

On the Representation of Women in the Didactic Books of Chosŏn Korea (1392-1910)

Following is the biography that beings the Korean section of the *Yŏllyŏ* (烈女, Virtuous Woman), the third volume of the *Samgang haengsil to* (三綱行實圖, Illustration of the Conduct of the Three Bonds, compiled in 1433):

Tomi (都彌) and his wife were from Paekche Korea (百濟, BC18-660AD). Tomi's wife had a reputation for beautify (美麗) and chaste acts (節行). The fourth Paekche King, Kaeru (蓋婁王, 128-160), heard of her and warned Tomi, one of his vassals, that despite his wife expressed devotion to him, she was likely to commit infidelity by being seduced in a quiet and secluded place. Tomi defended his wife, saying that his wife would never change her mind, even if she knew that her decision would result in her death. To test this, the king made Tomi to stay with him and sent to Tomi's house his servant as the king himself, attired in the king's garments. This faux king told Tomi's wife, "I heard of your beauty. Your husband and I made a bet. I won and decided to make you my wife." In response to his lewd conducts, Tomi's wife said, "Kings do not lie. How dare I do not respect you? Please enter the room first. I will change my clothes and follow." But, she sent her maid to stay with him. Later, when the king found that he had been deceived, he blinded Tomi and, by putting him a boat, exiled him. Immediately, he brought Tomi's wife into his palace and forcibly attempted to commit adultery with her. She responded, "I lost my husband now and I cannot depend on myself. Further, I can attend on you, the king. Why do I disobey you? Yet I am menstruating now. Please wait for me a little while." The king followed her. Then, she fled from the palace. She arrived at the bank of the river and, after bitterly weeping toward Heaven, found a boat. Finally, she found Tomi alive on Chŏnsŏng Island. They prolonged their life with grass roots. They left for the Koguryŏ (高句麗, BC37-668AD) and died there.¹

Intriguingly, the actual meeting between Tomi's wife, the female protagonist of this biography, and the king, Kaeru, its villain, did not happen at the story's beginning. The people of the Tomi's time so highly praised the appearance of Tomi's wife and her loyalty to her husband that the king took an interest in her. He first heard of her. Later, he heard of her again directly from her husband, Tomi. This shows that the king simply imagined her, based on what he had heard of her. Nevertheless, at first, he

did not attempt to actually see her, as he sent his servant to her. He ordered this faux king, his proxy, to have her commit adultery with him (or his servant). Similarly, Tomi's wife had her maid, her proxy, serve this faux king. That is, these two proxies of the female protagonist and the villain physically met. The trick of the female protagonist enabled her to maintain her own sexual fidelity and validate her reputation, while that of the villain failed to destroy Tomi's faith on his wife and his wife's sexual fidelity.

Here it is important to observe the other results of these deceptions. Because of their tricks, Tomi eventually became blind and exiled, although Tomi and his wife shared the married years together, after overcoming the difficulties that the tricks generated. However, there remains the question of what happened to the maid, whom Tomi's wife made to copulate with the faux king, and the faux king, whom the king ordered to seduce Tomi's wife. Depending on his and her marital status, they either lost their virginity or committed adultery. Certainly, this biography and the later comments on it alike did not provide any more details on these two figures, who faithfully carried out the given duties at the cost of their sexual fidelity.

The narrative structure of this biography provided most emphasis on both the conflicts between protagonist and villain and the difficulties that were generated by these conflicts and imposed upon protagonist. Its narrative flow led its audience to follow or rather focused only on the ways in which its protagonist overcame the given difficulties. The more the narrative converged on the difficulties imposed upon protagonist and visualized the protagonist's way of struggling with these difficulties, the less the audience could recognize the existence of the actual victim(s) of conflicts between protagonist and villain. The manners in which Tomi's wife responded to the king's attempts and, despite the difficulties, how she kept her sexual fidelity to her husband were the core concerns of her biography. Since her biography was selected for the *Yŏllyŏ*, her way of solving difficulties while engaging in conflicts with villain were understood as virtuous acts. Tomi's wife was a virtuous woman, the feminine ideal. Yet, again, this designation overlooked or ignored the side effects of her decisions or tricks, especially, on her maid. Likewise, the decisions on which narrative apparatuses were

employed, how narrative structure was reorganized without hurting the original frame, where narrative flow was directed, etc. were quite influential to shape the protagonist as an exemplary person. Thus, the significance of these decisions directs to appreciate the roles of the creators of the *Yŏllyŏ*.

The three-volume *Samgang haengsil to* of the *Hyoja* 孝子 (Filial Child), the *Ch'ungsin* 忠臣 (Loyal Vassal) and the *Yŏllyŏ* was created in the early fifteenth century by Chosŏn Confucians. Each volume included one hundred and ten biographies of Chinese and Korean historical figures of filial children, loyal vassals, and virtuous women. Each biographical narrative was depicted in both image and text, with the former on the front page and the latter on the back. The academic foundation of the creators were in the reformed Confucian thought that is now commonly called Neo-Confucianism, which played a key role in the decline of Koryŏ (918-1392) and the founding of Chosŏn (1392-1910). About two decades before the creation of this first Confucian didactic book, the military coup of the Koryŏ general Yi Sŏnggye (李成桂, 1335-1408) could succeed with the support of the Koryŏ civil officials, who believed in the necessity of Confucian principles reorganized by Zhu Xi's philosophy. This alliance eventually founded Chosŏn and enthroned Yi Sŏnggye as the first king (r.1392-1398). Subsequently, the civil officials, specifically the meritorious dynastic foundation subjects, dominated the central government and made possible the institutional spread of *their* reformed Confucian thought. They attempted to standardize, regulate, and institutionalize the life of the Chosŏn people in *their* Confucian manner. They decided to publish and distribute the didactic books and the *Samgang haengsil to* was the first one. As its volumes' title indicated, they put special emphasis on the principles of filial piety, loyalty, and virtuousness. Their purpose was to reorganize the contemporary society, by cultivating the morality of the people, as mentioned in the preface of the work, and they expected people to incorporate these virtues in their daily life. That is, they believed they could mobilize people by circulating the particular books. Obviously, their book project can be considered as one of the most effective ways to accomplish their plans. This attempt was integrally related to their program to reform Confucian thought, which had begun in the late thirteenth century

on with the introduction of Zhu Xi's works by the late Koryŏ civil official An Hyang (安珦, 1243-1306).²

The late Koryŏ scholars, through the academic interchanges with the Chinese scholars (Song, Yuan, and Ming), saw the ways in which a new discourse based on Zhu Xi's approaches to conventional Confucian thought became an impulse to reorganize both the conventional Chinese Confucian thought and the contemporary Chinese academic circle. Moreover, they saw how Zhu Xi's philosophy could be used for consolidating political authority. Zhu Xi's comments on the roles of government and government officers to organize society and control people, presumably, attracted their most attention. From the late twelfth century onward, Koryŏ society suffered greatly from the domestic political turmoil between civil and military officials, which resulted in the Military Regime (*ca.*1170-*ca.*1270). In addition, the wars with the Khitan Liao, the Jurchen Jin, the Japanese pirates, and the Mongol Yuan made the situation decline from worse to the worst. The situation was serious as the Koryŏ court was unable to levy taxes on the people, while the people could hardly expect security from the government. Eventually, Koryŏ sued the Yuan for peace in 1258, and this ranked the Koryŏ king as a son-in-law of the Yuan emperor (*ca.*1258-*ca.*1358). That is, the late Koryŏ court lost its authority as the central government.

Under the circumstances, An Hyang brought into Koryŏ some of Zhu Xi's works, which were popular among the contemporary Yuan scholars. Based on his experience in Dadu, he strove to reorganize the contemporary educational and civil service examination systems of the late Koryŏ. Moreover, he raised disciples and developed an intellectual circle of the reformed Confucian thought. The extant writings of his disciples, like those of the contemporary Koryŏ scholars, depicted their critical charges against the impracticality and ineffectuality of the conventional Confucian and Buddhist thought to settle the contemporary disorders, and their suggestions to employ Zhu Xi's ideas to solve the discussed problems. These writings proved that the further development of this intellectual circle accompanied the reorganization, or reform, of Koryŏ Confucian thought. In fact, this period was a significant moment to consolidate the grounds that effected on the direction of

further development of the Confucian thought.³

As was noted earlier, the continuous distribution of the Confucian didactic books throughout society provides a prime example of this process of Confucian reform. The book project could be accelerated, when the central government of the early Chosŏn made full use of technologies of cultural production. At first, it focused on the usage of the printing technologies. It endeavored to invent more strong and convenient printing types and printing machines. The extant Confucian didactic books, including the *Samgang haengsil to* and its two sequels, show that they were printed with various printing types. The central government informed the local official institutions of the advanced printing technologies. Yet the local agencies could print the limited numbers of the limited items, according to the central government's order or allowance. In fact, the development of printing technologies and their transmission allowed the central government to control the publication of the books in general. Second, the official institutions of public education were specialized and rearranged. Particularly, the central government focused on organizing the higher education, such as the *Sahak* (四學, Four Schools) and the *Sŏnggyun'gwan* (成均館, National Confucian Academy), which influenced the system of civil service examination and the produce of government officials. Moreover, it tried to engage in the operation of private educational institutions, located in both central and local areas, including the *Sŏdang* (書堂, Elementary Confucian Academy) and the *Sŏwŏn* (書院, Private Confucian Academy). Through the legal codes and royal decrees, all educational institutions were required to teach Confucian ethics, and the Four Books and the Five Classics were used. In fact, it is not clear whether the *Samgang haengsil to* was included as an official textbook or not. Nevertheless, these public and private educational institutions in the central and local areas were an important channel to distribute didactic books from the central government to the common people. Third, most notably, the Chosŏn court created the new writing system *han'gŭl* or the Korean script (invented in 1443, promulgated in 1446). *Han'gŭl* was targeted at the lower social strata and women, and the contemporary ruling elites treated it as an inferior writing system. Yet the text section of the biographies of the *Samgang haengsil to* started to be written in *han'gŭl*, besides literary Chinese,

which meant that its audience could receive its main messages through illustration, literary Chinese and *han'gŭl*. The court could use the didactic books as a tool to circulate this new writing system. In fact, the circulation of the didactic books, having the *han'gŭl* texts, contributed to increasing not merely the *han'gŭl* literate audience, but also the female writers as well as their *han'gŭl* works.

The Chosŏn book project played a pivotal role in developing a Chosŏn book culture, and the development of the Chosŏn Confucian book culture enriched the Chosŏn culture in general. Actually, this tradition of designing didactic books can be traceable back to the last decades of the Koryŏ period, when An Hyang and the first and early second generations of his disciples strove hard to enlarge their academic circle of the reformed Confucian thought. Two particular books of this period, affected the development of the Chosŏn didactic books, in particular, that of the *Samgang haengsil to*. They were of the *Pulsŏl Taebo Pumo Ŭnchunggyŏng* (佛說大報父母恩重經, The Sutra of Honorary Parental Love) and *Hyohaeng nok* (孝行錄, The Records of the Filial Deeds). These two books were made in the middle 1300s about half century after the Chinese Neo-Confucian thought was introduced to Koryŏ. The content, structure, and way of delivering a main idea were followed by the *Samgang haengsil to* about two decades after the reformed Koryŏ Confucian thought was used for the founding spirit of Chosŏn. Actually, their authors were related biologically, intellectually, and by marriage. This indicates that the political, social, and intellectual dominance of the early Chosŏn was not different from that of the late Koryŏ. Another important similarity is that not only these Koryŏ books but also the later *Hyoja* and *Yŏllyŏ* employ female figures to convey their subject matter. Each way of representing woman implies the contemporary understanding of the feminine of the late Koryŏ to early Chosŏn period.

First, the Buddhist didactic book *Pulsŏl Taebo Pumo Ŭnchunggyŏng*, more simply known as the *Pumo Ŭnchunggyŏng* (父母恩重經), was published by the Koryŏ court no later than 1378.⁴ This book is viewed an equivalent of the Confucian classic *Xiaojing* (孝經, The Book of the Filial Piety). In fact, the appearance of this Buddhist book has been regarded as one way that Buddhist thought survived under the drastic spread of the reformed Confucian thought over the late Koryŏ society. Yet

the book clearly demonstrates unique aspects of the Buddhist thought, by revealing their different understanding of filial piety from the Confucian thought. Actually, quite a number of the Buddhist sutras articulate the Buddhist perspective to filial piety, by narrating how children save their parents from Hell or individual karma. These sutras, such as the *Foshuo Yulanpenjing* (佛說盂蘭盆經) and the *Foshuo mulianjing* (佛說目連經), are organized in the Chinese society through the debates between Confucian scholars and Buddhist monks on the proper meanings of filial piety, in particular, whether a son could enter the Buddhist priesthood (出家), ignoring his duties of carrying on his family line and serving his parents. Similarly, the *Pumo Ŭnchunggyōng* is a Korean version of the *Fumu en chong jing* of the Tang China, possibly, part of the Dunhuang manuscripts. However, this specific Buddhist book delineates a different Buddhist understanding of filial piety.

The *Pumo Ŭnchunggyōng* is comprised of ten different episodes. Each episode characterizes how great a maternal love is and alludes to why children must be filial to their parents. Interestingly, in the course of the Chosŏn period, despite the dominance of the reformed Confucian culture and the official intention to Confucianize society, various versions of this Buddhist book were continuously published by local Buddhist temples and distributed to the common people.⁵ Some extant versions include the illustrations with accompanying texts, as the *Samgang haengsil* to employed illustrations and texts. Yet it is hard to ascertain whether the original versions from late Koryŏ included also illustrations. One characteristic of this work is that the included episodes are not of particular women's biographies and each biography does not keep a biographical format. Rather, its ten episodes represents a mother and they as a whole follow a biographical format, with each episode providing a separate yet consecutive narrative from conception through birth to raising children. This narrative structure shows several similarities to the representation of the Buddha's life or *Jataka*, organized in the Indian Buddhist society and recontextualized through the Buddhist Dunhuang manuscripts of the Tang China. Another characteristic is its employment of mother figure to demonstrate the necessity for filial piety. Since its title includes two characters of *pu* (父, father) and *mo* (母, mother), it is supposed to represent parent's mercy (恩). However, it has no mention of a paternal love at all. Most

of the ten episodes represent how much mother sacrifices for her children from her conception, and couple of episodes towards the end depicts a hell whose demons punish impious children. Nevertheless, it is questionable to state that they unfold the roles of mother and suggest an ideal mother figure. Its general content rather addresses more children's duties to take care of their parents.

Second, the *Samgang haengsil to's* preface specifies that the *Hyoja* includes the eulogistic comments of the *Hyohaeng nok*, composed by the leading Confucian scholar (名儒) Yi Chehyōn of the late Koryō.⁶ The Koryō didactic book *Hyohaeng nok* was designed initially by the Koryō civil official Kwōn Chun (權準, 1280-1352) on the occasion of celebrating the eighty-fifth birthday of his father Kwōn Pu (權溥, 1262-1346). Kwōn Chun hired some painters to paint twenty-four famous filial acts, and asked Yi Chehyōn (李齊賢, 1287-1367), Kwōn Pu's son-in-law, to write comments on these pictorialized pious children. Kwōn Chun's decision to embrace only twenty-four biographies suggests the influence of the *Er shi si xiao* (二十四孝, Twenty-Four Paragons of Filial Piety), probably the edition of either Zhao Mengfu (趙孟頫, 1254-1322) or Guo Jujing 郭居敬 (?-?). Alternatively, the influence of the *Er shi si xiao ya zuo wen* (二十四孝押座文), the Buddhist *bianwen* (變文) texts of the representative Dunhuang manuscripts can be considered, which the aforementioned book *Pumo Ŭnchunggyōng* might have been also influenced. Later, Kwōn Pu added thirty-eight additional narratives to Kwōn Chun's twenty-four narratives, and again asked Yi Chehyōn to make additional comments on them. This work was entitled *Hyohaeng nok* (1346).

After the Chosōn administration started, during the reign of the third king T'aejong (r.1400-1418), Kwōn Kūn (權近, 1352-1409), one of Kwōn Chun's grandson republished *Hyohaeng nok* with an additional preface (後序) and annotation for, presumably, both the included illustrations and eulogies (1405).⁷ This book, regardless of the original version or one of its later versions, was used for several purposes by the early Chosōn court and was continuously published in the ensuing reigns. Most notably, when the fourth Chosōn king Sejong (r.1418-1450) heard a report of patricide, which Kim Hwa of the Chinju area (Southeastern area of current Korea) had killed his father, he commanded Sōl Sun (偁循, ?-1435), the *Pujehak* (副提學, Chief State Councilor) of the *Chiphyōnjōn* (集賢殿,

Hall of Worthies), to republish *Hyohaeng nok* (1428).⁸ This republication has been assumed the beginning of the efforts to compile the *Samgang haengsil to*, perhaps because Söl Sun was of the chief editor of the *Samgang haengsil to*. During the course of the Chosŏn period, the circulation of the *Hyohaeng nok*, either its original or revised version, continued as a separate volume or a part of certain book. Due to its prominence, it has been considered as the original version of the *Hyoja* rather than the *Hyoja*'s key reference, although no specific records support this assumption.

According to the extant versions of the *Hyohaeng nok*, their original was supposed to comprise sixty-two biographies but actually covered sixty-four people's embodiment of filial piety. These extant versions also suggest that the original version was most likely divided in two sections: the first section comprised twenty-four biographies, possibly preserving Kwŏn Chun's first organization, while the second section had thirty-eight biographies, which might be what Kwŏn Pu later added to Kwŏn Chun's version. In addition, these versions provide the intriguing information that not all sixty-two biographies in the original 1346 version represented pious children and some biographies covered affectionate care among siblings. They also prove the inclusion in the original version of female biographies.⁹

The *Hyoja* of the *Samgang haengsil to* included sixteen female biographies and three of them came from the *Hyohaeng nok*.¹⁰ Here the inclusion of the female biographies of the *Hyoja* is quite suggestive. The *Hyoja* biographies of children depict how faithfully and sincerely their protagonists serve his or her parents. The sons' ways of embodying filial piety do not differ from the daughters', but the biographies of daughter are less numerous when compared to those of son. Presumably, far smaller number of the female biographies in the *Hyoja* may reflect the creators' consideration of the existence of an individual volume of the *Yŏllyŏ*. Intriguingly, all male biographies of the *Hyoja* illustrate how a son serves his natal parents, including his stepmother. No male biography shows how a son takes care of his parents-in-law or wife's family members. Several biographies illustrate how the married couple serve husband's parent. Their titles indicate husband's name only, although their narrative content normally deliver more wife's acts than husband's. However, the female biographies

illustrate both how daughters serve their natal parents and how daughters-in-law serve her in-laws. Obviously, no daughter-in-law biography shows how she serves her natal parent. The emphasis on the affines and daughter-in-laws' roles become more concrete in the *Yŏllyŏ*.

The biography of Tomi's wife, as described at the beginning of this chapter, can be regarded as typical of the *Yŏllyŏ*. The protagonists of the rest of the biographies, in the case of the 1433 original version's one hundred and nine biographies, face similar conflicts and difficulties to those of Tomi's wife. The book starts with the biographies of the Chinese empresses or queens. Some biographies focus on how well they serve her husbands, the king or the emperor, while the others stress how seriously they accept and fulfill their roles as the heads among the women in the court. The subsequent biographies are of women outside the court, and they are of either wives or daughters-in-law or both. When the narrative protagonist is a wife, as Tomi's wife showed, her biography recounts how hard she tries to overcome the attempt(s) to destroy her fidelity, most likely sexual fidelity, to her husband. The daughter-in-law biographies point to how they serve their parents-in-law in a sincere and faithful manner. When a biography deals with both roles of wife and daughter-in-law, one role is slightly more emphasized than the other. Yet the biographies, representing how well she serves her natal parents, are not found at all in the *Yŏllyŏ*. Moreover, intriguingly, the descriptions of the role of a mother are not numerous, either.

Following is another *Yŏllyŏ* biography of wife and daughter-in-law. It is the seventh biography of the second chapter ("Worthy and Enlightened") of the *Lienu zhuan* (列女傳, Biographies of [Notable] Woman). It concerns Yojing (女宗) of the Liu Song dynasty (宋, 420-479), one of the Northern and Southern Dynasties. According to her biography, Yojing was not the name of its female protagonist, but rather the honorary title given to her with a *chŏngmun* (旌門, honorary gate), when the (local) government offices heard of her deeds. She was the wife of Bao Su (鮑蘇). She carefully supported her mother-in-law, when Bao Su left for the Northern Wei (北魏, 386-534) for work and had another wife in three years. Further, she was solicitous for the welfare of him and his new wife. Her sister-in-law suggested that she leave her husband, and her argument made her sister-in-law

speechless. Her argument was:

. . . A woman once having drunk of the marriage cup does not change, and if her husband dies, she does not marry [again]. She takes in hand the hempen fibers, oversees the silken cocoons, weaves silken clothes, bands, and cords in order to provide clothing and in order to serve her husband's family. She clarifies wine for libations and presents viands and food in order to serve her parent-in-law. She considers devotedness to one man as chastity and docile compliance as obedience. How is it that the love of a single husband's family is not considered good? If she has licentiousness in her heart, but clings to a fondness for her husband's family, I do not understand such goodness. According to the [Book of] Li, the Emperor may have twelve wives, the noble nine, the ministers three, and the army officials two. At present, my husband is an army official and so if he has two [women], is not that fitting? Moreover, the woman has seven reasons for being divorced [by her husband] but there is not one righteous reason for her to leave her husband. Of the seven reasons for divorce the foremost is to envy another wife, base lust, stealing, shrewishness, contemptuous pride, childlessness, and a repulsive disease are all next in importance . . .¹¹

The commentaries in both the *Lienu zhuan* and the *Yōllyō* praise her humility (謙) and acknowledgement of propriety (禮). As the *Yōllyō* compilers decided to quote the entire content of her argument, she collectively mentioned how a woman was supposed to act. Yojing's deeds to keep her sexual fidelity to her husband Bao Su and take care of her parents-in-law led to her selection for the *Yōllyō*.

As Yojing's biography, among the plausible sources for the *Yōllyō* are a number of biographies from the *Lienu zhuan*, compiled by Liu Xiang (劉向, BCE79 - 8CE), an imperial archivist of the Han China (漢, BCE202 – 220CE). This book has been considered one of the most important books in women's education in the Chinese history, and according to various Chinese records, most of the Chinese courts continued to publish this work with various modifications.¹² Certain narratives were used for official records or books focusing on woman's education. Some female protagonists even became the subject matter of literature or performances in later Chinese periods.¹³ There are several historical records, mentioning that the Chosŏn court revised, republished, and distributed the

Lienu zhuan.¹⁴ However, it is hard to determine whether the *Lienu zhuan* first introduced to the Korean scholars was Liu Xiang's version or a revised version.¹⁵ Although there are no specific records to prove that the *Yŏllyŏ* referred to Liu Xiang's *Lienu zhuan*, probably, the early Ming version of the *Gujin lienu zhuan* (古今列女傳, Past and Present Biographies of [Notable] Woman), published during the reign of the third Ming Emperor Yongle (r.1402-1424), can be considered as the *Yŏllyŏ*'s reference.¹⁶

The first Chinese character in the title of the *Lienu zhuan* (列女傳) is the term *lie* (列), which is different from that of the *Yŏllyŏ* (烈女). That *lie* (烈), having a fire radical, means the vehement or fierce, etc. while the *lie* (列) without the radical, means a category or listing or kinds. Accordingly, the title of Liu Xiang's *Lienu zhuan* implies the categorization of women, while that of the *Yŏllyŏ* indicates virtuous woman. Precisely, in Koryŏ as well as early Chosŏn society, the terms *chŏlbu* (節婦, chaste wife) or *ŭibu* (義婦, righteous wife) or *hyobu* (孝婦, pious wife) were still used for official or personal records, representing how faithfully and sincerely she served her parents-in-law or husband. Also, when the court designated and awarded female models of morality, these terms were used.¹⁷ In fact, as other early Chosŏn works demonstrate, before and even after the circulation of the *Yŏllyŏ*, the term *chŏlbu* in particular was used frequently. Yet no records show the usage of the term *yŏllyŏ* until the book *Yŏllyŏ* was designed. Moreover, two terms of *yŏl* (烈, virtuous), with a fire radical, and *yŏ* (女, woman) were first paired, around when this book appeared. Henceforth, the term *yŏl*, with the fire radical, was considered the best adjective to modify women in Chosŏn cultural context.

Then, who was the *yŏllyŏ*? The examination of the *Lienu zhuan* biographies, included in the *Yŏllyŏ*, gives quite suggestive information. Comparing the biographies of the *Yŏllyŏ* with those of an extant seven-chapter *Lienu zhuan*, no biography was selected for the *Yŏllyŏ* from its seventh chapter "the Pernicious and Depraved" (孽嬖).¹⁸ The Chosŏn compilers selected the *Yŏllyŏ* biographies from the other six chapters of: "Matronly Deportment" (母儀), "the Worthy and Enlightened" (賢明), "the Benevolent and Wise" (仁智), "the Chaste and Obedient" (貞順), "the Pure and Righteous" (節義), and "the Rhetorical and Competent" (辯通). A slightly different number of biographies was picked

out of each chapter. Apparently, full range of the selected biographies for the *Yŏllyŏ* specifies the excluded chapter, but does not provide the reasons why the *Yŏllyŏ* compilers decided not to use any biographies of this particular chapter. It is hard to determine the criteria the compilers followed to select the biographies. Moreover, it is questionable how different the characteristics of the biographies of the *Lienu zhuan* were among the seven chapters. The *Lienu zhuan* arranges its biographies into the seven categories that Liu Xiang initially made, and each chapter lists the women of the higher social stratum before those of the lower social stratum.¹⁹ The *Yŏllyŏ* basically lists its biographies in chronological order. Yet the compilers first divide them into Chinese and Korean women, and the Chinese court ladies are separated from the women outside court. The compilers use neither the original titles nor original texts of the selected *Lienu zhuan* biographies. The revised parts moreover show the compilers' intention to emphasize certain points. It seems, for the *Yŏllyŏ* compilers, Liu Xiang's information of name, social rank, nationality, and the dates of the protagonists was more useful than his criteria for categorizing women. In other words, it is hard to say that the compilers already had a specific definition of the term *yŏllyŏ*, when they designed the book *Yŏllyŏ* or coined this term. Rather, they had an idea of which roles they would impose upon women, and they selected *Lienu zhuan* biographies representing the women who accomplished the roles that they expected the Chosŏn women to carry out.

The *Yŏllyŏ* is regarded as the first institutional work in Korean history that proposes a feminine ideal of virtuous woman and unfolds the roles of an ideal woman. Both the creation of a separate volume that excludes the roles of daughter yet stresses those of the married women and the naming of this volume the *Yŏllyŏ* do not simply reflect a understanding of the ideal woman of its compilers. They include also a compilers' plan to reorganize the contemporary society in a patrilineal and patriarchal manner. While the Chosŏn court was compiling the *Samgang haengsil to*, the necessity of transforming the contemporary marriage system to the *ch'inyŏng* (親迎, Induction of the bride to her husband's home) system, or making shorter the period of bride's stay in her natal house after her marriage ceremony, was under debate. Intriguingly, as the records of the *Chosŏn wangjo*

sillok (朝鮮王朝實錄, Annals of the Dynasty of Chosŏn) show, this debate became serious about the time when the *Samgang haengsil to* compilation was finished and started to be distributed. Even, the legal codes of the *Kyŏngguk tajeon* (經國大典, National Code [of Chosŏn]) supported this *ch'inyŏng* system. However, in reality, this system was not fully actualized until the middle seventeenth century. By then, the inheritance system had also shifted from the equal distribute between daughters and sons to a system of primogeniture. It means, the Chosŏn society became eventually a patriarchal society from this period, which the civil officials of the early Chosŏn, or the *Samgang haengsil to* compilers, sought to establish. Thus, when they decided to put this particular book in their first publishing Confucian didactic book in the early fifteenth century, it indicates that they were taking an initial step to construct a patrilineal patriarchal society.

The continuous distribution and circulation of the three-volume *Samgang haengsil to* was possible thanks to royal decrees. By enlarging the award policies to the virtuous women, the government encouraged people to look into the book.²⁰ Moreover, according to the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn*, legally, “[the] *Samgang haengsil to* should be translated into *ŏnmun* [*han'gŭl* or the Korean script]. In central and local areas, a head of a family, the elder, and the *kyosu* [教授] or the *hundo* [訓導] has to teach this book to women and children, and make them understand it.”²¹ Presumably, the common women could learn these books from their grandfathers or fathers, rather than men outside their natal families. Accordingly, it is hard to exclude men from the audience of the *Yŏllyŏ*. As daughter, woman could learn the *Hyoja*, too. Considering women’s role to raise their sons properly, the future subjects of the king, they might have learned the *Ch'ungsin*. In other words, the creators of the *Samgang haengsil to* might have expected that women would learn from the *Yŏllyŏ* how they should serve their husbands and parents-in-law, from the *Hyoja* how to serve their parents-in-law, and from the *Ch'ungsin* the concept of the loyalty to teach their son. Accordingly, beyond the activity of the various apparatuses of government, legislation, and education, by producing the proper virtuous women, Chosŏn’s power rested on social mores. That is, the compilers took into account the critical role of the women, particularly after marriage.

Starting from around the middle seventeenth century, conventional Confucian thought had more Chosŏn-colored than ever before, and this Chosŏn Confucian thought became prevalent throughout society and penetrated the daily lives of the common people. Extant works from the middle Chosŏn forward still maintained the primacy of Zhu Xi's thought, but were quite selective and greatly narrowed ideas in comparison to his original writings. These writings bore out the Chosŏn scholars' intrinsic capacity to recontextualize Chinese Confucian thought to make it fit the Chosŏn context and their endeavors to reform Chosŏn Confucian thought. Ironically, when Chosŏn Confucian thought entered its zenith in the seventeenth century, the Chosŏn court and the ruling class gave more priority to Confucian culture than any other, and as people became more exposed to this thought, there began to emerge the new hybridized cultures. Nevertheless, two sequels of the *Samgang haengsil to* and other Confucian didactic books were continuously published and distributed without any specific changes from the 1433 original *Samgang haengsil to*.

The Confucian civil officials, the dominant or ruling group of the Chosŏn society, carefully designed the Confucian didactic books, targeting the lower stratum of society, and issued several political apparatuses, including legal codes, in order to systematically circulate these books. The official circulation of the *Samgang haengsil to* eventually opened up a new channel to contact people. The intention or plan of the government started to be clothed in a handy book and reach people. At first, the organized meanings of the feminine ideal of the virtuous woman were arranged in a book form. Then, when they were distributed to people, they became a manual to enumerate requirements to become an ideal woman. The circulation of the *Yŏllyŏ* did not simply distribute the ideas of virtuousness and virtuous woman that the compilers of the early Chosŏn authority suggested. It also provided people a chance to construct the definition of the term *yŏllyŏ* while urging women to follow what the *Yŏllyŏ* protagonist did. It is hard to overlook the fact that when the term *yŏllyŏ* came to have the most commonly accepted definition in the Chosŏn society, the Chosŏn society became the patrilineal and patriarchal society and the Chosŏn reformed Confucian thought entered into its zenith.

¹ *Samgang haengsil to*, *Yöllyö*, 71-72.

² An Hyang's interpretations of how Zhu Xi "rediscovered Confucius' ways and reasonably reprehended Buddhist and Taoist thoughts," specifically encouraged the late Koryö literati to accept this new intellectual system. See: Chae-ön Kang, *Sömbi üi Nara Han 'guk Yuhak 2 ch'ön nyön* 선비의 나라 한국 유학 2천년 [The Nation of *Sömbi*, Two thousands years of Korean Confucianism] (P'aju: Han'gilsa, 2003), 177-179.

³ As Duncan stated, "The case of the [Chosön Korea] would seem to be a singular instance in which Neo-Confucians played a large role in the creation of a new regime and in the formulating of its institutions." See: John B. Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosön Dynasty* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2000), 239.

⁴ To-hwa Pak, "Hwaamsa kan Pumo Ŭnjungkyöng p'anhwa üi tosang kwa üüü 花岩寺刊父母恩重經 版畫의 圖像과 意義 [The *Pulsöl Taebo Pumo Ŭnchunggyöng* of the Hwaamsa Buddshit Temple]," *Pulkyo misul* 불교미술 (1998): 133-166.

⁵ To-hwa Pak, "Hwaamsa kan Pumo Ŭnjungkyöng p'anhwa üi tosang kwa üüü," 133-136.

⁶ Kwon Ch'ae (權採, 1399-1438), the author of the preface, gave a brief indication of another reference of the eulogistic poems of the pious and obedient deeds (孝順), composed by the Yongle emperor the third Ming emperor of China (r. 1402-1424).

⁷ His additional preface is found in the twentieth volume of his personal writings *Yangch'on jip* (陽村集) as well as the extant *Hyohaeng nok*, including the one published in 1433 when the three-volume *Samgang haengsil to* was completed. The preface provides another information that Yi Chehyön 李齊賢 composed the preface of the original *Hyohaeng nok* of the 1346 version, besides the eulogies.

⁸ *Chosön wangjo sillok* (朝鮮王朝實錄, Annals of the Dynasty of Chosön), *Sejong sillok*, 41: 21a-b.

⁹ Two biographies depicted the pious daughters and the rest four were represented the pious daughter-in-laws.

¹⁰ The *Hyoja* included the *Hyohaeng nok*'s eighteen biographies in total. These three female biographies, coming from the *Hyohaeng nok*, represented two pious daughters and one pious daughters-in-law.

¹¹ Albert O'Hara, 60-61.

¹² Katherine Carlitz, "The Social Uses of Female Virtue in Late Ming Editions of *Lienu Zhuan*," *Late Imperial China* 12, no. 2 (December 1991): 117-152.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Since any actual Chosön version has not been found, their existence is only recognized out of written records. Thus, it is hard to describe how they were composed. Some versions show the inclusion of illustrations and texts.

¹⁵ K'oe-jae U, "Yöllyö chön üi Han-Il chöllae wa suyong yangsang koch'al 烈女傳의 韓日傳來와 受容樣相 考察 [An examination of the *Lienu zhuan*'s appearance in Korea and Japan]," *Ömun yön'gu* 어문 연구 21 (1991): 135-141. According to the *Koryösa* [高麗史, The History of Koryö], the list of the books traded in 1063 between the Koryö's thirteenth king Sönjong [宣宗, r.1083-1094] and the contemporary Song emperor – most likely the seventh Emperor Zhezong [哲宗, r.1085-1100] includes the book title of the *Liu Xiang Qi Lu* [劉向七錄]. Thus, recent Korean scholars assume that this book can indicate the seven chapters of the Liu Xiang's *Lienu zhuan*. Another assumption is that the 1214 version might be the first whose manner of using both illustrations and texts also appeared in the book *Yöllyö*.

¹⁶ The preface of the *Samgang haengsil to*; K'oe-jae U, "Yöllyö chön üi Han-Il chöllae wa suyong yangsang koch'al," 137.

¹⁷ For the more detail information of the national awards for the Koryö period, See: Chu Pak, "고려시대 旌閭 에 대한 一考察 [The research of the honored village (旌閭) granted by the Koryö state]," *Hyodae nonmunchip* 효대논문집 50 (1995): 53-79.

¹⁸ I use both the O'Hara's and Kinney's translation to indicate the name of each chapter. I do

not consider its eighth chapter at all. See: Albert O'Hara, trans. *The Biographies of Eminent Women: the Position of Woman in Early China* (Taipei: Mei Ya Publication, 1971).

¹⁹ It can be eight categories, depending on how to treat the last chapter "Supplementary Biographies." It is arguable whether Liu Xiang initially organized this chapter or not.

²⁰ Chu Pak, "Chosŏn *ch'ogi Chŏngp'yo ja e taehan ilgoch'al - hyoja, yŏllyŏ chungsim ũro* 朝鮮初期의 旌表者에 대한 一考察: 孝子, 烈女를 中心으로" [The award policy *Chŏngp'yo* of the early Chosŏn], *Sahak yŏn'gu* 사학연구 37 (December 1983): 111 – 156.

²¹ *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* (經國大典, National Code [of Chosŏn]) 3, 43b. The *kyosu* [教授] or *hundo* [訓導] were of the lower government officers of the instructors. The central government selected them and sent to each local area.