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Print Culture in the Imagination of Modern Korea, 1880-1931: Knowledge, Literature, and Classics

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**PRINT CULTURE IN THE IMAGINATION
OF MODERN KOREA, 1880-1931:
KNOWLEDGE, LITERATURE, AND
CLASSICS**

Sang-ho Ro

A DISSERTATION
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the historical evolution of Korean print culture by studying the ways in which the reading public expanded its boundary beyond the confines of canonical texts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this dissertation, I analyze the unexpected trajectory of the development of the Korean literary culture, which dynamically diversified its spectrum and encouraged the growth of new authors and readers, despite the powerful controlling mechanisms of the regime: the examinations and the police censorship from 1880 to 1931.

These dynamisms originated from the socio-cultural contexts of the nineteenth century. In Part One, I examine how elite kinship organizations, literati associations, and new religious groups sponsored new cultural activities without the requirement of the classical curriculum for passing the civil service examinations. In the late nineteenth century, these three indigenous institutions, which had accumulated cultural capital, began to access printing, using either the new machine press or old woodblock printing, to present their subcultures to wider audiences. My goal is to show that Korean culture was not homogeneous in the nineteenth century, despite its having looked so under the civil service examinations and police censorship. Korean vernacular language and classical Chinese both contributed to the diversity of literary culture by developing new genres, such as popular literature, pedagogy, statecraft study, and philology.

In Part Two, I investigate how the Korean society responded to powerful impacts from the outside after the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. The basic goal of Part Two is to contextualize the regime shift from the Chosŏn kingdom to the colonial empire in the context of Korean print culture. Under the Japanese occupation and colonization of Korea, the market economy, public school system, and the colonial empire dramatically transformed what Koreans read and how they wrote.

The vernacularization of the literary culture proves that the interaction between the colonial regime and Koreans contained a complexity that cannot be simplified by nationalism. Indigenous writers adapted to the new regime and competed for profit and fame by projecting their books as the new vision of Korea. The complicated cooperation and negotiation between the regime and the society not only illustrates that the unexpected transgressions enriched Korean literary culture, but also suggests that Korean books were at the center of rivaling discourses and imaginations from the 1880s until the early 1930s.

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INTRODUCTION

Books existed long before nation-states came into being. Even today, a book can exist beyond the national boundary. Imagine the absurdity of a state claiming that *Harry Potter* must be enjoyed only by a certain nation and must be read only in a certain national language. Thus, books have a distinct nature that modern nation-states systems cannot completely pigeonhole into their exclusive bounds of nationhood. Although I use the term “Korean” books and print culture in this dissertation, it does not mean that the books in interest were produced by Korea as a nation. Simultaneously, one cannot understand the modern history of books without mentioning nationhood, because authors in the modern world commonly have nationalities. The authors usually choose one language in which writing is defined by grammar and vocabulary verified by a certain nation-state: American English, the Japanese national language 標準語 (hyōjungo [J]), or the Korean national language 標準語 (p’yojunŏ) or 國語 (kukŏ). Nations do not always affect print culture, but they often do.¹ So, the production and circulation of books share two conflicting centrifugal and centripetal forces: modern books cannot exist without a nation-state, but they continue to transgress borders as the media of literature, culture, and knowledge. This dissertation aims to explore the historical evolution of print culture in the age of nation-building by examining the case of Korea. My main argument is that Korean print culture expanded with a wide variety of genres and thoughts that cannot be easily reduced to a particular ideology, whether Neo-Confucianism or modern nationalism.

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006). Anderson proves that historical development of print culture was deeply related to nation-buildings in Europe and Asia. Especially, he conceptualizes “print capitalism” in which the vernacularization institutionalized the natural diversity of human language with the development of printing technology. Although this dissertation is based on critical conversations with Anderson’s book, I am indebted to Anderson’s concepts of print capitalism and imagined communities.

Korea is an intriguing case for better understanding the historical transformation of print culture in the making of the modern era. The basic goal of this dissertation is to examine what Koreans actually read and wrote in the period from the 1880 to 1931. These fifty years cover the last several decades of the Chosŏn kingdom and the early decades of the Japanese colonial rule. These were the turbulent years when the monarchic regime of the Yi family faced enormous challenges from within and without, and the country went through several wars and the foreign occupation and colonization after 1905. These years are particularly interesting for the study of Korean print culture, because Korea, including its main language, remarkably changed through the years. It is intriguing to find that previous scholarship has emphasized two doctrines in order to explain the transition from old Korea to new Korea. The first is Neo-Confucianism 性理學 (sŏngrihak) and the second is modern nationalism 民族主義 (minjok chuŭi).² These two dogmas make a strange pair in modern Korean historiography, because discussions of both assume that Koreans were and are always homogeneous as one political and cultural unity. In other words, many people have argued that Korea in the nineteenth century stood as the “last bastion of Neo-Confucianism,” and then adopted modern nationalism after the Japanese Empire occupied and colonized it.³ The two doctrines, however, hinder us from understanding the varieties of literary genres that emerged in those years, as well as the complicated relationship between books and readers.

² In this dissertation, I follow McCune-Reischauer Korean Romanization.

³ In his influential textbook on East Asian history, Charles Holcombe writes, “Chosŏn Korea envisioned itself as the last bastion of proper Neo-Confucianism. Paradoxically, this also helped promote a new sense of pride in, and awareness of, Korean identity.” Charles Holcombe, *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 177. In a similar fashion, two ideologies of Neo-Confucianism and modern nationalism have dominated Korean historiography. Chung Chai-sik, *A Korean Confucian Encounter with the Modern World: Yi Han-gyo and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Michael Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); Kim Key-Hiuk, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

Indeed, Koreans produced many different genres of books, and they consumed hand-written and printed texts for a number of different reasons. Some books in fact disseminated dogmatic messages of classical ethics among Koreans in the nineteenth century, yet only a few books directly discussed nationalism in the colonial era. These both were only fragments of the entire bibliography that consisted of Korean literary culture. As Adrian Johns, a historian of books in North America and Europe, describes the complexity of print culture, the historical evolution of books shows varied trajectories that did not exactly correspond to the formation of modern nationhood.⁴ Print culture, note some scholars, is not only monolithic or timeless, but rather is diverse and a result of interactions with canons, states, and the market economy.⁵ We also observe the diverse body of literature and books in the Korean case as well. In this dissertation, I report about three informal institutions enriching modern Korean print culture. Books circulated through three institutions—kinship organizations, literati associations, and new religious groups—even when bookstores did not exist. Why did people read books? How did they acquire the texts?⁶ These questions may appear self-evident to us because bookstores offline and online are readily available in these days. Yet, the circumstances surrounding reading were different in the nineteenth century and even to a certain degree in the early twentieth century. Moreover, such structural legacies played a critical role in training new authors and fostering literary audiences when the market economy became a new norm in the early twentieth century.⁷ By uncovering the diversity of literary culture and the varied routes of disseminating literature, knowledge, and classics, I argue that Korean print culture evolved with the

⁴ Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 2-3.

⁵ Regarding the complexity of print culture, Robert Darnton makes an interesting contribution by uncovering underground literary world of pre-revolutionary France. Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-sellers of Pre-revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995).

⁶ In this dissertation, I borrow the framework of “book history” which Robert Darnton. Regarding the way in which cultural history of books can be different from intellectual history, see Robert Darnton, “What is the History of Books?” *Daedalus* 111:3 (1982).

⁷ For example, Shawn McHale, a historian of modern Vietnam, also points out traditional legacy of print culture in the making of modern Vietnam. Shawn McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).

intensive interactions among old and new institutions, making books the vortex of competing and contesting visions whose advocates wished to bring them to the attention of the reading public.

1. Indigenous Institutions of Print Culture

How did people living in nineteenth-century Korea access a book? When did they begin to have bookstores as we do now? Today, we think of books normally circulating through a commercial network of merchants. It is common in our modern economy that curious readers can purchase a book by paying money at stores. Basically, books are consumer goods except for a few kinds of books designed for a limited audience. The notion that people could trade a book was not, however, well-established in nineteenth-century Korean society. The immaturity of commercialization was related to the degree of the development of the Korean market economy, but the most important factor can be found in Korean literary culture. In other words, literary production and consumption depended on institutions that were often outside the market economy. It was only after the Russo-Japanese War that the commercial press extended its network in Korea. That is, books were more like a gift than a commodity before the twentieth century in Korea. A renowned historian of Europe, Natalie Zemon Davis, discovered a similar phenomenon in France. Whereas the historical contexts between nineteenth-century Korea and sixteenth-century France are different, it is valuable to listen to what Davis said about French print culture. She argues:

We can best understand the connections between printing and the people if we do two things: first, if we supplement thematic analysis of texts with evidence about audiences that can provide context for the meaning and uses of books; second, if we consider a printed book not merely as a source for ideas and images, but as a carrier of relationships.⁸

⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Printing and the People," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern Europe: Eight Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975) 192.

Although Davis also regarded commercial printers as an essential part of new popular media, it is noteworthy that she suggested a new approach to uncover multiple functions of reading a book. In the Korean case, books did not simply link readers to printers in the nineteenth century; books connected readers to the sacred authors. Books carried the authority, the morality, and the knowledge, which people of that time did not regard as an object of commercial trade. Among others, the Four Books and Five Classics 四書五經 (sasŏ ogyŏng) were the canonical texts printed by the king of the Chosŏn kingdom. From the fifteenth century, the Chosŏn regime enthusiastically imported the Confucian canons from the Ming Empire and canonized the nine books. As Benjamin Elman points out, these books were recent publications of the Ming imperial government, which designed them as the principal textbooks for those who prepared the civil service examinations in the empire.⁹ The Chosŏn kingdom emulated the system. When it came to print culture, the word for “a book” 書 (sŏ) itself was virtually synonymous with these canonical texts, and authorized by the ruler.

Beginning in the eighteenth century, new cultural movements emerged with a common goal of writing something more than commentaries on the canons. It was not at all revolutionary, but a cautious experiment of testing the limit of “Korean” books beyond the bounds of the textbooks. To scrutinize these extensions of print culture, I choose to analyze three native institutions in the first part of the dissertation: kinship organizations, literati associations, and new religious groups. I investigate them because books seemed to circulate through these social networks more than through merchants’ shops. First, kinship groups called munjung 門中 emerged throughout the

⁹ It was the trilogy of *Great Collection of Four Books* 四書大全 (sasŏ taejŏn), *Great Collection of Five Classics* 五經大全 (ogyŏng taejŏn), and *Great Collection of Philosophy of Nature and Principle* 性理大全 (sŏngri taejŏn). Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 113-116.

eighteenth and nineteenth century as the most powerful organization in Korean society.¹⁰ Recently, a few scholars in South Korea have revisited the importance of kinship groups, but negative evaluations of them are still predominant in academia and the general public. The prominent kinship organizations were so-called “royal in-laws” 勢道家門 (saedogamun). They not only monopolized the royal marriage, but also controlled the government as wealthy and literate clans. Their unprecedented dominance as aristocrats has been negatively described as the principal reason for political inflexibility and international seclusion. At least from the perspective of print culture, however, there is a possibility of rethinking their dominance from a new perspective. Given their affluence and political ascendance, some elite kinship groups accumulated books in their studies and protected the academic research of their members.¹¹ So, elite kinship groups became the leading sites for disseminating foreign books from China and later from Japan.¹²

In addition, literati associations accumulated cultural capital for new authors and readers. Literati networks began to replace private academies called sŏwŏn 書院 in terms of fostering print culture. Although previous scholarship in South Korea tended to emphasize the private academies, these private schools were deeply intertwined with political factions in the bureaucracy.¹³ As James Palais and others point out, they had various functions in central and local politics as well as in

¹⁰ As a recent study on powerful kinship organizations, Yi Kyŏng-gu, *Chosŏn hugi Andong Kimmun yŏngu* 朝鮮後期安東 金門 研究 [Study on Andong Kims] (Seoul: Iljisa, 2007). Kim Myŏng-suk's article about Yŏhŭng Mins also shows an interesting research on the historical formation of kinship organizations in the late Chosŏn period. See Kim Myŏng-suk, Yŏhŭng Minssi kasŭng kiryak ŭl t'onghae pon 17-18 saegi Yŏhŭng Minmun ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa kamun chŏngbi 驪興閔氏家承記略을 통해 본 17-18 世紀 驪興閔門의 形成과 家門整備 [The formation and strengthening of Yŏhŭng Mins in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a case study of Records of the Lineage in Yŏhŭng Mins], *Hanguk sasang kwa munhwa* 46 (2009).

¹¹ Regarding cultural functions of kinship organizations, see Benjamin Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: the Chang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

¹² About a new approach to the yangban oligarchy, see Hanguk yŏksa yŏnguhoe 19segi Chongch'isa yonguban, *Chosŏn chŏngch'isa, 1800-1863* 朝鮮政治史, 1800-1863 [Political History of Korea, 1800-1864] (Seoul: Ch'ŏngnyŏnsa, 1990) vol.1-2.

¹³ About private academies and local politics, see Yi Su-gŏn, *Yŏngnam sarimp'a ŭi hyŏngsŏng* 嶺南士林派의 形成 [The Formation of Literati Factions in Kyŏngsang Province] (Taegu: Yŏngnam taehakkyo minjok munhwa yŏnguso, 1980).

reproducing the financial privileges of local gentries.¹⁴ A few schools seriously preserved textbooks and other readings for students, but many small academies hardly supported adventurous writers and those who wished to read new books. Literati groups were informal institutions. And, their networking of peers grew influential in educating and training writers, especially by sharing non-canonical books together. Today, historians in South Korea tend to call these networks *hakup'a* 學派 (literally meaning “the factions of learning”) without paying enough attention to their homogeneous features as an informal and intimate network.¹⁵ The appearance of such informal networks cannot be understood simply by the political factionalism. Although factional fighting in the bureaucracy was indirectly related to the growth of dissenting voices in the countryside, the primary role of literati groups was to break the social isolation of heretic writers and readers. As elite kinship organizations became patrons of their members, the literati associations basically built their own infrastructure for writing and reading books. Also, the most surprising difference between private academies (*sŏwŏn*) and intimate networks of scholars (*hakup'a*) is that the latter detached itself from the preparation of passing the civil service examinations. Due to the dedication of academic circles toward learning for learning's sake, Korean print culture began to explore new horizons beyond the boundary of Confucian canons.

¹⁴ James B. Palais, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

¹⁵ For example, historians in South Korea commonly use the terms of “the lineage of Practical Learning in Southerners' Faction” 南人實學派 (*namin silhakup'a*), “the lineage of Northern Learning in Patriarchs' Faction” 老論北學派 (*noron pukhakup'a*) and “the lineage of Yangming School in Kanghai Island” 江華陽明學派 (*kanghai yangmyŏng hakup'a*). It is necessary, however, to synthesize and examine what these different schools can tell us about broad social and cultural changes in the nineteenth century. For example, a Korean historian Chŏng Chae-hun still traces back the *hakup'a* to sixteenth-century philosophers, although he suggests the rethinking of vibrant academic culture before and after the Hideyoshi Invasion. Yet, he still describes the academic lineage and homogeneity of literati groups in a term of *hakt'ong* 學統. That is, he explains that the “*hakup'a*” always needed “the absolute patriarch of the group 學派의 宗祖 (*hakup'a ŭi chongjo*)” Chŏng Chae-hun, *Chosŏn sidae ŭi hakup'a wa sasang* 朝鮮時代の 學派와 思想 [Literati Associations and Their Thoughts in the Chosŏn period] (Seoul: Singu munhwasa, 2008).

Finally, religious groups also collected non-canonical books. In particular, a new religious group called Eastern Learning 東學 (Tonghak) highlights the diversification of print culture in popular society. Religious institutions, especially Buddhist temples and monasteries, had preserved rich collections of Buddhist sutras and other readings. While the kingdom standardized the literary culture of elite males by testing them at the civil service examinations, popular society, including females, was devotedly Buddhist. Besides, low-class males who struggled to pass the exams often looked for religious salvation in temples and used their quasi-literate skills to read religious texts. The civil service examinations systematically disqualified almost ninety-nine percent of candidates, and certain groups of people were ineligible to take the tests from birth. So, popular culture existed as an alternative culture in the kingdom, especially by mixing Korean vernacular language and Chinese characters. Among others, religious texts in Buddhism provided important references for vernacular-language readers and writers, for Buddhist priests wrote vernacular songs for religious enlightenment.¹⁶ The mixture of oral and literary culture was a striking phenomenon in the nineteenth century, making vernacular fiction and songs increasingly popular in the society.¹⁷ When a vernacular-language writer created the new popular religion of Eastern Learning in the 1850s, the underground religious network steadily increased its followers due to his easy and popular texts. This religious heresy became a critical momentum of the peasants' rebellion in 1894-95 as many scholars

¹⁶ Regarding vernacular songs written by Buddhist priests, see Yi Sang-bo, "Pulgyo kasa ūi yōksa" 佛教歌辭의 歷史 (the History of Buddhist verse dramas), *Myōngji ōmunhak* 5 (1972).

¹⁷ Anne E. McLaren also found the same phenomenon in the Qing Empire and shed light on how vernacular works contributed to the growth of the new reading public. Anne E. McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China" in Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow eds., *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) 152-184. In a slightly different way, Eiko Ikegami also explores the Japanese vernacular poems and the network of literary aestheticism in the Tokugawa period in Japan. See Eiko Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

have found.¹⁸ Some groups of scholars in South Korea even identified them as proto-nationalists.¹⁹ Discussing Eastern Learning's doctrine is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but one should not explain the growth of popular religions retrospectively by assuming that the rebellion was inevitable or that it was related to modern nationalism.²⁰ Rather, I argue that the new religious group shared many aspects with other institutions of print culture such as kinship organizations and literati associations.

2. New Agents after 1905

After 1895, the Chosŏn kingdom experienced several turnovers in its domestic and international politics. The reform cabinet of 1894-95 dramatically collapsed in February 1896 as the cabinet not only received the blame that it failed to protect the queen from assassins, but also some cabinet members looked guilty of helping the murder behind the curtain. From 1896 until 1905, the kingdom was governed by the monarchy Kojong 高宗 who elevated himself to Emperor Kwangmu 光武帝 with his loyal servants, the Mins. This unsuccessful political experiment received the support from the Russian Empire, and such international policy exposed the kingdom to another risk of war between the belligerent Japanese Empire and the Russians. When the Russo-Japanese War broke out and the Japanese Empire won the war, the Korean kingdom officially became a

¹⁸ Peasants' revolts occurred at many times and places in the nineteenth century. Popular beliefs and practices became important parts of legitimizing their rebellious acts and mobilizing people. See Sun Joo Kim, *Marginality and Subversion in Korea: the Hong Kyŏngnae Rebellion of 1812* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007) 98-100.

¹⁹ The five-volume-series books published in 1991 collect the most extensive research on the 1894-95 rebellion. Hanguk yŏksa yŏnguhoe ed, 1894nyŏn nongmin chŏnjaeng yŏngu 1894 年 農民戰爭研究 [Studies on 1894 peasant war] vol.1-5 (Seoul: Yŏksa pip'yŏngsa, 1991).

²⁰ The relationship between the religious group and the military revolt is not so self-evident because it was only after 1919 that they began to acknowledge the rebellion as their expression of nationalism and patriotism. Such discourses for remembering the 1894 rebellion appeared in their magazine *Recreation* 開闢 (*kaehyŏk*) in the 1920s. See Sang-ho Ro, "Reorienting Colonial Book Market," *Kukjae Koryŏhak* [Journal of International Korean Studies] 13 (2009). Carl F. Young also emphasizes the difference between Eastern Learning before 1895 and Ch'ŏndogyo after 1905; see Carl F. Young, "Embracing Modernity: Organisational and Ritual Reform in Ch'ŏndogyo, 1905-1910," *Asian Studies Review* 29 (2005).

protectorate of the Japanese Empire. As Peter Duus points out, however, the initial plan of “nurturing self-rule” failed to build the stable pro-Japanese government and the Japanese Empire lost its faith of gradualism and annexed Korea in 1910 as one of its new territories in the Asian continent.²¹

After the Russo-Japanese War ended in 1905, new powerful agents came into being in literary production and consumption. They were the market economy, public education, and the Japanese Empire. These three agents not only represented the rapid transformation of the kingdom into the colony, but also changed the everyday life of Koreans by transforming the definition of language, canons, and classics. As the Japanese Empire more closely connected Korea with the global economy than before, and as Korean writers emulated Japanese commercial publishing producers, printing for profit began to flourish in the postwar years. Private printing presses in Seoul competitively published daily newspapers, vernacular fiction, and new school textbooks. Surprisingly, the Japanese Empire protected many writers who had been critical of the Chosŏn monarchy and who previously had to rely on kinship organizations, literati associations, or religious groups for their safety. Scholars in South Korea previously reduced the complex interactions among rebellious writers, mass consumers, and the colonial empire to the genre of “pro-Japanese literature”

親日文學 (ch’il munhak).²² It is valid in retrospect to measure the literary works of the early colonial period by the standard of post-colonial nationalism, but we now need to rethink the reasons

²¹ Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Stanford: University of California Press, 1995), 201-241. Alexis Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

²² Ch’oe Wŏn-sik, Professor at Inha University in South Korea, has already suggested the necessity of reconsidering the pro-Japanese literature in the 1900s and 10s. Ch’oe Wŏn-sik, *Han’guk kŏndae sosŏlsaron* 韓國近代小説史論 [Essays on Korean Modern Literature] (Seoul: Ch’angjaksŏ, 1986). Nevertheless, some Korean historians emphasize the complete control of colonial police censorship, so they depict the 1910s as the dark age of iron-fisted military rule 武斷統治 (*mudan t’ongch’i*). Such negative evaluations on literary culture can be seen at Chŏng Chin-sŏk, *Han’guk ŏnronsa* 韓國言論史 [History of Korean Journalism] (Seoul: Nanam, 1990) and Suyŏ yŏksa yŏn’guhoe ed., *Sikminji Chosŏn kwa Maeil sinbo – 1910 nyŏndae* 植民地朝鮮과 毎日申報-1910年代 [Colonial Korea and *Daily Newspaper* in the 1910s] (Seoul: Sinsŏwŏn, 2003).

why popular writers and readers so enthusiastically collaborated with the Japanese occupation and colonization of Korea. Moreover, the native institutions of print culture, which I mentioned above, generally did not confront colonial rule. Rather, they all took advantage of the market economy, public education, and colonial rule.²³

Consumption of imprints grew rapidly in the first decade of the twentieth century.²⁴ As new printing technology was introduced from Japan and the United States, printing presses recruited many literate males in order to make their business more competitive than others. Vernacular-language media especially realized that the business environment was favorable to them, because the size of their market was steadily growing. Regardless of political commotions and international conflicts, print capitalism took its firm root in Korea after the turn of the century. The weakening of the Korean monarchy ironically was beneficial to vernacular-language writers who used to work in the underground network. In particular, the dysfunctionality of the Korean government from 1895 to 1905 loosened the tight control over literary culture. Although a new kind of police censorship began to take shape after 1908, under Japanese colonial rule Korean writers were rarely executed by police because of their writings. It is a surprise to discover that the censorship was less developed in the early colonial period (1905-1937) than before 1895 under the Korean king or after 1937.²⁵

Indeed, the colonial state prohibited the sales of certain books, but the scope of censorship was,

²³ The historiography of post-colonial nationalism, therefore, highly evaluates the 1920s after the March First Movement as the time when Koreans finally had freedom of speech due to their countrywide protests. Michael Robinson's book on modern Korean history, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925*, took the same side with post-colonial historiography in which 20s' mass media are described as genuine speakers of Korean nationalism.

²⁴ Pu Kil-man reports the increasing activity of private publishers, but he still acknowledges that the government publishing 官版本 was still dominant in the late Chosŏn period. Pu Kil-man, *Chosŏn sidae panggakpon ch'ulp'an yŏngu: Han'guk hyŏndae ch'ulp'an ū ppuri riŭl ch'ajasŏ* 朝鮮時代 坊刻本 出版研究: 韓國現代出版의 뿌리를 찾아서 [Woodblock Printing in the Chosŏn Period: Searching for the Root of Modern Printing] (Seoul: Sŏul ch'ulp'an midŏ, 2003) 145-147.

²⁵ The radical Japanization policy called "kōminka 皇民化" accelerated after the outbreak of Sino-Japanese War in 1938. See Mitsui Takashi, "Sikminjiha Chosŏnaesŏi ŏnŏjibae – Chosŏn kyubŏmhwa munjae riŭl chungsim ūro 植民地下 朝鮮에서의 言語支配-朝鮮語 規範化 問題를 中心으로 [About Japanese Colonial Policies to Koreans: from the Issue of Standardizing Korean Language]", *HanIl minjok munjae yŏn'gu* 4 (2003), 225-226.

nevertheless, limited and selective. Although many scholars depict the 1910s as the decade of brutal Japanese martial rule, they do not explain why the colonial government increased the size of police censors only after 1926.²⁶ Prolific and professional vernacular writers such as Yi In-jik 李人植, Yi He-jo 李海朝, and later Yi Kwang-su 李光洙 easily evaded Japanese censorship and communicated with the Korean reading public.²⁷ Instead of provoking the police, commercial publishing companies took advantage of such weak control and turned vernacular writers into bestselling authors, the shining stars of print capitalism.

Colonial public education also helps explain the development of print culture in the 1910s and 20s. Previous scholarship has emphasized that the Japanese colonial empire paid little attention to the establishment of compulsory education in the newly added territories. Koreans demanded elementary education, although the colonial state did not meet their expectations with enough money and staff.²⁸ Enthusiasm for education largely originated from Korean society. Often, the colonial government was overwhelmed by the high expectation of Koreans regarding the speed of expanding public education, and struggled to meet the demand with a limited budget and experience. Most of all, the Japanese colonial empire did not prohibit the teaching of Korean vernacular language and acknowledged its usefulness in teaching the Japanese language in the long run. It is also astonishing to discover that the colonial regime maintained the previous structure of male-centered

²⁶ Chŏng Kŭn-sik and Ch'oe Kyŏng-hŭi, "Tosŏgwa ūi sŏlch'i wa Iljae ūi sikminji ch'ulp'an kyŏngch'al ūi ch'aegyehwa, 1926-1929" 圖書課의 設置와 日帝 植民地出版警察의 體系化, 1926-1929, *Han'guk munhak yŏn'gu* 30 (2006).

²⁷ About these three vernacular writers, there are many researches about their life, and works. Along with Ch'oe Wŏn-sik's researches on Yi In-jik and Yi He-jo, Kim Yun-sik's three-volume books about Yi Kwang-su are wonderful references for Yi Kwang-su's works and bibliography. Kim Yun-sik, *Yi Kwang-su wa kŭn ūi sidae* 李光洙와 그의 時代 [Yi Kwang-su and His Age] vol.1-3 (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1986). In English, Michael Robinson's book, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925*, also analyzes Yi Kwang-su's thoughts and activities in the early 1920s.

²⁸ E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan, 1895-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977); Kim Pu-ja, *Shokuminchi Chōsen no kyōiku to jenda: shūgaku fushūgaku o meguru kenryoku kankei* 植民地朝鮮とジェンダー就学・不就学をめぐる権力関係 [Colonial Korea and Gender: Schooling and Non-schooling in Everyday Life Politics] (Yokohama: Seori shobō, 2005).

and class-based education in the first few decades. Schooling was not mandatory, while only degree-holders could sit for the civil service examinations in the entire colonial era. Many people failed to pass multiple stages of examinations because of expensive tuition and difficulty of learning the foreign language and, eventually, dropped out of the colonial schools. So, public education brought about the unexpected effect of fostering the Korean literary world by producing literate, but frustrated people who received the highly-standardized education in the Korean vernacular language and some level of the Japanese language. Accordingly, public schools increased the pool of the reading public and trained new Korean authors such as Yu Chin-o 俞鎮午 who refused to take the civil service examinations.²⁹ The colonial education was indeed successful among certain groups, but it is critical to examine how the society took advantage of the system for its own purpose.

Finally, the Japanese colonial empire heavy-handedly intervened in Korean literary culture from 1920. Not surprisingly, many scholars in South Korea and Japan have highlighted powerful control of the colonial regime, namely police censorship, over Korean imprints and public expression in the colonial period.³⁰ Nevertheless, we must consider that the empire also made many new popular books as much as it policed Korean authors and readers. New school textbooks after 1922, in particular, quickly dominated everyday life of Korean students. As colonial Korea experienced the gradual industrialization in the 1920s, the colonial government began to produce

²⁹ There are few researches about Korean students at Keijō Imperial University. Ch'oe Che-ch'öl, "Keijō teikoku daigaku kwa Abe Yoshishige, kūrigo sikminji toshi Keijō ūi chisikin 京城帝國大學과 安倍能成, 그리고 植民地都市 京城의 知識人 [Keijo Imperial University, Abe Yoshishige, and Colonial Intelligentsia in Colonial City Seoul]", *Ilbon yōngu* 42 (2009).

³⁰ Matsuda Toshihiko, "Nihon tōchika no Chōsen ni okeru keisatsu kikō no kaihen: kenpei keisatsu seidō kara hutsu keisatsu seidō he no tenkan wo megutte 日本統治下の朝鮮における警察機構の改編－憲兵警察制度から普通警察制度への轉換をめぐって", *Shirin* 74:5 (1991). Mizuno Naoki, "Chōsenjin no namae to shokuminchi sihai 朝鮮人の名前と植民地支配 [Korean Names and Colonial Rule]", *Seikatsu chū no shokuminchi shugi* 生活中的植民地主義 [Colonialism in Everyday Life] (Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 2004).

school textbooks in a massive scale by installing a giant printing factory in Seoul.³¹ When the colonial empire compiled new school textbooks, it referred to classical evidences in order to create a new popular Korean history book. In particular, *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* 三國遺事 (*Samguk yusa*), one of Korea's medieval texts, reappeared in Korea after 1904 as a modern book and became a significant text for making new Korean history books.³² Although historian Andre Schmid and anthropologist Hyung Il Pai in the United States both argue that this medieval text and its renowned myth on Tan'gun played an essential role in Korean nationalism, few Koreans would have read this book before the twentieth century.³³ When this text returned to the view of the Korean reading public, its cultural impact was significant.

3. Structure of This Dissertation

This dissertation consists of two parts. Part One analyzes the period from 1880 to 1900. In order to explain the last decades of print culture under the civil service examinations, I trace the history of indigenous cultural movements back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, because these movements remained powerful and consistent until the end of the nineteenth century. In Part Two, I examine the decades from the late 1890s until 1931. By comparing these two time periods, I aim to examine how the native literary culture evolved and extended its spectrum beyond the confines of both Neo-Confucianism and Korean nationalism. By violating the conventional

³¹ Regarding the early industrialization in colonial Korea, see Carter Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: the Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991).

³² Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Although Andre Schmid examined the formation of modern myth by borrowing ancient myth in the 1900s, it is questionable whether *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* did circulate as a monograph before Tokyo Imperial University published it in Tokyo in 1904.

³³ Hyung Il Pai discussed the archaeological projects of the colonial empire. Hyung Il Pai, *Constructing "Korean" Origins: a Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000). But *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* as a modern book does not receive any serious attention in academia.

periodization of late Chosŏn and colonial Korea, I intend to emphasize the negotiation and collaboration of indigenous institutions and new agents of the colonial rule.

In chapter one, I demonstrate that the emergence of non-classical print culture was related to elite kinship organizations. Wealthy and well-educated aristocrats pursued cultural elitism in the late Chosŏn period. Their devotion to reading for reading's sake originated from classical learning. Once they mastered the classics, some wished to extend their study regardless of the results of the civil service examinations. Along with the inflow of new books from the Qing Empire, their own observations of the outside world ignited their passion to go beyond the bounds of canons. Passing the civil service examinations was not easy for all, because the preparation cost enormous amounts of time, money, and effort. Many males of yangban status repeatedly read textbooks until they held the highest degree in hand. Although many minor kinship groups kept producing successful candidates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, political power and cultural capital accumulated in the limited circles of powerful kinship organizations. As the result of their supremacy in the nineteenth century, these clans supported and protected those who extensively read books beyond the curriculum. Their demand for new books from China was high, so aristocrats collected books for their own sake and for the education of kinship members. Thus, new genres of books such as travelogues and encyclopedias were published by the efforts of high-class elite males from the 1880s. Surprisingly, aristocrats adopted a new technology of printing press and reading for new knowledge and mass communication sooner than others.

In chapter two, I move my focus downward to authors who did not receive much patronage from their kinship group. In this case, literati associations supported private authors, especially, those who had no official degrees. Unlike private academies called sŏwŏn, the literati associations were a new social and cultural network. Literati groups were an extremely intimate network, so they

commonly wrote books usually for peer review, not the general public. Although these dissenters did not revolt against Confucian canons and textbooks, they instead tried to prove the legitimacy of studying non-canonical texts. Their primary methodology was philology, for close textual readings protected them from persecution and government censorship against heresy. Acute investigations of things, they believed, would prove that Koreans should write and read things about their own kingdom. In order to criticize Chinese books that contained information about Korea, they adopted the methodology of evidential study 考證學 (kaozheng xue [C]) from the Qing Empire and reused it for the development of new genres: literary criticism, historical geography, bibliography, and statecraft study. Their access to printing was highly limited, but new Korean books circulated through literati networks by handwritten manuscripts and occasionally woodblock printing. New cultural movements of dissenters illustrate that active officials in bureaucracy had lost their hegemony in print culture and that classics of the ruling dynasty had become the object of criticism and revision. When the new printing press appeared in Seoul after 1895, the writings of cultural dissenters drew the attention of the reading public as a Korean classic.

My enquiry on print culture also spotlights the emergence of popular culture of religious texts and vernacular fiction in chapter three. Literacy spread, but most people became only minimally literate. This created a new space for popular books of fictional narratives. In the nineteenth century, the majority of people in Korean society failed to pass the civil service examinations. Or, many were ineligible to sit for the tests from the beginning. Few achieved full literacy in classical Chinese scripts, but rather in the vernacular or a mix of classical Chinese and vernacular Korean. Literate culture, therefore, gradually spread out in the society and fused with the pre-existing oral culture in religion and entertainment. Low-class males who continuously failed at the exams found alternative careers by using their literacy. Some became medical doctors, village

school teachers, or fortune tellers. These outsiders of the civil service examinations lived on the margins where literary culture mixed with oral culture. In this space, new genres of religious books and vernacular literature emerged. Popular fiction relied solely on the vernacular script (hangŭl) to communicate with popular readers. Popular demand for stories about daily emotion, experience, and frustration helped new authors to write their personal narratives in the form of books. Such stories were different from the moral doctrines that Confucian canons contained. Government censorship of the nineteenth century targeted these heretic authors and sometimes punished them by death. The spread of the new popular religion, Eastern Learning, was possible by a vernacular text and its woodblock printing in the 1880s.

In Part Two, I examine new agents in Korean print culture: the market economy, public schools, and the Japanese Empire. In chapter four, I discuss the formation of the literary market in the 1900s and 10s. Vernacular media and literature took the lead in the increase of popular readership by appealing to people's curiosity and emotional sympathy toward ordinary characters. Personal stories in the vernacular script, therefore, became the bestsellers. When people read how other people lived, there appeared a new sense of belonging to the imagined community. Ironically, the colonial regime proved more tolerant of these narratives than the Chosŏn kingdom in the nineteenth century. Bestselling authors improved the quality of fictional books by taking advantage of the relaxed censorship in the regime shift. Police censorship did not impede the expansion of the market, partly because the colonial regime was still not well enough staffed to check every word. More surprisingly, vernacular fiction welcomed the Japanese colonial rule as the antidote to the miserable years of chaos. Although new religious groups such as the Heavenly Way Sect 天道教 (Ch'öndogyo) still worked closely with vernacular writers, it was the market economy that institutionalized the production and consumption of popular literature after 1905. When this

printing revolution was in its high tide during the 1910s, private publishing companies, popular authors, and bookstores made a triangle coalition as the leading agents of mass print culture.

In chapter five, I shed light on how public education changed literary practices. The examination system was restored by the Korean government in 1908, and the Japanese colonial empire after 1910. Astonishingly, the basic structure of the testing system remained intact because people had to invest considerable amounts of time and money in order to become degree-holders. Instead of classical Chinese, the Japanese language became the new language needed to pass the civil service examinations. The assimilation of Korean elite boys was successful. Especially, after the colony built its own university, Keijō Imperial University 京城帝國大學 in 1924, public schools finalized the elite course of education by which Koreans could speak, write, and read the Japanese language fluently. Yet, Japanization had a double effect. Ethnic Korean boys constantly faced the double standard of the Japanese Empire, which doubted their level of civilization, regardless of their official degree. When targeted by ethnic discrimination, the degree of frustration was stronger among well-educated Korean men than others in the 1920s and early 30s. Some elite writers such as Yu Chin-o 俞鎮午 abandoned the dream of passing the civil service examinations and instead reintegrated into popular society. Professions such as essayist, novelist, journalist, and teacher became alternative careers for ethnic Korean degree-holders. It was an unexpected effect of the successful colonial education and examination system.

In chapter six, I highlight how classics became popularized in the 1920s by the combined efforts of the Japanese Empire and Koreans. After the abolition of the old civil service examinations, classical-language users struggled to survive in the print capitalism and the Japanese educational system. Although Confucian canons turned into consumer goods, the sense of crisis was strong among those who received classical education before 1894. Instead of police censorship, Korean

consumers themselves became increasingly indifferent and even hostile to the classics and classical language. After 1915, however, the classics returned to the attention of the reading public. At first, a commercial publisher, House of New Literature 新文館 (sinmungwan), proved that an extract from classical texts, if easy and concise, could become a popular text. After 1920, the Japanese colonial empire also relied on classical texts in the compilation of a new history textbook for Koreans, *The National History* 國史 (*Kokusshi* [J]). As the printing was industrialized in the 1920s, surprisingly, the easy and concise extractions from classics massively circulated in colonial Korea. The publishers including the Government-General of Korea and a leading vernacular media The Oriental Daily News Company agreed that classics could generate popular curiosity about new Korea and promote the anti-Chinese and anti-Chosŏn sentiment. It was an intriguing twist and turn that Korean classics became popular books due to the alliance of the colonial empire, powerful printing machines, and Korean writers.

In summary, Korean print culture moved along on unexpected trajectory from 1880 to 1931. Literacy spread under the predominant authority of canonical texts such as the Confucian textbooks and Japanese school textbooks. Many people did read textbooks over and over again in order to win a post in the bureaucracy. Literary criticism or critical reading of textbooks was discouraged not by the police censorship *per se*, but their fear of confronting the authority and of failure at the tests (i.e. self-censorship). But transgressions did happen at the cultural borders where “correct” and “incorrect” languages were tangled, where the colonial periphery met the imperial metropole, and where the present memorialized the past. Print culture matured due to such careful and unexpected dialogues among strange bedfellows. The state-authorized texts and privately-made texts were, in fact, closely tied together because people read both. The Japanese Empire and Korean society had multiple ways of communicating with their counterparts, especially by writing and reading books. I

argue that the number of books that the Korean reading public could read increased throughout this time in spite of many restrictions, chaotic regime shifts, and wars.

4. Transgression against Limits

Thematically, transgression best explains the main goal of this dissertation. New books usually come into being because their authors wish to add something new or to amend previous literature. Canonical texts, however, do not tolerate the challenge of new books. The canons are the authority written in words. In my dissertation, I discover two ways the regime disciplined challenging authors in the Korean case. The first was to fail those who read the new books in the examinations and the second was to censor the heterodoxy by force. But surprisingly, such disciplinary methods failed, in fact, to homogenize what people wrote and read. Korean print culture managed to evolve under these two disciplinary forces from 1880 until 1931. During these years, many people crossed the limit and explored new culture, risking punishment and isolation. I argue that their motivations varied so widely that it is almost impossible to describe their transgressions under one single ideology or doctrine like Neo-Confucianism or nationalism. Korean print culture in the making of the modern era was far from a monolithic structure.

By confirming the diversity of Korean literary culture, one can rethink the question of a modern subject in the making of modern Korea. Homi Bhaba argues that cultural transgression developed the subjectivity in periphery. He says:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originality and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These “in-between” spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular

or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.³⁴

As Bhaba articulates the exchange and emulation on the border and beyond, the mutation of self-identity occurs in the act of crossing. In the same fashion, Korean literary culture emulated others, especially the Ming-Qing Empire and the Japanese Empire. It imported Confucian canons, school textbooks, popular fiction, and encyclopedias from China and Japan. Korean authors and the reading public were located in the middle ground, dividing universal civilization and provincial culture. And, at the very points where bold crossings and experiments occurred, one could find new dreams about Korea as its own subject. The imagination of subjectivity in Korean print culture was based on inter-connectedness 關係 (kwangye) to others instead of something unchanged or unique. Therefore, it is the goal of this dissertation to examine the fluidity of Korean print culture located in between various languages, the past and the present, as well as China and Japan.

³⁴ Homi Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 2.

PART ONE

BOOKS UNDER CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATIONS IN THE LATE CHOSŎN PERIOD

ONE

HIGH-CLASS KINSHIP ORGANIZATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE-BOOKS

Introduction

This chapter examines how the civil examination system regulated Korean print culture during the late Chosŏn period, and unexpectedly contributed to the diversification of literary genres as well-educated degree-holders explored literature beyond the material contained in the officially-sanctioned curriculum. In recent decades, the historical nature of Chosŏn elites, the yangbans 兩班 (or sajok 士族), has become an important subject of historical research. If there was any consensus in the previous scholarship on this subject, it would be that the principal characteristic of yangbans of the late Chosŏn period was their literacy in Chinese characters and classical Chinese language. Yangbans were the hereditary ruling elite status in Chosŏn society.³⁵ However, in order to maintain positions of privilege and prestige, each individual was required to at least pass the lowest level preliminary civil service examination. Because of these civil service examinations, members of the land-based gentry gradually became the literate and political elites in the late Chosŏn period.³⁶ In this

³⁵ Yi Sŏng-mu, "Chosŏn chŏngi ŭi sinbun chaedo 朝鮮前期의 身分制度 [Status System of the Early Chosŏn Period]", *TongA munhwa* 13 (1976) 173-191. Regardless of social and economic changes, the status system remained still powerful until the nineteenth century. See Kyung Moon Hwang, *Beyond Birth: Social Status in the Emergence of Modern Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard Asia Center, 2004).

³⁶ However, it still remains debatable as to whether literacy in classical language was almost the same in all yangban status-holders. Regarding *yangbans* in early Chosŏn period, see Yi Sŏng-mu, *Chosŏn ch'ŏgi yangban yŏn'gu*

first chapter, I argue that there is evidence that the relationship between print culture and the civil service examinations was complicated in so far as the classical education for the tests enabled successful students to advance to the next level of learning after they finished the textbooks.

The civil examinations required a high-degree of mastery of classical language and Confucian texts, the Four Books and Five Classics. Even though many yangban-status-holders studied the canons, spending even more than two decades of their life on it since the age of three, many inept candidates failed to achieve success. That is, not all who held the status of yangban could become degree-holders. This examination system created a hierarchy which sharply divided Korean society into two groups: the qualified and the unqualified. This absolute division existed between correct language-users and others.³⁷ Education and literacy were the most important cultural capital among yangban-status-holders, for it was education and literacy which conferred official status. Wealthy and literate kinship organizations began to extend their networks for passing along their social status from one generation to the next. In the course of literary education for their children, there appeared new genres of pedagogy and knowledge-books. An aristocratic virtue of “erudition” 博學多聞 (pakhak tamun) motivated a few well-educated degree-holders to extend their education beyond the limits of the canons. For their own knowledge and their kinship fellows, these elite writers began to produce educational books which classified natural things and codified human

朝鮮初期兩班研究 [On Yangban in the Early Chosŏn Period] (Seoul: Iljogak, 1980); *Chosŏn yangban sabae yŏn'gu* 朝鮮兩班社會研究 [Social Activities of Yangban in the Chosŏn Dynasty] (Seoul: Iljogak, 1995); Ch'oe Yong-ho, *The Civil Examinations and the Social Structure in Early Yi Dynasty Korea, 1392-1600* (Seoul: Korean Research Center, 1987).

³⁷ See chapter two. Previous scholarship in this area has underestimated the homogeneity of degree-holders, and has instead tended to highlight internal conflicts and factions among the degree-holders.³⁷ Despite severe factionalism at the upper level of society, the highest degree-holders represented an extremely homogenous group of successful candidates who passed the series of examinations, adopted the doctrine expressed in Confucian texts, and were literate in their elite use of language. If their heated debates about policy issues represented the presence of the reading public among high-class literati, they did not speak to the entire society, but only to the narrow audience of degree-holders. As Martina Deuchler states, the spread of classical learning as well as the increase in the literacy rate in Korean society occurred gradually over time. Many parts of the society remained uninfluenced by the moral and philosophical doctrine expressed in classic texts, not to mention the classical tongue. Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 1992.

knowledge in a comprehensible order.³⁸ Although they did not sell these texts in the market, their writings carefully explored the possibility of mass education through a medium of books intended for others from the nineteenth century. Therefore, I argue in this chapter that the creation of new Korean books written by elite yangban writers in the nineteenth century was the means by which Korean elitism diversified the literary culture and tried to disseminate knowledge in the society.

1. Civil Service Examinations and Classical Education

The civil service examinations caused the formation of a literati community in Korean society. The testing system recruited the most talented men in literature and classical learning, and thus governed the everyday life of elite males. During the late Chosŏn period, the examination system improved the literacy rate, acting as a centrifugal force which invited numerous literate men to the testing centers at provincial and royal capitals. Until the examination system was abolished in 1894, the print culture of the kingdom evolved under the multi-layered and country-wide system of testing. The level of literacy and knowledge in Confucian canons was evaluated, and those who passed the test were given rewards. These rewards took the form of ranks and titles, personal glory, and prestige for the successful candidate's family. As a historian Ch'oe Yŏng-ho points out, "Success in examination brought unrivalled honor and prestige not only to graduates but also to their families and clans as well."³⁹

The examination system consisted essentially of two levels of tests: lower examinations, which were called sama 司馬, and higher examinations called taegwa 大科. Whereas sama

³⁸ Regarding new cultural movements of the Qing Empire which inspired Korean elites, see Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 2001). About knowledge-books in the late Chosŏn period, a group of Korean scholars published an edited book on an dictionary-encyclopedia 大東韻府群玉 (*TaeDong unbu kunok*) in 2009. See Ok Yŏng-jŏng, *Chosŏn ūi paegwajisik: TaeDong unbu kunok ūro bonŭn Chosŏn sidae ch'aek ūi munhwasa* 朝鮮의 百科知識: 大東韻府群玉으로 보는 朝鮮時代の 冊의 文化史 [Encyclopedic Knowledge in the Chosŏn Period: Cultural History of Books from a Case of *TaeDong unbo kunok*] (Seoul: Hangukhak chungang yŏnguwŏn, 2009).

³⁹ Ch'oe Yong-ho, *The Civil Examinations and the Social Structure in Early Yi Dynasty Korea, 1392-1600*, 36.

examinations can be translated as “lower” examinations, this does not mean that it was easy to pass them. To be sure, it was less difficult to pass the sama examinations than the taegwa examinations, but the sama examinations also involved multiple and thorough screening processes. Examinees had to prove their ability in reading and writing at the testing center. The royal capital and each province had strict quotas which limited the number of examinees who were allowed to compete at the metropolitan examination. The royal capital, Seoul, controlled the largest share of these preliminary candidates, with a total of 400 such positions (200 of saengwŏn 生員 and 200 of chinsa 進士). In addition, the three southern provinces—Kyŏngsang 慶尙, Chŏlla 全羅, and Ch’ungch’ŏng 忠清—could produce 200, 180, and 180 preliminary candidates respectively. In total, 1,400 candidates (700 for the saengwŏn degree and 700 for the chinsa degree) who passed the provincial test finally sat at the metropolitan examinations for the preliminary degrees of saengwŏn and chinsa in Seoul. At the final round, only 100 candidates out of 700 were granted the degree of saengwŏn, a master of the Four Books and Classics. In the same manner, only 100 candidates received the degree of chinsa, a master of literary composition.⁴⁰

Preliminary degree-holders then had to prepare for the highest degree. The next test was the final gate before elite males were qualified to participate in statecraft as bureaucrats. Since the Chosŏn kingdom borrowed its curriculum from the Ming Empire, the civil service examinations thoroughly tested the literacy skills in writing classical language and the comprehension of canons. At this advanced round, candidates had to take several essay tests. Graduates of the saengwŏn and the chinsa then had to pass the provincial tests. In this examination, the candidates’ knowledge of the subject matter was evaluated by means of essay tests 義 or 疑 (ŭi) from the Four Books and Five Classics. These essays included an argument 論 (non) on a special topic, as well as literary

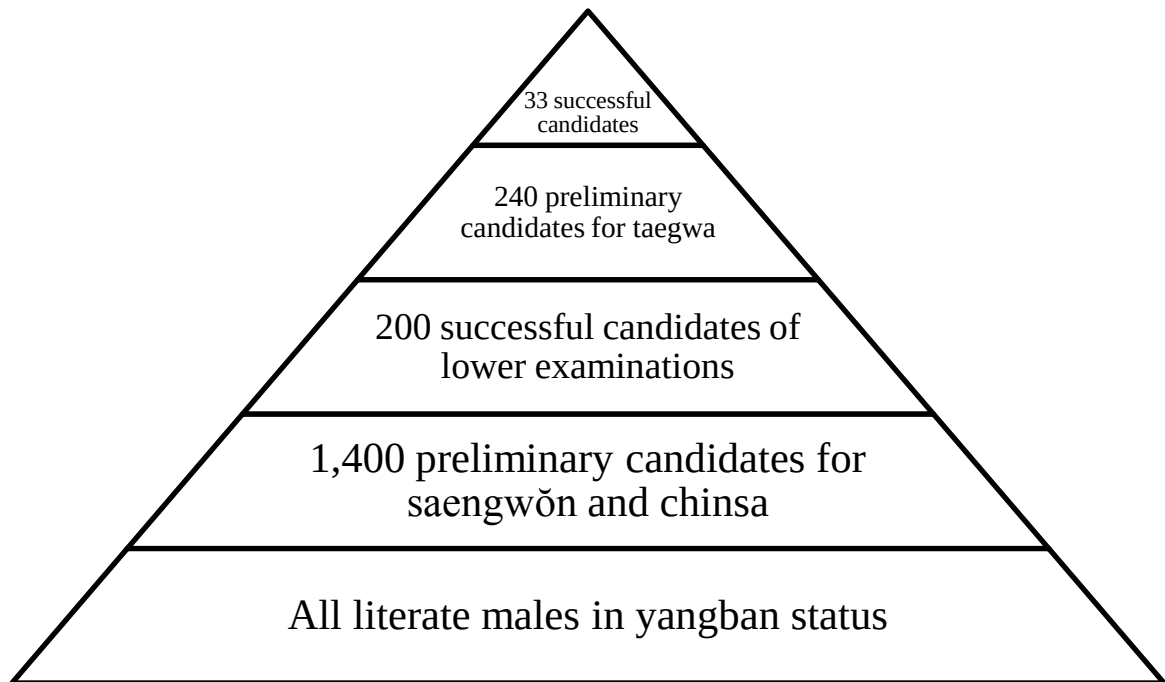
⁴⁰ Regarding the civil examination system of Chosŏn dynasty, see Ch’oe Yŏng-ho, *The Civil Examinations and the Social Structure in Early Yi Dynasty Korea*, 26-28.

compositions such as a memorial 表 (p'yo), a report 箋 (chŏn), or a dissertation 策 (ch'aek). Only 240 candidates were selected from the entire country, and they were sent again to the metropolitan examination in Seoul. In order to pass the metropolitan exam, students had to memorize the authorized texts such as *Complete Collection of Royal Codes and Regulations* 經國大全 (Kyŏngguk taejŏn) and *Family Rituals of Zhu Xi* 朱子家禮 (Zhu xi jia li [C]), as well as the Four Books and Five Classics. In order to survive in this final round, they were required to read and remember the textbooks so thoroughly that they did not even need to have the books in hand. After all the painstaking processes, only thirty-three were granted the honorable taegwa degree.⁴¹ These successful candidates were the literate males who had most thoroughly mastered the official standardized curriculum which was tested by the examinations, therefore forming a homogeneous group ready for a job in the bureaucracy.

As we can see from figure 1, the civil service examination system allowed only about 2 percent (33/1400) of literate males to achieve success during each cycle of the tests. If we take into account the potential pool of lower degree-holders with saengwŏn and chinsa, we can understand that the rate of success is lower than 2 percent. That is, almost 99 percent of men who believed that they could read and write classical language without difficulty dropped out of the competition, and repeatedly faced the tough decision to either retry or abandon the quest. The hope of passing the taegwa degree occupied the mind of literate elites, causing the expansion of literacy. Yet even so, the overwhelming majority of them were destined for failure and disappointment..

<Figure 1. Pyramid of the Civil Service Examination System>

⁴¹ Ibid. 36-38.



It required enormous amounts of time and resources, in addition to personal talent, for a male to pass the examinations. Without financial support from his clan, it would be almost impossible for any young man to afford the long years of intensive learning. Thus, powerful and wealthy kinship organizations had the absolute advantage in educating their children in Chinese characters and Confucian texts which the examinations required them to read thoroughly. It was standard procedure for Korean students to memorize Chinese characters, and even entire phrases of the Four Books and Five Classics, and other respectable texts of classical literature, through repetitively reading the passages aloud. This was normally done without recourse to proper reference books, dictionaries, or grammar books.

This pedagogical process was called “aloud reading” 聲讀 (sŏngdok). By reading phrases repeatedly and loudly, students could comprehend the grammar and styles as well as the pronunciation of classical Chinese.⁴² Only after memorizing characters and phrases could students

⁴² Sin Yŏng-chu, “Chŏnt’ong side hanmun haksŭpbŏp ae kwan han il koch’al: Yŏngjo ŭi Changhŏn seja kyoyuk ŭl chungsim ŭro” 傳統時代 漢文學習法에 關한 一考察: 英祖의 莊獻世子 教育을 中心으로 [On the Pedagogy

reach a sufficient level of mastery. According to eighteenth century scholar Yi Tök-mu 李德懋 (1741-1793), yangban literati made it a routine to read one text repeatedly. Every morning, he read forty to fifty sentences 行 (haeng) fifty times. From morning until dusk, Yi Tök-mu set five sessions of study and repeated the same pattern of reading practices. Although Yi was an exceptional bookworm, his style of learning indicates that yangban literati of his era believed that repetition of the same text was a basic pedagogy for classical education.⁴³

The Four Books and Five Classics were the books which they were required to read and memorize if they wanted to sit for the examinations. We can glimpse the orthodox reading practices of late Chosŏn literati from the case of king Yŏngjo 英祖 (1694-1776). He was a royal prince, and thus far from being a typical man. Yŏngjo had no need to pass the civil examinations. Even so, he pursued his education diligently, and recorded his orthodox method of learning and reading in his *Royal Reading List* 御製讀書錄 (*Öjae toksŏrok*). Perhaps he did this because he wished to prove his devotion to learning and that his education was sufficient to govern taegwa degree-holders as the king. As we can see from his list in table 1.1, his entire academic life was oriented to the comprehension of the Four Books and Five Classics.

<Table 1.1. *The Royal Reading List* of King Yŏngjo>⁴⁴

Age of 8: <i>Classic of Filial Piety</i> 孝經 (<i>Hyogyŏng</i>)
Age of 10: <i>Elementary Reader for Uneducated Children</i> 童蒙先習 (<i>Tongmong sŏnsŭp</i>)
Age of 13: <i>Elementary Learning</i> 小學 (<i>Sohak</i>)

of Teaching Classical Chinese in Traditional Era: the Case of King Yŏngjo and Prince Changhŏn], *Hanja kyoyuk yŏngu* 31 (2008), 245-275.

⁴³ Sin Yŏng-chu, Ibid. The Ming-Qing pedagogy for elementary education was the same in terms of the emphasis on recitation and memorization of characters. See Angela Ki Che Leung, "Elementary Education in the Lower Yangtze Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900*, edited by Benjamin Elman and Alexander Woodside (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 395.

⁴⁴ *Öjae toksŏrok* 御製讀書錄 [The Royal Reading List] from Kyujanggak Archive of Seoul National University. M/F83-16-164-B (奎 2017).

Age of 19: *Great Learning* 大學 (Taehak)

Age of 28: the *Elementary Learning* 小學 (Sohak)

Age of 29: *Great Learning* 大學 (Taehak) and *The Analects* 論語 (Nonŏ)

Age of 32: *Mencius* 孟子 (Maengja)

Age of 34: *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸 (Chungyong)

Age of 35: *Classic of History* 書傳 (Sŏjŏn)

Age of 38: *Classic of Rites* 禮記抄 (Yegich'o)

Age of 41: *Classic of Poetry* 詩傳 (Sijŏn)

Age of 43: *Classic of Changes* 周易 (Chuyŏk)

Age of 44: *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋 (Ch'unch'u)

Age of 48: *Classic of Mind* 心經 (Simgyŏng)

Age of 51: *Rites of Zhou* 周禮 (Churye)

After age of 65: *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean*

King Yŏngjo must have felt pride in his lifelong devotion to the Four Books and Five Classics. For the forty-four years, beginning at the age of eight and continuing until he was fifty-one, he read fifteen books in total. On average, it took almost three years for him to complete one book. *The Royal Reading List* was printed using woodblocks for wide circulation. The publication of his reading list was a public announcement by the king to display his scholarly life. Like him, all students had to read the canons over and over again because the examinations only tested candidates by these nine books. The important assumption underlying this program was that the canons contained the totality of all important knowledge and every principle about human nature and things. For those who accepted this assumption, there was no need to read any other books than the canons in order to become a civilized man.

2. Kinship Organizations

As the literacy rate improved due to the enthusiasm for education among wealthy landlords and other yangban families, the competition became increasingly severe at all levels of the civil service examinations. In the late Chosŏn period, even the highest degree of taegwa did not always guarantee a bright future for all successful candidates. In comparison to the increasing number of literate men, the number of government posts increased slowly or stagnated. At the beginning of the dynasty, the government employed 520 civil officials of both senior and junior ranks. After several centuries, the total number of jobs increased to 800 positions, according to eighteenth century scholar Yi Ik 李穡 (1681-1763). During his time, 400 posts were for the central government and the other 400 were for local administrations. The number of jobs gradually increased for taegwa degree holders as the state apparatus expanded. Nevertheless, 300 posts were reserved for military officials, so the number of civil posts remained at approximately 500 until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. In contrast, the number of literate males increased dramatically, much faster than the speed of increasing jobs in the government. Yi Ik keenly summarized such congestion, saying “there are 2,330 men in one generation ... waiting for vacancies in a little more than 500 jobs.”⁴⁵ Therefore, the ladder of success was congested by many well-educated men, but the state did not recognize the situation as a serious problem.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ch’oe Yŏng-ho, *The Civil Examinations and the Social Structure in Early Yi Dynasty*, 57-59.

⁴⁶ In the Ming and Qing Empires, civil service examinations occurred under severe supervision against any possibility of violation and cheating. In a personal cell at the testing place, a candidate had to pass thorough a body search at entrance and he was completely blocked from the outside for two nights and three days during the test. Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 184-185. In contrast, the civil service examiners of Chosŏn Korea did not enforce such a severe check against possible violators, so the rampant foul play discredited the test system itself. At the same time, there was an official back door for the offspring of aristocrats in the name of munŭm 門蔭 or namhaeng 南行. Ch’oe Pong-gi, “Chosŏnjo kwagŏ chaedo ūi munjaejŏm kwa kŭ kachyŏkron ae kwanhan yŏn’gu” 朝鮮朝 科擧制度의 問題點과 그 改革論에 關한 研究

As soon as the rule of meritocracy was officially in abeyance at completion of the final examinations, taegwa graduates often relied on a different strategy in order to achieve success. They fiercely mobilized their social capital of networking—the kinship networks and academic connections—which consequently gave rise to severe factional divisions and rivalry among the literati community. First of all, the intimate networks of clans and private schools provided systematic support to students until they finished their education. This does not mean that all kinship groups highly valued education. However, some clans enhanced their solidarity under the new consciousness that they were one extensive family group called munjung 門中. Particularly, this phenomenon started from the highest echelon of the literati community, which had heightened their prestige by marriage with court aristocrats. They were the so-called “royal in-laws” 世道家/勢道家 (saedoga) that ascended to power and began to control the central government from the end of the eighteenth century onward.

From the reign of King Sunjo 純祖 (1790-1834), this pattern of only a few kinship organizations dominating the entire officialdom became most visible. The yangban oligarchy was based on the mutual trust and alliance between the Yi royal family and powerful clans such as Andong Kims 安東金門, P’ungyang Chos 豐壤趙門, and P’ungsan Hongs 豐山洪門. The trust of the throne in these literate elite clans is well-illustrated by the comment of King Sunjo in 1832. In this year, the king expressed his deep sorrow when he lost his father-in-law, Kim Cho-sun 金祖淳 (1765-1832) (figure 2). Although Lord Kim Cho-sun had already enjoyed many official titles and honors in his lifetime as the patriarch of the powerful clan, the king granted him the posthumous title of “Lord of Loyalty and Scholarship” 忠文公 (ch’ungmungong) as a farewell gift to his

[About the problems of civil examinations and reformist opinions in Chosŏn dynasty], *Saboe kwabak nonch’ong* 2 (1985), 9-10.

recently-deceased father-in-law. To this person, who served him at close quarters as the Head of the Royal Household Agency 領敦寧府事 (yŏngdonnyŏngbusa), the king made the following humble dedication:

I remember that it was the year of 1800 when my late father held my hand and told me: “Now I ask this man to take care of you. This person as my subject will never support you if you are making mistakes. You, keep this in your mind.” The voice of my father still lingers in my ears, and the scene is still as clear as if it was yesterday. The reason that I relied on this man—my father-in-law—for the last thirty years, as a most trusted individual, is not simply because he is part of my royal family. Rather, he was diligent, hardworking, honest, and always loyal to the royal family. He supported me with extreme care and saved this country from disaster by his ability to be a man of the state. Who could deserve more respect than he does in his mission of protecting this country? He never abandoned the sacred words of my father, and he helped me. Alas, I have lost him now. Putting aside my personal sorrow, who can I depend on for ruling this kingdom [without him] from now on? I feel like a lonely ship that has lost its mast, navigating in the middle of the river.⁴⁷

<Figure 2. Portrait of Kim Cho-sun>

⁴⁷ “Sunjong taewang haenjang” 純宗大王行狀 [The Obituary of Great King Sunjong] *Sunjong sillok purok* 純宗實錄附錄 [Appendix of the Annals of King Sunjong], vol. 48. In the *Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, the king who is now known as King Sunjo 純祖 is called King Sunjong 純宗. Currently, King Sunjong 純宗 is used for Yi Ch’ŏk (1874-1926), the last king of Yi Dynasty. I refer to the *Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty* in the online version at <http://sillok.history.go.kr>.



This eulogy reflected the king's emotional and practical dependence on the powerful yangban elite. The king relied upon Kim Cho-sun and his clan, for the king was only eleven years old when he ascended to the throne. There was political and social disorder at that time because of the power vacuum, but Kim and his fellows quickly restored order for the teenaged king. As we can see from his portrait above, Kim Cho-sun symbolized the cultivated man of letters and political power with his grandiose uniform hat called samo 紗帽. Once again in 1834, when the king died, leaving only a male heir of eight years old, the kinship group again took charge of the succession. Dowager Kim, a daughter of Kim Cho-sun, maintained the hierarchy on behalf of the throne.⁴⁸ This episode of the splendid family illustrates that kinship organizations emerged as an essential social building-block in the public affairs of the nineteenth century. Although it has been understood that the nineteenth century oligarchy was the result of literati factionalism and royal marriage, factionalism cannot explain the complicated nature of this mixed system of meritocracy and

⁴⁸ About the nineteenth century political system of Chosŏn kingdom, see James B. Palais, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Han'guk yŏksa yŏn'guhoe 19segi chŏngch'isa yŏn'guban eds., *Chosŏn chŏngch'isa* 朝鮮政治史 [The Political History of Chosŏn Dynasty], vol.1-2 (Seoul: Ch'ŏngnyŏn, 1990).

aristocracy. These clans effectively transformed their material wealth into cultural capital, by internalizing the literary culture as their sign of nobility. Their children were more likely to pass civil examinations than others, not because they were innately superior, but because their family could afford to mobilize and expend vast resources to educate them for passing the civil service examinations. Once they passed higher examinations, they could pass over rival candidates with assistance from kinship networks which already occupied senior ranks. Hence what we see in nineteenth century Korea is the juxtaposition of literacy and power, and classical education as a familial business.⁴⁹

It is of interest that some members of those aristocratic clans began to doubt the validity of the classical curriculum and to question the meaning of such thorough readings on Confucian textbooks. The voice of reform was motivated by the desire to extend classical learning, not by the subversive intent of overthrowing the authority of the canons. For these aristocratic critics, it was problematic that the examination system failed to promote genuine scholarly interests. They viewed the obsession with the test results as the reflection of the mundane desire to achieve prestige and position, rather than for ennobling of the mind. Therefore, they suggested that genuine scholarship should be independent from the mundane merit which the examinations promised. They claimed that learning for its own sake was superior to studying for the examinations.

Most of all, the introspection among high-class literati was inspired by their observation and admiration of the Qing Empire and its culture. As the Korean elites who were most literate in classical Chinese, they often served as diplomats, travelling to Beijing. Especially, in the eighteenth

⁴⁹ The construction of yangban oligarchy from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century had an aspect of denying the ideal of literati politics. Not to mention of the meritocratic principle in recruitment, the censorial system that the powerful clans monopolized was originally designed as the public media of communication between literati and the throne. Such a ideal model of literati politics came with the civil service examinations from the Ming Empire. See Charles O. Hucker, *The Censorial System of Ming China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966) 9-25.

century, their travel in the Qing Empire became a reformatory moment when they were exposed to the outside world. It was not a coincidence, therefore, that Andong Kims 安東金門 suggested revising the traditional views of civilization and their traditional contempt of the Qing Empire.

Prominent scholars of this kinship group, such as Kim Ch'ang-hyöp 金昌協 (1651-1708), argued that Koreans should recognize the Qing as the legitimate successor of the previous Middle Kingdom, the Ming Empire.⁵⁰ Kim Ch'ang-hyöp greatly valued the opportunity to visit and observe the Qing.

In 1706, for instance, he confessed to his friend that the academic level of Qing books was impressive:

I have read a lot of books from Beijing on topics of history and literature. Among these books, some are written by contemporary writers, being added to old books as prefaces, commentaries, and evaluations. Their knowledge [on things] is so accurate, their argument is so clear, and their writing is also so thoughtful and wide that scholars in our Eastern Land cannot compete with them. I have only met Chinese students who are preparing for civil examinations [in Beijing]. And, [I suppose that] the level of professional scholars in the countryside must be higher than that of those students in Beijing. It is a shame that I do not know the names of these scholars and have not read their books. On behalf of me, please go and investigate their world of academia.⁵¹

The Kims acknowledged the prosperity of the Qing Empire by empirical observation. These powerful kinship groups respected the value of extensive research and broad reading, disregarding those who were obsessed with passing civil examinations. Under the lofty goal of studying for its own sake, Kim Wön-haeng 金元行 (1702-1772), as the leading scholar of the kinship group,

⁵⁰ Kim Ch'ang-hyöp learned directly from Song Si-yöl 宋時烈 (1607-1689), the leader of the early Patriarchs faction. Andong Kims not only received respect as the martyr who insisted on the resistance to the Manchu during the Manchu Invasion of 1636-1637, but also elevated their status as a scholarly clan throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The success of this clan was largely due to its enthusiasm for youth education which benefited the extensive youth groups of their entire clan. Yi Kyöng-gu, *Chosön hugi Andong Kim mun yön'gu* (Seoul: Iljisa, 2007) 185-188.

⁵¹ Cho Söng-san, *Chosön hugi Nagrongye haep'ung üi hyöngsöng kwa chöngae* 朝鮮後期 洛論系 學風の 形成과 展開 [The Formation and Development of Urban School in the Patriarchs faction in the Late Chosön Period] (Seoul: Chisik sanönsa, 2007) 188.

glorified the purely academic passion toward the self-conscious duty that required devotion to reading and learning.⁵²

Due to their interest in advanced learning beyond the officially-sanctioned curriculum, new authors of travelogues and encyclopedias appeared in these elite kinship organizations. As diplomats, yangban officials travelled inland through Manchuria to pay visits to the Qing Emperor. The oversea journey to Beijing, which they called Yŏnkyŏng 燕京, inspired them to write about what they saw and felt during the trip. A new cultural movement, which is now called Northern Study 北學 (pukhak), originated from their personal experience and observation in the Qing Empire and their travelogues called Yŏnhaenggi 燕行記.⁵³ Not surprisingly, one of the prestigious kinship groups—Pannam Paks 潘南朴門—produced a prominent writer named Pak Chi-wŏn 朴趾源 (1737-1805) who wrote a travelogue and short stories. His travelogue, entitled *Jehol Diary* 熱河日記 (*Yŏlha ilgi*), was a literary product of an eighteenth century literary writer's empiricism. Although Pak Chi-wŏn did not pass the highest examinations, he used his classical education to criticize the dogmatism of literary culture and explored a new extension of classical learning.

3. The Virtue of Erudition

Erudition 博學 (pakhak) became a new intellectual motivation, which was not necessarily contradictory to the ultimate goal of moral perfection in Song metaphysics. The observation of things was a basic methodology in writing new books about nature, literature, and the outside world.

⁵² Yi Kyŏng-gu, *Chosŏn bugi Andong Kim mun yŏn'gu*, 234-237.

⁵³ The most famous travelogue in the eighteenth century is Pak Chi-wŏn 朴趾源's *The Jehol Diary* 熱河日記 (*Yŏlha ilgi*). Pak Chi-wŏn (1737-1805) wrote this travelogue from his journey to visit Emperor Qianlong in 1780. He did not pass the civil examinations of the highest degree and enjoyed his life at his countryside home until 1786 when he entered the officialdom due to his lineage privilege. Yang Hi Choe-Wall, "Introduction," *The Jehol Diary: Yŏlha ilgi of Pak Chiwŏn (1737-1805)* (Kent: Global Oriental, 2010), xix.

As Pak Chi-wŏn tried to record what he saw and heard in the Qing Empire, other well-educated and affluent men of powerful clans compiled books in order to classify new knowledge in a comprehensible order for future use or for the benefit of others. These new genres of knowledge-books such as encyclopedias, travelogues, and guidebooks were therefore the means of self-expression of erudite, aristocratic men who proudly believed that they could guide others to the virtuous project of “broad learning and wide experience” 博學多聞 (pakhak tamun).

These new literary genres of taegwa graduates were called collectanea 叢書 (ch'ongsŏ) or compendiums 志 (chi). In Chinese cases, knowledge-books became commercial goods, especially for students who prepared for the civil service examinations. Ming-Qing China and Chosŏn Korea shared the similarity of collecting and organizing knowledge in print culture, but there is little evidence that the Chosŏn kingdom also had such visible signs of commercialization.⁵⁴ Two large-scale projects of making new guidebooks were finished by the powerful and literate family, Taegu Sŏs. Surprisingly, the authors did not write them for profit. Sŏ Yu-gu 徐有榘 (1764-1845) completed the most extensive guidebook for improving everyday life, titled *Sixteen Collectanea for the Benefit of Leisurely Life* 林園經濟志 (*Immŏn kyŏngjaejŏ*). His sister-in-law, Madam Yi, also wrote an encyclopedic book for female readers entitled *Collectanea for Respectful Women* 閨閣叢書 (*Kyuhab ch'ongsŏ*). However, it is doubtful if any private publishers circulated these Korean knowledge-books for profit. Rather, there is a possibility that the Sŏs' family only allowed their kinship members or their friends to read these books. Without the vibrant market economy, yangban authors wrote

⁵⁴ About Ming-Qing encyclopedia and its commercialization, see Benjamin Elman, “Collecting and Classifying: Ming Dynasty Compendia and Encyclopedias (*Leishu*),” *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident*, hors série 2007, 137-140.

knowledge-books for their family members or close friends. That is, the books were communal assets of the clans.⁵⁵

The concentration of cultural capital and political power promoted the desire to expand the scope of reading materials beyond the Confucian textbooks from the nineteenth century. A bibliography of Hong Sök-ju 洪錫周 (1774-1842), entitled *The Reading List of Mr. Hong* 洪氏讀書錄 (*Hongssi tok.sörok*), best illustrates the size of book collections in the affluent clans. His clan was the famous P'ungsang Hongs 豐山洪門 clan. Along with Andong Kims, this kinship organization comprised the oligarchic government during the reign of King Sunjo as “royal in-laws.”⁵⁶ Due to mutual trust with the throne, family relationships, and his high literary skill, Hong Sök-ju remained in the highest echelon of the government, and once supported his brother-in-law King Sunjo as the Second-rank State Councilor 左議政 (Chwaüijöng).⁵⁷

The affluence and prestige of his kinship group permitted Hong Sök-ju to devote his youthful leisure to reading for reading's sake and, later, to statecraft. His extensive bibliography, called *The Reading List of Mr. Hong*, was the expression of his own personal intellectual journey and cultural pride. He believed that he could cover the entire bibliography of valuable books in his time. He thought that studying only for the civil service examinations was boring and insignificant. This

⁵⁵ The commercialization of books can be found in other fields of study as well, such as medicine and pedagogy. The *Collectanea of Local Remedies* 方藥合編 (*Pangyak habp'yön*) was widely distributed for the education of medical practitioners. Also, reference books for preparing civil examinations, such as dictionaries, also became an important part of commercial publication. I will examine the publication of such practical knowledge-books in the next project.

⁵⁶ The author had two younger brothers, Hong Kil-chu 洪吉周 (1786-1841) and Hong Hyön-chu 洪顯周 (1793-1865), and his youngest brother was married to the Princess Yi of Pure Good-nature 淑善翁主 (Suksön ongu), daughter of King Chǒngjo and the sister of King Sunjo.

⁵⁷ The P'ungsang Hongs had enjoyed the prestigious status of “royal in-laws” for several generations. The grandmother of King Sunjo was also from this kinship group, and is well-known for her firsthand observation and elegant writings on inner-court life and politics, compiled as *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyöng* 閑中錄 (*Hanjungrok*). Her memoir was translated into English by JaHyun Kim Haboush in 1996. See Hyegyönggung Hong ssi, *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyong: the Autobiographical Writings of a Crown Princess of Eighteenth-century Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

was because he had no urgent need to earn a salary from servicing public duty, and because he looked down on the popular style of reading the canons as mundane. Instead, he set a new goal of reading all variety of books without being concerned with the examinations.⁵⁸ In the preface of the bibliography, he described his unusual reading practice in terms of erudition 博學 (pakhak) and wide knowledge 多聞 (tamun). He argued that such values would create a genuinely noble man.

Most of all, he critically reviewed the conventional practice of repeatedly reading the same textbooks and memorizing their content without subjecting them to deeper thought and analysis. He stated that knowledge and information continuously expanded throughout time, so it was more important to update the body of knowledge than to read old books over and over again. Scholars could become erudite when they opened their minds to new texts. He argued:

Confucius once mentioned that you should learn widely 博學 (pakhak) in literature, and he also taught that you could select the good and follow it from broad experience 多聞 (tamun) and extensive observation 多見 (tagyŏn). Students in ancient times were all able to be scholars only after they widened their knowledge and experience. But, the number of characters in the books which were written on six arts in the years of three sages does not exceed the tens of thousands. In those days, school students usually worked in the fields and studied later. And, they could finish one art for six years, so they could read all Five Classics in three decades. ... In the high time of the Han Empire, [for example] the books which Liu Xiang and Ban Gu collected were about 3,269 volumes 卷 (kwŏn). Because ancient people used bamboo sticks to make a book, ten volumes in those years would only amount to one volume today. So, their books are less than several thousand volumes in today's standard. Therefore, it was not so difficult to read all the books which were circulating in the entire world in ancient times.⁵⁹

In this preface, he pointed out that the number of books available had increased dramatically. His sense of living in a non-classical age was heightened by the vast number of books available to nineteenth century literati. As the amount of reading material increased, the goal of erudition and

⁵⁸ "Hongssi toksŏrok" 洪氏讀書錄 [*The Reading List of Mr. Hong*] at Kyujanggak Archive of Seoul National University. M/F85-16-311-C (想白古 015.51. H758h).

⁵⁹ Hong Sŏk-ju, "Hong ssi toksŏrok sŏ" 洪氏讀書錄序 (Introduction), *Hong ssi toksŏrok*.

wide knowledge became more difficult to achieve than in previous eras. He felt that human culture advanced over time, and that the ancient era was severely lacking in terms of its breadth and depth of knowledge. Hong Sök-ju even critically evaluated the achievements of Liu Xiang and Ban Gu, stating that, from a contemporary standpoint, their writings were too brief. “[Today,] someone who reads a lot of books 多讀者 (tadokja) cannot cover a tenth of the whole literature until his hair gets white,” he lamented.

His bibliography was the result of his three decades of reading. He expressed the strong self-consciousness as a scholar and a book collector who could not only overview the entire literary world, but also wished to evaluate contemporary literary culture. On the flip side of the discourse of erudition and wide knowledge, therefore, he felt the growing threat of unnecessary books. Essentially, what he attempted to do in his bibliography was literary criticism. Since he felt uncomfortable with the explosion of reading materials, he wanted to classify all literary and academic works into a comprehensible order in the manner of an encyclopedia on literary culture. He explained his motivation as below:

I have started reading a book from the age of six, and devoted almost three decades to it. [Despite the amount of time], I still could not achieve the goal of wide knowledge and broad experience of things 博學多聞 (pakhak tamun) until now. We have hundreds of authors and theorists, who have written about various subjects including natural science and even miscellaneous episodes. And, it is also sure that we are now and then witnessing the explosion of heterodox stories 不經之談 (pulgyöng chi tam), which I must call deceiving and filthy books.⁶⁰

As one might expect from his comments about “deceiving and filthy books,” he excluded vernacular fiction and other “non-canonical” books from his bibliography. His word choice of “pulgyöng”

⁶⁰ Ibid.

不經, which literally means “non-canonical,” demonstrates that he, as a book reviewer, still believed in the hierarchy between canons and non-cans.

The interesting point of his bibliography is, however, that he himself struggled to control his own curiosity toward “non-canonical” books. He obviously read them. Otherwise, he could not tell which books were “deceiving and filthy.” He must have preserved non-canonical books in his collection and labeled them as heterodox only *after* he reviewed them. That is, Hong Sŏk-ju himself violated the bounds of the orthodoxy – a thing he insisted others must *not* do, but such violation did not trouble him. The reason that he could enjoy so much freedom and a variety of books was the support and protection of his powerful clan. None could accuse of the Second State-Councilor of owning “deceiving and filthy books” in his mansion. It was ironic that his aristocratic privilege under the Chosŏn regime exposed him and his clan to new thoughts and foreign print culture.

In his bibliography, Hong Sŏk-ju used a traditional cataloging method that divides his collection into Four Parts 四部 (sabu). In the first part of Classics, he listed ninety-five titles of Classics, which comprise more than 2,271 volumes (kwŏn). Although he included seven books by native authors, the majority of these Classics are Chinese books. In terms of classical study, he still respected Song scholars’ works by including thirty-two titles of Classics, which were compiled during the Song period (960-1276 A.D.). It is not surprising that Zhu Xi was the most prominent author in this section, with his eleven volumes, including his books on the Classics of Change, Poems, Rituals and Lesser Learning 小學 (sohak) as well as his commentaries.⁶¹ Besides to this book collection of the great master, the Ming’s Great Collection of Classics also took an important part in the field of classical learning.

⁶¹ Zhu Xi’s books in Hong’s list are eleven books in 97 volumes (kwŏn).

Simultaneously, Hong Sŏk-chu updated his bibliography with recent publications from the Qing in the field of classical learning by including the books of Qing scholars such as Li Guangdi 李光地, Xu Wenjing 徐文靖, Xu Qianxue 徐乾學, Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, and Zhang Yushu 張玉書. He acknowledged the recent progress of new academic genres in the Qing Empire, especially in pedagogy and phonology, which he classified in a section designated as Lesser Learning (sohak). Both of these fields were instrumental for learning the new language and starting preparations for the civil service examinations. In explaining Gu Yanwu's 顧炎武 *Five Books on Ancient Pronunciation* 音學五書 (*Yin xue wu shu* [C]), Hong Sŏk-ju cited Li Guangdi's 李光地 comment that phonology was a modern concept: "It intends to correct current sounds by verifying ancient ones" 以古音正今韻 (*yikoŭm chŏnggŭmun*). Hong acknowledged the value of new disciplines by saying, "Li Guangdi once mentioned that the phonology of Gu Yanwu and the calendrical calculations of Mei Wending 梅文鼎 are purely unprecedented achievements" 三代以來未有也 (*samdae irae miyu ya*). In his study of phonology, Gu Yanwu suggested that the Books of ancient sages were written in local dialects and ancient rhymes, and therefore his study challenged the mythical aura of the Classics and revealed that they also were ruled by time and place. The Qing's phonetic study taught Hong Sŏk-ju a new methodology in which modern students must understand ancient texts as the objects of scholarly investigation instead of as "the repository of moral truth that transcended time and place."⁶²

In the field of Lesser Learning, Sŏk-ju added two Korean indigenous texts in which native scholars investigated Korean native sounds of Chinese characters. The first is *Correct Sounds [of Letters] for the Instruction of the People* 訓民正音 (*Hunmin chŏng'ŭm*), a fifteenth century text on Korean

⁶² For a discussion of the phonology in Qing Dynasty, see Benjamin Elman, "From Value to Fact: The Emergence of Phonology as a Precise Discipline in Late Imperial China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 102:3 (1982), 493-500.

phonetics. The second is also a phonetic dictionary of Chinese-Korean, published in 1796 by the Chosŏn court, entitled *Royal Dictionary of Chinese-Korean* 御定奎章全韻 (*Ŏjŏng kyujang chŏn'un*). His comments reveal that Hong Sŏk-ju thought highly of the practicality of the Korean vernacular alphabet. Apart from the fact that the alphabet was invented by the king and his royal scholars, Hong recognized the positive aspects of the indigenous characters in terms of their precision and usefulness for mastering Chinese characters. He understood the vernacular alphabet as phonetic signs which he called pŏnjŏl 翻切 or panjŏl 反切 (fanqie [C]). The method of fanqie (syllabic transcription) had been widely used in medieval China for translating Sanskrit into Chinese scripts. The usage of native phonetic signs for recording foreign sounds was not rare in East Asia, as we can see from fanqie and the Japanese kana alphabet. Investigating the relationship between Korean signs and fanqie is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but this nineteenth century aristocrat respected the functionality of the native alphabets. He argued “We can precisely catch and write down [by the alphabet] how winds sound, how cranes sing, how chicken cry, and how dogs bark.” He appreciated its practical nature, saying, “There are no empty words in what these signs stand for.”

To conclude, powerful kinship groups such as P'ungsan Hong's played a significant role in importing new books from the Qing Empire and diversifying literary genres by sponsoring the compilation of encyclopedias, travelogues, and bibliographies. Also, some of them had strong interest in using Korean vernacular alphabet for education. They were able to do so because their members had favorable infrastructures: political protection, financial wealth, and unflagging support for academic projects. Elite males, in fact, had more chances to transgress the rules of the orthodoxy and to taste new print culture from the Qing Empire. And, in the same fashion, only they could read non-canonical books because only they could afford to distract themselves from the painstaking routine of reading textbooks for a whole day. However, until the 1880s their experience did not

disseminate widely to the general reading public. Some individuals indeed showed an interest in sharing and mass communication by writing books. But we can see from the case of Hong Sök-ju, however, they still hesitated to announce their transgression in public.

4. A New Development of Knowledge-books from the 1880s

During the time when Korea was falling into a series of political upheavals in the 1880s, the elite kinship organizations carefully initiated a new experiment in print culture. It is surprising to find that these well-educated and affluent aristocrats attempted to popularize new knowledge which the Confucian textbooks did not cover. It was reformative in two ways. First, elite kinship organizations took the risk of exposing their departure from the orthodoxy. As young aristocrats organized the 1884 palace coup for radical reform, their political ambition and cultural experiment conflicted with the ruling authority. Second, moderate reformers, such as Kim Yun-sik 金允植 (1835-1922), extended the virtue of erudition and tried to disseminate new thoughts by circulating a book: an encyclopedia about the outside world. It was a noteworthy advance in Korean print culture, for they regarded the publication of a new book as a media for political and cultural reform. In 1886, Kim Yun-sik became the supervisor of a printing project for the first book intended for mass education. It was published by a royal printing press named Pangmun'guk 博文局 (which literally means a bureau for spreading words).⁶³ This yangban aristocrat understood the value of new technology in printing for mass communication sooner than anyone else had.

⁶³ A Japanese man named Inoue Kakugorō 井上角五郎 was recruited by Pak Yōng-hyo and appointed at the royal printing press in 1882. Inoue Kakugorō resided at the factory and managed the printing machine until his place and the machine was destroyed by mobs in the aftermath of the 1884 palace coup. He was a student of Fukuzawa Yukichi. Inoue Kakugorō, "Fukuzawa sensei wo omou [Memorizing Mr. Fukuzawa]" *Waga Fukuzawa sensei* わか福沢先生 [Our Teacher Fukuzawa], (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1931) 176. This new royal printing press published a court gazette *Hansōng sunbo* 漢城旬報 from 1882 to 1884. The factory was officially affiliated to the Royal Academy of Foreign Languages 同文學 (Tongmunhak).

First of all, Kim Yun-sik shared many similarities with Hong Sŏk-ju. Kim Yun-sik grew up in a favorable, supportive, and unusual family which had trained him as an excellent graduate of the taegwa degree. His uncle was the famous minister Pak Kyu-su 朴珪壽 (1807-1876), a grandson of Pak Chi-wŏn, who had pioneered new genres of travelogues and fiction in the eighteenth century. As many men from powerful clans did, Kim Yun-sik and his uncle both experienced an oversea trip to the Qing Empire. Because of Pak Kyu-su's exceptional book collection, Pak's house in Seoul attracted many yangban boys like Kim Ok-kyun 金玉均 (1851-1894), Pak Yŏng-hyo 朴泳孝 (1861-1939), and Yu Kil-jun 兪吉濬 (1856-1914). Yangban men who learned from Kyu-su were all from the powerful clans of the oligarchy (Kim Ok-kyun from Andong Kims, Pak Yŏng-hyo from Pannam Paks, and Yu Kil-jun from Kigye Yus) in the nineteenth century. Although many of these rebellious aristocrats participated in the 1884 coup (and defected to Japan after its failure), Kim Yun-sik distanced himself from the coup. In 1882, he stayed in Tianjin and met many Qing leaders of the Self-Strengthening Movement, asking advice about desirable changes for his own country. When he returned in 1882 with Qing troops, he brought 189 volumes of Chinese books on science which he had received as gifts from Tianjin Arsenal.⁶⁴ His connection with Qing troops was famous, for Yuan Shikai who stationed in Seoul at that time became his close supporter.⁶⁵

Books from the Qing Empire became the new model of how to popularize non-canonical knowledge. Qing reformist writer Zheng Guan-ying's 鄭觀應 (1842-1921) book, *On Change* 易言 (*Yi Yan* [C]), became the first book written by a foreign author which the Chosŏn kingdom authorized as a legitimate source of learning after the Confucian canons. Zheng Guan-ying's book

⁶⁴ Yi Kwang-nin, "Hansŏng sunbo wa Hansŏng chubo ae taehan ilgoch'al 漢城旬報와 漢城週報에 對한 一考察 [About Hansŏng chubo and Hansŏng sunbo]" *Hanguk kaehwasa yŏngu* (Seoul: Iljogak, 1970) 77-81.

⁶⁵ Lin Mingde, *Yuan Shikai yu Chaoxian* 袁世凱與朝鮮 [Yuan Shikai and Korea] (Taibei: Zhong yang yan jiu yuan jin dais hi yan jiu suo, 1970) 146-148.

was initially published in Hong Kong in 1880, containing introductory knowledge about the West.⁶⁶ After three years, the Chosŏn kingdom printed the Korean vernacular translation of *On Change*. The Royal Department of Foreign Translators 司譯院 (Sayŏkwŏn) translated the entire book using the vernacular alphabet. The year 1883 was a time of strong Qing dominance in the kingdom. The Qing Empire militarily occupied Seoul. Under the auspice of Qing's military, Kim Yun-sik took charge of the newly-created Ministry of Foreign Affairs 統理交涉通商事務衙門 (T'ongsang kyosŏb t'ongsang samu amun).⁶⁷ And, he cautiously adopted the Self-Strengthening Movement from the Qing Empire. Although there remain few sources of explaining why and how *On Change* was translated, we can speculate that Kim Yun-sik in one way or another must have supported this project in 1883.

Kim Yun-sik collaborated with the Qing Empire (and did the same with the Japanese Empire after 1910). However, it would be too simplistic to label him as a member of the pro-Qing faction 親清派 (or the pro-Japanese faction 親日派 after 1910). His behavior maintained the intellectual and cultural consistency which we cannot simply dismiss as opportunistic political ambition. The vernacular translation of Zheng Guan-ying's book, which Yun-sik perhaps read in Tianjin or Seoul, demonstrates that the Foreign Ministry encouraged the proliferation of the aristocratic virtue of "erudition" by imitating this new genre of a Chinese knowledge-book. Instead of *pakhak* (erudition), however, a new term, *simu* 時務 (engagement in current affairs), represented the new rationale for why literate men should read more than Confucian textbooks. In the introduction, Zheng Guanying's words were translated as follows:

⁶⁶ Yi Huili, *Zheng Guanying ping zhuan* 郑观应评传 [The Biography of Zheng Guanying] (Nanjing: Nanjing da xue chu ban she, 1998), 55-61.

⁶⁷ About Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see Chŏn Mi-ran, "Tongri kyosŏb t'ongsang samu amun ae kwanhan yŏngu 統理交涉通商事務衙門에 관한 연구 [Research on Ministry of Foreign Affairs]," *Yidae sawŏn* 24, 25 (1989) 228.

Rivers and oceans are so grandiose that they never refuse to accept a small stream running into them. And, Mount Mai and Hua are so tall that they never care about a small clod living under them. Now, the horizon of our world is expanding so that all people can speak out what he knows. Speakers can wait until people in the world listen to their words. It is no longer important who said it, but it matters now whether his words are indeed useful for engaging in current affairs 시무 (simu). In addition, a nobleman 선비 (sŏnbi) cannot be deaf [to the speech of people], because they are critical for governing the age.⁶⁸

Here, the vernacular translation of the word sŏnbi draws our attention. In the original book, Zheng Guan-ying used Chinese characters of da ya 大雅. Korean translators interpreted it as sŏnbi 선비. Since this vernacular word sŏnbi literally means an ideal yangban man, the vernacular translation of *On Change* intentionally redefined a nobleman as someone who updated his knowledge by reading new books regardless of the author's status. The logic was the same as before, that exclusively reading the virtuous texts and studying only to pass exams was no longer desirable in the new age.

After 1882, Kim Yun-sik and his Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried to project the idea of simu as the new virtue of all literati. Under the Qing occupation, they adopted the printing press as the most effective media for promoting popular support for reform. On one occasion a little later in 1892, for example, Kim Yun-sik clarified the term simu when he encouraged one of his friends to travel to the Qing Empire and to observe things with his own eyes. He defined the term “engagement in current affairs” as the effort of verifying one's knowledge by the accumulation of empirical and acute knowledge. He wrote:

What is the meaning of “simu”? It means conscious efforts to engage in what should be done in his day 當時所當之務也 (tangsi sodang chi muya). It is something like healing a patient with a [correct] medicine. Even if you have a mysterious elixir, you cannot cure every disease with one same pill. ... Recently, some people misunderstand that simu means the imitation of

⁶⁸ Zheng Guanying, “sŏ” 序, *Iŏn* 이언 (On Change), translated by Sayŏkwŏn (Seoul: Pangmun'guk, 1883) 2.

political systems of Western countries. [I would like to argue that] this is nothing less than following blindly others without knowing his own capacity. Let me ask: are you willing to treat your patient with a medicine which other doctors prescribed from their observation of different patients? And, if so, do you expect that the pill will bring the same effect regardless of the differences in symptoms and conditions? It is nonsense.⁶⁹

As we can see from the above, he denied the presence of “a mysterious elixir” applicable to every aspect of the world. Every solution must be found from acute observation, similar to how a medical doctor can treat a patient correctly only after he examines the patient and diagnoses the disease by his own observation. That is, Kim Yun-sik argued that correct knowledge and policy are the result of extensive investigation and empirical research. Even though he himself was a highest degree-holder, Yun-sik believed that accurate observation and reading new books were necessary for amending the previous universalistic solution of Confucian moralism. Under Confucian moralism, if everyone could become morally perfect, then society would be free from any troubles or disorders. This expectation was no longer valid in a non-classical age, Kim thought, when the Confucian textbooks did not explain all different kinds of things and knowledge.

In 1886, his Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the first Korean encyclopedia on the world outside Korea by a new press machine. Its title was *Memorandum on Ten-Thousands Countries* 萬國政表 (*Man'guk chŏngp'yo*). The publisher was the royal printing press Pangmun'guk. When the book came out, its readers could see that Kim Yun-sik took the ultimate responsibility for the publication. He wrote a preface and praised the new knowledge-book for Koreans. Since the minister of foreign affairs officially supervised this new printing facility, Kim Yun-sik, as the minister, was deeply involved in the compilation and publication.⁷⁰ In each volume, the book introduced basic

⁶⁹ Kim Yun-sik, “Simusŏl song Yuk saeng Chon-yu yu Tianjin” 時務說送陸生鍾倫遊天津 [On Current Affairs: When departing Mr. Yuk Chong-ryun to Tianjin], *Kim Yun-sik chŏngnip* 金允植全集 (The Anthology of Kim Yun-sik) vol.2 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1980), 19-20.

⁷⁰ Kim Yun-sik, “Sŏ” 序, *Manguk chŏngp'yo* 萬國政表 [Memorandum on Ten-thousands Countries] (Seoul: Pakmun'guk, 1886). This book is preserved at the National Library of Korea.

information about Asia (vol.1), Europe (vol. 2 and 3), and Africa and America (vol.4). In order to publish this new knowledge-book, Kim Yun-sik hired a Japanese man who was named Inoue Kakugorō 井上角五郎 (1860-1938), a graduate of Keio School in Japan. Perhaps this title was chosen because Inoue recommended his mentor Fukuzawa Yukichi's book, which also had the same title of *Mangoku seihyō* [萬國政表].

If the Korean vernacular translation of *On Change* shows Chinese influence, *Memorandum on Ten-Thousands Countries* indicates a Japanese influence on new Korean print culture in the 1880s. Despite the international tension between the Qing Empire and Meiji Japan in Korea, Kim Yun-sik thought that the two neighbors were compatible as the model of new Korean literary culture and reform. The emulation was selective in the sense that Korean compilers preferred to borrow the Japanese political system and to introduce it as one example of progress. This book introduced Japanese neologisms of political theory in the introduction. It summarized general political systems into three categories: absolute monarchism 君主專制 (kunju chŏnjae), constitutional monarchism 君民同治 (kunmin tongch'i), and republicanism 共和政治 (konghwa chŏngch'i). Then, it boldly criticized absolute monarchism, categorizing Korea's own polity as an outdated mode of political system in the universal standard. "Even if Yao and Shun were reborn [today]," it said, "They could not have ruled the country properly under the system of absolute monarchism." In contrast, when it explained the term "congress" 國會 (kukhoe),⁷¹ constitutional monarchism and republicanism were praised as advanced systems. While the book emphasized the recent military build-up of the Qing Empire, it depicted Meiji Japan in a different way. Perhaps by the guidance of Inoue Kakugorō, *Memorandum on Ten-Thousands Countries* taught that Meiji Japan was achieving civil progress in East Asia. For example, it praised the establishment of compulsory education of Meiji Japan as a

⁷¹ "Yaksŏl" 略說 (Theoretical Preview), *Manguk chŏngp'yo* (Seoul: Pangmunguk, 1886).

difference between Japan and the Qing Empire. Especially, it complemented the Japanese plan of creating the national constitution. It said, “In 1890, Japan will establish the Diet and change absolute monarchism to constitutional monarchism.”⁷² Thus, this guidebook reflected the increasing Korean curiosity about Meiji Japanese reforms and spread it among the elite boys who were familiar with the classical literary style of the memorandum. This encyclopedia was written in classical Chinese and its characters. This means that the intended audience of the book was those who finished the classical education as degree-holders or people who followed classical education. Accordingly, the early introduction of Japanese reforms was most influential to elite males, as this book illustrates. This also explains why so many ambitious elite boys of powerful kinship organizations departed to Tokyo, paying the expense out of their own pockets, and why they chose to study at Fukuzawa Yukichi’s Keio School in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

5. Emulation for New Korean Print Culture

The Sino-Japanese War was a turning point in the development of Korean knowledge-books. The most crucial change occurred when the wartime cabinet, including Kim Yun-sik, abolished the civil service examinations in 1894. The Confucian canons and the curriculum suddenly lost their official sponsorship in the middle of the war. Along with the radical change in the educational system, one Korean writer published a new type of a travelogue in Tokyo in 1895. This book, entitled *Observations from the Tour in the West* 西遊見聞 (*Söyu kyönmun*), was the consequence of the conjunction of a traditional literati, new knowledge, and new printing technology. Its author was Yu Kil-jun 俞吉濬 (1856-1914), who once studied with Pak Kyu-su and advanced to Keio School, later travelling to the United States. He was not at all a self-made man, but the son of a prestigious family

⁷² Ibid.

in the elite kinship group Kigye Yus 杞溪俞門. First of all, he succeeded in the old genre of a travelogue in which he recorded his personal observations during a grand tour of Japan, the United States, and Europe. He classified what he saw, what he read, and what he learned in a comprehensible order for the benefit of ordinary readers. In this sense, the book was an updated version of *Memorandum of Ten-Thousands Countries*.⁷³

More interestingly, Yu Kil-jun did not hesitate to borrow a printing technology from the Japanese. The publisher was a Japanese company, Kōjunsha 交詢社. Yu Kil-jun used to be a student of Fukuzawa Yukichi before he left for the United States in 1883, and this publisher was also closely related to Fukuzawa Yukichi. In fact, Yu Kil-jun did not hide his admiration for Fukuzawa in his book. In one chapter on “popular rights” 人民의 權理 (yinmin ŭi kwŏnri), he copied Fukuzawa’s message, as can be seen below:

When every human being is born, there should be no discrimination against his enjoying his right as a human whether he is wise or foolish, noble or lowly, poor or rich, and strong or weak. This is a grand and absolute principle in this world. Based on this principle, the masses behave as they are designed by nature. Some people mention that there must be a rule to limit human rights according to who they are. This is a mistake. It is only one side of the story. The status which a person has after birth is an artificial division, while the fundamental human right is the public Way 公道 (kongdo) given by the Heaven. The principle to be a human 人이 되는 理 (yini toenŭn ri) is exactly the same from the Son of Heaven to an ordinary person. Therefore, their outlooks are all similar and their nature is also the same. Although there are some distinctions, all humans can resist the tyranny of injustice which is against civilization and can preserve his inborn nature of love and hatred. When we call a human a human, there is none above a human and there is

⁷³ This 556-page book was edited by Ō Yun-chōk 魚允迪 and Yun Ch’i-o 尹致昨. In 20 chapters, Yu Kil-chun covered various topics ranging from world geography to political science. He did not designate any subheading in each chapter, but their topics are as follows: world geography (chapter one and two); political systems and theories (chapter three and four); government (chapter five and six); tax and fiscal system (chapter seven and eight); education, conscription, law and force, the monetary system (chapter nine and ten); civic morality (chapter eleven and twelve); history and academia of the West (chapter thirteen); commerce (chapter fourteen); rituals and manners (chapter fifteen); clothes, agriculture, and leisure (chapter sixteen); social institutions (chapter seventeen); machinery and companies (chapter eighteen); metropolitans in the United States and Great Britain (chapter nineteen); and Continental Europe (chapter twenty).

none below a human. There is no difference between the Son of Heaven and ordinary people.⁷⁴

This paragraph reminds us of the famous part in Fukuzawa Yukichi's *An Encouragement of Learning* 學問のすすめ (*Gakumon no susume*) which declares that “It is said that heaven does not create one man above or below another man.”⁷⁵

It was an ambivalent emulation, because he as a son of a high-class yangban family mixed together his classical education and new learning. In the passage quoted above, Yu Kil-jun interpreted the principle of human equality by the classical terminology of “Way” 道 (to) and “Principle” 理 (ri). Thus, he reinterpreted Fukuzawa Yukichi's *An Encouragement of Learning* as a general theory about human civilization by understanding it from the perspective of his own background knowledge. For example, when Yu Kil-chun introduced Isaac Newton in this book, we can glimpse the interconnection between classical learning and new science. Yu Kil-jun said, “In England, there was a great scholar named Newton. As an unprecedentedly talented man, he was born in the world when knowledge advanced every day” 學術의 日新하는 世界 (haksul ŭi ilsin hanŭn saegye). “Newton,” he continued, “investigated the principle of things [萬物の 理를 格하야] (manmul ŭi ri rŭl kyŏkhaya)] and opened the gate toward [a better understanding of] the mysterious nature.” Yu Kil-chun concluded that Newton's books became the “greatest foundation of investigation of things [窮理學 (kungrihak)].”⁷⁶ In his understanding, there was no fundamental difference between Western science and classical learning in the sense that both investigated the principle of things and improved the welfare of people. He even described the work of Scottish

⁷⁴ Yu Kil-chun, *Sŏyu kyŏnmun* 西遊見聞 [The Observation from the Tour in the West] (Tokyo: Kōjyunsha, 1895, reprint, Seoul: Iljogak, 1971), 134-135.

⁷⁵ Concerning the reception of *Gakumon no susume* in Meiji Japan, Earl H. Kinmonth, *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 44-46.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 331.

philosopher William Hamilton with the term sŏngrihak 性理學 (which is often translated as Neo-Confucianism).⁷⁷

The experiment of disseminating new knowledge bore new fruit from his book, since he revised the writing style of classical Chinese by adding Korean vernacular alphabets. Such mixture of languages symbolized the dramatic changes of Korean print culture after the Sino-Japanese War. He used the writing style of so-called kukhanmun hongyong 國漢文混用 in this book. He did not invent this style. It was commonly used in classical education in order to teach the Confucian canons to Korean students. In the introduction of *Observation from the Tour in the West*, Yu Kil-chun announced that his writing style and grammar followed the previous rules of “the Korean vernacular translations of seven books” 七書諺解 (ch’ilsŏ ŏnhae). Kil-jun’s contribution is that he extended the usage of the mixed style from commentaries on the canons to writing a new monograph for knowledge. Also, Yu Kil-jun showed a belief that a book for knowledge should spread out widely by means of printing. In this regard, he was an ambitious emulator and synthesizer who stood on the borderline between classical education and new learning, and between Korea and the outside world in the 1890s.

Thus, the production of the two encyclopedias in the 1880s and 90s signals the evolution of reading for knowledge from the aristocratic practice of elite kinship groups to a more popular one which used the new media of the printing press. From the perspective of postcolonial Korean nationalism, these books are not monumental books of nationalistic projects. They not only copied Chinese and Japanese books, but also still heavily used classical Chinese. Most of all, these books did not intend to overthrow the classical learning *in toto*. However, one should not underestimate the fact that these new writers, Kim Yun-sik and Yu Kil-jun, grew up as aristocrats and enjoyed the

⁷⁷ Ibid. 332.

privilege and support of their families, so they could explore new ideas and thoughts. As successful students of the classical education, they desired to upgrade their reading list and to write their own books. In this sense, it is not surprising that Kim Yun-sik, Yu Kil-jun, and others at Pangmun'guk took a leading role in the wartime cabinet which abolished the civil service examinations in 1894, and that they tried to reform the classical education with new school textbooks.

Therefore, in the postwar period after 1894, the Ministry of Education imported many books from Meiji Japan and tried to rebuild the school curriculum. However, when the Ministry classified Japanese books, it still used the traditional cataloguing method of having Four Parts. Leaving the Four Books and Classics intact, it added recent publications to previous collections or created new sections after the section on History. For example, the new section on botany 植物學 (sikmulhak) shows us that the post-1895 Ministry of Education still respected previous books as important sources of information. Li Shizen's 李時珍 (1513-1593) *Compendium of Materia Medica* 本草綱目 (*Bencao gangmu* [C]) appeared side-by-side with Yokota Katsuzō's 横田勝三 *Outline of Advanced Sericulture* 人工養蠶法 (*Jinkō yōsahō* [J]) in the book catalog. Despite the time gap between these two books and the consequences of the Sino-Japanese War, the Ministry of Education did not discard Li Shizen's book.⁷⁸

Conclusion

In summary, the civil service examinations not only contributed to the rise of the literacy rate in late Chosŏn society, but also caused the accumulation of cultural capital in elite families. When they constructed the oligarchic rule in the nineteenth century, they already adjusted well to the

⁷⁸ "Sikmulhak" 植物學 (Botany), *Hakbu p'yŏnjipguk sŏch'aek mongrok* 學部編輯局書冊目錄 [The Book Catalog of the Editors' Bureau of the Ministry of Education] at National Library of Korea.

examination system. Preparation for the civil service examinations demanded significant amounts of time, money, and talent, and therefore education and reading became a familial business which could decide the fortune of the next generation. Students read the Confucian canons over and over again until they memorized all the words. The Korean literary culture of these elite males, thus, cannot be explained without mentioning the textbooks. It was, however, ironic that successful aristocratic students were able to deviate from the official curriculum more easily than those who did not receive this painstaking traditional education. Hong Sŏk-ju was a good example. While the examination system pushed the standardization of literate practices and knowledge throughout the entire kingdom, there arose within many students a desire to reflect upon why they read a particular book, why they studied so hard, and how they could test new thoughts. Therefore, one of the important changes started from the core of the regime, which powerful kinship organizations constituted by the early nineteenth century. It was an aristocratic movement for reading for reading's sake.

From the 1880s, Korean literary culture, especially in the genre of knowledge-books, carefully adopted the new printing technology from the outside. The existence of the printing press dramatically improved the infrastructure of literary production and consumption. Learning from the Qing Empire and Meiji Japan, new Korean writers with aristocratic backgrounds extended the scope of knowledge, readership, and authorship. They thought that the Confucian canons were insufficient for catching up with current affairs. They came to believe that books should circulate on a massive scale instead of only within the limited circle of a family network. In addition, they began to reconsider which language they should use in order to communicate with the reading public. When Yu Kil-jun used the mixed style of classical Chinese and Korean alphabet for his book, it represented the extension of classical education from the Confucian texts to new science. So we can note that Korean print culture diversified from the high echelon of society in the late nineteenth

century. In addition, as I will analyze in the next two chapters, two other groups of readers and writers also showed the same kind of desire and passion for making new Korean books.

TWO

THE POLITICS OF LITERACY AND THE VOICE OF DISSENTERS

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I showed that elite kinship organizations gained power and prestige by educating their young members to pass the civil service examinations. The civil service examinations standardized the print culture of the local gentry and their sons through the process of enculturation. The orthodox curriculum, accordingly, facilitated the steady growth of literacy and caused the accumulation of cultural capital by the wealthy clans.

This chapter illustrates the ways in which the civil service examinations have engendered the development of scholarly networks and shaped the formation of literary sociality in the nineteenth century. In fact, the majority of prospective examinees gave up in their attempts to pass the civil service examinations for a number of reasons. Some possessed insufficient linguistic skills in classical Chinese, compared to successful candidates of the examinations. As I mentioned in chapter one, to learn classical Chinese required the intensive investment of time and money, so yangban men without enough familial support could not finance their education for the required number of years. As Benjamin Elman points out, the civil service examinations forced the local gentry to internalize the Confucian texts, regardless of their test results. The authority of the classical language deeply changed the minds of those in the majority who failed at the tests.⁷⁹ In the late Chosŏn period, especially from the late eighteenth century, some literati, holding perhaps only a junior degree or even no degree, believed that they were educated to read and write as well as taegwa graduates.

⁷⁹ I appreciate Professor Benjamin Elman at Princeton University kindly allowing me to read his conference paper, "Late Traditional Chinese Civilization in Motion, 1400-1900," 2.

The politics of literacy began to increase in Korean print culture when unsuccessful examinees refused to acknowledge the cultural and intellectual hierarchy that existed between degree holders and non-degree holders of the civil service examinations. The realm of writing and reading evolved into a contested cultural field in which non-degree holders produced alternate bodies of literature and classical studies. As a result, new peer groups for literary criticism and academic research were established. It was a significant change that literati did not necessarily read books and write essays for examiners of the ruling dynasty. In the eighteenth century, the literati associations emerged as an alternative social network for readers and writers who detached themselves from the preparation of the civil service examinations. Beginning in the nineteenth century, a yangban writer named Chŏng Yag-yong 丁若鏞 (1762-1836) developed sub-cultures of dissenting literati and wished to publish his texts for the reading public.⁸⁰ In this chapter, I highlight how such tradition of literati associations started producing new Korean classics by the end of the nineteenth century. I argue that the publication of new classics in the early 1900s was based on the nineteenth-century historical context that Korean writers strove to change the concept of authorship and readership. It is surprising, therefore, that literati associations and their cultural legacy became another source of new print culture with elite kinship organizations after 1895.

1. Risks of Writing New Books

⁸⁰ About Chŏng Yag-yong's life and thoughts, there are so many researches in South Korea that they are even called "the Study about Chŏng Yag-yong 茶山學 (Tasanhak)." An edited book entitled Chŏng Tasan yŏngu ŭi hyŏnhwang 丁茶山研究의 現況 [Essays on Research about Chŏng Yag-yong] is a good bibliographical review on this topic. Han U-gŭn ed, *Chŏng Tasan yŏngu ŭi hyŏnhwang* (Seoul: Min'umsa, 1986). Kŭm Chang-t'ae, a professor of Seoul National University, summarizes the philosophy of Chŏng Yag-yong at his book, *Chŏng Yag-yong, Han'guk silhak ŭi chibdaesŏng* 丁若鏞: 韓國實學의 集大成 [Chŏng Yag-yong: a Synthesizer of Korean Practical Learning] (Seoul: Sŏnggyungwan taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2002). In this chapter, my interest is not about Yag-yong's philosophy and Practical Learning per se, but about his ideas and practices for new print culture. And, later in this chapter, I analyze how his manuscripts became popular thanks to various factors after the Sino-Japanese War.

As noted in the previous chapter, wealthy landlords collected books for the purpose of reading for pleasure. The P'ungsang Hongs 豊山洪門 best illustrates this aristocratic taste. The Hongs evolved into one of the most influential clans in the early nineteenth century. Hong Sök-ju, who wrote *The Reading List of Mr. Hong*, was the leading member of this kinship group (chapter one). Before the Hongs became the royal in-laws in the late eighteenth century, they had elevated their status as literary nobles. Hong Man-jong 洪萬宗 (1643-1725) and Hong Man-sön 洪萬選 (1642-1715), in particular, detached themselves from the curriculum for passing the civil service examinations and explored new horizons of print culture. These two Hongs pioneered the pre-nineteenth-century field of literary criticism and private scholarship.

First, Hong Man-jong compiled native books, which he collected into literary compendiums called ch'ongrim 叢林 or chi 志.⁸¹ Man-jong preferred fictional works such as folklore, poetry, and stories written by indigenous writers over the academic genres about Song metaphysics.⁸² While a yangban's literary anthology, called munjib 文集, was commonly compiled to display the writings of a single author by his students, Man-jong's compendia bore no resemblance to those produced by the members of literati fraternities and private academies 書院 (söwön). The collection of aesthetic writings had little to do with pragmatic motivations that would assist ambitious students in the acquisition of superior essay writings on the topics about metaphysics and Confucian classics.

⁸¹ For biographic information about Hong Man-chong, see Han Yöng-u, "17segi huban-18segi ch'o Hong Man-chong üi hoet'ong sasang kwa yöksa insik" 17世紀後半-18世紀初 洪萬宗의 會通思想과 歷史認識 [The syncretism and historical researches of Hong Man-chong in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century], *Hanguk munhwa* 12, 1991.

⁸² His works are: the *Unusual Stories of Eastern Kingdom* 海東異蹟 (*Haedong yijök*), the *Literary Criticism on Poets in Small Middle Kingdom* 小華詩評 (*Sohwa sip'yöng*), the *Compendium of Virtuous Writings* 莫葉志諧 (*Myöngyöp chibae*), the *Compendium Written in Fifteen Days* 旬五志 (*Sunoji*), the *Supplementary Collection of Poetry Criticism* 詩評補遺 (*Sip'yöng poyu*), the *Concise History of Eastern Kingdom* 東國歷代總目 (*Tong'guk yökdæ ch'ongmok*), and the *Extensive Collection of Poems and Stories* 詩話叢林 (*Sibwa ch'ongrim*).

In particular, *Compendium Written in Fifteen Days* 旬五志 (*Sunoji*) positively redefined the value of native texts. This compilation reflected Man-jong's interest in non-canonical texts. Like Japanese native scholars in the Tokugawa period, Man-jong doubted that the Four Books and Five Classics could sufficiently depict the Korean native culture. His deep attachment to indigenous texts was related to the aesthetic beauty of indigenous literature, and he intended to prove that Korean writers could produce literary works that paralleled or exceeded the quality of what was produced in the Middle Kingdom. Man-jong commented: "Even though Our Eastern Kingdom is much smaller than the Middle Kingdom, it can stand equally with the Middle Kingdom in terms of its natural beauty, people, and prosperity." He claimed that the notion of nativity accompanied the memorization of literary works. Man-jong stated, "It is natural for people in the Eastern Kingdom to remember and transmit the names [of the renowned in their past] 東方之人固當傳誦其名 (tongbangjiin kodangjōnsong kimyōng)."⁸³ Man-jong did not use the Korean vernacular alphabet, but rather, he took for granted that classical Chinese was an essential part of Korean classical literature.

Second, Hong Man-sŏn, a relative of Hong Man-jong, contested the authority of successful candidates who had devoted their life to mastering the Confucian canons and classics. Similar to Hong Man-jong, Man-sŏn attempted to prove his ability to write a book without a taegwa degree. Man-sŏn collected information, knowledge, and know-how and compiled a book titled *How to Manage Your Economy in the Countryside* 山林經濟 (*Sanrim kyōngjae*). In this book, Man-sŏn organized practical knowledge through the selection of such topics as divination, hygiene, agriculture, gardening, botany, horticulture, sericulture, animal husbandry, food processing, emergent medical

⁸³ Hong Man-jong, *Sunoji* 旬五志 [the Compendium Written in Fifteen Days] (Unknown: preserved at the National Library of Korea) 29.

treatments, and pharmacology. Particularly, he devoted many pages to medical information and *material medica*.⁸⁴

When Man-sŏn wrote the manuscript of *How to Manage Your Economy in the Countryside*, he was cautious in selecting the word “management” 經濟 (kyŏngjae). Discussing the management of public affairs was the business of the highest degree holders and qualified officials. Man-sŏn realized the possible risk that could be presented in the event that he, a retired junior official, wrote about management (kyŏngjae) without the consent of the regime. In the absence of an official taegwa degree, his knowledge alone, no matter how great, would never allow him the privilege of communicating with the reading public. Therefore, Man-sŏn carefully defended his project and the choice of the term “management” as follows:

Life in the countryside and statecraft study are two different things 山林與經濟異途 (sanrim yŏ kyŏngjae yido). When someone lives in the country, it means that he only cares about himself and enjoys his private life. [By contrast], statecraft is studied only by someone who has his mind on the affairs of the world. The difference [between these two] is obvious, but [I would like to argue that] there also are some similarities. The character of kyŏng 經 means the management of affairs, and the character of chae 濟 means to take care of all things. If the Court has its own boundaries for management, why can't we categorize [the principle of ruling a country] as the management of the Court 廊廟之經濟 (nangmyo chi kyŏngjae)? And because the countryside has its own agenda of concerns, let's call [the principle of managing life in the hinterland] the management of the countryside 山林之經濟 (sanrim chi kyŏngjae). These two belong to two different realms, but the principle is the same.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ For this reason, its 1914 printing by Aoyagi Tsunatarō was published under the title of *Chosen hakubutsushi* 朝鮮博物志 [Natural History of Korea] under the aegis of the Japanese Society of Korean Studies 朝鮮研究會.

⁸⁵ Hong Man-sŏn, “Sŏ,” *Sanrim kyŏngjae* 山林經濟 [How to Manage Your Economy in the Countryside], *Nongsŏ* 農書 [Books on Agriculture], vol. 2, reprinted by Han'gukhak munhŏn yŏnguso (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1981) 3.

In this passage, Hong Man-sŏn defended his ability to write about management. In his opinion, the society to which he belonged possessed a distinct agenda, which was in line with that of the Court. He dared not claim that he wished to contest high government officials and taegwa graduates on the issue of statecraft. Man-sŏn defined the affairs in the countryside as something equally important, and expressed his belief that the application of an identical methodology of management could improve the quality of life in the countryside. Thus, Man-sŏn acknowledged the vertical hierarchy that existed in literary production. Only the state and its qualified men had access to the public expression on management, while those labeled “illiterate” in society were supposed to read over and over again the texts necessary for passing the examinations. Man-sŏn, however, claimed that literati without the taegwa degree could have their own culture, although it was subordinate to that of the orthodoxy when borrowing the elite term “management.”

In Tokugawa Japan, a similar movement of writing about management began during the same period in the early eighteenth century. Dazai Shundai 太宰春臺 (1680-1747), for example, explained the term “management” (keizai 経済) as “the principle of managing the country and the world 凡天下國家ヲ治ムルヲ經濟ト云フ (oyoso tenka kokka wo nayamuru wo keizai to ihu)” in his book *On Management* 經濟錄 (*Keizairoku* 経済録). In this book, written in 1729, Dazai Shundai did not show the degree of caution exercised by Hong Man-sŏn. Dazai Shundai studied at the school of “ancient studies” 古學 (kogaku 古学) under Ōgyu Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728) and shared the notion that the art of statecraft is a legitimate field of learning and writing for samurai scholars.⁸⁶ As Tetsuo Najita points out, Dazai Shundai’s study was linked to the dissenting voices among samurais against

⁸⁶ Tetsuo Najita translated *keizai* as “political economism.” About Dazai Shundai, see Tetsuo Najita, “Political Economism in the Thought of Dazai Shundai (1680-1747),” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 31:4, 830-831; Tetsuo Najita ed., *Tokugawa Political Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

ill-managed policies. What draws our attention is that Shundai worried less about his lack of formal qualifications during his public speeches than did Hong Man-sŏn.

Therefore, the public status of a private author was relatively weak and vulnerable in the Chosŏn kingdom and its examination system until the eighteenth century. Police censorship would not have been able to prevent Hong Man-jong and Hong Man-sŏn from collecting and writing commentaries about non-canonical texts. However, self-censorship, imposed by the civil service examination, motivated writers to limit their excursions to literary criticism and practical knowledge to life in the countryside. Public speech, especially about statecraft, was allowed only by “correct” language users. Many private authors took for granted that they were not qualified to touch certain genres or that they should not comment on non-canonical books. This went on until the mid-eighteenth century.

2. The Growth of Dissenting Voices

As many scholars point out, the court politics in the eighteenth century marked the most heated years of the factional conflicts.⁸⁷ While the overall situation gradually stabilized under the growing hegemony of powerful kinship organizations such as Andong Kims and P’ungsan Hong, the violent and cannibalistic fights left deep scars in the literati community. Many yangban families were forced to discontinue preparation for the civil service examinations after their members were sacrificed at factional conflicts and were dishonored. Interestingly, severe literati purges disenchanted literate males from the dream of becoming government officials and directed them to the private sector. However, in the eighteenth century, a number of literati who abandoned their preparation for the civil service examinations began to build their own networks for sharing books

⁸⁷ JaHyun Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea: Yŏngjo and the Politics of Sagacity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

and exchanging essays. These literati networks, later called hakp'a 學派, were slightly different from the aristocratic dissenters, such as Hong Man-jong and Hong Man-sŏn, in that literati associations created a new sociality as a group.

One of the founders of the new literati group was a wealthy landlord named Yi Ik 李穡 (1681-1763). He was not at all a humble man, but a member of a renowned kinship group that belonged to the underdog faction called the “Southerners” 南人 (Namin). Yi Ik lost his father and older brother at one of the most violent literati purges during the reign of King Sukjong (r. 1674-1720). Observing the misfortune of his family at close hand, Yi Ik voluntarily gave up his career path of passing the civil examinations. His brother was tortured to death in prison in 1706, and Yi Ik retired to the countryside.⁸⁸ As his family was wealthy and owned great expanses of land, his retirement was likely a more pleasant prospect than living amidst the belligerent clique wars.

Like Hong Man-jong and Hong Man-sŏn, Yi Ik personally collected many books on a wide range of topics, including European Jesuits' books on Catholicism, astronomy, and mathematics, which were all published in the Qing Empire. His bibliophilism, however, did not indicate that he was subversive to Song metaphysics. Yi Ik constructed his scholarly enquiry using his readings of the Four Books and Five Classics as the foundational base. He emphasized that *Great Learning* should be a basic Classic for “the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge” 格致 (kyŏkch'i). In other words, Yi Ik was not at all rebellious toward the orthodox curriculum. He stated, “We have to extend our knowledge to cultivate our opinions. Only after we have correct opinions can we

⁸⁸ In the cases of Ming-Qing China, political dissidents chose “kinship strategies” as the means of organizing their collective interest and ideas. Similar to Ming-Qing literati, the yangban were divided into various groups of kinship, intellectual backgrounds, and political tendency. The Southerners' clique in particular was tied up with the real or fictional kinship lineage in which mostly recruited sons of alienated yangban families to its membership. Benjamin Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: the Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

straighten our minds.”⁸⁹ Yi Ik, unlike the two Hong, claimed that he was a classicist without a degree. Yi Ik publicly announced that Song metaphysics was the genuine methodology of the Classics, and was opposed to the intuitionism of Yangming Studies and Buddhism.⁹⁰

Regardless of his rhetorical adoption of the orthodoxy, Yi Ik’s works swayed the monolithic culture of the civil service examinations from below. Like Hong Man-jong, Yi Ik remained a generalist and a commentator without developing any monograph on a specific topic or issue. His contribution, however, was monumental, as he created a foundation for scholarly networks and writing practices for future private authors. His sentiments about public writing can be witnessed in his provocative essay, “The Concern of a Person Who Lives on Bean Leaves” 藿憂錄 (Kwakurok). He wrote:

I am a man of humble origins. And, as a humble man, my concerns must not go beyond the farm or the fields of agriculture. My brain, however, does not know where it must stop and is always curious about issues about which I am not supposed to know. That is my fault. [However], in the past, there was one man who wrote a letter to Duke Xian of Jin 晉獻公 (Chinhŏn’gong) and asked about the policy of the country. And this man said, ‘If people who eat meat every day 肉食者 (yuksikja) make a mistake at the Court, people who live on bean leaves 藿食者 (kwaksikja) will suffer and perish in the dirt in the middle of nowhere’ . . . At present, all noblemen are diligently supporting the majesty. So there is no reason why I need to write [this book]. But I did because I do not know the limits of my ability, just like a dog that barks at falling snow and like an ant that tries to move a big object. I always tend to mumble to myself and then record a note after my research. But this book is just an expression of my stupidity.⁹¹

With this passage, he apologized for his imprudence in studying or writing about what he was not supposed to know. Despite the rhetorical apology, this paragraph makes explicit his belief that the

⁸⁹ Yi Ik, “Kyŏkch’i chŏngsim 格致正心 [Straightening Your Mind by Extending Knowledge],” *Sŏngbo sasŏl* 星湖僿說 (The Petty Words of Yi Ik) vol. 2 (Seoul: reprint by Kyŏnghŭi ch’ulp’ansa) 170.

⁹⁰ His magna opus, *Sŏngbo sasŏl*, was a collection of his short essays and commentaries.

⁹¹ Yi Ik, *Kwak’urok* 藿憂錄, edited by Chŏng In-bo, *Sŏngbo sasŏl ryusŏn*, Seoul: Munkwang sŏrim, 1929.

general public retained the right to inquiry and expression about government policies.⁹² Yi Ik purposely chose this episode and used it as bibliographic proof to legitimize his vocalism.

Yi Ik's group as a whole clarified the new methodology of philology. Specifically, the institutionalization of the non-degree holders' vocalism depended on a new genre of writing, a non-political but highly engaging essay style called *ko* 考. Unlike literary compendium or collectanea, which Hong Man-jong and Hong Man-sŏn did in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this analytical essay retained a distinctive feature in that its author analyzed one specific topic, mainly with the use of textual and bibliographic sources. Although Yi Ik remained a generalist and an educator, his student, An Chŏng-bok 安鼎福 (1712-1791), established this genre of writing and, with its substantiation as a discipline, introduced an arena in which degrees were not considered a dominant factor.

An Chŏng-bok had little interest in writing useful books for students who prepared for the civil service examinations. His magna opus, *Outline and Digest of History of Eastern Land* 東史綱目 (*Tongsa kangmok*), was completed in 1778 and was the first privately made book in Korean historiography that did not receive any form of support from the ruling dynasty. Like his former mentor Yi Ik, An Chŏng-bok was indifferent to passing the civil examinations and instead devoted

⁹² In the original story, *Hou Han Shu*, to which he briefly referred, the Duke bluntly rejected the letter of inquiry and stated, "Meat-eating people already well engage in policies, so the people who eat bean leaves have no need to worry about it" 肉食者已慮之矣, 藿食者尙何預焉 (yuksikja kiryŏjiŭi, kwaksikjasanghayeŏn). Responding to the Duke, the man justified his willingness to engage in the debates on statecraft by claiming that such effected the fate of poor men on a larger scale than the nobles. Fan Ye, *Hou Han Shu*, vol. 57, (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1973 printing) 1845.

his life to independent reading and learning, as he, too, had been born into an affluent family and did not look to the civil examinations as a means through which to improve his livelihood.⁹³

3. The Implication of Analytical Essays

An Chŏng-bok, a student of Yi Ik, established the philological essay as an academic genre of Korean literary culture. His essay titled “On Historical Geography” 地理考 (chirigo) was the essay from which he developed his book *Tongsa kangmok*. In his essay, he intended to prove that historical geography could be a legitimate subject of study for private scholars who did not pass the civil service examinations. One of Chŏng-bok’s major goals in book writing was to correct the errors in native medieval texts, especially those in two canonical texts of Korean historiography produced by the ruling dynasties: *The Chronicles of Three Kingdoms* 三國史記 (*Samguk sagi*), authorized by the Koryŏ dynasty, and *The Chronicle of the Koryŏ Dynasty* 高麗史 (*Koryŏsa*), published by the Chosŏn dynasty. However, he did not explicitly denounce the books of ruling dynasties, but cautiously and persuasively suggested the possibility that these books could be corrected by non-officials.

First, Chŏng-bok challenged the regime’s monopoly of evaluating books. He promoted the previous tradition of collecting non-canonical books and reading them. His goal was to show that the body of Korean classics should be determined by public readers, rather than the regime. He believed the canonical texts should be open to the criticism of private authors. His iconoclasm of philology was similar to that of Evidential Study 考證學 in the Qing Empire.⁹⁴ In his book, An Chŏng-bok doubted the faith that the canons authorized by the regimes would contain the truth of

⁹³ About his biographical information, see Han Yŏng-u, “An Chŏng-bok ūi sasang kwa *Tongsa kangmok*” 安鼎福의 思想과 東史綱目 [The Thoughts of An Chŏng-bok and the Outline and Digest of History of Eastern Land], *Hanguk hakbo* 14:4 (1988).

⁹⁴ See Benjamin Elman, “From Value to Fact: The Emergence of Phonology as a Precise Discipline in Late Imperial China,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 102:3 (1982).

transcending time, space, and mistakes. Simply stated, his goal was to encapture a nouveau cultural space in which the regime was not the ultimate authority:

Those who read history 讀史者 (toksaja) must clarify territorial boundaries in the past. Only after so doing can they draw the topography of kingdoms and analyze the effect of wars. Also, the records of division and unification can be clear. In the era of Three Kingdoms, there must be [indigenous] officials who recorded history. However, the Han Empire and the Tang Empire invaded [the Korean Peninsula]. Barbarians in the north also disturbed the border . . . Secret records and books which had been written for one thousand years all disappeared. What a pity! When Lord of Literary Excellence Kim Pu-sik wrote his book, he was closer to the ancient [records] and he was able to read broadly ancient books 古籍 (kojök). But he only relied on insufficient and faulty records of Shilla kingdom and compiled his books of history. Chŏng Hadong [Inji] likewise uncritically repeated errors and completed history on Koryŏ. . . . Then, how can we call these texts trustworthy books of history? 謂之信史可呼 (wiji sinsa kaho)⁹⁵

To a certain degree, Chŏng-bok's methodology resembled that of scholars of Evidential Study in the Qing Empire. By correcting the factual errors within the medieval texts, Chŏng-bok presented the iconoclastic claim that the ruling dynasties depicted antiquity incorrectly. Qing scholars of Evidential Study "hoped to recapture pristine meaning formulated by the sage-kings of antiquity in the ancient Classics."⁹⁶ Likewise, An Chŏng-bok attempted to uncover the antiquity of ethnic Koreans by critically reviewing the medieval texts. Although his project is often labeled "practical learning" 實學 (sirhak) today in South Korea, his book not a knowledge-book. His philological essays were devoid of educational content for either passing the civil service examinations or benefiting everyday life. His motto of "verifying the records with evidential facts" 實事求是 (silsa kusi) meant that only classical and bibliographic evidence would defend his possible persecution at the hands of the regime.

⁹⁵ An Chŏng-bok, "Chirigo" 地理考 [On Historical Geography], *Tongsa kangmok pu kwŏn ha* 東史綱目附券下 (The Supplementary) (reprinted by Chosŏn kosŏ kanhaenghoe) (Seoul, 1915) 366.

⁹⁶ Benjamin Elman, "Social Roles of Literati in Early to Mid-Ch'ing," *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 9, part 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 395.

In the introduction of his book *Outline and Digest of History of Eastern Land*, An Chŏng-bok showed the determined interest in native texts. He believed that he should write a new history book about “the affairs in the Eastern Kingdom.” The locality played an integral role in his reconstruction of Korean classics of historiography with this postulate: “This land is located at an edge of the continent, and the rituals and the matters are unique and distinct 禮異事殊 (yei sasū) [from the Middle Kingdom].”⁹⁷ In his list of selected bibliography 書目 (sŏmok) of this book, for example, he named forty-two books written by indigenous writers. In contrast, seventeen reference books were published outside of Korea. Similarly, when he identified “scholars who studied history,” the number of indigenous writers outnumbered that of non-indigenous writers by seventeen to six.⁹⁸

Therefore, An Chŏng-bok wrote a new Korean history book by studying classical texts. His book project demonstrates that new Korean authorship gradually came into presence in the late eighteenth century through writers’ borrowing philology from the Qing Empire. Consequently, this emulation served for legitimizing the local body of literature and classics. As a social group, Yi Ik, An Chŏng-bok, and their students built their own culture by collecting indigenous books and “specific facts 事 (sa)” for their communal assets.

4. Unauthorized Vocalism in the Nineteenth Century

⁹⁷ An Chŏng-bok, “Tongsa kangmok pŏmrye 東史綱目凡例 [Introduction of Tongsa kangmok]”, *Tongsa kangmok* 東史綱目 [Outline and Digest of History of the Eastern Kingdom] vol.1 (Seoul: Chosen kosho kangyŏkai, 1915) 12.

⁹⁸ He only counted “Chinese scholars who mentioned about the Eastern Land” in this list. According to him, Ban Gu 班固, Fan Ye 范曄, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元, Zeng Gong 曾鞏, Zhu Xi, and Ma Duanlin 馬端臨 wrote about the history of the Eastern Land. Among indigenous writers, he selected Kim Pu-sik 金富軾, Kwŏn Kŭn 權近, Sŏ Kŏ-chŏng 徐居正, Yi Hwang 李滉, Han Paek-gyŏm 韓百謙, O Wun 吳濔, Yu Kye 兪棨, Song Si-yŏl 宋時烈, Yim Sang-dŏk 林象德, Yi Chae-hyŏn 李齊賢, Yi Ch’ŏm 李詹, Ch’oe Pu 崔溥, Hong Sŏng-min 洪聖民, Sin Hŭm 申欽, Yi Su-gwang 李睟光, Hŏ Mok 許穆, Yu Hyŏng-wŏn 柳馨遠. Ibid., 28.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, the tradition of literary subculture grew more influential and visible than ever before. Chŏng Yag-yong 丁若鏞 (1762-1836) best illustrates how the philology of literati associations transformed the concept of classics throughout the nineteenth century. In South Korea today, Chŏng Yag-yong is commonly memorialized as an intellectual giant and a leading scholar of “Practical Learning” 實學派 (sirhakp’a). However, the situation surrounding his literary works was too complicated to idolize him ostentatiously as a greatest scholar of the late Chosŏn period. Until he died in 1836, Yag-yong was completely isolated and ignored by society. Even after his death, his works did not draw attention until the end of the Sino-Japanese War.

Chŏng Yag-yong belonged to the orbit of Yi Ik’s literati networks. In his youth, he was exposed to new books from the Qing Empire and converted to Catholicism after reading the Chinese translation of Jesuits’ books. Yet, his reading of new foreign books became an unbearable burden to him. His older brother, Chŏng Yag-jong 丁若鍾 (1760-1801), also became a Catholic and organized an underground Catholic Church. In 1801, the police discovered this religious network and rounded up the members, including those who were only indirectly related to the Catholics. As a result, Chŏng Yag-yong, who then served in the bureaucracy as a taegwa graduate, was imprisoned with his two brothers. As the leader of the church, his older brother, Chŏng Yag-jong, was beheaded, and the two other Chŏng brothers were forced into exile. Marked as a heretic, Chŏng Yag-yong lost everything but his life. He was sentenced to lifetime banishment in a remote land and was stripped of the titles that he had earned as a successful candidate of the civil service examination.⁹⁹

Although his dramatic life has attracted many scholarly and popular interests in South Korea, his isolation can characterize his actual life in exile for eighteen years. He was forced to live in the

⁹⁹ In regard to Myŏngdohoe, refer to Cho Kwang, “Chŏng Yag-chong ŭi sidae wa sasang: Chŏng Yag-chong kwa ch’ogi chŏnjugyohoe” 丁若鍾의 時代와 思想: 丁若鍾과 初期 天主教會, *Hanguk sasangsa hakhoe* 18 (2002) 28-32.

far-off peasant county of Kangjin 康津, in the Chŏlla province. The regime punished his readings of non-cans by detaining him in exile and barred the publishing of his written texts. Perhaps because he assumed that his works would not be read, his writings were extraordinarily candid and critical of the ruling regime. Moreover, unlike Yi Ik and An Chŏng-bok, Chŏng Yag-yong was a taegwa degree holder who successfully passed all the examinations. He knew the limits of the educational system as an elite student, and he appreciated the benefits of a classical education. In this regard, he was similar to Qing scholar Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849), who tried to synthesize classical learning with philological study.¹⁰⁰

Unlike previous philologists and classicists, Chŏng Yag-yong intended to speak to fellow taegwa graduates beyond the small circle of literati associations. While Yag-yong succeeded in this philological methodology, he believed that the subculture of literati associations could spread widely and meet the reading public. At least, he dreamed it when he was in exile and reflected the dream in his book manuscripts. Yag-yong, a former bureaucrat, boldly used the tabooed word “management” 經世 (kyŏngsae). In one of his major works, titled *Memorial on Statecraft* 經世遺表 (*Kyŏngsae yup’yo*), he bluntly criticized the incompetent administration.

Ordinary people [of our land] are impoverished. I can tell that our society is facing all kinds of trouble and breakdowns. If we do not reform the current situation, there will be nothing else in the future but the end of the country 及今不改, 其必亡國而後已 (kübgŭmbulga, kip’ilmanggukihui). How can loyalists and righteous men sit with their arms crossed and see this destiny? The *Classic of Changes* teaches us that one must not speak out beyond his jurisdiction. And, according to Confucius, you must not engage in a debate on state policy unless you are qualified. Then, why do I, being punished with

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspect of Change in Late Imperial China*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001, 272-275.

various crimes, attempt to discuss the rites and rituals of our country? It is because I want to speak out.¹⁰¹

Here, Yag-yong expressed the literati vocalism of the early nineteenth century. His enthusiasm toward public debate reminds us of the Ming loyalist scholars such as Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682). As Benjamin Elman notes, Gu Yanwu started his analytical and extensive research on classics, history, and geography because he understood that the Ming Empire collapsed due to its own vulnerability.¹⁰² Yag-yong's use of "mangguk" 亡國 shared the similarity of patriotic reformism. Therefore, philology extended beyond the strict academic realm into public passion when private scholars reasoned that the late Ming and the Chosŏn kingdom had erred in the past and expressed their research to the reading public.

Chŏng Yag-yong chorused with Evidential Study and argued that analytical research could save the Chosŏn kingdom from degradation. Specially, Yag-yong urged taegwa graduates, who were the most educated people of the society, to read books other than the canons. His intended audience was broader in nature than that of his predecessors, such as Yi Ik and An Chŏng-bok. Reading a book, in his opinion, was a self-motivated process of learning that should not stop, even after one had succeeded at the highest taegwa examinations. Yag-yong insisted that new books should "go out and meet the public," so he summarized the new practice of reading widely as "do-something" 有爲 (yuwi). In *The Memorial on Statecraft*, he directly criticized the ill-managed convention of taegwa graduates:

Ordinary people often misunderstood the rule of Yao and Shun; they supposed that the sage kings were sitting silently in their house without doing anything about statecraft and that their virtue naturally spread out, with good favor coming to people without any artificial efforts . . . When the era of

¹⁰¹ Chŏng Yag-yong, "Pangrye habp'yŏn" 邦禮合編 [the Collectanea of Rituals and Rites of the Country] *Kyŏngse yup'yo* 經世遺表 (the Memorial on Statecraft), 3.

¹⁰² Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 2001) 81-82.

sage-kings was over, there came the study of Han Fei and Shang Yang [on laws]. And people thought that their studies [of laws] were thorough and disciplined enough to pacify and rule humble folks . . . In my opinion, however, there was none who worked harder than did Yao and Shun in the sense that these two made the whole country do its best; they worked diligently without even a moment of indolence . . . Yao and Shun were the most diligent workers in their time, but people falsely understood them as the rulers of do-nothing 無爲 (muwi). Although Yao and Shun were the most thorough in the art of ruling, people thought that their rule was benevolently loose. Whenever a ruler was asked to be diligent and conscious 有爲 (yuwi) [on statecraft], he always referred to Yao and Shun and refused to be active. This is the very reason why the world has decayed, day by day, and why it cannot be revived . . . In our day, ministers did not have professional knowledge of their works. But they excused their ignorance by saying that they broadly understood general things. It would be a mistake if they thought that they could handle the administration with such a [low] level of effort.¹⁰³

His object of criticism even included ministers. Yag-yong tackled the problem that taegwa graduates did not work hard to educate themselves once they earned the highest degree of taegwa. Although his logic resembled that of Hong Sök-ju's "broad reading and wide knowledge" (chapter one), Yag-yong's thoughts had broader social connotations than the aristocratic virtue of erudition. The level of knowledge could decide the future of the kingdom, so literati as writers and readers should actively exchange and share their knowledge through the media of books, Chŏng Yag-yong thought.

5. The Popularization of Korean Classics

After the Sino-Japanese War in the late 1890s, Chŏng Yag-yong's texts suddenly reappeared to the reading public. How did the manuscripts of the yangban writer become the first beneficiary of the new machine press? First of all, Chŏng Yag-yong himself designed his texts for a wide audience. In the introduction of *Admonitions for Governing the People: A Manual for All Administrators* 牧民心書 (*Mokmin simsŏ*), posthumously printed in 1902, Yag-yong explained why he wrote this text for the public. He intentionally chose the word "mind" 心 (sim) before "book" 書 (sŏ). The title "Mind-

¹⁰³ Chŏng Yag-yong, Ibid. 1-4.

book” (simsŏ) was not a conventional use of the words. According to him, the character of “mind” symbolized his wish of breaking the limit of book circulation. He argued:

I studied the histories of twenty four dynasties and read books about the history of our Eastern Land 吾東 (odong). From these [classical] references, I selected the historical information on the art of caring for people, and I came to compiling these two volumes. This southern land where I live has large amounts of land tax, and wicked officials and gangsters are thriving. Living with humble folks, I have heard in detail what was happening here. Based on my witness, I'd like to record them and present my humble opinions 以類疏錄, 用著膚見 ... Some people may wonder why I included the character of sim (mind) 心 in this book's title. It is because I cannot practice my idea in reality, even though I want to do so 有牧民之心, 而不可以行於躬也. So, I called the book *Mongmin simsŏ* (*Admonitions on Governing the People: A Manual for All Administrators*) 牧民心書.¹⁰⁴

He wished his book to become a media through which he could express his mind to many people. Although he could not achieve this due to his criminal status, he hoped that his knowledge could reach the reading public via the print media. In his plan, sharing a common “mind” could connect book authors to readers who had never met one another. Unfortunately, his dream did not come true in his lifetime.

When the new printing technology began to spread out to private companies in the late 1890s, Chŏng Yag-yong's books on statecraft study and historical geography drew attention as new Korean classics. His three books, *New Book on Jurisprudence* 欽欽新書 (*Hŭmbŭm simsŏ*), *Admonitions for Governing the People*, and *Analytical Essays on Historical Geography of Korea* 大韓疆域考 (*Tae Han kangyŏkgo*), were distributed to the reading public as commercial imprints in 1901, 1902, and 1904. Chŏng Yag-yong's dream of producing “New Book” 新書 (*simsŏ*) and “Mind-book” 心書 (*simsŏ*) in the Korean print culture finally came true almost seventy years after his death. The publishers of his

¹⁰⁴ Chŏng Yag-yong, “Mongmin simsŏ sŏ [Preface of Admonition for Governing People]”, *Mongmin simsŏ* (Seoul: Kwangmunsa, 1902) 1-2.

three books were two private companies, Kwangmun Press 廣文社 (of the first two) and Imperial Capital Post Company 皇城新聞社 (of the last).

Even after the Sino-Japanese War, Yag-yong's books could not circulate in public without the sponsorship of a powerful kinship organization. In the first two books of 1901 and 1902, we can discover the public endorsement of the Yōhŭng Mins 驪興閔門. The Mins are an intriguing kinship organization for many reasons. Conventionally, this kinship group has been understood as a family of Queen Min (1851-1895). Of course, they did not include all the people who shared the same last name of Min. They claimed that they shared one common ancestor, Lord Min Yu-jung 閔維重 (1630-1687), who was a powerful royal in-law of the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁵ The Mins claimed that they were a homogeneous union of powerful families, including a paternal family of Queen Min and a maternal family of King Kojong. The public endorsement of the Mins, therefore, meant the amnesty to Chōng Yag-yong and his texts because the kinship organization was the most powerful “royal in-law” for decades in the late nineteenth century and even in the 1900s, until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. We can find a similar case in the Qing Empire in that high-ranking officials became sponsors of literati vocalism. When Wei Yuan 魏源 (1758-1848) published *The Collected Writings on Statecraft from the Qing Dynasty* 皇朝經世文編 (*Huangchao jingshi wenbian* [C]) in 1827, Wei Yuan also needed the support of a high official who could protect him from potential threats.

¹⁰⁵ Min Kwang-hun 閔光勳 (1595-1659) is believed to be the founder of this privileged lineage, but Min Yu-jung emerged as a leader of the Patriarchs' faction with his close connection to Song Si-yōl, the primary patriarch of the Noron faction. Thereafter, the Sambang lineage established its dominant status by guiding the faction through the bloody rivalry with the Namin faction. Regarding the process through which the Min family distinguished its noble character, please refer to Kim Myōng-suk, “Yōhŭng Min ssi kasŭng ryak” ŭl tonghae bon 17-18 saegi Yōhŭng Minmun ŭi hyōngsōng kwa kamun chōngbi”, *Han'guk sasang kwa munhwa* 46 (2009).

Although Wei Yuan's compilation reflected the growing vocalism of literati associations, the access to public media was still tightly controlled by the empire and the kingdom.¹⁰⁶

In the postwar years from 1895 to 1900, the Mins showed strong interest in mass media to promote wide support of them. In the chaotic postwar years, they wanted to mobilize popular support of the newborn regime of the Great Han Empire 大韓帝國 (*Tae Han chaeguk*). Whether they had prior knowledge of Chŏng Yag-yong's works is hard to determine; yet, they certainly had a close connection to some literati members who belonged to the academic circle of philologists and classicists. In particular, a yangban man named Chang Chi-yŏn 張志淵 (1864-1921) had worked as a ghost writer and a private tutor for the powerful clan. Although Chi-yŏn is better known as a patriotic journalist and a classicist in the 1900s, his friendship with the Mins started in the 1890s, or perhaps earlier. Chi-yŏn worked for the Mins because he continued to fail at the civil service examinations and needed a temporary job and a sponsor. He was from a low-class yangban family and grew up almost as an orphan in a southern province. Fortunately, he was able to receive an education due to the mercy of a rich relative. Soon, he advanced to a private school of the literati association affiliated with the philologists' circle. After he repeatedly failed at the civil service examinations, Chi-yŏn made a connection to the powerful "royal in-laws" for income and shelter in Seoul. Finally, he passed the lower sama examination and soon gave up pursuing an advanced degree because the examination system was terminated in 1894.¹⁰⁷ However, his friendship with the Mins remained intact as he vocally supported the Great Han Empire at a newspaper *Imperial Capital Post* 皇城新聞 (*Hwangsŏng sinmun*) in the 1900s.

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin Elman, "The Relevance of Sung Learning in the Late Ch'ing: Wei Yuan and the Huang-ch'ao ching-shih wen-pien," *Late Imperial China*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1988; William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁷No Kwan-bŏm, "Ch'ŏngnyŏn'gi Chang Chiyŏn ūi hakmun paegyŏng kwa pakhakp'ung 青年期 張志淵의 學問背景과 博學風 [Educational Background of Chang Chi-yŏn in His Youth and Culture of Erudition]," *Chosŏn sidaesa hakebo* 47 (2008).

When Yag-yong's manuscripts on classical study and philology were made into commercial imprints, the Mins' kinship group and the members of literati associations closely collaborated with one another. The Mins understood Chŏng Yag-yong to be a patriotic reformist with the highest degree of the classical education. Specifically, they wished to emphasize his work on statecraft study; therefore, they called it "kyŏngjae chi hak" 經濟之學 (Learning for Statecraft). When *New Book on Jurisprudence* was published in 1901, a man named Hyŏn Sang-gŏn praised this as a remarkable book by a Korean author in "kyŏngjae chi hak." He said that the reading public should read it to improve the welfare of the entire society.¹⁰⁸ A powerful minister, Min Ch'i-hŏn 閔致憲 (1844-1903), also agreed with the evaluation. Min Ch'i-hŏn highly evaluated the book as a new classic of Korean print culture, as follows:

For several generations, our Holy Kings continued their benevolent rule of eight provinces, with an ultimate principle that their subjects should not be subjected to harsh punishment. That resulted in noble gentlemen [who have no interest in jurisprudence] only studying letters and literature, and they did not have to be concerned with the [vulgar] business of local clerks [who handled criminals]. Because Mr. Tasan [a pen name of the author] was concerned about the suffering of humble individuals, he researched statecraft and compiled this book. This book is dedicated entirely to criminal justice. Alas, I wish that there was no crime in our society and that the officials had no files in their hands. Then, this book could be archived at a library, and there would be no need to read it. But there were four kinds of punishment even during the age of Yao and Shun . . . If a magistrate suddenly comes across a criminal case without his studying it previously, [I am sure that] he cannot state any words and cannot provide any legal opinion. This is the reason that the literati are ashamed that this book was not published until now.

This powerful minister still believed that reading for moral perfection should be the ideal practice of Korean literary culture. Namely, moral completion of each individual would solve all problems of the society without any artificial policy. "Noble gentlemen" had to spend their time and energy on the art of letters and classical literature while humble folks could handle the criminals. Yet, he

¹⁰⁸ Hyŏn Sang-gŏn, "Pal [Ending Memo]" 跋, *Hŏmbŏm sinsŏ* 欽欽新書 (*The New Book on Jurisprudence*) (Seoul: Kwangmunsa, 1901), 3.

acknowledged the necessity of a new print culture because he also sensed the gap between the ideal and the reality. If people were allowed to read non-canonical texts, he thought, Chǒng Yag-yong's texts had to become a new Korean classic.

However, it does not seem plausible that Min Ch'i-hǒn himself performed the manual labor required for the publication. He most likely hired someone like Chang Chi-yǒn, who was familiar with the genres, grammars, topics, and classical Chinese. The process of proofreading and editing required enormous time, energy, and literacy skills. At present, there remain only two of Yag-yong's anthologies, both in handwritten manuscripts. The first one is *The Anthology of Yǒyudang* 與猶堂集 (*Yǒyudangjib*), and the second is *The Literary Collection of Yǒlsu* 洌水全書 (*Yǒlsu chǒnsǒ*).¹⁰⁹ In both, Yag-yong hid his own name and instead used the pen names of Chǒng Yong 丁鏞 or Yǒlsu 洌水. Because his texts were rare and written by hand, it took many years to collect and verify the original version, so that the complete set of his collection was finished only in 1974. The Mins, therefore, likely hired classicists such as Chang Chi-yǒn for editing and proofreading at the publishing companies.

Chang Chi-yǒn succeeded in the academic tradition of studying philology and historical geography as a non-taegwa degree holder. In 1904, Chang Chi-yǒn supervised the publication of *Essays on the Historical Geography* 大韓疆域考 and added his own name as a co-author.¹¹⁰ The original title was *Essays on the Historical Geography of Our Country* 我邦疆域考 (*Abang kangyǒkko*), written by

¹⁰⁹ Asami Collection of Korean Rare Books at the C.V. Starr East Asian Library of the University of California, Berkeley, has a part of these two anthologies in the form of a manuscript. The entire collection of his writings was finally completed in 1974 in South Korea. About the bibliographical information about Chǒng's writings, please see Cho Sǒng-ŭl, "Chǒng Yag-yong chǒjak ŭi ch'aegye wa Yǒyudangjip chapmun ŭi chaegusǒng" 丁若鏞 著作의 體系와 與猶堂集 雜文의 再構成 [For the Systematic Understanding of Chǒng Yag-yong's Writings and the Compilation of His Miscellaneous Essays], *Kyujanggak* 8 (1984).

¹¹⁰ Chǒng Yag-yong, edited by Chang Chi-yǒn, *Tae Han kangyǒk ko* 大韓疆域考 [Essays on the Historical Territory of Korea], (Seoul: Hwangsǒng sinmunsa, 1904).

Chŏng Yag-yong. Chi-yŏn changed the term “our country” to “Tae Han (Korea)” because he not only politically supported the new regime Great Han Empire, but also believed that “Tae Han” 大韓 (Great Han) represented the historical lineage of the country from the beginning of history. Therefore, he, as a classicist, reinterpreted the academic genre of historical geography for backboning the newborn Korean government with philological evidence. Before he developed his new career as a journalist for the *Imperial Capital Post*, he worked at the Royal Institute of History and Rituals 史禮所 (saryeso). In one petition letter to the throne, he articulated the meaning of “Tae Han” from the perspective of a philologist and classicist. Here, he criticized the expensive Westernization project of building a new palace and advised holding on to the historical and textual legitimacy of the new regime:

Your Majesty finally elevated one step up to the imperial status and came back to the pavilion of Supreme Ultimate and attended at the celebration of all officials. The name of our country was changed to Great Han 大韓 (Tae Han) and you proclaimed a new name of era as Kwangmu 光武 [as a sign of being independent from the Qing Empire]. ... When Your Majesty enthroned with the imperial title, every ritual and rite exactly followed those of Great Ming 大明 Empire. This proves the fact that our new Empire is succeeding the holy lineage from the late Ming, and standing on the indigenous land of Great Han 大韓 from ancient time. It is obvious to everyone that we are not imitating Western rituals arbitrarily. ... The legitimacy of our Empire cannot be found at anywhere else than this righteousness. ... This is why the [previous] rite and ritual must not be underestimated.¹¹¹

In this letter, he argued that textual evidence should be the genuine element of the independent Korean kingdom after the Sino-Japanese War. Specifically, he liked the name of “Tae Han” because it symbolized the combination of cultural lineage from the Ming Empire and indigenous history of the peninsula. Consequently, he extended the classical literature of philology and historical geography into a new dimension of nationalistic imagination.

¹¹¹ Chang Chi-yŏn, “Ch’ŏngchŏng hwangŭi so,” *Wiam mungo* 韋庵文稿 [The Anthology of Chang Chi-yŏn] (Seoul: Kuksa p’yŏnch’an wiwŏnhoe, 1956) 86-87.

Chang Chi-yŏn's transformation from a veiled classicist to a public journalist from 1895 to 1905 was similar to the process of the publication of *Essays on Historical Geography of Korea*. When Chang Chi-yŏn published Yag-yong's book on historical geography at the Imperial Capital Post Company in 1904, Chi-yŏn was less dependent on the support of the Mins than before. As a failed candidate of the civil service examinations, Chang Chi-yŏn found that urban publishers could provide him with a new chance to speak to the reading public, bypassing the control of the regime or the notables. Indeed, a new print media elevated his public status from a ghost writer of the Mins to a nationalistic journalist with the intellectual background of philology. This newspaper company, in particular, printed its daily paper in classical Chinese, so it was a perfect popular media for those who had prepared for the civil service examinations, such as Chi-yŏn. Therefore, these traditional literati adapted surprisingly well to the new development of mass media, becoming the early authors and audiences of imprints.

In the same fashion, Chŏng Yag-yong's book appeared to the reading public faster than any other kind of popular books. The 1904 book of historical geography, coauthored by Chang Chi-yŏn and Chŏng Yag-yong, for example, proves that the classics were still an important text of contemporary politics. Chang Chi-yŏn wrote his own analytical essays and added to the original text by Yag-yong. It was "An Essay on Imna" 任那考 (Imnago). In his writing, Chi-yŏn practiced the philological methodology. His major goal was to verify the ancient taxonomy of "Imna [K]/Mimana [J]" which appeared in a Japanese medieval text. He compared three texts, *The Chronicle of Three Kingdoms* 三國史記 (*Samguk sagi*), *The Chronicle of Japan* 日本書紀 (*Nihon shoki* [J]), and *Comprehensive Institutions* 通典 (*Tong Dian* [C])¹¹² and concluded that "Imna/Mimana" is an alternate name for Taegaya 大伽耶. Interestingly, the word "Imna" is not found in the Korean classic of *The Chronicle of*

¹¹² Chang Chi-yŏn, "Chŭngbo Imna ko", *TaeHan kangyŏk ko* 大韓疆域考 [Essays on Historical Geography of Korea] vol.2 (Seoul: Hwangsŏng sinmunsa, 1904) 47.

Three Kingdoms. Chi-yŏn argued that this mysterious tribe did exist in the southern edge of the peninsula in ancient history, but the Korean and Japanese history books recorded it with a different pronunciation. The question of Imna had an important connotation in international politics between Japan and Korea because new history books in Meiji Japan began to claim that Imna/Mimana was subordinate to the Yamato kingdom, which Meiji Japan regarded as its historical origin.¹¹³ Chang Chi-yŏn concluded in his essay that the Shilla kingdom conquered this tribe, so the political unity of the peninsula was maintained since the military conquer of the Shilla dynasty. In other words, Chang Chi-yŏn discounted the possibility that Korea and Japan shared the same territorial space or common history at any moment in time. His historical consciousness on the separation between Korea and Japan, thus, was based on the nineteenth-century genre of historical geography, which Chŏng Yag-yong and Chang Chi-yŏn shared. In addition, the new urban media early adopted such academic discourses and circulated it among readers who could read classical Chinese.

Conclusion

To conclude, the civil service examination system excluded many talents from the bureaucracy in the late Chosŏn period. Some writers, such as Yi Ik and An Chŏng-bok, refused to confine themselves to the official curriculum for the examinations because they preferred not to engage in the unpredictable and dangerous world of literati politics among taegwa graduates. When they independently chose topics and wrote in genres of their own choice, the boundary of literary culture expanded beyond the limited circle of the textbooks for the examinations as well as beyond the authoritative books that were published by the order of the king. When people accumulated

¹¹³ From 1890s, Japanese historians, led by Kume Kunitake 久米邦武 at Tokyo Imperial University, began arguing that the Japanese domination in Korea had historical grounds in ancient records. Unlike nativist (kokugaku 國學) scholars, who were unwilling to include the Korean peninsula in the definition of the divine land of Japan, the new professional academics in the 1890s vigorously tested the validity of the “common origin” of Japanese and Koreans by historical, ethnical, and biological viewpoints. Peter Duus, “Defining Koreans,” *The Abacus and the Sword: the Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 413-420.

non-canonical books, there appeared a social network by which they could break their isolation, share their interests, and train new members. Consequently, Korean print culture matured from different parties, both inside and outside of the examination system.

Literary production as the voice of dissenters, however, did not confront the regime itself. As we can see from the case of Chŏng Yag-yong, the Chosŏn regime could easily place dangerous authors in exile. If anyone broke the rules of the state orthodoxy, he would be sentenced to isolation, including an inaccessibility to print media, or even death. To evade state censorship, literary dissenters carefully tested the possibility of public speech in the academic genres of literary criticism, statecraft study, philology, and bibliography. The expansion of literary genres was not revolutionary to Song metaphysics, but it was the complicated imitation and cooptation by which private authors justified their public speech. In particular, friendship networks of trustworthy peers became an alternative social fabric in which the new cultural movement was able to start, keeping a safe distance from the watchful eye of the regime. Even though scholarly books circulated in a limited capacity until the end of the nineteenth century, cultural capability of the society gradually matured enough to understand and use the new printing technology after the Sino-Japanese war in 1894-5. To summarize, literati associations did not suddenly become obsolete after the war. Rather, they became more active than ever before. When the new printing technology and printing presses began to take a root in Seoul, the members of these literati associations became the first generation of book editors, publicists, and professional writers in the city.

THREE

POPULAR READERS: VERNACULAR AND ORAL CULTURE

Introduction

In chapters one and two, I have highlighted how Korean literary culture, especially those portions of it that were based on classical education, hierarchically stratified by the system of civil service examinations. New books were continuously imported from the outside world during this era. Koreans who received classical education also created new books for themselves in the nineteenth century. Therefore, when the new technology of the printing press was introduced in Korea after the 1880s, elite kinship organizations and literati associations became unexpected sources of new literary culture. However, the books created by these elite groups, written as they were in the classical Chinese and the mixed style of the vernacular alphabet combined with Chinese characters, were still difficult for popular audiences to read.

In this chapter, I will further investigate one additional player in the arena of native Korean print culture in the nineteenth century. The main focus of this chapter is upon popular writers who lived outside the influence of the civil service examinations. Even before the abolition of the examinations in 1894, not everyone read the Confucian canons. Under the official system, males of inferior status and all females were forbidden to take the civil examinations under any circumstance. These people had no motivation to read the officially-sanctioned textbooks at all. There was a significant number of such “outsiders” to the civil examination system in pre-1894 Korean society. The kingdom often labeled them as “illiterate” and “uneducated” folks. Nonetheless, such labels

represented more an expression of the belief of the regime than it was a description of the social and cultural reality of the time.

In the nineteenth century, a striking observation is that the size of both the readership and number of authors using the Korean vernacular language gradually increased. Popular genres attracted vernacular-language users who did not read books for the purpose of passing the civil service examinations. In the literary genres of religious texts and vernacular fiction, authors wished to express their emotions and anxieties more freely, and using the vernacular language allowed them to do so in a richer context than if they used the classical Chinese. Nevertheless, such cultural changes emerged primarily as a result of the complex interaction with the classical education system. This was because popular authors also received a literary education. After they abandoned the dream of becoming taegwa graduates, many people looked for an alternative career in the society. There was a spectrum of alternative careers available to the unsuccessful candidates. The most unfortunate ones remained at the bottom strata of society, usually working as wondering beggars, pilgrims, or quasi-religious masters of healing and divination.

Such quasi-literate males operated completely outside the civil service examination system. To some degree, many of these outsiders were similar to Chŏng Yag-yong, who wished to break his isolation by circulating the words that expressed his mind (心書 *simsŏ*). However, most such low-class writers did not believe that taegwa graduates would listen to anything they had to say. Instead, they appealed to a sub-culture of popular readers. In particular, the new popular religious network of Eastern Learning 東學 (*Tonghak*) illustrates the uncanny, but vibrant growth of popular vernacular books in the nineteenth century. In this chapter, I will examine such cases of “low-brow” literary works and analyze how these popular authors and readers shared the same passion for expressing

themselves in written words, and for communicating with public audiences through the printing presses.

1. Outsiders of the Examination Regime

On March 10, 1864, a public executioner in Taegu beheaded a 40-year-old man named Ch'oe Che-u 崔濟愚 (also known as Ch'oe Pok-sul 崔福述, which literally means “Ch'oe, a fortune teller”). This man lived without a regular job, claiming that he possessed a supernatural power which could protect his followers from disease and all types of ill fortune. He had many exceptional talents, but he was also one of the many people in Korean society who struggled with poverty and isolation. He chose a career of practicing divination and fortune telling, as folk religions survived under the Confucian orthodoxy of the time. Unlike ordinary shamans and fortune tellers, however, Ch'oe Che-u seems to have touched a nerve of the regime, and provoked an unusually strong reaction from the government against himself. He was a good vernacular-language writer. He had gathered his followers and organized them under one coherent dogma, to which he assigned the name “Eastern Learning.” Furthermore, he ordered his followers to memorize certain texts which he had written. By punishing him, the government expected that, without his charismatic leadership, the Eastern Learning group would dissolve. However, although Ch'oe Che-u did perish, his popular texts still remained safe within the religious network. At first they did so only as handwritten texts and oral transmissions, but later became transformed into woodblock printings. The net result of his

execution was the beginning of long and dramatic struggle between the Chosŏn regime and the religious dissenters, which lasted until 1910.¹¹⁴

Ch'oe Che-u was one example of those who lived at the margins of the civil examination system and classical education. He was the illegitimate son of a yangban man who had conceived him with a mistress. Because he had a mother of an inferior status, he was what was referred to as a sŏl 庶孽 – a person having the mixed-blood of a noble man and a humble woman. Although the sŏl were not outcasts, members of this group were officially prohibited from taking the civil service examinations. Therefore, although he received basic education in the classical language, he had no motivation to invest his energy in mastering the standard Confucian textbooks. Despite his inferior status, his father endowed some property to him, but it seems that he had a difficult life. Perhaps because of crop failure or his heavy burden of taxes, Ch'oe Che-u eventually became penniless. Since he was a sŏl, an unqualified member of the kinship organization, it seems that his kinship group was not concerned with his suffering. Once he had lost his lands, there was no reason for him to remain in the village. Soon, he began an aimless journey, wandering alone as a vagabond.¹¹⁵

Ch'oe Che-u's life as a traveling beggar highlights the diversity of Korean society in the nineteenth century, contrasting the social reality against the conventional stereotype that it was a typical and benevolent “Neo-Confucian” society. After his family abandoned him, he often received basic care from Buddhist temples. Religious institutions, especially Buddhist temples and monasteries, were willing to feed such wanderers as part of their philanthropic policies. Even until the 1900s, in popular fiction, Buddhist monks and nuns appeared to take on the public function of

¹¹⁴ As a result, the Tonghaks demanded amnesty for Ch'oe Che-u. Yi Hyŏn-hŭi, “19segi Hanguk sahoe wa kyojo sinwŏn undong” 19世紀韓國社會와敎祖伸冤運動, [The Amnesty Campaign of Eastern Learning and Nineteenth century Korean Society] *Tonghak hakbo* 8 (2004).

¹¹⁵ Ch'oe Chae-u, “Potŏkmun” 布德文, *Tonggyŏng taejŏn* 東經大全 in *Tonghak sasang charyojip* 東學思想資料集, vol. 1 (Seoul: Sŏul asea munhwasa) 20-21.

caring for orphans and beggars. Since these wandering people could at least earn some food and shelter at temples, their journey tended to take on at least the superficial appearance of a kind of religious pilgrimage as they travelled from one temple to another. Ch'oe Che-u took up this same path and spent many days at Buddhist temples.

Buddhism was officially tolerated by the Chosŏn kingdom as minor heresy, but it was a popular religion with a long history and numerous cultural assets, which included books, sutras, and visual images. Anyone who possessed a moderate level of literacy could read Buddhist sutras or many other non-Confucian texts which were safely preserved in these temples. According to a record of one sect of Eastern Learning, Ch'oe Che-u educated himself throughout his journey with religious ceremonies, jargons and esoteric languages. When he studied alone as a mountain hermit, the record claims, a Buddhist monk once paid a visit to his place. This monk had one roll of mysterious scripts which the monk could not understand, so the Buddhist monk asked Ch'oe Che-u to interpret it. When Ch'oe decoded these scripts, the monk was impressed by his knowledge and handed the roll to him. This meeting was commemorated by Choe's followers, which they considered to be one of many miracles which he experienced along his path toward becoming a supernatural being.¹¹⁶

Contrary to the religious sect's claim, however, Ch'oe Che-u was, in fact, one of many people who devoted their life to the reading of non-classical learning. It is not difficult to discover similar cases of autodidacts in a nineteenth century book of biographical stories entitled *Observations of People in the City and the Countryside* 里鄉見聞錄 (*Yihyang kyŏnmunrok*). Its author, Yu Ch'ae-gŏn

¹¹⁶ “Ch'ŏndogyohoesa ch'ogo pu Ch'ŏndogyo ch'ongsŏ” 天道教會史 初稿 附 天道教叢書, *Tonghak sasang charyojip* 東學思想資料集, vol. 1 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1979) 392. “Ch'ŏndogyohoesa” 天道教會史 is a handwritten manuscript recording the history of the sect and its leaders. Its author is unknown. It is generally known that this manuscript was used as education for youth groups in 1920. Sin Il-ch'ŏl, “Tonghak sasang charyojip haecjae” 東學思想資料集解題, *Tonghak sasang charyojip*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1979) xii-xiii.

劉在建, who was also a literate man of a minor kinship group without a degree, compiled this collection of biographic episodes of ordinary people in classical Chinese. According to this book, books were familiar items in everyday life even to people who did not receive high-level educations or who could not afford to buy books. Regardless of their level of literacy and wealth, individual readers continued to read books which had nothing to do with preparation for the civil service examinations. Like Ch'oe Che-u, the poor outsiders at the bottom of society depended upon religious organizations such as Buddhist temples when they needed alternative book collections to enrich their cultural life. According to Volume ten of Yu Chae-gŏn's book, many different kinds of books were actually circulating in Korean society through the religious networks:

<Table 3.1: Book titles which appeared in Volume 10 of *Observations of People in the City and the Countryside*>

	Title
Twelve books of popular religions	The <i>Todŏkgyŏng</i> 道德經 (the <i>Dao de jing</i> [C]), the <i>Ch'amdonggye</i> 參同契 (<i>Can tong ji</i> [C]), the <i>Kŭmbyŏkgyŏng</i> 金碧經 (<i>Jin bi jing</i> [C]), the <i>Hwangjŏnggyŏng</i> 黃庭經 (<i>Huang ting jing</i> [C]), the <i>Sŏngmyŏng kyuiji</i> 性命主旨 (<i>Xing ming gui zhi</i> [C]), the <i>Naeoe kŭmdangyŏl</i> 內外金丹訣 (<i>Nei wai jin dan jue</i> [C]), the <i>Literary Collection of Ch'ŏnghŏdang</i> 淸虛堂集 (<i>Ch'ŏnghŏdangjip</i>), the <i>Lotus Sutra</i> 蓮華經 (<i>Yŏnhwagyŏng</i>), the <i>Literary Collection of P'yŏnyangdang</i> 鞭羊堂集 (<i>P'yŏnyangdangjip</i>), the <i>Diamond Sutra</i> 金鋼經 (<i>Kŭmganggyŏng</i>), the <i>Pukdugyŏng</i> 北斗經 (<i>Bei dou jing</i> [C]), and the <i>Naejŏn</i> 內典 (<i>Nei dian</i> [C])

As can be seen in this table, the distinction between canons and non-canons was not clearly drawn among the literate people of the lower level of Korean society. Even after they gave up preparing for the civil service examinations, they used their literary skills to read books for personal reasons. Religious books were one of the popular genres for those who sought religious salvation through reading. The Confucian texts also encouraged such a wide range of readings, because the *Book of Change* 易經 (*Yŏkgyŏng* [K] and *Yi jing* [C]) remained popular as source books for fortune telling. The skill of divination obtained from reading the *Book of Change*, in particular, remained in an

ambivalent position part way between the orthodoxy and the heterodoxy. Therefore, many scholars studied it along with the *Ch'amdonggye* 參同契 (*Can tong ji* [C]), one of the books in Table 3.1, and wrote their own commentaries.¹¹⁷

One particular episode in *Observations of People in the City and the Countryside* illustrates the cultural variation in popular print culture. This episode depicts how a yangban man, who used to be loyal to Confucian doctrine, became a cultural renegade in the end. This man, named Mun Yu-ch'ae, spent three years, living right next to the tomb of his parents to follow the Confucian ritual. He apparently did so because he believed in the Confucian morality which he learned from reading the Four Books and Five Classics. However, after he experienced a series of mishaps, he suddenly realized that Confucian orthodoxy did not completely control Korean society. When he returned to his house after finishing the ritual, he found out that his wife had run away with her secret lover. Moreover, his wife's family falsely accused Mun Yu-ch'ae as having murdered her because they were afraid of her being severely punished for her adultery, which would have disgraced the entire family. Helplessly, he was arrested and put in jail for the next seven years until his wife was finally found alive. Thus Mun Yu-ch'ae discovered there was a gap between idealized morality and real life. It must have disenchanted him greatly to realize that no one except himself was committed to moral perfection in everyday life. His loyalty to Confucian doctrine earned him nothing except dishonor and banishment for ten years.¹¹⁸

After this, he decided to devote his remaining life to a different kind of culture and learning. Living in a remote hut in the mountains, he practiced the techniques of Inner Alchemy 內丹 (naedan) which glamorized voluntary starvation and the endurance of hardship. After enduring the

¹¹⁷ Pak Chi-hyŏn, "Chuyŏk ch'amdonggye koi sogo" 周易參同契攷異小考, *Changsŏgak* 6 (2001), 138-140.

¹¹⁸ "Mun Yu-ch'ae," *Yihyang kyŏnmunrok* 里鄉見聞錄 (Seoul: Asea Munhwasa, 1974) 466-468.

harsh training, it was said that he became a master of Inner Alchemy who could run as fast as a bird flies, and who did not feel cold without clothing during the bitter winter. Having successfully transformed himself into a Daoist master, he started wandering around the country as a vagabond, and never returned to his village again. It remains unclear whether this episode was real or fictional. What draws our attention, however, is his intriguing reading practice. Like Ch'oe Che-u, Mun Yu-ch'ae arduously read the heretical texts available at Buddhist temples. Mun Yu-ch'ae showed an impressive level of literary skill in reading Buddhist texts. When he loudly and fluently read these Buddhist books, priests came to him and asked how it was possible for him to read so well. To the curious Buddhist priests, he answered, "I can read them, but I do not understand their meaning" 知能讀, 不知其旨 (chinŭngdok, pujigiji). This pattern of "reading without comprehension" allows us to glimpse a unique feature of this quasi-literary world of the late Chosŏn period. Reading was sufficiently independent of comprehension, to the extent it was possible for a person to read a book without gaining knowledge from a text. In the realm of oral folk culture, knowledge 知 (chi) and reading 讀 (tok) could be separated. *Observations of People in the City and the Countryside* contains several more cases of this same mode of vocal reading. For instance, one person said that he read a Daoist book entitled the *Hwangjŏnggyŏng* 黃庭經 more than 8,000 times. Also, one woman is described as always chanting the sentences of the *Cb'amdonggye* without interruption. Thus, popular literary culture could exist by oral transmission and chanting - without *any* educational function of communicating information and knowledge to its readers.

2. Underground Popular Literature

Thus we observe that the term “literacy” can refer to different abilities, depending on the audience in a society like late Chosŏn Korea. It is difficult to define what the minimum literacy level should be in order to decide who was “literate” in Korean society. This is partially because the classical language required such a great amount of financial investment and personal effort that many people dropped out of the educational process at the beginner’s level. Many other people never even dreamed of attaining a classical education at all. However, once a man became educated, nevertheless, he did have new professional options made available to him as a result of his literacy skills. For example, one possible career option was to become a Buddhist priest. Religious books about Buddhism and Daoism were, however, categories of canonized texts that forbade any arbitrary revisions. Thus, the distinction between authors and readers was, in fact, as institutionally well-established for religious texts as it was for the Confucian canons. However, in marked contrast, in the case of popular religious practices of divination, fortune telling, and geomancy, popular authors could enjoy greater liberty to make their own textbooks. That was the reason that new popular religions attracted so many lower-class writers, for in this realm, they could freely create their own new books.

New religious texts became a main genre of underground literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Written in classical Chinese, they were referred to in many different ways, such as “prophecies” 訣 (kyŏl), “secret records” 秘記 (pigi), or “secret prophecies” 秘訣 (pigyŏl). There were generally two ways to use these books of divination. First, individual readers privately owned the texts and practiced the techniques described within for their needs. Second, those who mastered them could make a business of providing quasi-religious services for their customers. One of the most famous Korean books in this genre is a book entitled *The Secret Prophecy of Yi Chi-ham* 土亭秘訣 (*Tojŏng pigyŏl*). Written in classical Chinese, this book also required its readers to

understand classical Chinese at an intermediary level. Although it is believed that the author was a sixteenth century yangban man named Yi Chi-ham 李之菡 (1517-1578), there is no evidence that the book actually existed prior to the nineteenth century.¹¹⁹

The *Classic of Change* provided the prototype for such books of divination, and Korean writers invented their own texts by co-opting the classic and local practices in order to create their own texts. Therefore, popular genres also followed the same general pattern, in that Korean native writers imitated the Confucian classic in the same manner that elite authors and dissenting scholars did in the nineteenth century. Another Korean book of divination, *The Record of Prophet Chǒng* 鄭鑑錄 (*Chǒnggamrok*), exemplifies such literary emulation in underground literature. This was a notorious book of political and cultural heterodoxy that contained malicious prophecies about the Chosŏn dynasty, implicitly predicting that a new kingdom would replace the existing regime. Fortunately, the Kyujanggak Archive of Seoul National University in South Korea preserves a rare copy of this handwritten manuscript. Since this archive is built on the collection of the Chosŏn dynasty's royal library, it is plausible to assume that this copy reveals the pre-twentieth century forms of this book. According to the Kyujanggak version, *The Record of Prophet Chǒng* consists of four chapters: "The Prophecy of the Mirror" 鑑訣 (*kamgyŏl*), "Divination from the Calculation of Numbers and Yin-yang in the Eastern Kingdom" 東國歷代氣數本宮陰陽訣 (*Tongguk yŏkdae kisū pon'gung ūmyanggyŏl*), "Geomantic Divination about the Destiny of Royal Capitals" 歷代王都木宮訣 (*Yŏkdae wangdo mokgungyŏl*), and "Secret Words about Three Hans and their Mountains"

¹¹⁹ Pak Chong-dŏk, "Tojŏng Yi Chi-ham ūi sasang kwa Tojŏng pigyŏl" 土亭 李之菡의 思想과 土亭秘訣 [The Thoughts of Yi Chi-ham and the Secret Prophecy of Yi Chi-ham], *Yŏksa wa segye* 38 (2010) 198-199.

三韓山林秘記 (*Sam Han sanrim pigi*).¹²⁰ As can be seen from its chapters, the book was a collection of “prophecies” and “secret words” written by anonymous native writers.

The anonymity shows how dangerous it was to create and circulate this kind of a book. In chapter one of “The Prophecy of the Mirror,” a fortune teller named Prophet Chŏng boldly predicted the end of world. In this apocalypse, he described that the Final Day would come as the combination of all kinds of natural and unnatural causes such as foreign invasions, natural disasters, or political rebellions. Such messages, of course, were deemed irresponsible and dangerous to public order in the Chosŏn kingdom. A scholar who lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Yi Nŭng-hwa 李能化 (1869-1943), characterized it as a literary expression of political rebels.

However, Yi Nŭng-hwa himself did not designate any single author for this text. Instead, he understood it as the collective work of “those who became resentful to the country after their dreams were frustrated” 失志怨國者 (*siljiwŏn’gukja*).¹²¹ He pinpointed a notorious yangban rebel of the sixteenth century, Chŏng Yŏ-rib 鄭汝立 (1546-?), as an example of such people. Although Chŏng Yŏ-rib was a degree-holder in the civil examinations, he retired from the government and drew the police’s attention because of his bohemian lifestyle and intimate friendships with heretics such as the Buddhist monks. His life and behaviors left many folktales about his wish to become a new king. When he was accused of high treason, he fled from the police to a southern island and killed himself.¹²² Such a stereotype of frustrated yangban men still lingered in popular imagination

¹²⁰ Anonymous, “Chŏnggamrok” 鄭鑑錄 [the Record of Prophet Chŏng] at the Kyujanggak Archive of Seoul National University (M/F83-16-89-N).

¹²¹ Yi Nŭng-hwa, *Chosŏn kidogyo kŏp oegyosa* 朝鮮基督教及外交史 [A History of Korean Christianity and Foreign Affairs], vol. 2 (Seoul: Changmunsa, 1928) 20.

¹²² Cho Yong-sŏn, “Chŏng Yŏ-rip sŏlhwa ae nat’ananŭn hyŏnsil’insik ae tachan koch’al” 鄭汝立 說話에 나타나는 現實認識에 對한 考察 [An Essay on Folktales about Chŏng Yŏ-rib], *Kyŏraeŏ munhak* 37 (2006) 237-239.

until the early twentieth century when Yi Nŭng-hwa commented about it. That is, the ruling dynasty was also fully aware of the fact that the literate men could become serious trouble-makers.

However, it is doubtful whether such dangerous books circulated before the eighteenth century. Korean scholar Paek Sŭng-jong suggests that *The Record of Prophet Chŏng* became accessible to the public only after the early eighteenth century. Based on a police report, Paek argues that the first author must have been a vagabond fortune teller who never actually engaged in any serious political schemes or commotions as Chŏng Yŏ-rib had done.¹²³ As *The Secret Prophecy of Yi Chi-ham* borrowed the reputation of the sixteenth century figure, it seems that the book also relied on the popular image of the archetypal “rebel” in order to appeal to popular readers. It seems that lower-class writers wished to improve the reception of their texts by appealing to the established reputations of well-known legendary characters.

However, we should note that the misery and resentment of low-class literate males was an important force in diversifying Korean print culture. When the poor yangban men wandered around the country, they often earned bread from begging and fortune telling, as we can see in figure 3. The person on the right is wearing the attire of a Daoist practitioner. Standing side-by-side with a Buddhist monk, he unfolds a certain written text in front of him. His technique and knowledge of this text empowered him in a quite different way from how literacy in the Four Books and Five Classics produced authority for degree-holders. Especially to women and low-status-holders, these kinds of books were the sources of knowledge, literature, and the authority.

<Figure 3. (Anonymous painter, circa the eighteenth century) (National Museum of Korea)>

¹²³ Paek Sŭng-jong, “18 segi chŏnban sŏbukjibang ae ch’ulhyŏngha” *Chŏnggamrok* 18世紀 前半 西北地方에 出現한 鄭鑑錄 [The Circulation of the Record of Prophet Chŏng in Northwestern Provinces in the Early Eighteenth Century], *Yŏksa haebo* 164 (1999).



These low-brow texts of divination illustrate how literacy created popular readers in Korean society. Thanks to the genres which thrilled and entertained readers, literacy became a part of popular culture. *The Record of Prophet Chǒng*, for example, contained the voices of multiple narrators. Since this text was not printed using woodblocks, the transmitters could easily add their own sentences, and make it seem as if the original text had included these passages from the beginning. As time went on, and the multiple generations of authors each added their own comments in succession, the book became an odd combination of multiple authors.

The description of the Final Day exemplifies how numerous low-brow writers cooperated to reinforce one another. Basically, three narrators led the discussion about how to keep safe during the impending disasters. The structure of their conversation was extremely disorganized, because three (or more) speakers had all contributed their words. Similar to a “jam session” in jazz music, they collectively built the grotesque image of the Final Day:

[When the Day comes], all stones at Mount Kyeryong will change into white, and bamboo trees will lose their green color and turn white. A grass plain will be invaded by the tide from the sea, and a ship will turn up there. For the next three days, there will be a boiling dark fog and black clouds. A comet will appear [in the sky] and invade the Milky Way. When the comet invades

the seat of the king of the stars and reaches the tail of the Great Bear, or when the comet ends at the Southern Six Stars, Great and Small Middle Kingdoms will perish all together 大小中華皆亡矣 (taeso Chunghwa kaemangŭi). . . Bandits will arise from four directions and invaders will come from eight directions . . . Junior officials will murder their supervisors and law and order will be gone forever 綱常永殄 (kangsang yŏngjin).¹²⁴

Following this passage, another narrator added his own ominous prediction by inserting unrelated sentences, such as “There will appear one thousand ships overnight and later dead bodies will be piled up as tall as the height of a mountain.”

Nevertheless, despite the chaotic and disjointed nature of the final product, these authors all shared one common motivation. The cumulative effect of their words was intended to empower the fortune tellers. After talking about the omen, these multiple narrators continued the heated conversation on the topic of discovering the safest places in the kingdom. At this point, the purpose of their prophecy became straightforward: if a person wanted to survive the disaster, they must listen to fortune tellers/beggars. Considering their techniques of geomancy and their esoteric knowledge in astrology, it seems that they were well-tuned into the sub-culture of divination and geomancy. Since the geomancers 風水家 (p’ungsuga) were paid for their service of searching for auspicious places of burial, this profession was an attractive career for those who had basic literacy in classical Chinese and Confucian rituals.¹²⁵

Literacy in the classical language, therefore, had diverse functions in Korean society. Literacy was useful not only for preparing the civil exams and writing academic essays, but also for earning money as a geomancer. Such skills also well-served the quasi-literate males who temporarily became

¹²⁴ Anonymous, Manuscript of the *Chŏnggam-rok* at Kyujanggak Archive in Seoul National University (M/F83-16-89-N), 2-3.

¹²⁵ Sun Joo Kim also points out that Hong Kyŏngnae, the rebel leader of the early nineteenth century, was a professional geomancer, and he intentionally manipulated the contents of prophesy in order to recruit the members for his uprising. Sun Joo Kim, “Prophecy and Popular Rebellion,” *Marginality and Subversion in Korea: the Hong Kyŏngnae Rebellion of 1812* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

fortune tellers in one village, and then continued their journey elsewhere. To these men who lived at the social margin, the classical language was not the elite tongue, but a part of their own culture. Even if taegwa graduates and academic writers might regard them as vulgar commoners, we should take into account their self-consciousness as literate men and active agents of popular culture.

3. Popular Protagonists: Vagabonds in Vernacular Literature

As seen in chapters one and two, canonical books and non-canonical books coexisted in Korean print culture during the nineteenth century. In the similar fashion, the classical education indirectly inspired popular vernacular writers. It is an interesting cultural phenomenon that writers of popular fiction in the vernacular alphabet often chose unsuccessful candidates of the civil service examinations or outsiders as main characters. The so-called first vernacular fiction, entitled *The Tale of Hong Kil-dong* 홍길동전 (*Hong Kil-dong dyŏn*), described the wild adventures of a typical dissenter against the classical education. Like Ch'oe Che-u, who was executed as a black magician, the protagonist was also the illegitimate son of a yangban man. Because of his low-born status, this character was therefore not eligible to take the examinations. Accordingly, he chose to indulge himself in Daoist texts and techniques instead of mastering the Four Books and Five Classics. As a result of his lifelong devotion to reading underground literature, Kil-dong eventually became a master of Daoism. This well-known work of vernacular fiction depicted his journey and adventures as a vagabond after he ran away from his father and kinship organization. The journey concluded with an exciting finale, in which he became a kingpin among mountain bandits and conquered a southern island, creating a new utopian country.

No one claimed authorship of this particular work of vernacular fiction. Hŏ Kyun 許均 (1569-1618) has generally been believed to be its author. To verify the authorship is beyond the

scope of this dissertation, but it is of interest that the relationship between Hŏ Kyun and this problematic text was similar to that of other popular books, such as *The Record of Prophet Chŏng* and *The Secret Prophecy of Yi Chi-ham*. The attribution of authorship for these documents appears to represent popular images and evaluations of the texts without bibliographic evidence. Hŏ Kyun also had a notorious reputation as a cultural heretic and, in the end, perished on the scaffold in 1618.¹²⁶ It was only after his death that this vernacular fiction was linked to him from the seventeenth century onward.¹²⁷ At present, there remains only a single copy of the 24 page, woodblock printing of *The Tale of Hong Kil-dong*, and this document contains no author's name. Since it does not provide any information about the publisher or the year of publication, it remains an open question as to who wrote it and when it was printed.

In addition, this vernacular fiction effectively appealed to popular sympathy toward the personal drama of this illegitimate son of a noble family. Emotional rewards mattered to popular readers, for they did not read books for knowledge or classical reference. Therefore, such books were a media for cultural entertainment which even peasants could enjoy as a pastime. If we examine figure 4, we observe low-class male laborers listening to the vocal readings of their fellow. In the bottom left, a middle-aged man who holds a fan in one hand is reading a certain book. Although in the painting, only this one figure has literacy, the contents of the book are being shared with all four figures by the oral reading. For the quasi-literate audience, the act of reading had little to do with education *per se*. For them, the contents should be fun, and they welcomed any understanding they might derive from it as a result of their own experience and observation in everyday life.

¹²⁶ Chŏng Chu-dong, *Hong Kil-tong chŏn yŏn'gu* 洪吉童傳研究 [The Study on *The Tale of Hong Kil-dong*] (Taegu: Munhosa, 1961) 40-41.

¹²⁷ Yi Sik (1584-1647) once wrote that *The Tale of Hong Kil-dong* was written by Hŏ Kyun. So, it seems that the work was already circulating in the late sixteenth century, even then connected to Mr. Hŏ. Chŏng Chu-dong, *Ibid.*, 141.

<Figure 4. Kim Hong-do, National Museum of Korea>



Thus, in such literature, taegwa graduates in public office were hardly popular protagonists. If the degree-holders appeared in those narratives at all, they were often depicted as antagonists, villains, or other unsavory characters. Another vernacular fiction, *The Tale of Chŏn U-ch'i* 전우치던 (田禹治傳 *Chŏn U-ch'i chŏn*) displayed these same characteristics. This fantasy novel also used an unsuccessful examinee of the civil service examination as its main character, Chŏn U-ch'i. He, like Hong Kil-dong, is also a Daoist black magician, but his career consists primarily of inelegant pranks, and contains none of the high-brow messages about the injustice and inequity of late Chosŏn society to which *The Tale of Hong Kil-dong* addressed. It surprises us that this magician was not afraid of ridiculing the authority of the ruling dynasty. While Hong Kil-dong eventually dreamed of his own

utopia on a southern island, Chŏn U-ch'i was a simple rule-breaker who enjoyed throwing dirt into the face of the holy: the king, ministers, local magistrates, and high-class yangban men.¹²⁸

Its author[s] must have been well acquainted with the miserable life of wandering yangban beggars. Poor and unsuccessful yangban men were attractive characters in popular literature. This was because these people, unlike peasants, were extremely mobile without being attached to a routine of village life. It was much easier to imagine that such individuals were transgressors against cultural norms and social rules. In the social context of the nineteenth century, there was a realistic possibility that a poor vagabond might have received some level of the classical education before they became beggars. The main characters were not simply criminal gangs, but cultured outsiders who were willing to take sides with ordinary folks such as Hong Kil-dong. A printed version of *The Tale of Chŏn U-ch'i* from the early twentieth century, for example, reveals that it was a literary trope that an unsuccessful literate man could turn into a trouble-maker after he spent long years studying Daoist texts. A respectful yangban man could easily transform into a vagabond criminal because of his literacy skills:

In the early Chosŏn period, one Confucian scholar lived inside of the Sung'in Gate in Kaesŏng. His name was Chŏn U-ch'i. When he was young, he learned the discipline of Daoism from a great master . . . One day, there appeared sea pirates at the southern coast, and several villages were ransacked. To make things worse, several famines struck the people of these villages. Words are not enough to describe the deep misery and sorrow of the victims. Nonetheless, high aristocrats of the Court were obsessed only with their turf war for power. They had no concern for the tragedy of ordinary folks. [Therefore], men of high mind flared up because they could not sit silently with their anger against the aristocrats. U-ch'i also could not suppress his anger and decided to abandon all his belongings, house, and property.

¹²⁸ His wild adventure illustrates the low level of taste of this popular fiction. According to one version of the tale, the main character acquired his magical power from sexual intercourse in the forest with a female fox which took the shape of a woman. Cho Hye-ran, "Minjungjŏk hwansangsŏng ūi han yuhyŏng – Ilsabon Chŏn U-ch'i chŏn wŭl chungsim ūro 民衆의 幻想性의 한類型: 일사본 전우치전을 中心으로 [A Case Study of Popular Imagination: Ilsabon the Tale of Chŏn U-chi]," *Kososŏl yŏngu* 15 (2003) 62-63.

Instead, he made the whole world his house, and he was going to care for his people like he cared for his own body.¹²⁹

This rhetoric of cutting off all mundane responsibility and property exactly resembles that of the miserable low-class yangban men such as Ch'oe Che-u, Mun Yu-ch'ae, and Hong Kil-dong. As soon as they abandoned their duty of reading the Confucian canons, their relation with the regime quickly became aloof. For example, this black magician U-ch'i confronted public authority, even including the throne. This cultural expression of ridiculing the Chosŏn king must have been possible because this version was published in 1918. Vernacular fiction of the woodblock printings did not openly reveal such strong antagonism against the ruling dynasty, whereas *this* story consistently expressed a rebellious sentiment.¹³⁰

In this sense, *The Tale of Chŏn U-ch'i*, can be designated as a prototype of early twentieth century popular fiction. The novel was written in the vernacular alphabet, so its potential audience was much larger than the classical Chinese. More importantly, this wandering man appeared as a protector of the weak. In one episode, the black magician encountered an old man in the street. This old man complained of the injustice, saying his son had been falsely accused of homicide. According to this old man, his son just happened to witness two men fighting and stopped them. These two men had tried to kill each other because one had cheated with the other's lover. When one of these men died of injuries resulting from the fight, the other wickedly trapped the old man's son as the murderer. The tale said, "The real murder is a fellow of Minister of Justice Yang Mun-dŏk so he can evade justice."¹³¹ In response, the black magician Chŏn U-ch'i magically changed his own shape to

¹²⁹ Kang Ŭi-yŏng, *Chŏn U-ch'i chŏn* 전우치전 (Seoul: Yŏngch'ang sŏgwan, 1918) 1.

¹³⁰ According to Korean scholar Kim Chŏng-mun, there currently remain 13 different versions of *The Tale of Chŏn U-ch'i* in South Korea. There are three kinds: a handwritten manuscript, a woodblock printing, and a metal-type printing which was made in the early twentieth century. Kim Chŏng-mun, "Chŏn U-ch'i chŏn ŭi kaejak yŏngu – mokp'anbon kwa kuhwaljabon ŭi taebi rŭl t'onghayŏ" 田禹治傳의 改作研究-木板本과 舊活字本の 對比를 通하여 [The Reproduction of the Tale of Chŏn U-ch'i: The Comparative Study of the Woodblock Printings and Metal-types Printings], *Paedalmal* 19 (1994), 187-188.

¹³¹ Kang Ŭi-yŏng, *Chŏn U-ch'i chŏn* (Seoul: Yŏngch'ang sŏgwan, 1918) 7.

resemble that of the dead man and appeared in front of the minister, this frightening him into releasing the innocent son and pressuring him to punish the real killer. In another chapter, U-ch'i also begged for food at a party of yangban landlords. These wealthy men, who were enjoying the party with outcast female entertainers, looked down on him and tried to eject him from the festivities. One man despised him, saying "We are not rich men, but just today we happen to have some food and to hire female entertainers. I am sure that you have never seen these in your life!" At this point, Chŏn U-ch'i cast a spell on them so that their genitals disappeared from their bodies. The tale vividly and humorously captured their words of surprise, stating, "They were so stunned and searched for theirs. What was supposed to be there was completely gone. In shock, they said "How can I piss now?"¹³² U-ch'i then left the party, displaying no mercy.

Late Chosŏn society, which this fiction described in the vernacular tongue, was evidently full of wild, immoral, and cruel people who lived without any of the moral disciplines of the classical education. In the black magician's aimless journey, he encounters many beggars and magicians like himself. In one chapter, he attempts to kidnap a young widow in order to give her to his friend. However, another magician "who is begging food on street with his fellows" intervenes and saves the widow.¹³³ Such an episode implies its author and readers must have had sufficient opportunities to experience these beggars/fortune tellers in their everyday life to be able to relate to them in such a story. The vernacular fiction of U-ch'i differentiated its popular audience from the rulers (corrupt ministers, local magistrates, and condescending landlords). This feature of cultural sentiments implies that the text itself circulated only in the lower classes of the society, while elites stood apart from the popular culture. In other words, vernacular fiction was a literary sub-culture existing under

¹³² Ibid. 9-10.

¹³³ Ibid. 31-32.

the regime's indifference or tolerance in a similar way that the philology and historical geography of dissenting literati could co-exist with the canons.

4. A Popular Author

As popular culture adopted literacy in the nineteenth century, a new religious network came into being with its own text. The new religious group, called Eastern Learning, became the most powerful underground network from 1860s to 1890s. As is well-known, it contributed to the outbreak of a massive rebellion in southwestern provinces in 1894-5 on the eve of Sino-Japanese War. As discussed above, its founder, Ch'oe Che-u, became an influential black magician after he studied the esoteric texts of underground literature. He left two books to his followers after his death in 1863. One was written in classical Chinese, entitled *The Collection of Canons of Eastern Learning* 東經大全 (*Tonggyŏng taejŏn*). The other was written purely in the Korean vernacular alphabet, a collection of his vernacular songs, titled *The Songs of Dragon Pond* 龍潭遺詞 (*Yongdam yusa*). These two texts were published using woodblock printing in the 1880s, but it was commonly believed among his followers that Ch'oe Che-u taught the text to his pupils when he was alive.

By writing two books, Che-u proclaimed that he was bilingual in classical Chinese *and* Korean vernacular language. He was, of course, not a degree-holder. It is doubtful he could write academic essays in classical Chinese. Rather, his strategy was to emulate the classical Chinese only as much as he needed. He taught simple sentences of Chinese characters to new converts and required them to read the characters repeatedly until they had memorized them. Thus, all followers of Eastern Learning came to “read” classical Chinese. Once someone joined his religious circle, he or she was obliged to memorize thirteen Chinese characters. After this, the next step was for them to learn eight more characters. This spread of literacy surprised a police commissioner who came down

from Seoul in 1863. The policeman reported, “Every woman and child even at a village in deep mountains chanted the spells [of Ch’oe Che-u’s teaching] and proselytized the words to their neighbors.” Unfortunately, this police commissioner did not record the Chinese characters in his report. There is, however, a way to discover which exact characters were being used in these religious spells. This method involves the testimony of Ch’oe Si-hyŏng 崔時亨 (1827-1898), who later became a second-generation leader of the group. In his interview from jail in 1898, Si-hyŏng explained how he first joined Eastern Learning. He said that he learned these two spells:

侍天主造化定永世不忘萬事知

sich’ŏnju chohwa chŏngyŏngse pulmang mansaji

至氣今至願爲大降

chigi kŭmji wŏnwi taegang¹³⁴

The first sentence means, “Worship the Heavenly Lord! Every destiny of human world is all decided by him. He rules us forever. Worship the Lord who knows everything.” The second sentence says, “His Holy spirit reaches us now. I am praying. Ye please come down to me.” Ch’oe Si-hyŏng was born into a poor peasant family, so he did not receive any formal literary education in his youth. When he first learned these two sentences, he had been suffering from a disease and wished to cure himself by relying on the mysterious words of Eastern Learning. A peddler merchant proselytized these spells to him, and Si-hyŏng said that he miraculously cured himself by the spell.

Again, we can notice here that the term “literacy skills” had a different meaning to different people. Reading a word was not simply being used here as a linguistic tool to acquire knowledge or to express their dissenting voices to peers. Members of this group read the characters in order to contact and feel the presence of “the Heavenly Lord.” This arbitrary, but self-motivated use of

¹³⁴ “Confession of a Tong Hak Chief,” *The Korean Repository*, June 1898, 234-235.

classical Chinese explains the strange conjunction of literacy and popular belief. To some degree, Eastern Learning also copied the Buddhist reading practice of oral chanting, which would supposedly “save” those who listened. As Stephen Teiser points out, the religious use of reading in Buddhism did not always need comprehension.¹³⁵ The difference between Buddhist sutras and Ch’oe’s texts was that Ch’oe Che-u believed in his own capability to make a *new* sacred text. In other words, he claimed his own right to authorship in the religious genre, and his writing directly confronted other pre-existing canons.

However, he had little intention of competing with taegwa graduates in classical Chinese. His primary language was the Korean vernacular language. His vernacular songs, which were compiled as *The Songs of Dragon Pond*, reveal how he used the native alphabet so successfully for communicating with ordinary people. This vernacular song book contains nine vernacular songs called kasa 歌辭.

<Table 3.2. List of Contents of *The Songs of Dragon Pond*>

1) Song of Dragon Pond 용담가 (龍潭歌 Yongdamga)
2) Song for the Peace in Your Mind 안심가 (安心歌 Ansimga)
3) Song of Lessons 교훈가 (敎訓歌 Kyohunga)
4) Dialogue of the Old and the Young in a Dreamy World 몽중노소문답가 (夢中老少問答歌 Mongjung noso mundapga)
5) Song for the Encouragement of Studying the Way 도수사 (道修詞 Tosusa)
6) Song for the Encouragement of Education 권학가 (勸學歌 Kwŏnhakga)
7) Song of Morality 도덕가 (道德歌 Todŏkga)
8) Song of the Uncertainty in One’s Life 흥비가 (興比歌 Hŭngbiga)
9) Song of a Sword 검결 (劍訣 Kŏmgyŏl) ¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Makings of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994) 157-162.

¹³⁶ Chŏng Che-ho, “Tonghak kyŏngjŏn kwa Tonghak kasa yŏngu” 東學經典과 東學歌辭研究 [Study on Tonghak Canons and its Vernacular Songs], *Tonghak yŏngu* 8 (2001) 64-74.

Like other vernacular fiction, his songs were basically the literary expression of his own despair, anger, and frustration in everyday life. This vernacular genre, called *kasa*, and originally practiced by some taegwa graduates such as Chŏng Chŏl 鄭澈 (1536-1593) and Buddhist monks, gradually entered popular culture. This long verse drama in the vernacular script had persisted since the medieval period, and was used especially by the literate Buddhist priests who wrote for the enlightenment of popular folk.¹³⁷ Throughout the Chosŏn period, the song evolved with the increasing diversity of authors and topics. The pleasure of reading and listening was an essential feature of this genre, and therefore some literati adopted it to express their daily emotions and travel experiences. Ch'oe Che-u seems to share this literary tradition of the vernacular literature.

For example, in *The Songs of Dragon Pond*, “The Conversation of an Old Man and a Young Man in a Dreamy World” 몽중노소문답가, records an oral narration of one couple who hid in the mountains. After they lost all of their money and lands, they traveled away from their village as wanderers, and, in the end, took refuge in the deep mountains. They lived as beggars and became pilgrims, finding a temporary shelter at Buddhist temples. Finally, they settled down in Mountain Diamond. When they resettled in the forest, they miraculously bore a boy due to “the help of the Heavenly Lord.” But they still stayed deep in the mountains and raised this boy in isolation. When the boy grew up, he also became a vagabond magician who “abandoned all properties and even his parents.” This boy was remarkably similar to the narrator, Ch'oe Che-u, who was also an only child born from an old yangban man, and his father was also an unsuccessful candidate of the classical education. After he became an adult and a powerful sorcerer, this boy sang a vernacular song, which

¹³⁷ A Buddhist monk, Naong 懶翁 (1320-1376), is known as the earliest author of the vernacular verse drama. His “Song of Travelling to the West” 西往歌 remains at Haein Temple in the form of woodblocks. It was written for encouraging the devotion toward the Buddhist doctrines and its moral messages. Later, the vernacular verse drama became an important literary genre of Sŏn masters, such as Hyujŏng 休靜, Yongam 龍岩, and Sŏng'u 惺牛 until the early twentieth century. Yi Sang-bo, “Pulgyo *kasa* ūi yŏksa” 佛教歌辭의 歷史 [the History of Buddhist verse dramas], *Myŏngji ŏmunhak* 5 (1972).

expressed his sympathy toward “those who did not follow the words of the Heaven.”¹³⁸ The basic message of this vernacular song is to urge the audience to believe in him:

He had mysterious books of divination made in the Eastern Kingdom and said ... People only know after the disaster occurred. Why don't we figure out the safest place in this world? Powerful men at court who earn money from the sales of title also want to save their life from the crisis. Rich men who pile crops at his house only care about their safety in the coming chaos. It is only beggars who know about the prophecy, floating around the world.¹³⁹

In this vernacular song, he bluntly says that the rich and powerful were so selfish and greedy that they would never help ordinary people survive in the upcoming chaos. The most righteous people, therefore, were floating beggars. This was because they had “nothing in their hands” and knew about the secret prophecy by reading “mysterious books of divination made in the Eastern Kingdom.” Thus, Ch’oe Che-u’s song shared the similarity with the vernacular fiction, *The Tale of Hong Kil-dong* and *The Tale of Chŏn U-ch’i*. His message about the Final Day contained a strong rebellious tone against the regime. In his thinking, the beggar would be a genuine savior.

Che-u synthesized the earlier underground literature and created a new term of apocalypse which implies a powerful passion for radical changes. He called it “Recreation of Heaven” 後天開闢 (huch’ŏn kaebyŏk). As this term of “Recreation” (kaebyŏk) later became the unflagging catchphrase among Korean radicals in the early twentieth century, the Final Day generated material that inspired people’s powerful imagination for change. Ch’oe Che-u also used this as a literary symbol to transform him from a literate beggar into a religious savior. He sang in his vernacular song, “Song for the Peace in Your Mind,” that “In ten thousand years, I am the Real Master” 만세명인나뿐니다 (Manse myŏngin na ppunida) “who can tell about when the Recreation

¹³⁸ Ch’oe Che-u, “Mongjung noso mundapga” 몽중노소문답가, *Tonghak sasang charyojip*, vol.1 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1979) 110-111.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 111-112.

(kaebyŏk) would come.”¹⁴⁰ So, Che-u elaborately developed popular literature for projecting his message and authority to wide audience.

5. Publishing New Canons

The execution of Ch’oe Che-u, the charismatic and popular writer, served as a warning to the public. The regime clearly announced that it would not tolerate such rebellious activities. His death was so swift that Che-u had no opportunity to appoint a successor among the followers. However, because his texts still remained in the hands of his followers, the religious network established by Ch’oe Che-u did not perish. There were sporadically violent uprisings instigated by his followers, who protested the execution, but all failed.¹⁴¹ The turning point for the revival of the secret religious sect came in 1880. Followers of Eastern Learning gathered secretly at one village of a deep mountain area in Kangwŏn province and decided to print the two texts of their late teacher using woodblocks. At first, one hundred copies of *The Anthology of Mr. Ch’oe* 崔先生文集 (*Ch’oe sŏnsaeng munjib* later renamed *The Great Collection of Canons of Eastern Learning*) were printed in 1880. During the following year, *The Songs of Dragon Pond* was also printed and distributed in the same province. In these printed books, a person named Ch’oe Si-hyŏng boldly claimed that he published the two books even though he knew that the regime had legally forbidden the Eastern Learning. He also proudly inscribed the title “owner of the Way” 道主 (toju) in front of his name.¹⁴²

The woodblock printing of the two books, first appearing in 1880 and 1881, became a watershed moment for the expansion of the illegal religious association. It is most noteworthy that

¹⁴⁰ Ch’oe Che-u, “Ansimga” 안심가 (安心歌), *Tonghak sasang charyojip*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1979) 94-95.

¹⁴¹ In 1871, there was a small-scale rebellion by adherents of Eastern Learning in Kyŏngsang province. Led by another yangban vagabond, Yi P’il, this riot had devastating consequences for the remaining members of the religion in the northern parts of the province. O Chi-yŏng, “Tonghak sa 東學史 [History of Eastern Learning],” *O Chi-yŏng chŏnjip*, vol.1, (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1992) 47-49.

¹⁴² Han’gukhak munhŏn yŏnguso, ed., “Ch’oe sŏnsaeng munjip towŏn kisa 崔先生文集道源記書 [The Record of Origins of the Way],” *Tonghak sasang charyojip*, vol.1 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1979) 277-278.

the religious minority effectively made use of the printing press. Unfortunately, none of the original one-hundred copies of the books remain today. However, they were reprinted at several places in Kyöngsang and Kangwŏn provinces in the decades that followed the initial printing. From the reprint of 1883 at Mokch'ŏn in Kangwŏn province, the title of *The Anthology of Master Ch'oe* was changed to *The Great Collection of Canons of Eastern Learning*. The reprinting by woodblocks and handwritings continued until 1898, when its publisher Ch'oe Si-hyŏng was hanged in Seoul as the supreme leader of the peasant rebellion in 1894-5.¹⁴³ It still remains a topic of heated debate in South Korea as to whether Ch'oe Che-u himself finalized these texts when he was alive. However, it seems clear that the publication was finished by a team comprised of numerous people, and not by any single editor. At the committee of the printing workshop, a total of 30 people participated in the complicated process of collecting, verifying, editing, carving, stamping and binding. Whereas Ch'oe Si-hyŏng officially supervised the entire business as the chief editor (toch'ong), given his personal background, his level of literary skill is doubtful. Low-class yangban men, such as Sim Si-jŏng, Kim Si-pong, and Yu Si-hŏn, seem to have performed the tasks of editing and proofreading (kyojŏng), which required fairly high levels of literary skill. It was, in fact, a unique feature of this religious association that all members admired their new leader Si-hyŏng, regardless of his humble origin and low-level education (see figure 5.).

<Figure 5. The Photo of Ch'oe Si-hyŏng circa 1898>

¹⁴³ Pak Hyŏng-ch'ae, "Yujŏk kanp'o 유적간포" *Sich'ŏngyo ch'ong'yŏksa*, vol.2, (Seoul: Sich'ŏngyo ponbu, 1915) 16.



Ch'oe Si-hyŏng made for an interesting twist in the history of Eastern Learning. While his teacher, Che-u, was the illegitimate son of a yangban family, as mentioned above, Ch'oe Si-hyŏng was the son of poor peasants. It is difficult to know his official status. However he must either have been a low-status commoner or a slave, as he had worked at the house of a wealthy landlord as an indentured servant, called mŏsŭm 머슴 in his youth. Later on, he ran away from the house and found a new job at a printing workshop near Kyŏngju, where the religious association began to form. Therefore, he did not have the opportunity to wander around the country as a beggar or to extensively read the underground literature, as his teacher had done during the 1840s and 1850s. Instead, he enthusiastically followed the program which his teacher created. After he was appointed as the head of missionary works in the northern regions, he carefully added his own color to the religious teaching. Since he was aware of the inhumane treatments of slaves and outcasts, he emphasized the fundamental equality among all humans more so than his teacher had done, who had seldom mentioned the issue. After the execution of the founder, Ch'oe Si-hyŏng simplified the esoteric practices of the popular religion, and presented the message of “serving a human like you

do the Heavenly Lord” 事人如天 (sainyŏch’ŏn) as the new dogma of Eastern Learning. He borrowed the authority of his teacher and directed the association into the new populism. Once, he taught that “You must follow the will of our dead leader by promising that you will never discriminate against people based on their status. If you break this rule, it is the same as violating Heaven’s will.”¹⁴⁴ Even though he was heavily relying on his dead master for his authority, the underground religious group transformed under the new leadership of Si-hyŏng.

When the network expanded into a western part of the peninsula in the 1880s and early 1890s, the printing press played an indispensable role. The two books (one in classical Chinese and the other in vernacular Korean) successfully reached out to popular readers. These imprints helped the secret network recruit new converts, not only from among peasants, but also from among low-class literate men. Under his leadership, secret missionaries used the books to represent the principle of Eastern Learning as a respected part of Korean literary culture. The imprints of the popular religion also easily outstripped the previous enigmatic manuscripts, such as *The Record of Prophet Chŏng*, as well as Confucian texts. In the history of this religious association, it was a new phenomenon that large numbers of low-class yangban men in Ch’ungch’ŏng and Chŏlla provinces showed strong interest in *The Collection of Canons of Eastern Learning* and *The Songs of Dragon Pond*. Increasingly large numbers of such men became members of the secret association during that decade. The most representative of these new converts who passionately read the books were Son Ch’ŏn-min 孫天民 (1854-1900) and Son Pyŏng-hŭi 孫秉熙 (1861-1922). These two Sons not only served Ch’oe Si-hyŏng as close secretaries, but, in addition, the latter Son Pyŏng-hŭi subsequently continued Eastern Learning after the execution of his teacher in 1898 by founding the Heavenly Way sect called Ch’ŏndogyo 天道教 in the 1900s. Both men were from a low-class background and a minor

¹⁴⁴ Cho Sŏng-un, “Haewŏl Ch’oe Si-hyŏng ŭi togyo chŏnsu wa ch’ogi p’ogyo hwaldong (1862-1875) 海月崔時亨의 道教傳授와 初期布教活動 (1862-1875) [The Succession of Ch’oe Si-hyŏng and his Early Activity for Proselytization],” *Tonghak yŏngu* 7 (2000) 16.

yangban family that served, from generation to generation, as unpaid clerks at the office of local magistrate in Ch'ungch'öng province. Distinct from an honorable magistrate who was a taegwa graduate, the hereditary position of a clerk was assigned to minor families in villages. Son Pyöng-hŭi, in particular, was an illegitimate son, sööl, of this family, without any specific job except wandering around the villages. Like Ch'oe Che-u, Pyöng-hŭi was deeply frustrated by the civil service examination system and lived as an outsider. Hearing about the prophecy of the "Recreation" of Eastern Learning, he at first refused to join and commented that he did not want any supernatural protection or care. This was because he was actually looking forward to seeing the Final Day when the present order of the world would be overthrown.¹⁴⁵ Once he joined the circle, however, he came to devote his entire life to this alternative underground society until his death in 1922.

As the two books of the group became increasingly popular, the group tried to transform them into an alternative canon - equal to the Four Books and Five Classics and Buddhist sutras. In 1892, Ch'oe Si-hyöng issued eight codes of correct behaviors among the faithful in "a letter for wide circulation" (tongyumun) written in classical Chinese. In these codes, he set a new rule that every member should demonstrate their full respect toward the two books, which he then gave the status as holy canons, as shown below:

[I already heard that] some people are treating *The Collection* and *The Songs* in a very disrespectful manner. Some are lying down when reading them. And some even carelessly put them in their pocket and store them in a dusty box. These behaviors will be punished as profanity from now on. I cannot help but tremble with fear for these folks . . . It is like humiliating our master and Heaven. I can no longer tolerate this disrespect. From now on, the two canons must be stored only at the house of a local preacher. And a student who wishes to learn the Way must kneel down and read them with full respect. Every time you open the first page of a canon, you must kowtow to the books four times after burning incense . . . Additionally, I heard that there are private booksellers who make their own copies and sell them to our people for money . . . If this kind of a [vulgar] business is found again, the

¹⁴⁵ Yi Hyöŋ-hŭi, *Son Pyöng-hŭi: minjok öpsinün kudo to öpta* 孫秉熙: 民族없이는 求道도 없다 [Biography of Son Pyöng-hŭi: "religious salvation is impossible when you have no nation"] (Seoul: Tonga ilbosa, 1995).

seller and the buyer cannot be safe from punishment from Heaven. Everyone should keep this in his mind.¹⁴⁶

The two books of Eastern Learning were, therefore, privately-created canons which for the first time openly challenged the authority of the Four Books and Five Classics. It is difficult to know whether its founder himself wished to idolize his texts with this degree of respect and ritual. As can be seen above, Ch'oe Che-u's books were popular. However, printing for money was a foreign and even blasphemous concept to the faithful. They believed this was an insult to the author and the original publisher. Therefore, Eastern Learning, after all, chose to canonize the books as their exclusive print culture in the same fashion that the kingdom canonized the Four Books and Five Classics. Surprisingly, the rebels thus mirrored what they wished to destroy.

Conclusion

To summarize, I examine the nineteenth century context of literary production of popular writers in this chapter. The eligibility of being a legitimate member of the group of “literate men” was not granted to everyone, so the majority of the society knew that they could not climb the ladder of success. Outsiders, however, did not take for granted that only rulers could write and read books. As high-class literati and political dissenters explored new horizons of cultural life in the nineteenth century, popular society also adopted literacy as a part of their popular culture. Such increasing numbers of written texts demonstrates the appearance of the new print culture among popular readers. Increasingly, people believed that they could express their own emotions and experiences in written characters, especially in the vernacular alphabet. Oral culture of recitation, memorization, and transmission remained dominant among popular audiences. Of course, the regime occasionally censored authors they deemed dangerous by killing them as the tragic case of

¹⁴⁶ “Ch’öndogyohoesa chogo 天道教會史初稿 [A Manuscript of History of Heavenly Way Sect]” *Tonghak sasang charyojip*, vol.1 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1979) 437.

Ch'oe Che-u demonstrates. The censorship in the late Chosŏn period did not target certain words, pages, or texts, but eliminated authors *in toto*. In order to evade such thorough censorship, popular writers used various tactics. Some, for instance, claimed that they simply copied the heterodox texts written by a dead man. Thus, many new books of popular culture ironically appeared, and were attributed to the alleged authorship of political and cultural rebels whom the regime had already destroyed.

It is also important to notice that popular literature during this period was not at all loyal to the regime. In most cases, popular books limited their audience to non-degree-holders. In this sense, vernacular fiction somewhat mirrored the orthodox canons which also excluded “illiterate” people from the readership. The cultural field was fragmented and classified by gender, status and class. As a result, the vernacular literature appealed to public audiences through entertaining effects, vulgarity, and rebellious messages. These entertainments often directed against the ruling authorities. More importantly, from the perspective of low-class yangban beggars and writers, the kingdom was far from a heaven-on-earth form of “Neo-Confucianism” under a benevolent and virtuous king. Especially when rebellious texts met the printing press in the 1880s, such criticism of and opposition to the ruling dynasty quickly spread.

In summary, I have investigated how three native institutions, kinship organizations, literary associations, and new religious groups contributed to the development of Korean print culture in the nineteenth century in Part One. In the nineteenth century, all three had commonly owned their own literary cultures for learning knowledge, studying classics, and expressing personal emotions. The Korean literary culture under the civil service examinations was not monolithic at all, but rather fragmented and multi-layered according to status, class, and languages. The Four Books and Five Classics not only unified all yangban males’ culture by enforcing them to read the same texts, but

also unintentionally encouraged the growth of sub-cultures. The canons and non-cans, hence, shared more similarities than we conventionally assume in Korean history. However, the possibility of confrontation between the ruling culture and the sub-cultures grew higher, as aristocratic writers, dissenting classicists, and new religious groups all accessed to the printing after 1880. It was still an open question what kind of the new Korean culture would be after the civil service examinations was abolished in 1894. Then, there came a powerful force of change from the outside. After the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese Empire occupied and colonized Korea. In Part Two, I will examine how Korean culture transformed under the Japanese rule in the twentieth century.

PART TWO

STATE, MARKET, AND THE READING PUBLIC IN EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD

FOUR

BESTSELLERS: THE BOND OF SYMPATHY AND FANTASY

Introduction

In Part One, I investigate three different native networks of print culture in the nineteenth century. When it comes to the production and consumption of books, I argue that the market economy merely played a role in book circulation. Alternatively, traditional networks such as kinship organizations, literati associations, and religious groups were the most active public forum in terms of educating and training new authors, and nurturing literary experiments, and expanding Korean bibliographies. For this matter, the influence of the Chosŏn regime and its holy texts was complicated. The classical education not only homogenized literary culture, but also indirectly improved the literacy rate in the society. Based on such mixture of canons and non-canons, there appeared new authors and critics who reused their literary education for their own projects. So the body of Korean literature grew as people read for erudition, critical vocalism, or religious salvation after giving up preparation for the civil service examinations. Whereas all three motivations above usually coexisted in the society and occasionally conflicted with the desires of the police, they all together shared the same notion that the Confucian canons of the civil service examinations failed to answer individual desires and to represent all aspects of human society. After the Russo-Japanese War, Korean society came across new and powerful forces which the Japanese occupation of Korea

brought in after 1905 and then the Japanese colonization after 1910. In Part Two, I aim to investigate these new agents of print culture and how old networks negotiated with them and adapted to the new environment.

In this chapter, I argue that Korean vernacular fiction emerged as bestselling books in the late 1900s and 1910s due to the increasing activity of vernacular media and the state's loosened control over Korean vernacular writers. As can be seen in chapter three, vernacular writings of the nineteenth century existed at social and cultural margins. The Chosŏn regimes censorship of vernacular writers was severe. The execution of Ch'oe Che-u is just one example of how they punished unauthorized writers. Ironically, then, the severity of censorship over vernacular writings weakened substantially in the first three decades of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁷ Until the Japanese colonial regime prohibited the use of Korean vernacular scripts in 1937, Korean phonetic signs were by and large tolerated by the colonial regime, although its degree of tolerance varied with time. Once given the opportunity, Korean society entered its printing revolution in which popular consumers, rather than state exams or government officials, measured the value of books. The commercial success of popular authors was indebted to a mixture of factors: the improvement of public education, the economic boom fueled by the Japanese Empire, merchants' activities and the weakness of the censorship.¹⁴⁸ The goal of this chapter is to contextualize how popular literature and

¹⁴⁷ Chŏng Kŭn-sik at Seoul National University and Ch'o Kyŏng-hŭi at the University of Chicago have studied colonial police censorship. Although they persuasively argue that colonial policing was tightening public speech in Korean society, they also acknowledge that the bureau of censors gradually increased its staff and capacity to read the Korean language only after the 1920s. Chŏng Kŭn-sik and Ch'oe Kyŏng-hŭi, "Tosŏgwa ūi sŏlch'i wa Iljae sikminji ch'ulp'an kyŏngch'al ūi ch'aegyehwa, 1926-1929" [The Book Department and the Systematization of Japan's Publication Police in Korea, 1926-1929] *圖書課의 設置와 日帝 植民地出版警察의 體系化, 1926-1929*, *Hanguk munhak yŏngu* 30 (2006).

¹⁴⁸ Still, many historians and the general public in South Korea understood that the 1910s were a decade of a "dark age" under "the militaristic rule" 武斷統治 (*muldan t'ongch'i*). Korean scholar Han Ki-hyŏng, who has studied the literary culture of the 1910s and 20s, tends to emphasize the oppressive nature of the colonial censorship. Han Ki-hyŏng, "1910 nyŏndae sinsosŏl ae mich'in ch'ulp'an yut'ong hwangyŏng ūi yŏnghyang" 1910 年代 新小説에 미친 出版, 流通環景의 影響 [Publishing and Book Circulation on the Development of New Fictions in the 1910s], *Hanguk hakbo* 22:3 (1996).

vernacular language raised their public status in the market economy by cooperating with the Japanese rule and claiming that they genuinely represented new Korea and its new mass culture.¹⁴⁹ In particular, I analyze so-called “New Fiction” 新小説 (sinsosŏl) and shed light on their strategies for overturning the old hierarchy in literary culture in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

1. Vernacular Media

Following the Sino-Japanese War, the vernacular script increasingly dominated Korean print culture. This was a watershed moment in Korean political history, given its short-lived independence from Qing China and Meiji Japan.¹⁵⁰ Both China and Japan retreated reluctantly from the peninsula in the postwar years. The Korean government took advantage of the vacuum of power between its belligerent neighbors, although the building of the new independent state proceeded ineptly and slowly by relying on another foreign power, the Russian Empire. Such an opportunity ended in 1904 when the Japanese Empire opened fire with the Russians, surrounding Korea and Manchuria. While the Korean king was ensconced in a perilous diplomatic strategy of “checking one barbarian by another barbarian” 以夷制夷 (yiyi chaeyi), Korean society conducted the broad and groundbreaking experiment of creating new, middle-brow print culture in which the vernacular phonetic script toppled classical Chinese in public communication and literary culture for the first time in its

¹⁴⁹ Previous historical research on the colonial state and print media, on the contrary, has emphasized how the Japanese Empire controlled public speech. See Chŏng Chin-sŏk, *Hanguk ŏnronsa* 韓國言論史 [History of Korean Journalism] (Seoul: Nanam, 1990); Sujo yŏksa yŏnguhoe ed., *Sikminji Chosŏn kwa Maeil sinbo: 1910 nyŏndae* 植民地朝鮮과 毎日申報: 1910 年代 [Colonial Korea and Daily Newspaper in the 1910s] (Seoul: Sinsŏwŏn, 2003).

¹⁵⁰ Regarding the postwar international politics between Japan and Korea, see Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: the Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

history.¹⁵¹ During this decade, vernacular print media expanded its influence and elevated the status of the Korean phonetic scripts to the level of a public language.

The growing influence of foreign culture and new technology threw off balance the pre-existing structure. Korean readers and writers of lingua franca enjoyed the most favorable environment in the era post-1895. First of all, the civil service examinations disappeared during wartime. The new government began to use the mixed style of Chinese characters and the vernacular script in official documents. But the government was not so enthusiastic about the institutionalization of the Korean national language until the late 1900s.¹⁵² The efforts for raising the public status of the vernacular script can be found at private sectors such as newspaper companies and printing presses. The regime's unusual tolerance and indifference was at least harmless to the development of vernacular media. *The Independence* 독립신문 (*Tokenip sinmun*), the first Korean private newspaper, was made possible by the generous indifference of the regime toward vernacular expression.

The Independence inspired Koreans with its linguistic experiment of not using the Chinese characters. A naturalized Korean-American, Philip Jaisohn 徐載弼 (Sŏ Chae-p'il) founded the company.¹⁵³ Philip Jaisohn printed *The Independence* at The Trilingual Press, a missionary printing press made by H.G. Appenzeller. This printing press was located at the mission school Pai Cai School in Seoul, and a British missionary F. Ohlinger brought a new machine from Shanghai and a

¹⁵¹ About the new commercial journalism in the interwar period, Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

¹⁵² Yi Ki-mun, *Kaehwagi kukmun yŏngu* 開化期 國文研究 [Korean Vernacular Language Movements in the Enlightenment Era] (Seoul: Iljogak, 1970).

¹⁵³ Born the son of a high-class yangban family, Philip Jaisohn studied in the United States and attained his degree as a medical doctor. Initially, he defected to the United States after he participated in the 1884 palace coup with other aristocratic yangban men such as Kim Ok-kyun and Pak Yŏng-hyo.

new metal type of Korean vernacular alphabet and English alphabet from Japan. After 1893, H.B. Hulbert took over the management of the Trilingual Press and expanded the factory by buying new metal types from Shanghai in 1895.¹⁵⁴ While the Western missionary mostly used the press for printing vernacular texts about Christianity, Jaisohn Philip used the new technology for circulating a new type of reading material regarding current issues and news. Such a new experiment in Korean print culture awakened young Christians such as Syngman Rhee 李承晩 and Chu Si-gyŏng 周時經 who studied at the mission school. The regime's tolerance, though, ran out quickly so that the government disbanded it in December 1899 with its issuing institution, the Independence Club.¹⁵⁵

It is interesting to note that underground religious organizations including Protestants and followers of the Korean new religion actively made use of the printing press. The faithful of Eastern Learning imitated *The Independence* and founded another vernacular newspaper, *The Imperial Post* 帝國新聞 (*Dyeguk sinmun*) in 1897. Although *The Imperial Post* was not so tightly tied with Eastern Learning, its founder named Yi Chong-il 李種一 continued to communicate with the underground religious group. He dared not expose his religious identity; Eastern Learning was still illegal heresy in 1897. Yi Chong-il openly followed *The Independence* and adopted the new trend of using only the vernacular alphabet. Regarding his decision, he explained that it would help the newspaper to be a media for “the enlightenment of women.”¹⁵⁶ Since then, this vernacular newspaper enjoyed the longest run in the history of Korean newspapers until 1910. It lasted from 1897 until 1910 when the Japanese colonial empire closed it down. Instead of borrowing the printing press from the Western missionaries, Yi Chong-il worked with an indigenous printing factory called Yimunsa 以文社.

¹⁵⁴ An Chong-muk, “Han’guk kŭndae sinmun, chabji ūi paldal sigiae sŏngyosadŭlŭi ōnronhwaldong ae kwanhan yŏn’gu” 韓國近代新聞雜誌發達時期에 宣教師들의 言論活動에 關한 研究 [The Study on Missionary’s Media Activity for the Development of Korean Newspapers and Magazines], *Han’guk ōnron hakebo* 48:2 (2004), 9-10.

¹⁵⁵ About the Independent and the Independence Club, see Vipin Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea: Enlightenment and the Independence Club* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

¹⁵⁶ Yi Chong-il, “Muk’am pimangnok (The Diary of Yi Chong-il)”, vol.1, in *Han’guk sasang* 16 (1978) 269-270.

Initially, the amount of its copy in sales was about 2,000 every day. It seems that the distribution was also concentrated in the urban areas of Seoul and nearby. In the company, twenty employees and technical staff saw to the business end, while printing was undertaken by Yimunsa.¹⁵⁷ Since its record of sales is not available, we can only speculate as to the actual size of its business. At least, its number of copies sold did not exceed 3,000 at most until 1910, because the newspaper company often faced the danger of bankruptcy and could not adopt plans to expand.

Regardless of its financial vulnerability, *The Imperial Post*, however, demonstrates that Korean print culture gradually detached reading and writing practices from the previous rule of the civil service examinations. It allowed pages for the exchange of miscellaneous information by novices instead of depending solely on the clout of literary big names. Its vernacular script-only-policy appealed to popular audiences, including women, who did not receive the classical education and had little interest in court politics. In particular, the newspaper communicated a positive message to potential booksellers that a vernacular imprint could be a decent source for profit without the lofty values of art and literature. It is unclear whether the populist line of their editing policy had something to do with Eastern Learning, but at least the paper paid little attention to the literary style or the artistic value of their writings in comparison to other private newspapers which still heavily used Chinese characters.

Its columns of “miscellaneous reports” and “advertisements” characterize its leaning toward popular audiences. These two columns were designed as a bulletin board for its ordinary readers. After all, *The Imperial Post* proved that information in written form could be marketed without any of the big name elite writers such as Jaisohn Philip, Yun Ch’i-ho or Chang Chi-yŏn. It was a visible sign of growing print capitalism in which people could consume information regardless of their religious

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 302.

orientation, status or the level of education. *The Imperial Post* evaded religious messages on its page, but it could successfully appeal to popular sympathy and curiosity by posting news stories about ordinary people. Such interest in sharing personal experience was basically consistent with the character of vernacular fiction and songs of the nineteenth century. Namely, what *The Imperial Post* marketed was a story about people. For example, one episode which appeared in a column of “miscellaneous reports” in 1898 highlights such a strong tone of populism in the vernacular media. It was a short story about a little girl named Sun-dök. Her parents were looking for their daughter because she was missing for several days. They called for communal support through *The Imperial Post*. In all respects, it was a personal story which was irrelevant to most people unless public readers felt sympathy toward the family.

In order to help the parents, the newspaper published descriptive information about her clothing in the plain vernacular language. By doing so, it was expected that readers could search for her together only by reading the article. The vernacular language easily outstripped classical Chinese in terms of the functional effectiveness in the mass communication of spreading her story to a broad audience. In the column, the newspaper intentionally used descriptive words such as “pink” 분홍 (punhong) and “indigo blue” 반말 (panmul) in order to refer to her clothing. In this mass communication, aesthetics and literary or academic values were hardly important. Rather, the communication acquired its own value through the straightforward and widely-known style of the writing. The ultimate goal of the language here was to describe her image as accurately as possible. And, her information should spread broadly out across the society.

By sharing the story of the girl, the media was building a bond of sympathy among the vernacular reading public which regarded the personal tragedy as the communal concern. The circulation of Sun-dök’s case predated the age of journalistic sensationalism when Korean

newspapers competitively picked up private stories for the purpose of drawing popular attention and selling more copies.¹⁵⁸ In the 1920s, suicides, scandalous murders or lawsuits were the most common news in commercial journals. Yet, *The Imperial Post* did not publish the story about this missing girl for sensationalism, nor did the clip did provoke any sensation. Rather, the newspaper was sympathetic to the misfortune of the family and it also anticipated popular support for her case. It is important to note that by communicating empathy with their fellow Koreans, the newspaper transformed the personal story into a public issue of the whole readership. If I borrow the term of Benedict Anderson, the bond of sympathy generated “the imagined community.” This communal bond was somewhat related to new idea of a natural community. And, the vernacular media became a public forum where many people with minimal literary skill could come and enjoy stories about their neighbors if they were willing to pay the price of the newspaper.

But this “imagined community” was spontaneous and temporary. Three days later, the newspaper finished the public alert with a happy ending. It reported how the girl was rescued by the voluntary help of one of its reading fellows as follows:

Several days ago, our newspaper announced the missing of a 7-year-old girl. Yesterday, her parents visited our company and appreciated our support, saying that they discovered their daughter thanks to the newspaper. When we asked the detail, they explained the whole story. A guy named Pak Ho-sun who lives at Myōngdong kidnapped the girl and sold her to a house of eunuch Ri-sun at Ōnch’ōn County. He tried to receive 1,000 nyang by selling her as an indentured house maid. ... Accidentally, someone who read our newspaper sensed that the eunuch took the girl in his custody and informed to her parents. The police arrested both Mr. Pak and the eunuch and put them in jail. We indeed deserve the praise, but most of all, [we request that]

¹⁵⁸ The new age of sensational journalism came after 1919. In addition to commercial vernacular magazines such as *Pyōlgōngon* 別乾坤 [*New World*], major newspapers also picked up criminal cases and sensational gossip to win popular attention. The *East Asian Daily Post* 東亞日報 (*Tong-A ilbo*), the *Korean Daily Post* 朝鮮日報 (*Chosōn ilbo*), and the *Daily Newspaper* 每日申報 (*Maeil sinbo*) were such new middle-brow journalism.

those who kidnapped a commoner and sold her as a slave must be punished without mercy.¹⁵⁹

Accordingly, the popular empathy emerged as a new key factor in print culture, especially in the societies where many people still preserved traditional moralism in the name of chŏng 情 (sympathy).¹⁶⁰ But, when the new popular media effectively appealed to such traditional values, sympathy became a powerful momentum for developing a new sense of a natural community. So, compassion connected an individual to the wider social network beyond kinship groups, peers, or religious associations. They shared the same anger and call for justice towards the criminals—the kidnapper and the eunuch who appeared as their common enemy. And, such bond of sympathy was based on the wide accessibility of the vernacular language and the communal sense of the readership. Therefore, the rise of vernacular language took place gradually at the turn of the century, causing the unexpected combination of traditional moralism and print capitalism in an unprecedented form.

2. New Vernacular Writers

The vernacularization of Korean print culture 言文一致 (ŏnmun ilch'i) accelerated from 1905. One significant change was the political impact that resulted from the Japanese occupation of Korea after the Russo-Japanese War. By winning the war, the Japanese Empire could finally secure its control over the peninsula. However, as Peter Duus analyzes, the foreign military occupier had no long-term strategy or policy toward Korea and its people in 1905. Instead, its policy on Koreans was a series of trial and error.¹⁶¹ After the Russo-Japanese War, the regime shift unintentionally promoted the autonomy of private media and booksellers. In particular, the religious minorities of

¹⁵⁹ “Chapbo 잡보” *Tyeguk sinmun* 데국신문, 12 December 1898.

¹⁶⁰ Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: the Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 15-17. I appreciate Professor Benjamin Elman for introducing this book to me.

¹⁶¹ Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: the Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Eastern Learning enjoyed the freedom of public speech and proselytization for the first time in their history. One sect of the religious minority organized a political group, named the Progressive Society 一進會 (Iljinhoe) which took a strong populist line and collaborated with the Japanese army. And the other group merged into the Heavenly Way Sect 天道教 (Ch'öndogyo) under the leadership of Son Pyöng-hŭi, an ex-sööl man from Ch'ungch'öng province (chapter three).¹⁶² Surprisingly, these two groups of Eastern Learning founded their own vernacular media, *The New National Post* 國民新報 (*Kukmin sinbo*) of the Progressive Society and *Long Life* 萬歲報 (*Mansebo*) of the Heavenly Way Sect.

Under the Japanese occupation, a Japan-educated writer named Yi In-jik 李人植 (1862-1916) made a surprising impact on Korean literary culture. He worked as a chief editor of *Long Life*, although he was not a faithful member of the sect. Many aspects of his personal life still remain mysterious except for the fact that he met Son Pyöng-hŭi in Tokyo. Both of them took refuge in Tokyo in the early 1900s. In-jik initially came to Japan after he passed the state examination for selecting a student for oversea education and studied at Tokyo School of Political Science 東京政治學校 (Tokyō seiji gakkō [J]). Soon, he became a political dissenter since he refused to follow the government order of repatriation in 1903. He was summoned by the Korean government because of his close acquaintance with a political exile, Cho Chung-ŭng 趙重應, at the same school.¹⁶³ In-jik studied the journalism theory in this school and earned a field experience at a Japanese newspaper *The City Post* 都新聞 (*Miyako shinmun* [J]). He discovered in Tokyo that writing for fame and profit for the sake of popular readers could be legitimate for literary culture. At the

¹⁶² Regarding the doctrine and strategy of the Progressive Society, see Yumi Moon, "The Populist Contest: the Ilchinhoe Movement and the Japanese Colonization of Korea, 1896-1910," Ph.D. Dissertation of Harvard University, 2005.

¹⁶³ Tajiri Hiroyuki, *Yi In-jik yōngu* 李人植研究 [Study on Yi In-jik and His Life] (Seoul: Semi, 2006) 27-28.

school, he learned the theory of modern journalism from its US-educated president, Matsumoto Kunpei 松本君平, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania.

Japanese print culture in the late Meiji period became a window for Koreans to understand the nature of commercial publishing. The social status of professional writers—novelists and journalists—was not firmly established even in Japan in the late nineteenth century. Matsumoto Kunpei, from whom Yi In-jik learned, explained the rationale of such new careers in the 1900s. According to Matsumoto Kunpei, a journalistic writer should be recognized as “the fourth estate” which should guide aristocrats, priests, and commoners as an agent of modernization. Matsumoto claimed at one of his lectures that

The creation of the fourth estate 第四種族 (dai yon shujoku JJ) is a new social phenomenon of the modern era. We must call it significant progress. The people who belong to this class are different from aristocrats who boast of their glorious titles. And, they are also unlike priests who pray for a better life after death. Equally, they are not commoners who are similar to cows and sheep, directed by other estates. With their outstanding knowledge and intelligence, the fourth estate should guide the whole nation—aristocrats, priests and commoners. It is their duty and responsibility. Who is the fourth estate, then? They are called journalists 新聞記者 (shinbun kisha JJ).¹⁶⁴

As can be seen above, Matsumoto introduced the profession of journalism from the West and tried to transplant it into Japanese print culture. He used the term of “power of the pen” 筆の力 (fude no chikara JJ)¹⁶⁵ to symbolize the increasing influence of such a new independent journalist in Japanese literary culture.

Long Life, therefore, was the result of the coalition among three agents: the Heavenly Way Sect, the Japan-educated Korean writer, and the Japanese influence. In-jik came back to Korea with the Japanese army. With his excellent Japanese language skills, In-jik participated in the Russo-

¹⁶⁴ Matsumoto Kunpei, *Shinbungaku: Obei shinbun jigyō* 新聞學: 歐米新聞事業 (On the Journalism: the Business of Journalism in the West) (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1899) 6-7.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 307-309.

Japanese War as a Japanese army translator of Korean language and permanently returned to the country in 1906. Then, he began to work at the vernacular newspaper of the Heavenly Way Sect. Yi In-jik pioneered a new genre of vernacular literature called “New Fiction” 新小說 (sinsosöl), by mixing together his new education in Japan, Korean vernacular language, and the new print media. Yet, his literary career was intensively short, from 1906 to 1913, perhaps because he could not continue writing, due to his ill health.¹⁶⁶ The name of “New Fiction” was partly for commercial marketing purposes, indicating the modernity of the fiction by differentiating it from “Old Fiction” 古代小說 (kodae sosöl) which meant vernacular stories which had already been widely known since the late Chosŏn period.

In-jik believed in the value of private journalism because of his education in Tokyo. At the same time, In-jik succeeded the legacy of vernacular literature by adding his new imagination and information. Although he intentionally mixed the character of “new” 新 (sin) with the term of “fiction” 小說 (sosöl), one should not miss the intricacy of his experiment as the extension of vernacular genres. For example, his magnum opus, *Tears of Blood* 血의淚 (*Hyöl ŭi nu*), adopted the contemporary narrative structure of popular stories. This fiction appeared in *Long Life* from June 22 to October 10 in 1906. It was the first serialized vernacular novel in Korean history.¹⁶⁷ In-jik appealed to popular curiosity and empathy toward a poor character by writing the adventure of a war orphan named Ok-ryŏn. In this story, Ok-ryŏn lost her parents in the fierce battles in

¹⁶⁶ Publishing a novel under a penname remained common until the 1920s in colonial Korea, reflecting the general notion that being a novelist was not a respectful profession for literati. Yi In-jik challenged such notion by publishing his works with his real name: *The Tears of Blood* (1907), *The Silver World* 銀世界 (*Ŭnsaegye*, 1908), *The Voice of Ghost* 鬼의聲 (*Kwi ŭi sŏng*, 1908), *The Mountain Ch’iak* 雉岳山 (*Ch’iaksan*, 1908) and a short story of “a Japanese Lady of a Poor Korean Man” 貧鮮郎의 日美人 (*PinSŏnrang ŭi Ilmiin*, 1912).

¹⁶⁷ *The Imperial Post* soon imitated *Long Life* and began to publish a serialized fiction from 1907. Before it hired its own writer, the Imperial Post also started with *The Tears of Blood* by borrowing it from *Long Life*. It was Yi He-jo who became a new contributor of fictions for *The Imperial Post* from the year. I will discuss Yi He-jo in more detail later on in this chapter. Pae Chŏng-sang, *Ibid.*, 2, 5-6.

P'yŏngyang during the Sino-Japanese War. She assumed that her parents must have been killed by soldiers somewhere, and her parents also gave up searching for her. Then, a Japanese military official adopted her and sent the war orphan to his wife in Japan. However, the official also soon died during the war and she grew up with a single step-mother, a Japanese war widow. In-jik sympathetically reported her journey from P'yŏngyang to Japan, depicting the melodrama in which a little Korean girl had to survive in the years of war and peace. When her step-mother considered remarriage, the girl decided to run away from her step-mother and fled to the United States where she accidentally came across her real father who she thought had died in war.¹⁶⁸

Tears of Blood was a Korean version of Frances H. Burnett's *A Little Princess*. The two stories effectively captured public attention by sharing sympathy for a poor girl whom public readers had never met—like the missing girl who appeared in *The Imperial Post* in 1898. The strength of a serialized novel was its vivid reality and accessibility which the newspapers systematically guaranteed by placing the novel side-by-side with real news clips. In fact, it did not matter if the similar episode of the missing girl at *The Imperial Post* was real or not. To the majority of readers, it was more important to feel the emotional delight from following her drama and knowing the happy ending; they were released by knowing that the missing girls were finally back with her parents. In-jik borrowed the formula of popular entertainment in vernacular writings and developed it in the name of New Fiction. Such transformation was possible because sympathetic readers were readily present in Korea. Although *The Imperial Post* could not develop such a personal story into a full-length fiction novel, it was Yi In-jik, a Japan-educated writer, who successfully reinvented the popular genre into the “New Fiction” of Korean colloquial language.

¹⁶⁸ Yi In-jik, *Hyŏl ūi nu* (oe) 血의 淚(外) [The Tear of Bloods and Others] (Seoul: Ŭryu munhwasa, 1969 (1982 printing)).

3. Consuming the Fantasy of Civilization

Vernacular fiction after 1905 projected the message that “old” Korea was dead. These radical anti-Chosŏn novels remind us of nineteenth century fiction such as *The Tale of Chŏn U-ch’i* which I analyzed in chapter three. The popular desire of social mobility and challenge toward ruling elites made a new turn after 1905 as Japan-educated vernacular writers brought new fantasy to popular literature. The cheap and easy reading materials sold the illusion of self-transformation by the way of departing from their old village and society. In Old and New Fiction, the protagonists likewise cut off all mundane relationship with kinship organizations and other duties such as filial ones. But, the scale of their wandering journey enlarged beyond the territorial boundary of the old kingdom in New Fiction. Such geographical expansion of the imagination made it possible for characters to acquire new abilities other than Daoist magic. In the nineteenth century vernacular novels and songs like *The Tale of Chŏn U-ch’i* and Ch’oe Che-u’s song, protagonists commonly transformed into a supernatural beings during their journey. If the Daoist magic could give them new abilities, then the splendid civilization of the outside world could replace the old magic in the course of overcoming their old identity and hardship in New Fiction. Vernacular writers still used the similar strategy of inviting popular audiences into the new entertainment by meeting the popular demand of self-transformation.

Especially, Tokyo, the imperial capital of the Japanese Empire became a new destination of dissenting runaways. Their purpose of bringing Tokyo into the story was not to give accurate information to readers about the city. It was basically a simplistic dream that everything could be possible in Tokyo. Of course, the Japanese colonial empire was not opposed to such discourse. The Japanese colonial police took charge of censorship after 1910. Police censors were affiliated to the

Bureau of Higher Police 高等警察課 (kōtō keisatsuka [J]) in the Chief Executive of Public Security 警務總監府 (keimu tōkanfu [J]). Censors belonged to small Department of Books 圖書課 (toshoka [J]). The total number of censors (all ethnic Japanese) was three in 1910, and it increased to six from 1911. According to a Korean scholar Chŏng Kŭn-sik, the Department of Books had no ethnic Korean staff in the 1910s. The censor-in-chief was a Japanese policeman named Sakai Yoshiaki 境喜明, and he learned the Korean vernacular language.¹⁶⁹ The censorship of the 1910s was insufficient. Chŏng Kŭn-sik and many others explain that such a small scale was related to the scarcity of Korean imprints in the decade of the Japanese martial rule. But it is a hasty conclusion that colonial Korea could not produce reading materials only by sampling vernacular newspapers. Books kept coming out of the press, and especially vernacular fiction including New Fiction successfully passed through the police censorship. Especially, the stories glorifying Tokyo must have helped the publishers to satisfy the Japanese censors.

For example, another vernacular writer named An Kuk-sŏn 安國善 developed New Fiction with unambiguous pro-Japanese messages. He also received his education in Japan and lived as a political criminal in exile until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. Kuk-sŏn published his fiction entitled *The Exhibition* 共進會 (*Kongjinhoe*) in 1915 through a private publishing company. It was printed at a printing factory Sŏngmunsa 誠文社 and sold by bookseller Sumun sŏgwan 修文書館. Originally, he submitted for the permission of publication to the Bureau of Higher Police five short stories, but only three survived in the end and came to press. So, police censors were neither a rubber stamp nor a totalitarian dictator in managing Korean literary culture. It is important

¹⁶⁹ Chŏng Kŭn-sik, “Sikminji kōmyōl ch’aejae ūi yōksajōk sŏnggyōk: Iljaeha kōmyōl kigu wa kōmyōlgwan ūi pyōndong” 植民地檢閱體制의 歷史的 性格: 日帝下 檢閱機構와 檢閱官의 變動 [Historical Research on Colonial Police Censorship: the Institution of Censors and its Change in the Japanese Colonial Empire], *Taedong munhwa yŏngu* 51 (2005) 6-7.

not to underestimate the tension between the author and the police even if a text openly bannered the outspoken pro-Japanese message. He borrowed the title from the 1915 Korean Exhibition 朝鮮物産共進會 which the colonial empire organized as a showcase for its economic development of Korea. In this fiction, three short stories featured a kisaeng 妓生 female outcast entertainer, a rickshaw worker, and an old man from the countryside. In the first story about the girl born as an outcast entertainer, the main character followed a similar journey of Yi In-jik's *Tears of Blood*. The poor girl escaped from her old village and escaped her destiny to live as an outcast. Then, she reached the new world—Japan—with high hopes of finding an alternative life in the imperial metropole of Tokyo. So, the story vividly contrasted “old” Korea with “new” Japan and claimed that Koreans could acquire new life in the fabulous world of civilization.

An Kuk-sŏn, as a vernacular writer, asked popular readers to believe that the Japanese Empire had the magical capability to transform Koreans. He did not bother himself with the question of whether a Korean girl could find a way of living alone in the Japanese city and could enter a Japanese school without having any education in the Japanese language. He simply proffered the fantasy that such a princess story would be possible in the new world. In the fiction, she turned into a modern girl after she finished the school in Tokyo and became a Japan-licensed nurse. As this story sounds like a Cinderella fairy tale, this New Fiction relied on the traditional narrative of the magical transformation. What makes it different, though, is the resolute belief in the civilization which, the author and police censors agreed, had not existed in Korea. Then, the story brought her to China. She volunteered as a Japanese army medic and fought on the battlefield against Germany in Shantung. The fantasy of the modern Korean girl reached its climax when she fought together with the Japanese soldiers. She took care of the wounded soldiers as a legitimate member of the civilized empire. In the camp, she met her first love, a Korean man, who also participated in World

War I with Japanese soldiers. The reunion of the couple quickly led to a happy ending of the outcast girl returning to Korea and enjoying her pleasant life in Seoul as a Japanese army veteran. The story ended at the moment when she visited the 1915 Korean Exhibition which was held in the courtyard of the previously-forbidden royal palace.¹⁷⁰ Her successful transformation from an outcast to a nurse highlights the death of “the ancient regime” in Korea.

The admiration for the colonial rule, however, was not simply a part of the imperial propaganda, but it had certain elements to appeal to popular readers. *The Light of the Autumn Moon*, another popular vernacular fiction demonstrates that post-1910 popular literature aggressively spread the anti-Chosŏn message when the colonial police censorship showed its favoritism to this kind of discourse. If the censors believed that such favoritism would benefit the colonial rule, vernacular writers also took advantage of the regime’s power for their own benefit. By denying “old” Korea, popular writers projected their imagination that all Koreans had equally been the victims of the tyrant. Namely, they urged popular society not to be sympathetic to the late kingdom. By their efforts, colonial Korea came to have the new “imagined community” where popular society could remove the old language and rulers. The police censors, therefore, *unintentionally* contributed to the power shift from classical-language writers to vernacular-language writers in the 1910s.

As one of the steadily selling novels, *The Light of the Autumn Moon* illustrates how fiction could redefine Koreans as equal fellows. Its author, Ch’oe Ch’an-sik, created a romance between a yangban boy and a yangban girl. The prominent yangban families promised the marriage of the two when they were young. But, one day, the boy’s family became a victim of the chaotic violence in the interwar period. When the boy’s father worked as a local magistrate, local mobs attacked the government building and killed his parents. So, the author suddenly changed the boy of the

¹⁷⁰ An Kuk-sŏn, “Kongjinhoe” 共進會, *Hanguk sinsosŏl chŏnjib* 韓國新小說全集, vol.3 (Seoul: Sŏul tehakgyo ch’ulp’anbu, 2003) 309-324.

prominent kinship group into a poor orphan. Ch'oe Chan-sik describes the violent scene in the vernacular language as follows:

Among the angry men [who broke into the office], there were some who had disheveled hair, who wore small hats, and who gripped clubs. Some had just a stone in their hands. They first attacked low-rank clerks as if they knocked a dog. A group of people violently took the magistrate down from his chair. Some took the woman out of her chamber. Then, the mob tied all the people together. ... [One said,] "Low-rank clerks are responsible for all evils! That stupid magistrate is just an alcoholic who can write letters beautifully. He doesn't know what is going on at the office. Let's tie him up and throw him out of the town." [The other answered,] "I have a more interesting idea. Let's put the couple in a wooden chamber and drown them in the river."¹⁷¹

After only the poor boy narrowly saved his life from the mob, he happened to meet a British couple who was travelling in Korea. Thanks to the generous foreigners, the boy started his journey to Europe. Looking through the eyes of the boy, Ch'oe Ch'an-sik broadcast the splendid world of new civilization. The fiction contrasted chaotic and backward Korea with London in which "Railroads stretch all out on the roads, and the sky is covered by telegraph lines like a spider web. On a wide road, automobiles, bicycles and coaches are running busy. Red-brick buildings of ten stories are standing on each side of the road, and the chimneys of factories fill one's view."¹⁷² In the city of London, the boy received new education in a British school and transformed himself from a poor orphan to a modern gentleman in London. So, this mechanism resembles that of the Old Fiction in which a lowly hero often turned into a powerful black magician in order to empower himself.

His old fiancée, the yangban girl, also decided to escape from Korea and they met in Tokyo. Because she refused to follow her parents who demanded that she choose another groom, the heroine left for Tokyo and modernized herself as a female student in the imperial capital. The fiction states, "She always progressed to the next grade smoothly, with honor, and all people in the

¹⁷¹ Ch'oe Ch'an-sik, "Ch'uwölsek" 秋月色 (The Light of Autumn Moon), *Ch'uwölsek, Anüisöng, Kümangmun* 추월색, 안의성, 금강문 (Seoul: Söul tehakgyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2003) 309-324.

¹⁷² Ibid., 38-39.

women's schools of Tokyo admired her as a most brilliant student.” Finally, the boy and girl meet again in Tokyo and live happily as “new” Koreans—citizens of the civilized empire. It is not so difficult to figure out why *The Light of the Autumn Moon* became a sensational bestselling novel; for it repeated the proven formula of popular fiction: the revolt against parents, the romance by overcoming hardship, and the wonderful transformation in the outside world. To those elements, Ch'oe Ch'an-sik added one more fantasy: that such an adventure was a common story for all—high-class and low-class yangbans and outcasts. Thanks to the broadness of its intended audience, popular readers warmly received *The Light of the Autumn Moon* of 1912 more than any other New Fiction.¹⁷³

4. A Best-selling Author: Yi He-jo 李海朝 (1869-1927)

The technological infrastructure and popular content of Korean print culture steadily matured even after 1910. Yi He-jo 李海朝 became the first Korean best-selling author by making use of three favorable factors: the growth of the vernacular literary market, a new vernacular media, and his own talent. He-jo was one of the new vernacular writers, actively engaged with the printing presses and media companies. Before 1910, he worked at The Imperial Post Company and published New Fiction at the vernacular newspaper. Before he decided to become a professional vernacular writer, perhaps after 1897, he used to be an outsider of the civil service examinations. His kinship organization was, nominally at best, affiliated to the Yi royal family. When Prince Taewŏn

¹⁷³ For a decade from 1912 to 1923, five print presses (Yungmun'gwan 隆文館, Kyemunsa 啓文社, Sŏnmyŏngsa 鮮明社, Posŏngsa 普成社, and Chosŏn pokŭm inswaeso 朝鮮福音印刷所) participated in the reprinting of the book. In addition, two booksellers in Seoul (Kwanghan sŏrim 廣韓書林 and Kwangik sogwan 廣益書館) and local merchants (Taga sŏp'o 多佳書鋪, Koryŏ sŏwŏn 高麗書院, and Taejŏng sŏgwan 大正書館) also circulated the novel. So far, eighteen different editions have been discovered in South Korea. See Ko Ŭn-ji, “Ch'uwŏlsaek ŭi taejungjŏk ingi wa sŏsa kujo” 秋月色의 大衆의 人氣와 敍寫 構造 [The Popularity of The Light of Autumn Moon and its Narrative Structure], *Minjok munhaksa yŏngu* 30 (2006) 204.

took power from 1863, it seems that his grandfather participated in the regime as one of the prince's clique. Yet, after the 1882 mutiny was quashed when its leader Prince Taewŏn was kidnapped by the Qing military force, He-jo's family also received severe punishments. His grandfather was executed when He-jo was only fifteen years old, so he endured hardship and abandoned his classical education for the same reason that many young men who had political criminals in their family gave up the tests.¹⁷⁴ After the Sino-Japanese War, He-jo finally found a new opportunity to start his first public career at *The Imperial Post*. This was the beginning of his successful career as a popular vernacular writer.

His prime time as a writer came after 1910. His popularity, first of all, depended on a new vernacular newspaper, *The Daily Post* 毎日申報 (*Maeil sinbo*). The Japanese colonial government founded this newspaper company in October 1910 and recruited renowned Japanese journalist Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰 as its executive chair. Tokutomi Sohō already owned a newspaper, *The National* 國民新聞 (*Kokumin shinbun* [J]), and several journals in Japan and took the opportunity to expand his business in the newly added territory of the Japanese Empire. In addition, Tokutomi was willing to develop his personal connection to a prospective military general Terauchi Masatake 寺内正毅, the first Government-General of Korea. The colonial government merged all Korean newspapers into one government-sponsored paper, *The Daily Post*. The Japanese colonial empire abolished all private newspapers which used classical Chinese, while it made *The Daily Post* print all pages in the Korean vernacular language with Chinese characters.¹⁷⁵ The goal of the merger was to facilitate the control over public speech by allowing only one Korean-language paper, *The Daily Post*,

¹⁷⁴ Ch'oe Wŏn-sik, *Hanguk künde sosŏl saron* (Seoul: Changjaksŏ, 1986) 16-22.

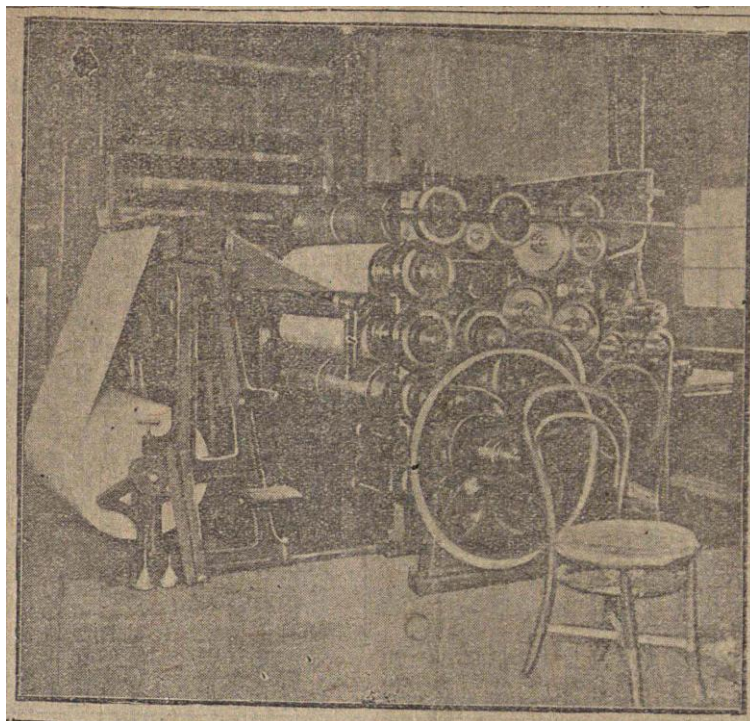
¹⁷⁵ Shibasaki rikiei, "Tokutomi Sohō to Keijō nippo" 徳川蘇峰と京城日報 [Tokuto Sohō and *The Daily Seoul*], *Nihon rekishi* 425 (1983), 67.

and one Japanese-language paper, *The Daily Seoul* 京城日報 (*Keijō nippo* [J]). The presidency of Tokutomi Sohō of the two newspapers lasted until 1918.

The Daily Post Company improved the printing technology in Korea by purchasing a new machine of the Marinoni's Rotary printing press in 1913. It is hard to miss the impact of the technological innovation. The newspaper company ordered the new machine from France in the previous year, and the new printing machine finally arrived in Seoul in June 1913. The company celebrated it as follows:

Needless to say that this machine can improve the quality of printing; it has an incredible productivity of producing twenty thousand copies only in one hour. If we calculate the amount of time for printing *The Daily Post* at present, it only takes two and half hours to meet the current demand. So, you may see how many copies we circulate every day by calculating our new machine's productivity and time costs.¹⁷⁶

<Figure 3. The Marunoni's Rotary Press of The Daily Press Company>¹⁷⁷



¹⁷⁶ *The Daily Post* 毎日申報, no.2309, 22 June 1913.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

So, according to this, The Daily Post Company had to use the Marunoni's Rotary press for two and half hours (2.5 * 20,000) in June 1913. Namely, 50,000 copies of *The Daily Post* were printed out every day in the year. Also, the number of copies must have increased afterwards, because the company announced the plan to lower its fee for commercial advertisements by boosting the number of copies. It was a policy of mass production for quick return 博利多賣 (pakri tamae).

Since the newspaper secured about 50,000 regular readers in the early 1910s, *The Daily Post* became a powerful media outlet by which a single Korean writer could circulate his writing to a broad audience in one day. He-jo, as a reporter of *The Daily Post*, took advantage of this dominant vernacular media. As many vernacular novelists did in the 1910s, He-jo was conciliatory to the Japanese colonial regime. He-jo felt no objection to publishing his serialized novels in *The Daily Post*. His first piece was a fiction entitled *World of Flowers* 花世界 (*Hwasegye*), which appeared on the front page of the newspaper for about 73 days from October 12, 1910 until January 17, 1911. This vernacular fiction was the adventure story of a country girl named Su-jöng. The background of this serialized fiction was the chaotic situation at the end of the Chosön dynasty. Basically, the female protagonist started a journey alone in order to defend herself from criminals and oppressors in her old village. For that matter, He-jo likewise appealed to public sympathy and popular desire toward fantasy by using the female character. So, He-jo wrote it with a well-established formula for popular drama and *The Daily Post* effectively delivered it to wide audience.

Seen from the perspective of the helpless country girl, He-jo claimed that the old regime and elites were nothing more than corrupt, selfish, and oppressive victimizers. The heroine appeared as an only daughter of a low-class yangban family in a poor peasant village of Kyöngsang province. Her father was working at a magistrate's office as a clerk. One day, a young military official approached to her father and offered to marry Su-jöng. As a matter of fact, the military official already had a wife

in Seoul and merely wanted Su-jŏng as his concubine. After receiving threats from this military official, her father reluctantly accepted and promised to offer her to him as a mistress. Soon, her father anticipated that the trade-off of his daughter would grant him some money and a useful familial network for his career in the government office. Yi He-jo unambiguously criticized the unruly behaviors of government officials and soldiers, as follows:

When a state owns the army, its purpose is to keep domestic order and defend the country from foreign invaders. Soldiers must protect the country and take care of people like a castle wall. Alas, what a shame [to Korean soldiers]! At that time, the thugs of local garrisons did not know how important their duty was and often abused their power and authority for the purpose of squeezing innocent people every day. Once they receive some orders, they roamed around the street in groups behaving like devils. There were numerous cases where people, regardless of their status, received humiliation from them. People were so scared that they even held their breath if a dog barked at night, wondering if the soldiers were coming to them. ... We lived under such conditions in those years.¹⁷⁸

The Japanese colonial empire was completely invisible in her misery. She was a victim of the dominant Korean men: the military official and her father. There was no one who was willing to help her in the village. So she decided to accept the marriage as her destiny. However, the Korean army was officially disbanded by Japanese pressure after the Russo-Japanese War. Thus, her groom suddenly lost everything and could not help but run away to Seoul, abandoning her in the village. Soon after the family realized that the man would never return, her parents arranged another marriage for her. But this time she refused to docilely follow her father's order and instead escaped from the village with the hope of looking for her own husband. It was the Confucian moral value of keeping her chastity that empowered her to revolt against her irresponsible parents and justified her runaway from another arranged marriage about which she could not say anything. She boldly

¹⁷⁸ Yi Hae-jo, "Hwasegye" 花世界 [World of Flowers], *Hwasegye, Kuŏisan* (Seoul: Sŏul taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2003) 5-6.

departed from the ruthless rules and practices of her family and the local society in which she was nothing but an object of the marriage negotiation.

So, He-jo's *World of Flowers* was another New Fiction which followed the line of *Tears of Blood*, entertaining its readers with imaginary tension and emotional relief. It was, of course, not the only one, among popular novels of the vernacular literature, which took up pro-Japanese rhetoric and welcomed the Japanese Empire as the savior of Koreans. Some may argue that such a literary phenomenon was inevitable because of the police censorship. However, literary production was entrusted to Korean writers as long as they dare not confront the colonial state. Equally, the popularity of such New Fiction was related to their populism of persuasively arguing that ordinary Koreans had no need to feel responsibility for the ill-fate of the late kingdom and they felt no sympathy toward the old regime.

5. Rewriting a Vernacular Story about an Outcast Girl

After popular writers began to use private and government-sponsored printing presses in Seoul, the voices of non-elites grew increasingly dominant in print culture. Vernacular writers such as Yi In-jik, An Kuk-sŏn, Ch'oe Ch'an-sik, and Yi He-jo believed that the literature should represent the experience and emotion of ordinary folk: a poor-country girl, an outcast woman, or an orphan boy. Accordingly, the popular culture which they constructed set the highest priority on the happy ending of an individual character. New Fiction, hence, tended to be a collection of fragmented and unrealistic episodes of the socially weak overcoming hardship, which gave audiences emotional pleasure. At the same time, some writers began to criticize such fantasy of individualistic happiness and the entertaining effect of vernacular literature. Especially, Yi He-jo reconsidered the literary quality of vernacular stories as the essential means to reform Korean popular culture. By cooperating

with *The Daily Post*, the vernacular media created by the colonial regime, he tried to upgrade the previous sub-culture to a new culture including all Koreans. It was somewhat an ironic alliance between the Korean writer and the new colonial regime because the two parties had different purposes in the collaboration.

From 1912, He-jo started an ambitious and successful project of rewriting Old Fiction 古代小說 (kodae sosöl) in the style of New Fiction. He collected p'ansori songs and stories of folk arts and transformed them into new literary works for the reading public. By this project, he fused the previous oral tradition of songs and storytelling with the new technology of the printing press. His goal was to upgrade the previously low-brow culture of vernacular literature into a new type of a commercial reading material. He expected that Korean literature would be not only easy and entertaining, but also would connect all literate men and women by a common set of classics. The Korean literary market surprisingly welcomed his idea. In 1912, he published the first work of Old Fiction as a trial at *The Daily Post*. It was *The Flower Blossoming in Prison* 玉中花 (*Okjunghwa*) that he remade from *The Romance of Ch'unghyang* 春香傳 (*Ch'unghyangjön*). Soon after he had finished all forty-eight chapters of the vernacular fiction at *The Daily Post*, a private publishing company Pogŭb sögwan 普及書館 merchandised it and sold it at bookstores. *The Flower Blossoming in Prison* became the top bestseller of colonial Korea until the end of World War II. The book was a record-breaker; there appeared seventy-one variations on *The Romance of Ch'unghyang* which all imitated He-jo's success. He-jo's book itself continued to be sold out up until it was reprinted in ninety-seven editions for the next four decades.¹⁷⁹ Not surprisingly, *The Flower Blossoming in Prison* was reproduced

¹⁷⁹ Sō Yu-sōk, "20segi ch'oban hwaljabon Ch'unhyangjön ūi pyōnmo yangsang kwa kŭ ūimi 20"世紀 初半 活字本 春香傳의 變貌 樣相과 그 意味 [The Transformation of the Romance of Ch'unhyang at the Printed Versions in the Early Twentieth Century], *P'ansori yōngu* 24 (2007), 136.

at theaters and cinemas as a new classic of Korean popular literature. The commercial success was beyond the reach of any other contemporary New Fiction.

One reason he was so successful was that he mixed the oral and popular culture of the late Chosŏn period with new style of writing and printing. But one should not miss the point that many other commercial publishers were already selling Old Fiction at stores. What made him distinctive was his heavy-handed remaking. That is, he played himself as a kind of a police censor who could cut inappropriate parts of vernacular fiction. So, he made an odd pair with Japanese colonial police censors, sharing the same notion that Korean print culture should be disciplined. Yi He-jo, however, implicitly undermined the authority of the colonial regime by showing that Koreans could improve their culture all by themselves. When he published old vernacular fiction, he believed that he could be an independent censor and critic without waiting for the judgment of the regime. He argued:

In Korea, there are oral opera works called t'aryŏng 打令 such as *The Romance of Ch'unhyang*, the *Tale of Simch'ŏng* 沈淸傳 (*Simch'ŏngjŏn*), the *Tale of Hŭngbu* 朴打令 (*Pakt'aryŏng*), and the *Tale of a Wise Rabbit* 兎打令 (*T'ot'aryŏng*). Originally, they were created by literate authors who wished to teach the lessons of loyalty and righteousness and to improve the public morality by the stories. However, the cultural level of performers was not enough to understand the intention of the authors. On the stage, they revised the works arbitrarily and distorted them by inserting dirty words. Their revisions were well received and very popular among low-level folks, but more and more people with common sense and knowledge looked down on the works. Alas, what a pity! So, I collected them from the singers and performers and rewrote them. As a result, I already published my own edition of *The Romance of Ch'unhyang* (*Flower in Prison*) and the *Tale of Simch'ŏng* (*Lotus on the River* 江上蓮 (*Kangsanryŏn*). And, many ladies and gentlemen 貴婦人과 紳士 (kwibuin kwa sinsa) warmly received my works. ... Please do not ignore these works as the song of entertainers, but please try to read the original voices of original authors in the past.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ *Meil sinbo* (the Daily Newspaper), April 27, 1912. Recited from Ōm Te-ung, “Yi He-jo sanjŏng p'ansori ūi Meil sinbo yŏnje yangsang kwa kŭ ūimi” 李海朝 산중 판소리의 每日申報 연재 양상과 그 의미 [Yi He-jo's Serialized Novel on P'ansori operas], *Kukŏ munhak* 45 (2008), 182.

According to him, opera singers improvised the classics and lowered the quality of arts in exchange for popularity and money in the late Chosŏn period. He explained that his project was intended to restore the original artistic value of “ancient authors” 古人 (koin). Of course, he himself was well aware of the fact that there was no way to know about the real authors. It was his convenient imagination that the p’ansori works were not “the entertainment for vulgar folks” from the beginning. By imagining the original authors, he discovered the possibility that the folk art could become a source of new popular culture in the early twentieth century.

Imitating New Fiction, He-jo tried to recreate the female protagonist of *The Flower Blossoming in Prison* as a modern Korean girl. In the fiction, this girl, named Ch’unghyang, was an outcast born of a noble man and a humble woman. He-jo cut out some songs and scenes which, he thought, were disgusting and offensive to the dignity of the female character, Ch’unhyang. Although He-jo was far from a social reformer who wanted to liberate outcast women, he wanted to erase the past when a Korean girl was maltreated simply as an object of sexual pleasure. In this sense, he was a self-motivated censor in transforming folk arts into popular fiction, and he had no hesitation in inserting his own words in regard to the outcast girl. Intentionally, He-jo elevated the status of the outcast girl up to the same level as her partner, a yangban boy. In the social context of the nineteenth century, the two characters—the yangban man and the outcast girl—could not be equal because of their status as well as their gender. In He-jo’s mind, however, an outcast girl could express her emotions and opinions and embody Confucian morality better than anyone else.

Accordingly, *The Flower Blossoming in Prison* became a modern romantic novel about a boy and a girl, a Korean version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Their relationship was no longer the vertical one between a rich yangban customer and a desperate outcast girl. When the yangban boy visited her place, she even scolded him for distracting himself from the preparation of the civil service examinations. She

confidently demanded her yangban customer to treat her fairly as if “a girl of another family.” As far as *The Flower Blossoming in Prison* showed, Ch’unhyang was like a girl living in 1910s’ Korea. Her attitude indicated her strong sense of dignity, equity, and morality as she turned down the seduction of the yangban boy at night. She questioned him with dignity, “Do you really expect that a respectful woman would go to a man’s place upon request [that late at night]?” For example, the scene which he censored was the love scene between the two characters. The oral opera work described their first night so vividly and vulgarly that he decided to censor it in his new version. It was a renowned song of the opera, called “The Melody of Love” 사랑歌 (sarangga). Although there are several different versions of “The Melody of Love,” some singers added pornographic content to the story and turned it onto a song to entertain adult male audiences. Yi He-jo clarified his policy of editing as he wrote, “Recently, there are several songs like “The Melody of Love” in the opera work. These songs deteriorate the dignity of the work. And, there are some parts which cannot be accepted in social custom. I decide to remove these songs, because they can damage the honor of Ch’unhyang.”¹⁸¹

Thus, when the decade of the 1910s was drawing to a close, colonial Korea already had a number of bestselling novels: *Tears of Blood*, *The Light of the Autumn Moon*, *The Flower Blossoming in Prison*, and so on. Books of vernacular literature came to occupy a significant part of Korean literary market. Yi He-jo successfully elevated them to the level of popular literature by combining New Fiction with Old Fiction. These books had nothing to do with the school examinations or civil service examinations, but their influence over the reading public began to supersede that of old Books and Classics, especially among the young generation. In particular, Yi He-jo’s project of saving Ch’unhyang from the private chamber of male customers signaled the spread of a new

¹⁸¹ Yi He-jo, *Okjunghwa* 獄中花 (Flower in Prison) (Seoul: Pogŭb sŏgwŏn, 1914), 36.

consciousness about gender-equality as well as the passion for “new” Korean print culture. His imagination for reinterpreting vernacular literature resulted in a greater integration of Korean society regardless of gender, age or class through popular books. And, his passion and sympathy toward the outcast girl was succeeded by Yi Kwang-su 李光洙 and his novel of 1917, *Heartless* 無情 (*Mujŏng*).¹⁸²

Conclusion

To summarize, the first two decades of the twentieth century can be characterized by the rise of vernacular literature in modern Korean history. The classical language, education and literature quickly lost their influence and institutional supports. Instead, quixotic writers who used to be outsiders, such as Yi In-jik, Yi He-jo, An Kuk-sŏn, and many others, worked together for the formation of New Fiction and new vernacular literature. The unprecedented supremacy of the vernacular literature came with the complicated interactions with the development of urban media, the demise of the old kingdom, the new colonial state-building, and the growth of print capitalism. Particularly, the vernacular books, called New Fiction, contained few messages expressing loyalty to the late Korean kingdom during these years. The major concern was to describe how a poor girl, an orphan boy or an outcast woman could save themselves from the victimizers and reach a happy ending. Ordinary readers showed an amazing level of sympathy and curiosity for these victims and paid money for the entertainment and relief of reading them to their happy endings. The vernacular print media was exceptionally good at circulating such personal stories which temporarily created the bond of sympathy and compassion that bore a likeness to national solidarity.

¹⁸² About the similarity between *The Flower in Prison* and *Heartless*, see Sang-ho Ro, 1910 nendai shokuminchi Chōsen ni okeru shōhi taishū no tōjō: Maeil sinbo no rensai shōsetsu wo chūshin ni 1910 年代の植民地朝鮮における消費大衆の登場：『毎日申報』の連載小説を中心に [The Growth of New Consumer Culture in 1910s' Colonial Korea: from the Case of Serialized Novels at Maeil sinbo], *Honichi gakujutsu kenkyūsha ronbunshu* 訪日研究者論文集 17, Japan-Korea Cultural Foundation ed. (2011).

New Fiction at first appeared in vernacular newspapers such as *The Imperial Post* and *Long Life* for that reason. *The Daily Post*, after 1910, continued to empower lingua franca by purchasing the new machine of Marunoni's Rotary Press and sponsoring the prolific vernacular writer Yi He-jo. The colonial police censorship did not stop this cultural transformation because the colonial regime never expected that *The Daily Post* under its strict scrutiny would be used by Koreans in a different way. To be sure, vernacular writers collaborated with the new regime. But their bold transgression created what no one expected in the nineteenth century. When the new popular culture of vernacular fiction nervously swung between moralistic voices and individualistic desires, between authors and consumers, the spectrum of Korean print culture was dramatically widening. It marked a new age when a new type of literati began to control the popular texts and to communicate with the broad population by using the printing press and the market economy, without the need to be a bureaucrat of the state.

FIVE

NEW EXAMINATIONS AND CANONICAL TEXTS UNDER THE COLONIAL REGIME

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I shed light on the dynamic development of the literary market. In the new print capitalism, Korean consumers chose their favorite books at bookstores. Whereas Japanese police censorship controlled the mass media, the growth of commercial publishing never stopped after 1910. Along with the introduction of the new technology of the printing press, the forceful merger of all Korean newspapers under the new regime ironically empowered Korean popular writers by giving them one predominant vernacular-language newspaper—*The Daily Post*. The colonial regime favored New Fiction which spread the pro-Japanese and anti-Chosŏn discourses. As a result, Korean vernacular fiction which used to be a rebellious subculture in the nineteenth century successfully turned into a new icon of Korean culture in the 1900s and 1910s. In short, the market economy transformed the structure of Korean print culture.

In this chapter, I analyze another force of change. It was the nation-wide school system which the Japanese colonial empire installed after 1910. Here, I examine how the Japanese colonial education affected Korean print culture by assimilating and alienating Korean students at new schools. As before the loss of sovereignty in 1910, many elite boys avoided popular fiction. The new examination system of the Japanese colonial empire encouraged education by promising material rewards and glory, as did the late Chosŏn regime. The expected effects of the examinations, in other words, were to differentiate literate elites from the illiterate mass. Although previous scholarship has emphasized the regime's censorship of public expression and the oppression of Korean books, it is

equally important to understand that the new regime after 1910 created many books including new school textbooks.¹⁸³ Replacing old Confucian canons, modern school textbooks became a new canon in their own right which the state authorized as the key texts for success and tested students. The sacred tongue of the canonical texts switched from classical Chinese to the Japanese language, whereas the Korean vernacular still remained as the instrumental, intermediary language to help Koreans to become fluent in the Japanese language in the end. In this chapter, I reveal that Korean literary culture was still under the examination system imposed by the regime. So, the main focus here moves from print capitalism to the interaction between Korean elite families and colonial schools, chronologically covering the three decades from the 1900s to 1920s.

The new educational system after 1910 made a significant impact on Korean print culture as much as the market economy did. As a transformative force, the colonial education has been commonly understood as a Japanese policy of assimilation 同化 (dōka [JJ]). Successful candidates of the school examinations formed a homogeneous group of Korean males who chose to master the Japanese language and to obtain the degree. They sought to speak, write, and read fluently and naturally the Japanese language. To them, Japanese textbooks were the standard of culture and knowledge. Interestingly, though, such successful assimilation cannot properly explain the complexity between Japanese education and Korean literary culture, because some elite writers wished to go beyond the curriculum. When well-educated Korean students were able to read and speak the Japanese language, some such as Yu Chin-o 俞鎮午 (1906-1987) began to become disenchanted with the goal of the education: i.e. passing the civil service examinations. Namely, the alienation occurred at the highest level of the school education. And, those who dropped out of the ladder of success reintegrated into Korean society and wrote in the vernacular language. Thus, the

¹⁸³ I will discuss about the compilation and mass production of school textbooks in chapter six.

colonial education not only promoted the literacy rate in the Japanese and the Korean language, but also unexpectedly well-trained new vernacular writers in the 1920s. As the pendulum was in motion, the new school system pulled many people to one end. When the majority of students failed to reach the end, they, like the pendulum, flew toward the other end. Therefore, many private sectors for Korean print culture such as urban journalism, publishing, and private education grew bigger and more influential at the opposite end of the bureaucracy, when failed students looked for an alternative career.

1. New Examinations

In 1908, the Korean government under the Japanese control created a new system for recruiting civil officials. It took almost fourteen years after the reform cabinet hurriedly abolished the civil service examinations in 1894 in the middle of the Sino-Japanese War. Whereas the meritocratic principle remained intact in the new examination system, Korea this time copied the Meiji Japanese model instead of the Ming Chinese system. Especially after the Russo-Japanese War, many Koreans came to admire the effectiveness of the Meiji Japanese model. It appeared that the Japanese Empire had caught up with the West and defeated Russia, one of the European powers. Especially after 1907, the Japanese control over the Korean government tightened. The Korean emperor (Kojong) abdicated from the throne by pressure for his decision of sending an envoy to the Hague Peace Conference in 1907. In July 1907, the Japanese Empire pressed the new Korean emperor and his cabinet to sign on New Treaty of Japan and Korea. This treaty allowed the Japanese Empire to intervene in Korean domestic policies for the first time.¹⁸⁴ The new examination system was also adopted on the advice of the Japanese. In July 1908 as the Japanese Empire tightened its control of the Korean government, the plan of restoring the civil service examinations

¹⁸⁴ Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, 205-214.

came to fruition with the new name of “Civil Official Appointment Regulations” 文官任用令 (mun’gwan imyongryŏng). Later in October, the Korean Emperor approved the examination system’s return to Korea.¹⁸⁵

The Korean bureaucracy after the Russo-Japanese War was being quickly reorganized under the model of the Japanese system, borrowing its terminology, ranks, and degree system. The entire officialdom was stratified into three different groups in a hierarchical order: royal appointee 勅任 (ch’ikim), senior officials 奏任 (chuim), and junior officials 判任 (p’anim). As with the Meiji system, the new bureaucracy showed a high degree of centralization and top-down hierarchy. At the very bottom of the bureaucracy were located public schools which qualified potential candidates to become government officials. By doing so, the government could homogenize its employees, who shared the same knowledge and culture nurtured by the school curriculum. As a result, the sheer number of tests absolutely increased in the everyday life of students. As with their antecedents in the late Chosŏn period, the modern officials were examination elites. They differed from yangban officials in their reading list, though. The new tests required apposite examinees to read and study books in law and political science instead of the Four Books and Five Classics. Candidates had to receive a degree in jurisprudence at professional law schools in Korea or foreign educational institutions overseas plus two years of practical experience.¹⁸⁶ Replacing Song metaphysics, political science, especially modern law, became a new subject that statesmen had to master.

Simultaneously, the government sprang into action to rebuild the new country-wide educational system. In May 1908, reviewing the plan of the new civil service examinations, the

¹⁸⁵ Chang Sin, “1919-43nyŏn Chosŏn ch’ongdokbu ūi kwanri imyong kwa pot’ong mun’gwan sihŏm 1919-43” 年朝鮮總督府의 官吏任用과 普通文官試驗 [The official appointment system and preliminary civil service examinations of the Government-General of Korea from 1919 to 1943], *Yŏksa munjae yŏn’gu* 8 (2002); “Ch’ikryŏng” 勅令 (Royal Edict), *Hwangŏng sinmun* 皇城新聞 (Imperial Capital Post), 31 July 1908.

¹⁸⁶ “Ch’ikryŏng” 勅令 (Royal Edict), *Hwangŏng sinmun* 皇城新聞 (the Imperial Capital Post), July 31, 1908.

Korean government reformed “The Regulations of High School Education” and rebuilt public schools in Seoul and provincial cities. By the end of the year, a prestigious royal high school named “The Royal High School in Seoul” 官立漢城高等學校 (kwanrib Hansŏng kodŭng hakkyo) steadily increased its number of students up to 172. In the whole country, there was also a boom in educational enrollment so that the entire population of high school students jumped by eighty percent during this single year. Korean society was fully aware of how the return of the examination system worked. On the eve of the Japanese annexation of Korea, the country already had about 10,000 high school students.¹⁸⁷ When the Japanese Empire annexed Korea in 1910, the regime change did not stop the educational fever and the expansion of the school system. Although the Japanese colonial regime acknowledged the presence of Korean schools, it arranged them into an adjunct position under the Japanese schools. Under the colonial rule, old high schools were renamed “Advanced School for Koreans” 高等普通學校 (kodŭng pot’ong hakkyo [K]). These Korean schools survived the regime change, enduring the inferior status without having the right to grant a degree for college entrance. For example, the previous Royal High School in Seoul maintained its reputation as an elite boys’ school, known as “the Advanced School for Koreans in Seoul” 京城高等普通學校 (Kyŏngsŏng kodŭng pot’ong hakkyo [K]).¹⁸⁸

Before 1910, the Ministry of Education 學部 (hakbu) struggled to keep pace with the rebuilding of the civil service examinations by pumping new school textbooks into society. By the end of 1908, the government published six school textbooks that would ultimately claim the status

¹⁸⁷ Chōsen sōtokufu, *Chōsen sōtokufu shisei nenpo: Meiji 41,42 nenban* 朝鮮總督府施政年鑑:明治 41,42 年版 [the Yearbook of Japanese Government-General in Korea] (reprint, Tokyo: Kuresu shuppan, 1991-1992), 155-156.

¹⁸⁸ The fame of this school continued until the 1970s. Although the school has changed its name three times since then, it still exists in Seoul today. In 192*, the school became “the First Advanced School for Koreans” 京城第一高等普通學校 (Kyŏngsŏng kodŭng pot’ong hakkyo). Entering the 1930s, it renamed itself the Kyŏnggi Middle School 京畿中學校 (Kyŏnggi chunghakkyo), and later in the post-WWII period, restored its old status as a High School, changing its name once more to Kyŏnggi High School 京畿高等學校 (Kyŏnggi kodŭng hakkyo): the powerhouse of South Korean elite boys until the 1970s.

which the Four Books and Five Classics had previously held in the minds of young Koreans. The ministry published new school textbooks in the mixed style of Chinese characters and the Korean alphabet in 1908.¹⁸⁹ Interestingly, the new school textbooks were printed by a Japanese printing company, Dai Nihon tosho 大日本圖書株式會社 (Dai Nihon tosho kabushiki kaisha [J]), in Tokyo. As we can see in table 5.1, new school textbooks began to spread out in Korea on a massive scale after 1908. In the next year, the total number of the books in public circulation already exceeded 227,000 copies.

<Table 5.1. Number of School Textbooks in Circulation in 1909>

Title	Number of Copies in Circulation
<i>Ethics</i> 修身書 (<i>Susinsō</i>)	21,900 (Sales); 16,368 (Rental)
<i>The Korean National Language</i> 國語 (<i>Kukō</i>)	38,726 (Sales); 33,946 (Rental)
<i>The Japanese Language</i> 日語 (<i>Ilō</i>)	37,896 (Sales); 33,840 (Rental)
<i>Classical Chinese</i> 漢文 (<i>Hanmun</i>)	22,835 (Sales); 12,398 (Rental)
<i>Natural Studies</i> 理科 (<i>Yigwa</i>)	3,921 (Sales); 2,464 (Rental)
<i>Mathematics</i> 算術 (<i>Sansul</i>)	1,672 (Sales); 1,512 (Rental)
Total	126,950 (Sales); 100,528 (Rental)

After 1910, the Japanese colonial regime accelerated the replacement of Confucian canons with newly-printed school textbooks. The colonial empire had more money and a greater police force which it had brought in from outside of Korea. The Japanese Government-General of Korea

¹⁸⁹ The new public school textbooks were *Ethics* 修身 (*Susin*), *National Language* 國語 (*Kukō*), *The Japanese Language* 日語 (*Ilō*), *Classical Chinese* 漢文 (*Hanmun*), *Natural Studies* 理科, and *Basic Reader* 圖書 (*Tosō*). In the next year, the ministry added two more on this set of school textbooks: *Calligraphy* 習字帖 (*Sūbjach'ōb*) and *Mathematics* 算術書 (*Sansulsō*). Ibid. 162-3, 245-7.

朝鮮總督府 (Chōsen sōtokufu [J]) kept investing significant finances and effort to increase the circulation of school textbooks. Police censorship also removed the private textbooks written by native writers such as Yu Kūn 柳瑾, Hyōn Ch'ae 玄采, Chang Chi-yōn 張志淵, Yun Ch'i-ho 尹致昊 and others.¹⁹⁰ The crackdown on “dangerous” reading materials began in 1908 and accelerated after 1910. The government monopoly on school textbooks continued until 1945.¹⁹¹

So, one should not miss the point that the publication of new school textbooks made an important coupling with the police censorship in the colonial rule. If the censorship was basically reactive, the Japanese colonial empire heavy-handedly intervened in Korean print culture by way of creating an alternative text. So, the total number of school textbooks already reached 592,485 copies in 1911. No private booksellers could compete with the government in this growing, but monopolized market. School enrollment approached ten percent in a same-age group by 1919 and the increasing availability of standard reading texts contributed to the improvement of the literacy rate in Korean society. However, all textbooks were written in Japanese except for subjects only for ethnic Koreans such as Korean language 朝鮮語 (Chōsengo [J]). So, the percent of school drop-outs remained high in the early colonial period, reflecting the difficulty of continuing education due to expensive tuition fees as well as studying in the foreign Japanese language.¹⁹²

The building of the Japanese colonial bureaucracy attracted ambitious boys, because government jobs increased accordingly after the Russo-Japanese War. If their family valued the

¹⁹⁰ Already in 1909, the Korean government prohibited the circulation of thirty-nine books for the violation of police rules. In 1908, the government received 565 applications of privately-made school textbooks for passing the censorship and rejected 130 (about twenty-three percent). Ch'ae Hwi-gyun, “Kaehwagi kūmji kyogwasō ūi yuhyōng kwa naeyong yōn'gu” 開化期 禁止 教科書の 類型과 内容研究 [The types and contents of forbidden textbooks in the years of enlightenment], *Kyoyuk ch'ōlhak* 26 (2004), 181-2.

¹⁹¹ About the police censorship and its effects on print culture in the 1910s and early 20s, see Sang-ho Ro, “Reorienting Colonial Book Market: Private Publishing Companies after 1919,” *Kukjae Koryōhak* 13 (2009).

¹⁹² Kim Pu-ja, *Shokuminchiki Chōsen no kyōiku to jendā: shūgaku fushūgaku o meguru kenryoku kankei* 植民地朝鮮の教育とジェンダー: 就學・不就學をめぐる權力關係 [Education and Gender in Colonial Korea: the Power Relationship surrounding Schooling and Non-schooling] (Yokohama: Seori shobō, 2005) 61-62.

education and could afford to support the tuition fees, the examination system had a merit to the boys. In 1911, there were about 15,113 total positions in central and local governments, including forty-two royal appointees, 996 senior officials, 5,595 junior officials and 8,480 clerks and contractors. This compares to 800 positions offered to yangbans in the nineteenth century. Compared with the relatively small size of the Chosŏn bureaucracy, the demands of the Japanese colonial regime on degree-holders were unprecedentedly extensive. In particular, the two largest hiring institutions were local administrations and the police force. In 1911, the Agency of Provincial Affairs 地方廳 (chihōchō [J]) hired 4,098 officials, and the Police Agency 警察官署 (keisatsukansho [J]) hired 2,600 employees. Reflecting the building of new infrastructure, the Agency of Communication and the Bureau of Railroad Transportation also emerged as new opportunities in colonial Korea. So government officials in new-style uniforms at stations and post offices represented the coming of a new age when there were more chances to be a part of the state once people could acquire school degrees.¹⁹³

The increase in opportunity was, however, elusive because ethnic Koreans had to endure the invisible ceiling of the bureaucracy. While ethnic Japanese elites began to fill the high ranks, the new recruitment was concentrated on the lower echelon below junior officials 判任. The Japanese colonial education, from the beginning, put the major focus on intermediary education which was necessary for training candidates for positions as junior officials and low functionaries. Japanese language ability was desirable, but a high level of education in science and philosophy was, of course, unnecessary and regarded as a superfluous luxury to ethnic Koreans. Such a low esteem of and demand for Koreans resulted in the slow development of Korean higher education after 1910. After the colonial state renamed Korean high schools “advanced schools,” graduates of these schools

¹⁹³ Chōsen sōtokufu, *Chōsen sōtokufu shisei nenpo: Meiji 43 nenban* 朝鮮總督府施政年鑑:明治 43 年版 [the Yearbook of Japanese Government-General in Korea] (reprint, Tokyo: Kuresu shuppan, 1991-1992), 34-36.

were no longer eligible to apply for positions as junior officials. If they wished to work for the government, they had to finish additional education at professional schools 專門學校 (*senmon gakkō* [J]). Otherwise they had to go to Japan and graduate from Japanese middle schools. Even if they successfully earned an additional degree and entered the officialdom, they were far from any positions in decision-making. In order to be senior officials like their yangban predecessors, they again had to pass the entrance examinations of the Japanese imperial universities and then, again, pass the highest civil service examinations 高等文官試験 (*kōtō bunkan shiken* [J]) which only took place in Japan.¹⁹⁴ Although the two countries were ostentatiously merged (合併, *gappei* [J]), Koreans had to compete with Japanese in the Japanese language and the Japanese curriculum in order to be statesmen.

2. New Books for Popular Education

After the Russo-Japanese War, one ex-yangban family quickly responded to the increase of educational fever by publishing books for popular education. These kinds of examination preparation books, called *tongnon* 通論 or *kaeron* 概論, appeared for the first time on the Korean literary market in 1905 and lasted until 1910. After that, these kinds of educational books for popular audiences quickly gave way to Japanese books. Since these books provided introductory knowledge in political science, their popularity in the market decisively depended on the usefulness for preparing for school and civil examinations. Few people purchased the *tongnon* or *kaeron* books and read for pleasure; students at high schools and professional schools were the main consumer group of this genre. As commercialized quasi-textbooks, these educational books did not exist in the

¹⁹⁴ Chang Sin, “1919-43 nyŏn Chosŏn ch’ongdokbu ūi kwanri imyong kwa pot’ong mungwan sihŏm 1919-43” 年朝鮮總督府의 官吏任用과 普通文官試驗 [The Government Appointment and Preliminary Civil Service Examinations of the Japanese Government-General from 1919 to 1944], *Yŏksa munjae yŏngu* 8 (2002), 50-51.

nineteenth century, and rather, steadily took root in Korean society as the new school and examination system increased the number of the student population. More interestingly, early authors of this genre were ex-yangban literati who wished to imitate how Meiji Japanese society popularized educational knowledge through the literary market.

In Korea, the earliest book in this popular genre for exam preparation was *Introduction to Jurisprudence* 法學通論 (*Pōbbak t'ongnon*), published in 1905. This book was made by a private publishing company, Pangmunsa 博文社, and its author was a renowned yangban man named Yu Sōng-jun 俞星潛 (1860-1935). As I mentioned in chapter one, his older brother, Yu Kil-jun, was the first Korean author of a mass-produced book for popular education in 1895 with his publishing of *Observation from the Tour in the West* 西遊見聞 (*Sōyu kyōnmun*). Although it is unclear if Yu Kil-jun wished to sell his book as a reference book, his younger brother comprehended the nature of an educational book as a commercial product. It is not a historical coincidence that two outstanding authors appeared from the same kinship organization of Kigye Yus 杞溪俞門. This aristocratic and literary family had led Korean bookish culture from the late Chosŏn period as teachers of Song metaphysics, so this familial support and investment in new education enabled Yu Kil-jun and Yu Sōng-jun to go to Japan and enjoy the luxury of studying abroad.¹⁹⁵ Of course, not all of his kinship organizations welcomed the so-called “new education” as Yu Chin-o recalled in his famous short story, *The Memory of a Pavilion on a Blue Wave* 蒼浪亭記 (*Ch'anrangjōnggi*). Nevertheless, Kigye Yus'

¹⁹⁵ Yu Sōng-chun studied in Japan at Keio School and Meiji Law School. While his older brother explored the West after initial education in Japan, he returned to Korea and developed his career as a high-rank bureaucrat. Under the auspices of Foreign Minister Kim Yun-sik, he became a promising reformist technocrat from 1885 until the collapse of the Kabo cabinet in 1895. “Yu Sōng-chun” 俞星潛, *Tae Han cheguk kwānbōn iryōksō* 大韓帝國官員履歷書 [Resumés of Officials in the Tae Han imperial government] (Seoul: Kuksa p'yōnch'an wiwŏnhoe, 1972) 294.

family was a successful example of the transformation from traditional literati to modern intellectuals.¹⁹⁶

Their early adoption of political science was related to their common interest in the art of statecraft. This first *tongron* book in Korean history was, therefore, made possible by the collective work of Yu Sŏng-jun and Yu Ch'i-hyŏng 俞致衡 (1877-1933) of the same clan. Both of them studied in Japanese higher educational institutions, majoring in jurisprudence before the Russo-Japanese War. Yu Sŏng-jun, who had developed his career as an elite bureaucrat until the Sino-Japanese War, departed to Tokyo and studied at Meiji Law School. At this school, he was influenced by Japanese scholars such as Uzawa Husaaki 鵜沢総明 (1872-1955), who had a practical teaching philosophy of popularizing modern discipline in law.¹⁹⁷ It seems that he also borrowed the book title *Pŏbbak t'ongnon* from his teacher's introductory course of "Hōgaku tsūron" 法學通論. This new rise of popular education in Japan was fueled by the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War and the following rapid industrialization. Thanks to the economic boom, professionals from schools such as Meiji Law School began to constitute the new white-collar middle class in twentieth century Japan. Unlike imperial universities, private professional schools actively corresponded to the increase of popular demand in the kind of higher education which ambitious youths wished to attain in the

¹⁹⁶ In this short story, Yu Chin-o calmly recalled the glorious mansion of his relative's family on the top of a hill next to the Han River. As a child, he had often slept over at this aristocratic mansion and he wrote this story when he visited the place again as an adult. He could not get to the old house, in part because Seoul had changed so much and in part because his relatives had gradually lost their wealth and fame. Yu Chin-o implicitly claimed that this family lost everything because they refused to send their children to schools and educate them in modern disciplines. The glorious family disappeared from people's memories after their male heir wasted time and money. Yu Chin-o, "Ch'angrangjŏnggi 蒼浪亭記" *Han'guk munhak chŏnjib*, vol.6 (Seoul: Samsŏngdang, 1985).

¹⁹⁷ Uzawa Husaaki, *Hōgaku tsūron* 法学通論 [the Introduction to Jurisprudence] (Tokyo: Meiji hōritsu gakkō kōhōkai, 1903).

hopes of having a better future.¹⁹⁸ So the elite ex-yangban Korean writer, Yu Sŏng-jun, was exposed to this new expansion of popular education in postwar Japan.

Although Yu Sŏng-jun wrote the manuscript based on what he learned in Tokyo, it was his relative, Yu Ch'i-hyŏng, who actually merchandised it for commercial sale. Ch'i-hyŏng was also an ex-yangban, who extended his study at the Keio School and Chuō Law School. When Sŏng-jun was arrested by the Korean police for the conviction of high treason on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War, Ch'i-hyŏng took the pains to proofread, edit and publish on behalf of the author.¹⁹⁹

Introduction to Jurisprudence highlights the “hybridity” of Korean elitism on the eve of the Japanese annexation. In his book, Gyan Prakash persuasively captures the tension and anxiety of indigenous elites in colonial societies by arguing that the spread of science in India was not simply “adaptation,” but the “hybridization” of identities by which an elite could claim himself as “a modern representative of indigenous traditions.”²⁰⁰ In their educational books, editor Ch'i-hyŏng likewise showed exactly the same trajectory of “hybridity” by arguing that imitation was a universal phenomenon. He believed that an educational book written by yangban elites could guide Koreans about the universal principle of things. Regardless of their foreign origin, therefore, *t'ongron* or *kaeron* could become an ideal Korean genre for popular education. The authorship of this genre was

¹⁹⁸ In Japan, the first two decades of the twentieth century were the formative time when mass production and consumption shaped the urban white-collar population. The Japanese economic upsurge occurred with a series of wars in East Asia and the global theater: the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War and WWI. At the end of WWI, the Japanese economic boom was at its climax. More about the new Japanese middle-class culture in the early twentieth century in: Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003). Regarding the social reorganization in Meiji Japan at the turn of the century, see Sheldon Garon, *The State and Labor in Modern Japan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 10-38.

¹⁹⁹ He was convicted of high treason, because he was allegedly involved in the seditious group of military officials who prepared for a military coup against the crown. Yun Pyŏng-hŭi, “Ilbon mangmyŏng sijŏl Yu Kil-chun ūi kudet'a ūmmosagŏn” 日本亡命時節 兪吉濬의 쿠데타 陰謀事件 [About the Incident of Aborted Military Coup Organized by Yu Kil-chun in Exile in Japan], *Hanguk kŏnhyŏndesa yŏngu* 3 (1995).

²⁰⁰ Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 84-85.

respectable and noble though these books were fundamentally designed as commercial goods, the same way in which popular fictions were. He wrote:

As soon as a man becomes an outlaw, he is a non-human even if he may look like a human 凡人無法이면 人而不人이오 (pöminmuböb imyön inibulin io). As soon as one country becomes lawless, it also no longer can be a country 國無法이면 國而不國이라 (kukmuböb imyön kukibulguk ira). Once we are born in this world, it is impossible to live without a law. And if one cannot live in the country, how can the country maintain its status as the state? A Western scholar once said that every human being is born under law and lives and dies under law. It is indeed correct. When one country has laws, it can civilize its people and discipline them and guide them not to fall into the outside of the civilization.²⁰¹

His enquiry on the nature of human civilization strikingly echoed the tradition of classical learning. When one reads a book, the reading must contribute to a better understanding of the principle of the universe. Such knowledge about things would enable the reading public to constitute society and the state as well. Regardless whether or not readers purchased the books with the motivation of following highbrow literature, the authors and the editors felt pride in making and selling the books. Printing was a noble business. Reading a book was seen as the foundation of human civilization, and there would be none else who could continue the duty except ex-yangban writers such as Yus, they believed. Therefore, the strong tone of idealism and universalism characterized the newborn popular books of *t'ongron* at this particular moment in the late 1900s.

In the same fashion, Yu Ch'i-hyöng also wrote *Introduction to Economics* 經濟學概論 (*Kyöngjaehak karon*) as a privately-made guidebook for new science whereby it was designed for students who wished to pass the civil service examinations. Although it is unclear exactly when this book was published, it seems that Ch'i-hyöng finished the book before 1909.²⁰² In the beginning, he

²⁰¹ Yu Ch'i-hyöng, "Che il p'an sō" 第一版序 [Introduction of the 1st Edition], *Pöbhaek t'ongnon* 法學通論 [the Introduction to Jurisprudence], 3rd edition (Seoul: Kwanghan sörim, 1910), 1.

²⁰² Yu Ch'i-hyöng, Sin Hae-yöng ed., *Kyöngjaehak* 經濟學 [Economics] (Unknown: Unknown), an old book collection of the National Library of Korea. This book is composed of 199 pages with four pages of errata at the

called modern economics “the subject which clarifies the principle of managing a state and caring for the country in the interest of people 經國濟民 (kyōngguk chaemin) by improving the materialistic condition.”²⁰³ Public-mindedness characterized how he understood modern economics: “Even if one individual family increased their income and enhanced their happiness, such a technique does not belong to economics according to my terms.”²⁰⁴ Learning should improve the society and the community, he wrote, so “economics discusses relationships in a human world 人生의 關係 (insaeng ŭi kwangye).” He sensed that modern economics was the extension of the previous metaphysics because both shared the same goal of learning for public service. This new discipline was extensively focusing on “the demand and supply of necessary materials in a human life: food, clothes and housing.” So, as far as we can tell from this aspect, he wrote the text for the benefit of would-be-rulers, and the elitist tone remained intact and even helpful for the development of the new genre in Korean print culture.

The transformation of Korean elitism, therefore, cannot be explained without the hybridity of classical learning of the indigenous literati and new science introduced from Japan. Books were supposed to contain the ultimate truth and to represent it timelessly in written words. In *Introduction on Jurisprudence*, similarly, its author, Sōng-chun, explained its *raison d'être* by borrowing the old terminology of the Way 道 (to). Its author claimed the following:

Those who want to study jurisprudence must start with understanding the meaning of law. If they want to comprehend its meaning, they, most of all, must be able to recognize 明知 (myōngji) the commonness and the difference of law 法 (pōb) and the Way 道 (to). Thus, I will begin to explain this at first. A human is the supreme being of whole creatures. Given from

end. Its editor, Sin Hae-yōng 申海永, died of an illness in October 1909 on his way to Tokyo. So, the book must have been finished before 1909. “Kamdok Sin Hae-yōng pyōngmol simal” 監督 申海永氏 病沒始末 [The Details of the Death of Sin Hae-yōng, a supervisor of Korean Students in Japan], *Tae Han hūnghakbo* 6 (Oct, 1909) 64-66.

²⁰³ Yu Ch'i-hyōng, *Kyōngjaehak*, 1.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 2.

the Heaven, he has indefinite liberty over his body and mind. As an independent being, his mind must be independent from the tyranny of trivial emotions 性情의 是非 (sŏnjŏng ŭi sibi). Also, his body cannot be imprisoned by the whims of another person. Deciding between good and evil, a human should have his own standards and be ready to confront anyone who challenges the rule. In spite of these two [inborn] freedoms, nonetheless, there must be a common rule to make a person complete his personal obligation 其人된 本分 (kiin tŏen ponbun) [as a member of the society] and live with the social norms of the society 社會에 立한 通義 (sahoe ae iphan t'ongŭi). ... Two kinds of the obligation, thus, appear: the internal and the external rules. The internal is identified as the Way 道 (to) and the external, the law 法 (pŏb).²⁰⁵

As we can see from this paragraph, the author understood the nature of modern law by applying the classical nomenclature of Song metaphysics. He carefully learned the rationale of jurisprudence as an advanced field of classical learning in the same manner that Yu Ch'i-hyŏng adopted economics. Jurisprudence was the learning for the perfection of morality in society. To them, it seemed that modern political science was harmonious with that which many previous philosophers had studied for many centuries. He even implied the statist perspective that the state should discipline society by law and force because the state exists for the perfection of morality. In his opinion, therefore, law and moral rules are indissoluble. Respectable men such as him should study both of them if they wished to participate in statecraft.

Thus, their philosophical background in classical learning helped them introduce to Korea new knowledge from Japan. The Kigye Yu family in particular, with an outstanding legacy as yangban nobles, recognized it as their duty to enlighten people who were willing to be a part of civilization. In this sense, they had no objection toward the growth of print capitalism. They thought the market could be an alternative forum for popular enlightenment. It was important to improve public welfare by circulating books: in economics and jurisprudence. Ignorance was immoral as well as malicious to the common good. They argued that an individual could not control “freedom”

²⁰⁵ Yu Sŏng-chun, *Pŏbbak tongnon* (Seoul: Kwanghan sŏrim, 1910), 2-3.

自由 (chayu) or “emotions” 性情 (sǒngjǒng) without internal and external rules. Without knowledge, all people would become the same as “the poor and the outcast” 貧人賤者 (pin’in ch’ŏnja). It is important to note that the commercialization of educational texts signaled the substantial expansion of elitist discourse beyond the previous boundary of kinship networks. In print capitalism and the new examination system, anyone could improve their level of knowledge and potentially become a man of the government if he could spend money wisely at bookstores. All Korean males had the possibility to stand equal when all men would become new yangbans. The genres of *tongron* and *kaeron* were spreading the elite virtues, which motivated ambitious Korean boys to go to schools and bookstores over the next two decades.

3. Schools and Bookstores

Once the Japanese directly took charge of the examinations from 1910, Korean authors could no longer compete with Japanese authors in both schools and bookstores. Most of all, the colonial state monopolized the production and distribution of school textbooks, and no privately-made books could compete with these modern canons. The Yu family gave up the production of Korean *tongron* books. The market shares of the early books for popular education on political science dwindled. Now that the new examinations emphasized preliminary education more than advanced study in political science, Korean educational books also lost their previous liveliness and devolved into an inferior status. It was one reason that private publishing companies invested so much more in vernacular fiction than in academic books.²⁰⁶ The Japanese colonization disoriented the Korean literary market by discouraging Korean authors to write in certain genres—to say nothing of the powerful police censorship.

²⁰⁶ Sang-ho Ro, “Reorienting Colonial Book Market”, *Kukjae Koryŏhak* 13 (2009).

However, the colonial government found that it was more essential to control schools than bookstores. The state allowed autonomy to private Korean booksellers as long as they did not violate the police rules. Interestingly, Confucian canons were still circulating widely in Korean society through commercial networks. Even though Korean authors could no longer discuss the new science, the Japanese government also did not prohibit the Confucian texts. This negotiation between the state and society kept classical learning alive among many literary families because these were the only possible “Korean” books which enabled Koreans to keep their scholarly tradition of philosophy and statecraft. According to one catalog of a private bookseller in 1914, the Confucian texts still appeared at the top of the sales. As we can see from table 5.2, this merchant was selling the Korean vernacular translations and annotations 懸吐具解 (*hyŏnto kubae*) of Confucian books.

<Table 5.2. Four Books and Classics in the Stock of Tŏkhŭng sŏrim 德興書林>

Title	Price (<i>wŏn</i> 圓 <i>chŏn</i> 錢)
<i>Elementary Learning with Korean Vernacular Translation and Annotations</i> 懸吐具解集註小學 (2 volumes 冊)	1 <i>wŏn</i>
<i>Original Text of Mencius with Translation and Annotations</i> 原本具解孟子集註 (2 volumes 冊)	1 <i>wŏn</i> 20 <i>chŏn</i>
<i>Mencius with Annotations</i> 集註孟子	1 <i>wŏn</i>
<i>Doctrine of the Mean with Annotations</i> 集註中庸	25 <i>chŏn</i>
<i>Great Learning with Annotations</i> 集註大學	15 <i>chŏn</i>
<i>Classic of Poetry with Annotations</i> 集註詩傳	1 <i>wŏn</i> 20 <i>chŏn</i>
<i>Classic of History with Annotations</i> 集註書傳	1 <i>wŏn</i> 10 <i>chŏn</i>
<i>The Analects with Annotations</i> 集註論語	1 <i>wŏn</i>

<i>Classic of Changes with Annotations</i> 集註周易	1 wŏn
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Of course, the value of Confucian texts was no longer like before the 1910s. In this particular store, the most expensive book was not *Mencius*, but *Japanese-Korean Dictionary* 日鮮大字典 (*IlSŏn tajajŏn*) which cost two wŏn. If a customer could afford to buy *The Analects* or *Mencius*, then he or she must have considered whether it would be better or worse to buy the school textbook on mathematics 算術教科書 (*Sansul kyogwasŏ*) instead at the same price. *Advanced Mathematics* 中等算學 was being sold at a more expensive price than *Classics of Poetry*. Although the market price does not always mark a book's social or cultural value, the fact that Confucian canons were traded at a lower market prices reflected the intriguing change in Korean print culture.²⁰⁷

The Japanese Empire also did not want to eliminate the traditional morality of Korean society by prohibiting the circulation of Confucian texts. From the perspective of Koreans, the books were useful for learning Chinese characters which the Japanese language also shared. The literacy they gained from reading old books could be advantageous in schooling, because colonial education also heavily used Chinese characters in many subjects. More importantly, the moral doctrine of classical learning was adopted by the Japanese Empire equally in the metropole and the colony. As Carol Gluck points out, the Japanese Empire was not at all hostile to the old canons, as its Imperial Rescript on Education 教育勅語 (Kyōiku chokugo [J]) demonstrated. Because Confucian morality was an important part of Japanese state-building, the colonial government also

²⁰⁷ Kim Tong-jin, *Kode sosŏl Sŏmdongjijŏn tugeŏppjŏn* 古代小説蟾同知傳 [An Ancient Tale of Mr. Tout] (Seoul: Tŏkhŭng sŏrim, 1914) 42. At the same time, commercial publishers printed much classic and vernacular literature in the 1910s and 20s because these texts written pre-twentieth century did not have a copyright. Regarding this point, I appreciate a comment from Professor Sheldon Garon. I will revisit the revival of classics in the next chapter.

maintained the same policy in public education for Koreans.²⁰⁸ Thus, Four Books and Five Classics managed to survive in print culture as “Korean” as well as “Japanese” texts which the state and the society used for different purposes, respectively.

After 1910, a new kind of bookstore which opened in Seoul draws our attention. As Korea had become part of the Japanese Empire, so had its literary market. Japanese bookstore chains began to open their own shops in Seoul and jumped into the newly-opened colonial market. The first and most aggressive Japanese chain was Ōsakayago shoten 大阪屋號書店. Following the initial success of this shop, another company Maruzen 丸善 also hurried to expand their network to Korea. Ōsakayago shoten was opened in Honchō 本町, a new commercial boulevard and a “Japan town” of the city, where many Japanese immigrants opened new businesses. While Maruzen sold Western books, Ōsakayago shoten attracted Korean students by selling a variety of Japanese books, from school textbooks, magazines, and fiction to study-aid books. If we compare this Japanese bookstore with Korean bookstores, it is clear that the former visualized a new culture whereas the latter maintained native and popular content such as with vernacular fiction and the Four Books and Five Classics.

It is noteworthy that these Japanese bookstores became a popular place where Korean schoolboys hung around. When the March First Movement erupted in 1919, for example, a student named Pak Hŭng-wŏn happened to join in the demonstration when he was shopping at Ōsakayago shoten. He was a freshman of the Korean Professional School of Pharmacy 朝鮮藥學校. This twenty-year-old student was typical in his lifestyle; he lived at a boarding house called hasuk 下宿 in Seoul, for he had come to the city to study at a professional school. On his way to and from the

²⁰⁸ Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) 102-111.

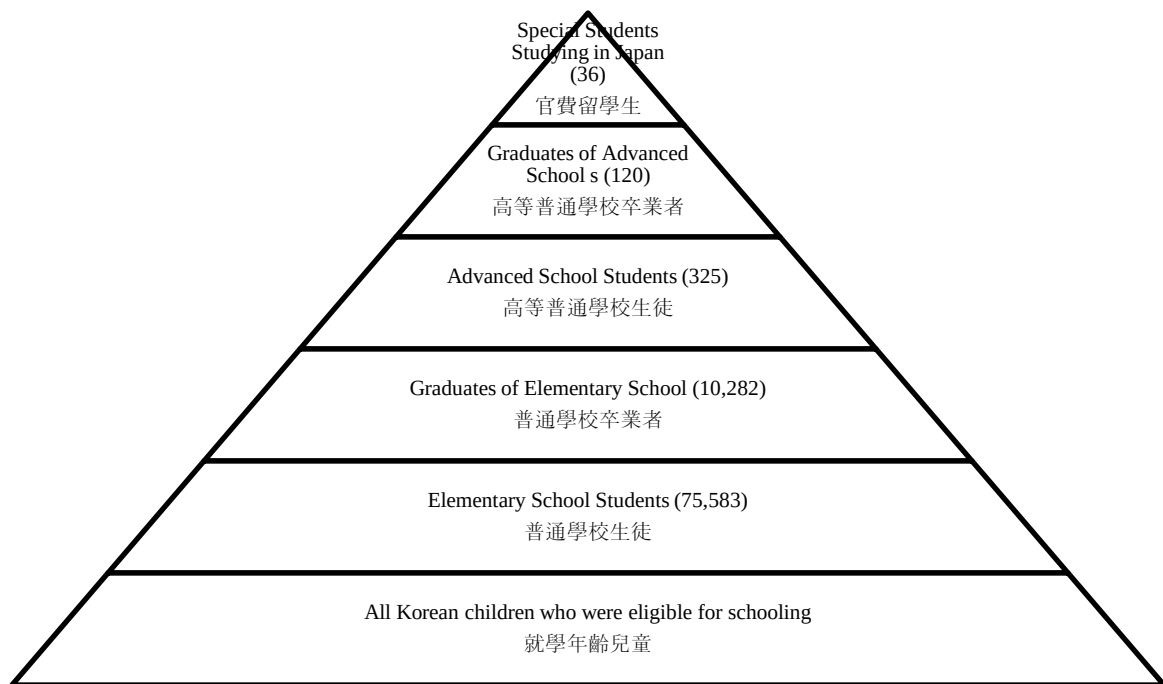
school, he often visited the Japanese bookstore in Honchō in order to buy reference books 参考書 (sankōsho [J]; ch'amgosō [K]). On March 1, following his daily routine, he found the street demo and decided to participate in the protests.²⁰⁹ It is noteworthy that two different desires, success at a colonial school and Korean independence, coexisted in the mind of many student protestors in 1919. Ex-yangban writers such as Yu Sōng-jun and Yu Ch'i-hyōng must have had some complaints about the Japanese rule, but they never confronted the state as these students did on that day. Korean students at professional schools and advanced schools rushed out to the streets to protest the ethnic segregation and the militaristic rule of the empire, though they had come to terms with and accepted Japanese teachers and were willing to learn, speak and write as the ethnic Japanese students did.

This mixed experience of alienation and assimilation characterized young Korean school elites in the early colonial period. Floating from their boarding houses to bookstores, from bookstores to schools, they highlight the hybrid nature of Korean bookish culture of that period, especially among examination elites. Given their successful records at entrance exams, they must have loyally read school textbooks instead of reading vernacular fiction. Some may have bought *tongron* or *kaeron* books written in Korean from Korean stores, but the majority struggled with Japanese books in their everyday life. Despite their mimicry of the Japanese, their opportunities for success were much fewer and far between than those of the ethnic Japanese. As Figure 4 shows, the percent of school drop-outs as well as examination failure was extremely high in the early colonial period.

<Figure 4. The Ladder of Success in the Colonial Examination Regime>²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ “Pak Hūng-wōn sinmun chosō” 朴興源訊問調書 (the preliminary hearing of the accused, Pak Hūng-wōn), *Hanminjok toknip undongsa charyojip* 한민족독립운동사자료집 [The Collection of Documents on the Korean Independence Movement], vol.17 at the Database of Korean History (<http://db.history.go.kr>).

²¹⁰ Chōsen sōtokufu ed, *Chōsen sōtokufu shisei nenpō Taishō 6 nenban* 朝鮮總督府施政年報大正 6 年版 [the Yearbook of the Japanese Government-general in Korea in 1917] (Reprint, Tokyo: Kuresu shuppan, 1991), 265, 268-269.



According to these statistics in 1917, the chance to succeed at colonial exams was extremely low. Only thirteen percent of first graders finished the entire curriculum successfully in elementary school. There must be various factors to explain this high number of drop-outs, but the difficulty of studying in a foreign language was one major reason. In addition, those students who did succeed still had to pass the entrance examinations in order to advance to higher schools. Three percent of degree-holders from elementary schools earned the chance to study in a big city where “Advanced Schools for Koreans” were located. Even after they entered the schools, two thirds dropped out in the course of their schooling—perhaps, because they wanted to leave or because they failed at tests. The graduation to “Advanced Schools” was not the end, either. They had to choose either to go to Japan or to study more at professional schools in Korea. Even the thirty-six successful students at the top of this pyramid also had to prove themselves again by competing with Japanese candidates

in the metropole. Then, if they did survive in Japanese middle schools, they could directly enter officialdom as junior officials in Japan as well as Korea.²¹¹

Once they ended up reaching, at some point along the way, a higher level of this pyramid, they acquired a high degree of assimilation as Japanized Korean elites. As their ancestors read and wrote classical Chinese, these students spoke, read and wrote fluently in Japanese. Because many people failed in the middle of these long competitions, they needed to find an alternative career path by using their literacy and education. The second career option was to attend a professional school which the GGK authorized for Korean education. There were five professional schools in Seoul, such as the Keijō Law School 京城專修學校 (Keijō zenshū gakkō [J]), the Keijō School of Engineering 京城工業專門學校 (Keijō kōgyō senmon gakkō [J]), the Agricultural School 農林學校專門科 (Nōrin gakkō senmonka [J]), the Keijō Medical School 京城醫學專門學校 (Keijō igaku senmon gakkō [J]), and the Korean School of Pharmacy.²¹² In addition, private professional schools also adopted many candidates who had failed in the competition for civil officialdom. In 1918, one year before the March First Movement, about 800 students were studying at those schools.²¹³ This student group was constituted of the new young and literate population which was well-educated, but which felt that they were not treated as equally as were the imperial

²¹¹ Novelist Yōm Sang-sōb 廉想涉 (1897-1963) sarcastically depicted the pressure on Korean elite students in Japanese schools in his short story *Before 1919* 萬歲前 (*Mansaejōn*). The protagonist is a Korean student in Japan living on a tight schedule of “exams” at school. When he visits his older brother, the first question the brother asks is: “What did you do at your school exams?” [그래 학교의 시험은 어떻게 되었단 말이냐]? He is then scolded by his brother, for not being so serious about schooling, and he defends himself, saying, “[School education] should have nothing to do with an ambition to wear a bullshit line [똥테 (ttongt’ae)] (I always called the golden line a shit line) around my head.” The golden line to which he contemptuously refers here symbolizes the position of a junior official 判任官 who wears the golden decoration on his hat. Yōm Sang-sōb, “Mansaejōn 萬歲前,” *20saegi Han’guk sosōl* 20世紀韓國小說 [Korean Fictions in the 20th Century] vol.2 Yōm Sang-sōb (Seoul: Ch’angbi, 2009) 127-128.

²¹² Yi Sang 李箱 (1910-1937)’s work well exemplifies the dysfunctional mentality of Korean elite writers from alternative career paths. He graduated from the Keijō Professional School of Engineering and published short stories mostly about the frustrated masculinity of educated Korean men.

²¹³ Chōsen sōtokufu ed, *Chōsen sōtokufu shisei nenpō Taishō 6 nenban* 朝鮮總督府施政年報大正 6 年版 [the Yearbook of the Japanese Government-general in Korea in 1917] (Reprint, Tokyo: Kuresu shuppan, 1991) 281.

subjects. They embodied the social and cultural foundation in which Korean elite writers wished to find sympathetic readers as equal creole fellows after 1919.

4. Cultural Aristocrats: the Case of Yu Chin-o 俞鎮午 (1906-1987)

As Michael Robinson points out, post-1919 Korean society experienced the sharp increase in books and periodicals under the new colonial policy of “cultural rule.”²¹⁴ Many Korean degree-holders took new jobs as professional writers and journalists at newly-opened newspaper companies and presses after 1919. If the 1920s marked the first decade of modern Korean literature, it was in part because the average educational level of the society gradually increased through the colonial education and in part because many literate men were looking for jobs in the booming printing business. The conciliatory Japanese colonial rule in the early 20s reached its zenith when the empire allowed the colony to have its own university in 1924. When the new Keijō Imperial University 京城帝國大學 (Keijō teigoku daigaku [JJ]) accepted the first class of the year, forty freshmen were ethnic Korean men. Among them, there was one boy from an ex-yangban family, the only son of Yu Ch'i-hyŏng, the first author of the Korean introductory book on economics. His name was Yu Chin-o 俞鎮午 (1906-1987) and he later became a prominent political, intellectual and cultural leader of postcolonial South Korea.²¹⁵ The kinship organization Kigye Yus which included Yu Kil-jun, Yu Sŏng-jun, Yu Ch'i-hyŏng and him was still decisive in Chin-o's success at colonial schools. His father strictly educated Chin-o from the age of four. The first book which he memorized was a traditional educational text for beginners, *One Thousand Characters* 千字文 (*Ch'ŏnjamun*). Under his

²¹⁴ Michael Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

²¹⁵ After the Korean War, he not only became a leading professor of jurisprudence at the new Korea University, but also mentored two young politicians, Kim Tae-chung 金大中 (1924-2009) and Kim Yŏng-sam 金泳三 (1927-), and his two students became presidents of the sixth Republic of Korea after 1987.

father's hard training, including physical punishment, he quickly mastered the basic Chinese characters in one year and moved on to an education in vernacular scripts. At the time when he started school, he had already finished the basic literacy education at home.²¹⁶

As yangban sons did in the late Chosŏn period, he had to combine his own literate merit and familial background. He passed the entrance examinations to the Keijō Advanced School 京城高等普通學校 and then advanced to the Keijo Imperial University in the 1910s and early 20s. After he entered the new imperial university in Seoul, he enjoyed the moment when ethnic Japanese finally treated him respectfully. In his memoir, he vividly recalled:

I could puff my chest out, whenever I wore a university hat which was decorated with three pieces of zelkova leaves in gold along with two white lines of surrounding the leaves. ... The most exciting moment which I devoured was the visit to streets of Chingoge 진고개 [i.e., Honchō, the Japanese commercial districts in colonial Seoul]. The Japanese who always looked down on ethnic Koreans changed their attitude as soon as they noticed my university hat.²¹⁷

Of course, the Japanese Empire granted such prestige and privilege only to those Koreans who succeeded at the examinations (figure 5 and figure 6).

<Figure 5. A Picture of Yu Chin-o, his sisters and his father, Yu Ch'i-hyŏng, in the back>

²¹⁶ Yu Chin-o, “Ōmōni ūi kiōk” 어머니의 記憶 (My memory of Mother), *Kurum wi ūi mansang: Yu Chin-o susangjip* 구름위의 漫想: 俞鎮午隨想集 [Floating Thoughts above the Clouds: Essays of Yu Chin-o] (Seoul: Iljogak, 1966) 187-189.

²¹⁷ Yu Chin-o, “Naŭi tachak saenghwal – Iljeha ch’ogi pōbmunhakbu sijōl 나 의 大學生活-日帝下 初期 法文學部 時節 [My Undergraduate Life when I was a student of College of Humanity and Law under the Japanese Colonial Rule]”, *Chōlmŭn nal ūi chamasang* (Seoul: Pakyŏngsa, 1976) 26-27.



<Figure 6. Yu Chin-o in a school uniform in 1928>



He was one of the most successful cases in the Japanese assimilation policy, especially considering that ethnic Japanese men also struggled to enter the imperial university. His ability in the Japanese language and education in the official curriculum was solid enough so as to outstrip even the ethnic Japanese boys. Of course, the university education was also administered entirely in Japanese. Even after 1945, he clearly remembered the names of Japanese faculty members at the university. Especially, young philosophers such as Abe Yoshishige 安倍能成 (1883-1966), Hayami Hiroshi 速水滉 (1876-1943) and Ueno Naoteru 上野直昭 (1882-1973) impressed this young Korean. Yu Chin-o called them the “Iwanami Group” which spread new thoughts and trends of Taisho culture from Japan to the colony. Growing up in the liberal atmosphere of the newborn university, he read Japanese books, not to mention school textbooks, extensively. The university campus in Seoul was like a little Tokyo in the colony. This young and prospective man remained aloof from Korean popular audiences. He devoted himself to “boundless reading” 濫讀 (namdok) of non-Korean books. Although he did read some Korean literary magazines, his intellectual and cultural life was connected to the imperial city of Tokyo.

His reading practice resembled that of yangban aristocrats such as Hong Sŏk-ju of the nineteenth century (chapter one). Once he mastered the canons, his intellectual journey gradually deviated from the textbooks. The virtue of erudition 博學 (pakhak) lingered on in the Korean elitism. We can take a look at his extensive reading practice by analyzing his diary, published in 1964. According to him, this diary was written in 1927 when he was a twenty-year-old student at the Keijō Imperial University. As President of Korea University in 1964, Yu Chin-o generously opened his personal account to the reading public, “in order to provide contemporary students a chance to

compare their college life with that of a student forty years ago.”²¹⁸ Not surprisingly, he heavily edited the diary before it was published. Originally, many of his accounts were written in Japanese or English, so he had to translate them into Korean. Sometimes, he erased parts about his private life. What remained was only the record of 106 days. Although the credibility of this diary as a historical source is questionable, it enables us to glimpse the everyday life of the colonial elite student in 1927.

His boundless reading of Japanese books highlights how well-educated Koreans went beyond the confines of school textbooks by using their colonial education. As he did before entering the university, Chin-o read the school textbooks in order to get a better score at the examinations. His diary illustrates that the preparation for class examinations took a significant part of his everyday life. All classes were taught in Japanese, so he also had to take exams in Japanese together with native Japanese-language speakers. But he never complained of the linguistic difficulty in communication in the diary. When he was freed from the duty of preparing for exams, however, he devoured non-canonical books written in Japanese and sometimes in German. Korean vernacular fiction barely held his attention except in so far as the memory he had that his late sister loved to read them.²¹⁹ His favorite bookstores must have been Osakayago shoten and Maruzen, since he regularly purchased Japanese books on the topics of literature, literary criticism, and political science as well as popular novels. His overall valuation of Korean print culture was extremely low, although he subscribed to a Korean left-wing magazine, *The Beacon of Korea* 朝鮮之光 (*Chosŏn chi kwang*). One of his favorite journals was *The Reconstruction* 改造 (*Kaizō* [J]), a Japanese moderate left-wing magazine. On 23 April 1927, for example, he read short stories by Hayashi Fusao 林房雄 (1903-1975) and Yokomitsu Riichi 横光利一 (1898-1947) in the magazine. He was curiously following a

²¹⁸ Yu Chin-o, “Chŏlmŭn nal ūi chawasang 젊은날의 自畫像 (A Portrait of My Own Young Days)”, *Kurŭm wiŭi mansang* (Seoul: Iljogak, 1966) 194.

²¹⁹ Ibid. 201.

new Japanese artistic movement of proletariat literature and New Sense Movement 新感覺派 (sinkagakuha [JJ]), so *The Reconstruction* was his own textbook for erudition.

In addition, Chin-o enthusiastically kept up with the new Japanese publications in political science. This aristocratic man of a noble family who studied at this privileged imperial university grew interested in the Japanese socialist art movement. At a bookstore in 1927, he bought a new book entitled *Keizaiigaku hiban* 經濟學批判 (*Einer Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*), the Japanese translation of Karl Marx's book. Although his interest in the Marxist theory was more related to curiosity than belief, he was, certainly, one of few Koreans who studied the new theory in 1920s Korea. He calmly recorded one interesting discovery from his regular visits to a Japanese bookstore:

It has been raining for a whole day. Quiet outside. A rainy day in January is quite rare. I wish that the climate of Korea would become like this forever. Then, Koreans could work outside as much as they want and they can earn more money. The formula which Marx wrote at the introduction of *Keizaiigaku hiban* is fascinating. It is clear and straightforward. I am not sure, though, if he is right or wrong, at my current level of knowledge.²²⁰

He remained engaged by Japanese Marxism. He read the new translations of Japanese socialists Kawakami Hajime 河上肇 (1879-1946) and Miyakawa Minoru 宮川實 in 1927: *Keizaiigaku hiban shosetsu* from Kōbunkan 弘文館 publishing company. Kawakami Hajime designated this book as Volume 6 of the series entitled *The Collection of the Marxist Theory* マルキシズム叢書 (Marukisizumu sōsho).²²¹ Chin-o acquired this latest edition as soon as the book was circulated throughout the Japanese Empire.

His interest in Marxism and the socialist movement was purely academic. He explored the new thought because he wished to be an erudite man, not because he wanted to be a fighter for

²²⁰ Ibid. 197.

²²¹ Karl Marx, translated by Kawakami Hajime and Miyakawa Minoru, *Keizaiigaku hiban josetsu* 經濟學批判序説 [The Introduction of Criticism on Political Economy] (Kyoto: Kōbunkan, 1927).

labor unions or Korean proletariats. Regardless of his intention, Yu Chin-o began to become known as “a fellow traveler” (poputčiki [Russian]), 同伴者 (tongbanja) in the Korean literary market at the end of the 1920s. Mostly, former members of the Korean Federation of Proletariat Artists (KAPF, Korea Artista Proleta Federatio) welcomed his writings on proletariat art as the work of a sympathetic artist. Although he was far from being a member of the class-conscious intelligentsia, he and his university classmate, Yi Hyo-sök 李孝石, drew public attention as the young generation of socialist writers.²²² Accordingly, his thorough education in the Japanese language and culture brought about this unexpected consequence in the end. High education and excellent ability in Japanese enabled indigenous elites like him to enjoy non-canonical texts. After they could read and speak Japanese after all examinations, the Japanese Empire could no longer prevent them from freely reading and learning whatever they wished. Japanized elites such as Yu Chin-o were not interested in translating Japanese imperial propaganda. Rather, they positioned themselves as the harbingers of new ideas. This was so attractive to Yu Chin-o and his friends because no one else could do what they were doing, at least in Korea, and for the Korean reading public. As he approached the end of his colonial education, he faced the difficult choice between entering the colonial state as an ethnic minority or joining Korean popular society as an elite writer.

5. Unexpected Crossing

After all the years of training and education, Yu Chin-o never took the civil service examinations for the position of senior official. With his degree from the imperial university, he was an eligible candidate to be a senior official of sōnin 奏任. Becoming a junior official was not even

²²² Yi Kang-ŏn, “Tongbanja chakga’ui hyōngsōng kwa Yu Chin-o ūi ch’ogi chakp’um” 同伴者作家’의 形成과 兪鎮午의 初期作品 [The formation of ‘Fellow Travelers’ and the early works of Yu Chin-o], *Inmun kwahak yōngu* 2 (1983), 6-7.

considered by him as a possible option. He never clarified his reasons for abandoning the preparation of the exams at the last minute. Briefly, he recalled that he simply excluded other possible careers such as a journalist writer or a minor bureaucrat, for he disliked them. Instead, he went back to the colonial school as a teacher of modern law. As soon as he stepped off of the ladder of success and the protection of the colonial state that came with it, however, it did not take long for him to realize that Japanized Koreans were troublesome outsiders. In particular, the ethnic Japanese community viewed Koreans with hybrid identities with suspicion. His high-level education and knowledge were not so desirable from the perspective of the Japanese, because this mimic man could replace the imperial masters. Yu Chin-o, in fact, faced the same situation as his father and the popular genre of Korean educational books. That is, Korean elites became useless in popular education and culture because the Japanese authors and educators could do it better. His father had chosen retirement when he faced with the propaganda that Koreans as a whole could not civilize themselves without the help of the Japanese, whereas Yu Chin-o's level of mimicry was almost perfect. He had the degree given by the Japanese Imperial University to prove it.

Like his father, Yu Chin-o evaded head-to-head battles with Japanese educators and authors. Unlike his father, however, Yu Chin-o began to write popular genres of Korean vernacular books: not the *tongron* genre, but short stories and essays in Korean vernacular. His reputation as a literary writer started as “a fellow traveler” as I mentioned above, but soon he switched to more moderate and delicate styles of elitism, giving up the socialist artistic trend. Instead of narrating about proletariats, he described urban landscapes, modern girls, café waitresses, and elite gentlemen. By describing the fragments of modernity, he created micro-dramas of human relationships. But this did not mean that he became a professional novelist. Writing fiction was his avocation, while he was still teaching modern law at Posŏng Professional School 普成專門學校 (Posŏng chŏnmun hakkyo).

When he picked a battle, he considered the ramifications it would have for his own future. And he concluded that working for Korean print culture would be more beneficial to his ambition as a man of letters than serving the colonial state as a bureaucrat and a mimic man. It seemed plausible to the Japanized Korean elite that the reading public of Korean society would be mature enough to listen to his works in the 1920s and early 30s.

One of his novels, *Lecturer Kim and Professor T* 金講士와 T教授 (*Kim kangsa wa T kyosu*) illustrates how he persuaded the Korean reading public to accept him as one of their own. Published in 1935 at the magazine *Three Thousands Ri* 三千里 (*Samch'ölli*), this short story was a biographic novel of Yu Chin-o himself. The narrator of this story was an ethnic Korean man who graduated from Tokyo Imperial University. Regardless of his outstanding education in Japan, this character did not appear as a confident man who looked forward to enjoying a bright future as a successful and ambitious assimilated degree-holder. Injecting himself into the story, Yu Chin-o depicted this Japanized Korean man as a victim of ethnic segregation. The protagonist is described in the vernacular tongue as “a young master of a noble family” 도련님 (*toryönnim*) and “a nerdy bookworm” 책상물림 (*ch'aeksang mullim*). Regardless of his university degree, the main character, named Kim Man-p'il, spent his life jobless in colonial Korea. One and a half years after the graduation, he finally took an opportunity to teach one course at one colonial school in which he was the only ethnic Korean faculty member.²²³

This story intentionally victimized the identity of “Lecturer Kim” in order to symbolize the ambivalent status of a well-educated but enervated Korean man in the colonial society vis-à-vis “Professor T,” an ethnic Japanese degree-holder. Lecturer Kim did not think about colonialism or

²²³ Yu Chin-o, “Kim Kangsa wa T kyosu” 金講士와 T教授 [Lecturer Kim and Professor T], *20segi Han'guk sosöl* vol.8 (Seoul: Ch'angbi, 2005) 51.

Korean independence. His only concern was to save his temporary position at the school. He was able to get this job, thanks to the recommendation letter of his Japanese advisor, “Professor N” of Tokyo Imperial University. Yu Chin-o added one more identity marker to Lecturer Kim for the purpose of entertaining the audience. In this fiction, the character Kim tried to hide his past activities of supporting the Marxists. He was a member of a left-wing student group called The Society of Literary Critics 文學批評會 (munhak pip’yŏnghoe), but he had to keep it secret to maintain his job in the colony. When he begged for a job from a colonial bureaucrat, he lied that he was innocent of “dangerous thoughts” 思想問題 (sasang munje).

Lecturer Kim symbolized the dangerous hybrid identity of a university-educated Korean socialist in the colony. His colleague, Professor T, tenaciously kept his eyes on Kim Man-p’il. Professor T slowly drove him into a corner, by gossiping about his pro-socialistic activities and publications in the Korean language about German socialists. The tension between Lecturer Kim and Professor T was not solely related to the ethnicity or race, but caused by the fact that Kim Man-p’il caught up with the Japanese by imitating them. Professor T pressured him, by saying “I read your wonderful articles about new German writers. It was very impressive, because there are only few [ethnic] Japanese who understand German literature as much as you do. ... I hope that you continue your writing [in Korean].” These words sounded like a death sentence to Lecturer Kim, because he knew that his articles contained “dangerous thoughts.” He said, “The writing was all about German left-wing writers and such kind of writings must be kept in secret if I do not want to lose this job at this school.”²²⁴

The fiction met a tragic end when the colonial government noticed his “dangerous thoughts” which he learned in Tokyo. The colonial bureaucrat who had initially arranged his job summoned

²²⁴ Ibid. 64.

him. Being nervous about the recall, he reluctantly paid a visit to the house of the high official. Turning to him, the bureaucrat yelled at him, saying “That’s why [Japanese] people call Koreans disrespectful! ... I trusted you. But how can you deceive me so cunningly and humiliate me in public? ... Didn’t you say that you have nothing to do with ideology?”²²⁵ Lecturer Kim Man-p’il desperately defended himself, but he realized that such an effort would be useless as soon as Professor T walked out of the door. This short story ended at that moment and the readers could easily imagine that this elite man would lose his job again. It was of course fiction. Even if the story was inspired by Yu’s personal experience, only a few ethnic Koreans would ever have similar experiences to Lecturer Kim. Since the fiction combined multiple factors of danger—the ethnicity, high education, and socialist tendencies of the character—it would be an overstatement to argue that Yu Chin-o wished to protest the ethnic inequality of the colony. This kind of tension and grumbling could exist only at the top of Korean society, since few actually received the university education.

It is important, however, to note that Yu Chin-o believed that his personal experience could receive popular sympathy. Kim’s anxiety was unusual and elitist from the beginning. Only Japanized Koreans such as him would experience intensive engagements with imperial masters or have tasted the interrogation about their dangerous hybridity. Upon request, they should be always ready to prove their level of assimilation. Popular audiences would not feel any interest in this story unless they could regard his suffering as one of “their own” issues. As Yu Chin-o grew up in an exceptional background, Kim Man-p’il was not an ordinary man at all. When Yu Chin-o circulated his personal story in the form of a vernacular short story, he did so for he expected that the reading public would be sympathetic to “Korean” elites. Such sense of commonness signaled the increasing degree of integration of Korean print culture, surprisingly related to the colonial educational system. Namely, many school drop-outs and failed candidates would understand Kim’s frustration that a Korean

²²⁵ Ibid. 77.

could not become a Japanese imperial subject, no matter how hard he tried. And, the wide distribution of elitist anxiety through print culture created a new potential—that creole nationalism could become a popular movement.

Although this novel cannot prove the growth of Korean civil society or nationalism, the case of Yu Chin-o can demonstrate how some Japanized elites writers appealed to the general public in Korea. This new way of mass communication was different from the kinship organizations or friendship networks in the late Chosŏn period. It was more open and horizontally expanded over the society. He respected the Korean reading public, and popular readers were willing to consider him their own. Although the elite identity defined many parts of his life and public activities, the gap between high and popular culture was closing up substantially in the early 1930s. The integration of elite writers and popular audiences, therefore, emerged as an unexpected consequence of such dynamism among the colonial regime, the examination systems, and Korean elitism in literary culture.

Conclusion

In the end, it was a matter of choice whether colonial elites took sides with mass society or the state. The earlier elites of the nineteenth century felt little sense of companionship with the reading public since their high education meant difference and hierarchy. By contrast, Yu Chin-o, son of Kigye Yus, wished that the Korean reading public would understand the frustration and humiliation which he felt because of the ethnic Japanese. The successful candidates of colonial schools spoke Japanese fluently and even admired the culture of the metropole. The degree of assimilation increased according to the level of colonial education. But, interestingly, the assimilation caused alienation, because Koreans could not become exactly like the Japanese regardless of their

effort. It was the irony of the civilizing mission, which undercut the colonial project. Once they failed at tests and dropped out of the exams, their frustrations pushed them into the other direction in Korean society. The print culture and literary market became an alternative space where creole elites could practice their own subjectivity without the imperial master. The market and society had matured enough to soothe the elites with popular support.

Therefore, many new Korean writers of the 20s and 30s appeared from the realm of the examination elites. Unlike popular writers of the 1900s and 10s, the young generation of so-called “cultural nationalists” had intricately striven to be like the Japanese. Some prominent writers such as Hong Myŏng-hŭi 洪命熹 grew up in a powerful yangban kinship organization like Yu Chin-o. Others, such as Yi Kwang-su 李光洙, had a chance to study abroad thanks to the support of religious groups. But, they chose equally to work at non-government jobs, as journalists, novelists, essayists or teachers after finishing their education at colonial or Japanese schools.

SIX

THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF KOREAN PRINT CULTURE:

THE MASS CIRCULATION OF KOREAN CLASSICS

Introduction

As described in the previous two chapters, the Japanese Empire managed Korean print culture in two ways: through police censorship and through the examination system. I also argue that Korean writers and readers actively adjusted to such controlling mechanisms. The Japanese colonial empire not only discouraged Koreans to read certain texts, but also encouraged them to read, write, and speak within a boundary that the empire imposed. Korean print culture, therefore, was enriched and diversified with the increase of Korean vernacular readers and writers under the Japanese colonial rule, without taking a risk of confronting the police. In this last chapter, I analyze how Koreans and the Japanese colonial empire revised their concept of classics in a different way from the nineteenth century literati.

Most of all, the colonial regime published many new books. School textbooks are the case in point. In 1922, the Government-General of Korea (GGK) revised the Regulation of Korean Education 朝鮮教育令 (Chōsen kyōikurei [J]).²²⁶ One of the major goals of the revision was to abolish the ethnic segregation between Koreans and Japanese in education. As a result, Korean students were able to study with almost the same textbooks and curriculum as did the Japanese students. Although the GGK monopolized the publication of all school textbooks, a history

²²⁶ Sano Michio, *Kindai Nihon no kyōiku to Chōsen* 近代日本の教育と朝鮮 [Modern Japanese Education and Colonial Korea] (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 1993); O Sōng-ch'öl, *Sikminji Ch'odŭng kyoyuk ŭi hyōngsŏng* 植民地初等教育의 形成 [The Formation of Colonial Elementary Education] (Seoul: Kyoyuk kwahaksa, 2000).

textbook entitled *The National History* 國史 (*Kokusshi* [J]) specially draws our attention for its powerful influence toward Korean concepts of classics.²²⁷ Written in Japanese, *The National History* was compiled in 1922-23.²²⁸ Although *The National History* primarily covers Japanese history, the GKG added several special chapters on Korean history. As the colonial regime established the examination system and the imperial university in the 1920s, *The National History* became one of mass-produced school textbooks for Koreans to read without criticism.²²⁹ More importantly, this history textbook unintentionally revived popular interest in Korean classics and “old books.”

Simultaneously, Korean society did not mirror the state-authorized texts, but dynamically reacted to the massive circulation of Japanese-made books on their own terms. Korean popular writers and the commercial media welcomed the new textbooks, and even took advantage of them for their own agendas. Most of all, classics written in classical Chinese were losing their influence in 1900-10s' Korea, as Korean vernacular literature and Japanese books replaced the Confucian canons and other classical works. As Stefan Tanaka describes, the Japanese empire did not discard classical Chinese literature, but promoted research on it as a sign of the Japanese difference to “others” in

²²⁷ Although there is voluminous research on Japanese colonial school textbooks in South Korea, previous literature tended to emphasize the perspectives of the colonial government and bureaucrats in the Educational Bureau 學務局 (*gakumukyoku* [J]). Colonial school textbooks have been understood as the tool of imperial propaganda in order to facilitate the colonial rule from 1910. Having said that, it is also important to recognize the evolution of colonial school textbooks as well as the interaction between Koreans and the textbooks. As an example of scholarship on school textbooks, see Pak Hyŏn-ok, “Iljaeha Yŏksa kyogwasŏ wa sikminji chibae ideologi: Futsu gakkō Kokushi wa Shōtō Kokushi rŭl chungsim ūro” 日帝下 歴史教科書와 植民地 支配 이 데올로기 [History Textbooks of the Japanese Colonial Empire and the Colonial Ideology], *Chungang saron* 25 (2007).

²²⁸ Kim Han-jong, “Chosŏn ch'ongdokbu ūi kyoyuk chŏngch'aek kwa kyogwasŏ palhaeng” 朝鮮總督府의 教育政策과 教科書 發行 [Educational Policy of the Government-general of Korea and the Publication of School Textbooks] *Yŏksa kyoyuk yŏngu* 9 (2009).

²²⁹ Pak Hyŏn-ok, “Iljaeha Yŏksa kyogwasŏ” (2007); Yi Pyŏng-dam, “Chosŏn ch'ongdokbu Ch'odŭnghakkyo Kokushi ae nat'an an chimryak sagwan kwa sikminji adong ūi t'ansaeng” 朝鮮總督府 初等學校 國史에 나타난 侵略史觀과 植民地兒童의 誕生 [The Birth of Korean Colonial Identity among Children: the Historical Education in favor of Japanese Invasion to Asia and Elementary School Textbook National History] *Ilŏ Ilmunhak* 27 (2005).

Asia.²³⁰ Some adventurous Korean publishers such as Ch'oe Nam-sŏn 崔南善 (1890-1957) agreed with the Japanese orientalism and joined in the efforts of popularizing Korean classics as a textual evidence of differentiating Korea from China in the late 1910s and 1920s.²³¹ In this chapter, I argue that *The National History*, a Japanese history textbook, triggered an intriguing chain reaction in Korean print culture because the colonial government and Korean popular writers both agreed on the point that Koreans should revise their notion on classics. At the same time, the Japanese colonial government as well as Koreans began to industrialize book production and to circulate single texts in more than hundreds of thousands copies from the 1920s. I argue in this chapter that classics, hence, came back to colonial Korea with industrialization.²³²

1. The Crisis of the Classical Chinese Language

Classical Chinese language played only a marginal role in the explosive increase in the number of books and periodicals after the Russo-Japanese War. The vernacularization of print culture became a major trend in Korean literary production and consumption in the postwar period, even though academic writings and books for popular education still used Chinese characters and classical terminology (chapter four). However, soon after 1910, the Japanese language became the dominant language in schools, and Japanese colonial education steadily and firmly penetrated into

²³⁰ Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

²³¹ Recently, in South Korea, some scholars suggest reevaluating Ch'oe Nam-sŏn and his cultural nationalism. Especially, his idiosyncratic ethnography in the 1930s and early 40s draws a new attention as the Koreanology 朝鮮學. Chŏn Sŏng-gon, Kŭndae 'Chosŏn' ūi aident'it'i wa Ch'oe Nam-sŏn 近代 '朝鮮'의 아이덴티티와 崔南善 [Identity of Modern 'Korea' and Ch'oe Nam-sŏn] (Seoul: Chae & ssi, 2008). One of his grandsons also published a new bibliography with new testimonies in 2011. Ch'oe Hak-ju, *Na'ni halabŏji Yŭkdang Ch'oe Nam-sŏn naui halabŏji* 六堂 崔南善 [My Grandfather Yudang Ch'oe Nam-sŏn] (Seoul: Nanam, 2011).

²³² Regarding the industrialization of colonial Korea, see Carter Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: the Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origin of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991); Dennis McNamara, *The Colonial Origins of Korean Enterprise, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Park Soon-won, *Colonial Industrialization and Social Change in Colonial Korea* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997). However, there is scanty research on printing factories and the industrialization of printing presses and media companies.

Korean society. Soon thereafter, traditional literati lost their potential readers and students, which turned into a crisis to those who wrote and read classical Chinese.

Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, a Korean commercial publisher, joined the new language movement and printed popular vernacular fiction and educational books for profit. Born in 1890, Nam-sŏn became a renowned ethnographer and popular historian during the 1920s. His reputation as a Korean nationalist lasted until he died in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in 1957. Before he became famous as a Korean historian, however, his career was in commercial editing and publishing. Nam-sŏn grew up in the urban and commercialized atmosphere of Seoul as the son of a medical practitioner. In his youth, he devoured popular fiction, including Chinese vernacular novels such as *Water Margin* as well as Korean vernacular translations of Protestant books printed by missionaries. His schooling officially started in 1902 at Seoul Mission School 京城學堂 (Keijō gakudo [J]). In 1906, he entered Waseda School. In less than a year, however, he dropped out of Waseda and returned to Seoul with a new plan. With his older brother, he purchased a new printing machine press in Japan and founded a new publishing and printing company called House of New Literature 新文館 (Sinmun'gwan) in Seoul.

His company became a new trendsetter in the business of commercial marketing and the sale of books. House of New Literature, in particular, ventured into a new series of dime novels 十錢小說 (sibjŏn sosŏl). This series pioneered the literary market of cheap and easy vernacular fiction. Simultaneously, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn attempted to transplant a commercialized general magazine 雜誌 (chapji) from Japan to Korea. Although this journalistic venture was not as profitable as his dime novels, Nam-sŏn supported the formation of a new middlebrow print culture by copying the Japanese model of printing. From 1909 to 1914, he tested the commercial possibility of children's

vernacular magazines in Korea.²³³ His company, House of New Literature, symbolized the contemporary literary movement of New Fiction 新小說 (sinsosöl) in the late 1900s and early 1910s.

In 1915, Nam-sŏn realized that the classical Chinese could become an important source of profit and fame, and he published a new Chinese-Korean dictionary, titled *New Dictionary* 新字典 (*Sinjajŏn*). This shows us how the publishing mogul understood the commercial value of the classical Chinese. Nam-sŏn did not write this text, but he heavily edited the original manuscript to fit it into print capitalism. Its author was a classicist named Yu Kŭn 柳瑾 (1861-1921). Yu Kŭn was a member of the literati association, the Society for Illuminating Korean Literary Heritage 朝鮮光文會 (Chosŏn kwangmunhoe). This literary club was one of a few academic networks that remained in the late 1900s for sharing books under the collective goal of classicism. After the Russo-Japanese War, the club desperately tried to preserve the “old books” 古書 (kosŏ) in colonial Korea.²³⁴ In a public advertisement of 1910, the literary club warned that “these [classical] books as an expression of Korean wisdom and talent are about to disappear.” It claimed that the books were “the brilliant achievements of sages and the wise during the last 5,000 years.” In the public appeal, we can note that the classicists unequivocally recognized the postwar years as a crisis. The public appeal stated, “Classical literature is now withering and [we are terrified by the worry that] the purity of Korean ethnicity 族粹 (choksu) will follow the same path.”²³⁵ Based on this sense of crisis, Yu Kŭn and his fellow members of the literati association compiled the new dictionary to encourage popular interest

²³³ He published several children’s magazines such as *Boys* 少年 (*Sonyŏn*), *Red Skirt* 붉은 저고리 (*Pulgŭn chŏgori*), *Kids* 아이들보이 (*Aidŭl poi*), and *New Star* 새별 (*Saebŏl*).

²³⁴ Kwŏn Tu-yŏn, “Sinmungwan ūi munhwa undong yŏn’gu” 新文館의 文化運動研究 [The Study on Cultural Movement of the House of New Literature], Yŏnsei University Ph.D. Dissertation, 2010, 97-98.

²³⁵ Chosŏn kwangmunhoe, “Chosŏn kosŏ sujib palheng Chosŏn kwangmunhoe kwanggo” 朝鮮古書蒐集發行 朝鮮光文會廣告 [The Project of Collecting and Reprinting Old Korean Books: the Announcement of the Society for Illuminating Korean Literary Heritage], *Sonyŏn* 少年 (the Boys) 9 (1910) 56-57 (Recited from Kwŏn, Ibid., 97-98).

in the classical language. However, they had trouble finding a publisher who was willing to print their manuscript.

Initially, Yu Kŭn named it *Extensive Dictionary of Classical Chinese* 漢文大字典 (*Hanmun taejajŏn*). This manuscript was the Korean translation of *Kang Xi Dictionary*, the imperially-authorized dictionary of the Qing Empire. It took five years for Kŭn to complete the translation of the imperial dictionary with the help of four people.²³⁶ Yi In-sŭng 李寅承 and Nam Ki-wŏn 南基元 assisted with the proofing and editing, and Chu Si-gyŏng 周時經 and Kim Tu-bong 金科奉 edited the Korean vernacular translation.²³⁷ However, they did not expect that most commercial publishers at that time would be reluctant to print the Korean version of *Kang Xi Dictionary*.

Ch'oe Nam-sŏn had an idea of how to transform the manuscript into a commercial product. He changed the title to *New Dictionary*, made it into a much more concise dictionary, and charged a lower price for it. Since Yu Kŭn had originally translated the entire *Kang Xi Dictionary*, the manuscript must have contained about 47,035 Chinese characters. However, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn dramatically reduced the size to almost one fourth of the *Kang Xi Dictionary*, so *New Dictionary* only contained 13,019 Chinese characters in the end.²³⁸ In addition, he legitimized heavy editing and cutting by borrowing the Western model of a concise dictionary. *New Dictionary*, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn argued, was following “the most progressive style of Western dictionaries.”²³⁹ He realized that the concise and inexpensive dictionary was a profitable item in bookstores in Japan and that it would be the same in colonial Korea. Perhaps he possessed English dictionaries which Protestant missionaries

²³⁶ Yu Kŭn, “Sinjajŏn sŏ” 新字典序 (the Introduction of *The New Chinese-Korean Dictionary*), *Sinjajŏn* 新字典 [*The New Dictionary*] (Seoul: Sinmungwan, 1915) 1-2.

²³⁷ Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, “Sinjajŏn sŏ”, *Sinjajŏn* (from Yudang Ch'oe Nam-sŏn chŏnjib vol.7) (Seoul: Hyŏnamsa, 1973), 10.

²³⁸ Chen Liu 陳榴, “Kangxi zidian Hanguo jindai zidian bianzuan de yingxiang” <康熙字典>對韓國近代字典編纂的影響 [*Kang Xi Dictionary's Influence on the Compilation of Korean Modern Dictionaries*], *Zhūnghuá zìdiǎn yán jū* 2:1 (Beijing: Zhūnghuá shè huì kē xué chū bān shè, 2010) 124-128.

²³⁹ Ch'oe Nam-sŏn 崔南善, “Sinjajŏn sŏ” 新字典敍, *Sinjajŏn* (Seoul: Sinmun'gwan, 1915).

had distributed in Seoul. Alternatively, he may have bought a new Japanese dictionary, such as *Sea of Words* 言海 (*Genkai* [J]), which also followed the model of *Webster's Dictionary*.²⁴⁰ Japanese lexicographer Ōtsuki Humihiko 大槻文彦 (1847-1928), the author of *Sea of Words*, thought that classical Chinese characters not only constituted the Japanese-Japanese dictionary, but could also popularize and standardize the everyday practice of reading, writing, and speaking in the Japanese language. Similar to Ōtsuki Humihiko's dictionary, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn adopted the new global trend of popularizing the classics from Japan and proved that classical learning could be a valuable part of Korean print culture even in the age of print capitalism and Japanese colonial education.

Thus, *New Dictionary* of 1915 had the co-authorship of Yu Kŭn and Ch'oe Nam-sŏn. Ch'oe Nam-sŏn claimed his copyright to this dictionary. He deserves the credit for saving the manuscript and for achieving commercial success with *New Dictionary*. Ch'oe Nam-sŏn also began to raise his public influence not simply as the owner of House of New Literature, but as a vocal supporter of popularizing classics. This transition was partly related to the fact that his vernacular writings failed to appeal to the literary market. He took the accomplishment of *New Dictionary* as a sign that he would have a greater chance at success in popularizing old books.

2. The Popularization of Classics

After 1919, the Japanese colonial empire likewise acknowledged the usefulness of classical texts in governing Koreans and their print culture. It was a remarkable change, because the empire viewed itself as a modernizer, similar to the British Empire in India and America in the

²⁴⁰ Yasuda Toshiaki, *Jisho no seijigaku: kotoba no kiban to wa nani ka* 辭書の政治學:ことばの規範とはなにか [Politics of Dictionaries: What is the Standardization of Languages?] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2006).

Philippines.²⁴¹ Interestingly, we can note that Japanese propaganda regarding “the unity of Japan and Korea” 内鮮一體 (naisen ittai [JJ]) flexibly transformed throughout time after 1919. In the 1910s, the Japanese Empire commonly legitimized its colonial rule by civilizing and developing backward Koreans and their country. As the Korean Exhibition of 1915 illustrates, the colonial regime officially announced that the empire remained in Korea to improve the living conditions there and to civilize ethnic Koreans. It was believed that Korea failed to maintain its independence and to survive in the race toward modern civilization. Further, the Japanese colonial government and police deemed that the civilized empire should sanitize, modernize, and discipline Koreans to make them like the Japanese.²⁴²

Before 1919, many Japanese believed that there was an enormous gap between the ethnic Japanese and the Koreans. Given the difference in their levels of civilization, Koreans could not study at the same school with ethnic Japanese. The degree granted by Korean schools was also inferior to that of imperial institutions. For example, historical connections between the two countries barely drew the attention of Japanese residents in Korea such as Watase Tsuneyoshi 渡瀬常吉 prior to 1919. Tsuneyoshi, a Japanese Protestant pastor, actively supported the colonial regime in his book, *Urgent Requirement of Civilizing Koreans* 朝鮮教化の急務 (*Chōsen kyōka no kyūmu* [JJ]) in 1913. Interestingly, Ch’oe Nam-sŏn once studied at Seoul Mission School, managed by Watase Tsuneyoshi. In 1917, Watase Tsuneyoshi wrote two articles on “The Ideal of the Unity of Japan-and-Korea” in the Korean language, which were published in *The Daily Post*. In these articles, he expressed the pre-1919 perception that Korea and Japan were fundamentally different. He stated, “We can achieve the ultimate goal of the annexation if Japanese and Koreans can get united and

²⁴¹ Regarding the Japanese rationale for the colonization before 1919, see Alexis Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005).

²⁴² Todd A. Henry, “Sanitizing Empire: Japanese Articulations of Korean Otherness and the Construction of Early Colonial Seoul, 1905-1919,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 64:3(2005).

bring glittering civilization to the Korean peninsula. ... Only then, two nations 兩民族 can merge into one body and enjoy pleasure and sorrow all together.” Watase Tsuneyoshi believed that the annexation had the sole practical goal of apprenticing Koreans. Discussing the past was more harmful than useful for harmony between Japan and Korea, he argued. “If we are obsessed with the historical past and wish to find the future and hope from the past, we usually go into the direction of mutual conflict,” he wrote to Koreans in the Korean vernacular newspaper.²⁴³

In the 1920s, however, the colonial regime started using historical texts to create new school textbooks. In particular, the government popularized classical references for the purpose of teaching new Korean history to Korean elementary school students. The colonial government hurried to make these new school textbooks after the March First Movement with the Second Revision of Regulation of Korean Education of 1922. *The National History* 國史 (*Kokusshi* [J]), compiled in 1922-1923, illustrates how the government reinterpreted classics for its political need in the 1920s. *A Reference Book for Teaching National History at Elementary Schools* 普通學校國史教授參考書 (*Futsu gakkō kokushi kyōjū sankōsho* [J]), written by the GKG, highlights the message that the government wished to teach to Koreans. This reference book for teachers became a standardized pedagogy of teaching new Korean history at colonial schools until 1937.

Ch’oe Nam-sŏn’s *New Dictionary* and the GKG’s *The National History* shared similar linguistic and editing policies. As *New Dictionary* used the Korean vernacular alphabet to teach Chinese characters and their classical usages, *The National History* chose the Japanese vernacular language because young Korean students could not understand classical Chinese. The GKG paid special attention to using more kana alphabet than Chinese characters. The ratio of the kana alphabet to

²⁴³ Watase Tsuneyoshi, “NaeSŏn ilch’ae ūi isang” 內鮮一體의 理想(一) [The Ideal of the Unity between Korea and Japan], *Maeil sinbo*, 5 June 1917.

Chinese characters in *The National History* was greater than that of a same-grade Japanese history textbook for the ethnic Japanese.²⁴⁴ As many scholars in South Korea have indicated, *The National History* had a specific and straightforward message: China was an aggressive invader, while Japan was a peaceful and beneficial neighbor from ancient time. In one “objective of lesson,” the GGK requested that teachers pinpoint the military invasion and the conquering of the Chinese in northern Korea as follows:

When you teach about the foundation of three Hans 三韓 in this lesson, your main objective is to teach the historical difference in northern and southern areas. Northern Korea was ruled by the people who migrated from China, and it became a Chinese territory 領土 (ryōdo [J]). However, southern Korea became a land for the Han race 韓種族 (Kan shozoku [J]), common ancestors of current Koreans. You, teachers, must assure that [Korean] students remember that southern Korea had a tight relationship with Japan from ancient history.²⁴⁵

As seen above, the colonial regime promoted the pro-Japanese and the anti-Chinese emotions by circulating *The National History* among Koreans. However, it is a mistake to assume that the GGK simply made up a story for the propaganda. In a supplementary chapter called bikō 備考 (Supplementary Analysis), the GGK carefully listed bibliographical evidence and extensive references. This bikō resembled the analytical essay of philology. Its bibliographical references listed the Chinese classics including *Book of Wei* 魏書 (*Wei shu* [C]) and a newly-printed Korean book, titled *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* 三國遺事 (*Samguk yusa*). Additionally, the bikō thoroughly recorded other textual evidences, including *The Stele of King Kwanggeto* and *The Chronicle of Japan* 日本書紀 (*Nihon shoki* [J]). *The National History* was, hence, a concise storybook for Korean children similar to *New Dictionary* from the House of New Literature.

²⁴⁴ Chōsen sōtokufu, *Futsu gakeko kokushi kyōjū sankosho: Chōsen shireki kyōzai* 普通學校國史教授參考書: 朝鮮事歷教材 [A Reference Book for Teaching National History at Elementary School: the Textbook for Teaching Korean History] (Tokyo: Chōsen sōtokufu, 1923).

²⁴⁵ “Pak hyōkgōsae” 朴赫巨世, *Futsu gakeko kokushi kyōjū sankosho: Chōsen shireki kyōzai*, 5.

Therefore, the importance of the classics or “old books” was gradually restored from the late 1910s in colonial Korea, and the Japanese colonial government supported the return of classics by publishing the new school textbook. Once the publishers reprocessed the contents for readers of popular literature, classical knowledge could generate significant power and influence over the Korean reading public. Indeed, as the Japanese colonial regime included the new Korean history in its curriculum, “old books” no longer seemed obsolete or useless. Therefore, the classics obtained new popularity due to the indirect cooperation of the colonial empire and private publishers.

3. The Creation of a New Korean Classic

As a commercial publisher, Ch’oe Nam-sŏn agreed with the Japanese compilers of *The National History* that Koreans were one “race” from antiquity. However, Ch’oe Nam-sŏn was more radically anti-Chinese and anti-classics than was the GGK. His preface in *New Dictionary* in 1915 shows his determined hatred of Chinese culture and influence. He claimed that classical Chinese was never “our words and our language” at any moment in Korean history. The obsessive learning of Chinese characters, he continued, was nothing but the blind worship of “the foreign language,” causing the degradation of Korean print culture, as follows:

We completely abandoned our own words 自語 (chaŏ) and imitated the foreign language 他文 (t’amun). The long-year education simply caused self-deception, and the vague usage of the language only made people unaware of their ignorance. It grew more and more unclear because no one cared about the acuteness and the true nature [of things]. In spite of efforts for the last three thousand years, we had never surpassed theirs and none could catch up with them. It is no wonder that people failed to recognize the difference between us and them 自他 (chat’a). ... Truly, it is an unacceptable condition for our study 我學 (ahak). Also, judging from the perspective of Chinese study 漢學 (Hanhak), it is an unusual tragedy. We must finish this.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ Ch’oe Nam-sŏn, “Preface of New Dictionary” *Sin’jaŏn* (Seoul: Sinmungwan, 1915).

As can be seen above, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn imagined a fundamental division between ethnic Koreans and ethnic Chinese. These thoughts resembled Japanese oriental studies 東洋學 (tōyōgaku [J]), as Stefan Tanaka points out, because Nam-sŏn approached classics to find textual evidence that Koreans were not Chinese at any moment in history. Ch'oe Nam-sŏn claimed that Koreans should liberate themselves from “Sinology.” He felt strongly that Koreans could not and should not be like the Chinese, because the Chinese were “others.” The division between Korea and China was self-evident to him. No transgression was acceptable or desirable.²⁴⁷

While Nam-sŏn wished to separate Korean culture from Sinology and the Chinese language, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn implicitly assumed that Korea could be a part of Japan. He uncritically adopted the modern concept of “a race” called Chongjok [K] / Shuzoku [J] 種族. In an article in 1915, for example, he wrote a short but provocative essay, “About Korean Colonies in Chinese Eastern Coast in Antiquity,” in his magazine *The Youth* 青春 (*Ch'ŏngch'un*). In this eccentric essay, he claimed that ethnic Koreans occupied an eastern shore of China as an ancient “race” and competed with the Han Chinese for control of the Asian continent. Along with *New Dictionary*, this essay marked his transformation from a successful commercial publisher to a popular and anti-Chinese historian. His basic job after 1915 was to popularize the complicated classics by revising them into cheap and easy vernacular books for wide audiences. And, his selling points were the anti-Chinese message and ethnocentrism. In particular, he devoted himself to ancient history. He tried to use classical texts to

²⁴⁷ Yu Kŭn and Ch'oe Nam-sŏn somewhat agreed that Koreans could not create new Chinese characters because Chinese characters belonged to China. In a special chapter entitled “Korean Local Characters” 朝鮮俗字部 (Chosŏn sokjabu), the two segregated the characters which Koreans used, but which *Kang Xi Dictionary* did not include. Classical references for these 107 characters were all Korean native books except one, *The Collection about Things in Korea* 鷄林類事. Yu Kŭn identified the usages of 107 Korean Chinese characters from thirty-four indigenous texts. Calling these characters “vulgar characters” 俗字, the compilers claimed that Koreans simply had borrowed the language from China. They tried to remove any signs of the cultural mixture and integrations such as these characters from the concept of classical Chinese. Some were made from the mixture of the Korean vernacular alphabet and Chinese characters. Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, “Chosŏn sokjabu,” *Sinjaŏn* (Seoul: Sinmungwan, 1915).

prove that Koreans 朝鮮人 (Chosŏnin) had always existed as a homogeneous race from their founder, Tan'gun.²⁴⁸

The G GK and Ch'oe Nam-sŏn both noted one obscure text, titled *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* 三國遺事 (*Samguk yusa*). This medieval text drew their attention because it collected many folktales that were useful in popularizing ancient Korean history. *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* was known to a few philologists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (chapter two), but its circulation was highly limited before the twentieth century. A yangban literati of the nineteenth century despised it, saying that the text was “ridiculous nonsense” 其說荒誕 (kisŏl hwangt'an).²⁴⁹ The text was printed by woodblocks in the Kyŏngsang province in 1512. Since then, no one printed it until 1904. Tokyo Imperial University published it as a modern book, using two rare copies of woodblocks which Tokugawa Yoshiakira 徳川義禮 (1863-1908) of Kishūke 尾州家 and Baron Kanda Takahira 神田孝平 (1830-1898) privately owned as part of their familial collections of Korean books. Tokugawa's collection and Kanda's collection were all original copies of 1512 printings. The Imperial University faculty evaluated this book highly, writing, “The relationship between Korea and our country began in the distant past and this book also contains some information about our own history.” In particular, they focused on Korean vernacular songs of the Shilla kingdom called hyangga 鄕歌. The editors were very excited to find these songs. Yet, the

²⁴⁸ Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, “KoJosŏnin ūi China yŏnhae sikminji” 古朝鮮人の支那沿海植民地, *Yukdang Ch'oe Nam-sŏn Chŏnjip* 六堂崔南善全集 [The Anthology of Ch'oe Nam-sŏn], vol.2 (Seoul: Hyŏnamsa, 1973), 375-377.

²⁴⁹ Ch'oe Nam-sŏn referred to Yi Kyu-gyŏng 李奎景 (1788-?)'s *Ojuyŏnmunjangjŏn* 五洲衍文長箋 (The Collection of Writings and Essays in Five Continents). Ch'oe owned this rare manuscript of encyclopedic knowledge but lost it during the Korean War through the fire-bombing. According to Ch'oe, Yi Kyu-gyŏng knew *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* and listed it in the section of “Books on History” 史籍類 (sajŏkryu). The version which Yi Kyu-gyŏng saw consisted of two parts in five volumes: “Chronicle of Miracles” 紀異 (kiyi) (vol.1-2), and “Growth of Words” 興法 (hŭngbŏb), “Explanation of Teaching” 義解 (ŭihe), and “Connected Minds” 感通 (kamt'ong) (vol.3-5). In the end, Yi commented that the book was ridiculous nonsense. Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, “Samguk yusa hejae” 三國遺事解題 [The Introduction to the Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms], *Ch'oe Nam-sŏn chŏnjip* 崔南善全集 [The Anthology of Ch'oe Nam-sŏn] (Seoul: Hyŏnamsa, 1973) 38.

major research interest of Tokyo Imperial University was more on the value of studying “our own ancient language” than on the relationship between the two countries.²⁵⁰

In 1921, a better version of *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* sensationally reappeared in Kyoto. In fact, this copy stayed in Korea until Japanese Koreanologist Imanishi Ryū 今西龍 (1875-1932) purchased it from a Korean and brought it to Japan. Working as a professor of Kyoto Imperial University and later of Keijō Imperial University, Imanishi Ryū soon realized that he secured the same copy that an eighteenth century philologist, An Chǒng-bok, had personally owned (chapter two). Kyoto Imperial University celebrated the fact that the Japanese had saved what Koreans carelessly abandoned. A renowned Japanese Sinologist, Naitō Kōnan 内藤湖南 (1866-1934), supported the reprinting of *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* (*Memorabilia* hereafter). Naitō Kōnan commented in classical Chinese that “the personal commentaries handwritten by An Chǒng-bok himself” made this version more precious.²⁵¹ The GGK did not miss this reappearance of the new Korean classic. When *The National History* was made in 1922-23, *Memorabilia* became an important reference. Yet, the GGK did not include the Tan’gun story in the curriculum. According to *A Reference Book for Teaching National History at Elementary School*, the colonial government cautiously remarked that the Tan’gun story of *Memorabilia* was a native myth without any supporting evidence in other Korean and Chinese classics.²⁵²

Ch’oe Nam-sŏn welcomed the reprinting of *Memorabilia* in Japan. Unlike the GGK, he was fascinated by the fact that other classics did not support the Tan’gun story or other folktales of *Memorabilia*. He criticized the literati in the late Chosŏn period because they did not recognize the

²⁵⁰ “Jō” 紵 (Preface), *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 [*Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms*] edited by Tokyo Imperial University (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Hanshichi, 1904) vol.1, 1-4.

²⁵¹ Naitō Kōnan, “序” (Introduction), *Samguk yusa*, edited by Kyoto Imperial University (Kyoto: Kyoto Imperial University, 1921) 1-4.

²⁵² “Pak hyōkgōsae” 朴赫巨世, *Futsu gakeko kokushi kyōjū sankosho: Chōsen shireki kyōzai*, 8.

true value of the Korean classic. The previous literati's negative review of the book reassured his faith that *yangban* scholars were Sinologists and that the genuine record of Koreans had been treated unfairly until then. In the 1920s, he searched for another copy of *Memorabilia*, with which he hoped to participate in the oriental studies of the Japanese imperial universities. In 1927, he finally reported that he discovered new pages of the book. In the magazine *Enlightenment* 啓明 (*Kyemyōng*), he claimed that "I restored all of *Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms*, with the exception of volume two" and that he had corrected Kyoto University's version.²⁵³ Although he was not a professional scholar of classical literature, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn believed that his research on *Memorabilia* could enhance his fame. As Liang Qi-chao 梁啓超 argued that the universalism of the Confucian canons were useless in the making of modern "Chinese literature" 中國文學, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn wished to redefine the Korean classics as something exclusively belonging to Koreans.²⁵⁴ Chinese and Japanese classics never mentioned Tan'gun, but he loved it precisely because of such idiosyncrasy.

4. Mass Production of Concise Texts

The simplification of classics made a significant impact on Korean literary culture in the 1920s. The simple versions of classics became popular books for children and adults who received school education, partly because of the mass production of imprints. The number of Korean elementary school students increased every year during the 1920s. In 1920, there were 559 public elementary schools, and 102,654 students read school textbooks. After the Second Revision of Regulation of Korean Education in 1922, the speed of growth was surprisingly fast. The total

²⁵³ Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁵⁴ About Kang and Yang's project of creating new reading materials for the nation, please see Saitō Mareshi, *Ibid.*, chapter 3 "Sinkokumin no shinshōsetsu" 新國民の新小説:近代文學觀念形成期の梁啓超 [New Fiction for New Nation: Liang Qichao in the Formation of Modern Concept of National Literature], *Kanbunmyaku no kindai: Shinmatsu=Meiji no bungakken* (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2005).

number of students tripled between 1920 and 1923. When the decade of rapid growth was over in 1929, there were 448,215 students enrolled at 1,500 schools in the country. Table 6.1 shows the number of students in each year.

<Table 6.1. The Number of Public Elementary School Students>²⁵⁵

Years	Number of Students	Number of Public Schools
1920	102,654	559
1921	149,975	675
1922	224,737	808
1923	304,483	956
1924	361,483	1,087
1925	392,008	1,187
1926	419,415	1,258
1927	430,491	1,337
1928	439,856	1,423
1929	448,215	1,500

According to this statistic, *The National History* circulated among more than 450,000 readers by the end of the decade. The price of *The National History* was about twenty chŏn 錢. It was relatively cheap as a single book, because *Mencius* and *The Analects*, for example, were five times more expensive than that. If they wanted to get higher scores at school examinations, Korean students had to read *The National History*. This cheap and concise book of the Japanese Empire, therefore, standardized their knowledge of Korean history in the 1920s.

²⁵⁵ Im Sam-jo, “1920nyŏndae Chosŏnin ūi kongrib pot’ong hakkyo sŏlrib undong 1920”年代 朝鮮人の共立普通學校 設立運動 [The Korean Educational Campaign for Building Public Elementary Schools in 1920s’ Korea], *Kyemyŏng sabak* 17 (2006), 265.

In 1923, the colonial government established a new giant printing company for the mass production of school textbooks. This printing factory was a former government company called Ryūsan insatsujō 龍山印刷所. The exact history and size of the Ryūsan printing factory are unknown due the lack of source materials. However, the Government-General of Korea privatized it and renamed it Korean Book and Printing Incorporation 朝鮮書籍印刷株式會社 (Chōsen shoseki insatsu kabushiki kaisha [J]), which went on to monopolize the production of school textbooks and government periodicals. According to *The List of Korean Companies* 朝鮮會社表 (Chōsen kaishahyō [J]) of 1922, there were seven private printing factories in Seoul. Four companies were owned by Koreans, and three belonged to the Japanese. In 1922, The Oriental Daily News Company 東亞日報社 (Tong-Ailbosa) had the printing factory with the biggest capital—700,000 wŏn. Interestingly, Japanese printing factories, with the exception of Korean Book and Printing, were smaller in their capital investment than were Korean firms.²⁵⁶ In 1923, Korean Book and Printing Incorporation (KBP hereafter) toppled The Daily East Asia Company. The initial capital of KBP was 2,000,000 wŏn.

The two major printing factories, The Oriental Daily News Company and KBP, were equipped with Marinoni's Rotary Printing Press machine. Because no records remain of KBP, we will focus on the case of The Oriental Daily News Company. This Korean vernacular newspaper company had installed the press machine in 1920. Ten years later, the company was managing its business with three of these machines,²⁵⁷ and the number of readers of *The Oriental Daily News* virtually tripled during that decade. Although it is unclear how many copies of *The Oriental Daily News* were produced and circulated, we can compare numbers with *The Daily Post*. When *The Daily*

²⁵⁶ Keijō shōgyōkaigisho, *Chōsen kaishahyo* 朝鮮會社表 [The List of Korean Firms] (Seoul: Keijō shōgyōkaigisho, 1922) 48-49.

²⁵⁷ “Ponsa ūi kŭmsŏk” 本社의 今昔 [Past and Present of Our Company], *Tong-A Ilbo*, 2 April 1930.

Post first introduced Marinoni's Rotary Press in 1913, the machine managed to produce 50,000 copies in one day (chapter four). Therefore, even if *The Oriental Daily News* had more pages than *The Daily Post*, we can assume that *The Oriental Daily News* circulated about 150,000 copies or more every day from 1928 when the company installed the third machine. Therefore, the Government-General of Korea and The Oriental Daily News Company surpassed all other rivals, including small private publishing companies, in the production of reading materials by industrializing printing in the 1920s.

It is of interest that the colonial government and Korean newspapers both started the project of popularizing the classics during this decade. As the reprinting of *Memorabilia* revived the discourses on Korean classics, the two powerful agents of book production—the government and vernacular media—had enough facility and networking power to circulate the new concise extraction of classical texts to the reading public.

5. Popular History Books

In the 1920s, Korean popular literature of New Fiction soon gave way to the new trend of commercialized classics. So-called historical novels 歴史小説 (yōksa sosōl) emerged as the new champion of the literary market from the late 1920s. This new genre was the result of the cooperation among the Japanese Empire, vernacular media, and Korean popular writers such as Ch'oe Nam-sōn and others in the 1920s. An account of the attacks on the Sinologists in the late Chosŏn period can be found in both *The National History* and a new popular genre of historical fiction (yōksa sosōl) in the 1920s and early 1930s. Early vernacular fiction in the 1910s used the rhetoric of criticizing the Chosŏn dynasty as the ancient regime. However, the 1920s' and 30s' popular novels about Korean history used a slightly different style. Korean historical fiction flourished within the factual boundaries of *The National History*. In other words, students acquired

standardized knowledge about Korean history from reading the textbook, and popular writers made their fiction congruent with the facts contained in *The National History*. For instance, one chapter in *The National History* told the story of two sixteenth century yangban scholar-officials, Yi Hwang 李滉 (1501-1570) and Yi Yi 李珥 (1536-1584). Colonial schoolteachers were required to teach how these two left behind negative legacies in Korea, as follows:

In this chapter, you should discuss the development of Confucianism 儒學 (jyūgaku [J]) and give students details about two Confucianists 儒者 (jyūsha [J]), Yi Hwang and Yi Yi, as the representative figures. Regarding Yi Hwang, you must briefly teach how private academies flourished and how these academies caused troubles. Regarding Yi Yi, you must mention the origin of factionalism 黨派. By describing the clique wars, you can ensure that Korean students know the disorder of Korean politics in their history.²⁵⁸

Thus, the GGK ordered teachers to impose a negative image of yangban scholars in Korean students' minds. "Factionalism," the GGK taught, "became the fundamental reason why Korean politics were so disorderly and dysfunctional." In addition, the teachers were asked to contrast Korea's Chosŏn kingdom with Japan's Warring States period, implying that the two countries followed different developments from the sixteenth century.²⁵⁹ Scholars in South Korea often identify this failure narrative as "the historical interpretation in favor of the Japanese colonialization 植民史觀 (sikmin sagwan)." However, they underestimated the complexity that Korean students and popular writers welcomed the failure narrative and even amplified it as a part of their popular literary culture.

²⁵⁸ "Yi Toegye to Yi Yulgok" 李退溪と李栗谷, *Futsu gakeko kokushi kyōjū sankosho: Chōsen shireki kyōzai*, 137-138.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 145.

Yi Kwang-su, who worked closely with Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, published a sensational fictional piece titled *Yi Sun-sin* 李舜臣 in the Korean vernacular newspaper *The Oriental Daily News* in 1931.²⁶⁰

Yi Kwang-su, a prolific vernacular writer, wrote this fiction to describe how Confucianists and their factionalists maltreated Yi Sun-sin, the sixteenth century legendary war hero who fought against the Japanese invasion, from 1592 to 1598. Yi Kwang-su boldly claimed that Yi Sun-sin best illustrates how the old kingdom forced the Koreans' dependence on China. Yi Kwang-su chose to use "old texts" 古記錄 (kogirok) to assist him in narrating the fictional history of the legendary hero.²⁶¹ "Yi Sun-sin, whom I describe in this novel," he wrote, "is a righteous and virtuous human being. I did not intend to create this figure from my imagination. The purpose of this novel is to characterize him through my ability to interpret him from old texts." His popular historical fiction thus made an interesting parallel with the Japanese history textbook, *The National History*.

The number of fans of historical novels increased in the literary market from the late 1920s. Yi Kwang-su again took a leading role in popularizing historical fiction as he did for New Fiction in the late 1910s. Further, because his works intricately supplemented the colonial history textbook, the colonial police had no reason to censor him. Before *Yi Sun-sin* of 1931, Yi Kwang-su had already published several historical fictional pieces, such as *Royal Prince in Hemp Clothes* 麻衣太子 (*Ma'ui t'aeja*) of 1926 and *The Sorronful History of King Tanjong* 端宗哀史 (*Tanjong aesa*) of 1928.²⁶² In addition, *The Oriental Daily News* actively supported Yi Kwang-su's writings of historical fiction due to their surprising popularity. When *Royal Prince in Hemp Clothes* was published in the vernacular newspaper

²⁶⁰ Kong Im-sun, "Yŏksa sosŏl ūi yangsik kwa Yi Sun-sin hyŏngsŏng munbŏb" 歷史小說의 樣式과 李舜臣의 形成文法 [The Pattern of Historical Novels and the Stylistic Formation of Yi Sun-sin], *Han'guk kŏndae munhak yŏn'gu* [Journal of Korean Modern Literature], 4:1 (2003) 197-206.

²⁶¹ Yi Kwang-su, *Tong-A Ilbo*, 30 May 1931 (recited from Yi Kwang-su, *Yi Kwang-su chŏnjib* 李光洙全集 [Collection of Yi Kwang-su] vol.12 (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1962) 522.

²⁶² Kang Yŏng-ju, "Yi Kwang-su ūi yŏksa sosŏl" 李光洙의 歷史小說, *Han'guk hakbo* 11:2 (1985) 71-72.

as a serialized novel, the newspaper company received several thousands of fan letters.²⁶³ Yi Kwang-su was able to satisfy both Japanese police censors and Korean consumers because his writings corresponded to the GGK's textbooks, thereby defending his credibility and popularity.

In addition, the success of *The National History* and Korean popular historical fiction spread due to the rivalry of commercial media. As a rival of *The Daily Oriental News*, *Korean Daily* 朝鮮日報 (*Chosŏn ilbo*) hurried to take advantage of this lucrative market. In 1931, *Korean Daily* published a series of quasi-historical essays written by an anarchist, an overseas political activist named Sin Ch'ae-ho 申采浩 (1880-1936). Sin Ch'ae-ho was an active journalist in Korea before 1910 and defected to the Russian Empire after the Japanese annexation. Subsequently, he traveled through East Asia, from Vladivostok to Shanghai, Manchuria, and Beijing. In 1926, Ch'ae-ho joined the Korean Anarchists League in China. Ultimately, he was arrested in Taiwan for participating in a terrorist group. When his works circulated through *Korean Daily* in 1931, he was a prisoner in Ryojun of the Liaotung Peninsula.²⁶⁴ Although Sin Ch'ae-ho is commonly memorialized as a Korean nationalist in South Korea, his political thoughts were akin to anarchism. *Korean Daily* must have been aware of his political and intellectual leanings, not to mention his imprisonment in Liaotung. Remarkably, *Korean Daily* and the police censors agreed that Sin Ch'ae-ho's writings could be published in the press and reach the reading public, regardless of his anarchism. From the perspective of *Korean Daily*, Ch'ae-ho's quasi-philological essays were a sensation that drew public attention as fictional narratives about pre-historic 上古 (sanggo) Koreans.

²⁶³ Kim Chong-su, "Yŏksa sosŏl ūi palhŭng kwa kŭ munbŏb ūi t'anseng—1930 nyŏndae sinmun yŏnjae yŏksa sosŏl ūl chungsim ūro" 歷史小說의 發興과 그 文法의 誕生:1930年代 新聞連載歷史小說을 中心으로, *Han'guk ōmunhak yŏngu* 51(2008), 294.

²⁶⁴ Sin Yong-ha, "Sin Ch'ae-ho ūi saengae wa sasang kwa toknip undong" 申采浩의 生涯와 思想과 獨立運動 [Life, Thoughts, and Independence Movement of Sin Ch'ae-ho], *Sasang* 10 (1991), 402-407.

Korean Daily posted Ch'ae-ho's magna opus, *Pre-historic Korean History* 朝鮮上古史 (*Chosŏn sanggosa*) in 1931. It was a historical fiction with sensational messages. Although Ch'ae-ho was opposed to the Japanese presence in Korea, his historical fiction again echoed the narratives in *The National History*. Sin Ch'ae-ho was an extreme case of new popular historians. He not only criticized Sinologists on the entire Korean history, but also doubted the credibility of all classics in China, Japan, and Korea. According to his serialized essays in *Korean Daily* in 1931, Koreans should liberate themselves from "the mentality of subservience to the Middle Kingdom 事大主義 (*sadae chuŭi*).” To him, the previous classics of historiography were the forgery of “Confucianists” 儒教徒 (*yugyodo*).²⁶⁵ Sin Ch'ae-ho stated, “There is no country that has a greater number of forged books than China.” As his political ideal was anarchism, he refused to acknowledge the credibility of previously authoritative books such as *History of Three Kingdoms* 三國史記 (*Samguk sagi*), *Record of the Grand Historian* 史記 (*Sagi*), the most well-respected classic, as well as *The Chronicle of Japan*.

In the same vein, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn also tried to please Japanese censors and Koreans by writing popular history about Korea. In particular, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn idolized *Memorabilia* as the genuine classic of Koreans. Picking up folklores and mythology from the book, his writings continued to have strong fictional elements. In the years of the Japanese invasion of China, his articles chorused with Japanese Pan-Asianism. In his famous articles at *Korean Daily* in 1937, for instance, he argued that Koreans also had worshiped Shintoism before they adopted Confucianism. Ch'oe Nam-sŏn claimed, Koreans and Japanese both served “the Sun God.” For such ethnocentric narrative, he used *Memorabilia* while distrusting the previous canon of Korean historiography, *History of Three Kingdoms* 三國史記 (*Samguk sagi*).

²⁶⁵ Sin Ch'ae-ho, *Ibid.*, 28.

Therefore, *The National History* and Korean popular writers together created the literary market for popular history books in the 1920s, and classical texts reemerged for the view of the Korean reading public. Especially, popular history-books, including history textbooks and vernacular fiction, all used classics to spread the anti-Chosŏn and anti-Chinese messages. Such new interest in classics was promoted by massive production of concise and cheap texts such as *The National History*, *The Oriental Daily News*, and *Korean Daily* in the early 1930s.

Conclusion

Korean classics reappeared in the 1920s. However, the Korean readers' use of the classics differed from that of the literati in the nineteenth century. The classics of historiography were simplified and commercialized by the colonial government and Koreans. If the colonial empire wished to manipulate the popular notion of Korean history for the benefit of the rule, Korean vernacular writers and commercial media had little objection. Instead of confronting the regime, Korean writers and media companies amplified the propaganda for their benefit. In addition, the Marinoni Rotary Press machine became more widely available in the 1920s, so the classics could be produced more easily and inexpensively, making them more accessible to the public. This was the early industrialization of print culture in colonial Korea. It is of interest that the extractions from the classical texts—*The National History* and historical fiction—became the first items of industrialized printing.

Korean publishers and vernacular writers took advantage of *The National History*. Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, *Daily Oriental News*, and *Korean Daily* all tried to sell their books and newspapers to students who were acquainted with the antagonism toward “Confucianists” and the old kingdom. The failure narrative of *The National History* satisfied Koreans who wished to express anti-Chinese

and anti-Chosŏn sentiment. Korean vernacular media welcomed the sensational and provocative stories about Korean antiquity, not because they were nationalistic, but because such stories could quickly draw public attention. In a similar vein, the Japanese colonial police allowed the circulation of popular Korean history books because the stories in these books were in line with the narratives in *The National History*. As long as Sinologists and “factionalists” deserved the blame for vices in Korean culture and politics, the Japanese colonial regime and Korean commercial publishers worked closely together to use the classics for their own purposes. Therefore, many classics obtained new, powerful sponsors, the colonial regime and Korean writers, in 1920s’ colonial Korea. The classics, hence, created a strange undercurrent of communication between the Japanese colonial empire and Korean society and popular culture in the 1910s and 1920s. It was an unexpected recycling of classics that nineteenth century classicists could not have imagined.

CONCLUSION

Few scholars have explored the cultural history of Korean books. In historiography, Koreans as poor peasants, stubborn isolationists, nationalistic protestors, wartime laborers, and angry guerilla soldiers have drawn much more attention than Koreans as book authors and enthusiastic readers. Considering Korea's long years of political chaos, and wars in modern history, it is understandable that scholars in South Korea and the United States did not study the Koreans who spent much time and money at bookstores, libraries, and in their study rooms in order to write and read books. Although books were and are critical parts of cultural expression and political imagination in the everyday life of Koreans, it is not clear what and how they really wrote and read in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Let me share one small, but significant anecdote from my field research before I conclude my dissertation. In 2008, when I initiated this project out of an interest in Korean children's books, I happened to attend a public speech in Kyoto, Japan. The speaker, a Korean-Japanese man in his 70s, was a well-known activist for the ethnic Korean minority in Japan. After the speech was over, I approached him, hoping that I might be able to uncover how the minority group had developed its own library and book collections after World War II. When I asked for a short interview, he bluntly crushed my naïve hope by answering that he and his organization had no leisure to collect books, especially for kids, in immediate postwar periods and later. Putting aside my despair at that moment, however, I kept wondering about the relationship between human beings and books. Was there any moment in history when reading and writing could be readily defined as leisure?

These questions have been the driving force behind writing this dissertation. In spite of censorship, wars, and the risk of death, some people did keep writing and reading books. Of course,

I understand that the old activist wanted to emphasize the hardship that his group has endured after World War II to the young stranger coming from South Korea and educated at an American university. In addition, I do know that this activist does not represent the ethnic minority as a whole. Later, I discovered that the minority group has its own printing press in Tokyo. Thanks to his comment, though, I have expanded the scope of my research and discovered so much evidence that Korean literary culture has matured gradually and densely, connecting Koreans to one another, to the outside world, and to their own past, in spite of two wars and the Japanese occupation and colonization of Korea.

1. Ambivalent Readers

Reading and writing belonged to both sides of private and public life in modern Korean history. As I discussed in Part One, Koreans read non-canonical texts in their private space and time. It is an oversimplification to argue that such practice was a new phenomenon of the nineteenth century, because various literary, academic, and religious genres had existed long before then. What is new is that heretic writers began to express their cultural experience to the others in the form of mass communication: that is, printing. Public expression of private culture, hence, marked the beginning of a new era in Korean cultural history. It was not the separation of the public and private spheres, but the tangled intercommunication between the two that created so many new Korean books from 1880 to 1931. This was somehow a different trajectory of developing modern culture from that of Western Europe, which Jurgen Habermas captured by the term of “public and private spheres.” One significant reason for such difference is that reading Confucian canons and later, school textbooks, was a public obligation for elite males, not a choice. Far-fledged examination systems occupied the significant part of literary culture by testing the mastery of the texts and

distributing valuable resources based upon the test results. For many centuries, accordingly, Books 書 (*seo*) with a capital B were not an item that individuals collected and read for pleasure.

As a means to fulfill one's public duty, the canonical texts had ambiguous effects on the development of literary culture. Since they could not choose which texts to read to receive good grades at the state-made tests, elite males came to share the highly homogenous set of knowledge, literature, and classics. Someone who prepared for the civil service examinations in a small village of a southern province expected that he could have a fair chance of winning because the examination questions were all based on the canonical texts. The Four Books and Five Classics, in this sense, standardized the high culture of elite males and disseminated literacy in the society. Japanese school textbooks basically maintained the same function in the early twentieth century. The regimes made people believe that the distribution of political power and valuable benefits was ruled by the doctrine of meritocracy. In this structure, anyone who chose to read a book irrelevant to the school curriculum (say, Korean vernacular fiction) violated the public duty as a responsible man. Or, at least, many people pretended not to distract themselves from the mastery of canons in public space. In this sense, Hong Sŏk-ju, a nineteenth-century aristocrat, and Yu Chin-o, a college student at Keijō Imperial University, shared the same kind of anxiety because they knew that they were not supposed to read popular literature. But they were curious, or such anxiety was much more intensive for highly-educated males than others, for they could read Qing vernacular fiction and Japanese popular novels quite easily, thanks to their high level of foreign language education and affluence. Ironically, orthodox education encouraged people to make contact with the varieties of literary culture. Canons and non-cans, hence, could coexist in people's minds.

The unexpected contribution of elite kinship organizations demonstrates the complexity of private-public interaction in Korean bookish culture. Books (written, edited, and printed) were

generally not collected in one place naturally. Building a library often required a considerable amount of money, literacy skills, and sociopolitical privilege. Since Korean native authorship was not well-established until the end of the nineteenth century, book collection could not have been possible without importing books from China or Japan. Two Korean powerhouses, P'ungsang Hongs and Kigye Yus, which I analyzed in chapter one and four, are the representative cases. Given their reputation of coming from a wealthy and cultural clan, they cautiously gathered foreign books in their possession and encouraged youth to explore the outside world by reading books or travelling overseas. The Hongs best illustrate how broad reading and wide experience became an aristocratic virtue in the nineteenth century. While they still acknowledged the public duty of reading the canonical texts, they carefully constructed the rationale of reading for reading's sake and of sharing their new knowledge with strangers.

At the same time, new cultural institutions allowed the same kind of mixture of public and private life. On behalf of those who did not belong to elite clans, literati associations and religious groups provided a new library as an infrastructure where people could study and write books. Such institutional supports were crucial for the appearance of new cultural movements. Most of all, the Chosŏn kingdom had strong censorship. The consequence of writing a non-canonical book would be the death penalty. The nineteenth-century system of policing words employed the radical method of beheading authors, not to mention destroying their texts. Facing the risk of death, an individual writer or reader could not help but be vulnerable to such violence. So, to make a new book critical of previous literature and canons, authors needed patronage. These new kinds of cultural organizations themselves were ambivalent in terms of the public or private sphere. They belonged to a murky space between publicity and privacy, for they emerged as an alternative to status groups or political factions. What united them is that they shared heretical books. The degree of classical education was important in the membership of literati associations, but popular groups opened their

doors to almost all people, literate or illiterate. But, they shared the common feature as social networks in which authors and readers could evade censorship and communicate with each other. Based on these networks, various sub-genres were able to appear in literary culture even before machine-printing presses came into business in the 1900s.

To conclude, three informal institutions (kinship organizations, literati networks, and religious institutions) connected people with books as kinds of private libraries. These were not identical with political parties or social clubs that Jurgen Habermas discovered as agents of the public sphere in Western Europe. None of the three institutions in the Korean case claimed that they could represent the public 公 (kong) because the monarchy embodied the public (kong).²⁶⁶ The Books maintained the cultural unity of the kingdom. The three new indigenous institutions sometimes compromised, and sometimes contested the ruling dynasty in order to maintain their sub-cultures. Therefore, Korean society began to have many vibrant cultures within it in the nineteenth century. Although the kingdom appeared docile to the dogmatic philosophy of the regime, it hid so much cultural energy and so many unexpected sources of print culture underneath.

2. Rethinking Censorship

It is another main question of this dissertation to rethink censorship in modern Korean history. The Chosŏn kingdom was, of course, far from a *laissez-faire* regime. Neither was the Japanese colonial empire. Indeed, the colonial state effectively removed certain texts and authors from public view after 1910. Then, what were the similarities and differences between the native kingdom and the Japanese colonial rule in their attitude toward dissenters? It is striking to notice that the nature of

²⁶⁶ Rowe argues that the idea of “the public” gradually proliferated in late imperial China so the empire also could not help but recognize the participation of local elites in public service. William T. Rowe, “The Problem of “Civil Society” in Late Imperial China”, *Modern China* 19:2 (1993) 139-141. In spite of the difference in degrees, my argument is that Korean society also showed the similar phenomenon in the literary culture.

managing Korean society by written texts persisted. The local society had to prove its degree of civilization in order to take part in the discussion of statecraft or to obtain a post in the state bureaucracy. And the key element of education was a “correct” language and its main textbooks. In other words, censorship was only a fragment of this great controlling mechanism.

The use of new canonical power and the examination system under the Japanese after 1910 prompts us to reconsider the previous understanding that the colonial regime was exceptionally harsh toward public expression. The Japanese occupation purged those writers who kept loyal to the late kingdom. The unintended effect of such literati purge was ironically to promote Korean vernacular language and its public status. Early bestselling authors took advantage of the regime shift and its favoritism of political and cultural dissenters against the late dynasty. Vernacular-language writers dexterously mixed the message of glorifying the colonial rule with their own opinions about Korea as the community of people without a king. So, it is important to understand that the commercial press and its popular writers benefited from selective targeting by police censors against their rivals. Popular literature, especially in the 1910s, described the late kingdom as an ancient regime that was corrupt, brutal, and oppressive. Having said that, they compromised with the foreign occupiers, and their works created a new kind of imagined community in the Korean reading public. Due to the growing market economy and literacy rate, vernacular literature was well established under the Japanese colonial rule. Yi In-jik, Yi He-jo, and later Yi Kwang-su represented this new age of print capitalism.

Although the examination system symbolized the same doctrine of meritocracy, the empire-building had a different meaning to Korean elites. The regime shift did not affect Korean society equally. Elite males had the biggest disadvantage in taking a government post because they competed with ethnic Japanese degree-holders. Elite kinship organizations were still able and willing

to invest in education for their next generation even in the Japanese colonial curriculum. Given the fact that public education successfully assimilated Korean boys, it is important to note that the colonial regime was not simply a brutal totalitarian regime, but rather it co-opted some natives by the promise of fame and glory. In terms of print culture, schools made a positive contribution by educating children in the Korean vernacular language in the lower grades. As the competition for government posts intensified because of the empire-building, many Korean males failed or dropped out of the schools. The percent of failure as well as the number of the unsuccessful was much larger than that of the nineteenth century. The systematic exclusion of “non-correct” language users, ironically, enhanced the size and skill of the Korean reading public in the 1910s and 20s. New urban institutions such as newspaper companies, professional schools for Koreans, and printing presses put forth great demand for literate males who had refused or failed to take the civil service examinations. Young and literate Koreans, hence, migrated massively from public schools to private sectors. Police censorship had little means to control such increasing mobility except checking what appeared in the public media. This process of frustration and rehabilitation among Japanized Korean males was one of the unintended consequences that affected Korean print culture in the process of the Japanese empire-building in the peninsula.

Korean print culture kept using the same tactic to coexist with the oppressive regime even after the Korean War in 1952. South Korea was based on a more favorable condition than North Korea in literary culture, because Seoul maintained major cultural institutions. Major newspaper companies, printing presses, the old imperial university, private colleges, writers’ associations, and student bodies remained intact, while P’yŏngyang was a newborn capital of the soviet nation. Eight years after the Korean War ended, Syngman Rhee’s one-party rule of the Cold War regime in South Korea collapsed because of nation-wide protests in 1960. This so-called April Revolution was

organized by newspapers, new universities, renowned writers, and high school and university students that united regardless of severe police censorship.

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