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Hyeon Chae's Growth as One of the Main Agents of Modern Translation

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I. Introduction

Hyeon Chae (1856–1925) was a former yeokgwan (譯官: an official interpreter) who is known as a textbook compiler, historian, and enlightenment activist. Yeokgwans were government officials in charge of interpretation and translation in the Joseon Dynasty. The yeokgwans' responsibilities afforded them many opportunities to interact with personnel of the Ming and Qing Dynasty, and Japan. Naturally, exposed them to foreign cultures, they were also able to accumulate wealth through trade with Qing and Japan. However, limitations of social status, scope of business, and academic traditions centered on Neo-Confucianism made it difficult for them to join the ranks of true intellectuals in the Joseon Dynasty. But the process of modernization began to create an environment in which yeokgwans with expertise and wealth could actively participate and become recognized as intellectuals. In this transformational process, Hyeon emerged as a modern intellectual through his translation of foreign books and compilation of textbooks.

Existing studies deal with the early stages of Hyeon's life and his ideas of patriotic enlightenment (Roh 69–203; Jeon 69–92). Moreover, numerous research has analyzed his translated work and his textbooks from the perspective of various academic fields (Kang 109–18; Ko 259–89; Y. Park 263–85; J. Park 741–50; Chung and Lee 481–506; K. Choi 97–131; Y. Choi 981–1021). The most recent studies focus on the translation method that Hyeon employed in working on *Wolnammangguksa* (越南亡國史) (Goh and Oh 293–323; Lee 499–521; Song 183–204).

This thesis examines Hyeon's transfiguration into a modern intellectual through translation. We argue that the evaluation of Hyeon as a modern intellectual rests on his adoption of modern knowledge in establishing his viewpoint and applying it modern education. This research reveals the process

in which Hyeon, a government official of the premodern era, discovered his identity and social role as a modern intellectual of the Daehan Empire. In that process, we hope to shed light on the role that translation played in forming and propagating modern knowledge in Korea.

This paper will first look at Hyeon's life in order to examine the process of his transfiguration into a modern intellectual, and then proceed to investigate how he constructed his views of the nation, the world, and of education through his translation work. By reviewing *Yunyeonpildok* (幼年必讀, 1907), I intend to examine how those viewpoints were reflected in his writing.

II. Identity Development as a Modern Intellectual through Translation

1. Life

Hyeon Chae was born in 1856 into the Hyeon household of Cheonryeong, a family that had served as yeokgwans for generations. In 1873, he passed the examination for the Hanhak (漢學: Chinese classics) branch of Yeokgwa (譯科: Official examination to select yeokgwans) and began his career as a yeokgwan.¹ Since the 18th century, many yeokgwans in his family passed the examination in both the Chinese classics branch and the Japanese classics branch (Kim 9–11). Therefore, it is most likely that Hyeon learned both Chinese and Japanese while he was growing up. Living as a yeokgwan, he was appointed as Beonyeokgwan (繙譯官: Officials in charge of translation in Department of Foreign Affairs) of the Busan harbor Gamliseo (監理署: Administration Office) in 1892.² Considering that Busan harbor played an important role in trade and diplomacy with Japan, it is highly likely that he also took part in Japanese interpretation and translation. Subsequently, from July 1894, he worked as a junior official (主事) at Tongni gyoseop tongsang samu amun (統理交涉通商事務衙門: Board for General Control of Diplomatic and Commercial Matters).³

The 1894 Kabo Reforms presented Hyeon an opportunity to expand

1. *Yeokgwa bangnok*. Vol. 2.

2. *Seungjeongwonilgi*. December 22 (Byeongja), Gojong 29 (1892); December 23 (Jeongchuk).

3. *Seungjeongwonilgi*. September 5 (Gapsin), Gojong 30 (1893); July 2 (Byeongja), Gojong 31 (1894).

the scope of his activities. First, more public posts became available to the yeokgwans. Second, as the implementation of a modern education system became widespread, the translation of foreign books became necessary for securing educational contents.

In January 1895, Hyeon, at the time a junior official at Oemuamun (外務衙門: Department of Foreign Affairs), was also in charge of making an agreement (合同) between the government and Paichaihakdang (培材學堂).⁴ Even though he was an official of the Oemuamun, he was able to engage in this role because Paichaihakdang was a school established by foreigners. In the leap month of May 1895, he was appointed as assistant instructor of the Foreign Language School.⁵ In December of that year (solar calendar: January 1896), he was appointed the governor of Pyeongyang, even though he chose not to take up this new post.⁶

Afterwards, he worked as committee member of Hakbu (學部: Department of Education) and as a junior official of the government reorganized by the 1894 Kabo Reforms (Roh 77). During his Hakbu employment, he wrote various textbooks to be used for modern education. In those early days of modern education, Hyeon possessed the expertise as an interpreter and translator of Chinese and Japanese, which enabled him to translate and edit books written in either language with ease. It was on the basis of this ability that he was able to write textbooks. However, in December 1906 (solar calendar: January 1907), he was dismissed from the Hakbu committee.⁷

During Hyeon's employment at Hakbu, many government schools and private schools were established through the country. Notably, after 1905, private schools were established and the enlightenment movements became more active. In these conditions, Hyeon interacted with intellectuals and organizations endeavoring to enlighten the public.

In 1909, several kinds of textbooks, which would evoke Korean national spirit, were banned from circulation by the pro-Japanese government, including several textbooks authored by Hyeon. The following year, his translation work was made even more difficult with the conclusion of the annexation treaty

4. Paichaihakdang Agreement (奎23177).

5. *Seungjeongwonilgi*. May (leap month) 21 (Sinyu), Gojong 32 (1895).

6. *Seungjeongwonilgi*. December 7 (Kyeyu), Gojong 32 (1895) (solar calendar: January 21); December 17 (Kyemi) (solar calendar: January 31).

7. *Seungjeongwonilgi*. December 15 (Jeongchuk), Gojong 43 (1906) (solar calendar: January 28).

between Korea and Japan.

Based on the 1923 and 1924 personnel directory of the Japanese Government General of Korea, where he is listed as a member of the Joseon History Compilation Committee (朝鮮史編修會), it can be estimated that he worked there until shortly before his death in 1925.⁸

In the Joseon Dynasty, Hyeon was only an ordinary yeokgwan, a government official in charge of interpretation and translation. However, as Joseon society began to follow the path of modernization, he was reborn as a textbook writer and translator. This was possible due to his status as an official as well as his interpreting and translating abilities. Hyeon showed an awareness of his role as a modern intellectual and an ability to put it into practice.

2. Transfiguration into a Main Agent of Modern Translation

After the 1894 Kabo Reforms, Hyeon worked at Hakbu, compiling textbooks and translating foreign books. His significant works are arranged in <Table 1> below.

Hyeon's works can be divided into those written while he was working at Hakbu and those written after his retirement. The works written during his Hakbu employment can be further divided by period: those penned in the period around 1900, and those written in the period after 1905.

Hakbu published most of Hyeon's works around the year 1900. The books published by Hakbu include *Dongguk yeoksa* (東國歷史) and *Daehan jijji* (大韓地誌), textbooks on Korean history and geography; *A-guk ryaksa*, a history book on Russia that had a close political relationship with the Daehan Empire at the time; and *Cheongguk musuljeongbyeon-gi* (清國戊戌政變記) a record of the Musuljeongbyeon (戊戌政變) which was an important event that occurred in the process of modernization in Qing. These works deal with the history and geography of the Daehan Empire, and the history and circumstances of neighboring countries. Among these, *A-guk ryaksa* and *Cheongguk musuljeongbyeon-gi* were translated from the Chinese. He edited and published *Daehan jijji*, translated from the records of several Japanese writers, after consulting several *Yeojiseungram* (輿地勝覽) and records kept in government offices.⁹ In other words, Hyeon's translated works of this period

8. List of Personnel of Institute of the Japanese Government General of Korea (<http://db.history.go.kr>).

9. Hyeon, Chae. "Preface." *Daehan jijji*, 1899.

were compiled to meet the demands of the government, based on his fluency in Chinese and Japanese. In short, during a time after the 1894 Kabo Reforms when modern studies and civilization were being introduced and public

Table 1. Significant Works by Hyeon Chae

Period	Title	Year of Publication	Translated work	Publisher
Works authored during employment at Hakbu	<i>A-guk ryaksa</i> (俄國略史)	1898	√	Hakbu Press
	<i>Jungdong jeon-gi</i> (中東戰記)	1899	√	Hwangseong Newspapers
	<i>Dongguk yeoksa</i> (東國歷史)	1899		Hakbu Press
	<i>Daehan jiji</i> (大韓地誌)	1899	√	Hakbu Press
	<i>Cheongguk musuljeongbyeon-gi</i> (清國戊戌政變記)	1900	√	Hakbu Press
	<i>Manguk sagi</i> (萬國史記)	1905	√	
	<i>Dongguk saryak</i> (東國史略)	1906	√	Boseongwan
	<i>Beoplanso sinsa</i> (法蘭西新史)	1906	√	Daehwasanghoi Printers
	<i>Wollam mangguksa</i> (越南亡國史)	1906	√	Boseongwan
Works authored after retirement from Hakbu	<i>Yunyeonpildok</i> (幼年必讀)	1907		Hwimun-gwan
	<i>Yunyeonpildok seok-ui</i> (幼年必讀釋義)	1907		Ilhan Book Printers Inc.
	<i>Dongseoyang yeoksa</i> (東西洋歷史)	1907	√	Boseongwan
	<i>Lamasa</i> (羅馬史)	1907	√	Ilhan Book Printers Inc.
	<i>Ilbon sagi</i> (日本史記)	1907	√	Bomunsa
	<i>Choesin godeungsobak iguwaseo</i> (最新高等小學理科書)	1908	√	Ilhan Book Printers Inc.
	<i>Sinchan chodeungsobak</i> (新纂初等小學)	1909		Ilhan Printers
	<i>Gaejeong igwa gyogwaseo</i> (改正理科教科書)	1910	√	Ilhan Book Printers Inc.

education was beginning in earnest, Hyeon was in charge of Chinese and Japanese translation at Hakbu with his yeokgwan background. This led him to a compiler of textbooks.

Meanwhile, it is remarkable how Hyeon, despite his jung-in roots (中人: people of the class below yangban who were in charge of practical business as officials in Joseon), participated in narrating Korean history, a task that had previously been monopolized by the yangban (兩班: aristocrat class). To be sure, Hyeon did not write *Dongguk yeoksa* on his own; he instead selected important parts and supplemented what he deemed insufficient parts from *Daehan yeokdae saryak* (大韓歷代史略), a textbook for middle school compiled by the Hakbu editorial bureau.¹⁰ However, his experience in compiling a history textbook provided him with an opportunity to contribute to the process of change concerning the role of history. This experience made it possible for Hyeon, a government official from jung-in roots, to take part in this transformational process where “history for the ruling class by the ruling class” of the premodern era, which was written for politicians and social leaders to govern properly by reflecting on past politics, became “a mandatory subject for the general public.”

The only work among the translated works from around 1900 that was published by a publisher other than Hakbu was *Jungdong jeon-gi* (published by Hwangseong Newspapers). A postscript in *Jungdong jeon-gi* describes his reasons for translating the book:

The Sino-Japanese War started from us, so we, the people of Daehan, have to know the relationship between China, Japan, and Korea, what the war situations were like, how an arrangement was made, how the enemy was defeated, and the reasons behind the victory. By also examining the causes for losing in the battle and making strenuous efforts to learn and strengthen ourselves, we can change the declining conditions of Daehan. If we do so, we will be able to shed our weakness to become rich, powerful, and will prosper in the future, joining in on the ranks of Prussia in the West and Japan in the East.¹¹

10. Lee, Kyu-Hwan. “Preface.” *Dongguk yeoksa* Vol.1, 1899.

11. Hyeon, Chae. “Afterwords.” *Jungdong jeon-gi*, 1899.

The Sino-Japanese War was fought to gain supremacy over Joseon. For this reason, Hyeon believed that it was necessary to know the full account of the war and that people should identify the reasons for Qing's defeat and use them as a foundation for making the Daehan Empire powerful. Hyeon also answered the question "Why translate foreign books?" by saying that the purpose of this translation was to reflect upon the examples of foreign countries and to strengthen the Daehan Empire.

In 1905 and 1906, private publishers printed his translated works. Hyeon strongly expressed his reasons for compiling translated books in the preface of *Manguk sagi* (萬國史記) and *Dongguk saryak*, both of which were translated during this period.

Manguk sagi is an edited translation of world history. With "Manguk chongseol" (萬國摠說) placed as the first book, the massive collection is composed of four volumes of Asian history, one volume of African history, 21 volumes of European history, two volumes of American history, one volume of Oceanian history, and includes "Cheongguk musuljeongbyeon-gi" (清國戊戌政變記) and two volumes of "Cheongguk danbi gisa" (清國團匪記事) as sequels. A total number of fourteen Chinese and Japanese books were used as original scripts or for quotations in this edited translation. Five prefaces written by five people (one of them being by Hakbu minister Lee Jae-Geuk) was printed in *Manguk sagi*.

Hyeon penned a preface that is seven pages long. Hyeon begins with the ominous sentence – "If a country exists, the people exist, and if the country is ruined, it stands to reason that the people are ruined."¹² He allots a good deal of space in his preface to stir the notion that the existence of a country is an urgent and supreme task for all Koreans. He warns that the danger of the country is close at hand and that he translated the history of nations for reasons of his own after observing the dangerous circumstances that his country was facing. He writes, "Poland was ruined because of the subjects' discord and the establishment of parties by creating alliances with foreign nations. Turkey declined because it abused its people and blindly followed conventions. China diminished because of arrogance about its own vastness of land and by not practicing new laws."¹³ To arouse the readers, he adds that he closed his book and covered his face to hide the tears that came as he was translating these

12. Hyeon, Chae. "Preface." *Manguk sagi*, 1905.

13. Ibid.

words.

Underscoring the cruelty of imperialism, he asserts that unlike change of dynasties in the past, the destruction of a country in present times will lead to the extermination of its people. He also implores that people be patriotic. “If I truly love my country, it exists and thus I exist. If I do not love my country, it will perish as will I.”¹⁴ By mastering the affairs of many nations, to learn from their strengths and overcome our weaknesses, by adopting the good and eliminating the evil, and by discarding individual selfishness in favor of the country’s public interest, he believed that the Daehan Empire would become a country that could hold its head high internationally.

Hyeon wrote *Manguk sagi* anticipating that his country would stay an independent nation, using the history of countries all around the world as a mirror to learn from their strengths and eliminate weaknesses, and to finally stand on equal footing with the world powers. But 1905 saw the conclusion of the Eulsa Treaty. It was a time when people of the Daehan Empire had an intense consciousness of crisis and loss. In this atmosphere, Hyeon’s edited translation of *Manguk sagi* focused on modern history (Chung and Lee 495–96).

In addition to wanting to build an independent state, Hyeon appears to have been fascinated with nationalism and the theory of social evolution. According to Hyeon, individuals are considered to exist only for the existence of their country. He also pinpoints to adhering to conventions and not accepting “new culture” as the main causes of national decline. Noting the cruelty of imperialism without criticizing it, he warned of the negligence and ignorance of the weaker nations that could not catch up with the richer and more powerful counterparts.

One of Hyeon’s projects, a textbook of Korean history called the *Dongguk saryak* (東國史略) was a translated version of Hayashi Daisuke (林泰輔)’s *Joseonsa* (朝鮮史) and *Joseon geunsesa* (朝鮮近世史). Hyeon explains his reasons for translating Korean histories authored by a Japanese: “These books are based on reliable grounds ranging from the Three Kingdoms period until the current era, and are also organized for the readers to clearly understand the material, so one should not view them with prejudice just because they were written by a foreigner. This is why I translated them.” In other words, Hyeon pointed out that the strengths of Hayashi’s books were its credibility and organization,

14. Ibid.

which made it easier to read.¹⁵

Even though Hyeon appreciates the fact that a Japanese researched Korean history in such detail, he modified parts which he judged were factually incorrect, or those that ran counter to his own perception of history. He divided the narrative of *Dongguk saryak* into Taegosa (太古史: history from Gojoseon to the Samhan period), Sanggosa (上古史: history from Three Kingdoms period to Later Three Kingdoms period), Junggosa (中古史: history of the Goryeo dynasty), and Geunsesa (近世史: history of the Joseon dynasty). In doing so, he eliminated many parts from Taegosa and summarized it roughly, while giving detailed attention to the latter part of Geunsesa (Y. Choi 995–96). He also added the tenth and final chapter of Geunsesa, titled “Bu gabohu sipnyeon gisa (附甲午後十年記事: Ten Years’ History after Kabo Year)” which does not exist in the original text of the *Joseon geunsesa*. On matters concerning Dangun’s foundation of the country, Imna ilbonbu (任那日本府), and the Imjin War (Japanese Invasion of Joseon in 1592), he deleted, added, and modified the contents of the original text (Y. Park 13–15; Y. Choi 1001–17). Furthermore, in many places, Hyeon deleted, added, and modified words and phrases in parts in which he did not change the context of the content.

What grasped Hyeon’s attention in *Joseonsa* and *Joseon geunsesa* was how the books’ clear organization had made them easier for the general reader to read. *Joseonsa* was first divided into Taegosa, Sanggosa, and Junggosa. They were again each divided into five chapters, thirteen chapters, and seventeen chapters, respectively, with headnotes (頭註) that acted as titles for each short unit. *Joseon geunsesa*, like *Joseonsa*, was divided into ten chapters and also used headnotes.

Prior to the compilation of *Dongguk saryak*, most modern textbooks used pyeonnyeonche (編年體: chronological form) or pyeonnyeon gangmokche (編年綱目體: chronological form where the outline is presented in large letters and specifics is written in small letters), which were methods of historical presentation in the premodern era (Do 118, 198). Hyeon, who had previously compiled *Dongguk yeaoksa* (東國歷史) in pyeonnyeonche, was able to immerse himself in a different method of historical presentation during the compilation of *Dongguk saryak*, which involved dividing chapters according to the compiler’s intentions and giving titles (headnotes) for each unit in order to organize the passages and create emphasis in the narrative. Hyeon seems

15. Hyeon, Chae. “Preface.” *Dongguk saryak*, 1906.

to have judged this presentation method to be quite useful in systematically classifying the contents. Whereas the table of contents in *Joseonsa* and *Joseon geunsesa* only included the title of chapters, *Dongguk saryak* included all titles in the headnotes.

Hyeon expresses the fundamental reason for translating this book towards the end of his preface to the *Dongguk saryak*.

I request: tie old books such as *Tonggam* (通鑑) and *Saryak* (史略) up on a high places. Let the children read our Korean history and then read about world history, so they can broaden their knowledge and understand their circumstances. Moreover, encourage them to put efforts into practical work such as military tactics, criminal law, farming, or manufacturing (兵刑農工) without being idle nor careless. If they throw themselves fully into this pursuit, would we not be able to restore our old culture and rise as a manifestly independent nation before many years have passed?¹⁶

Hyeon was arguing that instruction in Korean history should be a mandatory part of education. He believed that this would enable the construction of a rich and powerful country with a high level of culture. An examination of his preface reveals that one of the main reasons he encouraged the study of Korean history was to make people understand and take pride in the fine culture of their past. Hyeon emphasized this sense of pride in Korean culture in order to give the people confidence that ‘We could also join the ranks of advanced Western nations.’ It was with this purpose in mind that Hyeon compiled *Dongguk saryak*. Hyeon engaged in compiling textbooks while working for Hakbu, and as he continued his translating activities, he found his own reasons for translation: to enlighten the people in finally building a rich and powerful independent state. In *Yunyeonpildok*, which he wrote after his retirement from Hakbu, these themes emerge in a more distinct manner. The following chapter examines Hyeon’s development as a modern intellectual through his translating activities.

16. Hyeon, Chae. “Preface.” *Dongguk saryak*, 1906.

III. Hyeon Chae as a Circulator of Modern Knowledge in *Yunyeonpildok*

1. Background and Characteristics of the *Yunyeonpildok*

Before his retirement from Hakbu, Hyeon had mainly worked on compiling translations. But in 1907, he authored a children's textbook, titled *Yunyeonpildok* (幼年必讀). He wrote *Yunyeonpildok* to meet the needs of his time, an era in which there was a growing awareness that all citizens should receive modern education. Since this book was not a work of translation, Hyeon's perception of modern knowledge is more clearly revealed than in the prefaces to his translations or in the modifications to translations of original texts.

First, I will examine the context in which *Yunyeonpildok* was written. Amid a mounting sense of crisis over the loss of sovereignty after the Eulsa Treaty, many schools were established, and the notion that all citizens should be educated to make The Daehan Empire powerful took hold within society. It is against this backdrop that the necessity of textbooks suitable for modern education became an issue.

For example, on the October 5, 1905 issue of *Daehanmaeilsinbo* (*The Korea Daily News*), the editorial "Non monghakgyohak" ("Discussion of Children Education," 論蒙學教學) gathered arguments by educators on the necessity of suitable textbooks for children. It pointed out how children's education texts were too difficult and full of insignificant material, resulting in unsatisfactory outcomes despite many hours of study. Japanese textbooks, too, were pointed out to be inappropriate for children's education. The editorial summarized the requisite textbook as follows:

The child's unique, innate temperament should be considered in choosing a suitable textbook; one should take into consideration the strong points of foreign textbooks, the use of both Korean and Chinese in writing the text, and the addition of pictures to make the information simple and easy to understand. It should be regulated so that every child in the country uses the same textbook.¹⁷

17. "Discussion of Children Education." *Daehanmaeilsinbo* [*The Korea Daily News*] no. 45, Oct 5, 1905.

In other words, the necessary textbooks were those that selected practical information appropriate for a child's level of understanding, combined both Korean and Chinese characters, and included illustrations to help the children understand the material. Experienced in compiling textbooks and translating foreign books, Hyeon wrote *Yunyeonpildok* by integrating these demands of the times with his own experiences.

The following section will examine the characteristics of *Yunyeonpildok*. In his introductory remarks of *Yunyeonpildok*, Hyeon writes, "Although this book is a textbook for children, in truth, even a person of old age should read it once to acquire the general knowledge about the nation and its people."¹⁸ Under the circumstances of the times in which only a limited number of people could receive modern education, he wrote this book not only as a textbook for elementary school students, but also as an introductory textbook for the education of the general public. Hyeon summarizes the purpose of the book and its composition: "We Koreans are still stuck in old customs and our patriotism is in the dark. Therefore, this book has as its sole focus the arousal of patriotic sentiment and thus deals with topography and world affairs with a focus on history."¹⁹ In other words, Hyeon composed the book by combining material related to topography and world affairs with a concentration on history. He did this for the sole purpose of fostering patriotism.

The *Yunyeonpildok* was organized into four volumes and 132 chapters, depicting the flow of Korean history from ancient times to the Eulsa Treaty. Moreover, information on Korea's topography is placed in the same chapter as Korean history or is dealt with in a separate chapter of its own. Chapters with information on the concept of the modern state and the attitude of its people are inserted at various intervals. Meanwhile, Hyeon's intention in writing this book is demonstrated through the manner in which the first and final chapters are composed. the 1st and 2nd lessons of Volume 1 begin with "Nation" and the 33rd lesson of Volume 4 concludes with "Perseverance (臥薪嘗膽)."

The 1st lesson of Volume 1 argues that each and every person is valuable, that a nation is made up of many people, and that the reason individuals are significant is that they are members of the nation who are influential to national power. In the 33rd lesson of Volume 4, he quotes Gucheon's words (句踐: a king of the Yue (越) dynasty during the period of Chunqiu (春秋時代)

18. Hyeon, Chae. "Introduction." *Yunyeonpildok*, 1907.

19. Ibid.

in China) to argue that perseverance and education is the way to achieve the ultimate aim of attaining independence. In other words, Hyeon points out how the book was written to provoke its readers to become conscious of themselves as important beings that form the nation, and to inform them that to build a rich and powerful country they have to work hard and train themselves.

Before compiling *Yunyeonpildok*, the preface of Hyeon's translations confirm that he was developing his identity as a modern intellectual through discussions with contemporary intellectuals about the direction of the Daehan Empire's modernization and independence. By aiming to enlighten the public through his translation and compilation work, Hyeon presents himself as performing the crucial role of an intellectual in a time of change. This aspect of the modern intellectual, partially revealed in his translation work and his edited translations, came into its own in *Yunyeonpildok*, Hyeon's textbook for children and the general public. This textbook highlights the Hyeon's role as a circulator of modern knowledge who selects, edits, and provides information related to Korean history, geography, and world affairs that the general public requires. In the next section, I will analyze the text of the *Yunyeonpildok* to examine how Hyeon's accumulated concerns through translations and communication with other intellectuals were expressed and developed.

2. Hyeon Chae as a Circulator of Modern Knowledge

In this section, I will examine how the contents of *Yunyeonpildok* reflect the development of Hyeon's consciousness through his translating activities amid the emerging need for a textbook suitable for modern education.

First, Hyeon wrote in an easy and straightforward manner, choosing to organize each chapter based on the amount of information appropriate for a single teaching session. He used large fonts and wrote in both Korean and Chinese characters. He also provided the Korean pronunciation and meaning of words written in Chinese characters. So that his readers could absorb the material more easily, Hyeon also included numerous pictorial illustrations.

For example, Hyeon allocated three whole chapters to "Euljimundeog (乙支文德)" in Volume 1. Comparing the *Yunyeonpildok* with *Dongguk saryak*, Hyeon's *Dongguk saryak* divides the Sui (隋) invasion of Goguryeo into three items marked by headnotes. The item "Yang gwang (楊廣)'s Invasion" in *Dongguk saryak* corresponds with the contents of the 13rd lesson of *Yunyeonpildok*, and the item "The Sui Army is Defeated and Flees" is similar to the contents of the 14th lesson. The third item in *Dongguk saryak* is titled

“Sui Emperor Yang Gwang Invades Goguryeo Again,” and is different from how the decline of Sui is depicted in the 15th lesson of *Yunyeonpildok*. It can thus be understood that the criteria of dividing the chapters in *Yunyeonpildok* was influenced by his experience of translating *Dongguk saryak*. Hyeon made use of his previous translating experiences in his attempt to compile a clear and easy-to-grasp textbook.

In this work, Hyeon aimed to convey his accumulated knowledge from translation to the students and readers who were just beginning modern education by using an approachable writing style as well as a selecting and organizing material at a level appropriate for children. In the process of his translation work, Hyeon developed a goal of stirring his readers to learn about their history, geography, and modern knowledge, and to educate them so that they could contribute to the construction of a rich and powerful nation. With this goal in mind, Hyeon sought to develop a new composition method that would be suitable for public education. This demonstrates that Hyeon was concerned about the very methods of transferring knowledge, trying to keep pace with the demands of contemporary society. In this role, he can be considered to have performed a significant role in leading the processing and circulation of knowledge in Korean society.

Second, in its focus on Korean history, the overall narrative of *Yunyeonpildok* informs readers of the excellence of Korean culture and highlights the possibility of building a rich and powerful independent nation. As in his preface to the *Dongguk saryak*, Hyeon wrote that his reasons behind translating books on Korean history were for the Korean people to foster a sense of pride and improve their capabilities through recognizing the excellence of their culture.

Yunyeonpildok is composed so that the reader can naturally acquire a sense of pride and affection for the nation while learning about the history and geography of Korea. Even when depicting the population and area of the Daehan Empire, Hyeon tries to make readers recognize the Daehan Empire as a nation with sufficient conditions for becoming an independent state. In “Nation 2,” the 2nd lesson of Volume 1, he writes that countries of ancient times like Sipje (十濟) and Baekje (百濟) were so named because they were built with ten or a hundred people. Since the population of the Daehan Empire had reached twenty million at the time of writing, Hyeon considered it a sufficiently large country.²⁰ He also points out that the Daehan Empire, with an area of

20. Hyeon, Chae. “Nation 2 (2nd lesson).” *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.1, 1907.

82,000 square li (方哩), has been a purely independent state although smaller in size than England, Germany, France, Japan, Qing, Russia, and America. Furthermore, he observes how Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, and Switzerland were smaller than Korea but were independent states.²¹ Thus, he tries to make readers recognize that the Daehan Empire can have independent status, however small its size is. In the 9th lesson of Volume 1, Hyeon writes that despite having little flatland, farming is practiced in many places; that gold, silver, copper, iron, and coal are plentiful; and that grains and fruit trees thrive. Declaring that “Our country is the best country in the entire world,” Hyeon tries to evoke a sense of pride in the hearts of the people.²²

Particularly in sections that deal with history, Hyeon includes many materials that evoke patriotism and national pride anchored in ancient history. The chapters on Korean history were organized to provide basic historical facts related to each historical figure and period. The figures selected in Hyeon's ancient history section are as follows.

- Goguryeo (高句麗): Euljimundeok (乙支文德), Yang Manchun (楊萬春)
- Baekje (百濟): Seongchung (成忠), Gyebaek (階伯)
- Silla (新羅): Kim Yusin (金庾信), Kim Yang (金陽), Jang Bogo (張保臯), Choe Chiwon (崔致遠)

Euljimundeok and Yang Manchun were figures who blocked the invasions of Sui and Tang (唐), the unified nations of China at the time. This fact alone enabled Korean readers to feel a sense of pride. Moreover, Hyeon intended to proliferate the people's sense of pride by adding under “Euljimundeok” that Sui had been destroyed in the aftermath of the war, and in “Yang Manchun” that an emperor of Tang, Taejong (太宗), who had invaded Goguryeo, had been shot in the eye by an arrow during the war and had regretted the Goguryeo invasion as he had returned to his country.²³ This method is on full display in the description of Kim Yusin. He does this by allotting the second chapter of the two under the title “Kim Yusin” to depict an episode in which Silla created an alliance with Tang to attack Baekje. At the time, Kim Yusin was angered by

21. Hyeon, Chae. “The Area of Our Nation (20th lesson).” *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.1, 1907.

22. Hyeon, Chae. “Topography (9th lesson).” *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.1, 1907.

23. Hyeon, Chae. “Euljimundeok 3 (15th lesson),” “Yang Manchun 2 (17th lesson),” “Yang Manchun 3 (18th lesson).” *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.1, 1907.

the rude behavior of So Jeongbang (蘇定方), who led Tang army, and drew his sword; he later received an apology from So Jeongbang. This episode worked to emphasize Kim Yusin's boldness in interacting with the powerful Tang.²⁴

From Baekje, Hyeon chose the figures Seongchung and Gyeback to evoke patriotism. He wrote about their achievements of remonstrating and fighting for the country, risking their lives in the process.²⁵ This emphasis can be seen in the first chapter of "Kim Yusin" as well. Instead of focusing on Kim Yusin as a war hero, Hyeon stresses Kim's devotion to his country in the scene where he is enraged by the Goguryeo and Baekje invasions and swears to heaven that he will defeat the two.²⁶ When depicting Kim Yang and Jang Bogo, Hyeon concentrates on their achievements in subduing rebellions and protecting the royal family.²⁷ These sections reflect Hyeon's hope that readers will also put in the effort to defend their nation in a time of crisis.

Throughout *Yunyeonpildok*, Hyeon directs his attention to depicting the development of academic studies and culture in the developmental process of Korean history. Under the item "Choe Chiwon," Hyeon notes that Choe Chiwon was a well-known academic in the country and the author of numerous books.²⁸ Hyeon further writes of how Choe Chiwon's manifesto that pressed charges against Hwang So (黃巢)'s rebellion won him renown in Tang. He mentions the high standards of scholarship in the past to instill a sense of pride and confidence in readers' minds. This is further revealed when Hyeon summarizes the important historical facts of Baekje over the course of three chapters. Apart from the portion in which he deals with the fall of Baekje, the part of Hyeon's narrative that occupied the most space was that in which he describes the transmission of Baekje culture to Japan. To quote Hyeon directly, "In the times of King Go-i (古爾王), Wang In (王仁) took books titled *Noneo* (論語) and *Cheonjamun* (千字文) on his visit to Japan. Afterwards, Japan was civilized and recognized our country as an advanced country. Japan's Iroha (伊

24. Hyeon, Chae. "Kim Yusin 2 (5th lesson)." *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.2, 1907.

25. Hyeon, Chae. "Seongchung 2 (26th lesson)," "Gyeback 1 (26th lesson)," "Gyeback 2 (27th lesson)," "Gyeback 3 (28th lesson)." *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.1, 1907.

26. Hyeon, Chae. "Kim Yusin 1 (4th lesson)." *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.2, 1907.

27. Hyeon, Chae. "Kim Yang 1 (6th lesson)," "Kim Yang 2 (7th lesson)," "Jang Bogo 1 (8th lesson)," "Jang Bogo 2 (9th lesson)." *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.2, 1907.

28. Hyeon, Chae. "Choe Chiwon 1 (10th lesson)," "Choe Chiwon 2 (11th lesson)." *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.2, 1907.

呂波) was also created by Wang In.”²⁹ By mentioning that Japan obtained its culture from Korea, Hyeon is suggesting that even though Japan is ahead in modernization, Korea is only a short distance behind it, and that the Korean people are historically equipped to build a civilized country.

That Hyeon's methods of depicting Korean history served to accomplish the contemporary task of building an independent state through education can be confirmed by looking at the lyrics “Sui, Dang was defeated by us, and Japan is our pupil” of a song about defending independence rights included in a chapter titled “We Should Be Faithful to Our Duty (本分)” in Volume 2 of *Yunyeonpildok*.³⁰

However, while these parts were written to encourage a sense of pride in the people by suggesting that the Daehan Empire has the potential to become a civilized, rich, and powerful nation, Hyeon also turn a critical eye on contemporary Korean society. He places chapters at intervals that point out aspects of contemporary Korean customs in need of modification, and also pens chapters about the state system and people's rights, aiming for a Westernized modern state system.³¹ An introductory textbook of modern education, *Yunyeonpildok* works to further materialize Hyeon's initial goal of building an independent state by learning from successful systems around the world, making a civilized society, by being proud of one's own culture.

Third, Hyeon recognized the importance of industrial and scientific education. This recognition was not explicit in his previous translational writings. However, this aspect is clearly revealed in *Yunyeonpildok*. In an item titled “Customs” of Volume 2, Hyeon points out that one of the Korean conventions in need of correction is the lack of appreciation for people who make good products. Due to this attitude, he writes, there are no products in Korea to be proud of.³² In item “Do Not Call Small Work Vulgar” of Volume 3, he argues that if a country wants to become rich and powerful, its people should not consider even smaller, less prosperous work as vulgar, pointing out that sculpture, architecture, and invention can be the sources of constructing

29. Hyeon, Chae. “Baekje 1 (21st lesson).” *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.1, 1907.

30. Hyeon, Chae. “We Should Be Faithful to Our Duty (本分) 1 (14th lesson),” “We Should Be Faithful to Our Duty 2 (15th lesson).” *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.2, 1907.

31. Hyeon, Chae. “Customs 1 (16th lesson),” “Customs 2 (17th lesson),” “The State 1 (18th lesson),” “The State 2 (19th lesson),” “People's Rights (20th lesson).” *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.2, 1907.

32. Hyeon, Chae. “Customs 1 (16th lesson).” *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.2, 1907.

a rich and powerful nation.³³

These recognitions can also be found in the sections on Korean history. His recognition of industry as an important factor can be witnessed in the brief descriptions of Silla on the making of ships during King Jijeung (智證王)'s reign and on using cows to plow the fields which appears in the 2nd lesson of Volume 2.³⁴ Moreover, Hyeon notes in the item "Yi Sunsin" that Yi was a great general during the Imjin War and that he invented the world's first armored battleship, the Geobukseon (Turtle Ship).³⁵ This illuminates Yi Sunsin not only as a great commander, but also as an inventor. Under the item "Mulberry Trees and Cotton," which concerns the main cottage industry of the premodern era, Hyeon introduces the origins of planting mulberry trees and cotton, accompanying the text with pictures of both mulberry trees and cotton.³⁶ This suggests that Hyeon paid attention not only to the method of their cultivation but also to their botanical attributes and that he tried to introduce the scientific way of thinking to the public. Afterwards, Hyeon translated and compiled science textbooks such as *Choesin godeungsohak igwaseo* (最新高等小學理科書) and *Gaejeong igwa gyogwaseo* (改正理科教科書).

Through the translation of books related to history, geography, and world affairs, Hyeon shaped his goal of building an independent state by educating the people. He recognized the importance of science and industry, and thus participated in editing and compiling science textbooks as well.

IV. Conclusion

Hyeon Chae, a yeokgwan in the Joseon Dynasty, used his abilities in Chinese and Japanese to work at the Hakbu after the 1894 Kabo Reforms as a translator and compiler of textbooks. Instead of remaining in a passive role simply meeting the needs of the Hakbu, Hyeon worked to give new meaning to his translation work within the context of his times. He translated in order to introduce foreign books to the people for the purpose of educating them

33. Hyeon, Chae. "Do Not Call Small Work Vulgar 1 (30th lesson)," "Do Not Call Small Work Vulgar 2 (31th lesson)." *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.3, 1907.

34. Hyeon, Chae. "Kyeongju 2 (2nd lesson)." *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.2, 1907.

35. Hyeon, Chae. "Yi Sunsin (21st lesson)." *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.3, 1907.

36. Hyeon, Chae. "Mulberry Trees and Cotton (23rd lesson)." *Yunyeonpildok* Vol.3, 1907.

and ultimately making the Daehan Empire a rich and powerful independent nation. Consequently, Hyeon attempted to delete from, add to, and modify the original texts in the process of translation. Hyeon's method and purpose in translation demonstrate his development as a main agent that introduced, processed, and circulated modern knowledge.

While the works produced during his tenure at Hakbu were mostly translations concerning Korean history, Korean geography, world history, and world affairs, Hyeon took a different approach following his retirement from Hakbu. This approach is manifest in his *Yunyeonpildok*, an introductory textbook for children and the general public, both of whom were just beginning to experience modern education. Based on his past experiences in translating and compiling textbooks, Hyeon attempted to organize the material in a clear and straightforward manner suitable for the level of children or those new to modern education. The *Yunyeonpildok* was an extension of his efforts in translating foreign books in order to make the Daehan Empire a rich, powerful, and independent country through the education of its people. In other words, Hyeon aimed for a modern state system and meticulously incorporated messages that would evoke people's patriotism and sense of pride within his narratives of Korean history, Korean geography, the state system, and people's rights and roles. Hyeon sought to apply his accumulated consciousness and knowledge to practice by writing an introductory book on modern education as a processor and circulator of modern knowledge. Furthermore, Hyeon recognized the necessity of industrial and scientific education in reaching the goal of building a rich, powerful, and independent nation, and he attempted to put it into practice. Later, this led Hyeon to broaden his scope of activity by translating science textbooks.

Hyeon Chae did not limit himself to performing a passive role as a government official in the process of introducing modern knowledge. Instead, he transformed himself into an active modern intellectual who would lead the introduction, processing, and circulation of modern knowledge in Korea.

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Abstract

This article examines the process by which Hyeon Chae (玄采), who had been a yeokgwan (譯官) in Joseon, emerged as a modern intellectual through his works on foreign book translation and textbook compilation. Hyeon worked at the Hakbu (學部) as a translator and compiler of textbooks after the 1894 Kabo Reforms. He did not limit himself to performing a passive role as a government official. Hyeon has been concerned about the organization of textbooks and worked to give new meaning to his translation work within the context of his times. He translated foreign books for the purpose of educating people and ultimately making the Daehan Empire a rich and powerful independent nation. Hyeon's consciousness and knowledge which have accumulated through translations manifest clearly in the *Yunyeonpildok*(幼年必讀), an introductory textbook for children and the general public. Hyeon attempted to organize the material in a clear and straightforward manner suitable for the level of children or those new to modern education. He intended to evoke people's patriotism through various contents in this book. Hyeon also recognized the necessity of industrial and scientific education in reaching the goal of building a rich, powerful, and independent nation, Hyeon Chae, who had been a lower level official in the premodern era, transformed himself into an active modern intellectual who would lead the introduction, processing, and circulation of modern knowledge through translation.

Keywords: Hyeon Chae (玄采), translation, modern intellectual, modern knowledge, *Yunyeonpildok* (幼年必讀), yeokgwan (譯官)

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