

# Chosŏn Korea and Global History : Exploring New Teaching Methodologies

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## Prelude

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## Prelude

Recent progress, associated with the successful entrance of Korea into the world economy, the surge of Korean popular culture and the global presence of Koreans outside of Korea, has made the global community more interested in learning about Korea. The geopolitical situation surrounding the Korean Peninsula keeps bringing up such volatile issues as the nuclear crisis in North Korea, unification, a return of *Pax Sinica*, and territorial disputes. For these combined reasons, teaching about Korea has shown a considerable degree of development in quantity and quality.<sup>1</sup>

In the U.S., an increasing number of universities, including Harvard, Columbia, UCLA and the University of Washington at Seattle, have been expanding Korean studies in their regular academic program. Scholars in Korea and the U.S. have been discussing several current issues and future directions in terms of research.<sup>2</sup> Teaching Korean studies in college has also been integral to the growth of Korean studies on the ground that post-secondary students majoring in Korean studies will stand at the forefront of K-12 education on Korea in the future.<sup>3</sup>

In the following presentation, I would like to review the content of two textbooks available for teaching Korean Civilization courses (unless otherwise noted, hereafter Korean Civilization). As a rule, Korean Civilization is a required subject for students who major in Korean studies, including Korean history, and other fields of East Asian studies. And, it is offered as one liberal arts course, fairly germane to the humanities, in U.S. colleges. Then, how to teach Korean Civilization, including the development of textbook materials, will be an important element for the betterment of East Asian/Korean studies in specific and liberal education in general.

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\* Please note that the Romanization for Korea used in this article follows the McCune-Reischauer system.

<sup>1</sup> There is some reportage on the state of and issues associated with Korean studies abroad. For instance, see; Kim Keong-il, "Over Contested Terrain: Currents and Issues of Korean Studies" *The Review of Korean Studies* 6:2 (December, 2003); Keith Howard, "Korean Studies Overseas," *Asia Journal* 1 (June, 1994); Cho Ji-Hyung, "Migugesŏ ūi han'gukhak ūi hŭrŭm kwa jŏnmang: an kwa pak ūi saengsanjŏk taehwa rŭl wihayŏ" [Korean Studies in the United States: A Discursive Review and Appraisal], *Miguksa yŏn'gu* 15 (2002); John Duncan, "Miguktaehak han'guksa kyoyuk ūi tonghyang kwa mujechŏm," *Yŏksa kyŏryuk* 58 (1995); *A Guide to Korean Studies in the United States*, ed. Craig S. Coleman (Los Angeles, CA: Korea Society, 1993). The analysis on research products— books, dissertations and articles— in the 2000s has been conducted by a team project, *A Basic Research on the Review of Overseas Scholarly Achievements in Korea Studies*, under Kim Jongmyung at the Academy of Korean Studies. The project is in progress and the mentioning of this project is made possible by the permission of Professor Kim Jongmyung.

<sup>2</sup> Cho Ji-Hyung, *Miguksa yŏn'gu* 15; John Duncan, *Yŏksa kyŏryuk* 58.

<sup>3</sup> Duncan punctuates the consequence of replenishing the quality and level of Korean studies not only in college, but also graduate education. *Ibid.*, 219-220. To acquire an excellent graduate schooling is to construct a sound infrastructure for the production of solid doctoral degree holders, most of whom will teach at the college level in the future.

Addressing some critical matters on Korean Civilization and examining, if briefly, the content of books available for the course also help present how effectively researches and education can reinforce each other in Korean studies. These approaches, I believe, will lead us to a new venue for placing education on Korea under a broader framework of global humanities.

### 1. Korean Civilization in U.S. Colleges

Education about Korea before college starts with the social studies curriculum of secondary education, specifically with the offer of world history or world civilization classes. Despite the global coverage, however, K-12 classes were usually formatted in a West-centered model whose terminology, concepts, and categories are presupposed as standard. Alongside this, the orientation would frame the dominance of the Western powers over the rest of the world, particularly after the eighteenth century, in the West-centered paradigm of modernization.<sup>4</sup>

What was imposed on the historical and cultural unfolding of non-Western civilizations, then, is the West-led modernist dichotomy that not only typifies the initiative impact of the West and the following response of the non-West, but also essentializes the Western civilization as the frame of reference in understanding other civilizations.<sup>5</sup> The other attention to Korea in K-12 education was paid to modern times especially after World War II.<sup>6</sup> Under these circumstances, world civilization/history courses found few specific reasons for laying stress on Korean civilization or tradition in the category of non-Western civilization.

Since the 1990s, K-12 curriculum on Korea has improved. A newer trend emerged to emphasize diversity and interaction in world civilization, including the non-Western regions that had relatively been written off. Still, this new step does not seem to effectively resolve the problem of the conventional West vs. non-West dichotomy. In regards to premodern Korea, this narrative delivers an image of a scapegoat sandwiched between China and Japan. Or, it explains the role of Korean civilization as a bridge between the two countries.<sup>7</sup> More often than not, the meanings of historic relics or inventions in the revised K-12 textbooks are not properly organized according to the historical context of Korea proper; the misplacement sometimes would cause confusion rather than clearer understanding.<sup>8</sup> Explaining the unfolding of Confucianism and Buddhism in premodern Korea does not depart from the impact-response

<sup>4</sup> In historiography, Duara relates the source of this master narrative to “the linear, teleological model of Enlightenment History.” See Presenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning narratives of Modern China* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 24-25.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen addresses the coercion of the West-centered comparison. “The modernization, or tradition-modernity approach, with deep roots in nineteenth-century Western attitudes towards culture, change, China, and the West, sins in imposing on Chinese history an external-and parochially Western- definition of what change is and what kinds of change are important. Implicitly, if not explicitly, it concentrates more on asking of Chinese history questions posed by modern Western history-whether, for example, China could have generated on its own a modern scientific tradition and an industrial revolution or why it didn’t- and less on asking questions posed by Chinese history itself. The underlying assumption is that modern Western history is the norm, with the corollary assumption that there is something peculiar or abnormal about China requiring special explanation.” Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writings on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1984), 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> Chung, Young-soon, *Yöksagyoyuk* 93, 44-48.

<sup>7</sup> Kim Seon Mee, “Miguk segyesa kyokkwasō sok ūi han’guksa – han’guksa kyoyuk ūi munjechōm ūl chungsimūro–[Korean history in the U.S. world history textbooks – The problems of Korean history education for American secondary students–],” *Sahoegwagyoyukhak yōn’gu* 5 (2001): 84; Chung, Young-soon, “Segyesa kyokkwasōesō ūi han’guksa sōsul kyōnghyang kwa kwaje– miguk ūi yōksakyoyuk kwa segyesa kyokkwasō punsōk ūl chungsimūro–[Descriptive Tendency and Our Task on Korean History in World History–Based on reviews of history education and world history text books from the United States–],” *Yöksagyoyuk* 93 (2005): 51.

<sup>8</sup> Kim Seon Mee, *Sahoegwagyoyukhak yōn’gu* 5, 86-91.

paradigm pursuing how far these regimes of thought were successfully transformed from Chinese original/standard into Korean replication.

#### West-centrism and Modern Korea

Different from the situation of K-12, education about Korea in college has displayed some promising aspects. One of the positive sides to be considered about this post-secondary education is the fact that teaching Korea has much more space of independence in terms of curriculum and textbook development. It is in the college classroom that students can enjoy a thematic diversity of Korean courses, choose what they want to take under a systematic curriculum of Korean studies, and concentrate on Korea-related topics for their own careers.

Saving language requirement, Korean Civilization is the basic compulsory subject for students who major in Korean studies. As in the case of other non-Western civilization courses such as Chinese Civilization and Japanese Civilization, it is also offered as one liberal arts course in college. In fact, for many college students who are unable to take any more Korea-related, except Korean-language, courses than Korean Civilization, it can be the sole course that they can take to know about Korean tradition, culture, society, and history. Hence, Korean Civilization, including the development of textbook materials, occupies a central part in discussing the betterment of Korean studies in specific and liberal education in general.

As it stands, the U.S. education system allows colleges to organize academic programs, set under the principle of liberal education, and to afford various interdisciplinary courses.<sup>9</sup> Oftentimes, the curriculum of liberal education is structured on the juxtaposition of humanities and social sciences in subject while in content it is designed for the learning of the universal values of humanity. In this context, world civilization/history courses, including Korean Civilization, play a pivotal role in liberal education by covering a variety of human experiences from a transhistorical perspective and the complexity of the contemporary society from a multidimensional angle.

However, similar to K-12, liberal education in U.S. colleges continues to carry the West-centered bias in which Western civilization is not only presumed as the norm of human experiences, but also identified as the core of American tradition.<sup>10</sup> Western civilization is regarded, if implicitly but profoundly, both as a *lingua franca* in the curriculum of world civilization/history and a centerpiece of American identity. In contrast, the non-Western civilizations, vested in good part with unfamiliarity, partiality and particularity, have been counted as the creation by Others as opposed to the Western civilization including the U.S. Not a few courses, related to non-Western regions, in liberal education tend to be predicated upon this dualistic assumption. Korean Civilization has not been an exception to this dichotomy.

Moreover, as is widely known, Chinese and Japanese studies in the West have produced a remarkable degree of academic and educational achievement. What long made a great number of Western scholars interested in China was its unfolding of empire and civilization for more than three thousand years and its dynamic turn to modern times from the first half of the twentieth century. Another great attention was paid to Japan, the sole non-Western country taking the imperialist route in Asia and re-emerging as a global economic leader in post-World War II. The long process of Japanese civilization also attracted the scholarly and educational interest of the West. That is to say, apart from the West-centered perspective, Korea studies have met the China-/Japan-centered perspective as another facet of West-centrism within East Asian studies.

Meanwhile, Korean studies curricula in college education have also developed with strong emphases on modern times from the late nineteenth century to the twentieth century. Both

<sup>9</sup> Kang Sun-joo, "Miguk taehak ūi kyoyang kyoyukkwajōng esō 'sōgumunmyōng' kangjwa ūi pyōnch' ōn" [Changes of Courses in Western Civilization in American Universities: Focusing on Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago University], *Hosō sahak* 44 (2006): 152-167.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-148.

researchers and educators have made a substantial effort to teach modern Korea. To be certain, since the end of World War II, Korea has risen to immediate attention as a new venue full of security issues in the post-war era. A complicated set of geopolitics such as the Korean War, the division of the Korean Peninsula, the Cold War, North Korea, the nuclear question, the rise of PRC as a new superpower, and the territory issue among the countries of East Asia has generated a strong practical motif for propagating the significance of Korean studies.<sup>11</sup>

What is to be added to the motive of this modern-focused orientation is the demand of students, composed mostly of Korean Americans, in the undergraduate and graduate programs of Korean studies. On top of the difficulties of learning literary Chinese (*hanmun*) and Sino-Korean lexica (*hanjaō*), they have expressed a topical preference for colonialism, the Korean War, Division, democratization, immigration, and the economic development of South Korea, and North Korea. These subject matters, connected closely to their parents' generation as well as their own, inspired them to find the most realistic and fundamental reason for their pursuit of Korean studies with the concentration on the modern period.

The number of Korean nationals who studied Korea-related subjects for their doctoral degree in the U.S. increased from the 1970s to 1990s.<sup>12</sup> Many of their majors belonged to social science in which economics, political science, psychology, sociology, education, journalism, and the like were widely received as an indispensable lens for analyzing and solving the problems, such as industrialization, democratization, social movement, or labor movement, in contemporary Korea. Even such humanistic fields as history and literature lent modern Korea a prime initiative for research and education. The modern-oriented phenomena tells us about how the crucial portion of human resources in Korean studies, here Korea scholars who originally came from Korea, specialized in modern Korea for their academic and educational careers at U.S. universities.

## 2. Premodern Korea and Global History

Any overemphasis on educational pragmatism and the ensuing tilt toward modern Korea, however, may cause some side effects in Korean studies. There is a sense in which excessive attention to such contemporary topics as wars, foreign intervention, colonialism, and authoritarian regimes can be in danger of eclipsing too easily the context of Korea itself. The problem here, as is repeatedly pointed out, is the ongoing tendency where the modernist framework can be bound with ease to the West-centrism that assumes the trajectory of Western civilization to be the universal pattern and standard in understanding other non-Western civilizations.<sup>13</sup> Under these circumstances, non-Western civilizations, including those of premodern times, are likely to find themselves susceptible to various narratives of prejudice and stereotype. In fact, the tradition and civilization of premodern Korea have made a habit of bearing the negative image of being closed, dependent, or even regressive, albeit implicitly, thereby occasionally yielding a myopia against the deeper understanding of East Asia.<sup>14</sup>

Besides, the general narrative of the Korea scholarship in the U.S. has tended to share a binary set of explanations that the civilization of premodern Korea relied in large part upon the civilization of premodern China while achieving a considerable degree of independent identity. This account, if unwittingly, might reflect the West-centric impact-response framework where Sinocentrism sits as the other prevalent authority in understanding the rest of premodern East Asia; imperial China as giver and the rest as receiver in the region.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cho Ji-Hyung, *Miguksa yōn'gu* 15, 181-184.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-183.

<sup>13</sup> Kang Sun-joo, "Organizing High School World History Courses in the United States – Debates on the Western-centered Approach –," *Sahoegwagyoyuk yōn'gu* 5 (2001): 58-71.

<sup>14</sup> Kim Seon Mee, *Sahoegwagyoyukhak yōn'gu* 5, 91-93; Chung, Young-soon, *Yōksagyoyuk* 93, 44-53.

<sup>15</sup> Kwon Nae-hyun & Joseph Jeong-il Lee, *International Journal of Korean History* 17, 78-84.

Teaching the culture and history of premodern Korea can be seen from a larger perspective that rethinks the West-centrism, coupled structurally with Sincocentrism, and locates more of East Asian context from a perspective of global history. Premodern Korea had, at least for two millennia, experienced the dramatic vicissitudes of civilizational enterprise in East Asia, which the U.S. had not encountered. Particularly, the civilization of continental East Asia between the tenth and eighteenth centuries—corresponding to Koryŏ and Chosŏn in Korean history—saw an ongoing rivalry between Han Chinese states and Northern (nomadic) states. For centuries, diverse agents in premodern Korea continued to seek strategies and solutions capable of internalizing the political and cultural impacts of imperial China, reframing them in universal language, and finally adapting it to their own interest.<sup>16</sup>

This presentation does not subscribe to a grand master narrative of global history but appreciates its comparative and macro approach, spanning sometimes more than five centuries, in search of a historical pattern that has shaped the rise of modern civilization on an intercontinental scale. It helps to reconsider the conventional West-centered historiography and education on world civilizations and to illuminate the various layers of interactions across continents and oceans. Along this line, we can further researches that find the degree to which accumulation of experienced knowledge about how to live with the civilized empires at that time and accrued interaction with them became the integral part of Korean civilization. In terms of teaching, college students can also be encouraged to grasp a deeper context of historical interaction within East Asian civilization. The impetus of global history on the synchronous development of research and education will contribute to treating how productively current researches and education on premodern Korea strengthen each other and to envisioning a higher level of Korean Civilization armed simultaneously with a well-organized format and a rich array of primary sources translated into English.

The lesson about a prolific collaboration of research and education sectors can be learned from the case of Chinese studies that has demonstrated the synergy effect where the growth of education on premodern China develops teaching materials and strengthens the overall curriculum of Chinese studies.<sup>17</sup> For instance, with competent researches equipped, premodern-

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Jeong-il Lee, “Patterning a Chosŏn-focused Discourse in Yi I’s Understanding of *Li*,” *Journal of Asian History* 46.1 (2012); Remco E. Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918–1170: History, Ideology and Identity in the Koryŏ Dynasty* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Sohn Pow-Key [Son Pogi], “Power versus Status: The Role of Ideology during the Early Yi Dynasty,” *Tongbang hakchi* 10 (1969).

<sup>17</sup> One decent example is Asian Educational Media Service (AEMS). This database houses 448 China-related documentary films for elementary, K-12, and college students. The titles of the materials are 1) *History as a Mirror: Using China’s Past to Shape Its Future*, 2) *Ming China (1368-1644): Political Stability, Economic Prosperity, and Cultural Vitality*, 3) *Song China (960-1270): Splendor and Change*, 4) *Confucius, Confucian, and Confucian Temple*, 5) *The Great Wall*, 6) *Imperial Mausoleums of Ming and Qing*, 7) *Imperial Mausoleum of Qin*, 8) *The Ancient Empire, (part I)*, 9) *Marco Polo’s Shangri-la*, 10) *Marco Polo’s Silk Road*, 11) *Power to Predict*, 12) *1421: The Year China Discovered America*, 13) *Ancient China (1998)*, 14) *Ancient China (1996)*, 15) *Ancient China: A Journey Back in Time*, 16) *Ancient China: From the Neolithic period to the Han Dynasty*, 17) *China and Japan: 1279-1600*, 18) *China and Forbidden City*, 19) *China in Transition: 581-1279*, 20) *China: Dynasties of Power*, 21) *China: Lost Civilizations*, 22) *China: The History and the Mystery*, 23) *China: Geography and History of the North*, 24) *China: Geography and History of the South*, 25) *China: Heritage of the Wild Dragon*, 26) *China’s Cosmopolitan Age: The Tang, 618-907*, 27) *China’s Old Houses*, 28) *A Day on the Grand Canal with the Emperor of China*, 29) *The Emperor’s Eye: Art and Power in Imperial China*, 30) *The Enduring Legacy of Ancient China: Primary Source Lessons for Teachers and Students*, 31) *Exploring History: China*, 32) *Fine and Folk Arts of China*, 33) *Fine Arts of China CD-ROM*, 34) *Fine Rain: Politics and Folk Songs in China*, 35) *The First Emperor of China*, 36) *The Great Wall of China*, 37) *A Guide to China’s Cosmopolitan Age: The Tang*, 38) *History and Culture of China*, 39) *History of Trade in China*, 40) *Imperial Tombs of China: The Museum Tour*, 41) *Lai Shi: China’s Last Eunuch*, 42) *Mysterious Mummies of China*, 43) *National Treasures: Gems of China’s Cultural Relics*, 44) *NGS PicturePack Series: Ancient*

majored scholars in Chinese studies have kept participating in the production of introductory textbooks for survey and selective courses. Such eminent senior scholars in premodern China as Patricia Ebrey, F.W. Mote, Conrad Schirokauer, Charles Holcombe, Stephen Owen, Kang-I Sun, and Philip Ivanhoe have written educational books whose topics and contents are well-suited to East Asian/Chinese Civilization courses.<sup>18</sup> The complementary cycle of research and education about premodern China along with the whole progress of Chinese studies intimates that Korea researchers and educators should take into earnest consideration how to raise education about premodern Korea as a vital part in the future of Korean studies in the U.S.

Hence, keeping in mind a more balanced development between premodern and modern periods in the college curriculum of the U.S., I contend that the reinforcement of premodern Korean curriculum, including Korean Civilization, will be indispensable to the overall upgrade of Korean studies. This direction will eventually establish Korean studies as a competitive section of area studies in U.S. college education. In the next, I turn to Michael Seth's and Keith Pratt's general history books of Korea, used or useful for Korean Civilization, with a focus on late Chosŏn from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. According to the categories of perspective, verification, and references, strengths and shortfalls will be discussed.

### 3. Two Textbooks – Focusing on Late Chosŏn

*A New History of Korea* is the translation of *Hanguksa sillon* by Lee Ki-baik. Its abridged version, entitled *Korea: Old and New*, has been widely used for Korean civilization and Korean history courses in American universities. In 2006, two general Korean history textbooks appeared, *A Concise History of Korea: From the Neolithic Period through the Nineteenth Century* by Michael J. Seth and *Everlasting Flower: A History of Korea* by Keith Pratt. The authors try to keep up with the current form and content of world history and East Asian history textbooks published in North America, suitable to the demands of English-speaking college student and general reader. In this section, according to the categories of verification, references, and perspective, I would like to mention briefly the period of late Chosŏn in these two general Korean history books. The focus of this sketch will be on how exactly information and facts are delivered, what Western and Korean sources are used, and how the history of late Chosŏn is interpreted. Examining strengths and shortfalls of the two recent books will facilitate further discussion on teaching materials for Korean Civilization in the U.S. and pave the way for future collaboration between Korea scholars and educators in the West and those in Korea.

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China, 45) *Old Treasures from New China*, 46) *Religion of China*, 47) *Secret of the Stone: Lineage organization in a North China village*, 48) *Splendors of Imperial China: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei*, 49) *Spotlight on China: Traditions Old and New*, 50) *The Ancient Civilizations Starter Collection: China*, 51) *The Heart of China*, 52) *The Heart of China: Capturing Chinese Life on Video*, 53) *They Came from China: Inventions That Changed the World*, 54) *Traditional Concepts of Morality in China*, 55) *Horse (tomb figure) Tang Dynasty (618-907), 1st half of the 8th century, China [picture]: art poster and teacher's packet*, and 56) *The Concepts of Order in Ancient China: a curriculum unit for history and social studies, grades 6-9*. For more reference and information in detail, go to <http://www.aems.illinois.edu/index.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Patricia Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1993); F.W. Mote, *Imperial China: 900-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); *A Brief history of Chinese civilization*, Ed. Conrad Schirokauer and Miranda Brown (Boston, MA: Cengage, 2006); Patricia Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History: China*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010); *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature, Volume I: To 1375*, Ed. Kang-I Sun and Stephen Owen (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010); *Mortality in Traditional Chinese Thought*, Ed. Amy Olberding and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011); and Charles Holcombe, *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the twenty-First Century* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Michael J. Seth, *A Concise History of Korea*  
 (Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine)  
 A General Review

Primary and/or secondary sources are included at the end of each chapter so as to provide with reader vivid scenes of pre-modern Korean culture and history. In content, what is noticeable is the author's attempt to explain the long duration of pre-modern Korean civilization and its various themes from an American perspective. Employing a balanced account of pre-modern Korea in contrast to nationalist tones, found conventionally in many history textbooks written by Korean scholars in Korea, is another reader-friendly merit of the book.

Still, more attention can be paid to 1) historical relationships within the East Asian world order of the time, such as the power relations among Han Chinese, Northern dynasties and Korean dynasties, 2) civil government (文治), and 3) agriculture-based economy. Several mistakes, related to period confusion and mismatching, are also located in the list of primary sources. And, the deficiency of valuable illustrations, maps, charts, and statistics in this reading-oriented textbook may lessen the interest of college student, receptive to digital/audiovisual media, or of reader without any basic knowledge of (pre-modern) Korea. For accurate delivery of information and sources, more reference to research and teaching materials of Korean scholarship in Korea can be selectively made.

### 1. References

The book heavily relies on academic works published in the West. This unbalance may render the book subject to West-centrism. For more information, please see the presentation content in the Power Point.

### 2. Verification

- Was Pusan a major port in the late Chosŏn period (p. 204)?
- The explanation of *yurang chisigin* in late Chosŏn is unfamiliar to Korean scholarship (p. 205).
- It is necessary to reconsider the statement that the martial arts tradition in pre-modern Korea derived from China (p. 205).
- It is necessary to reconsider the statement that various martial arts were widely practiced even among commoners (p. 205).
- There is an anachronous citation where the author takes the period of the *T'aejong sillok* and the *Sŏngjong sillok* for late Chosŏn (p. 207).
- It is necessary to reconsider the statement that Western realism influenced the eighteenth-century Korean artists (p. 218).

### 3. Perspective

Generally speaking, the author appreciates continuity in pre-modern Korean history and culture. Yet, the main reason for change is given greatly to Chinese influence. This step seems to make it difficult for the author to stay away from the typical impact-reaction, originality-replication, and center-periphery dichotomy of West-centrism in East Asian studies. As a consequence, the author comes to follow the claim that modern history and culture of Korea were also able to grow with influences received from the United States and Japan (p. 224).

In order to understand the deeper context of late Chosŏn, we should not disregard the correlation among geopolitics, civil government (文治), and agriculture-based economy. Along this line, I would like to point out the problem of referring to Qing, whose Jurchen origin was hardly dismissed by the Chosŏn court and ruling elites, merely as "China." To be certain, Chosŏn differentiated the Northern dynasties, founded by the Khitans, Mongolia, and Jurchens, from the Han-Chinese dynasties with which it used to side. And, far from the author's statement that Koreans no longer had to worry about Central Asian invaders (p. 186), intelligence activities and information gathering by the court and ruling elites about Manchuria, Mongolia

and the neighboring areas continued throughout late Chosŏn. Simultaneously, the Chosŏn elites of the time made vigorous effort to distinguish the universality of Confucian civilization from the character of Chinese culture while sometimes recombining them together at their vantage point. The performance of Chosŏn civilization was also inseparable from the long practice of civil government of pre-modern Korea itself. Accordingly, we should be careful of where to locate Chinese tradition and Korean tradition under the larger framework of East Asian civilization and how to bring out commonality and difference in the context of late Chosŏn.

The book explains slow development of commerce in late Chosŏn by reason of the persistency of Confucianism and geographical reasons. On top of these, some explanation about agriculture-based economy and civil government as the institutional infrastructure will be useful for reader to have a better understanding of the orientation of reform and change after the seventeenth century. In regards to international trade, the limited economic exchange of late Chosŏn with Qing and Tokugawa (Japan) can be touched along with the specific context of East Asian world system in which Chosŏn chose to remain.

Keith Pratt, *Everlasting Flower* (pp. 130-176)

#### General Review

Not only placing the preface, maps, and chronological table before the introduction, but also offering a summary at the beginning of each chapter help reader to get a general picture of Korean history.<sup>19</sup> Among the thirty-two illustrations in the book, twenty-four illustrations concern premodern Korea, reflexive of the author's interest in the traditional arts of Korea and the penchant of this book for cultural history. But, to place them at the end of each chapter would have been more effective. On the whole, the author's notion about the traditional era of Korean history, including late Chosŏn, is based upon the conventional interpretation of the Western scholarship in East Asian studies: little interaction, except China and Japan, with the rest of the world occurred before World War II (pp. 13-15). This assumption concurs with the West-centered impact-reaction, originality-replica, and center-periphery dichotomy. What can be more included is a wider historical context of premodern East Asia with the great extent of various human interactions/exchanges across and within the different polities.

Chapter 4. Early to Mid Chosŏn: Kingly Way II (pp. 139-150)

#### 1. References

The author barely reflects the contributions of Korean scholarship. All fourteen works cited here are published in English, and only three of them are translated from Korean to English. For more information, please see the presentation content in the Power Point.

#### 2. Perspective

The text primarily focuses on the reigns of Yŏngjo (r. 1724-1776) and Chŏngjo (r. 1776-1800). It is refreshing to see these periods being compared to world history, but it may be problematic to parallel Chosŏn to Europe. During the period, Europe had witnessed the rapid growth of imperialism and colonialism, which had shaped the beginning of modern civilization. Meanwhile, the stability of late Chosŏn had to do with the situation of East Asian world system. In the midst of continuous minor conflicts, serious military confrontation between Qing and Russia diminished and Mongols collaborated with Qing in the continent. In this sense, the statement that Chosŏn could not become an empire but nevertheless flourished, as implicitly compared with the West, needs to be more carefully reconsidered (p. 139). And, *kyunyŏkpop* (Equalized Tax Law), *taedongpop* (Uniform Land Tax Law), and *yŏngjŏngpop* (Fixed Land Tax

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<sup>19</sup> Only two maps of the Three Kingdoms and contemporary Korea are placed. Maps of ancient Korea, Koryŏ, and Chosŏn should be added. Unlike Seth's book, the map (pp. 8-9) has "East Sea" but it follows, as in Seth's book, the Chinese Romanization for *Tuman Rive* and *Amnok River*.

Law) were the major reformed taxation of late Chosŏn (p. 139), but also has to be linked with the ongoing economic reorganization and social accommodation during the time.

The political history is of significance in general history books of Korea in English on the ground that, as in the case of modern history, pre-modern Korean history cannot separate politics, society, and culture from one another. Nonetheless, detailing complex factions or names without a comprehensive and integrative view of late Chosŏn could slow readability. Regarding the factions of *noron* and *soron* (p. 139), an insertion of chronological table and diagram, which highlights factional genealogy or relations, may lessen confusion and misunderstanding. In fact, it is political history that had served for a negative narrative of factionalism as the decline of Chosŏn to give impetus to the formation of the colonialist historiography in early modern times.

In the field of intellectual history, the portrayal of T'oegye and Yulgok, respectively, as progressive and conservative sounds somehow problematic (p. 141), as well as the dichotomous division of *Yuhak* 儒學 and *Sirhak* 實學 (p. 144). Identifying Hŏ Kyun of the mid-Chosŏn period and Pak Chiwŏn of the late Chosŏn period as *Sirhak* scholars altogether also needs more consideration (p. 145). To mention the recent scholarship of Korea on the characteristic and significance of *Sirhak*, if briefly, will deliver a clearer content of the intellectual topology of the day. As is widely known, the debate on *Sirhak* involves the issues of how to interpret the remarkable degree of social and cultural changes in late Chosŏn and how to reformulate Sinocentrism, West-cenrism, modernization, and Korean identity in the course of East Asian civilization.

Description of fine arts contains four paragraphs in total, which is not common in a general history book. The topic concentrates on Chosŏn paintings of An Pyŏng (1418-1453), An Kyŏn (b. 1418), and Chŏngsŏn (1676-1759) (pp. 146-7). In the second half, it covers the style and feature of the pieces drawn by Kang Sehwang (1713-1791), Kim Hongdo (1745-post-1814), and Sin Yunbok (1758-c. 1820). Such detailed and technical content might distract the attention of reader. The long illustration, stretching across two pages (pp. 148-149), may work better when sitting at the end of the last page (p. 150). It would be more effective to have a balanced account between the influence of certain premodern Chinese painting styles and the context of artistic adoption. In so doing, reader will gain more knowledge about the attribute of high culture during the period and the vital interaction between cosmopolitanism and nativism in late Chosŏn.

## Chapter 5. The Hermit Kingdom, 1800-64: Tradition at Work (pp. 153-176) Society and Culture (pp. 153-168)

### 1. References

The eleven texts, cited in this chapter, were published in English. Only one publication is a translation of one literary work from Korean to English. For more information, please see the presentation content in the Power Point.

### 2. Perspective

The first part starts with central politics and international relations, and then informs Chosŏn's social structure and social statuses. Still, periodically, a large portion of this political and social explanation tends to cover the general state of Chosŏn less than late Chosŏn. And, the author explains gender right after political history, and then enumerates a variety of cultural topics such as clothing, shamanism, seasonal customs, *pansori*, architecture, housing, pottery, and music without any periodic distinction (pp. 157-168). As seen from the statement, "Like painting, music and dance also crossed the social divide" (p. 168), the author attempts to examine the connection between political history, social history and cultural history. However, tying politics, society and culture together can be supported by more of specific context without which reader

might skip many of items and subjects even including some unfamiliar proper nouns in Korean Romanization.

#### Concluding Remarks

In this presentation I have proposed a new level of Korean Studies, offered as academic curriculum for area studies, international studies, and liberal arts education in American colleges and universities, by underlining a balance between the pre-modern period and the modern period on the one hand and a synergetic effect between research and teaching on the other. Focusing on specific issues in two general history textbooks on Korea written by Michael J. Seth and Keith Pratt, respectively, which are used or are useful for Korean civilization and Korean history courses, I examine strengths and shortfalls while drawing out areas for improvement. The period treated here concerns late Chosŏn from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century. The two textbooks assume that Chosŏn, and late Chosŏn in particular, formed an independent politico-cultural community or civilization while being similar to imperial China. Such a claim reflects the Sinocentrism of current American scholarship on East Asian history, and perhaps with West-centrism at its root. That is to say, in seeking an objective stance in response to the nationalistic narratives of Korean scholarship in Korea, Korea scholars in the West continue to have difficulty in moving beyond the conventional framework of West-centrism and Sinocentrism. Still, considering the relatively small number of specialists, the promotion of pre-modern Korean studies in the United States can be undertaken in cooperation with pre-modern Korea scholars/educators in Korea. Developing textbooks, sourcebooks, and other teaching materials with the aid of audio-visual and digital technologies can be a productive form of collaboration in pre-modern Korean studies. Regarding content, researchers and educators in the United States should expand more fully their scholarly engagement with global history from the tenth century to the eighteenth century in particular in order to challenge the conventional West-centered narrative of modern civilization and highlight the numerous and varied layers of human interaction across continents. The constructive process of engagement, challenge, and collaboration suggested here will help Korean studies to develop as a more competitive academic and educational discipline in association with the global humanities of the twenty-first century.