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**Panel Topic: 18 세기 기행문학에 반영된 조선과 유럽의 타자에 대한 인식-
조선의 연행록과 유럽의 한국 관련 기행문학을 중심으로**

**“British perceptions of Chosŏn Korea as reflected in travel literature of the
late eighteenth and early nineteenth century”**

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Introduction

This conference paper is based on a research project that investigates British perceptions of Chosŏn Korea in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by examining British travel literature, focusing on Volume Four of John Green’s *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1745-47), the October 1797 entries in William Robert Broughton’s *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean* (printed in 1804), Basil Hall’s *Account of a Voyage of Discovery to the West Coast of Corea, and the Great Loo-Choo Island* (1818), and John M’Leod’s *Narrative of a Voyage in His Majesty’s Late Ship Alceste, to the Yellow Sea, Along the Coast of Corea* (1817). This presentation is an abridged version of the research project, and will focus mainly on the primary sources and the implications of their content and rhetoric in connection with British attitudes towards Chosŏn Korea prior to the emergence and rise of the ‘Great British Empire’.

While there are a number of European accounts on China and Japan during and before this time period, those on Korea are relatively few. Some of the earliest extant materials include records by a Dutch navigator, Hendrik Hamel (fl. 1653-1669), and French Jesuit priests based in China, including Jean-Baptiste Regis (1663?-1738) and Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1674-1743). In terms of British accounts, however, it was not until the late eighteenth / early nineteenth century when travel reports on Korea began to appear, usually as a chapter or two within larger bodies of work on East Asia and the surrounding regions. By the late nineteenth century, there were an increasing number of published manuscripts that

dealt with Korea exclusively.¹

At the turn of the eighteenth / nineteenth century, the industrial revolution was in its early stages, and it was before the British Empire would emerge on a global scale. The period was also marked by the Napoleonic Wars and a measured but growing ecological and demographic crises in northwestern Europe. Foreign trade was thus regarded as a solution to these problems and a means to procure economic stability and power. In seeking new trade partners, new territories were to be explored; and in the process, in line with a tradition kept by their predecessors, navigators would map and chart little known regions and their seas, and document as much detail pertaining to the land, people, and their customs for the benefit of both the state and private audience who relished these works for their presentation of 'exotic' worlds. As a result, travel literature increasingly came in great demand, and by the nineteenth century it served as archival record, entertaining narrative, and inspiring literature that promoted pride in the extensive economic empire which Britain was beginning to develop.

In addition to these functions, however, British travel literature also inadvertently challenged ideological constructions that were essentially Euro- or Anglo-centric, and this holds infallibly true for works recounting the experience of British explorers in East Asia. Despite the small number of materials composed or compiled by Britons on Chosŏn Korea prior to the late nineteenth century, those that exist provide valuable clues as to how Korea and Koreans may have been perceived and understood by the British at a time when the two countries had very little contact with and limited knowledge of each another.

John Green's A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels (1745-47)

Even before her first expedition to China and Korea in the late eighteenth century, Britain's interest in the region was documented in the form of an extensive compilation of surviving travel records, *A New General Collection of*

¹ Works published in the late nineteenth century include John Ross's *History of Corea: Ancient and Modern* (1879), William Elliot Griffis's *Corea: The Hermit Nation* (1882), A. H. Savage-Landor's *Corea or Cho-sen: The Land of the Morning Calm* (1895) and Isabella L. Bird's *Korea and Her Neighbours* (1898). There were also shorter, more localised narratives such as Charles William Campbell's *Report by Mr. C. W. Campbell of a Journey in North Corea* (1891) and A. E. J. Cavendish's *Korea and the Sacred White Mountain* (1894).

Voyages and Travels. Compiled by John Green (d. 1757) and published fifty years prior to the first British mission to China, the collection includes diverse accounts related to numerous countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. The sections on Korea are found in Chapter One and Two of Book Two in Volume Four and are English translations of earlier travel accounts by Jean-Bapiste Regis and Hendrik Hamel. While the collection does not include new or original reports on Korea, the compiler's notes in the general preface and introduction to the accounts shed some light on a Briton's attitude towards Korea at the time.

In the Preface, Green confirms that the only accounts available to the British and European public in his time were those by Regis, du Halde and Hamel.² He goes on to remark, "From this Country so much resembling *China*, as well in its Improvements as the Manners and Customs of the Natives, we pass into its Reverse in those Respects, Great Tartary." His statement here not only expresses a general observation, but carries certain implications regarding established conceptions of 'civility' or 'sophistication'. How one culture defines these notions can differ from others, and in this early modern period when different civilisations encountered one another for the first time, the way in which one culture judged another was ultimately based on systems determined and designated as normative by their own traditions. In Green's statement, China is the pinnacle prototype and paradigm of its region on which to compare and evaluate other surrounding nations; if a culture shares similarities with China, then it is 'improved' or developed in its manners and customs (Korea), and if it does not, it is 'reversed' or backwards (Siberian Tartary).³ If we take this view, it can be said that travel narratives on Chosŏn Korea do not, on the whole, convey the kingdom to be what the British may deem as 'uncivilised' or 'barbaric' in spite of the Korean people's unwelcome reception of the British explorers, but rather they consider the

² Green, v. This is reiterated by subsequent writers including Broughton, Hall, and M'Leod in their works.

³ It is noted, however, that Green also distinguishes Korea and its historical identity from that of China in his notes to Regis and Hamel's records. One such example is found in Regis's account. In reference to Regis's statement in the main text, "The *Koreans* were subject to the *Chinese* from the Time of *Yau*," Green comments, "This History, taken from the *Chinese Annals*, is not a connected Relation of the Affairs and Kings of *Korea*, but only so far as they concern the Empire of *China*: Yet, being the only Piece of the Kind extant, we judged it too important to be omitted." (Green, 322, note e)

Koreans' behaviour and culture in light of Korea's relations with China.⁴

William Robert Broughton's A Voyage of Discovery (printed in 1804)

Around fifty years after the publication of Green's compilation, the first British expedition to China took place, known as the Macartney Mission of 1792-1794. This mission, however, failed in its aim to open the Chinese Empire and achieve trade relations.⁵ Although the Britons had no explicit intention of making contact with Korea during this visit, subsequent expeditions to China after Macartney's unsuccessful venture raised possibilities for British contact with Korea, and heightened British interest in surveying the Korean coast. This interest gave way to the first British voyagers to arrive on Korean territory in 1797 followed by a second tour in 1816.⁶ The first British ship to reach Korea in 1797 was the HMS *Providence* under the command of Captain William Robert Broughton (1762-1821) who documented his journey and experiences, which was published in 1804 as *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean*. The opening of his Preface allude to Broughton's conviction in overseas trade and patriotism, which were likely to have been shared by his British compatriots, and the desire to further explore and expand new exchange relations with as many countries as possible including Korea:

Voyages of Discovery justly claim the public attention, because they open new sources of knowledge and trade, and consequently are interesting to a scientific and commercial people....

Highly pre-eminent in the scale of Europe, not only for her military character but for her celebrity also in the arts of peace, Great Britain has long maintained her envied superiority among the nations, from the encouragement she has given to such enterprizes, and for the many illustrious navigators she has produced. ...the survey of this unknown part of the North Pacific Ocean was particularly recommended by the Honourable Daines Barrington in his *Miscellanies*, where he says, "The coast of Corea, the northern part of Japan, and Lieuchieux Islands, should

⁴ Another example in Green's collection is found in his Introduction to Hamel's memoir in Chapter Two (p. 329). But in similar fashion to his response to Regis's record, he also acknowledges cultural distinctions, namely language, between Korea and China in the same Introduction (pp. 329-30).

⁵ See Cranmer-Byng.

⁶ Based on G. N. Curzon's *Problems of the Far East* (London, 1896), A. H. Hamilton also suggests that the earliest English interest in Korea was expressed in the seventeenth century, accompanying the first East India Company factory in Japan. See Hamilton, 26.

be explored.”⁷

Broughton and his fellow naval officers were entrusted with the task of, among other things, exploring and charting the coasts of Northeast Asia and the North Pacific. An initial attempt at surveying the Korean coast after their departure from China was unsuccessful, which is documented in a short, uneventful account in Chapter Two of Book Two. But after their journey around the Japanese islands they began their second attempt to explore the east coast of the Korean peninsula from 6 October; and on the 14th they docked near the harbour of “Tchosan” or “Chosan”,⁸ to remain for one week before heading south towards Macau.

Broughton and his crew were unable to spend much time around the Korean coast and had little contact with the local people owing to the Koreans’ expressed desire and anxiousness for their speedy departure. They remained long enough to obtain basic provisions and venture briefly around the surrounding villages. The Britons’ experiences and brief sojourn in October 1797 on the southern shores of Chosŏn are recorded in Chapter Seven of Book Two. Most of the British crew’s interaction with the local people involves the Koreans pleading them not to proceed any further inland, but to return to sea and from whence they came. The Britons do, however, engage more with the local Korean officials who keep constant watch, maintain the crowd of villagers, and assist their visitors in obtaining water and wood to ensure that they leave Korea as quickly as possible. If the villagers are described as being “extremely ordinary”, Broughton depicts the officials, with whom he had more interaction, in more detail including being physically nimble, effectual in carrying out tasks, and both affable and conversable toward their foreign visitors. But due to the consistent plea on the part of the Koreans, Broughton and his men soon leave the Korean shores “to the great joy of our Corean friends,” parting with “mutual satisfaction.”⁹

Rather than displaying offence and making dismissive remarks about the Koreans’ unwelcome reception that disallowed the British navigators from fully

⁷ Broughton, iii-iv.

⁸ J. E. Hoare suggests that Broughton “confused the name of the country, Choson, with that of the harbour” (Hoare, 309). Both he and J. H. Grayson render the location to be the Pusan area (Hoare, 309 and Grayson, 2).

⁹ Broughton, 341.

realising their objectives to explore the land and acquire information of any significance, Broughton notes, “We felt ourselves much obliged by their supplies of wood and water, without expecting any thing in return.”¹⁰ His compliant attitude is accounted for implicitly in his ruminations that follow the main narrative:

It will be observed how little opportunity we had to make any remarks upon the customs and manners of these people, from their avoiding as much as possible any intercourse with us. Indeed this treatment we have been universally accustomed to, both at the land of Infoo and the Lieuchieux islands.¹¹

In other words, based on previous experiences, he was already aware of and is susceptible to local reactions to the unexpected presence of new foreigners on their land. Hence, instead of a defensive rhetoric criticising the Koreans, on the whole Broughton employs a neutral, almost sympathetic tone in his reflections:

It appears by their behaviour they are by no means desirous of cultivating any intercourse whatever with strangers. They seemed to look upon us with great indifference, which I suppose was owing to the insignificance of our vessel; or perhaps, their not comprehending what nation we belonged to, or what our pursuits were, made them solicitous for our departure, probably from a suspicion of our being pirates; or some other reason we could not divine.¹²

However, soon thereafter there is an instance when he betrays some level of umbrage and superciliousness toward the Koreans and their reticence:

Amongst the pines were other diciderous trees, but of what kinds we were unacquainted, as the jealousy of the people entirely prevented our acquiring any knowledge of the productions of the country. Indeed in no instance would they admit our researches.¹³

It is the usage of the word, “jealousy”, which displays a shift in tone, but this shift is momentary as he continues with his deliberations in the same level and balanced manner with which his previous comments were made. While one of the main tasks of Broughton’s crew was to chart the Korean coasts, his observations

¹⁰ Broughton, 341.

¹¹ Broughton, 342.

¹² Broughton, 342.

¹³ Broughton, 342.

of resources and articles spotted on the land¹⁴ and the Korean people's reactions to his men's attire and presence¹⁵ clearly indicate the underlying mission and objective of their journey: to investigate possibilities of British trade with Chosŏn Korea. This is made all the more explicit in Broughton's final introspective remarks based on his experience on the Korean shores before continuing with his journey:

As a commercial nation, of course they were well acquainted and conversant in trade; but with us they did not seem desirous of making any exchanges whatever, which may be owing, probably, to the articles we possessed being of no value in their estimation. Indeed we had nothing to excite their attention, or satisfy their curiosity, except our wearing apparel.¹⁶

Basil Hall's Account of a Voyage of Discovery (1818) and John M'Leod's Narrative of a Voyage (1817)

While Broughton was among the first British crew to have landed on Korean shores and had some (albeit limited) contact with Koreans, his travel account did not prove to be as popular or influential as the works by successive explorers. With the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812, the pressure for overseas trade expansion became even greater for Britain in the early nineteenth century, competing with her European neighbours as well as the United States. Although Britain's interest in commercial relations with East Asia was due in part to a desire to block the expansion of Tsarist Russia, it was also the desire to open trade with China and Japan, who were some of the most coveted trade partners amongst Britain and her competitors.¹⁷ Basil Hall (1788-1844) sailed to East Asia as a lieutenant of the Royal Navy on board the *Lyra*, as part of the Amherst Mission to China, after which he was promoted to the rank of captain. His work, *Account of a Voyage*, recounts the voyage of two British ships, the *Alceste* and the *Lyra*, along the west coast of Chosŏn Korea in 1816. Hall's account was well

¹⁴ "We saw horses, hogs, poultry, and black cattle, of which articles much as we were in want we could not procure. Money, at least of European coins, they had no idea of ; but they perfectly understood the value of gold and silver, their knives, &c. being ornamented in the workmanship with those metals." (Broughton, 343)

¹⁵ "All their attention was paid to expedite our departure; and yet many articles of European manufacture excited their curiosity, particularly our woollen clothing." (Broughton, 343)

¹⁶ Broughton, 343-4.

¹⁷ McCune, *Account*, xiv-xviii.

received by his compatriots upon its publication in 1818 in London, and his work was translated into Dutch, German, and Italian in subsequent years.¹⁸ Along with Basil Hall's account, John M'Leod (1777?-1820), a surgeon on board the *Alceste* which set out to East Asia together with the *Lyra* in 1816, also produced a book based on his journeys. His *Narrative of a Voyage* is a corresponding work to Basil Hall's. A third edition of the book was published in 1819 entitled, *Voyage of His Majesty's Ship Alceste to China, Corea, and the Islands of Lewchew, with an Account of her Shipwreck*.

Hall and M'Leod's accounts of their voyage were collectively praised in a book review published in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1818. What is interesting to note are the concluding remarks of this review:

We do not know when we have met with two more pleasing works... They make us proud of our country, and put us in good humour with our species. They contain a great deal of curious information, too; but it is their *moral* interest that forms by far their greatest attraction.¹⁹

These remarks reverberate with the patriotic pride conveyed in Broughton's Preface, and further substantiate the burgeoning popularity and assumed role of travel literature as mentioned earlier. But what is particularly interesting is the last statement, "it is their *moral* interest that forms by far their greatest attraction," which alludes to a British society that was becoming increasingly conscientious of developing notions of 'civility' and 'propriety' in line with its socio-economic expansion at home and abroad. The statement is rather curious in that what "(the works') moral interest" signifies is not entirely clear. At first glance, it seems to refer to the authors' interest in and estimation of the state of morals of the Korean people, which would imply a rhetorical tone of authority and disparagement in their narratives. But if we examine their accounts, it can be suggested that Hall and M'Leod did not merely impose one-sided conceptions of propriety with British values as the pinnacle paradigm, but also considered the characteristics of

¹⁸ It is believed that an unauthorised edition published in Philadelphia the same year of its publication in Britain was the "first book published in the United States which referred directly to Korea." (Library of Congress.) Reference to this is found in McCune, *Account*, 6.

¹⁹ *Edinburgh*, 497. Reference also found in McCune, *Account*, 6. As McCune notes, British interest in the Koreans was matched by Korean interest in the British visitors, as attested by an entry in the Yi Dynasty Annals, which has been translated into English by L. George Paik, which can be found in Paik, 15-19. Reference to this is found in McCune, *Account*, 8.

Korean values and rules of decorum as one of many edifying models to convey to their fellow Britons.

Hall and his embassy's visit to Korea is recounted in Chapter One in colourful detail, and compared to those of Broughton and M'Leod, Hall's narrative is richly descriptive and attentive to episodic details. Shortly upon their first arrival on Korean territory on an island situated off the western coast,²⁰ Hall and his crew, as experienced by Broughton and his men two decades earlier, are met with an unwelcome reception by the local people – this sentiment, as Hall and his crew would discover, would prevail and be the consistent element of their experience throughout their time on Korean land. Hall's descriptions of the local people are mixed with physical observations and personal opinions that are initially coloured by an air of condescension, but which gradually convey deference especially with the occasion of his crew's encounter with an old Korean 'Chief' on their third stopover. Of the first Korean group they meet he writes, "their colour was a deep copper, and their appearance forbidding, and somewhat savage;"²¹ regarding their airs and manners he states,

These people have a proud sort of carriage, with an air of composure and indifference about them, and an absence of curiosity which struck us as being very remarkable. Sometimes when we succeeded, by dint of signs and drawings, in expressing the nature of a question, they treated it with derision and insolence.²²

After having failed in their attempts to "conciliate them" with "forbearance", the British crew are unable to explore the area in any great detail and proceed with their journey. When they land on another Korean island not far from the first, they encounter local villagers who are equally anxious as the first group to see the foreigners leave their land. Of this second group of Koreans Hall remarks, "their beards and whiskers which, apparently, had never been cut, and their fans and long tobacco-pipes, and their strange language and manners, gave a grotesque air to the whole group, which it is impossible to describe."²³ The Britons stay only one day on this island before setting off, to the relief and joy of the locals who

²⁰ Grayson specifies the location to be Maryang-jin off Sŏch'ŏn County in South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province (Grayson, 1).

²¹ Hall, 3.

²² Hall, 6.

²³ Hall, 11.

eagerly help Hall's boat to set out towards the British ship on the sea, when Hall has occasion to observe their movement at close range: "This gave us an opportunity of observing their remarkable symmetry and firmness of limb; yet, as their long hair was allowed to flow about their neck and shoulders, their appearance was truly savage."²⁴

It is the British crew's third stopover that is the most significant in terms of their interaction with Korean people and first-hand observations on some examples of Korean manners and customs. Their experience on this particular shore is especially marked by their dealings with the Korean Chief. Their first contact begins with the following episode in which both parties try to communicate with one another with no avail:

(The Korean Chief) sat down on his mat, and began talking with great gravity and composure, without appearing in the smallest degree sensible that we did not understand a single word that he said. We of course could not think of interrupting him, and allowed him to talk on at his leisure; but when his discourse was concluded, he paused for our reply, which we made with equal gravity in English; upon this he betrayed great impatience at his harangue having been lost upon us, and supposing we could, at all events, read, he called to his secretary, and began to dictate a letter.²⁵

Having already discovered that even their Chinese assistant could understand neither the Korean spoken language nor the Chinese writing composed by the Koreans in their previous encounters with the natives, Hall and his men are prepared for a reaction of surprise by the Korean Chief. However, what they are met with is more than mere wonderment, as Hall describes "his mortification and disappointment were extreme on perceiving that he overrated our acquirements," to which he attaches the following note:

The knowledge of writing is supposed to be very generally diffused over the countries using what is called the Chinese character, and, as probably none but the lowest vulgar are ignorant of it,²⁶ the surprise of these people on discovering our inability to read their papers is very natural. The case, we may imagine, had never occurred to them before, and it was highly interesting to watch the effect which so novel an incident produced. At first they appeared to doubt the fact of our ignorance, and shewed some

²⁴ Hall, 12.

²⁵ Hall, 16.

²⁶ This is echoed by M'Leod as he writes, "The Chinese written characters have found their way here, but they would appear to be confined to the literati, for the common language has no resemblance in sound to the colloquial language of China." (M'Leod, 53)

symptoms of impatience; but this opinion did not last long, and they remained completely puzzled, looking at each other with an odd expression of surprise.²⁷

While the two parties are unable to communicate their respective situations in great detail, through body language and signs they sustain a certain level of basic understanding and relationship. This was most likely made possible due to the presence and active intervention of a senior member of the local community, which was not the case in the two previous stopovers. Although this allowed Hall and his crew to interact with a select group of people over a lengthier period than on previous occasions, their contact with the locals at large was very limited as before.

The Chief is invited to visit the British ships, and during his calls with his associates Hall takes great attention to describe him, noting everything from his attire, appearance, and movements, to his “grave propriety,” “ceremonial etiquette,” “keen observation and curiosity,” and “willingness to adopt his guests’ customs” as a matter of courtesy.²⁸ As his descriptions suggest, Hall is very much taken in by the Chief’s mannerisms, and his rhetoric is marked by respect and admiration in contrast to his previous narratives relating the natives of the Korean islands. Further to earlier comments regarding rhetorical tone and its implication, if Hall’s descriptions of Koreans during the first two landings were characterised by derision and disparagement, based on the ways in which he describes him, the Chief represents a model of civility that is at once intrinsic and culture-specific at the same time extrinsic and universal:

The politeness and ease with which he accommodated himself to the habits of people so different from himself, were truly admirable; and when it is considered, that hitherto, in all probability, he was ignorant even of our existence, his propriety of manners should seem to point, not only to high rank in society, but to imply also a degree of civilization in that society, not confirmed by other circumstances. Be this as it may, the incident is curious, as shewing, that however different the state of society may be in different countries, the forms of politeness are much alike in all. This polished character was very well sustained by the old Chief; as he was pleased with our attempts to oblige him, and whatever we seemed to care about, he immediately took an interest in. He was very inquisitive, and was always

²⁷ Hall, 18.

²⁸ These descriptions are found intermittently in Hall, 30-34.

highly gratified when he discovered the use of any thing which had puzzled him at first. But there was no idle surprise, no extravagant bursts of admiration, and he certainly would be considered a man of good breeding, and keen observation, in any part of the world.²⁹

In other words, Hall's experience with the Chief seems to rub out any former misgivings he may have had regarding Koreans and the level of their social propriety from his contact with the natives of the first two islands.³⁰

When the Chief, after having been received by the British aboard their ships, does not return the hospitality by failing to invite the foreigners into his village, the two parties make their individual cases using body language as before. However, in this instance, their communication through signs fails and the Korean Chief displays a sudden change of behaviour reflecting profound grief and despair that results in a scene where he breaks out in heavy tears. When the British and Korean groups attempt to use signs in show acting to deliver their thoughts in reaction to the Chief's unanticipated display of distress, they are unsuccessful. But Hall does not expect the Koreans to understand the signs used by the British, as he and his men cannot equally understand those used by the Koreans, which is expressed through a passage in his work.³¹ His statements present an attitude that is not judgmental towards the Koreans for their failure to recognise the signs made by the British, but rather that of a neutral stance and even sympathetic in implication. But as the Chief's change in composure and behaviour are in stark contrast to his earlier mannerisms that had profoundly impressed Hall, the author tries to make sense of the situation by reflecting on the external factors that may have given cause to the Chief's distress, rather than questioning or scrutinising over his character.

²⁹ Hall, 34. To this Hall also adds, "Towards his own people, indeed, he was harsh and impatient at all times; but this may have arisen from his anxiety that no offence should be given us by the other natives, whom he might know were less delicate and considerate than himself, and therefore required constant control." (Hall, 34-5)

³⁰ At the same time, it is noted that the narrative also indicates an author who is conscious of social class and correlates it with the distinction of manners – "propriety of manners" is not merely a matter related to national or cultural identity, but is also deeply rooted in how social behaviour and rules are defined, standardised, and practised among the upper echelon of an organised community regardless of nationality.

³¹ "The signs used by different nations, however, are often dissimilar when the same thing is to be expressed: and it happened frequently with us that all attempts at explanation failed, on both sides, though the signs used appeared to be understood by all the people of the same nation with the person making the signs." (Hall, 38.)

It seems very probable that some general instructions were in force along the whole of this coast by which the treatment of strangers is regulated. The promptitude with which we were met at this place, where, perhaps, no ship ever was before, and the pertinacity with which our landing was opposed, seem to imply an extraordinary degree of vigilance and jealousy on the part of the government.³²

Here, the underlying culprit causing the scene of the Chief's distress is not identified as the Chief himself, but rather the Korean government for their "extraordinary degree of vigilance and jealousy" for which they are implicitly criticised. So while Hall's final reflections on their sojourn on that shore includes a frank statement expressing a certain loss of respect for the Chief on account of his "pitiable and childish distress," he also adds, "every thing ridiculous in the old man's character is lost in the painful uncertainty which hangs over his fate,"³³ expressing sympathy and some level of understanding regarding his odd outburst that was essentially caused by extrinsic, not intrinsic, elements.

Within the account of the British crew's final Korean stopover, we see the first instance in which Hall's receptivity to advantageous modes of behaviour, which had been alluded to in preceding narratives, is explicitly expressed in the last sentence of the following passage:

The quick manner of these people, so different from the ordinary behaviour of the Coreans we had seen, made us apprehend that some violence was meditated; but in this we were mistaken, for they sat down with us, gave us their pipes to smoke, and laughed immoderately at some of our words: we took the hint from them, and laughed heartily whenever we observed that any thing good had been said amongst them; this was well received, and proved afterwards a good mode of instruction.³⁴

If British reactions to the Koreans' behaviour were a dominant feature in much of his narrative hitherto, Hall begins henceforth to explicate gestures and approaches that invite positive responses from the Koreans, and which thus might assist future British encounters and interaction with Koreans.³⁵ This is further reviewed

³² Hall, 38.

³³ Hall, 41.

³⁴ Hall, 48-9.

³⁵ A good example is found on page 55, where Hall expounds on how the British sailors were much better at making acquaintance with and winning the confidence of the natives than the officers: "This seems the natural effect of the difference in our manners. On meeting with natives, we feel so anxious to conciliate, and to avoid giving offence, that our behaviour, thus guarded and circumspect, has an air of restraint about it, which may produce distrust and apprehension on their

towards the end of his account as they leave the Korean coast on 10 September:

The shortness of our stay on this coast, and the difficulty we experienced in communicating with the inhabitants, will account for the scanty and disjointed nature of the information obtained. A future voyage would do well to be accompanied by a person who can write the Chinese character, and should have full leisure to overcome, by patient management, the distrust of strangers evinced by the unsociable people.³⁶

As Shannon McCune notes, while Basil Hall's book was more widely disseminated than M'Leod's, it is limited in scope, dealing exclusively on the journey to Korea and the Ryukyu islands, when compared to M'Leod's work which provides a more extensive testimony of the entire journey from England via Brazil and Cape Town, to China, Korea, Okinawa, Java, and the return trip via St. Helena.³⁷ His account on Korea is more abbreviated in nature when compared to Hall's work, and his descriptions and reflections are concise in narrative style. Nevertheless, it is interesting to read both and compare Hall and M'Leod's accounts, as they sometimes convey different focus in narrative that implies varying intentions, or alternative interpretations of events. For example, if we compare the two authors' narratives on an incident surrounding the Korean Chief's punishment of one of his men in full view of the British group, Hall includes remarks on the purported intention of the Chief, suggesting that the event was intended to display aspects of Korean decorum and "high notions of Korean discipline" to their foreign visitors,³⁸ on the other hand, M'Leod does not venture on intentions, but rather focuses on the details of the event as it takes place and pointed descriptions of the Chief's demeanour and attire with the English reference to Shakespeare's *King Lear* with an aim to, perhaps, provide a vivid and relatable picture in the minds of his British readers.³⁹ While much of M'Leod's

part; whilst, on the other hand, Jack [a sailor], who is not only unreflecting and inoffensive himself, but never suspects that others can possibly misconstrue his perfect good-will and unaffected frankness, has an easy, disengaged manner, which at once invites confidence and familiarity."

³⁶ Hall, 56-7.

³⁷ McCune, *Voyage*, xiii.

³⁸ "This exhibition, which it was evidently intended we should witness, had a very ludicrous effect, for it followed so much in train with the rest of the ceremony, and was carried on with so much gravity and order, that it looked like an essential part of the etiquette. [...] This speedy execution of justice was, no doubt, intended to impress us with high notions of Korean discipline." (Hall, 21-22).

³⁹ "Divested of his broad-brimmed hat, he would not upon the whole have made a bad representative of old *King Lear*." (M'Leod, 40) In another instance, when M'Leod describes a

travel accounts overlap in their details with those of Hall's work, what is particularly noteworthy is his personal reflections which follow the main narrative towards the end of the section on Korea. After his Korean travel experiences M'Leod concludes, "Of their government, general manners, and customs, it would be impossible to speak with any accuracy from so limited an intercourse as we had with them,"⁴⁰ then proceeds to speculate on Chosŏn Korea's political situation in relation to China and based on the consistent signs of anguish displayed by the Korean people at the British crew's uninvited presence on their land:

China has very little communication with *the barbarians of the west*, and that is chiefly confined to a particular spot, the port of Canton; Japan still less, and Corea none at all. A connexion, however, is kept up with China by two or three annual junks from the eastern coast. [...]

Corea (or Kaoli) is tributary to the emperor of China, and sends him triennial Embassadors expressive of its homage. We saw enough, however, to convince us that the sovereign of this country governs with most absolute sway; and that, occasionally, he makes very free with the heads of his subjects. The allusion to this danger could not have been so constant and uniform, in places so remote from each other, without some strong reason.

The law against intercourse with foreigners appears to be enforced with the utmost rigour. [...] On almost all occasions they positively refused every thing offered to them. His Corean majesty may well be styled "king of ten thousand isles," but his *supposed* continental dominions have been very much circumscribed by our visit to his shores. Except in the late and present embassy, no ships had ever penetrated into the Yellow Sea; the *Lion* had kept the coast of China aboard only, and had neither touched at the Tartar nor Corean side.⁴¹

Conclusions

M'Leod's reflections convey and confirm the fact that Britain was not yet well-acquainted with Korea in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with

scene of a meeting between the British officers and Korean men on the boat, we can see a similar attempt to provide a picture to which his compatriots could relate: "It appearing to be etiquette for the head to be covered, the whole party, consisting of Captains Maxwell, Hall, and other officers, conformed to this rule, and squatting on the cabin-floor, with gold-laced cocked hats on, amid the strange costume of the Coreans, looked like a party of masquers." While this last statement ("party of masquers") would mean very little in the Korean cultural context, it would conjure up an image familiar in the minds of the British public which would serve as a proxy or point of reference as they imagine the scene.

⁴⁰ M'Leod, 51.

⁴¹ M'Leod, 51-2.

China acting as a major point of reference for all matters, from government, politics, and culture, to the people, customs and manners. During the first two British expeditions to the Korean coasts, the consistent elements which Broughton, Hall and M'Leod encountered during their journeys were the Korean people's averse reaction to the unexpected sight of foreigners on their land, and their constant plea for their visitors' departure. In spite of this, the British navigators succeeded at spending some time on Korean shores and achieving some interaction with the locals, albeit limited in time and scope, which enabled them to record and put out the first and rather interesting first-hand British observations about Korea and Koreans for the benefit of their contemporaries as well future British explorers and readers. From their narratives, it can be said that British perceptions of Chosŏn Korea at this time were characterised by a Korean people who, while displaying marks of discipline and the capacity to be polite, sociable, and generally of good behaviour, were firm in their wish not to interact or deal with foreigners outside of select or known regions, and a government who had strict control over their people who dared not defy orders from above. With regards to the level of propriety and civility on a cultural or national level, Chosŏn Korea would have been considered as one of the 'civilised' nations (although lower in scale when compared to China or Japan based on other records) as opposed to the 'barbaric' or 'uncivilised.' As for its resources and capacity for commercial trade, there was much potential but the country did not appear to be ready in spirit as of yet to consider direct trade relations with unknown strangers beyond familiar territory. Existing knowledge and records were still scanty and insufficient, so there was still much effort and more visits to be made to gather more concrete information about the country.

In examining British travel literature whilst considering one of the inadvertent functions of these works at that time – to question established ideological constructions regarding foreign cultures – it can be concluded that, in spite of the Korean people's reticence which disallowed the proud British explorers to become better acquainted with the local customs and people of what they considered a relatively obscure kingdom, the British writers' rhetoric did not necessarily fall into one of patronising condescension or disparagement with

notions of British values being a superior model, but it considered and respected Korean values as one of many instructive models to convey to their fellow British public. This does not mean to suggest, however, that the purpose of their conveying these matters stemmed purely out of altruistic or philanthropic concerns, or that it was free from mercenary motives. As Britain had yet to start making active attempts to open up Korea to trade, British travel literature from these earlier times performed a practical role of educating future British voyagers and merchants on the Korean people's ways to assist them in the future establishment and promotion of mercantile relations with Korea. As Robert Markley notes:

The wealth pouring in from the importation and re-exportation of the luxuries of the Far East underwrites [John] Campbell's efforts to finesse, if not reconcile, the tensions between progressivist views of history and fears that the world either cycles through epochs of prosperity and corruption or is locked into a process of irreversible decline. In this context, international trade offers a means to transcend the theological identification of sin and scarcity and to displace anxieties about diminishing returns, higher prices, and environmental degradation. Since trade continues to be promoted as the be-all and end-all for judging the morality and progress of nations, those countries that refuse trade must be either ignored or explained away.⁴²

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⁴² Markley, 270.

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