

The publication of *Hyol-ui Nu* signaled the emergence of modern Korean literature

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Hyol-ui Nu: Korea's First 'New' Novel

Part 1: Toward a Language of Reform

Kichung Kim

In 1906, *Manse-bo*, a Seoul daily newspaper, began the serialized publication of a short novel by a young Korean journalist named Yi Injik, who had recently returned to Korea after three years of study in Japan (pl. 1). Entitled *Hyol-ui Nu* (Tears of Blood), this novel concerned the sufferings of a family from the northern city of Pyongyang during the recent Sino-Japanese war, and proved to be radically different both in language and content from traditional prose fiction. The following year *Manse-bo* also serialized Yi's second novel, *Kwi-ui Song* (The Voice of the Devil), and in rapid succession Yi published two further novels, both of which appeared in 1908.

Although prose fiction had long

existed in Korea, these four novels by Yi Injik marked the first appearance of the novel in its modern form. More than any other works published during the first decade of the twentieth century, Yi's novels established and defined the genre which has come to be known in Korea as the 'new' novel. This genre differed from traditional prose fiction in every respect. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the publication of *Hyol-ui Nu*—the first 'new' novel—signaled not merely the emergence of a new genre, but also of modern Korean literature as a whole.

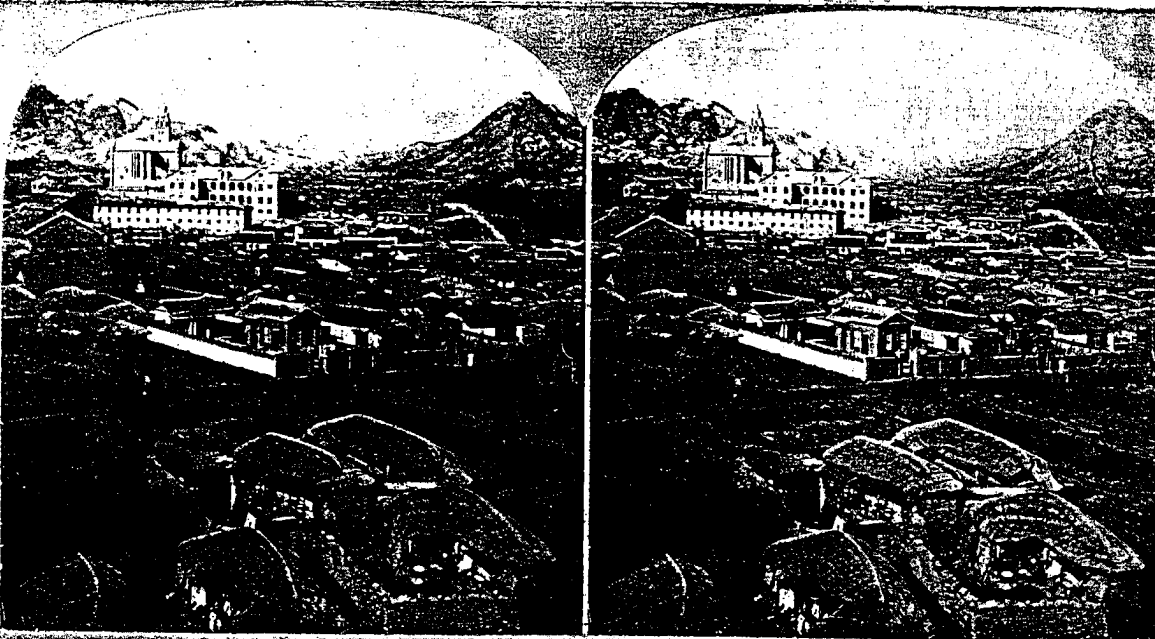
The stylistic innovations apparent in *Hyol-ui Nu*, as important as they were, were not alone in giving impetus to the development of this

new genre. Rather more importantly, this 'new' novel was a direct response to the influx of Western learning to Korea, and an integral part of what was then called the 'national language movement.' In this connection, the 'new' novel was characterized by three major features: an ideological preoccupation with *kaehwa* (reform and modernization), the active promotion of *onmunilch'i* (correspondence between spoken and written languages), and an impulse toward verisimilitude (a gift of the Western novel, which arrived on the back of *onmunilch'i*). In order to grasp the significance of these new features of Yi's first novel, then, we must briefly examine their place in the history of Korea during the first decade of the twentieth

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14074—Birdseye View of Seoul, Korea

Plate 1. A stereographic view of Seoul, 1901. Christian missionaries played a major role in the transmission of Western influence to Korea during the latter half of the nineteenth century—as evidenced by the Western edifices that had arisen in the city by the turn of the century. Reproduced by courtesy of the Library of Congress; Underwood and Underwood Collection, no. A39722.

century.

The word *kaehwa* is comprised of two Chinese characters, meaning literally 'to open' and 'to be transformed.' Various translated as 'enlightenment,' 'Westernization,' or 'modernization,' the term has come to refer generally to the changes brought about in turn-of-the-century Korea by the influence of the West. Within the context of Korean history, *kaehwa* implies not only modernization through the absorption of Western knowledge and technology, but also the reformation of traditional institutions by changes wrought from within.

Kaehwa, a Great River

During the four decades when it played a dominant role in the life and thoughts of the Korean people, the meaning of the term *kaehwa* underwent a three-stage development—closely paralleled by a series of contemporary internal and external crises. The 1870s witnessed the introduction of Western influence to Korea, and in its earliest form *kaehwa*

implied merely a willingness to open the country to such contacts for the purpose of learning about the Western nations and their ways.¹

In the second stage, during the 1880s, Korea struggled to attain the quick reform and modernization necessary to meet the radically altered—

During the 1880s, the meaning of kaehwa was expanded, as its advocates sought to 'enrich and strengthen' the country

and rapidly altering—situation in East Asia (pl. 2). In turn, the meaning of *kaehwa* was expanded, as its advocates sought to 'enrich and strengthen' the country by importing Western knowledge and technology. From the time Korea's ports were first opened in 1876, the inventions and

institutions of the modern West slowly—yet ceaselessly and irresistibly—trickled into the country. Steamships—Japanese, Chinese, and Western—stopped at the ports of Inchon, Pusan, and Wonsan; telegraph lines linked Seoul, Pusan, and other cities; postal service was initiated; newspapers—first weekly and then daily—were published; and electric lights were installed in the royal household.² The forces of *kaehwa* became like the current of a great river—many-layered and many-channeled, at times reduced or diverted, but never entirely stemmed (pl. 3).

Despite these advancements, however, Korea soon found its independence threatened by stronger and more modernized neighbors. Foremost among these was Japan, which had also faced the necessity for modernization—but with entirely different results. During the early years of the Meiji period (1868–1912), native Japanese institutions showed a high degree of readiness to accept Western influences. The country established—

1. Yi Kwangnin, *Hanguk Kaehwasa Yongu* [A Study of the History of the Enlightenment in Korea with Reference to the 1880s] (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1969), pp. 19–20.

2. Telegraphic communications became available as follows: Seoul–Peking, 1885; Seoul–Pusan, 1888; Seoul–Wonsan, 1891; Seoul–Hamhung, 1892; Seoul–Inchon–

Pusan–Wonsan–Kongju, 1894.

on its own initiative—an extraordinarily rapid pace of modernization, which resulted in a vast disparity between the powers of Japan and Korea during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. As one analyst has described this phenomenon: “the

‘The hand that opened the door was as important as the one that produced the knock from outside’

hand that opened the door was as important as the one that produced the knock from outside.”³ Unlike the resulting situation in Japan, Korea's failure to take full advantage of the coming of the West had by 1900 rendered the country powerless to resist the encroachments of her powerful neighbors—Japan and Russia in particular. During this final stage, from 1890 to 1910, *kaehwa* came to describe efforts to preserve and restore national independence, as well as to achieve equal rights for the Korean people. The loss of national independence to Japanese occupation in 1910 provided a final punctuation to the national movement for *kaehwa*, which ended as a dream largely unrealized.

Literacy and Reform

The issues that came to be described by the term *kaehwa* were thus of central importance for the development of turn-of-the-century Korea. As early as 1900, it seemed to Koreans concerned with the fate of their nation that only two paths of action remained open to them. One was to take direct action by organizing armed resistance to foreign and domestic foes; this course proved mostly futile, and was soon abandoned. The remaining path was to adopt the long-range

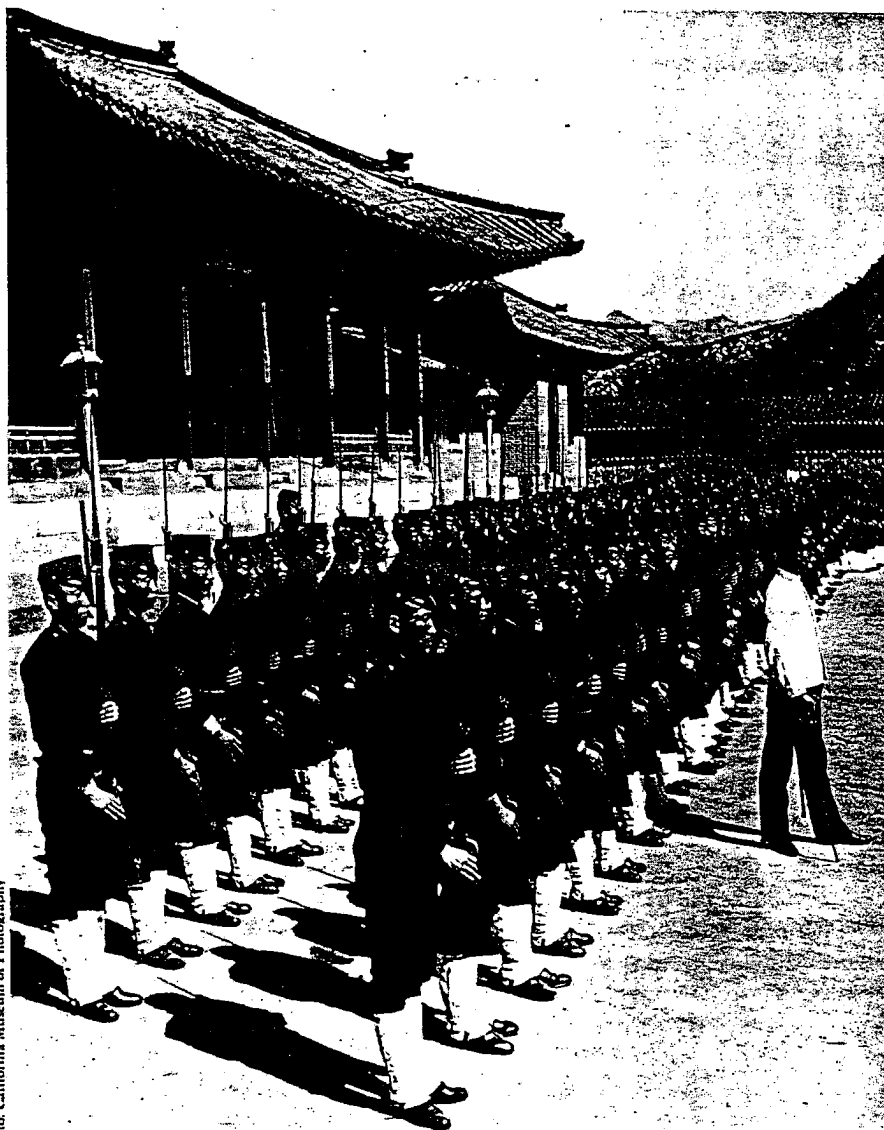


Photo: California Museum of Photography

Plate 2. During the 1880s, reform and modernization—expressed by the inclusive Korean term, *kaehwa*—often meant militarization along Western lines. Here the Korean army shows off Western-style uniforms and armaments; despite such advances, Korea was unable to withstand the threats of more powerful neighbors following the turn of the twentieth century. Reproduced by courtesy of the Keystone-Mast Collection, California Museum of Photography, University of California, Riverside, no. KU 80937.

goal of educating and enlightening the mass of the Korean people, and it was on this task that the more thoughtful of the reform-minded Koreans concentrated their efforts. In effect, literacy and education came to be equated with reform and modernization, as the only means open to maintain the independence of the Korean nation. During the last two

decades of the nineteenth century both the government and Christian missions expressed their commitment to this task by establishing numerous Western style schools—not only in Seoul, but also in some of the provincial cities. Throughout the countryside, Christian missionaries—despite decades of harsh persecution—aided greatly in spreading literacy

³ John Hall, “Changing Conceptions of the Modernization of Japan,” in *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 36.

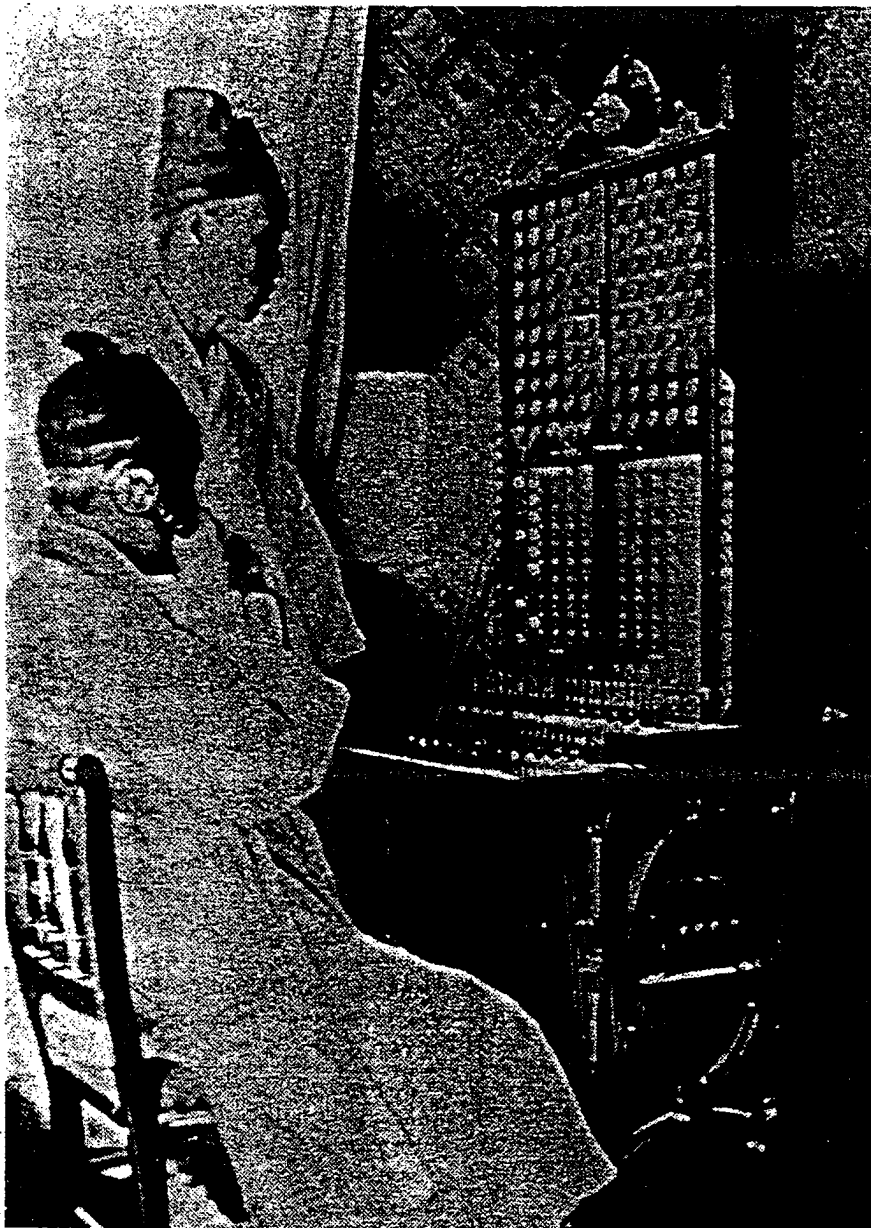


Plate 3. Another face of kaehwa. Koreans earnestly pursued modernization of all sorts from the 1880s onward. Here, an early telephone switchboard, probably from the first decade of the twentieth century.

among the common people.

Another major expression of these efforts was the 'national language movement,' which strove to revitalize not only the use of *hangul*—the native alphabet—but also to effect through its nation-wide use and dissemination a reinvigoration of all that was indigenous in the arts, in history, and in literature. This movement was

characterized by a strong impulse in favor of *onmunilch'i* (correspondence between spoken and written languages), and sought to remove from the written Korean language the foreign influences which had hitherto dominated it. How this seemingly apolitical impulse to 'Koreanize' the written language could have gained such extraordinary historical signifi-

cance is a curiosity in itself. The answer lies in the history of the written language in Korea—a side excursion which will greatly help to illuminate the importance of the 'new' novel.

Until 1446, when King Sejong promulgated *hunmin chongum*—a twenty-eight letter phonetic alphabet—the Korean people lacked a native writing system suitable to express the sounds of their language.⁴ This is not to say, however, that Koreans were without any written language. From about the beginning of the Eastern Han dynasty (A.D. 25–220) in China, Koreans wrote using Chinese characters, which they called *hanmun*.⁵ In effect, then, two entirely distinct language systems developed in Korea—native Korean for speech, and alien *hanmun* (classical Chinese) for writing—resulting in a wide divergence between the spoken and written languages.⁶

In operation, these two systems were cumbersome at best. Because Korean and Chinese are linguistically unrelated, and because Chinese characters are ideographic rather than phonetic, it was extremely difficult for Koreans to use Chinese characters to represent their own speech. For Korean speech to be recorded, it had first to be translated into classical Chinese. Understandably, therefore, repeated efforts were made to adapt Chinese characters so that they might be used to represent, however inadequately, the sound of spoken Korean. Two systems were devised for this purpose, *idu* and *hyangchal*—both little more than modest efforts to add a phonetic dimension to what was basically an ideographic writing system.⁷ The working of the *idu-hyangchal* system can best be understood if we compare it to the way Chinese characters are ordinarily used.

Take, for example, the Chinese word *hyangchal*. It is comprised of the two characters *hyang* (provincial

4. *Hunmin chongum* is today uniformly referred to as *hangul*.

5. Although the first use of Chinese characters in Korea cannot be dated precisely, it is generally agreed that their use was fairly widespread by the fourth or fifth century. *Hanmun* means literally 'letter of Han.'

6. It is difficult for a Western audience to appreciate the problems which such a divergence might cause. For the

7. Korean scholars disagree about the differences between these two systems. More is known about *idu*, which is generally acknowledged to have been used mainly in the official documents of petty government officials belonging to the *chungin* (middle) class. For a relatively brief but detailed study of the subject, see Kim Kunsu, "A Study of Idu," *Asea Yongu* [Asian Studies] 4:1 (1961):87–139.

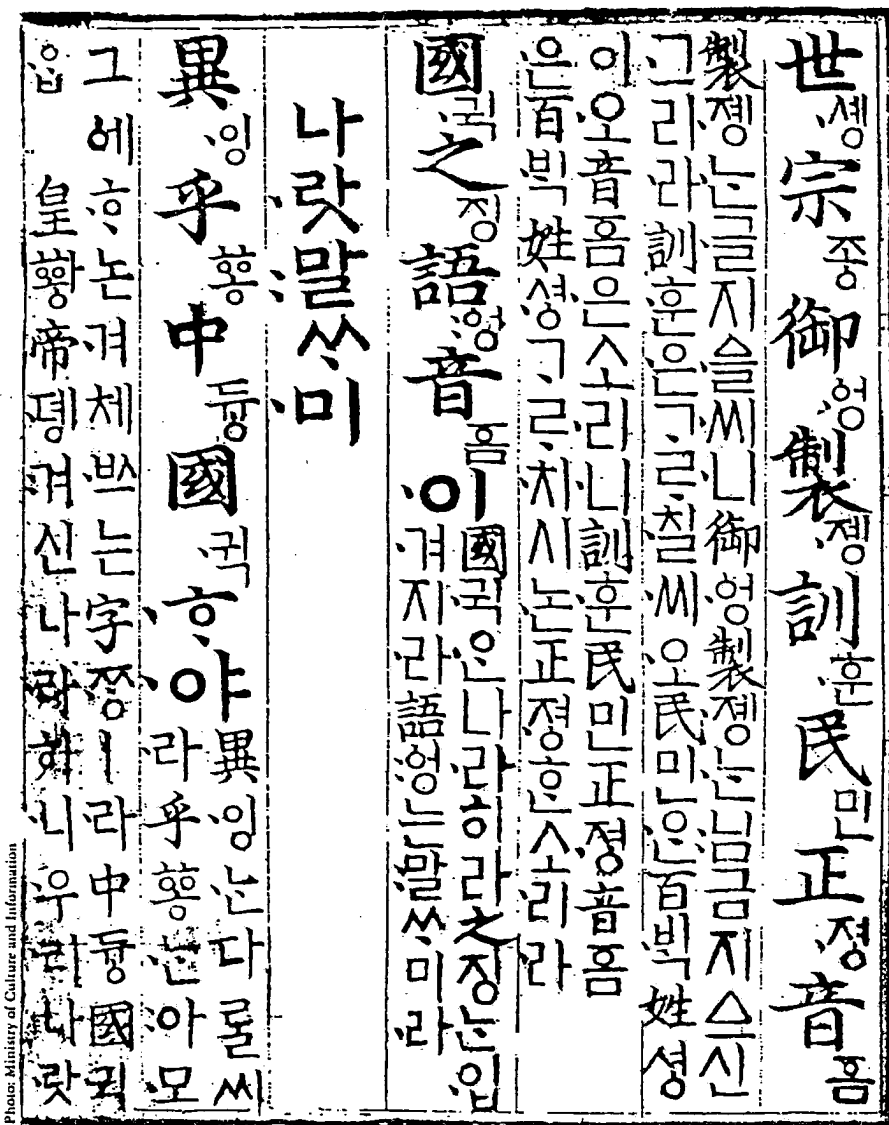


Plate 4. Opening page of King Sejong's 1446 promulgation of *hunmin chongum*, the twenty-eight letter phonetic Korean alphabet now known as *hangul*. The king's text—altogether only one hundred and ten characters in length—is given in large, bold letters. The smaller text comprises explanatory notes on the *hangul* letters, prepared by the scholars of the royal academy, *Sungkyunkwan*.

or indigenous), and *chal* (script or writing); when combined, these mean something like 'native script' or 'indigenous writing.' The meaning of this word thus derives from the values inherent in its ideographic characters, which have no relation to their sound. The meaning of the word would be the same regardless of its pronunciation, and anyone familiar with its ideographs—whether Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, of whatever time or place—could sight-

read the word.⁸

Limited Range

The earliest use of the *idu-hyangchal* system seems to have been connected with efforts to represent Korean place names using the written characters of *hanmun*. The Korean place name, Kolp'o, for example, would be written using two Chinese characters: *kol* (bones), and *p'o* (inlet or harbor). In this example, the first character is used for its phonetic value only, and

merely approximates the Korean pronunciation of the first syllable of the place name; the ideographic meaning of the character is totally disregarded. The second character *p'o*, on the other hand, functions as a Chinese loan word to the Korean language, and its ideograph signifies its usual meaning—an inlet or harbor. In practice, the workings of the *idu-hyangchal* system were much more complex, but this simple example provides at least a rudimentary notion of how the system worked.

The system of using selected Chinese characters to represent individual syllables of Korean speech had a very limited range

Such a system of using selected Chinese characters to represent individual syllables of Korean speech had a very limited range: most commonly it was used to supply the grammatical markers necessary to transform a group of Chinese characters into a Korean syntactical unit. As a declined language with four cases (nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative), spoken Korean accomplished this by adding to an existing noun one of a series of regular case-endings. The same alteration was necessary when the word was written in *hanmun*, and the phonetically equivalent Chinese character would be added to express the case-ending. A simple example of this should suffice: by themselves, the four Chinese characters *Sejong Taewang* (Great King Sejong), are without syntactical meaning. To create the nominative form of this compound noun, spoken Korean would add the case-ending *un*, thus making it the grammatical subject of its sentence. When written in *hanmun*, the phonetically equivalent Chinese character would be

8. The difference between a Chinese ideographic character and an English or French word may be illustrated by the following example: the word 'pain' has entirely different

meanings to an English (physical discomfort) and French (bread) reader. An equivalent Chinese character for the English word 'pain' would mean precisely this—and

nothing else—whether read by a Chinese, Korean, or Japanese.

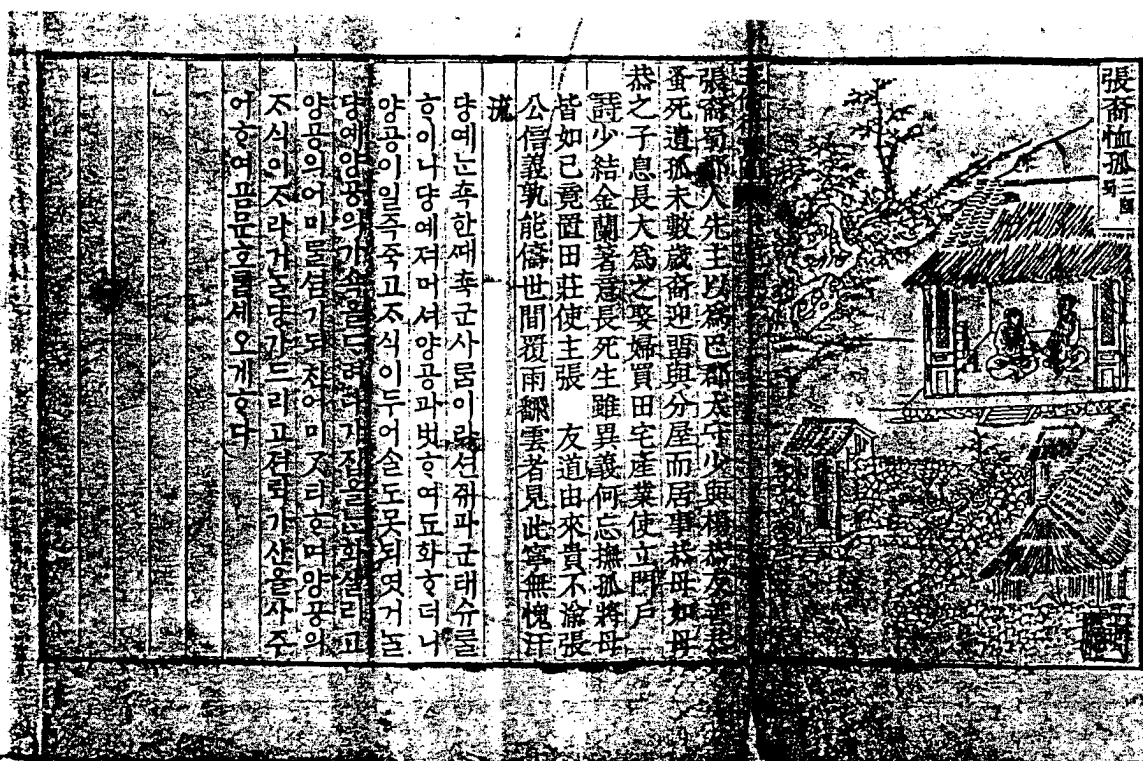


Plate 5. Although hangul was ill-received among the yangban of the country, the court of the Yi dynasty continued its favor toward the use of this alphabet. In 1797, for instance, King Chongjo (1776-1800) ordered the compilation of a text entitled *Oryun Hangchildo* (*Five Proper Types of Human Relationships*), which drew together pre-existing tales exemplary of Confucian ethics. Altogether, the work included one hundred and ninety-five stories, divided into five categories: filial obedience, pupils' respect for their masters, loyalty to the crown, virtuous women, and friendship. In order to ensure that this work might be used by the greatest number of people, the king ordered that its text should be written not only in the Chinese of the yangban, but also in the hangul of the lower classes—and even illustrated for those who could not read at all. Shown here, separated from its binding for exhibition, is a story from the section on friendship: “*Changye Hyulgo*” (*Changye Helps a Poor Boy*). Collection of Hong Seok Kim, Los Angeles.

added, and *Sejong Taewangun* would become the grammatical subject of the sentence. According to this use of the *idu-hyangchal* system, the fact that the character *un* also had a translatable meaning in Chinese (to be concealed, hidden, mysterious) was unimportant; the character was employed only for its phonetic value, which approximated the Korean nominative case-ending.⁹

In practice, however, even the addition of such characters might prove a nightmare, for the use of certain Chinese characters in *hanmun* was based not on their phonetic value, but on their ideographic meaning. The Chinese character *wei* (to make or do), for example, would normally have been pronounced *wi* by Koreans;

and one might have expected the character to replace a Korean syllable thus pronounced. In fact, however, this was not the case. Instead, the Chinese word *wei* was treated as identical to the stem portion of its Korean counterpart, the verb *ha* (to do). When written in *hanmun*, then, the Chinese character *wei* actually replaced a syllable pronounced *ha*—and the reader was expected to understand that it should also be pronounced thus. In this way was developed a long list of Chinese characters to be used singularly or in combination, most corresponding to the sound of Korean grammatical markers, the pronunciation of each determined either by its phonetic value or ideographic meaning.

Missed Opportunities

Inevitably, the *idu-hyangchal* system was able to represent very little of Korean speech—and only then with extreme difficulty. The inadequacy of this system for Korean speech was perhaps best summed up by King Sejong in his royal rescript of 1446, promulgating the newly created phonetic alphabet, *hunmin chongum*, commonly known as *hangul* (pl. 4):

While there is a great difference between the Korean language and the Chinese, there are no proper letters that the Korean people can use in writing their language and expressing their thoughts. From the time of the Silla Dynasty a system of writing known as Idu has

43

9. *Un* is the Korean pronunciation of the character; its Chinese pronunciation is *yin*.

been used in the daily life of ordinary people as well as in government business. But it is too complicated, imperfect, and inconvenient a system for the Koreans to use freely in expressing their own ideas and thinking, because too many Chinese characters are involved in it. Koreans are in great need of their own letters with which they can write the Korean language.¹⁰

The promulgation of *hangul*, a phonetic alphabet designed especially for Korean speech, should have marked a turning point in the history of Korean literature. For the first time, it was possible to transcribe Korean speech using a writing system so simple and convenient that any adult Korean could master its use in less than a week, and by this means forever to banish the alien system which had burdened the country for more than a thousand years. As it happened, however, the history of *hangul* from the time of its creation until the very eve of the twentieth century was one of missed opportunities.

Hangul was soon relegated to an inferior status—fit only for use by women and the humble

Even in the time of King Sejong, the use of *hanmun* among the educated elite of the *yangban* class was too deeply entrenched to be easily displaced. These *yangban* had invested a great deal of time and energy in learning to manage *hanmun*, and their literacy in that system was among the traits which distinguished them from the lower classes.¹¹ This provided them with a reason to support the continued, and exclusive, use of *hanmun*—and to oppose the spread of Sejong's new letters. Besides



Photo: Library of Congress

Plate 6. Korean women long provided a major portion of the audience for *hangul* romances. By the turn of the century, they were also the focus of proselytizing efforts by Christian missionaries, who realized that their influence on the upbringing of families made their help in spreading the gospel a significant factor. Reproduced by courtesy of the Library of Congress; LC neg. no. USZ62-72648.

this, the forces of tradition were solidly on their side, and their own lukewarm reception of the new alphabet created an inertia that could be overcome only with great difficulty. As a result, not even the most zealous promotion of *hangul* by the king himself could bring about a widespread acceptance and use of the new alphabet (pl. 5).¹²

With such meager support, it is not surprising that *hangul* was soon relegated to an inferior status; dubbed *onmun* (vulgar script) it was considered fit for use only by women and the humble, and was to be shunned by the literati and highly placed. In this dismal situation, the best use to which *hangul* was put was as an indigenous replacement for the *hanmun* grammatical markers that had been used in the *idu-hyangchal* system. This oddly mixed writing system served as a forerunner to a later style of mixed Chinese and Korean (mostly *hanmun* with *hangul* used for grammatical markers)—itself a forerunner to the Korean-Chinese mixed style still used today. Thus,

even after the creation of *hangul*, the peculiar and debilitating split between the spoken and written languages of Korea persisted.

Female and Plebeian Audience

There were, to be sure, further opportunities for *hangul* to take root and gain widespread acceptance. From about the sixteenth century, for instance, Korean travellers returning from China brought back Chinese prose romances—an influence which created a popular demand in Korea for similar works. The Korean prose romances which soon began to be written—at first in *hanmun*, and later also in *hangul*—were aimed principally at the female and plebeian audiences (pl. 6). Now here was a perfect opportunity to achieve a correspondence between the spoken and written languages, by developing a style of *hangul* prose that would approximate spoken Korean. As it happened, however, the style of prose adopted in these *hangul* romances was anything but Korean; instead, this prose had about it an artificial

10. Yi Sangbaek. *The Origin of Han'gul: an Analysis of Hunmin Chongum*, trans. Dugald Malcolm (Seoul: Tongmun Kwan, 1957), p. 2.

11. *Yangban* is the generic name for those of the

traditional aristocratic classes, both civil and military. The common people were called *sangnom*.

12. Even as King Sejong promulgated *hunmin chongum*, there was considerable opposition within the court itself

to the invention and use of the new alphabet. Several highly placed court officials had to be reprimanded, and at least one minister was dismissed for his vehement opposition.

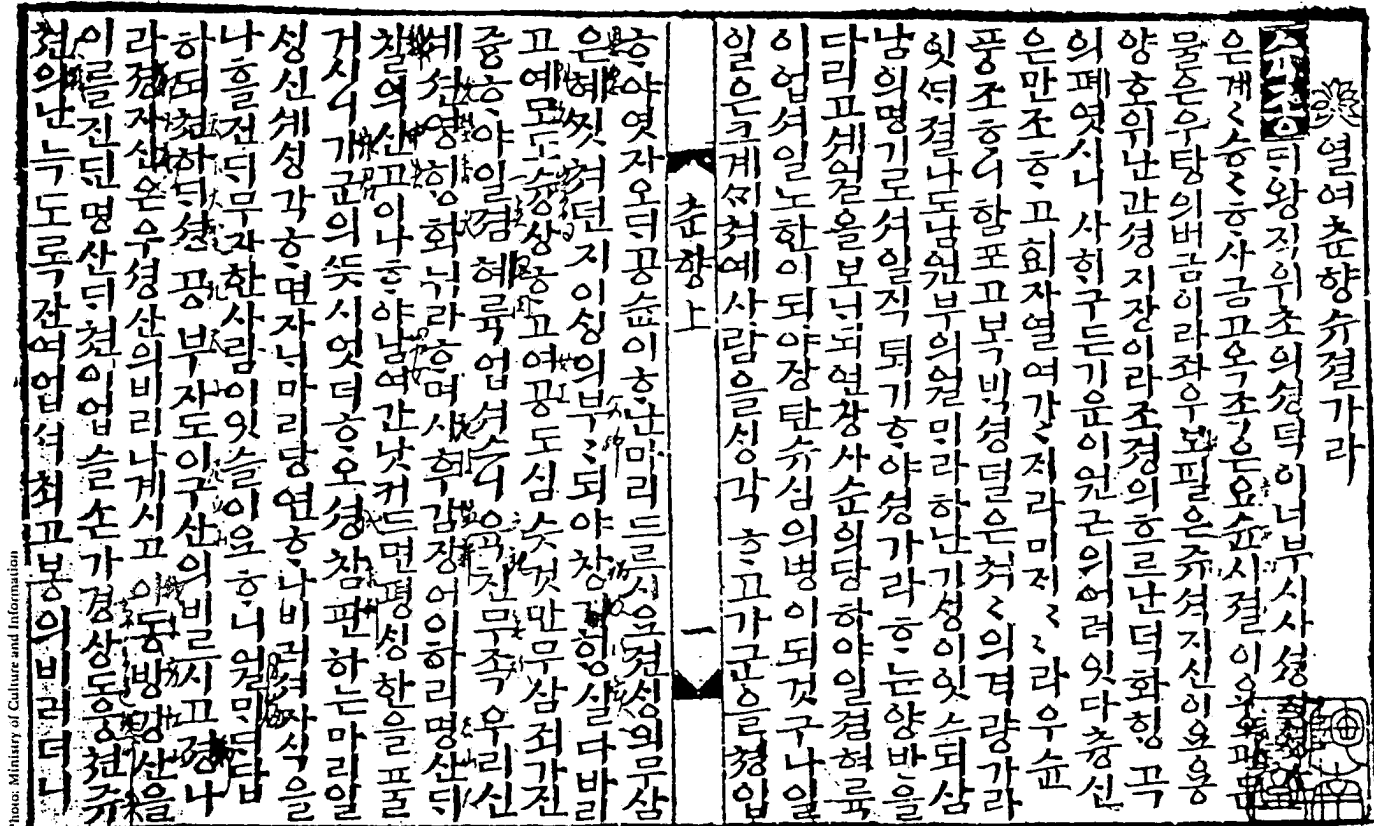


Plate 7. King Sejong's twenty-eight letter alphabet, hangul, should have encouraged the use of movable metal type, in which Korean artisans were pioneers. In fact, however, few books were published in this way until the end of the nineteenth century. Determined to maintain its exclusive use of hanmun, the yangban class provided no market for books printed in hangul—whether produced by movable type or otherwise. Among the lower classes, for whom most hangul books were produced, printing with carved woodblocks remained the most common method. Shown here is the opening page of one such woodblock edition, the earliest imprint of Chunhyang Chon (Tale of Chunhyang), published at Chunju, North Cholla Province, in 1870.

quality which is difficult to convey to a non-Korean reader. At best, it might be characterized as a sort of semi-prose, with a sing-song cadence built on syllabic regularity, and frequent use of formulaic phrases from *hanmun* transcribed into *hangul*.

There were two reasons for the syllabic regularity of this semi-prose. First, book printing in Korea was not widespread, and this was particularly true for *hangul* romances—a popular but nevertheless despised literary form. Such *hangul* romances as did appear were therefore composed not for private and individual perusal, but for public recitation. This, in turn, imposed a necessity that the prose be written in a style that was most readily recitable. A second factor which contributed to the oral nature of these romances was the development of the recitative dramatic mono-

logue performances called *pansori*, which began to flourish during the eighteenth century. Most of the popular *hangul* romances—such as *Chunhyang Chon* (Tale of Chunhyang) and *Simcho'ong Chon* (Tale

*Most of the popular
hangul romances were
ultimately derived from
pansori*

of Simcho'ong)—were ultimately derived from *pansori* (pl. 7). When converted to their prose form, however, they retained much of the cadence of the original verse composed for public recitation.

In the second and third installments of this article, which will appear in future issues of Korean Culture, Kichung Kim discusses the gradual emergence of hangul at the end of the twentieth century, and analyzes the contribution of Hyol-ui Nu to the development of the 'new' novel.—ed.

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Domestic unrest and foreign intrusion jolted Korea from its centuries of isolation.

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Hyol-ui Nu: Korea's First 'New' Novel

Part 2: The Power of the Press

Kichung Kim

In the first installment of this article, Kichung Kim discussed the debilitating split which historically existed between the spoken and written languages of Korea, and the failure of Korea's yangban class to acknowledge the benefits that adoption of hangul—the phonetic alphabet promulgated by King Sejong in 1446—might have provided for both the country and its people. In the absence of support from the yangban, such works as were written using hangul were directed toward the female and plebeian audiences, and did little to advance an indigenous prose style.—ed.

Despite the opportunities to advance hangul prose which had arisen

during the four centuries after the alphabet's creation, the very eve of the twentieth century found Korea still lacking a literary style capable of representing Korean speech with any degree of accuracy or credibility. It was not until domestic unrest and foreign intrusion had jolted Korea from its centuries of isolation that any movement toward the development of hangul prose began in earnest. When at last this arrived, it came as part of a movement for reform and modernization whose motivating impulse was at once nationalistic and populist. Driven by the shadow of foreign domination to reappraise their traditional values and institutions, Koreans desperately needed to rediscover and reassert their

national and cultural integrity. The means to do so were provided by the 'national language movement' which, among other things, helped to forge the language of the 'new' novel.

The 'national language movement' sought more than merely to Koreanize the written language through the use of hangul. A crystallization of forces from within the country as well as influences from without, the movement provided strong support for efforts to revitalize and modernize native institutions—precisely the central concerns of *kaehwa*. The use of hangul was, to the movement's adherents, a symbol through which was expressed a number of deeply felt desires: to create an enlightened and democratic society by making literacy

Previously published photographs accompanying this article have been taken from Hisung Lee, et al., eds., *Yu Kilchun Chunso* [The Works of Yu Kilchun], vol. 4:

Chungchi Kyungje [Politics and Economy], and vol. 5: *Simun* [Literature] (Seoul: Iljogak, 1971); and Homer B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea, Illustrated from Photo-*

graphs (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1906).



Plate 1. Official portrait of Yu Kilchun, who sought to reach a broad Korean audience by using a mixed style of hangul and hanmun in his 1895 publication, *Soyu Kyonmun* (*Observations during a Visit to the West*).

universally attainable; to be rid of undue reverence for all things Chinese; and to return to what was inherently and basically Korean. How this single movement came to embrace such historically significant concerns can best be illustrated in the efforts of Yu Kilchun, Philip Jaisohn (So Chae-p'il), and Christian missionaries, toward a more widespread acceptance of the use of *hangul* and *hangul* diction.

'It is my regret that I could not write it altogether in Korean'

As a young man of great promise and exceptional connections, Yu Kilchun studied for a year with Japan's foremost proponent of modernization, Fukuzawa Yukichi

(pl. 1). Yu's exposure to modern ways was broadened still more when he travelled to the United States in 1883 as a member of the first Korean delegation, and remained an extra year for the express purpose of absorbing Western knowledge. Then, in 1895, he printed at his own expense a work entitled *Soyu Kyonmun* (Ob-

A strict and unprecedented policy on the exclusive use of hangul

servations during a Visit to the West), in which he provided an impressively comprehensive digest of his gleanings, as well as reflections on what he believed to be the true meaning of *kaehwa*. As important as the contents of this work were, however, it is the style in which Yu chose to write that is of particular interest.

Rather than writing entirely in *hanmun*—as expected from a man of his high position and learning—Yu interspersed his mostly *hanmun* text with some expressions in that vulgar script, *hangul*. Warned in advance that his noteworthy work was likely to be ridiculed for this breach of scholarly etiquette, Yu added to the beginning of the book an explanatory note, in which he defended his decision to adopt a 'mixed style' of *hangul* and *hanmun*. The most important of Yu's many reasons for adopting this style seems to have been his wish to make the work available to as many Korean readers as possible—a reason for which he expressed his willingness to endure the ridicule of his fellow aristocrats (pl. 2). "It is my regret that I could not write it altogether in Korean," he wrote, adding that he considered the use of *hangul* inseparable from his vision of *kaehwa*—and essential to his program for the reform and modernization of Korea.¹ Although Yu provided an impassioned defense of

hangul, and gave to its use some small measure of sorely needed respectability, it would remain for others to take up where he had left off.

Unprecedented Policy

It was Philip Jaisohn who accomplished the next, and most radical, step in promoting the use of *hangul*. Upon his return from exile in America—now Americanized in both education and citizenship—Jaisohn founded the Independence Club. With the cooperation of the government, Jaisohn also established a semi-official organ for this movement, the newspaper *Tongnip Sinmun* (The Independent), which began its thrice weekly publication on 4 April 1896 (pl. 3). Jaisohn was single-minded in his dedication to the enlightenment of Korea and the reform of its diseased institutions, and—like Yu Kilchun before him—he considered the use of *hangul* an integral part of the movement for reform. Consequently, Jaisohn insisted that *Tongnip Sinmun* be published entirely in *hangul*.

Tongnip Sinmun established a style which not only made use of the Korean alphabet, but also of Korean diction

In the opening section of the paper's first edition, Jaisohn informed readers of the paper's policy to welcome letters for publication. He added very firmly, however, that the paper would have nothing to do with letters written in *hanmun*, and this reminder of the paper's strict, unprecedented policy on the exclusive use of *hangul* was repeated in its first seven numbers.² Still more significantly, the prose style adopted in this newspaper differed greatly from that of earlier Korean semi-prose romances, whose

1. Yu Kilchun, *Soyu Kyonmun* [Observations during a Visit to the West] (rpt. Seoul: Kyonginunhwasa, 1965), p. 6.

2. *Tongnip Sinmun* [The Independent] (reduced ed., rpt. Seoul: Ilchogak, 1970), vol. 1.



Photo: Lee, et al., vol. 4.

Plate 2. Yu Kilchun (left) risked the scorn of his fellow yangban by advocating kaehwa—reform and modernization. When the progressive government cabinet of which he was part was felled by a coup in 1898, Yu fled to Japan, barely escaping with his life. Here, Yu Kilchun poses with his son during happier days at his Seoul villa, Johojung. Note the shoes worn by both men, and the short hair sported by the younger Yu—sure signs of their commitment to Western-style modernization.

style had been Korean only in its exclusive use of *hangul* script. By contrast, the prose of *Tongnip Sinmun* was an entirely new development—a style which not only made use of the Korean alphabet, but also of Korean diction. Even today, reading the pages of *Tongnip Sinmun*, one is struck by the naturalness of its style; it is written in simple, clear, straightforward Korean prose, and the only *hanmun* expressions that were permitted to remain (though transcribed into *hangul*) were unavoidable Sino-Korean words and phrases that had long since been accepted into everyday Korean speech.

The contribution of *Tongnip Sinmun* to the promotion of literacy, enlightenment, and patriotism among Korean people during this period cannot be over-estimated. For the first time, it had been shown what the use of *hangul* alone might achieve. The paper demonstrated that a simple and plain prose written entirely in *hangul* could facilitate wider dissemination of information and knowledge, and thereby immeasurably enhance literacy among the mass of the Korean people. Al-

Uncompromising editorials and reports of official corruption and incompetence soon earned for Tongnip Sinmun the hatred of government ministers

though *Tongnip Sinmun* remained popular with its readers, the paper's uncompromising editorials and reports of official corruption and incompetence soon earned for it the hatred of government ministers. The government, which had provided part of the initial funding for the paper's publication, gradually ceased its

toleration of Jaisohn's work.³ As a result, in 1898—only two years after he had founded the paper—Philip Jaisohn was once again driven from his native land.⁴

Nevertheless, *Tongnip Sinmun* had taken the all-important first step, and other newspapers soon followed its example. *Maeil Sinmun* (Daily

Within a year, Korea's first daily newspaper had been closed down by the government

News), Korea's first daily newspaper, was first published in 1897, but was closed within a year by the government. *Kyongsong Sinmun* (Capital News), began publication in 1898. *Cheguk Sinmun* (National News), was first published in 1898, and successfully continued publication until the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910. While the fate of these papers varied, each was published entirely in *hangul*, and each contributed to the advancement of Korean prose during a crucial period of the nation's history (pl. 4).

A Medium for Sacred Thought

Although the early Korean newspapers contributed greatly to the development of Korean prose, there was much that they could not accomplish. The newspapers played a major role, for instance, in creating an ever-widening circle of *hangul* users and newspaper readers; but the supple, conversational, and idiomatic qualities of Korean speech remained for the most part outside the range of writing they practiced during their initial years. It was not until they began to serialize the 'new' novels—most of which gained their first publication in this form—that the news-

Photo: Ministry of Culture and Information

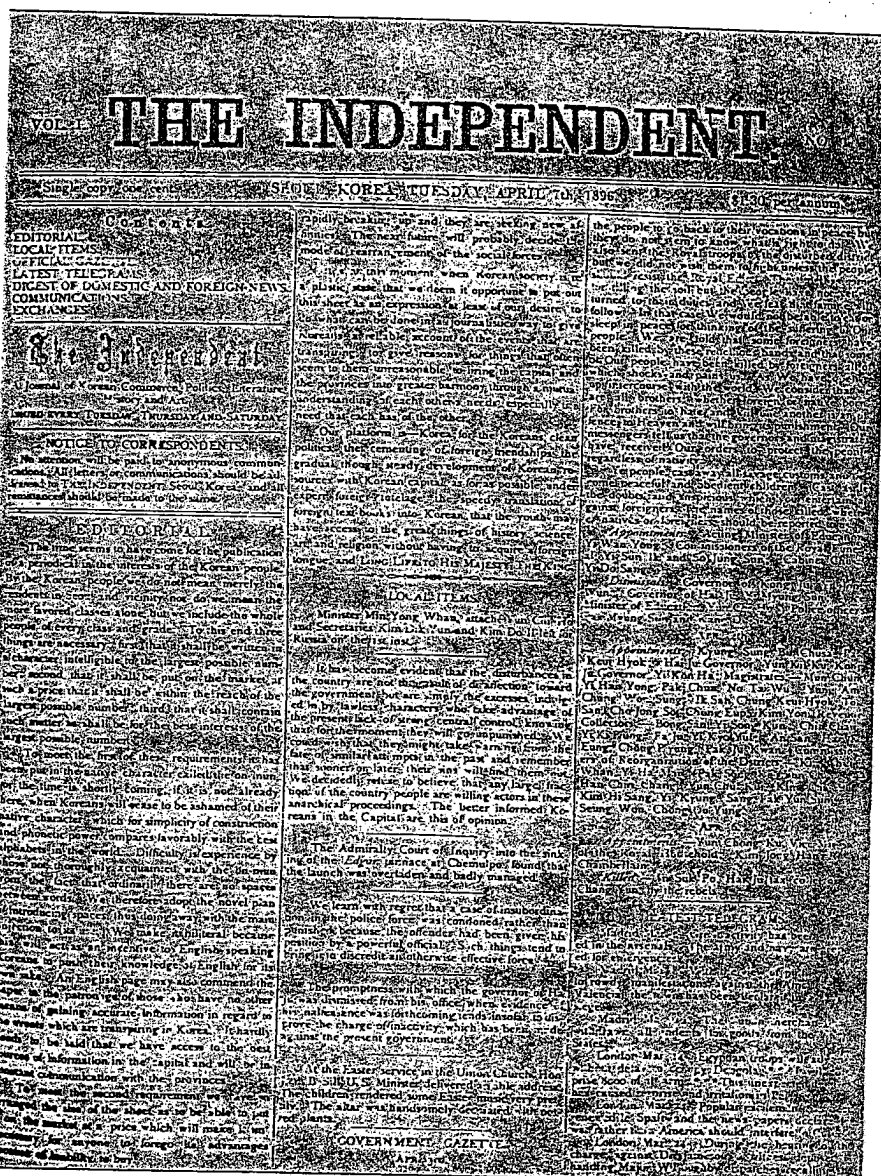


Plate 3. Philip Jaisohn's thrice weekly newspaper *Tongnip Sinmun* was published in both an English and Korean edition. The Korean edition was the first paper to insist on the exclusive use of *hangul*, and established an entirely new style for Korean prose.

The supple, idiomatic qualities of Korean speech remained for the most part outside the range of the early Korean newspapers

papers were able to transcend the inherent limitations of their own journalistic style.

In the meantime, the influence of Christian missionaries on the development of Korean prose had long since preceded—and, according to some, even surpassed—that of the newspapers. The Gospel of Luke as translated into *hangul* by Ross and

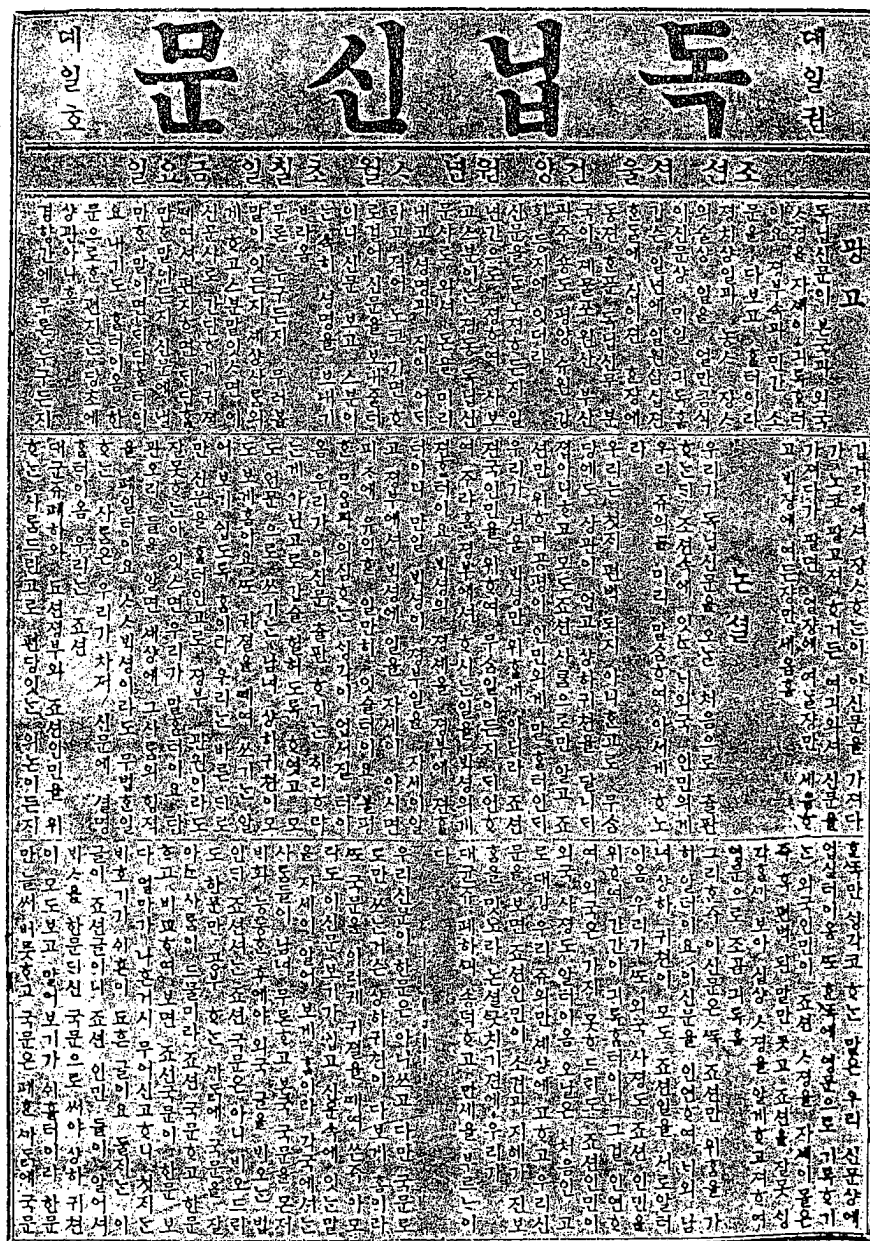
3. While Yu Kilchun was briefly the minister of internal affairs in 1895, he promised Philip Jaisohn considerable financial assistance for his projected newspaper. The cabinet of which Yu was a part was felled by a coup two months before the paper was to begin publication, however, and Yu barely managed to escape to Japan. Although the new cabinet reneged on every other promise

made by its predecessor, it fulfilled the promise of financial assistance to Jaisohn, thus enabling him to begin publishing *Tongnip Sinmun* in April 1896. For a description of these events, see Ch'oe Chun, *Hanguk Sinmunsa* [A History of Korean Newspapers], rev. ed. (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1970), pp. 51-53.

4. During his first exile from Korea (1884-1896), Philip

Jaisohn studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and became a United States citizen. In 1898 he was forced to leave the country when the Korean government complained to the United States legation in Korea about Philip Jaisohn, a United States citizen.

42



reformed, modernized—and Christian—Korea, and they spared neither themselves nor any effort that might bring this about. They went everywhere in Korea—every nook and corner even in the most remote of areas—knocking on every closed door, especially among the women and humbler working people of the countryside (pl. 6).

Missionaries shared the vision of a reformed, modernized—and Christian—Korea

Also like Jaisohn, the missionaries believed that in order to achieve their goals it was necessary to reach the mass of the Korean people—and that this could best be effected only by using *hangul*. It was this belief that drew them to intensive study of the Korean language, as well as to the work of translating the Bible. In 1893, the Protestant Council of Missions in Korea established guidelines for the work of its members, including the following notable items:

All tracts should be written in *han'gul* only.

Proselytizing efforts should first be directed towards the people of the working classes, and only afterwards towards those of the upper classes.

Special efforts should be made to convert women and educate young unmarried women. This is because the homemakers have the greatest influence on the raising of children.⁷

It was natural, then, that the missionaries should have chosen to cast their translation of the Bible into *hangul*, the hitherto despised written

MacIntyre—by no means the earliest Korean version—appeared as early as 1882, and thus predated *Tongnip Sinmun* by nearly fifteen years.⁵ By 1887 the remainder of the New Testament was available in this translation, which rapidly became the first of its kind to be widely disseminated. In the succeeding years, the *hangul* New Testament found a

receptive audience among the Korean people, as indicated by the number of copies distributed (table 1).⁶

What gave substance to this distribution, however, was the dedication, zeal, and effectiveness with which the Christian missionaries pursued their work of proselytization (pl. 5). Like Philip Jaisohn, these missionaries shared the vision of a

5. *Yesu Syonkyo Chonsyo* [Complete Text of the Sacred Teachings of Jesus Christ], trans. John Ross and John MacIntyre (Mukden [now Shenyang]: English Bible Society, 1887). There had been several earlier translations of the Bible into Korean—some of which included merely one or two of the gospels—dating as early as 1790.

6. Kim Byongch'ol, *Hanguk Kundaebonyok Munhaksa*

[A Study of Modern Korean Translation Literature] (Seoul: Ulyumunhwasa, 1975), p. 39.

7. Kim Yongdok, "Onhae Munch'ae wa Songso Pyonyokch'ae wa ui Kwangye Yongu [The Vernacular Style and the Translation of the Bible into Korean]," *Ewha University Center for the Study of Korean Culture, Selected Essays 6* (1966):95–96.

language of the women and humbler working people whom they sought to educate. The efforts of the missionaries went beyond mere translation, however, for they were also active in teaching *hangul* reading and writing to whomever they could reach—regardless of sex, age, or social

Missionaries were active in teaching hangul reading and writing to whomever they could reach

position. It can easily be imagined what impact this must have had, when, after a short span of years, practically every Korean convert to Christianity was literate in *hangul* (pl. 7). One scholar has summarized this process:

Just as students of the Confucian classics revered Chinese literature and Chinese characters, it was natural that the masses of people studying the Bible in *han'gul* translation should come to hold *han'gul* in reverence. As the *han'gul* Bible, the carrier of the Divine words, came to be deemed precious, *han'gul* itself in turn, as the medium of sacred thoughts, came to be deemed precious.⁸

Year	Distribution
1882-1890	198,652
1900	13,005
1901	16,314
1902	23,716

Table 1. The Ross-MacIntyre translation of the New Testament was the first such translation to be widely disseminated in Korea. After its appearance in 1882-1887, the number of copies distributed each year was substantial. This table shows the distribution of the *hangul* New Testament in Korea around the turn of the twentieth century.

8. Ch'oe Hyonbae, quoted by Kim Byongch'ol, *Hangul Kundaebonyok Munhaksa*, p. 21.

9. Yu Ch'angkyun, "Gukyoksongso ka Cuko ui Paltal e Kich'in Yonghyang [The Effect of the Korean Bible on the Development of the Korean Language]." *Tongso Munhwa* [Culture: East and West] 1 (1967):59-74.



Photo: Ministry of Culture and Information

Plate 4. The fate of Korean newspapers varied widely. While some managed to continue printing until Korea was occupied by the Japanese in 1910, others were closed down because of their criticism of government corruption and incompetence. Here, a scene in the composition room of an early Korean newspaper.

With respect to the social and cultural history of Korea, the missionaries' stimulation of literacy and 'enlightenment' among the Korean populace is perhaps comparable only to the movements of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries which produced vernacular translations of the Bible for nearly every region of Western Europe.

But the *hangul* Bible also added something of an alien note, by introducing to the Korean language new words, new expressions, and even new diction.⁹ This came about because of the missionaries' determination to be completely faithful to the spirit of the scriptures when they rendered them into *hangul*. Whenever they found that Korean lacked words equivalent in feeling or meaning to those of their original (Hebrew, Greek, or English), they coined new words and expressions—most often drawing from Chinese or

combining two or more Korean words.¹⁰ The result was a sort of Korean prose which has been called 'scriptural translation style,' and which had a noticeable effect on the spoken language of Korean converts

The hangul New Testament introduced to the Korean language new words, new expressions, and even new diction

to Christianity.¹¹

Thus, even as this translation increased the use of *hangul* and tremendously advanced the cause of *onmunilch'i* (correspondence between spoken and written lan-

today in the language—both spoken and written—of devout Korean Christians. For a discussion of this style, see Kim Yongduk, "Onhae Munch'ae wa Songso," *passim*.

10. There was an additional twist to this: because the three Koreans who assisted Ross and MacIntyre were from the northwestern provinces of the Korean peninsula, many dialectal idioms from those regions crept into the 1882 and 1887 editions of the *hangul* New Testament.

11. This 'scriptural translation style' remains apparent



Plate 5. The American Methodist Church, Seoul. The influence of missionaries was pervasive in turn-of-the-century Korea.

guages), it also introduced complications. For a more faithful rendering of their country's speech, therefore, Koreans had still to await the development of the 'new' novel—the earliest expressions of which appeared in newspapers.

Blind Reverence

During the period just prior to the July 1906 appearance of Yi Injik's novel, *Hyol-ui Nu*, the works of prose fiction published in Korean newspapers displayed a multiplicity of prose styles. Some were written entirely in *hanmun*; some laced their *hanmun* text with *hangul* grammatical markers; others were written entirely in *hangul* characters, but retained a diction that was heavily *hanmun*. Such works as these suggest that the language of Korean prose fiction had made little progress toward achieving *onmunilch'i* during the years since *Tongnip Sinmun* had

been forced to cease publication. There were exceptions, however, and a handful of works appeared which were both written in *hangul* and Korean in their diction. Of these, the most interesting and stylistically significant are two satirical pieces, both unsigned, serialized in *Taehan Maeil Sinbo* (Korean Daily News).

The suppleness and colloquial idiom of spoken Korean

Both are brief, slight pieces—little more than sketches—without any plot or character development. What makes them so interesting and significant, however, is the style of their prose, which possesses the suppleness



Photo: Ministry of Culture and Information

Plate 6. The lives of Christian missionaries were frequently in danger, particularly in the years prior to the opening of Korea. During the years 1836-1890 Catholic priests disguised themselves in mourning clothes, to avoid being killed. Despite the risks, Christian missionaries of all denominations displayed courage and dedication to their work.

and colloquial idiom of spoken Korean that had previously been absent in *hangul* prose.

The first of these sketches, entitled "A Dialogue between a Blind Man and a Cripple," appeared eight months prior to the first installment of *Hyol-ui Nu*. The dialogue, which takes place between a blind fortune-teller and a crippled horsehair hatband maker, is cast in the guise of a complaint by the two men about the difficulty of earning a living with the coming of 'modernization.' The fortune-teller complains that since modernization became fashionable, people have ceased to hire him to tell fortunes. As for the hatband maker, people no longer have any use for his product, since modernization has made short hair fashionable (pl. 8). These complaints, however, form merely the comic surface of the satirical dialogue; its real barbs are reserved for the folly of unthinking



Photo: Library of Congress

Plate 7. Christian missionaries penetrated every region of the Korean peninsula, and established many Western-style schools at which they taught not only the Bible, but also reading and writing in hangul. The original caption of this 1904 photo read: "The Gospel 'Light' shining into the 'Hermit Kingdom'—the American Mission, Seol [sic], Korea." Reproduced by courtesy of the Library of Congress; LC negative no. USZ62-72611.

followers of fashion, for corruption in government, and for blind reverence toward 'modernization.' One central passage goes like this:

'It looks to me like whether their heads are shaved off for "modernization" or "enlightenment," inside they are still filled with the same old antiquated ideas, even if on the surface they seem to be all caught up with "enlightenment" or "progress"; in fact, they are still asleep, walking about the city, snoring. They are like a rotten old tree, fine

looking outside and worm-eaten inside.'¹²

The infirmities of the two characters themselves form a metaphor for the ills of the country they satirize: the country's leaders are both blind and crippled, for they neither see its problems, nor are they able to bring about any meaningful reforms.

The second sketch, called "The Misunderstanding of a Rickshaw Man," appeared only five months before *Hyol-ui Nu*, and deals in one sense with the terrible estrangement

12. Song Minho, *Hanguk Kachwaki Sasol-ui Sajok Yongu* [A Historical Study of the Korean Novel during



Photo: Holbert, facing p. 264

Plate 8. A Korean hat-maker. In the "Dialogue between a Blind Man and a Cripple," the hatband maker complained that 'modernization' had made his trade unprofitable, since short hair was now fashionable.

The country's leaders are both blind and crippled, for they neither see its problems, nor are they able to bring about any meaningful reforms

between the spoken and written languages of Korea. The sketch is based upon a rickshaw man's comic and absurd misunderstandings of certain fashionable *hanmun* phrases he has picked up from the important public men who ride in his rickshaw (pl. 9). Had he been educated, he would have visualized the Chinese characters for which these *hanmun* phrases stood, and thereby grasped their correct meaning; because he is uneducated, however, he cannot even recognize that these are *hanmun* phrases. One such word he hears repeatedly, for example, is *cho-jik*—a two-character *hanmun* word meaning 'organizing' or 'organization.' Puzzled

the Enlightenment Period] (Seoul: Hyejisa, 1975), pp. 181-183, 297-300.

by the unfamiliar word, the unlettered fellow decides that it is probably a mispronounced version of *cho-jip* (millet straws), and wondering what all these public men want with millet straws, he begins a series of hilarious

Savage criticism, couched in comic language, of the incompetence of the country's leaders

misconstructions. Of course, the laugh is not on the poor rickshaw man, but on the absurd situation which had been allowed to exist in the country for so long. From this, the anonymous author goes on to a savage criticism—though couched in comic language—of the incompetence of the country's leaders.

The language of such works as these two brief, unsigned satirical sketches developed the idiomatic and colloquial potential of *hangul* prose further than it had previously been cultivated, and in this respect these works marked a significant advance toward a prose capable of fully representing Korean speech. Nevertheless, the style of these works had not yet entirely outgrown the influence of traditional prose romances. Even in these works, the prose now and then slipped into patterns of syllabic regularity reminiscent of the

The stage was set for the appearance of the 'new' novel

language of earlier romances composed for oral recitation. With these short sketches, however, the stage was set for the appearance of the 'new' novel, and for the development of a truly Korean prose style.



Photo: Library of Congress

Plate 9. The original caption of this photograph read: "Native aristocrat of the old school in rickshaw after the fall of the government." It was the lack of education on the part of the rickshaw man, coupled with the arrogance of his yangban passengers, that led to the satirical essay "The Misunderstanding of the Rickshaw Man." Reproduced by courtesy of the Library of Congress; Carpenter Collection, no. 11356-3.

In the third and final installment of this article, which will appear in the next issue of Korean Culture, Kichung Kim analyzes the character of Yi Injik's Hyol-ui Nu, and examines the authorial revisions which refined this 'new' novel for publication in book form.—ed.

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Yi saw himself following in the footsteps of earlier reformers

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Hyol-ui Nu: Korea's First 'New' Novel

Part 3: Verisimilitude and the West

Kichung Kim

In the first and second installments of this article, Kichung Kim discussed the initial failure—and eventual emergence—of hangul, the phonetic alphabet promulgated by King Sejong in 1446. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, literacy in hangul came to be regarded as a means for the reform and modernization of the Korean nation, and newspapers experimented with new styles of Korean prose.—ed.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Korean reformers dreamed of making their country an enlightened modern nation. (pl. 1). One of these reformers, Philip Jaisohn (So Chae-p'il), returning from exile in the

United States, established the Independence Club and its semi-official organ, the newspaper *Tongnip Sinmun* (The Independent). Newspapers such as Jaisohn's not only provided the published voice of the movement for *kaehwa* (reform and modernization), they also promoted *onmunilch'i* (correspondence between spoken and written languages)—a linguistic movement with far-reaching implications for Korea. In these publications, the stylistic features that had characterized traditional Korean prose were gradually altered in the direction of a more accurate, and indigenous, *hangul* diction. Practitioners of this new Korean prose were fiercely nationalistic, and their es-

pousal of the *hangul* alphabet demonstrated the potential for universal literacy in Korea.

Another reform-minded Korean educated abroad was Yi Injik, who had been sent to Japan in 1900 on a government scholarship. Little is known about the three years Yi spent studying in Japan. What is known is that during this time he became passionately pro-Japanese and pro-Western, and that he returned home a firm convert to the ideology of *kaehwa*. Shortly after Yi's return from Japan, in 1906, the Seoul daily newspaper *Manse-bo* began the serialized publication of his first novel, *Hyol-ui Nu* (Tears of Blood; pl. 2). Set in the northern city of Pyongyang during

Photos used for this article have been taken from Won Yuhun and Yoon Byungsuk, *Hanguksa Daegye*, Vol. 7: *Chosun Malgi* [History of Korea: The End of the Yi

Dynasty] (Korea: Samjin, 1974); and Hanguk Donggrib Tujansa [Korean Independence Patriots Association], *Donggrib Yugonja Hyubwhe* [History of the Struggle for

Korean Independence] (Seoul: Yujin Munhwasa, 1983).



Plate 1. During the late nineteenth century, a group of young government officials sought to reform the political and social structure of the Yi dynasty (1392-1910). This effort proved futile, and in 1884 they attempted a coup, known as Kapsin Chongbyon, which failed. From left: Park Yonghyo, So Kwangbom, Hong Yongshik, and Kim Okhyun. During the Sino-Japanese War, Japanese troops ordered the expulsion of Chinese sympathizers from the Korean government and, ironically, compelled the implementation of some of the Western-style reforms sought earlier by these Korean reformers.

the recent Sino-Japanese War, Yi's novel revolved loosely around the sufferings of the family of Kim Kwanil, his wife, and their daughter, Ongnyon (pl. 3). The stylistic innovations of this work—the first 'new' novel—signaled not merely the emergence of a new genre, but also of modern Korean literature as a whole.

This 'new' novel—like the newspapers that were its foster parents—was born of the impulse toward *kaehwa*. From its first appearance, the genre was conceived as a vehicle for popular education and enlightenment, and was imbued with the didactic zeal of the Korean reformers. That the genre might at the same time provide entertainment was, to the reformers, merely a pleasant by-product. As might be expected, the 'new' novel took full advantage of the remarkable progress toward *onmunilch'i* that had been made by Korean newspapers at the end of the nineteenth century. Like their journalistic counterparts, the authors of the

*Korean reformers dreamed
of making their country
an enlightened modern
nation*

'new' novels abhorred the overwhelming influence of China on the language of Korea, and sought to eliminate it.

When applied to the 'new' novel, however, *onmunilch'i* became not merely an abstract desire for the purer expression of spoken Korean, but also the agent for a new sort of artistic realism that had hitherto been lacking in Korean prose. In effect, the newspapers' progress toward *onmunilch'i* made it possible for the 'new' novel to attain a level of verisimilitude approaching that of contem-

porary Western and Japanese fiction. In turn, this verisimilitude became the touchstone of the 'new' novel, and contributed still more to the advancement of *onmunilch'i*.¹

Unquestioning Assent

The stylistic innovations which found expression in the 'new' novel can be readily seen by comparing the opening passage of a traditional Yi

Progress toward *onmunilch'i* made the 'new' novel possible

dynasty prose romance with that of *Hyol-ui Nu*. Because traditional prose romances portrayed human experience as exemplary rather than idiosyncratic, their details tended to be conventional and representative, rather than individual and particular. Invariably, such tales began with a standardized enumeration of the time, place, and circumstances of the hero's or heroine's birth (and conception, too), the general outline of which differed only slightly from one romance to another. Here, for example, is the opening passage of *Chunhyang Chon* (The Life of Chunhyang), the most celebrated of the Yi dynasty prose romances:

When King Sukchong first ascended the throne, virtue flowed out from him all over the land: the king had sons and grandsons, so the succession was assured; the times were secure and seasons harmonious as in the days of Yao and Shun; administration and culture were as efficient and flourishing as in the days of Yu and T'ang. The ministers of the crown were strong pillars of the state and the generals and marshals were faithful warriors. The good influence of the court reached the remotest coun-

tryside, peace and security reigned within the four seas.

At this time, in Cholla province in the city of Namwon, there lived a kisaeng named Wol-mae. She was famous throughout the three southern provinces, but she had retired early and was living with a gentleman named Song. Time passed, and she was over forty years of age, but she had no children.²

Although this passage is written entirely in *hangul* in the original, its stylistic features can hardly be consi-

dered Korean. Throughout, the tale retains diction which is both formulaic and heavily laced with *hanmun* (classical Chinese) features; Korean words and phrases are used almost incidentally—mostly in the form of grammatical markers, conjunctive words, and adjectival and verbal suffixes. The language of *Chunhyang Chon* also displays a syllabic regularity in its prose—typical of nearly all such romances—which gives to it a peculiarly sing-song and stilted quality when read aloud.

The language and narrative devel-

1. For the discussion presented here, the author wishes to express his indebtedness to the analysis of Cho Yonhyon, a noted scholar of Korean literature. According to Cho, the style of language and narrative development found in *Hyol-ui Nu*—both in its original, serialized form in

Manse-bo, and its extensively revised book form published the following year—established a new standard for prose fiction in Korea. See Cho Yonhyon, *Hanguk Sinmunhak Ko* [Notes on 'New' Korean Literature] (Seoul: Munhwadang, 1966), pp. 57-73.

2. Richard Rutt and Kim Chongun, trans., *Virtuous Women* (Seoul: Korean National Commission for UNESCO, 1974), p. 250.

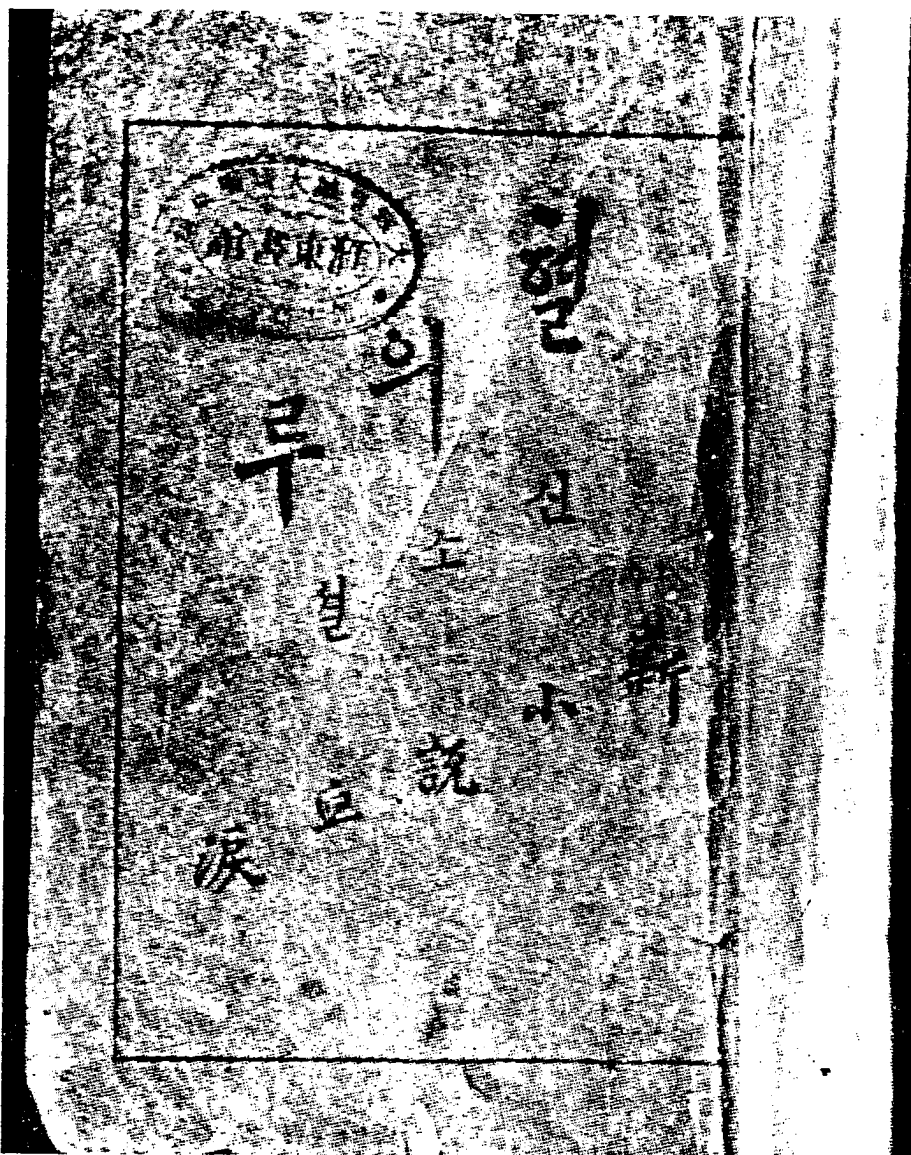


Plate 2. Yi Injik's *Hyol-ui Nu* (Tears of Blood) first appeared as a serialized publication in the *Manse-bo*, a Seoul daily newspaper, in 1906. One year later this first 'new' novel was published in book form, the cover page from which is shown here.



Photo: Wen and Yoon, p. 286.

Plate 3. Armed Japanese soldiers arrive at Pyongyang station during the Sino-Japanese War. The war began on 25 July 1894, with a Japanese naval attack on Chinese warships at Asan Bay, along the west coast of Korea. Japanese forces proved superior in nearly every battle; in the treaty of April 1895 recognizing the Japanese victory, China ceded to Japan the island of Taiwan.

opment of such tales were never intended to create an illusion of the actual. On the contrary, the decor, action, speech, and characterization of these romances conform to accepted conventions. 'Willing suspension of disbelief' is gained not by an achievement of veracity, but by the readers' unquestioning assent to a semi-legendary world created by a collection of literary conventions. In such a conventional world, quotations from Chinese classics and formulaic phrases—both descriptive and proverbial—might abound without seeming out of place or detracting from the story being told.

A Sense of the Actual

On the other hand, despite a few phrases which are *hanmun* and formulaic in diction, the opening passage of *Hyo!-ui Nu* is definitely a prose passage—not a versified prose—and the passage as a whole is clearly Korean in diction:

The thundering guns of the Sino-Japanese War seemed to nearly blow away the entire P'yongyang region, but when the sound of gun-fire ceased, the defeated soldiers of the Chinese Army had

been scattered away like the fallen leaves in the autumnal wind, while the Japanese soldiers had pushed on like the tide into the northwest, leaving in their wake only corpses in the fields and mountains. . . . As the sun was about to set behind the high peaks of Mt. Moran, a thirtyish woman was groping about in the wooded hillside, her clothes all disheveled.³

Even in this short passage, it is immediately apparent that *Hyo!-ui*

Unquestioning assent to a semi-legendary world created by a collection of literary conventions

Nu differs radically from the traditional prose romance in its very conception of fiction. When the novel opens, the northern city of Pyongyang has just fallen to the Japanese, and the Chinese forces are in full flight (pl. 4). To the non-combatant

Korean residents of the city, however, the unwelcome war has brought only suffering: families are displaced from their homes, family members are separated from one another, and many are injured, lost, or killed while fleeing. Unlike the heroes and heroines of earlier romances, the characters of Yi's novel are not archetypal and exemplary, but unique and individual. Yi places these characters not in a context of artificial conventions, but in a concretely realized time and place. And the reader, as a silent presence, is persuaded to accept Yi's fiction because its concretely realized details create a sense of the actual.

Thematic Obsession

Altogether, *Hyo!-ui Nu* represents a sort of groping toward formal realism made possible by a new norm of verisimilitude: veracity of time, place, person, society, and speech. Yi's acquaintance with nineteenth-century European and post-Meiji Japanese fiction—both of which he must have encountered during his stay in Japan—may have had a profound influence on his creation of this new style.⁴ Nevertheless, such verisimilitude would have been impossible without the corresponding accuracy of language brought about by the recent progress of *hangul* prose toward achieving *onmunilch'i*.

Yi did not, however, achieve this verisimilitude evenly throughout his work, and some of the novel's features indicate basic flaws in his artistic techniques. Although *Hyo!-ui Nu* contains some brilliant narrative, descriptive, and dramatic passages, for instance, it would be wrong to imply that the stylistic features of the traditional romance were entirely eliminated in this so-called first 'new' novel. More commonly, the language of *Hyo!-ui Nu* is stilted, lacking in precision and vividness, and marked by time-worn archaisms. Especially in the initial chapters of the novel, Yi's prose frequently slips into syllabic regularity, producing oddly lilting passages which, in isolation, sound nearly like verse. Particularly

3. Quoted by Cho, *Hanguk Sinmunhak* Ko, p. 62.

4. Further studies are needed to determine the influence of post-Meiji Japanese fiction on Yi Injik's work. Yi must have been well

acquainted with the work of Tsoubouchi Shoyo, who stressed the importance of verisimilitude in the novel.



Plate 5. An example of the discrimination experienced by women during the Yi dynasty (1392-1910); whenever women ventured into public they were required to wear a changok (kind of long hood), which hid their features from strangers. Reproduced by courtesy of the Library of Congress; LC negative no. USZ62-47030.

distressing is the almost total absence of the individualized voice: nearly every character—from a ten year old child to a middle-aged woman—speaks essentially in the same undifferentiated accent of the authorial narrative voice. Unfortunately, this voice is all too often merely that of an obsessed reformer speaking of Korea's need for *kaehwa*, with little regard for the characters into whose mouths he has placed his views.

This thematic obsession with *kaehwa* makes for one of the most unsatisfactory features of *Hyol-ui Nu*—a gross imbalance between its ideology and its art. Yi seems to have believed that the didactic role of his novel was more important than its art, and therefore allowed his fiction to become merely a vehicle of advocacy for his reformist ideology. Some amount of such polemic might be

expected from an author with deep ideological concerns, but in much of *Hyol-ui Nu* Yi seems to have sacrificed art to ideology.

*Excessive didacticism
inspired by the author's
preoccupation with the
theme of kaehwa*

Instead of developing the potential for human drama inherent in his setting, Yi leaps from one to another of his ideological obsessions—including the need to educate young Koreans in Japan and the United States, and the need to question such

traditional practices as the family-arranged marriage, prohibition of a widow's remarriage, and inequality of the sexes (pl. 5). The result is a narrative comprised of implausible events and coincidences, constructed in total disregard for the credible unfolding of fictional characters and situations, merely to illustrate the author's own ideas.

Reformist Sympathies

Even a single illustration is sufficient to demonstrate that the sequence of the novel's events is wildly implausible, and heavily dependent on coincidences which occur entirely at the author's convenience. Having become separated from both his wife and daughter in the terrifying confusion of the war-ravaged city, the protagonist, Kim Kwanil, returns home utterly despondent. Throughout the

21



Photo: *Hangeuk Donggrib Tujansa*, p. 19.

Plate 4. The Tonghak ('Eastern Learning') Rebellions of 1892–1894 provided the occasion for the Sino-Japanese War. Unable to bring these rebellions under control, King Kojong (1864–1907) appealed to the Chinese for military aid. At the same time, the Japanese seized this opportunity to gain power within Korea, and sent some twelve thousand troops to the peninsula. Here, a view of the ruined village of Sunkyori, Pyongyang Province, after a battle between Japanese and Chinese troops on 15 September 1894.

night he agonizes, tormented in turn by his own desperate solitude and his worst fears for the fate of his wife and daughter. Confronted with such anguish, the reader expects that Kim will go out the following morning in search of his lost family. But what does he actually do? Instead, he leaves for Pusan where, having obtained the necessary funds from his father-in-law, he departs for the United States in search of new knowledge. An unbelievable behavior.

The rationale which Yi provides for these actions is similarly unsatisfactory. Kim's decision to depart for the United States results mainly from his patriotic and reformist sympathies. Had Korea been militarily strong, he believes, it would not have suffered from the warring of foreign troops—and he therefore decides to dedicate himself to absorbing new knowledge in America so that he might later work for Korea's modernization. He thinks to himself:

'Those already dead . . . nothing can be done for them. It's the living that must be looked af-

ter. . . . Those men who think mainly of their wives and children, they don't accomplish much for their country. I shall go abroad, look at different countries of the world, learn, and afterwards I shall work for our country.'⁵

Just and noble as Kim's patriotic and reformist sentiments may be, it is hardly believable that at such a time the remote possibility of his future service to Korea should appear more pressing than the immediate and urgent necessity of finding his lost family.

Incredible Events

Hyol-ui Nu suffers from many similar examples of incredible events and inexplicable behavior, most of which result from Yi having put his ideology before his art. Yi's transparently pro-Japanese stance, for example, was almost certainly founded in his belief that Japan represented a model of modernization worthy of emulation by Korea. China, on the other hand, stood for all that was antiquated and backward, and all that Korea needed to jettison in order

to reform itself. This deep-seated bias apparently made Yi blind to the excesses of his novel. Japanese soldiers, for instance, are presented as uniformly just, kind, and victorious; naturally, then, Chinese soldiers are shown to be unjust, cruel, and defeated. Even the soldiers' bullets take on a singularly moral character: those fired by the Chinese are poisoned and therefore fatal, while those from Japanese guns are clean and less fatal. It is therefore fortunate—if hardly credible—that the heroine of the novel, Ongnyon, is wounded in the leg by a Japanese bullet, for her wound is quickly and completely healed.

Greater Accuracy

The artistic weaknesses of *Hyol-ui Nu* were apparently not lost on Yi for, prior to the 1907 publication of the novel in book form, he submitted his text to a thorough revision (pl. 6). In the course of this revision, Yi seems to have made a special effort to create a greater sense of linguistic accuracy and dramatic realism. The most significant changes fell in two

5. Quoted by Cho, *Hangeuk Simunhak Ko*, pp. 61–69.

areas: the language of the novel and its excessive preoccupation with the theme of *kaehwa*. Yi purged his revised version of formulaic *hanmun* phrases, and replaced many Chinese

An achievement of verisimilitude that no serious subsequent work of fiction could safely ignore

or Japanese sounding phrases with Korean expressions. The language of this revised version is decidedly more Korean in both its diction and its use of *hangul*, and its expressions are more idiomatic and precise—and therefore less stilted. At the same time, some passages show signs that Yi attempted to mute his authorial voice, so that it would not interfere with the drama of the novel. The main thrusts of Yi's revision are evident in the opening passage of the novel as it appeared in book form:

The thundering guns of the Sino-Japanese War seemed to nearly blow away the city of P'yongyang, but when the guns ceased abruptly there was not a trace of human traffic, with only the peaks of Mt. Moran towering higher than usual over the city. The only sound was the cawing of the crows as they flew about in the still depth of the mountain.⁶

Aside from the rejection of formulaic *hanmun* phrases, such as the trite 'fallen leaves in the autumnal wind,' the most conspicuous alteration is the excision of any reference to either the Chinese or the Japanese soldiers. Though historically accurate, these references had served only to emphasize the overtly pro-Japanese and anti-Chinese tone of the first version, and had contributed little to the atmosphere of the scene. Yi's revision permitted the passage to focus instead

on the stillness and desolation of the mountain, and to provide a valuable and realistic setting for the character about to appear on the scene.

Extensive Recastings

Just as significant for the improvement of the revised version was the extensive recasting of some lengthy passages, which Yi changed from the narrative to the dramatic, or vice versa. These changes nearly always created a greater sense of realism, by

more accurately and vividly illustrating the nature of the characters, or their interaction. One such recasting, for instance, involved a lengthy exchange between the heroine's maternal grandfather and his servant (see box). The changes between the two versions are considerable—most of them for the better. In the first version the lengthy speeches of the old gentleman and his servant had done little to reveal their characters; in fact, they were more expressive of the

일정전야의 총소리는 평양을 떠나서 가든듯하니 그 총소리가 굵직한
 사출을 지니고서 산과 골짜기를 비추는 빛이
 평양의 모퉁이마다 비추는 빛은 누엿／＼ 너머가는데 저히빛을 보드
 러워 시골마을에 보드러워지는듯하고 숨이턱에 단드시 갈광질풍은
 부인이나 하삼십이 되랴말과하고 일팔은 부을싸고 번드서 현 일팔이 인정
 업시 쓰다듬느라 또하느라 울빛에 일팔이 악어서 현 일팔이 되고 거름거리
 는 최동지동호는 되 웃음소리느라 저 젓가슴이다드려고 차마 쓰락은 다해
 질 수 없려서 거름을 간느라로 차마가 발피니 그 부인은 아무리 급한 거름거리
 들을 다라도 멀리가지도 못하고 최동거리기만 한다
 남이 그 모양을 보자면 자릿케 여쭙는 절문너편에가 술먹고 힘길애와
 서 주정호나 홀터이나 그 부인은 술먹었다는 말은 고사하고 잊었다 지랄호
 다하더라도 그 따위 소리는 귀에 들리지 아니할 만하더라
 무슨 소리가 그리 대단한지 그 부인도 라우슬지경이면 뒤 답할 수가 도읍세우
 년이 흥부르면서 도라다나 다라

Phaice, Won and Yoon, p. 322

Plate 6. Opening page of the revised version of *Hyol-ui Nu*, which appeared in 1907. Aside from its unified publication in book form—already a departure from the serialized form of its original publication—this version also included many textual changes intended to impart a greater sense of realism to Yi's work.

6. Yi Injik, *Hyol-ui Nu, Unsegye* [Tears of Blood, A Silvery World], ed. Chong Hanmo (Seoul: Chongumsa, 1976), p. 1.

author's own thoughts on the war, the ruined country, and the abuses of the *yangban*. In the revised version, Yi added more narrative and shortened the speeches—but this condensed form more powerfully illustrates the attitudes, moods, and personalities of the old gentleman and his servant (pl. 7). Imagining that both his daughter and granddaughter have perished, the old gentleman is quite downcast, and in his despondency and loneliness he turns to wine and his servant for consolation and companionship; the revised narrative

The traditional romance preached the old creed, 'promote virtue and castigate vice'; the 'new' novel preached a new creed—the ideology of 'reform and modernization'

and speeches illustrate this dramatically. For his part, the servant—ordinarily callous and interested only in chiselling a few pennies out of his master—has his head turned when the old gentleman offers him a cup of wine, and deludes himself into imagining that the world is about to be turned topsy-turvy. This comic delusion of grandeur is dramatized by the added narrative and the revised speeches given to the servant.

Yi's revisions also affected the passage already cited, in which Kim Kwanil abruptly decides to depart for the United States. The author, too, must have seen the strangeness of such behavior, for in his revision he modified the episode to explain better Kim's decision. Instead of appealing to Kim's sense of patriotic resolution, the passage now focuses on Kim's nightmarish experience during his solitary vigil in the empty,

Vision and Revision

After the serial publication of Hyol-ui Nu in the Korean newspaper, Manse-bo, Yi Injik submitted his text to a thorough revision, in preparation for its publication in book form. The alterations made for this revised version, which appeared in 1907, were considerable. Many passages were wholly recast—changing the narrative to the dramatic, or vice versa—apparently in a deliberate attempt to create a greater sense of artistic realism. Given below are the two versions of one such passage, in which the heroine's maternal grandfather and his servant engage in a lengthy exchange. The old gentleman has just arrived at his daughter's house in war-ravaged Pyongyang, only to find it totally deserted. Concluding that both his daughter and granddaughter have perished in the war, he turns to his servant and complains:

From *Manse-bo* (1906):

"Let me have some wine. Bring in a bottle from the saddle-pack and leave everything else. I'll just sit down here, drink through the night, and when the day breaks we'll start back home for Pusan. I'd never known what a war was like, but now I know it's the greatest evil of man's life. A daughter and a granddaughter were all I had of my own flesh and blood, and look what's happened! I've lost them both.

"Boy, maybe you think I'm wasting my words on an ignoramus like you, but mark my words. If you mean to provide for your children and grandchildren, provide for the country first. Had our country been strong, there'd been no war. I've lost the daughter I'd brought through all kinds of difficulty as well as the granddaughter who'd survived the measles, smallpox, and sundry other illnesses."

"It's you *yangban* [the servant responds] that's ruined the country. The common folks like us've been completely at your mercy; you took our lives, beat us, took our money and our women if they're good looking, all at your pleasure, and since we common folks have no way of taking care of even our own money, let alone our women and our lives, 'cause we're dependent on you *yangban* for everything, what power have we got to do anything for the country? Just one wrong word out of our mouth, we get clobbered nearly to death, our legs bound or sent away, so what chance have we got to live like a man? It's the *yangban* that's brought us to this war. This war between the Chinese and Japanese was caused by the *yangban* Min Yongchun, who called in the Chinese. You've lost your daughter and granddaughter because of this war, and their grief-stricken and vengeful ghosts will come back to haunt Min Yongchun."²

From Revised Version (1907):

"I'll just have some wine. Bring in a bottle from the saddle-pack and leave everything else. I'll just sit here and drink, and when the day breaks we'll start back home for Pusan."

24

After replying to his master, the servant went out, had his supper somewhere, all in his own good time, and on his return he found his master sitting alone in a pitch-dark room, drinking. Out he went again, this time returning with a bunch of wax candles, one of which he lighted with a match.

"Boy, there's nothing like a light. Just looking at this candle light, I feel a little less sad," says the old gentleman, lifting up his head and taking another drink of wine.

The servant, by nature, was the sort who never paid the least attention to his master, whether he was in joy or sorrow, except when his master sent him out on some errands on which he could pocket a few pennies, and so he hardly heard what his master said to him, the only thing on his mind being going out to the servant's room and getting some sleep. The old gentleman, in his loneliness, wanting to have someone to talk to, kept on talking.

"Hey, boy, there's nothing like a light. Just looking at this candle light, I feel a little less sad," says the old gentleman, lifting up his head and taking another drink of wine. "He, boy, there's nothing like a light. Just looking at this candle light, I feel a little less sad," says the old gentleman, lifting up his head and taking another drink of wine.

The servant was amazed, his mouth agape, strange dark thoughts coming over him. Like an old saying goes, "Even as the house burns down, you find pleasure watching the fire burn to death," he thought to himself.

"Through the world be in ruin through this war, my own hand is on the shaft of the bow."

He said to his master, "Master, have another cup of wine. The shade becomes the sunny side, the sunny side the shade. The wealthy and the privileged, and the poor and the lowly go round and round like the water wheel. The *wangban*s outside the city wall, the commoners do a drunken dance. I become my master's drinking pal. He, boy, there's nothing like a light. Just looking at this candle light, I feel a little less sad," says the old gentleman, lifting up his head and taking another drink of wine.

1. Min Yongphun was the eldest of the five children of a family which he inherited during the period from 1890 to 1900.

2. Quoted by Ch'oe Hwang, *Summunhak*, p. 112-113.

3. See *Hyol-ai Nu*, p. 14.

desolate house, imagining the worst for his wife and daughter. In this revised version, even Kim's brief monologue dramatizes his nightmare; knowing there is no one else in the house, he calls to his wife and daughter:

'Halloo, halloo, there, wife, warm me a cup of wine. Halloo, there, Ongnyon, my daughter, bring me my pipe.'⁷

Then, striking the floor with his fist, he topples over like a drunken man; exhausted, he falls asleep. When he is awakened from a dream-filled sleep, he is overcome by despair. Fearing that he would be tormented by memories of his wife and daughter if he were to remain at home, he decides to go abroad. This surrender to despair, leading to Kim's abrupt departure, is perhaps a little more believable than the first version of the episode—especially if we consider Kim a sort of self-pitying weakling, for which there is considerable support in the novel. But still his behavior is not quite convincing; any other person would have delayed his departure a week or two—if not a month or two.

The effect of Yi's revisions was to make each scene much more dramatic, and each component of the scene better tailored to fit what goes on in it. The revised story is enacted by the interaction of its characters:

Hyol-ui Nu is plagued by problems caused by the intrusion of the author's own bias

each character is thoroughly embodied in the action, and the action unfolds the story. Viewed in this way, Yi's revision is indeed significant: the resulting achievement of verisimilitude perhaps constitutes the touchstone of the 'new' novel, which no serious subsequent work of fiction could safely ignore.



Plate 8. Kim Okkyun, advocate of *kaehwa* and a leader of the Progressive Party at the end of the nineteenth century. Kim was among the leaders who participated in the attempted coup of 1884, for which he was subsequently exiled to Japan.

The traditional prose romances had preached the old creed, 'promote virtue and castigate vice,' a Confucian ethic of little value to the Korean reformers of the end of the nineteenth century. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Yi Injik's first novel should have been preoccupied with the unrealized dream that had previously belonged to Kim Okkyun and Philip Jaisohn—as well as a host of other Korean reformers before and after them (pl. 8). The protagonist of Yi's last completed novel, *Unsegye* (A Silvery World), refers to Kim Okkyun as a visionary and exemplary patriot, and there can be little doubt that Yi saw himself following in the footsteps of those unappreciated and much-maligned reformers of an earlier time.

In *Hyol-ui Nu*, Yi's devotion to the ideology of *kaehwa* became inextricably and confusedly intertwined with his equal devotion to the art of the modern novel. While each made use of the other, the partnership was not an easy one, and at many points the interests of one betrayed those of the other. Even the revised *Hyol-ui Nu* has many problems, for in some ways it is a terribly uneven work. Nevertheless, Yi Injik's work deserves recognition for its contribution to the rise of the modern Korean novel, and the advancement of Korean prose, for it was *Hyol-ui Nu* that firmly established the 'new' novel and provided it with a new creed—the ideology of 'reform and modernization.'

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26