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Conception of the Hero
in Korean Popular Fiction
of Late Chosŏn Period

A dissertation submitted by partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Seung-Ah Lee

2014

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Conception of the Hero in Korean Popular Fiction of Late Chosŏn Period

by

Seung-Ah Lee

Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor John B. Duncan, Chair

The image of a hero reflects the desires, ideals and dreams of the people of a given time. “It is in times of emergency that heroes are looked for, and found,” as Lucy Hughes-Hallett pointed out. In times of war or social disorder, people look for someone who can save them from chaos. If the environment is what creates necessity for a hero, what does the type of heroic figures tell us about the past or present?

The role of heroes in premodern Korean literature is similar to what Ruhlmann depicts. They “embody current values and ideals” which can be understood in part as Confucianism, and they also “convey a powerful image of the conflicting forces at work in the society of their time.” By investigating heroes in premodern literature, we can find an answer to the question of ‘who created which heroes for whom?’ Furthermore, it is also important to look at any differences of

heroic images within the same period to see how they may vary depending on social class, gender, and region. The answer to these questions tells us about current values and ideas, in addition to class/gender conflicts of the time.

This dissertation will specifically focus on Korean hero fiction (*yǒng'ung sosŏl*; 英雄小說) in the late Chosŏn period. Hero fiction was the most popular literary genre in premodern Korea. For that reason, we can consider writing/reading/circulating hero fiction as a reflection of contemporary popular culture. Among John Storey defines popular culture in five different ways, I see popular culture to be “a site of struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups and forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant groups.”

I will examine three major works of hero fiction: *A Dream of Nine Clouds* (Kuun mong), *Record of Black Dragon Year* (Imjin rok) and *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl* (Hong Kyewŏl chŏn). By examining these three hero fictions, we will be able to see how popular culture functions against dominant elite culture in the late Chosŏn period. This kind of study will be a foundation for examining the cultural, social and literary characteristics of that time.

The dissertation of Seung-Ah Lee is approved.

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For My Parents

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Introduction

Why the hero?

In 1931, historians, writers, and journalists such as Kim Pyŏngno (1888-1964), Mun Ilp'yŏng (1888-1939), Yu Kwangnyŏl (1898-1981), Yi Kwangsu (1892-1950), Chu Yohan (1900-1979) and Ch'a Sangch'an (1887-1946) gathered at the *Tonggwang* (Eastern Light, 東光) magazine company for a roundtable talk.¹ The topic was, "Who is a hero?" They discussed politicians, military figures, intellectuals, literary figures and artists throughout world history. Although there were some debates, they unanimously chose Yŏn Kaesomun (? - 666) and Taewŏngun (Yi Haŭng, 1820-1898) from among Korea's political leaders and Yi Sunsin (1545-1598) from among Korea's military figures. Reflective of the dark period under Japanese colonization (1910-1945) when Korea had lost its autonomy, they defined a hero to be, "a man who set big plans and rendered great meritorious deeds for the populace." They eagerly wanted a "great leader" who could lead the people.

From September 4, 2004 to August 28, 2005, the dramatic series *Immortal Yi Sunsin* (Pulmyŏl ūi Yi Sunsin) aired on KBS, a Korean broadcasting company. Before it was released, the writer Yun Sŏnju described her depiction of Yi Sunsin as a man who agonized over ordinary aspects of life just like the average man. Korean viewers, however, opposed this portrayal of Yi Sunsin and the "netizens" swamped the drama's website with their disapproval, finally persuading the writer to change the story line to appease the netizens. In the collective memory of the Korean people, Yi Sunsin was a sage hero, *sŏngung* (聖雄), who had no personal conflicts and devoted himself solely to the concerns of the people and the state.

As we can see in these two examples, the image of a hero reflects the desires, ideals and dreams of the people of a given time. “It is in times of emergency that heroes are looked for, and found,” as Lucy Hughes-Hallett pointed out.² In times of war or social disorder, people look for someone who can save them from chaos. That is why these intellectuals of the colonial period gathered to find heroes from the past. If the environment is what creates necessity for a hero, what does the type of heroic figures tell us about the past or present? The late Robert Ruhlmann, professor of Chinese literature, well describes the role of heroes in Chinese literature. He writes:

Heroes in literature and art express more than the personal opinions and dreams of particular authors. They also embody current values and ideals, and convey a powerful image of the conflicting forces at work in the society of their time. Superhuman yet human, these prestigious personalities inspire and encourage imitation, initiate or revive patterns of behavior, and thus play a significant role in shaping history.³

The role of heroes in premodern Korean literature is similar to what Ruhlmann depicts. They “embody current values and ideals” which can be understood in part as Confucianism, and they also “convey a powerful image of the conflicting forces at work in the society of their time.” Furthermore, if, as Frederic Jameson argued in *The Political Unconscious*, narratives are “socially symbolic acts,” then works of popular fiction may be seen as texts representing an “individual parole or utterance” of “collective and class discourses,” since such works simultaneously represent perspectives of writers and readers, the literati and commoners in the Chosŏn period (1392-1897).⁴

By investigating heroes in premodern literature, we can find an answer to the question of ‘who created which heroes for whom?’ Furthermore, it is also important to look at any differences of heroic images within the same period to see how they may vary depending on

social class, gender, and region. The answer to these questions tells us about current values and ideas, in addition to class/gender conflicts of the time. This dissertation will specifically focus on Korean hero fiction (*yŏng'ung sosŏl*; 英雄小説) in the late Chosŏn period, a genre considered to be most “influenced” by Chinese works.⁵

Hero fiction was the most popular literary genre in premodern Korea. For that reason, we can consider writing/reading/circulating hero fiction as a reflection of contemporary popular culture. John Storey defines popular culture in five different ways.⁶ First, “popular culture is simply culture that is widely favored or well liked by many people.” Second, “it is the culture that is left over after we have decided what is high culture.” Third, popular culture is “a mass culture.” In this case its focus is on commercial culture. Fourth, “popular culture is the culture that originates from the people.” Lastly, it is “a site of struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups and forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant groups.”

Using Storey’s five definitions of popular culture, I will examine three major works of hero fiction: *A Dream of Nine Clouds* (Kuun mong) *Record of Black Dragon Year* (Imjin rok) and *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl* (Hong Kyewŏl chŏn). By examining these three hero fictions, we will be able to see how popular culture functions against dominant elite culture in the late Chosŏn period. This kind of study will be a foundation for examining the cultural, social and literary characteristics of that time.

What is a Hero?

Common Western definitions of a hero are: 1) a mythological or legendary man, often of divine ancestry, who is endowed with great courage and strength, celebrated for his bold exploits, and favored by the gods; 2) someone noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose, especially

one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life.⁷ Cecil M. Bowra further defines heroes in Western literature as those who “possess those gifts of body and character which bring success in action and are admired for that reason.” He further writes:

He may be strong or swift or enduring or resourceful or eloquent. Not all heroes possess the whole gamut of these qualities but all have some portion of them, and what matters is less their range of gifts, than the degree in which they have one or other of them. A hero differs from other men by his peculiar force and energy.... This is commonly displayed in battle, because battle provides the most searching tests not merely of strength and courage but of resource and decision. The greatest heroes are primarily men of war.⁸

Heroes of traditional Korea are not very different from Bowra’s description and dictionary definitions. We often find heroes in war tales such as *Record of Black Dragon Year* about the Imjin war (or the Hideyoshi invasion of 1592-1599). Although *The Tale of Hong Kiltong* and *The Tale of Hong Kyewol* are not war tales, these stories include battle scenes and martial arts fighting scenes that portray courageous and brave acts of heroes/heroines. However, unlike Western heroes, as Huges-Hallett points out, for whom “virtue is not a necessary qualification for heroic status: a hero is not a role model,”⁹ virtue is one of the most important values of a hero in Korean hero fiction. A hero is a role model.

The classical Korean equivalent for “hero” is “*yǒng’ung* (英雄).”¹⁰ This word also appears in some Chinese classics, the earliest uses of which were tied to the defeat of the Qin (221 BCE – 206 BCE) and the founding of the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), when many warlords rebelled against the tyranny of the Qin. Among them, Liu Bang (BCE 247–195), the eventual founder of the Han dynasty, and Xiang Yu (BCE 232–202), the leader of the Chu state, were two major figures who fought for unification. Liu Bang eventually led the warlords or

yingxiong (K. *yǒng'ung*, 英雄) to defeat both the Qin and Xiang Yu.¹¹ A similar case can be found at the end of during the Three Kingdoms period (220 – 280). When many warlords rose to fight for power, the king of Wei (220 –264), Cao Cao (155-220) told Liu Bei (161-223), the king of Shu Han (221 – 263) they were the only two heroes who could bring about unification.¹² In both cases, *yingxiong* indicated a man with exceptional military knowledge, martial skills and courage, as well as a man who could lead the state.

The word *yingxiong* also appears in a poem by the Tang poet Du Fu (712-770) in a tribute to Zhuge Liang (181-234), the prime minister of Shu Han and adviser to Liu Bei. He writes, “That he should have died before victory could crown his expedition will always draw a sympathetic tear from men of heroic stamp.”¹³ Here again, *yingxiong* signified the warlords who helped Zhuge Liang fight for unification. Apart from these examples, though perhaps not explicitly called *yingxiong*, heroic figures were often portrayed as loyal subjects, filial sons/daughters, men of righteousness, and those who contributed to the community. Their courageous behavior was based on moral values, especially Confucian morality. In the case of Chinese heroes in popular fiction, Ruhlmann reduces them to three types:

The impetuous, uninhibited, and generous Swordsman, a lovable and explosive “good fellow”; the Scholar, of outstanding intelligence, resourcefulness, eloquence, and self-control, “knowing all knowable things and some others,” whose powers of reading minds, of seeing into the future, of influencing the forces of nature have a supernatural cast; and the Prince, holder of Heaven’s mandate, who does nothing spectacular himself, but is skilled in judging men and in choosing the Scholars and Swordsmen who will enable him to fulfill his destiny.¹⁴

In contrast to such descriptions of the Chinese hero, Korean scholars such as Sŏ Taesŏk define a Korean hero as “a man/woman who accomplishes a great contribution, not necessarily in a war, but for the state or society. He/she should value the interests of the community more than personal interests.”¹⁵ Since Confucian morality is one of the most prominent traits of the Korean hero, I will use Sŏ Taesŏk’s definition of hero to illustrate how moral conduct is the basis of heroic identity in Korean hero fiction.

Transmission of Chinese Literature

Since Korean hero fiction is arguably the literary genre most influenced by Chinese fiction, it is important to understand how Chinese literature was transmitted to Korea.

The first reference to Chinese learning appears with the establishment of the National Confucian Academy (*T’aehak*; 太學) around the 4th century CE in Koguryŏ (37 BCE – 668 CE). The Academy’s main Confucian texts included the Five Classics (五經) and dynastic histories such as *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian) and *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of Han). When Silla (57 BCE – 935 CE) established a royal Confucian academy in 1862, number of literary works such as *Wenxuan* 文選 (Anthology of Literature) were also on the curriculum.

Access to literary Chinese was a privilege and a source of power for Korean scholars even after King Sejong (1418-1450) sponsored the invention of the *Correct Sound to Instruct the People*, *Humin chŏngŭm* (*han’gŭl*), the Korean vernacular writing system, in 1443-44. The king believed that non-literati were illiterate because of the difficulty of literary Chinese. With the creation of *han’gŭl*, women and commoners were able to become literate even though it took more than two hundred years for the usage of *han’gŭl* to spread widely. Chinese literature was

thus transmitted to the level of commoners via two major methods: translation and, and as will be discussed below, adaptation.

Beginning in the 15th century, many Chinese works were translated into vernacular Korean: selected stories from *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Gleanings of the Reign of Great Tranquility), poetry collections of Du Fu (712-770) and Huang Tingjian (1045-1105), and the *Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀 (Wonders of the Present and the Past), a collection of forty works from *Sanyan* (三言) collections.¹⁶ Although it is not clear when *Extensive Gleanings* was transmitted to Korea, it is believed that it was brought to Korea by at least the 12th century since King Kojong of Koryŏ (r. 1213-1259) mentioned this work to one of his subjects. In the 15th century, Sŏng Im (1401-1484) selected fifty chapters from *Extensive Gleanings* and called it *T'aep'yŏng kwanggi sangjŏl* 太平廣記詳節 (Detailed and Condensed *Extensive Gleanings of the Reign of Great Tranquility*) and translated about 268 stories into Korean. The translated version was kept in the Royal Palace Library (Naksŏnjae 樂善齋) during the Chosŏn dynasty. Fictional works of the Ming and Qing such as *Sanguozhi yanyi* 三國誌演義 (Romance of the Three Kingdoms), *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin), *Jinghua yuan* 鏡花緣 (Romance of the Mirrored Flowers),¹⁷ and *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (The Dream of the Red Chamber) were also translated. Among these masterpieces, the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was most popular, especially after two major foreign invasions by the Japanese and Manchus in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the aftermath of these events, people who had suffered during the wars sought salvation vicariously through hero fiction. There were sixty-four different translated versions including handwritten copies, woodblock and movable type editions. It is widely read even today.

As writers translated Chinese works, they often changed a given story to accommodate the tastes of Korean readers. They sometimes abbreviated a story, embellished it, or even changed the entire plot. This is how adaptations became popularized in the late Chosŏn period. The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, for example, was adapted in many ways. Some collections consist of thirty volumes, while others consist of only one. Some editions only depict the battle at Red Cliff, while some select one character from the book, Zhao Yun or Jiang Wei, and focus on him alone.

The adaptation of Chinese fiction was important to the development of premodern Korean fiction. Since classical Chinese preceded the invention of the vernacular Korean writing system, it was natural for Korean writers to draw stories from Chinese fiction. Ming and Qing fiction were popular in Korea to the degree that King Chŏngjo (1776-1800) tried to ban importing Chinese works, the reasoning behind which will be explored in Chapter One. Despite this, the popularity of Chinese works continued and King Kojong (1863-1907) ordered interpreters to translate Chinese fictional works for palace ladies and stored them at the Royal Palace Library where the translation of *Water Margin* was also kept.

Korean Scholarship on Comparative Studies

Comparative studies of traditional Korean and Chinese fiction in Korea take two main approaches to the development of Korean literature. The first takes a nationalist perspective. After liberation from Japan in 1945, the Korean government moved to rebuild the state in the name of nationalism. Korea had suffered tremendously for thirty-six years under Japanese colonial rule, especially through Japan's assimilation policy which banned all forms of cultural

expression that might be considered nationalistic. Publication of newspapers and magazines in Korean were banned from the late 1930s. Writers were forced to write in Japanese, and it was used exclusively even in schools. For these reasons, the post-liberation Korean government expelled all traces of Japanese imperialism in the course of rebuilding the nation. The field of Korean literature was no exception. As a result of this nationalist reconstruction project, some Korean scholars have tried to suggest that Korean literature developed independently from outside influences. The second approach to the development of Korean literature engages in a search for similarities between Korean and Chinese literature. While nationalist scholars emphasized the “Korean-ness” even within the field of comparative studies, other scholars tried to search for similarities. Both of these methods have limitations, on which I will briefly elaborate.

Kim T’aejun (1905-1949), the author of the pioneering *Chosŏn sosŏl sa* (History of Korean Fiction), was the first to mention the relationship between premodern Korean and Chinese fiction.¹⁸ Though he did not specifically compare each Korean work with a Chinese counterpart, he referred generally to the relationships between the literatures of these two countries.

Comparative studies began in the late 1950s. Pak Sŏngŭi, for example, compared Korean traditional narratives (*sŏrhwa*, 說話) to Chinese fiction,¹⁹ while Yi Chaesu compared Korean and Chinese fiction more loosely.²⁰ In general, Pak and others discussed the intertextuality of Korean and Chinese fiction in describing place names, style, structure, and characters, pointing out the similarities between them. Although Korean scholars use the term “influence,” I choose the term “intertextuality” since the term “influence” has the connotation of cultural imperialism suggested by Jay Clayton. He writes, “At its worst, discovering parallels between the literature of

two nations was put to the service of a crude cultural imperialism; a work, a movement, or an entire national literature was exalted to the degree that it was able to exert a hegemony over the literature of other countries, so that twentieth-century scholars such as Rene Wellek or Claudio Guillen saw its improper use as a major stumbling block to the field of comparative literature as late as the 1950s.”²¹ In Korea in the 1960s, individual works began to be compared, especially *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin) and *Hong Kiltong chŏn* 洪吉童傳 (Tale of Hong Kiltong). Again, identifying similarities occupied the major part of the discussion. In the late 1960s, short stories of the Ming dynasty (1368-1662) were also studied. Though studies of the relationship between Chinese and Korean literature dominated until the 1970s, Korean scholars eventually began to compare individual works in an attempt to identify the originality of Korean works. In the 1980s, the focus shifted to the translation and adaptation of Chinese works, especially Ming short stories collection such as *Sanyan* (三言) - *Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言 (Illustrious Words to Instruct the World), *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (Comprehensive Words to Admonish the World), *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恒言 (Lasting Words to Awaken the World) and late Qing (1616-1911) fiction. The major debate of this period was whether Korean works were adaptations of Chinese fiction or original creations. However, as scholars such as Sŏ Taesŏk and Sŏng Hyŏnja argue, even adapted works should be considered representative of Korean literature since they reflected the perspectives of Korean writers.

When Korean scholars used the term influence, were they referring to similarities? When discussing intertextuality, we need to know the cultural and social background of writers and their works; in addition, we must also examine how the literary transmission occurred. Before we examine the intertextuality of *Sanguozhi yanyi* 三國志演義 (Romance of the Three

Kingdoms), for example, we should look at the social or cultural background of Korean society in the reception of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* to understand why people in premodern Korea read and enjoyed this work, how they were introduced to the texts, when they were translated, and what were the criteria for excluding or including portions of the text. These issues have been largely neglected in Korean scholarship despite the fact that these factors are central to understanding the reception and adaptation of Chinese literature in Korea.

***Chǒn*: Antecedents of Korean Traditional Fiction**

The development of *chǒn* 傳 (biography, life-writing) from a historically based work to a fictional one can be seen as an antecedent to hero fiction. I will review major classical works in an attempt to trace the development of the *chǒn*, which played a significant role in the development of fictional narratives in premodern Korea. *Chǒn* is a literary form first established in official historiography that resides at the intersection between history and fiction.

Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu writes:

Chinese historiography developed a system of representation that privileged a faithful, straightforward recording and as reproduction of external reality in compliance with the sanctioned, official worldview. In certain respects, historical writings provided the prototypes, plots, themes, and characters used and transformed by ‘fictional’ writings. The study of narrative in the Chinese case sometimes takes the shape of the enumeration and classification of types of historical and quasi-historical discourses.²²

Historical writings played a significant role in the development of fictional writings in Korea as well. When China's renowned historian Sima Qian (135-86 BCE) wrote *Shiji* 史記 (Record of the Grand Historian), he adopted an annal-biography style (紀傳體) instead of the chronological style (編年體). Annal-biography style is an important feature in the rise of fictional narratives. A biographic section is used to elevate a character, rather than a historical event, as the centerpiece of the narrative. Although the Confucian literary tradition held that writers should transmit facts rather than introduce innovations (述而不作, *Analects* 7:1), the writer had to mobilize his imagination in order to depict the lives of people who had died hundreds of years earlier based on limited sources. We can trace a similar development in premodern Korean literature as well. According to Peter H. Lee, "essentially there are two kinds of biography: official and unofficial."²³ He writes:

The official biography may be further classified as either biography that forms a part of official history and is compiled by a court-appointed committee, or biography that forms a part of the collected works of a scholar-official, compiled by his family members, friends, or colleagues....

Unofficial biography – what I call the “prose portrait” – is unofficial because it flouts the prescriptive conventions of the formal prose genres, including the official type of biography just described. The prose portraits are usually preserved in the literary miscellany. The portrait's intent is to demonstrate what a man is like by examining what he does. The writer does not treat his subject in great detail. Rather, he touches such essential manifestations of the subject's personality as his distinctive way of speaking, his personal views, or his idiosyncrasies.

To summarize the characteristics of these two kinds of biography: one emphasizes the similarity of men, while the other emphasizes their diversity. One emphasizes the public life; the other, the private. One attempts to give the subject's career; the other, the moment. Both, however, share a number of features: relative indifference to the subject's external appearance; a lack of markedly contemporary detail; and a dearth of information about the subject's private life. Rhetorically, both types are epideictic in that an anecdote or episode is intended to imply praise or blame, even when there is no explicit moral comment.²⁴

Haedong Kosŭng chŏn 海東高僧傳 (Lives of Eminent Korean Monks), compiled by Kakhun in 1215 under royal command, contains eighteen major and seven minor biographies of eminent monks that cover a period of five hundred years. In writing these biographies, Kakhun focuses on “prenatal wonders, amazing precocity, feats of endurance, wonder-working and miracles – these familiar formulae and patterns are the very stuff from which the compiler worked up his accounts.”²⁵ The cosmos that Kakhun describes, governed by Buddhist Dharma with the figure of Buddha at the center, may not have been a familiar one for ordinary Koreans in terms of space and time. As a way of making this account more familiar, Kakhun used epithets to praise the characters in his stories and patterns in presenting their life. Repetition, then, serves as a method of familiarization. The particularity of *Lives* is that it delineates a single incident which can highlight the accomplishment of the characters instead of portraying whole life of the characters from birth to death.

The problematic aspect of the text, as Lee points out, is that the *Lives* is a “demand biography,” “produced to satisfy the requirements or the predilections of an age, to act as a beast of burden for ends other than the illumination of life,”²⁶ and “yet the ultimate function of the *Lives* is more secular than one is led to believe.”²⁷ The purpose of the *Lives*, in fact, was to emphasize the prosperity of the state and the flourishing of Buddhism. It was a way to reinstate Buddhism as a state religion.

Kim Pusik’s (1074-1151) *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (History of the Three Kingdoms) presents the first example of historical biographies available today. Modeled on the Chinese *Record of the Grand Historian*, and in keeping with the tradition of Confucian writings, Kim Pusik compiled folktales, orally transmitted tales, career accounts (行狀), and epitaphs that were available at the time and retold the biography of each individual as interestingly as possible.

Kim's *History* is characterized by its great emphasis on the unification of the Three Kingdoms, as shown in his allocation of three chapters out of a total of ten to the biography of Kim Yusin (595-673) who led the unification of three kingdoms. Although the conventional structure of *chŏn* consists of an introduction that establishes the lineage and personality of a character, a main part that describes the character's life achievements, and an ending commentary, Kim Pusik generally dispensed with the commentary at the end, with the exception of his treatment of Kim Yusin.

He praises Kim Yusin as the most notable figure in Korean history, a perfect hero. Kim Pusik begins Kim Yusin's biography with the founder of Kim's clan who established the Kaya kingdom. Kim Pusik then connects Kim Yusin's family to Chinese legendary figure Xuanyuan, followed by his portrayal of Kim as a hero in a foundation myth. In this, Kim Yusin is described as having an unusual birth. His father Sŏhyŏn and his mother Manmyŏng had a close relationship even before they married. After Manmyŏng's father found out, he locked her away in a remote location. She was freed by a thunderbolt that hit the house she was trapped in, making a hole that allowed her to escape and follow Sŏhyŏn. They finally married, and after being pregnant for twenty months, Manmyŏng gave birth to Kim Yusin. In the second chapter, Kim Pusik depicts how Kim Yusin was a great general who was not only brave, but also was a great strategist. The third chapter presents his descendants and death. His story is structurally similar to the biographies of the dynastic founders of the Three Kingdoms as told in *History of the Three Kingdoms*.

These accounts follow a general structure that starts with the founders' unusual birth (e.g., unknown paternity), traces their hardships in life, and culminates in the establishment of a state. The narrative typically ends with the founder's death. Hero tales of later periods bear a

similar structure. Following this typography, Kim Yusin had an unusual birth and faced hardships in uniting the Three Kingdoms. Though Kim Yusin did not establish a new state to become a ruler, Kim Pusik treats the unification as an accomplishment equivalent to establishing a new state.

In his *History*, Kim Pusik also included the lives of war heroes, *hwarang* (martial youth),²⁸ remonstrators, Confucian scholars, and commoners. However, another unique characteristic of the *History* is the absence of any biographies of Buddhist monks, reflecting perhaps Kim's personal bias considering flourishing of Buddhism during the Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392).

The source of most of Korea's ancient legends, the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) was compiled by Great Master Iryŏn (1206-1289) in the thirteenth century, possibly begun in the seventh year of King Ch'ungnyŏl's reign (1281). While Kim Pusik starts his work with the founding of the Three Kingdoms, Iryŏn went back further in time to the Tan'gun myth to trace the founding of the ancient state of Korea. This act institutionalized myths into historical text and thus extended the span of Korean history by several thousand years. Locating Korea's origins to such an early period of civilization ensured their superiority to the Mongols, something that was especially needed after the Mongol invasion (1231). This shows how the institutionalization of the Tan'gun myth may have worked in elevating the collective consciousness. Unlike Kim Pusik's work, biographies in *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* attempt to describe a single event or the "moment" of the subject rather than delineate the "subject's career." For example, Iryŏn only briefly outlines Kim Yusin's lineage from his grandfather and introduces Kim's siblings, followed an account of a strange experience of Kim Yusin when he was visited by three spirits to warn him that he was in danger. While Kim Pusik

treats Kim Yusin as a perfect hero and portrays his career from birth to death as a public figure who unifies the Three Kingdoms, Iryŏn treats Kim as a private person and depicts Kim's unusual experience. However, in both cases, we can see strong presence of mythical elements. An additional feature of the *Memorabilia* is the close relationships drawn between human existence, religion, and culture.

Yongbi ŏch'ŏn ka 龍飛御天歌 (Songs of Flying Dragons) was composed in 1445-1447 as the first literary work written in the Korean vernacular. Its one hundred twenty-five cantos celebrate the founding of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1896). The six dragons in the book represent the four ancestors and the first and third kings of Chosŏn. The book's structure follows that of biographies and eulogies of eminent men in classical Chinese literature. Yi Sŏnggye (r. 1392-1398), the founder of Chosŏn, is portrayed as an exemplar of both scholarship and military arts. Yi Pangwŏn (r. 1400-1418), the third king, is also described as a perfect ruler even though he is known to have killed many members of the Koryŏ royal house and his own brothers. His act is portrayed as being justified by the Mandate of Heaven. Commissioned by King Sejong (r. 1418-1450) and composed by scholars in the Academy of Worthies, the *Songs* was written in both Korean vernacular and literary Chinese, and praised the virtues of the dynastic founder and his ancestors. The *Songs* also includes annotations and anecdotal information in literary Chinese.

An experimental literary work using the Korean vernacular script, the *Songs* was written to be accompanied by music as a celebration of the founding of Chosŏn to be performed at court and the royal ancestral shrine. The tone of the book – a prayer of supplication for the longevity and prosperity of the dynasty – is set in the first canto. Techniques such as repetition, cross-references, stock and formulaic phrases, epithets, and parallelism are used to emphasize certain themes or motifs. The book portrays the ideal ruler who should practice Confucian morality with

benevolence and filial piety. Heroes in the *Songs* share similar patterns with those of folktales, hero fictions, and myths.

Biographies were not limited to official genres. *Chapki* 雜記 (literary miscellany), written in literary Chinese, formed one of the unofficial literary genres in premodern Korea that collected random jottings for didactic or entertainment purposes. A notable example of *chapki* is the *Storyteller's Miscellany* by Ŏ Sukkwŏn (fl. 1524-54). In his biographical sketches, Ŏ Sukkwŏn wrote about characters he found interesting, the sheer diversity of which is remarkable. If we look at their social status, it ranges from the highest to the lowest: prince, *yangban*, middle people such as physicians and illegitimate sons, artisans, monks, commoners, servants, female entertainers, diviners, actors, and shamans.

Peter H. Lee refers to biographical entries in the miscellany as “prose portraits” that “reveal a class through an individual’s characteristic actions, each portrait delineating a type dominated by a single vice or virtue... [The writer] is not recounting a person’s life, yet he should be able to reveal what sort of person his subject is.”²⁹ Here is an example that shows depiction of a single event revealing the subject’s personality.

Chŏn Im (?-1509), Magistrate of Seoul, received official preferment after passing a military service examination. He was rude and fierce of character. Once, seeing that horse he rode had boils on its back, he cut into the back of his aged servant, saying, “You did not protect the horse from boils; now feel its pain.” Later, when he was critically ill, he rose and became violent. He stared and bent his bow, yelling angrily, “What ghosts are you that dare to kill me?” He then stomped with rage for a long while.³⁰

Here, by singling out this one incident, we see the secularization of Chŏn Im who is depicted as brazen and fierce. We do not see a sage figure. By presenting him as an ordinary man the reader is meant to feel closer to these characters than remote sacred figures.

The traditional literary form of biography allowed writer Pak Chiwŏn (1737-1805) to express his own thoughts and articulate the central tenets of his belief system. In “Yedŏk sŏnsaeng chŏn” (Story of Mr. Yedŏk [lit. “even virtue can come filth such as human excrement”]), the protagonist, though a lower-class farmer who collects human excrement as fertilizer for his fields, is praised as virtuous. Hard working, living on what he produces, thrifty, and neither vain nor treacherous, Yedŏk is an example of a truly virtuous man. Pak Chiwŏn is subverting the classical biography form to comment on the “virtuous” men of his own age, choosing as his subject not a heroic or eminent figure but a lowly farmer who displays exemplary virtue. Pak Chiwŏn also criticizes the rigid Confucian moral code regarding women. In “Yŏllyŏ Hamyang Pakssi chŏn” (Life of Lady Pak of Hamyang, a Faithful Wife), the author criticizes a society that drives Lady Pak to kill herself after her husband’s death.

In one of Pak Chiwŏn’s more famous satirical tales, “Hŏsaeng chŏn” (Story of Master Hŏ), he satirizes the literati class by having Hŏ monopolize the market for items essential to their ceremonial rituals. Hŏ takes money from the rich and distributes it among the poor, thereby seeking to correct the unequal distribution of wealth. Hŏ addresses the importance of international trade and criticizes the current state of government. Through Hŏ’s dialogue and action, Pak Chiwŏn emphasizes how literati can be more useful in practical ways than just reading books to prepare for the civil service examinations. This theme is expanded in “Yangban chŏn” (Story of the Scholar-Official), in which a debt-ridden *yangban* agrees to sell his official status to a wealthy merchant to avoid jail time. The merchant who has everything but elite social

status is eager to buy *yangban* status but decides not to go through with it after realizing how many social prescriptions he would have to follow. Through his descriptions of what *yangban* were supposed to do, Pak Chiwŏn delineates rigid ritual propriety to which *yangban* was bound. Through the description of what *yangban* was allowed to do, Pak Chiwŏn also criticizes *yangban*'s abuse of privilege and power. In his writings, Pak Chiwŏn thus criticizes society, especially the flaw of Chosŏn's society to live up to the values of Confucianism, and uses satire to drive home his message. Pak Chiwŏn's writing requires a high degree of education to be fully understood and the manner of delivery heightens the power of the message.

In examining the development of *chŏn* (biography) in premodern Korean literature, we should revisit Lu's argument on the traditional Chinese narrative. Lu maintains that "the difference between history and fiction was, to a large extent, between canonical and non-canonical texts, between officially sanctioned discourse and non-official discourse, between orthodoxy and heterodoxy."³¹ If Lu is right, we can see the premodern Korean fiction change from historicity to fictionality through development of *chŏn*. *Lives of Eminent Korean Monks*, *History of the Three Kingdoms*, *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*, and *Songs of Flying Dragons* are canonical texts that reinforce state orthodoxy. In biographies of *History of the Three Kingdoms*, Kim Pusik favored Confucian ideology, while Iryŏn and Kakhun emphasized the importance of Buddhism; in the Koryŏ period, both Confucian and Buddhist ideology were supported by the government. During the Chosŏn dynasty, the consideration of Neo-Confucianism as the state orthodoxy is found in *Songs of Flying Dragons*. It represents an officially sanctioned discourse whose purpose was to legitimize the royal house by representing General Yi Sŏnggye as a perfect hero.³²

Literary miscellany, an example of a non-official genre in the late Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods, included biographies. The authors of the miscellany chose to focus on contemporary figures rather than those of the past, and also focused on storytelling as entertainment. However, the underlying ideology in Ŏ Sukkwŏn's *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany* was still tied to the state orthodoxy of Neo-Confucianism. In contrast, Pak Chiwŏn's satirical tales revealed the thoughts of an author who criticized those who practiced it.

Confucianism, the Dominant Ideology

The development of Confucian thought during the Chosŏn period is central to the discussion of dominant ideology, and its influence over various literary genres in the Chosŏn period.

After the Mongol invasions (occurring periodically from 1231 to 1256), the relationship with Yuan Dynasty grew, not only among the Koryŏ royal family, but also among officials and scholars who visited Dadu (the capital of Yuan). At that time, the Yuan government adopted Confucian ideology as the basis of their statecraft. The Chinese scholar, Xu Heng was invited to the Yuan court. Xu Heng brought Zhu Xi's commentaries on Four Books and used them as texts which sparked the spread of Zhu Xi Learning in the Yuan period. The Koryŏ scholar, An Hyang (1243-1306) who had also visited China brought Zhu Xi Learning to Korea, marking the gradual rise in popularity of Zhu Xi Learning among scholars. 100 years later, scholars such as Yi Saek (1328-1396), Chŏng Mongju (1337-1392) and Kil Chae (1353-1419) led Zhu Xi Learning, criticized Buddhism and viewed studying Confucian classics to be more important than belles-lettres. They even suggested that the king use Confucian statecraft to govern. They changed rites and clothing that were a combination of Buddhist and Mongolian styles to fit in accordance with

Rites of Zhou.³³ They also tried to establish a new relationship with Ming China rather than the Yuan and wanted to rehabilitate Confucian statecraft, morality, scholarship and ideas to a time before the military rule in Koryŏ (1170-1270). The revival of Confucian Academy (Sŏnggyungwan) was a significant turning point where the revitalization of the education system marked the revival of Confucianism.

It is widely known that some of these scholars such as Chŏng Tojŏn (1342-1398), Kwŏn Kŭn (1352-1409) (also known as Neo-Confucianists) participated in establishing the Chosŏn dynasty. However, John B. Duncan suggests that reform was “actually laid out by Cho Chun (1346 – 1405), who submitted two major memorialsjŏn who basically formulated Chosŏn’s social policie in the summer of 1388.”³⁴ These scholars heavily relied on *The Rites of Zhou* believing that rites as devices for ordering society and the government structure were significant. They also canonized Confucian texts for the civil service examination, and returned privilege and pride to elites through their access to Neo-Confucianism (Zhu Xi Learning). As Martina Deuchler pointed out, *ru* (儒) signified more than just “learned scholars”. In a broader sense, they were professionals who were indispensable functionaries of state and society because of their moral endowment, learning, and skills. A key role in the transformation from Koryŏ to Chosŏn, was the importance accorded to rites and rituals. Deuchler argues, “Men’s human properties not only could be guided but also profoundly changed. Such an environment could be achieved only through legislation that took the vagaries of human nature into account, that is, through Confucian legislation.”³⁵ This process gradually trickled down to commoners and made Chosŏn society patrilineal, which Deuchler sees as one of the major traits in the transformation from Koryŏ to late Chosŏn society. However, we found much more complexity of Chosŏn Confucian learning as Duncan pointed out.³⁶ He further wrote, “It [Confucian learning] must be

understood as a commingling (rooted in the social nature of the early Chosŏn ruling class) of the new Cheng-Zhu Learning with older, but still vital, traditions of Tang belletrism and northern Song Ancient Style learning.”³⁷

In early Chosŏn, meritorious elites (*hun'gu*) dominated the political realm especially after King Sejo's usurpation in 1455. It weakened the power of the king which the king tried to reclaim through the help of rising Neo-Confucian literati (also known as *tohak* [Learning of the Way] scholars or *sarim*) who resided in the provinces and devoted themselves to studying. However, Korean scholar, Chŏng Tuhŭi rebuffed this idea that the *sarim* were from the same social background as the meritorious elites.³⁸ Once the meritorious elites felt threatened by rising Neo-Confucian literati, they started to strike back against them, leading to major four literati purges in 1498, 1504, 1519 and 1545. It was more like one group of literati purged its political opponent. The resulting power struggles led to a lengthy period of factionalism in Korean history and was primarily due to the limited number of official positions. After a fight between two officials over a key official position, two groups formed: Easterners and Westerners. Even metaphysical arguments over whether *ri* (principle) and *ki* (material force) were unitary or separate became a divisive issue among scholars. In the process, these scholars deepened the ideology of Zhu Xi Learning, of whom Yi Hwang (1501-1570) and Yi I (1536-1584) were the leaders.

After the Imjin War and Manchu Invasion (1636), scholars looked to explain the causes behind these disasters, and they tried to reorganize the state. In order to do that, they emphasized the importance of rites and order. Scholars such as Song Siyŏl (1607-1689) and Kim Changsaeng (1548-1631) showed great interest in Learning of Rites, and Kim actually wrote commentary on *Family Rites of Zhuzi*. When King Hyojong died, there was great disagreement between Westerners and Southerners on the length of the mourning period for the queen dowager.

Westerners insisted that the mourning period should be limited to one year based on *Family Rites of Zhuzi* since the king was the second son. According to *Family Rites of Zhuzi*, parents mourn for three years if the first son died and one year for rest of children. Furthermore, they also pointed out that the relationship between the King Hyojong and the queen dowager should be understood as mother and son relationship rather than the king and a subject relationship. However, Southerners argued that King Hyojong should be considered as first son since he succeeded the throne after his father, King Injo's death. Therefore the mourning period should be three years according to the *National Law Code* (Kyōngguk Taejōn). Called the Rites Controversy of 1659 (*yesong*), the same dispute reoccurred in 1674 when King Hyojong's widow, Queen Insōn died. The dispute between two political parties eventually led to political purges, and was at the root of the factional divide between Westerners (*sōin*) and Southerners (*namin*) in the late Chosōn.

Literary Tradition

It would be important to look at the literary tradition of Chosōn before the discussion of hero fiction. It will provide conventional themes, literary genre, writing style and thoughts in writing literary works. A popular theme of classical poetry celebrates self-imposed seclusion or exile due to political chaos and factional struggle. According to Confucian teaching, a nobleman - should retreat when the time is not proper to serve. For this reason, some literati lived as unemployed eremites without participating in officialdom. Some literati were exiled from the capital due to power struggles in the central bureaucracy. Whether they were exiled or lived as eremites, they were isolated from the center, and the theme of isolation emerges often in poetry.

The means of writing in the Chosŏn period were literary Chinese, *idu*,³⁹ *kugyŏl*⁴⁰ and the native Korean script, *hangŭl*. Although it was extremely difficult to write in classical Chinese, most of scholars considered classical Chinese more privileged. Chosŏn elites continued to use classical Chinese for civil service examination, any official writings and private literary collections. Furthermore, local clerks continued to use *idu* and *kugyŏl* indicating Korean particles and suffixes even though *hangŭl* should have been much easier to use indicating particles and suffixes. For that reason, the Korean script was seen as a vulgar writing system for use only by women and commoners. Poetry was the most prestigious of any genre of literature, and so poetry written in classical Chinese embodied the pinnacle of Chosŏn literature. However, starting from the mid-Chosŏn period, literati begin writing poetry in Korean script and it begins to be seen as high culture.

Two major components of classical poetry were memorization and allusion. Poetry initially had to rhyme for easier memorization. Writing poetry was important part of the civil service examination and a medium of social engagement for literati. Spontaneous response was important in writing poetry, and memorization and allusion helped in vocabulary and ‘guiding impulse of poetic creation’ respectively. Allusion, as accepted referent, was also used for the quotation.

Chŏng Ch’ŏl (1536-1593) belonged to the Westerner political faction, served as an official, and later was sent into exile. His *kasa*⁴¹ were highly praised by contemporary literati and he was renowned as the best *kasa* writer of his time. Chŏng drew from native traditional and allegorical poems in the style of “Encountering Sorrow” and “The Nine Declaration,” using a woman’s voice who misses her lover in his *kasa* writings to signify his loyalty to the king. In writing *sijo*,⁴² he used more common words, phrases, and colloquial expressions. Many of his

sijo dealt with his resentment at being isolated from officialdom. He uses Old Man of the South Pole and the crane allegorically to express his longing to serve his king.

Pak Illo (1561-1642)'s career is unknown before joining the army to defeat the Japanese during the Japanese invasion. We do not know what kind of education he received in his childhood; however, he dedicated his *kasa* and *sijo* to Confucian teachings. He emphasized the importance of the classic 'five relations,'⁴³ among which he deems filial piety the most valued. He emphasizes his respect for his teachers such as Yi Tökhöng (1561-1613), and demonstrates his loyalty to the king. The Japanese Invasion was one of his major literary motifs. He wrote the *kasa*, "Song of Peace" to encourage soldiers in the battlefield. He also depicted harsh life of peasants, but also praised their poor but honest life. In general, we can witness the strong sense of didacticism, and his language is—following Confucian historiographic convention—dark, and damning. Pak followed the Way of Nature by living in Daoist fashion, but his philosophy was exclusively Confucian.

Yun Söndo (1587-1671) was a Southerner, another sub-faction of more moderate Easterners. Like the others, his political career was not smooth and though he lived in exile for fourteen years, his righteousness was often compared with Bo Yi and Qu Yuan. Yun was considered the most accomplished poet to write in the *sijo* form because of the diversity of moods conveyed and techniques used, as well as his peerless lyricism. Graceful, delicately varied rhythms came naturally to him, and in every poem he exhibited new techniques and tone. Yet his innovativeness was so subtle that it is noticeable only after repeated close readings. Yun's favorite motif is his relationship with nature. In "Angler's Songs", Yun used vernacular Korean beautifully with native rhythms. It is unclear when the tradition of fisherman's songs began but it became popular during the Koryö dynasty. Several scholars wrote fisherman's songs in this

tradition to describe leisure life but Yun's writings were considered the greatest. His poetry manages to presents nature's mysteries, beauty, and bounty in terms of illusory loveliness, actual loveliness, and finally the physical sustenance reaped by those who fish. Being close nature was one of Yun's favorite leisure activities while in seclusion. Why engage in this relatively extended discussion of *kasa* and *sijo* and their writers? Would it not suffice simply to note that *kasa* and *sijo* were the most respected forms in the early and mid-Chosŏn?

After the two invasions, the Chosŏn literati turned to examine internal social problems, as evidenced by self-criticism in literature. This is the point when *sasŏl sijo* (a longer *sijo* form), a form favored by so called Practical Learning scholars, flourished and it was also adopted by commoners (*sŏmin*). The themes of *sasŏl sijo* are similar to *sijo*: rural life, Confucian didactics, loyalty and love, social satire. However, a key difference was that it was a form popular amongst 'p'yŏngmin (commoner) *kagaek* (singers).'

The authorship of *kasa* also extended to *chungin* (middle people)⁴⁴, commoners and women as well. The major sub-themes of early Chosŏn (before the two wars) *kasa* were seclusion, exile, *tohak* (Learning of the Way) and travel.

Seclusion *kasa* is about idle country life by literati who resigned their official post in the capital to return to their home regions and enjoy living closer to nature. Ever since Tao Qian (365-427)'s "Returning to Dwell in Gardens and Fields", literati had a tendency to glorify the act of becoming a hermit and enjoying nature rather than staying in corrupted officialdom. After returning home, they wrote poems about rural life, a tradition which continued even in Chosŏn. Chinese poems about 'returning home' or seclusion, rarely depict a joyful or a pleasurable existence but rather dwell on their loneliness and frustrations from being forgotten. Although

those poems depicted leisure life in exile, Chinese poems contain more bitterness while writers of seclusion *kasa* in Chosŏn express great enjoyment to be back in their home regions.

Most of the exile *kasa* were written by scholars in exile for political reasons. In most cases, the exiled literati were located in unfamiliar and remote places to living a harsh existence. Even as they express their loyalty to their king, their resentment comes through strongly in these *kasa*. One of the best examples is Chŏng Ch'öl's "Hymn of Constancy".

Yi Sangbo states that Yi Hwang, Cho Sik (1501-1572) and Yi I wrote *kasa* (also known as *tohak kasa*) in vernacular Korean in order to delineate the importance of learning the Way.⁴⁵ *Tohak* translates as "learning of the Way". However, literary historian Cho Tongil challenges that these *kasa* were actually written by Zhu Xi learning scholars such as Yi Hwang, Cho Sik and Yi I based on their intellectually loose and slipshod style. Cho suggests that these might have been written by other scholars, but were attributed to them since they were the most prominent scholars in Chosŏn.⁴⁶

Travel *kasa* were written in a descriptive-style while the writers (in most cases, literati) traveled around. One of the main ideas explored through 'travel accounts' is self-representation vis-à-vis the relationship between nature and self. Writers also describe the exceptional beauty of the scenery in travel *kasa*, a theme, a theme also prevalent in seclusion *kasa* as well.

The tradition of writing *kasa* continued in the late Chosŏn (after the two foreign invasions), and the major themes appeared throughout this period. Due to factionalism and literati purges, more literati were exiled, or left officialdom to return to the provinces which resulted in their writing exile and seclusion *kasa*. An increasing number of *tohak kasa* were written as a call to restore the social order disrupted by war. In case of the travel *kasa*, it was not only the literati who traveled, but merchants and commoners also made trips for business or

other purposes. These social phenomena helped to popularize *kasa* in the form of travel guides that described the routes and scenery of Chosŏn's eight provinces.

War *kasa* was one of the sub-categories that emerged in late Chosŏn. It depicted battle scenes and the sufferings of people in the war. *Kyubang* (inner chamber) *kasa* was another sub-category. Although it was not necessarily written by women, many of these *kasa* were indeed written by women for women. They dealt with topics such as instructing daughters, female resentments, festivals and even traveling. It is interesting to see that women also wrote travel *kasa* considering that women rarely traveled in the late Chosŏn period. Like *sijo*, commoners participated in writing *kasa*, and *kasa* expanded to cover the daily life of peasants and the urban life of Seoul.

Writing poetry in Korea in classical Chinese was a marker of one's knowledge, education, and aesthetic or moral discipline. Kings, high officials, Buddhist monks, scholars, commoners, female entertainers and yangban women all wrote poetry to express their interiority. The themes found in Eastern paintings were also found in poetry with language as the medium instead of ink. However, some prominent Confucian scholars did not view poetry in classical Chinese as a venue for expressing thoughts on Confucianism, rather they believed poetry should be in the style of Tang belles-lettres. Furthermore, literati also wrote poetry using vernacular Korean, writing system that was used for women and commoners. Those literati believed that native language is best way to express one's emotions. However, when it came to write prose, it was a different story. While poetry in vernacular Korean was considered as high culture among elites, writing hero fiction in Korean was considered as low culture of that time. To this point, we have a rather lengthy review of various literary genres to show literary tradition among elites. Writing poetry indicated long tradition of elite culture in Chosŏn, and it was a representative

activity of elite culture of that time. To compare with hero fiction that is a product of popular culture, it is necessary to have a glimpse of elite culture.

The Structure of Hero Fiction

Hero fiction in premodern Korea adopted the structure used for *chŏn* or biographies. Korean scholars used the term, “*kundam sosŏl*” 軍談小說 (military fiction), “*yŏksa sosŏl*” 歷史小說 (historical fiction), or “*yŏngung sosŏl*” 英雄小說 (hero fiction) to describe premodern genres related to heroic behaviors. “Military fiction” is the prose fiction focused on military activity such as the *Imjin nok* 壬辰錄 (*The Record of the Black Dragon Year*), *Pakssi chŏn* 朴氏傳 (Tale of Lady Pak) and *Ongnu mong* 玉樓夢 (Dreams of the Jade Tower). However, some of these works overlap with “historical fiction” and “hero fiction.” Kim Kihyŏn defines “hero fiction” as “a fiction in which an author chooses a certain historical character or event to create a new fictional world, adding elements from his own imagination. It is not important whether the story is historical; what we need to focus on is the author’s historical consciousness and the literary value of the work.”⁴⁷ Historical fiction based on historical characters includes “Chŏn Uch’i chŏn” (Tale of Chŏn Uch’i), “Ch’oe Koun chŏn” (Tale of Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn), “Im changgun chŏn” (Tale of Im Kyŏngŏp), and the like. Historical fiction based on historical events include *The Record of the Black Dragon Year*, “Tale of Lady Pak,” and “Tale of Ch’oe Ch’ŏk.”

Works such as *The Record of the Black Dragon Year* and “Tale of Lady Pak” are categorized as both historical and military fiction. “Tale of Chŏn Uch’i,” “Tale of Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn” and “Tale of Im Kyŏngŏp” are also considered hero fiction. Then, how should we define hero fiction? It is clear that it should represent tales about heroes. I will use the examples

of two hero tales, *Tale of Cho Ung*, and *Tale of Yu Ch'ungnyöl* to discuss how these two protagonists (Cho Ung and Yu Ch'ungnyöl) in their fight for the state or for social justice may be representative of the hero.

Cho Tongil proposes that hero fiction developed from folktales and therefore shares the same structure:

1. A hero comes from an illustrious lineage such as an aristocratic family.
2. Pregnancy or birth is unusual
3. He/she has extraordinary talents.
4. He/she is abandoned in childhood. He/she even faces the threat of death.
5. He/she is saved by foster parents or helpers.
6. He/she faces more threats as he/she become an adult.
7. He/she overcomes these threats and becomes a hero/heroine.⁴⁸

On the other hand, Kim Yölgü believes that hero fiction developed from foundation myths sharing the same structure. Kim suggests the following structure:

1. Even though a hero has a noble lineage, there is an obstacle to pregnancy.
2. The birth of a hero is prophesied in a dream.
3. He is abandoned or hidden in a remote place.
4. Either low class people or animals nurture him.
5. He returns to his hometown or exacts revenge.
6. He establishes a new state.

7. The story ends with the unusual death of the hero.⁴⁹

Yi Sangt'aek proposes this structure for hero fiction:

1. Life in a heavenly world.
2. Descent to the human world.
3. Hardship and suffering in the human world.
4. Earns fame and wealth in the human world.
5. Returns to a heavenly world.⁵⁰

This structure is more simplified than the previous two. However, not all the heroes are from a heavenly world and return to a heavenly world. The pregnancy and birth of Cho Ung, for example, have nothing unusual about them except that he is born posthumously after his father dies. Nothing indicates he is other-worldly unlike Yu Ch'ungnyöl.

Sō Taesök's suggestion on the structure of hero fiction is interesting.⁵¹ He sees strong parallels with the structure of a religious ritual. First, parents of hero/heroine are usually childless even at age forty, and have to resort to praying to deities for a child. Sō sees this prayer akin to the ritual asking a deity to descend to the human world. Second, the heavenly status of a hero/heroine is learned by the parents in a dream. This also explains why a hero/heroine descends to the human world. Third, when a hero/heroine is born, he/she is usually surrounded by five colored clouds and a mysterious atmosphere. Fourth, a hero/heroine always fights for good against evil, as can be seen in the ritual when an officiator reads the Buddhist scriptures (or any sacred books) about a deity that leads a divine army to fight evil. Fifth, a hero/heroine

usually meets an unusual death. He/she knows has foreknowledge of his/her death and usually dies peacefully as if falling asleep. Sō sees this unusual death as an indication of ascent to the heavenly world. Sō's reading of the structure of hero fiction interprets the descent of the hero/heroine as a fulfillment of human prayers granted by the Heavenly God. However, the descent of a hero/heroine could also be seen as a type of exile because of his/her misconducts in the heavenly world.

The above structure can be simplified as the structure of the descent of hero/heroine – life in the human world – and ascent. However, it is not necessary that ascent and descent should be from or to heaven. In hero fiction, we also see themes of ascent and descent in terms of mental struggle.

In explaining the themes of descent and ascent in the structure of romantic literature, Frye states that “The general theme of descent was that of a growing confusion of identity and of restriction on action,”⁵² and the ascent theme as “returning to its original awareness.”⁵³ We can see these ascent/descent themes in some of our hero tales. Cho Ung also experiences mental descent and ascent. Although Cho Ung was born posthumously as a son of a high official, he had a loving mother and was favored by the emperor. However, the enemy that had poisoned Cho Ung's father to death, tried to kill Ung and his mother forcing Cho Ung to flee with his mother and conceal his identity. After avenging his father, he reclaims his true identity.

In general, the hero tales we have discussed present a distinctive dualistic image of the world: good and evil, loyal and treacherous subjects, and the heavenly world and human world. Frye describes the dualism of good and evil:

Heroes and villains exist primarily to symbolize a contrast between two worlds, one above the level of ordinary experience, the other below it. There is, first, a

world associated with happiness, security, and peace; the emphasis is often thrown on childhood or on an “innocent” or pre-genital period of youth, and the images are those of spring and summer, flowers and sunshine. I will call this idyllic world. The other is a world of exciting adventure, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation, pain, and the threat of more pain. I will call this world the demonic or night world.⁵⁴

We can see that the “idyllic world” describes the environment before descending to the human world and after ascending to heaven, while the “night world” can be seen after their descent.

Whether hero fiction develops out of myth or ritual, we see a secularization of the narratives. A characteristic of myth and ritual is that it emphasizes the sacred nature of the hero or heroine, but in hero fiction of traditional Korea, as in the case of Cho Ung, the hero is not sacred. However, if we look at the characters in hero fiction, they appear one-dimensional and fall into two types representing either good or evil. Heroes usually have distinguished lineages and are also extraordinary human beings who save the world often by restoring the hierarchy of Confucian order. Heroines are also from distinguished families and boast exceptional physical beauty and talents.

Korean hero fiction has a long tradition that began with the adoption of the biographical trope of dynastic foundation myths. Thus, before Chinese hero fiction was introduced to Korea, Korean readers were already familiar with hero tales. An author of hero fiction had to use the familiar pattern to engage readers. With established motifs in hero fiction, using the familiar pattern was a way of satisfying readers and earning popularity. Kim Chinyŏng offers twenty-seven major motifs.⁵⁵

1. Persecution by villains: Villains persecute the protagonist and his/her family forcing the separation of the family scatter.
2. Foreign invasion: Due to the foreign invasion, the protagonist and his/her family experience separation.
3. Parental death from illness: The sudden death of his/her parents destroys the protagonist's family.
4. Encountering bandits on a river: When the protagonist and his/her mother run away from villains or foreign invaders, they often encounter bandits on the river which causes their separation from their mother. Usually, the protagonists are thrown into the river, and the mother kidnapped by the bandit.
5. Marriage with a daughter/son of an ally: When the protagonist is in danger, he/she is rescued by a person who turns out to be a friend of his/her father. Later, the protagonist marries the ally's daughter/son.
6. Torment of in-laws: This occurs when the protagonist is male. Usually, the mother of his future wife torments the protagonist, or the stepmother of the future wife torments both the protagonist and his fiancée.
7. Forced marriage: Usually the villain or his son forces the female protagonist to marry the villain's son. However, this marriage does not succeed.
8. Leaving home in man's clothing: Either to escape from a forced marriage or a villain's persecution, the female leaves home disguised in man's clothing.
9. Living in seclusion: The female protagonist lives in a secluded place and encounters a helper after she leaves home.

10. Practicing martial arts in seclusion: The protagonist encounters a hermit who knows martial arts and studies from him while living in seclusion.
11. *Chuanqi* (傳奇) style romance: The romance develops in *chuanqi*⁵⁶ style.
12. Forming a relationship in women's clothing: The male protagonist disguises himself as a woman to evaluate the appearance and character of a female protagonist in secret.
13. Plots of treason by a villain: The villain plots treason against his own state causing war.
14. Plots of treason by the emperor's immediate family and relatives: The emperor's immediate family, such as his brother or uncle plots treason and fights against the protagonist.
15. Assassination: The villain dispatches an assassin to kill the protagonist, especially if the protagonist exhibits exceptional power when they are engaged in war.
16. Secluding the crown prince: A villain secludes the crown prince to control state affairs.
17. Alliance with former subjects: In order to fight against the villain, the protagonist often forms an alliance with former subjects who used to serve the former emperor.
18. Encountering the father on a deserted island: The protagonist encounters his/her father who is exiled to a deserted island.
19. Quelling the chaotic war in the Dragon Palace: The protagonist is called by the Dragon King to quell war.
20. Struggle for state foundation: It is about a struggle to establish a new state.
21. Conflicts between a wife and concubine: It is about a conflict between wives, or a wife and concubine, especially when the male protagonist is away at war.
22. Ritual by the river: Usually the protagonist believes that his/her parents have drowned in the river so he/she worships them by the river.

23. Selected as an imperial son-in-law: The protagonist is selected as a son-in-law of the emperor after he succeeds in war.
24. Explaining a male disguise: The female protagonist explains to the emperor why she has to be in man's clothing.
25. Revenge: The protagonist takes revenge against the villain who causes his/her separation.
26. Punishing the beloved concubine of a husband: When the female protagonist tries to exhibit her superiority over her husband, she often punishes her husband's beloved concubine.
27. Revival of the dead: Deceased parents or the emperor are revived using magical medicine.

Frye argues that fiction can be classified into five modes depending on the hero's power of action. Among these five classifications, traditional Korean hero fiction can be categorized within Frye's "romance" and "high mimetic" modes: "If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvelous but who is himself identified as a human being."⁵⁷ That is, if hero is superior to other men and to his environment, then he can be said to belong to a "romance mode." However, if hero is superior to other men but not to his environment, then he belongs to a "high mimetic mode." The majority of heroes discussed in this dissertation can be said to fall into this mode. He writes:

If (hero is) superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, the hero is a leader. He has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature. This is the hero of *high mimetic* mode.⁵⁸

Some heroes in Korean fiction overcome their environment, but some failed. In dealing with the given environments, the hero's reaction to it can be categorized as a special characteristic of that hero. Peter Lee also suggests that we should use term 'higher narratives' to refer to premodern Korean literature if it deals with 'characters taken to be greater stature than ourselves and above the horizon of literary realism.'⁵⁹ According to Lee, the term 'higher narrative' is more suitable since "the conventional terms of European derivation – such as epic, romance, and novel – carry connotations and expectations irrelevant to East Asian literary texts."⁶⁰ Hero fictions that will be examined in this dissertation fall into category of 'higher narratives' since it deals with heroes/heroines who are of greater stature than ordinary people.

Premodern literature can be divided into two groups: orally transmitted literature and written literature. Within orally transmitted literature are myths, legends, folktales (*mindam*), folk songs (*minyo*), shamanistic songs (*muga*), *p'ansori* and folk drama (*minsokkŭk*). Hero tales are often found in myths, legends and shamanistic songs. For example, we see a hero establishing a state in the founding myths of Tan'gun and Chumong. On the other hand, legends have their own local peculiarities depending on region. Some examples are "Ch'ŏnjisu" (Water in Ch'ŏnji)⁶¹ and "Samt'aesŏng" (Three Big Stars).⁶² The heroes in these two particular tales sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others eventually resulting in their worship as heroes by local people. The legend of "Agi changsu" (Infant general) that is found in various regions tells the story of a newborn baby that is killed by his parents because of his extraordinary skills for fear that his skills would turn him into a traitor.⁶³ This legend represents a hero who fails to succeed. Local people believed heroes in shamanistic songs had the ability to grant prayers.

Written literature is composed of official and private writings. From the biographies in *Samguk sagi* (History of the Three Kingdoms), *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), *Koryŏ sa* (History of Koryŏ), meritorious epitaphs, and local heroes in *Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* (Augmented Survey of the Geography of Korea), we gain an understanding of the social role models promoted by the ruling class where the emphasis is generally placed on Confucian morality, especially loyalty (忠) and filial piety (孝).

Private writings include travel writing, letters, poetry, random jottings, miscellany, personal accounts and epitaphs that are found in personal literary collections. Here we see individual perspectives on what heroes should be like or who should be recognized as heroes. One example is a poem by Im Ŏngnyŏng (1496-1568) titled “Song taejanggun ka” (Song for General Song) to commemorate Song Ching (ca. 1271). When Im was appointed as a magistrate of Kangjin, he noticed a small shrine dedicated to General Song at which local people worshipped. It was believed that Song Ching was involved in revolt of *Sampyŏlch’o* (Three Elite Patrol). When the Three Elite Patrol retreated to Chindo, Song Ching arrived at Wando and stayed there for a year before moving to Cheju island during which time he treated the Wando people well, attacked government vessels, seized grains and redistributed them to the people. Although the title ‘general’ was not formally bestowed by the government, people called him a general and treated him as a deity after he left Wando. Im Ŏngnyŏng revived his story with his brush and emphasized that a historian should collect orally transmitted tales in order to better record biographies.⁶⁴ Im turned Song Ching into a Robin Hood-esque folk hero who robbed the corrupted officials to feed the poor peasants.

In another example, Hong Yangho (1724-1802) wrote *Haedong myŏngjang chŏn* (Prominent generals of Korea) that gave an account of 46 generals of Korea from the Three

Kingdoms era up to his time. These generals saved the state during the Imjin War and Manchu invasion. Hong Yangho also emphasized the importance of both *mun* (literacy) and *mu* (military skill) in governing and protecting the state. Hong Yangho's heroes were thus saviors with great military abilities.

By late Chosŏn, as hero fiction developed, the concept of a hero came to embody all of the following elements: origins in unusual birth; abandoned or separated from parents; self-sacrifice for others; savior with great military abilities. Although the transmission of Chinese fiction played a significant role in the development of hero fiction in Korea, different concepts of hero in Korea and China clearly emerge. Despite the great popularity and wide readership of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in the late Chosŏn, we rarely see Korean counterparts to the figures of Zhuge Liang, an adviser to the king, or Guan Yu, a general with absolute martial skills and loyalty to the king within Chinese hero fiction although there was religious practice of Guan Yu worship which will be discussed in chapter 3 along with *Imjin nok*. Different concepts of hero can be seen as a unique aspect of Korean culture.

In chapter 1, I will discuss the production, distribution, and consumption of hero fiction. I will examine some literary collections of individuals who wrote commentaries on hero fiction to give an understanding of hero fiction among the ruling class. Readership will be examined to determine the leading figures in popular culture of that time.

In chapter 2, *Dreams of Nine Clouds (DNC)* will be examined. It was written by Kim Manjung who was at the center of power of his time. Interestingly, there is on-going debate whether one should understand *DNC* as a literati fiction (*sadaebu sosŏl*) or women fiction (*yosŏng sosŏl*). I will examine to see if an elite who was at the center of political was willing to write a hero fiction of women readership.

In chapter 3, I will examine the *Record of Black Dragon Year*. It is most widely read hero fiction in the late Chosŏn period that depicts the Imjin War from popular perspectives. More than 50 different versions of the story exist suggesting that there are multiple tales about the Imjin War from that time. By examining the *Record of Black Dragon Year*, we can get an understanding of how the general populace remembered the Imjin War compared to the ruling class and government officials.

In the last chapter, I will discuss the *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl*, a story about a woman who disguised herself as a man to take the civil service examination and revenge her parents. She exhibits her exceptional literary and military ability, and eventually, becomes a general who saves the country from invaders. This story, gives us a glimpse of women's desire to be part of the outside world.

Through the investigation of these four major works of fiction from popular culture, I will discuss whether they represent a counter culture of that period in opposition to the dominant elite culture.

Chapter 1: Participation in Popular Fiction in the Late Chosŏn

Munch'e panjong (文體反正)⁶⁵

King Chŏngjo (r. 1776-1800) criticized literati writing styles saying, “Recently, the trend in literati writing styles has worsened such that it has become vulgar. Everyone emulates the informal essay (*sop'um*) style even in compositions for civil service examinations, so that the meaning of the Classics which should not be omitted become useless things. Content has become thin, and though there is technique, it does not contain teachings of the ancients. It is impetuous and frivolous. It does not look like sentences of our world.”⁶⁶

The informal essay was the favored writing style of literati of the late Ming and the early Qing, most of who belonged to the Gongan School.⁶⁷ King Chŏngjo disapproved of the ideas of the Gongan School, and even banned any import of books of the Gongan School or books that used the Qing informal essay style. In 1792, the king ordered officials using the informal essay style to submit an essay on their wrongdoings using the ancient style (*komun*). One Sŏnggyun'gwan student, Yi Ok (1760-1815), used the informal essay style when he took the civil service examination which prevented him from passing the official exams. He was forever barred from entering officialdom.⁶⁸ This incident is known as “Returning the Writing Style to the Correct Way” (*munch'e panjŏng*).

Korean scholars have interpreted this incident from various perspectives. For instance, Pak Kyunsŏp interprets this incident as King Chŏngjo's effort to track down and control heterodoxy against the Neo-Confucian order.⁶⁹

Yun Chaemin sees it as political gesture by King Chǒngjo. Yun suggests that it was a reactionary move against the dominant political party, the Old Doctrine. In 1791, there was a debate about the harmful effect of Western Learning (Catholicism). The king said in its defense, “If you want to ban Western Learning, then you should ban miscellany/fiction (*p’yegwan chapki*) first. And if you want to ban miscellany/fiction, you should ban literary collections of the late Ming and the early Qing.”⁷⁰ Around this time, many of the literati involved in Western Learning were Southerners, the political party that the king was closer to. On the other hand, most of the literati who used the informal essay style were Old Doctrine members. Hence, Yun suggests that the king’s decision of *munch’e panjǒng* was politically motivated and was intended to protect Southerners from Old Doctrine.⁷¹

Kang Myǒnggwan has different view. He does not believe it was a political dispute and states, “It was not because of internal reasons swaying on factionalism. It was a suppression of thoughts to blockade the intrusion of heterodoxy caused by imported books from Liulichang in Beijing in 18th century.”⁷² Kang argues that *munch’e pangjǒng* was simply King Chǒngjo’s choice in order to censor certain thoughts, especially what he thought was the heterodox ideology of the Gongnan School from the Qing. How the *munch’e panjǒng* is interpreted might be significant to understanding the relationship between politics and thoughts in that period. However, what others have ignored regarding this incident and what I would like to highlight is the king’s suggested ban on miscellany/fiction, which suggests that many people were reading fiction at that time. It has been documented that the king once caught Yi Sanghwang (1763-1841) reading

fiction while on duty and subsequently removed him from his official position.⁷³ It is no doubt that reading fiction had spread widely during this period.

According to John Storey, popular culture can be defined in five different ways.⁷⁴ First, “popular culture is simply culture that is widely favored or well liked by many people.” Second, “it is the culture that is left over after we have decided what is high culture.” Third, “it is a commercial culture. It is a mass-produced for mass consumption.” Fourth, “it is the culture that originates from ‘the people.’ It is an ‘authentic’ culture of ‘the people’.” Fifth, ‘it is a site of struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups and the forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant group.” Although most studies on popular culture focus on modern phenomena, I will examine whether participation in fiction—through writing, reading, distributing fiction—was an example of popular culture of the late Chosŏn period based on Storey’s five definitions .

Readers of Popular Fiction

So, when did people start reading fiction? Several premodern texts suggest that reading fictions had started becoming popular from the time of the Imjin War. Oh Hŭimun (1539-1613) wrote,

I stayed at home all day, and felt really bored. Right at that moment, my daughter asked. So I translated *Romance of Chu and Han* (Chu Han yanyi) into Korean, and let my second daughter write it down .⁷⁵

Oh Hŭimun recorded things that happened around him from the time he left Seoul when the Imjin War broke out in 1592 until he came back to Seoul in 1601, and named

this collection, *Record of a Shabby Wanderer* (Swoemi rok). During that period, Oh moved around to avoid the battle and recorded what he witnessed at that time. His record obviously included scenes of disaster due to the war, but he also included scenes of ordinary daily life as well. In the excerpt above, he even wrote that he was bored, and to entertain himself he translated Chinese fiction such as *The Romance of Chu and Han*. What is interesting here is that his daughter requested he translate the text, and he dictated it to his second daughter who wrote it down. We do not know whether the same daughter did both but it seems there were two daughters involved since Oh first wrote ‘my daughter requested it’ (因女息之請), and then specified that ‘I let my second daughter write it down’ (使仲女書之). In any case, it shows that women were interested in reading Chinese fiction, particularly *The Romance of Chu and Han*, a work of historical fiction that deals with war heroes after the death of the First Emperor of Qin (BC 210). Another interesting aspect of this passage is not only that Oh made his daughter transcribe his translation, but that he did not make his son do it. It likely points to the fact that Korean writing system, *hangŭl*, was a writing system exclusively for women and that the male elites did not want to write in *hangŭl*.

Understanding literary Chinese was difficult not only for Korean readers, but also for Chinese readers. For this reason, few people were able to read works in literary Chinese. However, as Stephen Owen points out, the situation in China changed after the Song (960-1279) when commercial printing flourished and vernacular literature was produced. Owen writes:

The most important use of the written vernacular was in first producing written versions of the oral literature that flourished in the urban culture of the Song. In the entertainment quarters of the great urban centers there was a rich world of performance literature that was enjoyed by commoners and elite alike. Professional storytellers were divided by specialty: among these specialties were the elaboration of Buddhist sutras, chivalric romances, and men who popularized history, elaborating the standard histories in vernacular Chinese with a wealth of invented incidents and narrative devices to hold the interest of the audience. Another category of storyteller specialized in *xiao-shuo*, the term now translated as “fiction.” *Xiao-shuo* included love stories, stories of heroic bandits, and crime stories with Confucian magistrate as detective.⁷⁶

The popularity of Chinese vernacular fiction was transmitted to Korea through envoys, interpreters, and merchants as I mentioned in the introduction. Korean readers paid attention to trends in Chinese literature. Whenever they had a chance to visit China, they would go to Liulichang, the bookstore center of Beijing, and buy hundreds of books to bring back to Korea. The popularity of these books spread first the among literati who were able to read Chinese, and then it spread to women as many works of Chinese fiction were translated into vernacular Korean.

According to Yi Minhŭi, the popularity of reading Chinese fiction rose during the Imjin War.⁷⁷ This is plausible since it was actually the first major encounter between the Chosŏn people and the Chinese, even though most of the latter were soldiers. During the war, the Ming army came to Chosŏn to provide aid and stationed troops there for more than seven years. The Chosŏn people were probably curious about the Chinese people, their culture, and their history. For ordinary people of Chosŏn, Chinese fiction, especially historical fiction, may have been the easiest way to learn about Chinese culture. Because Chosŏn, Ming China and Japan were engaged in war at that time, there would have been a heightened interest in war heroes. I believe the combined historical and social context

made possible the boom in the popularity of Chinese fiction, especially hero fiction. Eventually, women gradually became interested in translated hero fiction.

Before the Korean writing system (*hangŭl*) was promulgated in 1444, reading was limited to literati who knew literary Chinese. However, with the invention of Korean *hangŭl*, reading expanded to include commoners and women. Ōtani Morishige argues that in late Chosŏn, the majority of popular fiction readers were women, especially the members of the ruling class. The demand for popular fiction, especially works written in Korean, rose sharply after the seventeenth century and at the heart of this increasing demand for fiction were upper-class women readers.⁷⁸

There are more examples of women engaged in reading fiction. It is a famous anecdote in Korea that mother of scholar Cho Sŏnggi (1638-1689) loved to read fiction, so that Cho wrote fiction for his aged mother. In Cho Sŏnggi's collected works, Cho Chŏngwi (1659-1703) wrote Cho Sŏnggi's biography and in it mentioned Cho's mother.

Grand Lady [Cho Sŏnggi's mother] was so wise and intelligent that there was nothing she did not know about history books and *chuanqi* of ancient times and now. In old age, she liked to lie down and listen to what others read to her. It was to drive out sleep or anxiety. So Cho Sŏnggi always worried she might not be able to continue to lie down and listen to the stories. If Cho found out that someone had books that Grand Lady had not read, he tried every which way he could to get those books for her. Sometimes, he adapted ancient tales and wrote several stories for her.⁷⁹

Ch'ae Chegong (1720-1799) criticized women's consumption of fiction.

Recently, if I should record anything about the competition of women in the inner chamber it should be about fiction. The way they like fiction

risers everyday and increases every month, now its number reaches thousands and hundreds. *K'woega* (rental shop) hand-copy the books nicely and lend them out (to readers). They always raise their price to make a profit. Women who did not have profound wisdom sold hairpins or bracelets, or sometimes they even borrowed money and fought each other to rent books. And they spent long days reading them.⁸⁰

As we see here, Ch'ae Chegong criticized women for being eager to get their hands on these works, even going as far as to sell their accessories or borrowed money to pay for renting of books. It is clear that many women spent their time reading fiction regardless of cost. Furthermore, as Ch'ae indicated that these were women in the inner chamber, it seems most of readers were either upper class and/or wealthy women who had money to acquire books and time to read them. The scholar Yi Tǒngmu (1741-1793) wrote in criticism,

One should not fall into reading translated *chuanqi*. One should not neglect housework and should not be lazy regarding women's tasks. Some of them even pay to rent them and fall in so deep that they cannot stop until they squander their fortunes. Furthermore, contents are about jealousy, and are obscene, perhaps causing women to become depleted or delusional.⁸¹

The situation appears to have been serious in the eyes of some male elites. Though it might have been an exaggeration to claim these women went bankrupt spending all of their fortunes on renting fiction, nonetheless it seems there was a problem of excessive spending. They also neglected their domestic duties. What drew women into these stories will be discussed in chapter 5, but we can see they read with enthusiasm much like today's women absorb themselves watching TV dramas. Chǒng Yagyong (1762-1836)'s criticism was even harsher than Yi Tǒngmu. He wrote,

Miscellany/fictions are the biggest disaster among man-made catastrophes. Obscene and hideous tones make peoples' minds useless and dissipated, and ridiculous and odd stories imbue people with arrogant dispositions. Withered and languid poor sentences like broken pieces erode peoples' valorous spirit. If children and disciples read them habitually, they would treat the Classics and history like trash beneath the fence. If ministers read them habitually, they would treat the affairs at the Court like useless things. If women read them habitually, they would eventually stop weaving. What could be more catastrophic than this under the heaven? I think these vicious stories would be extinguished and writing styles would improve if we collected all those books throughout the country and burned them all, and if we sentence people who brought those books from Beijing with severe punishment.⁸²

Chǒng Yangyong was a renowned reformist of that time. However, even a progressive scholar like Chǒng Yagyong strongly opposed reading fiction.

In an extreme case, there is a story of a woman who was expelled from her house because she read fiction during a mourning period. According to Yi Manbu (1664-1732), his great aunt read fiction aloud during her mother-in-law's mourning period, making her husband so upset that he sent her away to her parents' house.⁸³ Despite strong social pressure to stop, women's love of reading fiction continued for hundreds of years. We see examples of this from American or French missionary accounts of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. An American missionary, Homer Hulbert (1863-1949) commented on popular fiction. He wrote in 1906,

These that we have mentioned are written in Chinese characters, but Korea is also filled with fiction written only in native character. Normally these tales are despised by the literary class, which forms a small fraction of the people, but in reality there are very few even of this class who are not thoroughly conversant with contents of these novels. They are on sale in

every bookstore in the country, and in Seoul alone there are several circulating libraries where novels both in Chinese and in pure Korean found by the hundreds. Many, in fact most, of these novels are anonymous, their character being such that they would hardly reflect credit upon their writers. And yet, however discreditable they may be, they are a true mirror of the morals of Korea to-day.⁸⁴

If we look at the examples discussed above, it seems that except for most literati, the popularity of fiction was widespread. Most readers were women who were wealthy enough to rent or buy books and had time to read, and this included palace women. In the palace, they had the official library, *Naksŏnje*, that housed translated versions or copies of works of fiction.⁸⁵ Ch'oe Namsŏn (1890-1905) identified differences in quality of vernacular fiction. He wrote,

There are several kinds in vernacular fiction. The highest level among them is fiction such as *Dreams of Red Chamber* and stories of love affairs of men and women such as *An unofficial history of Daoist hermits and true men* (Sŏnjin ilsa) that were translated and read regularly at the palace. It [the palace collection] includes collections from inside and outside of the country from ancient times to the present. The lowest quality is simple and short works produced for ordinary people. These are only for selling to the people. Although the original texts are long, they were made into ten to twenty page volumes and printed on woodblock. There are likely only forty to fifty stories of this kind in Seoul and the provinces. The in-between middle level are rental books (*sech'aek*) available only in Seoul. This includes long and short stories, large and small volumes. They copied books that were popular and bound them as thirty to forty page volumes. Some of the collections are two to three volumes long while some of them are several hundreds of volumes in a single collection. They lent the books for a couple of coins. After the books were returned, they would relend them to someone else. In their heyday, there were more than several hundred kinds of works and several thousand volumes.⁸⁶

Of these works, the best quality [of binding and structure of the books] were the palace versions, followed by books at the rental shop, while the worst quality were books intended for sale. It is understandable that the palace version was the highest quality, but it is interesting to see rental version were of better quality than the versions for sale. I believe that in order the books to be circulated to numerous different readers, rental versions had to be in good shape.⁸⁷

Pak Chonghwa (1901-1981) writes in his memoir about popular fiction read by family members. He recalls from his childhood how his grandaunt and aunt used to rent books such as *Three Stories* (Samsöl ki), *Lady Sa's Journey to the South* (Sassi namjǒnggi), *Tale of Changhwa and Hongnyŏn* (Changhwa hongnyŏn chŏn), *Tale of Yu Ch'ungnyŏl* (Yu Ch'ungnyŏl chŏn), *Dream of Jade terrace* (Ongnu mong), *Tale of Hŭngbu* (Hŭngbu chŏn), *Tale of Ch'unhyang* (Ch'unhyang chŏn) and *Romance of Three Kingdoms* (Samguk chi) from a rental shop.⁸⁸ The popularity of these vernacular fictions continued for long time among women readers.

In the late Chosŏn, reading fiction started with male literati eager to import and read Chinese fiction. Later, wealthy and educated women as well as commoners began reading Chinese fiction in translation and adaptations. We also know that those unable to read were exposed to these stories through the common practice of storytellers (*chŏngisu*) reading aloud vernacular fiction in outdoor markets. Cho Susam (1762-1849), writes of such an experience,

An old man who read vernacular fiction lived outside the east gate. He recited vernacular fiction without the books [I believe it means the storyteller told the story from his memorization.] in front of him. He read books such *Tale of Sukhyang* (Sukhyang chŏn), *Tale of So Taesŏng* (So

Taesǒng chǒn), *Tale of Sim Ch'ǒng* (Sim Ch'ǒng chǒn) and *Tale of Sǒl Ingui* (Sǒl Ingui chǒn).

On the first day of the month, he sat under one bridge, and next day he sat under a second bridge. The next day, he was at Paenamuje, on the fourth day, he was at Kyodong, on the fifth day, he was at the entrance of Chǒlkol, and on the sixth day he read aloud vernacular fiction sitting on Chongno street. Afterwards, he would go up and down the streets finishing [telling the story] for that month.

The following month, he would do the same thing. He was good so good at reading aloud that he was mobbed. The old man kept his mouth closed when he came to most interesting parts. If he kept quiet and did not say anything, then people would throw coins in front of him to listen to the next line. That was how he made money.

Children and women grieved that shed big drops of tears.
They wonder with bated breath whether heroes would be
victorious.
He stopped suddenly at the most interesting part.
The way he earns money is skillful.
Who would not listen to next line?⁸⁹

The old man memorized the books and then recited them in front of people. He moved from place to place as he told the story, forcing people to follow him to another location where he could attract new listeners (potential customers). He cleverly stopped the story at the most interesting part to intensify curiosity just like we are eager to watch next episode of a TV drama series. The old man knew how to serialize the story in order to attract a greater audience in order to make money. Based on the reaction of the audience, the old man must have been a skilled performer and the stories must have been compelling enough to make the audience become emotionally attached. They wanted to find out whether heroes were victorious. Children and women even shed tears when listened to the story. Literate people would enjoy the old man's performance for the entertainment value while the illiterate had a way of being exposed to this type of

literature by listening. Since payment was not mandatory to participate in the storytelling, even people who did not have money were able to sit and listen to the story, and in this way, the readership was extended to illiterate and poor people as well.

Writers of Vernacular Fictions

As Hulbert pointed out, most writers of vernacular fiction were anonymous. Perhaps it is true that vernacular fiction was not deemed worthy enough to claim the credit. Or perhaps writers did not want to be associated with writing fiction because of the strong social stigma under Confucian ideology wherein ‘writing should carry the Way (文以載道)’ or ‘writers should transmit rather than introduce innovations (述以不作)’. However, we know of a number of writers of miscellany or fiction who composed in literary Chinese, such as Kim Sisŭp (1435-1493), Cho Sŏnggi and Pak Chiwŏn, but we know little about vernacular fiction writers. We can only conjecture about writers of vernacular fiction based on very limited sources.

In 1444, King Sejong (r.1428-1450) promulgated a new vernacular writing system, *hangŭl*. Before its invention, literary Chinese was the writing medium for educated Koreans. Because the grammar and synthesis of Korean and Chinese languages are totally different, it was extremely difficult for Koreans to learn literary Chinese and became a writing system exclusively for the literati. Sympathetic to these difficulties, King Sejong decided a vernacular system was needed to better reflect the native language and improve literacy through *hangŭl*. King Sejong wrote the *Humin chŏngŭm* (Correct Sounds to Instruct the People) explaining,

The sounds of our language differ from those of the Chinese and are not easily communicated by using Chinese graphs. Many among the ignorant, therefore, though they wish to express their sentiments in writing, have been unable to communicate. Considering this situation with compassion, I have newly devised twenty-eight letters. I wish only that the people will learn them easily and use them conveniently in their daily life.

It is clear that King Sejong wanted people to learn *hangŭl* to express their thoughts more readily. *Hangŭl* is writing system that can be learned within two hours. It is ‘phonetic and capable of transcribing almost any sound’ as Peter Lee pointed out.⁹¹ A Korean speaker can read and write with little effort and *han ’gŭl* was a way for illiterate Koreans who did not have the time and money to study literary Chinese to learn how to write. Even today, the creation of *hangŭl* is considered one of Korea’s greatest innovations. However, the invention of *hangŭl* was not universally praised during King Sejong’s time, and actually faced harsh criticism from literati like Ch’oe Malli (? – 1445).

Ch’oe Malli, as first counselor of the Hall of Worthies, presented a memorial to the king saying,

If the Korean script is widely used, the clerics will study it exclusively and neglect scholarly literature. ... If they discover that knowledge of the twenty-[eight] letter Korean script is sufficient for them to advance in their official careers, why would they go through agony and pain to study the principles of Neo-Confucianism? If such a situation lasts several decades, then surely the people who understand Chinese graphs would be reduced to a very small number. Perhaps they could manage their clerical affairs using the Korean script, but if they do not know the writings of the sages, they will become ignorant and unable to distinguish right from wrong.... This Korean script is nothing more than a novelty. It is harmful to learning and useless to the government. No matter how one looks at it, one cannot find any good in it.⁹²

What Ch'oe emphasized in this memorial to the king was the importance of Neo-Confucianism. Ch'oe and his followers believed that only Chinese graphs could delineate the teachings of the sages, Neo-Confucianism. Hence, in order to maintain the legacy of Neo-Confucianism, one had to study literary Chinese diligently since Neo-Confucianism was transmitted from China, and all Neo-Confucian texts were in literary Chinese. For that reason, literary Chinese itself was a writing system representing the dominant ideology of that time. "It functioned as means to spread the specific thoughts and ideology of ruling class and intellectuals," Chu Yŏngha argued.⁹³ It was crucial for the yangban to sustain literary Chinese as the writing system in order to keep their privileged status in society. Despite King Sejong's efforts, *hangŭl* was not widely used while literati continued to use Chinese graphs as the main writing medium. More than two hundred years later, during the reign of King Chŏngjo, literary Chinese was still the preferred writing system of the ruling class while *hangŭl* was only used by women and commoners. I believe the social stigma of the vernacular explains why most writers of vernacular fictions were anonymous. If they were men of elite social status, they not want it known that they wrote fiction in the vulgar Korean script.

Korean literature scholars such as Cho Yunje⁹⁴ and Kim Tonguk⁹⁵ have studied writers of vernacular fiction, and concluded that most writers were "fallen yangban" (yangban men who were impoverished or of degraded social status) or middle people (*chungin*). Most hand-written vernacular fictions circulated in Seoul at that time. If we look at the vernacular fictions, it appears that writers were learned people from southern and northern neighborhoods of Seoul, where concentrations of fallen yangban and middle

people lived. Fallen yangban became poor if they were not able to pass the civil service examination, and therefore unable to get an official position in the government. Furthermore, if they came from families that did not have large landed estates and were thus dependent on official salaries. As for middle people, they were not allowed to take the *munkwa* civil service examination needed to advance to high official positions. Even if they were well educated, highly intelligent, or men capable of governing the state, they had to be satisfied with either low official civil service positions or become military officials. Kim Tonguk suggested that fallen yangban and middle people wrote vernacular fiction to vocalize their social misfortunes.⁹⁶ Since the 1980s, scholars of Korean literature have increasingly studied the social phenomenon of fallen yangban and middle people and have concluded that authors of vernacular fiction in the late Chosŏn period were fallen yangban, middle people or commoners although they differ on the authors' intentions. However, a discussion of the intention, background and thoughts of writers is essential and should be an important part of understanding their writings and their view towards vernacular fiction as a whole. Vernacular fiction was also written and circulated for commercial purposes that specifically targeted the readership. For that reason, the targeted audience perspectives are also woven into vernacular fiction. Therefore, I would like to suggest that we need to approach vernacular fiction as having a "collective authorship" rather than single authorship in this period.

There were many different versions of a single vernacular work in circulation at any given time. For instance, *Imjin rok* has more than fifty different versions. It suggests that the work was edited or revised depending on its readers/audiences. Under single authorship, we would not see so many different versions under the same title. Also, these

works were often hand-written and hand-copied at the rental shops, making it much easier to revise and cater the story in response to the readership. Readers visited a rental shop to borrow the book, or they sent servants out to the shop to retrieve the books. Most books were serialized, so if readers liked the story, they would get the next volume quickly, but if they did not like the story, then they would not get the next volume. I would believe the shop owners would get feedback from readers and would not mind changing the storyline to please the readers. Therefore, it is more accurate to portray these books as being the product of a collective effort of writers, readers, and shop owners who participated collaboratively, though not necessarily intentionally, in these processes.

Production and Circulation of Vernacular Fiction

We are made aware of the existence of rental shops (*k'woega*) in the course of the rise of vernacular fiction. Prior to the spread of these shops, people circulated books privately. For instance, Oh Hūimun translated Chinese fiction into Korean for his daughters, and Cho Sōnggi wrote works of fiction for his mother. Previously, the transmission of these works were driven more by individual needs and circulated privately, within one's family or among friends. Eventually more and more people became interested in reading fiction so that demand for these works culminated eventually in the emergence of rental shops to fulfill the high demand around the eighteenth century.

According to Otani Morishige, rental shops translated and adapted Chinese fiction into Korean, and also created their own vernacular works. They were thus deeply involved in production of vernacular fiction. Rental shop owners would hire someone to hand copy (*p'ilsa pon*) these works which was a common form of publication at the time. After books were hand copied, they lent and sold these books to readers. Rental shops played a central role in the expansion of readership in the late Chosŏn period through publication, sales, and rental.⁹⁷ Interestingly, we find similar developments in Japan.

In Japan, after a long period of wars between provinces and warlords (1467-1568, known as the Sengoku era), Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) established a new government in Edo in 1603 that finally brought peace to an exhausted state. Miner writes:

The shogunate quickly dispossessed commoners of swords, required provincial magnates alternately to reside in Edo or provide hostages, and in the course of rapid developments left many samurai without a place in society. Edo was for some time an authoritarian seat of power, and it is not surprising that the *kamigata* area [Kyoto-Osaka region] near the old capital should have continued to be the nursery of literature, even when the work was not produced by the nobility or warriors but by people of mercantile extraction, members of professional classes, and dispossessed.⁹⁸

During the Edo period (1603-1868), as the number of writers increased, commercial printing and publishing of *kanahon*⁹⁹ flourished, making it possible to broaden readership as well. If we look at these two countries, we can see that development of commercial printing, production of vernacular works, and the presence of professional storytellers or performing arts drew a large number of readers – both men, women, and people from various classes. However, unlike Japan, only Seoul had rental

shops. In Korea, Seoul was probably the only place that was urbanized enough for the spread of popular culture in the eighteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, as the demand for fiction grew, woodblock printed editions (*panggak pon*) were published, which led to the mass production of vernacular fiction. With hand-copying, quantities were limited, but with the emergence of woodblock printed editions, fiction could be published in larger quantities.¹⁰⁰ These books were for sale rather than for rental. There were three major book printers: Seoul edition (Kyōngp'an), Chōnju edition (Wanp'an) and Ansōng edition (Ansōngp'an).

During the late Chosŏn period, the ruling class, especially the men, did not recognize vernacular fiction as artistic works, but rather criticized it harshly as harmful works that deluded the world and deceived the people. Reading vernacular fiction was viewed as unethical behavior. Readers of these works were criticized for neglecting their duties, and for losing themselves in wild fancies. Reading caused increased consumption. Despite the social ills that ideologues of the time warned against in reading vernacular fiction, it also led to the commercialization of popular fiction of that time. Reading was the taste of the ruling class which had been practiced exclusively by male elites in earlier times due to the difficulty of literary Chinese. Reading vernacular fiction could be understood as an act of imitating the taste of ruling class in a time of economic development, and this popular culture was led by women, and outsiders of society.

Chapter 2: The Ideal Life of the Literati Represented in *A Dream of Nine Clouds*

Believed to have been written specifically for the purpose of consoling his mother during the author's exile, Kim Manjung's (1637-1692) *A Dream of Nine Clouds* (hereafter *DNC*), is a remarkable work of classical Korean fiction written in seventeenth-century Chosŏn, and is generally interpreted by scholars as a fictional work intended primarily for women readership, and as a work that contains many elements designed to meet the demands of popular entertainment.

Such is the view held both by Emanuel Pastreich¹⁰¹ and Otani Morishige¹⁰². Considering *DNC* to be an example of *kyubang sosŏl* (inner chamber fiction), Pastreich suggests that the work presents affairs that takes place within the domestic household of a *yangban* family and sketches the process by which these internal problems may be resolved. Highlighting the work's treatment of the domestic space, Pastreich concludes that upper class women were the predominate focus of *DNC* readership. Otani Morishige subscribes to a similar view in addressing *DNC*'s popular characters and readership. Otani argues that in late Chosŏn, the majority of popular fiction readers were women, especially the members of the *yangban* class who were literate in Korean script. The demand for popular fiction, especially works written in Korean, rose sharply after the seventeenth century, and at the heart of this increasing consumption of fiction consumption were upper-class women. Although a debate still persists regarding whether *DNC* was first written in classical Chinese and then translated into Korean vernacular, or first written in Korean—both Korean and classical Chinese versions are extant today—Otani argues that since Kim Manjung wrote *DNC* for his mother, he must have originally written it in Korean. He believes the classical Chinese version came into existence only later

when someone else translated the work. In addition, Otani surmises that when Kim Manjung wrote *DNC* for his mother, he must also have had other women readers in mind although Otani's assumption is not clear; for Otani, then, *DNC* is an example of a *yŏsŏng sosŏl* (women's fiction) that represents a particular form written explicitly for Chosŏn women.

What I find problematic about these approaches is that in placing great emphasis on questions regarding the manner of *DNC*'s consumption and deducing a particular interpretation that fits the model of who read the work and for what reasons, Otani and Pastreich tend to suppress important aspects of the text itself. In this reading, *DNC* is understood as belonging to a certain category of fiction popular among a certain group of people; the text is then read by cherry picking through the work for details that may reflect the tastes and attitudes of this group of people to support this interpretation.

Cho Tongil¹⁰³ and Sŏl Sŏnggyŏng¹⁰⁴ approach the text of *DNC* more directly. For Cho Tongil, *DNC* is not an example of female fiction. At the same time, however, *DNC* cannot be classified as a *sadaebu sosŏl* (literati fiction) either since its ending does not affirm the ideal of bureaucratic service to the state, a concern that would have been central to the literati of Chosŏn. In a somewhat different vein, Sŏl Sŏnggyŏng interprets the work as representing the intellectual history of late Chosŏn, with its interweaving of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. Sŏl argues that elements of these three traditions became well fused in the *DNC*, and for this reason classifies *DNC* as *chisŏng sosŏl* (intellectual fiction).

All four scholars address, though in different ways, the distinction between women and elite literature. Pastreich and Otani, in classifying *DNC* as either inner chamber fiction or women's fiction, highlight its popular character; Cho, while rejecting the limitations of the label women's fiction, observes that *DNC*'s ending does not observe the values shared by the elite

literati; Söl notes the popular elements in the narrative but argues that *DNC*'s central thematic is an intellectual one. Without question, *DNC* is full of details with popular entertainment value. More specifically, it has a number of features seen as being characteristic of romance. According to Northrop Frye, romance may be categorized as a form of popular literature as opposed to elite literature¹⁰⁵, and if we accept Frye's distinction, Pastreich and Otani might be right in labeling Kim Manjung's work as women's fiction. In contrast, Söl and Cho read *DNC* as an example of elite literature despite the many similarities in structure and characteristic elements it shares with romance. While Söl uses the English translation "intellectual," however, I would like to put back into play the more restricted Korean term, "*sadaebu*," since the most visible portrait that emerges in the main body of the text is that of the ideal life of Chosŏn literati rather than intellectual syncretism of three traditions of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. According to Ki-baik Lee, "*sadaebu* were not only educated and knowledgeable men, but men who were adept too in the administration of the affairs of government. In short, they were scholar-bureaucrats, or literati."¹⁰⁶ An important aspect of the ideal life sketched in *DNC* is the prominence of one's position within the Neo-Confucian officialdom. For these reasons, I argue that *DNC* is to be understood most usefully as an example of a fiction representing both *sadaebu* and women and should be seen as popular culture. Bennett explains,

The field of popular culture is structured by the attempt of the ruling class to win hegemony and by forms of opposition to this endeavour. As such, it consists not simply of an imposed mass culture that is coincident with dominant ideology, nor simply of spontaneously oppositional cultures, but is rather an area of negotiation between the two within which – in different particular types of popular culture – dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural and ideological values and elements are 'mixed' in different permutations.¹⁰⁷

Following Bennett's definition of popular culture, as an area of negotiation between high (elite) and low (women) culture, *DNC* can be seen as a product of popular culture of that time. In this chapter, I propose to discuss the ideal life of the literati and romantic aspects in the guise of the character Shaoyou as represented in Xingzhen's dream. The Chinese name Shaoyou literally means "a short journey to the human world," and in this journey that spans almost the entire text, a number of elements are presented that exemplify perfection in the life of literati: public fame and merit achieved through distinguished service in the bureaucracy, ability to write exceptional poetry and prose, wealth stemming from the state recognition of merit, refined tastes (*p'ungnyu*), romances with fairy-like women and extraordinary relationships with those residing in the immortal realm.

Kim Manjung represents all of these elements well, and in the process, inspires the envy of his readers of his time. However, Kim Manjung showed that such fame and fortune reveal themselves to be just images that make human beings seek objects of desire in an endless cycle of suffering rather than allowing them transcend desire altogether. Kim Manjung presents the ideal life of the literati and romance with particular vividness, forcing the reader to experience the luxuries of life through Xingzhen's dream, but ultimately describes the process of enlightenment that makes the reader realize life's true meaning.

This chapter, begins with a discussion of the life of author Kim Mangjung's life will be discussed, followed by a discussion of the romantic aspects in *DNC* to show that *DNC* employs many entertaining elements similar to what is found in hero fiction. Lastly, will be a discussion about the representations of the ideal literati life in the work to show how *DNC* has elements of literati fiction as well.

Life of Kim Manjung

Unlike most works of vernacular fiction, *DNC* has been attributed to a single author, Kim Manjung. There is still debate whether *DNC* was originally written in Korean or literary Chinese. Those who want to categorize *DNC* as literati fiction claim it was written in classical Chinese and then translated into Korean since literary Chinese was the primary means of writing for literati. Those who see *DNC* as women's fiction argue that it was first written in Korean just like the author's other prominent work, *Lady Sa's Journey to the South*.

Kim Ch'unt'aek (1670-1717), a grandnephew and disciple of Kim Manjung collected and published writings of Kim Manjung. In Kim Manjung's literary collection, he pointed out that it would be simply and act of parroting if Koreans wrote poetry and prose in classical Chinese and discarded Korean (國書).¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, Kim Manjung had praised fiction writing in historical fictions that went beyond official history by touching a reader's heart. Kim Ch'unt'aek also indicated in his literary collection that Kim Manjung wrote vernacular fiction.¹⁰⁹ Based on Kim Manjung's thoughts on writing fiction, it seems highly likely that *DNC* was originally written in Korean vernacular although we cannot completely discard the possibility of his writing a classical Chinese version.

Kim Manjung was born to a prestigious family in Chosŏn. He was a great grandson of Kim Changsaeng (1548-1631) who was a disciple of Yi I and the authority of the Westerner faction. Kim Changsaeng was "the foremost scholar on ritual, and had a reputation as an authority on ritual in his own right"¹¹⁰ and was at the center of *sallim* scholars¹¹¹ that became very unique tradition of politics and scholarship in the late Chosŏn. Song Siyol (1607-1689),

who had a profound influence on the Westerners, was also a student of Kim Changsaeng. For that reason, Kim Manjung was unquestionably at the center of the Westerners by his intellectual lineage. However his father died before he was born during the second Manchu invasion (1637), so he was raised and educated by his mother along with his elder brother, Kim Mangi (1633-1687) who was a father King Sukchong (r. 1674-1720)'s first wife, Queen Ingyŏng (1661-1680). Kim Manjung's mother, Lady Yun also come from a prominent family. Kim was known as a filial son who wrote fiction for his mother such as *Lady Sa's Journey to the South*. Kim passed the civil service examination and moved on to officialdom at the age of twenty-eight. Since then, he had a very successful career typical of high ranking officials, and ultimately obtained a position in the Ministry of Rites and Justice. Though his life appeared of even tenor, he experienced great turmoil in his life as well.

During the unstable political climate under King Sukchong there were four major bureaucratic upheavals (*hwanguk*). At the beginning of the Sukchong period, the government was dominated by the Westerners, but soon the Southerners gained control after winning the Rites Controversy. Kim Manjung was exiled at that time.¹¹² In 1680, Hŏ Kyŏn (? – 1680), a son of the ruling Southerners was involved in corruption and eventually was executed as a traitor. This incident restored the Westerners to the government along with Kim Manjung.¹¹³ When the king's consort, Lady Chang (1659-1701) bore him a son, King Sukchong favored Lady Chang so much that he wanted to appoint his one year-old son to be crown prince. Kim Manjung along with the Westerners opposed the king emphasizing that Lady Chang was a consort, and Queen Inhyŏn (1667-1701, the second wife of Sukchong after the death of his first wife, Queen Ingyŏng) was still too young to bear a son. Infuriated, Sukchong sent Kim Manjung into exile to a remote place in Namhae. Bureaucratic control changed again from the Westerners to the Southerners. The

Southerners supported Lady Chang was since Queen Inhyŏn was a daughter of a member of the Westerners. Queen Inhyŏn was then dethroned and expelled. Eventually Queen Inhyŏn returned to the palace and restored as queen while the king ordered Lady Chang to be put to death by poison in 1701. The Westerners once again dominated the government, but Kim Manjung had by that time already passed away in 1692 while in exile in Namhae.¹¹⁴ There is a speculation that Kim Manjung wrote *Lady Sa's Journey to the South* based on the life of Queen Inhyŏn and Lady Chang.

Throughout his whole life, Kim Manjung walked a central path. He was born, raised and educated in a family considered the center of the Westerners. He was member of the king's in-law family when his niece became the first queen of King Sukchong. He should have enjoyed the privileges and esteem of a scholar- official, and as a literati of that time. Perhaps Kim Manjung's very centrality enabled him to criticize the king without fear. However, his life ended in remote exile, unable even to sit by his dying mother's bed although he was known to be a filial son. What would he think of life sitting in the remote place excluded from the center? It is said that Kim Manjung wrote *DNC* in the last years of his life while in exile. Fortunately, we will be able to examine his thoughts on literati life through the life of his character Shaoyou in *DNC*.

A Dreams of Nine Clouds

The following is the brief summary of *DNC*. The setting is Tang China.

Xingzhen ("the truth of nature") is the youngest and most outstanding disciple of an old monk who is known as the Great Master Liuguan residing in Hengshan, one of the five sacred mountains in China. One day, Xingzhen is sent to thank the Dragon King at Dongting Lake. The Dragon King holds a feast for

him, and Xingzhen shares drink with the Dragon King. On the way back to the monastery, he runs into eight beautiful fairies on a bridge. After he returns to his chamber, he cannot erase the eight women from his thoughts. He even envies the life of Confucian scholars. At that moment, he is summoned by his master, Liuguan. Liuguan knows the thoughts in Xingzhen's mind. Thereupon, Liuguan rebukes Xingzhen and sends him away, condemning him to hell. There, he is reborn in the human world as a son of the gentry family Yang.

Xingzhen is named Shaoyou ("brief journey"). Shaoyou's father is in fact a hermit, and he leaves home when Shaoyou is still young. When Shaoyou turns sixteen, and he leaves home to take the civil service examination at Changan.

On his way, he meets with Qin Caifeng ("rainbow phoenix") who is the daughter of the commissioner. They fall in love and exchange poems vowing to get married. However, Caifeng's father revolts against the government, and she becomes a court servant. To avoid calamity, Shaoyou flees to the mountain. He meets an immortal who happens to be a friend of his father. Shaoyou learns the lute and flute and some heavenly tunes. He spends one night there, but it actually turns out to be five months. When Shaoyou is not able to locate Caifeng's whereabouts, so he goes back to home.

The next year, he makes another trip to Changan to take the exam. This time he passes through Luoyang [place name]. Here Shaoyou wins the heart of Gui Chanyue ("moonlight"), a female entertainer, with his poetry. She promises to be Shaoyou's secondary wife (though Shaoyou is yet unmarried, considering her status, she cannot be a first wife).

Shaoyou reaches Changan and hears about the beauty and talents of judge Zheng's daughter, Qiongbei ("jade"). Shaoyou wants to see her badly, he disguises himself as a Daoist priestess. He goes to Qiongbei's home and plays the music with lute. He shows off his exceptional talents playing music, and Qiongbei is moved. However, she realizes that Shaoyou is a man. She feels disgraced.

Shaoyou passes the exam in first place, and he submits a marriage proposal to the Zheng household. It is accepted by Qiongbei's father. Although Qiongbei is happy to be Shaoyou's wife, she still wants revenge for her disgrace. She uses a little trick with her sworn sister, Jia Chunyun ("spring cloud"). Chunyun plays the role of a ghost lady, and Shaoyou falls for Chunyun. Later he realizes it is a joke.

Wei, Zhao and Yan revolt against the government. Shaoyou sends them a letter demanding their submission. Only Wei and Zhao submit. Shaoyou is sent to pacify Yan. Yan finally surrenders.

On the way back to Changan, Di Jinghong ("wild goose") follows Shaoyou when she sees him at the Yan palace. She is a court dancer at the palace. Jinghong disguises herself as a young boy and follows Shaoyou. They become fond of each other and become sworn brothers. Shaoyou later finds out that Jinghong is a woman and spends the night together with her. When he passes through Luoyang, he is reunited with Chanyue.

Upon his success in the Hebei campaign, a royal marriage with Princess Lanyang ("orchid") is proposed by the emperor. One night at the palace, Lanyang plays the flute that she learned from a fairy lady in her dream, and Shaoyou

replies with his lute. After the empress-dowager hears about this incident, she also insists on the marriage. However, Shaoyou declines the proposal saying that he is already engaged. Thereupon, he is imprisoned. The Tibetan army then invades the border. Shaoyou is sent off again.

One night, at the military camp, an assassin named Shen Niaoyan (“gentle mist”) comes in to kill him. She is moved by Shaoyou’s courage and tells him about herself. She is destined to marry him. They spend several days together, and she leaves him promising that she will return to reunite with him someday. Shaoyou has a difficult time in the campaign due to poisoned water. Soldiers are not able to drink any water nearby. In his dream, Shaoyou is invited by Bai Lingbo (“waves”), the second daughter of the Dragon King of Dongting Lake,. She helps him purify the water and in return Shaoyou helps her to defeat the army of Nanhai (“south sea”). The King of Nanhai wants her to be his wife, but she refuses and flees to nearby Tibet. That is why Nanhai attacks the Dongting Lake. Lingbo also tells him that she is also destined to marry him. Shaoyou spends the night with her. After the victory celebration at Dongting Lake, Shaoyou goes to a Buddhist temple. The chief priest who greets him informs Shaoyou, “the day of your final coming has not yet arrived,” at which point Shaoyou awakens from his dream. All the soldiers had the same dream, and the water is purified as well. After they drink the water, they defeat the Tibetan army.

Meanwhile, Lanyang wants to find out who Qiongbei is. Langyang visits Qiongbei disguised as a commoner. They both grow fond of each other’s beauty and talents and come to like each other. They become sworn sisters, at the same time, Qiongbei is adopted by the empress dowager Yingyang. In this case, both of them want to be wives of Shaoyou. To make Shaoyou accept marriage, They lie to Shaoyou saying Qiongbei had died in grief. Shaoyou no longer is left with an excuse to refuse marriage to Langyang. Furthermore, Shaoyou also pushed to marry Langyang’s sister, Yingyang. Later he finds out that Yingyang is actually Qiongbei.

Shaoyou marries all eight women and rises to the highest rank in the government. One day, when Shaoyou and his eight women hike to a mountain, Shaoyou feels the fragility of life and decides to be a monk. Xingzhen then awakens from the dream and realizes the true meaning of life.

In this tale, Xingzhen, the monk dreams that he is Shaoyou, a Confucian official, and achieves the upper limits of wealth and fame possible for a man. After Xingzhen wakes up, however, he realizes that all the wealth and fame in the world means nothing more than a long dream. He attains enlightenment the moment he wakes up from the dream and simultaneously awakened to the mutability of human life.

The Romantic Elements of *DNC*

In his dissertation comparing *chuanqi* to middle English romance, Francis Sō has identified a number of similarities between them, particularly structural and aesthetic patterns. The discussion may be of particular relevance to our understanding of *DNC* since Kim Manjung's text, though it is not a *chuanqi* narrative per se, may be seen as arising from a narrative tradition which was heavily influenced by the *chuanqi* form.

The first part of Sō's dissertation deals with characterization.¹¹⁵ In both *chuanqi* and medieval English romance, characters are seen as being "flat" and fall into two types representing either good or evil. Heroes have a distinguished lineage: usually a knight, in the case of English medieval romance, and a member of the gentry class, in the case of *chuanqi*. They are extraordinary human beings in search of fame and adventure. Heroines are also from distinguished families and boast exceptional physical beauty. While these qualities emphasize the extraordinariness of the hero and heroine, the flatness of the characters and the superficial manifestation of personal qualities make it difficult for most of these stories to expose the psychological complexity of the characters.

Secondly, both genres have distinctive language and narrator-functions.¹¹⁶ The language of the romance is usually in verse, occasionally in prose, but always in vernacular language. *Chuanqi*, in contrast, is written in classical Chinese rather in vernacular, but still in verse style. Unlike, the function of narrator in the romance which is primarily to entertain the reader/audience, in *chuanqi*, the central criterion of narrator's function is the articulation and transmission of moral lesson.¹¹⁷ At the end of a *chuanqi* tale, one generally finds a didactic message at the end of the story.

According to Sō, the third pattern common to both genres is the expression of artistic creativity.¹¹⁸ These narratives are not a retelling of history, myth or folktales that have been in existence, but artistic creations with high degree of innovation and originality.

The patterns that emerge in Sō's discussion of *chuanqi* in the genre's general similarity to romance can be observed in *DNC* as well. The hero of the inner narrative, the dream, fits the general description of a romantic hero: Yang Shaoyou is from a gentry family who he leaves home to take the civil service examination in search for fame and recognition in the public world of officialdom. An individual with extraordinary gifts, Shaoyou places first in the civil service examination and becomes a prime minister at the age of twenty. His extraordinariness is further highlighted by his interactions with immortals (Shaoyou is once rescued by a friend of his father, a Daoist immortal), and his romantic life is quite extraordinary as well (he is involved simultaneously with eight beautiful women but there are no conflicts among them).

The eight heroines are also aristocratic in birth, and even when circumstances have led some of them, specifically Chanyue and Jinghong, to fall in status and become female entertainers, it is emphasized they are noble by blood. In the treatment of the eight women, however, *DNC* diverges in a notable way from the romance. Unlike passive heroines typical of the romance genre, the eight women of *DNC* are all determined and act according to their own will. Rather than being chosen, the women actively choose to become primary or secondary wives to Shaoyou, in a manner more characteristic of *chuanqi* than a medieval romance.

Francisca Cho Bantly refers the Shaoyou's romantic relationships with eight beauties as following the format of *caizi jiaren* (talented scholar-beautiful maiden) tales.¹¹⁹ The names of hero and heroines are symbolic as well. Before the dream, the hero's religious name is Xingzhen: literally meaning "the truth of nature," the name encodes the journey for the attainment of

enlightenment that he embarks upon in the text, and suggests that some day, Xingzhen will realize the true meaning of life. The significance of his name Shaoyou during his dream journey highlights, as discussed before, the fact that his presence in the mundane world will be as temporary as a short trip. In addition, all eight of the women's names are conventional references to female beauty and invoke the familiar tropes of Phoenix, Moonlight, Jade, Spring Cloud and Orchid. These names, however, sometimes index particular aspects of the bearer's personality. For example, Jinghong's wildness is shown in her name "wild goose", or *hong*. The name of the Dragon King's daughter contains the character "wave" meaning that she is from the water. Niaoyan's name *yan* means "mist" or "smoke", and reveals her exceptional skill in martial arts—her movements are so swift that she appears and disappears like mist or smoke. The symbolic naming of the characters is yet another feature commonly associated with the genre of romance.¹²⁰

Regarding the language of *DNC*, the case is somewhat ambiguous since it has not been firmly established whether the work was first written in vernacular Korean or literary Chinese. However, since the vernacular edition of Seoul National University is the oldest extant version, scholars in Korea have tended to see the original version as having been written in vernacular Korean. Furthermore, the author, Kim Manjung's insistence on the special desirability of composing works in vernacular Korean instead of literary Chinese in other writings contained in his literary collection lend strong credence to the possibility that the vernacular Korean version may predate the version in literary Chinese. Kim discusses the importance of writing in Korean in his literary collection, *Sop'o manp'il*, saying, "Now, our poetry and prose are written in using other language instead of our own language. Although it can express the actual meaning closely, it is nothing but a parrot repeating human words."¹²¹

If indeed this is the case, *DNC* may further conform to the romance pattern Sō has identified in his analysis. Regarding the matter of artistic creation as well, *DNC* bears a strong mark of Kim Manjung as a sole author.

In addition to these patterns that *DNC* shares with romance, it also contains features identified by Northrop Frye as particularly characteristic of romance, such as the dream motif, themes of descent and ascent, disguise, and adventures undertaken in order to claim identity. Given these points of convergence, can we view *DNC* as a romance, in a manner Sō seems to do with *chuanqi*?

While one would be remiss to ignore the existence of these similar patterns, my position is that the mapping of romance onto *DNC* is not exact and leads to finer disparities upon closer inspection. As briefly alluded to before, the distinctive personalities of the eight women provide complexities of characters that did not emerge in Sō's discussions of romance and *chuanqi*. We can look more closely at the individual characteristics of the eight women for concrete details. Qiongbai is calm and fastidious in matters of decorum, hardly ever coming out of her chamber to receive the guests. Her behavior is in strict accordance with ritual propriety, and her knowledge of music is exceptional. While all this might lead the reader to expect a "flat" character whose description conforms to the ideal formulations of the chaste and virtuous woman, Qiongbai reveals her to be less serious and dogmatic when she comes up with a scheme to trick Shaoyou to pay him back for having tricked her. She knows how to take revenge, with a sense of wit and style that is uniquely her own. Such unexpected turns in characterizing the eight women can be seen in other instances as well.

Jinhong is hot-tempered and brave enough to escape the Yan palace in disguise as a young boy. Chunyun, though a maidservant, is clever enough to play the role of a ghost and

seduce Shaoyou. Niaoyan and Lingbo, foretold in their dreams, recognize Shaoyou immediately as their future husband, but decide to test his qualifications. They follow Shaoyou and become his secondary wives, but only after he has satisfied them by displaying his courage and ability in passing the tests they have devised for him. In these accounts, the narrative captures the psychological spaces of the eight women that transcends modes of description commonly employed in romantic narratives. Noting distinctive characteristics of romantic narratives and “realistic” narratives, Frye writes:

In realism, the attempt is normally to keep the action horizontal, using a technique of causality in which the characters are prior to the plot, in which the problem is normally: “given these characters, what will happen?” Romance is more usually “sensational,” that is, it moves from one discontinuous episode to another, describing things that happen to characters, for most part, externally. We may speak of these two types of narrative as the “hence” narrative and the “and then” narrative.¹²²

DNC is not written entirely in what Frye calls “hence” narrative and contains some movement from one discontinuous episode to another. Salient moments in the text, however, do feature causal relationships between narrative events and sustained analysis of psychological motivations. One good example is demonstrated by the scene after Shaoyou’s marriage with the Princess Lanyang and Qiongbei (Shaoyou does not yet realize the Princess Yingyang is Qiongbei at this point). They meet in Qiongbei’s room. When hearing Yingyang speak for the first time, Shaoyou remembers the deceased Qiongbei. He thought to himself.

He thought to himself: “In this world it happens sometimes that those who are not sisters, and in no way related, look exactly alike. When I made a contract of marriage with Qiongbei I decided in my heart that it was for life and death, and

now here am I enjoying the delights of home felicity while poor Qiongbai's lonely spirit is wandering I know not where. To avoid making myself conspicuous, I have not poured out even a single glass as an offering at her grave; nor have I once even wept in the little hut by her tomb. I have indeed treated dear Qiongbai very, very unkindly." The thoughts in his heart showed themselves in his face, and the tears were ready to come.¹²³

With distinctive characteristics of eight women and narrative descriptions that highlight the interior of their psychological world, *DNC* often operates in a narrative mode that Frye codes as "realistic." *DNC*, then, contains both romantic and realistic elements.

Ideal Life of the Literati

Another of Frye's distinctions that is of relevance in our reading of *DNC* is the one between "elite" and popular literatures:

Paradise Lost is "elite" literature not because it is biblical in its choice of subject, but because the whole structure of humanist learning, with biblical and Classical mythology radiating out from it, has to be brought to bear on the reading and study of the poem. By contrast, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is, or was, popular literature, because it assumes only the kind of understanding of the Christian myth that every English family with any books or education at all would have possessed in Bunyan's day and for two centuries thereafter.¹²⁴

The same dynamic is at work in my reading of *DNC* as *sadaebu sosŏl*. *DNC* is an example of elite literature not simply because it narrates the lives of elite members of a particular society, but because it dramatizes the ethos shared by this elite community and assumes an understanding of an elite cultural context which must be "brought to bear on the reading and study" of the text. In the following section, then, I analyze some prominent aspects of this elite cultural context.

A. Fame, Merit and Wealth

The philosophical outlook that dominated the literati of Chosôn society was based on Neo-Confucianism. What the Confucian scholar could achieve in the world according to the demands of society was fame through merit and wealth through fame. After Xingzhen (literally meaning “truth of the nature”) meets eight fairy women on the bridge, he is unable to forget their beauty, which in turn forces him to think about the world of Confucian scholars:

If a man diligently studies the Confucian Classics and then grows up to meet a king like Yao or Shun... He can have his fill of glory in this life, and can leave behind a reputation for generations to come; but we Buddhists have only our little dishes of rice and flasks of water. . . when once the spirit and soul dissipate into smoke and nothingness, who will ever know that a person called Xingzhen once lived upon this earth?¹²⁵

Xingzhen’s monologue demonstrates the human desire to leave one’s name in the world. Xingzhen compares the life of a Buddhist monk to that of a Confucian scholar and envies the glorious life of the Confucian scholar. For this reason, Xingzhen is reborn into a literati family when he is sent into the world in his dream.

The possibility of rising in the world and being recognized for one’s merit during one’s lifetime is realizable within a Confucian scheme of bureaucratic service, as Xingzhen, now Shaoyou, explains to his mother upon leaving home to take the civil service examinations at the age of fifteen:

When my father went up to heaven he entrusted the reputation and honor of his home to me, and yet here we are so poor that you are compelled to toil and struggle. To live here like a mere watch-dog or a turtle that drags its tail and makes no effort to rise in the world means that we shall be blotted out as a family. . . May I not leave you for a little and try my skill?¹²⁶

In this explanation, Shaoyou clearly states his intent to pursue wealth and fame.

Subsequently, he passes the civil service examination with the highest honors and is appointed a post in the Hanlin Academy when he has an opportunity to save the country. Hearing news that the kings of Zhao, Yan and Wei have revolted against the Tang court, Shaoyou suggests writing an imperial order to persuade them to stop, and on account of his splendid writing, Zhao and Wei lay aside their claims. With his elegant and eloquent words, Shaoyou manages to save the country.¹²⁷ When Yan still refuses to submit, however, Shaoyou is sent to Yan as an envoy to persuade the King of Yan. With his verbal skill, he is able to persuade the Yan king to submit, thus saving the country a second time from war.¹²⁸ Later, when the Tibetan army attacks Tang territory, Shaoyou is sent as a general at the head of an army; exhibiting his martial skills, Shaoyou defeats the Tibetans and saves his country a third time.¹²⁹

Talented in writing and speaking as a civil official, and equipped with tactical military skill as a military general, Shaoyou saves his country three times and wins enduring fame. He could have established a reputation with only one of these gifts, writing and speaking or tactical military knowledge, but combining all three in a judicious way, Shaoyou attains unparalleled meritorious achievement, and in the process becomes an ideal model who personifies literati values in the public realm. At the young age of twenty, Shaoyou becomes Prime Minister and brother-in-law to the emperor; born with talents, which he used appropriately to attain merit, Shaoyou reaches the highest possible official rank. It is only natural that wealth and fame would

follow. Shaoyou's rise in the government affirms the fact that it is his public role within the bureaucracy that becomes an important measure of the literati's worth.

B. Composing Prose and Poetry

Being a literatus in premodern East Asian society required skill in writing poetry and prose. Writing poetry in particular was privileged above other modes of literary expression. Shaoyou's poetic skills are shown on several occasions. He is able to earn Qin Caifeng's love, for example, because of his skill in composing poetry; seeing a sumptuous willow tree, he immediately composes the Willow Song. Qin Caifeng recognizes Shaoyou's scholarly skill and immediately desires to become his wife. In the case that he were already married, she is even willing to become his concubine despite the fact that she was a daughter of a Government Commissioner, all on the strength of his poem which establishes him unequivocally as a superior man.¹³⁰

Incidents like this occur over and over again in the text. When Shaoyou heads to Changan to take the civil service examination, he passes through Luoyang, the capital of Han. There, he joins a poetry meeting already under way in a pavilion. Several young scholars are gathered to compose poems and compete for the night's favor of a female entertainer named Gui Chanyue, a woman with exquisite taste in and vast knowledge of poetry. Seeing the most beautiful and famous entertainer of the entire Jiangnan area, Shaoyou is moved by her appearance and composes a poem to submit in the contest. Shaoyou, again with his talent in writing poetry, wins the heart of a beautiful woman. Chanyue even predicts that he would be in first place in the civil examination with his talent. The episode reveals that both scholarly enterprise and amorous adventure are mediated by poetry.

Earlier, Shaoyou's skills in composing prose was seen as operating in the public realm; with his eloquent words he saves the country from rebellion by drafting an imperial order persuasive enough to pacify rebellions. Here, in these encounters with beautiful women, Shaoyou's skills in composing poetry allow him to win victories of love. Matters of the brush, an essential mode of having oneself recognized in the world of *DNC* as well as one of the core literati values, continue to be emphasized throughout the text.

C. Refined Taste (*p'ungnyu*) and Women

Understanding music, composing poetry, fondness for wine and having romances with beautiful and talented women were elements of a man of refined taste. It was a luxurious way to spend leisure time as literati, who had a generous sense of style about life that rounded out the rigorous adherence to principles in the Confucian world.

The first woman Shaoyou meets is Qin Caifeng, the daughter of a Government Commissioner. He makes her fall in love him almost instantly with his skill in composing poetry, and agrees to marry her. Through exigencies of circumstance, however, she becomes a palace servant when her father is accused of treason.

The second woman is Gui Chanyue, the most famous female entertainer of the time. Although many men wanted to win her heart, Shaoyou's poetry once again makes her devote her life to him. She even recommends her best friend, another famous female entertainer, Di Jinghong to his service.

The fourth woman is Zheng Qiongbai, the daughter of the Judge Zheng. This time, Shaoyou stimulates her intellectually through his musical skills. Shaoyou not only understands music, but also knows how to play masterfully, having learned the art of playing the lute and

flute from an immortal. His playing is described as sounds not of the human world. He uses his musical skills, then, to have access to Zheng after hearing of her exceptional beauty, talents, and virtue. Knowing her to command a perfect understanding of music, he disguises himself as a Daoist priestess and plays the lute before her, finding in her a *zhiyin* (“a friend who understands him perfectly”). As the music ends, he proposes marriage to her in a circuitous manner by using an allusion contained in the song. Even though Zheng is initially mortified when she realizes that the priestess was actually a man, he later gains her hand when her father accepts him after he passes the civil service examinations. His disguise as priestess was considered *p’ungnyu* to the extent that it was praised by his father-in-law.¹³¹

The fifth woman he becomes involved with is Jia Chunyun, both a friend and servant of Zheng Qiongbai. To pay back for the personal humiliation she has suffered on account of Shaoyou’s disguise, Zheng wants to make sport of Shaoyou and asks Jia to seduce him by playing a ghost. Jia, also a beautiful woman, fills Shaoyou with wonder: “Her beauty is so perfect, her love so real. Fairies too have their divinely appointed mates; devils and disembodied spirits have theirs, I suppose. What difference is there, I wonder, between a fairy and a disembodied spirit?” Thus, the text seems to suggest that the liberal attitude that might lead a man to have an affair with a ghost rather than recoil in fear could be considered as part of *p’ungnyu*.

The sixth woman is Shen Niaoyan, a pupil of a female master in sword arts. Claiming to be fated to marry Shaoyou by a connection in previous lives, Shen helps Shaoyou with her martial skills. He spends the night with her in the middle of a battlefield, displaying his intrepid character.

The seventh woman is the second daughter of the Dragon King of Dongting Lake, Princess Bai Lingbo. She is forced to marry the son of the South Sea Dragon King, a marital request backed up by the stronger army of the South Sea Dragon Palace. Refusing to marry the prince, however, she requests that Shaoyou help her defeat the army of Nanhai. After her unwanted suitor is successfully repulsed, Shaoyou takes the Dragon Princess as a concubine despite that she is not human.

The eighth woman is Princess Lanyang, a sister of the Tang emperor. So beautiful and talented that no one of the human world could match her, the Princess is particularly skilled in playing the flute. When she plays the flute, cranes—known as the birds of immortals—would flock to her and dance to her music. Overhearing her music one night while staying at the palace, Shaoyou responds to her music with his own flute-playing—music he learned from an immortal himself. When the Empress Dowager hears about this episode and sees Shaoyou's regal bearing, she decides to marry the princess to Shaoyou. Once again, music mediates amorous relations between people; by the end, Shaoyou has two wives and six concubines.

One could see in this narrative the projection of a particular kind of a patriarchal fantasy: a meritorious and supremely accomplished Confucian scholar at the heart of a peaceful household in which all his wives and concubines remain in loving obedience to the patriarch and in friendly camaraderie with one another. The male fantasy spans both the human world and the realm of ghosts and immortals, and enlists women of both high (princesses) and low status (female entertainers).

D. Otherworldly Relationships (*kiyôn*)

Relationships with worlds beyond the human realm indicate heavenly favors showered upon a chosen individual, and provide further evidence to the hero's extraordinariness. As such, a relationship of this type—encounters with immortals or divine spirits—may have been an expression of a particular desire for spectacular success among the literati who competed with one another for distinction in Confucian officialdom.

Shaoyou's first other worldly relationship is with his father, a Daoist immortal fated to enter the human world for the purpose of fathering Shaoyou. Having served his role in the human world, the father leaves Shaoyou when he reaches his tenth year to return to the immortal world. Shaoyou's parentage, then, is itself a mark of his exceptionality.

His second otherworldly relationship occurs when he meets his father's friend while hiding in Green Field Mountain to avoid going to war. Although Shaoyou spends only one night learning the lute and flute from this immortal, Shaoyou descends the mountain to realize that five months had passed and that the war had ended. Through this chance encounter, Shaoyou is able to learn heavenly sounds of lute and flute while avoiding the dangers of war. This is made possible only through heavenly intervention.

The third relationship occurs when he is invited to the Dragon Palace. Although his experience in the Dragon Palace is presented as taking place while he is dreaming—a dream within a dream—it occurs in real time as well. After waking from his dream, Shaoyou is able to defeat the enemy, and accumulate further merit by saving his country.

With help of these otherworldly relationships, Shaoyou avoids calamity and achieves spectacular success in both public and private spheres.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined how a man of the core elite produced a popular cultural product in the late Chosŏn period. With its distinctive heroes and heroines, complex construction, rich dialogue between Shaoyou and eight women, and depictions of the psychological world of the characters, *DNC* can be considered a thematically complete novel of late Chosŏn. Its central theme dwells on the limitations of human life within Buddhist concepts of the frailty of life. To show this, Kim Manjung used the trope of dreaming to represent ideal literati life in contemporary society. In portraying the life of Shaoyou in the dream, Kim portrays the life of hero, or what Sŏ Taesŏk defines as a Korean hero: “a man/woman who accomplishes a great contribution, not necessarily in a war, but for the state or society. He/she should value the interests of the community more than personal interests.”¹³² Furthermore, Kim Manjung followed the structure of hero fictions which is the structure of the descent of hero/heroine – life in the human world – and ascent. Yi Sangt’aek also proposes following structure for hero fiction:

1. Life in a heavenly world.
2. Descend to the human world.
3. Hardship and suffering in the human world.
4. Earns fame and wealth in the human world.
5. Returns to a heavenly world.¹³³

In Xingzhen’s dream, as Shaoyou, he passed the civil service examinations in first place, and saved his country three times with his written, spoken and military skills garnering him recognition even from foreign countries. He was favored by the emperor and highly recognized. As a scholar, he enjoyed the *p’ungnyu* of composing poetry and playing music. As a man, he had

two wives and six concubines all of whom were exceptionally beautiful and talented. When hee as a human being was in trouble, he was helped by divine forces. Shaoyou lived an ideal life that no one could possibly imagine. Clearly, the ideal life of literati in late Chosôn was one based on Confucian scholarly accomplishments and epicureanism according to Daoist dictates. With this dream life, Kim Manjung wants to tell us of the dominance of Daoism and Confucianism as an official-scholar ideal. However, as Shaoyou wakes up from the dream and returns to being Xingzhen he realizes the true meaning of life, through Buddhist enlightenment. Perhaps this was how Kim Manjung felt about his life. He enjoyed all the worldly matters when he was at the center of the government, but life was so unpredictable that he ended his life in exile. He perhaps felt frailty of life upon realizing its uncertainty. He understood the true meaning of the *Diamond Sutra*:

All is dharma, illusion:

A dream, a phantasm, a bubble, a shadow,

Evanescent as dew, transient as lightning;

It must be seen as such.

DNC shares many features of the romance and proves to bear the characteristics of popular fiction where “dominant, subordinate and oppositional culture and ideological values are ‘mixed.’” This work has Confucian dominant culture, and oppositional Buddhist and Daoist cultures which supports a reading of *DNC* as a product of popular culture rather than the elite culture. It was not only for elite male or female readership. It appealed to both groups of people and is why *DNC* is still widely read today.

Chapter 3: Remembering the Imjin War

in *Imjin nok (The Record of the Black Dragon Year)*

The Imjin War (1592-1598) as Historical Memory

If you ask any Korean seniors, especially those who are over seventy, about the Korean War (1950-1953), they would tell you their experiences as if it happened yesterday. I was also able to experience the Korean War indirectly through the memories of my parents and grandparents. They repeatedly talked about the Korean War over and over again without changing any words. When I was young, I was amazed by the way that they were able to retell the story without any modification. If anyone were to ask me what I know or remember about Korea War, I would retell the story based on what I heard from my parents and grandparents. However, I would not be able to repeat exactly what I had heard. I most likely would need to rely on my memory to repeat the story. I might mix up the story by combining my mother's experiences and my mother-in-law's version. I might forget some details so that I would need to fill in the blanks with my imagination.

The generations who listen or read my story would not remember as much as I do, and they would also come up with their own versions as well. The story might vary, but we as Koreans would remember the Korean War as "collective memory" as Halbwachs referred.¹³⁴ He writes, "While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember."¹³⁵ Furthermore, "when it comes to historical memory," he continues, "the person does not remember events directly; it can only be stimulated in indirect ways through reading or

listening or in commemoration and festive occasions when people gather together to remember in common the deeds and accomplishments of long-departed members of the group.”¹³⁶ In this case, I, as an individual, also participated in constructing the social notion of the Korean War. The historical memory of the Imjin War was also constructed with the collective memory of individuals throughout the time.

The Imjin War was the one of the main events in premodern East Asian history. As I mentioned previously, it was the first time that Korea, China, and Japan had an armed clash unless we count the Paekche'on-gang battle of the 7th century.¹³⁷ Japan invaded Chosŏn Korea, and Ming China came to Chosŏn to provide aid. The war went on for seven years. So many people got killed, and the land was devastated. Those who survived started to talk or write about the war. Stories were orally circulated and transmitted. Officials recorded what had happened around the court. Generals and soldiers wrote about battle fields. Refugees wrote about their harsh experiences. Everyone became reporters and witness of the war, and then these collective memories went down to many generations becoming historical memory.

Then, how did historical memory transform in the form of popular cultural production if there was any in the premodern era? In order to examine the representation of the past in a popular cultural product, I will examine the *Imjin nok*, a vernacular fiction about the Imjin War that was very popular around the 18th and 19th centuries. *Imjin nok* is known as collection of folktales about Imjin War, so that we see different tales are woven in together.

There were more than forty editions which suggest that it was very popular at that time. As I mentioned earlier, if there are many different editions in hand copy and

woodblock, it also suggests most of them were written for the profit, so that it represented perspectives of readers/consumers of the time. In this case, we can see the past represented in *Imjin nok* can be seen as “social construction (mainly if not wholly) shaped by the concerns of the present,” as Halbwachs said.¹³⁸ Here, the present would be the society of eighteenth and nineteenth century Chosŏn. If so, what were the concerns of that time? What did those concerns tell us/readers?

Most of Korean scholars who worked on *Imjin nok* see it as *minjung* literature¹³⁹ that represents resistance of ruled class against ruling class. Ch’oe Munjŏng sees it as a fiction that reinforces the dominant ideology emphasizing the Sinocentrism.¹⁴⁰ John B. Duncan examines Eric Hobsbawm’s “negative ethnicity” in the text although it is somewhat different from the “state tradition” that Hobsbawm suggests since non-yang class had negative awareness toward the state meaning they yangban class and non-yangban class did not have a sense of shared commitment to be identifies as one nation.¹⁴¹

I again see *Imjin nok* as a product of popular culture that is a site of struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups and the forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant groups. Interestingly, in *Imjin nok*, the ‘resistance’ and ‘incorporation’ are embedded in two different Chinas represented by Li Ruosong and Guan Yu. I will examine representation of Li Ruosong as ‘resistance’ while Guan Yu representing ‘incorporation’ in story.

The Imjin War

We found many different records on Imjin War, but I will go over the war briefly based on the *Sŏnjo sillok* (Veritable Records of King Sŏnjo) and Yu Sŏngnyong (1542-1607)'s *Chingbi rok* (The Record to Reprimand and to be Cautious).¹⁴² Yu Sŏngnyong served as a prime minister of Chosŏn standing by King Sŏnjo when the war broke. Yu also went to Ming China to ask aid. After the war, Yu recorded his personal view on the war to warn later generations.

In the 25th year of Sŏnjo's reign (1592) Japan invaded Chosŏn. Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536 – 1598) who took over the position of Oda Nobunaga (1534 – 1582) who brought an end to the Sengoku period and unified Japan sent out troops to invade Chosŏn. His -ambition was to conquer the Ming and he requested the Chosŏn court to allow his forces to pass through Korea on the way to the Ming. Chosŏn denied Hideyoshi's request, and the war broke. About 200,000 troops landed near Pusan in the southeastern corner of the Korean peninsula. It was an unexpected war that Chosŏn was not ready for at all. Furthermore, Japanese troops were better armed with rifles. Hence the Chosŏn army collapsed without offering much resistance at the beginning of the war. Japanese troops moved so fast that the Chosŏn government hurried King Sŏnjo to leave the palace in Seoul and flee to P'yŏngyang. They did not even bother to defend the capital. Japanese troops were able to gain Seoul about a month after they landed at Pusan.

Japanese troops kept on pursuing the king, so that the king had to flee to Ŭiju which is located northwest corner of the Korean peninsula. It is located on the banks of the Amnok River (Yalu River in Chinese) that forms the border between Korea and China. In the worst case scenario, the king and his officials were ready to cross the river

to China. Japanese troops captured P'yŏngyang only two months after they first landed at Pusan. The Chosŏn government sent an envoy to the Ming court asking aid.

There was debate in the Ming court whether they should help Chosŏn or not. Some of Chinese officials were against the sending troops to help Chosŏn because they once failed helping Vietnam during the Yongle period (1402 – 1424), and there were ministers who did not trust Chosŏn. These non-believers even thought that Chosŏn allied with Japan to deceive and attack Ming.¹⁴³ However, supporters insisted that Ming China's relationship with Chosŏn and Vietnam were different in that Chosŏn and the Ming kept close relationship. Furthermore, they emphasized that Chosŏn was geographically so close that Japan would invade China easily if Chosŏn lost to Japan. It was a logic of “sunmang ch'ihan” (唇亡齒寒) meaning your teeth feel cold if you do not have lips. Finally Ming sent out troops to provide aid for Chosŏn. Ming first sent out 3000 troops led by Zu Chengxun (? - ?). Once Zu arrived in Chosŏn, he attacked P'yŏngyang but failed to recover it from the Japanese. After that defeat, Zu Chengxun did not want to engage in fighting and opted to wait for reinforcements from the Ming.

Chosŏn troops did not want to just sit and wait for reinforcements from the Ming and attacked P'yŏngyang without Ming troops' help. Chosŏn troops also failed to recover it. Finally Li Ruosong arrived with 40,000 troops and together with Chosŏn troops attacked P'yŏngyang and recovered it. Li Ruosong wanted to recover Seoul driving on without a stop, but it was not an easy task. Japan also wanted to defend Seoul, so that rest of Japanese troops all over Chosŏn gathered in Seoul. There were about 50,000 Japanese troops gathered in Seoul. The war had reached a deadlock.

Li Ruosong decided to have a peace talk with Japan although Chosŏn disapproved. Meanwhile, people gathered together formed guerilla forces called *ũibyŏng* (righteous armies) to fight against Japanese troops. Yangban, commoners, monks, slaves and soldiers who fell behind gathered together and fought against the enemy. They were not official army forces, but they just gathered together on their own to save the country from calamity. Those *ũibyŏng* had some victories. Among them, Kwak Chaeu was very successful. General Kwŏn Yul also achieved brilliant success in battle at the Haengju mountain fortress (*sansŏng*), and it was a crucial victory since Haengju was located very close to Seoul. In various locations, Chosŏn troops and *ũibyŏng* (righteous army) had some achievements in delaying and harassing Japanese forces.

There were about 50,000 Japanese troops in Seoul so that they faced a shortage of provisions, but due to the activities of the righteous armies in various locations, the food transportation was very difficult for them via overland route. Furthermore, waterways were blocked by Admiral Yi Sunsin. The Japanese troops in Seoul felt isolated, so that they responded to Li Ruosong's peace talk suggestions. Finally in April 1593, one year after the war broke, Japanese troops retreated to the south of the Korean peninsula, where they maintained garrisons in various locales, and an effective cease-fire set in. The Chosŏn government sent an envoy to Japan to have meeting with Toyotomi Hideyoshi although most of the Chosŏn people and even the king did not favor peace talks. Sim Yuyŏng met Toyotomi Hideyoshi, but his demands were not acceptable to Hideyoshi. Sim, who wanted to end the war, falsely reported that Hideyoshi consented to his demands. Later Hideyoshi found out that he was deceived and in a fury ordered the dispatch of new forces to Chosŏn to begin another campaign in Chosŏn.

In 1597, Japan opened its new campaign in Chosŏn, but in 1598, Japanese troops suddenly withdrew to Japan after Hideyoshi's unexpected death. Ming troops also went back to China in 1599. The war ended this way. The war extended for seven years, but almost all the heavy fighting happened during the first and last years. However, the disaster of the war was great. The consequences of the war effected dynamics of power in East Asia. Ming China which was the center of power in East Asia soon fell and was destroyed by Manchus, established the Qing dynasty and became the new power sitting in the center position. In Japan, Tokugawa Ieyasu established a new Shogunate government after Hideyoshi's death, so that there was regime change from Toyotomi Hideyoshi to the Tokugawa family.¹⁴⁴ In Chosŏn, although there was no regime change, the country faced great emotional, mental, physical, political and social turmoil. It seemed almost impossible to recover. By examining *Imjin nok*, we will be able to see how people in 18,19th century remembered this horrifying and complicated war in the realm of popular culture.

Different editions (*ibon*) of *Imjin nok*

As I mentioned earlier, there are many different editions of *Imjin nok*. For that reason, it is difficult to choose single edition to examine characteristic of *Imjin nok*. Some of Korean scholars worked on different editions of to categorize the *Imjin nok*. Among them, So Chaeyŏng found 23 different editions and divided them into five groups.

1. Editions based on historical facts (written in literary Chinese)
2. Editions based on historical facts adding elements of folktales (written in Korean)

3. Editions based on folktales written in literary Chinese
4. Editions based on folktales written in Korean
5. Editions based on folktales but modified and extracted from different versions.¹⁴⁵

So Chaeyŏng's categorization is based on contents and formation process of the editions. Im Chŏrho also worked on forty different editions to categorize them into six different groups of editions based on structure of the editions. For instance, if the structure the story follows Ch'oe Iryŏng, then it is considered to be Ch'oe Iryŏng group.

1. Historical editions in literary Chinese
2. Ch'oe Iryŏng version
3. Guan Yu version
4. Yi Sunsin version
5. Modified historical editions
6. Rest of them¹⁴⁶

The edition that I used in this chapter is Ch'oe Iryong group according to Im Ch'ŏrho's categorization and the edition based on folktales written in Korean according to So Chaeyŏng's categorization. It is also titled *Hŭngnyong nok* (The record of the Black Dragon Year). There twenty seven different editions of the Ch'oe Iryŏng version which implies that this version was most popular. It follows a hero fiction structure centered on Ch'oe Iryŏng. Most of characters in *Imjin nok* are historical figures such as Yi Sunsin, Li

Ruosong, and Kim Ŭngsŏ. However, the main character, Ch'oe Iryŏng, is a fictional figure.

Ch'oe Iryŏng, according to the story, was born in this world because of his mistakes in the heavenly world. Ch'oe was exiled to the human world where he experienced much hardship. He eventually overcome his hardships and went back to the heavenly world as he died. This is a formulaic structure of the type easily found in hero fiction around this time. Furthermore, all heroes in the story are very young. They are eighteen or nineteen years old. Even an historical figure like Yi Sunsin was portrayed as a nineteen year old boy in the story. Considering the fact that Yi Sunsin was around fifty at the time of Imjin War, it is quite surprising to see him portrayed as teenager even though he still built the turtle ship and defeated the enemy. I believe it the consequence of following the conventions of hero fiction of that time. All the protagonists in hero fiction were teenagers, or youths in their high teens, I should say. All of these heroes also had exceptional talent defeating enemies, outstanding physical appearance, and good martial art skills. These were all the conditions of being heroes in hero fiction. It implies that this edition was written in 18th – 19th century when hero fictions were flourishing. In order to satisfy the readers/consumers of hero fiction, modifications were necessary even though they went against known historical facts. Here is the brief storyline.

Ch'oe Wigong who was forty years old did not have a child. In his wife's dream, Guan Yu appeared saying that the heaven granted a son for them. This child was Ch'oe Iryŏng. He was so brilliant that he became a minister at the age of nineteen. At that time, King Sŏnjo dreamt of girl with broomstick who cried in his dream. The king thought it was so strange that he asked his ministers about his dream. No one dared to speak out, but Ch'oe Iryŏng interpreted the dream as an invasion by Japan. The

king was furious about this dream interpretation. So that Ch'oe Iryōng was exiled.

There was Yi Sunsin who was twenty years old and lost his parents at a young age. He was tall and strong. He also built the turtle ship. He eventually headed down to Chōnju, but was killed by Japanese invaders.

There was Kang Hongnip who was very told and strong. When the war broke, the king fled to Ŭiju. On his way, he faced Japanese soldiers, and Kim Togyōng who was seventeen years old saved the king. In disarray of that time, Ch'oe Iryōng was able to reach Ŭiju to be seen by the king. Ch'oe recommended Kim Ŭngsō who was twenty years old to be a general. Kim Ŭngsō was able to kill a Japanese general with help from *kisaeng* (female entertainer) Wōlsōn who was a concubine of the Japanese general. But Kim Ŭngsō also killed Wōlsōn.

Yu Songnyōng went to Nanjing to seek aid from the Ming government, but most of the Ming ministers opposed dispatching the army. Guan Yu then appeared in the Ming emperor's dream, saying that Ming should help Chosōn since the Ming emperor was reincarnation of Liu Bei while the king of Chosōn was reincarnation of Zhang Fei who were sworn brothers in their previous lives. Finally Ming sent out troops led by Liu Ruosong to help Chosōn.

After Li Ruosong arrived in Chosōn, he was reluctant to attack the Japanese troops. He finally attacked P'yōngyang with help from many Chosōn commanders. Li Ruosong realized that there were too many heroes in Chosōn, so he decided to sever the veins of mountains and rivers. And he was caught by mountain deity and scolded by him. He then left Chosōn and went back to China.

There was Kim Tōngnyong who was a young boy. His father passed away and he lived alone with his mother. During the war, he also wanted to participate in the fighting, but his mother insisted that he should finish his mourning period for his deceased father. But later he was executed on the grounds that he did not participate in righteous army activities.

Japan tried to invade Chosōn a second time. This time, the king dispatched an army to invade Japan led by Kim Ŭngsō and Kang Hongnip. When they arrived in Japan, they lost all of their soldiers due to thick fog, but both Kim and Kang fought so well that the Japanese king wanted to have them as his sons-in-law. Kim Ŭngsō refused, while Kang Hongnip accepted the offer. Kim then killed Kang, wrote a letter to the king, and killed himself as well. Kim's horse brought Kim's head and the letter back to Chosōn crossing the sea.

Thirteen years later, Master Yujōng (Samyōngdang) went to Japan where he overwhelmed and intimidated the Japanese king with his exceptional and magical skills. Finally the Japanese king surrendered, and Master Yujōng came back to Chosōn with the surrender document and tribute.

In the story, we find heroic acts of young men who participated in the righteous armies. All of these non-officials fought hard to save the country. However, we do not see any exceptional behaviors from officials in the story except Yu Sŏgnyong who went to China to ask for aid. The king was portrayed as an incompetent man who could not make any decisions. The tragic life of heroes such as Kim Ŭngsŏ and Kim Tŏngnyong can be seen as how people in general felt pity on those people who were sacrificed for the sake of the state. These elements are things that we often see in hero fictions. Here, I would like to pay attention to Chinese figures in *Imjin nok* to examine the perspectives of ordinary people of that time.

Representations of the Ming in *Imjin nok*

In 17th and 18th century Chosŏn, an interesting phenomenon can be observed. In the official bureaucracy, attitudes toward the Ming became major determinants of political stands. During the Imjin War (1592-1598), the Chosŏn government asked the Ming government to send reinforcements, and upon request the Ming government sent 40,000 troops to Chosŏn. However, when the Later Jin (later it became the Qing dynasty after they destroyed Ming) attacked the Ming, it became Chosŏn's political dilemma whether they should stand by the Ming or support the Later Jin. These tensions resulted in the deposal of King Kwanghae in the early 17th century and also drove serious political factionalization in the late 17th century.

In 1689, King Sukchong (r. 1674-7120) bestowed poison on Song Siyŏl (1607-1689) who was a prominent Confucian scholar of Chosŏn. At that time, Song was a head of the Westerners (*sŏin*), but Southerners (*namin*) who were the political rival of

Westerners were in power. In order to strengthen their power, Southerners insisted on killing Song Siyöl. After Song's death, Kwön Sangha (1641-1721), a disciple of Song Siyöl, established Mandongmyo (萬東廟), a Confucian shrine to worship the Emperor Shenzong (r. 1572-1620), who dispatched aid army to Chosŏn during Imjin War (1592-1598), and Yizong (r. 1627-1646), the last emperor of the Ming dynasty. When Song was still alive, he used to emphasize the argument of Chosŏn "keeping the Confucian civilization" after Ming's fall, and it became the political stance of Westerners. Establishing the shrine could be understood as a political gesture of Westerners in order to exhibit that Westerners still remained taking over the will of Song Siyöl. However, fifteen years later, in 1704 when Westerners regained their political power from the Southerners, to commemorate sixty years (the one complete sexagenary cycle) of Ming's fall, King Sukchong established an alter called "Taebodan" which means "great payback" to worship three emperors of Ming: this time, the founder of Ming, Taizu (r. 1368-1398) was included, and the sacrificial ceremony was conducted officially. The representation of Ming became a symbolic political practice when Westerners and Southerners struggled over hegemony.

However, in contrast to officialdom, the Ming was represented differently in popular level. *Imjin nok*, the one of the most popular fictional writings of Chosŏn, represents how ordinary people thought about Ming China. Although it is not clear when it was written and who wrote the book, most of scholars in Korean studies agreed that it was written during 18th century and flourished until the end of 19th century. There are about forty manuscripts and printed versions, and some of them are written in classical Chinese and some are in vernacular Korean. It is believed that orally circulating *Imjin*

War tales were written down around 18th century. There are many different extant versions, and it indicates that how widely and deeply the war tales were circulated among people.

Li Ruosong

The book depicts war heroes such as Admiral Yi Sunsin (1545-1598), Yujŏng (1544-1610) and Hyujŏng (1520-1604), two monks who led monk soldiers fighting against Japanese troops, and many leaders of *ũibyŏng* who fought for the state. The interesting point about this book is its depictions of Li Ruosong, a Ming general who came to Chosŏn leading the Ming troops. *Imjin nok* does not describe other Ming officials or soldiers who resided in Chosŏn during the war. Instead, depiction of Li represents Ming as whole.

Following scene shows how Li was reluctant to fight against Japanese, giving a hard time to Yu Sŏngnyong who was a minister at that time.

... the Yalu River swelled and overflowed. Li Jusung [Ruosong] could not cross the river and gazed upward to the sky and lamented: "Heaven always has a purpose. What shall we do? If we oppose the will of heaven, though we may win in battle how long can our victory last."

Just as he was he was ordering the soldiers to go back, minister Yu Sŏngnyong bowed his head to the ground a hundred times and said: "If you will pitch camp for tonight only, I will make a bridge that will allow you to march across the river."

"If you intend to do this," Li Jusung [Ruosong] said, "swear that you will accept punishment if you fail." Yu Sŏngnyong swore an oath and began his undertaking: connecting boat to boat, he urged on the people to build a bridge that night. Gazing upon the river as big as an ocean that had become land, Li Jusung [Ruosong] exclaimed: "How can there be such talent in a small country like this?"

When Li Jusung [Ruosong] expressed a wish to dine on dragon broth, Yu Sŏngnyong poured water into an earthenware jar, caught a

dragon with a hook, and boiled the broth. When Yu presented it, Li Jusung [Ruosong] said: “To eat dragon broth there must be ivory chopsticks.” When Yu Söngnyong pulled out ivory chopsticks from his sleeve and presented them, Li Jusung [Ruosong] was struck with amazement. Immediately they crossed the river.¹⁴⁷

Li kept making excuses before he crossed the river. It shows how Li was reluctant to fight. However, Yu fulfilled all of Li’s requirement even preparing ivory chopsticks in the middle of the war, and finally made Li cross the river.

The next scene is more surprising. Li Rusong thought there were so many talented heroes in Chosŏn, hence he thought it could be threaten to Ming. For that reason, he went all over the eight provinces and severed the veins of mountains and rivers. Doing that he thought it would cut off talented descendents in Chosŏn. While he was doing that, he met an old man at one place. The old man invited Li to his place and asked him to preach his unfilial son. After Li heard of the old man’s saying, he decided to help the old man. And the old man’s son came back home when Li was having wine and refreshments.

Shortly after Li Jusung [Ruosong] had eaten, the azure-clad boy came in, wearing an octagonal belt and holding five-colored flowers in his hand. When Li Jusung [Ruosong] returned his greeting, the old man said to his son: “Entertain our guest well” So saying, he went inside. “I hear that you are very unfilial and don’t respect human relations. Rascals like you should be killed as a lesson to posterity,” Li said. “Who are you to mock an adult? I will do away with you,” the boy answered.

Li Jusung [Ruosong] was further enraged and drawing his sword struck the boy. The sword, however, broke. Unaffected, the boy sat down and said in reproof: “I’ve known you for a long time. Although I intend to pulverize you, for the moment you are a guest in my house. To render meritorious service and leave a beautiful name behind is what every grown man wishes. But you, with perverse intentions of usurpation, smash the faults in our mountain ranges. How can I not be furious?” And he

grabbed Li Jusung [Ruosong] in one hand, threw him out the door, and roared: “Dirty general! Leave this mountain at once!” Li Jusung [Ruosong] looked up at the sky in resignation and lamented: “I cannot stay here for long.”¹⁴⁸

What Li tried to do was to destroy the future of Chosŏn, and this was certainly not what Chosŏn people expected when Ming troops came to Chosŏn. Li seemed more concerned about Chosŏn’s future than fighting against Japanese troops. Instead, Li was jealous of the many talented men in Chosŏn. Therefore, he tried to get rid of talented men. Through Li’s behavior, readers could see that Chosŏn’s status was as high as Ming. Chosŏn men were well mannered, stronger and smarter than Li. Li even sweated out the boy in the mountain that the boy knew magic. The reason why Ming troops came to Chosŏn was to fight against Japanese and provided an aid. However, in *Imjin nok*, Ming troops’ victorious scenes are rarely depicted; rather what we read is how the arrogance and cruelty of Ming troops made Chosŏn people suffer more. It seemed people were dealing with another enemy.

Then, one can ask what really happened during the Imjin War regarding the attitude of Ming troops. Fortunately ample written source are available to us. Among them, Yu Sŏngnyong (1542-1607)’s *Chingbi rok* (The Record to Reprimand and to be Cautious) vividly depicts behavior of Ming troops. When Sŏnjo fled to Ŭiju, Yu Sŏngnyong escorted him as an official. While Li Ruosong stationed in Chosŏn, Yu was in charge dealing with Li. During the war, Yu recorded almost every day’s accounts named it *Chingbi rok* meaning that his writing is to reprimand Chosŏn’s conduct during the war,

and to let the war be a lesson to descendants, so they can prepare and look out for future disaster.

According to *Chingbi rok*, after Li Ruosong along with 40,000 Ming soldiers recaptured P'yŏngyang at his first battle, he became very arrogant and looked down on the Japanese army. At the second battle at Pyŏkchegwan, Li's army was defeated badly by the Japanese. Since then he did not only want to fight against Japanese, but he wanted to go back, withdrawing his forces. Yu Sŏngnyong, Yi Pin and other officials went to see Li asking to dispatch army, but Li refused to move. Yu wrote, "Among many Ming generals, Zhang Shijue suggested to withdraw force to Li Ruosong. But we continuously asked [to fight] eagerly. Li kicked Yi Pin and yelled at us to retreat. His face and voice were agitated."¹⁴⁹ They treated Chosŏn officials as if they were their own subordinates, plundered the people, and demanded military provisions all the time. They came to Chosŏn to help them, but they caused many problems as well. More stories about Ming troops can be found in non-official writings as well. Among them, O Hŭimun, who recorded daily life during the war while he spent days as refugee, wrote many passages about Ming troops in his collection. One passage writes, "I heard the Ming troops that went down to Honam where they plundered goods of people endlessly on the streets and in people's houses. People felt like they are facing enemy. They even stole a cow, slaughtered and ate it. They also stole treasure like basins... They are under Li Ruosong's army. They acted this extreme way because Li Ruosong did not control them well."¹⁵⁰

The peace talks went for four years without any result. Although Chosŏn was the victim of the war, it did not have any right to express its own opinion about the war. Chosŏn people did not want the peace negotiation with Japan. They wanted to fight to the

end; however, Ming government wanted the peace negotiation. Therefore, Chosŏn was excluded in the peace negotiation. Furthermore, Ming generals were afraid that Chosŏn troops might attack Japanese troops while the peace negotiation was discussed; therefore, Ming troops even escorted Japanese troops when they retreated to Pusan, and ordered Chosŏn troops not to attack Japanese troops.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile both Ming troops and Japanese troops were stationed in Chosŏn, and the Chosŏn government had to provide provisions for the Ming army. It was a great burden to both Chosŏn and the Ming. In *Imjin nok*, we found the discontent of Li Ruosong, a general who did not want to fight, a man who tried to destroy the future of Chosŏn. The way Li Ruosong is portrayed in *Imjin nok* can be seen as reflecting the unwelcome attitude of ordinary people toward the Ming of that time.

Guan Yu

We face another Chinese figure in the book. It is Guan Yu. He lived during the Three Kingdoms period of China, and he became famous with popularity of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Although he is a historical figure, he is better known as one who appeared in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The most famous tale about him is the “Crossing five passes while executing six commanders. (ogwan cha’m yuk)” Guan Yu, Liu Bei and Zhang Fei were sworn brothers who vowed to die on the same day although they had not been able to be born on the same day. Liu Bei was the eldest, Guan Yu in the middle and Zhang Fei was the youngest among them. During the battle Guan Yu was captured by Cao Cao along with two wives of Liu Bei. Cao Cao always respected Guan Yu being so talented in fighting and so gentle like a noble man. Cao Cao treated Guan Yu

with all his effort to keep him by his side with many gifts such as nice horse that could run one thousand *li* in a day. However, Guan Yu refused all of Cao Cao's goodwill saying that he would leave once he found out Liu Bei's whereabouts. When Guan Yu heard about his brother, Liu Bei's whereabouts, he left along with two wives of Liu Bei without hesitation. Cao Cao wanted to keep him so badly, but in order to keep his promise, Cao Cao let Guan Yu go. When Cao Cao's subordinates heard about it, they pursued Guan Yu, with the result that he killed six commanders while crossing five passes. Since then, Guan Yu is known for the loyalty and righteousness that he kept toward Liu Bei.¹⁵²

Then, why did Chinese historical figure became a deity in Chosŏn? Why do we see Guan Yu as a guardian spirit in *Imjin nok*? Guan Yu was highly praised by Chinese and came to be worshiped as a deity in China starting from the Tang dynasty. During the Song dynasty Guan Yu was made a king by Emperor Huizhong who built the King Guan Yu Shrine (Guan wang miao) in 1102. In the time of the Ming dynasty, China faced frequent invasions from foreign countries so that Guan Yu became an emperor when the Yongle Emperor built the Emperor Guan Yu Shrine (Guan di miao).. Guan Yu belief widely spread around the country and even the emperors promoted Guan Yu belief. Confucius' shrine is known as the literary shrine (wen miao) while Guan Yu's shrine is known as the martial art shrine (wu miao). Guan Yu was that much important in Chinese society. Chinese people believed that the spirit of Guan Yu would protect from engaging any kinds of battles. That was why the Ming troops brought the portable altar of Guan Yu to Chosŏn to protect themselves. The Ming general like Mao Guoqi and Chen Lin built Guan Yu shrines in Sŏngju and Seoul respectively in 1598. For that reason, some

scholars assumed that Guan Yu worship had begun during Imjin War as folk religion.¹⁵³ However, it actually started from the Chosŏn court.

In 1601, Emperor Shenzhong requested the building of a Guan Yu Shrine in Seoul. He insisted that Chosŏn was able to defeat Japanese troops because of protection from Guan Yu. The Chosŏn court began construction in today's Sungindong called Tongmyo (East Shrine) of Guan Yu. However, no one in Chosŏn welcomed it. Most of the people suffered and barely survived the war. Now they had to provide the labor to build the shrine for a foreign deity. Every day they needed two hundred laborers which were very difficult to summon. King Sŏnjo was not pleased either that people who survived the war had to provide labor in building the shrine. Some of laborers ran away, some of them got hurt, and there were riots at the construction site. Officials were also very concerned about it.¹⁵⁴ It implies that there was no sign of Guan Yu worship immediately after the Imjin War.

The shrine was neglected for a while until King Kwanghae ordered to repair it in 1612.¹⁵⁵ Afterward, Chosŏn kings performed rituals for Guan Yu. King Sukchong emphasized the loyalty of Guan Yu and paid respect to him by worshiping Guan Yu at the shrine along with his guards.¹⁵⁶ King Yŏngjo also worshiped at the shrine as soon as he was enthroned.¹⁵⁷ By the time of Chŏngjo, ordinary people began to visit the shrine to worship. It seems Guan Yu worship became popular belief because of Chosŏn kings. As they frequently visited the shrine, ordinary people began to believe that Guan Yu was a significant figure as a deity. Guan Yu worship still remains in today's Korean society as folk belief. Guan Yu was appeared as a deity, a guardian spirit of Chosŏn in *Imjin nok*. Following is the first scene that he appears.

The man approached the lady and said: “Long ago, in the empire of Han, I was Marquis Shouting, Kuan Yuch’ang [Guan Yu]. But I committed a crime against heaven and had to float like cloud and flow like water. Then I found out that my younger brother had become king of Chosŏn, on whom I wish to depend. So I went to the Jade Palace of the Transcendent in Heaven, and the Emperor on High instructed me: ‘I kept this child under my care and loved him every day, but because he lost a volume of The Document of Human Fortune and Misfortune, I am sending him into exile as a human being and you must raise him secretly.’ Thus I wish you to raise him as a person of noble birth.”¹⁵⁸

In the first scene, Guan Yu brought a son to the Ch’oe family who later become adviser of the king saving the country. It is obvious that Guan Yu’s role is a guardian spirit. Next, we see Guan Yu scold Japanese general, Kato:

“I am Marquis of Shouting, Kuan Yuch’ang, of the Three Kingdoms of the past. I am now entrusting myself to the state of Chosŏn to avoid wind and rain. Barbaric Japanese bandits, how dare you invade Chosŏn? When I beheaded the commanders of five passes, hundreds of thousands of heroes all died at my hands. I am from another world. And if I do battle, you’ll be erased in an instant. If you do not wish to meet sudden death, evacuate your position and retreat at once. If you are arrogant, I will pulverize the Japanese people.”¹⁵⁹

Guan Yu said that he entrusted himself to Chosŏn to avoid wind and rain. It means that he is enshrined in Chosŏn, so that he now is a deity of Chosŏn, not a Chinese deity. Again his role is protector of the state. In following scene, we see why Guan Yu became a guardian spirit.

“Elder brother, you guard all under heaven, yet you do not know the ties between brothers. How can I not be sad?”

“Who are you to call me your elder brother?” replied the Son of Heaven.

“Lord brother, please listen carefully.” Again the ghost of General Kuan [Guan] bowed four times. “Liu Hsuante [Liu Bei] of the Three Kingdoms of old reincarnated as the Son of Heaven of Great Ming, and the youngest brother Chang Fei [Zhang Fei] became the king of Chosŏn. Your subject could not be reborn, so he used to rely on the younger to avoid wind and rain. Then the younger suffered the Japanese invasion and fled to Ŭiju. Please, send the requested reinforcements as soon as possible and save you younger brother from distress.” He then vanished.¹⁶⁰

Guan Yu explains relationship between the Ming Emperor, the Chosŏn king and Guan Yu himself as the reincarnation of sworn brothers. Guan Yu suggests that it is fate that the Ming should provide reinforcements for Chosŏn. What Guan Yu suggests here is that relationship between Ming and Chosŏn is like brothers rather than ruler and subject.

Fifty-six Japanese generals faced seventy Ming generals. As the two parties fought one another, heaven and earth roiled in confusion. How could heaven be so uncaring? Just then a cold wind picked up and blew dust, the earth caved in, and it was as if heaven were exploding. With a sound like thunder from the air, a general appeared wearing a Heaven Gold helmet and Green Cloud armor, riding Red Rabbit, brandishing a Blue Dragon sword, and wearing a three-point beard. With eyes glaring like a phoenix’s, he shouted: main you intend to swallow Chosŏn whole? How can you possibly expect to live? I am Marquis Kuan Yuch’ang of the Three Kingdoms period! My sword has no mercy! Receive it!”

Kiyomasa could not bear to behold Lord Kuan [Guan] twice, such terror did he strike into his heart. At that moment, Li Jusung [Ruosong]’s sword flashed, Kiyomasa’s head fell, and Kim Ŭngsŏ skewered it on his sword’s end and danced a sword dance on horseback.¹⁶¹

Again Guan Yu appeared as a protector. In previous passages, Guan Yu is more like a messenger who delivers message from the heavenly world and warning. But in this passage, Guan Yu actually used his martial art skills to kill Kato Kiyomasa, the leader of Japanese troops stationed in Chosŏn.

While Chosŏn kings worshiped Guan Yu emphasizing the loyalty that Guan Yu preformed in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, ordinary people believed that Guan Yu was a deity who can provide wealth and protection. Guan Yu's loyalty was magnified in fiction, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The most famous part dealing with Guan Yu is 'killing six commanders crossing five passes,' but this scene does not exist in the real history book: Chen Shou's *Sanguo zhi* (History of Three Kingdoms). It implies that the Guan Yu known to the Koreans was based on what they read in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Even King Chŏngjo praised Guan Yu's loyalty mentioning 'killing six commanders crossing five passes' meaning Chŏngjo also read *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* although he harshly criticized reading and writing fiction.

While Chosŏn kings worshiped Guan Yu, emphasizing the loyalty that Guan Yu preformed in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, ordinary people believed that Guan Yu was a deity who could provide wealth and protection. I believe that is why we see Guan Yu in *Imjin nok* as a guardian spirit. Furthermore, Guan Yu was a familiar figure to Chosŏn people via popularity of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Guan Yu was like a star figure of today. It might have been easier for them to accept Guan Yu because of the fiction, just as we today can easily accept Hollywood stars. In the 18th century, Guan Yu worship was a popular belief that started from the king, it was not a belief that implanted

by foreign troops. Therefore I believe having Guan Yu as guardian spirit in *Imjin nok* does not necessarily imply Sinocentrism in Chosŏn of that time.

Conclusion

In the discourse of the officialdom, Ming was represented positively as an entity to which Chosŏn owed a great debt. In 1618, when Manchu invaded the Ming China, the Ming court requested reinforcements emphasizing that Chosŏn should repay the debt of “kindness (of Ming) to (let Chosŏn) revive (chaejo chiŭn 再造之恩)” that Ming provided to help Chosŏn to rise again during the Imjin War. King Kwanghae delayed dispatching army in hesitation since he acknowledged the rise of Manchu. King Kwanghae tried to stay neutral between Ming and Manchu although officials insisted that Chosŏn should dispatch the reinforcements. Perhaps, that would be part of reason why King Kwanghae ordered to fix the Guan Yu shrine that had been neglected for long time. It could be seen as King Kwanghae’s gesture that he tried to repay the debt. Korean scholar Han Myŏnggi interprets King Kwanghae’s action as a brilliant move to survive as a small country in between two big power houses like Ming and Manchu.¹⁶² However, King Kwanghae was removed by his political opponents, and he was accused of his misconducts. One of them was that King Kwanghae neglected the importance of ‘repay the debt’ to Ming, and stayed close to barbarians (Manchu). In order to legitimize the kingship afterward, the discourse on ‘kindness to revive’ continuously appeared in the Chosŏn court. In 1712, although King Sukchong was physically ill, he insisted to pay visit the Taebodan to commemorate the Ming’s ‘kindness of to revive’ since it was year of Imjin. He

emphasized the importance of ‘kindness of to revive’ although it is not clear whether he really believed it or it was a political gesture to confirm the legitimacy of the kingship.¹⁶³

In sharp contrast, it was represented negatively in popular narratives. Li Ruosong, who represents Ming as whole, was unwilling to fight, very arrogant toward Chosŏn officials, and he even tried to foreclose future rivalry. This different representation indicates “socially symbolic acts” that Fredric Jameson states in his book, *The Political Unconscious*.¹⁶⁴ Jameson argues that every narrative has political interpretation, and represents socially symbolic acts. He further states,

In particular we will suggest that such semantic enrichment and enlargement of the inert givens and materials of a particular text must take place within three concentric frameworks, which mark a widening out of the sense of the social ground of a text through the notions, first, of political history, in the narrow sense of punctual event and a chronicle like sequence of happenings in time; then of society, in the now already less diachronic and time-bound sense of a constitutive tension and struggle between social classes; and, ultimately, of history now conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production and the succession and destiny of the various human social formations, from prehistoric life to whatever far future history has in store for us.¹⁶⁵

Imjin nok should be considered as “collective and class discourses of which a text is little than an individual parole or utterance”¹⁶⁶ since it is believed to be a collection of orally transmitted war tales among commoners. In this sense, we can argue that it belongs to the second phase of the three phases of interpretation that represents society in terms of struggle between social classes. During the Imjin War, commoners were people who suffered most. The king and his officials, anxious to save their own lives, totally neglected the people. The incompetence of the army meant that commoners had to fight

against the Japanese, they had to provide their labor to the government, and they had to provide provisions to Ming army while suffering their cruel treatment. Representations of the Ming in *Imjin nok* shows how much they struggled and suffered. That representation of Li Ruosong in *Imjin nok* can be seen as ‘resistance’ from the ruled class.

Furthermore, the presentation of Guan Yu as a guardian spirit does not imply Sinocentrism that has been argued by Korean scholars such as Ch’oe Munjong. Instead, it shows that Guan Yu worship became folk belief because of the worship done by the Chosŏn court. Hence it can be seen as top down practice that can be seen as ‘incorporation’ within Chosŏn among ruling class (the king and ministers) and ruled class (ordinary people). So, what would be the concerns of the people of that time represented in Imjin War? I believe ordinary people did not simply neglect the major political discourse on ‘kindness to revive,’ or Sinocentrism, or Chosŏn’s relationship with Ming and Qing. Whatever the reason behind this political discourse was, ordinary people also participated in this discourse via popular cultural products as they ‘resist’ and ‘incorporate.’

Chapter 4: Gender Inversion in Female Hero Fiction of Late Chosŏn

In 17th – 19th century Chosŏn, most hero fiction readers were women as I have discussed previously. In *A dream of Nine Clouds*, I examined a vernacular hero fiction written by literatus to see if whether it reflects ideal life of literati at that time. In *Imjin nok*, I investigated to see if perspectives of commoners were represented. Although the majority of readers of hero fiction were women, we have not yet seen women's distinctive perspectives in those hero fictions. In this chapter, I will examine *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl*, a female hero fiction that was very popular to have glimpse of what women dreamt of that time.

According to Martina Deuchler, the Confucianization of Chosŏn society was a process that spread gradually to commoners that transformed Chosŏn into a patrilineal society—something that Deuchler sees as a major discrepancy from bilateral Koryŏ society.¹⁶⁷ However, this kind of view of Chosŏn as a rigidly normative Confucian society has been challenged in recent scholarship. Although it is true that Chosŏn society was patriarchal and patrilineal based on Confucianism, the normalization of whole society cannot be seen as stagnant and rigid as Duncan pointed out.¹⁶⁸ Especially in the discussion of the women of Chosŏn, we often focus on the suffering and submissive life of women. However, we see women that are different from what we usually expected in Chosŏn society in female hero fiction. Those figures finding in female hero fiction are different from the exemplary models we found in the *Samgang haengsil to* (Illustration of Exemplary of Three Bonds) - especially women who committed suicide to maintain chastity (*yŏl*) -the book that was published by the government to instruct people properly with Confucian teachings of loyalty, filial piety and chastity (of women).

In her discussion of gender, Joan Scott defines gender as knowledge about sexual difference, borrowing Michael Foucault's notion of knowledge that is "understanding produced by cultures and societies of human relationships, in this case between men and women."¹⁶⁹ Through the education, whether it is institutional (public and private) or family education, understanding of sexual difference between men and women had been installed. For instance, the Three Bonds (*samgang*) and Five Relations (*oryun*) would tell you there should be distinction between men and women. There are things men should do, and there are things women should do. There are also what women should not do called 'seven evil behaviors' (*ch'ilgŏ chi ak*): 1. not being obedient to parents-in-law; 2. not bearing a son; 3. being jealous; 4. lewdness; 5. having bad disease; 6. being talkative; and 7. stealing. If you committed any one of these behaviors, you could be expelled (by your husband) unless you did not have a place to stay, had mourned your parents-in-law for three years, or if you and your husband became rich after you married him.

Women would have been aware of the differences between being men and being women in Chosŏn society as well as men would have. However, do we always act the way we are educated? Do we always listen to our parents? Perhaps not. Perhaps, women in Chosŏn also did not always behave the way they were educated or told by their parents. There might be deviation in practice just like reading hero fiction or romance fiction of that time. They certainly had freedom to imagine, freedom to dream the fictional world.

There is no definitive evidence that men also read female hero fiction. Although we witnessed literati harshly criticized the reading of vernacular fiction with its absurd content, there was no specific mention of female hero fiction. I believe it is safe to say female hero fiction was

read by women mostly if not exclusively. There remains the question of who were the writers of female hero fiction. One might speculate it might have been written by women; however as discussed previously, I would argue for ‘collective authorship’ in writing female hero fiction like other vernacular fiction. I will examine women’s deviation from Confucian ideals in the *Tale of Hong Kyewöl*.

Female Hero Fiction

Female hero fiction can be characterized according to one of the following three types:

1. The heroine has magical powers and is talented, smart, and well educated. She never reveals herself in public but only supports her husband from behind the scenes. The *Tale of Lady Pak* (Pak ssi chŏn) is one example of this type.

Stories like the *Tale of Lady Pak* are also categorized as war tales like *Imjin nok* since the background of the story is set during the Manchu invasion of 1636. Lady Pak was born in this human world due to the misconduct she committed when she was in heavenly world. She came down to the earth to fulfill her term of live in the human world. It follows the ascend/descend motif of hero fiction. However, unlike other heroines, she was born like a beast. She had beastly physical appearance so that she had to cover her face with a veil all the time. Later, her father-in-law was able to recognize her extraordinary ability and allowed her to marry his son. However, her husband did not like Lady Pak because of her physical appearance. Eventually she was

transformed into a beautiful woman as her punishment term ended. From that time on, she kept a good relationship with her husband. If the story ended here, it could be a romance fiction, but it continued to the Manchu invasion of Chosŏn.

Historically, Chosŏn surrendered to the Manchus, but in the story Chosŏn was able to defeat the Manchus with Lady Pak's help. Lady Pak's exceptional skill was that she knew how to perform Daoist magic of the type that we often see in hero tales. However, she never leaves home – actually the inner chamber – to fight against Manchus. She instead lured them in to her house, and had her servant fight against them as she directed from behind the curtain. Lady Pak emphasized that it was not appropriate to face the enemy since she was a woman. Eventually the enemy withdrew the troops and rest of them lived happily ever after.

However, in this story, Lady Pak always reminds readers that she is a woman, and there is something that woman should not do such as facing the enemy since they were men, but she did not mind facing female enemy. Even in an emergency like war time, although she had exceptional skills she refused to go out and fight since she was a woman. We see the limitation in woman's activity in public space in this case.

2. Men and women are equals in all aspects. An example would be *Tale of Yi Taebong* (Yi Taebong chŏn).

This story has a similar structure to the *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl*, so it would be not necessary to go over the storyline here. But unlike the *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl*, there are no differences in terms of ability and skills between men and women. They would pass the civil service examination at the same level and would get the same official position. We do not see women's superiority yet.

3. Women are superior to men. Two examples are the *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl* (Hong Kyewŏl chŏn) and the *Tale of Scholar Pang* (Pang Hallim chŏn).

In this group of female hero fictional works, we see women's superiority. They are smarter than men and have better martial skills. Their official positions are higher than men's. In case of *Tale of Scholar Pang*, we even see the rejection of men.

Scholar Pang, a woman disguised in man's clothes took and passed the civil service examination at top. She eventually became a son-in-law of the emperor. She was afraid to reveal her true identity, but she decided to tell the princess. When she told her true identity to the princess, she replied saying, "It was my wish to meet a female hero like you, become a life-long friend, and end my life as a friend and a couple. I never wanted to marry a man because I didn't want to become an inner chamber lady drawing eyebrows to look beautiful to a man. This may look like a mere coincidence, but it is not. It must be destined by heavenly way."¹⁷⁰ Thereupon Pang married the princess without reveal her true identity. Pang became a prime minister and died at forty. She reveals herself before she dies to the emperor, but the emperor forgives her. The emperor even praised Pang being such a talented and exceptional woman.

If we examine the relationship of couples in female hero fictions, we see an interesting phenomenon. We see emergence of women in public space and disappearance of men in public space. In the *Tale of Lady Pak*, she stayed in the inner chamber, so that she never advanced to public space to exhibit her skills. Instead, she lured the enemy into her private space, the inner chamber. Meanwhile her husband was also very active in public space, in officialdom and the battle field. A woman stayed in the inner chamber, and a man stayed in public space.

In case of *Tale of Yi Taebong*, Yi Taebong stepped out of public space taking civil service examination and advancing to officialdom in disguise of man's clothes. Woman and a man are sharing the public space at the same level, and it moved onto private space as they married without many conflicts since they are portrayed at the equal level. However, in the case of the *Tale of Hong Kyewöl*, we see a different situation. In the story, Hong Kyewöl and her husband share the public and private space together, but we see many conflicts between them unlike *Tale of Yi Taebong*, and it is because Hong Kyewöl is superior to her husband at any level. In the story, we hardly see her husband in a state of action. He is portrayed as a troublemaker who gives a hard time to Hong Kyewöl, but he is later changed once he acknowledges Hong Kyewöl's superiority. In the case of *Tale of Pang hallim*, we do not see men. Both public and private spaces are occupied by women.

We cannot conclude that this is how female fiction developed – by driving men from the public space – in late Chosŏn since we do not have specific timeline of the production of these female fictions. However, we could speculate that many women readers wanted better and stronger female heroes, and they wanted to see a more active state of women in the fiction, so that there was no space left for men to fit in.

Another unique feature of female hero fiction is that there is no romance in these stories. In case of male hero fictions, romance between male hero and his counterpart female is very important in developing the storyline. For instance, in *A Dream of Nine Clouds*, Shouyou fell in love with eight different women. If anyone argues that a man cannot fall in love with eight women, at least we see romantic situations in the story. In case of other hero fiction that follows the formulaic structure such as the *Tale of Cho Ung* and the *Tale of Yu Ch'ungnyöl*, we see each one falling in love with a beautiful woman, being separated due to incidents, and reunited at

the end of the story. Therefore reunion with lovers is a very important motif in male hero fiction. However, we do not see any romantic moment in female hero fiction.

In the *Tale of Lady Pak*, her marriage was arranged by her father and her father-in-law. Hence it was not her choice to get married to her husband. Furthermore, her husband neglected Lady Pak for long time because she had a beastly physical appearance. Later it narrates that they lived happily ever after, but their relationship is different from what we see in male hero fiction. Similar things happened to other female heroes as well. Their marriages are all arranged by either parents or superior like the emperor. In case of Pang, she ended up marrying a princess. In case of male heroes, they always made first move to get close to women they love, but as for female heroes, they acted passively in selecting men they love. I believe it implies that women could not see women being autonomous in marriage since in the Chosŏn period it was not a matter of romantic love but rather the union of two families arranged by senior men.

A frequent question regarding female hero fiction might be the background of the stories. It is often asked why many of the stories were set in China and not Korea. I have not found any studies on this topic yet, but I believe it was just a literary convention of writing hero fiction as it has formulaic structure. As I discussed in the introduction, the popularity of reading hero fiction had begun with Chinese vernacular hero fiction such as *Romance of Three Kingdoms*. For that reason, readers might be familiar with Chinese setting. Furthermore, hero fiction is a fantasy, and fantasy requires imaginative space which could be China in late Chosŏn.

I found a similar phenomenon in today's Korea. There is a literary genre called *wuxia xiaoshuo* (*muhyŏp sosŏl* in Korean) meaning martial art fiction. It can also be seen as subcategory of fantasy. It is about warriors living in Jianghu (literally rivers and lakes, Kangho in Korean). Jianghu is not a physical place name. It is an imaginative place where warriors

competing their martial art skills. There is one rule to be a man of Jianghu. You kill, or you get killed. The *wuxia xiaoshuo* was introduced to Korea in 1960s, and it became very popular. First, Koreans read translated works, but starting from 1990s, Korean writers gradually began to write *wuxia xiaoshuo*, and when Korean writers write it, the setting is always in Jianghu although there is no Jianghu in Korea. It certainly does not imply the Sinocentrism of today's *wuxia xiaoshuo* writers. They just follow literary convention that *wuxia xiaoshuo* should be set in Jianghu, and I believe similar thing can be seen in writing hero fiction set in a Chinese locale, just literary convention.

The Tale of Hong Kyewŏl

It is believed that the *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl* was written in the 18th century and continued to be circulated until the early 20th century.¹⁷¹ However, like most works of late Chosŏn fiction written in vernacular Korean, the author of the story is unknown. The plot of the story echoes other well known hero fiction such as the *Tale of Cho Ung* and the *Tale of Yu Ch'unghyŏl* that were most popular in the late Chosŏn period.

Female hero fiction shares the same structure and motif of male hero fiction as I discussed in introduction. Among them, *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl* follows the structure that Cho Tongil suggests. Cho Tongil proposes that hero fiction developed from folktales and therefore shares the same structure:

1. A hero comes from an illustrious lineage such as an aristocratic family.
2. Pregnancy or birth is unusual

3. He/she has extraordinary talents.
4. He/she is abandoned in childhood. He/she even faces the threat of death.
5. He/she is saved by foster parents or helpers.
6. He/she faces more threats as he/she become an adult.
7. He/she overcomes these threats and becomes a hero/heroine.¹⁷²

The story is set in China's Ming dynasty. Kyewöl, the central figure, was born to an aristocratic family and from birth showed many signs of being an extraordinary girl. Pregnancy was unusual as well that a fairy showed up Kyewöl's mother telling her that Kyewöl exiled from the heaven. When her father learned of Kyewöl's great intelligence, he dressed her in men's clothes in order to assign her a tutor to learn the Chinese classics. It shows that Kyewöl was raised like a man.

Unfortunately, when she was five years old, a revolt occurred that separated the family—Kyewöl's father disappeared in the chaos and Kyewöl's mother was forced to escape with her. When the mother and daughter tried to cross the river during their escape, they ran into bandits led by Cho Maenggil who captured Kyewöl's mother and servant, then threw Kyewöl into the river to die. Eventually, Kyewöl's mother escaped and hid in a small Buddhist monastery.

Meanwhile, Kyewöl was rescued by the Yŏ family where her brilliance was recognized by Master Yŏ. He treated Kyewöl like he did his son, Poguk, and once again she was dressed in men's clothes and this time given a male name, P'yŏngguk. She received a proper education with Poguk and at the age of 18, both of them sat for

the civil service examinations. Kyewöl passed the examinations in first place and Poguk took second place.

When another revolt broke out, Kyewöl was appointed to be a general and Poguk became her adjutant.¹⁷³ Both of them were dispatched to the battlefield to pacify the outbreak. Successfully subjugating the rebels, Kyewöl was reunited with her parents after thirteen years of separation during her return to the capital.

The emperor, who was delighted over Kyewöl's successful campaign, learned that she had taken ill and sent the imperial doctor to treat her only for the doctor to discover her female identity. Believing that it was only a matter of time before the emperor found out, she sent a letter to the emperor explaining her circumstances and requesting punishment. After reading her letter, the emperor said, "Who would have thought P'yöngguk is a woman? I have never heard of such thing. She is equipped with both literacy and martial skills. She protected the state with extreme loyalty. No man can equal her spirit and talent. How can I dismiss her even though she is a woman?"¹⁷⁴ The emperor not only did not dismiss her from her official position, he also requested that she marry Poguk.

Poguk never had any complaints against Kyewöl up to this point but once their marriage was decided, he tried to control her and was envious of her higher official post. Their relationship worsened when Kyewöl killed Yöngch'un, Poguk's beloved concubine, after which they never shared the same room.

Soon thereafter, another rebellion occurred which Kyewöl was sent to extinguish. In an attempt to showcase his skills, Poguk fell into an enemy trap and was courageously rescued by his wife Kyewöl, forcing Poguk finally to acknowledge

Kyewöl's abilities. Afterwards, Kyewöl withdrew from her official position and worldly affairs to reside in the inner chamber as Poguk's wife, living happily ever after.

Female subversion of the male ideal?

Throughout this story, Kyewöl is portrayed as masculine and even superior to her male counterparts. Passing the civil service examination in first place and being appointed to a higher official position than Poguk, Kyewöl was commended by her tutor who said, "What P'yöngguk [Kyewöl] is able to learn in three months, Poguk cannot even understand though he spends a year."¹⁷⁵ Not only was her knowledge superior, but her martial skills surpassed everyone as evidenced by her heroic rescue of Poguk during the third revolt. When Poguk was trapped by the enemy, Kyewöl rushed into the battlefield to save him. It says, "Kyewöl dashed into the enemy line and shouted saying, 'Do not kill my adjutant.' She then saved Poguk and held him under her arm killing fifty soldiers with one stroke."¹⁷⁶

Kyewöl demonstrates further conventionally male traits such as cruelty when she seeks revenge against her mother's kidnapper, Cho Maenggil, by making him suffer an agonizing death:

Kyewöl dismounted from her horse and grabbed Maenggil's topknot. She then hung him on a pear tree. She said, 'I'll peel you apart gradually.' And then she drew her sword and peeled off his skin. She finally cut his stomach open and pulled out the liver, which she announced to the heavens and reported to the emperor.¹⁷⁷

At this point her enemies as well as her own troops begin to both fear and respect her. She also played the board game 'go' for leisure, displaying in all respects characteristics that were generally perceived to be male. Moreover, Kyewöl exhibits no feminine traits.

On the other hand, Poguk is feminized to a great degree. He is depicted as passive and submissive. Before their marriage, Poguk is simply a shadow of Kyewöl, staying behind her and hanging on her every word. We do not see any of his activity. After marriage, his attitude changes and Poguk weeps before his parents to complain of mistreatment under Kyewöl's hand. As indicated above, his martial skills and war tactics were far inferior to hers and he made many mistakes, which led to the occasion where Kyewöl had to save his life on the battlefield.

In light of this transition, such reversal of gender roles as presented in the *Tale of Kyewöl* wherein a woman is depicted to be more masculine and superior to a man has been interpreted generally by Korean scholars as a gender inversion that subverts accepted gender relations and therefore subverts the patrilineal basis of Chosŏn society. For example, Chŏng Pyŏnghŏn argues along these lines saying:

Women in the Chosŏn period were oppressed and forced to be submissive within the realm of family. The *Tale of Hong Kyewöl* shows the female consciousness that they should revolt against gender discrimination and correct it. It even suggests that the methods that women should take. Until men are defeated, only then, can men and women be equal.¹⁷⁸

Yi Hyesuk also writes:

The *Tale of Hong Kyewöl* can be categorized as resistance literature since it demonstrates resistance against gender discrimination. Considering the fact that it is written after two foreign invasions, this resistance is justified. Furthermore, the

female protagonist believes in the equality between women and men, and exercises her abilities in the public eye regardless of her married status.¹⁷⁹

In contrast, however, I would suggest that no aspect of Kyewöl's gender inversion is presented with the intention of being subversive or transgressive. Kyewöl's appropriation of masculine roles break many taboos of female behavior. As a woman, Kyewöl is not allowed to take the civil service examination; she should not hold any official position; she should not expose herself in the public sphere. If she wanted to exhibit gender inversion, I would say all her public activity should be done as a woman. Instead, Kyewöl was only able to perform in the public sphere in man's disguise. It implies that the public sphere is still man's land, even in the female imaginary.

Once her true identity was revealed, she wanted to withdraw to private sector, but the emperor held on to her. The emperor recognized Kyewöl's talent so that he wanted to keep her in the officialdom. Even killing her husband's concubine can be considered as the jealousy that is banned for women's behavior as I mentioned in seven evil behaviors of women. However, all of this is excused within the logic of the narrative because all her actions are motivated by Confucian morality. In fact, Kyewöl is the most successful model who practiced Confucian morality in the text. She is a loyal subject, filial daughter, good wife, and a wise mother of four children. Despite the fact that women are banned in officialdom, the emperor does not dismiss her because Kyewöl is a genuine loyal subject.

As a woman, she never encounters any obstacles within the society and instead her abilities are widely recognized and respected. Her only problems arise from conflicts with her husband.

There is no indication that Kyewöl believed in gender equality. When asked to marry Poguk, she laments to her parents the fact that she was born a woman without opposing the treatment or position of women in society:

I did not want to get married. I just wanted to live with you until I get old. After I die, I want to be born as a man in the next world and learn the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. Now the Son of the Heaven has discovered I am a woman and has ordered me to marry Poguk. It must be also regretful for you not having any other children who can conduct ancestor worship. As a daughter, how can I not listen to you? But as a subject, how can I disobey the Son of the Heaven? As you said, I will marry Poguk, and in this way, I can repay Master Yō's benevolence. Father, please inform what I have said to the Son of the Heaven.' She then wept and lamented that she was not a man.¹⁸⁰

If one can see Kyewöl's autonomous act in marriage or her romantic move towards Poguk, then one can talk about subversion in this fiction. However, Kyewöl married Poguk even though she did not love him. She actually did not want to marry him. She believed that Poguk was inferior to her. However she decided to marry in order to satisfy Poguk's father who saved her life and raised her like his own child. It is an act of filial piety and righteousness. She tried to repay the debt to Poguk's father. She also could not deny the marriage since it was offered by the emperor. She had to be a loyal subject to keep the emperor's order. Poguk actually had a lover before he married Kyewöl. Neither one of them was happy about this marriage, but they married.

In this passage, Kyewöl never suggests that men and women should be treated equally but rather, she expresses her desire to have been born as a man in this world or the next. This affirms Kyewöl's underlying belief and agreement that men are superior making it difficult to suggest this work is a subversion of either patrilineal society or sexuality. I would oppose the idea that the *Tale of Hong Kyewöl* suggests revolt against patrilineal society.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examine the *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl* as a basis for understanding the inversion of gender roles in female hero fiction which I argue does not represent a subversion social mores as has been argued by mainstream contemporary Korean scholars.

How then should we understand gender inversion in this type of fiction? As I mentioned, Otani Morishige argues that in late Chosŏn, the majority of popular fiction readers were women. In particular, the number of stories written in vernacular Korean rose sharply after the 17th century and upper-class women comprised the majority of fiction readers. They acquired these books through book rental shops in the Seoul region which lent works of fiction in vernacular Korean.¹⁸¹ If, as Frederic Jameson has argued in *The Political Unconscious*, narratives are “socially symbolic acts,” then works of popular fiction may be seen as texts that present an “individual parole or utterance” of “collective and class discourses,” since popular works of fiction simultaneously represent perspectives of writers and readers.¹⁸²

In this sense, I suggest instead that the women readers’ perspectives—such as yearning for the outside world, or the critique of the misconduct of men in terms of Confucian morality—are strongly represented in these works of female hero fiction. The inversion of gender roles in *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl* also can be seen as ‘resistance’ to the patrilineal society suggesting that women also need a sphere to exhibit their talents. Kyewol exemplified the Confucian morality thought to be only possible among men only while she displayed an exceptional filial piety and loyalty greater than that Poguk could do.

There are so many works of hero fiction in Korea that are believed to be written in the years from the 17th century to the early 20th century. Most of them share the same structure and plot with flat characters so that you would easily forgot what you read, or

mix up with other fictions. It is almost like you just change names of characters rather than reading/writing new or different fictions.

However, the *Tale of Hong Kyewöl* is different. It has a well developed storyline although it follows formulaic structure of hero fiction with distinctive characters. Probably that is why it earned great popularity in late Chosŏn, and it has even been made into an internet game in today's South Korea. Expressing woman's masculinity is something that we did not expect to see in Chosŏn period based on our 'knowledge.' It is impressive to see a female character like Hong Kyewöl in Korean premodern texts which I see as something very unique. However, it failed to show a women's utopia as Kyewöl withdrew to the inner chamber as she married and had children.

The inversion of gender roles represented in this story can be seen as 'resistance' to the society, or rather the way in which society failed to realize key Confucian values. It wanted to show that women also could be as good as men in public sphere. The emperor praised Hong Kyewöl being so skillful and conducting moral perfection, and I believe it suggests that in order to be recognized as public figure, one needs to be moral. This is a way to 'incorporate' with social norm of that time.

Conclusion

After two major foreign invasions by the Japanese and Manchus in the 16th and 17th centuries, hero fiction earned great popularity in the late Chosŏn period of Korea. People who had suffered during these wars sought heroic figures capable of saving them—a need that was fulfilled vicariously through hero fiction. By the late Chosŏn, hero fiction had developed as a literary genre and the concept of a hero came to embody all of the following elements: He/she was born under unusual circumstances and endowed with extraordinary skills; was abandoned or separated from his/her parents; sacrificed him/herself for the benefit of others; was a savior with great military abilities; and most importantly, upheld Confucian morality.

The dominant ideology of late Chosŏn was Neo-Confucianism, and it was led by the literati. They used literary Chinese in reading and writing to control any kind of activities regarding literacy (mun, 文). Writing and reading became the hallmarks of elite culture since not everyone was literate at that time. Writing and exchange poetry in both literary Chinese and vernacular Korean became part of elite culture as they basked in poetry. After King Sejong invented the Korean alphabet, *hangŭl*, in 1444, non- yangban social groups and women gradually acquired the ability to read and write, and by the time of the 17th century, non-yangban social groups and women began to enjoy reading and writing, and it became part of the popular culture of that time.

We found that literati criticized reading and writing vernacular fiction, especially among women. They considered it as full of absurdities that made people bewildered. It was considered as an *inferior culture* to them. With the growing popularity of vernacular

fiction, professionals who were involved in production and distribution of vernacular fictions emerged in 17th century, as Otani Morishige pointed out. The rental shop owners would find writers and hand copied their manuscripts for *mass production*, and rented fiction to consumers at a certain cost.

Perhaps it will be useful to revisit John Storey's definition of popular culture in five different ways.¹⁸³ First, "popular culture is simply culture that is widely favored or well liked by many people." Second, "it is the culture that is left over after we have decided what is high culture." Third, popular culture is "a mass culture." In this case its focus is on commercial culture. Fourth, "popular culture is the culture that originates from the people." Lastly, it is "a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate groups and forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups."

Following Storey's definition of popular culture, reading and writing vernacular fiction can be seen as popular culture. It was widely favored by many people so that it became social problem according to the writings of the literati. It was an inferior culture from the perspective of literati, but it was a form of popular culture that featured the mass production of fictional texts.

Three major works of hero fiction were examined to see if their contents would fit into Storey's last definition of popular culture being a 'site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate group and forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups' as has been widely in recent Korean scholarship.

A Dream of Nine Clouds was written by Kim Manjung who was a prominent scholar and man of central power. It is believed that he wrote this fiction while he was exiled. Kim Manjung depicted the ideal life of the literati in the fiction following

structure and elements of romance that women enjoyed in vernacular fiction. This can be seen as combination of literati culture (high culture) and women's culture (low culture) of that time. It means *A Dreams of Nine Clouds* can be seen as a product of popular culture.

Imjin nok and *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl* can be seen as popular fiction that contains both 'resistance' of subordinate groups and forces of 'incorporation' from dominant groups. When the Manchus invaded Ming China, the Ming court requested reinforcements from Chosŏn since Ming had sent its soldiers to aid Chosŏn at the time of the Imjin War. Relations with and attitudes toward the Ming subsequently became a major feature of political discourse in the Chosŏn court. Ordinary people also responded to the state regarding this issue in *Imjin nok*, where we see resistance of ordinary people to the Ming via depictions of Li Ruosong, and their incorporation with larger Chinese culture in Guan Yu worship.

Tale of Hong Kyewŏl is one of the most popular works of female hero fiction. Female hero fiction depicts the masculine aspects and extraordinary skills of women, but it lacks the romantic elements we find in male hero fictions. Due to the masculinity of the female heroes and the inversion of gender roles, some Korean scholars see female hero fiction as subversion of the patrilineal society. However, even as it suggests resistance to the patrilineal society, it also shows incorporation with the state orthodoxy that was Confucian morality.

By examining the vernacular hero fiction of late Chosŏn, we are able to see the development of a popular culture that featured reading, writing, and circulating vernacular fiction, especially hero fiction. This particular popular culture was developed mainly by women and commoners on the periphery of society. Furthermore, this popular

culture did not mean the rise of a counterculture that solely resisted the dominant culture; rather this type of popular culture contained elements of both resistance to the elite social order and incorporation with the dominant Confucian culture.

Reference

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- ¹ Tonggwang 29, (1932), pp.297-308.
- ² Huges-Hallett, *Heroes: A History of Hero Worship* (2006), p.4
- ³ Ruhlmann, “Traditional Heroes in Chinese Popular Fiction” in *The Confucian Persuasion* (1960), p. 141.
- ⁴ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (1982), p. 76.
- ⁵ In order to distinguish this from Western heroes in epics and some romance genres, I will use the term “hero fiction” in referring to traditional East Asian fiction about heroes.
- ⁶ Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (2012), pp.1-15.
- ⁷ *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1985), p. 608.
- ⁸ Cecil M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (1964), p. 97.
- ⁹ Huges-Hallett, *Heroes* (2006), p.4
- ¹⁰ Literally, “yǒng” means the finest of flower, and “ung” distinguished animal, referring finest and distinguished one among nature. (Morohashi, *Dai Kan-Wa jiten* (1986), p. 590.)
- ¹¹ 總攄英雄, 以誅秦項. (*Hanshu*, 23:1090.)
- ¹² 天下英雄, 惟使君與操耳. (*Sanguo zhi*, 32:875.)
- ¹³ 出師未捷身先死, 長使英雄淚滿襟. (Hawkes, *A Little Primer of Tu Fu*. (1967), pp.103-108.)
- ¹⁴ Ruhlmann, “Traditional Heroes in Chinese Popular Fiction” (1960), p.175.
- ¹⁵ Sō Taesōk, “Yōngung sosōl ron” (Discussion on hero fiction) in *Hanguk kojōn sosōl ron* (Studies on premodern Korean fiction) (2000), pp. 176-197.
- ¹⁶ *Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言 (Illustrious Words to Instruct the World), *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (Comprehensive Words to Admonish the World), *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恒言 (Lasting words to Awaken the World), and *Erpo* (二拍) collections, *Poan jingqi* 拍案驚奇 (Striking the Table in Amazement at the Wonders) and *Erke poan jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (The Second Collection of Striking the Table in Amazement at the Wonders)
- ¹⁷ *Jinghua yuan* 鏡花緣 (Romance of the Mirrored Flowers) was translated as *Cheil kiōn* 第一奇諺 (The Strangest Words) by Hong Hūibok in the early nineteenth century.
- ¹⁸ Kim Ta’ejun, *Chosōn sosōl sa* (History of Korean Fiction) (1990).
- ¹⁹ Pak Sōngūi, “Hanguk sosōl e kkich’in Chungguk sosōl ūi yōnghyang” in *Kodae osip chu ’nyōn kinyōm nonmun chip* (1955).
- ²⁰ Yi Chaesu, “Hanguk sosōl paltal tangye e issōsō chungguk sosōl ūi yōnghyang,” *Nomun chip* 1 (Taegu, 1956).
- ²¹ Jay Clayton, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* [1991], p .5.

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- ²² Lu, Sheldon Hsiao-peng. *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (1994), p. 4.
- ²³ Lee, Peter H. *A History of Korean Literature* (2003), p. 127.
- ²⁴ Lee, Peter H. *Ibid.* (2003), pp. 127-128.
- ²⁵ Lee, Peter H. *Lives of Eminent Korean Monks* (1969), p. 12.
- ²⁶ Kendall, *Art of Biography*, pp. 40-41.
- ²⁷ *Lives of Eminent Korean Monk*, p. 14.
- ²⁸ It is the flower of youth in Silla who excelled in beauty, bravery and military arts.
- ²⁹ Lee, Peter H. *Anthology of Korean Literature* (1981), p. 101.
- ³⁰ Lee, Peter H. *Anthology of Korean Literature* (1981), p. 102.
- ³¹ Lu, Sheldon Hsiao-peng. *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (1994), p.5
- ³² Here we should also note that in the transition from official to non-official discourse, there were pseudo-biographies (假傳). About nine extant pseudo-biographies have been transmitted from Koryŏ. Written by educated scholars and monks, these stories personify various items such as wine, bamboo, paper and stick. They exhibit a higher degree of inventiveness and became incorporated into the tradition of non-official writings such as the literary miscellany.
- ³³ “It contains diverse material which touches upon the ideal structure of government, the highest state rituals, appropriate funeral, wedding, and banquet etiquette, proper interpersonal behavior within a hierarchical Confucian society, and many other topics.” (Nienhouse, *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (1986), p. 312.
- ³⁴ Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty* (2000), p.205
- ³⁵ Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*. (25)
- ³⁶ Duncan, “Confucianism in the Late Koryŏ and Early Chosŏn.”
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.80-81.
- ³⁸ Chŏng Tuhŭi, *Chosŏn sidae ŭi taegan yŏn'gu* (1994)
- ³⁹ Chinese characters were used for sound and meaning to indicate, usually, Korean suffixes and particles. It was mostly used by clerks in writing official documents and contracts.
- ⁴⁰ Chinese characters were used to indicate Korean particles and suffixes reading literary Chinese texts.
- ⁴¹ One of 4 poetic forms of traditional Korea. Originating as song lyrics written to a prevailing *kasa* tune, it is characterized by a lack of stanzaic division and variable length, a tendency toward description and exposition, and, at times, also lyricism and the use of balanced parallel phrases, verbal and syntactical. Often linked to Chinese *fu*, it emerged as new genre toward the middle of fifteenth century. (Lee, *A History of Korean Literature* (2003), p. xxxviii.)

⁴² The most popular, elastic, and mnemonic poetic form of Korea. Dating from the fifteenth century, this 3-line poem/song was sung and orally transmitted until texts were written down from about the beginning of the eighteenth century. Even today it is an oral art for both the lettered and unlettered. (ibid, p. lviii)

⁴³ Five ethical norms (*oryun*) of Confucian teaching: 1. Righteousness and justice that governed the conduct between ruler and ministers (subjects); 2. Cordiality or closeness between parents and children; 3. Distinction between husbands and wives; 4. Order between elders and juniors; 5. Trust between friends

⁴⁴ There were four social classes in Choson: yangban, *chungin*, commoners, and mean people. Yangban was elite ruling class while *chungin* was hereditary class that consisted of technical official, hereditary clerks, and illegitimate children of yangban.

⁴⁵ Yi, *Hanguk kojŏn siga yŏngu* (1994).

⁴⁶ Cho, *Hanguk munhak t'ongsa* 2 (1996).

⁴⁷ Kim Kihyŏn, "Chosŏn chunggi ūi yŏksa sosŏl" (Historical fiction of Mid-Chosŏn) in *Kososŏl sa ūi chemunje* (Problems in literary history of premodern fiction) (1993), pp. 601-618.

⁴⁸ Min Kŭnggi, "Ch'angjak kumdam sosŏl ūi changnu sa chŏk wisang chŏngnip ūl wihan myŏkaji chŏmgŏm" (Several investigations for the establishment of creative military fiction as a genre) in *Kososŏl ūi chemunje* (1993), pp. 585-600.

⁴⁹ Pak Yongsik, "Yŏngung sosŏl ūi sini sŏsa yuhyŏng yŏngu" (Studies on extraordinary narrative structure of heroic fiction) in *Hanguk kososŏl ūi chaejomyŏng* (Reillumination of premodern Korean fiction), (1996), pp. 3-52.

⁵⁰ Yi Sangt'aek ed. *Hanguk munhak ch'ongsŏ 2: Kojŏn sosŏl* (Anthology of Korean Literature 2: Premodern Fiction), (1997), p. 9

⁵¹ Sŏ Taesŏk, "Yŏngung sosŏl ron" (Discussion on heroic fiction) in *Hanguk kojŏn sosŏl ron* (Studies on premodern Korean fiction), (2000), pp. 176-197.

⁵² Frye, Northrop. *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (1976), p. 129.

⁵³ Ibid. P. 157

⁵⁴ Ibid. P. 53.

⁵⁵ Kim Chinyŏng, "Hwaso wa kŏylgu pangsik ūl t'onghaebon yŏngung sosŏl ūi yuhyŏngsŏng" in *T'angmin Kim Kwangsun kyosu chŏngnyŏn kinyŏm nonch'ong*. (2004), pp. 115-138.

⁵⁶ "It is a form of classical language fiction which arose during the Tang dynasty. The tales are short pieces of approximately 350 to 3500 characters, disciplined in both form and style. Their subject matter reflects a fundamental interest in human character: when something, possibly unusual side, happens to someone, how does he react." (Nienhauser, *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* 1, (1986), p.356)

⁵⁷ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1990), p. 33.

⁵⁸ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1990), pp. 33-34.

⁵⁹ Lee, "higher Narratives in Korea" (2011), pp. 26-41.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.26

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- ⁶¹ *Paektusan sŏrhwa yŏngu* (1992), pp.192-194.
- ⁶² *Mindam chip* (1983), pp.41-49.
- ⁶³ *Hanguk kubi munhak taegye* 2-2. (1981), pp. 670-673.
- ⁶⁴ 太史徵人口, 列傳猶不誤. *Sŏkch'ŏn chip*.
- ⁶⁵ It literally means returning the writing style to correct form.
- ⁶⁶ *Chŏngjo sillok*, 46:349
- ⁶⁷ Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610) argued for originality and spontaneity in poetry and urged the recognition of vernacular novels and of folksong – neither had been recognized by most contemporary critics. His literary views (as well as those of his brothers) were best summarized, in which he stressed the linguistic changes in language and the importance of clarity and sincerity in literary expressions. The brothers' influence – their writings, along with those of some of their literary associates came to be identified as school known as the Kung-an p'ai [Gongan]. Nienhauser, *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (1986), p.955.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 46:351
- ⁶⁹ Pak, "Reading munch'e panjŏng," (2010), pp. 609-645.
- ⁷⁰ *Chŏngjo sillok*, 46:253
- ⁷¹ Yun, "Reinterpretation of *munch'e panjŏng*," (2001), pp. 69-94.
- ⁷² Kang, *Anjok kwa pakkatchok*, (2007), p.217
- ⁷³ *Chŏngjo sillok*, 46:351
- ⁷⁴ Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (2012), pp.1-15.
- ⁷⁵ Oh, *Swoemi rok*, 4
- ⁷⁶ Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature* (1996), p. 557.
- ⁷⁷ Yi, *Bestsellers of Chosŏn* (2007), p.18.
- ⁷⁸ Ōtani, *Chosŏn hugi sosŏl tokcha yŏngu* (1985), pp. 46-55.
- ⁷⁹ Cho, *Cholsujae chip*, 12
- ⁸⁰ Ch'ae, *Pŏnam chip*,
- ⁸¹ Yi,
- ⁸² Chŏng, *Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ*, 1:8
- ⁸³ Yi, *Siksan chip*, p.285
- ⁸⁴ Hulbert, *Passing Korea* (1906), p.311

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- ⁸⁵ King Kong ordered to keep translated Chinese fictions and Korean vernacular fictions in this library for palace women.
- ⁸⁶ Ch'oe, "Chosŏn ūi kajŏng munhak" (1938), p.8
- ⁸⁷ Michael Kim also wrote an article regarding this topic in "Literary Production, circulating libraries and private Publishing: The Popular Reception of Vernacular Fiction Texts in the Late Chosun Dynasty" (2004)
- ⁸⁸ Pak, *Wŏlnt'an hoego rok*
- ⁸⁹ Cho, *Ch'ujae chip*
- ⁹⁰ *Hunmin chŏngŭm* 1a. Translation from *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* 1, p.516.
- ⁹¹ Ibid, p.516.
- ⁹² *Sejong sillok* 103:19b-22a. Translation from ibid, p.519.
- ⁹³ Chu, "Yŏksa sok ūi ch'aek, chisik kwa kwansŭp ūi maegaemul" (2008), p.20.
- ⁹⁴ Cho, *Hanguk munhak sa* (1963)
- ⁹⁵ Kim, "Han'gŭl sosol panggak pon ūi songnip e taehayo" (1995)
- ⁹⁶ Kim, "Yijo sosŏl ūi chakcha wa tokcha e taehayŏ" (1985)
- ⁹⁷ Otani, "Chosŏn hugi ūi sech'aek chaperon" (2003)
- ⁹⁸ Miner, *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature* (1985), pp 63-64.
- ⁹⁹ It is a book in Japanese script. Stories of the Edo period, written entirely or mostly in hiragana for people with little education in reading and mostly given to entertainment. Numerous kinds followed each other in popularity. (Miner, *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature* [1985], pp. 281-282.)
- ¹⁰⁰ Otani, ibid (2003)
- ¹⁰¹ Pastreich, "The Reception of Chinese Vernacular Narrative in Korea and Japan" (1997), 71-83.
- ¹⁰² Otani, *Chosŏn hugi sosŏl tokcha yŏngu* (1985), 46-55.
- ¹⁰³ Cho, *Hanguk munhak t'ongsa* (1994), 21.
- ¹⁰⁴ Sŏl, *Kuun mong yŏngu* (1999), 194-217.
- ¹⁰⁵ Frye, *The Secular Scripture* (1976), 27.
- ¹⁰⁶ Lee, *A New History of Korea* (1984), 160.
- ¹⁰⁷ Bennett, "Popular Culture and the Turn to Gramsci" (2009), p.96.
- ¹⁰⁸ Kim Manjung, *Sŏp'o manp'il*
- ¹⁰⁹ Kim Ch'unt'aek, *Pukhŏn chip*, 6

¹¹⁰ Haboush, Jahyun Kim, “Constructing the Center: The Ritual Controversy and the Search for a New Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea,” p.52

¹¹¹ *Sallim* scholars literally means scholars of the mountains and forests, who, unlike professional officials who entered the bureaucracy by passing the civil service examinations, abjured examinations and official careers and only periodically accepted public posts at royal invitation. (ibid., p.64)

¹¹² *Sukchong sillok*, 38:285

¹¹³ Ibid. 38:442

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 39:300, 301, 610.

¹¹⁵ Sō, “The Romantic Structure: A Rhetorical Approach to *Ch’uan Ch’i* and Middle English Tales (1979), 284-288.

¹¹⁶ Sō, “The Romantic Structure”, 279.

¹¹⁷ Sō, “The Romantic Structure”, 289-291.

¹¹⁸ Sō, “The Romantic Structure”, 303.

¹¹⁹ Bantly, *Embracing Illusion* (1996), 79.

¹²⁰ Sō, “The Romantic Structure” (1979), 21.

¹²¹ Kim, *Söp’o manp’il* (1987), 388-389.

¹²² Frye, *The Secular Scripture* (1976), 47.

¹²³ Kim, *Kuun mong*. Trans by Gale, 223.

¹²⁴ Frye, *The Secular Scripture* (1976), 27.

¹²⁵ Kim, *Kuun mong*. Trans by Gale, 11-12.

¹²⁶ Kim, *Kuun mong* (1984), 21-22.

¹²⁷ Kim, *Kuun mong*, 107-108.

¹²⁸ Kim, *Kuun mong*, 114.

¹²⁹ Kim, *Kuun mong*, 147.

¹³⁰ Kim, *Kuun mong*, 47.

¹³¹ Kim, *Kuun mong*, 77.

¹³² Sō Taesōk, “Yōngung sosōl ron” (Discussion on hero fiction) in *Hanguk kojōn sosōl ron* (Studies on premodern Korean fiction) (2000), pp. 176-197.

¹³³ Yi Sangt’aek ed. *Hanguk munhak ch’ongsō 2: Kojōn sosōl* (Anthology of Korean Literature 2: Premodern Fiction), (1997), p. 9

¹³⁴ Halbawachs, *On Collective Memory* (1992).

¹³⁵ Ibid, p.48.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p.24.

¹³⁷ In 663, Silla and Tang alliance attacked Paekche. Paekche requested reinforcements from Japan that Japan sent around 30,000 troops according to Park Noja who wrote about *Nihon shoki*, “Kuwŏnbyŏng chagyŏk ŭro hanbando rŭl ch’ajattŏn woegun” (2009)

¹³⁸ Ibid, p.29.

¹³⁹ *Minjung* can be translated as people, but it has a specific connotation. The term *minjung* was not used in the premodern era, but 20th century Korean scholars used this term to emphasize the resistance of ruled class against ruling class.

¹⁴⁰ Ch’oe, *Imjin nok yŏn’gu* (2001)

¹⁴¹ Duncan, “Imjin woeran ŭi kiŏk kwa minjok ūisik hyŏngsŏng” (2010)

¹⁴² Yu Sŏngnyong, *Chingbi rok* (2007)

¹⁴³ The Ming government’s reaction is based on the studies of Kenneth M. Swope. Swope, “Sun’ mang ch’ihan,” (2007)

¹⁴⁴ This argument is based on Chŏng Tuhŭi’s article of Imjin war. (Chong Tuhŭi, “16 segi ch’oedae ŭi chŏnjaeng, Imjin woeran” (2007)

¹⁴⁵ So Chaeyŏng, *Im Pyŏng yangnan kwa munhak ūisik* (1980) from Ch’oe Munjŏng, *Imjin nok yŏn’gu* (2001), p.27.

¹⁴⁶ Im Ch’ŏlho, *Imjin nok kun yŏn’gu*, from ibid, pp. 32-33.

¹⁴⁷ *The Record of Black Dragon Year*. Trans by Peter Lee. (2000), p.82-83.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. P. 95-96

¹⁴⁹ Yu, *Chingbi rok* (1999), p.145

¹⁵⁰ O Hŭimun, *Swoemi rok*, p. 193

¹⁵¹ *Sŏnjo sillok* 36

¹⁵² Luo Guanzhong, *Sanguo yanyi* 2

¹⁵³ Kim T’ak, *Hanguk ūi Kwanje sinang* (2004)

¹⁵⁴ *Sŏnjo sillok* 34

¹⁵⁵ *Kwanghae ilgi* 33:191

¹⁵⁶ *Sukchong sillok* 40:31

¹⁵⁷ *Yŏngjo sillok* 41:489

¹⁵⁸ Lee, ibid, p.57.

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- ¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p.72.
- ¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p.80.
- ¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.90.
- ¹⁶² Han Myŏnggi, *Kwanghaegun* (2000)
- ¹⁶³ *Sukchong sillok* 40:428
- ¹⁶⁴ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (1982), p.20
- ¹⁶⁵ ibid. P.75
- ¹⁶⁶ ibid. P.76
- ¹⁶⁷ Deuchler, *The Confucian transformation of Korea*.
- ¹⁶⁸ Duncan, “Examination and Orthodoxy in Chosŏn Dynasty Korea,”
- ¹⁶⁹ Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (1999), p.2
- ¹⁷⁰ *Tale of Pang hallim* (1991)
- ¹⁷¹ Pak Kyŏngwŏn, *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl chŏn yŏngu* (1991).
- ¹⁷² Min Kŭnggi, “Ch’angjak kumnam sosŏl ūi changnu sa chŏk wisang chŏngnip ūl wihan myŏtkaji chŏmgŏm” (Several investigations for the establishment of creative military fiction as a genre) in *Kososŏl ūi chemunje* (1993), pp. 585-600.
- ¹⁷³ civil officials usually assumed military command in times of emergency
- ¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p.59
- ¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p.34
- ¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p.44
- ¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.75
- ¹⁷⁸ Chŏng Pyŏnghŏn, *Hanguk ūi yŏsŏng yŏngung sosŏl* (2000), p.281
- ¹⁷⁹ Yi Hyesuk, *Tale of Hong Kyewŏl e nat’anan yŏsŏng ūisik yŏngu* (1997), p.397
- ¹⁸⁰ *Hong Kyewŏl chŏn*, p.60
- ¹⁸¹ Otani Morishige, *Sech’aek kososŏl yŏngu* (2003), pp.21-40
- ¹⁸² Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (1982), p.20
- ¹⁸³ Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (2012), pp.1-15.

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