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The Life and Works of Yi Ok

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

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Professor Peter H. Lee, Chair

My dissertation examines premodern Korean literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, focusing on the role of the literati in the development of popular literature and culture in late Chosŏn Korea. In particular, I consider the significance of the literary works of the prominent Chosŏn literatus Yi Ok as a case study to reexamine the cultural diversities of the literary field at this time. Yi Ok was an iconoclast whose controversial writings violated Neo-Confucian literary norms, even compelling King Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1800) to establish a policy prohibiting the Chosŏn literati from writing in Yi's style. In examining Yi's unconventional stories, such as those about morally defeated members of the literati, lower-class people, and ghosts and transcendents, my dissertation challenges prevalent ideas about premodern Korean literati; they are often perceived as Confucian moralists whose writings, themes, and subject matter are limited to didactic moral lessons

in the service of upholding the Confucian social order. My dissertation demonstrates that the theme of secular desires and the use of colloquial language were popular among politically marginalized members of the literati. It shows the existence of a much more expansive characteristic of the Chosŏn literati culture at large, which impacted the development of fiction in late Chosŏn.

The dissertation of Youme Kim is approved.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vi
Vita	vii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Chapter 2. Yi Ok and King Chŏngjo's Literary Policy	16
Chapter 3. Yi Ok's Life and Writings	54
Chapter 4. Yi Ok's Views of Literature	77
Chapter 5. The Lives by Yi Ok	102
Chapter 6. Conclusion	188
Appendix	193
Bibliography	229

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The literati, guided by Neo-Confucian principles, were expected to cultivate themselves according to Confucian morals and uphold social order as a ruling class through their writings. During the late Chosŏn period, however, works of fiction were created by literati writers, and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have largely been regarded as the golden age of fiction (*sosŏl*) in Chosŏn Korea. The writers adopted existing literary genres such as *chŏn* (biography), *rok* (account), or *ki* (record) to write works of fiction. The literary genre that shows the most prominent affinity to fiction is biography. Many works in a biography form are regarded as "fiction" among contemporary Korean scholars.[1] Examples of early Chosŏn fiction in the biography form include "Yisaeng kyujang chŏn" (Student Yi peers over the wall)[2] by Kim Sisŭp (1435–1493) and *Hong Kiltong chŏn* (Tale of Hong Kiltong)[3] by Hŏ Kyun (1569–1618). The biography category reveals a gradual evolution into fiction, with its tendency to merge on fiction

[1] The commonly adopted English translation of "*sosŏl*" is "fiction." This term, however, seems ambiguous because Chosŏn literati, especially in the early Chosŏn period, adopted the term to indicate various secondary genres of literature including literary criticism, miscellany including works of fiction, and philosophical and other discursive writings. It is largely in the late Chosŏn period that "*sosŏl*" referred to "fiction." I will use the term "fiction" to indicate literary works generally considered as "fiction" by Korean scholars.

[2] The story is about the love between a talented student, Yi, and a beautiful girl, Ch'ŏe. When she is killed by the Red Turbans, she fulfills her love as a ghost wife.

[3] It concerns Hong Kiltong, the secondary son of Minister Hong and a maidservant, Ch'unsŏm. Kiltong refuses to live a humiliating life as a secondary son and uses military tactics as the leader of bandits by stealing the ill-gotten wealth of evil officials.

and history.[4] Sheldon Lu argues for the case of a transition from history to fiction in Chinese narrative saying that Chinese biography is situated between history and fiction:

> A noticeable generic intersection between history and fiction at this point is the Chinese biography, a literary form first established in official historiography. It later becomes an important genre of fiction. . . . Fiction writers often take pains to imitate the rhetoric of the historian and to adopt narrative devices that evoke an aura of historicity and factuality in a biography. The T'ang fiction biography often describes the transgression of identities and prescribed roles, mixes the natural and the supernatural, and depicts the individual in crisis, at the threshold of two orders of reality.[5]

The genre of fiction that developed in late Chosŏn partly from biography shares similarities with Chinese biography. Given this, among Yi Ok's total of twenty-five biographies and some one hundred pieces of literary miscellany,[6] I focus upon the biographies for two reasons; they show the long tradition of historiographical writing and reveal their gradual evolution into a fiction genre as literati writers combined history and fiction.

A brief review on the biography section of the *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian), by Sima Qian (135–86 B.C.), serves as the model of form and style for traditional Korean biography. Sima's format is composed of an introduction, main body, and epilogue. The introduction identifies the main character(s) and provides details about each character's background and occupation. The main body addresses the sequence of events. The anecdotes contained therein are selected by the writer according to the historiographical principle of praise and blame 褒貶. In

[4] "Biography itself is a mixed form, having always a tendency to merge on the one side with fiction and on the other side with history." Judith H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 69.

[5] Lu, Shledon Hsiao-peng. *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 7-8.

[6] I follow Wu Peiyu's definition of literary miscellany to indicate casual writings of premodern Korea. For Chinese miscellaneous works, I use the term "casual writing." Please see footnote 24 in Chapter 2 for details. "Miscellany is a convenient repository of random jottings, anecdotes, or observations, sometimes grouped together under specific headings, but sometimes without any scheme or structure." Peiyi Wu, *The Confucian's Progress: Autobiographical Writing in Traditional China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 196.

the epilogue, usually marked by a heading such as “I say” or “in appraisal we say,” the writer adds the appraisal of life or explains his or her sources. A comment in a biography often fulfills a didactic purpose by urging readers to follow his authoritative interpretation of the story.

One of the important styles that brings biography closer to fictional narrative is the annal-biography format 紀傳. In the *Shiji*, Sima Qian adopted an annal-biography format instead of a chronological one. This format is a significant step in the rise of fictional narratives, as a character rather than a historical event, becomes the center of the narrative. The literary form of biography in Korea was first established in official historiography.[7] I review major Korean historical records to show the model of style and form of traditional Korean biography, and to trace its historiographical features and fictionalization. Examples of early biography can be found in the *Samguk sagi* (Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms) by Kim Pusik (1074–1151), the *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) by Iryŏn (1206–1289), and the *Koryŏ sa* (History of Koryŏ) by early Chosŏn compilers.

Historical Records is the earliest extant official history of the Three Kingdoms: Silla (57 B.C.–A.D. 935), Koguryŏ (37 B.C.–A.D. 668), and Paekche (18 B.C.–A.D. 660). Largely influenced by the *Shiji*, it includes the basic annals, chronology, treaties, and biographies. In particular, the biography section deals with exemplary figures, including generals, scholars, filial sons and daughters, faithful women, and rebels. The Confucian historian Kim Pusik argued that a historian should not rely on dubious materials, such as myths and legends. However, he collected popular narratives, including folktales, orally transmitted tales, career accounts, and epitaphs that were available, and incorporated these in his historical writing. For example, in the biography of

[7] The various types of official biography include the chronological biography 年譜, accounts of conduct 行狀, epitaphs on tombstones 墓碑, funeral orations 弔文, elegies 哀詞 , and funeral odes 頌/贊.

General Kim Yusin (595–673), Kim's father dreamed that two stars fell onto him, and his mother dreamed of a boy who wore golden armor, rode on clouds, and entered her room. In addition, Kim describes heavenly interventions, such as a mysterious old man who gives Kim a secret formula, and a god who directs auspicious starlight onto Kim's precious sword in response to his prayer at a Buddhist monastery:

> Kim Yusin realizes that the old man is an extraordinary being. He bows twice and says, "I am a Silla person . . . . Considering my sincerity, I desperately wish that you would give me a secret formula with which to defeat my enemy." The old man shares a secret formula and says, "Please do not show it to others carelessly. If you use the formula in a non-righteous way, then you will meet with a misfortune." . . . When Kim tries to follow the old man, Kim is unable to see him but only shining light in five colors on the mountain.[8]

However, biographies in the *Historical Records* are different from those of late Chosŏn because Kim as an official historian claimed that he adopted an objective point of view.

The compiler of the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*, Iryŏn, is a Buddhist monk of the Meditation School. He includes both Buddhist biography and the official account of Buddhism in the Three Kingdoms and Unified Silla. He often incorporates miraculous and divine happenings that assist readers in understanding the universal principles of the Buddha. In addition, embodiments of the Buddha or a bodhisattva often appear among despised or lowly people—beggars, servants, or ordinary country folk and children. For example, a female servant enters the Lotus Paradise in answer to her earnest prayer:

> She [the female servant] followed her noble master to the monastery every evening and offered a prayer. The unkind master did not like this. He gave her two large bags of rice to pound to pearly white each day, to keep her busy at home. But she worked so diligently that she was able to attend prayer . . . . Moreover, as a sign of her belief, she gouged holes in her two hands and passed a straw rope through them, which was then tied to two pegs on opposite sides of the monastery courtyard. . . . One evening, she was

[8] Kim Pusik, *Samguk sagi* (Historical Record of the Three Kingdoms) (Yi Pyŏngdo, ed., Ŭryu munhwasa, 1977), 41:728a2-5.

> lifted into the sky through a gaping hole in the ceiling and roof, higher and higher as she flew toward the western side of the monastery.[9]

In addition, the descriptions of extraordinary animals, such as dragons that protect Buddhist sages, reveal Iryŏn's idea that the natural and supernatural worlds are connected and that human existence is inseparable from the supernatural world.

History of Koryŏ also contains biographies of 949 people under nine categories, including faithful civil and military officials, evil subjects and traitors, filial sons and daughters, and faithful women. For example, the biography of Lady Ch'ŏe describes a woman who chose to die rather than to be raped by Japanese marauders. The compilers express their admiration for the lady's death in order to manifest the virtue of female chastity.

> Lady Ch'ŏe was about thirty years old and had a beautiful appearance. The [Japanese] invaders tried to rape her by threatening her with a sword. She resisted them by grasping a tree and kept rebuking them that "I am doomed to die. I would rather choose righteous death than living with dishonor." The invaders finally killed her and took her two sons. Her other son Chŏngsŭp, only six years old, cried beside her dead body and a baby in swaddling clothes crawled to her and suckled her mother's breast. Her blood kept entering the baby's mouth and the baby died soon.[10]

Continuing upon the compilation of official biographies, Chosŏn literati also wrote private biographies. In early Chosŏn, the literati produced a considerable number of biographies of political figures who were involved in literati purges. Their works were aimed to reveal the righteousness of the person who shared the same political views as the writers. One representative example is "Yuksin chŏn" ("Biography of Six Martyred Subjects"), by Nam

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[9] Iryŏn, *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) (Ch'ŏe Namsŏn, ed., Minjung sŏgwan, 1954), 5:7a8-8b8.

[10] "崔年方三十餘貌且美。 賊得而欲汚之露刃以脅。 崔抱樹拒奮罵曰 死等耳。與其見汚而生寧死義。 罵不絶口。賊遂害之虜二子以去。子習甫六歲啼號屍側襁褓兒猶匍匐就乳。血淋漓入口尋死。後十年都觀察使張夏以事聞。乃命旌表其閭蠲習吏役" Chŏng Inji et al., *Koryŏ sa* (History of Koryŏ). 3 vols. (Tongbanghak yŏnguso, 1955–1961), 121:24a6-b6.

Hyoon (1454–1492). Nam wrote about six subjects who were martyred while attempting to restore the dethroned King Tanjong (1441–1457, r. 1452–1455). When Nam's disciples and friends expressed their concern that his works might enrage King Sejo (1417–1468, r. 1455–1468), he insisted upon writing the biography, saying, "How can I let the loyal and righteous names of sages vanish for the fear of my death?"[11] Nam's purpose for writing corresponded to the traditional one, as explained by Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721), the Chinese historian who compiled *Shitong* (Generality of Historiography):

> As for the life of men, there are the worthy and unworthy. If one's wickedness is enough to be a warning to the world, or if one's goodness is enough to provide a paragon for posterity, and if his name is not heard on the day of his death, whose fault is it? It is the responsibility of the historian.[12]

While traditional biography continued to be written, some biographies incorporated fictional aspects similar to early examples of Chosŏn fiction. Though vulgar or evil subjects were generally considered unworthy topics, biography writers were able to describe their subjects without dishonoring their morality—the objective description of the subjects could offer lessons to readers. Likewise, fictional aspects were accepted, when the authors could offer didactic lessons or garner the reader's interest in the classics and history. The safe and objective distance created by the biography format enabled literati to hide behind the façade of objectivity when they described the traditionally irreverent or overlooked aspects of reality. Thus, literati relied on biography to create fiction.

[11] "吾豈惜死終沒大賢忠義之名乎" *Yijo myŏnghyŏn chip* (Collected works of renowned worthies of the Yi Dynasty) 4, (Taedong munhwa yŏnguwŏn, 1984–1986), 159.

[12] Lu, Shledon Hsiao-peng. *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 97.

During late Chosŏn, as more literati writers incorporated history and fiction in biography, the history genre gradually came to be overshadowed by fiction. For example, one of Pak Chiwŏn's (1737-1805) works, "Yangban chŏn" ("Tale of a *Yangban*"), describes an invented character, an impoverished literatus, who agrees to sell his status to a wealthy merchant to avoid punishment.[13] In the process of negotiating to purchase literati status, a local magistrate reads a document that lists what a literatus should and should not do: he should not pursue material gain by engaging in commerce or manufacturing, even if he is starving to death. The merchant complains that the title of literatus is only full of empty formalities. In addition, when the merchant discovers the literatus's abuse of privilege and power, such as extorting property, using the labor of commoners, and lynching them, he calls the literatus a thief and decides not to purchase the literati status. The description of literati who lost his authority and bears criticism and ridicule from lower class people for a living reflects Pak's social reform idea—calling literati to participate in socially productive tasks that prosper the country and do not misuse their privileges as *yangban* and waste time and energy only to save their ruling class dignity.

Including Pak's works, many works of fiction offer entertainment with interesting characters and episodes. Many characters are full of sexual desires and material gains and swallow insulting and abandon Confucian moral principles to fulfill their needs. In particular, literati characters are often depicted as hypocrites—though they maintain Confucian morality on the surface, they pursue ambition, fame, and love in secret.[14] "Pae pijang chŏn" 裵裨將傳 (Tale of

[13] The wife of the literatus criticizes her husband: "You always love to study, but you're no good at returning the government grain. *Yangban* [literati] you say, but your kind isn't worth a penny."Kim Kich'ung, *An Introduction of Classical Korean Literature* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 177.

[14] The hypocritical literati character is in "Hojil" 虎叱 ("A Tiger's Rebuke") by Pak Chiwŏn. The story presents the portrait of Squire Pukkwak, who is a renowned Confucian scholar. He, however, is having a secret affair with a widow, Tongnija. The widow is also a hypocritical figure; she is known as a faithful woman, but she, in fact, has

Subcommander Pae), for example, concerns a fictional character Subcommander Pae, who is infatuated with a woman and put to shame in public. When Pae arrives at his new office, he sees a former subcommander bidding farewell to Aerang, a female entertainer, and gives all his possessions and even his front tooth to her. Pae criticizes the former subcommander by saying that an ethical man like him would never be seduced by a woman. Pae, however, is also attracted to Aerang and sneaks into her home at night. His lewd act is discovered by the public, and he is humiliated, naked, in a magistrate's office. Though there is some social criticism on officials, the story does not directly offer a moral judgment on Pae or subversive minor characters, but amuses the reader with its plot and humorous anecdotes.

The characters in fiction are bold in satisfying their desires and rich in their expressions of emotion. *Ch'unhyang chŏn* 春香傳 (Tale of Ch'unhyang), for example, deals with the love between Ch'unhyang, the daughter of a retired female entertainer, and Student Yi, the son of the local magistrate. Student Yi speaks ill of his father, using vulgar expressions, and reads Confucian classics in a rhapsodic way when he is under his father's scrutiny and cannot go out to see Ch'unhyang. Though she represents a faithful woman, Ch'unhyang, destroys her furniture, tears off her clothes, and plucks out her hair when Student Yi tells her that they must separate.

Late Chosŏn readers of fiction were fascinated by a mixture of refined language of literati culture and the lively colloquial expressions of commoners and lower class people. The protagonist Hŭngbu in *Hŭngbu chŏn* 興夫傳 (Tale of Hŭngbu), for example, uses allusions from a

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secret affairs with other men. A hungry tiger goes down to the village and looks for a man to eat. He, however, refuses to eat a physician and a shaman, fearing that the marrow of their bones is poisoned because they have killed many patients and clients with their clumsy skills and lies. Instead, he decides to eat the Squire, who supposedly is clean and pure. However, when the tiger witnesses the Squire's vileness and hypocrisy, he rebukes the Squire by saying that literati are the most dirty and harmful creatures in the world and not even worth tasting. This work criticizes the Confucian literati's self-contradictory behaviors through fictional characters and events.

wide range of Chinese history and literature to describe his poverty. However, in the scene in which the Hŭngbu family eats cooked rice, they do not show any sign of self-restraint:

> Sitting around the dirty old trough, they are eating cooked rice with dirty bare hands, without spoons. These kids are always fighting with each other to eat more. Though there is enough rice, the younger brothers snatch the rice that the older brothers are eating. The older brothers bawl with clenched fists, hitting the cheeks of the younger ones to the extent that they knock out teeth and call one another "son of a bitch" and "son of a cow." The rice trough is upset, and the kids are fighting each other as if they are killing one another. Hŭngbu also throws away discipline in eating rice. He does not attempt to save his children, though some of them are close to death while eating and fighting.[15]

Character's worldly appetites and desires are revealed in a bold and vulgar manner. Who, then, participated in the fictionalization of biography in Korea? Contemporary studies agree that the literati, as writers and critics, took an important role in the development of fiction.[16] Existing studies, however, tend to focus on a limited number of literati who played a role in political and literary realms. This is largely because many works of late Chosŏn fiction remained anonymous. Despise of fiction, as a casual writing, has been firmly rooted throughout Chosŏn and writers hesitate to reveal their names in writing such works. In addition, from the 1950s, contemporary Korean scholars focused on the internal motivation of modernization in premodern Korean fiction as a way of overcoming Japanese scholarship on Korea.[17] For these reasons, literary works with ideas of social reforms received extensive studies. The popular literary figure is Pak Chiwŏn (1737-1805), an advocate of the School of Northern [Qing] Learning, known as *pukhak*

[15] Kim Chinyŏng ed., *Hŭngbo chŏn* (Tale of Hŭngbo) (Minsogwŏn, 2005), 117.

[16] Im Hyŏngt'aek and Chŏe Unsik, *Kososŏl ŭi sachŏk chŏngae wa munhakchŏk chihyang* (Historical Development of Classic Korean Fiction and Its Literary Orientation) (Pogosa, 2000), 58

[17] Japanese scholarship here indicates the Japanese scholars' argument that Chosŏn had no internal motivation to be a modern nation and thus Japan's intervention is necessary to make it a modern nation.

北學. However, literary works which focused on amusements with little idea of social reform, like Yi Ok's, were undervalued. .

Among the politically unrecognized literati, a large portion of the educated, I focus on Yi Ok (1760–1812), whose works include a total of twenty-five short biographies, poems, essays, and a play. While the latest studies suggest that literati who have fallen politically such as Yi Ok are important writers whose works contributed to the development of fiction, studies are relatively limited to certain themes, such as criticism of corrupt society and the government. Given the scholarship, my research demonstrates that the politically isolated literati were active participants in the development of fiction, though their contribution has largely been underrated due to the weak social and political concerns in their works. The pioneering study on Yi Ok by Kim Kyunt'ae (1985) argues that Yi Ok detaches himself from Neo-Confucian principles and opens a new path toward modern literature by describing lower class people and women.[18] Some studies reveal that Yi's ideas are similar to those of Northern Learning scholars' writings. [19] However, Yi's writings are different from those of Northern Scholars. Yi Ok, unlike Pak Chiwŏn, does not deal with political issues in his writings, but makes keen observations of

[18] Kim Kyunt'ae, "Yi Ok ŭi munhak iron kwa chakp'um segye ŭi yŏngu." (Study on Yi Ok's Ideas on Literature and the World of His Works) (PhD diss., Seoul National University, 1985)

[19] This idea was prevalent among scholars who argued against the found internal motivation of modernization in pre-modern Korean fiction works. Yun Kihong, "Yi Ok ŭi munhak non kwa munch'e yŏngu" (Study of Yi Ok's Views on Literature and Writing Style). *Hanguk hanmunhak yŏngu* 13 (1990): 249–297; So Inho, "Yi Ok 'chŏn' ŭi t'ŭksŏng kwa chakka ŭisik ŭi kuhyŏn yangsang" (Features of Yi Ok's Biography and Ways of Reflecting the Writer's Consciousness). *Sungsil ŏmun* 16 (2002): 227–242; Sin Haejin, *Chosŏnjo chŏngye sosŏl* (Biographical fiction in the Chosŏn period) (Wŏrin, 2003); An Sehyŏn, "Yi Ok ŭi sayu pangsik kwa sanmun ŭi munch'ejŏk t'ŭksŏng" (Ways of Thinking and Features of Narrative style of Yi Ok). *Chinju sanŏp taehak nonmunjip* 59 (2004): 109–136. Other studies argue the uniqueness of Yi Ok compared to Practical Learning School scholars. The studies include Studies who argue against Yi, Hyŏnu, "Yi Ok *sop'um* yŏngu" (A Study of Yi Ok's *Sop'um*) (Ph.D diss., Sŏnggyungwan University, 2002); Kim, "Yi Ok ŭi munhak iron kwa chakp'um segye ŭi yŏngu;" Pak, Hyŏnsuk, "Yi Ok *sop'um* mun ŭi chakp'um segye" (The World of Yi Ok's *Sop'um* Writing). (MA thesis, Seoul National University, 2004).

subjects' personal lives and describes what subjects might think and feel. He reveals the importance of worldly desires and feelings in their lives. For example, "Nights of Seven Kinds" and "Seven Things that One Should Avoid" offer a contrast between miserable literati speakers, who have Yi's pennames, and happy individuals who enjoy gambling, wine, beautiful women, splendid houses, and reading fiction.

> There are a sixteen-year-old beautiful lady and an eighteen-year-old lovable young man. They are full of love and longing for each other. They untie their silk waistbands and hold each other's snow-white arms. Their love is deepened as they spend the night together. Their bodies become relaxed like in springtime and their minds are intoxicated, as if drunk. Their bodies become moist with sweet-smelling sweat. They are afraid of the rooster's crow and happy to see that the silk window is still dark. They hope Heavenly God will take care of them and veil the bright moon, so it does not shine on them. Do you still think that night is long?[20]

The long and vivid description of seven enjoyable lives enables readers to perceive the writer's envy, as he cannot sleep alone. Though the speaker says that Confucian literati should avoid such pleasures, the rejection is only superficial and functions as a bridge to other types of pleasures. Such differences between Pak and Yi shows that the two's ways of devotion in the development of fiction are different, though they are both devoted to the development in a broader sense. Considering the scholarship, I see the necessity of expanding upon and modifying previous scholarship on Yi Ok to closely see in what ways that he contributed to developments in fiction written during late Chosŏn.

[20] "二八佳人 三六情郎 意滿思長 於時解寶帶 授素肘 心隨席而轉密 恩與被而漸厚 爾乃體嬾似春 神暢如酒 恐膠音之先唱 愛綺疏之尙黝 願天神之諒此 閣明月而無右 當此之時 夜其長乎" "Yach'il" ("Nights of seven kinds"), Yi Ok, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok Chŏnjip* (Translated Collection of Yi Ok's Works), vol 3, Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏngu hoe tr., (Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2001), 162.

Given the tendency that literary works emerge from their historical contexts, and change in literature takes place developmentally,[21] Chapter 2 examines King Chŏngjo's (r. 1776–1800) policy on literature in 1791, commonly known as *Munch'e panjŏng* 文體反正 (Return to Ancient-Style Prose). From the seventeenth century, newly introduced Chinese casual writings including works of fiction and prose-vignettes of the *Gongan* School held a fascination for Chosŏn elites. Faced with the popularity of Chinese works, King Chŏngjo issued the policy on literature to prohibit the circulation of late Ming and Qing works and ordered officials and scholars to produce practical and useful writing that could uphold social morality. The king's argument on the literati's social obligation in literature is actually not new, but he reemphasized it based on the political necessity—strengthening his power over the court.

Chapter 2 is also designed to answer why King Chŏngjo maintained an uncompromising attitude in punishing Yi Ok. The policy, implemented for cultural and political reasons, charged a number of talented literati from diverse factions. However, the king punished Yi Ok extremely severely while treating generously other literati charged under the king's literary policy. The years of King Chŏngjo's reign have largely been regarded as the golden age of the late Chosŏn dynasty, marked by peace, relative political stability, and cultural prosperity.[22] The king's passion for national renovation and the policy of impartiality brought the appointment of talented literati from a broader pool, including secondary sons who had previously been ignored because of their lower status origins. Considering King Chŏngjo's generous appointing policy, it does not make sense that the king ousted Yi, who were regarded bright and insightful, from central

[21] David Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 4.

[22] Hwang Kyŏngmoon, *A History of Korea* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 100.

politics. The examination of political background will show that the king was unfair in implementing his policy depending on literati's political stances.

Chapter 3 provides biographical information about Yi Ok to show that he is an example of political outsiders of the eighteenth century. It examines Yi Ok's representative works that changed in their features in relation to his social and political status. Based on social and political status, there existed diverse groups of literati with distinct modes of thinking and writing in the late Chosŏn society. John Duncan defines the diverse factors that affect the literati's[23] sense of identity:

> It seems to me that the *yangban* had multiple senses of identity, including clan, class, region, polity and transitional literati status and that the predominance of any one sense of identity at any given time was dependent on historically contingent social and political circumstances.[24]

Similarly, Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow point out that people's selves are "processual" as they change over a lifetime of experience and occupy many "subject positions" within multiple discourses and social relations.

> Despite the firm conviction of individuals and societies, the concept of an autonomous, individuated self with coherent meanings is always a mythic construct that can be accomplished only through cultural discourses and artistic means. Collecting—of either material objects or texts—is one such way to create an artifice of the self.[25]

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[23] The term *yangban* indicates civil and military officials and their families in the late Koryŏ and the early Chosŏn periods. However, in the late Chosŏn period, the term indicates literati whose ancestors once possessed official positions or passed the civil service examinations. More detailed research is done by John B. Duncan in "Examinations and Orthodoxy in Chosŏn Dynasty Korea," *Rethinking Confucianism: Past and Present in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 2002), 76.

[24] John B. Duncan, "Proto-nationalism in Premodern Korea," *Perspectives on Korea* (Sydney: Peony Press, 1998), 210.

[25] Angela Zito and Tano E. Barlow, eds., *Body, Subject, and Power in China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 9-10.

After becoming a student at the National Institution, he became involved in political turmoil and exiled, and realized his hopeless situation. Yi Ok's evaluation on himself and his world views changed, and these changes affected the kinds of literary works that he enjoyed and adopted in his writings. With the more time he spent in exile, he gradually comes to regard himself as a pioneering and insightful writer who examines values in themes and subjects which had been regarded trivial and unworthy among other literati.

Chapter 4 explores Yi Ok's views of literature revealed in his works, in particular, critical essays on Chinese classics, prose-vignettes, and popular fiction. Yi was an avid reader of Ming fiction and wrote works inspired by Chinese stories. My dissertation questions how Yi's wide reading and favorable views on Chinese popular literature and the *Gongan* School writers' prose vignettes affect his recognition on Korea's native culture and diction.

Chapter 5 explores literary subjects, themes, and styles of Yi Ok's biographies. Yi's 25 subjects of biography include politically marginalized literati, lower class people, and supernatural entities. The subjects are non-exemplary from the Confucian perspective. They exert their talents in order to acquire material gains, enjoy life, and do not prioritize Confucian ethics. Though Yi depicts literati characters, many are poor individuals whose talents remain unrecognized by bureaucracy and who finally end their lives by suicide or execution. This chapter examines his literary skills that made his works similar to official biography or a creative writer. Yi adopts the third person omniscient narrative, but seldom the first person narrator—he is not an active participant in the events he recounts.[26] Sometimes, Yi provides a physical description of the subject's appearance portrayed from the outside, but also presents the subject's

[26] Yi sometimes disavowed his authorship, presenting himself as a mere recorder of stories he has heard ("This is the story X told me."). Also, at times, it is unclear whether the subject is Yi's personal acquaintance or from a remembrance and recollection.

interiority with verbs of feeling and thought—recognized as an individual human being that is possible only in fiction. Sometimes, he also shows intimate knowledge and little human details or instinctive sympathy for the subject or assigns a moral value of an act in order to eliminate ambiguities. Also, Yi's choice of a wider range of characters than his contemporaries and the lively descriptions within his writings, regardless of historical accuracy, reveal that his works cannot be judged fairly with a view towards the traditional type of biography.

Yi did not hold any official position in his life and his works were circulated among a small number of friends. Kim Yŏ, Yi Ok's friend, however appreciated Yi's works and compiled them into a collection at the risk of being censured by the literati world. I expect that this study highlights Yi, situated between officials and commoners, as unrecognized but significant writer in his affinity of his writings to late Chosŏn fiction. In addition, I would like to clarify that the following study on Yi's works is not intended to exhaustively catalogue the themes and motifs in his collected works, nor is it an attempt to capture all facets and phases of the authorial subject in its totality. Still, Yi's works show the cultural diversities which enabled the prosperity of fiction in Chosŏn, where Neo-Confucian principles dominated the literati culture as the ruling ideology.

Chapter 2

Yi Ok and King Chŏngjo's Literary Policy

This chapter reviews King Chŏngjo's policy on literature, commonly known as *Munch'e panjŏng* 文體反正 (Return to Ancient-Style Prose), under which Yi Ok became a political exile. This review will explain why the king showed strong hatred to the Chosŏn literati's reading of Chinese popular literature represented by fiction and prose-vignette of the *Gongan* School to the extent that Yi Ok's life dream to become official was ruined. From the time of its establishment in 1392, the Chosŏn government proclaimed that the literature written by literati should embody Confucian principles in order to serve the government and guide the public.[1] Chŏng Tojŏn (1337–1398), a renowned Neo-Confucian scholar of late Koryŏ and an important founding member of the Chosŏn dynasty, proclaimed that literature was a tool to embody the Confucian Way, for "literature is a vehicle of the Way. It results in the configuration of men. If one attains the Way, one can illuminate the world with the teachings of the classics."[2] If a writer is sincere in Confucian principles, then his inner self is necessarily reflected in writing in such a way that expresses Confucian moral themes. When such moral writings prosper in the country, it was believed that then the country is sound, healthy, and well-governed. In contrast, the popularity of literary works which contains socially disruptive characters, anti-moralistic themes, and vulgar

[1] "The dictum that literature is a vehicle of the Way regulate the family, put the state in order, bring peace to all under heaven, and finally to bring about the way of the Former Kings." Peter H. Lee, *A History of Korean Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 322.

[2] Chŏng Tojŏn, *Sambong chip* 3:92, in his preface to the *Mogŭn munjip* (Collected Works of Yi Saek). *A History of Korean Literature*. 317.

and obscene language may signify people's disregard for Neo-Confucian teaching and the incompetence of a king who is responsible for the social health of his kingdom.

According to the idea, literature had been regarded as a mirror of society and literati, especially when they were in official positions, and literati were supposed to write morally healthy writings to cultivate the public and king's recommended officials to write literary works that could uphold the ruling ideology, Neo-Confucianism. From the early years of King Chŏngjo's reign, he emphasized the importance of literature in governing, declaring that literary culture reflects the inner-self of an individual and the governance of the country: "Writers' minds and intentions are revealed in their writings,"[3] and "Writing reveals the good and bad aspects of the rules of society and the lives of people."[4] Confucian classics were the ideal model for the founders of Chosŏn, and continued to be the model throughout the dynasty. Sŏng Hyŏn (1439–1504) said, "The classics are the sayings and the deeds of the Sage, and literature is the dregs of the six classics. Not taking the ancient as a model in writing is like facing the wind without wings; not taking the classics as a model is like crossing the waves without an oar."[5] It was a widely accepted view by Confucian literati that good poetry should have practical use to cultivate one's mind and society.[6]

[3] *Hongjae chŏnsŏ* (Collected Works of King Chŏngjo) 165 (Hanguk kojŏn pŏnyŏk wŏn, 1997), 161.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Sŏng Hyŏn, *Hŏbaektang chip*. (1842 edn.) 12:11a-14b, esp. 11b. Peter H. Lee, *History of Korean Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 317.

[6] A number of influential officials supported Zhu Xi's importance in literary culture. Yi Hwang (1510- 570) focused *Complete Works of Zhu Xi* 朱子大全. Ch'ae Chegong 蔡濟恭 (1720-1799), for example, reaffirmed that Neo-Confucianism by Zhu Xi was the only orthodox ideology in Chinese culture.

> The saying that "poems are for cultivation" means that poems should be gentle and kind, so that they can correct people's nature and cultivating the society. Such poems move people's mind and regulate the principle of the world.[7]

After the promulgation of Chŏngjo's policy in 1791, miscellaneous works including works of fiction and prose-vignettes were prohibited and instead ancient style prose was promoted, represented by the Pre-Qin and Former and Later Han 先秦兩漢 and Confucian classics prose.[8] The king ordered officials and scholars to produce practical and useful writing that could uphold social morality. Works of fiction that depict socially disruptive characters and diffuse false information on history by fictionalization were deemed a precursor to social unrest, and thus enjoyment of these works should be prohibited to strengthen the existing social order. The policy, which was implemented for cultural and political purposes, led to a number of talented literati being ousted from politics, including Yi Ok. In order to understand Yi Ok's significance in the literary history of Chosŏn, it is necessary to examine the eighteenth-century literary atmosphere underlying the institutionalization of the *Munch'e panjŏng*. Specifically, this chapter discusses (1) King Chŏngjo's support of ancient-writing and his criticism of fiction and prose-vignette writing and (2) why the king denounced the latter and issued a policy to curb its popularity.

After an overview of the features of fiction and prose-vignettes of *Gongan* School, eighteenth century court politics will be examined to see that the king's necessity to hold the power in political struggles produced his issue of the policy. King Chŏngjo's reign is often considered as the golden age of the late Chosŏn period, marked by peace, relative political

[7] Nam Kuman (1629-1711), "Preface of Im Hyŏngsu's Literary Collection" 錦湖遺槁序, *Nakch'ŏnchip* 27.

[8] Though Chosŏn kings expressed concern about and even banned some literary works, King Chŏngjo's policy has been regarded as the most rigid literary policy created in Chosŏn.

stability, and cultural prosperity.[9] The king's passion toward national renovation and the policy of impartiality brought about the appointment of talented literati from a broader pool than his predecessors, including secondary sons who had previously been ignored because of their lower birth origins. Though the king had a great desire to cultivate talented officials, he needed to sacrifice some talented literati in order to make his policy effective. The king showed patial attitudes in applying the policy to the literati based upon their significance at court. Harsh punishment was meted to those from politically insignificant families that possessed little political impact on the king's ruling, such as Yi Ok, because the king had relatively less risk in punishing literati from these families rather than those from politically powerful families. Yi was sent to exile and prevented from participating in politics throughout his life. The political exile and isolation changed the identity of Yi Ok, who once dreamed of an ideal literati life as a high official, to a writer of secondary literature. The complex political climate—characterized by factional struggles and the king's need to curb one influential faction dominating the court—will demonstrate that Yi's failure to acquire an official position was not caused by a lack of literary talent. Yi's humble family background left him open to be punished for his adoption of popular literature. This section will reveal how the politically unrecognized literati, who were actually a large portion of the educated, adopted various literary styles that was not recognized by officials and pursued delights in telling stories of people who disobeyed Confucian moral principles.

[9] Hwang Kyŏngmoon, *A History of Korea* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 100.

Exemplary Writings: Ancient Style Prose

First of all, the examination of writings that King Chŏngjo recommended to his officials is necessary to see why the king regarded Chinese fiction and prose-vignettes undesirable to his governing and society's well-being. He invigorated ancient-style prose 古文 modeled on the five Classics and the works of the eight Tang-Song masters as examples.[10] The king selected works of these masters and ordered the publishing of *A Hundred Selected Works of Tang-Song Masters* 唐宋八子百選 which suggests what kinds of writing the king preferred in selecting officials from literati and giving favors among existing officials.[11] The eight masters generally advocate that prose should uphold social morality and that it should be an instrument of political critique with the simple and pleasing style once advocated by the great Tang writer Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824).

Chŏngjo discovered the model for prose from the classics commented upon by Zhu Xi (1130-1200). The Chosŏn government showed reverence to Zhu Xi as an orthodox Confucian scholar, and promoted his writing as the model that the literati should follow: "I [King Chŏngjo] admire Zhu Xi's writings because they reveal the writer's wide, grand and righteous spirit in every way," "Scholars who want to accomplish righteousness, they should model Zhu Xi," and "Dissemination of an unorthodox learning is caused because an orthodox learning is not brightened 明. In order to brighten the orthodox learning, nothing can be better than respecting Zhu Xi."[12] Zhu Xi advocates literature's social function to support social morality and govern a

[10] The five classics include *Yijing* (Book of Changes), *Shujing* (Book of Documents), *Shijing* (Book of Songs), *Liji* (Book of Rites), and *Chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn Annals).

[11] The eight prose masters of the Tang and Song indicate Han Yu (768~824), Liu Zongyuan (773~819), Ou Yangxiu (1007~1073), Wang Anshi (1021~1086), Su Shi (1037~1101), Su Xun (1009~1066), Su Zhe (1039~1112), and Zeng Gong (1019~1083).

[12]"朱子定著經說.明白的確.所以往復發明者.其於道理精粗.工夫次序.委曲詳盡.無復餘蘊.學者但當依其門路.尋繹脈絡.而若其裏面許多精微處." "學者欲得正.必以朱子爲準的."

country. He reinterpreted works in the *Book of Songs,* which contain social criticism or courting and love as the didactic works for educating the ruling class. Zhu Xi, for example, read "Osprey's Cry" 關雎 the first song in the *Book of Songs*[13] as representing a king's continuous efforts to find good officials. Chŏngjo argued that, based on the model provided by Zhu Xi, the writings of officials should deal with imminent political issues rather than leisurely and trivial things. He particularly respected Liu Zi 陸贄 (754-805):[14] "Liu Zi's writing is enough to be the model for people. He points out advantages and disadvantages of a public affair and illuminated central points of the affairs."[15] Chŏngjo's trusted official, Sŏng Taejung, wrote an essay asserting that the writings of Zhu Xi and Confucius are exemplary, marked by a brevity of words, righteousness of themes, and principles of literature.

> Writing has a large significance for people. . . .Writings show the Way of the World and the priorities of the time. How can a writing not be a serious and precious thing to people? The poetry of Zhu Xi and the *chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn Annals) of Confucius have concise words, express profound ideas, and keep important principles of writing. Such writing is similar to that of the three ancient dynasties of Xia, Yin, and Zhou.[16]

"邪學之橫流.亦由於正學之不明.明正學.莫先於尊朱子." *Hongjae chŏnsŏ* (Collected Works of King Chŏngjo) 165 (Hanguk kojŏn pŏnyŏk wŏn, 1997), 91.

[13] Waley, Arthur, trans. *The Book of Songs* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954), 5-6.

[14] Lu Zhi 陸贄 (754-805) was a trusted advisor of Emperor Dezong 唐德宗 (779-804). His writings include a relatively large body of writing on his advice to the emperor which discussed in fair detail the condition of the Tang people at the time.

[15] "陸贄學問事功.不但爲唐朝不數人物.其言語文章.亦可爲後來模範.其指陳利害得失處. 刺骨洞髓.人主見之.自多警發觀感." Ibid. Liu Zi was the Tang writer who advocated political utility of literature.

[16] Sŏng Taejung, *Ch'ŏngsŏng chip* 靑城集 (Collected Works of Sŏng Taejung), 5 (Yŏgang ch'ulp'ansa, 1985), 116.

Among Chosŏn writers, Chŏngjo recognized early Chosŏn officials whose writings supported the establishment of Chosŏn institutions during the early period of the dynasty.[17] Representative writers include Chŏng Tojŏn 鄭道傳 (1337-1398), Pyŏn Kyeryang 卞季良 (1369-1430), Yang Sŏngji 梁誠之 (1415-1482), and Ch'oe Hang 崔恒 (1409-1474). The writings of early Chosŏn were deemed worthy of being a model for contemporary officials by King Chŏngjo in terms of their focused interests regarding increasing national prosperity, expressing ethical themes, and pursuing an unembellished style:

> Among official writers, Pyŏng Kyeryang's and Ch'oe Hang's writings are serious and worthy. Contemporary writers who strive to embellish only cannot follow the two. In order to return to the pure literary culture, Pyŏn and Ch'ŏe should be models. However, people accustomed to the current literary style regard these two writers lightly and are not willing to learn from them.[18]

Regarding writing style, Chŏngjo appreciated Pyŏn Kyeryang saying that the merit of Pyŏn's writing lies in its purity and simplicity though some people looked down on it because it lacks adornment.[19] These records commonly agree that ancient styles of prose have Confucian themes, historical reliability, usefulness in governing, and are written in a terse and plain language.

In addition, Chŏngjo's most important criterion for appreciating literature was the themes of loving country and Chosŏn's independence from the Qing. He appreciated the poetry of Lu You 陸游 (1125-1210), a Chinese poet of the Southern Song known for his patriotic poems.

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[17] Kang Myonggwan, "Yi Tŏngmu sop'um yŏngu" (Research on Yi Tŏngmu's Literary Miscellanies), *Chosŏn hugi sop'ummun yŏngu* (Research on Late Chosŏn Literary Miscellanies) (T'aehaksa, 2003), 196.

[18] "國朝文章.如卞季良, 崔恒輩.文氣渾重.非後世雕斲者所可及.今欲反漓回淳.當以此爲法. 而無奈習尙已痼.卑之不肯學." *Hongjae chŏnsŏ*, 165.

[19] "我國館閣體.肇自權陽村.而伊後如卞春亭, 徐四佳輩.亦以此雄視一世.近古則李月沙, 南壺谷, 李西河.又相繼踵武.各體俱備.比若大匠造舍.間架範圍.只管牢實做去.不要奇巧底樣子.而四面八方.井井堂堂.了不見斧鑿痕.此亦可爲一代巨擘生壺谷可怕." Ibid., 161.

When Lu's country was threatened by invasion from the Jin 金,[20] he demonstrated his unwavering loyalty for his country. Chŏngjo complimented Lu's poems:

> Though contemporary people do not refer to Lu's poems much, I deeply appreciate them. The words of his poems represent his spirit of loyalty, sincerity, and faithfulness 忠厚敦實, which is close to Koreans' nature. His lifetime principle is "respecting legitimate kings and defeating barbarians 尊王攘夷.[21]

Chŏngjo's appreciation of Chinese writers on the one hand reflects his respect for them. On the other, he emphasizes that Koreans already possess a patriotic spirit by nature, and thus expressing patriotic themes in literature is a natural outcome rather than an artificial act derived from the king's arbitrary command. Chŏngjo's opinions regarding respecting legitimate kings and defeating barbarians demonstrate that he wanted Chosŏn literati to write works that can evoke people's patriotic spirit against Qing China, which was regarded as a barbaric country after its defeat of Ming China.

The Popularity of Chinese Casual Writings and Its Social Influence

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the number of Chinese books circulated, including fiction and literary collections of Ming and Qing writers, greatly increased. The Chosŏn envoys to Qing China bought books on their foreign travels and introduced them in Korea. In 1614 and 1615, for example, Hŏ Kyun (1569-1613) purchased four thousand books when he went to Ming China as an envoy. Yi Ŭihyŏn (1669-1754) bought 1,416 books in his two

[20] Burton Watson, *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1984), 313.

[21] Chŏng Okcha, *Chŏngjo ŭi munye sasang kwa Kyujanggak* (Literary Idea of King Chŏngjo and the Royal Library) (Hyohyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2001), 62-63.

diplomatic travels to Qing.[22] Chosŏn literati shared these books, wrote critical essays, or criticized them in the court or casual meetings.[23] The influx of a large number of Ming and Qing books greatly impacted the literary culture of Chosŏn. The most noticeable phenomenon was the popularity of casual writings from Ming and Qing China which were called *sop'um* 小品 (informal essays), *p'aesa* 稗史 (unofficial histories), *p'awgwan chapki* 稗官雜記 (miscellany writings of a minor official/a storyteller), or *sosŏl* 小說 (small/minor talk) in Korea.[24] Some of most popular works of fiction includes *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (Romance of the Three Kingdoms), a historical fiction written by Luo Guanzhong in the fourteenth century.[25] It deals with the turbulent years during the end of the Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period (169-280) featuring Liu Bei and his followers as protagonists. Other popular works are *Suihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Outlaws of the Marsh) which depicts the gathering of 108 outlaws gathers at Mount Liang and how are the outlaws eventually sent to resist foreign invaders and suppress rebel forces, *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅 (The Plum in the Golden Vase) which deals with the love affairs among lustful man Ximen Qing and his wives and concubines, and *Xiyouji* 西遊記 (Journey to the West) describing the Buddhist monk Xuanzang's journey to India with three protectors.

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[22] Chosŏn envoys' purchase of Chinese goods largely increased from the eighteenth century. Kang Myŏnggwan, *Chosŏn sidae munhak yesul ŭi saengsŏng konggan* (The Production Space of Literary Arts in the Chosŏn Period) (Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 1999), 256.

[23] Ibid., 279.

[24] The terms "*chapki*" 雜記 "*sop'um*," "*p'aegwan sop'um mun*" 稗官小品文, "*p'aesa sop'um mun*" 稗史小品文, and "*p'aesŏl*" 稗說 are often adopted without clear distinction at the eighteenth century Korea. It indicates a broad range of miscellaneous literary works which were not highly recognized, such as short essays and works of fiction. This dissertation uses the term a "casual writing" to indicate Chinese miscellaneous works represented by prose-vignettes of the *Gongan* School and late Ming and Qing fiction.

[25] "The Qing Dynasty historian Zhang Xuecheng famously wrote that the novel was "70% fact and 30% fiction." Luo Guanzhong, *Three Kingdoms*. Translated by Moss Roberts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 980.

During King Chŏngjo's reign, Chinese fiction and prose-vignettes, were popular among Chosŏn literati and the popularity rose as a political issue at the court. *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* (The Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty) records more than fifty occasions in which the king discussed his concern for the undesirable impact of the Chinese works in the society, with such statements as "I witness that recent writing is weak and it makes me worry"[26] and the "recent writing style is shallow and stiff and far from great official writing. This decline is caused by the introduction of the Chinese casual writings."[27] His comments on the casual writings in terms of number are noticeably more than those of other kings, although such writings have existed for a long time. King Sŏnjo (1552-1608, r. 1567-1608), for example, made two short comments on the nature of the casual writings. King Yŏngjo debated with officials about the issue of casual writings four times. Why was the casual writing dealt with as an important issue in Chŏngjo's time? Did other kings simply fail to recognize its evil influence until it overwhelmed the literati and officials, and Chŏngjo belatedly attempted to correct this evil? It seems more reasonable to say that other kings did nothing about it because the casual writings simply did not affect Chosŏn society as widely as in the eighteenth century, and thus the kings saw little harm in it.[28] However, the frequency of King Chŏngjo's concerns may indicate that the Chinese fiction and prose-vignettes ran counter to his purpose to cultivate officials who uphold Neo-Confucian social order. Thus, rather than belatedly addressing a large social problem, Chŏngjo felt necessary to promptly root out the potentially dangerous social problem.

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[26] Ibid., 10.

[27] "最所切可惡者, 所謂明末、淸初文集及稗官雜說, 尤有害於世道. 觀於近來文體, 浮輕噍殺, 無館閣大手筆者, 皆由於雜冊之多出來." *Chŏngjo sillok* (Veritable Records of King Chŏngjo) 24:34b4-6 in *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*.

[28] Jahyun Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), 118-119.

A range of cultural and political reasons shaped Chŏngjo's concern that Chinese casual writings are the source of current unacceptable literary culture, and these concerns formed the basis of *Munch'e panjŏng*. Eighteenth century literary culture witnessed the rise of casual writings to the extent that the king felt the necessity to intervene.[29] *The Veritable Records* contains a number of entries regarding the king's reproach of officials who enjoyed the Chinese writings. Representative figures are Nam Kongch'ŏl 南公轍 (1760–1840), the son of the king's teacher; Yi Mansu 李晩秀 (1752-1820), who served as a director 大提學 in the Office of Special Advisers 弘文館; Yi Sanghwang 李相璜 (1763–1841),[30] who later became chief state councillor; and Kim Chosun 金祖淳 (1765–1832), who later became the father-in-law of King Sunjo (1790–1834, r. 1800–1834). These literati-officials were accused of enjoying or sharing works of fiction during their night duty in the Office of Royal Decrees 藝文館. The king discovered their enjoyment of such works and reproached them several times.[31] For example, Kim Chosun and Yi Sanghwang's appreciation of fiction reading was discovered when the king made an unannounced inspection of the Office while they were reading *Pingshan lengyan* 平山冷燕, a Chinese romantic fiction that was criticized by the king.[32] The king regarded that his officials took his royal edict not seriously. Chŏngjo ordered the two to submit writings of reflection on their conduct as an act of penitence. He also demonstrated his concern about the wide popularity of the Chinese casual writings several times throughout his reign:

[29] Yi Hyŏngu, *Yi Ok sop'um yŏngu* (A Study on Yi Ok's *sop'um*) (PhD Diss., Sŏnggyun gwan University, 2002), 106.

[30] Chŏng Sŏnhŭi, *Mok T'aerim munhak yongu* (A Study of Mok T'aerim's Literature) (Pogosa, 2005), 83.

[31] Kim Sŏngjin, "Chosŏn hugi munin ŭi saenghwalsang kwa sop'umch'e sanmun" (Study of the Chosŏn Literati's Lives and Narratives in Miscellaneous Style), *Chosŏn hugi sop'um mun yŏngu*, 201.

[32] It is a scholar-beauty romance dealing with four characters Ping, Shan, Leng, and Yan.

> The evil practice today is that people only follow the strange writings of the Ming and Qing. They have abandoned practical works that should be fulfilling. They enjoy the casual writings too much.[33]

Beyond the *Veritable Records,* records of private literary collections show the literati's preference for the criticized casual writings. Yi Mansu, the leading political figure of the Young Doctrine (*soron*), read the *Record of the Western Chamber* and *Outlaws of the Marsh* and commented that these works' artistic achievements changed his view toward appreciating literature; he changed his writing style to suggesting that he became favorable to works of fiction, as well.[34] Additionally, Yi Sanghwang enjoyed the *Record of the Western Chamber,* saying that the work was superior to the ancient-style writing of the Tang and Song, the prose of the Pre-Qin and Former and Later Han 先秦兩漢, and the Confucian classics.[35] Such ideas were against the previous criticisms on these works; *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was criticized for its inaccurate historical information, which could lead young students to false knowledge. *Outlaws of the Marsh* was criticized for its socially disruptive characters and themes; *Plum in the Golden Base* for its sexual themes and language, while *Journey to the West* for its Buddhist themes and fantastic aspects. Against some literati's positive views on the works, a number of officials worried about the fast and widespread circulation of these works. Hong Manjong 洪萬宗 (1643-1725) argues about the evil effects of fiction on the Ming:

[33] *Chŏngjo sillok,* 51b:14.

[34] Kang, *Chosŏn sidae munhak yesul ŭi saengsŏng konggan,* 272.

[35] Yi Sanghwang later wrote poems to Chŏngjo and added words to express the righteousness of the king to express to Chgannonggann, Leng, and Ya, including fiction and prose-vignettes of the *Gongan* School writers.

> During the late Ming, many writers respected embellished writings and created non-realistic story books. Even in the government office, officials who should have been taking care of documents were negligent of their duties and instead paid attention to creating new words. If they were able to collect such words, then they extended the words and made them into a book. The number of such books may be innumerable. A work that had been enjoyed among busybodies only now becomes a custom, and people respected and followed it. Finally, the Dao of the world becomes withered and the country collapses.[36]

Hong Manjong attributed the reason for the Ming collapse to officials neglecting their duties while enjoying the casual writings. Indeed, the Chinese writings captured Chosŏn literati and officials' attention to the extent that they not only enjoyed reading it, but they reproduced similar works. For Hong, indulging in theses Chinese writings and achieving Confucian Dao are mutually exclusive and further unsound literature caused the dynasty's decline. Also, Chŏngjo, who attempted to denounce the casual writings, admitted that it had a certain attraction: "All people make comments on the Chinese casual writings, which are seemingly attractive but are actually mean and lewd."[37]

Witnessing the wide popularity of the casual writings among officials, Chŏngjo began to seriously consider an effective means to suppress them. Such views can be seen in Chŏngjo's trusted officials' arguments regarding late Ming literature. Sŏng Taejung, for example, regarded works of fiction and prose-vignettes as the central reason for Ming's ruin:

> Writing takes a great significance in people. . . .It shows the Way of the world and the auspiciousness of the time. How can writing not be a serious and precious thing to people? The writings of Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593), Yuan Hongdao, Zhong Xing 鐘惺 (1574-1625), and Tan Yuanchun 譚元春 (d. 1631) are evil. Unrighteous ideas and sad tones in their writings were enough to ruin the Ming.[38]

[36] Hong Manjong, *Sunoji* 旬五志 (Records Written in Fifteen Days) (Sinwŏn munhwasa, 2003).

[37] *Chŏngjo sillok*, 36:25b7-26a5.

[38] Sŏng, *Ch'ŏngsŏng chip*, 116.

Sŏng's criticism of these Chinese writers reveals that the Chinese writings can ruin the country and thus should be prohibited because they show disrespect for the Neo-Confucian classics by imbuing literati with unorthodox ideas. As seen in the case of Yi Sanghwang and Yi Mansu, the casual writings from Qing including fiction and prose-vignettes captivated Chosŏn officials to the extent that it began to blur the hierarchy between what was regarded as primary and secondary genres. Chŏngjo pointed out that the casual writing style is "frivolous, shallow, and does not flow smoothly. It is not a style suitable for great official writers."[39] In 1784, the king expressed his worries by saying that the Chinese casual writings lead to people's disrespect for Neo-Confucian classicism and thus as dangerous as an unorthodox ideology: "Writing works of fiction is not desirable because doing so causes fabrication of what does not exist, arouses what is indecent, and makes people waste time and eventually despise the classics."[40]

Chŏngjo regarded that popular Chinese literature can ruin officials' respect toward orthodox literature.[41] In 1792, the king expressed his concern that the popular literature tended to arouse a decadent mood in society, and that officials had begun to disrespect the Confucian classics:

> Contemporary scholars are becoming corrupt and literary culture is getting vulgar 卑. In official literature, people today follow the casual writing style. Thus, the taste of grain [merits of Confucian classics] is despised as useless and the quality of writings is shallow, immodest, lacking sage features, and has sad and gloomy tones. This feature is different

[39] *Chŏngjo sillok* 24:34b4-6. "最所切可惡者, 所謂明末、淸初文集及稗官雜說, 尤有害於世道. 觀於近來文體, 浮輕嘵殺, 無館閣大手筆者, 皆由於雜冊之多出來." Especially, fictionality, unorthodox themes, and the vulgar language of casual writings from late Ming and Qing were denounced.

[40] Munak kososŏl charyo yŏnguhoe ed., *Hanguk kososŏl kwallyŏn charyojip* (Souces of Premodern Korean Fiction) (Ihoe, 2005), 33.

[41] Chŏng, *Mok T'aerim munhak yŏngu*,70.

> from the current public morality and makes me worry. I took great pains over the issue and reproached offenders for the future. If I talk about it only and do not punish the practice of writing, how can it be effective?[42]

Chŏngjo pointed out that socially disruptive subjects, immoral themes, and colloquial language must be the source of undesirable writing practices. Thus, he commanded envoys to forbid the purchase of casual writings from China.[43]

Considering that the casual writings of China express unorthodox themes by describing rebellious characters, the popularity of the works could be dangerous in terms of the potential to incite people in Chosŏn who were dissatisfied with the existing social order. Yi Tŏngmu criticized the harmful effects of the *Outlaws of the Marsh*: "This work of fiction teaches people dissipation and stealing, and ruins morality and cultivation. It is evil enough to be banned by royal order."[44] In addition, King Chŏngjo criticized the negative effects of these Chinese work to officials:

> I have said that the evil of the casual writings is worse than unorthodox learning, but people do not understand it. . . .It is easy to believe that unorthodox learning should be avoided and people who were into such learning should be executed. However, the writings seem merely a matter of writing, and those who were young, frivolous, and had some artistic skills modeled their works on the casual writings because they preferred the unusual to ordinary things. Thus, these literary works led people's minds into confusion. The evil influence of such works led people to disregard Confucian sages, be against the classics, and to ignore morals.[45]

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[42] *Chŏngjo sillok* 36:17a11-12.

[43] Kim Sŏngjin, "P'aesa sop'um ŭi silch'e" (Essence of Literary Miscellanies), *Chosŏn hugi sop'ummun yŏngu*, 83.

[44] Yi, "Sasojŏl" 士小節 (Small courtesy for literati) 3, *Ch'ŏngjanggwan chŏnsŏ* 29:7b:4-6; Kim Kyŏngmi, *Sosŏl ŭi maehok* (Attraction of Fiction) (Wŏrin, 2003), 74.

[45] Kang, *Chosŏn sidae munhak yesul ŭi saengsŏng konggan*, 56.

According to the king's argument, the casual writings from late Ming and Qing spread social evils by arousing official doubt regarding Neo-Confucianism and instead lead to unorthodox learning. Considering that the literati's support for existing social order was essential to stabilize the country, the king's policy can be understood as a necessary tool of suppressing social unrest.

King Chŏngho regarded that Chosŏn literati's favor in the Chinese fiction and prose-vignettes could increase cultural dependency on Qing China and the weakening of Chosŏn's national identity as a cultural center after the Ming collapse. The signs were already in society. A number of envoys' travel records to Qing China depict Qing culture in a positive manner, explicitly or implicitly. Imported goods from Qing included books, paintings, ornaments, and daily goods spread among Chosŏn literati-officials. Irritated by this popularity, Chŏngjo intensely criticized officials who enjoyed the imported goods from China by saying that they were betraying their own culture and country. The king expanded his policy to ban the importation of Chinese books, saying that the books brought by envoys from the Qing were impractical and unworthy of reading.

> I looked over books from Peking recently. I cannot find a practical book which deals with ritual and music, military and punishment, commerce and farming. The books only deal with minor and indecent elements, and are impudent to the Confucian classics, aiming to entertain only. . . .For this reason, all of my writings were written with the purpose of practicality.[46]

Chŏngjo, who declared Chosŏn's cultural superiority to Qing, felt that the Chinese casual writings may hinder literati's respect towards Chosŏn culture and must be removed in Chosŏn in order to ensure Chosŏn literati's ideological purity. Similarly, Chŏngjo's chief officials

[46] Chŏng Okcha and et al., *Hankuk sa inmul yŏlchŏn* (Biographies of Historical Figure of Korea) (Tolbaegae, 2003), 363-364.

emphasized that Chosŏn literati should have pride on Chosŏn culture which is superior that Qing's culture. Ch'ae Chegong 蔡濟恭 (1720-1799) and Hong Yangho 洪良浩 (1714-1802), who were appointed to manage literary affairs, are the representative figures. Ch'ae traveled to Peking in 1777 and wrote travel diaries. The poems in the diary reveal Ch'ae's respect of the Ming and attack on the North (Qing).[47] He describes Chosŏn as the cultural center in "Leaving the Qing Capital 發皇城."[48] Ch'ae describes how the grand scale and flourishing cities, markets, streets, and bridges of Qing were noticeable but did not compare to those of Chosŏn. In other writings, Ch'ae reaffirms that Neo-Confucianism put forth by Zhu Xi and his followers was the only orthodox ideology in Chinese culture.[49] Regarding Qing culture as barbaric and unworthy of respect, he blames the casual writings of the late Ming and Qing as unorthodox. He advised Chosŏn envoys to Qing that they should remind themselves of their identities as Chosŏn literati before being dazzled by the Qing culture's variety and grand scale.[50] Hong Yangho (1724-1802), who served as Academician 文衡 [51] in 1793 and 1800, also compiled the biographies of great generals in Korea in *Haedong myŏngjang chŏn* 海東名將傳 (Lives of Great Generals of Chosŏn).[52] The preface to the book reveals the motivation behind the compilation: "I compiled this book in order to transmit the stories of great Chosŏn generals' heroic exploits during the

[47] 尊明排淸. Ibid., 361, 364.

[48] Ch'ae Chegong, *Pŏnam chip* (Collected Works of Ch'ae Chegong) 17:235; Chŏng, *Hankuk sa inmul yŏlchŏn*, 364.

[49] During Qing, Evidential Learning which was a reaction against Neo-Confucianism emerged. It argued the innovations of Neo-Confucianism by turning back to the original classics through comparing different texts in great detail.

[50] Chŏng, *Hankuk sa inmul yŏlchŏn*, 364.

[51] *Munhyŏng* 文衡 is another name of *taejehak* 大提學, the senior 2nd rank.

[52] Chŏng, *Hankuk sa inmul yŏlchŏn*, 377.

national crisis."[53] Hong also composed *Hŭngwang chosŭng* 興王肇乘 (Records on Early Chosŏn Kings)[54] and presented it to King Chŏngjo in 1799. It deals with the history of early Chosŏn and eulogizes the early kings of the period. The compilation of such works reflects that the king's favored writings are those which illuminate Chosŏn's superiority over the Qing.

The review of the literary culture of the eighteenth century demonstrates that the king's policy of suppressing works of fiction and prose-vignettes was based on its noticeable influence on the Chosŏn literati. Works of the fiction were gradually recognized not only as enjoyable works for leisure reading but also as worthy endeavors to devote their literary talents and win recognition. Chŏngjo acutely perceived that the popularity of the Chinese works would expand its undesirable influence as well, unless stopped by a powerful intervention. His speculation was insightful considering the flourishing of fiction in the period following his reign. After the king's death, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed an unprecedented popularity of the casual writings including fiction and unofficial histories, to the extent that it could be labeled "the age of fiction" by contemporary scholars.[55] Chŏngjo's policy met with some success, especially in the officialdom. From the time the policy was issued, officials actively described the evil features of the casual writings in their official writings and further denounced Qing China, where such unworthy casual writings were flourishing and tainted Chosŏn literati. The Chosŏn literati's detachment from the Qing culture was necessary for the king to achieve

[53] Ibid, 376.

[54] Hong Yangho, "Chin hŭngwang chosŭng kye" 進興王肇乘箚 (Hong's Memorial to Present *History of Chosŏn's Establishment*), *Yigye chip* 耳溪集 (Collected Works of Hong Yangho) 20. *Hongjae chŏnsŏ* (Collected Works of King Chŏngjo) (Hanguk kojŏn pŏnyŏgwŏn, 1997).

[55] Kim, *Sosŏl ŭi maehok*, 10. Though fiction was never regarded as an orthodox form of literature during Chosŏn, still, the ruling class's negative view towards works of fiction grew significantly less intense after the end of Chŏngjo's reign.

Chosŏn's independence from Qing. However, the casual writing's popularity could not be effectively regulated outside the court and Chosŏn literati and official read these works secretly. In addition, Chŏngjo's policy produced politically isolated literati like Yi Ok and Kim Yŏ, who devoted themselves to creating works of fiction and unofficial histories.

Issue of Munch'e Panjŏng

The enjoyment of Chinese fiction and prose-vignettes was lead by the literati faction of the *noron* (Old Doctrine) faction that wielded greater political power than the other factions at court from King Sukchong (1661-1720, r. 1674-1720); the *noron* faction dispatched the most representatives to Qing.[56] The Ming and Qing fiction and prose-vignettes gained wide popularity among officials, quickly and extensively spreading among the Chosŏn literati.

Against this popularity, King Chŏngjo warned the dangers of unrecognized forms of writing by declaring "the most hateful ones are the literary collections and works of fiction in late Ming and early Qing China."[57] Yi Tŏngmu 李德懋 (1741-1793), a secondary son but appointed by Chŏngjo[58] as Junior Librarian 檢書官, criticized that historical fiction was worthless:

[56] Kang, *Chosŏn sidae munhak yesul ŭi saengsŏng konggan*, 57.

[57] "最所切可惡者, 所謂明末、淸初文集及稗官雜說, 尤有害於世道. 觀於近來文體, 浮輕噍殺, 無館閣大手筆者, 皆由於雜冊之多出來." *Chŏngjo sillok* (Veritable Records on King Chŏngjo) 24:34b4-6 in *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* (Veritable Records of the Chosŏn Dynasty). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[58] King Chŏngjo practiced the policy of impartiality by appointing Yi Tŏngmu as an official. It can be assumed that the king's practice of the policy received favors from the secondary sons because they could achieve official success which would not be possible without the policy. Also, the king could increase his new supporters by appointing the secondary sons from political factions that opposed him, thereby gaining the allegiance of these newly appointed secondary sons. Actually, most of the secondary sons were from the *noron* (Old Doctrine) faction, which wielded the most influence in the court to the degree of challenging the king's authority. This point will be explained in detail later in this chapter.

"Generally, *sosŏl* indicates the works of historical fiction."[59] Chŏngjo also criticized the literary collection of late Ming and early Qing writers, especially those of the *Gongan* 公安 and *Jingling* 竟陵 Schools. Chŏngjo denounced *Gongan* and *Jinling* scholars' writings in terms of their unorthodox themes and vulgar and obscene language. The *Gongan* School writings generally prioritize writer's individuality in terms of expressions and themes while avoiding ancient style writings. The writers also showed their admiration for "carefree" types and write biographies of various eccentrics.[60] The representative figures from these schools were Yuan Zhongdao 袁宗道 (1560-1600), Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610), Yuan Zongdao 袁中道 (1570-1624), Zhong Xing 鍾惺 (1574-1614) and Tan Yuanchun 譚元春 (d. 1631). Richard Strassberg introduced the features of Yuan Hongdao:

> The fundamental program of Yuan Hung-tao [*sic*] and the King-an school was based on developing authentic (*chen*), individual styles of poetry and prose to convey the writer's "personal sensibility" (*hsing-ling*) and on recognizing the inevitability of historical change in literary styles. The school opposed the archaist position of orthodox writers, considering such practices as imitation and stylistic revival irrelevant to the present. . . .Some of his works were later proscribed under the Ch'ien-lung Emperor (r. 1735-1795) and rejected by orthodox bibliographers, such as the editors of the officially sponsored *Complete Edition of the Four Library* (*Szu-k'u chuan-shu*, 1772-1782).[61]

Chih-P'ing Chou also examined the writings of Yuan Hongdao, the central figure of the *Gongan* School and summarizes features of *xiaopin wen*:

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[59] "夫俗所謂小說者 卽演義之類也." Yi Tŏngmu, "Yŏ Pak Chega Chaesŏn sŏ" (Letter to Pak Chega), *Ch'ŏngjanggwan chŏnsŏ* 靑莊館全書 (Collected Works of Yi Tŏngmu), vol. 2, (Minjok munhwa ch'ujinhoe, 1980); Kim, *Sosŏl ŭi maehok*, 74.

[60] Jonathan Chaves, "Self in the Kungan School," *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University, 1985), 150.

[61] Richard E. Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 304-305.

> The characteristics of *hsiao-p'in wen* [*sic*], then, may be summed up by two words: individuality and freedom. The attitude of *hsiao-p'in wen* writers may be characterized as favoring the substitution of aesthetic for utilitarian standard.[62]

Generally, scholars of the two schools criticized writers who imitated classical writing blindly. The scholars associated with the *Gongan* and *Jingling* Schools argued that literature should reflect the current society rather than follow ancient examples, actively adopted colloquial language and popular stories or songs that were largely avoided in ancient writing, and supported works of popular fiction and drama. In particular, Yuan Hongdao recognized that *Outlaws of the Marsh* and *The Plum in the Golden Base* were worthy as classical works for its vivid representation of human nature.[63] Yuan's support of lewd and anti-social characters in the works was criticized by Chŏngjo and his supportive officials and literati several times.

For Chŏngjo, the popularity of unorthodox themes and vulgar expressions in fiction and prose-vignettes cannot be helpful to uphold Confucian morality among public and thus understood as the seeds of social unrest. Chŏngjo's trusted officials also denounced the unorthodox themes of the Chinese casual writings and supported the king's policy of prohibiting the importation of late Ming and Qing casual writings. For example, Sŏng Taejung 成大中 (1732-1812) , a secondary son appointed by Kings Yŏngjo (1694-1776; r. 1745-1805) and Chŏngjo,[64] shared his thoughts regarding the evils of fiction based on their Buddhist and Daoist elements,

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[62] Chih-P'ing Chou, *Yuan Hungtao and the Kung-an School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 92.

[63] Cai Zhongxiang 蔡鍾翔 et al., *Zhongguo wenxuelilun shi* 中國文學理論史 (History of Chinese Literary Theories), 3 (Beijing chubanshe, 1987), 260*;* Kim, *Sosŏl ŭi maehok* , 79.

[64] King Yŏngjo appointed Sŏng Taejung, a secondary son, Junior Librarian (*kŏmsŏ gwan),* the official position of *ch'ŏngjik* 淸職, in 1765. He was the symbolic figure who received government positions by the king's policy of impartiality.

saying, “casual writings in late Ming was derived from eccentric Zhuangzi 莊子 and Liezi 列子. People followed the works, ruined themselves, and finally contributed to the collapse of Ming.”[65] Many Qing critics criticized the Yuan brothers’ writings as a formula for vulgarity and shallowness.[66] Yuan Hongdao’s writings, the central figure of the *Gongan* School, were banned in the Qing dynasty and were regarded as heterodox and unconventional. Chinese scholars criticized Yuan’s poetry by saying that they caused the decline of Ming poetry, literary culture, and dynasty. The editor of *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Annotated Catalog of the Complete Imperial Library) criticized Yuan Hongdao:[67]

> The poetry and prose [of the three Yuan brothers] redirected late Ming literature from the rigid and heavy to the light and frivolous, from affection to originality. They opened a new vista to the world, and they were in turn impetuously followed, The Seven Masters still rooted themselves in scholarship, while the three Yuan [brothers] relied totally on their wits. Those who followed the Seven Masters [committed the mistake of] merely imitating antiquity, and those who followed the three Yuan [brothers] reached the point of taking pride in their cleverness, violated the prosodic rules, and ruined versification. In the name of correcting the errors of the Seven Masters, they committed even more serious errors.[68]

Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1637-1769) also criticized the Yuan brothers, asserting that they were responsible for the decline of “moral education through poetry” and had jeopardized the continuation of the Ming dynasty. Throughout the Qing period, Yuan Hongdao’s poetry was

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[65] Sŏng Taejung, “Kamŭn sisŏ” 感恩詩書 (Poems of Appreciating King Chŏngjo’s Favor), *Ch’ŏngsŏng chip* 5 (Yŏgang ch’ulp’ansa, 1985), 41.

[66] Chou, *Yuan Hungtao and the Kungan School*, 3. “Only with the rise of modern literary reform movement in the early twentieth century was the reputation of the Kung-an school restored.”

[67] Ji Xiaolan 紀曉嵐 (1724-1805).

[68] Chou, *Yuan Hungtao and the Kungan School*, 70.

regarded as the sound of decadence and as having presaged the ruin of the Ming.[69] In a similar sense, Chŏngjo and his trusted officials denounced the popularity of fiction and prose-vignettes as a precursor to social unrest. Sŏng Taejung's criticism suggests that the popularity of the Chinese casual writings in Chosŏn could bring the country's downfall, as it did to the Ming.[70]

Vulgar and obscene language in the casual writings is another major reason behind the king's and his officials' criticisms. Chŏng Yagyong 丁若鏞 (1762-1831), Chŏngjo's trusted official, denounced fiction's non-gentle, non-smooth, and non-sincere words and themes, which lead readers astray from cultivating a gentle, smooth, and sincere mind 溫柔敦厚:

> The writers of fiction respect Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 (1330-1400) [the author of the *Sanguo yanyi*] and Shi Naian 施耐庵 (1296-1371) [the author of the *Outlaws of the Marsh*] and Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608-1661) [the commentator of works of fiction] as the masters, who created writings with obscene and coarse words as if monkeys and parrots made their tongues speak gibberish. They enjoyed their writings, but they cannot be good ones. The mournful, bitter, and sobering expressions are not rooted in the principle of the gentle, smooth, and sincere. The writers drive readers to stumble into lewd, indignant, and sorrowful scenes.[71]

Chŏngjo, to support his policy, ordered his officials to write about exemplary and non-exemplary literary styles. Under the command, Sŏng Taejung pointed out the eccentric words of *Gongan* and *Jingling* writers: "Among late Ming writers, Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593), Yuan Hongdao, Zhong Xing 鐘惺 (1574-1625), and Tan Yuanchun 譚元春 (d. 1631) are the worst. The unrighteous ideas and sad tones in their diction were enough to ruin China."[72] King Chŏngjo and

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Historically, literary works were understood as the reflection of current society and governing of rulers.

[71] Chŏng Yagyong, "Wi Yi Inyŏng chŭngŏn" 爲李仁榮贈言 (Words for Yi Inyŏng), *Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ* 與猶堂全書 (Collected Works of Chŏng Yagyong), 1 (Kyŏngin munhwasa, 1981), 372; Kim, *Sosŏl ŭi maehok*, 236.

[72] Sŏng, *Ch'ŏngsŏng chip*, 116.

his trusted officials blamed unrecognized literary works as the cause of social disorder and justified the issue of the literary policy. Still, however, the issue of the policy was driven by an imminent political issue that the king faced—the dominance of one political faction and the king's need to curb the faction's power while keeping the support of the faction at the same time.[73]

Munch'e panjŏng as a Political Tool

Why was literary style a central political issue for Chŏngjo? The king not only issued his new policy because of the harmful effects of the Chinese casual writings on society, but, more importantly, because as an astute politician himself, he perceived that the regulation of literary style could be an effective political means to increase his supporters and strengthen his power over the court. Interestingly, the Qing court used the very similar tactic. Late seventeenth-century Chinese scholars criticized the undesirable features of the casual writings and blamed them for the fall of the Ming. The Qing court supported such criticism, for they helped to deflect blame for the regime change away from conquest by the Manchus.[74] Similarly, King Chŏngjo's blaming the Chinese casual writings aimed to cover his intention of suppressing a political faction, the *noron* (Old Doctrine) faction that wielded power in the court, and increasing other factions that he favored in order to increase his supporters at the court. For the king, the issue of policy on literature was the practice the policy of impartiality 蕩平策.[75]

[73] The members of the political powerful faction took high official positions in the court.

[74] Thus, the *Gongan* School's writings were proscribed under the Qing court under the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-1795) in the eighteenth century.

[75] The policy of impartiality is *t'angp'yongch'aek* 蕩平策.

Throughout King Chŏngjo's reign, the policy of impartiality to which his predecessor King Yŏngjo (1694-1776; r. 1724-1776) devoted himself continued to be a central issue. The court of late Chosŏn is often characterized by a weak kingship and the increase of political struggles among factions striving for power at court. Sŏnjo (1552-1608; r.1567-1608), Yŏngjo, and Chŏngjo aimed to pacify the struggles amongst the political factions and strengthen the kingship through the policy of impartiality.[76] The kings needed to find a means to create a balance of power among the factions to prevent one faction's growth, which might overwhelm the kingship. Haboush describes the factional issues during King Yŏngjo's reign, in which the policy of impartiality unfolded:

> For a good part of King Yŏngjo's reign, factional issues dominated his court to such a degree that one wonders whether other matters could have received sufficient attention. Yŏngjo obviously felt that, in order to bring stability to his court, it was imperative that factional politics be brought under control. Yŏngjo turned, as he had done in other aspects of his rule, to impeccable rhetoric-*t'angp'yŏng* (magnificent harmony), as he called it—with which he proposed to deal with the problem. Alluding to the Kingly Way in the *Book of Documents*, *t'angp'yŏng* literally meant the grand harmony achieved through a rule of impartiality. Adopted from Confucian utopian rhetoric, the *t'angp'yŏng* policy became perhaps the most celebrated theme of Yŏngjo's reign, almost a synonym for his policies.[77]

During Yŏngjo's reign, factional struggles were mainly a struggle between the *noron* (Old Doctrine) and *soron* (Young Doctrine) factions. The struggles for domination of power between factions sometimes brought political purges by exiles and death penalties on a large scale. At the conclusion of his reign, the court was dominated by the Old Doctrine. Chŏngjo, the

[76] "First adopted by King Yŏngjo and continued under Chŏngjo, the poliy of impartiality aimed at according equal favor in official appointments to men of all the so-called four colors to those of the Old Doctrine and of the Young Doctrine, to the Southerners and to the Northerners" Carter J. Eckert et al. *Korea Old and New: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 157.

[77] Jahyun Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 118.

successor of Yŏngjo, was well aware of the necessity of checking the dominant faction's wielding of power and strengthening his kingship by a broad base of support. Chŏngjo adopted *Munch'e panjŏng* and applied the policy rather unfairly according to the political factions that the charged literati belonged. The unfair application of the policy explains why Yi Ok failed to receive the king's forgiveness to the very end and came to devote himself to plays, short stories, and works of fiction.[78] Soon after Chŏngjo issued the policy in 1792, a number of literati-officials were charged for their works: Pak Chiwŏn (1737–1805), one of the influential literary figures of the period; Nam Kongch'ŏl (1760–1840), Kim Chosun (1765–1832), who later became the father-in-law of King Sunjo, and Sim Nosŭng. These literati were accused of enjoying or sharing works of fiction during night duty in the office. If the king had the single purpose of correcting literary culture by issuing his policy, the officials who violated it should have been fairly punished. However, application of the policy was noticeably partial based on the officials' or students' political status. This section investigates the different application of the policy to those who were charged under it.

Old Doctrine (*noron)*

The policy on a writing style, which seemingly relates to the field of literature only, can be understood as Chŏngjo's political strategy to protect his kingship from the powerful *noron* (Old Doctrine) faction,[79] which wielded greater political power than other factions during his reign. The policy aimed to suppress the political power of the Old Doctrine by both punishing and appeasing its influential figures. While the king criticized influential Old Doctrine literati, King Chŏngjo was, nonetheless, relatively generous to the Old Doctrine literati. While attempting to

[78] These works were commonly called miscellany in Chosŏn.

[79] Eckert, *Korea Old and New: A History*, 156.

strengthen the throne by curbing the influence of this faction, King Chŏngjo at the same time needed to avoid overtly angering the influential members of the Old Doctrine, for the risk of losing their tenuous support. The representative character is Pak Chiwŏn, whose Qing travel diaries gained wide popularity among the literati. Pak's diaries dealt with his experiences of flourishing Qing culture and works of fiction during his travels. The king blamed Pak's writing for being the root of the unsavory current literary atmosphere:

> Today's literary culture is vulgar and it comes from Pak Chiwŏn. I already read his *Diary of Rehe*, how can he deny this? He is the most prominent figure who dared to escape from a net [officially sanctioned boundary of literature]. Literary culture today came to change when Pak's work was circulated. Pak, who caused this trouble, should correct the trouble, too.[80]

The king showed a cautious attitude towards dealing with the renowned literati of the *noron* faction. The *noron* faction literati, including Pak Chiwŏn, Nam Kongch'ŏl, Yi Sanghwang, and Kim Chosŭn, were criticized by the king but exempted from punishment, so long as they presented writings in an ancient style with words of apology afterwards. Well-written apologies in ancient-style prose after receiving punishment for a transgression sometimes worked to promote officials to higher positions. While the king blamed Pak for his writing in casual writing style, he asked for Pak's writing about the ancient style's superiority to the casual style. He suggested that despite having violated his policy, the king could offer Pak a high official position that entailed taking charge of national literary affairs, *munim* 文任: "If Pak corrects his writing style and purges his fault, then giving him a *munim* position cannot be a waste."[81] This statement demonstrates that the king recognized Pak Chiwŏn's influence in the literary world and

[80] Pak Chiwŏn, *Yŏnam chip* 燕巖集 (Collected Works of Pak Chiwŏn), vol. 1, (Kyemyŏng munwha sa, 1986), 129.

[81] Ibid.

attempted to make him his supporter. If Pak accepted the king's offer to not only avoid harsh punishment but also receive promotion to a prominent position, then the king's generosity would be revealed at court and Pak's literary influence could change the current literary atmosphere.[82]

Southern Faction (*namin*)

Chŏngjo showed dissatisfaction towards the continued concentration of power and position in certain factions. By promoting groups who were discriminated against or showed discontent, Chŏngjo was able to curb the influence of dominant factions because a wider dissemination of honor and power could strengthen the throne by gaining the support of newly favored groups. While the bureaucracy was dominated by the Old Doctrine, other factions that had been out of power, such as the Southern Faction, were excluded from positions of influence.[83] King Chŏngjo manipulated the policy to protect the Southerners, who supported the king. The Southerners supported the eldest son of the Crown Prince Sado (1735-1762) at that time to acquire the kingship, while the Old Doctrine was against it. The king appointed scholars from the Southerners, including Chŏng Yagyong (1762-1831), who advocated strong kingship to stabilize his reign. The king's support of the Southerners is seen in "Ch'ujo chŏkpal sagŏn" (The event unearthed by the Ministry of Punishments) in 1785, when the king's criticism on Chinese casual writings started.

In 1785, a few literati of the Southern faction attended Catholic mass, which was prohibited by law. The king, however, showed a lukewarm attitude toward punishing the charged

[82] Im Hyŏngt'aek, *Silsagusi ŭi Hanguk hak* (Korean Learning Pursuing Actuality) (Ch'angjak kwa pip'yŏng sa, 2000), 141-142.

[83] Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea*, 119.

literati.[84] Rather than punish the members of the Southern faction for attending the prohibited mass, he instead blamed Chinese books on *sŏhak* (Western learning) as the cause of the event. Subsequently, the king forbade the import of fiction and literary collections of late Ming and early Qing, claiming that Chinese writing made Chosŏn literati lose respect for Confucian sages and neglect the Confucian canon. The king's policy of literature as intensified with the "Chinsan sagŏn" (Incident at Chinsan) in 1791, which was caused by Catholics Kwŏn Sangyŏn 權尙然 (1751–1791) and Yun Chich'ung 尹持忠 (1759–1791) when they burned their ancestral tablets to reject ritual services for ancestors. Kwŏn Sangyŏn and Yun Chich'ung were literati of Southern Faction in Honam, the southern and northern areas of Chŏlla province, which produced many important Southerner officials. Under the charge of disobeying the practice of ritual service that the ruling ideology of the state claimed to the people, Kwŏn and Yun were sentenced to death, and Catholic books were collected and burned. At this time, the king again blamed the current literary culture, rather than punishing the Southerner literati, by ordering the headmaster of the Royal Confucian Academy 成均館 to punish students who showed any hint of the casual style writing in the *Sŭngbo* examination, which later led to Yi Ok's exile.[85]

[84] King Chŏngjo was the son of the deposed Crown Prince Sado (1735–1762). The Southerners (*namin*) supported King Chŏngjo, the eldest son of the Crown Prince at that time, to be a king, while the Old Doctrine (*noron*) faction members were against it. See Chŏng, *Chŏngjo ŭi munye sasang kwa Kyujanggak*; Kang Myŏngwan, "Munch'e wa kukka changch'i" (Literary Style and National Apparatus), *Chosŏn hugi sop'um mun ŭi silch'e* (Essence of the Late Chosŏn *Sop'um* Writings) (T'aehaksa, 2003), 49–73.

[85] *Sŭngbo si* 陞補試 is one of the preliminary qualifying examinations 初試 (*ch'osi*, Chinese *chushi*) held every 10th month. *Ch'osi* 初試 is the preliminary qualifying examination. A student who passes the examination can take the metropolitan examination *poksi* 覆試. If a student passes the metropolitan examination, he can take the final examination for official positions, the palace examination *chŏnsi* 殿試. Students in the Royal Confucian Academy study to pass the final civil service examination and to acquire official positions. Nearly all students in the academy held licentiate degrees. Edward W. Wagner, *The Literati Purges: Political Conflict in Early Yi Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), 18-19.

> When you find a student in the Royal Confucian Academy whose examination answer is somehow related to the casual writing style, you should not show any tolerance toward him. You should give him the lowest grade even though his overall answers are excellent as jewels. Also, you should check his name to prohibit him from taking the examination again later. Announce this to the students who take the *Sŭngbo* examination tomorrow so that it will have an effect. Yesterday, I saw an essay of Yi Ok and was astonished by his adoption of casual writing style.[86]

The king turned his attention to prohibiting young scholars from adopting the casual writing style rather than punishing the Southerner literati which suggesting the king's intention of protecting the Southerners. He also appointed Southern Faction scholars who were supportive of Chŏngjo to high positions, including Ch'ae Chegong (1720-1799) and Chŏng Yagyong. Ch'ae was appointed as chief state councilor (*yŏngŭijŏng*) in 1793 and Chŏngjo's central figure practicing the policy of impartiality. Chŏngjo also showed a lenient attitude in dealing with Old Doctrine officials' criticisms of Southerner officials. Yi Tongjik 李東稷 (b.1749), the Old Doctrine official, presented a memorial to Chŏngjo that blamed Yi Kahwan 李家煥 (1742-1801), a Southerner scholar, for his casual writings. When Yi Tongjik blamed Yi Kahwan for being a rebellious person who disobeyed the royal policy, Chŏngjo said that Yi Kahwan's literary style was a minor issue and not worth correcting:

> All people make comments on Chinese casual writings, which are seemingly interesting but mean and lewd. However, it is merely a minor issue. It is like small countries like Kucha 龜玆 [87] and Puyŏ 夫餘 that seem to have their own national forms, but they are trivial like a mosquito's eyebrow and the horns of a snail. If an elder should visit every

[86] *Chŏngjo sillok* 36:17a8-9. "上謂大司成金方行曰: "泮試試券, 若有一涉於稗官雜記者, 雖滿篇珠玉, 黜置下考, 仍坼其名而停擧, 無所容貸. 明日設陞補, 會多士而面諭此意, 俾有實效."

[87] Kucha was an ancient Buddhist kingdom located on the branch of the Silk Road that ran along the northern edge of the Taklamakan Desert.

> household to correct its wrongs and meet every person to rectify his faults, then wouldn't it be too bothersome?[88]

The king further protected Yi Kahwan, by saying that his casual writing was merely derived from his unfortunate circumstances and not his favorite style.

> Yi Kahwan thought of himself as a rustic person or a wanderer who spends time counting rosaries or making wheels because he was isolated from officialdom. Thus, his sound would be resentful and indignant and his colleagues would be those who enjoyed silly talks and strange deeds. The more lonely he was, the more biased his talk would be. Furthermore, the more biased his talk, the more strange his writing. . . . How could such casual writing be what he really pursued? This country made him write such works. . . . Thus, I save rustic people in rags from humble families. Yi Kahwan is one of those. You [Yi Tongjik] should not speak about Yi Kahwan anymore. He just flies to a huge tree from a gully and revives from dirt. Why are you concerned that his words will not gradually advance to an excellent stage? [89]

Chŏngjo not only blocked further criticism of Yi Kahwan, but also revealed his intention of appointing him as an official and his high expectations of him. Chŏngjo clarified his goal of protecting the Southern Faction by not punishing their transgressions against his policy of literature.

Chŏng Yagyŏng, a scholar of the Southern Faction and one of Chŏngjo's trusted supporters, was also appointed as an official in the Royal Library in 1789. Chŏng presented an essay to the king about the harmful effects of the works of fiction:

> I have been thinking of the harmful effects of minor works by storytellers[90] and I cannot hide my ideas here. In this world where Heaven-made and man-made calamities exist, the

[88] *Chŏngjo sillok* 36:25b7-26a5. "且況降此而瑣瑣稗品, 鄙俚淫畦之蕞蔀傍蔗, 喙喙爭鳴, 其視龜玆、夫餘之各具小成, 不翅若蚊睫蝸角, 而家家而正其謬, 人人而齊其舛, 爲其上者, 不已勞乎?"

[89] Ibid.

[90] *P'aegwan sop'um*

> minor works are the worst among the man-made calamities. Indecent and vulgar expressions make people weary and lustful. Evil emotions and supernatural stories confuse people's knowledge. Stories of absurdity and wonder drive people to be arrogant, and highly embellished and vulgar stories damage people's minds. When students enjoy them, they come to regard the study of official history as worthless; when women enjoy them, they stop working on their affairs [weaving]. What man-made calamities can be worse than *sop'um*?[91]

Chŏng argued that the works damaged popular minds through the indecent expressions of desire, vulgar style, and absurd fictionality within the writings. The king also discussed with Ch'ae Chegong, a Southern Faction official, the methods of prohibiting casual writings from China:

> Your report pointed out things that I did not elaborate yet. You are in the position of managing national affairs, thus you should seriously consult with other ministers whether the works of fiction and the literary collection of Ming and Qing should be thrown in water or burnt in fire. If it can be hard to practice by force, then what do you think about prohibiting envoys to Peking from buying miscellaneous works?[92]

The king often expressed that Ch'ae was an official who deeply understood him, and trusted him until the end of his reign. Chŏngjo's frequent consultations with Southerner officials about the means by which to prohibit the miscellaneous works reveal his favor of the Southern faction. When members of the Old Doctrine accused members of the Southerners for following an unorthodox belief, which was a serious challenge to the national ideology, the king mitigated the members' charge by turning his criticism towards the Chinese casual writings that the members read and inflicted relatively light punishment. Also, when Old Doctrine members accused the members of the Southerners for violating the royal edict of prohibiting casual writings, the king showed generosity to the accused members by saying that their violation was a relatively

[91] Chŏng Yagyong, "Munch'e ch'aek" 文體策 (Policy on Literary Styles), *Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ* 與猶堂全書 8; Chŏng, *Chŏngjo ŭi munye sasang kwa kyujanggak*, 139.

[92] *Chŏngjo sillok* 33:47b14-48a12. "卿居廟堂籌謀之地, 須以明末淸初文集及稗官雜記等諸冊, 投之水火當否, 與諸宰, 爛加講究, 而此若以令不便爲嫌, 赴燕使行購雜書之禁, 在所申明."

insignificant issue considering that larger numbers of Old Doctrine literati enjoyed casual writings. Through this way, the Southerners, in turn, became the king's supportive literati and officials. This indicates that the king's main purpose of the policy was to eradicate the king's political opponents from the court rather than proscribing casual writings themselves. The king's generous application of the policy toward the Southerners increased the political status of Southerners while also helping to relieve the dominance of Northerners during the king's reign.

Secondary Sons (*sŏŏl*)

The other group that King Chŏngjo focused as his new supporters was secondary sons, especially those from the Northern faction.[93] Considering the secondary son's limitations in acquiring official positions,[94] it does not seem strange that secondary sons tended to show discontent toward society and look for ways to relieve their distress. Reading works of fiction depicting socially disruptive characters and expressions of social criticism was one of avenue for secondary sons to sound their criticism against a social order that restricted them from official positions. In particular, the secondary sons from the Old Doctrine were the main readers of casual writings, especially works of fiction, based on the relative accessibility of newly introduced Chinese books from the envoys of the Old Doctrine. Their writings are often characterized by frustration and dissatisfaction towards society and government, which limited their rise. Yi Tŏngmu, a secondary son who was later appointed an official at the Royal Library

[93] The appointment of secondary sons exemplified Chŏngjo's policy of impartiality. Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea*, 92.

[94] It was largely from Chŏngjo's reign years that the distinction between the legitimate and illegitimate (*sŏja*) lines of descendent including the opportunities to take the civil service examinations was slowly breaking down. Eckert, *Korea Old and New: A History*, 181.

during Chŏngjo's reign, confessed that he enjoyed many works of fiction in his youth. In appointing talented secondary sons, Chŏngjo showed generosity towards them by saying that their unfair social status led them to indulge in rebellious tendencies, and thus it was his duty to promote and support them at court. Chŏngjo paid particular attention to secondary sons from Old Doctrine families:

> Secondary sons knew that they should get along with those of the same kind only and should not disrupt the social order. They enjoyed reading about the seventeen heroes who fulfilled their talents in the *Outlaws of the Marsh* and came to respect the works of miscellany. Thus, their writings do not have smooth tones. They have difficulties to be competent. In what fields can they fulfill their talents? The government has the responsibility for them.[95]

In his words, similar to Chŏngjo's advocacy of Yi Kahwan, the king argued that the secondary sons' enjoyment of rebellious characters was caused by their unfulfilled talents, and thus he should give them chances to advance. The king chose young and promising secondary sons from the Old Doctrine faction, including Yi Tŏngmu, Pak Chega 朴齊家 (1750-1805), Yi Sŏgu 李書九 (1754-1825), and Yu Tŭkkong 柳得恭 (1749-1807). It is not strange that the secondary sons, whose official paths could have been blocked, showed support to the king's governing when they were appointed as high officials. Many of them acquired the position of junior librarian[96] at the Royal Library, and were ordered to research Confucian classics and literature. Officials in the Royal Library performed as the king's strong supporters throughout his reign. Thus, by advancing the careers of secondary sons of a faction that challenged a strong kingship, Chŏngjo

[95] *Chŏngsi munjŏng* 正始文程 is the collection of exemplary writings of Royal Confucian School students. The writings were written in the ancient writing style. Chŏngjo ordered to compile this collection in 1795.

[96] Junior librarian is *kŏmsŏgwan* 檢書官.

effectively shows that he is ready to give favors to who that follow the king regardless of origin or faction.

The king made the secondary sons from the Old Doctrine into his supporters. He first punished them for their enjoyment of casual writings and later showed them his favor when they submitted a formal apology. For example, Chŏngjo appointed Yi Tŏngmu as an investigator of documents, and as a junior librarian, at the Royal Library 奎章閣. Chŏngjo reproached Yi Tŏngmu and Sŏng Taejung, both secondary sons, for the fact that their writings showed a hint of the casual writing style and commanded them to present a written apology. This was a preemptive move for the king to avoid being accused of showing favoritism. After reading their apologies, the king promoted Sŏng to the official position of the senior third rank.[97] Yi Tŏngmu presented a written apology and also received the king's favor. He revealed his support to the king in a letter to Pak Chega:

> I saw several red dots [king's marks on excellent phrases] in Sŏng's writing. In the chance of advancing my prospects, I cannot retreat but will sincerely do my best to fulfill the royal expectations of me.[98]

Both Yi Tŏngmu and Sŏng Taejung actively supported the king's policy on literature: "Your Majesty's policy will be a great chance to regain the pure and noble literary atmosphere of the ancient time."[99] The king treated the secondary sons from the Old Doctrine who successfully rectified their enjoyment of casual writings with exceptional favor. Yi Tŏngmu received the king's trust based on his extensive knowledge and literary talents. He was ordered to write

[97] 北靑都護府使 is a military commander who took charge of Hamgyŏng province.

[98] Yi, *Ch'ŏngjŏng gwan chŏnsŏ* 20; Kim, *Sosŏl ŭi maehok*, 69.

[99] Ibid.

poems on the cityscape, titled "Poems of Cityscape" 城市全圖詩 which praised the prosperity of Seoul.[100] When Yi submitted his poems, the king praised them as both decent and elegant 雅. For secondary sons who were previously ignored under Chŏngjo's predecessors, the royal literary policy gave them a chance to show their support of the king's rule. Also, it is not difficult to assume that members of the Old Doctrine, especially those with secondary sons, positively regarded the king's appointment of secondary sons in the court.

Literati from Politically Insignificant Families

While King Chŏngjo attempted to increase his supporters through his literary policy, he was well aware of the need to maintain the policy strictly while minimizing damage to his kingship. Though the country needed the literati class and sanctioned its privileges, when its interests worked against those of the state, the king was forced to check its interests at the expense of losing some support. For these purposes, literati from politically meager families seemed to be appropriate targets for punishing transgressions against his policy. Compared to the king's lenient attitude towards the Southerners and talented secondary sons, harsh punishment was meted out to some literati, such as Yi Ok and Kim Yŏ 金礪 (1766–1822), mostly from marginal families. Transgressors from politically marginal families were ousted from the political sphere for adopting the casual style of writing. Different from Old Doctrine literati who were exempted from the punishment by presenting a writing of repentance in the ancient style, Yi Ok was not exempted even after presenting one hundred regulated verses 律詩 at the king's order. Although Yi Ok's answers in the civil service examination ranked at the top, his answers were downgraded

[100] Yu Ponghak, *Chŏngjo taewang ŭi kkum* (Dream of King Chŏngjo) (Singu munwhasa, 2001), 171-192.

to the lowest according to Chŏngjo's orders that Yi's writing did not follow the ancient style. Kim Yŏ was also punished and sent into exile for ten years for his miscellaneous writing style until he got an official position in 1806 during King Sunjo's reign, a period in which writing in casual style was no longer a punishable offense.

Interestingly, when Chŏngjo blamed Yi Ok's writing for his undesirable writing style, he said that Yi's writing was not a serious issue because he was merely an insignificant literatus: "Yi Ok is an insignificant literatus who does not relate much to court affairs."[101] The king's comment on Yi's political insignificance suggests that he made Yi Ok into a political scapegoat. Though the king punished Yi Ok severely, the backlash or loss of support for the king would not be as serious as if the target of punishment had been a member of the Old Doctrine. Though the king recognized Yi's political insignificance, the king could not show generosity towards Yi as he did later for literati from the Old Doctrine and Southerners. In order to justify his follow-up policy of prohibiting the casual writings and blaming politically influential literati for enjoying unorthodox literary works, during the policy's early period, the king required individuals to demonstrate the severe consequences of disobeying his orders. The ideal target was someone from a politically insignificant family who can be charged under his policy. Yi's meager family background may have driven the king to punish him relatively severely as a way of demonstrating his strong will to regulate the officialdom.

Some literati were demoted or exiled, or chose to leave politics altogether, as a result of Chŏngjo's policy of literature. However, their political isolation was not necessarily caused by their lack of literary ability. On the contrary, among the literati who were punished for violating this policy, many passed the classic licentiate examination 生員試 and became students at the

[101] *Chŏngjo sillok*, 36:17a8-9.

Royal Confucian Academy. In particular, Yi Ok and Kim Yŏ were known in the academy for their skills at adopting various styles of writing. The king's different attitude towards the Old Doctrine, Southern Faction, secondary sons, and insignificant literati shows that the policy not only aimed to correct the literary atmosphere of the time, but to increase the king's authority at the court to rule the country effectively.[102]

[102] Chŏng, *Chŏngjo ŭi munye sasang kwa Kyujanggak*, 79.

Chapter 3

Yi Ok's Life and Writings

The historical review in chapter 2 reveals that Yi was sent to exile in his early period and severely punished under the king's political necessity. Chŏngjo's repetitive reproaches to Yi Ok stigmatized him as an outsider to the literati world. Yi, without having the chance to return to politics as a consequence of his punishment, came to devote his life to writing plays, short stories, and works of fiction that were despised among literati. This chapter concerns Yi Ok's life and his writing with representative examples of narratives and poetry. Yi's writings cover an array of topics—ranging from descriptions of natural scenery to historical nostalgia—and various genres, including poetry, biography, and plays. His writings reflect his complex state of mind, which arose from his experiences at the Royal Confucian Academy, life in exile, failing the civil service examination, the death of his father, and farming in rural areas. Studies generally argue that Yi possesses the self-perception of an 'unfortunate being who fails to meet the right time.'[1] While I agree that this perception is generally found in his later works, I would reconsider the validity of a single feature of Yi Ok which may penetrate every stage of his work. His state of mind experiences transition and at times becomes almost overturn from one state to another as a response to political and domestic events that he faced as a student, an exile, and as an elderly person.

[1] Yi Ok, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip* (Collection of Yi Ok's Works in Translation), vol 1, Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏngu hoe tr., (Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2009), 8.

Early Years as a Student (1760-1792)

Unfortunately, relatively few extant records about Yi Ok's life remain. Kim Yŏ, who compiled Yi Ok's works in 1818, left short records about Yi, and the *Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty* contains a brief record of King Chŏngjo's punishment of Yi Ok. Recent research, however, has uncovered new information about Yi's life and family background that enables readers to see why Yi Ok did not received King Chŏngjo's favor despite his literary talents. Yi's birthplace was a suburb of Seoul, Namyang 南陽 in Kyŏnggi province. According to Kim Yŏngjin's studies, Yi's family was the secondary son's lineage 庶族, and later advanced to *yangban*. Yi Ok was born in 1760 as the third son of Yi Sango 李常五 (ca. 1760). His mother was the daughter of Hong Yisŏk 洪以錫 (1687-1742).[2] His great-great-grandfather was Yi Kich'uk 李起築 (1589-1645), originally a secondary son. However, Yi Kich'uk joined the restoration of the throne to Injo 仁祖反正 in 1623 and achieved *yangban* status as a third meritorious subject.[3] Yi Kich'uk had four sons and one daughter. The fourth son, Yi Mallim 李萬林 (ca. 1672), passed the military examination in 1672. Yi Mallim's first son, Yi Tongyun (ca. 1700), had only one son, Yi Sango, the father of Yi Ok. Yi Sango passed the literary licentiate examination 進士試 in 1754. Although Yi Ok's father passed the licentiate examination, he did not have an official position. It is not clear to which political faction Yi Ok's family belonged, but recent studies suggest that he

[2] Though the family achieved *yangban* status, the social status of the family was not the same as a genuine *yangban*. The descendants of Yi Kich'uk, Yi Ok's paternal great-great grandfather, married the descendants of secondary son families, which followed the practice that descendants of secondary son families married the same status families. Yi Tongyun, the first son of Yi Manrim and Yi Ok's paternal grandfather, married the daughter of Chŏng Ŭngsang, a secondary son. However, Yi Ok's family was not restricted from taking the civil service examination because the family official possessed *yangban* status. Kim Yŏngjin, "Yi Ok ŭi kagye wa Myŏng Ch'ŏng sop'um toksŏ" (Yi Ok's Lineage and His Reading of Ming and Qing Literary Miscellanies), *Chosŏn hugi sop'um yŏngu*, 319-325.

[3] Though Yi's family achieved *yangban* status, it is still remained politically insignificant because Yi Kich'uk was originally from secondary status (*sŏŏl*) and a military official.

belonged most likely to the Northern Faction 北人(*pugin*), who were excluded from power during the seventeenth century.[4] In the Royal Confucian Academy, Yi stayed in the Eastern Dormitory 東齋 (*tongjae*) where Southerners, Northerners 北人, and Young Doctrine 小論 (*soron*) officials resided.[5] Most of his friends in the academy belonged to the Northerners.[6]

Yi Ok spent his twenties studying for the civil service examination in his hometown, Namyang. His early works included poems 詩, parallel prose 騈儷文,[7] rhyme-prose 賦, and questions and answers on policies 策問, treatises 論, and inscriptions 銘. These writings show his desire for success, displaying a sense of pride in his knowledge of prose forms and rhyme-prose. For example, in "Funeral Oration for the God of Literature" 祭文神文, written in 1784 at the age of twenty-five, he described his devotion to study and his suitability for working as a government official:

> I read the *Book of Documents* 400 times and the *Book of Songs* one hundred times. The Odes and Hymns 雅頌 sections in the *Book of Songs*,[8] in particular, twice as often. I also read the *Books of Change* thirty times and works of Confucius (*Analects*), *Mencius*, *Cengzi* 曾子, and *Zhishi* 子思 (*Doctrine of the Mean*) twenty more times. I love to read them out loud, but have not yet read them a thousand times.[9]

[4] Kim, *Chosŏn hugi sop'um yŏngu*, 319.

[5] Yi Ok, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 1: 8.

[6] Kim, *Chosŏn hugi sop'um yŏngu*, 327.

[7] *Piantiwen* 騈體文 (parallel prose style) had a rigid structure and came to be criticized for being overly ornate at the expense of content in late Chosŏn.

[8] In *Book of Songs*, *yasong* sections eulogizing the great achievements of ancestors are regarded as the most elegant and exemplary form of poetry.

[9] "Funeral Oration for the God of Writing" 祭文神文. Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 262.

King Chŏngjo's generous employment of secondary sons in the officialdom might facilitate Yi Ok's dream of success. In the hope of acquiring profound knowledge for promotion, Yi visited those who passed the examinations and well-known scholars. However, he described these visits as disappointing experiences by saying that many renowned writers' fame came from their wealth, social connections, or influential patrons rather than their literary talents.

> I followed a person who was known as an erudite scholar and asked questions. However, I found out that they had narrow views as if talking about stars sitting in a jar. Also, those who were known for their good answers on the examinations were actually no more than scarecrows dancing in a market place. However, they sold their names in the capital and looked for connections in the bright world. By doing these things, they could use their writings in the civil service examinations and offices and felt satisfied with their writings. Their writings were recorded in printing blocks and engraved in excellent stele and survived beyond their lives.[10]

Yi viewed the king and the government favorably in his early career, although he criticized members of the literati who were held in high degree. His writings contain a number of eulogizing comments regarding the king's governance and the peaceful society under his reign, demonstrating his high regard for the king and his government. He wrote, for example, "Rhapsody on the Royal Library" 奎章閣賦 praising the beauty of the library, built in accordance with King Chŏngjo's order: "The Royal Library was established by a sage king. People praise the royal favor with songs and are pleased that they live in this good time."[11] When dealing with his failure to pass the examinations during this early period, he blamed individuals, not the government or examination institution. In "Funeral Oration for the God of Writing," Yi regretted that his studies were insufficient to satisfy the god of writing and that he was thus unable to pass

[10] Ibid.

[11] "Rhapsody of Royal Library with a Preface" 奎章閣賦幷敍. Ibid.,1: 140, 152.

the examination. Yi believed that his period of success would soon come to fruition. Such an optimistic view is reflected in his description of chrysanthemum and lotus flowers, which do not bloom in spring, but late in fall. According to Yi, they bloom in fall because they are destined to do so. Yi encourages them not to be disappointed about having to wait to bloom, which can be read as his belief that his talents would eventually bring him fame, even though he was facing difficulties at the time.[12]

Yi passed the classics licentiate examination in 1790 at the age of thirty.[13] After that, Yi was permitted to enroll in the highest national institution of learning, the Royal Confucian Academy,[14] to take the final civil service examination. While Yi was a student at the academy, he was known for his wide reading of late Ming and Qing literary miscellanies.[15] Largely beginning in the seventeenth century, writings of various *Gongan* School writers were widely read by members of the Korean literati, some of whom expressed their positive regard for their fascinating colloquial dictions and themes of secular desires. In the academy, he associated with such young students as Kim Yŏ, Kang Ich'ŏn 姜彝天 (1769-1801), and Yu Chŏngnyang 柳廷亮 (fl. 1767-1809). Kim Yŏ and Yi Ok were known as connoisseurs of popular fiction and of *Gongan* School miscellanies. Yi wrote his play "Record of the East Wing" 東廂記 in 1791, about the marriage of an old bachelor and an old maid. Yi revealed that the play was inspired by "The

[12] "Funeral Oration for the God of Writing" 祭文神文. Ibid., 2: 266.

[13] John B. Duncan describes the Chosŏn civil service examination system in his "Examinations and Orthodoxy in Chosŏn Dynasty Korea" in *Rethinking Confucianism: Past and Present in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 2002.)

[14] "The Royal Confucian Academy (*Sŏnggyungwan*), with a quote of two hundred students, served as a tertiary university." Jahyŏn Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 17.

[15] Though King Chŏngjo warned against miscellaneous writing style, it was only from 1792 that the style was officially prohibited through his policy.

Western Chamber" 西廂記, a popular work of Chinese fiction that was later rewritten in the form of a play. In writing the play, Yi proceeded with caution, adding, "I ask my readers, if any, please do not ask whether the event is true or not or who the writer is. It will help relieve idleness for half such a day."[16] Although Yi read such popular fiction and plays, his favorable criticism toward them is relatively few in his early years. Yi's cautious attitude reflected in the play may have derived from King Chŏngjo's intense criticism of these writings.

Writings in Exile (1792-1800)

His life changed dramatically in 1792 when he was accused of adopting the casual writing style in his official essay in response to the *sŭngbo* examination. To enforce his policy on literary style, Chŏngjo ordered the headmaster of the Royal Confucian Academy in 1791 to punish students who showed any hint of the casual style of writing in the *sŭngbo* examination:

> Yesterday, I saw an essay of Yi Ok and was astonished by his adoption of casual writing style. I ordered *Tongji sŏngyungwan sa* (the Assistant Director of the Royal Confucian Academy)[17] to make Yi correct his writing style completely by composing fifty poems daily in parallel prose style. Later, he can reapply for the civil service examination. A mere literatus, Yi is not related to court affairs. However, a number of officials who hold the official baton and wear official belts also followed such style. How could this be not regrettable?[18]

[16] "Record of the East Wing" 東廂記. Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 448.

[17] *Tongji sŏngyungwan sa* 同知成均館事 is the junior second rank at the Royal Confucian Academy.

[18] *Chŏngjo sillok* 36:17a8-9. "上謂大司成金方行曰: "泮試試券, 若有一涉於稗官雜記者, 雖滿篇珠玉, 黜置下考, 仍坼其名而停擧, 無所容貸。 明日設陞補, 會多士而面諭此意, 俾有實效。"

The king cited Yi Ok, who presented an essay at the king's order, saying that he was shocked by Yi's writing because it largely adopted a casual writing style.[19] Yi's official essay that upset the king is no longer extant. However, the king's criticism of Yi's work suggests that Yi's writing contained unorthodox elements which do not follow the royal policy. At first, Yi Ok was prohibited from taking a civil service examination under the king's policy on literature, but a month later, the punishment of his sentence changed and he was forced to serve in the army in Ch'ungch'ŏng province instead of being prohibited from retaking the exam.[20] Chosŏn literati were exempt from military service, but still subject to punishment under military regulations. He retook the examination at the end of 1792 while serving in the army, but he was again criticized by the king that his writing still did not flow smoothly 噍殺 (*ch'oswae*).[21] *Ch'oswae* is a term originally from the *Record of Music*, which indicated the coarse sounds of people in sorrow. As seen in chapter 2, the king's punishment on Yi Ok was exceptionally severe and long-lasting considering that other literati who violated the policy received generous forgiveness. For the king,

[19] Ibid., "日昨儒生李鈺之應製句語, 純用小說, 士習極爲駭然。"

[20] Chosŏn literati (*yangban*) were exempt from military service but still subject to punishment under military regulations.

[21] James Legge tr., "*Records of Music*" 樂記, *Book of Rites* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 90. "Music is (thus) the production of the modulations of the voice, and its source is in the affections of the mind as it is influenced by (external) things. When the mind is moved to sorrow, the sound is sharp and fading away; when it is moved to pleasure, the sound is slow and gentle; when it is moved to joy, the sound is exclamatory and soon disappears; when it is moved to anger, the sound is coarse and fierce; when it is moved to reverence, the sound is straightforward, with an indication of humility; when it is moved to love, the sound is harmonious and soft. These six peculiarities of sound are not natural'; they indicate the impressions produced by (external) things. On this account the ancient kings were watchful in regard to the things by which the mind was affected. And so (they instituted) ceremonies to direct men's aims aright; music to give harmony to their voices; laws to unify their conduct; and punishments to guard against their tendencies to evil. The end to which ceremonies, music, punishments, and laws conduct is one; they are the instruments by which the minds of the people are assimilated, and good order in government is made to appear." "樂者，音之所由生也；其本在人心之感於物也。是故其哀心感者，其聲噍以殺。其樂心感者，其聲嘽以緩。其喜心感者，其聲發以散。其怒心感者，其聲粗以厲。其敬心感者，其聲直以廉。其愛心感者，其聲和以柔。六者，非性也，感於物而後動。是故先王**慎**所以感之者。故禮以道其志，樂以和其聲，政以一其行，刑以防其奸。禮樂刑政，其極一也；所以同民心而出治道也。"

Yi Ok, who was from a politically meager family, was a minimum-risk target, and thus the king punished him in 1792 in the very next year after issuing the policy.

This time, more severe punishment was meted to Yi Ok. He was exiled to Samga 三嘉, a remote location in Kyŏngsang province, and was prohibited from taking the examination later. The situation of the time can be seen in his "Records of My Itinerary to the South," 追記南征始末, a travelogue about his exile from 1795 to 1800.

> His Majesty regarded my writing as inappropriate and prohibited me from taking the examination. Later, he changed his order to service in the army. *Tongji sŏngyungwan sa* called me and pointed out my faults with a royal command. I came to repent deeply of my wrongs to the extent of crying. I went to Chŏngsan county 定山縣 of Ch'ungch'ŏng province and applied for the civil service examination at Seoul in the ninth month of the year.[22]

The work describes his early years of exile from 1795 to 1800 when he was released. When the prohibition was lifted in 1795, he took the examination again in 1796. However, when the king criticized him as an example of writing not befitting an official, Yi's path to officialdom seems to have been blocked. His answer on the preliminary qualifying examination in 1796 was initially ranked among the top, but was downgraded to the lowest by the king's command due to its suspected influence from casual writing style. Yi was again exiled to Samga. The repeated rejections from the court were critical for him, like many other literati from politically unimportant families, for whom the civil service examination system was the only route to officialdom.[23] Such difficulties drove Yi to change his optimistic view towards his future career

[22] "Record of My Itinerary to the South" 追記南征始末. Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 164.

[23] Yi Ok had an insignificant family background and could not rely on other systems of recruitment, such as recommendation or protection appointment.

and enabled him to realize the weakness of a *yangban* individual who was excluded from the *yangban* privileges that he took for granted before.

The exile and his travels made Yi feel frustrated and have critical view on society. Yi faced harsh realities while traveling through several regions to solve problems of his army registration. In the winter of 1796, he returned to his hometown to attend his father's funeral. In order to attend his father's funeral, he left his assigned place of exile, Samga, without undergoing the necessary formalities to be exempt from military service.[24] One who passed the preliminary qualifying examination could be exempted from military service after presenting the proper legal documents. Though Yi Ok passed the examination, he did not submit the documents and did not receive permission to leave his post prior to attending his father's funeral. Thus, he was charged with desertion and summoned by the magistrate of Samga. Belatedly, Yi presented a petition to remove his name from the army register. However, officials in the Ministries of War, Punishments, and Rites rejected the petition by pushing their responsibilities to other ministries. As a result, Yi had to go back and forth between his place of exile, his hometown, and several ministries to appeal his case. His experiences of the officials' lack of responsibility, magistrates' harsh treatment of him, and his exhaustion from long itineraries can be seen in the "Record of My Itinerary to the South."

> I knew that I could be exempted from the army service when I passed the examination. I only knew the law itself, but did not know that I had to file an application. [After passing the examination,] I came back to Namyang in the third month (without filing the application). My father passed away in the fifth month. I maintained my humble life by sleeping on a straw mat and a poor pillow. Unexpectedly, in the spring of the *chŏngsa* year (1797), a local official of Samga county sent me a notice asking the date of my return. I then realized that I still belonged to the military of Samga county. After finishing

[24] One who passed the preliminary qualifying examination could be exempted from military service after presenting legal documents. Though Yi Ok passed the examination, he did not submit the documents.

> three years of mourning, I appealed for an exemption from the Ministry of Punishment. The ministry referred my appeal to the Ministry of War, which then referred it to the Ministry of Rites. The Ministry of Rites said that they could not accept my appeal. Once my appeal was blocked, all officials rejected it. In the year of *kimi* (1799), I was severely troubled by pressure from the magistrate of Samga county. The Ministry of Punishment said, "We only deal with the existing army register and do not concern ourselves with who passed the examination." The Ministry of Rites said, "Though we know that you should be exempted, other offices did not permit it. How can we do it?" Then, the governor of Kyŏnggi province and the magistrate of Namyang treated me like a criminal and forced me to go back to Samga county to serve in the army.[25]

The writing which deals with the inadaptable bureaucratic system that made an individual unnecessarily sacrifice vividly shows his frustration. His writings of this period criticize officials who pursued private interests only and appeared incompetent in recognizing talented individuals, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

> The guest said, "I know the brightness of your knowledge can be compared to the endless transformations of dragons and fabulous birds, and the strength of your driving spirit is like running horses. Unfortunately, however, I do not think that you can achieve success nowadays. These days, people scold a person who sells precious jade disks and gorgeous embroidered silk with cloud patterns, saying that he sells worthless stone and plain cotton clothes if you do not secretly offer bribes and ask personal favor. . . .Many officials are unfair. Likewise, the way of the world is not righteous. If an individual has special connections with officials, then his poems do not need to be well written, his narratives do not need to be skillful, and his calligraphic style does not need to be great. He also does not need to submit his writings by himself in the civil service examination. His name is sure to be revealed on the list of successful candidates. People cannot tell that he is not talented. If they already know this, they will cover it up. His face will be full of pride, dressed in green garbs, and the crimson color of the hat for successful candidates will shine. His lifelong dream will come true, and his path to success will be considerably eased. How can his poor writing ability get in the way of his success?[26]

[25] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok Chŏnjip,* 2: 164.

[26] Ibid., 197.

Yi's essays reveal his belief that achieving success as an official depends more on having an influential family background than on one's literary talents. Such an idea differs from the ideas of his early period, when he blamed an individual's lack of effort for one's failure to achieve official success. Yi turned his eyes towards socially unsuccessful people, including students who gave up their political ambitions and lived reclusive lives in despair, whom he paid little attention to before. He pointed out that social injustice or ineffective legal institutions drove the people's failures rather than the people's individual lack of talent or effort. It is also seen in the "Tale of Yu Kwangŏk," which dealt with a poor and politically fallen literatus who made a living by selling his examination answers to the rich. The corruption of officials and the poor literati's means of survival within the tale reveal Yi's critical views of the incompetence of officials and the government. Yi expressed his sympathy to unfortunate people who faced unexpected calamities. One such example is that of a fisherman who encountered a tiger on land and a python in the water and barely managed to escape with his life:

> A fisherman made his living with his net. One day, he cast his net in a bend of the Chaeng River and waited for fish while sitting on a rock. After sunset, a light flashing like lightning approached him. He knew that it was a tiger's eyes, but he could not run away by land. He jumped into the river and swam into the middle of the rapids. The tiger stayed where he was and did not leave. Soon afterwards, something wriggling approached him underwater. He touched it and discovered that it was a python. Before he could attempt to run away, the python had already quickly wound around his leg. The python was as thick as a person's thigh, and its winding power was as strong as iron. . . .When the python died and the tiger left, he left the river and cried to the sky, "I see Heaven does not want me to catch fish. I would rather starve and die at home." He then tore his only fishing net apart and left that place.[27]

[27] Ibid., 3: 183.

The fisherman ripped apart his fishing net out of a sense of despair. Yi expressed his sympathy for the fisherman thus: “Alas! I have not heard of the kind of difficulties that make a fisherman tear apart his net.”[28] As Yi spent more time in exile, his favorable subjects became those who unreasonably fell into helpless and miserable conditions without any possible exit. Another example can be found in the characters in “Two Tang People’s Writing to Ask for Food” 唐人乞粮文, who were Tang Chinese literati forced to leave their country during the transition from Ming to Qing. Without anyone to rely on, they wandered throughout Korea and lived by begging for food. Yi expressed his sympathy for their plight: “Their travails make people shed heavy tears and enable them to console their minds for one hundred years. Ah! My mind hurts, too.” [29] Similarly, his biographies of virtuous people focused on depicting their suffering and sadness in life rather than on eulogizing their virtues and depicting them as ideal social examples. “Tale of Such’ik,” for example, described the tribulations of a woman who maintained her chastity but lived lonely and sad life. Yi included an anecdote representing her loneliness and desire to escape, and added lengthy sympathetic comments expressing that her virtue was practically wasted among ignorant people. The women who lived among the ignorant and the plight of the Tang people in a foreign country, who were educated and had solid social status in their homeland, were appropriate subjects for Yi Ok who suffered from unexpected punishment, exile, and wondering in rural areas where he felt was like a strange and uncultivated foreign country.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 1: 66.

In addition, Yi's writings depict himself as a weak person who surrendered to secular desires. "Nights of Seven People" 七夜 [30] describes a dialogue between the writer, who could not sleep at night due to loneliness, and his young servant. The boy enumerated diverse people who enjoyed busy lives, including those who enjoy wine, gambling, and romance with a beautiful lady. The writer at first criticized the servant's words as unreasonable; however, he finally accepted the servant's statement that a life of secular pleasures was worth pursuing and better than his purposeless, lonely, and unpleasant existence. "Small Writing" 小敍 also expresses his troubled mind by depicting his friend, who indulged in drinking because he had many worries.

> I asked, "Why do you drink wine so heavily?" My friend replied, "My drinking is not for taste, intoxication, feeling full, pleasure, or acquiring fame, but only to forget worries." I said, "How can you cure worrying by wine?" He replied, "I live in a land of worry and face a a troubled time. . . .When I move my mind to somewhere else, my worries cannot follow me. When I shake a wine bottle, my mind is in the bottle. When I am cautious in holding a wine cup not to spill wine, then my mind is in the cup. When I eat food, then my mind moves to the food. When I offer wine to my guests by their age orders, then my mind comes to move to the guests. Thus, I am out of worries momentarily from the moment I hold a wine bottle to wipe my mouth. My worries over my body and my situation are gone. My worry caused by the wrong time also disappears. This is how I forget my worries and why I keep drinking." I regard his words as reasonable and feel sympathy for him. Alas! My feeling of writing in Pongsŏng is the same as his feeling of drinking.[31]

Only habitual drinking temporarily alleviated his friend's frustration. Similarly, Yi revealed his worry that only writing could save him from boredom, which frustrated him.[32] In his expression of the agony and suffering caused by his fallen status, his writing shares similarities with the

[30] The work describes the nights of seven individuals including students, merchants, gamblers, officials, one with intimate friends, husbands and wives, and Daoist hermits.

[31] Ibid., 3:192. It was written in the fifth month of 1800.

[32] "Introduction of the Story of the Marriage of Student Kim and Lady Sin" 金申賜婚記題辭. Ibid., 2: 241.

literature of exiles of early Chosŏn.[33] Still, Yi's writings are unique in terms of a relatively weak sense of repentance for his misdeeds and minimal supplication to the king. Yi's choice of subjects in despair and non-repentant attitude reflect Yi's recognition that his individual efforts asking forgiveness from the king would be useless, because he received punishment as a scapegoat under complex politics rather than purely punishment on his own personal misdeed.

The exile and travel put Yi into unfamiliar environments that were often of interest to him, and he recorded interesting characters and events that he witnessed or heard during this period. Such experiences facilitated his creation of a number of biography, short stories, and critical essays. While conventional biographies dealt with virtuous people who displayed loyalty, filial piety, and female chastity, most of Yi's characters were commoners and lower class people, including merchants, beggars, fisherman, singers, shamans, female entertainers, female servants, thieves, swindlers, and widows. These characters did not pursue moral lives. On the contrary, they enjoyed exuberant lives, often violating social restraints. For example, Yi depicted swindlers who skillfully deceived people, a female entertainer who encouraged her guests to get drunk and to die earlier, and a male singer who disguised himself as a woman and sneaked into noble women's homes to engage in adultery. By depicting these characters with minimum or non-didactic messages, Yi expressed that their lives of following sexual desires and profits are worthy by themselves, even if they were undervalued among literati.

Yi also recorded local customs and dialects in rural areas that surprised or amused him, including children's play, women's hairstyles, local dialects, and merchants at markets. These

[33] Peter H. Lee describes the features of literature by exiled writers, including the sorrow of exile and recollection of the past; the causes of exile; itineraries with a brief description of places, or a description of the place of exile; repentance, longing for home, and prayer for a quick recall. Peter H. Lee, ed., *History of Korean Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 236.

records adopted vernacular and colloquial expressions from various sources, including shaman's songs, folk tales, commoner's dialogues, and jargon that was regarded as rustic in literati writings. In the "Tale of Licentiate Ch'ŏe," for example, Yi adopted shaman's jargon and offered explanations as in the following:

> *Sŏngju* 城主 or *hŏju* 墟主 means the god of earth residing in commoners' houses; *malmyŏng* 末明 indicates the ancestor's spirit of other people. Also, *samsin* 三神 indicates a god who is in charge of birth, *chesŏk* 帝釋 indicates Buddha, *hogu p'ap'a* 虎口婆婆, the smallpox spirit, *sŏnwang*, the wrong name of *sŏnghwang* 城隍, a village tutelary shrine, and *saja* indicates *ch'asa* 差使, emissaries from the underworld.[34]

He recognized the Korean vernacular diction, arguing that it reflected the genuine life of the Korean people. His writings of this period are rife with bold criticism of the government and adoption of the vernacular which deviates from the earlier writings when Yi, with the hope of a future career as an official, was cautious about not violating writing conventions.

Period of Retirement (1800-1818)

Yi Ok was released from nine years of exile in 1800 at the age of forty-one. He no longer took examinations and chose to live in his hometown of Namyang. During his retirement in this rural area, Yi mostly farmed on a small scale and associated with friends of the same background, including his colleague from the Royal Confucian Academy Kim Yŏ, until he died at fifty-six in 1813. Yi's writings during this period largely centered on reflections on his life and the lessons he had learned as a result of his farming experiences.

[34] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 235, 328.

Yi's early writings as a student identified insufficient efforts as the main cause of one's failures. Later, in exile, he blamed incompetent government institution or calamities that unexpectedly ruined people's lives. His writings from his period of retirement considered nature or fate, which he believed were difficult to resist in their capacity, as the reason of ruined lives. His essay "Many Words" 衆語, for example, shows that changing one's inborn nature is difficult and almost impossible based on his farming experience of gluten millet. He reflects on his life through the lens of his repeated failures at making his infertile land productive. He discovered a deserted piece of land and initially planned to grow barley there. However, he gave up after seeing how poor and salty the land was. Instead, he chose to grow safflower. He failed again, but Yi was not easily discouraged and identified the reason for his failure as a lack of effort. Yi then chose to grow millet, which generally grows well in dry conditions. In opposition to the old servant's warning that his field was infertile by nature, Yi insisted that the earth was generous and thus did not give up his plan of cultivating grain. The reasons he gave for his failure remind readers of his early attempts to understand his failure to pass the civil service examination: "I will do my best from now on, so I beg you, god of writing, not to abandon me."[35] Although Yi believed he had a weakness as a son of a secondary son's family, just as the salty water invaded the land and made it barren, he believed the generosity of the earth would overcome this damage. This essay is noticeably rich in expressing the writer's ambition, devotion, failures, and frustration in farming experiences, which enable readers to regard this work as the reflection of the writer's life rather than mere records of farming.

[35] Ibid., 262.

In order to prove that the no land deserved to be deserted, Yi put special effort into growing gluten millet and described the process of making it grow in detail. Unfortunately, although he chose the best seed and put forth his best efforts, unexpected heavy rains washed away seeds and manure from the land and made it barren. This sudden calamity is reminiscent of King Chŏnjo's punishment of Yi Ok, which caused all of Yi's efforts and literary talents to come to nothing. The narrator of the "Many Words" greatly discouraged and criticized the land's infertility, saying, "I didn't know that some lands are destined to be deserted" and asking "Is there land which can be deserted?"[36] He tried using the field in various ways, but they all failed. Yi finally gave up the land and let weeds grow. Having reached this point, Yi no longer showed criticism toward himself or nature. Instead, he admitted that the artificial efforts of humans are no match against nature. Different from previous periods, he accepted the limitation of an individual's efforts in a calm manner, rather than in anger or denial, which drove him to make another attempt.

Another newly acquired lesson is that different things cannot stay together, which is embodied in "Lesson from a Foxtail" 莠悟. This work deals with Yi's efforts to weed foxtail from the part of his land that was covered in it. Yi, as the narrator, describes his attempts to get rid of the weeds and grow gluten millet instead, finally giving up after all attempts came to nothing. He finally came to admit that grain and weeds could not share the field together:

> Both foxtail and grain are plants. Heaven produced them and the earth grows the two, and thus Heaven and earth treat them fairly. Only people do not do so. People distinguish and name plants differently and express their benevolence and hatred toward each. Such distinction relates to the people's interests and not to the nature of the world. I also treat a

[36] Ibid.

> profitable thing with benevolence and things that damage my interest like an enemy. This is a common practice. . . .I would uproot a plant growing in front of my doorstep even if it was a beautiful orchid. The fault lies in the orchid, not me. The same practice can be applied to people. People of different kinds cannot be the same and cannot go along to the end.[37]

After failing to grow grains, he did not come to believe the common idea that grain was good and should be cultivated while weeds were bad and should be rooted out. He argued that this common belief was based on human necessity only and, according to nature's view, each plant had its own value and could not be replaced by others. Yi connected his new understanding to a social issue: some people did not fit into the world by their very nature and therefore were abandoned by their king.

> Alas! I thought the land was totally useless. However, now I am reconsidering why the land should be filled with grain and make people rich. The earth produces and grows myriad things. The earth shows its benevolence to all things and does not suppress weeds or favor grain. Only people treat them differently.[38]

Yi showed doubt on the literati's conventional idea that social functions were the only things of value and that one should make harmony with society to create an ideal one. Different from his time of exile, when he focused on the sorrows and sufferings of his subjects' lives, Yi examined the variations in people's ways of living and recognized different ways of living. He dealt especially in those who experienced catastrophic vicissitudes. For example, he described a deer whose young antlers caused it to be hunted and a bamboo able to enjoy its life span because of its uselessness for people. His comments almost always involved the examination of the lives of talented people whose talents ultimately caused their ruin.

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[37] "Lesson from a Foxtail" 莠悟, Ibid., 256.

[38] "Many Words" 衆語. Ibid., 229.

> I almost shed tears when I heard the story of a deer with its young antlers. . . .Alas! Young antlers are a sad thing for a deer. They grow out of its own body and ultimately threaten the deer's life. How can they not be troublesome? This is not the case for a deer only. I was told that a peacock plucks off its own tail and a musk deer tears apart its musk gland. Those who hide deeply and run far away sometimes cannot escape from danger. So, then, what about those people who are wandering in the city with their young antlers?[39]

While he expressed sadness for those whose talents ruined their lives, he showed bittersweet relief for things that enjoyed longevity: "Alas! The flourishing bamboo trees in my backyard can be flourishing because they are useless."[40] However, Yi expressed his deep lament and sympathy for falcons, pearls, whales, and birds that failed to have the chance to reveal their merits. "A Falcon" 虎鷹, for example, deals with a falcon whose power enables it to hunt a tiger. A rural person catches it by accident and ties it to the tavern's pillar without recognizing its ability. Having no one who recognized its power, the falcon soon dies:

> This falcon had the craft and strength to catch a tiger. However, it failed to meet anyone who was able to recognize it. It tried to test its ability on the tavern dog, but unfortunately was caught and tied up by the side of the road. Isn't it sad?[41]

The fate of the falcon was decided when it was caught by an ignorant man who did not recognize its true value. Yi's highlights the importance of having someone who can recognize the value of a person, which may suggest his blame towards a ruler who could not appreciate his true values. Yi also highlights this importance in the story of an extraordinary pearl. In this story, Yi

[39] "Young Antlers" 鹿茸. Ibid., 3: 139.

[40] "Words on Flowers" 談花. Ibid., 226.

[41] "A Falcon" 虎鷹. Ibid., 60.

expressed his lament for an extraordinary pearl, which was burnt by ignorant people in "A Pearl." A rural man found a large pearl from an oyster and held it dearly. However, when it glittered at night, his wife though it as an uncanny thing and burnt it:

> Alas! This pearl which glittered at night was a treasure. . . .It was unable, however, to meet a person who recognized its value and finally it was burnt like a worthless seashell. It was against the will of Heaven, which produced such a treasure. However, what could be expected from the ignorant woman? I felt sad for the sake of the God of the Sea.[42]

Similarly, "A Whale" 長鏽皮 describes a killer whale that came ashore and was hunted by people: "Alas! Why should the whale be cooked on chopping boards and in pots instead of enjoying freedom in a vast sea?"[43] Yi blamed the ignorant people who simply regarded a whale as a mere fish. These extraordinary animals and objects in the stories commonly had tragic endings because they failed to have someone who appreciated their true values. The stories remind readers of Yi's laments that he lived in an inappropriate time and place to fulfill his talents.[44]

Yi wrote several records describing a wide range of daily objects—grain, trees, fish, animals, insects, and tobacco.[45] "A Snipe Bird," for example, is about a bird by the Korean seaside, and describes the season and the area where the birds were seen, the origin of their name, and their shape and color. The various Korean and Chinese references that Yi used to identify the objects include *Yŏrha ilgi* 熱河日記 (Diary Written at Rehe*)*, *Hunmong chahoe* 訓蒙字會 (A

[42] "A Pearl" 珍珠, Ibid., 126 .

[43] "A Whale" 長鏽皮, Ibid., 96.

[44] "Small Writing" Ibid 192, "A Casual Postscript to a Poetry Collection of Lu You," Ibid., 1: 279.

[45] The records dealt with 90 kinds of things in ten categories: twenty-one kinds of birds, seventeen kinds of fish, seventeen kinds of animals, nineteen kinds of insects, fifteen kinds of flowers, twelve kinds of grain, fifteen kinds of vegetables, seventeen kinds of trees, and fourteen kinds of plants.

Handbook of Chinese Graphs),[46] *Hanch'ŏng mungam* 漢淸文鑑 (Chinese-Korean dictionary), *Bencao Gangmu* 本草綱目(Native Medicinal Plants),[47] *Qixieji* 齊諧記 (On Universal Harmony),[48] and *Bowuzhi* 博物志 (The Treaties on Research into Nature),[49] with Confucian and Daoist classics. Yi's favorable view on the vernacular words continued with his use of the vernacular names of vegetables, grain, animals, and fish, along with explanations of them. This is different from writers who avoided adopting the vernacular names because they regarded them as rustic and indecent in literati writings.[50] Yi, however, used the word *yŏsu* 女藪, from a local dialect indicating a fox, and *migu* 米駒,[51] the vernacular for a loach, instead of *chuŏ* 鰍魚, the Chinese term. Yi's interests in local cultures and vernacular names have existed throughout his entire writings. However, while Yi adopted vernacular names in a limited way in earlier periods—replacing difficult Chinese words to the vernacular for better understanding for readers, Yi actively adopted vernacular names in depicting Korean local cultures, even though he could find words in Chinese. This can be understood as his expanded appreciation for the vernacular that it is sometimes more effective than literary Chinese in depicting certain topics. Yi's appreciation on the vernacular distinguishes him from official writers who firmly believed the superiority of

[46] *Hunmong chahoe* 訓蒙字會 was written by a Korean scholar Ch'oe Sejin 崔世珍 (1473-1542) in 1527.

[47] *Bencao Gangmu* 本草綱目, written by a Chinese scholar Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518-1593) in the seventeenth century, provides an explanation of the original name of the plant.

[48] *Qixieji* 齊諧記 is an early Chinese collection of strange or supernatural stories compiled in 5th century.

[49] *Bowuzhi* 博物志 is a Chinese collection of short stories edited in an encyclopedic manner. It was written by Zhang Hua 張華 (232-300). It mainly records stories of strange events and supernatural phenomena.

[50] Pak Chiwŏn argued that he avoided using vernacular names since they were not appropriate and decent. *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 25.

[51] *Mikkuraji.*

literary Chinese over the vernacular, regardless of reader's level of comprehensibility or localities of topics.

Yi's writings may have been inspired by the encyclopedic writings popular in the eighteenth century. For example, Hong Mansŏn 洪萬選 (1643-1715) wrote *Sallim kyŏngje* 山林經濟 (Farm Management),[52] which included the topics of growing plants, building houses, and medical treatment. Sŏ Yugu (1764-1845) wrote *Imwŏn kyŏngje chi* 林園經濟志 (Record on Management of Farms and Gardens) which was also an encyclopedic record of daily objects. The aim of these records was to increase national wealth by developing farming skills. While Yi Ok's records share similarities with those in terms of their encyclopedic scope, his were written for his personal interest rather than for providing useful knowledge to develop people's lives and society. Yi clarified that he wrote them just to help pass the boring summer time in a remote corner of a country, without any hint of their public utility.[53]

In this period, the number of records on extraordinary things noticeably increased. Yi's interests can be seen in his records of strange things, including stories of mermaids, horse-like fish, ghosts, eccentric animals, and miraculous natural phenomenon for which no social utility can be found.

> A person who traveled to Haesŏ told me the story of a mermaid.[54] In his travels, he saw that a naked beautiful woman and children were confined in an empty home. He first thought that they were human beings. He approached the woman and had sexual intercourse with her. Their behaviors and emotions were like those of humans. The master of the home came back from the field later and was about to steam them to serve

[52] *Farm Management* 山林經濟 is written by a Korean scholar Hong Mansŏn 洪萬選 (1643-1715).

[53] "Small Preface of Writing at a White Cloud Temple" 白雲筆小敍. Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 3: 53.

[54] Haesŏ is the regional name of the Hwanghae province which is located at the northwest of Korea.

> as a meal. He was shocked and asked what they were. The master said that they were fish. He asked the master's favor and released them into the sea. They looked back three times when they were released, as if appreciating his kindness, and the woman seemed to miss the relations she had had with him.[55]

In his stories of strange things, Yi did not use didactic garb to make them appear suitable for Confucian literati readers. On the other hand, he revealed his curiosity and surprise in them, describing the seemingly unbelievable and despicable subjects in the literati writings. In his later period, his writings no longer stress his aptitude for official positions or his repentance for his past, themes commonly found in his early works and the works of exiled literati. He gradually became less hesitant to reveal his favorable views on popular fiction, vernacular dictions, and supernatural things, using minimum didactic trappings. Some studies interpret this as Yi's resistance against the king's authority or his transcendence of political ambition. Furthermore, some regard Yi as a revolutionary figure who was against national policy.[56] However, considering the political situation of his time, his exile can hardly be understood as being solely the result of Yi's unconventional writings. Yi did not show much repentant because he realized that his regret would not alleviate his miserable isolation. Therefore, for Yi, the necessity of following official literary conventions became less crucial than it was for those in official positions. Although Yi was a doubtless Confucian student when he was young, his social view gradually changed while being sacrificed in the political turmoil and he gradually turned into an unorthodox story writer.

[55] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 3: 104.

[56] Ibid., 1: 6-9.

Chapter 4

Yi Ok's Views of Literature

Chapter 3 shows that Yi Ok's interest in characters, themes, and languages in his writings have intensified, modified, or changed based on his political and living experiences. Although offering a simple answer on Yi's identity and his literary features can be difficult, his writing in general is unique in the history of premodern Korean literature for rejecting ancient writing models, choosing subjects of women, and respect on Chosŏn culture and diction. In order to demonstrate Yi's uniqueness, this chapter deals with Yi Ok's views of literature based on his critical essays, comments on the Neo-Confucian classics, popular literature, and writers of his time. Because the king proclaimed an uncompromising standard to judge how values of literary works should be decided, it was difficult, especially officials, to reveal their positive views on popular literature. Revealing such a view in the court could pose a risk to prospective officials' careers, and even their lives. Considering this, it is not strange that literati's favorable views of the casual writings were not prominent while the king's policy was in active. Yi Ok is one of the few literati who openly revealed views on literature which could hardly be recognized within official literary culture. When King Chŏngjo recommended literati to follow the Qin, Han, and Tang literature as literary examples, Yi argued that imitation could not produce good literature and rejected imitating past traditions. Instead, Yi asserted the significance of the present time and place, the genuine and unfiltered emotions of women, and the uniqueness of Chosŏn culture and its native words. In addition, Yi did not hesitate to clarify that his views were inspired by Chinese popular literature and prose-vignettes that the king denounced.

My study compares Yi's works with those of officials and Northern Learning School scholars, represented by Pak Chiwŏn and Pak Chega. Scholarship on the Northern Learning scholars has accumulated since 1980 and these scholars were regarded as the central figures in the late Chosŏn field of literature. According to this scholarship, Yi's writings—based on his challenge to literary traditions and his adoption of the vernacular—can be said to belong to those of the Northern Learning scholars who challenged the imitation of the Qin, Han, and Tang literary traditions. Yi was against the official literary culture like the Northern Learning scholars; however, Yi's view on literature differs from that of Northern Learning School scholars who prioritized the social function of literati writings: educating the public with moral lessons and rectifying social evils. Yi paid little attention to the function; instead, he pursued amusement in writings, and regarded the social function of literary works gained at the expense of the writer's spontaneity a loss.

Generally, Chosŏn literati proposed following the literary models of the past to write good literary works. The literary form and style of the ancients were the best for any period or place; thus, writers could produce works of comparable quality by imitating the ancient form and style.[1] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, scholars who respected the literary tradition of the Qin and Han wrote: "prose writing must follow the tradition of the Qin and Han, while poetry follows the High Tang style 文必秦漢 詩必盛唐."[2] The respect of Chosŏn literati for the Qin, Han, and Tang models and their imitation of these works are depicted in Northern Learning scholars′ writings to criticize the practice of imitation

[1] Chih-p'ing Chou. *Yuan Hongtao and Kungan School* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 30.

[2] The supporters of the Qin and Han States are called Archaic School (*ŭigomunp'a*).

I see people nowadays	我見世之人
praising other's writings with:	譽人文章者
"Narratives like the Han style."	文必擬兩漢
"Poetry like the High Tang style"	詩則盛唐也
Saying "like," however, means theirs are not authentic.	曰似已非眞
How can there be other Han and Tang dynasties?	漢唐豈有且 [3]

Pak Chiwŏn′s poem criticized contemporary writers' practice of imitating Chinese literary traditions. Similarly, Yi challenged this practice of imitating the Qin, Han, and Tang literary traditions and disregarding other styles as impure and indecent. Yi's essay "The First Difficulty," for example, demonstrates that contemporary Chosŏn literati's attachment to literary purity was nonsense, and no models can be recognized as absolute, because Qin and Han works are also derived from past literary traditions. Yi despised those who are well known for their imitation of the Qin and Han style as a scarecrow wearing gorgeous clothes and argued that different literary works were the product of the time in which the writers lived and that each had its own unique value.[4] According to Yi, adopting the more ancient style did not necessarily make one's writing better as the modeled one; the more recent one is not necessarily poorer or more rustic.

> A butterfly flew over *hangnyŏng* [a kind of chrysanthemum] and asked, "Why are you yellow and not the white color of the apricot flower, the red of the peony, or the pink of the peach blossom?"
> *Hangnyŏng* replied, "I have no power to control my color. Time gave me this color. What can I do with time?"
> [Dear guest], why are you asking questions like the butterfly?[5]

[3] Pak Chiwŏn, "Giving to Yi Tŏngmu" 贈左蘇山人 in "Preface of Yi Tŏngmu's Literary Collection"嬰處稿序.Pak Sumil, *Pak Chiwŏn ŭi miŭisik kwa munye iron* (Literary Theory and Aesthetic of Pak Chiwŏn). (T'aehaksa, 2005), 91.

[4] Yi's emphasis on the present time recalls the Yuan Hongdao's literary theory on historical perspective on the development of literature. Yuan launched his attacks against the imitative approach advocated by the Archaist school. Chih-p'ing Chou, 36-7.

[5] Yi Ok, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip* (Collection of Yi Ok's Works in Translation), vol 2, Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏngu hoe tr., (Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2009), 408.

The comparison with a chrysanthemum shows that literature has changed over time and every literary style has its own values. Based on the idea, Yi wrote a number of *ci* 詞 (lyrics),[6] then regarded as frivolous and shallow, due to how desires are expressed in *ci*. He advocated writing of *ci* in "Question and Answer in the Hall of Peach Blossoms and Running Water" 桃花流水館問答, which dealt with the debate between Yi and a guest, who advised Yi not to write *ci*, since they were undervalued among the literati of his time.

> The guest said, "Please be careful. People nowadays no longer write *c*i."
> I said, "I do not have deep knowledge about *ci*, but know who wrote *ci*. No literary master, including Li Bo 李白 (701–762), Bo Juyi 白居易 (772–846), Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140–1207), Lu Benzhong 呂本中 (1084–1145), and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), avoided writing *ci*. Only contemporary Chosŏn writers avoid them. Are you saying that people in the past who wrote *ci* were all frivolous and Koreans now are so wise that they avoid them? Were the people in the past truly not discreet and shallow and dared to write them? I cannot tell if it is true.[7]

Yi enumerated several renowned Chinese writers of *ci*, in order to argue against the guest's criticism that Yi Ok was not fully aware of the literary practices of his time. Yi countered that the Chosŏn literati's respect for Qin, Han, and Tang traditions only was rustic and stubborn, in the broader realm of literature. Yi further found the origin of *ci* from the *Book of Songs*, a Confucian classic, to show that his *ci* deserved respect.

> I said, "*Shiyu* 詩餘 [different name of *ci*][8] inherited "Airs" [of the *Book of Songs*]."
> The guest said, "Are you saying that *shiyu* has the spirit of the "Airs"?"
> I said, "Well, my answer is yes and no. *Shiyu* works that express decent emotion become *zhengfeng* 正風 ["Airs South of Zhou" and "Airs South of Shao"], and works dealing with

[6] *Ci* 詞 (lyrics) is a type of lyric poetry based on traditional structures, originally meant as lyrics to go along with music. It generally expresses desires. The famous *ci* work is "Song of Autumn Wind" 秋風詞 by Li Bo (701-761).

[7] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 1: 436.

[8] *Shiyu* 詩餘 literally means "That which is beside poetry," is a different name of *ci* 詞.

> lewd emotion without moderation become *bianfeng* 變風 [works in the *Book of Songs* besides *zhengfeng*]. One difference was enough to change *zhengfeng* into *bianfeng*. *Shiyu* is a work from "Airs" but appeared after experiencing several changes and differences from "Airs." Still, *shiyu* has merit [common with the "Airs"] in expressing emotions well, and the merit distinguishes *shiyu* from regulated verses, a selection of literary works, and archaic poems [from the Tang]. Thus, I say that *shiyu* inherited the spirit of the "Airs." This is why *shiyu* is worthy of being."[9]

Yi revealed that his *ci* and songs in the *Book of Songs* are worthy because they are not artificial. According to Yi, changes to literary styles do not necessarily result in the deterioration of literary quality. Yi's recognition of diverse literature was shared among other literati of his time, particularly by the Northern Learning School scholars. For example, Pak Chega's (1750–1815) essay reveals the values of different literary styles through the comparison of different foods in a ritual service table.

> When setting a table for a ritual service, millets are placed in the front and soups and dried meat slices in the back. People seek salty taste from salt, sourness from apricot, spicy from mustard, and bitterness from tea leaves. It makes sense if one criticizes salt as not being salty, apricot as not being sour, mustard as not being spicy, and tea leaves as not being bitter. However, if one criticizes salt, apricot, mustard, and tea leaves by saying that they are not the same as millet or criticizes soup and meat slices by saying that they are not placed in the front of the table [and try to correct this], the things criticized will lose their nature and various tastes will lose the value of each.[10]

Each food on the table has value that cannot be replaced by others and cannot be judged under the same criterion. Yi Ok, Pak Chiwŏn, and Pak Chega shared similarities in challenging the contemporary literary trend of imitating the Qin, Han, and Tang literary traditions. The challenge of Pak Chiwŏn and Pak Chega, Northern Learning scholars, however, did not devalue the traditions. On the other hand, they recognized the traditions as good literary models while criticizing Chosŏn writers' excessive attachment to them to the extent that imitating them was

[9] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 1: 439.

[10] Pak Chege, *Chŏngyu chip* 貞蕤集 (Poetry Collection of Pak Chega). This is part of Pak Chega's writing of apology 自訟文 presented to King Chŏngjo (Pak Sumil, *Pak Chiwŏn ŭi miŭisik kwa munye iron*, 54).

regarded as the only way to achieve literary value.[11] It is largely derived from the Northern Learning scholars' idea that literature should help to rectify social evils. Thus, it is not strange that they did not support casual writings, such as prose-vignettes or popular fiction, which did not have address social utility, and attacked these works as being insignificant and vulgar.[12] Pak Chiwŏn, for example, expressed his dislike of *Outlaws of the Marsh*, *The West Chamber*, and writings of the *Gongan* school as odd and vulgar.

> People who enjoyed reading casual writings of late Ming and Qing pursue eccentric knowledge and sarcastic expressions. They enjoyed the works while they were young, but such uncommon enjoyment naturally disappears as they get older and more mature. So, such works are not worthy of arguing over seriously. However, these works, lacking rules and decency were written in the time of the late Ming, when ornate expressions were respected despite poor contents. Writers of the Wu and Chu states [*Gongan* school writers] with trivial skills and poor virtues made efforts to compose strange stories. Their writings are trivial and lack good spirit in their contents, though some diction is fresh. Such writings are outcomes of the odd and strange preferences of rustic writers of Wu and Chu. How can such writings be worthy of respect?[13]

In contrast to the Northern Learning scholars, Yi regarded that writings that followed the traditions of the Qin, Han, and Tang were artificial, trite, and sacrificed the writer's individuality and creativity. Such ideas drove him to expand his recognition to non-orthodox literary works, such as late Ming and Qing prose-vignettes and popular fiction, which were largely written for

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[11] *Pianliwen* 騈儷文 pursued ornate expressions with allusions and fixed forms. Chosŏn literati wrote *pianliwen* because the civil service examination required answers to be written in the style. Also, diplomatic documents sent to China needed to be written in the *pinliwen*. Writing the works was respected, in that writers possessed refined literary skills; it was also a means to prove Chosŏn's developed culture to China. For these necessities, *pianliwen* was popular among official writings in Korea. However, such writing style was fixed and regarded as a literary model that writers should not challenge during the 18th century. Pak Uhun. "Hanjung ŭi pan pyŏngryŏ mun kwan" (Views of Anti-Parallel Prose in Korea and China) *Tonga inmunhak* 4 (2003), 169.

[12] Their literary perspectives are in accord with their idea of learning practical things from Qing China and also King Chŏngjo's literary policy.

[13] An Sehyŏn, "Munch'e panjŏng ŭl tullŏssan kŭlssŭgi wa munch'e nonjaeng" (Writings and Debate on the Policy of Literary Policy), *Ŏmun nonjip* 54 (2006), 157.

amusement. Yi's writings thus have a wider selection of themes and expressions that officials and Northern Learning School scholars' writings suppressed.

Importance of Women as Subjects

Woman subjects are relegated to a small corner of literati culture as seen in the several remarks about women in Confucian texts.[14] Yi Ok challenged the idea and adopted women as major subjects by dealing with women of different social classes in his sixty-six songs, eight biographies, and one play. Yi regarded women as the most refined and reliable lens to see society and people. His portrayals of female personas in "Words of a Rural Area (Korea)," for example, depict the lives of female entertainers, newlyweds, and miserable wives. The example below describes the lives of female entertainers:

> Don't touch my silky hair, dear.
> If not, camellia hair-oil will stain your clothes.
> Don't put your lips to my shiny lips, dear;
> My red rouge will easily smudge.
>
> Here comes my dear holding his smoking pipe.
> I see that the pipe is from Tongnae.
> I grasp and take it, even before he takes a seat,
> because I love the silver engraved graphs "Longevity" and "Blessing."[15]

Yi's second essay, "The Second Difficulty" 二難, shows why female subjects are important in literature. The essay deals with the dialogue between Yi Ok and his guest, who believes that women are inappropriate literary subjects. Yi asks a series of questions, which seem to test the

[14] Daniel Hsieh. *Love and Women in Early Chinese Fiction*. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press), 2008, 11.

[15] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 435.

latter's fundamental knowledge of the *Book of Songs.* Yi's questions appear to be insulting to the guest, who visited Yi to correct his wrongdoings with his respect for the literary traditions:

> I asked the guest, "Your advice certainly has a profound lesson. Please go ahead and burn my writings. Still, I humbly ask you to advise me to the end. I ask you, what is the *Book of Songs*?
> The guest said, "It is a classic."
> "Who wrote the works?"
> "The poets of the time wrote them."
> "Who compiled the book?"
> "Confucius did."
> "Who made annotations on it?"
> "Scholars of Zhu Xi and Confucius made the annotations."
> "What subjects did the book deal with?"
> After a while, the guest said, "Mostly on women."
> "How many poems deal with women in all?"
> "Eleven poems in 'Airs of Zhounan' and nine in 'Airs of Shaonan.'"
> "How many works are not related to women?"
> "Only five."
> "Is that so? It is a strange situation! Isn't it because women who wear powders, rouges, skirts, and hairpins actually represent myriad things in the world? This is not because the ancient poets did not know the saying 'Do not see, hear, and talk about improper things.' My dear guest, would you listen to my explanation? A proper reason exists for the situation."[16]

The *Book of Songs*, a collection of ancient Chinese songs believed to have been compiled by Confucius, encompasses songs of love and emotion, social critiques, and hymns and ritual songs of dynasties, along with pictures of nature, birds, and plants. Yi examined several women subjects in "Airs of Zhounan" and "Shaonan" regarded as exemplary in the *Book of Songs* to argue that the guest's idea came from his shallow knowledge and narrow views. Interestingly, Yi's preference for female subjects was based on their delicate sentiments, the main reason why women were despised in Confucian literati culture.[17] Generally speaking, Confucian scholars

[16] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 1: 483.

[17] Confucian literati should properly regulate their emotions and not indulge in or be distracted by them saying that too much grief and pleasure hurt people. "Pleasure is not carried to the point of debauch, and grief not carried to the

believed that upright knowledge could be achieved by studying Principle 理, which is permanent and important, rather than emotions, which can be easily changed and frivolous. Women, believed to be full of emotion and with little principle, were thought to be unreliable and inappropriate subjects for literati writings unless the women subjects were dealt with as anti-models. Yi, however, clarified that women's intense emotions—which he believed were inherent in women from birth—effectively mirror people's true selves and society. Yi believed that the emotions by themselves alone are worthy subjects of writings and thus writers do not need to forcefully induce socially practical themes from these emotions:

> Women have a biased nature. Their delight, gloom, grudges, and licentiousness derive from their unfeigned emotion. They seem to have needles in their tongues and an axe between their eyebrows. Therefore, women are the most exquisite subjects and most appropriate in poetic scenes. They are creatures of extreme beauty 尤物. Their attitudes, words, and clothes reach the extreme, and watching them seems like listening to the singing of orioles snoozing and enjoying peach blossoms while drunk. Except for women, no one possesses such rich poetic materials.[18]

Among emotions, Yi focused on the feelings that arise in the relations between men and women by saying that such feelings could not be fabricated and thus were the most true and natural in life. Confucian scholars largely despised the value of feelings thinking they were unstable, unreliable, and distracted people from achieving morality.

> Generally, in regard to observing myriad things in the world, nothing will be greater than observing human emotions. Thus, by examining emotions, all the states of mind, and also the goodness or evilness of a person, gains or losses in affairs, the dissipation or simplicity of customs, the fruitfulness or barrenness of a piece of land, the rise and fall of a family, the peaceful reigns and turbulent days of a country, and the ups and downs of a period will be revealed.[19]

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point of self-injury" 樂而不淫 哀而不傷 *Analects* 3:20 (Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* [London: Allen & Unwin, 1949], 99).

[18] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 414.

[19] Ibid., 296.

Yi regarded that people can achieve profound knowledge by examining women's emotions. His way of achieving this knowledge using women's unregulated emotions was not an orthodox approach. The recognition of desire and emotion is not only found in Yi Ok's writings; the works of Northern Learning school scholars share similar views. Pak Chiwŏn, for example, wrote the "Tale of a Faithful Woman from Hamyang," which depicts the difficulties and hardships of living as a widow by describing Mrs. Pak, who revealed her lifetime of physical and emotional suffering to her sons. While Pak Chiwŏn dealt with faithful women to demonstrate that sexual desire is natural, Yi Ok, who valued sexual desires, dealt with women who violated or had little to do with the female virtue as a lens to perceive a principle of the world. Yi's "Wail of A Female Entertainer in the Northern Area" depicts the extreme emotions aroused in the relationship between a man and woman as a way of achieving profound knowledge. The work is about Karyŏn, a female entertainer who seeks an appropriate partner: a handsome, young man who possesses talents in poetry, music, and dancing. One day, she has a guest who seems to fit her dream. She regards him as the very partner whom she has been seeking. However, when she finally realizes that he is unable to do what other men are good at, she is frustrated and expresses her sadness by wailing loudly at night.

> I regard Karyŏn as one who cries well. It is natural that sadness and joy exist in the meeting of men and women. . . .Thus, when she suddenly stands up and wails with grief, her expression of sadness derives from meeting someone who is rarely found, but ultimately ends in unfulfillment. How can she not feel sadness? How can she not feel pain?[20]

[20] Ibid.,1: 404.

Although the female entertainer's crying was caused by her sexual desire, Yi Ok did not interpret her sadness as evidence of lust, but as a proper expression of human nature, with which all readers could sympathize. Yi further found the principle of the world from Karyŏn, that having someone who can recognize oneself is the most important and difficult thing in one's life. Yi's regard for women as the lens distinguishes him from official writers, who found little significance in women subjects, or Northern Learning School scholars, who only positively regarded women who fulfilled the morals as worthy subjects in literati writings.[21]

Yi's emphasis on emotions is noticeable in his favorable essays on the *Gongan* school writers who argued the importance of emotions. For Yi, who emphasized the expression of genuine emotions between men and women, any form of literary technique could be used to depict one's emotions in a lively way. Yi's view expanded to advocate for late Ming and Qing writers, whose descriptions of emotions between men and women were often despised by Chosŏn literati. Yi's "A Casual Postscript to a Poetry Collection of Lu You,"[22] for example, depicts the debate about Lu You between Yi Ok and his friends Kim Yŏ (1766–1822) and Kang Ich'ŏn (1768–1801). Lu's poetry was famous for its refined and delicate expressions of human emotions. Lu's "Phoenix Hairpin" 釵頭鳳,[23] for example, expresses a man's longing for his departed beloved.

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[21] Critics like Yi Hyŏnu argue that Yi Ok recognizes women's individuality by favorably depicting those who boldly express their emotions and desire to be loved. Focusing on bold female characters, however, these studies tend to overlook the fact that Yi Ok depicts other women who pursue traditional female roles as well. More importantly, Yi Ok's admiration of women's emotions seems to follow traditional norms, which place men in the realm of reason and women in the realm of emotion, rather than reflecting his advanced social consciousness. Yi Hyŏnu, "Yi Ok *sop'um* yŏngu" (Study of Yi Ok's *sop'um*) (Ph.D dissertation, Sŏnggyungwan University, 2002) 82.

[22] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 1: 279.

[23] It is translated as "Where to Send my Letter?" by Edward E. Chang.

Where to Send My Letter?

Your pinkish and smooth hand
brought me some wine of a precious brand.
The whole city is filled with the colors of spring.
But the willows are separated by
an imperial wall from within.
The east wind is vile.
No longer can we be together having a good time.
My mind is full of sorrowful thoughts.
How can one bear years of separation by force?
It is wrong, it's wrong, it's all wrong!

Spring is still the same.
You and I grow thin in vain.
Your silken kerchief is soaked in red
with traces of rouged tears.
Peach blossoms will fall.
The pond and pavilion will be deserted.
The vow between us remains true.
But how can letters get through?
It is over, it is over, it is all over![24]

This poem, which depicts sentiments from separation, contradicts King Chŏngjo's recommendations for literary themes of renovating society and cultivating the public with morals. Different to the king's idea, Yi Ok advocates Lu Yu. His essay on Lu You comically describes Kang Ich'ŏn's criticism of Lu:

> When the topic reached Lu You, Kang suddenly rose from his seat and shouted with a pointed finger: "How dare you read Lu You's poems? You should burn them if you have them. Or, they will certainly ruin the next generation." Kim Yŏ and I laughed at Kang's overreaction to such an extent that our hat strings almost broke."[25]

[24] Edward. C. Chang tr., *The Best Chinese Ci Poems: A Bilingual Approach to Interpretation and Appreciation* (Virginia: Emnes Publishing, 2012), 358.

[25] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 1: 280.

Yi cautiously recognized Lu's poetic ability to capture delicate emotions and said that his writings were outcomes of excessive literary talents, which did not deserve condemn. Yi also supported *Gongan* School writers, including Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610) because the *Gongan* writers' support on genuine emotions as literary topics fits to what Yi prioritized.

> Yuan Hungtao's [*sic*] most celebrated dictum was to: "uniquely express [one's] personality and innate sensibility without being restricted by convention and form." The first half of this ideal refers to content, in which the importance of individuality and the genuineness of emotion are emphasized; the second half refers to form, in which freedom of style is stressed. He believed that only when one expressed oneself freely could one's real feelings and true emotions be revealed. The Kung-an [*sic*] school is known as the "School of Innate Sensibility" (*Hsing-ling p'ai*). Hsing-ling became, in fact, the hallmark of Yuan Hungtao's literary theory.[26]

Yuan Hongdao was the target of criticism from King Chŏngjo and his officials because he advocated prioritizing one's desires, while rejecting the cultivation of *li*. Kim Ch'anghyŏp (1651–1708), for example, criticized Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602), and widely understood the predecessors of the *Gongan* School with his idea of individualistic styles in writing.[27]

> The literary culture was overturned because of Li Zhi 李贄. Presumptuous and immoderate words were derived from him. He deserved to be called the leader of monsters. Li Zhi neglected the principle of "cultivating one's mind by suppressing one's secular desires and controlling outer stimuli." So, when people see a precious thing displayed in a store, they want to have it. According to Li, people should take it because they should follow their desire. Isn't this wrong?[28]

Yuan's emphasis on secular human desires over Confucian principles was blamed as unethical and anti-social: "I read Yuan Hongdao's collected works and discovered that it dealt with Daoism, and drinking, and lust on the other hand. His writing is ridiculous, as if butchers and

[26] Chih-P'ing Chou, 45

[27] Ibid., 22.

[28] Song Hyŏkki, *Chosŏn hugi sanmun ui ihae wa pip'yŏng* (An Understanding and Criticism of Late Chosŏn Narratives) (Wŏrin, 2006), 185.

wine-sellers are debating Confucian canons."[29] Yuan's idea was considered inappropriate, since such desires drove people to be greedy and bring disorder to society. Yi, however, supported Yuan by saying that his writings reflected people's true inner selves, which the ancient writings failed to do:

> Yuan's writing presents a noticeable change of his time, since he recorded words derived from his mind with his smooth tongue and skillful ability. . . .I wonder about his popularity. Was he popular because people can appreciate the merits of his writings—reflecting people's genuine nature—which distinguished his writings from those who yelled at the Snow Pavilion [advocates of archaic Chinese writings] pointlessly? Alas! Each period has its own Way. I assume that his time had a particular reason, enabling him to gain recognition.[30]

By saying that the advocacy of archaic writing was vain and fruitless, Yi Ok mocked the contemporary Korean literati's criticism of the *Gongan* School and their avoidance of dealing with emotions because of concern that unrefined emotions only make people's minds confused and indecent. Yi's recognition of emotions further enables him to compare his writings to the *Book of Songs*: "If my writings dealing with the emotions of the people of Yi Ok's time are unworthy, then ancient poetry cannot be worthy, since poetry deals with the emotions of the people of the time."[31]

Respect to Chosŏn Culture and Colloquial Words

For contemporary scholars, premodern Korean writer's adoption of the vernacular and colloquial diction has been understood as an important lens to see how much the writer

[29] Ibid., 184.

[30] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 1: 283.

[31] Ibid., 2: 407.

appreciated Chosŏn culture. Korean's local names and vernacular words in literati writings were often replaced by Chinese names. Hanyang 漢陽, the capital city of Chosŏn, for example, was often written as Changan 長安, the ancient capital city of China.[32] Writers who adopt colloquial words were often regarded ignorant and arrogant, while adopting literary Chinese words are regarded as refined as Yi Ok revealed, "People criticized my works for rejecting the original [literary Chinese] names of clothes, foods, and dishes. They criticized me as arrogant and rustic."[33] Against this practice, Yi expanded his stylistic options and includes a scene that traditional writers would have condensed or deleted. Rather than brief description with refined dictions, Yi's works are characterized by vivid scenes of the daily lives of people and are full of native and colloquial words. Yi's "Third Difficulty"[34] 三難, reflects his favorable views on easy diction and the contemporary spoken language while opposing archaic Chinese words.

> If Korean people name objects like clothes, foods, and dishes with their spoken names, even a three-year-old boy would have no difficulty in understanding the objects. However, people have to ask others about the Chinese names of objects when they need to write—even short records. Still, they often fail to figure out the Chinese names. Why do such situations occur? Alas! I know why. People have said that "Native names are used in speaking only. The names can be spoken out but should not be written." I wonder, if such words are right, why did Silla call its capital *sŏraböl* instead of *kyŏng* [the Chinese word for Seoul]. Why did Silla call its kings *isagŭm* 尼斯今 [a native Silla word indicating teeth marks],[35] instead of *ch'imun* 齒紋 [the Chinese word for teeth marks]?

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[32] Changan 長安 originally indicates an ancient capital from the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). During the Tang Dynasty, Changan was one of the largest and most populous cities in the world. Chosŏn writers often used "Changan" to indicate the capital of Chosŏn. For example, Kim Pyŏngyŏn (1807-1863) used the term "Changan" to indicate his hometown Seoul in his poem 蘭皐平生詩: "簪纓先世富貴人 花柳長安名勝庄." Im Hyŏngt'aek, *Silsagusi ŭi Hanguk hak* (Korean Learning Pursuing Actuality) (Ch'angjakkwa pip'yŏng sa, 2000), 283.

[33] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 301.

[34] Ibid., 420.

[35] According to the *Historical Records of Three Kingdoms*, the term *isagŭm* is derived from the competition between Yuri and T'arhae to be a leader. They bit rice cake to count teeth marks on it. Yuri became a leader because he had more tooth mark than T'arhae. *Historical Records of Three Kingdoms* 1:6a7-b6.

> Why did Silla use *pak* 朴 instead of *ho* [Chinese word for gourd] as a surname? Did Kim Pusik forget to record Chinese names and adopt native Korean words?[36]

The quote above shows that Yi believed that the written language could not be completely isolated from the spoken. He presented examples that would be misunderstood between a local person and a Seoul native when an archaic Chinese word and a native Korean word indicated the same object.

> A person from Seoul invited his intimate friend from the countryside and said "*Ch'ŏngp'o* [green-bean jelly] is now in season in the Seoul market. Please visit me, and I will serve it to you." The friend from the countryside regarded *ch'ŏngp'o* as a special food and visited his friend's home in Seoul the following day. His friend, however, served him *noktubu* [green-bean jelly]. *Noktubu* [i.e., *muk*] is a different name for green-bean jelly among people in the countryside. The friend got angry, returned to his home, and complained to his wife: "My friend made a fool of me today, by thinking that I did not know what *ch'ŏngp'o* was. When I visited him, he served *muk*, but there was no *ch'ŏngp'o*. He got angry for a long time, as he did not recognize that *ch'ŏngp'o* indicated green-bean jelly. This is the fault of the Seoul resident and not of the man from the countryside. I wonder how many people in my country have had green-bean jelly without knowing that it is *ch'ŏngp'o*?[37]

In a similar sense, Yi Ok respected native Korean words and criticized Korean writers' adoption of Chinese terms instead of native Korean words by saying that such writing practice necessarily failed to reflect reality and caused readers' confusion only.

> A Korean bird that has beautiful blue feathers and lives on a streamside is called *ch'ŏlchak*. However, Korean poems depict the bird in the passage, "A kingfisher sings at a country home covered by thick bamboo trees." Is there any relation between a Korean country house and the tribute of Yueshang 越裳, the ancient state located in Southern China [Yueshang presented kingfishers as a tribute to the Zhu state]? Also, a Korean bird named *chŏptong* lives in a mountain and sings sadly at night. An old Korean poem has the line, "I cannot bear to hear the sad singing of the nightjars." What connection can be there between the spirit of Bashu (nightjars)[38] and *chŏptong* of Korea?[39]

[36] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 420.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Du Yu 杜宇. Du Yu was a legendary king of ancient state Shu what is now in Sichuan. According to a historical legend, Du Yu taught people agriculture and transformed into a nightjars after his death.

With this emphasis on showing the clarity of the vernacular, Yi compared easy Korean words with archaic Chinese words to show how clear the former is:

> *Put* [brush] and *chongi* [paper], what we use nowadays to indicate a brush and paper, cannot be real names because the parents of brush and paper—paper mulberry trees and fur—did not name their children. If so, Chinese or Korean names are the same in status because none of them are real names. The Chinese gave names to objects based on what they called them, and we Koreans gave names based on what we called them. Why should I avoid our names and use Chinese names? Furthermore, why would it not be possible for the Chinese to avoid using their names and use ours instead?[40]

Yi argued using everyday diction in literature and avoiding archaic words. The adoption of colloquial language showed the writer's serious efforts to reflect the spirit of the times, rather than his ignorance of common literary practices. Furthermore, writers who avoided using native names should have felt shame and guilt about confusing readers.

Yi utilized vernacular and colloquial dictions as a way of to express his impression of the vividness achieved, by using the vernacular in *Tales Written While Trimming the Wick* 剪燈新話 and *The Plum in the Golden Vase* 金瓶梅.[41] Yi revealed his positive attitude toward the use of colloquial language in the "Annotation of *New Tales Written while Trimming the Wick*" 剪燈新話註. *New Tales Written While Trimming the Wick* is a Chinese work of fiction that achieved widespread popularity among the Chosŏn literati. Yi found the source of its popularity in its writing style: "Chu Yu[42] collected and edited stories in Yuan and Ming China to compose

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[39] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 420.

[40] Ibid., 2: 302.

[41] *The Plum in the Golden Vas*e is a Chinese novel composed in the vernacular during the late Ming. It mainly depicts the domestic sexual struggles of the women.

[42] Chu Yu 瞿佑 (1347-1433) is the Ming writer of *Written while Trimming the Wick* 剪燈新話.

Written While Trimming the Wick. Most of the minor officials in my country read these stories because they are easily understood in simple colloquial words."[43] Yi further appreciated colloquial words in Chinese works of erotic fiction, such as *The Plum in the Golden Vase* and *The Canal Prayer Mat* 肉蒲團 [44]: "Have you thought about why the writers of the two did not embellish their expressions, so that people [of different generations] could understand them easily? It is not because the writers were odd and ignorant."[45] Because native words contain the spirit of the country, Yi argued that avoiding these words would be the same as avoiding the writers' own identity, which would forsake the genuine spirit of Korea, while making their writings hackneyed and meaningless.

Some scholars of the eighteenth century argued that the uniqueness of Korean culture is equally valuable to the culture of China. Yi Tŏngmu, for example, proposed that Korean writers should deal with subjects of contemporary Korea, rather than following ancient Chinese examples.

> Even two people in the same bed have different dreams.
> Contemporary people are not Du Fu or Li Bo, and the present time is not the Tang period.
> My poems reflect no one else but me.
> Haven't you seen that people laugh at Gentleman Kwak, who was good at mimicking?[46]

Yi Tŏngmu respected the individuality of a writer by showing that he could not be the same as Li Bo or Du Fu, both respected Chinese poets. Pak Chiwŏn also pointed out the difference between

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[43] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 129.

[44] *The Carnal Prayer Mat* is a Chinese erotic novel published in 1657 under a pseudonym but usually attributed to Li Yu 李漁 (b. 1611).

[45] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 422.

[46] Kawkrang was known as an actor who mimicked other people well. Chŏng Taerim, *Hanguk kojŏn pip'yŏngsa* (Critical History of Korean Classics) (T'aehaksa, 2001), 454.

China and Chosŏn Korea and argued the importance of the latter to Korean writers. Korean writings, according to Pak, would become more artificial and jejune, the more they attempted to imitate Chinese literary models:

> If Koreans only pursue the literary style of the Han and Tang, their writings will become more insignificant and meaningless as they make more attempts, and finally only fall into falsehoods. Chosŏn is a small country. However, it possesses thousands of carriages 千乘之國. Silla and Koryŏ were not great countries. However, their folk villages had beautiful cultures. Authenticity can be achieved by recording Chosŏn's local words and folk songs. I see that only Yi Tŏngmu's writings have not followed Chinese examples and reflect myriad things in their native words by showing the present time.[47]

Pak argued that Korean writers should deal with Korean culture, rather than archaic literary Chinese, to achieve authenticity and adopt its spoken words. Pak's and Yi Tŏngmu's ideas were based on the belief that imitation alone could not produce works of comparable quality. Yi Ok, Pak Chiwŏn, and Yi Tŏngmu similarly stressed the importance of contemporary Korean culture. However, Pak and Yi Tŏngmu recognized native diction, when the diction could serve the social functions of literature and were not vulgar. Yi, however, adopted a number of vulgar words, including slang, as in "Record of the East Wing" 東廂記, a play dealt with the story of Student Kim, an old bachelor who was desperate to marry. When a local petty official visited the student's home, the official made a joke about his pathetic bachelor state:

> The petty official: "Student Kim, write down your name, date of birth, and age here quickly."
> Kim: "What's that for?"

[47] Pak Chiwŏn, "Preface of Yi Tŏngmu's Literary Collection." "今懋官朝鮮人也 山川風氣地異中華 言語謠俗世非漢唐 若乃效法於中華 襲體於漢唐 則吾徒見其法益高而意實卑 體益似而言益僞耳 左海雖僻國亦千乘 羅麗雖儉 民多美俗 則字其方言 韻其民謠 自然成章 眞機發現 不事沿襲 無相假貸 從容現在 卽事森羅 惟此詩爲然." Pak Sumil, *Pak Chiwŏn ŭi miŭisik kwa munye iron*, 93.

> The petty official: "I was officially ordered to record old bachelors' names and have their unnecessary things [genitals] cut off and give them to petty officials, like me, as side dishes for wine."
> Kim: "Stop joking. What's the real reason that you are recording this?"[48]

The petty official's vulgar words comically reveal the student's pathetic circumstances. Not only the official, but also the literati characters in Yi Ok's works, did not hesitate to reveal their secular desires in bold words. When the student finally gets married, he describes how he took off his bride's clothes to his friend. Also, the narrator of the play depicts the happiness of the old maid before the day of her marriage:

> The old maid was extremely excited to be married, but she could not express her happiness to others, for fear of losing her modesty. When she finally could not restrain her excitement, she ran to a dog lying near a restroom and boasted to the dog: "Dear dog, do you know that I am going to marry soon?" The dog, however, only yawned. She was ashamed to see the dog's yawning because she thought that the dog seemed not to believe her words. She thus confirmed her words by saying that "if this is a lie, then I will be your daughter."[49]

The characters in Yi's works move away from modesty or self-restraint and are distinguished from virtuous characters, who disciplined themselves with Confucian morals. Yi found the value of literature in releasing worries and providing pleasure to readers and writers with vivid expressions. In his "Prologue of Fragrance of Vomited Ink" 墨吐香前敍 [50] and "Postscript to Fragrance of Vomited Ink" 墨吐香後敍, he compared his writing activity to vomiting after heavy drinking:

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[48] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 457.

[49] Ibid., 3: 251.

[50] Ibid., 1: 270.

> Some people asked why I named my writing "Fragrance of Vomited Ink." I answer the question here. The Ming writer Pan Youlong 潘遊龍 named his writings "Got Drunk by *Ci* Songs," because the songs could soak readers' deep insides and amuse their minds and souls, just like nice wine intoxicates people. No one who read Pan's works can escape from getting drunk. I was also drunk to the degree I could not control my body. A person who is seriously drunk necessarily must vomit. . . .I am such a person who cannot stop vomiting when I get drunk. My writing after reading Pan's works is the same as vomiting after getting drunk. . . .As I vomited after reading Pan's work, my writing may make others become drunk and vomit.[51]

Yi advocated spontaneous and unrestrained writing. If the desire to express oneself is left unfulfilled and remains inside, it will torture the writer, just as a drunkard suffers from an uncomfortable stomach. This comparison shows that acquiring pleasure and purifying one's mind is an important purpose of his writings. In order to achieve it, a writer can adopt colloquial language and depict secular desires, while less concerned with moral lessons and common techniques or forms. Considering that King Chŏngjo emphasized the literati's solemn attitude in writing that embodied Confucian principles and had practical use, it is not strange that Yi's pursuit of amusement in reading and writing irritated the king.

Yi found the value of the *Book of Songs* to be in its expressive qualities—particularly of people's lives—rather than its moral lessons. Yi's positive view of these qualities is related to his support of the various Ming and Qing miscellanies and popular works of fiction. "Record of A Musical Performance at the Pear Blossoms Garden" 游梨院聽樂記, for example, reveals that Yi enjoyed *Diverse Records From the Wooden Bridge* 板橋雜記 [52] and Southern plays.

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[51] Ibid.

[52] It was published in 1654. "Yu Huai who lived in the dynastic transition, records "weeds and brambles filled one's eyes; the brothel has been reduced to ashes and the beauties to dust." . . . .Yu Huai created melancholic narratives of the Nanjing pleasure quarter in the last years of the dynasty and included firsthand experiences, poetry, and biographical information of about thirty courtesans. Yu Huai emblematized the courtesan and the pleasure quarter with the loyalist's feelings of nostalgia for the past dynasty." Lin Foxhall and Gabriele Neher ed. *Gender and the City before Modernity* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 145.

> Alas! I read *Diverse Records From the Wooden Bridge* by Yu Huai 余懷. The stories in the book intoxicated me deep into my bones and excited my mind to burn like fire. When I read it, I felt as if I were with Xue Yi 雪衣 and Qin Xin 琴心 [female entertainer characters in the book]. I lament that I cannot live in the time of Yu Huai. The ignorant people here [audiences of a music performance] are no more than flirting butterflies and noisy bees. If they were born when Southern plays were popular, then they would look like hungry ghosts in a beautiful world. I feel joyful and also sad at the same time.[53]

Yi Ok highly regarded the amusement of reading Yu Huai's (1616–1696) *Diverse Records from the Wooden Bridge* that deals with stories of female entertainers and gentlemen in brothels. Also, Yi's essay "Seven Things to be Avoided,"[54] 七絶 concerns the attractions of popular Chinese works of fiction.

> Diverse collections of casual writings exist from the time of the Han. Some works have Daoist hermits and evil spirits as characters. Some depict fights between strong men until the fights are settled. Some deal with the romance between ghosts and humans. . . .The *Story of Yingying*[55] is a beautiful story, with its vivid expressions and pleasant contents.[56]

Yi Ok recognized that the *Story of Yingying*[57] and *Diverse Records of the Wooden Bridge* offer extreme joy through their vivid and beautiful expressions and romantic content:

> Those who read the *Story of Yingying* feel they are chewing sugar cane, dizzy, as if they are drunk, and lost in the beautiful palace of Emperor Yang of Sui;[58] they cannot escape from it and meet a devastating beauty. They cannot put down or turn their eyes from the story because they feel something is pulling them in.[59]

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[53] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 1: 322.

[54] Ibid., 2: 184.

[55] *Story of Yingying* is written by Yuan Chen (799-831). Yi Ok compared the story with the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the historical record of China covering B.C. 722 to 481.

[56] Ibid., 2: 186.

[57] The *Story of Yingying* deals with the romance between lady Yingying and Student Zhang.

[58] 隋煬帝 (569-618)

[59] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 186.

King Chŏngjo revealed that writings without moral lessons were useless, no matter how beautifully written.[60] According to Yi, however, good literature could not be produced without expressive qualities that depict people's emotions in a lively manner and move the readers' hearts and minds. Such an idea is shown in his support of *Plum in a Golden Vase* 金瓶梅 and *The Canal Prayer Mat* 肉蒲團.[61]

> The feelings between men and women are the only authentic ones among emotions. These feelings have authenticity, whether expressed in a decent or lewd manner. . . .The works that were regarded as lewd, such as *Plum Blossoms in a Golden Vase* and *The Canal Prayer Mat*, are not merely lewd. Writers regarded that there was nothing to be avoided in writing even though some subjects were regarded lewd because they all convey the principle of the world.[62]

Yi revealed that such works were enjoyable and fascinating because of their vivid expressions of sexual desires. Yi's literary concerns lay in the degree of expression, not in how exactly his writing followed officially recognized forms.[63] The righteousness or obscenity of events, characters, or words cannot be the primary issue in writing. Such advocacy of expressive quality can be seen in his essay on Zhu Xi's writing in which Yi praised its practical utility in an unusual way.

> In the daily lives of ordinary people, strong female servants are essential, while beautiful ladies of the Wu and court servants of the Han may not have been. An old cow is in need, while eight great horses of the king of Zhu and treasures of the Han may not be. The

[60] An Sehyŏn, "Munch'e panjŏng ŭl tullŏssan kŭlssŭgi wa munch'e nonjaeng," 156.

[61] *The Canal Prayer Mat* is believed to be written by Li Yu 李漁 (1610-1680).

[62] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 2: 412.

[63] Ibid., 293. "What I only feel shame in my writings is that my expressions of the myriad things cannot reach to the writers of the past. This is entirely my fault."

> writing of Zhu Xi must be in need, while the ancient-style writings and selection of literary works are not. [64]

Practicality in literature had been respected and should not be dealt with lightly, ignored, or criticized for its strong embodiment of Confucian principles. Especially in the time of Yi Ok, King Chŏngjo prioritized the practical use of literature and expressed his respect for Zhu Xi's writings.[65] Though Yi recognized the practicality of Zhu Xi's writings, his recognition could be read ironically, considering that the items Yi compared Zhu Xi's writings to were ordinary and rustic daily objects:

> Strong female servants on a farm, an old cow of a rural person, rice and salt for a cook, hemp clothes made by weaving women, humble thatched-roof cottages, pebbles, firewood and charcoal for households in valleys, iron axes, chickens, ducks, pigs, and cows.

While these objects commonly lack refinement and delicateness, Yi listed delicate and beautiful objects as the opposite of Zhu Xi's writings.

> Beautiful palace ladies of the Han, the eight steeds, auspicious barley, luxurious silk, legendary birds, great palaces, high pavilions, extraordinary jade, exquisite tress, fragrant aromatic plants, sharp spears, blue birds and white deer, and ancient-style writings.

Yi also limited the utility of Zhu Xi's writings among officials and students who worked towards non-scholarly purposes and ordinary tasks, while excluding Confucian scholars from the beneficiaries of Zhu Xi's writings.

> When officials read Zhu Xi's works, they become good at writing reports, and students are good at writing answers to civil service examinations. Rural people can write letters well, and minor officials paperwork well.[66]

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[64] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 1:290.

[65] An Sehyŏn, "Munch'e panjŏng ŭl tullŏssan kŭlssŭgi wa munch'e nonjaeng," 144.

[66] *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 1: 293.

For Yi, the works with high aesthetic contents are separate from those with practicality, such as Zhu Xi's writings. Yi's essays show that ideological value does not always seamlessly combine with the artistic values of literature. Yi Ok claimed that writers should reflect upon the authentic emotions and subjects of Korean individuals to produce thematically and aesthetically good literary works. Though previous scholars recognized Yi Ok's significance as similar to the Northern Learning School scholars, Yi's views on literature distinguish him from those of these scholars, though some similar features do exist.

Chapter Five

The Lives by Yi Ok

1. Stories of Ghosts, Spirits, and Transcendents

Based on the general examination on Yi Ok and his writings in previous chapters, this chapter analyzes his stories in a biographical form based on four types of subjects: the supernatural, lower class people, literati, and exemplary people. The chapter aims to show that 1) Yi's stories are unique in the choice of subjects and representation, 2) Yi's works are more akin to those of a creative writer than those of a moral historian or official biographers, and 3) a biography which is situated between history and fiction played an important role in developing premodern Korean fiction.

Probably the most heterogeneous works of Yi are the stories about the supernatural[1], including ghosts, spirits, and the transcendent[2] in "Tale of Soldier Sin" 申兵使傳, "Tale of Classic Licentiate Ch'oe" 崔生員傳, and "Tale of a Wood Tender" 浮穆漢傳. These three stories not only include amusing descriptions of extraordinary beings and phenomena, but also

[1] This study uses the term "supernatural" to indicate spiritual beings and transcendents by following Leo Tak-hung's usage of the "supernatural" in *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*. "Although the term 'supernatural' as derived from Western concepts of the 'natural' cannot be applied without qualification to the Chinese context, it is used here to denote categorically that which relates to the otherworldly realm. . . .The term "supernatural" is useful because it covers the entire range of otherworldly activities and phenomena as they figured in pre-modern discourse." Leo Tak-hung Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 77.

[2] More specifically, this study uses the term "ghost" when the supernatural being was originally a human being and has human-like personalities and appearances. The ghost character in Yi Ok's work is Soldier Sin, who appears in the form of a decent soldier. In contrast, when the supernatural lacks human personality and appearance, the term "spirit" is used. The spirit in Yi Ok's work is the village spirit, which appears as a lump of black *qi*. The terms for spiritual beings vary depending on the scholar. An early study of the spiritual beings of Korea, *Chōsen no kishin* 朝鮮の鬼神 (Ghosts and Spirits of Korea), was conducted by Murayama Chijun 村山智順 (1891–1968), who used the term "kishin" to broadly indicate deities, heavenly gods, dragons, spirits of illness, animal spirits, ghosts of ancestors, and natural spirits. Murayama Chijun, Kim Hŭigyŏng, trans. *Hanguk ŭi kwisin* (Ghosts and Spirits of Korea) (Tongmunsŏn, 1990).

challenge the idea that the supernatural is an inappropriate subject for Confucian scholars to examine and discuss. By examining Yi's literary devices to challenge literati's negative view on the supernatural, this study helps reveal how the literati were able to manipulate existing didactic discourse on the supernatural to justify their interest in it within the social milieu. Although Chosŏn Confucian scholars did not deny the existence of the supernatural, the supernatural rarely played a significant role in literati culture. The scholars' contempt for the supernatural may derive from Confucius's assertion that prodigies, feats of strength, disorders, and spirits should not be dealt with.[3] As Neo-Confucianism became the national ideology in Chosŏn, a number of literati indicated that they consider the supernatural to be marginal to canonical knowledge at best and at worst, frivolous, useless, and even damaging to society.[4] Female shamans who serve ghosts and spirits are despised in particular, as shamans prioritize the fulfillment of personal desires, rather than adhering to Confucian morals or national statutes and asking for respect and material offerings in order to receive blessings.

The literati's contempt for supernatural subjects is prominent in historical writings. Yi Sugwang (1563–1628), for example, writes in the preface to *Chibong Yusŏl* 芝峰類說 (Classified Stories of Yi Sugwang) on his criterion for selecting biographical subjects:

> My country has been known for ritual propriety in China. Refined and erudite scholars have been continuously produced. However, c*hŏngi* (biographical records) about the scholars has disappeared and the number of documents is limited; how can I not feel regret? . . . I do not write about what is spiritual and eccentric.[5]

[3] "The Master never talked of prodigies, feats of strength, disorders or spirits." Arthur Waley, *Analects of Confucius* (London: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 119.

[4] Victor H. Mair, *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 543.

[5] Yi Sugwang, *Chibong Yusŏl* (Classified Stories of Yi Sugwang) (T'aehaksa, 2001), 128.

While Yi Sugwang selects exemplary historical figures whose names should be known for the sake of posterity, he regards spiritual beings as inappropriate subjects unworthy of his attention because they are absurd and hard to verify in biographies, which are regarded as supplements of history that must be objective. In addition, Hŏ Kyun (1569–1618) reveals his criteria for selecting subjects, explaining that events concerned with "uncovering one's evil, retribution, the underworld, ghosts, dreams, fortune telling, and improper events are deleted."[6] Such was the case in historical writings, as supernatural subjects were also avoided in non-historical writing, such as fiction and unofficial histories. . This phenomenon can be seen in the court's rejection of the "Tale of Sŏl Kongch'an," written by Ch'ae Su 蔡壽 (1449–1515). The story concerns Sŏl Kongch'an, who possessed his nephew's body after his death and describes the underworld. King Chungjong (1488–1544; r: 1506–1544) and officials maintained that the story's absurd content of characters possessed by ghosts can mislead the public. Eventually, Ch'ae was dismissed from his official position and sent into exile. The Chosŏn elite's avoidance of the supernatural in literature is understandable, given the fact that supernatural features were thought to distort reality and disrupt the social order.

A small number of literati writers left records of the supernatural. These records are mostly written by those who lived as under-recognized literati or those who retired from official positions. Some attempted to provide explanations for seemingly unreasonable beings. Kim Sisŭp 金時習 (1435-1493), for example, in his "Kwisin sŏl" (Discourse on Ghosts and Spirits)

[6] Kim Sŏna, "Ŏu yadam sojae kwisindam ilgo" (Study on the Ghost Stories in the *Unofficial Stories of Yu Mongin*), *Kugŏ munhakhoe* 46 (2009): 34.

defines different kinds of spiritual beings and explains their features.[7] Nam Hyoon 南孝溫 (1454–1492) writes "Kwisin non" (Essay on the Spirits), which defines, categorizes, and comments on various types of spiritual beings.[8] The literary representations of such subjects are mostly found in the collections of unofficial histories and miscellanies. The *Yongjae ch'onghwa* 慵齋叢話 (The Miscellany of Sŏng Hyŏn) by Sŏng Hyŏn (1439–1504) includes eight stories of ghosts and spirits among three hundred stories. *Ŏu yadam* 於于野譚 (Unofficial Stories of Yu Mongin), compiled by Yu Mongin (1559–1623), incorporates forty-one stories of spirits in a collection of 588 stories. The eighteenth century produced *Haksan hanŏn* 鶴山閑言 (Words of Leisure by Sin Tonbok) by Sin Tonbok 辛敦複 (1672–1779) and Ch'ŏnye rok 天倪錄 (Records of Anomalies) by Im Pang 任埅 (1640-1724).

Chosŏn scholars of Yi's time avoided making comments regarding stories of the supernatural, although they enjoyed reading them privately. The writers who wrote such stories are often criticized for lacking judgment or sound critical abilities. Most compilers of miscellanies did not dispute the idea that stories of the supernatural did not address issues seriously enough for the literati and only entertain. Yi Ok knew that his writings on the supernatural not only disrespected the Confucian teaching "not to talk of ghosts and deities," but also challenged the literary conventions of his time. His stories, thus, need to be relevant to the intellectual discourse of the literati to be fully appreciated. Yi approaches these unorthodox subjects by adopting literary devices which: (1) minimize the readers' sense of fear or awe by depicting supernatural entities as similar to humans; (2) provide intellectual discourse regarding

[7] Yi Uk. *Chosŏn chŏngi kwisinnone taehan yŏngu* (Study on the Discourses of Ghosts in Early Chosŏn) (Hanguk chonggyo hakhoe, 1998), 265.

[8] Ibid., 264.

the principle (*li*) of the supernatural; (3) present multiple narrators and evidential information about characters, time, and locale; and (4) proclaim Confucian didactic messages.

Examining these four devices reveals just how much Yi's stories about the supernatural are the products of the negotiation between the intellectual climate of the eighteenth century and Yi's unique interest in unorthodox subjects. It also makes us question the view still prevalent today that the Chosŏn elite consisted of "Confucian rationalists" who deplored the supernatural.

Minimizing the Sense of Fear and Awe

The stories of ghosts generally entertain readers by evoking a sense of fear or awe by means of their strange or fearful appearances, behaviors, and extraordinary abilities. In the fifteenth century, *The Miscellany of Sŏng Hyŏn* by Sŏng Hyŏn (1439-1504), for example, tells the story of the ghost of Yi Tu's aunt. The apparition of the aunt causes troubles in her nephew Yi Tu's home by asking for food and engaging in outrageous behavior. The description of her physical appearance—only the lower part of her body is visible—is enough to arouse fear.

> She [the ghost of Yi Tu's aunt] wore a skirt made of paper. Her two legs are as thin as lacquered sticks and only have bones, without any flesh. When people asked why her legs were like this, she answered, "I died a long time ago, how can my legs be any different than they are?" People practiced several ways of expelling her, but they all failed. Soon, Yi Tu fell ill and died.[9]

A ghost with half of a body wears white paper clothes with seemingly solid legs. With its inappropriate behavior of asking for favors, a ghost's outer appearance characterizes her as a scary figure needing to be expelled. Another uncanny image of a ghost can be found in the tale

[9] Sŏng Hyŏn, *Yŏngjae ch'onghwa* (Collected Works of Sŏng Hyŏn) (Tosŏ ch'ulp'an sol, 1997), 114.

of a Buddhist nun in *The Miscellany of Sŏng Hyŏn*[10] which concerns a nun who becomes a snake following desertion by a magistrate. The snake reveals itself in the magistrate's room, showing itself as bigger and more grotesque every night despite the fact that the magistrate had burnt it into pieces. The uncanny descriptions of ghosts and spirits become increasingly intense in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the experience of the Japanese and Manchu invasions and physical and psychological damage of people caused by fights, death, and injuries.[11] In *Kangdo mongyurok* 江都夢遊錄 (Dream Records at the Capital on Kanghwa Island), written in the seventeenth century,[12] for example, female ghosts who committed suicide or were brutally killed in the invasions are depicted miserably.

> He approached the women and looked at them in detail. He found that *kil*-long[13] ropes were hung on their shattered bones or *ja*-long[14] daggers were stuck in their necks. The heads of some were totally smashed, some bled from their mouths and stomachs. Their miserable appearances are hard to see or talk about. . . .One woman whose entire chest was covered with blood and whose face was covered with bloody-tears talked to him in a low voice with her head down. . . .Another woman who sat on the floor had extremely miserable features—shattered, and her body was soaked with blood.[15]

Such horrible images of ghosts made readers have fear over the inability to have peaceful coexistence of ghosts and people. Different than the grotesque ghosts, Yi Ok's stories of ghosts

[10] Ibid.,559.

[11] Jahyŏn Kim Haboush, "Dead Bodies in the Postwar Discourse of Identity in 17th century Korea: Subversion and Literary Production in the Private Sector," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62 (2003): 421.

[12] Author of the story is unknown.

[13] One *kil* is about 72 inches.

[14] One *ja* is about 12 inches

[15] Kim Chŏngsuk. "Chosŏn sidae p'ilgi yadamjip sok kwisin yogoedam ŭi pyŏnhwa yangsang" (Changes in the Stories of Ghosts and Spirits in Chosŏn Literary Miscellanies). *Hantcha hanmun kyoyuk* 21 (2008): 562.

bring about a minimal sense of fear because they are depicted as similar to human beings in terms of their physical appearance, words, writing, time of activity, and deeds. An example is the "Tale of Sin Pyŏngsa" which concerns the ghost Sin who appears to Yi, a student, and asks him to take care of his deserted tomb. When Yi agrees to carry out Sin's request, the ghost expresses his gratitude and spends several days with Yi. In return, Sin tells him where to find an auspicious plot for the graves of Yi's parents. When Yi questions whether he has perhaps been fooled by an evil spirit, Sin's son appears and chastises Yi for not appreciating the favor that Sin has given him. Sin finally disappears, and Yi soon dies because of fear. In the tale, the ghost Sin has an impeccably polite manner, a desire for communicating with the living through writings and words, and a deep concern for the issues of living people. Unlike the female ghosts who show themselves in miserable physical appearances and frighten people, Sin first appears to the student Yi wearing decent formal clothes and politely bowing, much like a guest.

> A man who wore a hat with bead strings and military clothes made a polite bow to Student Yi and entered Yi's room. His appearance was very decent. Yi asks who he was. Then, he replied, "I am Soldier Sin, living next door." Yi was confused. Sin pointed to a deserted tomb on the south and said, "That is my home. I have no descendents. Villagers of the seaside did not take care of the tomb, so cows and horses have damaged it. It would be greatly appreciated if you could release my sufferings on my behalf. Here, I dare ask you."[16]

Ghost Sin's appearance differs from that of the aunt ghost or the female ghosts created in the invasions, all of whom wear bloody clothes. Sin's polite manner of speaking to Yi distinguishes him from ghosts who say nothing but stare at people or speak gibberish. Sin has good writing skills, giving Sin an air of nobility: "The form, writing style, and tone of his letter were refined

[16] Yi Ok, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok Chŏnjip* (Collection of Yi Ok's Works in Translation), vol 2, Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏngu hoe tr., (Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2009), 365.

and decent, which did not differ from the letter of ordinary people at all."[17] For Yi's stories, Sin's Ghost Sin followed the communicative methods of the living and thus the two who belonged to different worlds could understand each other and coexist in peace. The ghost here is understood as the object of understanding and examination rather than an evil or horrible object which should be kept away or expelled.

Moreover, Yi Ok's supernatural characters are depicted as either helpful or harmless, at least until people doubt them or attempt to harm them, whereas supernatural characters in other literati's writings are exceedingly malicious or grotesque. For example, in exchange for taking care of his tomb, Sin reveals to Yi an auspicious spot for a tomb. Sin helps Yi in the daylight, and people think that Sin is a geomancer and fails to recognize that he is a ghost. Such descriptions do not characterize Sin as an evil being that should be expelled. Even when Yi wonders whether Sin is an evil spirit, Sin says farewell with a polite attitude. The ghost characters in Yi Ok's stories do not attack people without a specific justifiable reason.

> After moving the graves of Yi's parents, Yi said to his brother, "Moving a grave site is a serious issue, and we followed Sin without knowing who he was. How are we to know whether or not a goblin wore a human mask and made a fool of us?" Before completing these words, a door opened, and Sin entered. "It is not strange that you doubt. All faults are on me; thus, I'll leave." A man wearing a straw hat and blue hemp clothes reproached Yi with great anger and without courtesy. "Far from appreciating the favor, you call my father a goblin?" His father scolded the man to stop.[18]

After Sin leaves Yi, Yi dies from fear of upsetting the ghosts, but the writer suggested that the death was not due to a curse from the ghost itself. The least malicious description from Yi of the supernatural appears in the "Tale of Classics Licentiate Ch'oe." The tale concerns a fearless

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 366.

Confucian scholar who disdains ghosts and female shamans. When Ch'oe disrupts a ritual rite for the village spirit, his horse dies due to the spirit's curse. He burns the spirit's shrine in great anger, and black energy 氣, most likely the village spirit, leaves the shrine. When Ch'oe later visits the village, he discovers that the villagers have made offerings to both Ch'oe and the spirit for several years. When the spirit—which possesses a female shaman—hears that Ch'oe is next door, it leaves the shaman and refuses to return.

In the tale, the village spirit causes no harm until a Confucian scholar, Ch'oe, harms the spirit:

> Ch'oe was going to Seoul and saw a female shaman who did a few rituals for a spirit. . . . Greatly angered, he drove away the shaman with a whip, broke a paper-sword, kicked ritual tables to the ground, reproaching, "How dare spirits mislead people?" Going several miles before his anger released, his horse suddenly fell down and died. His driver said, "Alas! It is not my fault. The spirit is truly powerful, why did you offend it? The horse died of the spirit's curse." Ch'oe said, "How dare a spirit do such a thing?" He raged with anger and rushed to the shrine and set fire to its thatched roof.[19]

The spirit does not seek revenge against Ch'oe, even though he burnt his "home." On the contrary, the spirit shows respect toward the licentiate's bravery by ordering villages to set up a special ritual table for Ch'oe. The spirit respects the brevity—the same values that the living people do even if it damages the spirit. In addition, the Buddhist monk in the "Tale of a Wood Tender" is not depicted as an eccentric who wears strange clothes or practices magical spells. The tale describes a novice who serves a Buddhist monk who possesses the extraordinary power of being able to tell people's fate. When the Buddhist monk dies on the day that he had predicted, the novice realizes that his master possessed extraordinary power. The novice then asks for a

[19] Ibid., 328.

lesson from the wood tender, a friend of his master. The wood tender, however, tells him that he only has three years to live, too short a time to practice Dao and become a transcendent. Instead, the wood tender advises the novice to stop working and to fully enjoy secular pleasures. The novice returns to the secular world and dies on the date that the wood tender had prophesied.

The monk has the extraordinary ability to determine people's fates. Still, the Buddhist monk does not practice spells nor encourages one to resist. The wood tender gives the novice secular advice to enjoy secular pleasures the most in his short life. These less strange characterizations of the supernatural can decrease the emotional distance between readers and the subject, which enables readers to approach the supernatural beings and examine about them than simply despising people who believed in the existence of the supernatural.

Rationally Explaining Principles of the Supernatural

As a member of the literati who aims to prove the existence of the supernatural and its significance in such a manner as to persuade the Confucian literati to recognize the supernatural's values in writings Yi Ok attempts to provide a reasonable explanation of the principle (*li*) of the supernatural's creation and behavior. For Yi, ghosts are a kind of natural phenomenon that can be explained with contemporary studies. In the "Tale of Soldier Sin," Yi explains the creation of ghosts on the basis of his own observation of candlelight and the theory of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610):

> When candlelight burns its wick and naturally blows out, no smoke arises. However, when the light suddenly blows out, smoke lingers for a while. The principle of life and death can be seen in the candlelight. I wonder if Sin died suddenly and became a ghost. Matteo Ricci said that all ghost-like things are only the devil's trick to fool people."[20]

[20] Ibid., 367.

His observations regarding candlelight provide insight into how some dead people become ghosts while others do not. Yi adopts Chinese records as supporting evidence to dispute the Chosŏn literati's beliefs about the supernatural with a certain rationality. Why did renowned Chinese scholars examine and write records on ghosts if they are not worthy subjects? If the records on ghosts were written by uncultivated and eccentric writers, then why did they become popular and read among Chinese and Chosŏn literati for centuries? In the story of Ghost Sin, Yi Ok disputes the idea that ghosts' appearance in daylight is implausible:

> Mountain spirits and ghosts sometimes engage in eccentric activities like whispering and dancing. However, the activities are only possible during the night and not during the day. However, *Qihai* 齊諧 [21]and *Chiquai* 志怪 show that "ghosts encounter people in a market place." This is a truly absurd account. But the absurd accounts exist because such events really happened. . . .Some say, "I do not know about Chinese cases, but I have not heard of such events in my country. I think that a lot of Chinese people say such absurd things." I respond that "it is only because you have not heard it yet. How can it be possible that only my country does not have such events? Are Pyŏng Chang, Che Mal, Kwŏn Ch'ŏngha, and Tu Ok not ghosts? Recently, there was the story of soldier Sin."[22]

Yi Ok argues that transcendent beings really exist, although ordinary people cannot recognize them. People's ignorance and biased views results in the low perception of the supernatural realm. As a result, Yi is able to argue the worth of records about such phenomena by saying that those who deny the existence or appearance of ghosts in daylight are only blinded by their limited view of what is reasonable. If the supernatural is a real existence in the world, then it should be a serious object for scholars to study about and expand their knowledge, as in the studies on natural phenomenon. The "Tale of Classics Licentiate Ch'oe," for example, begins

[21] Qihai 齊諧 is known as a Chinese collection of stories of anomalies.

[22] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 364.

with a debate between Yi and his friend regarding the existence of ghosts and spirits. In the face of the friend's doubts, Yi Ok adopts the first-person pronoun "I" 余. The narrator "I" is generally used in treatises 論 which aim to reveal one's personal ideas, while a third-person objective narrator is adopted in biographies.[23] The discourse using the narrator "I" distinguishes the work from the mere reportage by revealing the writer's subjective ideas. Following Yi's discourse, believers in the supernatural do not lack judgment or sound critical abilities. On the contrary, Yi's writings about supernatural elements were a pioneering activity of the enlightened literati, at a level beyond the mere rustic records of the uncultivated. The enterprise of recording tales of the supernatural becomes legitimized, and the tales merit consideration as a worthwhile field of investigation.[24]

Multiple Narrators and Evidential Information about the Supernatural

Yi's first concern is to validate the existence of the supernatural in order to put the supernatural into a Confucian context. He adopts multiple narrators, such as Yi Ok himself and his friend in the "Tale of Classics Licentiate Ch'oe." Yi narrates two anecdotes that he witnessed, and his friend narrates the main anecdote about the licentiate. More than one narrator telling the story of strange events imbues the story with a certain credibility.[25]

[23] Richard E. Strassberg, *Wandering Sprits*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 5.

[24] In tune with the intellectual milieu of the eighteenth century Chosŏn, Yi may have found himself compelled to present his ideas in a way acceptable to his readership. Yi withheld comments that he understood the cosmos of ghosts and did not forcefully stretch his beliefs regarding the realm of the supernatural. He revealed doubts where evidence was wanting or not persuasive enough: "the principle of ghosts is extremely profound, their deeds are extremely mysterious, and their affairs are extremely complex. Thus, I cannot make a definite statement about ghosts." Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 325.

[25] One may readily question the validity of a supernatural explanation when it is offered for one event—even a "strange" event—but not when the supernatural explanation is offered by two." Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*, 101.

The first anecdote that Yi presents is about a family who had to leave the house because of the appearance of a ghost. The family's neighbor hated the family and caused trouble by secretly throwing stones at the family's house. The family regarded these tricks as the activities of a ghost, so they called a female shaman to exorcise it:

> As I witnessed earlier, a family was living in a house of the southern wall. The house originally had no ghost, and not a leaf was shaken for five years. The neighbor living in the south hated the family and threw several stones at night. At first, the head of the family regarded it as the action of thieves. Several days later, he invited a female shaman, and she served rice cakes under a big tree while chanting incantations and shaking bells. . . .The neighbor stopped his tricks out of fear of being caught. However, the house became wild, especially during the night. People were kicked by shoes, and their faces were bruised. Things that were initially in the storage were found on the roof. The roof tiles were flying all around, and the eaves and pillars were damaged. In a few months, the lady of the house died and death and illness continued. Thus, the house became deserted.[26]

Even after the neighbor stops playing tricks, the family encounters strange and fearful events on a daily basis. The family thus has to leave, and it becomes a deserted house. The anecdote implies two messages: the existence of ghosts and their close relation to the human world. The messages are reaffirmed in the following remark by Yi: "I can say that ghosts are real."[27] Interestingly, the Chinese story in *Luanyang xulu* 灤陽續錄 (A Sequel to the Luanyang Record) is similar to Yi's story in terms of ghosts appearing where they had not existed previously:

> At night, Licentiate Tang threw some mud at the tutor's window and whined, striking at the door. The tutor fearfully asked who it was. He responded: "I am the inherent capacity of the two kinds of *qi*." Greatly perturbed and shivering all over, the tutor buried his head under his sheets and ordered two students to stand guard at the door throughout the night. The next day, he refused to get up. When friends came to inquire about him, he moaned

[26] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 326.

[27] Ibid.

> and said, "Ghosts." Soon afterwards, when it came to be known that it was all Licentiate Tang's doing, everybody applauded. However, from that time forth, demons became rampant, and not a night passed without their throwing stones and bricks or shaking the doors and windows. At first, Tang was thought to be playing another one of his tricks, but a closer look revealed these demons to be real. Unable to bear the disturbance any longer, the tutor left the village school. . . .That is what is meant by the saying "demons are aroused by men."[28]

The neighbor's action of pretending to be a ghost actually invited ghosts into the house. Yi and the Chinese story both understand the human and spirit realms to be correlated rather than independent and irrelevant to one another.

The second episode that Yi narrates also validates the existence of spirits and their relationship with humans. It is about a family who wisely expels the spirits from where they had been. A poor family comes to live in a deserted house, which is notorious for the appearance of ghosts. The family is troubled by the ghost's tricks at first, but they patiently keep silent about the spirits' deeds and pretend that they do not care about them. Later, the ghosts in the house leave of their own accord. This anecdote is similar to the first in terms of accepting the existence of ghosts and the link between the realms of the spirit and of humans.

In accordance with the previous two anecdotes, Yi introduces what Yi's friend narrates about Licentiate Ch'oe, a fearless man who defied the spirits and female shamans. The spirit, which is able to kill the horse of Ch'oe, make people offer rituals, and hear what people say and react to this affirms not only its existence but its influence on the public. In addition, Yi provides evidential information, including specifics of time, locale, and evidential proofs, if possible, to confirm the authenticity of seemingly unreliable and fantastic stories. In the story of Ghost Sin, the source of the story and proof reveal: "I heard that someone in Namyang kept the letter

[28] Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*, 273.

written by the ghost Sin" at the end of the story.[29] The effort is made in the story to show that even the ghost's origin is not known: "Ghost Sin's birth origin and place is unknown."[30] In the "Tale of a Wood Tender," Yi reveals the locale of the source of his story to be the Chinch'ŏn area: "I heard this fact from a monk at Chinch'ŏn, which is an example of such an encounter. In light of the story, it can be said then that the story of Kim Ch'anghŭp's meeting with Namgung Tu is believable."[31] Although the story is not witnessed by Yi himself, this information serves as a base for him to evince his belief in the existence of the transcendents in Chosŏn. Thus, Yi's examination of the supernatural is a worthy task for Confucian literati who were expected to examine objects to recognize the principles of the world.

Proclaiming Confucian Didactic Lessons

The Chosŏn literati who compiled and commented on the tales of the supernatural often present them in a Confucian didactic tone due to the literati's social responsibility to safeguard public morality to focus on Confucian teachings. .

> Didacticism is more than a matter of techniques. As attested by Ji Yun's collection, dispensing moral injunctions was seen as a responsibility of the traditional elite. In encouraging others to do good, members of the elite were not just assisting in social control; they were also fulfilling their role as guardians of public morality.[32]

[29] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2:367.

[30] Ibid., 364.

[31] Samyŏn is the courtesy name of Kim Ch'anghŭp (1653-1722). Namgung Tu (1526-1620) is a legendary Daoist hermit.

[32] Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*, 188.

In the story of Classic Licentiate Ch'oe, for example, Yi Ok expresses his contempt for female shamans for misleading the public with their absurd words and improper rituals. Yi criticizes the female shaman who serves the "stupid, blind, and deaf spirit" which was not able to recognize that the licentiate was next door. Furthermore, Yi broadly criticizes female shamans' practice of rituals at beautiful riversides:

> Recently, the government expelled shamans outside the city wall and prohibited those who have heterodox ideas from living inside the wall. Thus, shamans gathered in the southern section of the No River and danced and played music there, like those from the culture of Wanqiu.[33] Villagers relying on the shamans visited them endlessly, and red chariots and women with blue clothes kept visiting them. . . .The beautiful Southern Lake with standing willow trees are tainted by these. Alas! How can they invite a person like the licentiate and make him stay in the south of Noryangjin?[34]

Yi's message in his final comment is to criticize female shamans. This final message can confuse readers because the story is basically designed to answer his friend's doubts as to the existence of the supernatural. Still, it is clear that the anecdotes recognize the existence of the spirit and the entanglement of the realms of people and the supernatural. Although a conventional Confucian message appears on the surface, it can be understood as Yi's means of protecting his literati self in dealing with unorthodox subjects.

Literati writers often deftly manipulated supernatural materials at their disposal to extract a certain moral significance from them.[35] A biography of a filial daughter-in-law by Sŏ Kyŏngch'ang (ca. 1813), for example, concerns a miraculous communication between a tiger and a filial daughter-in-law. When she visits her natal mother who is lying in bed ill and then

[33] Wanqiu 宛丘 indicates the Huaiyang prefect in Henan, China.

[34] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 332.

[35] Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*, 154, 220.

returns to the home of her in-laws, she meets a tiger on a mountain pass. However, the tiger does not harm her but instead guards her throughout her journey home. Later, the tiger appears in her dreams and asks her for help. She goes to a village and finds out that the tiger has fallen into a pit, just as it had described. She jumps into the pit to prove the tiger has no intention of killing the villagers. The villagers then recognize the mysterious relation between the two and release the tiger. Sŏ's biography focuses on the woman's filial piety by richly describing her words and deeds, which prove how sincerely she served her blind father-in-law:

> After her husband's funeral, she worked in the homes of others to afford meals for her father-in-law. Her settled mind and sincere filial piety is always undistracted. When she sometimes visited her parents, her mother cried and said, "I cannot bear to see you live alone." She replied, "My husband asks me to serve my father-in-law. Because I have to serve him, I dare not die. It's better to die than to have other ideas."[36]

While her virtuous features were extolled, the scene in which she saves the tiger was relatively brief: "She patted the tiger and took it out of the trap. The tiger immediately ran away to the mountain and disappeared."[37] Sŏ's commentary is in accordance with the message in the anecdote that focuses on her virtues.

> Alas! The one who possesses extraordinary filial piety and faithfulness cannot be found easily from the past. The fact that a tiger shows her a way and falls into a trap, her father-in-law regains his eyesight. . . . Don't they show that her virtue moves Heaven and Heaven also responds to her virtue?"[38]

[36] Yi Hyesun et al. eds., *Hanguk ŭi yollyŏjŏn* (Biographies of Faithful Women in Korea) (Tosŏch'ulp'an wŏrin), 145.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

Sŏ includes a didactic injunction in the commentary to make the seemingly fantastic and unreliable tale into a proper literati biography.[39] It tells the readers that those who sincerely follow filial piety will be rewarded. The didactic injunction turned readers' attention away from the validity of the supernatural events and made the events minor ones, while in Yi Ok's stories, the injunctions were attached to reveal the validity of the supernatural events.

In Yi's story of Classics Licentiate Ch'oe, although Yi describes Ch'oe's contempt for the village spirit, it cannot be read as the victory of a Confucian scholar. If the story attempted to proclaim the righteousness of Confucian scholar Ch'oe, it would positively depict Ch'oe as a hero by showing the villager's distress from the spirit, the disappearance of the spirit, and the regaining of peace in the village. A typical example is the story of Gentleman An in *The Miscellany of Sŏng Hyŏn*, a brave new magistrate who successfully expels a village ghost:

> The village in which my uncle was appointed respected a village spirit. People who were appointed to the village and stayed in the office kept dying. The villagers regarded the office as a spirit's haunt and did not approach it. When An entered the office as soon as he was appointed, the villagers attempted to stop him, shedding tears. However, An did not listen to them and burned and destroyed all of the improper shrines. There was also an old well south of the office. The villagers believed that a spirit lived inside of it and thus invoked their blessings there. An ordered the well to be filled up with stones. A wailing sound like cows crying came from the well for three days. The villagers asked An to stop filling it up. An replied, "It must be the wailing of this well out of sadness, what strange things can occur?" From then on, all malicious deeds from the spirit ceased.[40]

In contrast to the story of Gentleman An, the licentiate in Yi's story fails to remove the spirit, relieve the villagers' sufferings, or at least stop the improper village ritual. The spirit simply moves away to another place and continues to be served by the same villagers as before. Ch'oe's

[39] Yi Ok also writes a biography of the same woman. However, Yi's interests are in the miraculous event itself rather than her filial piety.

[40] Sŏng Hyŏn, *Yŏngjae ch'onghwa*, 114.

fearless efforts fail to reduce the villagers' distress; in addition, the villagers have to perform another rite for the licentiate. Animosity toward the shamans and spirits hardly becomes the center of the story. In light of the fact that historical veracity in biography, supernatural elements may not have been easy to place in the forefront. Yi Ok may have recognized that adopting a moral message was the best means of removing the stigma attached to his heterodox ideas.[41]

Contemporary studies support different ideas regarding Yi's main motive for writing about the supernatural. It can be confusing to tell whether Yi Ok created these works mainly to deliver didactic messages or whether they reflect no more than his delight in telling tales of strange occurrences. The most that can be said is that both elements must have been involved in the biographies, and at times, one figured more prominently than the other. Yi foregrounds the significance of writing about the supernatural and provides an example of how "unworthy stories" can edify while entertaining.

[41] Leo Takhung Chan argues the *zhiguai* compiler's manipulation of morality to legitimate its genre. "By claiming to serve a moral function, by stressing a positive impact on the social hierarchy, the compilers justified the recording and compiling of supernatural events at the same time that they validated the zhiguai as a genre. The urge to moralize, as might be expected, provided the main line of defense for most, and indeed its utility as a form of rationalization was demonstrated in disclaimers by others, who felt it incumbent upon themselves to assert that moralizing was the last thing on their minds." Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*, 19.

2. Stories of Lower Class People[1]

As seen in Chapters 3 and 4, Yi's experience of exile and political isolation gradually changed his idea of judging people's lives—fulfilling secular desires is the key of happiness. His stories of lower class people, which were mostly written in his exile, are outstanding examples of Yi's idea. Also, his representation of the people shows affinity with character representation in late Chosŏn popular fiction. This section shows that lower class people in Yi's stories are noticeably similar to the fiction characters, such as Subcommander Pae in the *Tale of Subcommander Pae*, who is infatuated with a woman and put to shame in public and Norbu in the *Tale of Hŭngbu*, who abused his poor younger brother. [2]

Yi Ok's residence in Seoul to prepare for the civil service examination and travels to different urban and rural areas in exile were opportunities for him to witness the lives of the lower class at markets, inns, Buddhist temples, and on the streets. The table below shows that a number of the subjects of Yi's works are such city dwellers whose lives rely on urban culture: a professional singer who needs rich patrons and gatherings at which to perform, a chess player who achieves fame at matches in Seoul, thieves who need large and crowded markets to steal people's possessions, female entertainers who rely on rich guests, and a beggar[3] who needs support from wealthy households.

[1] Lower class people here indicate non-aristocrats including *chungin* (Middle People), *yangin* (commoners), and *ch'ŏnmin* (mean people).

[2] The features of late Chosŏn fiction works are briefly introduced in Chapter 1.

[3] The story of a beggar is titled "Chang pongsa chŏn." *Pongsa* 奉事 was an official title to indicate the 8th rank of a military official. However, the title was often used to politely refer to a man in late Chosŏn.

Lower-class people	Sin A Chang Chŏng Unch'ang Song Silsol Chang Poksŏn Yi Hong Ma Shouran Sangnang Such'ik[4] Filial Daughter-in-Law on a Mountain Woman Who Caught a Tiger Two Righteous Servants of a Confucian Shrine Soldier Sin Wood Tender Righteous Female Entertainer

Literati writers of late Chosŏn described the lives of lower class people in poems and narratives, such as biographies, tales of wonders, and *yadam* (unofficial histories), with different perspectives and intentions.[5] Pak Chega (1750–1805), for example, depicted vibrant people in a flourishing Seoul market in his poem, "Poetry of a Cityscape" (*Sŏngsi chŏndo si*).

> When a group of youth gathers and goes around,
> Hawks on their forearms show off their feathers and beaks.
> Several kinds of house pigeons are displayed.
> Fine bird cages sway with the wind.
> Children make fun of a blind man who attempts to cross a bridge.
> The blind man yells to the children, but the bridge already shakes.
> People cannot recognize a dogcatcher when he is in different clothes.

[4] Such'ik will be discussed in the section "Stories of Exemplary People." Such'ik is not significantly dealt with in this section because, as a palace woman, her life was detached from the ordinary lives of the lower class people.

[5] The term *Yadam* follows Kim Hŭnggyu: "Unofficial history" (*yadam*) is the comprehensive term for short literary Chinse narrative works collected in the urban areas during late Chosŏn." Peter H. Lee. *A History of Korean Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 267.

But dogs can tell and bark at him with angry glares.[6]

Pak Chega was a Northern Learning Scholar who advocated manufacturing, trade, commerce, and consumption as ways of increasing national wealth, thus he positively depicted active scenes of commerce and people in the market. The lower class people were, however, not common subjects in biographies. Biographers largely selected literati who fulfilled Confucian morals or socially respectable features to show how their literati subjects differed from the ordinary. Still, for official writers, the lower class people's practice of loyalty, filial piety, and female chastity was significant, because it evinced a morally sound Korean society and that such characters could only exist under the reign of an ideal king. Ch'ae Chegong (1720–1799), a minister under King Chŏngjo, for example, wrote about Mandŏk, a lower class woman from the Cheju Islands who saved the poor from starvation. To Ch'ae, Mandŏk's deed was understood in a broader social context as the evidence of an ideal society than her own individual story of generosity. Her virtue alone could not have complete social significance without the benevolence of the king who allowed Mandŏk to travel outside the islands as a reward for her deeds. Ch'ae revealed in his work: "His Majesty promised to accept her wish whatever it is. . . . His Majesty also gave her generous rewards.'"[7] Similarly, Hong Yangho's 洪良浩 (1724-1802) biography of a Catholic leader Chŏe 崔必恭傳 from a lower class, highlights King Chŏngjo's generosity and sincere care for the public, which made Chŏe abjure his Catholic belief and turn into a sincere Confucian

[6] Kang Myŏnggwan. *Chosŏn hugi yŏhang munak yŏngu* (Research on Middle People's Literature during Late Chosŏn) (Ch'angbi, 1997), 382.

[7] Yi Hyesun et al. ed. *Hanguk ŭi yŏllyŏjŏn* (Biography of Faithful Women of Korea) (Wŏrin, 2002), 421.

scholar.[8] For the officials and kings, biographies on lower class people are a useful way to show the public the good governing that corrects subversive individuals with benevolence and encourages virtuous people with rewards.

Northern Learning School scholars chose diligent and honest lower class people because they could provide lessons to the incompetent and corrupt aristocrats. Pak Chiwŏn, for example, described Master Yedŏk, a night soil collector, in the "Tale of a Night Soil Man." Though people despised the farmer because of his dirty and hard work, Pak portrayed his life as decent and respectable.

> People criticized him by saying that he was dirty because he made a living collecting night soil. However, isn't his way of life honorable? His career might be dirty, but his way of life is truly decent. Any rich or high official cannot possibly be better than him . . . . It's why I regard him as my master. How dare I become his friend? Thus, I call him by the courtesy name 字 "Master of Ritual and the Humane," not his real name.[9]

The positive description of the night soil collector effectively represents Pak's idea that Chosŏn literati should devote themselves to socially productive tasks for national prosperity.

Literati, such as Kim Yŏ and Yi Ok, who spent significant years in exiled areas sympathetically depicted non-aristocratic people who failed to be recognized despite their various talents. Involved in the case of the punishment of Kang Ich'ŏn, a believer of Western Learning, Kim Yŏ was criticized as Kang's follower and sent to exile from 1779 to 1806. During

[8] Chin Chaegyo ed., *Arajuji annŭn sam* (Unrecognized Lives) (T'aehaksa, 2005), 61.

[9] Pak Chiwŏn, "Yedŏk sŏnsaeng chŏn," (Tale of a Night Soil Man), *Nanŭn kk'ŏlkk'ŏl sŏnsaeng irao* (I am Master *kk'ŏlkk'ŏl*). Hong Kimun, trans. (Pori, 2004), 71.

that period, he devoted himself to writing about unique cultures and people in exile.[10] Kim Yŏ wrote seven works of biography, six dealing with lower class people including physicians, merchants, beggars, and palace women. Kim especially paid attention to those with practical skills who could not achieve recognition because of their lower social status. His choice of subjects and way of representation relate to his friendship with *chungin* (middle people) who failed to acquire official positions despite their talents. His description on people who failed to receive proper recognition suggests his criticism toward the appointment system which was only open to those with access to political or economic power.

Lower class people similarly occupy a significant portion in Yi Ok's biographies. Interestingly, many of his characters prioritized fame, money, and sexual desires over Confucian morals or social ethics, which reflects Yi's idea that such desires are important in people's lives. They pursued an enjoyable night with a nice gentleman, stealing and swindling naïve people out of their money, embezzling public funds to help his acquaintances in need, or singing a funny song at a funeral. Yi's choice and representation of the subjects were related to the *yadam* collections flourishing in his time.[11] The late Chosŏn period witnessed the rise of money as a social force, particularly in economic expansion and advances in agricultural techniques and

[10] Kim Yŏ, *Kŭlssŭgi chosimhaso* (Be Cautious in Your Writings), O Hŭibok tr., (Pori, 2006), 797.

[11] *Yadam* collections in late Chosŏn demonstrate that diverse kinds of people and social events, including those that were regarded minor and vulgar, were literati's research interest. The compilation of *yadam* in late Chosŏn includes *Ŏuyadam* by Yu Mongin 柳夢寅 (1559–1623), *Tongya hwijip* (Assorted Collection from the Eastern Field) by Yi Wŏnmyŏng 李源命 (b. 1807), and *Kyesŏ yadam* (Unofficial Tales from Korea) by Yi Ŭijun 李義準 (1772-1839) and *Ch'ŏnggu yadam* (Unofficial Tales from the Green Hills).

production.[12] The period included the gradual erosion of the elite dominance of society with the growth of *chungin* and commoners who amassed wealth based on their technical posts and products.[13] With more peasants able to produce items to be sold for cash, markets existed in over a thousand locations in Korea, and the larger ones had already been established permanently in the eighteenth century.[14] The growth of the lower class people with commercialized urban culture, therefore, made the literati turn their eyes to the people with different perspectives. These led to a number of *yadam* compilations during the eighteen century. Kim Hŭnggyu explains the appearance of *yadam* in relation to economic growth and social changes in late Chosŏn.

> Behind the appearance of *yadam* and Chinese fiction in the *yadam* style lie several historical factors including the development of agricultural technology and the dissolution of authoritarian society during the late Chosŏn. As a result, the country's money and commodities were concentrated in urban areas, where. . .farmers had migrated from the countryside. Indeed, the population of Seoul from the mid sixteenth century almost tripled in one hundred years. Others, too, came to the urban areas: officials, relatives and protégés of officials, servants, scamps, impoverished literati, Confucian scholars both inside and outside the town, paupers, merchants, vagabonds, and storytellers.[15]

[12] Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea: An Episodic Narrative* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan). 95; Eckert et al, *Korea, Old and New*, 159. Eckert explains the advancement of agricultural technology which brings economic growth of late Chosŏn.

[13] *Chungin* people recognize non-aristocrat class people's plight whose social status prevented them to acquire proper social recognition. Thus, from the late eighteenth century, the secondary status writers compiled a number of biographies which mainly depict the portraits of people of the writer's class. *Hosan ŏegi* (Hosan Unofficial History) by Cho Hŭiryong (1789-1866) contains the biographical portraits of *chungin* and lower class people including artists, physicians, hereditary clerks, and translators. Also, *Yuhyang kyŏnmunrok* (Observations from the Countryside) by Yu Chaegŏn (1793-1880) contain almost 300 separate biographies. Pak Hŭibyŏng, *Hanguk kojŏn inmulchŏn yŏngu* (Study on Biographies of Pre-modern Korea) (Hangil sa, 1992), 56.

[14] Eckert et al., *Korea: Old and New*,162.

[15] Lee, *A History of Korean Literature*, 268.

Many characters in *yadam*, even if they are aristocrats, are far from the hero types who sacrifice themselves to ruling ideology or display superhuman abilities. Scholars generally point out that *yadam*'s main subjects are impoverished literati and lower class people, and the most popular themes include the accumulation of wealth, fulfilling sexual desires, conflicts between *yangban* masters and servants, and the extraordinary lives of eccentric people.[16] Literati including Pak Chiwŏn, Kim Yŏ, and Yi Ok who urged their servants to tell them interesting stories and recorded them for literati readers demonstrate that they paid serious attention to the social changes reflected in the stories with their amusing features as well.[17] In Yi Ok's works, public places such as inns and marketplaces where people gathered were not only the sources of stories, but also served as main literary backgrounds. Yi's favorable background is not the court, where officials debate on politics, or nature in which literati can be free from the troublesome court. His play, "Records of East Chamber" 東廂記, concerns the belated marriage of an elderly bachelor and a lady. The play was based on a story that his servant heard from the streets, and Yi expressed his pleasure in hearing. Also, the "Account of Vicious People at a Market" depicts what he witnessed from the window of an inn facing the market.[18]

> All kinds of artisans and merchants carried their items to be sold. Commodities from every corner of the country were gathered like clouds and flowed like water. People purchased clothes, shoes, and food here. In the market, the eyes of a myriad of people were glaring, and their mouths talked glibly to gain only profits. One person was a seller,

[16] Kim Chunhyŏng. "Chosŏn hugi yadam e t'uyŏngdoen yŏsŏngŭi chisik sŭptŭk kwa hwaryong pangan" (Study on women's acquisition and practice of Knowledge reflected in the late Chosŏn unofficial histories), *Hanguk Kojŏn Yŏsŏng Munhak* (Pre-Modern Korean Literature on Women) (2013): 1-22.

[17] Pak Hŭibyŏng, *Hanguk kojŏn inmulchŏn yŏngu*, 324.

[18] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 1: 303; 2: 108.

> another a buyer, and a third a broker. People gathered when the sun rose and scattered at night. The shoulders and backs of people rubbed against one another, and, even standing, people could not wear their hats neatly. Deceptive people appeared in the market like fish gathering in a lake and birds in a bush.[19]

Yi recorded how people at a market sold, bought, and stole things and deceived one another for better profits. Such markets and inns, full of various people including female entertainers, thieves, artists, and artisans, enabled Yi to learn that people could live an active, enjoyable life pursuing secular desires. This may helpful to explain how the desire-centered lower class characters in late Chosŏn fiction were derived.

Contemporary readers of Yi's story will recall lower-class characters in late Chosŏn *p'ansori* fiction who are vibrant and centered on desire. Nolbu and his wife in the *Tale of Hŭngbu*, for example, represent profit-centered and greedy people who abused economically incompetent Hŭngbu. The female entertainer Wŏlmae in the *Tale of Ch'unhyang* treated her son-in-law coldly when he disguised himself as a beggar. Another character, the female entertainer Ch'uwŏl in the *Tale of Yi Ch'unp'ung*, abandoned her rich guest as soon as his money was all spent. Pp'aengdŏk in the *Tale of Sim Ch'ŏng* left her old blind husband to follow a handsome young man she met on the street. A number of popular works of fiction depict such desire-centered characters. Interestingly, these works were believed to be written or edited, to some extent, by literati writers. Writers such as Yi Ok who were politically isolated and thus less restrained by writing conventions placed great importance in the appearance of these cunning, mean, and funny lower-class characters in later narratives. Yi depicted morally flawed and

[19] Ibid.,1: 303.

eccentric characters with non-didactic comments, freeing himself from the literati morals, social ethics, or decency found in the lives of official- or Northern Learning School scholar-writers.

A number of literati enjoyed casual writings of late Ming and Qing in the eighteenth century. However, following King Chŏngjo's policy on literature, many of them corrected their writing styles and adhered to the recommended ancient style of writing. Nam Kongch'ŏl (1770–1840), for example, enjoyed the casual writings and expressed positive opinions on the vivid depiction of vulgar characters in them. However, after the king's policy was issued and the king criticized Nam's inappropriate literary taste, Nam devoted himself to the studies of the Confucian classics and his fondness of the miscellanies was suppressed. Later, he was appointed to high positions and recognized as a writer. Most officials charged under the policy experienced a similar path. This explains why most literary miscellanies did not have clear authorship, especially when they depicted socially disruptive characters. Such anonymous authorship has prevented contemporary scholars from examining literati's enjoyment of premodern Korean miscellanies, Yi Ok's uniqueness in selecting and representing lower class subjects can be valuable sources for understanding the development of lower class characters in late Chosŏn narratives.

Unconstrained Lives of Artists

Traditionally, artists were not common subjects for literati biographies because they were regarded as artisans who bargained their talents for personal interests. In the "Tale of the Singer Song Silsol,"[20] Yi dealt with a famous singer of the eighteenth century. Song was depicted as a

[20] *Silsol* indicates a cricket.

person who cast off social constraints and enjoyed a friendship with Prince P'yo[21] uninhibitedly. They sometimes competed with each other and played music together despite their different social statuses. In addition, Song sang at the funeral of his friend's mother and made attendees laugh:

> When Sech'un was holding his mother's funeral, Song made the call of condolence with his followers. When he entered the doorway, he heard Sech'un crying and said, "This is a *kyemŏn* mode.[22] I should reply to it with a *p'yŏngu* mode."[23] He proceeded to the chief mourner and cried, and his crying sounded like songs. People told the story to one another and laughed.[24]

Also, the songs that he enjoyed do not suppress his enjoyment of pleasures from wine and women. "Song of a Drunken Monk" 醉僧曲 humorously presented a monk's abandonment of abstinence and surrender to sexual desires.

> I shed a monk's clothes to make a beauty's inner wear.
> I cut off my prayer beads to make horse reins.
> My ten year of study is useless.
> Where should I live? Ah, go there.[25]

Yi Ok's selection of the songs reflects that he regarded the theme of sexual desires positively. Another song, "Song of a Yellow Rooster" 黃鷄曲, expressed the importance of spending life in amusement rather than in worry and concern.[26]

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[21] Prince Sŏp'yŏng (ca. 1715).

[22] *Kyemŏn* 界面 mode indicates Pentatonic la mode.

[23] *Pyŏngu* mode 平羽調 is used to sing *sijo*. *P'yŏngu* mode can be understood as the combination of the *p'yŏng* mode and *u* mode. 平調 indicates pentatonic aol mode and Wu 羽調 indicates pentatonic la mode.

[24] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 342.

[25] Ibid., 244

A yellow rooster is painted for war.
Let's play until the rooster crows
With craning its long neck
And shaking its wings.[27]

The singer aroused a funny mood by making the sound of drums[28] and mimicking the rooster's cry while singing songs. The description of the singer, focusing on his cheerful characteristics, is different from other biographies of artists. Chŏng Naegyo (1681–1759) wrote "Tale of Kim Sŏnggi," the famous *sijo* singer and musician of his time.[29] Nam Kongch'ŏl wrote the story of the painter Ch'oe Puk (1712–1786). This musician and artist were depicted as eccentric people. For example, Ch'oe refused to paint for arrogant buyers, mocked those who did not appreciate his works, and attempted to commit suicide when he was impressed by the beauty of the Kŭmgang Mountain and regarded its beautiful scenery worth sacrificing his life. Kim Sŏnggi also risked his life when he avoided singing songs for those whom he did not like. He rejected guests who did not understand his music. Still, in order to become literati's literary subjects, artists needed to have certain qualities that literati readers found agreeable.[30] Thus, the nature of their paintings and songs that the writers chose to present should be acceptable to the literati. In the story of Kim Sŏnggi, the theme of his song is the peaceful life in the countryside.

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[26] The original song in *Ch'ŏnggu yŏngŏn* (Songs of the Green Hills) deals with the sadness of woman who lost her beloved. Late Chosŏn singers showed diverse lyrical variations in singing.

[27] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 244.

[28] *para*

[29] Kang Myŏnggwan, *Chosŏn hugi yŏhang munak yŏngu*,363.

[30] Pak Hŭibyŏng, *Hanguk kojŏn inmulchŏn yŏngu*, 304.

> Leaving the secular world with bamboo sticks and straw sandals,
> Carrying *yogŭm*[31] and entering Western Lake,
> Seagulls among reed flowers are my friends.[32]

The song in Chŏng's story invokes literati culture, different from the songs of sexual desires in Yi Ok's story. For many biographers, singers' detachment from popular songs was an important criteria to distinguish their artist-subjects from the ordinary. As the artists' skills developed, their music moved away from popular taste and reached a degree that the public could not understand.[33] In Yi Kibal 李起浡 (1602–1662)'s "Tale of Song Kyŏngun," a famous musician of the seventeenth century, Song respected only ancient tunes but played contemporary music sometimes for ordinary people because they did not understand his lofty aspiration.

> Song said to me, "In playing the lute, I showed that the ancient and contemporary tunes are different. Contemporary people enjoy the contemporary tunes only when they abandon the ancient ones. Still, I only have had interest in the ancient ones. When I play a lute, my tunes rely on the ancient ones and leave no room for the current ones. The sound satisfies me and is truly worthy as music. . . . The sound is relaxing and not intense or vulgar, is enough to suppress the wrong sounds of the present and restore the right sounds of the great past. . . . Thus, I intend to play the ancient tunes to the end of my life and pass them to the next generation. I, however, see that my audiences are ordinary and not happy about the ancient tunes. They are also ignorant, so they cannot enjoy them."[34]

Song Kyŏngun's preference for ancient music was not only due to his personal fondness for this style of music, but also his need to correct contemporary people's unrefined taste. Such an aim

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[31] *Yogŭm* 瑤琴 indicates a Korean zither.

[32] Pak Hŭibyŏng, *Hanguk kojŏn inmulchŏn yŏngu*, 369.

[33] Ibid., 293, 296.

[34] Ibid., 360.

was in accord with Confucian literati's idea of making an ideal society by modeling on the ancient one. Song chose Yi Kibal because they shared the same idea and could truly appreciate each other.

Different from these musicians, the singer Song Singsol in Yi Ok's story is fully satisfied with popular songs and personal happiness. Most characters in Yi Ok's stories had little interest in how their music affected society. Instead, they sought the pleasure to the degree that they sacrificed their self-esteem. Such is found in the "Tale of Chŏng Unch'ang," a famous chess (*paduk*) player. When Chŏng was matched with a well-known literatus chess player, he did not do his best until his patron promised to give him rewards for winning a match. But, then, when the literatus asked him to yield for a better reward, Chŏng made mistakes on purpose. The scene in which Chŏng turned the drift of the match reveals his talents, but his self-esteem is lost when he yielded. Considering that Chŏng did not show any discomfort in playing badly, he could not be the same as those who did not hesitate to destroy their less-than-perfect works and reject unqualified people as their matches. Chŏng Naegyo, in depicting Kim's integrity, presented his refusal to play music for Mok Horyŏng 睦虎龍 (1684–1724), a villainous official. When Mok forcefully invited Kim to come to his party and play, Kim rejected the invitation with humiliating words to Mok.

> When Mok Horyŏng drank wine with his followers, he sent his servant and invited Kim politely, with an excellent horse. Kim, however, refused the invitation, saying that he was ill. The servants repeated the message several times, but he just lay in his bed. The servant returned and reported to Mok. Mok was angry and delivered a message through a servant: "If you do not come, you will be in big trouble." When the servant went to Kim Sŏnggi's home again, Kim was playing a lute with a guest. When Kim heard the message, he threw his lute at the servant and said angrily, "Send my message to your master. I am

> in my seventies. Why am I afraid of him? I heard that he is good at falsely accusing people. So, do what he is good at and have me executed."[35]

Kim Songgi was depicted as a person with high morality who could never surrender to Mok. For Kim, his life is less important than keeping himself pure and decent. Chŏng highly valued Kim's integrity to denounce the officials who behaved submissively to Mok for their personal safety:

> Kim Sŏnggi lived poorly to the end of his life. How can such a life be possible if Kim did not have strong life principles? His gallant attitude toward reproaching Mok Horyŏng showed his great spirit. He was indeed a Lei Haiqing-type person.[36] The literati who lost their integrity and corrupted themselves by following evil, powerful should feel ashamed reading the story of Kim Sŏnggi.[37]

Kim's moral integrity was important to Chŏng because it was reproach to corrupt officials whom Chŏng criticized in his other works.[38] The artist-subjects, if not as upright as Kim Sŏnggi, at least should not be considered immoral even though they might have eccentric behaviors. It signifies that morality is the most important criteria to be chosen as biography subjects by literati writers. Nam Kongch'ŏl's story about Ch'oe Puk, for example, indicated that Ch'oe's contemporary regarded him as an eccentric. However, Ch'oe impressed the writer not only with his paintings, but also with his political ideas which the writer viewed as insightful.

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[35] Yi Kyusang, *Sipp'al segi Chosŏn inmulchi* (Records of People in the Eighteenth Century Chosŏn) (Ch'angbi, 1997), 192.

[36] Lei Haiqing 雷海清 is a musician of the Tang. He was taken captive by An Lushan, but did not surrender.

[37] Yi, *Sipp'al segi Chosŏn inmulchi*, 192.

[38] Chŏng, a *chungin* writer, wrote poems which criticize corrupt governors and showed sympathy towards the suffering commoners.

> I happened to meet Ch'ilch'il [pen name of Ch'oe Puk] in his rustic home. . . . He said to me, "Ten thousand naval forces in my country to defend against the Japanese army in the future. The Japanese are used to sea battle, and we are not. When they invade us, we will be drowned if we do not defend ourselves. Why do people in the southern areas need to suffer?" While drinking more wine, day broke. Though people regarded Ch'ilch'il as a drunkard, painter, or even a crazy person, his words were sometimes sensible and had subtle awakening.[39]

Given that Nam Kongch'ŏl served King Chŏngjo as Headmaster of the Royal Academy, it is not strange that Nam found Ch'oe's importance from his political opinion though it was irrelevant to depict him as an artist. Ch'oe was more morally superior than ordinary artists, who sold their talents for money without professional principles. Chŏng, in Yi Ok's story, on the contrary, possessed the very quality that traditional literati despised in artists. Yi's stories suggest that satisfaction and happiness in life do not necessarily relate to moral principles or political aspiration, but rather rely on behaving as one pleases. Also, the value of people can be judged by the pleasure that they enjoyed in their lives, setting them apart from the socially recommended patterns for behavior.

Sexual Desires and Female Entertainers

Yi Ok dealt with the stories of female entertainers in "Tale of Ma Xianglan" 馬湘蘭傳, "Tale of Righteous Female Entertainer" 俠娼紀聞, and "Tale of a Female Entertainer's Wailing at Night" 北關妓夜哭論. These stories depict diverse cases of sexual desires, which were largely viewed as strange or abnormal by literati readers, between female entertainers and customers. Yi's sympathy and supportive comments on the cases demonstrates how Yi's social views and value judgments on people are different from those of traditional Confucian scholars. The "Tale of Ma

[39] Hŏ Kyŏngjin, *P'yŏngmin yŏlchŏn* (Biographies of Commoners) (Ungjin buk, 2002), 196.

Shouzhen" concerns a young student who passionately loved an elderly female entertainer named Ma Shouzhen who was more than twice his age.[40] When people ridiculed his love, the student argued that everyone's preferences are different and that his love should be respected.

> Someone asked him, "You are very young, but the female entertainer has a body like a worn-out sack and even her face is faded. Why do you yearn for her?" The student answered, "Your words are not right. From the moment I have met her, I have come to dislike other female entertainers' cloud-like hair because it is not gray. I hate to see their chubby cheeks and red lips because they are not wrinkled, dry, and faded. I regard radiant skin as ugly because it is not like the dried rough skin of a tangerine. Considering that some people prefer meat while others dried scab from wound, things that satisfy are valuable, and its value cannot be judged by others.[41]

Yi did not pass judgment on the boy's love affair as unhealthy. Similarly, "Tale of Female Entertainer's Wailing at Night" concerns a female entertainer who hoped to meet a talented gentleman worthy of herself. When she found a talented and handsome young man, she was delighted and eager to spend a night with him. However, when she found out that he was impotent, she wailed loudly and thumped the ground until day broke, and every villager could hear her cry. Though her desire was expressed in a vulgar manner, Yi did not show a hint of denunciation: on the contrary, Yi showed his sympathy for her unfulfilled desire by saying that her discouragement was truly enough to move him to lament and drew a lesson on the importance of good companionship.

> At first, she was waiting. But later, she began to doubt and came close. She finally found out that he was impotent. She rose up suddenly and wailed for a long time while

[40] The story deals with the famous female entertainer Ma Shouzhen (1548-1604) of Ming. She is well known for her orchid painting. Kim Yŏ, Yi's compiler, does not include this story in the biography section, but in a supplementary section. This seems to be derived from the story's eccentric characters and lack of a moral lesson.

[41] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 319.

> thumping the ground. “Oh, Heaven, Heaven! Alas, this person! Oh, Heaven!” I regard Karyŏn as one who cries for a great cause. It is natural that sadness and joy exist in the meeting of men and women. When she knew that her life wish turned out to be a failure, she cried heavily throughout the night. How could she not feel sadness! How could not she be in pain?[42]

For the female entertainer, that a handsome man shared her interests and spoke kind words with a gentle attitude was not enough to become her life partner. Conventional literati had difficulty depicting such women characters in a positive way. Pak Chiwŏn criticized sexual repression in women and a repressive society. Still, he did not choose a sexually open woman, such as the female entertainer, to portray the natural and good against the social decorum. On the contrary, Pak selected an aged widow who successfully maintained female chastity in the “Tale of a Faithful Woman Pak from Hamyang” to demonstrate the difficulty of suppressing sexual desire. Pak’s choice may have derived from the convention of biography to deal with socially exemplary people. More importantly, Pak’s choice could have come from his belief that writing should be a tool to correct social evils by presenting exemplary people. From the disappointment of the female entertainer, however, Yi demonstrated the significance of sexual desires. A real relationship cannot be established without desire. Yi Ok expressed his serious view on the theme of sexual desire and his recognition on the desire by dealing the female entertainer in treaties 論. Further, Yi did not show any discomfort in her relations with several men in order to find a good partner. The difference of representation in Pak and Yi show that the literary significances of the two writers cannot be judged on the same basis.[43] Although Pak and Yi share a similar

[42] Ibid., 1:404.

[43] Yi’s idea is notable considering that many unofficial stories positively depicted women who kept their chastity even when they did not need to, such as stories about a young girl who received a certain gift from a male stranger and kept her chastity for him.

recognition of women's desires, Yi's subject choice and way of revealing the issue were bold compared to contemporary writers of his time.

In addition, "Tale of a Righteous Female Entertainer" was about a female entertainer who followed a gentleman she once served. When the gentleman was exiled to the Cheju Islands, the remotest place in the south, the female entertainer followed him and persuaded him to enjoy life, saying a life of pleasure is better than a long and miserable one.

> She served him on the Cheju Islands diligently. She said to him, "It is certain that you cannot go back to Seoul. Living a short pleasurable life is better than a long miserable life. Why don't you pursue an enjoyable one?" She provided wine every day and made him drunk. When he was drunk, she spent the nights with him, regardless of time. Before long, he became sick and died.[44]

Yi's view on her as a righteous woman differs from conventional biographers who found Confucian morals or good nature in female entertainers while avoiding their desire-related aspects of life.[45] Sin Kyŏng 申暻 (1696–1766), for example, wrote "Tale of Turyŏn, a Filial Female Entertainer" 孝妓斗蓮傳. Turyŏn, a daughter of the student Ch'a and a female entertainer, grew up without knowing about her father. When she came to know that Ch'a was her father and he was dying of illness, she went a long way to see him. Sin revealed in the comment that he chose the female entertainer because of her extraordinary filial piety.[46] Ch'ae Chegong also

[44] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 316.

[45] This also explains why conventional biographies were understood as boring and monotonous with a lack of creativity.

[46] Kim Kyŏngmi et al. ed., *Sip'al segi yŏsŏng saenghwalsa charyojip* (References of Eighteenth-Century Women's Lives), 3 (Pogosa, 2010), 223-224.

wrote the "Tale of Mandŏk,"[47] to commemorate her righteous deed of saving the poor. She was once a female entertainer but redeemed herself later in life.[48] Cho Chaedo 趙載道 (1725–1749) wrote the "Tale of a Faithful Woman, Kyewŏl" 烈女桂月傳 about a female entertainer's chastity. Cho commemorates Kyewŏl's chastity by adopting her mother's words:

> The mother of Kyewŏl pointed a small pole in her garden and cried and said, "Here is where Kyewŏl is buried. You are a gentleman. I tell my daughter's story to you to warn those who took others' fidelity lightly and broke it."[49]

Cho chose the female entertainer because she provided a lesson to lewd officials who regarded female chastity lightly. Given Yi's advocacy for pleasures, literati of Yi's time may question Yi's openness of the body and sexuality as a literatus and also his aptness as a Confucian scholar, for the theme of love desires was suppressed among literati writings, and Yi openly challenged this sensibility. [50]

Interesting Lives of Swindlers

Yi's character of interest was a reprehensible thief who cleverly steals things and deceives people, rather than naïve people who are deceived. Indeed, the "Tale of Yi Hong" is about a

[47] Yi Kawŏn tr., *Yijo hanguk munak sa* (History of Chosŏn Literature) (Posŏng munhwasa, 1986).

[48] Women hold a relatively minor status in the hierarchy of literature subjects. Literati take the subject of women in a limited perspective, as virtuous or evil beings or in a figurative way to represent literati writers themselves, describing exiled literati's sorrow through the voice of deserted women. While many biographies of faithful women were produced, biographical portraits of female entertainers, women who lived without respect for female chastity, are rarely found. It is not strange that in the compilation of Kim Chŏng's (1486-1521) writings, works that dealt with female entertainers were omitted. Pak Yŏngmin et al., *Kojŏn munhak kwa yŏsŏngchuŭi chŏk sigak* (Pre-Modern Korean Literature and Feministic Perspectives) (Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2003), 235.

[49] Yi Hyesun et al. ed., *Hanguk ŭi yŏllyŏjŏn*, 421.

[50] Kim Yŏ, the compiler of Yi Ok's writings, does not include this story in the biography section, but in a supplementary section. This seems to be derived from the story's eccentric characters and lack of a moral lesson.

swindler who found pleasure in deceiving people. The tale contains three anecdotes about the deception of an innkeeper, a Buddhist monk, and a petty official. In the first anecdote, Yi Hong makes a fool of the innkeeper and satisfies his sexual interests by manipulating the innkeeper's greed—Yi Hong heard that the innkeeper had a beautiful daughter who served a local magistrate as a female entertainer. Though many attempted to see her, most failed because her greedy parents allowed her to serve only the rich. Yi Hong, then, pretended to be a wealthy merchant and stayed at her parents' inn. Hoping to obtain a large profit, the parents bring their daughter from the magistrate's office in secret to let her serve Yi. Though the parents were cunning and pursued profits by secretly deceiving a magistrate, Yi Hong was superior to the parents in deception. By manipulating the parents into presenting the female entertainer themselves instead of him overtly pursuing her, Yi was able to enjoy several nights with her without spending money. After fulfilling his desires, he pretended to go outside for business and ran away. The three anecdotes in the story all dealt with people who pursued material and sexual interests without a hint of shame or guilt. Yi's focus is to provide amusement by inserting dialogues and the inner thoughts of characters to bring vividness to the scenes.

> Yi made a bet with his friends that he could alone go to Anju and succeed in meeting her within ten days. He packed a load on a horse and wore silk military clothes. Only a male servant with a hat accompanied him. He entered Anju while applying his whip to his horse. Everyone would regard Yi as a wealthy Kaesŏng merchant . . . . The father bent his ear to the door crack and eavesdropped. Silk, spices, and medicinal items were the materials that Yi and his servant were tallying. The father talked with his wife, a retired entertainer. "The guest is a wealthy merchant. If he sees my daughter, he will be entranced with her. Then, our profits may not be small and could not be compared with those of the magistrate." The father secretly called his daughter from the magistrate's office in P'yŏngyang.[51]

[51] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 373.

Yi's comment also does not show criticism of socially evil acts.

> I say: "Big tricks deceive the world first, followed by the king and ministers, and then common people. Yi's deception was the lowest kind and not worth disputing. However, one who deceives the world becomes a king, then is honored, and finally makes his house illustrious. Yi Hong was punished by the law because of his deception. It can be said that he actually deceived himself rather than others. This is sad."[52]

Though the writer briefly commented that Yi Hong's deeds were bad, his representation of Yi Hong stands. The weak didactic comment cannot undo what the "immoral details" have already perpetrated.[53] Yi's narrator delights in the subject who does not conform to the norms of society or who transgresses conventional class and gender expectations that would have been nearly impossible in traditional hierarchical culture.

<u>*Yadam*-Style Stories</u>

Yi Ok's choice of characters, organization of stories, and comments relate to *yadam*. *Yadam*, which is not bound by writing rules, was performed as a means for literati writers to vent their interests in a relaxed manner that they were not allowed to write in biographies. *Yadam* usually begin with anecdotes that do not reveal the character's birth place, families, or childhood, details which are necessary in biographies for historical fact.[54] Readers looking for a complete picture

[52] Ibid.

[53] Keith Mcmahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 60.

[54] Peter Lee explained the components of biography: "A biography might recount the subject's ancestry, birth, and career with an emphasis on fidelity to the historicity, accuracy, and acceptability of the events described." Peter H. Lee, *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 49-50.Because they value the folktales as amusement, tellers make no attempt to present evidence that could establish the historical truth of the stories. Peter H. Lee ed., *Oral Literature of Korea* (Jimoondang, 2005), 14-15.

of a character, such as the lifetime covered in biographies, may encounter difficulties. Instead of such a comprehensive picture, writers focused on amusing effects. In addition, *yadam* usually has little or no judgmental comments which may interrupt the narratives.[55]

Yi's "Tale of Woman Who Caught a Tiger" and "Tale of a Filial Daughter-in-Law Living on a Mountain" share similarities with *yadam*. The former depicts a miraculous communication between a filial daughter-in-law and a tiger. She, as a widow, lives in a rural area with her parents-in-law and hears that her mother has a serious illness. She visits her parents, but the illness is a trick to bring her to them and make her remarry. She escapes and returns to her parents-in-law. On the way, she meets a tiger, and instead of threatening her, guides her to her home. Yi's story gave amusement to readers by providing detailed descriptions of the miraculous communication between her and the tiger.

> The tiger was sitting in the yard. She said, "I have finished bidding farewell and now have no regrets. You can do whatever you want." The tiger shook his head as if he would say no. "Are you taking pity on me and not eating me?" The tiger nodded his head. "Oh, generous tiger, aren't you hungry?" She went into the kitchen and took out a bowl of porridge to feed him. The tiger licked the bowl while shaking its tail and putting its ears close to its head.[56]

Yi Ok paid attention to miraculous communications between the two by showing the tiger nodded and shook its head to say yes and no, ate porridge like a dog, and appeared in her dream to ask for help. Such communication between an animal and a human are common in folktales.

[55] Such features are stronger in the works of *chungin* rather than literati. Yu Chaegŏn (1793-1880) wrote *Ihyang kyŏnmunrok*, for example, mostly dealing with diverse *chungin*.

[56] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 311.

In “The Dog and the Cat Go Seeking a Jewel” for example, a boy and a snake can communicate with each other.

> A huge snake opened his mouth wide, shooting his tongue out, and he blocked the path. “Yeah! You’re a respectable creature,” said the boy. “What are you doing? Move aside.” But the snake did not move aside. It was trouble. The boy said, “Since you won’t let me pass, is it your intention to eat me up?” The creature nodded his head. “Oh, no,” the boy thought. “Now I’m dead.” . . . . So the boy pleaded with the snake. . . . The serpent quietly slithered away.[57]

Sŏ Kyŏngch’ang’s story of the same wife character shows that the representation of the same subject can vary based on the writers’ narrative focuses. Sŏ Kyŏngch’ang highlighted how sincerely she served her blind father-in-law through the dialogue between her and her parents-in-law.

> After her husband’s funeral, she worked at others’ homes to support her father-in-law’s meals. Her chastity to her dead husband was strong and her filial piety to her father-in-law was never weakened. When she sometimes visited her parents, her mother cried and said, “I cannot bear to see you live alone.” She replied, “My husband asked me to serve my father-in-law. Because I have to serve him, I dare not die. It’s better to die rather than having other ideas.”[58]

In Sŏ’s story, while her virtuous features are praised, the miraculous scenes in which she saves a tiger and communicates with it are relatively brief and less miraculous. The tiger seemingly did not attack her because she reproached it, not because they had a mutual understanding, as Yi Ok’s story presents. In Sŏ’s story, the scene that she saved the tiger was short : “She patted the

[57] Lee, *Oral Literature of Korea*, 131-132.

[58] Yi Hyesun et al. eds., *Hanguk ŭi yŏllyŏjŏn*, 145.

tiger and took it out of the trap. The tiger immediately ran away to the mountain and disappeared."[59] Also, it was through the neighbor that she learned about the tiger that was caught. In Yi Ok's story, a tiger asked her help and she risked her life to show the ties between the two.

> She eventually entered the trap. The tiger, enraged, growled and stared because people surrounded and watched him. When it saw her entering the trap, the tiger suddenly lay on the ground and shed tears as if it could not bear sorrow. She also cried while smoothing its fur. At that time, the villagers were surprised that the tiger did not bite her. They finally saved the tiger by placing a ladder in the pit. The tiger first came out of the trap but did not leave until she came out. When she was out, the tiger rubbed its body against her clothes and licked her hands as if it were a tamed dog that follows its master. She again advised the tiger, expressed her gratitude to the villagers, and went back to her home. After that, the tiger never came down from the mountain.[60]

Yi's comment has little to do with the character's virtue; it reveals only his curiosity aroused from the miraculous event: "Ah! How can it be that a tiger does not eat everyone that he catches?"[61] This is different from the comment in Sŏ Kyŏngch'ang's story, which reaffirms what readers should learn from her.

> Alas! The one who possesses extraordinary filial piety and faithfulness cannot be found easily from the past. The fact that a tiger shows her a way and falls in a trap, her father-in-law regains his eyesight. . . . don't they show that her virtue moves Heaven, and Heaven also responds to her virtue?"[62]

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 311.

[62] Yi Hyesun et al. eds., *Hanguk ŭi yŏllyŏjŏn*, 145.

Sŏ organizes the story to show that Heaven rewards the good and clarifies that the story not only aims to provide morals in the style the Confucian scholar-officials would. Sŏ also shows that the government serves the Heaven's way by stating that the government rewarded her filial piety. Yi Ok, however, did not include a didactic injunction to make the unofficial story into a literati biography.

> I said this. I was told that "The tiger to the west of a city wall snatched a beautiful widow. Her skirt and ribbons were hung on a fence and blood covers the back of her home. Everyone took pity on her. After that, however, a man saw her in an inn." Was this because the tiger did not eat her? Ah! How can it be possible that a tiger does not eat everyone that he catches?[63]

This comment did not deal with the tiger or the woman, and the moral message was faint. If Yi stated that the tiger was moved by her filial piety and did not eat her, the story can be understood as a didactic biography as Sŏ's. What readers see is Yi's curiosity about the veracity of the event that a tiger did not kill a woman. Yi's stories show that not only the subjects presented that made the writer unique and irreplaceable but also the representations themselves characterize them.[64] Yi Ok's works are close to *yadam* of the same subject in *Ch'ŏnggu yadam* and *Tongya hwijip* which contain only anecdotes without judgmental comments of compilers.[65]

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[63] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 311.

[64] Sing-Chen Lydia Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), 251.

[65] Stories of the same subjects are "Ch'oe's Chastity Moves a Tiger" 守貞節崔孝婦感虎 in *Ch'ŏnggu yadam,* vol.6 and "Saving a Tiger as a Repayment" 放虎占穴相酬惠 in *Tongya hwijip,* vol. 15. Chŏng Inhyŏk. "Yŏngnam hyo yŏlbu chŏn kwa hyŏp hyobujŏn ŭi pigyŏ yŏngu" (Comparative research on the "Tale of Faithful and Filial Daughter-in-law" and the "Tale of Filial Daughter-in-law in a Rural Area"), *Kihohak yŏngu* 4 (1998): 197-230.

The narrative focus of Yi Ok's stories and their similarities with *yadam* is in the "Tale of a Woman Who Caught a Tiger" as well. It depicts a brave woman who catches a tiger by herself. When the tiger appears in her home and attempts to eat her and her newborn, she throws puppies to the tiger. When the tiger is not satisfied with two puppies, she throws a heated stone to it.

> She wrapped a rock in a brazier with old cotton and threw it to the tiger. Guessing that it was a puppy, the tiger gulped it down without chewing. He did not feel heat until the rock passed his throat, but soon after, he rushed about in frenzy as if a bear had overturned a measure[66] and a lion had rolled a ball. He raged about roaring and finally died.[67]

Such a description does not help to characterize her as virtuous. Rather, readers feel interest in her wits in avoiding an imminent danger. Additionally, as in *yadam*, evidence for historical veracity such as geographic location and her family background is not given. Yi's two stories begin with "A charcoal-maker lived at the foot of a mountain fortress wall of Chŏngŭp area" and "There once was a woman who lived on a mountain." Thus, any isolated place where people live suits for the purpose of the story.

Dealing with lower class people does not indicate that Yi Ok valued them the same or more as he did aristocrats. Nor does it mean that Yi possessed advanced or modern ideas toward the social system or have egalitarian beliefs. Yi may not be a revolutionary writer who resisted Neo-Confucianism and proposed an alternative ideology. Still, Yi's works are distinguished from stories by officials and Northern Learning Scholars who support the existing social order by showing exemplary characters. Different from those, many characters in Yi Ok's writings have

[66] *mal*: a measure containing 18 liters

[67] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 313.

little interest in finding their identity in social conformity. Although Yi's lower class characters are not ideologically pioneers, the characters reflect that Yi's value judgment on people's lives no longer solely depends on Confucian norm. In addition, Yi's representation of the characters demonstrates that Yi explores spontaneous and free writing styles in the otherwise formal literary genre of biography and devoted to the late Chosŏn fiction development with vibrant characters and lively colloquial words.

3. Stories of Vulnerable Literati

While Yi Ok witnessed the importance of secular desires from lower class people, he found incompetence of the government and despair and weakness in the lives of literati. Yi Ok's portraits of the literati include the "Tale of Yu Kwangŏk" 柳光億傳, "Tale of Student Sim" 沈生傳, and "Tale of Righteous Gentlemen, Ch'a and Ch'oe" 車崔二義士傳. Yi's portraits of the literati differed greatly from his contemporaries, because while he depicted the literati with recognizable literary or military talents, but they lived as criminals or otherwise unhappy lives because of poverty, literati obligations, and irresponsibility. Readers of these stories will consider literati's weakness within the closed literati society and the ruling ideology's failure in cultivating them. Yi Ok's writings which presented a morally unhealthy and weak ruling class demonstrate a stark contrast to the writings that the king imposed through his policy on literature.

The literati of Chosŏn were expected to be self-cultivated and enlighten people through their moral examples. Their sole duty was to study Confucian classics and cultivate their minds according to Confucian morality. Their sole ambition was holding public offices.[1] Literati biographers traditionally chose subjects from the ruling class to show their moral supremacy over the lower classes and legitimize their privileges. Kim Sŏngil (1538-1593)'s biography of Yi Hwang (1501-1570) focuses on his sincerity as a Neo-Confucian scholar and high integrity as an official, and presents an exemplary literati character. During periods of foreign invasions or political disorder, biography was a tool to restore social order. The Chosŏn government

[1] Eckert, Carter J., et al. *Korea Old and New: A History*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 108.

published stories of loyal subjects who fought against foreign armies and filial sons who offered their flesh and blood to save their parents.[2]

Late Chosŏn literature witnessed changes in the representation of the literati as the number of the educated without political and economic basis increased.[3] Although King Chŏngjo widened the door of officialdom by appointing secondary sons, the main beneficiaries are from politically powerful families.

> In late Chosŏn, a great many individual born into *yangban* lineages were unable to maintain their claims to that status. The most numerous such group, no doubt, were those who have been called "fallen" *yangban*. These may be defined as those with impeccable *yangban* lineage antecedents but whose claim to the privileges of the *yangban* status had eroded.[4]

Many politically fallen *yangban* suffered from economic hardships and made their living as teachers of private village schools, geomancers, or tenant farmers which were not better than lives of poor commoners. Unofficial histories show the poor *yangban*'s pursuit of material gain and hypocritical behavior forsaking their dignity. They accumulated wealth by trading and

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[2] *Tongguk sinsok samgang haengsil do* 東國新續三綱行實圖 (The Illustrated Guide to the Three Relations, Newly Supplemented) was published in 1617 to promote Confucian morals to the public with the stories of loyal subjects who fought against Japanese invasions. The purpose of educating people in biographies with didactic themes is seen in the works about faithful women. The government and literati promoted female chastity by writing biographies of widows who committed suicide. While the practice of widow suicide was widely spreading, backlash occurred. The women's parents-in-law and young children were abandoned. Writers then wrote biographies for the women who not only refused to remarry, but postponed their suicide until their parents-in-law had one to rely on or their babies did not drink breast milk.

[3] The corruption and disorder in the civil service examination is revealed in many documents. Pak Chiwŏn wrote a letter of congratulation to a successful candidate in his neighborhood saying that "I celebrate that you do not need to go into the examination hall in disorder again, which is enough to make nine people out of ten die out." An Taehŭi, *Sŏnbidapke sanŭnbŏp* (The Art of Living as Confucian Scholars) (P'urŭn yŏksa, 2007), 296. "The sole duty of the yangban was to devote themselves exclusive to the study and self-cultivation that Confucian doctrine holds must underlie the governing of others, and their sole profession was the holding of public office." Eckert et al, *Korea: Old and New*, 181.

[4] Eckert et al., *Korea: Old and New*, 181.

saving while avoiding meeting friends, or made their living by begging for food or money from their relatives or former servants.

However, biographies dealing with those who overcame difficulties with strong self-discipline were continuously produced. King Chŏngjo recommended his officials to write biographies about those who devoted themselves to the country's prosperity and those who received special favors from the government. Such works show that society is well-governed with a morally healthy ruling class and revealed the king's generosity and humanness. Examples include Ch'ae Chegong's "Tale of Loyal General Pak Yŏngsŏ,"[5] that depicted Pak Yŏngsŏ (d. 1624) who fought against Yi Kwal (1587-1624), and Yi Tŏngmu's "Tale of Husband Kim and Wife Shin," 金申夫婦傳 that concerns the government's help in the marriage of a poor male and an upper class female. Some writers including Yi Ok, however, chose subjects from different perspectives and judgments. This study focuses on Yi Ok's stories of the student Yu who made a living by selling his answers for the civil service examinations, and the student Sim who had a secret affair with a *chungin* (middle people) woman.[6] This study demonstrates how Yi Ok's writings differed from the official mode of writing, and why the king believed that Yi's writings could not serve social cohesion and cultural continuity as his policy of literature intended.[7]

The "Tale of Yu Kwangŏk" deals with a talented but poor and politically-fallen *yangban* who made a living by selling his civil service examination answers to rich but academically deficient candidates.

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[5] Ch'ae Chegong, "Tale of Loyal General Pak Yŏngsŏ" 忠壯公朴永緖傳, *Pŏnam chip* (Collected Works of Ch'ae Chegong), vol. 55, Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics. Available from http://db.itkc.or.kr.

[6] The examination of the "Righteous Gentlemen, Ch'a and Ch'oe" is in the section of "Stories of Virtuous People."

[7] Peter Lee, *A History of Korean Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 129.

> Yu Kwangŏk was from Hapch'ŏn, Yŏngnam. He was widely known in the southern area for his answers for the civil service examinations. However, he was poor and his family was meager. In rural areas, many literati made a living by selling their civil service examination answers, as Yu did.[8]

Given that the traditional function of biography reproaches anti-social behavior, Yu should be reproached by Yi. Yi Ok, however, views Yu with sympathy by highlighting the corrupt civil service examination system that drove Yu to live such an unprincipled life. The corruption includes practices of bargaining for answers, proctoring officials' negligence, and ineffective examinations which failed to select good candidates. Historical documents show that such corruption was a widespread social problem:[9] some candidates bribed examination committee members, others bought answers from poor writers, and some asked examination inspectors to overlook cheating. *Yŏllyŏsil kisul* (Narratives of Yi Kŭngik)[10] has a record about the official Yi Ich'ŏm (1560–1623), who leaked the examination questions to pass students of his political party and strengthen his party's status at court:

> In advance of a civil service examination, Yi Ich'ŏm secretly let his party members decide the examination topic and write answers in advance. This was intended to increase his political supporters. Later at the examination site, Yi issued the topic. However, the topic was known to others as well because many prepared answers in advance. During the preliminary examination in the *muo* year, some students said that today's examination topic would be this. Indeed, they were right. Then, other students clamored three times to change the topic. They said that students who did not prepare the answers in advance could not take the examination well. They disrupted the examination site and left. The examination committee members were frightened. Pointing at the sun,

[8] Yi Ok, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok Chŏnjip* (Collection of Yi Ok's Works in Translation), vol 2, Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏngu hoe tr., (Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2009), 350.

[9] An Taehŭi, *Sŏnbidapke sanŭnbŏp*, 296.

[10] *Yŏllyŏsil kisul* (Narratives of Yi Kŭngik) by Yi Kŭngik (1736-1806) is a description of major events in the history of Chosŏn through the reign of Sukchong (1674-1720), drawn from hundreds of individual accounts. Eckert, et al. *Korean Old and New,* 168.

> they promised the students, "If you return and take the examination, we will grade the answers fairly." However, the students were not satisfied with the promise.[11]

Yi Ik (1681–1763) and Pak Chiwŏn also criticized the prevalent illegal practices: "candidates of rich and powerful families were accompanied by several skillful writers and calligraphers who took the examinations for them. However, proctoring officials took such illegal activities for granted. Thus, the number of those accompanying candidates outnumbered that of candidates."[12] Yi Ok also revealed the inattention and carelessness of examination committees who took bribes and carelessly graded the answers. They also, for fun, made bets to find Yu's answers among many answers that Yu wrote for the rich candidates, which eventually caused Yu's indictment and suicide. Yi Ok did not find the reason for Yu's misconduct in his evil personality, but Yi details Yu's desperate economic difficulty: Yu borrowed a large amount of grain from a local office, and his debt needed to be paid off soon. His family was politically insignificant, and he had no one to recommend him for a political career. His poverty and cold treatment from the local office were a strong contrast with large profits and warm treatment from the rich who hired him.

> Yu entered a household decorated with several red gates. Several dozen luxurious buildings were in the household. The residence for Yu was in the inner chamber of the house. Excellent meals were served five times a day. The master of the house visited him three times and paid respect to him like a son serving his parents. Finally, Yu took a civil service examination instead of the son of the rich master. Indeed, the son passed the examination and acquired the literary licentiate degree. Yu was sent home with a horse

[11] Yi Kŭngik, *Yŏllyŏsil kisul* 燃藜室記述 (Narratives of Yi Kŭngik) (Minjok munhwa ch'ujin hoe, 1977), 21:678-679.

[12] Han Ugŭn, *Chosŏn hugi saheŏ wa sasang* (Society and Thoughts of Late Chosŏn) (Ŭlchi munhwa sa, 1981), 180-182.

> and a servant. When he returned home, a servant carried twenty thousand *yang* and his grain-loan from a local office was already paid off.[13]

The kindness of the rich came from Yu's writing skills and had nothing to do with a respect for Yu's literary talents. Less proficient literati, including aged calligraphers and writers, desperately waited outside to be hired by the rich. Yu's good writing was regarded as a mere technique, as lower-class people's butchery or manufacturing skills, rather than the outcome of his knowledge and self-cultivation. For a poor *yangban* whose living depended on the rich, making more money from a bargain mattered the most while morality suffered. It can be assumed that social recognition for the *yangban* without political or economic basis was low. Such corruption produced Yu Kwangŏk, who relied on the corruption of the examination system but felt little shame or guilt. Yi's description reflects his regard for Yu as a representative of politically fallen literati.

While Yu's livelihood exposes the fallen literati's social vulnerability, having no alternative for living, Yu's suicide shows his weakness—failing to take responsibility for what he had done.

> The day before the magistrate arrested and sent Yu to the capital for trial, he was very afraid. He thought he would be executed anyway because he had violated the examination law. He thought that avoiding a trial in advance would be better than being arrested. He drank a lot of wine with his relatives and drowned himself in a river at night.[14]

[13] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 351.

[14] Ibid., 253.

In a moment of crisis, he chose suicide rather than facing trials or fleeing to save his life. Such weak character is also described in the "Tale of a Righteous Female Entertainer," that concerns a female entertainer and a literatus. The literatus was involved in political struggles and was exiled to the remotest island. Without hope to return to the capital, he spent his time and energy in drinking and sexual indulgence to cause an early death. As soon as he was expelled from his usual privileges, he quickly collapsed without any attempt to overcome difficulties with self-discipline.[15] The life of the literati was different from those who regarded adversity as a test of true worth in which they overcome adversity with strong self-discipline in order to achieve spiritual progress.[16] Yi's representation of these vulnerable literati characters shows a good contrast with biographies on literati by other writers. Yi Kwangjŏng (1674-1756)'s "Story of Kim Sunbu" concerns a literatus who was involved in a political struggle because of his kinsman's false accusations. He was sent into exile and suffered from several trials, poverty, and illness. Kim, however, refused to counter the kinsman by saying that he would not trouble the senior official and endured all difficulties without complaint. As a sign of his endurance, Kim chose his pen name as "deaf and dumb" 聾啞 and lived a reclusive life. Yi Kwangjŏng, through Kim Sunbu, criticized social injustice and an unreasonable legal system that made innocent Kim into a criminal. Still, unlike Yi Ok, Yi Kwangjŏng chose a character who did not pursue personal

[15] Peter H. Lee shows the exemplary attitudes of Confucian literati who faced difficulties, as revealed in Chŏng Ch'ŏl's (1536–1593) and Yun Sŏndo's (1587–1671) writing. "In a culture where only the king could make or unmake the courtier, lying low in the wilderness while awaiting a pardon or summons represented a life of anguish. Chŏng Ch'ŏl and Yun Sŏndo, however, made use of adversity as a trial of spirit. Poems by Chŏng Ch'ŏl on the theme of constancy were praised by his contemporaries as perfect examples of patience and fortitude. They find in them a poet speaking with such individual style and such strength of spirit and dignity that his virtue is never overcome by ill fortune." Lee, *A History of Korean Literature*, 236.

[16] Peter H. Lee, trans., *Pine River and Lone Peak: An Anthology of Three Chosŏn Dynasty Poets* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 6.

profit. Yi Ok expanded his subject choice by including those who deviated from Confucian literati principles and showed sympathetic view towards them. This signifies the unconventionality of Yi Ok's writings and need to approach Yi's works differently from conventional biography works.

The Northern Learning School scholar Pak Chiwŏn pointed out incompetent literati as a social problem in his tales. In the "Tale of Student Hŏ," for example, Pak presents a literatus whose poverty drove him to stop studying Confucian classics and find an alternative way of life. When Hŏ's wife complained about his inability to make a living, Hŏ made a great fortune with his commercial skills, which he already had but had not put into practice because of his literati dignity. Hŏ borrowed seed money from a rich merchant, named Pyŏn, and earned a large amount by monopolizing daily necessities. Hŏ, however, fulfilled the obligation of the ruling class. With the money he earned, he helped thieves who had been farmers but turned to robbery out of poverty by giving them land and women to marry. Though Hŏ accumulated his wealth by monopolization, he was doubtless a member of the literati. He cared about public affairs and spent all his money to save the poor. Later, he paid back the seed money and returned to his poor home without a penny. In portraying a similar subject, Yi Ok and Pak Chiwŏn cover a great distance. Hŏ's priority was in correcting social problems for national prosperity while keeping his moral purity: "it's people like you only who became happy with money. How could money, however much, possibly enrich my Confucian Way?" Pak's work is in accord with King Chŏngjo's assertion that ruling class members should keep their dignity under any circumstances. Yu Kwangŏk in Yi Ok's story, however, showed little consideration for public morality. Instead, the story highlights why the politically-isolated literati came to live in a socially undesirable

manner. The literati, from Yi Ok's view, had no talent for business or connections to generous supporters such as the rich Pyŏn, who could loan them great seed money for free. This difference in literati subjects between Pak and Yi signifies the different social views of the two: Pak regarded that a righteous individual, even if he lacks economic or political power, can save the society or make the society better, at least. On the contrary, Yi reveals that an individual without political or economic support is merely an unimportant component of a society which would be replaced easily when broken. The individual cannot make an attempt to resist existing social institutions, which would bring the collapse of the individual.

Yi's choice of literati subjects is different from conventional biographers. The biographers chose the literati who kept their personal purity intact by living reclusive lives in the midst of factional struggles; as Confucius said, a literatus should seclude himself when the time is not good.[17] Chang Chiyŏn's (1865-1921) "Biography of Kim Ŏm"[18] concerns a poor literatus who made living by farming. Kim studied Confucian classics in the hope to be an official and devoted himself to establish the ideal Confucian society. However, when he visited Seoul to take the examination, he witnessed the cruelty of factional struggles and the injustice of the examination system that blocked politically insignificant literati like him from officialdom.

> When Student Kim Ŏm visited Seoul, factional struggles reached their peak at court and one faction lost. People from the victorious faction acquired official positions, showed their gratitude to the king, and greeted visitors who packed their gates. Those of the

[17] "The Master said to Yen Yuen, "When called to office, undertake its duties; when not so called, lie retired;—it is only I and you who have attained this." Arthur Waley trans., *The Analects of Confucius.* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949), 18. "子謂安淵曰 用之則行 舍之則藏 惟我與爾有是夫"

[18] "Tale of Kim Ŏm" was written by Chang Chiyŏn (1864-1921). It is included in *Ilsa yusa* 逸士遺事 (Stories of Forgotten People) which contains the biographies of literati of humble origin.

> defeated faction were expelled from the court, exiled, or forced to leave for remote islands in a hurry. Their leaving was urged fiercely and the streets were filled with the unending sounds of their wailing and lamentation. One particularly dreadful scene was the condemned people's clothes being stripped off and their heads were covered with them. Wearing cangues, they were taken to the State Tribunal 義禁府. . . . Kim was startled and asked the reason from the inn keeper. He said, "Two factions fought for power. Their trivial struggles developed into big crimes and reached this degree. The beginning of the struggle was not about the matter of loyal subjects or traitors. Neither was it the matter of people's being good or bad. It was only because the same kinds of people gathered and rejected others. When one faction acquired power, it avenged themselves on others. Literati who knew Confucian classics and commoners who sought profits are all engaged in it and were shaken by this struggle and cannot do their jobs." After hearing this, Kim lamented and said, "If I can acquire a position, then I will report the situation to the king to the best of my ability and manage to stop the factional struggles." The innkeeper sneered at him and said, "You are really foolish. You are from a humble family. Even if you pass the examinations, your position will be different from politically powerful families. At the beginning, you may get a position at *sabu haktang,*[19] but you cannot gain a high and powerful position no matter how much time you spend. Though you pass the examinations, how can you possibly obtain a high position and say righteous words?" Kim replied, "You're right." He packed up and returned home.[20]

The dialogue between Kim and the innkeeper illuminates that his goal of being a competent official could not be attained in the current political situation. Kim finally gave up on the examinations and went back to his hometown. Similarly, the "Story of Student Hŏ" 許生傳 by O Toil (1645-1703) concerns Student Hŏ, who felt sick at the literati purges and gave up his political ambitions.

> When a literati purge occurred, student Hŏ came to hate the world and planned to live in isolation. He secretly visited his close friend and talked about the purge. He cried and asked his friend, "Morals and society have already collapsed. How can a literatus live in such a world? I have decided to hide myself from this world."[21]

[19] *Sabu haktang* 四部學堂 indicates four public schools for students who prepared for the civil service examinations.

[20] Kim Yŏngil ed., Hanguk kiin yŏlchŏn (Biographies of Extraordinary Korean People) (Uryu munhwasa, 1972); Chang Chiyŏn, *Ilsa yusa* 逸士遺事 (Stories of Forgotten People) (T'aehaksa, 1982)

[21] Sin Haejin, *Chosŏnjo chŏngye sosŏl* (Biographical Fiction of Chosŏn) (Wŏrin, 2003), 115.

Ŏ Toil values Hŏ's decision by saying his integrity is respectable compared to those involved in dirty politics and tainted themselves shamelessly.[22] The discouraged literati characters express the writer's political criticism, which is presented only through characters who maintained their decency. From Ŏ Toil's and Chang Chiyŏn's perspectives, Yu Kwangŏk is enough to be blamed as one who sought personal interests and tainted himself. Yi Ok's criticism, however, addresses the buyer rather than the seller Yu. According to Yi, such a mean bargain originates from the need, the rich's misconduct: "Because of buyers' need, sellers come to appear. . . . According to law, the same weight of punishment should apply to both the giver and receiver."[23] Compared to Ŏ and Chang, Yi Ok blamed corrupted society more severely while minimizing the responsibility of an individual. Yi's sympathetic views toward the criminal contradict the norms of Confucian literati.

Another interesting feature of the literati in Yi's work is irresponsibility in love. Chosŏn *yangban* pursued marriage within their class to protect their privileges. When marriage is a social custom preserving the hereditary nature of *yangban* status,[24] those who reject the custom will lose the privileges and social protection. The example is the "Tale of Student Sim," a romantic story about Student Sim and a woman from the *chungin* class. When the student saw a young and beautiful girl on the street, he immediately followed her and secretly waited near her room. The

[22] Ibid., 119-120.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Eckert et al, *Korea: Old and New*, 109.

woman was the daughter of a rich petty official working in the Ministry of Taxation.[25] To win her love, Sim waited patiently for a month. However, when she finally accepted him, he showed a passive and irresponsible attitude in maintaining the relationship.

> Because her family was rich, the lady made excellent clothes for him. However, he could not wear them for fear of arousing his family's suspicion. With all of Sim's precautions, however, his family could not help but develop suspicions about his leaving and sleeping away for a long period of time. Thus, he was ordered to go to a Buddhist monastery on a mountain and study there. Although he did not like the command, under pressure from his family and friends, he could not avoid moving to Mount Pukhan Fortress with his books.[26]

Sim refused to wear clothes or eat food that she made, lest their relationship be known to his parents. When his parents forced him to study at a Buddhist temple and ended the secret liaison, he did not resist. Sim was described as a coward who left her without suggesting future meetings. The letter of the woman demonstrates that Sim's submissive attitude to the custom of avoiding marriage between different social classes made their love unfulfilled and the beloved die lonely.

> I was deceived by another [Sim] and did not see a single old female servant of yours. I made disgraceful choices while living, and will become a wandering ghost who has nowhere to go after death. This is my second regret. Among the wife's duties to her husband, nothing is greater than preparing food to serve and clothes to wear. It has not been a short time since I met you. I have made a small number of clothes for you. However, I could not let you eat even a single bowl of rice in my home or wear a single suit of clothes I have made for you, and I have served you only in bed." After reading

[25] Kyungmoon Hwang deals with the rise of the secondary status group in the mid-Chosŏn era in *A History of Korea*. "Many of the rich but sub-aristocratic members of society who could not hope to enter high office or marriage relations with the ruling aristocracy—i.e., those belonging to the secondary status groups—turned to monetary influence-peddling to gain the prestige that otherwise was denied them." Hwang Kyŏngmoon, *A History of Korea* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 96.

[26] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2:354.

> her letter, Sim burst into tears and cried in spite of himself. Although he cried sorrowfully, what was the use?[27]

The love which took her life and his promising future can be touching, but his failure to resist sexual desire or take responsibility for what he had done distinguishes Sim from disciplined Confucian scholars.

This story has attracted contemporary scholars' interest in its fictional characters and romantic theme. Yi Ok's story of Student Sim can be understood as a creative work inspired by the Chinese stories. Yi Kawŏn[28] introduced the work as literati fiction and later scholars including Im Hyŏngt'aek supported the idea, partially based on Yi Ok's writing motivation that was revealed at the end of the story. Yi reveals that he wrote this story because he wanted it to be a supplementary story in the *History of Romances* 情史,[29] a collection of Chinese love stories compiled in the early seventeenth century by Feng Menglong (1574-1646). During the eighteenth century, Korean envoys to Qing China bought literary collections including scholar-beauty romances such as *Pingshan lengyan* 平山冷燕 and "Story of Huo Xiaoyu" 霍小玉傳.[30] Chosŏn literati read Chinese popular fiction and prose-vignettes and demonstrated their

[27] Ibid., 361.

[28] Yi Kawŏn ed., *Yijo hanmun soŏl sŏn* (Selected Works of Chosŏn Fiction in Literary Chinese) (Posŏng munhwa sa, 1978)

[29] *Qingshi* 情史 is a collection of Chinese love stories compiled in the early seventh century by Feng Menglong 1574-1646).

[30] The story deals with the romance between Student Yi and female entertainer Huo. Huo Xiaoyu 霍小玉 is indicated as a daughter of a consort of King Huo. When the king lost power, she was degraded to a female entertainer. Student Li loved her, but betrayed her later to have a wife from aristocrats. Huo committed suicide, saying that she would seek revenge for his betrayal as a ghost. Yi Sanggu, "Hanjung chŏngi soŏl ŭi kwangye yangsang mit kŭ tŭkching" (Relation between Korean and Chinese Tales of Wonders and Their Features), *Kojŏnmunhak yŏngu* 21 (2002): 357-358.

favorable view toward the theme of love and vivid expressions to diversify literary themes and expressions in Korean narratives.

After the king's policy was issued, however, favorable comments on the Chinese works largely disappeared. Yi Ok is one of a few writers who openly revealed their reception of Chinese popular fiction and prose-vignettes, as well as how the Chinese works influenced their own writings. Yi values the Chinese works, including *Diverse Records from the Wooden Bridge* 板橋雜記,[31] *Story of Yingying*, *Plum in a Golden Vase* 金甁梅, and *Carnal Prayer Mat* 肉蒲團, saying that their vivid and beautiful expressions and romantic stories are fascinating. Yi's story of Sim demonstrates that Chosŏn writers were inspired by Chinese works and created similar stories with Korean characters and settings.

The story of Student Sim begins with the male character's handsome appearance and literary talents and his first encounter with a woman, the stereotypical beginning of the scholar-beauty romance.

> Student Sim was a literatus in Seoul, handsome and full of elegance. On his way home, he saw a royal procession on Unjong Street. He saw a robust female servant crossing the street while carrying a woman on her back. The woman was covered with a purple kerchief. A young servant followed them holding a pair of red silk shoes in her hands. After seeing the size of her body, Sim thought that she was not a child. He followed them closely. He did not take his eyes off the woman under the cover and sometimes passed them by with only a close shave. When they reached the Sogwangtong Bridge, suddenly a whirlwind blew and took off half of the purple wrapper. It was indeed a lady. She had peach-colored cheeks and willow-shaped eyebrows, wore a green upper blouse and a

[31] It was written by Yu Huai 余懷 (1616–1696) and published in 1654. It deals with stories of female entertainers and gentlemen in brothels. "Yu Huai, who lived in the dynastic transition, records "weeds and brambles filled one's eyes; the brothel has been reduced to ashes and the beauties to dust." . . . .Yu Huai created melancholic narratives of the Nanjing pleasure quarter in the last years of the dynasty and included firsthand experiences, poetry, and biographical information of about thirty courtesans. Yu Huai emblematized the courtesan and the pleasure quarter with the loyalist's feelings of nostalgia for the past dynasty." Lin Foxhall and Gabriele Neher ed. *Gender and the City before Modernity* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.), 145.

> crimson skirt, and wore beautiful makeup with rouge and powder. Even a glimpse of her was enough for Sim to recognize her extraordinary beauty. The lady in the cover, also, had noticed that a handsome young man with blue clothes and a straw hat was following her closely on her right or left side. She was peeping at him through the narrow opening of the cover. When the cover was blown off, four willow-like eyes and star-like pupils met. Surprised and embarrassed, she hid herself under the cover and went away.[32]

The scenes of their first encounter and his waiting for her take half of the story's length. The scenes may be summarized into a few sentences: Student Sim saw a maidservant carrying someone who wore a loose kerchief. When he had a chance to peep under it, it was indeed a beautiful young girl. Yi, however, extended this brief encounter by depicting a sudden wind, her eye shape, her clothes and makeup, and her hidden gaze at him under the kerchief, which aroused readers' curiosity in what would happen next.

Considering that Confucian scholars criticized scholar-beauty romances as lewd narratives, Yi paid attention to representing women's character as an untainted and worthy partner of the student, though she allowed a young man to her inner chamber at night. When she let Student Sim into her room, she brought her parents to the room. Her words to her parents, which take a third of the story, are about her innocence and concern for the young man: "I have not walked outside the gate [until the day of meeting Student Sim]. He has waiting for me outside and must become sick in a few days, and if he is ill, he cannot recover. Then isn't it my fault, even though I did not intend it? If I do not follow his will, then Heaven will hate me and will not bless me," and "This is all Heaven's will, no more words are necessary."[33]

Her letter to Student Sim before her impending death also demonstrates Yi's efforts to make their love romantic, not lewd. Poems and letters are inserted for the purpose. For

[32] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 360.

[33] Ibid., 2: 358-359.

example, the poems of Student Yi and the lady in the "Student Yi Peers Over the Wall" show that the characters belong in the romance and their loves are distinguished from those of humble commoners. There were three topics in her letters to Sim: her sadness for her lonely parents after her death; unfulfilled desire to be recognized as his legitimate wife from his family; and unfulfilled desire to serve him as a legitimate wife. Her three regrets related to the women's virtue are not to be blamed. She is a modest woman, no different from upper class women, who regarded her own sorrow from separation as a trivial matter unworthy of depiction.

Yi's judgmental comment reflects his struggles between his literary taste and the literati's obligation of writing:

> In appraisal I say: I studied at a village school when I was twelve years old and enjoyed hearing stories every day with my schoolmates. One day, my teacher told us Sim's story in detail and said, "Student Sim was my schoolmate. I witnessed him when he received the letter and wailed. I heard his story and have never forgotten it." He added, "I do not suggest that you follow the gallant young gentleman. If a person asserts his strong will in an affair, then he can move even a lady in her boudoir, and, writings and the civil service examinations are nothing to speak of." We thought the story was new at that time. I later read the *History of Romances* by Feng Menglong and found many similar stories. I add this story and make it a supplement to the *History*.[34]

Though the comment delivers a didactic message, it is not in accord with the content. Chan's argument of didacticism in Chinese fiction may be applicable to understand the message:

> The vernacular novel [*sic*], which flourished in the late imperial period and was considered to contain heterodox material that presented a threat to orthodox ethical values, often clothed itself in didactic garb to avoid censure. Much of the didacticism in the novels [*sic*] was no more than a shield: their authors were paying only lip service to

[34] Ibid., 361.

> conventional morality. But the fact that they felt constrained to do so shows the hold that the tradition of morality-in-literature had on men of letters.[35]

It can be understood that Yi did not feel comfortable in deviating from the literati writing conventions while pursuing his own amusement. The inappropriate comments reflect the "struggles between indulgence and abandon and a moral imperative to promote temperance and self-restraint as a literati writer."[36] Although vulgar or harmful subjects were generally considered unworthy, biography writers were able to portray their subjects maintaining a narrative distance from the events they described. The objective descriptions of their subjects could offer lessons to readers. Likewise, fictional aspects were accepted when the authors could offer lessons or stimulate the reader's interest in the classics and history. The safe and objective distance that biography created enabled literati to hide behind the façade of objectivity when they described traditionally irreverent or overlooked aspects of reality.

Late Chosŏn unofficial histories deal with love between the literati and lower-class women. Interestingly, the literati are often depicted as self-centered people. "Yijŏng" 離情 (Separating Love) in the *P'asurok* 罷睡錄 (Records of Breaking Drowsiness) and "Pangmaeng" 芳盟 (Swear like a Flower) in the *Chŏnggu yadam* 靑邱野談 (Unofficial Tales from the Green Hills) concern love between aristocratic males and women from the middle people class. The male characters are from poor and politically insignificant families and distressed about

[35] Leo Tak-hung Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 156.

[36] Mcmahon Keith argues about the morality in Chinese fiction written in the seventeenth century. "Stories about illicit romance, for example, describe lurid scenes but end with the lovers punished and morally condemned. This kind of reversal or contradiction is the sign of an underlying struggle between indulgence and abandon and a moral imperative to promote temperance and self-restraint." Keith Mcmahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 9.

expectations to achieve official success and honor their family. They had secret affairs with beautiful lower class women, but betrayed them when they had the chance to marry better partners, women from rich or politically-influential families. The representation of selfish literati characters is presented in late Chosŏn works of romance fiction.[37] The "Story of Student Chŏng," 丁生傳 by Kim Ki (1722-1794), for example, depicts Student Chŏng who fell in love with a lady from a rich *chungin* family. Chŏng promised marriage to her to earn her affection. However, when she was pregnant and asked Chŏng to run away together, he was afraid of the result and disappeared by following his relatives.

> Chŏng was by nature indecisive and weak. He thought of his lonely status, having no wealth, servants, and not getting married until late. It was stressful. He thought that if he married a woman without his aunt's permission, she would reproach him severely because it would hinder his future marriage.[38]

Later, he married a daughter of an aristocrat and obtained economic and political basis from his parents-in-law. While Chŏng achieved literary fame and enjoyed his life with a new wife, the lady gave birth to a baby boy and committed suicide. At first, he decided to take care of her baby son, but when a nanny came to him with the baby, he abandoned him and disappeared in the crowd:

[37] Im Hyŏngt'aek, "Chŏngi sosŏl ŭi yŏnae wa Wi Kyŏngch'ŏn chŏn" (Theme of Romance in Tales of Wonder and the *Story of Wi Kyŏngch'ŏn*), *Tongyanghak* 21 (1992): 11; Yi Sanggu, "Hanjung chŏngi soŏl ŭi kwangye yangsang mit kŭ tŭkching," 358.

[38] Kwŏn Togyŏng, *Chosŏn hugi chŏngi sosŏlsa ŭi chŏnp'yŏn kwa saeroun sigak* (New Perspective and Changes in the History of Tales of Wonder in Late Chosŏn) (Pogosa, 2004), 148; Ch'a Yongju, *Hanguk hanmun sosŏlsa* (History of Korean Fiction in Literary Chinese) (Asea munhwa sa, 1992)

> As soon as walking a few steps away, he changed his mind. He thought, "I had lived a poor life and barely had a wife and a child now. My life is now beginning. Still, this baby would not be accepted because my wife is narrow-minded. I cannot manage domestic affairs at all. How could my wife possibly accept the baby with pleasure?" Fear and suspicion heavily pressed his mind, and his affection for the child was already gone. He lost himself in the crowd and wanted to be apart from them. He ran to his home as fast as he could by taking shortcuts so they could not follow.[39]

Chŏng's life of comfort and fame is earned by his marriage with the daughter of an influential official. The students are different from the male characters in early Chosŏn stories who managed a balance between private and official lives well. In the *Dream of Nine Clouds*, for example, the male character Xingzhen's romance and official success harmonize and do not conflict. The harmony of his nine wives despite their disparity of social status demonstrates Xingzhen's capability. Incompetent characters such as Students Sim and Chŏng are largely found in the late Chosŏn works while relatively few in the early works of fiction. Yi Ok's stories are examples of how the literati manipulated the genre of biography and created works of fiction.

[39] Kwŏn, *Chosŏn hugi chŏngi sosŏlsa ŭi chŏnpyŏn kwa saeroun sigak*, 177.

4. Stories of Exemplary Subjects

While Yi Ok's stories of the supernatural and lower class characters are unique in terms of Yi's choice of unconventional subjects, his stories on exemplary people who fulfilled Confucian virtues, the stereotypical subjects of biographies, are unique in terms of the representation of subjects. This section analyzes Yi's biographies of exemplary people to show that he uses the biography genre to offer new devices that ran counter to the contemporary conventions of biography.[1]

Written to encourage social virtues by depicting exemplary people, biographies were traditionally supplements to historical records. Liu Zhiji (661–721), the Chinese historian and compiler of *Shitong* 史通 (Historical Perspectives), explained the principles of historical biography: "Biography transfers the ideas of the classics that one has received to posterity. Biography perpetuates that which is to be perpetuated and known to future generations."[2] *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (Historical Record of The Three Kingdoms, 1146), the oldest extant official history of Korea, for example, contains biographies of fifty-eight characters. The writer Kim Pusik (1071-1151), as a Confucian scholar of Koryŏ, wrote about Kim Yusin (595-673) focusing on his loyalty to the king and how he played a central role in the unification of the Three Kingdoms. In Chosŏn, where Neo-Confucianism was the national ideology, the government and Confucian literati produced biographies to encourage ethical values represented by the Three Bonds and Five Relations. People who practiced humaneness, loyalty, chastity,

[1] The late Chosŏn writers showed increased attention on the stylization of place and time of the narrative for effective characterization. Hŏ Kyŏngjin, *P'yŏngmin yŏlchŏn* (Biographies of the Commoners) (Ungjin buk, 2002), 508.

[2] Lu, Shledon Hsiao-peng, *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 97.

faithfulness, and filial piety were main subjects. In Yi Ok's biographies, he stayed true to the genre by writing about righteous and loyal men, faithful women, and a filial daughter in the "Tale of Righteous Gentlemen, Ch'a and Ch'oe" 車崔二義士傳 and the "Tale of Such'ik" 守則傳, "Tale of Sangnang" 尙娘傳, "Tale of Virtuous Woman Yi" 烈女李氏傳, "Tale of a Living Virtuous Woman" 生烈女傳, and "Tale of A Filial Daughter-in-Law Living in a Mountain" 峽孝婦傳. I focus on the "Tale of Righteous Gentlemen Ch'a and Ch'oe" and the "Tale of Such'ik," which are relatively detailed and rich in Yi's value judgments on the subjects. The study on these works will show that the representation of characters distinguishes Yi's writings from conventional biographies of exemplary subjects.

Subjects with Confucian Merits	Loyalty 忠	Righteous Gentlemen Ch'a and Ch'oe Two Righteous Servants of a Confucian Shrine
	Filial piety 孝	Filial Daughter-in-law in a Mountain
	Female chastity 烈	Sangnang Such'ik Virtuous Woman, Yi Living Virtuous Woman

Biography was a national tool for encouraging Confucian morality. From the founding of the dynasty, King T'aejo's (1335-1408, r. 1392-1398) issued an edict that demonstrates that the Chosŏn government expected people to follow Confucian morals from commemorating those who fulfilled them:[3]

[3] Katherine Carlitz explains rewards for virtuous characters in Ming. "By the beginning of the Ming dynasty, Chinese rulers had been rewarding filial sons, faithful wives, and undivided multigenerational households for nearly a millennium and a half, with the avowed aim of transforming popular morals and customs." Sing-Chen Lydia Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China* (Boston: Brill, 2005), 104.

> Because of the importance of morals and customs, we should encourage loyal ministers, filial sons, righteous husbands, and virtuous wives. Let local officials seek out such people and recommend them for preferential treatment and further advancement and for memorial arches to commemorate their virtuous deeds.[4]

In accordance with the royal edicts, a number of biographical works honoring filial piety, loyalty, and chastity were produced. These works aimed to stabilize a society following the dynasty's foundation by offering the people ideal social models to emulate. Official histories and literary collections of the ruling class contained biographies of exemplary people. They worked as a political tool for the literati as well. Nam Hyoon (1454-1492), for example, wrote the "Tale of Six Officials" 六臣傳, a biography of six men who opposed King Sejo (1417-1468), who usurped King Tanjong's throne.[5] Severe political struggles and literati purges in the seventeenth century also caused the literati to support their faction by producing biographies intended to demonstrate the righteousness of their party. Many shared common features in their themes and characterizations. Such features have caused contemporary critics to assert that these works are stories with a simple, monotonous style and plot, demonstrating a lack of creativity in the authors. Jaroslav Prusek's explanation on biographers' method of selecting anecdotes and composing biographies in China can be helpful to understand why Korean biographies shared such common features:

> Biographers usually gather a few anecdotes from the life of the given person. They gather anecdotes that are in accordance with the general image and stylization the given person

[4] Peter H. Lee and William Theodore De Bary, *Sources of Korean Tradition* (NY: Colombia University Press, 1997-2001), vol. 1, 274.

[5] By depicting the six men as loyal subjects, Nam reveals the righteousness of himself and his political faction, which resisted against King Sejo's usurpation.

> has created by tradition. . . .They place the person in a specific pattern of thought and emotion.[6]

Considering biography's nature and function as a supplement to historical records, it is not strange that biographers followed a simple and monotonous formula in their works, and literati readers expected a very specific format while consuming these works. Exemplary people are depicted as single-minded and without doubt, hesitation, or regret, in their adherence to Confucian values. They often sacrificed their lives and abandoned their newborn and young children: "When Lady Yi heard that her husband drowned in a river, she was not shocked at all and told her children, 'It seems that I need to go out and see.' She went to the river at once and threw herself into the river and died without any hesitation."[7] They are also fearless in practicing morality:

> When Yi Chonghwa (a righteous, loyal gentleman) heard that villainous officials gathered in a house and plotted against innocent officials, he rushed to the scene. He tore off documents that they were writing while swearing at them.[8]

Many of them do not feel physical pain when enduring sufferings or doing moral deeds: "When Lady Son was seven years old, she fell on the ground and bled heavily. Her mother saw it and held her and cried. Then, she smiled and said to her mother "My wound did not hurt much.

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[6] Jaroslav Prusek, "History and Epics in China and in the West," *Chinese History and Literature* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1970), 29.

[7] Yi Hyesun and Kim Kyŏngmi et al. eds., *Hanguk ŭi yollyŏjŏn* (Biographies of Faithful Women of Chosŏn). Tosŏch'ulp'an wŏrin), 241.

[8] Yi Chonghwa (ca. 1801). Sin Haejin, *Chosŏnjo chŏngye sosŏl* (Biographical Fiction of Chosŏn) (Wŏrin, 2003), 340.

Please do not worry for me.'"[9] Although veracity of these descriptions has room for doubt, biographers asserted them, and readers expected such stories. These descriptions helped to characterize the subject as a pillar of virtue.

Such an assertion and conforming to expectations, however, cannot be applied to Yi Ok's works, for his narrative focus, portrayal of the characters, and plot are what literati writers consciously chose to avoid. The virtuous woman in Yi's story is different from those who easily suppressed her desires natural to human beings to keep her morality intact. The woman was depicted as an emotionally weak person who had strong self-pity and cried in thinking of her past. Such description of her emotional turmoil reflects the writer's presumption that personal desires are powerful in an individual that cannot be ignored in any circumstance. Yi also criticized the ignorant public and incompetent government by depicting loyal subjects who did not receive proper recognition because they were from meager families or the government was wary of offending the powerful Qing by rewarding loyalists to the Ming. In addition, rather than enumerating a chronological series of events, Yi offered the time and place of narrative to pique the readers' interest. This is more akin to that of a creative writer than a didactic historian or official biographer. The examination of the seemingly stereotypical works of Yi Ok shows that some Chosŏn writers changed the purpose and nature of biographical sketches.

Yi's biographies focused on virtuous people's unreasonable sufferings and sadness under politics, rather than their virtues themselves. The "Tale of Two Righteous Literati, Ch'a and Ch'oe," for example, concerns two Korean gentlemen, Ch'oe Hyoil (d. 1639) and Ch'a Yerang (d. 1639), who fought against the Manchu. In the mid-seventeenth century, the Manchu defeated

[9] Yi Hyesun, et al. eds., *Hanguk ŭi yŏllyŏjŏn*, 227.

the Ming and established the Qing dynasty. The Korean government had maintained an amicable relationship with the Ming because of their assistance in the repulsion of two major Japanese invasions between 1592 and 1598. In contrast, the Korean government perceived the Manchus as barbarians, since their invasion of 1637 led to a humiliating Korean defeat. This hostility towards the Manchu drove the Korean literati to write biographical works about those who died during the Manchu invasion. Song Siyŏl (1607-1689), for example, wrote "Stories of Three Scholars" 三學士傳, which dealt with the unwavering loyalty of Hong Ikhan 洪翼漢 (1586-1637), Yun Chip 尹集 (1606-1637), and O Talch'e 吳達濟 (1609-1637) in the face of bravely fighting against the Manchu. Also, a number of works dealing with "heroes" were produced, such as "Tale of Im Kyŏngop" 林慶業傳, on the achievements of Korean general Im Kyŏngop (1594-1636), and "Tale of Lady Pak" 朴氏傳, a story of a wise noble woman who fought against the Manchu. Yi Ok's story deals with Ch'a Yerang, a man who held a strong hatred against the Qing, which caused Korea's humiliating defeat. He attempted to ally with the Ming generals and attack the Qing. Ch'a found Ch'oe Hyoil, an extraordinarily brave man who had once served in the military, but withdrew and waited for a chance to exact his revenge on the Qing. Under Ch'oe's plan, Ch'a went to Qing and made allies with Ming generals. However, their plan was leaked and Ch'a was executed in Beijing without help from Korea. After the execution of Ch'a, Ch'oe refused to surrender to the Qing and soon died from grief and loneliness. Yi highlighted that the government and the people unreasonably undervalued the two's virtues because they were not from politically influential families and did not achieve success. Yi's criticism was aimed at the incompetent Chosŏn government, which hesitated to reward the two loyal subjects in the fear of upsetting the Qing, and also revealed the limitation of a politically insignificant person regardless of their life devotions.

Another biography example in which Yi focused on virtuous person's loneliness and sadness in keeping the virtue is the "Tale of Such'ik," which concerns a court servant Yi serving Prince Sado (1736-1762), who met a tragic death by his father, King Yŏngjo. The prince was demoted to a lower class and ordered to die by his father who locked him in a rice chest.[10] Such'ik left the palace after the prince's death and kept her chastity for over thirty years by locking herself in a room to avoid seeing other people. Yi's story became known to the court, and King Chŏngjo bestowed on Yi a second-rank position, Such'ik 守則.[11] Her story was recorded in the *Veritable Records of the Chosŏn Dynasty* and Yi Ok, Sŏng Haeŭng (1760-1839), and Yi Kŏnch'ang (1852-1898) wrote biographies about her that focus on her exemplary loyalty and chastity.

Yi Ok's biographies generally highlight the subjects' sadness and dissatisfaction, previously disregarded aspects of exemplary people by other biographers, rather than focusing on their determined will to perform moral acts. Instead of describing her as unemotionally performing a remarkable act of female virtue, the "Tale of Such'ik" focuses on the subject's emotional agony and sadness expressed in her endless tears and laments: "While Lady Yi spent thirty years in her room, no one understood her behavior. But I can quietly fathom in my heart and can say that she did not see people, the sky, or the sun because there was not a single day she

[10] The issue of prince's death was kept from official discourse until King Chŏngjo, the prince's son, restored his father's official status.

[11] *Such'ik* is the sixth official rank. When her faithfulness was known to the palace, King Chŏngjo bestowed her this rank.

did not shed tears for these long years."[12] Especially, Yi inserted the fish anecdote which enables readers to explore her previously unexplored state of mind.

> Although the other woman [Yi's aunt] got along with people, she did not talk about her past. She sometimes bought small shrimp and fish in the market and released them in a lotus pond; she then looked at them and left, sighing as she departed.[13]

Instead of Such'ik, who completely hid herself by not leaving her home, Yi presented Such'ik's aunt, who lived with her, in order to discuss the private aspects of Such'ik's life: "Another woman [Such'ik's aunt] always stayed in her room and did not look out, lest neighbors know her appearance" and "If even her aunt did not do such things [talking with people, brushing, and bathing], then, what about Such'ik?"[14] Yi Ok's description of their crying and release of the fish into the pond reveals their self-pity and hidden desire for freedom. The small shrimp and fish represent the two women who have locked themselves into their reclusive lives. Such a depiction contrasts to the conventional depiction of virtuous women as a pillar of virtue. Although he cannot provide appropriate institutional documentation, Yi chose to enter the subject's private life into written discourse.

Yi's narrative focus can be further clarified in comparison with the official records and works by Sŏng Haeŭng and Yi Kŏnch'ang about Such'ik. Sŏng and Yi Kŏnch'ang's records characterized her as a loyal and faithful woman who willingly sacrificed her personal life and

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[12] Yi Ok, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip* (Translated Collection of Yi Ok's Works), vol 2, Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏngu hoe tr., (Somyŏng ch'ulp'an, 2001), 304.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 300.

pleasures. Sŏng clarified that he found her value from her faithfulness 守節.

> Such'ik kept her chastity even in the danger of losing her life. She avoided seeing people while raising several fierce dogs to protect her from outside attack. She made her living by telling fortunes for others. Her neighbors wrongly believed her to be a shaman and expelled her from the village. . . .Once, a fire spread from the adjoining neighborhood to my home, but she lay down and refused to leave. . . .Her fidelity is equals that of Bo Ji [a faithful woman of China].[15]

Similar to Sŏng, Yi Kŏnch'ang's characterization focused on her devotion to Prince Sado. She willingly sacrificed her personal desire and lived a life only for saving the prince from political troubles.

> If it had been known that the prince had a secret relationship with Such'ik, then he would have been charged seriously. Additionally, the sin would have been upon her as well. Her concealment of the incident was based on such a consideration. She can be deemed loyal and wise. At that time, King Chŏngjo was deeply concerned about the prince and beheaded the evil officials. . . .This is what is called 'being upright in her mind and keeping her body pure.' She was great not only because she avoided talking about her past, but also because she did not expect any reward.[16]

Yi Kŏnch'ang's story did not discuss Such'ik's sadness or loneliness in her harsh living

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[15] Sŏng Haeŭng, *Yŏngyŏngjae chŏnjip* 硏經齋全集 (Collected Works of Sŏng Haeŭng) 55:161b:10-162b7. Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics. Available from http://db.itkc.or.kr.
"復幸之.歲壬午世子薨.李氏遂矢死不嫁.購屋必於僻.多飼狗備無賴.撿畫周易.談命以自食.隣人目以巫而逐之.移寓城外月巖村.不櫛沐.以帛盖首.不見天者三十年.隣火及室而不出.賴隣人趨救得生."

[16] Yi Kŏngch'ang, *Mŏngmidang chŏnjip* 明美堂集 (Collected Works of Yi Kŏnch'ang) 16:232a:8-232b:2. Also in Ch'oe Kisuk, *Munbak ŭl nasŏni karkkosi ŏmnae* (Going Outside the Gate: I Have Nowhere to Go) (Sŏhae munjip, 2007), 193.
"外史氏曰.始李氏告其弟曰. 吾所以爲此者.堅吾志. 潔吾身以死而已. 非爲先世子也. 先世子何如人. 豈賤人所敢言私哉. 正宗聞之. 嗟歎以爲賢.然李氏意不止此. 正宗知其意.然不忍明言之也. 方世子時.賊臣忌其英明. 日夜爲流言. 讒於英宗. 民間譁傳. 世子微行閭里. 奪人好女子. 洶洶不止. 李氏得幸. 其事不甚明白. 萬一以此實流言. 而重累世子. 罪在李氏.其深匿不言有以夫. 可謂忠且智矣.當正宗痛念世子. 首戮賊臣 悉褒贈李彝章, 林德躋諸賢. 皆爲世子故也. 李氏竟亦不自言. 至數十年後始以聞.其所謂堅志潔身者. 益信丙博陽以德. 李守則以節. 其能不言而不望報則均也. 孰謂賤女子哉."

conditions. Descriptions of the private self were conventionally avoided in biography—though writers were able to express it based on their assumptions—partly because biographies were believed to be objective as supplements to official histories. Kim T'aejun explains the historical and literary nature of biography:

> Biography, on one hand, is a history since it deals with the story of people worthy of transmitting. On the other hand, biography is narrative because it deals with a life-story of a narrated individual.[17]

The record of Such'ik in the *Veritable Records of the Chosŏn Dynasty* maintained objective views in the interest of historical veracity while excluding information on the private lives of individuals. As Carlitz argued, talking about the virtue of women in state-sponsored Confucian tradition never meant discussing the realm of private experience.[18] The official record was based on evidential proof, which verified that Such'ik really served the prince. Such'ik's past was reported to the court through the words of the official who was dispatched to examine her and the official heard directly from her aunt, who was also once a palace woman.

> The old woman [Such'ik's aunt] assumed that was the reason for the official's visit, and said: "The woman in the room is my niece. When I became a young widow, I worked at the palace. She followed me to court at the age of ten. Later, she served Prince Sado in the year *kyŏngjin* [1760], and soon she came to live outside the palace. It has been more than ten years since I moved here from Soch'ŏnŏ Street. From the year of *imo* [1762] onward, she decided to keep her chastity at the risk of her life. She did not wash her face or brush her hair, but became a recluse and shut herself in a room, covering her body with

[17] Kim Taejun, "*Samguk Sagi*, *Samguk Yusa* wa Koryŏ *chŏn* ryu" (Biographies of Koryŏ people in the *Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms* and the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), *Hanguk sosŏlsa* (History of Korean Fiction) (Hyŏndae munak, 1990), 52.

[18] Katherine Carlitz, "Desire, Danger, and the Body: Stories of Women's Virtue in Late Ming China," *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 102.

> a quilt. She did not see either the sun or other people, and never left her room even to defecate. Ten dogs protected the home from thieves. Once, a fire spread from the adjoining neighborhood to my home, but she lay down and refused to leave. The neighbors were touched, took pity on her, and worked to protect her from the fire."[19]

The record did not report the neighbors' words, and their identities remain unknown. Similarly, Sŏng Haeŭng and Yi Kŏngch'ang respected the historical nature of biography and excluded a description of the character's inner self. In addition, as members of the ruling class, Sŏng Haeŭng and Yi Kŏnch'ang portrayed their subjects to give moral messages and eliminated, or at least minimized, aspects that did not match their judgments of her. Sŏng's story, for example, selected Such'ik's life events to accord with his understanding of her as a virtuous woman. Thus, his story came to be brief and dry, which made reaching a profound understanding of the individual difficult.

> In the year of *imo*, the prince passed away. Lady Yi hid herself in a small home and raised many dogs to keep it. . . . She made her living by telling fortunes for others. Her neighbors wrongly believed her to be a shaman and expelled her from the village. Then, she moved to the village of Wŏram, where she made her home outside the city wall. She did not clean her body.[20]

Her life events were depicted in a simple manner, without description of her unique personality or the thought process that enabled such self-sacrificial deeds. Similarly, Yi Kŏnch'ang's story presented her reclusive life in a dry manner, while offering few clues about her agony or pride during her thirty years outside the palace.

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[19] *Chŏngjo sillok* 33:4a4-b10. Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics. Available from http://db.itkc.or.kr.

[20] Sŏng, *Yŏngyŏngjae chŏnjip* 55:161b:10-162b7. "復幸之. 歲壬午世子薨. 李氏遂矢死不嫁. 購屋必於僻. 多飼狗備無賴. 撿畫周易. 談命以自食. 隣人目以巫而逐之. 移寓城外月巖村. 不櫛沐.以帛盖首. 不見天者三十年. 隣火及室而不出. 賴隣人趨救得生."

> Prince Sado passed away. Then, she did not wash or bathe. She stayed in a small room day and night. She did not leave the room to eat, drink, or defecate. Her appearance made her seem as if she was insane. Her parents attempted to speak to her, but she refused to answer. A long time passed like this. People could not stay near her because of her offensive smell. Her neighbors all looked at her suspiciously and laughed at her. They called her a cripple.[21]

Sŏng Haeŭng and Yi Kŏnch'ang interpreted moments of her life relating to her fidelity and loyalty, but avoided private aspects that diverge from their own images of her as the embodiment of loyalty and chastity. Their works also omitted the testimony of neighbors that could not be verified, like the official records.

Why does Yi characterize her as a person full of self-pity? It reveals that personal emotions and desires are significant in an individual, even if that individual is depicted as an absolute embodiment of virtue. Traditionally, the virtuous were depicted as self-suppressed and individuals who accepted hardship without complaint. On the other hand, evil characters were portrayed full of emotional ups and downs and openly expressed them. In the torture scene in the biography of Sŏng Sammun and Yu Ŭngbu, for example, loyal officials controlled their emotions. On the other hand, King Sejo, who usurped the throne from his nephew and tortured a number of officials is portrayed as full of rage:

> King Sejo became furious and ordered an attending military officer to heat an iron sword and cut Sŏng's arms and pierce his legs with it. Sŏng, however, did not change his

[21] Yi, *Mŏngmidang chŏnjip*, 16: 232a:8-232b:2. Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics. Available from http://db.itkc.or.kr.
"世子薨.李氏卽不梳洗.晝夜處小室中. 飮食便旋不離. 狀若病狂者. 父母問之不答. 旣久. 臭惡不可近. 隣里怪笑.遂以不售女稱. 後父母死.依弟而居. 弟嘗問.姊似非病者. 何居. 李氏乃微告之. 且曰愼勿洩."

demeanor, and slowly said, "Your punishment is severe."[22]

> Then King Sejo became angry and shouted at Yu. . . .However, Yu closed his mouth and did not say anything. The king became more furious and ordered officials to put a heated iron to Yu's stomach. Fire burned the skin of his belly; however, Yu's look did not change. He patiently waited until the iron got cold, and then he threw the iron on the ground and said, "This iron already became cool. Bring another hot one." He did not surrender and remained steadfast to the end.[23]

While the virtuous remained calm and serious, King Sejo, despite his status as a king, failed to control his anger. He shouted, struck a desk, his facial expressions changed, and his voice became hoarse from anger. On the contrary, Yu and Sŏng maintained their composure even in the face of severe torture. The biographies of virtuous women show a similar characterization. These women rarely lamented their misfortune as widows:[24] "After the death of her husband, she never showed herself to be distracted and always kept a solemn and upright attitude in preparing funerals and serving her parents-in-law."[25] The torture scenes might not be entirely accurate, but rather emphasized what socially respected lifestyles were and how people should live.[26] In order to effectively encourage good deeds, writers needed to demonstrate that Confucian morals are so important that people should prioritize them over their personal interests. Subjects with conflicting feelings and desires and the difficulty of practicing virtue can discourage readers.

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[22] Pak Hŭibyŏng, *Hanguk kojŏn inmulchŏn yŏngu* (Research on Biographies of Pre-modern Korea) (Hangil sa, 1992), 132.

[23] Ibid.

[24] The women sometimes showed pity for their parents-in-law or their natal families.

[25] Yi Hyesun, et al. eds., *Hanguk ŭi yŏllyŏjŏn*, 343.

[26] Scholes and Kellogg distinguish between two kinds of fiction, designated "representational" and "illustrative," and proceed to point out that the latter seeks not to reproduce actuality but to present selected aspects of the actual in order to reveal deeper truths. Scholes, R and R. L. Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1966), 88.

Thus, the biography's monotonous style can be understood as the literati writers' choice rather than their lack of creativity.

From the court's view, Yi's works can be problematic because they attack the government, which failed to give appropriate rewards to people who fulfilled their duties. In the "Tale of Righteous Gentlemen Ch'a and Ch'oe," Yi chose to focus on characters who were usually dealt with as secondary subjects by other biographers in celebrating the accomplishments of Koreans during the Manchu invasion. The government bestowed them relatively lower official rank and belated rewards, while those from renowned families received immediate and generous rewards though they had not participated in battles. Thus, Yi's first mission was to reveal their significance on their actual practice of belief, hatred of the Qing, for the final success or failure alone could not reveal one's true loyalty. Yi drew parallels between Ch'ae and Ch'oe and Im Kyŏngŏp (1594-1646), Nam Ihong (1576-1627), and the three scholars who received praise for fighting against the Manchu invaders. These heroes, who were from renowned families, were highly praised by the government despite the fact that their efforts turned out to be fruitless. Yi also depicted how Ch'a was brave, how Ch'a and Ch'oe came to a mutual understanding of each other, and how loyal they were in implementing their plan to attack the Qing. Yi inserted the poems that Ch'a sang during the farewell party in a somber mood.

> My bravery spreads through the world
> My sincere loyalty is bright like the sun
> I, a man, shed tears
> not because of where I am going.[27]

[27] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 285. "壯氣連天鬱/精忠貫日明/男兒一掬淚/不獨爲今行"
"Min Chinwŏn reported to King Sukchong, "After the Manchu invasions, Ch'a Yerang from Kwansŏ had tens of followers who had a mind to attack Shenyang 瀋陽 with the Ming. Ch'a went to Qing when Ch'oe Hyoil from Ŭi province followed the Ming. Ch'a and Ch'oe promised, "When Ch'oe goes into the Qing and attack Shenyang with

Yi also compared the two with Ming generals who fought together, but followed the Manchu immediately after the establishment of the Qing. The two Koreans were even superior in loyalty than the Ming general.

> Shizu 世祖 (r: 1644-1661) of Qing entered Shuntianpu 順天府 and Wuyingtian 武英殿 and received all the officials' congratulations. He ordered everyone around the country to shave their hair. All the Ming generals, including Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612-1678) danced, trampled on the ground, released their armor, and took off their hats, and shaved their hair, being afraid of falling behind. Only Ch'oe refused to celebrate Shizu and to shave his hair. He spent ten days wailing at the tomb of Emperor Chongzhen (r: 1627-1644). During this time, he refused to eat and eventually died in the woods near the tomb.[28]

Yi's positive description of the two can increase the readers' sympathy, especially in light of how they received little recognition because of their family background.

> Alas! People cannot intervene in what Heaven abandons. Who can be blamed, even though their efforts did not bring good results? Still, despite their extraordinary deeds, they are ignored because of their low social position. On the contrary, those who brag are respected and known to the people. This is why we passed our hands on books, strike swords on the ground, and keep choking back tears.[29]

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the Ming, Qing will ask support reinforcement. Then my country will conscript soldiers for Qing. We then volunteered, went into Qing and make our great plan come true secretly. Later, Ch'a went into Shenyang secretly as a spy. Their plan was discovered by Chŏng Myŏngsu and ten of Ch'a's followers met disaster. Hwang Ilho, the prefect 府尹 of the Ŭi province was also killed because of the incident. Ch'oe and Ch'a also met calamities in Beijing. Our government did not praise them yet in the fear of disclosing the praise to Qing. Now the government rose his rank and bestowed posthumorous official position to Hwang Ilho. Thus, Ch'a should be rewarded too. Now it would be appropriate to let the province thoroughly investigate ad report names and behaviors of those who met disaster regarding the incident. Then the government rewards them according to each individual's level of devotion." *Sukchong sillok* (Veritable Records of King Sukchong) 53:27a15-28b1.

[28] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 279.

[29] Ibid., 289.

Yi criticized the government for bestowing rewards to those who had achieved nothing, but were recognized for their "loyalty" because of their strong family backgrounds. Such works of social criticism increased after the Manchu invasions. Hong Set'ae (1653-1725), for example, wrote the "Tale of Kim Yŏngch'ŏl" on Kim (1600-1684), a Korean military officer taken prisoner by the Manchu army and sent to Peking. In spite of difficulties, Kim escaped from the Manchu soldiers while fighting them. He finally was able to return to Korea, but lived in distress while working as a corvée laborer to build a fortress and defend it until he grew old and died. Hong asserted that Kim did not receive appropriate recognition for his deeds:

> His achievement was truly worth writing in a biography. Still, he did not get any reward. . . .He was also ordered to defend a fortress in his late years. He died alone in poverty. Considering his unrecognized life, how can it be possible for the government to encourage the literati to be loyal?[30]

As Hong's comment reveals, the social criticism in Yi's work is problematic because it may increase readers' dissatisfaction about the current reward practices.

In the story of Such'ik, Yi compares her to Bo Yi 伯夷 (c. 1046 B.C.) to show that society is unfair, so good people tend to suffer rather than be rewarded. Such an idea is different from Sŏng Haeŭng, who saw Chosŏn society's soundness exemplified in Such'ik and stated that she can be equal to Bo Ji 伯姬 of Song China. According to Liu Xiang's 劉向 (77-6 B.C.) biography, Bo Ji kept her chastity by refusing to flee a burning house because her instructor was not with her at the time.[31] Sŏng's identification of Such'ik with Bo Ji offers a moral message by

[30] Sin, *Chosŏnjo chŏngye sosŏl*, 136.

[31] Hwang Yonghan (1744-1818) wrote a biography of faithful woman Pak: "It is upright that Bo Ji did not escape her home because she did not have an instructor with her." (Yi Hyesun et al. eds., *Hanguk ŭi yŏllyŏjŏn*, 322)

displaying the writer's pride in portraying an exemplary woman in Korea comparable to a Chinese woman.

> Such'ik's behavior was the same as Bo Ji of Sung China. People generally say that contemporary people's virtue cannot be as sincere as that of people in the past. However, considering that Such'ik did not avoid fire, her virtue is truly the same as that of Bo Ji of Sung. Who can say that contemporary virtuous people cannot be as good as those of the past?[32]

Yi Ok, however, compares Such'ik to Bo Yi 伯夷,[33] both lived lives of suffering as Sima Qian depicted. Sima Qian argued that Bo Yi had resentment based on his life of suffering.[34] It is different from Confucius' statement that Bo Yi was a righteous person loyal to the last king of the Shang Dynasty 商 and died without resentment. Following Confucius, the Korean literati compared Bo Yi with their biographical subjects to highlight their virtues. Sima Qian, however, revealed the injustice of Heaven's Way. Durrant explains:

> The disharmony between the received tradition of Bo Yi and Shu Qi and Confucius' description of these heroes obviously troubles Sima Qian. How could Confucius have said that the two Yin loyalists died without resentment?. . . .Sima Qian introduces that large problem by quoting what must have been an old and wisely accepted adage: "The way of heaven has no favorite. It consistently associates with the good." Unfortunately, Sima Qian's reading of the facts of the history does not support such a naïve

[32] Sŏng, *Yŏngyŏngjae chŏnjip*, 55:161b:10-162b7.
"論人每謂人古今不相及. 節烈之行. 熾於後世. 豈古之人達節. 今之人守節而然歟. 李守則之不避火者. . . . 宋伯姬之行也. 孰謂今古人不相及哉."

[33] Mo Taiyun indicates Bo Yi.

[34] Bo Yi made protest by refusing to eat the produce of the Zhou state, the state that conquered the Shang Dynasty. He, with his brother Shu Qi, wandered the wilderness of Shouyang Mountain. They finally starved themselves to death because every plant they came across belonged to Zhou.

> proclamation of heaven's fairness for paragons of morality, like Bo Yi and Shu Qi.[35]

Sima Qian examined Bo Yi and Shu Qi and argued that they demonstrated sadness and resentment. He further showed his doubt of Heaven's fairness regarding how righteous people led a poor life and died early. Yi Ok expressed his discomfort for the traditional view of Such'ik as an impeccably faithful woman by comparing her and Bo Yi. Yi Ok also says that her practice of virtue was somewhat wasteful and should have been in a more meaningful manner.

> If she found herself in a situation that called for the loyal subjects and past heroes, she should have performed what others could not and still more. Why did she only pull the quilt over her head, shut herself up in her room like a shadow, and keep back her tears for thirty years?[36]

Furthermore, the comparison suggests Yi's criticism of a public that was ignorant and failed to identify exemplary people: "Sadly, however, no one recognized or visited her to pay respects. Alas! Alas!"[37]

Why is Yi's comparison of Such'ik to Bo Yi and Shu Qi noteworthy? In a departure from traditional biography, in which virtuous people are satisfied and recognized by others, Yi reveals that their exemplary lives brought them neither recognition nor self-fulfillment. Yi suggests that reward is the primary motivation that leads people to act morally rather than the personal satisfaction, if any, that comes with virtuous behavior.

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[35] Stephen W. Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian* (New York: State University of New York, 1995), 23-25.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 305.

The Writer's Creativity of Narrative Time and Place

Yi's writing shows creativity in arranging narrative time and place. Following the tradition of historical records, a biography typically started with discussion of a person's family or social status in order to verify their existence. Recording people's life history in chronological order did not confuse readers accustomed to that order. Both Sŏng Haeŭng's and Yi Kŏnch'ang's works, for example, start with Such'ik's social status and her family background, which serve to explain how Such'ik, originally a lower-class court servant, came to enter the court and serve the prince.

> Lady Yi Such'ik's name was unknown. She relied on her aunt after losing her parents. She earned her living by needlework. Her aunt became a widow in her early years. She came to work at court.[38]
>
> Lady Yi was the daughter of a commoner living outside the South Gate of Seoul. During the later years of King Yŏngjo, her aunt entered the court as a servant. Such'ik was fifteen years old. She followed her aunt and entered the palace. She came to serve the prince by chance.[39]

Yi Kŏngchang and Sŏng Haeŭng begin their respective works with Such'ik's early years, which helped to register her as a virtuous woman: "She spent her youth doing needlework, a woman's work, and living with her widowed aunt."[40] Yi Ok, however, does not begin the story with her birth place or parents, but from a more intriguing point in her life: after her self-imposed isolation. At that time, people generally suspected that she was insane. Yi starts the story by

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[38] Sŏng, *Yŏngyŏngjae chŏnjip*, 55:161b:10-162b7. "李氏守則佚其名. 失父母依其姨母. 業針線. 姨母早寡. 役于大內."

[39] Yi, *Mŏngmidang chŏnjip*, 16:232a:8-232b:2. "李氏. 漢陽南門外良家子也. 英宗末. 其母黨有充掖庭者. 李氏年十五. 隨母入禁中. 偶得侍莊獻世子. 一夕而出."

[40] Ibid.

presenting the isolated place where the women lived:

> A giant rock stood at Wŏram west of the palace wall. The rock, very white and about one hundred-*ch'ŏk*[41] tall, is located in the most wild and remote area outside the city wall. Near the rock was a small house where two women lived. One made a living by fortunetelling and needlework. She did not comb her hair and looked as if she carried a bird's nest on her head. Another always stayed in her room and refrained from looking outside so that her neighbors would not know what she looked like. The two women always kept ten fierce dogs to protect them and locked the door from the inside day and night. If the one who made her living outside left the house, there was no cooking smoke from the chimney even if she was gone for five days.[42]

Yi's story raises readers' curiosity: who is she? Why does she live in such an isolated and unpleasant place? Why does she avoid going outside and seeing people? He delays giving the answers until the end of the story. Yi also arranges the setting of the story in such a way to match his characterization of her, while Sŏng Haeŭng and Yi Kŏnch'ang show little attention to the background. According to Yi's story, Such'ik's living place is surrounded by a giant white rock, the product of strong and concentrated energy.

> The most right 貞 and ardent 烈 energy of heaven and earth is sometimes gathered in objects or persons. When *qi* is gathered in objects, it becomes the sun, moon, frost, murmuring streams, protruding rocks, pine and cypress trees, the green of the bamboo, lotus flowers, peach blossoms, or chrysanthemums. When this same energy is gathered in a person, a man becomes a loyal official and a woman a faithful wife. The characteristics of strength, softness, and honesty are in such people. Nothing shares the same characteristics or shape, but all things are the same in terms of gathering the right and ardent energy of heaven and earth.[43]

[41] *Ch'ŏk* is a measure of length approximately equal to one foot.

[42] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 301.

[43] Ibid., 300.

According to Yi, Such'ik is a person of concentrated energy (*qi*) who possessed features of long-lasting nature and whiteness of jade. The tall, white rock nearby her home is the product of concentrated *qi* as well: "The white color is precious," "When *qi* is gathered in objects, it becomes. . . tall rocks." Her home can be read as the representation of her characteristics. Yi's depiction of her and her living place with energy and the color white also enables him to imagine a white-light heavenly sign: "Nearby Wŏram, I believe[44] that a white light of energy had beamed and reached to the moon and stars every night for a long time."[45] These flourishes of character descriptions are what conventional biographers tended to avoid in their work, since it might undermine the historical veracity. Yi Ok, however, chose to sacrifice veracity in order to reveal his, and maximize the reader's, impression of Such'ik. Yi's theme and description of his subjects evince the changing views of the nature and function of biographical sketches during late Chosŏn. During that time, literati writers' moral obligations in writing biographies of exemplary people seemed to relax when they witnessed the bravery of people, especially those who were from minor families and social class, during foreign invasions and under the incompetent government.

[44] 而意者

[45] Yi, *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip*, 2: 305.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

My dissertation demonstrates the dynamic literary culture of eighteenth-century Korea by inquiring into: how the social and literary atmosphere produced politically fallen literati of the time, why King Chŏngjo maintained an uncompromising attitude in punishing Yi Ok under his literary policy, in what ways Yi's literary themes, subjects, and styles were distinguished from those of court writers and Northern Learning scholars, and why Yi's works are significant in the development of fiction in premodern Korea.

My research reveals that politically isolated literati were participants in the development of fiction, though their contributions have largely been undervalued by contemporary scholars due to the weak social and political concerns in their works. Yi's works violated Neo-Confucian literary conventions by advocating secular desires and depicting unconventional characters, including: supernatural entities, politically marginalized literati, and lower class people, women. The plot in his writing is episodic, and fiction elements predominate, which reflect the changing conception of the nature and purpose of biographical sketches. Differing from his contemporaries who find values in historical veracity and moral lessons in writings, Yi's works are more akin to those of a creative writer than those of a moral historian or official biographer. Although official literary culture demanded literati to pursue a laconic and refined style, Yi expands his stylistic options and includes scenes that traditional biographers would have condensed or deleted because they are false, vulgar, or verbose.

Considering the distinctiveness of Yi's works, my research challenges prevalent ideas on the Korean literati that they are exclusively Confucian moralists whose writings, themes, and subjects are limited to offering moral lessons and upholding the Confucian social order. Yi's

works demonstrate that non-ethical themes and the use of colloquial language were popular among literati of his time.

I also challenge the proposal by some previous scholarship that significant attributes of Yi's works are based on his similarities with Northern Learning School scholar Pak Chiwŏn. Studies suggest that Pak attempted to challenge Neo-Confucianism, and other writers such as Yi Ok followed his lead. While I agree that Pak led the vanguard of literary trends of the period, I disagree with the suggestion that Pak challenged the Neo-Confucian mode of writing. Writings of Pak Chiwŏn and Yi Ok are different from official literary works that usually list the subject's curriculum vitae. Still, previous scholarship tends to overlook the distinctiveness of Yi's works from Pak's. Pak's stories aim to give lessons to rectify society and do not challenge the ruling Neo-Confucian ideology, and his criticism is limited to corrupt elements of Confucian ideology. Yi Ok, on the other hand, makes keen observations of subjects' personal lives and reveals the importance of worldly desires while paying little attention on writing's social function, unlike Pak.

Subjects in Yi's works are not exemplary from the Confucian standpoint. They exert their talents in order to acquire material gains, enjoy life, and do not prioritize Confucian ethics. Yi deals with historical figures, but his are different from historiographical biography, because Yi expands short accounts by adding dialogues and episodes rather than following description of traditional historiographical biography. For example, "Kama" (Thieves riding on a carriage) and "Sŏkkul chujo"(Making counterfeit money in a stone cave) describe thieves and counterfeiters in an outlaw world. Embellishing on a short tale heard on the street, Yi adds a scene with vivid dialogues at the thieves' secret drinking party. He expands and elaborates where the literati might condense and delete because of the perceived falsehood or vice of such details in biography. In addition, though Yi depicts literati characters, many are poor individuals whose

talents remain unrecognized and who finally end their lives by suicide or execution. Some characters even attempt to fulfill their desires at the expense of damaging their dignity as literati. Yi's stories shows readers that Confucian education does not always effectively make people to suppress their desires and the social problems of his time also produced the literati who deviated from the Confucian norm.

Previous scholarship on literati writers tends to highlight premodern writers whose works supported Korea's uniqueness and rejected Chinese models. Considering that this scholarship has overshadowed those with favorable views on Chinese literature, my dissertation reveals that Yi's avid reading and favorable views on Chinese popular literature and *Gongan* School writers' prose vignettes did not lead Yi to disregard Korea's native culture and styles. On the contrary, Chinese literature drove him to expand his recognition to less respected or even despised literary works and to compose works reflecting Korea's local culture and the vernacular Korean.

This dissertation reveals that King Chŏngjo consistently demonstrated a keen interest in popular literature as reflections of current opinions, and utilized its popularity as a political tool. The king's policy, which appears on the surface to be a literary issue, was in fact, a sophisticated political strategy designed to control his officials embroiled in severe factional struggles. The positive images associated with the king's reign, however, eclipse the severe factional strife and tension that existed between a dominant faction and the king throughout his reign. Yi Ok's political insignificance enabled the king to punish him and others from meager families while minimizing damage to his kingship. Yi may have been a naïve writer who assumed that his writings in the casual writing style, which was popular among the literati, would be recognized by the king.

Yi Ok was an unfortunate person living during King Chŏngjo's reign, especially when the king looked for a scapegoat to strengthen his kingship through his literary policy. Still, Yi can be regarded as a fortunate person in terms of having friends like Kim Yŏ, who appreciated and compiled his works despite criticism, spending his own assets to do so. Yi Ok's works could have been scattered, as many literati writers who did not possess renowned descendents who compiled the writing collections of their ancestors.

Yi's political marginalization led him to devote himself to reading and writing works with minimal concern with literary obligations. Though Yi's writing talents were not fulfilled in the court, his writings are valuable resources to see that politically insignificant literati, who were the majority of the literati population but mostly did not leave a mark of their existence on historical records, devoted to the diversity of late Chosŏn literati culture by inserting fictional elements and social criticism in the mask of conventional biographies. Though Yi's works are not as widely circulated as those of Pak Chiwŏn, they deserve a close reading because they reveal how Yi's negotiates his individuality and social decorum by utilizing literary tactics as a tool of negotiation within his political and social marginalization.

Given that the study focuses on Yi Ok and his biography works to see the politically isolated literati's devotion in the development of premodern Korean fiction, one direction of future research is to expand the list of politically isolated literati writers, including Kim Yŏ and Sim Nosŭng (1762–1837), who were punished under King Chŏngjo's policy. Also, even though biographies contributed to the development of fiction, they are not the only sources of fiction. While reviewing the benefits and limitations of biography, collected works of

unofficial histories and travel accounts can provide sources for studying the features of late Chosŏn fiction.[1]

This study examines literary works of Yi Ok as a case study to reexamine the complexity of the literary field at this time. Yi Ok was an iconoclast writer whose controversial writings violated Neo-Confucian literary norms, even compelling King Chŏngjo to establish a policy prohibiting the Chosŏn literati from writing in Yi's style. It maps the existence of a much more expansive characterization of the Chosŏn literati culture at large, which impacted the broader development of fiction in late Chosŏn.

[1] Literary miscellany also played a role in terms of its rich character portraits. It is a convenient repository of random jottings, anecdotes, or observations, sometimes grouped together under specific headings, but sometimes without any scheme or structure.[1] Representative examples of premodern Korean miscellany collections include *P'ahan chip* (Jottings to Break Up Idleness) by Yi Illo (1152–1220), *Yŏgong p'aesŏl* (Lowly Jottings by Old Man "Oak") by Yi Chehyŏn (1287–1367), and *P'aegwan chapki* (A Storyteller's Miscellany) by Ŏ Sukkwŏn (fl. 1524–54). Peter H. Lee writes about the nature of the prose portrait in literary miscellany: "Unofficial biography—what I called the "prose portrait"—is unofficial because it flouts the prescriptive conventions of the formal prose genre, 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." Generally speaking, the writer of miscellany describes his subjects' characteristics by selected actions and sayings, rather than by molding them into exemplary models. Thus, the individuality of the subjects can be revealed beyond the public self. Peter H. Lee, *A History of Korean Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 127.

Appendix

The Lives by Yi Ok

(Stories translated in Bold Face)

1. Tale of Two Righteous Gentlemen, Ch'a and Ch'oe 車崔二義士傳 (Ch'a Ch'oe iŭisa chŏn)
2. Tale of Two Righteous Servants Who Served at a Confucian Shrine 文廟二儀僕傳 (Munmyo iŭibok chŏn)
3. Tale of *Hyangnang* 尙娘傳 (Hyangnang chŏn)
4. **Tale of a Virtuous Woman, Lady Yi 烈女李氏傳 (Yŏllyŏ Yiss'i chŏn)**
5. **Tale of a Woman in the *Such'ik* Rank 守則傳 (Such'ik chŏn)**
6. **Tale of a Living Virtuous Woman 生熱女傳 (Saeng yŏllyŏ chŏn)**
7. **Tale of a Filial Daughter-in-law in a Rural Area 坱孝婦傳 (Hyŏphyobu chŏn)**
8. **Tale of a Wife Who Caught a Tiger 捕虎妻傳 (P'ohoch'ŏ chŏn)**
9. **Tale of a Heroic Female Entertainer 俠娼紀聞 (Hyŏpch'ang kimun)**
10. **Tale of Ma Xianglan 馬湘蘭 補遺傳 (Ma Shouran chŏn)**
11. **Tale of a Literary Licentiate, Sŏng 成進士傳 (Chŏng chinsa chŏn)**
12. Tale of a Classics Licentiate, Ch'oe 崔生員傳 (Ch'oe saengwŏn chŏn)
13. Tale of Chŏng Unch'ang 鄭運昌傳 (Chŏng Unch'ang chŏn)
14. Tale of a Deaf-Mute, Sin 申亞傳 (Sina chŏn)
15. Tale of a Gentleman, Chang 藏奉事傳 (Chang pongsa chŏn)
16. Tale of a Singer, Song Silsol 歌客宋蟋蟀傳 (Kaja Song Silsol chŏn)
17. **Tale of a Wood Tender 浮穆漢傳 (Pumokhan chŏn)**
18. Tale of Yu Kwangŏk 柳光億傳 (Yu Kwangŏk chŏn)
19. **Tale of a Student, Sim 沈生傳 (Simsaeng chŏn)**
20. Tale of a Military Officer, Sin 申兵使傳 (Sin pyŏngsa chŏn)
21. Tale of Chang Poksŏn 張福先傳 (Chang Poksŏn chŏn)
22. **Tale of Yi Hong 李泓傳 (Yi Hong chŏn)**
23. Tale of My Horse 所騎馬傳 (Sogima chŏn)
24. Tale of Tobacco 南靈傳 (Namnyŏng chŏn)
25. Tale of Mr. Tweezers 却老先生傳 (Kangno sŏnsaeng chŏn)

4. Tale of Virtuous Woman, Lady Yi

A virtuous woman, née Yi, was married to a gentleman, Kim. When her husband died of an illness when she was twenty-one, Yi loosened her hair, covered the floor of her room with dried grass, and shut herself up in a room. During the rite of placing his body in the coffin, she leaned over the coffin, wailed, and said, "I will follow you after your funeral."

After a month, she realized that she was pregnant. During the rite held for the third month after the death,[1] she wailed, saying, "I am with child and dare not forsake the life that you gave me. I will follow you after the one-year anniversary rite."[2]

Yi gave birth to a baby boy, did not breast feed him, but chose a female servant to nurse him instead. She did not change her clothes, move from her place, or change her diet. Continuing to keep her hair loosened, wear rough hempen clothes, and lay on dried grass, she shut herself up in her room. On the day of the one-year rite, she wailed and said, "Your posthumous child can carry on the family line, so I will follow you after the third year rite."

When Lady Yi postponed the day of her death, her family no longer kept watch over her. They prepared the 3rd anniversary rite,[3] which ended at dawn. On that day, Yi had the maid brush her hair, draw a bath, clean her teeth, and put on new clothes. She appeared in the main hall and gathered her parents-in-law, sisters-in-law, and all her relatives and siblings to bid them farewell. She seemed restless and unstable, and her behavior did not seem like those of a living person. She bowed to an ancestral shrine, her parents-in-law, and several other relatives. Her parents-in-

[1] *Cholkok*: the rite performed three months after one's death.

[2] *Sosang*: the rite performed at the first year of anniversary of one's death.

[3] *Taesang*: the rite performed on the third year anniversary of one's death.

law said, “As a mother, you now have a child whom you can follow. Why do you behave like this? Please don’t die.”

Yi said, “A bride was out of luck and her husband died early. Therefore, I ought to die in order that I may follow him. If I use my young child as an excuse, how will my husband regard me? I dare not break my promise.”

She then called her baby, caressed his forehead three times, and went inside her room. The baby’s nurse, her servants, and others desperately tried to prevent her from entering her room. Yi called her maid and said, “Tidy up my bedding and pillow.” Her servant followed her orders and arranged her bedding and pillow. Then, Yi laid down, folded her hands over her belly, closed her eyes, and died. When the news of the event spread, the court set up a memorial gate before her home.[4]

Alas! Virtuous women cannot be limited to characterization within defined categories. However, it can be said that in the past, they generally showed impatient behavior. Some stabbed themselves with knives or ornamental hairpins. Others hung themselves, starved for seven days, drowned themselves in a river, or drank poison in secret. Only Yi ended her life in a manner different from those women. Is she not an exceptionally virtuous woman? It can truly be called righteousness that she followed her husband, it is sincerity that she kept her promise, and it is in integrity that she died. If she did not possess these three virtues, how could she possibly behave like that? The *Book of Change*s has the expression “*kojŏl*”[5] (to maintain moral integrity through suffering) and Kim’s wife is one woman who embodies this expression.

[4] This memorial gate celebrates a woman’s chastity.

[5] “Galling limitation must not be persevered in.” Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, .trans. Cary F. Baynes (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 1950), III: p. 694.

5. Tale of a Woman in the *Such'ik* rank

The most right 貞 and ardent 烈 energy of heaven and earth is sometimes gathered in objects or persons. When *qi* is gathered in objects, it becomes the sun, moon, frost, murmuring streams, protruding rocks, pine and cypress trees, the green of the bamboo, lotus flowers, peach blossoms, or chrysanthemums. When this same energy is gathered in a person, a man becomes a loyal official and a woman a faithful wife. The characteristics of strength, softness, and honesty are in such people. Nothing shares the same characteristics or shape, but all things are the same in terms of gathering the right and ardent energy of heaven and earth.

I say: "Snow is always white and its whiteness is not necessarily inferior to that of jade." People, however, highly value jade only and disregard snow because they set a high value on jade's long-lasting whiteness. The *Book of Changes* says, "Lasting perseverance furthers."[6]

I say: "With regards to *qi*, strong *qi* becomes a man and soft *qi* becomes a woman. In dealing with great affairs and keeping great principles, a man may be necessarily superior to a woman. In examining old books, however, there were many women who never fell into evil throughout their lives and few men kept their principles throughout their lives. Why is this so? Is this because a woman's disposition is extreme and hardly pacified once twisted? Alas! When a person faces a moral dilemma, death is easy and living is difficult. People who stabbed themselves with a short and sharp knife and drank a cup of poison seemed to know righteousness only and not appreciate their bodies. All creatures with blood coursing through their veins are eventually fated to die. With a mind that changes a thousand times even in a day, some consistently maintain themselves for several decades without fear or regret, like deeply rooted mountains and rocks. Their lives are actually not much different from death. How could the difficulty of living be compared to the

[6] Ibid., I: p. 15.

difficulty of suicide? For this reason, it is said, "Living is difficult and death is easy." Indeed, maintaining one's life for a long period is more difficult."

A giant rock stood at Wŏram to the west of the palace wall. The rock, very white and about one hundred-*ch'ŏk*[7] tall, is located in the most wild and remote area outside the city wall. Near the rock was a small house where two women lived. One made a living through fortunetelling and needlework. She did not comb her hair and looked as if she carried a bird's nest on her head. Another always stayed in her room and did not look outside, so her neighbors would not know what she looked like. The two women always kept some ten fierce dogs to protect them and locked the door from the inside day and night. If one made her living outside left the house, there was no cooking smoke from the chimney even if she was gone for five days.

Once, a neighbor set the house on fire by accident and flames spread throughout the building, but the woman in the room still did not emerge. The neighbor put out the fire just in time to save her from danger. An old woman in the village secretly peeped at her and saw only that she was covered by a single-layer quilt and lay in her bed facing the wall. This shows that the woman did not expose her face, even in her locked room. Although the woman got along with people, she did not talk about her past. She sometimes bought small shrimps and fish in the market and released them in a lotus pond; she then looked at them and left, sighing as she departed.

A woman who had maintained a good relationship with her followed her, with much effort, and made her talk about her past. She only said, "Several years have passed since the lady in the room and I left the palace." She estimated the year they left the palace was a year before 1763. Some took pity on them without knowing them well and others gossiped about them out of suspicion. Not even the women's closest neighbors knew the most basic details about them.

[7] *Ch'ŏk*: a measure of length approximately equal to one foot.

In the seventh month of 1791, during his morning assembly, the king summoned the Magistrate of Seoul and the second minister of Rites to issue a command:

> About the policy of encouraging marriage issued from the five sections of Seoul, I received a report that a woman has lived alone for thirty years to the west of the city. After the report, I have not been able to sleep for a long time because of my concern for her. Recently, I sent a palace lady to examine her situation: I was told that she was forty-six years old and entered the palace following her aunt. She won my father's favor, but no one looked after her, and she soon left the palace after her aunt did. It has been thirty years since she left the palace, but she has not seen the sun in the sky and has locked herself up in the room by herself. She has not gone outside, even when she needed to defecate, or when her neighbor tested her with fire. Because I have come to know her situation well, I am considering erecting a memorial gate to celebrate her as an example. What are your opinions?

All officials, including the chief state counselor, were astonished and admired the woman. They granted her the rank of *such'ik*[8] and set up the gate on that day. The woman in the room is *such'ik,* and the other woman is her aunt. It was the villager's mistake that she was reported as an unmarried woman in the Western district. After the royal order, people finally came to know her faithfulness in detail, and some lamented so much as to cry over her situation. It was reported that her surname was Yi.

I say: "While the lady Yi spent thirty years in her room, no one understood her behavior. I quietly fathom in my heart, not under pressure, that she did not see people, sky, or the sun because there was not a single day she did not shed tears. She probably did not expose her teeth even to smile, much less combing her hair and bathing her body! Even her aunt did not do so; why should she? Her behaviors are not from her consciousness of other's eyes, but from deep within her heart. From the time that she left the palace, when could she forget the royal favor and

[8] *Such'ik*: the sixth official rank for palace women.

her suffering? Thirty years makes one generation, and she has maintained her chastity the entire time. Is it not terribly difficult to adhere to one's decision firmly in such a great ordeal? It is natural that a fragrant smell comes from the valley when the orchids are in bloom, and that a rainbow appears over the spring with a pearl in it. Her chastity came to be recognized by the world, although she did not want it. Nearby Wŏram, I believe that a white light of energy had beamed and reached to the moon and stars every night for a long time. Sadly, however, no one recognized and visited her to pay respects. Alas! Alas!" "Because Bo Yi[9] gathered bracken on the western hill and starved to death, he warned evil and idle people in the world. The effect Lady Yi has on society is not small, but I have some regrets. If she were born as a man and faced national crisis, wouldn't she have revealed her loyalty by ripping her belly and disemboweling herself? Or, wouldn't she have rammed her head into the stone step of the palace and smashed herself to death? Or, wouldn't she have wailed out of deep grief and lamentation and died by shedding her blood? Or, if she encountered situations like loyal subjects and heroes of yesteryear faced she would have performed what others could not and still more. Why did she only pull the quilt over her head, shut herself up in her room like a shadow, and keep back her tears for thirty years? Keeping one's chastity is difficult while doing so, but dying is easy. Thus, I assume that heaven chose to gather the most extreme energy of chastity within her, not any other, and gave her a trial through a great ordeal. Alas, alas! It is sad!"

[9] Taiyun 胎允 indicates Bo Yi 伯夷. Bo Yi descended from the Shang ruling class with his brother Shuqi, refused to serve under the succeeding Zhou dynasty and starved to death.

6. Tale of a Living Virtuous Woman

Mrs. Sin, a faithful woman, lives in Yŏngin and her origin is P'yŏngsan. She married a student, one Chŏng, but soon he got tumors that spread over his whole body. When he was about to die, the faithful woman heard that human flesh might cure her husband. She then secretly sliced flesh from her thigh, roasted it, and served it to her husband. Soon, his tumors were cured and her thigh was not severely wounded after all. The news spread and an honorary gate with the inscription, "The Gate of the Virtuous Woman née Sin, the Wife of Chong, from Pyŏngsan," was erected. Some person told me that he witnessed the event when he was in Muksadong[10] in the southern province.

I say: "A virtuous woman is one who does not serve two husbands, although she is able to remarry. Wang Zhu[11] said 'A faithful woman does not serve two husbands.' A woman in my country values faithfulness highly and is not lewd. Thus, the daughter of an aristocrat lived her entire life as a widow once she performed *Ch'orye* (the first stage of a wedding ceremony)[12] and could not marry another man. This practice became custom, and even a commoner who has the most basic sense of honor follows it. Thus, young women in white mourning clothes would have become virtuous women if they had lived in the past. Because the gate is erected only after a woman commits suicide following her husband, all virtuous women in my country died and not a single gate had been established for a living faithful woman. I have come to recognize the situation from Mrs. Sin's example. Ah! As a human being, she dared to slice her own flesh with a sharp knife. It is a more difficult thing than committing suicide. I consider that she is stout-

[10] Muksadong is what is now P'ildong, Chunggu in Seoul.

[11] Wang Zhu 王燭 (c. 300 B.C.): Wang Zhu is an officer in the Qi state.

[12] *Ch'orye*: the first stage of a wedding ceremony.

hearted and resolute. Earlier, I have heard that Mrs. Chŏng's home was extremely poor, and her father-in-law was always in a state of drunken frenzy. All the neighbors frowned because he cracked a pot or broke a jar every day. The faithful woman, however, served him with placid looks and a gentle voice. She never complained about her poverty or his drunkenness. She once said, "As a daughter-in-law, how can I neglect the duty of serving seniors?" She prepared one meat dish every day and made one suit of silk clothes every season to serve him until he died. The food and clothes were all from her own efforts. Earlier, I said that becoming a faithful woman while one is still alive is more difficult than when one is dead. Mrs. Chŏng's effort to serve her father-in-law is indeed more difficult than slicing her own flesh.

7. Story of a Filial Daughter-in-Law in a Rural Area

There once was a woman who lived on a mountain. Her husband died early. Because her home was deep in the mountains, she had no neighbors; moreover, her mother-in-law was old, sick, and blind and had no other person to serve her. The woman served her mother-in-law well and dared not leave her even for a day. Her parents' home was thirty-*ri*[13] away, but she never visited it after becoming a widow. One day, her father informed the widow of her mother's illness. The woman made a jar of porridge and said to her mother-in-law, "Please have this porridge; I will be back tonight. Although my mother's illness is severe, I will come back by tomorrow. The porridge is in the jar and fire is in the firepot. Please warm up the porridge and eat."

When she arrived at her parents' home, she found out that her mother was well. Her father said, "You are still young. How can you live as a servant of a blind old woman? A merchant happened to stay in my home briefly. He is good looking and seems to have some fortune. He

[13] *ri*: a unit of distance equal to about a third of a mile.

intends to wait for you and leave here with you, so follow him and do not return. If you don't, I will kill you."

"I also have had this idea for a long time. How fortunate! However, I have not worn makeup for a long time and cannot meet a new man. I would like to have a side room to dress myself in," replied the daughter.

Her parents were happy about her answer and let her go inside another room. She watched for an unguarded moment and ran away through opening a back door and over a fence. She took the byway because her parents might chase her. When it got dark, a tiger with bright patterns on its body appeared and blocked her way.

She came forward and said, "Dear tiger, I am a widow, and my parents are forcing me to remarry against my will. I do not regret death, but I have a mother-in-law to whom I should bid farewell. If not, I cannot close my eyes even in death. I hope you will spare some time for me and eat me at the door of my home."

The tiger relented and followed her. When they arrived at her home, she held her mother-in-law in her arms and said sobbing, "I have come back, but I must bid you farewell now." She told her mother-in-law the reason, cried for a while, and said, "It is Heaven's order that I cannot serve you to the last. I hope you will go to the village down the mountain and live there. The tiger may think that I hesitate to die, so I must be going now."

She bowed to her mother-in-law and went out the door. The tiger was sitting in the yard.

She said, "I have finished bidding farewell and now have no regrets. You can do whatever you want."

The tiger shook his head as if he would say no. "Are you taking pity on me and not eating me?"

The tiger nodded his head. “Oh, generous tiger, aren’t you hungry?”

She went into the kitchen and took out a bowl of porridge to feed him. The tiger licked the bowl while shaking its tail and putting its ears close to its head. She stroked the tiger’s head and said, “You, tiger, are really a sacred being. From now on, please catch only deer and rabbits and do not go near human beings. I fear your good intention could be sacrificed by a trap and pitfall.”

The tiger left after finishing the porridge and looking back several times. The widow served her mother-in-law as before. After a few days, the tiger appeared to her in a dream and said, “I did not follow your advice and am now in a trap at such and such a place. If you hurry, you can still save me.”

She woke up with a start, went to the place at once, and found the situation exactly as the tiger had described. The villagers were about to open the trap and kill the tiger. She told them her story in detail and asked them to release it. The villagers, however, regarded her words as absurd and did not heed her request.

She said bitterly, “I was saved by the tiger’s mercy. If I cannot save it, what is my life good for?”

She eventually entered the trap. The tiger, enraged, growled and stared because people surrounded and watched him. When it saw her entering the trap, the tiger suddenly laid on the ground and shed tears as if it could not bear the sorrow. She also cried while smoothing its fur.

At that time, the villagers were surprised that the tiger did not bite her. They finally saved the tiger by placing a ladder in the pitfall. The tiger first came out of the trap, but did not leave until she came out. When she was out, the tiger rubbed its body against her clothes and licked her hands as if it were a tamed dog following its master. She again advised the tiger, expressed her

gratitude to the villagers, and went back to her home. After that, the tiger never came down from the mountain and her parents dared not force her to remarry.

I said this: I was told that “The tiger to the west of a city wall snatched a beautiful widow. Her skirt and ribbons were hung on a fence and blood covered the back of her house. Everyone took pity on her. After that, however, a man saw her in an inn.” Was this because the tiger did not eat her? Ah! How can it be possible that a tiger does not eat everyone that he catches?

8. Tale of a Wife who Caught a Tiger

A charcoal-maker lived at the foot of a mountain fortress wall in the Chŏngŭp area. He lived with his wife and a dog and had no neighbors nearby. His wife was expecting a baby and childbirth was close at hand. One day, her husband went to the market with charcoal and said to his wife, “If I do not go to the market, I cannot buy seaweed and rice. Even if it is late at night, I will definitely return today, so please wait for me.”

During that day, however, he could not sell his charcoal because of heavy rain and thunder. He tried to borrow some money, but could not. Also, he could not come back early because he went to a faraway village. In the middle of the night, his wife gave birth and the dog also had three puppies beside the fireplace. Nothing was prepared for her, except for some broken bits of rice. Using charcoal as firewood, she was able to make soup in an earthenware pot on a brazier.

A big tiger suddenly appeared and was about to push the door and enter the room. She rose and patted the dog and said, “My baby is a human and yours are animals. Though mothers’ affection is the same, the gravity of loss is different between you and me. Please have no resentment toward me.” She then threw one puppy to the tiger, saying, “Are you hungry? Here, I offer you a fistful of meat and hope you will not return and hurt me.”

The tiger opened its mouth and swallowed the puppy like a crane eating food. Because the tiger did not leave after swallowing the meat, she threw another puppy. The tiger gulped it down again and growled which seemed to show that it still wanted more. The wife thought that she had already thrown two puppies out of three; she could not give him more and should not stimulate his appetite. So, she decided to shoo the tiger away using her wits. She wrapped a rock in a brazier with old cotton and threw it to the tiger. Guessing that it was a puppy, the tiger gulped it down without chewing. He did not feel heat until the rock passed his throat, but soon after, he rushed about in frenzy as if a bear had overturned a measure[14] and a lion had rolled a ball. He raged about roaring and finally died.

The husband returned home empty-handed and found out that his wife had given birth in good condition, and a big tiger had died and fallen down in the yard. He rushed to the magistrate's office to report the birth and the wife was given a bag of rice, soy sauce, and seaweed. The office, in return, took the tiger's skin.

I say: "Ah! The death of the tiger was inevitable. When the tiger arrived at the door and peeped through, it regarded moving things within his view as meat and not as people. Thus, though he stepped into the trap that would lead to his death, he did not realize it. If the husband had guarded the room, the tiger would not have reached the house. Or, if the tiger had arrived at his house, he was not able to catch it. Moreover, his wife was only a woman and would have run away while covering her eyes if she had encountered a tiger at a public place. How could she attempt to catch a tiger? However, she alone did what a brave man would at midnight without losing her composure. For this reason, it was told that the feeble could win over the strong in a desperate situation, and even the strong could not make certain of their victory if they lacked

[14] *mal*: a measure containing 18 liters

discretion. The old saying, 'Worry comes from negligence,' indicates the tiger's case and "You can survive only after falling into the jaws of death" indicates the wife's.

9. Tale of a Humane Female Entertainer

There was a female entertainer in Seoul whose beauty and artistic skills were the best of her time. She had noble taste and did not show respect if guests were not rich nor of high social status. Among the guests, moreover, she only served those who had handsome looks, renowned fame, and an eye for the arts. Thus, she did not always have many guests. Among guests she had served were civil officials from the office of the Special Counselors and Royal Secretariat and military officials from the office of a military Commander. In addition, there were guests from rich households who wore splendid clothes and were known for their witty talk. The guests rejected by her were eager to speak ill of her, but they did not know she had high principles.

In the year of *Urhae* [1755], many gentlemen were exiled for their involvement in a political event. One of the entertainer's favorite guests was charged, lost his position in the Office of Special Counselor and the Office of Royal Decree, and was exiled to Cheju Island as a government slave there. When she heard about him, she made the following announcement to others with whom she maintained close contacts:

"Please prepare my bags for travel. I served him only a day, as I do with many others. Considering the past, I have served guests for ten years and nearly one hundred people. They all enjoy meat and silk clothes and have not yet experienced hardship. He has been sentenced to starve on Cheju Island, and it would be my dishonor if I let my guest die in hunger. Thus, I will follow him."

Finally, she crossed the sea and followed him with ample funds. She served him on Cheju Island diligently and lavishly.

She said to him, “It is certain that you cannot go back to Seoul. Living a short pleasurable life is better than a long miserable life. Why don’t you pursue an enjoyable one?”

She provided wine every day and made him drunk. When he was drunk, she spent the nights with him, regardless of time. Before long, he became sick and died. When he died, she held a funeral with a superb coffin and shroud. Moreover, she carried out the funeral preparations by herself. She gave ten letters and the leftover money to her neighbors and said, “When I die, please wash and dress my body, and with this money transport my corpse to the southern hill in Kangjin. Also, please send these letters to Seoul.”

Soon after, she drank heavily, wailed, and died. Islanders had pity on her and followed her request. Her letters were sent to those she had served before in Seoul. The guests who received the letters felt sad and thought her behavior righteous. Therefore, they collected money and brought her body from the island, and obtained a good site to bury her. At this time, people finally recognized that she had a noble spirit of righteousness and did not depend on those with money and power.

Alas! It would be enough to say that a person like her kept her dignity. She is a heroic figure like Quanfu.[15] How can people compare her to other female entertainers who only adore their hair and pursue only money and profits? Alas, how can I get her leftover cosmetics and incense in order to let those who seek only profits learn by experience? It is sad!

[15] Quanfu 灌夫 (d.131 B.C.): A brave and humane Chinese of the Han.

10. Tale of Ma Xianglan

In Jiajing years[16] of Ming, an old female entertainer Ma Shouzhen lived in Jinling.[17] Her courtesy name was Yueqiao and literary name was Xianglan. She was known for her beauty and she was ranked the top in brothels. Getting old, however, her face faded and her courtyard for guests grew empty.

A boy who studied in the provincial school deeply loved Xianglan, a female entertainer, who was more than fifty years old. Once he saw her, he could not calm himself down and made up his mind to marry her by providing her with three hundred-*yang* of money and making a vow before a river.

She laughed and said, “If I come to have an affair with you, then it will be like a child who sells his beautiful jewel to buy an unworthy thing. How could I, as a female entertainer with grey hair, become your bride holding a winnow and broom for a husband?”

However, the boy’s will was strong. When the female entertainer rejected him and felt unhappy, he was worried and flustered to the extent of not eating. With no other recourse, a teacher of the village school whipped him until the distressed boy was forced to leave.

In a supplementary section, I say; “When the boy was infatuated with the female entertainer, someone asked him, “You are very young, but the female entertainer has a body like a worn-out sack and even her face is faded. Why do you yearn for her?”

The student answered, “Your words are not right. From the moment I met her, I have come to dislike other female entertainers’ cloud-like hair because it is not gray. I hate to see their chubby cheeks and red lips because they are not wrinkled, dry, and faded. I regard radiant skin as

[16] Jiajing 嘉靖 indicates 1522-1566.

[17] Jinling 金陵 is now known as the city of Nanjing. It was the capital city of Ming from 1368 to 1402.

ugly because it is not like the dried rough skin of a tangerine. Considering that some people prefer meat while others dried scabs from wounds, things that satisfy are valuable, and their value cannot be judged by others.

She refused him and was not pleased with the relation. The boy was in worry and could not eat in distress. He visited a fortuneteller and had his fortune told by tally divination. The boy chose sixth *yao*, *bo* hexagram.[18] The fortune teller said, "This sign is not auspicious. This sign indicates five *yin* and one *yang*. According to the *Explanation of Hexagram*, the sign means "a great fruit which is not eaten."

Fruits are usually good to eat. Still, when it grows too big, jujubes are wrinkled, persimmons and chestnuts are split, peaches and apricots have worms inside, pears taste sour and lose their original texture. These are inedible because they make people sick. The boy, however, did not follow the fortuneteller's advice and was eager to fulfill his wishes. He finally left after receiving one hundred lashes.

11. Tale of the Literary Licentiate, Sŏng

Human beings have existed for a long time. The degree of cunning worsens and deception flourishes every day. There was even such a case as this: One forced the locked door open while carrying the body of a person who died of hunger on his back and called fiercely out to the master of a house and angered him. When they finally came to blows, he shouted, "The master killed my friend. I will report him to the magistrate." Without knowing the circumstances, the case could be resolved only after the master had paid a heavy price. This was indeed a grave

[18] "上九. 碩果不食, 君子得輿, 小人剝廬." "The topmost NINE, undivided, shows its subject (as) a great fruit which has not been eaten. The superior man finds (the people again) as a chariot carrying him. The small men (by their course) overthrow their own dwellings." James Legge tr. *Iching*: *Book of Changes* (New York: New Hyde Park), 105-6. Bo Hexagram 剝卦 indicates "splitting apart."

matter. However, with those who are extremely cautious in their behavior, the cunning dare not make a deal and swindlers dare not work their tricks. As the proverb goes, “It is better to be cautious about yourself than to make friends of three noble men.” I regard the son of gentleman Sŏng, as close to the highest example of one who is cautious in his behavior.

Sŏng Hŭiryong was from the Sangju area. His home was rich. In a year of famine, many people begged food from him. When a female servant carried a table laden with food, another servant ran and reported to him, “A beggar carrying a bag snatched up a table of food like a crow!”

Sŏng said, “He may be hungry. Give it away.”

A little later, the servant came back and said, “The beggar is about to run away with dishes in his bag!”

“It’s okay,” responded Sŏng, who ordered the beggar to be brought to him. When he came to Sŏng, the beggar appeared to provoke a fight. Sŏng said, “Are you going to sell those dishes?”

“Yeah.”

“Sell those to me.”

“I do not sell them for less than one thousand and five hundred-*yang*.”

Sŏng ordered that one thousand and five hundred-*yang* be given. The beggar looked at Sŏng for a while and called his wife, who was waiting outside, to come see him and said, “He is not a human being, but a Buddha.”

The beggar untied his bundle and there was the body of a dead baby. He said, “When I do something wrong to someone, he pushes to drive me away. If he pushes me, I threaten him by saying that my baby was killed and then can receive a rich award. Now, I cannot use this trick

since you are discreet and cultivate yourself. I humbly decline your offer." Then, he left the money and dishes and went away. In the end, Sŏng lost nothing.

I say: "If Sŏng had not behaved like that, a criminal case would have proceeded. If so, legal officials might not have given a decision for several years by saying, 'Sŏng's case is unclear.' Then, how could Sŏng not feel victimized? Alas! If an official with a sense of judgment like Ximen Bao[19] were in charge of the case, a beggar would dare not commit such an affair."

17. Tale of a Wood Tender

In our language, the monk is called *chung*, an old monk *sujwa*, a novice *sangjwa*, a wood tender *pumokhan*, and one who returned to the laity *chungsokhan*. A Buddhist monastery was on the mountain in the Chinch'ŏn area. An old monk who was attended by a novice lived in the monastery. The old monk often called the novice and said, "Brew one-*mal*[20] of rice wine."

When the wine was ready, a wood tender suddenly visited the monastery from out of nowhere. The old monk then had the novice carry a wine jar; they found a remote and quiet place under a pine tree and drank and talked to each other. Because they talked about the arcane principles of Buddhism, the novice could not understand them. When the wine ran out, the wood tender suddenly rose and went away. The novice made more wine after several months; the wood tender appeared without fail when the wine was ripe and when he came, he and the old monk would visit the same place. He, however, had not heard that they made a promise to meet again. A year passed while this went on.

[19] Ximen Bao 西門豹 (446-396 B.C.): a Chinese official in the state of Wei.

[20] See footnote 14.

One day, the wood tender was about to rise, when the wine jar was empty and said in a pathetic voice,

"Do you know what's going to happen on a certain day?"

"How can I not know?"

"What are you going to do?"

"I will just obey."

"Why don't you avoid it?"

"I came to this mountain because I had made up my mind."

"Then, today is the last of your enjoyment in this world. Later on that day, I will return to you."

"I see." Finally, they gazed at each other and parted.

When the day that the wood tender had mentioned approached, the old monk woke up at dawn, washed his body with scented water, wore a monk's robe, sat with his legs completely crossed and invoked the name of Amitabul endlessly. In the evening, a disturbance arose because of the appearance of a tiger at the mountain in front. The old monk soon rose and came out. However, even before his robes were out of the threshold, something rushed at him and clasped him in its mouth and ran away. Several monks followed shouting and when they reached the forest, they found the old monk, whose body bore only the tiger's tooth marks with no other injury. They poured a liquid medicine in his mouth but failed to revive him. They washed and clothed the deceased and put him inside a coffin made of a willow tree. The day for cremation was settled, and it was the day that the wood tender had promised to visit. Before the cremation took place, he came and wailed sadly. He watched the cremation and went away when the fire was out.

The novice packed his bag and followed the wood tender stealthily. The wood tender scolded him to go back, but he did not listen. He went inside a mountain valley passing curved paths and thorn bushes, and protruding rocks sharp as knives. The novice followed him determinedly. When he fell down, he rose and went after him. Though his sandals were soaked with blood, he did not stop running. While doing this, a day had passed. At night, the wood tender finally told him. “Come here. Why are you following me in spite of suffering?”

“My deceased master was truly an extraordinary person, but I had not recognized it. That is already a past event. Who can I serve next besides you? I wish that you accept me as your disciple.”

“Ah, your effort is truly sincere, but what can I do with your life span?”

Then, the novice asked his life span.

The wood tender responded, “You have only three more years to live. Your time will end before you master the Path to prolong your life. Then, what you will have is only extreme suffering that is pointless. It is better for you to return to the laity, enjoy wine and meat, and spend the rest of your life pursuing what pleases human nature. If not, for what reason will I not teach you?”

The novice was stunned. He bowed to the wood tender and returned to the monastery pondering. The wood tender left without revealing his name and where he lived. After returning to secular life, the novice roamed market places as a celibate and told his story in detail, including the day of his death. Some did not believe his words, but sure enough, he indeed died on that day.

I say: A proverb has “No outstanding singer in my village and no good writer among my classmates.” People in my country tend to slight themselves. Thus, they believe in a saying, “A

Daoist transcendent lives in Yue[21] or a Buddha lives in Shu,"[22] but do not believe the words that a transcendent or a Buddha lives on some mountains of our country. How can they possibly know that mountains in Yue and Shu are like those in our country? Also, if an unknown extraordinary being, hiding his talent, walks among us like the wood tender, people would hardly recognize him and would just pass him by. How can you be sure that a woman working in the field is not a bodhisattva who observes the sounds of the world in white clothes or that a traveler passing by the lake is not a king? I heard that fact from a single story of the monk at Chinch'ŏn, who is an example of such an encounter. It can be said then that the story of Kim Ch'anghŭp's meeting with Namkung Tu[23] is believable. Alas! How can I meet such an extraordinary person and know my fate?

19. Tale of Student Sim

Student Sim was a literatus in Seoul, handsome and full of elegance. On his way home, he saw a royal procession on Unjong Street. He saw a robust female servant crossing the street while carrying a woman on her back. The woman was covered with a purple kerchief. A young servant followed them holding a pair of red silk shoes in her hands. After seeing the size of her body, Sim thought that she was not a child.

He followed them closely. He did not take his eyes off the woman under the cover and sometimes passed them with only a close shave. When they reached the Sogwangtong Bridge,

[21] Yue 越 was a state in China which existed during the Spring and Autumn Period (722–479 B.C.) and the Warring States Period (475–221 B.C.), in the modern province of Zhejiang.

[22] The State of Shu 蜀 (ca. 1046-316 B.C.) was an ancient state in what is now Sichuan, China. It was conquered by Qin in 316 B.C.

[23] Samyŏn is the courtesy name of Kim Ch'anghŭp (1653-1722). Namgung Tu (1526-1620) is a legendary Daoist hermit.

suddenly a whirlwind blew and took off half of the purple wrapper. It was indeed a lady. She had peach-color cheeks and willow-shaped eyebrows, wore a green upper blouse and a crimson skirt, and wore beautiful makeup with rouge and powder. Even a glimpse of her was enough for Sim to recognize her extraordinary beauty. The lady under the cover, also, had noticed that a handsome young man with blue clothes and a straw hat was following her closely on her right or left side. She was peeping at him through the narrow opening of the cover. When the cover was blown off, four willow-like eyes and star-like pupils met. Surprised and embarrassed, she hid herself under the cover and went away. How could Sim just let her go? He followed her again. When he arrived at Sogongju-dong with a red gate with a spiked top,[24] the woman entered the inner gate of her home.

He wandered around there for a while as if he had lost something. Then, he met an old woman living next door and asked about the lady in detail. He was told that the lady's father was a retired government accountant in the Ministry of Finance. He only had a seventeen-year-old daughter who was not yet married. Sim asked where she stayed in the house. The old woman replied with her finger pointing, "If you turn around a small crossroad, you will see a plastered wall and the lady stays in a small room inside the wall." After hearing this, he could not forget her. He lied to his parents, "My fellow student asked me to stay with him tonight. I would like to visit him this evening."

He waited until there was no passerby in the crossroads, climbed over the wall, and sneaked inside the house. At this time, the crescent moon's light was dusky, flowers were beautifully laid out outside the window, and the window paper was bright with reflected lamplight. Sim sat with his back against an outer wall and waited holding his breath.

[24] This gate is erected before official buildings, palaces, or temples.

Two young female servants and the lady were in the room. She read a work of vernacular fiction in a soft and low voice, sweet and clear like that of a baby oriole. At the third watch, the servants fell asleep and the lady put out the light and went to bed. However, she seemed to worry about something and did not fall asleep for a long time. Sim could not sleep either and dared not make even the faintest sound. He waited until the morning bell rang and crossed over the wall.

After that day, Sim's night visits became a routine. He went at dusk and returned home at dawn. He did this for twenty days without negligence. The lady sometimes read works of fiction or did needlework during the early evening. The light was out during the night, and she fell asleep quickly, though sometimes she could not sleep because of some worry. After six or seven nights , she said on her bed in the early evening, "I feel unwell," and knocked on the wall a few times with her hands while making deep sighs and short laments whose sounds could be heard outside the window. Her heavy sighs became worse day by day.

On the twentieth day, she suddenly came out of the back veranda and around the outer wall where Sim sat. He rose with a burst and grasped her in the dark. She said in a low voice without the slightest surprise. "Aren't you the gentleman whom I saw on the Sogwangt'ong Bridge? I have known about your visits for the past twenty days. Please do not hold me. If I make a sound, you could never escape from here again. If you let me go, I will open a back door and let you in. Please release me."

Sim believed her words, released her, and waited. She slowly turned around and returned to her room. She then called her female servant, "Go to my mother and ask for a big padlock. Tonight is very dark and I am afraid of others." The servant went to an upper room and soon brought a lock. She fastened the lock on the back door that she had promised to open. She purposefully locked the door "click." Soon after, she put out the lamp and pretended to be asleep.

Sim was angry that she had deceived him. However, he was somewhat happy to have a chance to see her even once. He stayed up all night outside the locked room and returned to his home at dawn. He went to her home the next day and again the day after. He was not discouraged, though the back door was closed. He did not fail to visit; even when it rained, he came with a rain coat made of oiled paper to stay dry. Ten more days passed. The house was quiet as people were sleeping. She also put out the lamp and lay down in silence for a long time. Then suddenly she aroused herself and woke up her female servants. She urged them to light the lamp and said, "Go and sleep in the upper room tonight." The two servants went out and she unlocked the door with a key that hung on a wall. She opened the door wide and called him, "Gentleman, please come in." Sim entered the room quickly, without hesitation. She locked the door again and told him "Please have a seat for a while." She went to the upper room and soon came back with her parents. The parents were greatly startled to see him.

She began to talk to them: "Please don't be startled and listen to my words. I had not gone outside the door as a seventeen-year-old girl. However, when I was on the way home after seeing the royal procession, the wind blew off my cloth and I met a young man with a straw hat at the Sogwangt'ong Bridge. From that night on, he has hidden himself and waited below the door every day for more than thirty days. He came in rain, cold, and even when I refused him by locking the door. I thought about it over and over. If a rumor spreads and village people know that he slipped in during the night and went away at dawn, who would believe that he actually stood alone outside the door? If so, I would be like a pheasant caught by a dog. Moreover, he is a gentleman from a noble family and does not know how to control his youthful vigor like a butterfly and a bee that only seek flowers and do not care for the danger of wind and dew. He may fall ill soon. If he cannot be saved, then his death would be my fault, even if I did not kill

him. Although others do not know the real situation, there would be a secret recompense. Also, I am merely a girl from a middle-class household. I am not a beauty that overthrows a city wall, or makes fish sink and hide in water, or and flowers feel shameful. He, however, regarding a kite as a hawk, has devoted his true heart to me. If I do not follow him, Heaven, displeased, will not bless me. I have already made up my mind. Dear parents, please don't worry. Ah! You are old and have no other children. I thought that it would be satisfactory if I could marry him and have your son-in-law live with us and serve you while you were alive, and perform memorial services after you passed away. However, things have turned out differently. This seems to be the command of Heaven and thus more words are of no use."

The girl's parents were dumbfounded at her words and had nothing to say. Nor could Sim say anything. Sim and the woman finally came to spend that night together. After his long yearning, how great was his pleasure! After that night, there was no single day that he did not leave his home after dark and return at dawn. Because her family was rich, the lady made excellent clothes for him. However, he could not wear them for fear of arousing his family's suspicion. With all Sim's precautions, however, his family could not help but grow suspicious about his goings and sleeping out for a long time. Thus, he was ordered to go to a Buddhist monastery in a mountain and study there. Although he was dissatisfied with the command, he could not help but move to the Mount Pukhan Fortress with his books under the pressure of his family and friends.

He had been staying at the monastery for about a month. A person handed over the lady's vernacular letter to him. He opened the letter and found out that it was her testament describing her impending death. She had already died. The general contents of the letter were as follows:

The spring weather is still chilly. How is your health in your study at the monastery? Longing for you always, when can I possibly forget you? After you left me, I fell ill and it gradually became severe to the extent that it reached to the marrow. Now all medicines prove useless. After all, the only thing waiting for me is death. What is the good of extending such an unfortunate life as mine? But still, I have three lasting regrets in my heart that keep me from closing my eyes.

I am the only child in my family and have received love from my parents. Thus, I wish to marry a suitable man whom my parents can rely on in their later years and who can undertake future affairs. However, as in the saying "Lights are usually followed by shadows," I have come to be entangled by bad karma. "The mistletoe and the dodder twine themselves on cypress and pine."[25] This is why I have worried in vain without any pleasure and have come to the point of death. Now, my old parents with gray hair will forever have no one to rely on. This is my first regret.

A woman, even a humble servant, has a husband and parents-in-law when she marries, unless she is a female entertainer. There is no daughter-in-law whom her parents-in-law cannot recognize. I was deceived by another and did not see a single old female servant of yours. I made disgraceful choices while living and will become a wandering ghost who has nowhere to go after death. This is my second regret.

Among the wife's duties to her husband, nothing is greater than preparing food to serve and clothes to wear. It has been a short time since I met you. However, I have made a small number of clothes for you. I could not let you eat even a single bowl of rice in my home or wear a single suit of clothes I have made for you, and I have served you only in bed. This is my third regret.

In addition, I feel sad that I should bid everlasting farewell after a short meeting, fall ill, and die soon without seeing you again. However, this is merely a woman's grief and not enough to express to a gentleman. As my thoughts reach this point, my bowels seem to be torn to pieces and my bones melted down with sorrow. The feeble grass is bent down by the wind. Although withered petals become mud, when can my grief possibly cease?
Alas! Our secret meeting through the window is now over. I hope you do not care about me and devote yourself to study and soon achieve the dreams of your youth. I sincerely wish myriad times that you maintain your health.

[25] *Shijing* 217:1; trans. Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 206.

After reading her letter, Sim burst into tears and cried in spite of himself. Although he cried sorrowfully, what was the use? After that, Sim threw away his writing brush and became a military official in the State Tribunal. He reached the rank of Kŭmorang,[26] but died young.

In appraisal I say: I studied at a village school when I was twelve years old and enjoyed hearing stories every day with my schoolmates. One day, my teacher told us Sim's story in detail and said, "Student Sim was my schoolmate. I witnessed him when he received the letter and wailed. I heard his story and have never forgotten it." He added, "I do not suggest that you follow the gallant young gentleman. If a person asserts his strong will in an affair, then he can move even a lady in her boudoir, and, writings and the civil service examinations are nothing to speak of." We thought the story was new at that time. I later read the *History of Romances*[27] by Feng Menglong and found many similar stories. I add this story and make it a supplement to the *History*.

22. Tale of Yi Hong

People in the past were unsophisticated, but those in the present value quick wits. Quick wits produce cunning skills, and skills make slyness, and slyness creates deception. When deception is frequent, public morals are disturbed.

Inside the Great West Gate in Seoul was a large market, the den of merchants who sold fake goods. The merchants deceived customers by saying that nickel was silver, goat's horn a hawksbill, and dog fur a sable. The merchants were actually fathers, sons, and brothers who

[26] The sixth junior ranking official.

[27] *Qingshi* 情史 is a collection of Chinese love stories compiled in the early seventh century by Feng Menglong (1574-1646).

pretended to make deals with each other by nosily bargaining over the price of their goods. A naïve countryman would believe that the goods were real and bought them at the asking price. Thus, a seller could make a tenfold to hundredfold profit. Moreover, pickpockets mingled with the crowd. When they thought something was in bags or money belts, they ripped them with a sharp knife and took the things inside. If noticed, they were chased and would run away to the side street where cold drinks made from fermented rice were sold. The street was winding and narrow. And, if the chaser came near to catch the thief, a man who carries a bundle of bamboo baskets would appear and say, “Please buy my bamboo baskets!” Then, one could no longer chase. For this reason, people who went to the market were extremely cautious about keeping their money and goods safe as warriors protecting a military camp in a battlefield, or as a bride guarding her body. Often, however, they were tricked by deception. In the past, people in the Three Han period were called unsophisticated. Recently, however, many like Paek Myŏnsŏn were notorious for their deceptive skill. Perhaps moral customs were gradually in decay and the naïve in the past became crafty? Or, did evil people exist in the remote past, too?

Yi Hong was from Seoul. He had good looks and speaking skills, so that people who saw Yi for the first time could not recognize that he was a swindler. He appeared to think little of wealth and enjoyed good clothes and food, but in fact, he was poor. Yi visited noble households and earned ten thousand-*yang* of money from them on the pretext of profits from irrigation works. Yi once held a position in construction work at the Ch’ŏngch’ŏn River. He ordered beef and wine to be prepared every day. When he invited female entertainers, no entertainer refused.

There lived a female entertainer in the Anju area whose beauty was the greatest in P’yŏngan province. Because she had the magistrate’s favor, even royal inspectors could not glimpse her face. Therefore, they had no way to invite her to their parties. Yi made a bet with his friends that

he could alone go to Anju and succeed in meeting her within ten days. He packed a load on a horse and wore silk military clothes. Only a male servant with a hat accompanied him. He entered Anju while applying his whip to his horse. Everyone would regard Yi as a wealthy Kaesŏng merchant.

He took up his quarters in the house of the entertainer. Her father was a retired soldier who had opened an inn. Yi made a deal with the father: “What I have are expensive goods. Please do not accept any other guests. During this journey, I have to wait for someone, but cannot tell whether he will come early or late. I will pay your price in full on the day I leave. In addition, I am particular about food, so extremely delicious meals should be prepared for me. I do not care about the price. You may set prices for food and lodging as you please.”

The entertainer’s father regarded Yi as a merchant. He also noticed that Yi’s loads were heavy, which suggested silver money. “Oh, I have an excellent guest,” he thought. He cleaned a room carefully and took Yi in. Yi entered the room and looked around. He frowned and called his servant, “Quickly buy oiled floor paper. How can I lie down in such a place even for a night?” He had the room repapered, put his loads at his bedside and laid out wool bedding and a silk quilt. He then took out a thick account book, an abacus, and a small ink stone from his luggage. Shutting his door, he pretended to do accounting tasks with his male servant throughout the day.

The father bent his ear to the door crack and eavesdropped. Silk, spices, and medicinal stuffs were the materials that Yi and his servant were tallying. The father talked with his wife, a retired entertainer.

“The guest is a wealthy merchant. If he sees my daughter, he will be entranced with her. Then, our profits may not be small and could not be compared with those from the magistrate.”

The father secretly called his daughter from the magistrate’s office in P’yŏngyang.

“A noble person like you comes to stay in this humble place. So I, a young landlady, dare to see you,” she said.

Yi replied, “Don’t do this. You don’t have to do this.” Yi kept working with his abacus as if he were busy. He did not appear to pay attention to her. The father thought, ‘This gentleman is surely a great merchant. His cold behavior is probably because he has highly refined taste and a great fortune.’ In the evening, the father talked with him in private. “Might my daughter not be worth seeing? You were indifferent to her so she feels much shame.

Yi refused his offer several times, did not show much inclination, but seemed to finally accept, albeit reluctantly, to meet her. The entertainer did her best to flatter him by preparing a table of wine and food, and flirted with him by singing and dancing. She was finally successful in spending a night with him. From that night, she frequently met with Yi over the course of three days.

One day, Yi frowned, called the father and asked him with a worried expression, “Haven’t you heard that the western provinces have been infested with thieves?”

“No.”

“How long does it take from Ŭiju to here?”

“It takes a few days.”

“Then, the target days have passed. Were there any problems with horses?” The landlord asked, “Sir, is there something bothering you?”

“Goods from Peking were,” Yi said, “supposed to pass the Yalu River on such and such a day and arrive here on such and such a day. However, the goods have not arrived yet, and I am anxious.” He called his servant and said, “Go and see outside the West Gate.” The servant returned in the evening and announced that he had heard nothing.

Yi was anxious after that day and, after three days, he called the landlord and said, “Because I now hold expensive goods, I cannot go outside. You feel like my family member now. I feel I am falling ill with anxiety and cannot wait and see any longer. I am going to leave my goods with you, so please take care of them. I will go out and look into this matter.” Yi locked his room and went outside in a hurry. Yi immediately took a byway and went back to the Ch’ŏngch’ŏn River. Indeed, his journey took ten days in all.

The suspicions of the people in the house of the entertainer were aroused when Yi did not return. They unpacked Yi’s loads and found nothing but pebbles the size of a goose’s egg.

A local petty official went to Seoul to pay military tax of a thousand strings of cash. While the official was thinking about where he would stay, Yi invited him to his home to deceive him. “I have a good idea. If you follow me, you will earn money for travel and enjoyment with a female entertainer as well.”

The official willingly gave all of his money to him. Yi appeared to earn some money working day and night. Ten days passed when, suddenly, Yi talked big about South Mountain’s beautiful scenery. Yi, with the official, bought a bottle of wine and climbed up the remote area of P’aengnamkol. Yi drank the wine all by himself and wailed.

“Tut, can’t you stand even a bottle of wine?” the official asked.

“Seoul is so beautiful, like this, but I should leave here… How can I not cry?”

Yi took out a rope from his sleeve and attempted to hang himself on a pine branch. The official was greatly startled, stopped him, and asked for a reason.

Yi responded, “It is because of you. I am not a person who runs out on another’s money, even if only for a single penny. However, I have been deceived by another person and your money is all gone. Though I try to repay you, I am poor and have no way. Though I attempt to

run away from it, then you will pester me impatiently, then the situation will be no better than if I die beforehand. So, please don't stop me." Yi seemed to hang himself and jump down under the cliff immediately.

The official was embarrassed and standing on his tiptoes, said: "Don't die. I won't ask you to repay my money."

"You can't be serious. You say such words because I am about to die. Words are meaningless anyway. How can I make you keep this promise later? It is better to die now."

The official thought, "Whether he lives or dies, it will be the same, and I cannot receive the money after all. If he dies, then I will be in trouble." Then, the official took out a brush and ink from his sleeve and wrote a voucher for the money and persuaded Yi not to kill himself.

"If you indeed do this, what reason do I have to kill myself?" Yi shook the dust off his clothes and returned home. Then, Yi drove the official out of his home from that night and prohibited him from coming through the door.

A judicial officer came to know of the deception by hearsay, seized him, and sentenced him to one hundred strokes of beating. Yi almost died from it, but lived anyway.

Yi practiced archery, but his success in the military examination that year was not due to his skill. When the list of successful candidates was announced, he celebrated by having a parade bigger than all the others. The musicians all wore official military clothes made in blue ramie cloth and aromatic hat string. In addition to an ornamental towel, cloth, and money, Yi gave the musicians a folding screen painted with peony flowers and an encased ornamental knife made of rhinoceros horn. People said that Yi often cut the weeds on the graves of others and sold *chewijŏn*[28] to raise money for the parade.

[28] Paddy fields set apart so that their produce will maintain annual ancestor-memorial services.

Yi's home was outside the West Gate. One day, while wearing silk shirts embroidered with a floral pattern, he slowly entered the South Gate, stroking his hat string and a fan ornament made of amber in his left hand. He saw a Buddhist monk who asked for an offering while striking a hand bell.

Yi called to the monk, "How long have you stood here?"

"For three days."

"How much money have you gotten?"

"I received some two hundred *p'un*."[29]

"My! You will be old and on the verge of death by the time you get enough money. Reciting 'I trust in Buddha Amitabha' for three days and you get only two hundred *p'un*! I am rich and have lots of family members. I have thought of doing a good deed to the Buddha. You met blessing today. What will I give you as an offering?"

Yi thought for a while and finally said, "I have some brassware. Are they useful?"

The monk replied, "There is no better charity than making a Buddhist statue in brass."

"Then, follow me," said Yi. He led the monk and went into the South Gate. He pointed to a lit house and said, "Let's rest there." The barmaid warmed wine and brought appetizers. Yi drank ten cups of wine one after the other, fumbled with his silk pocket, laughed loudly, and said, "Today, I forgot to bring money for the wine. Well, I'd like to borrow things from your sack. I will repay you right away." The monk paid the price.

They went out and Yi called the monk, "Are you coming with me?"

"Yes, yes, of course."

"My brassware is old. My family may stop you from taking it. You should carry it well."

[29] *P'un* is a unit of measuring old Korean copper coinage

"Offering brassware is up to you and carrying them is my work. How could I not care for them?"

"Yes."

They went into another tavern and drank wine by spending the monk's money. After three rounds at taverns, the monk ran out of money.

As they were walking, Yi called the monk again, "People should be perceptive in anything."

The monk answered, "I have spent my life like that. All I have is only social sense."

"You are right," said Yi. A few steps later, Yi turned around and said, "The brassware is really big. How could you carry it?"

"Bigger is better," the monk answered. "Once you give it to me, even if it is a thousand *kŭn*,[30] it won't be difficult to carry."

"All right," replied Yi.

They had already crossed over the Taegwangt'ong Bridge. Yi turned to the street to the east and held his fan while pointing the Injŏng Bell[31] in the bell pavilion. "There is brassware. You have to carry it well."

The monk listened and suddenly turned his body and looked over South Mountain. He was stunned, stood there for a long time, and finally ran away. Yi slowly walked toward the Ch'ŏlchŏn Bridge.[32]

Yi's life is generally like this. These are some famous stories about his life. He was notorious for deceiving people and, because of this, he was punished and exiled to a remote place.

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[30] *Kŭn*: a traditional unit of weight, equal to 0.60478982 kilogram.

[31] This is a curfew bell located at the Chongro area in Seoul.

[32] A bridge located on Chongro Street in Seoul.

I say: “A big trick deceives the world first, followed by king and ministers, and then common people. Yi’s deception was the lowest kind and not worth disputing. However, one who deceives the world becomes a king, then is honored, and finally makes his house illustrious. Yi Hong was punished by the law because of his deception. It can be said that he actually deceived himself rather than others. This is sad.”

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