 1916, the Japanese Government-General gave close-by mining rights to a Japanese entrepreneur who mostly ignored the existence of the grave of Yun’s father. Yun had to fight to exert his legal rights in instances that show that Japanese bureaucracy did not care about the personal rights of Koreans. When Yun inquired what he could do about the disrespectful neighbor, authorities made it clear to him that next to a letter formally asking the favor to respect the grave, there was nothing he could do. This enraged Yun, but seeking help from his connections in the government was of no avail either. Persuaded that the Japanese would do nothing as long as no violation of the space was found, he had a worker of the mining agency inspect the ground. The Japanese inspector told Yun that nothing could be done just because of the old Korean superstitions. All the more infuriated, Yun then filed complaints through all of his possible channels, including his connections to the staff of the Governor-General (19160824, 19170303, 19171212, 19171215, 19171220, 19171221).

This, for the time being, solved the issue, but seven years later, the mining license next to the grave came into Korean possession. The Korean owner (Yi Hŭi-jae) went even closer to the grave of Yun’s father than the prior Japanese owner had done. In the meantime, Yun’s connections to the Japanese authorities had improved as well. He personally presented his case in front of the Governor-General, Saitō Makoto (1858-1936), mere days after he was informed that the mining license had been given to a Korean (19241220).

(...) Called on Baron Saito and Mr. Shimooka to beg them to rescind the mining licence granted to 李希宰 [Yi Hŭi-jae - Addition by the author]. The Governor General was exceedingly amiable while the Administrative Chief was inclined to be naughty. Great God I hate to kotow to these men, for begging as favors what Koreans should have as rights. (19241224)

Yun visited his father’s grave on Christmas Eve, a mere three days after the meeting mentioned above. There he found that Yi Hŭi-jae had his men dig close to the house of the grave keeper. Yun was very aware that their encroachment was against the mining law, which angered him even more:

They had violated the very letter of the mining law; but the local police wouldn’t do anything against them. Had the hill
belonged to a Japanese, the Japanese police would have punished the 李希宰 [Yi Hŭ-jae - Addition by the author] crowd to the fullest extent of law. (19241227)

After Christmas, the men of Yi Hŭ-jae had "attempted to reopen the pit around which I had placed a barbed wire fence," Yun found, and with the help of his friends, "succeeded in fighting the scamps off the hill" (19241228). The following day, he reported this to the police. Still, he had to wait for the new year to start until authorities made another move – none against Yi, but against Yun, who was interviewed by an investigation committee the Governor-General had sent to look into the conflicting interests. In the afternoon, Yun brought the committee to the gravesite to show how far Yi’s men had gone (19241229, 19250109). Two days later, he was interviewed again in the Governor-General building about his demands concerning the graveyard, which he answered as follows:

I said my demands and hopes are: 1. The preservation of my brother’s rights as the owner of the hill. 2. The preservation of the sacredness of my father’s tomb and of its precincts—which means the entire hill. 3. The preservation of the entire hill from violation as our intention is to locate our family cemetery on the hill—the exact location to be decided by specialists. (19250110)

With "specialists," Yun referred to geomancers, whose profession was despised by the Japanese and whose "specialism" was in times also doubted by Yun himself. Still, he mentioned these “specialists” in front of the Japanese authorities who at the same time were cracking down on them. He tried to exert his right to hold a private family graveyard as it was according to size rules and had been in possession of his family since long before the 1912 graveyard regulations. Anyway, a solution could only be found by private consultation of the mining concession managing officer from the Governor-General and Yun’s family. When Yun agreed to give up 3000 pyŏng on the other side of the hill, Yi was content to not bother the gravesite anymore (19250323). Even though the resolution of this issue is not further mentioned in the diary, it becomes obvious that Japanese authorities did not bother about old Korean customs, and while the Japanese miners had given up, the authorities did not hesitate to reissue mining licenses to Koreans as to having the Koreans quarrel among each other. Here it becomes evident that some Koreans would stick to Confucian
rite and taboo, while others would ignore these for personal gain. In sum, the situation stayed un-changed. Instead of properly resolving the issue, the authorities made the Koreans compromise, basically preventing both from seeking out their respective rights in a lawsuit. Yun, even though the rightful owner of the grounds, in the end lost much in order to get his rights. In short, the issue concerning his father’s gravesite shows that even the rich who abided by the law were tried about the ownership and usage of their legally owned land.

Yun celebrated the solution of the issue with a renewal of his father’s grave in 1929. Whilst he professed that he would not even pay 100 yen for his own grave, he was not reluctant at all to spend 1000 yen to improve his father’s gravesite, all the while he kept professing to himself that he was as frugal enough to still be content that his father’s grave was the only land that he owned (19180606). Here again, Christian values came first to Yun, but he gave in to traditional expectations as a filial son, always trying to justify himself for his actions (19290407, 19290410, 19290411). His defense of his father’s grave shows that he had not yet overcome Confucian values if it was in terms of the importance of the grave of one’s own father. Also, the fact that he had hired a constant guard (myojigi) for the grave, which had been common to prevent crimes targeted at graves during the Chosŏn period, is further proof of this. He readily kept the Confucian tradition of two grave visits a year to pay his respects to his father – these respects however were Christian in form. Yun refrained from ancestor worship because this was tabooed by the Christian belief, but with his own grave, in the end, he would adhere to Confucian practices of being buried spatially below his father. Also, he observed the anniversary of his father’s death meticulously, but, instead of offering ancestor rites, he simply prayed.¹⁹

5. Experiencing Funerals, Working around Taboos

The above case showed the vagueness of logic which protected Yun from having to come to terms with the taboos his own belief system and the traditional Korean system were causing upon the further tabooization of funerary culture in the hands of the Japanese empire. Dividing private from official obligations, Yun managed to create a logic of ritual pluralism that allowed his consciousness to stay clear of putative taboo clashes. The following analysis of Yun’s experiences concerning funerals will further illuminate this.

¹⁹ Instances of which are: 19201122, 19270212, 19190219, 19190921, 19250508, 19251512, 19260220, 19270922, 19281226.
In 1927, in his function as the leader of the Korean YMCA, Yun was asked to plan and lead the funeral of another popular Christian leader with dissident background, Yi Sang-jae 李商在 (1850-1927), who had a past as an anti-Japanese activist. He was not only a Christian figurehead but also a symbol of resistance. Yun, a childhood friend of the deceased, was the obvious choice for planning and presiding over the funeral. The planning of the funeral had started while Yi was still alive on his deathbed, which was the conventional method in Confucian terms. It was only after his demise that Japanese authorities started to meddle with the plans of Yun by personal pressure because they did not want the funeral to escalate into another demonstration for independence. Yun’s plan was scaled down to up to 800 guests and a maximum cost of 1200 Yen. Yun later argued that the overall atmosphere as well as the stance of the innumerable onlookers of the procession was more amicable and sincere in mourning than compared to the funeral of Yi Wan-yong 李完用 (1858-1926), who was widely considered a traitor for his involvement in the protectorate treaty of 1905 and annexation treaty of 1910 (19270325, 19270330, 19270407, 19270408).

Yun also organized the funeral of Yi Sŭng-hun 李昇薰 (1864-1930), an educator, former independence activist and one of the 33 representatives who signed the Declaration of Independence on March 1st, 1919. As old comrades, they had shared their time in prison. Yun was made the main organizer without his prior consent and only got to know of the honor when intercepted by the police, who asked why he had not obtained permission before agreeing to the task. Professing his innocence and explaining the fact that he was not aware of being put down as committee leader, he was let go under the condition that he informally agreed that only three representatives per club or society were to be invited to the funeral and that the procession was to be comprised of ten cars at most. Dismayed with Japanese surveillance, Yun was more afraid of this ceremony than the one for Yi Sang-je three years earlier, for he had to fear for his personal freedom in case something would go wrong. This not only shows that Japanese authorities were afraid that funerals of former independence activists had the latent potential to develop into anti-Japanese rallies. Equally, Japanese authorities were employing peculiar measures of unofficial pressure to exert control over funerals that had the potential to spark public interest (19300509, 19300512, 19300517). Both Yi Sang-je and Yi Sŭng-hun had been Christians like Yun. Styling their funerals in a Christian framework was unproblematic and almost welcome.
to the colonizer, for it did refrain from showcasing “old superstitions” the Japanese authorities were tabooizing and cracking down upon.

Considering the other two private family graveyards the Yun clan upheld, Yun was not as understanding as with his father’s grave. Another family graveyard was located in Pyŏngtaek as the final resting place of the Yun Yŏng-ryŏl family line. Having personal issues with this side of the family, Yun would express his sadness upon the demise of Yŏng-ryŏl’s wife, but upon the death of his cousins, Yŏng-ryŏl himself and cousin Ch’i-byŏng, Yun instead mentioned their faults, such as highlighting the latter’s opium addiction (19400129-30). As with many other burials he attended, during his final personal reckonings with the deceased, he did only rarely consider the courtesy not to speak badly of the dead. This he reserved for his own wife, about whom in life he always had only complaints.

When Yun’s cousin Taek-yŏng (b. 1876) died in Shanghai in 1935, his younger brother spent vast amounts of money to get the body to Korea to give it a proper burial at the family graveyard. The costly service of the geomancers resulted in burying Taek-yŏng in the family graveyard, but at a higher spatial position than his grandfathers, which was unacceptable according to Confucian custom and met massive resistance in family meetings. In the end, it was decided to follow the geomancer’s advice rather than to heed completely to Confucian custom, which shows that both traditional Korean ways were not always compatible. Yun commented on the whole ceremonial as noisy, unrefined, and expensive (19350915, 19351102, 19351104). This event clearly shows that not only grave-related quarrels were occurring inside the same family clan, but that geomancy, although heavily discredited as superstition by Japanese authorities, by then held more currency than Confucianism, which had been the ideological foundation of Korea.

What is more, Japanese authorities under the leadership of General Ugaki Kazushige 宇垣一成 (or Issei, 1868-1956), General-Governor of Korea between 1931 and 1936, had reinforced inspections of graveyards and gravestones. The government even checked gravesites built according to the law for whether they complied with the rules or if they showed anti-Japanese sentiments. Disregarding whether such acts were intentional or not, the government considered it as anti-Japanese if birth and death years marked on gravestones were made in the old Korean way of noting the year according to the Chinese calendar and did not feature Japanese era names. Ugaki had those tombstones destroyed on the spot, which in Yun’s eyes was everything but the behavior to be expected from a "civilizer" (19341916). Such a view stemmed from the fact that desecrating a grave
was considered taboo in both Christian and Confucian culture. In case of reburial for geomantic purposes, Confucian concepts were reinterpreted as fit: in 1934, Yun got to know that the Japanese city planners under Ugaki had designated the Itaewon area of Yongsan, now a famous district in Seoul, to be turned into a residential area. This necessitated the removal of Itaewon graveyard, a "shared holy mountain" (pungmangsan) located in this hilly area, dating back to the Chosŏn dynasty (Lee, H. 2014: 407-408). Because of this, the grave of his wife’s mother had to be moved. Considering this a large breach of the Christian belief to not disturb the dead in their final rest, Yun was instead infuriated at the high cost this undertaking required. He described in his diary the gruesome sight of exhuming his mother-in-law who had died nine years before. In this state, Yun did not see another possibility than to bring the body to the crematory, which was another breach of Christian custom and also meant a give-in to Japanese cremation policy, which Yun described as the cleanest method (19351121). Whilst Yun was steadfast in his Confucian conviction of filial piety considering his father’s grave and equally steadfast in his Christian conviction for his close family, seeing the decayed body of his mother-in-law, his "modern" mind equating death with filth, Yun now opted for the clean and sanitized methods the colonizer had provided (19340428, 19351121).

This shows that the Japanese city planners had, in a bid to create more residential areas in downtown Seoul, did not hesitate to remove graveyards that were earlier sanctioned by them. This was an additional method to further push the sight of death out from the daily city life, as it is a common tendency in modern societies. Before the period after the Manchurian incident, Japanese authorities did not touch upon these pungmangsan, sticking to the policy already in place during their land surveys in the 1910s. The removal of Itaewon marked the beginning of the next step of removing sites of death out of sight - now it was not single graves anymore, but whole cemeteries (Takamura 2000: 135-137).

6. Conclusion
Yun Ch’i-ho, during his long life, encountered death many times. His family owned three private graveyards that adhered to Japanese policy. As a convinced Christian, Yun had a distinct consciousness of religion and was not afraid to voice it in his diary, where he also wrote extensively on his reservations against the Japanese, their laws and what he conceived as lavish and dull Buddhist and Shintōist customs. In the same vein, he was also highly critical of Confucianism or geomancy, but could not quite get
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over long-established traditional thought himself (19271019, 19290409, 19390430, 19390929). During his lifetime, traditional taboos established by Confucianism and geomancy were challenged first by Christian influx, then by a Buddhist funeral style reminiscent of the situation in medieval Korea. Tabooizing and outlawing Korean funerary customs, the colonizer attempted to "modernize" the Korean mindset in order to solve key problems for society that were deemed to originate from funerary culture. By doing so, they challenged the Confucian conceptions of death and dying that were widespread in Korea. To Koreans, Japanese modernity only hurt the memory of their ancestors. To the Japanese, Koreans was savage, but to the Koreans, the Japanese were even more so for they broke with the foundations of Confucian civilization. In Korea, what Miyajima Hiroshi (2004) had termed "Confucian modernity" was already in place as an alternative design for a Korean modernity without foreign intrusion. Japanese control over Korean burial customs and graves in the name of civilization and modernity could only be suspicious to Koreans. Korean intellectuals such as Yun were aware that this "modernity" had not yet been established in Japan for a long time. Problems concerning modern hygiene were, of course, also discussed in Korea, but while the Japanese understood earth burial as unhygienic because of tropical weather and frequent earthquakes, this was less an issue in Korea with its cold climate, with earthquakes also being much rarer than in Japan or Taiwan (Chŏng 2014b: 83-85).

Tabooizing and outlawing Korean funerary customs began as a policy aiming to bring order into the chaotic state that Korean burial practices had created on the peninsula: deforestation, the sight of graves on nearly every mountain in the country (Bishop 1898: 62-64), legal issues and so on. But when implementing and enforcing changes, Japanese authorities had to see that "old" Korean customs and beliefs were ineradicable. Indeed, the overall number of infringements of the Graveyard Ordinance was rising continuously in Korea, showing that the fear of taboo was stronger than the fear of Japanese repression (Han 2017: 63-66). Christianity, which could establish itself in Korea for its relative compatibility with Confucianism, also became a powerful counterforce to the ideology of the Japanese Empire fostered by State Shintō. During the war years, Japanese authorities, while claiming religious freedom, pushed state-Shintōism as a pillar of Japanese ideology upon all subjects of the Empire (Hardacre 2017). In time, not only funerary customs but the whole ritual life of Koreans was challenged. By enforcing the participation in Shintō ceremonial, ritual
pluralism as it was possible until then also became impossible. Certain Christian denominations chose to resist against Japanese repressions up to martyrdom (An 1956: 19-29, passim). But Yun, as a Methodist, could overcome these challenges simply because Methodism was lax when it came to ancestor worship, be it that of the Japanese imperial ancestors or the Korean Confucian rite. By citing the Golden Rule (Matthew 7,12), he as a Christian felt empowered enough to take part in any religious ritual, however always discrediting them from the Christian standpoint that he perceived as superior to anything else (19251014). When it came to imagining his own death, Yun did not wish for Confucian ideals nor begged for resurrection, but showed values commonly shared in contemporary times: "All I pray for is that, when the time comes for me to leave this world, I may do so without any physical and mental pains with gratitude for the past and cheer for the future. Amen!" (19260614).

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