



**Return to Rural  
Philosophy and Practice in Korea**

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Return to Rural movement operates on the underlying premise that the current development centred society should recognise the urgent need for radical shift.

## Philosophy

Green Political Thought in the West  
Korean Lift Thought 生命思想/哲学

## Practice

Hansalim Manifesto & Co-op  
Guinong Movement 歸農運動  
Indramang Community

Explore the functions of Return to Rural implementation in Korea and its correspondence to, and limitations in the face of, wider social change.

# Green Political Thought / Ecological Concerns in the West

1980s ~ **Deep Ecology** vs.  
**Social Ecology**

Requires the radical transformation of the existing anthropocentric and dichotomous worldview to ecological ones i.e. interconnected humans and nature that is influenced by the Eastern philosophy; pictures decentralised, small-scale, self-reliant regions and communities; emphasises re-inhabitation; focuses on the need for individuals to change attitudes, values and lifestyles. **vs.**

Places the struggle in a political and a historical context and seeks to fundamental transformation of the current society in all domination– i.e. by the state as a result of the development of bureaucratic rationality and by the capitalists those subdued both workers and nature– through ‘direct action’.

1970s **R. Bahro** (Germany)  
**A. Gorz** (France)

Alongside the pessimistic post-industrial visions of counter-cultural theory, the ideas of ecological utopianism was developed as an alternative paradigm for achieving the betterment of society and nature.

19<sup>th</sup> c. **W. Morris** (England)

Morris’s romantically inspired social and political vision possessed the characteristics of the ecological rural villages, those of community, harmony with nature, and creativity in work.

**P. Kropotkin** (Russia)

“decentralised production, blueprints for the design of agricultural and urban communities on a human scale, that promised a way of reversing all the customary divides of industrial society: urban and rural, mental and manual...”

# Green Political Thought / Ecological Concerns in Korea

1980s ~ **Lift Thought**  
生命思想/哲学

Deepen further and published in *Hansalim* Manifesto, 1989 based on Dong-hak. The Manifesto considers industrialism and modernity, as twin components of the dominant culture, coerce all living-beings into a death-like state by alienating them from the nature wherein they should dwell. To overcome, it suggests a great transformation of moral, spiritual, and ethical consciousness as well as of the material system.

19<sup>th</sup> c. **Donghak**  
東學

Composed of the Korean people's Confucianism—respecting Sky/Heaven(天); their Buddhism—being present; their Daoism—caring for other beings and emphasised *Hanwulnim* (天主), the creator of everything and a true being dwells within everything in the universe. 侍天主: should realise Hanwulim in ourselves to attain; 事人如天 expand to treat others as Hanwulnim: 敬物 incl. things—'one bowl of rice.' Progressive and liberating teaching became the basis of the 東學農民運動/革命 in 1894.

Ancient **Daoism** 道家

Attaches importance to the life of each individuals and dependence of each members. Each interdependent with all for survival, sustenance, and fulfilment.

**Buddhism**

The metaphysical implications of the sense of interconnectedness are caught in the jewelled Indra-net, where each jewel reflects all the others in the universe in the Avatamska Sutra (華嚴經). In the Indra-net, "to become fully human is to accept being qualitatively different and yet the same as the rest of planetary life; to accept full responsibility while remaining unreservedly at one with nature"—anthropocosmic worldview.

## Hansalim Manifesto & Co-ops



*Han* = great, one, whole  
*Salim* = domestic work & revival of life  
→ 'Save all living things'

When organic agriculture was unfamiliar to Korea, it started direct trade between organic farmers and consumers as both are the owner of the cooperative.

As of 2016, 350 thousand households consumer members, 90 of producer's community, 2 thousand of farming producer members in 20 regions.





## Guinong Movement (歸農運動)

- Result of the whole story of the long-standing peasant movement.
- Since the 1950s, pioneering nature-friendly farmers had stood against the modernisation of the agricultural sector that poisoned both farmers and products, and destroyed the quality of the soil and the ecosystem as well; yet treated as 'anti-government' / 'Red'.
- Social, political, and economic insecurity that resulted from Korea's crisis in 1997 directly encouraged the growth of *Guinong* Movement.

## Indra-mang Life Community

- Founded by the head monk of the Silsang Buddhist Temple (實相寺) and the head of National Guinong Movement Headquarters (全國歸農運動本部) in 1998
- Begun on the basis of Buddhist philosophy but not limited
- Aimed ecologically friendly local community where all incl. monks, activists, locals, and nature live in harmony.



# Indramang Life Community



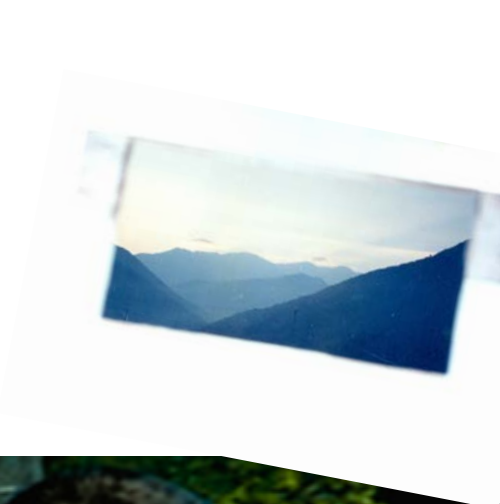
View of Silsang Temple



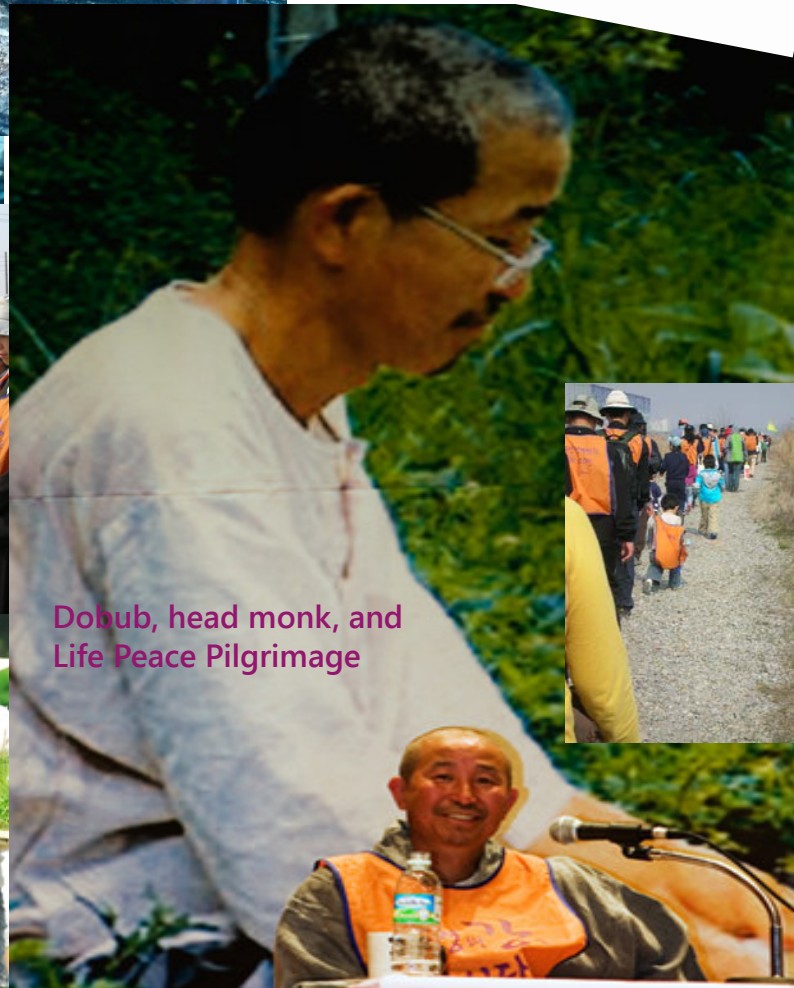
Guinong School



Compost toilet



The Farm



Dobub, head monk, and Life Peace Pilgrimage



Working together



Small School



Nursery in aging rural village



Ecotourism with Locals





Working together



Local Products



One bowl of rice



Compost Toilet



Duck weeding



Urban farmers



## MESSAGES

- Dobub's lesson and Morris's *News for Nowhere* envision the Return to Rural implementations become the majority and that could deliver the difference between urban and rural less prominent.
- Attempts are certainly functioning as a resting place from the mainstream world and as a place which offers motives to change the world– focus on the transformation of life-world; then, expect to bear a potential for changing the wider society.
- “If others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream” (W. Morris 1890).

**Ref.** So-Young Lee (2012) “Reconsidering Morris’s Ecotopia through Current Ecovillage Implementations”, *Korean Journal of Sociology* 46(6): 55-74.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2008) “Korean Environmental Thought and Practice”, *Environmental Ethics* 30(2): 115-134.