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**Contributions by Western Scholars to Modern Historiography in Korea, with Emphasis on the RAS-KB1**

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Introduction

Modern Korean historiography arose mostly during the colonial period (1910-1945) under the predominant influence of Japanese scholars, who had learned the “modern” methodology of historical research and writing from German mentors in the late nineteenth century. In developing the study of their own national history after Liberation in 1945, Korean historians faced the task of re-examining previous works by Japanese historians who had consciously “distorted” or “falsified” Korean history. Consequently, during the second half of the twentieth century, they tended to concentrate their efforts on “overcoming” the legacy of colonial Japanese historical scholarship. As a result, they paid only limited attention to Korean studies by Western scholars, which deserved at least equal attention than the works by Japanese writers.

A rapid rise in the number of quality monographs on Korea in North America and Europe since the late 1970s, however, has compelled Korean scholars to pay serious attention to these works. It is time that Koreans accord due recognition to Western scholars, contributions to Korean studies and learn from them on a selective basis. Toward this end, what follows is a survey of Western historiography on Korea from the thirteenth century to 1906, and its impact on native Korean historical scholarship after 1939.

1. Pre-1906 Western Studies on Korea

Korea was known to some Westerners as early as the thirteenth century, [page 4] but it did not become an object of their intellectual curiosity until 1668, when a Dutch sailor, Hendrik Hamel (1630-1692), who had languished in Korea for thirteen years after suffering shipwreck at Cheju Island in 1653, published a journal describing the internal condition of Korea. Western interest in Korea grew further at the turn of the nineteenth century while Western powers, including France, England, Russia, and the United States, were competing to establish diplomatic relations with the “Hermit Kingdom” for religious, commercial, and strategic reasons. Their attempts culminated with the French and American naval expeditions to Kanghwa Island in 1866 and 1871, respectively. The signing of the U.S.-Korean Treaty of 1882, followed by similar Korean treaties with Britain, France, and Russia later in the decade, enabled many Western diplomats, missionaries, and travelers to visit and study in Korea. Studies on Korea by these Westerners reached a new height in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Their scholarly interest continued unabated until Korea was reduced to a Japanese protectorate in 1906 following Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904- 1905). Thereafter, Japanese scholars began monopolizing the field and Western studies on Korea remained in the doldrums until the country was liberated from Japanese rule in 1945. The pre-1906 history of Western studies on Korea can, therefore, be divided into four phases, with the years 1668, 1800, 1882, and 1894 serving as convenient divides.

The Initial Phase, 1250-1668

The first European book that took note of “Caule” (Koryo) was a travelogue, Itinerarium, published around 1256 by a Dutch Franciscan friar, Willem van Rubroek (1215-1270), who served as an emissary of Pope Innocentius IV to the Mongol court at Karakorum. Marco Polo (1254- 1324) also referred to “Kaoli” in his famous Travels of Marco Polo published in 1298. But it was not until the Japanese invasion of Korea between 1592 and 1598 that a Westerner set foot on Korean soil. A Spanish Jesuit missionary in Japan, Father Gregorio de Cespede (1551- 1611), served as a chaplain for Japanese invasion troops on the southeastern coast of Korea during the Hideyoshi invasion and wrote four letters about the Japanese war-like activities in Korea to his superior in Kyushu, Japan, Father P. Pedro Gomez. These letters constitute the first [page 5] eyewitness report from Korea by a literate Westerner.

The book that served as the eye-opener on Korea to the Europeans was Hamel’s Journael (Journal), better known as An Account of the Shipwreck of a Dutch Vessel on the Coast of the Isle of Quelpart, Together with the Description of the Kingdom of Corea. Published in Amsterdam originally in Dutch and translated into French, German and English between 1670 and 1704, this book offered a rare insight into the morals, national traits, domestic life, festivals, and religion of seven-teenth-century Korea based on the author’s thirteen-year observation of the Korean people and their culture. It should be mentioned parenthetically that a Russian envoy to China, Nickolay Spafarii, described Korea together with a map of the peninsula in 1675—for the first time in Russian history—when he reported his findings on China to his home government.

The Second Phase, 1800-1882

Numerous books on Korean geography and history, including navigation reports by French, British, and Russian naval ships that surveyed the Korean coast, were published from about 1800 to 1882 in French, English, Russian and German. They included:

Jean Francois Galaup de la Perouse, Voyage autour de monde pendant les annees 1785, 1786, 1787 et 1788 (A Voyage Round the World in the Years 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1788), Paris, 1797.

W. Robert Broughton, A Voyage of Discovery to North Pacific Ocean, London, 1804.

Captain Basil Hall, Voyage to Corea and the Island of Loo-choo. London, 1820.

L A. Goncharov, Fregat Pallada (The Frigate Pallada), St. Petersburg, 1858.

John Ross, History of Corea, Ancient and Modem: With Description of Manners and Customs, Language and Geography, London, 1880.

Ernst Oppert, Ein Verschlossenes Land: Reisen nach Corea (A Forbidden Land: Voyage to Korea), Leipzig, 1880. [page 6]

The last-mentioned work was an account by Prussian merchant-adventurer Ernst Oppert (1832-1903) of his unsuccessful effort to obtain a trade license from the Korean government, which led to his abortive attempt to excavate the tomb of the Taewongun’s father in May 1868. In this book, Oppert provided a fascinating account of how the Korean people reacted to the Taewongun’s dictatorial rule, together with a synopsis of Korean history, political systems, and economic conditions which he had methodically studied before embarking on his bizarre adventure.

The most valuable Western work on Korea which appeared before 1882 was the two-volume Histoire de l’Eglise de Coree (History of the Korean Church) by Charles Dallet (1829-1878), a missionary historian of Le Societe des Missions Etrangeres de Paris (the Society of Foreign Missions in Paris). Published in 1874, the book’s main feature was a detailed account of the martyrdom of foreign Catholic missionaries and native converts in Korea between 1791 and 1866. It was based on the reports of the French Catholic missionaries who had engaged in clandestine proselytizing in Korea. The book’s introductory chapter contains rich information on Korean history, political institutions, educational system, language, customs, religion, and national character. The book is not only a sine qua non in understanding the history of the Catholic Church in Korea, but also a classic reference in the study of nineteenth-century Korean culture.

The Third Phase, 1882-1894

It was on the basis of the accumulated European studies on Korea, plus Japanese historical sources, that an amateur American historian based in Japan, William Griffis (1843-1928), published the first comprehensive history of Korea in English following the conclusion of the US-Korean Treaty in 1882. Entitled Corea: The Hermit Nation, the book went through nine editions until 1907 and exerted a decisive influence upon a large number of Western readers wishing to learn about the “Hermit Nation” in the late nineteenth century. The main focus of this book was on the history of Korea from the 1860s through the 1880s. But regrettably, the author’s account of ancient Korean-Japanese relations was based solely on an uncritical reading of Japanese mythology and legend, which alleged that the Japanese Empress Jingu had conquered the southern part [page 7] of Korea in the third century A.D. and that the Yamato government received tribute from the Korean kingdoms of Silla, Paekche and Mimana.

Another interesting book on Korea which appeared in the wake of the US-Korean Treaty of 1882 was a travelogue, entitled Choson: The Land of the Morning Calm. A Sketch of Korea. It was written by Percival Lowell (1855-1916), a “foreign secretary and counselor” to the Korean Special Mission to the United States, or the Reciprocatory Mission (Pobingsa), which King Kojong dispatched to the United States in 1883. Lowell visited Seoul as a royal guest during the winter of 1883-1884 and enjoyed the privilege of meeting the king in audience and visiting important places in and out of the capital city, including royal palaces and Buddhist temples—always carrying a camera with him. The result was a richly illustrated ethnographic narrative published in 1886 dealing with actual workings of Korean government, societal life, and religious practices. This book and Griffis’ work were responsible for spreading the stereotype image of Korea as the “Hermit Nation” and the “Land of the Morning Calm” in the minds of Westerners.

The Fourth Phase, 1895-1906

An upsurge in Western interest in Korea occurred in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War. The most significant Western academic work which appeared around the turn of the twentieth century was Bibliographic Coreenne (Korean Bibliography) by M. Maurice Courant (1865-1935), who served as the secretary of the French legation in Seoul from May 1890 to March 1892. It was published in two volumes in Paris during 1894-1896 and a Supplement was added in 1901. This impressive work contains an annotated list of 3,821 books published in Korea in classical Chinese, from the time printing was invented in Korea down to the 1890s. “Probably the largest, most detailed, and most thorough study of any phase of Korean life and culture yet made by an Occidental, the work laid the foundation for Korean studies in the Western world.2

Four other books written by British writers appeared between 1896 and 1900 reflecting the rising British strategic interest in the Korean Peninsula after the Sino-Japanese War. They included Isabella Bird Bishop’s Korea and Her Neighbours (London, 1896); W. H. Wilkinson’s The Corean Government: Constitutional Changes, July 1894 to October [page 8] 1895, with an Appendix on Subsequent Enactments to 20th June 1896 (Shanghai, 1897); George Curzon’s Problems of the Far East: Japan- Korea-China (London, 1894); and Angus Hamilton’s Korea (London, 1900). Bishop’s travelogue, based on her journeys across the Korean Peninsula and the Russian Maritime Province in 1894-95, provided an incisive analysis of socio-political conditions in Korea in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War and the Kabo Reforms of 1894.

A series of expeditions was attempted on Korea by Russian geogra-phers, intelligence officers, and ethnographers following the conclusion of the Russo-Korean Treaty (1884) and the Regulations for the Frontier Trade on the River Tumen (1888). As a result, many travelogues on the internal condition of Korea were published in Russian during the 1880s and 1890s. One of them was Along Korea, Manchuria and Liao-tung Half-Island written in 1898 by a well-known Russian writer, N. G. Garin-Mikhailovsky (1852-1906), when Russian influence on the Great Han (Korean) Empire reached its height. Another was a three-volume handbook on Korea compiled and published by the Russian Ministry of Finance in 1900, entitled Opisanie Korei (A Description of Korea). This work dealt with a wide spectrum of Korean internal affairs, including history, geography, industry, government institutions, educational system, military system, finance, economic conditions, and transportation system based on the field researches conducted by geographical, military and ethnographical experts in the previous years. In the words of Hong Yi-sup, it was an encyclopedic work which “included almost all the findings of studies on Korea up to the close of the nineteenth century, so that the most realistic understanding of Korea could be made possible.”3

II. The Rise of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society

The foregoing survey of Korean studies by Westerners before 1900 reveals that most Western works were the products of individuals representing either the Roman Catholic church or a government agency. The survey also shows that the British led Korean studies in the West until the close of the nineteenth century, followed by the French, Russians, Germans, and Dutch. The situation began to change after 1892 when a group of Protestant missionaries from North America in Seoul, including [page 9] Henry G. Appenzeller (1858-1902), George H. Jones (1867-1919), Homer B. Hulbert (1863-1949), and James S. Gale (1863-1937), launched a semiacademic journal, entitled The Korean Repository. They suspended its publication in 1898 in the face of mounting criticism from the conservative Korean government, which suspected The Repository was an arm of the subversive political association, the Independence Club.

Active staff members of The Repository thereupon sought affiliation with the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (RAS), apparently in order to obtain British protection to stabilize their activities. With permission from the RAS headquarters in London, they inaugurated the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch (RAS-KB) on June 11, 1900，under the chairmanship of a British charge d’affaires in Seoul, J. H. Gubbins. The purpose of the RAS-KB was “to investigate the arts, history, literature and customs of Korea and neighboring countries.” The group started with seventeen members with Jones, Gale, and Hulbert assuming the key posts of vice-president, corresponding secretary, and recording secretary, respectively. Before the end of 1900 membership doubled, and by 1903 had risen to seventy-four. Regular membership in the pre-Liberation period averaged about 150 to 200.

The RAS-KB began publishing its official journal, the Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, in 1900. The establishment of the RAS-KB and the publication of its Transactions were events of special significance in the history of Korean studies, for they marked the birth of a collaborative body of professional and semi-professional scholars devoted to Korean studies under the leadership of North American Protestant missionaries in Seoul. In 1901, an anonymous RAS-KB member noted the historic importance of the publication of the Transactions in the following words:

The publication of the first volume of the Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society is an event of prime importance in the literary history of Korea. It is the first time that a distinctively and avowedly critical study of Korean life and thought has been begun. There have been several popular attempts at placing the Korean before the world in his true colors, but we have here the first serious attempt to deal with the facts from a purely critical standpoint. In the past we have seen in print many partial discussions and many exaggerated descriptions of the things Korean. They have been interesting and [page 10] entertaining but the object of the society whose publication we are now considering is something different from mere entertainment. The society stands for a just, balanced, dispassionate discussion of the many phases of Korean life. It is not the province of this society to make facts square with theories, but to make theories an outgrowth of a careful and exhaustive study of the facts.

The editorial policy of Transactions, in other words, emphasized an empirical approach in historical research while promoting “a just, balanced, dispassionate discussion of the many phases of Korean life.” This policy qualified the Transactions as a modern professional journal. It should be noted that not until the early 1930s did Japanese and Korean scholars specializing in Korean studies launch their journals, Seikyu gakuso (靑丘學叢) and Chindan hakpo (震擅學報), respectively.

The editors of tne Transactions should be regarded as true pioneers of modern Korean studies for a number of additional reasons. First, the moving spirits of the Transactions, including Jones, Gale, Hulbert, and Mark Napier Trollope (1862-1930), an Anglican bishop who joined the editorial board later and served as president of the RAS-KB from 1911 to 1930, conducted their research using Korean and Chinese sources in collaboration with native scholars. For example, Hulbert wrote a series of articles on traditional Korean history based on such Korean and Chinese sources as A Summary of Korean History (東史綱要), Treasure Mirror of the Dynasty (國朝寶鑑), and Comprehensive Survey of Literary Remains (文獻通考). Gale made use of Korean and Chinese sources more extensively. The Oriental language sources which he utilized in writing his papers on traditional Korea included: Records of the Three Kingdoms (二國史記), History of Korea (高麗史), Treasure Mirror of the Dynasty (國朝寶鑑), Complete Mirror of Korea (東國通鑑), Outline History of Korea (東史綱目), Unofficial Records of Korea (大東野乘), Lighted Bramble Records (燃藜室記述), Compendium of Korean Chronicles (海東繹史), Yu Hydng-won’s Schemes (磻溪隨錄), Collectania of Yi Ik (星湖僿說), and Selection of Habitats (擇里志).

Second, as long-time residents of Korea, the editors of Transactions approached Korean culture with a healthy respect for the indigenous population and studied it with an emic (inside or native view) eye. For [page 11] example, Hulbert stated that his study of Korean history was a “labour of love,” and revealed his favorable opinion on the Korean national character and their potentials as follows in 1906 in The Passing of Korea:

This book is a labour of love, undertaken in the days of Korea’s distress, with the purpose of interesting the reading public in a country and a people that have been frequently maligned and seldom appreciated. They are overshadowed by China on the one hand in respect of numbers, and by Japan on the other in respect of wit. They are neither good merchants like the one nor good fighters like the other, and yet they are far more like Anglo-Saxons in temperament than either, and they are by far the pleasantest people in the Far East to live amongst. Their failings are such as follow in the wake of ignorance everywhere, and the bettering of their opportunities will bring swift success to their condition.5

Third, though Protestant missionaries, they approached traditional Korean religions, including Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, with an open mind, relatively free of religious bigotry and cultural bias. For example, Jones wrote a paper on Ch’oe Ch’i-won (崔致遠) in which he evinced no trace of ethnocentric or Christian prejudice, while Trollope and Gale published papers on Korean Buddhism and Taoism from an “ecumenical” point of view. The following is Gale’s evaluation of Korea’s traditional religions—from his Christian point of view:

The east, i.e. Korea, saw, centuries before Abraham was born, that religion was of the heart, not of the nation, nor of the organization, nor of the period of time, but that true religion was neither more nor less than the union of the heart with God... Confucianism, buddhism [sic] and taoism [sic]—the more I study them the more I honour the sincerity, the self-denial, the humility, the wisdom, the devotion that was back of the first founders, great priests of the soul. Their one desire was to overcome evil and step upward and upward, nearer to God. In this we are all alike, Confucian, buddhist, christian [sic]—all brothers. Kind and sympathetic we should be one another. Christ came to fulfill the ideals of each and every one of us. In Him, whatever our religion may be, we shall find the ideal of the soul. May He unite us all.6

In short, it is safe to say that the quality of Western studies on Korea began matching that of Sinology or Japanology by Western scholars with [page 12] the appearance of the Transactions in 1900.

Hulbert published his two-volume History of Korea in 1905 by consolidating the articles he had contributed to The Repository and the Transactions. He also published The Passing of Korea in 1906, which, according to Lak-Geoon George L. Paik, was “the most formidable, inti-mate and authoritative work on Korea, written in a Western language by a Westerner and published in the West, up to the time of its publication in 1906, with the possible exceptions of monumental works by two French authors, Dallet and Courant.”7 Gale published his major historical work, The History of the Korean People, in 1927 based on his researches on Korea since 1892. The works of Hulbert and Gale represented the acme of the Western historical scholarship on Korea prior to 1906 and surpassed in both quality and quantity any works produced by Korean and Japanese scholars up to the 1910s.

III. Western Impact on Native Korean Historiography

Historical works produced by Western scholars on Korea prior to 1906 were admittedly “unsatisfactory” from the standpoint of present-day historians because, among other things, they were products of self-trained non-professionals with limited academic background and because their researches were based on a limited use of primary sources. Griffis, Hulbert, and Gale wrote traditional Korean history without utilizing such basic sources as the Veritable Records of the Choson Dynasty (朝鲜王朝實錄), the Daily Records of the Royal Secretariat (承政院日記), and the Records of the Border Defense Command (備邊可騰錄). Nevertheless, most of their scholarly works, particularly the ones published in the Transactions, were sound because they tried to maintain objectivity in examining materials at hand with minimal conscious distortion. Their works consequently served as the principal secondary sources for numerous books and monographs on Korea which appeared before the Liberation of Korea in 1945 , including:

Fredrick A. McKenzie, The Tragedy of Korea (1908).

-. Korea’s Fight for Freedom (1920).

Henry Chung, Korean Treaties (1919). [page 13]

-. The Case of Korea (1921).

George Lak-Geoon Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910 (1927).

Andrew J. Grajdanzev, Modern Korea (1944).

Fred H. Harrington, God, Mammon, and the Japanese: Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905 (1944).

Frederick M. Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia(1945).

This means that the Western scholars writing on Korea before 1906 made a lasting contribution to the development of Korean studies in the English-speaking world.

What then was the impact of the pre-1906 Western scholarship on native Korean historiography? Generally speaking, Korean historians were slow in assimilating Western scholarly achievements, as evidenced by a chronological list of Korean translations of major pre-1906 Western works on Korea:

1934-35 : Yi Pyong-do. Nanson Chejudo nanp’agipu Choson guk ki (蘭船濟州島難破記 一附朝鮮國記一). A translation of Hendrik Hamel’s Account of Shipwreck (1668).

1946: Kim Su-gyong. Choson munhwasa sdsdl (朝鮮文化史序說). A translation of the “Introduction” of Courant’s Biblio graphie Coreenne (1894).

1959: Han U-gun. Kumdan ui nara Choson kihaeng (禁斷의나라 朝鮮紀行). A complete translation of Oppert’s Ein Ver-schlossenes Land (1880).

1966: Chong Ki-su. Choson kyohoesa soron (朝鮮敎會史序論). A translation of the “Introduction” of Dallet’s Histoire de I ‘Eglise de Coree (1874).

1973: Sin Pok-ryong. Taehancheguk-sa sosol (大韓帝國史序說). A complete translation of Hulbert’s Passing of Korea. (1906).

1974: Pak T’ae-gun. 1854-nyon ui Choson (1854年의 朝鮮). A [page 14] partial translation of Goncharov’s Fregat Pallada (1858).

1974: Pak Sang-gyu. Han’guk ui soji wa munhwa (韓國의 書誌와 文化). The second translation of the “Introduction” of Courant’s Bibliographie Coreenne (1894).

1976: Sin Pok-ryong. Unja ui nara Han’guk (隱者의 나라 韓國). A complete translation of Griffis’ Corea: The Hermit Nation (1882).

1979: An Ung-yol and Ch’oe Sog-u. Han’guk ch’onju kyohoesa (한국천주교회사 A complete translation of Dallet’s Histoire de l’Eglise de Coree (1874).

1981: Kim Hak-su. Chosdn, 1898-nyon (朝鮮, 1898年). A complete translation of uarin-Mikhailovsky’s Along Korea, Manchuria ana Liao-tung Half-Island (1898).

1984: Ch’oe Son and Kim Pyong-rin. Kugydk Han’guk chi (國譯 韓國誌). A complete translation of the Russian Ministry of Finance’s Opisanie Korei (1900).

1994: Yi In-hwa. Han guk kwa ku iut nara (한국과 그이웃 나라). A complete translation of Bishop’s Korea and Her Neighbours (1897).

1994: Yi Hui-jae. Han’guk soji: sujong ponydk p’an (韓國 書誌一修訂翻譯版). A complete translation of Courant’s Bibliographie Coreenne (1894).

The above list reveals, first of all, that out of more than twenty Western works cited above, only one, Hendrick Hamel’s Account of Shipwreck, was translated into Korean by a native historian before 1945. It took an average of seventy years for the remaining books to be partially translated into Korean. A full hundred years had passed before Dallet’s Histoire de l’Eglise de Coree and Courant’s Bibliographie Coreenne were translated in their entirety into Korean. This sad state of afiairs stands in sharp contrast to the Japanese translations of select Western works on Korea. For example, Japanese translations of Griffis’ Corea: Hermit Nation and the Russian Ministry of Finance’s Opisanie Korei came out in 1895 and 1903 respectively. This indicates that the Japanese [page 15] were translating important Western works on Korea within a dozen years after the issuance of the originals.

A lack of the Korean translations of Western works on Korea as well as an increasingly rigorous censorship on Korean studies imposed by the Japanese colonial authorities after 1906 reduced the impact of historio-graphy on Korean historians. It seems that Western works on Korean history did not directly influence the historiography of such native historians of the so-called nationalist school as Pak Un-sik (朴殷植, 1859-1926)一the author of the Han’guk t’ongsa (韓國痛史, The Bitter History of [Modern] Korea, 1915) and Han’guk tongnip undong chi hyolsa (韓國獨立運動之血史, The Blood-Stained History of the Korean Independence Movement, 1920)一and Sin Ch’ae-ho (申采浩, 1880- 1936)一the author of Choson sanggo-sa (朝鮮上古史, Ancient History of Korea) and Choson-sa yon’gu ch’o (朝鮮史研究草, Draft Papers on Korean History, 1929). It is also likely that they did not affect the scholarly activities of Ch’oe Nam-son (崔南善, 1890-1957), who promoted Korean studies between 1910 and 1918 by collecting and publishing traditional Korean literary sources through the Society for Refurbishing the Korean Literary Tradition (Kwangmun-hoe, 光文會). Similarly, a Korean Marxist historian, Paek Nam-un (白南雲, 1894-1979), the author of Choson sahoe kyongje-sa (朝鮮社會經濟史, The Socio-Economic History of Korea, 1933) and Choson ponggon sahoe kyongje-sa, volume I (朝鮮封建社會經濟史 上, The Socio-Economic History of Korea in Feudal Times, 1937), did not seem to have seriously consulted works by Western scholars.

A few native scholars and journalists specializing in modern diplomatic history and Christian church history are the only ones who actively utilized Western scholarly works on Korea. They included Yi Sung-man, Yi Nung-hwa, and Mun Il-p’yong. Yi Sung-man (Syngman Rhee, 李承晩, 1875-1965), who studied English at the Methodist mission school in Seoul, Paejae “College,” was the first journalist who appreciated the value of Western scholarly works on Korea and used them in his “historical” writings. He read English-language books and magazines and wrote his magnum opus, Tongnip chongsin (독립졍신: The Spirit of Independence), while in prison in Seoul during 1899-1904. In describing the post-1860 Korean history in the book, he relied heavily on Griffis’[page 16] Corea: The Hermit Nation and Hulbert’s articles in The Korean Repository and the RAS Transactions.

Another major native historian who utilized Western-language works on Korea was Yi Nung-hwa (李能和, 1868-1945). He learned English at the Chongdong English Language School and French at the government language school while cultivating close personal ties with James Gale. His major work, Choson kidokkyo kup oegyosa (朝鮮基督敎及外交史, History of Korean Christianity and Diplomacy, 1928) was based on Dallet’s Histoire de l’Eglise de Coree along with other Korean sources.

The third native writer who was intellectually indebted to Western scholars was Mun Il-p’yong (文一平, 1888-1936). An historian-journalist who studied intermittently in Japan from 1905 to 1925 at the Aoyama School of Christian Theology, Meiji Gakuin, Waseda University, and the University of Tokyo, Mun serialized his work “History of Korean-American Relations in the Past Fifty Years” (韓美關係五十年史) in the Choson Ilbo (Korea Daily) from July 15 to December 18, 1934. In this semi-scholarly work, Mun relied heavily on books and articles written by Western scholars.

An increasing number of Korean scholars in the fields of humanities and social sciences came under the influence of Western works after 1906 as they became proficient in English and other European languages. Some of them, including Mun Il-p’yong and An Hwak (安廊, 1886- 1946), advocated the promotion of “Choson-hak” (조선학/朝鮮學: Korean Studies) in the wake of the 1919 March First Movement. The movement for the Choson-hak in the 1920s culminated in the founding of the Chindan hakhoe (震槽學會: The Association for the Study of Korea and Her Neighboring Countries) in 1934 under the leadership of Yi Pyong-do (李丙燾, 1896-1989). The founding members of the Chindan hakhoe received training in history, archaeology, sociology and anthropology in Japanese universities. They published the Chindan hakpo (震擅學報) under the motto “Korean studies by Koreans.” The journal’s editorial policy was almost identical with that of the Transactions of the RAS-KB. It took Korean scholars more than three decades to master Western methodology and develop their own version of modern Korean studies.

[page 17]

Conclusion

The history of Western scholarship on Korean history, society and culture dates back to the 1870s, if not earlier, and reached its zenith in 1900，when a group of North American missionary scholars organized the RAS-KB in Seoul and launched its organ, the Transactions. The society’s scholarly activities suffered setbacks after 1906 under Japanese oppression. They stopped completely in 1941 under a wartime censorship imposed by the Japanese colonial authorities on all Korean studies. In 1945，the RAS-KB resumed its activities, including the publication of its annual journal.

The academic quality of the Korean studies achieved by Western scholars in the nineteenth century was uneven. Some works, like Griffis, Corea: The Hermit Nation, contained some factual errors due partly to the author’s uncritical reliance on Japanese sources. Others, including the works of RAS-KB members, represented a sound scholarship based on modern methodology in historical research and writing developed in Europe and North America. Generally speaking, they were superior in both quality and quantity to works produced by contemporary Korean scholars since they were products of modern historical methodology free of nationalistic bias. There were many things Korean scholars could have benefited from Western scholarship on Korea if only they had made an effort to assimilate them一on a selective basis, of course. Unfortunately, in the prevailing intellectual and ideological milieu of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century they paid little attention to Western studies on Korea. This unfortunate academic negligence was due to a number of factors, including (1) their linguistic difficulty in understanding works in English and other European languages; (2) their deep-rooted Confucian cultural prejudice and/or Marxist ideological bias against the Western “imperialist scholarship”; and (3) their consuming preoccupation with the struggle against the Japanese distortion of Korean history and culture.

Today, we are witnessing an outpouring of high-quality scholarly works on Korea by Western scholars. They are producing a growing impact among the increasing number of native scholars proficient in Western languages. If native Korean scholars are going to lead the Korean studies and propagate their works on a global scale, it is essential [page 18] that they rise to the intellectual challenge posed by their Western colleagues. Creative emulation of Western scholarship on Korea, accompanied by a critical evaluation from the Korean point of view, will certainly improve the quality of their work. They should be reminded that non-native scholars are fully capable of producing superb scholarly works on Korean history, society and culture, as Alexis de Tocqueville did on America and George Sansom on Japan.

NOTES

1. This is a revised version of the author’s article, entitled “Origins of Modern Korean Studies: Contributions by Western Scholars to Modern Historiography in Korea,” in The Periphery and Center in Korean History, eds. Chung Doo-Hee and Edward J. Shultz (Seoul: Humanities Research Institute, Sogang University, and Honolulu: Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawaii, 2003), 15-38.

2. Horace Underwood, “Introduction to the ‘Bibliographic Coreenne’ by Maurice Courant,” Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 25 (1936): i.

3. Hong Yi-Sup, “European Studies on Korea,” UNESCO Korean Survey (Seoul: Dong-A, 1960), 206.

4. “The Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,” The Korea Review 1 (August 1901): 337-38.

5. Homer B. Hulbert, “Preface,” The Passing of Korea (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1906).

6. Quoted from Richard Rutt, James Scarth Gale and His History of the Korean People (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, 1972), 78-79.

7. L. G. Paik, “Foreword” to the reprint edition of The Passing of Korea (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969), 4.