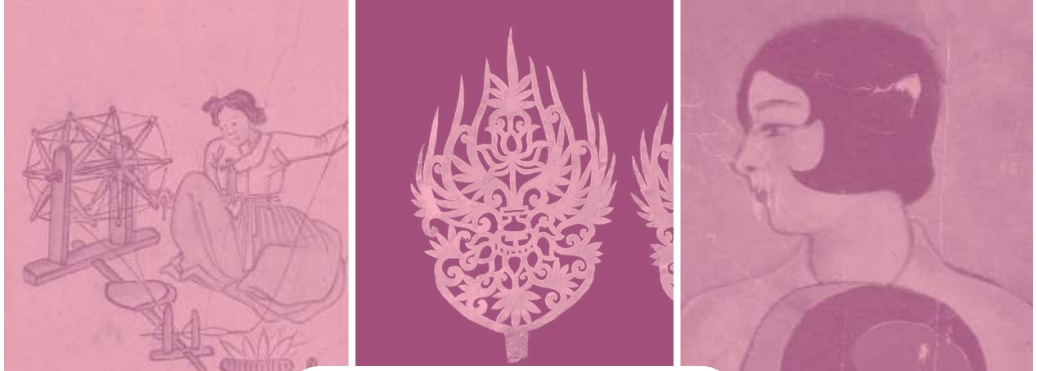


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A History of Korean Women

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A History of Korean Women

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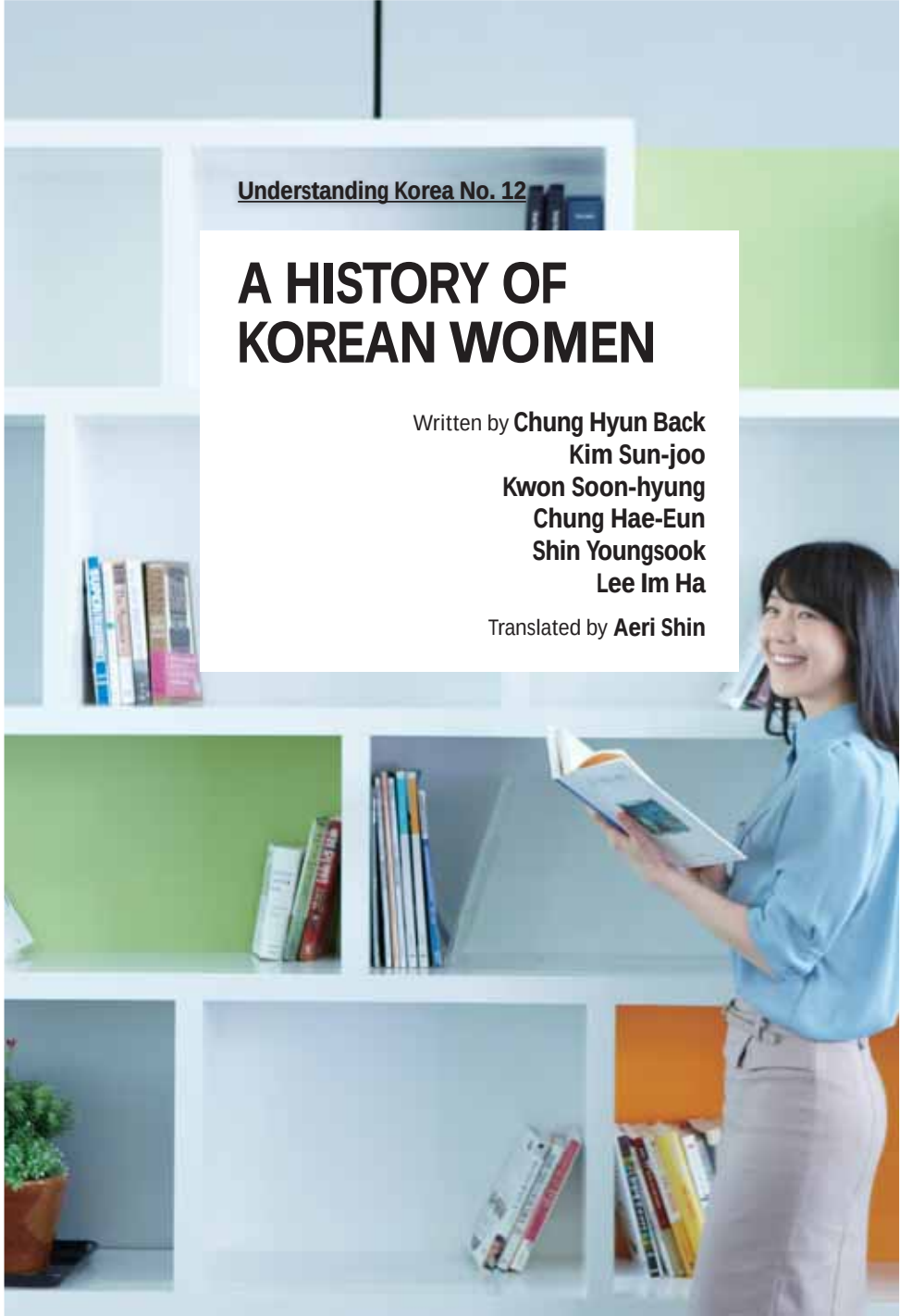
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A HISTORY OF KOREAN WOMEN

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Translated by **Aeri Shin**

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FOREWORD

For more than four decades, the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS) has devoted itself to studies on Korean history, society, and culture, while its Center for International Affairs (CEFIA) has been committed to the Understanding Korea Project. This project aims to promote a better understanding and appreciation of Korea through a variety of methods, including the development of pedagogic resources on Korea. With this objective in mind, CEFIA has published the Understanding Korea Series, which offers an in-depth knowledge to members of the international community who would like to acquire a deeper understanding and appreciation of Korea. As the series covers a wide range of subjects pertaining to Korea, we hope that it will become accessible to numerous readers with diverse interests regarding Korean culture and history.

The twelfth volume in the Understanding Korea Series, *A History of Korean Women* explains the history of Korean women from prehistoric times to the present. This book, which is divided into distinct periods, is designed to help readers understand the history of Korean women's lives and challenges, their endeavors under the restrictions of their times, and their efforts to overcome the prejudices and contradictions of their *milieux*. As a substantial introduction to, and an in-depth study of, the history of Korean women, this book is well suited to Korean studies majors and general readers, let alone textbook authors and teachers.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Professor Chung Hyun Back and five other authors for their concerted efforts and contributions to weave their decades of research into a single volume and to Ms. Aeri Shin for her impeccable translation work. We would also like to thank all the staff members at the AKS for their hard work and dedication for the publication of this book.

Center for International Affairs
Academy of Korean Studies

INTRODUCTION

In the past twenty years, research on the history of Korean women has increased dramatically, yielding a large corpus of notable achievements in academic research. However, there has been a lack of internationalization of such achievements, which has meant that, to this date, there is not even a faithful secondary source on Korean women's history to satisfy greater interest in the trajectories of Korean women and their lives. Against such a backdrop, the recent surge in the number of Korean studies majors abroad—a number that has been quickly rising and is surprisingly keeping pace with that of Chinese or Japanese studies majors—is certainly a welcome development. It is my belief that this trend will grow at a faster pace than ever before under post-Covid-19. Although (or perhaps because) interest in Korea has been increasing, it is regrettable that there is a lack of reliable reference materials on Korean women's history. In response to this problematic void, we have worked in earnest to publish this book, first with six authors collaborating on the publication of *Geullobeol Sidae-e igneun Hanguk Yeoseongsa* (Reading Korean Women's History in the Global Age) in Korean, and then revising and translating it into the current version.

Although several English-language volumes on Korean women's history have been published, most have focused on a specific topic or on modernity. In contrast, this book covers the *longue durée*, ranging from the Paleolithic and ancient periods to contemporary Korean history and culture, as well as including the structural changes and collective behaviors of gender relations in Korean society over the last decade. As evidenced by the Korean female workers' movements and the ongoing Korean campaigns concerning military sexual slavery, various Korean women's movements have achieved notable successes on the global stage since the late 1980s. With such developments in mind, the history of Korean women's movements from 1945 and on is also included in the present volume. In doing so, we aim to elucidate the narrative and trajectory of Korean women's history for readers who are unfamiliar with the subject.

Within the undertones of the book's narrative of this book is an attempt to reflect the comparative historical perspective as much as possible. In previous works on women's history, although the differences between Western and non-Western societies were duly noted, the idea of privileging Europe as the basis for judgment remained embedded. In addition, Korean women's history has often been identified *vis-à-vis* the history of gender discrimination in Asia, ruefully embodied by the Chinese tradition of foot-binding, whereas in some other instances it is understood through the historical lens of modernization under Japanese colonial rule.

How then should the history of women in non-Western societies be re-textualized? In addition to illuminating the structure and diachronic trajectory of Korean women's history as brightly as possible, this book seeks to reveal the specificities inherent to Korean women's history and the ways in which it differs from the histories of women not only in the West, let alone in China and Japan. In this context, Joseon-period households, for example, can be reborn and reproduced as spaces of behaviors and gender relations that cannot be captured simply through the perspective of the feudal patriarchal system characteristic of the West or the modern concept of public and private spheres. In the same vein, much research and dialogue are needed to

illuminate the meaning of Confucianism and the Confucian patriarchal system in women's lives.

Although the aforementioned problematizations permeate this volume, what was considered more important was to restore and reconstruct the history of economic activities and the daily lives of women—areas which had hitherto been largely neglected. Until recently, women's economic activities did not attract much attention in Korean historical studies. This may have been attributed to the imagination of historians being linked to the commonly held perception of women as passive beings homebound and devoted to household chores. In Korean history, research on women's economic activities in the past remains on the periphery, although there have been intermittent efforts to examine women's economic participation as well as reconstruct their daily lives. In regard to the latter, this volume attempts to focus on various aspects of quotidian life such as the food, clothing, ritual, marriage, hobbies, leisure activities, and religious lives of women.

Ultimately, the problem issue entrenched in the heart of this book is the restoration of women as self-sufficient beings with agency. Throughout pre-modern history, women simultaneously represented and resisted the internalization of unconditional obedience to a monarchy and the ideology of the Confucian patriarch. In modern times, women's lived experiences included their existence as active agents of or forces of resistance to modernization, and through this historical process manifested themselves as "gendered subjects." From a more expansive perspective, this book seeks to portray such gendered female subjects in terms of production, the family, and religious & cultural activities.

This book is divided into six chapters. Segmented into general

historical epochs, it consists of histories of women in prehistoric and ancient Korean societies, Goryeo, Joseon, modern Korea, and contemporary Korean history and culture. In the appendices of the book are the history of Korean women's movements and a chronology of Korean women's history to enable the reader's understanding of the entire trajectory.

In Chapter 1, which deals with women in prehistory and ancient history, the great politico-religious weight of women as divine beings or priestesses is analyzed according to the importance of religion in the political landscape of these periods. Also noteworthy is the fact that, as the ancient states accepted Buddhism, women came to play an important role in syncretizing traditional beliefs into Buddhism and developing it into a state-run religion. Furthermore, the chapter reveals the significant contribution of women to economic activities through their roles in farming and weaving. Even in ancient civilizations where numerous states continued to wax and wane, patriarchy took root, but as evidenced by the uxorilocal marriage common in such societies, it appears to have been a relatively flexible mechanism.

Chapter 2 discusses women in Goryeo society, more specifically focusing on the process of the intensification of women's exclusion from the public sphere as the first unified dynasty was established on the Korean Peninsula and the Sinicized sociopolitical system was reorganized. Even so, the status of women in the family was not entirely regrettable thanks to the survival of the uxorilocal marriage, and their rights to ancestral rites as well as inheritance were relatively equal to those of their sons. At that time, women were not only in charge of production and labor, but also engaged in commercial and trade activities using their own property. However, in the thirteenth century, women began to suffer greatly due to the Mongol invasion and inter-

ference, which led to the transferal of tributary items as well as the use of Goryeo women as tributes. In addition, with the introduction of Neo-Confucianism from the Yuan Dynasty, the patriarchal system began to intensify, particularly with the changes in marriage customs that took place toward the end of the Goryeo Dynasty.

As discussed in Chapter 3, after the founding of the Joseon Dynasty, the Confucian patriarchal system, which placed enormous pressure on women's lives, became further consolidated under the influence of Neo-Confucianism. In particular, the share of property distributed to women was reduced after the mid-1700s, and as the uxorilocal marriage custom disappeared, married women moved away from their natal homes and into the homes of their husbands. It was during this period that patriarchal customs, casually referred to as "tradition" in contemporary Korea, were constructed and gradually became ossified. Despite such changes, women were responsible for various labor and economic activities as managers of the home economy. Women's activities were also emphasized during the Japanese invasion of Korea and the subsequent Qing invasion.

Particularly transformative in the Joseon Dynasty period were the changes that the invention of Hangeul, the vernacular Korean alphabet, brought to women's lives and culture. Largely neglected by men of the literati class, Hangeul was easy to learn, and this not only freed women from illiteracy, but also encouraged women to read and even produce texts. Beginning in the eighteenth century, the volume of women's textual production increased dramatically. In addition, women, suppressed by gender discrimination and the stringent status system, constituted a large number of the acolytes to newly introduced Catholicism, which gave women the opportunity to experience modern developments.

The women of modern Korea examined in Chapter 4 lived through the period spanning the end of the Joseon Dynasty period to the end of Japanese colonial rule. In this period, women participated in the historical process of ending the wrongs of the feudal system and achieving national independence. As women's education expanded, women struggled to improve their status based on the modern knowledge they obtained. Professional women and women who worked in the service industry appeared, and female laborers, who accounted for 30 percent of all workers, became commonplace. There were also general women's labor movements, as well as the women's movements that emerged within the agricultural and fishing industries to protest the miserable working conditions amid the harsh colonial reality. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that a significant number of women participated in the March First Independence Movement in 1919, leading the activism for national liberation and women's liberation until the end of Japanese colonial rule in 1945. However, after 1931, as the Japanese empire continued to wage its campaign of the Asia-Pacific war, women's suffering drastically worsened due to working in the fetters of the war, notably as press-ganged members of the Volunteer Corps and as sex slaves of the Japanese military.

Chapter 5 deals with the liberation and division of Korea, women's realities during the Korean War, economic development & women's labor, and the development of modern families. After national liberation in 1945, women became facilitators of modernization policies and replaced men as the heads of households during the Korean War. In the early industrialization process after the 1960s, young women worked as low-wage laborers for extremely long hours, and, based on their contributions and sacrifices, the building blocks for the development of Korean capitalism were laid. However, the contribution of

these female workers to economic development in Korea's modern and contemporary economic history should be emphasized further still. Moreover, together with the female office workers who emerged in the 1980s, these workers became the principal agents behind the launch of the Korean labor movements after liberation.

Out of the struggle of female workers in the 1970s and 1980s, the women's movements that began in earnest in 1987 contributed to the development of Korean democracy by successfully creating laws and systems for promoting women's rights. However, with the increasing pressure of globalization since the 1990s, women's tempo- rary employment and job insecurity have drastically increased, fur- ther intensifying economic inequality among women. Now, Korean society and women exist on the twin precipices of incomplete reali- zation of gender equality on the one hand and economic inequality on the other.

Korea and the world





Map of Korea





Chapter 1

WOMEN IN THE PREHISTORIC AND ANCIENT PERIOD

Kim Sun-joo

Overview of the Period

In Korea, diverse Paleolithic remains have been found in more than two hundred places around rivers and caves, and it is estimated that people began settling on the Korean Peninsula at least 600,000 years ago. Indeed, fossilized human bones and chipped stone implements have been excavated at many of these sites. Analyses of the fossilized human bones have shown that there were marked differences in muscle strength and mobility between men and women. These physical differences between men and women, in addition to the biological functions of women (more specifically pregnancy and childbirth), became the basis for the gender division of labor that began in the Paleolithic period, which partly led to social inequality as society differentiated after the Bronze Age. In particular, after the Bronze Age, intense physical labor was required in the field of production, and the value of mobility and power was highlighted by looting and war, all factors that worked against women.

Accelerating this social differentiation was the use of metals, which contributed to the emergence of various states in ancient Korean history, starting with Gojoseon. With the influx of the iron culture around the fourth century BCE, which precipitated active integration or subjugation among different polities, the various states of Samhan, in addition to Buyeo, Goguryeo, Okjeo, and Dongye, were formed. After these states established a confederation with the head of the dominant group as their king, they were unified under the kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla. Although Gaya existed until the middle of the sixth century, it failed to develop into a centralized state and was destroyed during the confederation stage.

The establishment of a state, a public entity, led to the separation of the public and private spheres. Women, who were economically and militarily at a disadvantage, were increasingly excluded from the public domain. As the Three Kingdoms (Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla) developed into centralized states, official positions and ranks became male-dominated. In contrast, women's activities were gradually limited to private areas such as housekeeping and childcare, the social value of which was not duly recognized.

The period covered in this chapter spans the long stage during which ancient states expanded in prehistoric times and eventually merged into a single state. Therefore, significant diachronic changes can be observed. It is also a period of ancient features that differ from those of later states, namely Goryeo and Joseon. In ancient societies, religious authority held great significance in the political domain, and women were prominent in the religious and political spheres. Not only were women worshipped as divine beings, but they also oversaw rituals as priestesses with religious authority. In Silla, women also ruled as queens, who appeared only in ancient times in Korea.

However, in the strictly hierarchical ancient states, the status and roles of women differed according to their caste. Literature from this period attests to the existence of prostitutes, and shows that women were not only interred in tombs, decorated with gold crowns and gold belts, but were also buried alive with their deceased owners.

At this time, numerous states were established in parallel with one

another, and regional characteristics and differences surfaced. There were characteristic marriage customs such as levirate marriage in Buyeo, matrilocal residence or uxorilocal marriage (wherein the bride's family built a residence for the groom in the bride's home in which the groom would reside until the bride was pregnant, whereupon the groom returned to his home. After the birth of the child, the bride and the child joined the groom in his home) in Goguryeo, and patrilocal residence (wherein the prospective bride was brought to the prospective groom's home as a young girl and raised there until marriage) in Okjeo. Moreover, in Dongye, people with the same last name were forbidden to marry, whereas in Silla, consanguineous marriage was permitted.

There was no taboo on premarital sex and remarriage, and courting was permitted, because ancient societies placed great meaning on social reproduction, more specifically, birth. However, marriage was not something that could be undertaken freely. In ancient times, marriage was strictly intra-class, as society was based on strict social status premised on lineage institutions such as the bone-rank system. In addition, the establishment of the patriarchal order placed women under stringent control. Not only did the patriarch lead the marriage system, but social sanctions were also imposed on women who disrupted the patriarchal family order by committing adultery or expressing jealousy, for example.

After the Bronze Age, looting and war became commonplace in the process of the emergence and integration of political systems along with social differentiation, and it was women who were responsible for quotidian life in the rear during times of war. Some

women were directly involved in the war as warriors; other women, as part of diplomatic policy, were sent to foreign states to marry or were offered as tribute.

The Three Kingdoms, which had been entangled in fierce competition, were eventually unified by Silla toward the middle of the seventh century. Then, the founding of Balhae in the erstwhile territory of Goguryeo heralded the beginning of the Northern and Southern States Period. As Confucian ethics spread after the unification of the Three Kingdoms, both Silla and Balhae began to emphasize the Three Subordinations of a Woman (*samjongjido*) and Womanly Virtues (*budeok*). In addition, the patriarchal order was gradually developed and renovated, and discriminatory perspectives on men and women took root. However, succession within families was not completely changed toward favoring patrilineality; a married woman, for example, could still act on behalf of the family and exercise her economic rights after her husband's death.

Prehistoric Society and Women

Gender Division in the Paleolithic Era

It is estimated that people began living on the Korean Peninsula at least 600,000 years ago. More than two hundred Paleolithic sites have been identified and excavated in Korea, resulting in the discovery of chipped stone implements and traces of fire, along with fossilized human bones.

Among the bone fossils, those found at the Paleolithic site in the Yeokpo district of Pyeongyang belonged to a girl—named "Yeokpoin" by the researchers—aged between six and eight. These bone fossils were discovered inside a natural cave located near the Daedonggang River, along with chipped stone implements, and traces of various animal bones and plants—presumably the remnants of foods consumed by the cave's hunter-gatherer inhabitants.

It is estimated that hunting and gathering during the Paleolithic era were generally divided according to gender. Men were mainly responsible for hunting because they were more efficient at carrying out the task than women. As mentioned previously, the analysis of Paleolithic bone fossils shows that men were superior in terms of height, strength, and mobility; such differences, as well as biological functions such as pregnancy and breastfeeding, inevitably became the premise for gender-based division.

However, the gender-based division of labor did not necessarily mean gender inequality. Above all, Paleolithic societies, in which people lived communally, were fundamentally equal. Moreover,

fluctuations in the natural environment were severe, and the threat posed by predators was formidable. The most important factor in such an environment was the ability to cope collectively with natural threats. Under these circumstances, gender-based food collection must have provided stability in securing sustenance by complementing each gender's activities.

Meanwhile, fossils of large animals such as elephants and rhinoceroses have also been found in the cave inhabited by Yeokpoin, demonstrating that these cave dwellers hunted large animals at that time. As a significant number of people would have had to hunt collectively and drive large animals during such hunts, it would have been difficult to completely rule women out.

Pregnancy and childbirth were essential for maintaining a Paleolithic society where the infant mortality rate was high; in fact, it was not easy even for adults to survive due to the constant threat of hunger and attacks by predators. As it is known that Paleolithic women repeatedly fell pregnant and gave birth throughout their childbearing years, women played an important social and biological role in sustaining a Paleolithic community.

The Emergence of Venus

About 10,000 years ago, as the Ice Age came to an end, the Earth's climate began to shift to what it is today, and human life was transformed as people adapted to the changes in the natural environment. Notably, humans gradually began to use stone tools made of small grinding stones. They also made earthenware in which to store and



Comb-pattern pottery found at Neolithic sites in Korea

cook grains. In Korea, it is estimated that earthenware was manufactured from approximately 6,000 BCE; typically, such earthenware has a round bottom and features comb patterns on the surface.

During the Neolithic Age, agriculture and livestock farming began, resulting in changes in the quality of food production. In Korea, the remains of cultivated crops have been found along with stone farming tools at the Neolithic site in Bongsan Jitap-ri, Hwanghae Province, leading to the assumption that farming must have begun in a limited area. In addition, bone needles, needle containers, and spindle whorls have been excavated from Neolithic sites, indicating that weaving was an integral part of everyday life.

Farming may be said to have begun with the gathering activities of women. Ethnographical research as well as handprints remaining on earthenware demonstrates that women were most likely to have

led the gathering activities. Women also appear to have been in charge of weaving. In such a way, women played a leading role in the changes that occurred in the Neolithic Age.

Numerous figurines of women from the Neolithic Age have been unearthed around the world. These figurines, with their voluptuous bodies, emphasize women's sexual characteristics including their breasts, hips, and stomach, and are considered to represent the ideal female image of the time, hence the name "Venus." Prehistoric figurines of women, which began to appear in some areas from the late Paleolithic Age onward, show a worldwide distribution in the Neolithic period. Prehistoric representations of Venus have also been discovered at various Neolithic sites in Korea. In general, the waist is narrow and the breasts and hips are emphasized. The figurine of a woman excavated from the Neolithic site in Sinam-ri, Ulsan, for example, is 3.6 centimeters, and though the face and legs are damaged, one can still see that the breasts and hips are emphasized, while the waist is narrow.



Figurine of a woman excavated from a Neolithic site in Sinam-ri, Ulsan

The figurines of women found at Neolithic sites can be interpreted in various ways, ranging from the theory that they represent family or clan founders at the matrilineal social stage, to the view that they are shamans or Mother Goddesses responsible for abundance and production. Whatever their meaning,



Skeletal remains of a woman wearing seashell bracelets (right), excavated from the Janghang Neolithic site, Gadeokdo Island, Busan. Next to the remains is its reproduction (left).

it appears that there was a worship of women during the Neolithic period. In fact, the hypothesis that there were women who played special roles during this period has been confirmed. At the Janghang site on Gadeokdo Island, Busan, the excavations of tombs dating back to the Neolithic Age have unearthed two fully intact human skeletons along with seashell bracelets. Among them, the human bones excavated from Tomb No. 1 were scientifically determined to be those of a woman in her late forties. The woman had nine unfinished seashell bracelets on her chest and wore a bracelet made from ark shells on each of her arms.

Seashell bracelets are believed to have been worn mainly by people who played a particular role in Neolithic society. Although the Neolithic period was characterized by egalitarian societies, the

discovery of these bracelets presupposes the existence of a leader or priest of a particular group, so it is possible that the woman wearing seashell bracelets excavated from Janghang Tomb No. 1 in Gadeokdo Island may also have been associated with this social role. During the Neolithic period, women were sometimes worshipped as divine beings, and some women led groups or served as priestesses and representatives of the gods.

Social Differentiation and Gender Inequality

With the emergence of improved fire handling techniques in the production of earthenware, humans acquired bronze. Bronze is a metal produced by adding tin and zinc, among other elements, to copper. In Korea, it is understood that bronzeware began to be used around 1,000 BCE at the latest. The Bronze Age was also a period in which private property began to be established due to surplus production, resulting in a divergence between the rich and the poor as well as general social stratification.

The background to rapid social change in the Bronze Age was the development of the power of production. Although traces of farming can be found even from the Neolithic period, it became much more widely established during the Bronze Age; indeed, farming expanded widely, and rice farming began. From the late Neolithic period, the main production implements changed from hoes to ploughshares, indicating that plough agronomy had materialized by then. In addition, stone axes longer than twenty centimeters that appear to have been used to fell trees have been excavated,



Mandolin-shaped double-edged dagger and coarse-lined mirror, exemplifying the uniqueness of the Bronze Age culture in Korea

pointing to the active cultivation of farmland.

As farmland was cultivated, and plough agronomy developed apace, more intensive labor was required than ever before. One item of bronzeware, known to have been excavated in Daejeon, features carvings depicting a square piece of farmland and a man working with a wooden hand-plough, with his penis exposed, while its bottom is marked with furrows created with horizontally carved parallel lines. It can be seen that considerable labor was invested in farming and that the proportion of men engaged in agricultural activities was high compared to that of women.

The proportion of men involved in production also increased as livestock breeding began and boats were used in fishing activities. The production of bronzeware required intense labor as well, particularly in the smelting, tapping, and pouring of metal. In the Bronze Age, labor power became highly valuable in production activities;



Bronze implement with farming scenes, known to have been excavated in Daejeon

as such, men gradually took the lead in production organizations, command, and the right to speak in the community.

The value of mobility and force was further highlighted by looting and war. Wooden fences have been discovered at the Bronze Age site in Songguk-ri, Buyeo, while ditches surrounding settlements have been found at the sites in Geomdan-ri, Ulsan, within the submerged ruins of Namgang Dam in Jinju, and at Namsan Mountain in Changwon. These ditches were apparently designed to defend settlements against external aggression, indicating that people frequently engaged in conflicts with neighboring settlements during the Bronze Age.

War not only brought about the emergence of leaders and the masses under their command, but also created a male-dominated society on the basis of men's superior physical strength and force. Although there were female fighters, war was mostly men's work.



Ditches surrounding settlements found at the site in Geomdan-ri, Ulsan

Men were chosen as warriors because the male biological characteristics favorable to hunting also worked in favor of war. Men's superior strength and mobility were and are an important matter of life and death in war. Moreover, for women, pregnancy could only be a constraint even greater in war than in hunting.

In an era that valued strength and mobility, pregnancy and childbirth served as limitations to women's competitiveness. In addition, though the supply of labor had previously depended only on women's childbirth, now it was possible to increase the supply by taking captives through looting and war. As such, the absolute value of pregnancy and childbirth decreased compared to that in the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods. Ultimately, pregnancy and childbirth became a cause of social inequality in the Bronze Age.

Not surprisingly, a greater number of figurines and paintings depicting men have been excavated at Bronze Age sites. In the case of

the remains discovered at Unggi Seopohang Port, whereas female figurines were found in the Neolithic stratum, earthen male figurines were discovered in the Bronze Age stratum. Meanwhile, in the petroglyphs of Bangudae in Ulju, North Gyeongsang Province, various images of a group of men appear to be dancing with their penises exposed. All of these features show that the perception of gender and gender-related practices changed drastically during the Bronze Age.

Women in Ancient States: Religious and Political Roles

Goddesses

As the use of metals accelerated social differentiation in the Bronze Age, various states began to emerge in Korea. The first state to appear in Korean history against the backdrop of the Bronze Age culture was Gojoseon. Literary sources, such as the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* (Samguk yusa), record that a man named Dangun Wanggeom founded Gojoseon around 2,000 BCE. The myth of Dangun, which tells of the founding of Gojoseon, signifies that a new social order had been established.

By the fourth century BCE, iron culture had spread throughout Korea. Productivity increased with the manufacture of iron farming implements, while the use of iron weapons also strengthened military power. Based on these developments, the process of integration and subjugation among neighboring political forces led to the formation of the Samhan Confederacies and the emergence of Buyeo, Goguryeo, Okjeo, and Dongye, encompassing Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula.

Among all these rival states, Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla eventually established themselves as centralized kingdoms. In Korean history, this period is called the Three Kingdoms Period. In the *History of the Three Kingdoms* (Samguk sagi), Silla is said to have been founded in 57 BCE, Goguryeo in 37 BCE, and Baekje in 18 BCE. However, the Three Kingdoms Period was brought to an end

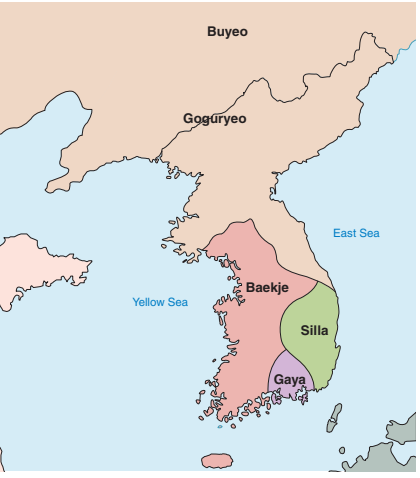
when Silla joined forces with the Tang Dynasty of China to destroy Baekje in 660 and Goguryeo in 668. Although the smaller kingdoms of Buyeo and Gaya lasted until the fifth to sixth centuries, they failed to develop into centralized states, collapsing during the federated kingdom stage.

The establishment of a state brought about separation of the public and private spheres, and women, who were left at a disadvantage both economically and militarily, were increasingly excluded from the public domain. Women's activities were limited to the private arena, essentially housekeeping and childcare. Instead of enjoying an independent social status, women were relegated to their family-oriented existence, as mothers, wives, and daughters.

However, the process of the establishment and development of ancient states and the appearance of ancient societies suggest various facets of women's existence and activities. In addition to the mythical founding fathers of various Korean states, women appear as important elements of the ancient founding myths, for example, in the form founding mothers such as Ungnyeo in the myth of Dangun (the foundational myth of Gojoseon), and Yuhwa, Soseono, and Seondoseongmo in the foundational stories of Goguryeo,



Map of Buyeo, Goguryeo, Dongye, Okjeo, and Samhan (first century)



Map of the Three Kingdoms (Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla) and Gaya (fourth century)

Baekje, and Silla respectively. These founding mothers were not just women who gave birth to and raised the founding fathers, but also women who themselves were worshipped as extraordinary beings with divine characteristics. The father of the founder of Goguryeo, Jumong, is Haemosu, the son of the Heavenly Emperor, and Jumong's mother is Yuhwa, the daughter of Habaek, the god of water. Haemosu does not appear in the myth after the conception of Jumong; on the other hand, Yuhwa plays an important role not only in giving birth to and raising Jumong, but also in telling him to go south to establish a new state.

When Yuhwa died, a shrine was built in Goguryeo. At the time of Goguryeo's demise, there were two shrines in the kingdom, one of which (Buyeosin) was represented in the image of a woman, while the other (Godeungsin), said to be the son of Buyeosin, was in the image of a man. It is assumed that Godeungsin was Jumong, the founder of Goguryeo, and Buyeosin, his mother Yuhwa. It can be seen that Yuhwa, the founder's mother, was interred at the shrine and worshipped at the state level as a divine being.

In the same vein, an ancient Baekje record states that "a shrine was built and ancestral rites held for the mother of the state." In Silla,

the existence of a founding mother named Seondoseongmo, for whom ancestral rites were held after the founding of the kingdom, has been confirmed. In Gaya, which remained at the stage of a confederacy, Jeonggyeonmoju was known to have given birth to the founders of Dae Gaya and Geumgwan Gaya, the two pillars of the Gaya Confederacy. These mythical mothers were not just women who gave birth to and raised the founding fathers, but were also worshipped as extraordinary beings with divine characteristics.

These female deities, who appear as founding mothers in the various founding myths, exhibit the characteristics of mother goddesses and agrarian deities. In addition to the founding mothers featured in the myths, there are also mountain goddesses such as the Holy Mother of Unjesan Mountain (Unjesanseongmo) and the Divine Mother of Chisul Pass (Chisulsinmo). Praying to the Holy Mother of Unjesan Mountain during a drought, for example, was considered to invoke rain, indicating the characteristics of both a mother goddess and an agrarian deity. Belief in the existence of women who were mother goddesses or progenitors of a clan during the Neolithic period began to fade away after the Bronze Age, but it was nonetheless transmitted to ancient societies.

Priestesses

In ancient societies, women were not only worshipped as goddesses, but also served as priestesses endowed with religious authority. For instance, Silla's second king, Namhae, established a progenitor shrine and empowered his sister Aro to hold ancestral rites. This ex-

ample illustrates that there were priestesses in charge of state rituals in the early Silla period.

In Silla, the syllable "Ar" (or "Al") became a common component in the names of queens, starting with Aryeong, the progenitor queen. The queen consort of Namhae, the second king of Silla, was Aru, and she was followed by Ahyo, Ani, Aryu, and Aihye. The Ar (Al) in the names of these queens is not considered a proper noun signifying a queen, but rather to be related to religious functions. The role of a priestess such as Aro, who officiated over the ancestral rites at the progenitor shrine, continued to hold significance.

There were priestesses in other states as well. It is said that the third king of Goguryeo, Daemusinwang, met a woman who was dancing with a cauldron while on his way to Buyeo. The cauldron the woman was holding was believed to be a magical object that cooked rice by itself without the use of fire. As ancient bronze or iron cauldrons were used primarily as ritual vessels symbolizing political authority, it is likely that the cauldron held by the woman was also a ritual vessel. The performance of holding a ritual vessel and dancing is connected to a rite, which could be interpreted as the appearance of a priestess in charge of various rites.

Yet another example is that of Empress Heo, the queen consort of the founder of Geumgwan Gaya, who is recorded as having arrived in Gaya by boat from the state of Ayuta. Once on land, Empress Heo took off her silk trousers and offered them to the mountain gods. In this tale, silk trousers can be understood as a sacrificial offering to the mountain gods, and given that she personally performed this offering, Empress Heo can also be understood as a priestess.



The gold crown excavated from the northern tumulus of Hwangnamdaechong Tomb
| National Museum of Korea

It is worth noting here the archaeological sources regarding the appearance of the ancient female priesthood. A gold crown representing the zenith of Silla extravagance was excavated from a wooden chamber tomb with a stone and earthen mound, a common form of burial between the fourth and sixth centuries in Silla. Gold crowns were once understood to have been used by men as symbols of kings. However, the excavation of Hwangnamdaechong Tomb, which is presumed to be the twin-mound burial of a married couple, only unearthed a gold crown from the northern tomb in which the wife was buried.

On the one hand, as Hwangnamdaechong Tomb was built before queenship emerged in Silla, it is difficult to imagine that a woman wore a gold crown as the ruler; on the other hand, gold crowns are not a commonly excavated relic. Thus far, only six gold crowns have been excavated from the erstwhile territory of Silla, and all of them in Gyeongju, which was the seat of the Silla royal palace. Furthermore, the tombs from which the gold crowns were excavated belonged to the highest class, as evidenced by the size of the tombs and the ar-

tifacts unearthed from them. Therefore, although the occupants of the tombs in which the gold crowns were found may not necessarily have been rulers, they must have held a special sociopolitical status.

According to one theory, the gold crown, which resembles a set of tree branches, is related to shamanism. If such is the case, a woman buried in a superbly constructed tomb, along with a gold crown associated with shamanism, could be understood to be a woman who exercised certain religious functions. Given that the tombs from which the gold crowns were excavated were of the largest size and decorated with extravagant objects, the woman wearing the gold crown—though not a ruler—must have held the highest public status.

Queens

In ancient Korea, women sometimes became rulers. In the middle of the seventh century, Queen Seondeok (r. 632–647) and Queen Jindeok (r. 647–654) ascended the throne consecutively, while Queen Jinseong (r. 887–897) was crowned at the end of the ninth century. Alongside the growth of ancient states, the centralized political order with a single ruler at the summit of power became a male-dominated system in which most offices were monopolized by men. It would be surprising, then, if women became rulers under such circumstances.

Queen Seondeok, Korea's first queen, was the daughter of King Jinpyeong. Although Jinpyeong did not have a son, it is said that the "gugin" (literally denoting "the people of the nation" as the character "gug" is often translated as "*nation*") enthroned Queen Seondeok. In describing the ascension of Queen Seondeok, the *History of the Three Kingdoms* records: "There were no Seonggol (literally 'Holy Bone') men." Thus, Queen Seondeok's ascension to the throne can be attributed to Silla's unique status system, namely the bone-rank system. In the absence of a man with the holy-bone rank, the highest priority of succession to the throne, a woman with the holy-bone rank would have been more persuasive in reaching a social consensus to become a ruler than a man of the second highest stratum, the true-bone rank.

It is said that Queen Seondeok was endowed with unparalleled personal qualities. The *History of the Three Kingdoms* praises Queen Seondeok as being "sagacious and intelligent." In the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*, it is stated that Queen Seondeok possessed such perspicacious foresight that she could almost foretell the future, citing three specific examples. She is also often understood as having shamanistic characteristics, due to the emphasis on her ability to see into the future.

The ascension of Queen Seondeok led next to the succession of Queen Jindeok. This is because the condition necessitated by the preference for a ruler of holy-bone rank, whether a man or a woman, continued after Queen Seondeok. Queen Jindeok is described as being "voluptuous and beautiful" as well as "seven *cheok* tall (one *cheok* at that time is considered to have been approximately 25 centimeters, which would have made her 1.75 meters tall), and her hands hung down by her knees." This physical description fits that of the Buddha, emphasizing that Queen Jindeok had the statuesque

appearance of a superhuman.

However, Queen Jindeok's succession did not unfold smoothly. Bidam, the head of the Council of Nobles, rebelled with the support of several other nobles, arguing that a queen could not govern the kingdom effectively. It is said that there were so many people who responded favorably to Bidam's revolt that the spirit of the revolt was indomitable; the justification that Bidam advanced at the time—"A queen cannot govern the kingdom well"—proved persuasive. After more than ten days of wrangling, Queen Jindeok was finally able to ascend the throne only because the revolt of Bidam was suppressed by Kim Yu-sin, arguably one of the most renowned generals in Korean history.

After Queen Jindeok, the succession to the throne remained exclusively male for another 250 years until Queen Jinseong became the third female ruler of Silla in the ninth century. Queen Jinseong's ascension was achieved by appointment before the death of her brother, King Jeonggang. King Jeonggang chose Jinseong as his successor, citing the precedents of Queens Seondeok and Jindeok. The king also made references to Queen Jinseong's outstading character—"Her natural character is sagacious."—and said that "Her bone structure is that of a man." In other words, Queen Jinseong was biologically female yet had the appearance of a man.

Behind this remark was the widespread negative perception of Jinseong's ascension to the throne at the time, which can also be felt in King Heonan's remarks. As King Heonan had two daughters and no sons, he handed the throne to his son-in-law, asserting, "Although there were Queen Seondeok and Queen Jindeok in the past, such occurrences are similar to a hen announcing the dawn." In this way, King Heonan's son-in-law became King Gyeongmun, the father of King Jeonggang and Queen Jinseong.

Despite the widespread negative perception, Queen Jinseong succeeded the throne thanks to the exclusive nature of the hereditary bone-rank system. At the time of King Jeonggang's death, the only man available among the descendants of King Gyeongmun was King Heongang's son by a concubine. Until that point in time, no son born out of wedlock had ever become king, and, to boot, the son was young. In this situation, instead of the throne being given to a man of another matrilineage, Jinseong, a daughter but nonetheless directly related to King Gyeongmun, was chosen to succeed the throne.

It can be seen that the ascension to the throne of each of the three aforementioned queens came about as a result of a special situation in which there was no man with the right to succession; in other words, there was a kind of transitional phase in which it was difficult to find men who could occupy the throne. However, Silla's queendom is characterized also by lineage. In contrast, China's only empress, Wu Zetian, was originally an empress consort, while most of the empresses of Japan were princesses first, then became empress consorts, and finally became empresses after the death of their husbands.

These three Korean queens are also notable for the fact that they were all from Silla. In fact, there would be no queens in the later dynasties of Goryeo and Joseon, nor were there any in Goguryeo and Baekje, kingdoms contemporaneous to Silla. As can be seen, in

terms of the perception of women, Silla diverged significantly from its contemporaries. Silla's founding myth includes not only the presence of the progenitor king Hyeokgeose, but also that of Aryeong, the aforementioned queen consort of the founder of Silla. Aryeong was the subject of a novel birth story common to various state founders, and was referred to as "Iseong," or "Two Holy People," alongside her husband, Hyeokgeose. On the other hand, there is no sign of the queen consorts of the founders in the founding myths of Goguryeo and Baekje. In addition, whereas queen consorts rarely figure in the records of Goguryeo and Baekje, those of Silla are thoroughly documented. In the records on Silla, for example, the names of most queens and other women are known, while such is rarely the case in the records of Goguryeo and Baekje, where women are referred to as daughters of their fathers, rather than by their own names.





A golden plate inscribed with the prayer presented by the queen of King Mu in welcoming the śarīra, discovered at Mireuksa Temple Site in Iksan

This discrepancy has become even more evident in the light of recent archaeological excavations. At the Royal Tomb of King Muryeong of Baekje, the tombstones of the king and the queen were excavated. King Muryeong was listed by name and official title, whereas the queen's name was omitted. A golden plate with inscriptions welcoming the śarīra, discovered at the site of Mireuksa Temple in Iksan, also follows the same custom regarding women's names. The inscriptions state that a pagoda was erected as the prayer offerings of the queen consort of King Mu of Baekje. The queen consort, the main character, however, was recorded only as the daughter of Sataekjeokdeok, and not by her name.

Silla wooden chamber tombs with stone and earthen mounds



Diadems of the king and queen, excavated from the Royal Tomb of King Muryeong | Gongju National Museum



Portrait of a man and his wife, Anak Tomb No. 3

have a unique structure that makes them difficult to excavate, which has the advantage of preserving the burial relics intact. There is no clear gender difference between the burial relics found in such tombs, where knives, weapons, and equestrian trappings have all been found in the tombs of women, while accessories have been found in those in which men were interred. In reality, these tombs show a clear difference in status rather than gender.

In contrast, an examination of the Royal Tomb of King Muryeong, the only tomb of Baekje never to have been looted, shows clear gender differences. In the king's tomb, large knives were excavated, while the queen's tomb yielded ornaments such as bracelets. Regarding the different diadems for the gold headgear, those of the king are more ornate than those of the queen, and only the king's is decorated with ornamental pendants. A similar perception of gender can be seen in the murals of Goguryeo tombs; most of the figures are men, and women, when depicted, are clearly subordinate to the male characters.

As can be seen, perceptions of gender differed across the Three Kingdoms. This difference, which is evident in ancient records and archaeological data, may help to explain why queenship materialized only in Silla. Even if a queen's ascension occurred in an exceptional situation, such as when there were no men with the highest priority of succession to the throne, it would have been difficult for a woman to ultimately become the ruler if women had been completely excluded from succession.

Economic Activities and Buddhist Faith of Women

Women's Productive Labor

Even within the same kingdom, women's status and roles differed by class. Ancient literature attests to the existence of not only queens but also prostitutes. In addition, some female slaves were buried alive with their deceased owners in Silla and Gaya, clearly demonstrating that women's lives varied according to class.

Most women's lives began and ended with labor. During the Bronze Age, farming became an essential part of life as agricultural practices expanded. Although men led the way in areas where strength and stamina were required, such as the cultivation of arable land and plough farming, women bore the brunt of a wider range of arduous activities from sowing to harvesting. It was also up to women to de-hull or pulverize grains in order to prepare meals.

There were also types of labor that required cooperation and collaboration, such as the utilization and reclamation of water. In ancient times, inter-state conquest and integration was common, often leading to situations in which women were compelled to substitute for the men who had been mobilized for the army. For example, records state that when the Thousand-Li Fortress (Cheollijangseong) was built in Goguryeo in the seventh century, men were mobilized for labor, and women worked in the fields.

Weaving, in particular, relied absolutely on women's labor. According to records on the second and third centuries, ramie cloth was produced at that time, and fabric was produced by growing

mulberry trees and cultivating silkworms. In addition, the excavation of cotton fabric demonstrates that cotton production technology was developed relatively early on.



Woman grinding grain by working a treadmill, Anak Tomb No. 3

Amid a self-sufficient way of life, a family depended solely on women's weaving for its clothing. In addition, the textiles produced by women's labor were tradeable commodities, along with rice, in ancient times when a distinct currency was not in circulation. In Silla, it is said that a single roll of hemp cloth was worth anywhere from thirty to fifty *seom* of rice (one *seom* being equivalent to 180 liters). Women also earned income by selling woven cloth on the market. It can be seen that women's labor played an important role in the home economy at a time when hemp cloth was used as a commodity.

Weaving was also important for women of the ruling stratum, such as queens and priestesses. It is said that Aryeong, the queen consort of the founder of Silla, encouraged farming and the breeding of silkworms while accompanying the king on his travels. There was also a custom whereby two royal ladies would mobilize women to weave for a month. In Silla, there was also an incident in which the sun and the moon lost their light, which could only be restored after a ritual



Loom in *Weaving* by Kim Hong-do, a renowned artist of the Joseon Dynasty | National Museum of Korea

was held with hemp cloth woven by a woman named Se'onyeo. She is understood to have been a priestess, and woven cloth may have been an important offering in her rituals.

In Silla, skilled female workers were employed at handicraft-related state-run offices to produce hemp cloth and silk fabrics. Textile production was subdivided into production processes, such as weaving, bleaching and dyeing, ranging from collection of raw materials to finished production. In addition, skilled female workers, labeled as "mothers" (*mo*) and "women" (*yeoja*), were hired to work as master craftswomen.

Among the diverse relics excavated from a site in Sinchang-dong in Gwangju, which is known to date back to the first century, were weaving-related tools such as spindle whorls, spools, yarn guides, pieces of fabric, and hempseeds. Moreover, a mural in the Daean-ri Ancient Tomb of Goguryeo depicts a loom that clearly resembles a loom of the Joseon Dynasty. As such, it can be inferred that weaving technology was already highly developed during the Three Kingdoms Period.

The excavation of a Baekje site resulted in the discovery of various pieces of fabric along with sewing needles. The fabric bore traces of sewing, which demonstrates that the techniques of sewing and embroidery common today were already employed in Baekje. In fact, Baekje is recorded as having dispatched various textiles and skilled textile workers to Japan, showing that Baekje excelled in weaving and needlework technologies.

Taxation and Statute Labor

During the Three Kingdoms Period, there was statute labor, which provided a certain amount of required labor, including military service, as well as in-kind taxation. The female labor force played an important role in in-kind taxation, which was centered on grain and textiles. It is also possible that women were mobilized for statute labor, which for adult men averaged approximately one to two months a year.

To impose statute labor, the state systematically managed the population according to age, and the data from Silla show that women were also classified as such. On an epitaph erected in about the sixth century in Danyang, North Chungcheong Province, are inscribed such words as "women" (*yeoja*) and "girls" (*sonyeo*). In addition, village documents compiled during the Unified Silla period show that men and women were each divided into six classes according to their age. These documents contain the words "*jeong*" and "*jeongnyeo*"; as the former usually denotes people who are subjected to statute labor, the latter, which contains the character "nyeo"

denoting women and girls, most likely does so as well.

In Goguryeo, men and women aged fifteen and older were conscripted to repair the palace. In Silla, it was said that men and women rushed to transport mud when a large statue of Buddha was being constructed at Yeongmyosa Temple. It can be seen that women were also mobilized for services for the state, such as the repair of royal palaces and Buddhist temples. In Unified Silla, for example, a woman named Ji-eun was exempted from statute labor as a reward for her filial devotion to her mother—clear evidence that women may have also been subject to statute labor.

Buddhist Faith and the Patronage of Buddhist Activities

Between the end of the fourth and sixth centuries, Buddhism was introduced to the Korean Peninsula, beginning with Goguryeo, and then spreading to Baekje and Silla. Women played an important role in the dissemination and acceptance of Buddhism, and some even entered the Buddhist orders as nuns. Among queens, some entered the orders as nuns in their later years, while others lived out the rest of their days as nuns after the deaths of their husbands.

The title "Doyunarang" assigned to women in Silla is assumed to have been related to a position of responsibility for all Buddhist nuns in the kingdom, indicating that a significant number of women entered the Buddhist orders in Silla. In Japan, nuns were dispatched to Baekje to study, while a nun from Goguryeo was dispatched to Japan to serve as a teacher for the nuns there—evidence that there were women who became Buddhist nuns in Goguryeo and Baekje as well.

In addition, women patronized the construction of Buddhist temples, pagodas, and steles. For example, the Pagoda of Mireuksa Temple Site, currently the oldest pagoda in Korea, was built with the patronage of the queen consort of King Mu of Baekje. Moreover, a Buddhist stele from Goguryeo discovered in Chungju was constructed with funds from the private wealth of a noblewoman named A-eom of Goguryeo. In Silla, there was even a woman who donated one hundred *gyeol* (a unit of land measurement) for Buddhist causes.

Both the bell at Hwangnyongsa Temple—said to have been four times the size of the largest extant temple bells in Korea, including the Divine Bell of King Seongdeok—and the Divine Bell itself were constructed under the patronage of royal women. Elsewhere, the pagoda at the Galhangsa Temple Site in Gimcheon, the stone lantern at Gaeseonsa Temple in Damyang, South Jeolla Province, and the statues of the Buddha and the Dharma Protector at Mujangsa Temple were all made possible under the auspices of royal women. However, it was not only royal women who sponsored Buddhist activities; in fact, the Bronze Bell of Sangwonsa Temple, the oldest extant bell of its kind in Korea, was sponsored by a noblewoman named Hyudori.

The fact that these temples and others were constructed under women's patronage indicates that women could own private property and exercise their ownership rights at that time. The Pagoda at Beopgwangsa Temple was paid for by a nun named Wonjeok, who donated her assets in order to secure its construction. Meanwhile,

Princess Danuijang, the sister of King Gyeongdeok, donated land and slave ownership to a temple. This was possible only because women also had the right to arbitrarily transfer or sell their property as they saw fit.

Diverse Marriage Customs and Restrictions on Women

Diverse Marriage Customs

After the Bronze Age, numerous states and kingdoms emerged in Korea, and marriage customs varied depending on the region and time. The most representative marriage custom was *seo'okje*, which is recorded in history as a Goguryeo custom. In this custom, the *seo'ok*, an abode for the newlywed, was built at the bride-to-be's house upon the marriage being decided, and on the appointed day, the groom-to-be came to the *seo'ok* to consummate the marriage. Thereafter, the bride continued to live at her natal home, leaving for her husband's home only after a child was born.

Baekje and Silla also practiced a form of marriage similar to *seo'okje*. In Baekje, there was a folk narrative called "Yaraeja" in which a man sleeps overnight at the house of his lover's family and then leaves, after which a child is born. There are clearly similarities between *seo'okje* and the narrative of "Yaraeja." Silla's marriage custom shared similarities with those of Baekje and Silla as well; for instance, a man would move into a woman's house to consummate their union, and later took the woman and their child back with him to his own home after the child was born.

Marriage customs such as *seo'okje* have ancient characteristics in that marriages were not binding and carried out in various ways. The woman stayed in her natal home after the consummation of the union, and only entered the man's house after a child was born



Gungnamji Pond in Buyeo, the setting of the Baekje folk narrative "Yaraeja"

and raised. As an extension of this custom, the relationship could be dissolved if no children were born. The most important factor in *seo'okje* was the presence of a child.

Meanwhile, in Buyeo and Goguryeo, there was a form of marriage called *chwisuhon*, a levirate marriage system in which a younger brother married his older brother's widow upon his death. In fact, the queen consort of King Gogukcheon of Goguryeo married her younger brother-in-law, who became King Sansang after the death of King Gogukcheon. While *chwisuhon* enabled the protection of

widows, it also meant the insurance of the birth of a child consanguineous to the widows' deceased husbands; what is more, a child born to this type of union was considered to be the son of the deceased husband.

In ancient times, when labor power was the basis of the economy, childbirth was bound to be more important than virtually any other factor. In ancient times, childbirth was the most effective method of securing reserves of labor. In an age of frequent wars, fertility was also related to competitiveness at the state level. There was no taboo on premarital sexual purity or remarriage in ancient times, possibly because ancient societies placed more meaning on social reproduction, that is, birth.

In Okjeo, there was a custom of taking a young girl to the house of the groom-to-be, whose family would raise her until she became an adult and then give gifts to the girl's family before the couple married officially. In other words, the groom's family compensated the loss of labor incurred by the bride's family due to the marriage. This system is called *minmyeoneurije*, or the young daughter-in-law system.

Whereas marriage in Dongye was exogamous, in Silla it was endogamous. In Silla, there were numerous cases of marriage to a brother's daughter or son, or of marriage to agnatic or matrilineal cousins. It can be seen that marriage customs varied significantly depending on the region.

Openness in Sex and Exclusion of Marriage Customs

Ancient literature shows that men and women met and dated openly.

The Chinese recorded the customs of Goguryeo in the *Records of Wei Concerning Eastern Barbarians in the Records of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguozhi weizhi dongyi zhuan): For example, "Men and women gathered at night to sing and play" and "the customs were obscene." The records from Silla also depict men and women meeting and dating relatively freely before marriage. During that period, dating was accompanied by sex. It can be surmised, therefore, that courtship was relatively free in ancient Korean societies.

However, it is difficult to envisage marriage as having been freely arranged according to individual intentions in ancient society. In a society with status and class divisions, marriage was fundamentally an intra-status, class-based institution. As such, strict control existed within the status/class system. In Silla, the records stating that people with the same surnames married and that women of bone ranks different from those of men were relegated to concubinage clearly demonstrate that marriage occurred within the stringent bounds of the bone rank system.

There are, of course, examples of marriage based on free dating in ancient Korean societies; however, such unions were possible only because those involved held the same status. Although the royal family of Geumgwan Gaya was absorbed into Silla by being granted the true-bone rank after its annexation by Silla, marriage between members of the Geumgwan Gaya royal family and those of the traditional Silla aristocracy did not materialize easily. As can be seen, though the relationship between men and women was had relatively free, there was strict control within the status system in regard to marriage.

Furthermore, it was the patriarch who had the right to render decisions regarding marriage; women, in contrast, did not have that right. For example, according to a folktale of Silla, a man who was required to fulfill his military service at a relatively old age in Silla, without his daughter's consent, promised his daughter's hand in marriage to a young man who was prepared to serve in the military on his behalf. However, as the young man did not return after the designated period, the girl's father urged his daughter to marry another man.

If anyone disobeyed the will of the patriarch, punishment was imposed accordingly. There were women who were disowned for dating men without their fathers' permission or for refusing to marry the men chosen by their father. Still others were placed in solitary confinement for seeing men against their fathers' wishes. Among the more disturbing measures taken to ensure a marriage took place is the case of a man who vowed to burn alive his sister who had become pregnant before marriage, the news of which led to the desired marriage. It can be seen that a woman who resisted the will of the patriarch could easily have been put to death.

Patriarchs also used women to fulfill their own interests and often forced sacrifice upon women. In Silla, for example, a man named Paro adorned his daughter, placed her in a cart, covered her with silk, and offered her to the king. The daughter was only sixteen years old at the time. There is also a record of a wife who was forced by her husband to gratify another man sexually.

Marriage Ethics and Restrictions on Women

With the establishment of the patriarchal order in parallel with social differentiation, women began to be controlled by the patriarchal family order; in other words, social sanctions were imposed on women who disrupted that order.

Gojoseon, the first Korean kingdom, is said to have established the Eight Prohibitions, which included rules regarding adultery. In Baekje, if a wife committed adultery, she was reduced to being a slave and put to work at her husband's abode. In Buyeo, adultery was treated as a felony punishable by death, a serious crime on par with murder.

What is noteworthy is that in Buyeo, the sanctions against jealousy were even more severe than those for adultery. A woman punished for jealousy was not only sentenced to death, but also disallowed a burial. The people of ancient societies were more afraid of being denied a proper burial after death than of death itself, as not being buried signified an eternity of unrest. This severe penalty was imposed on jealousy.

In Goguryeo, there was a case in which a woman was found guilty of jealousy and deprived of a proper burial. The woman, who had been favored by the king for her beautiful face and long, lustrous hair, was killed for fighting with the queen over the affection of the king. The king had the dead woman placed in a leather bag and thrown into the sea. This tale not only shows that Goguryeo also strictly regulated jealousy, but also demonstrates the veracity of Buyeo's record that jealousy was punishable by death and deprivation of a proper burial.

Jealousy was subject to such severe punishment because polygyny was practiced in Buyeo and Goguryeo. In fact, records of Goguryeo show kings who were married to several queens. The custom of polygyny can also be seen depicted in the murals of ancient tombs. When polygyny materialized, jealousy among wives had to be suppressed in order to maintain order within the family headed by the patriarch. In such a way, Buyeo and Goguryeo exercised harsh control over women.

In Silla, although there were no dictates on women's jealousy, fidelity between couples in marriage was considered important. Indeed, it was believed that fidelity should be observed even at the prenuptial stage of engagement. Stories of the state bestowing a reward on a woman who tried to keep her promise of betrothal to a young man who had served in the military on behalf of her old father but who failed to return within the allotted time, or on a woman who was betrothed at a young age at her parents' behest but who strove to maintain her engagement even after reaching adulthood, demonstrate the significance of faithfulness in Silla.

Unification of the Three Kingdoms and Balhae

Routinization of War and Mobilization of Women

During the ancient period, the Three Kingdoms (Goguryeo, Silla, and Baekje) developed into formidable states through repeated conflicts and conquests with neighboring kingdoms and, after the fourth century, fought fierce battles with each other. These conflicts further intensified as Silla occupied the Hangang River basin in the sixth century. In fact, Silla was engaged in a war at least once every other year. Within the context of the continuation of war and the subsequent expansion of the mobilization of men, it was the women who were responsible for quotidian life in the rear. Predictably, many people died in wars, and it was the women who had to endure the news of their husbands' or sons' deaths.

Most warriors were men, but there were also female warriors. The skeletal remains of three women were found buried alongside the occupant of Tomb No. 57 in Daeseong-dong, an archaeological site of Geumgwan Gaya. They appear to have been women in their twenties or early thirties who had produced children; around their skulls were found iron helmets and pieces of armor. In addition, the women appear to have had the kind of well-developed leg muscles that are generally found among horse riders. Such evidence raises the possibility that there were female warriors who received military training in Gaya.

The possibility of the existence of female warriors was also found in Gimhae. An analysis of the human bones excavated from Tomb

No. 57 in Yean-ri showed that they belonged to a woman. What is noteworthy here, however, is that various pieces of weaponry, including twenty-two iron arrowheads and iron spears, along with a large sword, were excavated from this tomb. The tomb also yielded gears for mounted soldiers, such as horse bits, leading to the hypothesis that the woman found in the tomb was a warrior, perhaps even a commander.



Clay figurine of a woman in mourning, c. Silla period

In the process of intensification of war, marriage alliances took root as a feature of inter-state diplomacy. Baekje and Silla, for example, formed marriage alliances in a bid to jointly resist the southward advances of Goguryeo. At the request of King Dongseong of Baekje, King Nulji of Silla sent a daughter of a man named Biji, who served as the Ibeolchan, the highest position among seventeen different official ranks. Conversely, some women from Baekje were married off to Silla; King Seong of Baekje, for example, sent his daughter to King Jinheung of Silla to be his second queen consort.

It was mainly women who were sent away from their homeland to a foreign state for the purpose of a marriage alliance. Women were sacrificed for the sake of such alliances, which were driven by the state's political interests. As such marriages were entirely political in nature, they usually ended when their utility and value expired.

In addition to formal marriage alliances, there was also the practice of gifting women as tributes. Silla, for example, offered women to the Tang Dynasty as part of its diplomatic relations. It is said that Okjeo also offered to Goguryeo a bevy of beauties, who were said to have been made slave-concubines and treated as such. Women who were offered by a fledgling state to a powerful one were often subjected to inhumane treatment, their status equaling that of tributary objects.

Social Changes in Unified Silla

The Three Kingdoms, which had long been locked in fierce competition, were ultimately unified by Silla around the middle of the seventh century. The long-standing war, consisting of battles large and small, was over. After the unification, Silla developed rapidly by absorbing the newly acquired territories and populations. The royal family of Silla, having led the unification war, now sought to establish a new society by strengthening the royal authority and reforming the political system on the basis of Confucian ideology.

During the Unified Silla period, patriarchal rights were strengthened, and the discriminatory perception of men and women intensified. Written a century after the unification of the Three Kingdoms, the song "Anminga" expresses a vertically oriented patriarchal perspective in the following verse: "The king is the father, the minister is the merciful mother, and the people are the children."

Moreover, Unified Silla also emphasized the Three Subordinations of a Woman (*samjongjido*) and the Womanly Virtues (*budeok*). The

Three Subordinations of a Woman refers to the three "entities" that a woman had to follow: father, husband, and son. Rather than being viewed as individual subjects, women were perceived as subordinate to their fathers after birth, to their husbands after marriage, and to their sons after the death of their husbands. For women, their positions as their husbands' wives and their sons' mothers became the *sine qua non* of their social existence and the most crucial social measure.



Map of Unified Silla and Balhae from the Northern and Southern States period

In the patriarchal order, children, especially sons, held essential meaning. Therefore, women began to experience the pressure to bear family heirs, more specifically sons, and those who failed to produce sons were penalized. After the unification of the Three Kingdoms, there were three occasions on which queen consorts were deposed and expelled from the palace, two of which were due to the failure to bear sons. Though there must also have been political reasons, these expulsions clearly demonstrate above all else the necessity for queens to give birth to sons.

King Gyeongdeok, for example, deposed his queen consort and expelled her from the palace because she had not given birth to a



Seokguram Grotto, constructed during the reign of King Gyeongdeok

son, and stories abound of his growing obsession with having a son. When the new queen consort became pregnant for the first time in fifteen years, King Gyeongdeok called upon a monk who was rumored to be able to communicate with the heavens to ask the heavens about his unborn child's gender. Hearing that a daughter would be born, King Gyeongdeok demanded that she be changed to a son and insisted on a son despite warnings that the kingdom would descend into chaos.

Even though Silla had already been ruled by two queens, King Gyeongdeok insisted on a son because a woman's ascendancy to the throne was by now viewed extremely negatively. As discussed previously, King Heonan, who had only two daughters and no sons, relinquished the throne to his son-in-law ahead of his death, claiming,

"In our kingdom, there were two queens, Seondeok and Jindeok, in the past, but this is not to be emulated, as the situation is similar to a household facing ruin when a hen crows." In Unified Silla, the roles of women and men were differentiated, and the perception that only men should play public roles became ossified, intensifying the negative perception of women's involvement in the social and political spheres.

A similar transformation in the succession of the throne can also be seen in Unified Silla; the most notable feature is that sons by concubines could now ascend to the throne. In Silla, where matrilineality as well as patrilineality had once been valued, only the sons of legitimate wives could succeed the throne. However, in ninth-century Unified Silla, the son of a concubine rose to the throne for the first time in Silla's history. Although an unusual situation, the recognition of sons by concubines illustrates the receding importance of matrilineality and, conversely, the growing weight of patrilineality.

However, familial succession had not been completely transformed into a system purely based on patrilineality. For example, the genealogy of a person named Geocheon includes the mother (named Ajinyeo), the mother of the mother (named Myeongjunyeo), and the mother of Myeongjunyeo (named Jeokrinyeo), narrating the family's matrilineage. Moreover, King Seondeok of Unified Silla emphasized King Seongdeok, his maternal grandfather, rather than his paternal grandfather, in their genealogy.

Also notable is the fact that a woman could act as the *de facto* head of the family and exercise economic power after her husband's death. Moreover, although paintings of goddesses and priestesses

disappeared, women were depicted as corporeal manifestations of Avalokiteśvara and as bodhisattvas who supported and assisted the Buddhist faith.

Women of Balhae

Although Silla had succeeded in unifying the Three Kingdoms, Silla's territory immediately after unification was limited to the areas south of the Daedonggang River, and the part of Goguryeo confined to the area south of the Daedonggang River. The area north of the Daedonggang River was first ruled by the Tang, which had been in an alliance with Silla. Then, thirty years after the demise of Goguryeo, Balhae (698-926) was founded.

Established in the erstwhile territory of Goguryeo, Balhae also emphasized the Womanly Virtues (*budeok*) and the Three Subordinations of a Woman (*samjongjido*). For example, the tombs of the second and fourth princesses of King Mun, the third king of Balhae, contain—along with descriptions of their different lives—almost identical epitaphs praising their adherence to the Three Subordinations of a Woman and the Womanly Virtue of supporting their husbands with devotion. Furthermore, both epitaphs claim that the princesses loved Ban Zhao of the Han Dynasty, who was respected for remaining devoted to her husband even after he passed away. She was also known to have remained a part of her deceased husband's family and never re-marrying. The fact that the epitaphs of King Mun's two daughters show that they were widows demonstrates that remarriage was frowned upon for women of the ruling



People of Balhae depicted in the tomb of Princess Jeonghyo

class in Balhae.

The Three Subordinations of a Woman (*samjongjido*) mentioned in the epitaphs, along with other precepts, are based on a fundamental Confucian tenet, demonstrating that the Confucian culture of Balhae had reached a considerable level of sophistication at that time. In addition, the two princesses were taught by female teachers called "Yeosa," evidence that the royal family had teachers entirely devoted to educating the princesses. This also indicates that there appears to have been a position for women called "Yeosa" at that time.

Buddhism was also prevalent in Balhae. King Mun, the father of Princess Jeonghyo, was considered to be comparable to the Wheel Turning Sage King; as such, he was called the "Sagely Dharma King of the Kāñcana-mandala." That the Buddhist faith was widely disseminated among the members of the ruling class can be readily

recognized, given that Buddhist relics such as temple sites, steles, and pagodas are scattered across the erstwhile territory of Balhae.

In Balhae, women played the role of patrons of Buddhist temples and engaged in various Buddhist activities. The stele of Amitabha Buddha in Balhae, which was completed in 834, was built under the patronage of the mother of Jo Mun-hyu, an official, to pray for enlightenment and for the salvation of the people. That this individual woman was able to patronize the construction of a stele demonstrates that Balhae women could personally own and exercise rights over their property.

On the other hand, Balhae had a unique custom:

> Usually, ten women, most with different surnames, form a sisterhood and watch one another's husbands. They never forgive the husbands for taking on concubines or having affairs, and upon hearing of such a dalliance, the women conspire to poison and kill the latest object of a husband's love. When a husband has an affair and his wife fails to realize it, the other nine women gather together to criticize him. In addition, they show their jealousy and envy. As such, although there is polygyny, and both prostitutes and female servants are available to men among the Khitan and Jurchen peoples, there is no such system in Balhae (*Song mo ji wen*).

The Chinese author who conveyed this information wrote that the women of Balhae were aggressive and jealous. This may be because Balhae's family system differed considerably from the Chinese patriarchal family order. In Balhae, however, there was also the custom of predatory marriage, whereby men kidnapped women and ran away with their captives to marry them. Such an amalgamation of customs illuminates the peculiarities of the culture of Balhae, a multiethnic state that was formed by assimilating the culture of Tang China into the culture of Goguryeo along with numerous indigenous elements.

Balhae was eventually destroyed by the Khitan, and from the erstwhile territory of Balhae originates the story of a female warrior named Hong Ra-nyeo. Hong learned martial arts from a demi-goddess and, upon the Khitan invasion, became a general and participated in the war. It is said that Hong Ra-nyeo rode horses, armed with a long spear in one hand and a bow slung over her shoulders. Balhae people are said to have enjoyed horse riding and archery, and the story of Hong Ra-nyeo suggests that the women of Balhae were not an exception to the rule.





Chapter 2

WOMEN IN GORYEO SOCIETY

Kwon Soon-hyung

Overview of the Period

Goryeo (918-1392) was founded in 918 by Wang Geon (King Taejo, r. 877–943), a member of the local elite from Gaeseong. At that time, the Korean Peninsula was ruled by disparate local elites, largely divided into Goryeo, Later Baekje, and Silla. King Taejo conciliated the local elites of various regions and achieved unification in 936, incorporating a pro-Silla, anti-Later Baekje policy. At the time of Goryeo's foundation, China was in turmoil during its Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period, and the Song Dynasty was founded in 960. Meanwhile, the nomadic tribes of the north, the Khitans and the Jurchens, also grew stronger, establishing the Liao and Jin Dynasties in 916 and 1115, respectively. The Goryeo Dynasty developed pluralistic diplomatic relations with the Song, the Liao, and the Jin to promote its own development. When emigrants from China, Balhae, the Khitan Liao, and the Jurchen Jin arrived in Goryeo to escape the ongoing war and chaos, Goryeo implemented an open-door policy of actively accepting the migrants. In addition, Goryeo became known to the West as "Corea" through its encouragement of commerce and trade.

During the Goryeo Dynasty, the ancient bone-rank system of Silla, wherein individual status was determined only by bloodline, was abandoned; in its stead, *gwageo*, a system of civil service examinations for the selection and recruitment of officials, was established. Simultaneously, however, there was also a protected appointment system whereby the descendants of high-ranking officials could obtain government posts without having to take an examination. Therefore, the Goryeo Dynasty was also a society with a status system in which lineage was accorded priority over ability. Marriage also held important social meaning in that lineage was determined by birth, and birth was achieved through marriage. In Goryeo, Confucianism was an essential ideology in governing the state, but Buddhism reigned supreme in the realm of individual faith. In addition to Buddhism, however, there were various other faiths such as Taoism, feng shui, and shamanism, attesting to considerable diversity and complexity of spiritual thought.

What, one may ask, was life like for women during the Goryeo Dynasty? With the weakening of the mythical characteristics and the readjustment of sociopolitical systems, women became further excluded from the public sphere. Women were now barred from acting as queens or priestesses as they had done in ancient times; instead, they served as regents in their capacity as mothers to a young king, or devoted themselves to managing the home and child rearing. In Buddhism, it was also emphasized that women should be faithful to their roles within the family, as mothers, wives, and daughters-in-law, rather than joining the Buddhist order and becoming nuns. As a result, women prayed for the wellbeing of their families and peace after death through religious activities including prayers and patronage. Within the family, the status of women was not so regrettable, however. Because the marriage system intimately tied married couples to the wives' natal families, there was no such belief that daughters would become "strangers" (in other words, members of their husbands' families) once they were married.

Moreover, inheritance practice was based on the balanced division of assets between sons and daughters. In fact, women could accumulate wealth through commercial and trade activities, using their own wealth as leverage.

In the thirteenth century, Goryeo was devastated by a series of Mongol invasions. For more than thirty years, Goryeo fought a desperate war against the Mongol Yuan, finally concluding an unequal peace treaty with the Yuan in 1270. As a result, Goryeo was compelled to accept Yuan princesses as its queens and relinquished a part of its territory to the control of the Yuan, all the while being coerced into offering countless tributary goods including women and eunuchs. In particular, the expropriation of women as tributary offerings during this period was a source of incredible suffering for women. As the relationship between the two dynasties progressed, however, exchanges of institutions, customs, languages, and scholarly endeavors became much more active than ever before. Due to the influence of Yuan customs, polygyny and levirate marriage became more commonplace, and Neo-Confucianism was introduced through officials who had sojourned in the Yuan. The officials who brought the Neo-Confucian ideology with them regarded as ideal the realization of a patriarchal family system such as that prevalent in China, placed significant emphasis on women's chastity, including a move toward the prohibition of remarriage for women, and criticized the existing uxorilocal marriage custom. Such developments, which were based on Neo-Confucian precepts, subsequently gained much greater momentum with the advent of the Joseon Dynasty, whereupon the lives and status of women changed drastically.

Founding of Goryeo and Women

Unification of the Later Three Kingdoms and Royal Marriage

King Taejo had twenty-nine consorts (*hubi*, a term denoting both official queens and ladies who were betrothed to the king), the largest number of any of Goryeo's kings. Such a large number of consorts was considered essential to consolidating power in Goryeo by establishing marriage alliances between Taejo and the daughters of the most influential local elites in each region in the context of the establishment of the Later Three Kingdoms. Taejo also married the daughters of the royal families of Later Baekje and Silla, thereby enfolding the royal families of the Three Kingdoms into his own family. In the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), where monogamy was the law, there was one queen, who was considered the king's one and only wife, and several concubines. However, in the Goryeo royal family, polygyny was the custom, and the distinction between a queen and a concubine was tenuous at best. Among the twenty-nine consorts of King Taejo, six of them were given the title of queen, a clear indication of polygyny. Also noteworthy is the fact that the practice of polygyny in the royal family of Goryeo attests to the traditions it inherited as a dynasty founded as the successor of Goguryeo.

Along with polygyny, "sister wives" were also fairly common. Taejo's fifteenth and sixteenth consorts were the daughters of Wang Gyu (?~945), a member of the local elite of Gwangju in Gyeonggi Province, while his nineteenth and twentieth consorts were the

daughters of Kim Haeng-pa from Dongju in Hwanghae Province. This type of marriage was not entirely new to Goryeo, as it had also existed in Silla. In addition to sister wives, endogamous or consanguineous marriage also took place in Goryeo. For example, after giving his two daughters to Taejo in marriage, Wang Gyu married another of his daughters to King Hyejong (912–945), the son of Taejo. In other words, Hyejong married his maternal aunt. Consanguineous marriage in Goryeo took on an extreme form; not only was marriage common between uncles and nieces, or aunts and nephews, as well as cousins, but it also took place between half-siblings. Princesses, in particular, were mostly married within the royal family. All of these practices were intended to strengthen the royal authority through consecration of the royal family and to prevent the dispersal of royal power. Consanguineous marriage had also been a custom since ancient times. These peculiarities of royal marriage systems, such as polygyny, sister wives, and consanguineous marriage, persisted after Taejo's reign, ultimately becoming entrenched as one of the characteristics of Goryeo's royal culture.

Gradually, the royal authority of Goryeo was fortified, and the local elites were transformed into Goryeo bureaucrats. Through the protected appointment system, families who produced high-ranking government officials across numerous generations gradually emerged. These families forged marriage alliances, eventually forming several powerful aristocratic clans called *munbeol*. In addition, members of these clans often married into the royal family, and as the descendants of the consorts succeeded the throne, the power of the clans increased.

The most representative *munbeol* clan was the Inju Yi clan. ("Yi" is the surname, and "Inju," the clan seat.) Yi Ja-yeon (1003-1061) rose to the position of Prime Minister after passing the civil service examination, and his three daughters became King Munjong's consorts. Most notably among them, the eldest daughter, Queen Inye (?-1092), gave birth to four daughters and ten sons, three of whom later ascended the throne. These kings in turn married the daughters of the Inju Yi clan, their maternal cousins, continuing the reign of their descendants as well as the marriage alliances with the daughters of the Inju Yi clan. All in all, the Inju Yi clan produced eleven royal consorts, six kings born to these consorts, and countless high-ranking officials over a period of eighty years from 1046, the year in which King Munjong ascended the throne, to 1126 (Table 1). In other words, the rise of the Inju Yi clan was intimately tied to the practice of consanguineous marriage, polygyny, and sister wives. Moreover, the Inju Yi clan continuously struck marriage alliances with other powerful aristocratic clans such as the Gyeongju Kim and Haeju Choe clans, expanding its power to equal, or even surpass, that of the king. In fact, in 1126, Yi Ja-gyeom (?~1126), who had married three of his daughters to King Yejong and King Injong, conspired to become the king himself by staging a revolt. Although the



Map of Goryeo in the eleventh century

Table 1. List of *hubi* from King Munjong to King Injong

King	*Hubi*	*Hubi*'s Father	*Hubi*'s Children
Munjong	Queen Inpyeong of the Ansan Kim clan	King Hyeonjong	None
	Queen Dowager Inye-sundeok of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Ja-yeon	10 sons and 4 daughters, including the Kings Sunjong, Seonjong, and Sukjong
	Royal Consort Ingyeong hyeonbi of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Ja-yeon	3 sons
	Injeol hyeonbi of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Ja-yeon	None
	Inmok deokbi of the Gyeongju Kim clan	Kim Won-chung	None
Sunjong	Queen Jeongui of the Gaeseong Wang clan	Wang Gi, Prince Pyeongyang	None
	Queen Seonhui of the Gyeongju Kim clan	Kim Yang-geom	None
	Janggyeong gungju of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Ho (son of Yi Ja-yeon)	None
Seonjong	Jeongsin hyeonbi of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Ye (son of Yi Ja-yeon's brother)	Queen Gyeonghwa
	Queen Dowager Sasuk of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Seok (son of Yi Ja-yeon)	King Heonjong, Princess Suan
	Wonseon gungju of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Jeong (son of Yi Ja-yeon)	Wang Yun (Prince Hansan)
Heonjong	None	None	None
Sukjong	Queen Dowager Myeongui of the Jeongju Yu clan	Yu Hong	7 sons and 4 daughters including King Yejong
Yejong	Queen Gyeonghwa of the Inju Yi clan*	King Seonjong	None
	Queen Dowager Mungyeong of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Ja-gyeom (grandson of Yi Ja-yeon)	1 son and 2 daughters including King Injong
Yejong	Queen Munjeong of the Gaeseong Wang clan	Wang Yu	None
	Sukbi Choe of the Haeju Choe clan	Choe Yong	None
Injong	Deposed Queen of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Ja-gyeom	None
	Deposed Queen of the Inju Yi clan*	Yi Ja-gyeom	None
	Queen Dowager Gong'ye of the Jangheung Im clan	Im Won-hu	5 sons and 4 daughters including King Uijong
	Queen Seonpyeong of the Gyeongju or the Gangneung Kim clan	Kim Seon	None

(* marks the *hubi* from the Inju Yi clan.)

revolt failed, the Inju Yi clan maintained its status and reputation as a representative clan of the kingdom's powerful aristocratic families until the fall of the Goryeo Dynasty.

As described previously, in the early Goryeo period, women served as the conduit for connecting King Taejo with the local elites through marriage in the process of founding the Goryeo Dynasty and unifying the Later Three Kingdoms. Subsequently, women made a significant contribution not only to developing their family members as matrilineal relations of the royal family, but also to forging powerful aristocratic families by marriage.

Inter-State Marriage in the Open Society

After the fall of Balhae in 926, Goryeo accepted some of the displaced people, including members of its ruling stratum. In fact, Ko Mo-han, a member of the Balhae ruling class, married a daughter of King Taejo. Furthermore, numerous Han Chinese people migrated from China to Goryeo to escape the instability prevalent during the Five Kingdoms and Ten Dynasties period. From 919 to 1148, the number of people shown in records to have migrated to Goryeo amounted to 155 on 42 different occasions. These migrants were of diverse status and professions, including literati, officials, merchants, musicians, and monks. In Goryeo, they were awarded government posts, land, and houses; as such, it is not a stretch of the imagination to assume that they would also have married Goryeo women. The Han Chinese migrants, in particular, played an active role in politics, diplomacy, interpretation, trade, medicine, and music, as well as in introducing the Chinese-style civil service examination system, called *gwageo*, in Goryeo.

Furthermore, a significant number of Khitan and Jurchen people migrated to Goryeo to seek refuge from war and political turmoil. In fact, in Namgyeong (currently Seoul), there was a Khitan district, and when the king sojourned there, the local Khitan residents performed dances, music, and other forms of entertainment for him. These Khitan and Jurchen migrants must also have married people of Goryeo.

Before the foundation of the Goryeo Dynasty, King Taejo's family had engaged in maritime trade, operating along the Yeseonggang River and on the Yellow Sea. For this reason, Goryeo continued to encourage commerce and trade after the establishment of the dynasty. Goryeo actively traded with the Song, while merchants from the Khitan Liao, the Jurchen Jin, Japan, Tamna (an ancient kingdom that ruled today's Jeju Island), and even the Arabian Peninsula came to Goryeo to engage in commercial activities. Consequently, the trade port of Goryeo called Byeokrando teemed with people, and numerous marriages between foreign merchants and Goryeo women are assumed to have materialized.

In the *History of Goryeo*, there is a song entitled "Yeseonggang River," whose lyrics recount a story in which a Chinese merchant named Hadugang sees a beautiful married woman by the Yeseonggang River one day. A talented *go* player, Hadugang makes a bet with the woman's husband and deliberately loses several times. When the greedy husband bets his wife for the next match, Hadugang wins at once and takes the man's wife with him on his ship. The husband regrets and laments his mistake, composing and singing the song "Yeseonggang River." What happens to the wife who is taken by Hadugang? On board, Hadugang attempts to rape her, but it is not easy because the woman's clothes are wound about her so tightly. Then, when the ship enters the sea, the bow appears unable to move forward. Fortunetelling shows that the chaste wife must be returned to her husband if the ship is to avoid wreckage. The sailors tell Hadugang to return the woman, and Hadugang complies with their demand.

Although the relationship between Hadugang and the Goryeo woman is not consummated in the song, in reality there must have been numerous unions between foreign merchants and Goryeo

women. There is even a record about a man named Song Yu-in (?~1179), an official, who married a former wife of Xu Deyan, a Song merchant, and bought a government post with her money. In the open and pluralistic Goryeo society, numerous inter-state marriages took place, and it is assumed that women's lives also varied accordingly.

Women and Homelife

State Policy Regarding Women and the Buddhist Perspective on Women

During the Goryeo Dynasty, laws and systems were reorganized according to Confucian ideology and operated based on its premises. In fact, the state encouraged the espousal of Confucian precepts by rewarding those who embodied filial piety, chastity, and devotion to child rearing. A woman by the surname of Choe, for example, became a widow at a young age, but she never remarried, instead serving her parents-in-law faithfully and focusing on child rearing, for which she received an award from the state in 990. In addition, women who produced three sons who passed the civil service examinations, an extremely difficult feat, were rewarded for their efforts in raising their sons well. Women who gave birth to twin sons were also rewarded with a prize of grain. Such a system, which endured from the ancient period, appears to have been meaningful in encouraging fertility and relief of the needy in an agricultural society.

On the other hand, the lack of filial piety was severely punished; married women who behaved in an unfilial manner toward their parents-in-law could be punished by the dissolution of their marriage. Furthermore, women who committed adultery were subjected to punishment and divorce. In contrast, though men who engaged in extramarital affairs were also punished, their affairs were not grounds for divorce. As such, the state encouraged women to fulfill their duties as wives, daughters-in-law, and mothers through

legal and systemic prescriptions and proscriptions.

As women were not able to receive public education, they were greatly influenced by the Buddhist faith and its teachings. In the Buddhist scriptures, women were often depicted as angry, jealous, stingy, and foolish, qualities that left them unfit for employment. In other words, Buddhism also called for women to demonstrate their virtues within the confines of the family rather than within society. This is well illustrated by the example of Kim Je-hak, a fourteenth-century government official, who wrote the following about his deceased wife: "Fortunately, my deceased wife, a woman of the surname Bang, was born in a Buddhist family and served her parents-in-law with great care, never once neglecting her duties as a wife. Her death has brought me indescribable sorrow."

In fact, the intensity of the moral and ethical prescriptions required of women in the pre-modern era, an era during which women were forbidden to enter the public sphere, did not much depend on whether the premises originated from Confucian ideology or Buddhist doctrine. However, what does differentiate Buddhism from Confucianism is the reciprocal nature of the former. In the Buddhist scriptures, for example, children are told to obey and serve their parents well, and parents, in turn, are urged to love their children to prevent them from doing evil. Moreover, a wife must fulfill her duties to her husband, treat his family and friends respectfully, and manage his wealth effectively; in response, the husband must also treat his wife courteously and kindly, never belittling or being disdainful to her, and is urged at times to delegate authority to the wife. These precepts differ significantly from those of Confucianism, which demand unilateral filial piety and respect for parents and husbands.

Uxorilocal Marriage

Since women were not allowed to enter the public sphere, most women married and lived out their existence as wives, mothers, and daughters-in-law. What was the status of women in the institution of marriage and the family system?

Goryeo marriage customs were not patrilocal, but uxorilocal, whereby the groom married the bride at the bride's natal home and resided there. Of course, the married couple did not live their entire lives at the bride's natal home, though in the case of an only daughter with no siblings at all, the groom might have lived at the bride's home for the duration of their lives. In most marriages, however, the union began as uxorilocal and, after a while, the couple either moved into the groom's home or had their own residence. The opposite of uxorilocal marriage is patrilocal marriage, whereby the bride marries the groom at the groom's natal home and resides there from the first day of marriage; this was a representative Chinese custom. In the patrilocal system of marriage, men were at the center, and marriage signified that brides became absorbed into the grooms' families. However, under the marriage customs of Goryeo, an equal relationship was maintained between the two families, rather than the women being absorbed into the men's families. As a woman's relationship with her natal family after marriage was an important factor in determining her identity and status, Goryeo's marriage

custom, which did not require patrilocal residence, can accordingly be considered far more advantageous to women than the Chinese marriage custom.

What is also noteworthy about this period is the existence of women who remained unmarried. In any society, there are cases of people who cannot marry due to such issues as poverty, disease, or religious reasons. However, there were men and women who chose to remain single in Goryeo. A maiden by the surname of Wang (1141-1183), a descendant of the royal family, was a stunning woman with beautiful skin said to glow like snow and a face as delicate as a flower. Although she lived alone "in a world where no man could really be her match," she lived a calm and joyful existence. She



Portraits of Jo Ban, a senior minister of the late Goryeo Dynasty period designated as a meritorious subject for his contribution to the founding of the Joseon Dynasty, and his wife. The original portraits from the early Joseon period were copied in the late Joseon period.

was devoted to her father, performed the ancestral rites faithfully, and remained close to her siblings. She also carefully chose her servants, avoided sycophants, and frugally maintained the precious treasures and property left to her by her parents. She died of illness at the age of forty-three.

The existence of people who chose to remain unmarried was possible in Goryeo because, unlike the Joseon Dynasty, Goryeo did not place a strong emphasis on the continuity of the patrilineal lineage through the generations. In Buddhism, the faithful were not required to marry, nor were they forced to remain sexually pure even if they chose to remain single.

Women's Position in the Family

As women continued to live in their natal homes even after marriage, the extended family structure could include elderly parents, daughter and son-in-law, and grandchildren. The son-in-law and the matrilineal grandchildren were no different from biological sons or patrilineal grandchildren. When someone died in a pre-modern East Asian society, the length of the period of wearing mourning clothes was an indicator of how close or distant the mourner was to the deceased. In China, for example, when the paternal grandparents, maternal grandparents, and parents-in-law of men passed away, the period of wearing mourning clothes was one year, five months, and three months, respectively. By contrast, in Goryeo, the duration was the same—one year—in all these cases, demonstrating that patrilineality and matrilineality carried equal weight. In addition,



Family register of Yi Seong-gye, compiled in Hwaryeong-bu (today's Yeongheung in South Hamgyeong Province). This family register was compiled in the year 1390 during the late Goryeo Dynasty period. The register shows men living with their in-laws.

the tradition of adopting sons that is commonly found throughout societies privileging patrilineality did not exist in Goryeo.

An inheritance was equally divided between sons and daughters, and the property that a woman received from her natal family was not attributed to her husband even after marriage. For example, if a couple were to patronize a temple together, the donations from the husband and wife were recorded separately. When a wife died, her property was temporarily transferred to her husband, but if she left no children, then the property was returned to the wife's family after the husband's death. In such a way, women's property was owned, managed, and disposed of by women themselves, and even after marriage, it existed as independent property wholly separate from that of her husband.

Moreover, men and women were equally entitled to ancestral rites as well as inheritances. Since ancestral rites were performed at temples under the supervision of monks, sons and daughters could take turns to provide monetary support for the ancestral rites. During the Joseon Dynasty, in contrast, only the eldest son could perform ancestral rites according to the Neo-Confucian precept of primogeniture. As such, the eldest son became the head of the family and hence the inheritor of the largest share of the family assets.

In such a way, the preference for sons was not as absolute during the Goryeo Dynasty as it was in the Joseon Dynasty, because sons and daughters had equal rights in terms of support for parents, inheritances, and ancestral rites. Of course, women were unable to engage



Record of property transfer (residence and land) to Princess Suksin, the daughter of a concubine, from King Taejo (Yi Seong-gye). This record demonstrates the existence of women's property rights in the late Goryeo and early Joseon period.

in the public sphere, but instead, their sons-in-law or maternal grandchildren could achieve fame and prestige for the family. Therefore, the official household register did not discriminate between sons and daughters, recording them by order of birth rather than listing sons before daughters. Moreover, even with an adult son, his mother could serve as the head of the household.

Work and Economic Activities

Household Management and Managers

What role did women play in the family? Let us examine the details of family life through the example of a woman called Lady Jeong. Lady Jeong (1104-1170) was a woman of a prominent family; both her grandfather and father had served as high-ranking government officials. She married Choe Yu-cheong (1095–1174), a widower nine years her senior who had a son. Lady Jeong was gentle and kind, diligent and frugal. She also respectfully held the ancestral rites and maintained good relations with relatives. In fact, so well did she



Epitaph for Madame Jeong, the wife of Choe Yu-cheong. Inscribed on Madame Jeong's tomb, the epitaph contains a record of her life.

manage the housework that she enabled her husband to concentrate solely on his career. She also raised her husband's son by his first wife as well as the seven sons and one daughter she herself gave birth to with great care and affection. Four of the sons passed the civil service examination and became officials, while two others passed the state examination for Buddhist monks and obtained high-ranking positions in the Buddhist orders. With her husband in office and nine children, the house was always full of guests. However, Lady Jeong was always able to serve delicious food to the guests in the morning and evening, for which she was highly praised by everyone who visited the house.

Lady Jeong's story illustrates the image of the ideal woman at that time. Women were the managers of households, the basic units of the state, who were dedicated to overseeing everything related to the family and the house, including clothing, food, residence, and all labor involved in such activities. They also contributed to the reproduction of labor power by faithfully observing the precepts of filial piety, raising children, and supporting their husbands.

Weaving

The most important part of women's labor was weaving. Weaving was practiced by women from all walks of life, from the ruling stratum to the lower classes, though there was of course a difference in the characteristics and intensity of their labor. The weaving undertaken by upper-class women held largely symbolic rather than practical meaning; in other words it was a performative fulfillment

of their duty as women. For example, Kim Won's wife, Lady In (1147-1217), was wealthy, but she never took a break from weaving. When her children entreated her to stop, Lady In said, "It's a woman's job to weave and breed silkworms. Weaving for us is akin to your books and brushes. How can I stop even for a moment?"



Fine ramie weaving of Hansan

Weaving for women of the lower classes, on the other hand, was essential labor. Hemp cloth was needed as a means of exchange in the market, not to mention as a material for making clothes for the family and paying taxes. Lower-class women had to either cut down on their sleep at night to weave, or fit it in whenever they could between farming and completing the household chores. However, the weaving process was so complicated that weaving was viewed as the most difficult job for a woman. Furthermore, during the Yuan intervention period (from the latter half of the thirteenth to the former half of the fourteenth century), taxes increased rapidly to support the tributes that had to be offered to the Yuan, exchanges of envoys, and the heavy costs of war. Ramie cloth was especially popular in the Yuan, but it was even more complicated to produce than hemp cloth, exacerbating the suffering of lower-class women.

Commercial Activities

Women also engaged in profit-making ventures. A typical example was usury, money lending at high interest rates. During the Goryeo Dynasty, usury was quite commonplace, with the interest rate being as high as one-third of the principal. Even temples were not protected from this profit-seeking practice. Women used their inheritance from their parents to increase their assets through usury.

In addition, women engaged in commerce and trade. Men and women of all ages did business together, as there were government-licensed shops in Gaegyeong, the capital of Goryeo, and local markets in the provinces. Trade was also well developed; merchants from China, Japan, and the Arabian Peninsula, as well as other states, entered Goryeo *via the Yeseonggang River*. Trade became even more active during the Yuan intervention period. More goods were traded through the Yuan, which had constructed the world's greatest empire at the time, and the royal family and the ruling class fully immersed themselves in trade by exploiting farmers and the products of their labor.

A representative example of a woman engaging in economic activities during this period is Princess Euncheon, whose surname was Im. Princess Euncheon was low-born, a daughter of a merchant called Im Sin, who sold porcelain. King Chunghye (1315-1344) adored Im Sin's daughter and took her as his concubine, bestowing upon her the title of Princess Euncheon. During the Yuan intervention period, King Chunghye was most interested in the economy. He dispatched his subjects to trade with China and opened shops in markets. At that time, the king also built a new palace, and installed there numerous millstones and maidservants who weaved silk according to the wishes of Princess Euncheon. In other words, Princess Euncheon played a central role in the king's trade activities, including enabling the manufacture of grain and textiles, the main items of trade with the Yuan, directly on the grounds of the palace.

Along with Princess Euncheon, Princess Jegukdaejang (1259-1297), the queen consort of King Chungryeol, also exemplifies women's involvement in economic activities of this period. The princess reaped exorbitant profits by trading the pine nuts, ginseng, and ramie that she obtained by exploiting commoners. Judging from these examples, it can be inferred that women's activities in trade at that time carried considerable weight.

Culture and Life

Buddhist Activities

Goryeo women tried to follow the teachings of Buddhism by reading or reciting the Buddhist scriptures. Often, they would wake up early in the morning to start the day by memorizing scriptures, and read them intermittently during the day in between their tasks. They also patronized temples to offer prayers for the repose of their deceased parents or husbands, or for the wellbeing of their living families as well as of themselves.

In addition, women joined the Buddhist orders to practice asceticism. Madame Heo (1255-1324), the wife of the government official Kim Byeon, built Gameungsa Temple next to her husband's grave. She also transcribed Buddhist scriptures in gold and silver to pray for the repose of her husband's spirit. She later became a Buddhist nun at the age of sixty-one and toured temples all over the kingdom, including those in Gyeongju. When she became weak due to old age, she built and lived in a small house next to her eldest son's house and died at the age of seventy-one. The state posthumously promoted her as Great Master Jinhye. Great Master Jinhye's relative by marriage, Madame Park (1249-1318), the wife of a government official named Choe Seo, also became a Buddhist nun. She entered a Buddhist order in 1318, but when the illness she was suffering from took a turn for the worse, she offered a slave of hers to a temple to become a nun in her stead, and died a few days later while reciting the scriptures. This trajectory was based on the belief that even one day of existence in the order could lead to a return to the heavens.

An examination of many women's entrance into the Buddhist orders demonstrates that a case such as Madame Park's, namely entering an order when close to death, was in fact rather commonplace. The state enacted a law prohibiting women from entering the Buddhist orders in 1017 and again in 1361, and as of 1388 only widows who intended to keep their chastity were allowed to become nuns. It is not known how thoroughly these laws were enforced, but it is clear that the state did not encourage women to enter the Buddhist orders. This was due to fears that if numerous women, especially of child-bearing age, became nuns, it would inevitably result in a drop in the population, potentially leading to a shortage of labor, a major source of productivity. In reality, women themselves must have preferred not to become nuns because they could only be the recipients of praise and honor as the wives of successful men or as the mothers of sons. Even when women did become nuns, they could not receive a promotion, as these women, unlike men who entered the Buddhist orders, did not sit for the state examination for Buddhist monks. Even after leaving their homes and entering the orders, women were still referred to by their secular titles, as in the case of Grand Lady and Great Master Jinhye, "Grand Lady" being her secular title. This shows not only the status of women in religious orders, but also a reality faced by women that is only understood *vis-à-vis* their relationships with men. As such, women were more likely to embody their faith within their own world, praying for their families and their own well-being, rather than entering the Buddhist orders as nuns.

Love and Sex

Were women faithful only to their duties as wives, mothers, and daughters-in-law according to the prescriptions of the law and the teachings of Buddhism? Did they have no desires or emotions? Love has existed in all ages, and Goryeo was no exception. A Goryeo song entitled "Spring Overflows the Pavilion" has the following verses: "Though we may die, freezing/upon a bamboo mat on ice/I wish for tonight, the night we have consummated our love/to push away the dawn." The lyrics are full of passion, which no amount of freezing cold could dampen. Love stories are not so few and far between in ancient documentary records. For example, an official is described as playing the *geomungo* (six-stringed zither) at night, when a girl from the neighborhood climbs over the wall, or a handsome scholar makes frequent visits to the home of his senior, whose widow gives him a seductive poem.

What is unusual here is that most such love stories are focused on single women or widows. This is related to the notion of chastity as understood at the time. In Goryeo Buddhism, adultery was forbidden, as a married couple were to keep their vows of monogamy faithfully to each other. However, the keeping of marital vows pertained to living spouses, not to the deceased ones. For this reason, single women or widows appear as the main subjects in many a love story.

On the other hand, adultery was severely punished. While adultery was a crime of dual punishment, the punishment was more severe for women. For example, a married man was found innocent if he committed adultery with a maidservant in his household; in

contrast, a married woman who committed adultery was entered into a registry called the Register of Licentious Women (Janyeoan), subjected to divorce, and turned into a slave or a professional female entertainer (*gisaeng*). Moreover, the adulteress's descendants were restricted from entering government posts. For example, one Madame Park, who was the wife of Ikheunggun, a relative of the royal family, was imprisoned for adultery. Madame Park committed adultery again while in prison, a crime for which she was punished by being turned into a *janyeo*, or a woman who serviced men, at a sort of inn for foreign merchants called Sinchanggwan. In other words, she was essentially made into a prostitute for foreign merchants. The existence of Sinchanggwan illustrates the development of foreign trade during the Goryeo Dynasty, the presence of foreign merchants, and the dark underbelly of Gaegyeong, an "international" city. Sexual relations with foreigners in this period can also be seen in the Goryeo song known as "The Dumpling Shop" (Ssanghwajeom: the word "ssanghwa" denotes dumplings).

I went to the Ssanghwajeom to buy dumplings,
But an Islamic merchant grabbed my wrist,
If this is known outside the store
… I'll say that it's a lie that you, a little clown, have spread
… I, too, will go to that bed
…there is no place stuffier than where we lay.

This song portrays the infidelity that takes place in the corner of a cramped, uncomfortable dumpling shop run by an Islamic

merchant.

There are numerous Goryeo songs such as "The Dumpling Shop" (Ssanghwajeom) and "Spring Overflows the Pavilion" (Manjeonchun) that depict love stories. For this reason, these songs became a target of criticism during the Joseon Dynasty, when sexual mores became extremely stringent. Often, Confucian scholars of Joseon either changed the lyrics of Goryeo songs or eradicated them wholesale from the literature, claiming, "These are songs that depict men and women in love and therefore should not be preserved." The main reasons why such truthful love songs could be composed during the Goryeo Dynasty are that there were no regulations on women's outings, and there were many opportunities for meeting members of the opposite sex because religious events were held outdoors and attended by men and women of all ages. Moreover, the fact that a woman's vow of chastity in a marriage pertained only to her living husband contributed to the proliferation of love songs in Goryeo.

Changes in Women's Lives during the Yuan Intervention Period

Marriage with Yuan Princesses and Women Sent as Tribute

After Goryeo concluded an unequal peace treaty with Yuan in 1270, Goryeo kings were forced to marry Yuan princesses as their primary queen consorts. By the end of the Goryeo Dynasty, eight Yuan princesses had come to Goryeo via marriage; compared to consorts from within Goryeo, these Yuan princesses enjoyed high status, and their descendants were the ones who ascended the throne. In general, the Yuan consorts were jealous of the consorts of Goryeo background, and some caused a great stir due to their jealousy, a prime example of which is the false accusation of the queen consort by the surname Jo. Princess Supreme of Gyeguk (?~1315), the second ethnically Mongol queen of Goryeo, was the queen consort of King Chungseon. The Princess Supreme informed the Yuan that her husband loved Queen Consort Jo more than he loved her, because Queen Consort Jo had cast spells upon him. In response, the Yuan dispatched an envoy to capture Queen Consort Jo and her parents, and King Chungseon was dethroned as a result.

What proved even more difficult than marriage with the Yuan princesses was the system of offering women as tribute. Women from all walks of life were targets, from those in the royal court to the common people, with the number rising into the thousands. If a woman were chosen as a tribute to the Yuan, she would never

be able to return to her hometown, spending most of her life in the Yuan court as a maid or a slave. As a defensive measure, early marriage became extremely popular in Goryeo, and numerous parents attempted to have their daughters enter the Buddhist orders to become nuns.

Among the many women taken as tribute, the most successful was Empress Gi (Empress Qi in Chinese, Öljei Khutugh in Mongolian, also known as Empress Bohyeonsukseong). A daughter of a Goryeo official by the name of Gi Ja-o, she was taken as tribute to the Yuan in 1333 and became a court lady. Huizong (posthumously Emperor Shun of Yuan), known as Toghon Temür in Mongolian, became enamored with Lady Gi, who rose to Second Empress in 1339 after giving birth to a son. In 1365, she was appointed Primary Empress. Her clan was involved in all kinds of illegal activities in Goryeo. Empress Gi fled to the north when the Yuan Dynasty collapsed in 1368, and her whereabouts thereafter remain unknown.

Exchanges of Customs and Cultures between Goryeo and the Yuan

During the Yuan intervention period, inter-state marriage between Goryeo people and the Mongols, spearheaded by the marriage of Yuan princesses and Goryeo kings, greatly increased. Predictably, Yuan trends began to influence Goryeo marriage customs, the most representative of which was the practice of polygyny, not just in the royal family but also among commoners. Although monogamy was the norm among commoners, the Goryeo government began to

seriously consider polygyny as a countermeasure against the system of offering women as tribute. For example, a government official named Park Yu argued, "While the Yuan practice polygyny, we practice monogamy. This is leading to an outflow of our population to the Yuan. In order to offset this, we should determine the number of wives a man can take dependent upon his official rank, and institute for the commoners a system of one-wife and one-concubine." Although his proposal was not legislated, there were several cases of polygyny among the upper classes. In fact, Yi Seong-gye (1335-1408), who would later establish the Joseon Dynasty, also had two wives, Madame Han and Madame Kang, whom he referred to as his provincial wife and his capital wife, respectively.

In addition to polygyny, the levirate marriage common in the Yuan began to be practiced in Goryeo. Levirate marriage is a marital custom in which a son marries his father's concubine after his father's death or a brother weds his sister-in-law after his brother's death. Levirate marriage may be considered a custom meant to ensure survival for women in nomadic societies. King Chungseon, who had become acculturated to Yuan customs having spent his childhood in the Yuan court, took as his own concubine his deceased father's concubine, Lady Kim. Considering that in China and Goryeo, which belonged to the Confucian cultural sphere, taking as one's concubine the concubine of one's father or grandfather was punishable by death, the changes in marital customs during the Yuan intervention period can be seen as quite drastic.

Meanwhile, lively academic exchanges between Goryeo and the Yuan also took place. For example, Neo-Confucianism was intro-

duced to Goryeo by the Goryeo officials who went to the Yuan, and studies of Neo-Confucianism began in earnest, particularly by the newly rising class of scholar-bureaucrats. As a result of the permeation of Neo-Confucian thought, marriage and family systems began to be criticized. For example, Jeong Do-jeon (1342-1398), a Neo-Confucian scholar and a leading figure in the founding of Joseon, argued for patrilocal marriage, claiming that uxorilocal marriage caused families to disintegrate because it exacerbated the tendency of wives to be disdainful of their husbands. In addition, a ban on the remarriage of wives of high-ranking government officials was also proposed. The prohibition of remarriage indicates that the notion of a woman's fidelity, which had been limited to the living husband, was now extended to include the years after the death of the husband. In Goryeo, these arguments were never really applied in real society; however, the problematics raised by such arguments gave rise to earnest debate in the Joseon Dynasty, during which time patriarchy was strengthened and then ossified.





Chapter 3

WOMEN IN JOSEON SOCIETY

Chung Hae-Eun

Overview of the Period

The Joseon Dynasty was ruled from its capital, Seoul, by twenty-seven generations of kings with the surname Yi for 519 years from 1392 to 1910. In 1897, King Gojong of Joseon proclaimed Korea as the Great Han Empire, which lasted until 1910. Except for the king, the general population was divided, based on the principle of heredity, into the *yangban*, the professional classes, the commoners, and the low-born; the *yangban* comprised the uppermost echelon of Joseon society external to the royal family, and was the wellspring of the Joseon scholar-bureaucrats.

The cornerstone of Joseon industry was agriculture. The defense of the realm was based on the conscription of male commoners between the ages of sixteen and sixty, who either served as soldiers themselves or bore the costs of conscription. The Joseon government was centralized, with the state divided into eight provinces (*do*), which in turn were divided into the smaller units of *bu*, *mok*, *gun*, and *hyeon*. The king ruled all classes of administrative levels by dispatching officials to them.

In the inter-state diplomacy of Joseon, the Ming, the Qing, and Japan proved the most crucial agents. Joseon regularly sent diplomatic envoys to the Ming and then the Qing to maintain peace, and engaged in exchanges with Japan on an equal footing. Two major wars were fought, namely the Imjin waeran (Japanese invasion of Joseon, 1592-1598) and the Byeongja horan (Qing invasion of Joseon, December 1636-January 1637).

Joseon was a cultural powerhouse. King Sejong invented Hangeul, the origin of the vernacular script used in today's Republic of Korea. Joseon's culture of documentation was also highly developed, leaving behind texts that are now inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World, such as the *Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty* (Joseon wangjo sillok), *Daily Record of the Grand Secretariat* (Seungjeongwon ilgi), *Record of Daily Reflections* (Ilseongnok), *Illustrated Record of Rituals* (Uigwe), and *War Diary of Yi Sun-sin* (Nanjung ilgi).

In Joseon, monogamy was the law, and the father or husband held the highest authority within the family. Until the seventeenth century, it was common for the groom to reside at the bride's house for a certain period after marriage. As such, daughters were able to exercise their rights; even after marriage, daughters received an inheritance equal to that of their male siblings and participated in ancestral rites. However, shortly after the eighteenth century, the bride moved away from her natal home and took up patrilocal residence, which inevitably distanced her from her natal family and drastically reduced or completely eliminated her share of the family inheritance.

For the first time in Korean history, the Joseon state published an illustrated textbook on ethics titled the *Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds* (Samganghaengsildo) in order to implement education that inculcated women with notions about women's duties. In contrast to the women of previous dynasties, women in Joseon who learned Hangeul, the vernacular script, were free to enjoy reading and writing. Hangeul, which is easy to learn, helped women to throw off

the chains of illiteracy, and more and more women learned Chinese characters as well. As a result, after the eighteenth century there emerged women who produced not only literary works, but also scholarly texts based on their own specialization.

Ideology and Law

Women and Neo-Confucianism

The reformers who founded the Joseon Dynasty struggled to create a new society and to distance themselves from the customs of Goryeo, whose state religion was Buddhism. It was Neo-Confucianism that opened up new horizons for the reformers. Neo-Confucianism is essentially Confucianism newly reinterpreted and synthesized by Zhu Xi, a Song Dynasty scholar who wrote the *Family Rituals of Zhu Xi* (Zhuzi jiali) to enable the practice of this ideology in everyday life.

In Korea, Neo-Confucianism was adopted at the end of the Goryeo Dynasty and fully blossomed in the Joseon Dynasty. The essence of Neo-Confucianism is the cultivation of one's virtue. The reformers who accepted Neo-Confucianism argued that they should cultivate their own virtues so as to become ethically accomplished people, and that a policy of edification should be implemented to enhance the virtues of the people in society.

These reformers believed that wholesome customs were the source of a healthy society, and thus began to push ahead with a top-down edification policy. They emphasized education in order to promote the edification policy, and sought to transform diverse aspects of quotidian life, including ancestral rites, funerals, inheritance, and marriage, based on the *Family Rituals of Zhu Xi*. Women were also included in the edification process. In fact, it was the introduction of Neo-Confucianism that provided the impetus for considering

women as the recipients of education at the state level for the first time in Korean history. Education for women was promoted with the aim of training women to think and act in accordance with the new social order.

In Confucianism, the creation of all things takes place according to the principles of the Heavens and the Earth. The birth of human beings, then, is understood to be the result of an exchange between the female principle (the Earth) and the male principle (the Heavens). As the Earth and the Heavens, or women and men, stand on an equal footing, each with its own principles, there is no notion of honoring men and degrading women. In reality, however, as all things became gradually classified as either *yang* or *yin*, the relations between men (*yang*) and women (*yin*) started reflecting a hierarchy based on the binary values of high and low, and noble and mean.

Such values, in conjunction with the Confucian principles of harmony, placed great emphasis on discrimination against women. In other words, to elicit harmony, women, who were relegated to the lower rungs of the hierarchy, needed to yield and obey. Due to Neo-Confucianism, discrimination against women intensified, based on the ideology that men, being cosmologically akin to the Heavens, reign over women, who are akin to the Earth. Neo-Confucianism asserted the patriarchal system whereby men's authority in the family should remain supreme in order to apply the logic of the Heavens and the Earth to society-at-large most effectively.

Moreover, women's sexuality was a target of vigilance within the Neo-Confucian system. Women's sexual desires were considered to endanger families and society and thus were heavily controlled.

As a result, women were inculcated with the idea that maintaining one's sexual purity was one of women's natural characteristics, and women who violated this nature were severely punished by exclusion from both the family and society. Furthermore, if a woman caused problems related to sex, it did not just brand the individual woman, but also her entire family, with the proverbial scarlet letter.

Monogamy and Concubinage

The prevalent form of marriage in the Joseon Dynasty was monogamy. However, men were allowed to take concubines. A concubine was a woman who lives in the same house with a man and his wife. As such, a concubine was not a secret lover, but someone who was publicly sanctioned.

The founders and reformers of the Joseon Dynasty tried to induce social stability by emphasizing Neo-Confucian precepts such as appropriateness (*bunsu*) and rectification of names (*jeongmyeong*). *Bunsu* denotes certain limitations on thought and behavior based on the parameters of a person's social position, whether in regard to women and men, a king and his subjects, the *yangban* and the low-born, fathers and children, and masters and servants. *Jeongmyeong* refers to the ideal of correcting *bunsu* and values in accordance with the direction of social mores.

Officials who espoused Neo-Confucianism in the early days of the Joseon Dynasty wanted to implement the rectification of names (*jeongmyeong*) in the home. In the *Supplemental Six Codes* (Sogyukjeon), promulgated and disseminated in 1413, monogamy

was proclaimed as the law of the land, distinguishing the wife from the concubine. This is related to the division of social systems and status into high and low, and noble and mean, which led to structural inequities in women's lives.

From the wife's point of view, the distinction between wife and concubine provided the advantage of guaranteeing her status. The wife was the foundation for maintaining the patriarchal system as the center of the family, and served as the main assistant in carrying out ancestral rites and receiving guests. At the same time, she was also a victim, compelled to accept the presence of her husband's concubines in the same living quarters. As such, it was the concubine who caused by far the most conflict between a husband and his wife in the Joseon Dynasty. Therefore, to cover up such an absurd context, men continually stressed the iniquity of jealousy.

Concubines came from a common or low-born background and thus were in inferior positions. Discrimination abounded at home, and even their relations with their "husbands" were unstable. Above all, children born of concubines were subject to intense discrimination and suffering. These children were categorized as either commoner or low-born depending on their mothers' status. Moreover, a concubine's son could not sit for the state examinations for bureaucratic appointment. Even if such a person somehow managed to enter a government post after numerous twists and turns, the positions he could take and his promotion were restricted.

Men were able to remarry when their wives died, but it was not easy for *yangban* women to remarry as they were restrained by the law that penalized the sons and grandsons of a yangban woman

born through remarriage. In the Joseon Dynasty, government offices were occupied by *yangban* men, but men who had mothers or grandmothers who had remarried could not sit for the state appointment examinations such as the civil service examination or the military examination. Therefore, a *yangban* woman virtually had no choice but to grow old and die a widow in order not to become a stumbling block to her sons' and grandsons' future. In contrast, commoner and low-born women were free to remarry.

Meanwhile, the Joseon state suppressed divorce to protect the family unit, which was supposed to serve as a cornerstone of statecraft. In reality, as it was not possible for *yangban* women to remarry, it was highly likely that these women would fall into dire straits after a divorce. Therefore, *yangban* men were required to obtain permission from the king for a divorce, whereas *yangban* women could not ask their husbands for a divorce. As a divorce was not officially possible, *yangban* men used the expedient means of banishing their wives from the home or living in completely separate quarters within the same home.

Titles for Married Women

In the Joseon Dynasty, there were several ways in which women were officially recognized for their existence. When a woman was noted as a virtuous woman or a filial daughter, thereby serving as a model for others, she received commendations from the state. In this context, a virtuous woman was a woman who remained chaste or committed suicide after her husband's death. Moreover, a woman

was considered virtuous when she committed suicide to maintain her chastity in times of crisis such as war.

Titles were yet another way to highlight the presence of women of a certain class in society. Titles were bestowed only upon married *yangban* women, female members of the royal family, and female relatives of the royal family. Among the titles conferred, a married *yangban* woman was eligible to receive one of ten titles, each of which was given a grade from one to nine. The Goryeo Dynasty also had a system of bestowing titles upon royal women. In the Joseon Dynasty, however, such a system was extended to include the wives of government officials, as the ruling stratum expanded and the rule of law was firmly established. The titles are as follows: Jeonggyeongbuin, Jeongbuin, Sukbuin, Sugin, Yeongin, Gongin, Uiin, Anin, Danin, and Yuin. Though simple in comparison to the titles reserved for male officials, it would not be unreasonable to consider these titles as opportunities for women of certain backgrounds to garner recognition in the public sphere.

There were two ways for *yangban* women to receive titles. First,

Table 2. Titles for *yangban* women in the Joseon Dynasty

Rank	Title	Rank	Title
1	Jeonggyeongbuin	5	Gongin
2	Jeongbuin	6	Uiin
3 (palace-ascendable official)	Sukbuin	7	Anin
3	Sugin	8	Danin
4	Yeongin	9	Yuin



"Office Warrant Bestowing the Title Sukbuin upon Madame Jeong," 1664
| Jangseogak Archives, Academy of Korean Studies

when their husbands were appointed to government posts during their lifetimes, the wives were bestowed titles equivalent to the ranks of the government offices held by their husbands. For example, when a husband became an official of Rank 3A, meaning a palace-ascendable official (Dangsanggwan), his wife became Sukbuin. When a woman's husband became an official of Rank 9B, a lower-ranking official, she became Yuin. Second, a woman could receive a title posthumously if one of her sons or grandsons achieved great success after her death. Though such a posthumous title was essentially meaningless as she had already died, it was nonetheless significant for her descendants as a token for honoring their ancestor.

The prerequisite for a *yangban* woman to receive a title was being married. Unmarried women, in other words women without husbands, sons, or grandsons, were not allowed to receive any title. However, not every woman who was married could receive a title. If a woman were born of a concubine or had remarried, she could not receive a title. In fact, a woman with a title could have it taken away if she remarried. In such a way, titles for women were confined to those who were born of primary wives and who never remarried.

Marriage and Family

Uxorilocal and Patrilocal Marriages

In Korea, uxorilocal marriage had been the dominant practice since ancient times. As a custom friendly to women, uxorilocal marriage required that the groom reside at the bride's natal home for a designated period after the marriage was consummated. However, this custom diverged considerably from the direction sought by the reformers who sought to build a new dynasty, Joseon.

In the fifteenth century, reformers used the *Family Rituals of Zhu Xi* (Zhuzi jiali) as the fundamental text in the process of designing a new society divergent from Goryeo society. For example, the wedding procedure outlined in the *Family Rituals of Zhu Xi* consists of seven stages, of which the climax was called *chinyeong*, whereby the groom-to-be brought the bride-to-be to his home and held the wedding there. Essentially, this meant that the bride moved to her husband's home, which led to the marriage being centered on the patrilocal residence, the exact opposite of uxorilocal marriage. It was precisely this idea of the patrilocal residence that the reformers attempted to disseminate among the masses, and in order to achieve this, they considered a wide variety of policies.

However, this new form of marriage, as represented in the *Family Rituals of Zhu Xi*, did not readily take hold amid society-at-large, as the majority were still inclined toward uxorilocal marriage customs, which had endured since ancient times. The uxorilocal marriage proceeded as follows. On the first day of a marriage, the bride-to-

be's house would light a torch outside the door and await the groom-to-be. Upon arriving at the house around eventide, the groom-to-be would consummate the union with the bride-to-be before holding the wedding ceremony. On the second day, the bride's house hosted a raucous feast, serving copious amounts of food and drink to the guests. It was not until the third day that the bride and groom held a ceremony in front of the guests. The difference between patrilocal and uxorilocal marriages is that in the former, the groom's home became the center of marriage ceremony, whereas in the latter, the bride's home was the center. Aside from the fact that the uxorilocal marriage custom privileged the bride's home, it drew further criticism for indecency, as the marriage was consummated before the actual wedding ceremony.



On the Way to the Wedding by Kim Hong-do, 18th century. It depicts a groom-to-be on his way to the bride-to-be's house for their wedding.
| National Museum of Korea

Uxorilocal marriage customs prevailed well into the sixteenth century. To resolve this issue, reformers concocted a sort of compromise whereby the groom-to-be would arrive at his bride-to-be's home in the evening, the wedding ceremony would take place that same night, after which the couple would head to the groom's home for the bride to meet her in-laws.

Despite the compromise, the uxorilocal tendencies persisted. However, the new custom was now free from the criticism of indecency and enabled a quick move into the groom's home, bringing to a close for the reformers, albeit temporarily, the long controversy regarding marriage customs.

Economic factors were largely behind the tradition of uxorilocal marriage surviving into the Joseon Dynasty. In patrilocal marriage, wedding expenses were a problem for the groom and his family, not to mention the economic burden of preparing a space for the newlyweds. Though the same burden held true for the bride's family, it welcomed the expense as the family did not relish the thought of the bride immediately going to live in a strange new place, namely her in-laws' home.

Due to this stance, the *yangban* remained reluctant to accept the new method of marriage as discussed above, instead insisting on a marriage custom that had been criticized for its indecency. This new form of marriage—a compromise between the traditional uxorilocal customs and patrilocal residence—spread gradually among the masses only after the Imjin War, or the Japanese Invasion of Korea in 1592, becoming well entrenched by the eighteenth century. As a result, marriage was now changed from uxorilocal to patrilocal in its broadest form. The expression "Sijip ganda" (literally, the bride going to her in-laws' home) is still used in Korea today. Not surprisingly, this change in marriage customs had dealt a significant blow to women.

Rights of Daughters in the Family

The uxorilocal marriage customs enabled women to maintain their identity as daughters even after marriage, as the family guaranteed the various rights of married daughters as members of the family. The most important was the right to equal inheritance, which meant that even after marriage, a daughter shared her parents' wealth equally with her sisters and brothers. However, in the case of children entrusted with the duty to perform ancestral rites, they could receive, for such a purpose, an additional one-fifth of the inheritance.

Even after marriage, a woman owned her property independently, and each spouse had the right to dispose of his or her (own) property. When a person either inherited or sold the spouse's share, he or she had to obtain the spouse's permission. When a woman died childless, her property was returned to her natal family. In return for the inheritance, a daughter would be put in charge of the ancestral rites for her parents. As such, sons and daughters took turns to perform ancestral rites for their parents, and when a daughter died, her sons (matrilineal descent) often assumed this duty.

The recognition of daughters even after marriage as members of the family is evident in genealogies as well. The oldest extant genealogy from the Joseon Dynasty is the Andong Kwon Genealogy, which was compiled in 1476. In this genealogy are several interesting features related to women. First, children are listed by order of birth, regardless of whether they were sons or daughters. Second, matrilineal descent is also recorded; in fact, of the 9,120 people listed in the genealogy, ninety percent are maternal grandsons and



"Inheritance Document Left by Madame Kim, An Gye-jong's Wife," recording the inheritance of a *yangban* woman with the surname Kim who left her own and her husband's assets to her three children in 1535
| Jangseogak Archives, Academy of Korean Studies



The *Andong Kwon Genealogy* compiled in 1476
| Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University

granddaughters. Third, the remarriage of women is recorded as "hubu." "Hubu" denotes "next husband," and its documentation in the genealogy is a valuable record of the fact that women remarried after the deaths of their husbands. The Andong Kwon genealogy contains seven such cases. These characteristics clearly illustrate that late fifteenth-century Joseon society did not have strong patrilineal tendencies.

It was not until the mid-seventeenth century—after the successive Japanese and Qing invasions of Korea—that substantive changes emerged. The most essential change was the inheritance of property with a great preference for sons and, even among sons, adoption and practice of the rule of primogeniture. In order to prevent the dilution of the family wealth, the *yangban* tended to concentrate their wealth in one place, passing it on to only a few people. As a result, land, which had increased property value, was inherited mainly by sons.

This was largely due to the spread of the practice of the "bride moving to the in-laws' home" (sijip gagi) and the ensuing alienation of daughters from their natal family. The patriarch excluded his daughters from the inheritance, citing that they could not hold ancestral rites as married daughters had to remain in other regions. Then, in the eighteenth century, the preferential inheritance for sons in general was further restricted to inheritance based on primogeniture. As the eldest son was solely in charge of ancestral rites, he bore the brunt of the expenditure for the rites, and hence his share of the inheritance increased. Also noteworthy is that the way in which a genealogy was composed also changed. Regardless of the order of birth of the children, the sons were listed first, while the documentation of maternal grandchildren was greatly reduced. In the eighteenth century, the daughter became a member of another family after marriage.

Love and War in Marriage

The Joseon Dynasty was a highly disadvantageous time for women due to the expansion and subsequent entrenchment of Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, images of submissive wives are easily conjured up, represented by such precepts as the "Three Subordinations for a Woman (*Samjongjido*)" and "Conjugal Harmony by Wives Following Their Husbands' Lead (*Buchangbusu*)."

However, there were couples who diverged from the conventional understanding of Joseon marriage at that time. In fact, there were even couples who showed strong affection for one another, or wives

who expressed their opinions assertively. One particularly illustrative example of the affection between spouses can be seen in "Won's Mother's Letter," which was excavated from a tomb in Andong, North Gyeongsang Province, in 1998. The person who wrote the letter in Hangeul on a 58cm × 34cm piece of mulberry paper was Won's mother; Won was her son's name.

Won's mother, who lived in the late sixteenth century, wrote of her longing for her husband after he, having pledged to live happily with her until old age, passed away. Won's mother wrote, "Now that you are gone, I no longer have the strength to live, so hurry up and take me with you. There is no way in this world that I can forget my feelings for you, so there is no end to my sorrow. What should I do with my aching heart while I live with my children and continue to miss you? Please read my letter and come to me in my dreams."



"Won's Mother's Letter," 16th century | Andong National University Museum

At the time of her husband's death, Won's mother was pregnant with Won's sibling. In a letter to her husband, she lamented, "You said you had something to tell the newborn after I gave birth to the child in my womb, so when I give birth to this child, whom shall I tell the child to call 'father'?" The woman's desperation and longing for her husband, who had left both her and her young children behind, never fails to deeply touch any reader.

Also noteworthy in this respect is the letter written by Madame Kang of Sincheon, who was terribly upset by her husband's taking of a concubine. The letter was discovered in 1977 in Cheongwon-gun, North Chungcheong Province, in the process of moving the tomb of Madame Kang's daughter to build an airfield. The daughter had kept 128 of her mother's letters, which were buried in the grave with the daughter after her death.

Presumed to have lived in the mid- or late-sixteenth century, Madame Kang was born in Seonsan, North Gyeongsang Province. After marrying, she lived in Seoul and had seven children. The daughter who kept the letters was Madame Kang's third daughter. Madame Kang wrote the letters when she was in her late fifties or early sixties, and her husband appears to have been about sixty.

When her husband was almost sixty years old, he was appointed as Chief of Post-Station of Seonghyeon Station in Gyeongsang Province, and took in a concubine. The Chief of Post-Station was the person in charge of the transportation-related facilities established on major roads state-wide to carry out public affairs, so working away from home was an inevitable part of the job. Sojourning often, he engaged a concubine to look after him. From Madame Kang's

perspective, however, this was a major betrayal on the part of her husband: "Am I not pitiful and sad now that my husband has taken in a concubine to look after him having finally achieved some success?"

What most saddened Madame Kang was her nostalgia for the days she had spent with her husband. As such, she wrote, "I'm not particularly sick, but I always have a headache, my chest is stuffy, and I can't digest my food. I feel deep pain every day, but who would know? Not my servants, not my children. So many times, I stay up all night, sobbing. How I lament my fate!"

Eventually, she collapsed because she could not bear the pain any longer, and woke up the next day. Madame Kang's temporary loss of consciousness shocked her husband, who eventually sent away his concubine in order to save his wife. What Madame Kang really wanted from her husband was empathy and fidelity, reminding us of the importance of faith between husband and wife, whether then or now.

Women Venturing Out in Public

In the Joseon Dynasty, laws and social rules proscribed women's venturing out into the public domain. The *Joseon Dynasty Law Code* (Gyeongguk Daejeon), promulgated in 1485, delineates the supreme laws of the Joseon Dynasty, equivalent to today's Constitution. In it is a clause that states that if a *yangban* woman plays or hosts feasts on a mountain or a waterfront, or holds a memorial service in person at a mountain stream, she will be punished with one hundred strokes of a paddle. In addition, women were not free to go outside and could not visit anyone other than their close

relatives due to the so-called "Inside-Outside Rule" (*Naeoe*), a social regulation that prohibited contact between men and women.

Visiting Joseon in 1894 and again in 1897, Isabella Bishop, a British geographer, wrote in a book titled *Korea and Her Neighbours* (1898) that most women in Seoul, except for the low-born, were isolated in the boudoir, never really seeing the streets of Seoul during the day. Bishop also wrote that when the women of Seoul ventured outside their homes, they did so hidden in their palanquins. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, women were not free to move about as they wished.

Nevertheless, *yangban* women would leave their homes to visit their parents' home or climb over the fence to attend various festivities. So keenly did they wish to see the outside world that they shrugged off the criticisms lodged against them. In the days when exciting, impressive events were uncommon, a procession of the king or of foreign envoys was a great spectacle. For occasions such as these, everyone, *yangban* and servants alike, came out on to the streets to observe. Processions of kings and foreign envoys were attended by many hundreds of people at a time with colorful costumes and flags, the greatest of all spectacles.

Some of the onlookers were *yangban* women. These women watched on from tents set up in the streets or from pavilions. The front of a tent was decorated with colorful insignia, and women waited for the parade while eating or chatting inside. They would also rent a small house by the roadside and stay up all night to obtain good seats in advance. For the procession of a king, the state issued a permit to use roadside houses as a temporary residence, and pow-

erful officials would go to great lengths to obtain the permit for their wives and daughters. The permit was a kind of ticket.

In March 1537, Seoul official Yi Mun-geon's house: This was the day when Ming envoys were supposed to arrive in Seoul, so a procession of the king and the foreign envoys was organized. Yi's wife and daughter woke up early in the morning and dashed to the house of an acquaintance of their natal family, as the house was situated in a prime location for watching the procession. However, it rained that day, so the news spread that the foreign envoys would arrive the next day.

Though Yi Mun-geon wanted to bring his wife and daughter back home with him, he could not convince them to leave, so he returned home alone. The next day, when the weather cleared a little, the foreign envoys started arriving in Seoul at noon. His wife and daughter, who had stayed up all night so as to be able to watch the procession, bragged about their impressions of the event. This anecdote appears in Yi Mun-geon's diary, which contains various other accounts of how upset Yi was at his wife's sojourning at her family home to watch various processions.

Many people voiced their concerns about how *yangban* women stayed up all night or mixed with the crowd of commoner sightseers. Officials in charge of statecraft insisted that women should be banned from going out to watch processions and other events, claiming that if men and women commingled, accidents could occur.

According to one record, when the envoys of the Qing came to Seoul in 1670, the streets were crowded with women in sedan

chairs, who had come to watch their arrival. In 1727, it was recorded that numerous *yangban* women came out to the sides of the streets to watch the Qing envoys arriving in Seoul. Based on these records, it can be assumed that, despite the regulations, *yangban* women still ventured outside their homes to enjoy sightseeing.

Labor and Economic Activities

Weaving

Women in the Joseon Dynasty were also in charge of social labor, which included the production of textiles. Important fabrics during the Joseon Dynasty were cotton, hemp, and silk. Among them, cotton cloth was particularly popular among the commoners because it was comfortable and effective as thermal wear, yet cheap. Because of this, cotton was distributed widely, and functioned as both a currency and a means of tax payment.

A representative example of cotton cloth being used in this manner is in-kind collection, which, after the seventeenth century, was available in place of mandatory military service to commoner men between the ages of sixteen and sixty. In 1751, for example, more than a million rolls of cotton were collected in lieu of military service across the state. In addition, as the Uniform Land Tax Law (Daedongbeop) was enacted, different tributary items were unified into rice offering, and some regions paid with cotton cloth instead of rice. Around the nineteenth century, 258 out of 316 markets statewide sold cotton cloth, which eventually became the second most marketable product after grains.

Under these circumstances, the cotton cloth produced by women became essential. Not only were women in charge of childbirth, child rearing, household labor, sewing, and farming, but they also led the production of cotton cloth so crucial to society. In fact, it took a woman about twenty days to weave a roll of cotton cloth. It



Weaving by Kim Hong-do, 18th century. Depiction of a woman weaving.
National Museum of Korea



Weaving a Sitting Mat by Kim Hong-do, 18th century. Depiction of a woman turning a spinning wheel. A spinning wheel is used to pull threads from cotton or cocoons.
National Museum of Korea

can be seen that women's labor contributed greatly to the family and the national finances.

Also noteworthy is the existence of female sericulture technicians at silkworm farms. These technical workers were dispatched to silkworm farms run by the state during the early Joseon period. Selected mainly from among public slaves, they did not possess the same level of professional knowledge as the female royal physicians, for example. In sericulture, however, female technical workers were at the apex of the industry. In the sixteenth century, as silkworm farming spread to the private sphere, these female sericulture technicians gradually disappeared, but they represent great historical significance as the producers and transmitters of sericulture technology at that time.

Manager of the Family Economy

During the Joseon Dynasty, family homes were at once living spaces for families and places wherein production and labor were concentrated. In contrast to the family homes of today, which provide respite from social labor, the homes of the Joseon Dynasty were places where the living economy materialized. Herein, women were in charge of managing the family.

Not only commoner women but also *yangban* women participated in economic activities while managing their families. From the late seventeenth century onward, a considerable number of men of *yangban* background struggled politically and economically due to the difficulty of obtaining a government post. However, these

men were reluctant to participate in ensuring the livelihood of their families because they considered it a disgrace to not focus wholly on their academic and sociopolitical advancement. As such, it was women who maintained their family's livelihood on behalf of these men. The following is an account by Yi Deok-mu, a scholar of the late Joseon Dynasty:

> If the family is poor and needy, the scholar's wife may work a little to find a way to live. Weaving and silkworm farming are the basics of such a family's livelihood; the scholar's wife also raises chickens and ducks, buys and sells fermented condiments, liquor, and oil, and keeps jujubes, chestnuts, persimmons, tangerines, and pomegranates at home; and then, when the time comes, she sells them.

Yi Deok-mu encourages the wives of scholars to work for a living so long as they are not bound by greed. The women of destitute *yangban* families generally made a living by needlework.

Kang Jeongildang, a female scholar, wrote in "Poem for My Husband," "I'm ashamed of my lack of talent and virtue/but I learned sewing when I was young/Please concentrate on true studies / and turn your attention away from the everyday necessities." In Park Ji-won's novel the *Tale of Heo Saeng* (Heosaengjeon), which depicts society in the late eighteenth century, Heo Saeng's wife makes a living by needlework as he, being indifferent to the home economy, focuses on his academics only.

As women's economic activities increased, women's lives began to change as well. Slowly but surely women took advantage of the

possibility of improving their situation through their economic power. In fact, Yi Deok-mu wrote, "In general, ferocious wives are so talented and wise that they are good at making profits, and their husbands depend on them. How can I not be despondent that these husbands are dominated by their wives to such an extent that they live in fear of them?" Clearly, Yi was on his guard about women who sought to dominate their husbands through economic power.

Women Who Work

In the Joseon Dynasty, there was a segment of the female population that held professional occupations, a change from earlier states. Such women served as court ladies, royal female physicians, or shamans, and tended to be low-born.

Court ladies worked in the palace, and were responsible for the food and clothing. Women who became court ladies never married, and generally died of old age in the palace. The number of court ladies varied from one period to another, ranging from fewer than a hundred in the fifteenth century to around five hundred in the eighteenth century. The highest position to which a court lady could aspire was that of palace matron.

To become a court lady, a girl entered the palace around the age of ten. From then on, she spent fifteen years on probation until she became an official court lady, called *nain*. It took more than thirty years for a *nain* to reach the level of palace matron (*sanggung*). A court lady who underwent the probationary period also played a professional role in helping the queen and the dowager queen to perform their role smoothly in accordance with the royal etiquette at all events and feasts held in the palace.

The royal female physicians were the equivalent of today's female doctors. In 1406, the Joseon court established a system of royal female physicians, as there were numerous cases in which women avoided male physicians when they fell sick and often died as a result. Royal female physicians were of low-born status, generally chosen from among female slaves.

The state devoted its energies to providing medical education to enhance the professionalism of female physicians. The women took a test every month, and only three people with excellent grades received three months' salary. A woman with poor grades continued to work as a servant in the departments where she had worked before becoming a royal female physician, and was only permitted to return to her medical post after taking the test again and achieving a high score. As such, diligent study was a prerequisite for royal female physicians.

During the late Joseon Dynasty, the royal female physicians were divided into two groups: those belonging to the Office of Royal Physicians (Naeuiwon) and those belonging to the Office of Benefiting the People (Hyeminseo). The former group consisted of twelve female physicians of the highest caliber, responsible for the health of the royal women. They specialized in obstetrics and gynecology, as giving birth in the royal family was of utmost importance in producing successors to the throne. The second group of female physicians, those of the Office of Benefiting the People, treated commoners. Approximately seventy in number, they were selected when



The Dance of a Shaman by Shin Yun-bok, early 19th century. It depicts a scene of a shaman performing a shamanic ritual. | Kansong Art Museum

young from among girls known to be intelligent. They took three tests each month, and the top three scorers were paid salaries, one of them was given cotton products or hemp cloth.

In the event of a vacancy among the royal female physicians of the Office of the Royal Physicians, it was filled by an appointee from among the physicians of the Office of Benefiting the People. Therefore, the ultimate goal of the female physicians at that office was to become a member of the prestigious Office of the Royal Physicians and work at the royal palace.

A shaman was a woman who performed shamanistic rituals. In the private sphere, people often commissioned a shaman to perform

an exorcism, treat diseases, and prevent disasters. In the early days of the Joseon dynasty, shamanism was shunned because it was viewed as contradictory to Neo-Confucian thought. As such, shamans were forced out of the capital, Seoul, and shamanistic rituals and prayers were prohibited.

However, it was not easy to eradicate shamanism as it was deeply embedded in the daily life of the people. Ultimately, the state failed to abolish shamans and instead focused on minimizing the social problems that arose as a result of these shamans. After the mid-fifteenth century, the government affiliated shamans to the Saving the Destitute Agency (Hwarinseo), which was charged with treating the sick and the homeless. They also collected taxes from shamans and used them as state finances.

Education of Women and Women's Literary Lives

Reasons for Women's Education

It was during the Joseon Dynasty that women first became the official subjects of education in Korea. The *Joseon Dynasty Law Code* (Gyeongguk daejeon), published in 1485, states, "The *Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds* (Samganghaengsildo) ought to be transcribed into Hangeul so that the heads of yangban households, elders, and teachers in Seoul and other provinces may teach the women and children."

The law's stipulation that the *Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds* be transcribed into Hangeul and be taught to women indicates that women were now subjected to state governance. Published by the Joseon state in 1434, The *Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds* is a compendium of the exemplary lives of 330 loyalists, filial sons, and virtuous women of China and Korea, and was the most widely read morality text in the Joseon Dynasty.

There were other books that women read and learned. The *Appendix to the Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds* was published in 1514, while the *Newly Augmented Geographical Conspectus of the Eastern Kingdom* (Sinjeung donggugyeojiseungnam), published in 1530, contained a section on virtuous women, which introduced chaste women and filial daughters of different regions. After the war triggered by the Japanese Invasion of Korea in 1592, which was eventually won by Joseon, the *Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds in the Eastern Kingdom* (Dongguk sinsok samganghaengsildo) was published in 1617 to disseminate the stories of women who had died to preserve their chastity during the war.



Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds (Samganghaengsildo), 1434. It was originally written in classical Chinese, with the upper marginalia written in Hangeul. Each example is accompanied by an illustration that summarizes the content.
| National Museum of Korea

As such, the women's education implemented by the Joseon state was not designed to broaden women's knowledge and thought per se, but rather to provide women with an ethical education. Under this type of education, the behavior desired of women was to be good filial daughters when living with their natal families, to be virtuous women when married, to be wise mothers when they had children, to be chaste as widows, and, finally, to be virtuous women when faced with difficult times such as war. In other words, women's education in Joseon was a kind of edification intended to transform women into the ideal figures that Joseon society desired.

This state-run women's education, or edification project, was successful. According to a study of the backgrounds of women who became virtuous women in the Joseon Dynasty, *yangban* women accounted for 68 percent in the fifteenth century, 37 percent in the sixteenth century, 43 percent in the seventeenth century, and 57 percent in the eighteenth century. Meanwhile, the percentage of commoner or low-born women who became virtuous women also increased rapidly after the sixteenth century, ranging from 19 percent, to 54 percent, 52 percent, and 34 percent in the same four periods. These figures demonstrate that the women's education in Joseon influenced women from all backgrounds.

Impact of Learning Hangeul

Historical transformation often takes place at an unexpected juncture. In fact, no one could have expected the changes that revolutionized the lives of women in the Joseon Dynasty, most particularly the changes driven by Hangeul. The Joseon government distributed morality textbooks transcribed into Hangeul in order to educate women to be filial daughters and virtuous women. This policy of edification gave women the gift of literacy through the use of Hangeul, which created a significant difference in women's lives and cultures; the easy-to-learn script freed women from the bonds of illiteracy.

The principal change that Hangeul brought about for women was the ability to read and write. From the early fifteenth century on, more and more women began to be able to read Hangeul as a result of the distribution of the *Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds* (Samganghaengsildo), which was transcribed into Hangeul by the Joseon government. The edification project for women contributed to lowering illiteracy among women. Women who acquired knowledge of Hangeul were then able to learn Chinese characters using the Hangeul transcriptions of the Four Books (*Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Analects*, and *Mencius*) and the Three Classics (*Classic of Poetry*, *Book of Documents*, and *Book of Changes*), expanding their knowledge by studying books from various fields written in Chinese characters. In the process, women's power of thought was enhanced and, along with it, their self-awareness.

In *yangban* families, the mother was responsible for the education of her children. Moreover, mothers played an even more significant role in families where teachers could not be invited to the home due to family circumstances. To reduce tuition fees, mothers had to teach their children the basic Confucian texts as well as educating them on building an upright character. Therefore, women themselves were required to study the basic Confucian texts before marriage, using morality texts and Chinese-language textbooks for children.

Yangban women studied the *Records of the Grand Historian*, the *Analects of Confucius*, *The Book of Songs*, and *The Book of Documents*, as well as the family genealogy, dynastic names from the past, and the names of the sages. A text called *Elementary Education for Women* (Yeojachohak), written for a daughter who was due to marry a *yangban* man in Gyeongsang Province, contains sections on the geography of Joseon, civil offices and their ranks, official selection, and a family genealogy. Although the environment surrounding women seemed unlikely to change, it did in fact evolve, and substan-

tially so. This can be seen as an unexpected result of the state's policy to edify women and the ensuing acquisition of Hangeul by women.

Popularity of Reading

As women became increasingly literate, they also began to enjoy reading. However, a woman who read books was viewed as somewhat threatening for a man. Reading books other than those designed to cultivate women's virtues was considered contradictory to a woman's duty. As such, men showed a hostile attitude toward women's reading.

Despite the criticism, however, women constantly read. As a result, their taste for reading gradually changed to include novels. The most popular novels read by women in the eighteenth century were *The Tale of Simcheong* (Simcheongjeon), *The Tale of Chunhyang* (Chunhyangjeon), *The Tale of Sukhyang* (Sukhyangjeon), *The Dream of the Jade Chamber* (Ongnumong), *The Dream of Nine Clouds* (Gu'unmong), *The Record of Lady Sa's Journey South* (Sassinamjeonggi), *The Tale of Lady Park* (Bakssijeon), *The Tale of Janghwa and Hongnyeon* (Janghwahongnyeonjeon), and *The Tale of Hong Gildong* (Honggildongjeon). The main themes of women's favorite novels included praising loyal servants, filial piety, and virtuous women, encouraging good behavior, and punishing evil people. On the surface, these themes posited no social problems. However, the subjects of these popular novels were often conflicts between wives and concubines, or disputes between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, as well as love stories. For this reason, policy-makers were concerned that women who read these novels could harm their virtue and their family lives.



A Woman, Reading by Yun Deok-hui, 18th century
| Seoul National University Museum of Art

As women began to prefer novels, the protagonists also changed to suit female readership. Such novels incorporated an approach other than establishing only men at the center of the narrative, instead situating men and women as the protagonists. Furthermore, heroines began to appear. These novels allowed women to experience the exhilaration of vicariously fulfilling wishes that they would never be able to achieve within the oppressive reality of Joseon society, as the novels tended to emphasize a reversal of women's role or status.

Women began by reading morality textbooks, but reading ultimately became a source of personal enjoyment for them. In response to this burgeoning taste for literature, novels that attracted the particular interest and attention of female readers also appeared. Going a step further, women expanded the scope of their reading to fit their own interests, and female scholars even emerged as they tasted new intellectual experiences. Female scholars will be introduced in a later section of this book.

Progress toward Modernity

Emergence of Successful Women

In the eighteenth century, the economy of the Joseon Dynasty developed by leaps and bounds. After the wars with Japan and the Qing, people in the private sphere actively sought ways to make a living. Farmland was reclaimed, irrigation facilities were developed, and agricultural methods were improved, which led to new crops being grown and commercialized in order to boost revenues. In addition, as the hierarchy of farmers intensified, the farming population that flowed into urban areas evolved into a commercial population, thereby boosting commerce. As commercial industry developed, currency was distributed naturally, so anyone could make a purchase using coins.

In the midst of this transformation, economically successful women also appeared. Kim Man-deok (1739-1812), a merchant in the late eighteenth century, was arguably one of the most successful women in the Joseon Dynasty. Born to a commoner family on Jeju Island, she was orphaned around the age of ten and lived in a residence for *gisaeng*, or professional female entertainers.

Subsequently, the government entered Man-deok on the registry of *gisaeng*. As *gisaeng* were of low-born origin, once one's name was registered on the list, it was difficult to climb out of one's low-born status. After the age of twenty, Man-deok narrowly escaped from being registered as a *gisaeng* by appealing to the government office that she was originally of commoner background.

Unmarried, Man-deok showed her talent for business. She turned profits from fluctuations in market prices by carefully identifying when and which goods were common and rare. After about ten years in business, she accrued quite a fortune. Meanwhile, there was a terrible famine on Jeju Island between 1792 and 1795. In 1794, even state-aid shipments failed to arrive due to strong winds, and in the spring of 1795, many of Jeju's inhabitants were faced with the harsh realities of extreme famine.



Portrait of Kim Man-deok, a contemporary imaginative portrait
| Kim Man-duk Memorial Hall

After much consideration, Man-deok used her wealth to feed the hungry. She implored a merchant from Jeolla Province to deliver the grains she had purchased to Jeju Island as a matter of utmost urgency. One-tenth of the grains were used to save her own relatives, and the rest was shipped to the government offices. When the Country Magistrate of Jeju reported to the king the donation made by Man-deok, the king offered to reward her. However, Man-deok wished to visit Geumgangsan Mountain rather than accept the prize.

At that time, Joseon law prohibited Jeju women from leaving the island. As such, the king specially appointed Man-deok to come to Seoul and work as a royal female physician at the Office of the Royal

Physicians. It was the fall of 1796, and Man-deok was fifty-seven years old. When she arrived in Seoul, she offered her greetings to the queen and received an award. The following spring, she went back to Jeju Island after visiting Geumgangsan Mountain.

Despite her gender, Man-deok earned a handsome fortune and even donated her wealth to her poverty-stricken neighbors. In the Joseon Dynasty, when women's social activities were strictly prohibited, she made a significant contribution to society by accruing wealth as a woman, leaving her good name for posterity.

Emergence of Female Scholars

Another important change for women after the eighteenth century was their vigorous textual production, which occurred naturally in the midst of the reading craze. In the early days of the Joseon Dynasty, there were some female writers such as Shin Saimdang, Heo Nanseolheon, and Hwang Jini, but the number of women who took to writing increased dramatically after the eighteenth century.

Despite the concerns and criticisms from *yangban* men, women hoped that their writings would be handed down to posterity. Im Yunjidang sent a manuscript to her younger brother to publish, hoping that her writing would be bound as a book, saying, "If my manuscript ends up as paper covering for the condiment crocks after I die, it will be truly lamentable." In her preface, Kim Samuidang wrote, "As a foolish woman from Jeolla Province, I may be scolded by the world for writing, but I want to set an example for the future by writing about what I have seen and heard in this house." In this statement one can perceive a woman's confidence in her own writing, an aspect rarely observed in previous periods.

The following table introduces the representative works by female writers from the eighteenth century onward. Currently, Korean names usually consist of three syllables. However, some of the women's names in the table comprise four syllables because throughout the Joseon Dynasty women's names were used infrequently; instead, women's by-names were used. For example, in Kang Jeongildang, "Kang" is the surname, and "Jeongildang" is the by-name.

What is noteworthy in the table below, is that there are numerous works of prose. The appearance of prose attests to the use of logic and the systematization of cognition, while also suggesting enhanced self-awareness. To produce prose, one must spend considerable time reflecting upon oneself, such as how one should express one's thoughts and what one should write. Moreover, long narratives require extensive reading and novel experiences.

In the *Encyclopedia of Women's Daily Life* (Gyuhapchongseo), for example, Yi Bingheogak cited about ten books published in Joseon, including *Principles and Practice of Eastern Medicine* (Donguibogam), *Farm Management* (Sallimgyeongje), *Miscellaneous Writings of Seongho* (Seonghosaseol), and *Farming in Korea* (Haedongnongseo). She also incorporated approximately sixty-five works from China, including *Systematic Materia Medica* (Bencao Gangmu), *A Treatise on Curiosities* (Bowuzhi), and *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Shan Hai Jing). In the *Bequeathed Works of Yunjidang* (Yunjidanggo), the author Im Yunjidang included writings on Neo-Confucianism, women's biographies, character theories of sages, and funeral orations.

Table 3. Female authors of the late Joseon period

Name	Birth-Death	Works
Kim Hoyeonjae	1681-1722	*Literary Remains of Hoyeonjae* (Hoyeonjae-yugo)
Im Yunjidang	1721-1793	*Bequeathed Works of Yunjidang* (Yun-jidanggo)
Shin Buyongdang	1732-1791	*Collection of Poems by Buyongdang* (Buy-ongsiseon)
Lady Hyegyeong (Queen Heongyeong)	1735-1815	*Memoirs of Lady Hyegyeonggung Hong* (Hanjungnok)
Yi Sajudang	1739-1821	*New Records of Prenatal Care* (Taegyosingi)
Seo Yeongsuhap	1753-1823	*Collected Poems of Yeongsuhap* (Yeongsu-hapgo)
Yi Bingheogak	1759-1824	*Encyclopedia of Women's Daily Life* (Gyu-hapchongseo)
Kim Samuidang	1769- ?	*Literary Remains of Samuidang* (Samuidanggo)
Kang Jeongildang	1772-1832	*Literary Remains of Jeongildang* (Jeon-gildanggo)
Hong Yuhandang	1791-?	*Collected Writings of Yuhandang* (Yuhanjip)
Madame Kwon (Wife of Yu Hui)	?-?	*Collected Writings of Yu Hui* (Yuhui-ui jeon-gi)
Park Juk-seo	? – 1851	Collected Poems of Jukseo (Jukseosijip)
Kim Geum-won	1817- ?	*Travelogue of Geumwon* (Hodongseorakgi)
Nam Jeongilheon	1840 - 1922	*Collected Poems of Jeongilheon* (Jeongil-heonsijip)
Kim Buyongdang	? - ?	*Collected Writings of Buyongdang* (Uncho-dangsigo)
Kwon Yuhandang	? - ?	*Written Records of Words and Acts of Yuhandang* (Yuhandangeonhaengsillok)

Furthermore, *New Records of Prenatal Care* (Taegyosingi) was the first compilation of contents related to prenatal care for women to appear in East Asia, written from the perspective of women.

Encyclopedia of Women's Daily Life was the first encyclopedia of quotidian life to be written in Hangeul, and contained extremely diverse contents pertaining to the making of liquor, food, and clothing, weaving, fieldwork, the planting of flowers, livestock farming, prenatal care, child rearing, emergency treatment, the exorcism of ghosts, and disaster prevention. As for *Memoirs of Lady Hyegyeonggung Hong* (Hanjungnok), it is a political history, written by a woman, covering the death of her husband Crown Prince Sado and her family.

Even in a collection of poems, prose was included. In addition to dozens of poems, there are also writings such as "The Story of the First Night," "Homeschooling," and "Seeing My Husband off to Seoul" in *Literary Remains of Samuidang* (Samuidanggo). The *Literary Remains of Jeongildang* (Jeongildanggo) contains "Writings between Teacher and Disciple," "Postscript to the Genealogy," and "Writing on the Signboard of Manseongjae Pavilion," composed on behalf of the author's husband.

Amongst the poems written by women, there are some surprising poems on travel and sightseeing. Kim Geum-won was the daughter of a concubine, who herself became a concubine. In her work *Travelogue of Geumwon* (Hodongseorakgi), she included the poems she had written aged fourteen while traveling, dressed as a man, to famed travel destinations such as Geumgangsan Mountain and notable places in Gangwon Province. Geumwon expressed herself as follows: "I can say that I have done everything I wanted to do because I even did things that men cannot do while I traveled through beautiful places by the rivers and in the mountains."

As is evident, women began to step into the male domain by producing texts in a variety of genres, including editorials, biographies, epitaphs, records of a deceased person's life, memoranda, funeral orations, and travelogues. Moreover, the appearance of women's writing served as an opportunity, though unintended, for women to enter the public sphere; this was the first step toward a new era.

Rejecting the Life as a Virtuous Woman

In the Joseon Dynasty, the most prominent woman was a woman of virtue. A virtuous woman was a woman who remained chaste after her husband's death or one who even committed suicide to follow her deceased husband. The state worked to discover these virtuous women in order to bestow various benefits upon them, and to encourage and commemorate them. A red gate was erected in front of the house or village of a virtuous woman to honor her. In addition, the government granted awards, rice or cloth, or tax exemptions to virtuous women's families and descendants. If the virtuous woman were low-born, she would be freed from her status, a dramatic measure of commendation.

In the early Joseon Dynasty, the majority of women who were honored as virtuous women were widows who remained chaste, although the number of such women was relatively insignificant. However, after the Japanese Invasion of Korea and the subsequent Qing Invasion, it became commonplace for women not to remarry after the death of their husbands. Furthermore, some women even committed suicide to differentiate themselves from other women.

In other words, remaining chaste after the death of one's husband was the baseline, and more and more women committed suicide after their husbands' death to achieve far beyond the ordinary.

In the late eighteenth century, Princess Hwasun committed suicide after her husband's death, despite the fact that King Yeongjo, her father, tried to stop her. The Red Memorial Gate of Honor for the Virtuous Woman Princess Hwasun was a state commendation bestowed upon her posthumously by her brother, King Jeongjo.

Amid this atmosphere, some women refused outright to live as virtuous women. In 1802, the daughter-in-law of a former magistrate of Gyeongsang Province disappeared, completely turning the neighborhood upside down as a *yangban* woman had gone missing. In fact, the woman was widowed at a young age, and had produced no children. At the time, she was initially rumored to have been killed by a tiger, but it soon came to light that she had simply run away from home, leaving her whereabouts unknown. This *yangban* woman refused to remain chaste or to commit suicide after her husband's death, and bravely ran away from home to live out another kind of existence.

In the late eighteenth century, a twenty-year-old *yangban* woman of the Pungyang Jo clan who lived in Seoul lost her husband of the same age to disease. She tried to commit suicide following her husband's death, but survived thanks to the persuasive efforts of her father and her mother-in-law. More than twenty years later, she wrote a book titled the *Record of the Self* (Jagirok) about her life from her childhood to the death of her husband. In this work, she calmly documented her ill-fated life without hiding her feelings of discomfort



Red Memorial Gate of Honor for the Virtuous Woman Princess Hwasun

at not being a virtuous woman.

The social perception of virtuous women also began to change. Jeong Yak-yong (1762-1836), a renowned scholar of the late Joseon period, wrote, in his work titled *On Virtuous Women* (Yeolbu-e daehae malhada), that widows committing suicide after the death of their husbands was merely the act of killing the self, symbolic of nothing more. As such, Jeong wrote, widows should "endure the indescribable sorrow and strive to live," for the sake of their elderly in-laws and young children. He also argued that the act of suicide, especially when the situation does not call for it, merely for the sake of righteousness, is futile.

As Jeong Yak-yong argued, the death of the head of a family was not only a grave misfortune for his wife, but also for all his family, from his parents to his children. If the wife were also to die amidst this misery, her in-laws and children would face even greater misery. In an era when women's existence was highlighted as the last bastion of family protection, women had to survive in order to serve as daughters-in-law and mothers of their children.

Women Encounter Catholicism

In the late eighteenth century, it was Catholicism that denied the existing social order and illuminated a new world. The act of refusing ancestral rites while recognizing God as superior to the king or one's parents represented a strong form of dissent. The Catholic doctrine that all human beings are equal before God was a dangerous idea that shook to the very core the hierarchical social order based on one's heritable status. Moreover, the recognition of equality between men and women and advocacy of the prohibition of concubinage posed a cataclysmic threat to the existing family system.

As a result, Catholicism was regarded as heterodox, in other words sheer heresy, in the Joseon Dynasty. At that time, King Jeongjo expected that Catholicism would naturally be rejected, confidently claiming, "Incorrect religion will self-destruct, and can be prevented by the promotion of Confucian thought." However, Catholicism spread like wildfire. By the year 1800, the number of Catholics had reached 10,000, and by 1801, female Catholics accounted for more than half of all believers. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, translated into Hangeul, played an essential role in increasing the number of female believers.

With the death of King Jeongjo in 1800, however, the policy toward

Catholicism changed drastically. Those newly in power expelled the statesmen who had worked under King Jeongjo, the purported reason for this purge being that they had tolerated Catholicism, which was ruining social mores. The persecution of Catholics began in January 1801 and lasted for the rest of the year, culminating in a mass beheading in December. This incident, which occurred at the dawn of the nineteenth century, saw the execution of as many as three hundred Catholics. Female believers were not spared from the persecution; more than seventy women were either beheaded or exiled. The crime the believers had committed, according to the state, was that they had been baptized, had immersed themselves far too deeply in Catholicism, and proselytized, leading others down the path of evil. In addition, the following crimes were attributed to female believers: fleeing home and going to Seoul; venturing out into the streets and moving from house to house; remaining unmarried or falsely claiming to be widowed; gathering with men in the main room of a house; and being baptized by foreign priests.

Most of the aforementioned crimes violated the prevailing social mores. In a society where men and women were kept separated from the age of seven, women who refused to marry, who gathered with men to hold meetings, or who invited men other than their husbands into the main rooms of houses were considered a direct challenge to social ethics.

Why, then, did so many women convert to Catholicism at the risk of death? Female believers varied in status from *yangban* to low-born, and their motives in accepting the Catholic faith varied, too, ranging from the hope of curing an illness to the desire to give birth to a son. However, the common factor binding all these women was perhaps an overwhelming desire to escape from the pressures of their miserable realities. The fact that many women were widowed was also a part of their motivation. In addition, Catholic doctrines proved highly favorable to women. In God, all men and women were equal, rendering possible equal fellowship between men and women as well as between *yangban* and the low-born. Even among married couples, the husband was prohibited from assaulting his wife or banishing a wife who could not bear a son, and concubinage was forbidden.

Though female believers did not consciously try to escape the social constraints, they contributed significantly to social transformation. Due to their willingness to accept the difficult reality while dreaming of a new world in which they could live a dignified existence as human beings, women's behavior became an important historical experience when they began to fight for freedom and equality in later periods.





Chapter 4

WOMEN IN MODERN KOREA

Shin Youngsook

Overview of the Period

The history of modern women in Korea generally refers to women's history from the opening of the ports toward the end of the Joseon Dynasty to the end of the Japanese colonial period. During this period, Korean society struggled heavily with reforms and changes to fight against the growing imperialistic foreign powers, while attempting to eradicate the inveterate internal problems within the Joseon Dynasty amid the turbulent trajectory of world history. After Joseon was coerced by Japan into opening its ports in 1876, Japanese oppression and brutality only increased, exemplified by the Gapsin Coup (1884) and the assassination of Empress Myeongseong (1895). At the same time, the task of developing a modern Korean society was accompanied by a diversification of ideology and proliferation of social movements, including the Donghak Peasant Movement, the Righteous Army Movement of the Eulmi Year, the Independence Association, and the People's Assembly in the 1890s.

Eventually, King Gojong carried out the Gabo Reforms in 1894 to address both internal and external difficulties, and proclaimed the Great Han Empire in 1897. However, Japan's aggression, on the back of its successive victories in the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, severely dampened such efforts toward reform and change. In 1910, Japan formally annexed Korea, and the suffering of the people grew day by day under Japan's coercive rule. Furthermore, during the Asia-Pacific War, which lasted for fifteen years from Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 to its defeat at the hands of the Allies in 1945, Korean people, especially women, had to endure indescribable hardships without an end in sight.

Women, however, took advantage of the crisis as an opportunity to act upon their new-found awareness. Owing to the educational opportunities and vitality of women's liberation, women realized that they were also members of the human race and of a nation, and in so doing, stepped forward to act on their own. After the Donghak Peasant Movement, the Korean people finally established the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai by launching the revolutionary anti-imperialist, anti-colonial movement called the March First Independence Movement in 1919. This was largely due to the ideals of national self-determination and socialism that were promoted by the international community after the end of World War I in 1918. Above all, it was now possible to participate in nationwide anti-Japanese independence movements regardless of one's status, gender, or age. The significant number of women who also participated in these movements left an indelible mark in the history of Korean women. Later, in the 1920s, women became involved in various collective activities and expanded the stage for such movements as the development of women's rights and awareness of national independence. In addition, as women's education and social advancement increased, these movements could be progressed more actively. The so-called "New Women," with their modern education, took the lead in the efforts to solve social issues with a more specific awareness of problems concerning not only themselves, but also other women as well as the Korean ethnic nation as a whole.

In such a way, women devoted themselves to the various independence movements and women's liberation until the end of the war and Korean national liberation in 1945. Some also led the independence movements by raising military funds, taking charge of communications, working as nurses, and disseminating propaganda. In addition, almost all of women's daily existence entailed responsibility for the livelihood of their families and their children's education, which amounted to a struggle for helping independence activists to survive. It goes without saying that women's lives served as the foundation for the anti-Japanese national liberation movement.

Women in the Port-Opening Period and the Great Han Empire

After Joseon opened its ports to the outside world, women in the late nineteenth century became increasingly aware of their social reality and attempted to escape the traditional patriarchal system. Catholicism, which had already been introduced before the opening of the ports, provided an opportunity for oppressed people, especially women, to escape the traditional life. Moreover, Protestantism, officially authorized in 1882, had a significant impact upon women through the Protestants' active missionary work, which included women's education and medical projects. In such a way, women were able to gradually advance into schools, churches, and even society. The Donghak (Eastern Learning) ideology also spearheaded social change by emphasizing a new consciousness of equality between men, women, and children—in other words, that women are in fact human beings. Based on certain achievements of the Donghak Peasant Movement, early marriage customs and the prohibition of women's re-marriage were abolished in 1894 through the Gabo Reforms.

Education of Women and Women's Entry into the Public Sphere

During this period, women's education was rather insignificant, but it attracted considerable attention as a social concern. Various

news organizations, including *The Independent* (Dongnip Sinmun), *Imperial Newspaper* (Jeguk Sinmun), *Daily News* (Maeil Sinbo), and *Capital Gazette* (Hwangseong Sinmun), emphasized women's social roles and advocated for women's education. In addition, the women's journals of various social organizations, including the *Guide for Women* (Yeojajinam) produced by the Association for Women's Education (Yeoja gyoyukhoe), the *Journal of the Women's Charitable Association* (Jaseon Buinhoe Japji) produced by the Women's Charitable Association (Jaseon buinhoe), and the Family Magazine (Gajeong Japji) issued by the New People's Association (Sinminhoe), all urged education for women and women's social involvement.

The educational activities of Catholic nuns as well as Protestant women's schools, such as the Ewha Girls' School, Paiwha Girls' School, and Chungshin Girls' School, all increased steadily. In addition, *yangban* women from Seoul formed the first educational group for women, called the Chanyang Association (Chanyanghoe), announcing the "Circular for the Establishment of Schools for Girls" in 1898 and subsequently establishing Sunseong Girls' School. At the same time, numerous private girls' schools could be established thanks to the sponsorship of several important people or organizations, such as Queen Eom, King Gojong's second queen consort. However, most did not last long due to a lack of operating funds and difficulty securing teachers. Nonetheless, Jinmyeong Girls' School, Sookmyung Girls' School, and Dongduk Girls' School all expanded. At that time, the purpose of women's education was to declare women to be an important element of national prosperity, patriotism, and enlightenment, and to this extent, it was largely pre-



The monthly *Family Magazine* (Gadyeong Japji) was the first-ever women's magazine published in Korea. Its first issue was published on June 25, 1906 by the Family Magazine Company, in whose establishment the Sangdong Young People's Association of Sangdong Church played a key role. | Hyundammungo



"Circular for the Establishment of Schools for Girls," published in the September 8, 1898 issue of the *Imperial Capital Gazette* (Hwangseong Sinmun). This was the first article to demand the establishment of girls' schools in Korea. | National Library of Korea

mised on the modern theory of gender roles.

Meanwhile, as industrialization gradually took root, women began to participate in socioeconomic labor outside the home. In 1900, for example, fifteen female workers were recruited by the Joseon Bureau of Mintage, followed by the recruitment of female workers by the Hanseong Textiles Company in 1901. Moreover, not only were women now employed as workers in the manufacturing industry, but they were also engaged in self-employed businesses. For example, there was an attempt to organize a women's economic association to encourage women's economic activities and organize businesses that used to be carried out by women at home, such as brewing liquors, making beverages, and sewing. In addition, women's organizations, such as the Jahye Women's Association (Jahye buinhoe), recruited women who had nowhere to go, taught them handicrafts, and sought ways for these women to support themselves by equipping them with the requisite skills.

Movements for Women's Rights and to Save the Nation

At the time, the various wrongs associated with the institution of marriage, such as early marriage, forced marriage, and trade marriage, continued under the patriarchal system; in resistance to such oppressive forms of marriage, there appeared modern weddings as well as simplified weddings. Along with the educational organization, the Chanyang Association (Chanyanghoe), the Fellowship of Women (Yeo'uhoe) held a sit-down demonstration against concubinage in front of Gyeongbokgung Palace. This demonstration can be considered the first women's movement aimed at women's enlightenment, and resistance to the patriarchal system, by opposing early marriage and concubinage.

Women also joined the righteous army movements for resistance to Japan and national liberation that sprang up across the Korean Peninsula. The assassination of Empress Myeongseong in 1895 aroused the ire of the Korean people, and amidst the anger and the precarity of the Korean people, righteous armies rose up against Japan; in such a moment of crisis, women also participated in the righteous army struggle. Not only did women provide accommodation and food for the soldiers, but they also helped manufacture gunpowder and weapons. In Chuncheon, Gangwon Province, and Jecheon, Chungcheong Province, women became directly involved in the righteous army. In particular, Yun Hui-sun, the niece-in-law of Yu In-seok, the chief of the righteous army in Chuncheon, encouraged anti-Japanese consciousness by composing the "Song of the Righteous Army," "Song of the Youth," and "Song of the Female Righteous Soldiers" to encourage young men and women. Yun Hui-sun, a woman who served her parents-in-law and was a mother, fought



Statue of Yun Hui-sun, located behind Chuncheon City Library



Kim Dal-jun and Seo Chae-bong, participants in the National Debt Repayment Movement

for the liberation of the nation while taking care of household chores. After her husband died in the righteous army struggles, she took her two sons and defected to Manchuria. Once there, she established a women's education institution called the Nohakdang and continued her anti-Japanese struggle right up until her death, becoming a model for other independence activists.

Women also actively participated in the National Debt Repayment Movement. Intended to solve the problems that threatened Korea's economic independence, the Movement spread across the nation, particularly with the participation of the Daehan Daily Newspaper Corporation (Daehan Maeil Sinbosa) after the men's smoking cessation campaign, which began in Daegu in mid-February 1907. By the end of the year, more than thirty organizations had arisen across the country, including the Women's Association for Reducing Food Consumption (Buin gamchanhoe) in Seoul and the Daegu Women's Association for the Repayment of Debt through the Donation of Jewelry (Paemulpyeji buinhoe), collecting sewing wages as well as gold rings, ornamental hair pins, and silver spoons. In Samhwa, South Pyeongan Province, Ahn Jung-geun and his mother Jo Maria also participated in this movement. The pan-national donation movement, which included participants from every social stratum, was actively carried out as a nexus of the enlightenment movements

and fundraising activities. By fostering a sense of self-esteem and social awareness among women, the National Debt Repayment Movement paved the way for increased female participation in the anti-Japanese independence movements.

The Lack of Women's Education during the Colonial Period (1910-1945)

Many girls' schools, including private religious girls' schools, were able to contribute to fostering women's social consciousness as well as national consciousness. At the same time, the growth of women's education naturally led to women's advancement into society. The government-led education for women, however, began rather late. In April 1908, the government established the Hanseong (Gyeongseong) High School for Girls and promulgated the Ordinance for Girls' High Schools. At this time, the main content of the education was focused on cultivating life skills, such as sewing and household chores, and personal characteristics suitable for women. It was not until 1914 that Pyeongyang Girls' Normal High School was established, with education majors being established there and at Gyeongseong Girls' Normal High School in the same year, in a bid to produce female teachers equipped with professional certificates of regular education.



Cha Mirisa during her matriculation at the Scarritt Bible and Training School (1910-1912)

Private night schools and lecture halls were also used to make up for the absolute lack of regular women's education. For example, organizations such as the Association for Women's Education and the Aid Society for Self-Supporting Girl Students in Korea played a crucial role in expanding regular education for women. Such organizations paid attention not only to education but also to the importance of economic activities in enabling women's independence as well as social awareness.

Meanwhile, female students actively participated in the Literacy Movement, which was begun in 1929 by the *Chosun Daily Newspaper* (Chosun Ilbo), and in the Vnarod Movement, which was founded by the *Dong-a Daily Newspaper* (Dong-a Ilbo) in 1931, using their school vacation time. A representative figure in this respect is Chae Yong-sin, the protagonist of the novel *The Evergreen* (Sangnoksu). In the drive for enlightenment, literacy campaigns and the activities of Christian women, including those of the YWCA, were notable. However, they were incorporated into the wartime mobilization system in the 1930s, with most of them becoming institutional conduits for the dissemination of the Japanese language. Japan's goal in providing wom-



The rural activist Choe Yong-sin, who served as the prototype for Chae Yeong-sin, the protagonist of the novel *The Evergreen* (Sangnoksu)

en's education was to eradicate the Korean national consciousness by emphasizing the notion of the ideal wife and the wise mother acquiescent to colonial rule and the policy of "Japan and Korea as One." It is evident that women's education during the fifteen-year wartime mobilization period deteriorated to such an extent that it served no other purpose than to coerce women into fulfilling their maternal duty to produce soldiers and to provide group training for wartime labor.

Diverse Women amid Social Changes in the Colonial Period

Emergence and Role of the "New Women" (Sinyeoseong)

In the 1920s, the New Women—with their short hair and Western-style shoes, hats, and parasols—attracted widespread attention. Many of the educated New Women even went abroad to study, mainly to Japan or China, but sometimes all the way to the United States and Europe. These New Women contributed to society by becoming professional women or social activists. In other words, the theory of women's liberation, which emerged before and after World War I, also gained prominence in Korea. Novel claims about free love, marriage, divorce and other matters were espoused, creating a sensation in wider society. The ideology of women's liberation was accepted as a way to deconstruct the traditional relationship between men and women and abuses of the family system. For example, first-generation New Women such as Kim Il-yeop, Na Hye-seok, and Kim Myeong-sun, who were exposed not only to Ellen Key's theory of free love and marriage, but also to Alexandra Kollontai's *Red Love*, did not hesitate to criticize the ideals of chastity enforce upon women of the time.

However, as the patriarchal social reality grew ever harsher under Japan's colonial policy, the contradictions and abuses of marriage remained more or less unchanged. The early marriage system, which was abolished during the Gabo Reforms, was revived after 1937 as wartime mobilization began, as a way to avoid forced mobilization.



Kim Won-ju
(Dharma name: Il-yeop)





Ellen Key and Alexandra Kollontai



A commemorative postage stamp issued in North Korea to commemorate Baek Seon-haeng

In addition, concubinage was maintained, with even some New Women themselves becoming concubines; this, combined with the increase in divorce and early marriage, only added to the suffering of women.

Still, there were many single women who actively engaged in social activities such as Kim Maria and Kim Hwal-ran, and there were some who married at a late age, such as the Hwang Sin-deok. In addition, widows whose husbands had died early, such as Baek Seon-haeng, Choe Songseoldang, and Jo Sin-seong, worked to foster younger students and devoted themselves to the independence movement. At the same time, numerous women led the anti-Japanese movement with their husbands. In the midst of such sweeping social changes, the emergence and role of the New Women who yearned to fulfill their calling proved highly significant in the history of Korean women.

Picture Bride Emigrants to America

Another notable group of women at that time were the so-called "picture brides," an early form of Korean immigration to America. A marital practice whereby immigrant men in America sent photos to single women in their native countries, the system was meant to stabilize the Asian immigrant population in America and was applied to most immigrant workers. Picture-bride marriage began in 1908 and ended in 1924 with the promulgation of the Asian Exclusion Act and the suspension of Asian immigration, except for international students. From 1910 to October 1924, 951 Korean brides



Picture brides

traveled to Hawaii and 115 to the U.S. mainland. It is said that the number of children born to them reached 7,000 in the 1950s.

Picture brides had to pretend to be Chinese or Japanese when going to Shanghai or Yokohama, with only pictures of their grooms in their hands. They waited for as long as a year, and were finally able to reach Hawaii or San Francisco after nearly a month of sailing. Only after thorough investigation by the U.S. Immigration Service were they permitted to meet their grooms.

The first picture bride, Choe Sara, arrived in Hawaii in November 1910 and, along with other picture brides, made great efforts to establish an early Korean niche with their husbands. These brides were generally aged between fifteen and twenty (the average was eighteen years), and were usually fifteen and sometimes even twenty-five years younger than their husbands. The majority were introduced

to their future husbands by friends, relatives, or church ministers. Most of the time, the women actively agreed to marry because they had a burning desire to acquire an education and experience life in a new world.

Problems occurred, however, when the man wanted to marry but was illiterate, and so had to ask a friend to write letters to his future wife on his behalf. In addition, there were fraudulent marriages by men who sent pictures taken more than a decade earlier or pictures of their friends instead. As a result, divorced or disappointed women sometimes returned to Korea, but most couples simply resigned themselves to their fate and adapted to a new life. Soon, they became major actors in the development of Korean communities in the U.S., including Hawaii, and contributed to the Korean independence movement from abroad.

Modern Working Women

The emergence of new occupations and the active social advancement of women during this period were both a historical trend and a product of the times. Colonial capitalism encouraged women's economic activities, and the desire to broaden their education and escape poverty led to the creation of new jobs. With the emergence of a variety of new jobs for women, women went to work, partially under duress and partially of their own volition.

At the time, there were various types of modern career women, including professionals such as teachers, doctors, journalists, and bank tellers, as well as service workers such as operators and store

clerks. In addition, there were female artists working in the literary arts, visual arts, music, dance, theater, and film, and even popular celebrities. Most were New Women who had been exposed to the new education, but this was not always the case. The reality was that in colonized Korea, women who could read had no choice but to go out and earn a living.

Professional Women

In general, professional jobs were handled by the New Women who had graduated from a girls' school with a regular education. They became doctors or journalists, working to develop women's consciousness and participating in various women's movements. For example, Kim Ran-sa, who had studied in Japan, again went abroad to study in the United States, becoming the first female university graduate in Korea in 1906. Thereafter, she taught at the Ewha Girls' School, her alma mater. Park Esther (Korea's first female doctor), Heo Yeong-suk, and Yu Yeong-jun were doctors who took the lead in general hygiene education and preventive medicine,



The magazine *New Women* (Sinyeoseong) published a special feature on bobs in August 1925. Bobs were a symbol of professional women.
| National Library of Korea

as well as treatment for women and children. In addition, women who took care of pregnant women and general nurses were representative professional women of the time.

Some women who graduated from Ewha Girls' School or Gyeongseong Girls' Normal High School became teachers who made a significant contribution to the expansion of women's education. Kim Hwal-ran and Ko Hwang-gyeong are particularly representative in this respect, as female teachers in various fields such as music and physical education were essential for fostering female talent.

At the same time, journalists writing for daily papers, such as Choe Eun-hui, Heo Jeong-suk, Hwang Sin-deok, Song Gye-wol, and Choe Jeong-hui, worked hard to raise women's consciousness



The dancer Choe Seung-hui

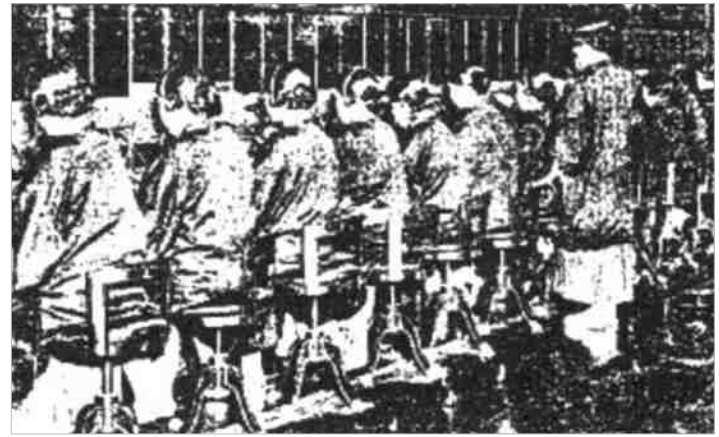
and enlighten them through the media, and were central figures in the women's movements. In addition, the painter Na Hye-seok and the writer Kim Il-yeop were active in various fields, including the publication of articles and magazines aimed at raising women's awareness, while numerous writers such as Kang Gyeong-ae, Baek Shin-ae, and Park Hwa-seong advocated for Korean national consciousness and women's self-awareness. Meanwhile, the dancer Choe Seung-hui gained fame as a world-class dancer by giving performances in the U.S. and Europe, instilling pride in the Korean people, who were suffering greatly at the time.

Furthermore, the emergence of female pilots and drivers as well as the establishment in 1931 of Injeong Library in Pyeongyang, the country's first private library, Baekseonhaeng Memorial Hall, and Gimcheon School by female social entrepreneurs and educators, are meaningful examples of women's professionalism and economic potential at that time.

Women in the Service Industry

The number of service jobs, also called "jobs for women," continued to increase. Examples include telephone operators, store clerks, hostesses, and household workers. There were also elevator girls, gas-station girls, and ticket salesgirls. Often educated beyond the elementary level, these women were usually paid daily or monthly wages, but they had to work an average of twelve to thirteen hours a day and often endured sexual harassment. At times, they were the targets of criticism and, at others, of admiration.

Although it was mainly Japanese women who served as telephone



Telephone operators

operators at government offices and companies, the number of Korean female operators gradually increased. In April 1920, the Gyeongseong Post Office recruited female operators who were fluent in Japanese. Subsequently, male customers' curiosity about the many thousands of female operators across the country caused quite a stir.

Female salesclerks, especially women working in department stores, were referred to by Western titles such as "Department Store Girls" or "Shop Girls"—positions for which one's personal appearance was the primary requirement. In addition, as the number of venues for entertainment and pleasure gradually increased after the opening of Korea's ports, women began to flock to Japanese-style brothels, restaurants, and inns. More than half of the women commonly referred to as professional entertainers, barmaids, and waitresses were Korean. In particular, waitresses at Western-style

cafes and bars emerged as a new class of working women with the formation of a modern urban culture.

On the other hand, household workers accounted for about 18 percent of all employed women, a sizeable portion. They were similar in status to the slaves and maids of traditional society, but were in the process of transitioning to the status of modern laborers. Most of the time, these workers took care of their Japanese employers' children, in addition to performing all kinds of errands and household chores. Called "Korean Housemaids," they were essentially housekeepers who could be hired as cheap labor. Although wages were usually set, these household workers had to endure unstable employment because the period of employment was not fixed.

The Exploitation of Women in Farming Towns and Fishing Villages

Most rural women were responsible for ensuring their families' livelihood. In addition to farming, women were responsible for childbirth, childcare, preparation of meals, sewing, and laundry, as well as silkworm farming, cotton cultivation, and weaving. At that time, these women were described as "fierce and strong," and "more useful, stronger, and more patient than cows." Such descriptions illustrate the tremendous labor intensity of these women. In the same way, divers in fishing villages, including those on Jeju Island, endured extremely difficult labor conditions. All these women ultimately had to pour all their energy into improving their families' livelihood. In the meantime, some went to night school or other





Women in farm towns working collaboratively

educational establishments to learn Hangeul. Young women who studied with their children strapped on their backs thought that learning was necessary not only for improving themselves but also for raising their children.

Furthermore, in the 1930s, the mobilization of the rural female labor force, including labor exchange, for weeding and rice harvesting was strengthened in accordance with the Rural Revitalization Campaign. In addition to outdoor labor and side jobs such as silkworm farming, the various collective affairs of a village were carried out through systematic collaboration. In 1930, women accounted for 95 percent of the total silkworm farming population, which accounted for only 3 percent of the total farming population. Under the wartime mobilization system, many women had to feed their families on herb roots, tree bark, mugwort, potatoes, leaves, and bean cakes for survival.

At the same time, Japanese policy routinely mobilized women for various women's classes not only to increase the overall production



A baby chosen as a "super baby"

of people in villages, but also to push them to thoroughly recognize the political context, including Japanese language courses and air defense drills. As the Pacific War intensified, Japan expanded the mobilization of women on the pretext of maternal instincts under the policy of "Give Birth; Increase the Population." After the Japanese Governor-General decided to adjust the rural labor force in 1941, 34 percent of women belonged to some form of women's work group or agricultural cooperative by 1944, and the training of these women was accelerated day by day. To mobilize women, more than 34,700 daycare facilities were established in 1942 alone, and co-cooking was encouraged; however, it was difficult for Korean women to actually benefit from any of this. Under the wartime mobilization system, rural women were of the lowest rank and hence forced to endure unbearable conditions, while their sons were dragged off to the battlefield.

Women Mobilized for War

Female Civilians Attached to the Military

Civilians attached to the military were members of the military,

generally composed of personnel other than soldiers serving in the Army and Navy. They were as important as the soldiers themselves, indispensable in times of war. In the Japanese military organization, civilian workers were usually classified as drill instructors, technical officers, legal professionals, prison officers, interpreters, and nurses. In addition, there were guards, temporary nurses, and firefighters. They worked on site at the request of the Army and Navy. This also included crew members, airfield workers, female typists, cooks, barbers, and field post office staff.

Mobilization began initially with recruitment, but was gradually replaced by conscription toward the end of the war, with active involvement by the government. Due to the long duration of the war, it was inevitable that civilians would be required to work to increase production and fulfill duties for the military simultaneously, along with the mobilization of civilian workers for the military. Thus, by the end of the war, the mobilization of manpower targeted men and women, as well as boys and girls aged twelve to sixty, and poorer people were much more likely to be mobilized by the military. Women were no exception to



Military register. Women were also recorded as civilian auxiliaries of the military in the wartime register and personal information notification. Most were recorded as temporary nurses.

this rule. There were women in the military who manufactured or inspected bullets at munitions factories, and others who were mobilized for the construction of airfields.

Women were also included in the Navy. Subjugated by the state and the military as "second-class citizens (female)," women with healthy bodies and special skills could be employed with the permission of the pertinent minister. Nurses constituted the largest group, and most women who were mobilized were brutally overworked as office workers, telephone operators, and as women who prepared meals, did the laundry, and handled cargo. They were subjugated by the state and the military as "second-class citizens (female)."

Wartime Nurses

The wartime nurses belonged to a professional class. They were dispatched to army hospitals, field hospitals, and medical corps belonging to the Japanese military to take care of wounded soldiers. Nurses were also present at the army hospitals in the rear along with medical personnel. In addition, patient care centers and camps were frequently set up on the battlefield, and hospital ships transported patients, medicines, and nurses. Wartime nurses had to treat patients to the point of complete exhaustion while moving between the front lines.

These wartime nurses were divided into those in the nursing department of the Japanese Red Cross and those directly recruited by the Army and Navy's nursing departments. Within these two categories, they had to endure further differential treatment during their mobilization in different capacities throughout the long war, serving


白衣의天使
昨日、無事히歸京

Newspaper article on war nurses. Called "Angels in White Clothes," wartime nurses were coerced into working on the battlefield. Dong-a Daily Newspaper (Dong-a Ilbo), April 15, 1938.

at one time or another as nursing caregivers, temporary caregivers, and assistant caregivers.

In the case of women in colonized Korea, poor women were mobilized to care for and console soldiers, and were forced to make great sacrifices as the "Angels in White Clothes." Beginning in 1938, the demand for Korean wartime nurses rose continuously, and from 1940, nursing schools were established, which at times granted a nursing license without requiring nurses to take or pass an examination. In addition, several organs were newly designated to temporarily and expediently produce war nurses, ranging from a nursing school in Pyeongyang to a nurses' training center at Incheon's Army hospital. Eventually, the age limit for obtaining a nursing license was lowered to sixteen, with the Japanese military in a hurry to mobilize ever more people for the war effort. Near the end of the war,

it was not only the female civilian workers of the military, but also the "Comfort Women" who were forced to work in nursing as well as performing additional tasks such as doing the laundry and transporting patients as well as supplies.

Ultimately, the wartime nurses became sexual objects of care and comfort to soldiers, and were forced to make sacrifices because they were women, mostly daughters who had never married. As symbols of filial piety and love of the family, they were the primary sacrifice for the patriarchal imperial system.

Young Women's Volunteer Corps

Japan's exploitation of the female labor force was strengthened after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, under the wartime system of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and the Pacific War in 1941. For example, it was after the promulgation of the National Mobilization Act in May 1938 that women were extensively mobilized under various names such as the Patriotic Work Corps and the Women's Promotion Corps. Under the National Mobilization Act, the regulation on male registration was extended from sixteen to fifty years of age to twelve to sixty in 1944, after the Employment Agency Decree (1940) was promulgated.

The Patriotic Corps, which mobilized a large number of women, was the lowest-ranking organization of the Patriotic Work Corps, established in 1938. In June 1938, the Mobilization of Student Labor for Patriotic Duties Decree stipulated that boys be mobilized for civil engineering work, and girls for cleaning up Shinto shrines and sewing military supplies. In 1944, many unmarried women



Young Women's Volunteer Corps

under the age of twenty-five, in addition to students, were included in Patriotic Work Corps through the Patriotic Labor Decree. Girls were forced to write consolatory letters, provide comfort kits, and launder uniforms, while women in their twenties and thirties who had at least received an elementary school education were chosen from every local league to organize the Women's Promotion Corps. In April of the same year, a special women's training center was established for all Korean women. These mobilization tactics were legalized in August with the enactment of the Women's Volunteer Corps Decree. In November 1943, the Women's Volunteer Corps recruited "volunteers" from schools and towns on the false pretext of education and better-paying jobs, and then whisked them off to diverse destinations. On the Korean Peninsula, many were taken to factories in Pyeongyang and Gwangju; however, the greatest

number of these young "volunteer" girls was taken to the Fujikoshi plant in Toyama Prefecture, Japan. By the end of May 1945, there were more than 1,000 of these unfortunate women there, while another 270 were taken to the Mitsubishi aircraft manufacturing station in Nagoya, Japan. According to the survivors, there were countless deaths and injuries due to the brutally intensive labor and the miserable conditions of dormitory life.

The abuse these "volunteers" suffered was unceasing. As the group "Volunteer Corps" became confused with the "comfort women," in other words the women who were forced into Japanese military sexual slavery, they became the objects of extreme social discrimination and profound contempt. In reality, there were those among the Volunteer Corps who were forced to work during the day and serve as sexual slaves at night.

"Comfort Women" of the Japanese Military

The term "comfort women" refers to women who were forcibly taken to serve as sex slaves of the Japanese Military and were repeatedly raped in the system. The term "sexual slavery," only recently established and accepted in the international community, precisely depicts the essence of the indescribable abuses committed by the Japanese military.

As the war spread and was prolonged due to the Manchurian invasion in 1931 and the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Japan established military brothels to prevent the spread of venereal diseases caused by the extensive rape of women by Japanese soldiers and to improve morale.

Although the civilian-led military brothels had already existed since the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894, it is estimated that the first military brothels established directly under the auspices of the Japanese military were built in 1932. After 1932, the Japanese Navy transformed the red-light district in Shanghai into "comfort stations" for the Navy, and began to establish brothels for the Army expeditionary forces. Notably, in late 1937, the Japanese Department of the Army began to establish regulations on the recruitment of women for the comfort stations and to stipulate the purposes of their construction. The comfort women were forcibly transported to various places, ranging from occupied areas to battlefields, as though they were military supplies.

The comfort women were called by room numbers or by Japanese names such as Hanako and Akiko, and forced to endure a harsh life



Newspaper advertisements recruiting "comfort women" for the Japanese military

as slaves who were not even allowed to speak their native language. Inside the brothels, there was a reception desk that received military vouchers and money, as well as distributed condoms. The comfort women also had to be tested for venereal diseases once a week or every two weeks. Inevitably, most of the comfort women were unable to avoid catching venereal diseases, and thus were given the so-called "injection no. 606," an injection of Salvarsan, or were treated with mercury, which posed a great risk of addiction. There were also a great many women who were abandoned without any treatment.

At that time, numerous women in Korea were left unattended and hence became easy prey to human trafficking, and it was not difficult to lure away young women from rural areas as levels of poverty increased. These trafficked women ranged from unmarried girls in their early teens to married women in their late twenties. Most of them were taken to brothels under fraudulent claims about good job opportunities, such as factory jobs or other high-paying positions. In addition, women were at times abducted or sold by comfort station managers and recruiters, as well as low-ranking government officials and military personnel. Even when private businessmen were involved in the recruitment process, behind them were the management and supervisory control of the Japanese military, including the commands of the Kwantung Army and the Japanese-Korean Army.

At the end of the war, many of these women were massacred, committed suicide, or returned home with great difficulty. In some cases, they did not know how to return, or even if they did know, they gave up entirely on themselves and remained where they had been stationed, ashamed and penniless. And even when they did return home, they suffered from various after-effects and severe trauma. Today, the problem of the "comfort women" remains an unresolved issue of the war and women's rights.

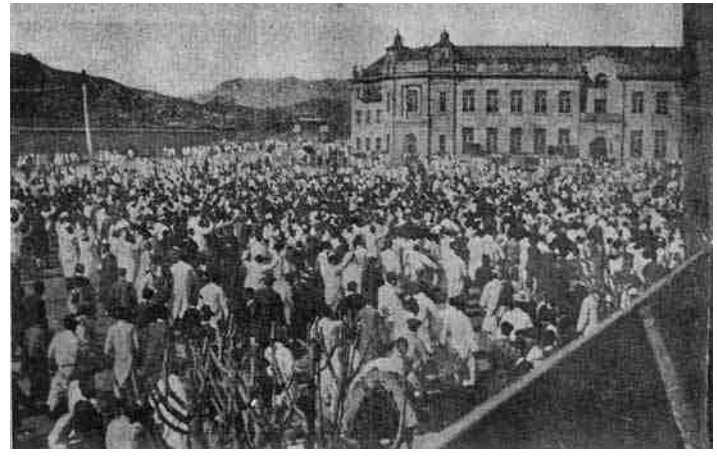
Women's Movement for National Liberation

The emergence of the anti-Japanese women's independence movement was in keeping with the desire to transform and develop Korean society into a nation-state based on modern nationalism. With the emergence of the March First Independence Movement in 1919, the energy of women's liberation, which had begun to blossom even before the March First Independence Movement, gradually spread to women at the general levels of society, and organizations and movements led by female nationalists and socialists were actively developed. Women's movements had to address two major tasks: the nationalist movement, which called for a complete break from colonial rule, and the liberation of women from the oppression of patriarchy. In the end, the anti-Japanese women's independence movements spread from Korea to overseas, but due to Japanese oppression and the "limitations" of being women, there was a definitive ceiling to how much could realistically be achieved. Nevertheless, women who actively participated in national independence movements carried out various activities related to basic women's education, self-awareness training, the struggle for the right to live, the anti-Japanese independence movements, and the armed struggles.

March First Independence Movement and Patriotic Women's Associations

The massive anti-Japanese protests that took place in March 1919 were part of a national uprising to liberate Korea from Japanese colonial rule and oppression. Women of all stripes from all over the country including female teachers, students, *gisaeng* (professional female entertainers), and rural women actively participated in the protests. It was at this time that Yu Gwan-sun, considered a symbol of the March First Independence Movement, died in prison for the independence of Korea.

At the same time, women reorganized the Korean Association of Patriotic Women (Daehanminguk aeguk buinhoe) to help the Korean Provisional Government in earnest, helping to accelerate



The March First Independence Movement

the government's activities by collecting and transferring military funds, aiding communication at home and abroad, and caring for political prisoners and their families. However, as the organization was exposed due to the treachery of a number of shameless members, many female activists including Kim Maria were arrested and imprisoned. Thereafter, many moved to foreign countries to continue the independence struggle overseas or remained in Korea to participate in the movement to promote production and enlightenment in rural areas, with the focus on enlightening women, raising their awareness, and providing Korean language education.

The March First Independence Movement is highly regarded in world history as an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial popular uprising. At that time, Woodrow Wilson's notion of national self-determination and the socialist ideology that succeeded in the Russian revolution also influenced Korea significantly. Therefore, the fact that the Korean people stood up boldly and protested against Japan as well as the great extent of women's participation hold great significance in world history, unprecedented not only in terms of scale, but also in terms of the numerous human sacrifices caused by the nonviolent struggle. In fact, the internationalization of social movements is evident in the fact that the March First Independence Movement directly influenced the May Fourth Movement in China. This also enabled subsequent progress in the women's movements.

Women's Organizations

Education of Women and the Improvement of Everyday Life

In the 1920s, women's movements were largely divided into Christian-centered nationalists and socialists, who organized groups and focused on social movements for national liberation and independence. First, nationalist women focused on women's education and the use of Korean-made products, as well as encouraged economic activities to improve women's rights in line with the movement to improve general skills. Through the Joseon Women's Education Association (Joseon yeoja gyoyukhoe) established by Cha Mirisa, the YWCA and other Christian women's organizations, and the Women's Youth Association (Yeoja cheongnyeonhoe), female activists worked to promote national consciousness and women's enlightenment through various lectures, discussions, and night schools.

The Joseon Women's Education Association, founded in 1920 with Cha Mirisa at the helm, emphasized education by opening night schools for ordinary women who had not attended school and by publishing the *Theory of the Times for Women* (Yeojasiron) every other week. In addition, organizations focusing on women's education were actively developed and established by social organizations, such as the Women's Youth Association, in various parts of the Korean Peninsula. For example, the Taiwha Women's Hall, the Women's Epworth League, and the YWCA held discussions and lectures that included performances of music and dance, which served to propel the women's movements at that time.

Meanwhile, women also participated in the Native Products

Promotion Movement and led the use of domestic products such as silk and cotton clothes. In addition, the Literacy Movement, which was begun in 1929 by the *Chosun Daily Newspaper* (Chosun Ilbo), and the Vnarod Movement initiated by the *Dong-a Daily Newspaper* (Dong-a Ilbo) in 1931, were active due to the vigorous participation of female students during their school vacation.

In December 1932, the Full Moon Club (Mangwol gurakbu), whose members were generally female schoolteachers, was reorganized into the Joseon Occupational Women's Association (Joseon jigeop buinhoe), in which any woman with a job could participate. The organization worked to protect the rights and interests of working women, particularly in such areas as employment opportunities, savings, and socialization. Before and after the March First Independence Movement, Christianity had a relatively significant impact on women's movements. The activities of female teachers and students at Christian schools such as Ewha Girls' School and Chungshin Girls' School continued into women's movements based on the spirit of Christianity.

Women's Liberation and the Liberation of the Korean People

The socialist women's movements began with the Aid Society for Self-Supporting Girl Students in Korea (Joseon yeoja gohaksaeng sangjohoe), which was launched in April 1922. Jeong Jong-myeong and others worked to help about thirty poor lower-class women to come up with their tuition fees through sewing and needlework. In 1924, the Korean Women's Socialist League (Joseon yeoseong dong'uhoe), which first advocated the liberation of socialist women,

was organized, and groups such as the Women's Youth Alliance (Yeoja cheongnyeon dongmaeng) were launched across the Korean Peninsula. All these organizations advocated for women's unity to participate in the women's liberation movements and located the ultimate solution to women's problems in the realization of socialism, namely the construction of a new society. Within just one or two years after their establishment, the socialist women's organizations were well received enough to organize more than forty women's youth organizations.

In 1925, a number of new socialist women's organizations emerged, including the Gyeongseong Women's Youth Alliance (Gyeongseong yeoja cheongnyeon dongmaeng), which was founded by Heo Jeong-suk and Kim Pil-sun, the Incheon Women's Youth Alliance (Incheon yeoja cheongnyeon dongmaeng), and the Pyeongyang Women's Alliance (Pyeongyang yeoseong dongmaeng), with the avowed aim of uniting and supporting young female members of the proletariat. Around the same time, the Seoul Women's Youth Association (Gyeongseong yeoja cheongnyeonhoe) founded by Park Won-hui and Kim Bo-jun became very active, before being integrated into the Central Alliance of Young Women (Jung'ang yeoja cheongnyeon dongmaeng) in 1926, and then into the Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society (Geunuhoe) a short time afterward in 1927.

The socialist women's movements largely reflected the global zeitgeist of the era. However, though the enthusiasm of the minority in the leadership positions was great, these movements did not really take root due to weak popular support. Still, it was their efforts that

continued the activities in the Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society, as they agreed that national liberation and independence must be prioritized to achieve their ultimate goals of women's liberation as well as social liberation.

Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society (Geunuhoe) and Female Student Movements

The Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society (Geunuhoe), arguably the largest women's organization of this period, was established in December 1926 when the YWCA's nationalist women, including Kim Hwal-ran, Son Me-re, and Bang Shin-yeong, agreed with the socialist women, including Jeong Jong-myeong, Yu Yeong-jun, and Park Won-hui, to integrate into the Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society. Following the establishment of the New Trunk Association (Singanhoe) as the only nationalist party of both the left and the right, the Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society was founded in May as a unified Korean women's organization, declaring that it would fight to improve women's status and achieve national independence. Within roughly three years, the Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society organized about sixty branches nationwide, attracting women from all walks of life, including female students, working women, farmers, laborers, and housewives. However, the harsh suppression of the Society by the Japanese, in conjunction with internal conflicts, raised the issue of dissolving the society from 1930, and it is regrettable that the society ultimately proved unable to overcome such obstacles.

However, following the Gwangju Student Movement in November



Circular of the Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society titled Rose-of-Sharon Friendship, May 1929, and its table of contents | Hyundammungo



The *Dong-a Daily Newspaper* (Dong-a Ilbo) widely reported the release from prison of students who had participated in the female students' independence movement on March 26, 1930.

1929, possibly the largest anti-Japanese movement since the March First Independence Movement in 1919, female student participation, particularly by private middle school students, in the Seoul independence demonstrations of January 1930 was largely attributable to the leaders of the Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society. Female students from thirteen schools in the city, including Ewha Girls' Normal High School, Paiwha Girls' Normal High School, Dongduk Girls' High School, Sookmyung Girls' High School, and Gyeongseong Girls' Commercial School (today's Seoul Girls' Commercial High School), rose up under the leadership of the Society. It is said that of the 380 students arrested during the demonstrations, female students accounted for around one hundred of them. Thereafter, female students' movements, such as the so-called Leave-of-Absence Alliance and the Blank-Exam-Paper Alliance, were consistent with the national movements, insisting on the exclusion of unqualified teachers as well as Japanese teachers, the improvement of facilities, and better treatment of students, in addition to the rejection of Japanese national holidays such as the National Foundation Day and Meiji Day, and a refusal to sing celebratory songs of Japan. Such female student movements of the early 1930s were largely influenced by the socialist movements that had been active since the early 1920s, but as Japan's oppression intensified, numerous activists moved overseas or went underground, making it difficult for such movements to continue under the ever expanding wartime mobilization system.

Female Factory Workers' Fight for Their Lives

During this period, there was a marked increase in the number of female wage earners, or more precisely, female laborers, as the demand for female laborers by Japanese conglomerates continued to increase. Most of the female laborers were healthy women aged sixteen to twenty, the result of Japan's exploitative policy to maximize corporate profits with cheap labor in light industries, which generally did not require expertise in high-level technologies. Impoverished rural women had no choice but to find a way to make a living in urban factories and became submissive, unskilled wage earners who worked long hours for low wages. These low-paid female laborers worked in factories producing textiles, tobacco, rubber shoes, matchsticks, and socks, or hulling rice.

In the 1930s, when Japan implemented its total mobilization system, female laborers accounted for more than 30 percent of the total manufacturing workforce. In particular, textile workers made up 50 percent of all female workers, while rubber shoe manufacturing and matchmaking factories employed over 20 percent of all female laborers, most of whom were under sixteen, had not received any formal education, and were barely literate. Some were unmarried women living in dormitories, while others were married women who commuted from home. Both unskilled and semi-skilled laborers received extremely low wages due to dual discrimination based on sex and ethnicity, and all suffered from dire working conditions and long hours of labor. In particular, the long hours—generally, each day was divided into two shifts—were almost fatal to the workers' health.

In addition, young female workers had to endure sexual harassment and assault by male directors, as well as being exposed to a variety of occupational hazards ranging from burns to tuberculosis. Nevertheless, competition was fierce, and obtaining a position was made even more difficult by the absence of entrance exams or strict qualification requirements. As most of the contracts were signed between employers and parents, young female laborers were not free to seek employment or to quit their positions of their own volition. Furthermore, as their income was needed to support their households or the livelihood of their families, they functioned essentially as the heads of their families without enjoying any of the benefits normally due the head of the family. Stigmatized as "Permanent Young Laborers," these young female workers would never receive wages above what they earned as apprentices; even after they became regular workers, their wages did not improve much. Despite such disadvantages, more than 80 percent of the spinning workers at this time were female.

On the other hand, there were numerous married women who commuted to work at rice hulling factories, rubber factories, or tobacco factories; not only did they receive even lower wages than the aforementioned young female laborers, but they also had to pull double-duty to raise their children and take care of the household chores. In particular, married women around the age of thirty were employed in rubber shoe factories on a performance (or per diem) basis, and so were subject to various penalties, including a reduction of wages due to rising inflation and the obligation to pay compensation from their wages for defective products. Under such circumstances, it is no surprise that these women carried out organized struggles in order to survive, often leading to an alliance strike to improve their lives, for example. As such, the 1920s and early 1930s saw many organized strikes by women in various manufacturing industries, which sometimes descended into violence.

Female Rice-Hulling Workers' Strike

Thousands of Korean women were employed as rice-hulling workers on a per diem basis by the rice mills in Incheon, Jinnampo, and Gunsan. In 1925, the Gadeung Rice Mill, which exported grain from Incheon and Jinnampo to Japan, tried to replace the female workers with automatic milling equipment. As this move would push the female workers, who were living a hand-to-mouth existence, to the brink of unemployment, the respective labor rice milling unions in Incheon went on strike, urging that countermeasures be taken by the Confederation of Incheon Labor Unions. The strikers demanded that the eleven to twelve hours of daily labor be reduced to an average of eight hours, that their income be maintained at the previous level, that the supervisor take measures to prevent illegal activities, and that unfair dismissal be prohibited. In the 1930s, alliance strikes were frequent due to problems related to wages and sexual assault by supervisors at various rice mills throughout Gunsan, Haeju, and Jinnampo. The strikes did not last long, however, due to the difficulties of subsistence facing the women.

Kang Ju-ryong and the Female Rubber Factory Workers' Strike

At the Pyeongwon Rubber Factory in Pyeongyang, a strike began

on May 28, 1931. In the early morning of May 29, Kang Ju-ryong climbed on the roof (about 6.5 meters high) of Eulmildae Pavilion in Morandae Park, and made an impassioned speech, inciting a strike against wage reduction. In other words, Kang tried to attract the attention of Pyeongyang's citizens by striking from a considerable height. After being sentenced to thirty days of detention, she began a silent hunger strike that lasted for seventy-eight hours. The factory, meanwhile, laid off fourteen workers and put newly employed female laborers to work in their place. Kang Ju-ryong and three other detained workers then began a hunger strike alliance, and, on June 4 at the Baek Seonhaeng Memorial Hall in Pyeongyang, held another meeting of 2,000 rubber factory workers, raising funds for the strike.



Kang Ju-ryong, a female rubber factory laborer, on strike on the rooftop of Eulmildae Pavilion

More than 200 female rubber factory laborers from the Geumgang Rubber Factory and the Gukje Rubber Factory joined the strike. Finally, the employers decided not to cut the wages any further, and the twenty-day strike was resolved. However, Kang Ju-ryong was arrested and imprisoned and, after four months awaiting trial, died at the age of thirty.

The strikes by female rubber factory laborers in places such as Busan were devastating; even married female workers accompanied by their children fought tenaciously for the right to survive by carrying out long-term hunger strikes.

Female Textile Workers' Strike

Between 1928 and the end of 1932, female textile workers between the ages of sixteen and eighteen who worked at the factories of Japanese conglomerates distributed throughout various regions, including Pyeonchang in Hamheung, Gunsi in Daejeon, Jeonju, and Gangneung, staged an alliance strike protesting the harshly low wages. With fourteen hours of labor per day but wages the same as those from fifteen years prior, demands for better treatment, higher wages, and shorter working hours were all too natural. In September 1933, the female workers at Gyeongseong Textiles Company went on strike, followed by 450 female laborers from the Jongbang Factory in Pyeongyang, who protested low wages and harassment by supervisors. In January 1936, the struggle continued at the Jongbang Textile Factory in Gwangju.

However, strikes by laborers at individual factories were more spontaneous than organized, due to the restricted conditions of

unmarried female workers living in dormitories, as well as limited awareness. In the mid-1930s, there were frequent escapes by female laborers from textile factories. Misled by the exaggerated claims of the recruiters, most laborers from farming villages obtained positions at a factory; however, they eventually escaped because they could not endure the inhumane conditions, which diverged completely from the false claims of the recruiters. Trying to escape through the strict surveillance network may also be equated to the highest level of personal resistance.

In addition to the various female workers' movements, female farm workers actively participated in the farm tenancy disputes that broke out on Amtaedo Island in 1924, while on Jeju Island, female divers fought against the unfair associations that threatened their survival in 1932. Their movements can also be considered to have



Female textile workers

played a role in the popular anti-Japanese movements waged by women.

Overseas Women's Movements and Armed Struggle

In 1919, Korean female students in Japan participated in the February 8 Declaration of Independence by Korean students in Tokyo. In addition, as previously mentioned, the Korean Association of Patriotic Women (Daehanminguk aeguk buinhoe) maintained a close relationship with the provisional government; Korean women living in China, such as Jeong Jeong-hwa, continuously raised funds for the military or took charge of communication between independent fighters by moving back and forth between China and Korea. These women went far beyond the call of duty, serving as wives, mothers, and daughters, and sometimes as the wives of independence fighters.

In 1920, Jo Sin-seong organized the Korean Independence Youth Corps (Daehan dongnip cheongnyeondan) and, as its female chief of staff, recruited young people from Maengsan, Yeonggwang, and Deokcheon in South Pyeongan Province to carry out assassination attempts on Japanese police and Korean collaborators, and to send death sentences, letters of intimidation, and warnings to various local government offices and police stations, in a campaign to threaten and intimidate Japanese officials and Korean collaborators.

In reality, the majority of women's armed anti-Japanese struggles took place in Manchuria and other parts of China. For instance, there were Yi Hwa-rim, who accompanied Yun Bong-gil in his assas-

sination of Japanese officials in April 1932 at Shanghai's Hongkou Park (now Lu Xun Park); Nam Ja-hyeon, called the "female Ahn Jung-geun," who carried out a series of heroic anti-Japanese activities; Ahn Gyeong-sin, who threw a bomb at the Provincial Government building of South Pyeongan Province; Park Cha-jeong (the wife of Kim Won-bong, the leader of the Righteous Patriots Corps, or Uiyeoldan), who served as the female Chief of Action of the Korean Volunteer Corps (Joseon uiyongdae) and was martyred after personally participating in the armed struggle; Heo Jeong-suk, who trained young fighters as a female officer in China; and Oh Gwang-sim and Ji Bok-yeong of the Restoration Army of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea. All of these women not only worked hard to inflame the anti-Japanese struggle, but also sacrificed themselves on the front line alongside the soldiers of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army by participating in the Meal Preparation Corps and the Sewing Corps.


Park Cha-jeong

Such women's independence movements were also active in the Americas; Korean women there made efforts to encourage cooperation and mutual assistance within Korean communities by organizing the Korean Women's Patriotic Association, the Korean Women's Association, and the Korean Women's Relief Society. Even if their actions sometimes proved unsuccessful, their spirit and their activities helped to lay the foundations for future Korean independence.

Hitherto, we have examined the everyday life of women in the colonial period after the opening of Korea's ports and their involvement in the anti-Japanese resistance movements. The women of that time worked ceaselessly for the liberation of not only themselves as women, but also the Korean people, in line with ongoing global developments. Amid Japanese domination and oppression, poor Korean women were taken to the battlefields or forced into sexual slavery and the Young Women's Volunteer Corps as human sacrifices for the Japanese empire. It was truly a time of mortal darkness. It was women, however, who helped rekindle the light, laboring for their families and dreaming of the creation of a nation-state amid the brutal realities of a colonized society.

For example, women, including the well-educated New Women (Sinyeoseong), pioneered changes in themselves as well as in society-at-large. They also enacted their resistance by participating in the March First Independence Movement in 1919 and the Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society (Geunuhoe) in the 1920s, in addition to the strikes organized by female laborers in factories, farming towns, and fishing villages in the 1930s, as well as in the armed resistance waged both domestically and overseas. Nevertheless, the bonds of the patriarchal system remained a millstone around their necks, making it difficult for many of the said movements and activities to come to fruition. The liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule, which finally came about on August 15, 1945, with the end of

the Pacific War, sadly led to the undesirable occupation of Korea by the Soviet Union and the United States, before either an independent nation-state or the liberation of women could be realized. In particular, the issue of women's liberation was still likely to be relegated to the margins of history, subordinated to the national crises or problems of the Korean people. On the other hand, it must also be noted here that during the war, numerous women were driven to engage in pro-Japanese activities.

Recently, there have been calls for a seismic shift in our socio-historical awareness and a deeper appreciation of the anti-Japanese women's independence movement. That is, specific aspects of women's activities cannot be compared with, or viewed through the same lens as, those of men. Women's resistance on the front lines of the anti-Japanese independence movements notwithstanding, their actions in support of the male independence fighters cannot and should not be boiled down to a mere ancillary role. It can be said that the quotidian existence of women at that time, as people who took care of their families by making a living, putting food on the table, and raising their children, was the true essence of the independence movements. As is evident, there is a need to shed new light on the role of women in the fight for Korean independence, particularly in counterbalance to the conventional understanding of their work as being peripheral to the significant work carried out by the men on the front lines. Anonymously, and without commendation, women literally created the future generations by enduring every difficulty imaginable to protect their families and the Korean people; thus, it can be said that the strength of women has birthed the prosperity

and peace of Korea today. Unfortunately, however, women's roles have not received the attention they so rightly deserve.





Chapter 5

WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY KOREA

Lee Im Ha and Chung Hyun Back

Overview of the Period

The United States dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, which directly led to Japan's formal surrender to the Allies and Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule. Subsequently, however, the U.S. military occupied the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, and the Soviet Union the northern half, each establishing its own military government. In 1948, the Korean Peninsula was divided into two wholly separate states: the Republic of Korea in the south and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north.

Then, on June 25, 1950, the Korean War erupted. The war ossified the division of the peninsula, and state power was used to control and suppress the freedom of the South Korean people, using the division as the premise. However, people continually fought against dictatorship, through the April 19 Revolution in 1960, the Gwangju Democratic Uprising in 1980, and the June Democratic Uprising in 1987. All of these movements played an invaluable role in the democratization of South Korea.

When liberation from Japanese colonial rule finally materialized in 1945, women poured out onto the streets, calling out for the creation of a world in which men and women could coexist on an equal footing. Women demanded the right to vote and to run for office, the elimination of the gender gap, particularly with regard to pay, and the eradication of gender discrimination in education. As men were mobilized by the Korean War, women entered every area of life, including agriculture, industry, and commerce, as well as public institutions.

In addition, women became prominent in Korea's economic growth, and worked to change the gender-biased laws and social systems as well as the structure of their own daily lives. Naturally, such demands could not be realized overnight, and therefore have been raised consistently throughout contemporary Korean history.

Liberation and Division

Women Pouring Out onto the Streets after Liberation

On August 15, 1945, news of Japan's surrender spread rapidly. The next day, people poured into Seoul Station Plaza and Namdaemun Gate and marched there, shouting, "Long Live Korean Independence!" Amidst the widespread exhilaration, women also established an organization to promote their own voices, namely the Alliance of Women for the Founding of a Nation (Geonguk bunyeo dongmaeng), on August 17, 1945.

The Alliance held a three-day conference of the heads of women's organizations across the nation from December 22, 1945, at which the organizations and the Alliance were collectively reestablished as the General League of Korean Women (Joseon bunyeo chongdongmaeng). The League was formed by 458 people representing 148 organizations from across the nation, proclaiming, "The resolution of all the special problems pertinent to women is contingent upon the absolute liberation of the entire nation and the people, and the liberation of the people cannot be achieved without the resolution of women's problems."

The Code of Conduct of the General League of Korean Women included all the representative women's policies that a modern nation-state should pursue. It demanded equal voting rights between men and women and the right to run for office, as well as freedom of speech, publication, assembly, and faith. It also called for the construction of social facilities such as day care centers and communal kitchens for women who work, and the elimination of wage discrimination between men and women. Finally, it sought to eradicate gender discrimination in education.

Meanwhile, right-leaning women, at least initially, also participated in the Alliance of Women for the Founding of a Nation (Geonguk bunyeo dongmaeng), but soon withdrew. In September 1945, the Korean Women's Nationalist Party (Yeoja gungmindang) and the Korean Association of Patriotic Women (Hanguk aeguk buinhoe) were formed. In April 1946, the Korean Women for the Acceleration of Independence (Dongnip chokseong buindan) and the Korean Association of Patriotic Women merged to become the Korean Patriotic Women for the Acceleration of Independence (Dongnip chokseong aeguk buinhoe), which then went on to propose a resolution calling for the use of domestic products and active cooperation in overall production to contribute to economic reconstruction.

Women after liberation did not stay at home but came out into the streets to speak out. However, they were divided ideologically between left and right. On the one hand, left-leaning women protested the establishment of a single government just in South Korea, but suppression by the U.S. Military Government forced major activists to move to the North, making it impossible to maintain their organization. On the other hand, right-leaning women supported the establishment of a government only in South Korea, encouraged women to participate in a general election to establish such a government, and insisted on sending female representatives to the National Assembly.

The U.S. Military Government's Policy on Women

Establishment of the Bureau of Women

On September 14, 1946, the U.S. Military Government issued a Decree for the Establishment of the Bureau of Women. The Bureau of Women would engage in the following activities: first, it would propose opinions regarding improvement of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural problems of Korean women to the General of the U.S. Military Government; second, it would collect data on the status and welfare of Korean women; and third, it would present its opinions to government agencies to determine the standards and methods of resolving the said issues.

The main activities of the Bureau of Women were largely focused on conferences and lectures, which were usually given by the director of the Bureau. From March 27 to May 29, 1948, the "School for Mothers" was held every Saturday; the director of the Bureau argued that women had an important role to play in the home, stating, "Mothers can make their children's future bright or terrible." In other words, the reason that women should be enlightened was to make them good mothers, and good mothers are those who raise good children.

Public opinion welcomed the establishment of the Bureau of Women as the first step toward realizing the democratic ideology of gender equality. However, the kind of woman who emerged from the U.S. Military Government's policy for women was not an independent individual, but rather a wife, mother, and daughter, in other words a person wholly defined by her family. The Western

legal order introduced by the U.S. Military Government formally released women from feudal restraints and recognized suffrage, but still emphasized only the duties of women while disregarding the idea of female citizens with rights as well as duties.

Female Police in Purple Two-Piece Uniforms

In post-liberation Korea, a new kind of social atmosphere began to make itself felt. When a child urinated on a fence in an alleyway because he needed relief while walking down the street, a woman in a purple two-piece uniform would approach and scold the child. This woman was a police officer. Korea's first women's police force was established in 1946.

The recruitment regulations included only women between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, but most of the people who passed the examination were married women over the age of twenty-five. In February 1947, police stations where only female police officers worked were established in Seoul, Incheon, Daegu, and Busan.



Female police

The first-ever female police officers based at these police stations either took calls or went out into the streets to remove dirty

posters from walls, but gradually they began to investigate female criminals and took charge of child protection and traffic control as well. It was also the job of these female police to teach women how to read and write and to protect women in difficult situations. Among these missions, crackdowns on prostitutes and the management of women in the sex industry were the most important tasks of the female police.

Prohibition of Human Trafficking and Abolition of Licensed Prostitution

Of all the U.S. Military Government's policies regarding women, those that are most highly regarded are related to prostitution, the prohibition of human trafficking, and the abolition of licensed or public prostitution.

On May 17, 1946, the U.S. Military Government issued Decree No. 70 on the Prohibition of the Trafficking of Women and of Pertinent Contracts. When the decree was first promulgated, public opinion understood it as an abolition of public and private brothels and a complete ban on prostitution. In response, the General of the U.S. Military Government stated that the ban on human trafficking was not an abolition of licensed prostitution, and that women's involvement in prostitution on a voluntary basis did not violate the decree. Since the right to grant business licenses to brothels was not repealed under Decree No. 70, brothel owners were able to terminate the so-called contracts signed through human trafficking and subsequently re-contract and retain the prostitutes. Some pimps also changed their businesses to inns and bars and registered the prostitutes working for them as employees.

Women's groups consistently demanded the abolition of prostitution as an essential condition for women's liberation, organizing the League for the Abolition of Prostitution (Gongchang pyeji yeonmaeng). Finally, on November 14, 1947, Public Act No. 7, or the Ordinance on the Abolishment of the Public Prostitution Law, was promulgated and took effect on February 14, 1948.

In light of the fact that the Supreme Command of the Allied Forces had already abolished licensed prostitution in Japan on January 21, 1946, on the grounds that it violated the ideals of democracy and the development of individual freedom, it seems strange that the U.S. Military Government's Decree on the Prohibition of the Trafficking of Women and of Pertinent Contracts and Public Act No. 7 (Ordinance on the Abolishment of the Public Prostitution Law) were promulgated in May 1946 and November 1947, respectively; in contrast, on August 18, 1945, immediately upon the U.S. military being stationed in Japan, the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA), intended only for the U.S. military, was organized in Japan under the leadership of the Japanese Ministry of the Interior, and prostitutes were tested for venereal diseases. However, there was no such organization in Korea; in its stead, there were several dance halls, cabarets, and cafes that functioned in a similar capacity. Therefore, the abolition of prostitution was not an easy task because prostitutes, who were controlled by the police, formed part of an extremely effective system for preventing and examining venereal diseases. As a result, there was a lapse of one year and nine months between the ban on human trafficking and the abolition of

the licensed prostitution system, which led to an increase in private brothels.

The Korean War and Women

Women's Duties during the War

Front and Rear: Women's Positions

War records are documented according to the gender gap between men on the front lines of the battlefield and women in the rear, protected by men. The history of the Korean War is also filled with the military records of generals, the war dead to be honored, and battlefield combat records.

This gender division alone does not lighten the weight of survival that the war left to women. Women were victims of war or of massacres and sexual assault by men or by the state during the war. The recognition of women as war victims became much clearer upon recognition of the harsh realities faced by women who were forcibly recruited into Japanese military sexual slavery under Japanese imperialism.

The wartime violence that women experience does not end when the war is over and the gunfire stops. The experience of destruction, economic hardship, and violence caused by a war continues to dominate a society for a longtime afterwards. In the case of the Korean War, the human casualties in South Korea alone amounted to 1 million dead, missing, and kidnapped, as well as 690,000 injured, and the entire national infrastructure was destroyed.

Women worked hard to earn a living for their families and took charge of educating their children in place of their husbands and fa-

thers. The new roles given to women during the war proved to be an excruciating ordeal for them regardless of their background, yet at the same time presented a new opportunity for women to improve their status.

With the end of the war, however, society-at-large despised and morally condemned women, and the discourse surrounding them abounded with such pejorative terms as "war widows" (jeonjaeng mimang'in) and "free women" (jayubuin), not to mention the controversy surrounding the Park In-su Case, and regulations were consequently enforced.

Female Soldiers

Early on in the Korean War, in August 1950, women began to be mobilized as soldiers, rather than as nurses, with the formation of the Korean Women's Volunteer Army (hereafter abbreviated to the "Women's Volunteer Army"). Recruitment of the Women's Volunteer Army, which began in mid-August, was conducted in the streets, either by recommendation by administrative agencies, by individual enlistment, or by recruitment through schools.

Within just a few days of the start of recruitment, the number of applicants exceeded the required quota. Then, on October 2, the Women's Volunteer Army was formally established, and its personnel were distributed and dispatched to the Ministry of National Defense, the Army Headquarters, the Communications Battalion, and the Distribution Battalion, among others.

Women's participation in the war as soldiers provided them with an opportunity to acquire a new status as proper citizens, breaking



Women's Volunteer Army

away from the conventional idea that "women should be protected by men." In the schism between citizens who could gain the honor of dying for their nation-state and those who could not, if only the former could attain rights as proper citizens, then women's participation as soldiers was a significant opportunity to acquire similar rights.

However, women's participation in the war, including the female soldiers of the Women's Volunteer Army, did not elicit fundamental changes such as the formation of a new perspective on women. The soldiers of the Women's Volunteer Army were given limited duties such as performing administrative work or assisting male soldiers. Eventually, many women demanded to be discharged from the combat units in 1951. They testified, "I was dissatisfied with the division's assigning me to administrative duties rather than combat missions, and the use of the Women's Volunteer Army was insufficient."

This limitation was revealed in the process of the creation and operation of the Women's Volunteer Army, and the awareness of the female luminaries who had encouraged women to participate in the military service was also not far from the limitation. It was presupposed that women's duties did not involve combat, but rather consisted in helping male soldiers on the battlefields. In other words, what women were actually required to do during the Korean War was to provide support from the rear rather than participate on the front line.

Substitutes for Men in the Public Domain

The war-induced mobilization system naturally led many men from mobilization to death, disappearance, or injury. About one million South Korean men in their twenties and thirties were mobilized as soldiers or laborers, which, according to the 1949 census, accounted for 30 percent of all adult men aged twenty to thirty-nine years. As a result, more women were required to enter the public arena, including production sites, in line with the need to continue the war while maintaining society.

In the early days of the war, women were recruited mainly by the military and by public institutions. Factories and businesses also recruited women. Many were places where men had worked before the war. In fact, the Ministry of National Defense issued a statement to the effect that all employers should hire women as much as possible.

In the wake of the Korean War, the most prominent arena that women could enter was the public sector. The Ministry of Education established teacher training centers in each city and province to meet the shortage of elementary school teachers, and gave priority to women aged sixteen years or older and with at least four years of middle school education. The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications trained female technicians to prepare for the recruitment of technical personnel and began employing women as tellers at post offices. The police department also increased the number of female police officers to fill the posts of male police officers who were drafted or dispatched to combat zones.

Women's entry into non-public sectors was also noticeable. In the case of farming and fishing, the number of women increased from 2.54 million in 1949 to 4.97 million in 1951. In industry, the number of female workers rose from 28,872 in 1949 to 84,892 in 1951. However, women's advancement and experiences in society due to the mobilization of labor forces disrupted the boundaries of the front (male) and the rear (female), and caused constant confusion in the identities of men and women, which had held steadfastly until that time. Fear of identity confusion—that women would become masculine—led to the portrayal of women as symbols of extravagance and vanity, and as powerless individuals who did nothing during the war.

Post-War Reconstruction and the Image of Women

War Widows

After the Korean War, women who had lost their husbands were

called war widows (jeonjaeng mimang'in). The Korean term "mimang'in," literally denoting a wife who should have died with her husband but who has not, carries the ethical meaning of a wife who has not fulfilled her moral responsibility to follow her husband, denies the existence of women as an independent entity, and existentially binds women as beings to be protected and defined by men. Although it is not possible to confirm the exact number of war widows of the Korean War, as no investigation has yet been conducted on the status of war widows after the war, it can be estimated that there were at least 300,000 of them, according to statistics from the Korean War.

War widows living in urban areas were mainly engaged in peddling, street stalls, needlework, and per diem labor. They sometimes also engaged in prostitution. On the other hand, many of the war widows living in rural areas survived with their children by depending on their in-laws or their natal families, according to traditional customs. In this case, war widows found themselves in an unstable position within the family; they were sometimes banished from the family and coerced into leaving their children behind or robbed of their property by their in-laws, often suffering from false accusations of adultery.



War widows learning cosmetological skills at a welfare establishment for mothers and children (families without fathers)

In general, war is a decisive factor in promoting women's economic activities, and the Korean War was no exception to this rule. Women's involvement in economic activities, including those of war widows, was expanding into commercial and other areas, moving them away from their role of supporting men. Despite these changes, women were still considered powerless and in need of protection.

Military Camp Towns

In Korean society, the women who sold sex to the U.S. military were called *yanggongju*, literally "Western princesses." The term is pregnant with the negative perception that these women were a disgrace to the Korean people as they, the *yanggongju*, failed to preserve their chastity , and hence were regarded by Korean people as objects of ridicule and contempt. While the women who sold sex to the U.S. military were alienated from society, the state implicitly recognized and nurtured their existence, based on the premise that they were necessary for national security.

In Korea, military camp towns first began to appear after the Korean War, when women gathered around U.S. military bases. The

camp town was an area of semi-official sex trade that was openly recognized and managed by the U.S. military as well as the Korean government. Koreans were banned from entering the camp towns, and were warned with signs that read "Off Limits." The pimps of the military camp towns entered into direct negotiations with the U.S. military command through such organizations as the Military Comfort Women Security Association (Wianbu jachidae). These organizations, scattered around each region, were expanded into a nationwide organization called the Korea Tourism Facilities Association in December 1961. Under the pretext of "national security," prostitution in the military camp towns was supported.

Women in the military camp towns were always exposed to danger. Gunfire, murder, and rape were frequent near U.S. military bases or in the military camp towns. One particular case that aroused nationwide interest regarding crimes by the U.S. military was the "Homicide of Yun Geum-i," which was committed by Private Kenneth of the 2nd Infantry Division in Dongducheon on October 28, 1992. The case revealed the extent of the crimes committed by soldiers of the U.S. military, which had been hidden until then, and aroused social interest in women who sold sex in the military camp towns, as well as stirring up anti-American sentiment among Koreans.

Nevertheless, Yun's death did not help improve the human rights of women who sold sex in the military camp towns. In the 2000s, the Korean women working in the sex trade in the military camp towns were gradually replaced by women from Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, which has led to an international problem.

Paradoxically, the multi-nationalization of prostitution has encouraged indifference and curiosity about the women involved in the sex trade in the military camp towns.

Chastity above Livelihood

The essential social problem that emerged in postwar Korean society was the collapse of traditional ethical codes, and this collapse was widely attributed to the moral decline of women. Korean society defined and criticized women's consciousness, behavior, and appearance, which had changed during the war, as "postwar women" who only enjoy pleasure, or "free wives" who had abandoned their families and children. The war widow was singled out as the representative woman who seeks only pleasure or as the "free wife."

Social interest in war widows did not cease here. The widows were subject to social monitoring and regulation because they could not be controlled just by referring to them as the wives of the dead. The surveillance of these women is evident in a 1954 case in which a war widow filed for divorce.

Kim, aged 27, lived with a British soldier and became pregnant after her husband was taken by the Korean Volunteer Army in 1950. In order to marry her British partner, she filed a divorce suit with the Seoul District Court based on Article 813-9 of the Civil Act, which states, "If it remains unclear as to whether the spouse is alive or dead for more than three years, then the couple may be divorced." However, the court dismissed the lawsuit, saying, "Since this is a case of abduction, we shall have to wait until unification to render our decision."

The ruling became a subject of intense debate over such issues

as the maintenance of good customs, the remnants of feudalism, and human rights abuses. The significance of this ruling was that the court had acknowledged that the wife of a missing person was obliged to maintain her chastity unconditionally, even if she were to starve to death before unification. In other words, even though war widows had already been playing the role of the head of the household due to the absence of their husbands, society still defined them as "wives of the dead or missing." Moreover, the power of social control took over the place of their absent husbands.

Where Are the "Virgins" in Korea?

The control of single women's sexuality and sex lives can be observed in the Park In-su case. A young man named Park In-su pretended to be a captain in the military and duped around seventy single women whom he met at dance halls into having sexual relations with him under false promises of marriage.

The Park In-su case provided an opportunity for fierce criticism and control of single women's sexual mores during and after the trial. In the court, Park In-su stated, "There was only one virgin among all the women." Public opinion responded accordingly, "I can find roses in trash cans, but I can't find a virgin in Korea."

The judge who dismissed the charges against Park in the first trial stated, "The law protects only the chastity that is deemed to be both worthy and socially valuable in the light of the law." He went on to emphasize that "The law will protect only the worthy chastity of virtuous women." In the appellate court, however, the judge sentenced Park to one year in prison, arguing that it was a measure aimed at establishing order among women.

Public opinion was more interested in Park's statements than in his fraudulent, exploitative behavior. In particular, it was well noted that only one of the women with whom he had had sexual relations was a virgin. All attention was focused on Park In-su and the other women, who were described by Park—in other words, in the language of men—while the women in the case were rendered silent. Law and public opinion were not interested in Park's deceptions, and only focused on the near absence of virginity as described by Park.

The Park In-su case emerged as a matter of how to define women in society and how women bind themselves. Single women were forced to remain silent about their bodies and emotions.

The controversy surrounding the case was divided into notions of healthy and unhealthy sex. Healthy sex referred to chastity, and chastity was life itself to women, whether single or married.

Economic Development and Female Labor

Female Workers as the Driving Force of Economic Development

Maids and Bus Usherettes

Poor women worked in needlework, laundry, and housekeeping, which were traditionally considered female labor. Part-time sewing was recommended as a woman's vocation in that it allowed women to work mostly at home, unlike peddling or working at street stalls.

Working as a *sikmo*, or maid, was one of the most readily available and difficult occupations for women in the 1950s and 1960s. The generalization of *sikmo* as a woman's occupation was inevitable due to the post-war economic devastation and rising unemployment. After World War I in Britain, for example, domestic service accounted for a quarter of all women's labor, and was the largest single profession for women.

A similar phenomenon took hold in Korea. Most maids were either women under the age of twenty or married women and war widows in their thirties. Maids had the advantage of being easily employed, but they were also maltreated far more than any other group of women. Maids suffered from low wages and long hours of labor, and often from rape, sexual harassment, and other types of sexual abuse. Stories of maids who had purportedly stolen from their employers and been kept captive or beaten to death as a result appeared in newspapers in the 1950s and 1960s with alarming frequency.

By the end of the 1960s, the number of part-time household workers increased at a higher rate than the number of maids residing with their employers' families. This was the result of a decrease in the number of war orphans, who were the primary source of maids, and the fact that more girls left the countryside to work in factories rather than as maids. Changes in the urban residential environment and the family structure also increased the demand for part-time housekeepers rather than live-in maids.



Bus usherette

Buses became an important mode of public transportation as people flocked to the city. The city's bus stops were crowded with people trying to catch a bus. The scene inside a bus during rush hour was so cataclysmic that it was described as "my body here, my bag over there." A bus conductor was a worker who organized the people who flocked on to a bus, collected bus fares, and signaled departures and stops. Until the 1950s, most of them were men, but in August 1961, women began to overtake men in urban areas under the government's order that the "service should be handled by women."

The term "bus guide" was also changed to "bus usherette." Most of

them were single women around the age of twenty with an elementary school education. The bus usherettes labored long hours, from five o'clock in the morning to late at night, and after completing the route, cleaned the dirty buses. They were also subjected to body searches for purportedly stealing the bus fares they collected, or sexually harassed by passengers, drivers, or male officials of the bus company. The bus usherettes disappeared in 1985 with the introduction of a fare system self-regulated by the passengers themselves, which allowed customers to insert their own fare into a container installed next to the driver's seat.

Peddling and Small Businesses

Amid the extreme hardships of life and the absence of men due to the war, many women immediately sold whatever they could afford to part with, such as precious metals, household utensils, and clothes, to make a living. Street stalls selling vegetables and fish to permanent markets such as Dongdaemun Market were referred to as "women's markets," indicating the domination by women of most such commercial arenas. This was because no special skills or educational backgrounds were needed to operate small stalls or to work as peddlers.

As such, the greatest change in women's careers was seen in commerce immediately after the Korean War. The number of female commercial workers, which stood at only 80,000 in 1949, reached 590,000 in 1951, becoming similar to that of men. Although the number eventually decreased significantly after the war, it was still more than double that before the war. The male-dominated market





Female vendors

landscape was transformed by the emergence of female merchants and consumers after the war. However, such statistics failed to take into account that there were far more women, such as peddlers and street stall operators, than merchants working in the permanent markets.

Female Farmers

Though unemployment was extremely high after the war, the labor shortage in the countryside was severe. This was because military mobilization was mainly aimed at rural people who were relatively easier to control. Even when there was a severe lack of food, almost no one wanted to work in rural areas.

The number of women engaged in agricultural labor increased from 2.54 million in 1949 (shortly before the war) to 4.97 million in 1951. Throughout the 1950s, there were more women than men working in agriculture. After the 1960s, the number of female farmers decreased along with an overall reduction in the number

of agricultural workers. The proportion of female farmers also decreased, but remained steady in the mid-40s.

Starting in the 1970s, the main influences on farmers' lives were the rural exodus and the cultivation of commercial crops. The means to fill the labor shortage caused by mass migration was partial mechanization as well as the participation of women and the elderly in agricultural labor. The cultivation of commercial crops led female farmers to engage in agricultural work all year round rather than just during the farming season.

However, in the course of agricultural production, most female farmers did not participate in ownership and management independently, but only provided labor. The labor of female farmers was mostly simple, and labor productivity was also undervalued due to the low rate of mechanization; moreover, the legal status of female farmers was mostly classified as "unpaid family workers." Therefore, women were completely excluded from protective systems such as compensation for damages and pensions.

Female Factory Workers Called "Gongsuni"

The government-led economic development policy was based on light industries in the 1960s and heavy chemical industry in the 1970s. Economic policy was rooted in a simple processing and trade type of industrial structure in which capital goods and intermediate goods were bought from abroad with foreign capital, while Korean goods produced by workers on low wages were sold overseas.

In the 1960s, female workers in the manufacturing industries were heavily concentrated in textile and clothing, accounting for about 75







Female laborers in the 1960s and 1970s

percent of all workers. Female laborers in manufacturing were usually the daughters of poor farmers, who had completed elementary or middle school and moved to urban areas to help their destitute households or earn money to pay the tuition fees of their brothers. Female workers subsisted mostly on *sujebi*, a light soup made with roughly formed wheat dough, for breakfast and skipped lunch.

They also took drugs in order to stay awake when working overtime or overnight. Female workers employed in the labor-intensive textile and clothing industries played an important role in the industrialization process under labor policies based on long work hours and low wages. According to statistics compiled by the International Labor Organization (ILO), Korean manufacturing workers worked the longest weekly working hours in the world in the early 1960s, rising from 50.3 hours in 1963 to 56.0 hours in 1964, and to 57.0 hours in 1965. In the 1960s, the average working hours per week exceeded 55 hours, and Korean female workers worked an average of 10 more hours a week than workers in other countries. This situation continued unchanged into the 1970s. According to a survey of 1,115 manufacturing workers at 220 companies in Seoul and Gyeonggi Province in 1976, the average weekly working hours was 60.7 hours.

Even if a female laborer worked all night long, her wage was nothing short of terrible. In 1963, the wage of female manufacturing workers was only 39-46 percent of that of male workers.

In addition, human rights abuses, such as overbearing control by middle managers to increase production at work sites, the use of labor surveillance and violence, and sexual harassment by male managers, were also severe. In the 1970s, female workers took the lead in national labor movements precisely because of the terrible conditions. Female workers at Cheonggye Textile, Dong-il Textile, Wonpung Textile, YH Trading, Bando Corporation, and Control Data led the way in forming labor unions and improving wages, working hours, and working environments.

Neo-Liberalism and Female Labor Power

Expansion of Female Office Workers

The increase in the number of female office workers was related to automation and de-skilling. As the proportion of simple repetitive work increased due to the de-skilling, office work was reorganized into a labor sector dominated by women.

The duties of female office workers included shorthand, typing, organization of documents and books, the operation of office equipment, accounting, bookkeeping, and customer guidance. Added to this list were office cleaning and beautification, support for male workers' work, coffee and tobacco errands for male workers, and secretarial duties for bosses. In other words, office women's labor was mainly limited to auxiliary work for men in managerial positions.

Differences in education, age, and work caused gender inequality in the workplace. According to a 1986 Ministry of Labor survey, the wage ratio between male and female office workers with high school diplomas was 100:55, a figure which remained unchanged even after women had accrued long work experience.

On top of that, many women were asked to do tasks beyond their assigned duties. In other words, cleaning the office, serving tea, and performing trivial errands were considered the exclusive preserve of female workers. Female office workers had to perform the role of "the wife in the workplace" in addition to their regular duties. Furthermore, female office workers were relegated to the status of auxiliary workers regardless of their personal abilities or characteristics. The female worker's perception of herself as a female employee, rather than just an employee, and the experience of gender discrimination in the form of unofficial work were factors that frustrated female workers as helpless individuals within competitive corporate organizations.

To change this structure, female office workers began to break the seemingly small but never-trivial practices. They began to regain their proper duties and positions through small actions, such as, for example, boycotting coffee errands and desk cleaning.

Temporary Employment of Female Labor Power

From the 1980s, women's employment structure changed significantly as the manufacturing-based economic structure was rapidly transformed into an economy based on the service and information sectors.

What were once primary industries, namely the agricultural and fisheries sectors, declined sharply, while social overhead capital and the service sector expanded rapidly. The number of women employed in tertiary industry was 23 percent in 1960, up from 52 percent in 1990, and increased to 73 percent in 2002 and to 81 percent in 2012.

This was largely affected by the massive expansion of the sales sector, including department stores and large-scale distribution businesses. However, the problem remains that women's employment in these sectors is extremely unstable. Most of the female employees who are concentrated in the service sector are employed as temporary workers.

One of the phenomena to have emerged as an acute social problem since the 1990s is the non-regularization of female workers. female workers accounted for around two-thirds (i.e. 59 percent in 1995 and 62 percent in 2005) of all temporary workers with an employment period of between one month and one year, as well as of temporary workers with an employment period of less than one month. In addition, it is estimated that at least 70 percent of all female workers were non-regular workers, as the number of non-regular workers who were not revealed in the statistics increased.

In Korea, the expansion of the non-regular workforce was carried



Protests calling for the abolition of non-regular worker status and the elimination of gender discrimination

out in such a way that full-time workers were forced to become non-regular workers, rather than by diversifying employment patterns in a way that would widen women's choices. In particular, the government chose to turn women-intensive jobs into non-regular positions; moreover, during the 1997 economic crisis, companies laid off regular female workers first and later filled the same positions with non-regular female workers.

In addition to the fact that the working conditions of non-regular female workers are extremely unstable in terms of employment, wages are noticeably low compared to those of regular workers. Moreover, non-regular workers are excluded from the protection offered by basic labor rights such as severance pay, bonuses, and annual leave.

Among non-regular workers, dispatched workers suffer the most from unstable employment and wage discrimination, and their work is often referred to as "modern slave labor." Among the many dispatched positions currently allowed are telecommunication workers, computer assistants, secretaries, travel guides, cooks, librarians, and translators, indicating that in the long term, such positions may constitute a sector almost exclusively staffed by women.

Family Strategy and Modernity

Birth of the Housewife

Final Destination of Dating and Marriage

It was only after Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule that free love became a concern for people again. However, in many cases, freedom existed in name only, and relationships were allowed only under the supervision of parents. Moreover, relationships that were not based on the premise of marriage were considered harmful and thought to cause moral decline.

After liberation, women generally wanted love and free marriage, but they had numerous conditions regarding their marriage partners. In other words, they preferred the nuclear family system, which is centered on couples who live separately from their parents immediately after marriage, and sought economic leeway. This trend led to the commercialization of marriage, with the ever-expanding wedding halls and a flood of marriage-related products, which were often criticized as signs that people try to trade relationships and marriage for products.

The ideal of married couples, independent of relatives and the extended family, became a common social norm throughout the 1970s. The practice of self-determined marriage has replaced arranged marriages, and the family unit consisting of married couples and their unmarried children replaced the traditional ideal of the family system in which three generations lived under one roof.

It was in the 1990s that marriage customs began to change. As employment instability increased, the wages earned by the heads of households could not guarantee the maintenance of a family's livelihood, weakening the material foundations for maintaining a family. Furthermore, as love was the most significant reason for marriage, the loss of love became the main reason for divorce. In fact, the number of divorces in 2001 was 135,000, a three-fold increase from 45,000 in 1990.

Beginning in the 2000s, Korean families could be characterized by the high age of the first marriage, as well as increases in both the divorce rate and the number of single people. In 2000, 40 percent of women in their late twenties (against 71 percent of men) were unmarried. According to a survey by the Korea Women's Development Institute, the main reasons that single women chose not to marry were as follows: "I would like to concentrate more on my career" (26 percent), "I don't think marriage is necessary" (24 percent), "I am not economically prepared to be married" (20 percent), "I don't want to be beholden to someone else" (10 percent), and "the marriage system is disadvantageous to women" (4 percent). It can be inferred that women's understanding and valuation of their own gender roles and their perspectives on marriage had changed quite noticeably.

Such changes in the valuation of marriage are deeply intwined with economic variables such as prolonged unemployment among young people. In fact, many unmarried men cited their reasons for not getting married as the weakening of their economic foundations as well as the heavy burden of responsibility and duty, indicating

that they felt the role of the patriarch to be a burden. Such responses demonstrate that the modern marriage model, which has been maintained by male breadwinners, has very much run out of steam.

Family Planning

Korean society traditionally regarded fertility as a virtue. Married women suffered from repeated childbirth and childcare, and often attempted dangerous methods of abortion that harmed their health just to avoid the hardships engendered by repeated childbirth and childcare. The most traditional way of abortion was to take drugs such as aspirin, anti-diarrheal medicine, and anti-cancer medicine, to lift heavy objects or engage in physically challenging work, and to leap from high places. However, predictably such methods often failed, posing a serious threat to women's lives. Amid such a reality, birth control was introduced as a feature of family planning.



Poster for family planning

The Park Chung-hee administration tried to create a family structure akin to the Western nuclear family through family planning projects. Park promoted his family plans with the following slogans: "If you keep giving birth without planning,

you will not avoid becoming beggars" (1960s), "Let's have only two children, regardless of their gender, and raise them well" (1970s), and "I don't envy ten sons when I have one well-raised daughter" (1980s).

Park Chung-hee stressed that the purpose of family planning was to pursue family happiness and modernity through the rationalization of life. The government attached these slogans to stamps, cigarette packs, theater tickets, bankbooks, buses, taxis, and subways to make them more familiar to the public.

The government proposed a number of incentives to effectively promote family planning. In 1974, the Income Tax Act and the Inheritance Act were revised to limit the number of children subject to tax deductions to three, and even this was reduced to two in 1976. In September 1977, the Korea National Housing Corporation gave priority to couples receiving sterilization procedures when they sold newly built apartments.

Through family planning projects, the Korean state was able to stabilize Korean capitalism and prevent unwanted population growth, unemployment, food shortages, and social costs. As such, they resulted in a decrease in childbirth and childcare labor for women. Today, many women are living lives quite divergent from those of their mothers' generation, participating in social labor after having only one or two children.

Birth of the Housewife

The once popular advertisement phrase "The time of the day when the husband returns home depends on his wife's performance" illustrates the division of roles between men and women in and outside the home. The distinction between gender roles, such as "women are families' guardian angels" and "men are heads of households and protectors of women and children," helped coin the terms *gajeongjubu* (housewives) and *jeoneopjubu* (professional housewives), more commonly referred to as "stay-at-home moms" in English.

It was from the late 1970s that women's lives as housewives became a reality. With the progress of economic development, more households were led by the white-collar heads of households, who were generally paid well enough to ensure the livelihood of their family, usually numbering between three and five people, including the children. But they would also reduce their spending in keeping with their income bracket if they were not paid enough to support their families. In line with this development, saving was emphasized nationwide, and publications and lectures on "how to manage the house most effectively with what is given" were prevalent.

On the other hand, the blue-collar family could make a living by finding jobs not only for male members of the household, but also for wives and children. In particular, wives' employment was crucial to maintaining the family. However, after the Great Labor Struggle of 1987, the number of blue-collar workers in large corporations who received high enough wages to support their families increased significantly.

Among the duties of housewives or stay-at-home moms was saving money as well as improving clothing, food, and shelter. The traditional garment was replaced by the Western suit, and basic food ingredients were bought from stores. Trees, firewood, and straw

disappeared from the city as briquettes appeared, and briquettes in turn disappeared as municipal gas became commonplace. In addition, with the installation of water and sewage systems, there was no longer any need to use a common well.

Such changes in turn allowed housewives to exercise the right to make decisions about the consumer behavior of their households. In urban life, the scope of household work was not limited to simple household labor on behalf of the family, but also encompassed the educational problems of children and various activities required by the community. Women were solely responsible for managing and making decisions regarding a variety of issues pertaining to their families. According to a 1990 survey, housewives' work covered a variety of areas ranging from basic household chores and purchases, to tax payments, children's education, family events, and relationship management.

For Koreans, the family had long been virtually the only foundation for surviving the hardships of life and the core reason for living. Strong family ties and affections, the ethics of self-sacrifice for one's family, and exclusive family centrism based on consanguinity were intensified and maintained.

Women's Education

Attending school was difficult for women due to poverty and gender discrimination, but none of this dampened women's enthusiasm for learning. Generally speaking, students experience a wider world and a variety of cultures on their way to school every day, in their

Table 4. Number of girls to every 100 boys at each educational level (1952-2014)

Educational Level	1952	1966	1975	1985	1995	2000	2010	2014
Elementary School	59.4	90.4	94.3	94.3	91.8	88.8	91.4	92.7
Junior High School	28.2	56.9	73.1	93.2	94.2	91.4	90.4	91.2
High School	22.0	51.3	61.7	85.5	92.8	92.1	88.0	91.5
University	13.5	28.3	42.4	52.6	67.9	85.4	89.6	90.6

Transformations in Korean Society Seen through Statistics, Statistics Korea, 2015

daily lives with friends at school, and through reading books and traveling—all of which expand the students' self-awareness. Such freedom was entirely novel for Korean women.

Schools were a space of control and surveillance, but female students lived together in such a space, reading books and sharing their concerns, thereby creating a sense of community. The diverse experiences of school life served as an opportunity for female students to grow as independent human beings. This change in women was the driving force behind the transformation of the family system and society.

Over time, the number of girls in all schools has increased. One of the characteristics of Korean society since the 1980s has been its highly educated populace. In addition to the decrease in the number of children, not only men but also women advanced into higher education, with the rate of women entering college rising from 21.6 percent in 1980 to 30.8 percent in 1990 and 65.5 percent in 2000.

Table 4 above shows the percentage of male and female students at schools of all levels. The number of female students per 100 male students entering university rose sharply to 52.6 in 1985, 67.9 in 1995, and 85.4 in 2000. As the number of educated women increased rapidly, so did the role of women in all fields.

Realities of Women in the Age of Globalization

Results of Policies for Women

The United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, provided a decisive opportunity for the development of women's policies not only internationally but also in Korea. The Beijing Platform for Action, the result of that conference, gave governments the task of pressuring for the implementation of the contents of the platform and monitoring their performance with periodic evaluations. After a progressive government came to power in 1997 (the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations), gender mainstreaming was executed over the next ten years, and women's movements aimed to implement it through aggressive action. As a result, South Korea was praised as the most exemplary case internationally in the ten-year evaluation of the Beijing Platform. This can be seen as the result of the development and entrenchment of Korean democracy and the passionate activities of the various Korean women's movements.

As previously mentioned, the improvement of women's reality over the ten years from 1997 resulted in the expansion of women's human rights, of laws and systems to improve women's status, and of social services such as childcare. It was a time when women's policies and systems were institutionalized under the governance of a progressive government and the women's movements, and numerous feminists participated in the policy-making process, working as the so-called "femocrats."

Despite the legal and institutional successes of the gender equality reforms, however, there have been many obstacles to their realization. First is the weakness and instability of the policy governance that promotes gender equality in Korean society. The political forces required to represent gender equality or gender issues were not properly organized, and senior policymakers and bureaucrats, mostly men, had little understanding of, or willingness to implement corrective measures for, gender issues. Under these circumstances, it was difficult for women to pursue gender politics alone. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which should have been a key player in governance, had limitations not only in its relative weakness but also in its policy consistency due to the administration's own ups and downs. Second, institutional reforms related to gender equality did not lead to changes that could address the gender discrimination inherent in the economic structure or labor market. In other words, drastic reforms of the economic structure and the implementation of social policies that would have enabled gender mainstreaming have not been carried out in earnest. Third, patriarchal rituals, practices, and cultures are and will be maintained for a long time even after the changes in laws and institutions, hindering the realization of reform through laws and institutions everywhere.

Moreover, in the ten years after the end of 2007, a conservative government was in power, and the backlash against feminism deepened within the conservative political culture. Indeed, little progress has been made in turning the laws and policies related to women that were institutionalized during this period into reality, and the

women's movements have also withered.

However, as the millions of protestors who took part in the candlelight vigils ultimately brought about the impeachment of Park Geun-hye, and the Moon Jae-in administration took power through democratic elections, the pressure to realize gender equality in drafting policy has shifted to a higher gear: thus, 1) the gender equality promotion system must be strengthened; 2) the representation of women in the decision-making process must be expanded; and 3) the protection of the rights of victims of violence against women must be strengthened. In order to deal with gender discrimination and sexual violence, a department dedicated to gender equality was established in each of the major ministries, a gender equality officer overseeing related policies was appointed, and regional gender equality centers were established. To strengthen women's representation, women were appointed to 30 percent of the initial cabinet positions, and constituted 40 percent of all government committees for the first time. In addition, female principals accounted for 40 percent of all school principals. In parallel with this, the government introduced a quota system for high-ranking female civil servants and female executives at public institutions for the first time.

Weak Economic Power of Women

Despite international praise for the active policy shift Korea implemented in following the Beijing Platform for Action, the reality of gender discrimination facing Korean women remains. In fact, the

gender equality report card that Korea received on March 8, 2016 (International Women's Day), three years after Park Geun-hye became the first female president of Korea, was abysmal; the gender wage gap was 36.7 percent in 2014, the highest among all OECD countries. Furthermore, Korea ranked last in the 2016 Glass Ceiling Index survey of twenty-nine OECD countries conducted by *The Economist*.

However, a more essential problem may be the structural coercion caused by globalization that has materialized since the 1990s. Global capital moves freely, always in search of more profitable spaces. As a result, strict labor regulations, long work hours, employment instability, and non-regularization are becoming the reality everywhere. The economic gap is widening by gender, class, and ethnicity, and economic inequality among women is deepening. In particular, the non-regularization of work and the low-income labor of women are increasing continuously. Female temporary workers, who are not guaranteed employment, account for 41 percent of all employed women, according to a 2017 survey by Statistics Korea.

The female labor force, which consisted of unmarried and poorly educated women in the early 1960s, was reorganized into married and highly educated women after the 1980s. In 2004, only 7.3 percent of unmarried women occupied production jobs. One of the important changes in Korean society since 1945 has been the development of higher education, which has been extremely rapid for women in particular. This may be because parents' interest and expectations for their daughters increased as the two-child family became the norm as a result of the success of the government's

family planning campaigns. The the college entrance rate for female students outpacing men by—outpacing that of men by increased from 21.6 percent in 1980 to 65.5 percent in 2000. In 2019, the figure rose to 73.8 percent, outpacing men by 8 percent, revealing the largest gap. However, the higher college entrance rate for women since 2005 is attributable to men's preference for courses related to technical training, making it necessary to exercise caution in interpreting this simply as gender equality.

Despite women's attainment of higher education, women's employment rate remains low. According to the results of the 2018 employment statistics survey by the Ministry of Education, 69.6 percent of new college graduates employed were men, and 66 percent, women. But the more serious problem than the 3.6 percent difference in figures is that women's jobs are poor in quality, resulting in frequent job shifts and repeated unemployment. The economic activity rate and employment rate of female college graduates are the lowest in the OECD; particularly notable is the fact that the economic activity rate of female college graduates was 62.4 percent in 2012, 20.2 percent behind the OECD average of 82.6 percent. Moreover, the employment rate was 60.5 percent, far lower than the OECD average of 78.4 percent. This is attributable to the conventional social wisdom that women's primary responsibility is the family, and the fact that the exclusionary mechanism targeting women is most evident in professional or management fields, which are the main positions held by highly educated women. Compared to Germany, the U.K., and the Netherlands, which already show a women's economic participation rate of more than 70 percent, the economic empowerment of Korean women still has a long way to go.

Women and Care Services

Care work, such as childcare, parenting, and elderly care, is still largely the preserve of women. This reality stems from the fact that although many legal and institutional improvements have been achieved in a relatively brief period, the patriarchal consciousness and culture that permeate Korean society remain solid. The ominous total fertility rate of 0.98 in 2018 is indicative of this rigidly patriarchal structure and its side effects. As of 2020, Korea became the nation with the world's lowest birthrate. In addition to the burden of care expected almost entirely to be borne by women, job insecurity triggers women's avoidance of childbirth even further.

The employment instability faced by women has created significant career disruption for women. The Korean government and various women's movements recommend that both women and men be the main agents of labor and household chores under the slogan "Coexistence of Family and Career," but this was not observed amidst the economic crisis. A 2004 survey showed that about 40 percent of women born in the 1980s (then in their late twenties) entered the upper-level labor market, while a 2015 survey showed that one in every four women was forced or voluntarily pushed out of the labor market for childbirth and childcare. Moreover, the 2015 statistics showed that women in their fifties comprised less than 10 percent of the upper-level labor market. Overall, 1.85 million married women

between the ages of fifteen and fifty-four gave up their labor rights due to marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and family care in 2018. In particular, it is deplorable that 51 percent of women whose careers are disrupted are in their thirties. Reflecting this situation, the novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (82-nyeonsaeng Kim Ji-young), which was published in 2017, has enjoyed explosive popularity not only in Korea but also in Japan. Career disruption imposed by reality not only denies women's labor rights, but also raises concerns about its negative impact on the overall national economy.

As couple-oriented nuclear family models are now the mainstay, conflicts over the sharing of household labor in today's Korean society are on the rise. In the case of dual-income households, the burden of household labor still belongs mostly to women, leaving women naturally at odds between home and work. According to a 2019 survey by the National Statistical Office, working women from dual-income families did 3 hours and 7 minutes of household-related labor on weekdays, compared to 54 minutes for men. It is clear that the gender division of household labor remained almost unchanged, and 92 percent of married women with careers were in charge of household labor. Recently, however, the values of Korean men, who hitherto had been company-oriented, are gradually changing, and their attachment to their families and children is increasing. The instance of paternity leave for men continues to rise, from 2,293 in 2013 to 12,043 in 2017; it is encouraging to see more than 20,000 paternity leaves in 2019, which amounts to 21.2 percent of the total number of childcare leaves. This is still insufficient, however, especially compared to the figures for Scandinavian countries, where nearly half of men take paternity leave.

The Korean government is actively encouraging companies to adopt a family-friendly policy, but such policy has yet to be established properly, and the utilization rate is low even in places where it has already been created. There is a system for installing childcare facilities at work and supporting childcare expenses, and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family is providing "visiting care services" for dual-income parents with children under the age of twelve in order to supplement the blind spots in facility childcare. For example, in 2017 some 20,878 child caregivers were dispatched to residences. In addition, the Ministry of Education uses school spaces to operate after-school care services. The institutionalization of care services is proceeding apace, but there is still a limit on the extent to which the immediate childcare burden borne by individual women can be addressed.

Apotheosis of Beauty

In the past thirty years, during which women's movements have become active and women's voices have made themselves heard, consumer capitalism premised on patriarchy and its proclivities has spread through various media in Korean society, wherein women are the primary target; such a distorted development of consumer capitalism rooted in patriarchy targets women's bodies in particular. In addition to the massive growth of new beauty industries such as diet, skin care, makeup, cosmetic surgery, and body corrections, mass media including television and advertising are constantly



A "no diet, no plastic surgery" performance

introducing new makeup, fashion, and beauty techniques. To keep up, female consumers spend an inordinate amount of time and money. According to a 2004 survey, more than half of female college students had undergone cosmetic surgery, and 80 percent of them wanted plastic surgery. In 2001, the beauty industry and the diet industry in Korea were valued at about 1 trillion won, respectively, whereas the diet market alone was estimated to be worth about 10 trillion won in 2018 due to rapid growth.

The main reason that the excessive development of the beauty industry is a grave problem is that it compels women to accept considerable economic, psychological, and physical pain to manage their appearance, and the importance of appearance in women's lives and self-identification is on a steep incline. Behind these women's efforts is the belief that society rewards women who are faithful to their "gender role wherein women should be beautiful"—that is, women with beautiful looks marry spouses who can offer better socioeconomic conditions or can obtain better jobs.

What is noteworthy, however, is the beginning of women's resistance to the pressure to improve their appearance in Korean society. The Anti-Corset Movement, which began online around 2018 among women in their teens and twenties, is growing in popularity and emerging as a notable feminist agenda. Since the sixteenth century, the corset, a body-correcting undergarment for women, has symbolized the pressure on women to achieve a fixed aesthetic ideal. Now, the Anti-Corset Movement seeks to abandon the social norms imposed on women and challenge the myth of beauty. Women participating in this movement have their long hair cut short, refuse to wear makeup, and free themselves from tight clothing and undergarments. They also refuse to wear contact lenses that may harm their eye health and reject plastic surgery for cosmetic purposes. This widespread movement among young women has lowered the threshold for feminism among the female public, by enabling women to acquire a feminist awareness and praxis upon the realization that focusing on their appearance is not just an individual's choice but a form of cultural coercion.

Misogyny

Since 2000, misogyny has spread like wildfire online in Korea. Of course, misogyny is not a new phenomenon. Since the beginning of human history, misogyny has been ubiquitous. However, the trend has become worrisome in recent years because misogynistic expressions have been disseminated widely throughout society, manifesting themselves in verbal and physical violence. With the abolition of the system of giving men additional points for their compulsory military service in the civil service examinations in

1999, the launch of the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2000, and the noticeable rise in the entry of women into the civil service and judicial examinations, there is widespread talk that men are being persecuted by reverse discrimination. According to a report by the Korea Women's Policy Institute in 2016, 54 percent of Korean men said they sympathized with misogynistic slang, such as "kimchi chicks," which signifies women who ignore their responsibilities and duties and only exert their rights. Moreover, in reality, most misogynistic expressions on the Internet are used by male teenagers and university students. A dramatic incident highlighting the reality of such worrisome trends was the murder of a young woman near Gangnam Station on May 17, 2016, in which a man, filled with hatred toward women, brutally murdered a woman he happened to see for the first time in a bathroom at a karaoke. In the wake of the collective action suggested by a netizen of attaching post-it notes at Exit 10 of Gangnam Station, which is close to the scene of the gruesome murder, to commemorate the victim, many women gather there throughout the year, and continue to stage protests every year.

The gravity of this phenomenon is such that, in addition to the establishment of online anti-feminist and anti-Ministry of Gender Equality and Family sites based on anonymity, it is common for misogyny to settle amongst the male clique culture in schools, with female students being targeted all too often. Also problematic in this respect are the misogynistic contents revealed in entertainment programs and media reports.

Along with the argument that the structural causes of misogyny should be thoroughly analyzed rather than simply attributed to individuals or specific groups is the perspective that the misogyny apparent in today's Korean society is a manifestation of "men in crisis" who point to women as a threat to their economic stability amid the dangers of the neo-liberalist marketplace and women's increasing entry into the job market. It is true that women of a certain class have more opportunities under neo-liberalism, but not all women's lives have improved. In this situation, communication in cyberspace is more extreme than it is in reality, and the online exposure of children to misogynistic expressions before they have the opportunity to properly evaluate the problematic nature of such expressions is a profound problem that will be difficult to resolve. This pattern in the online world reflects the real gender order that is structuralized in



Gangnam Station femicide memorial event

Korean society today and a weakening of solidarity with the socially disadvantaged in Korea.

Through successful democratization, rapid development of the New Women's Movement, and the substantial expansion of women's policies, there have been legal and institutional developments in women's human rights and improvements to their status. In particular, the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women introduced new concepts of gender, rather than ideas of gender roles based on biological sex, and the perception that gender roles inured by social factors can be shifted has spread. In particular, after the year 2000, concepts such as "gender recognition" and "gender mainstreaming" appeared in national policy documents, and gender equality took root as a major policy goal. As a result, gender equality education was encouraged in the public sector as well as in school. However, according to studies on mass media, gender equality policies have not had much influence on converting gender role stereotypes into notions of equality. Although there has been a considerable shift in the perception of gender equality, and the elimination of gender-based stereotypes has been achieved to some extent, there has been no drastic change in gender role stereotypes. Moreover, the diversity of the mass media and the spread of Internet media, which have emerged rapidly since the early 2000s, have not assisted the realization of gender equality policies.

The gap between gender equality policies and reality is due to the solidity of patriarchal consciousness and culture in society. It is argued that a more systematic revolution of consciousness and awareness must be carried out continuously, and that a wide range of gender equality education and democratic civic education should be combined in order to realize a society that manifests true gender equality.



Appendices

HISTORY OF KOREAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AFTER 1945: BETWEEN INTERVENING AND ESTABLISHING NEW FIELDS

Chung Hyun Back

Commonalities and Differences as Seen through International Comparisons

From the enlightenment period to the liberation of Korea in 1945, the Korean women's movements did not deviate very much from the type of women's movements that appeared in other non-Western countries under the threat or control of imperialism. In the late nineteenth century, amidst the power struggle among the Western powers, Joseon took upon itself the task of modernization by embracing new Western culture through enlightenment, and building a modern nation-state. In this context, women also emerged as at once subjects and agents of enlightenment in the course of the country's modern development. Moreover, for the construction of an independent nation-state, women, along with men, had to first resist the threat of imperialism and colonial rule.

Unfortunately, Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 led to the division of the Korean Peninsula and the subsequent Korean War. In this peculiar historical experience, women became the victims of the division, yet at the same time played a certain role in the conflict between the systems and ideological friction of the two Koreas. Under dictatorships and the divisional system, women's movements were divided along ideological lines into conservative and progressive camps, casting a long shadow on the Korean women's movements that have continued to the present day. Of course, the women's movements of other countries have also seen divisions and conflicts due to ideological segmentation into conservative women's movements, liberalist women's rights movements, and socialist women' movements. What stands out in the case of Korea's women's movements, however, is that the confrontation between the camps was much sharper and the antagonism surrounding them much fiercer. As a result, the conservative women's movement has consistently failed to break away from its semi-official nature, even if it included some of the principles of liberal feminism. In comparison, the progressive women's movement was wiped out in the 1970s under severe oppression, and then reemerged as the New Women's Movement following the rise of female workers' movements and democratization movements in the 1970s.

Another notable feature of the Korean women's movements from the perspective of international comparison is their aggressive activities and stellar performance from the late 1980s onward. The 1968 Revolution in the West and the ensuing waves of feminist movements and thought have also provided a great stimulus for Korean women. When democracy was stabilized to some extent through the democratization movement in Korea in 1987, female activists who had devoted themselves to the democratization movement and the student movements then entered the women's movements with a keen interest in the issue of women's human rights. Thanks to their thorough dedication, in addition to effective strategy and social democratization, Korea's policies on women have been evaluated by the international community as the most successful in achieving the realization of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. In this process, the roles and strategies of the Korean women's movements were exemplary for women's movements in other countries and, in this sense, were a successful model for the women's movements in the Third World. As such, this volume contains a specific section on

the history of women's movements in Korea.

Women's Groups in Ideological Confrontation and Excessive Politicization: 1945-1960

Under the military dictatorship, which lasted for more than forty years after Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, economic development and national security were emphasized above all else, and women reemerged as subjects and targets of modernization in the process. The conservative women's organizations that formed the mainstream of women's group activities, such as the Korean National Council of Women (Hanguk yeoseong danche hyeobuihoe), founded in 1959, and the Korean Women's Association (Hanguk buinhoe), founded in 1964, voiced little criticism of the authoritarian politics. They were responsible for mobilizing women to modernize the nation through family planning and the New Village Movement, or the lifestyle reform movement. They helped a small number of well-known women advance into politics, partly engaging in activities aimed at improving women's status or acting as a quasi-political organization to support the ruling party in elections.

The Burgeoning Consciousness of Women and the Rise of the Female Workers' Movements: 1970-1987

Women's organizations engaged in some notable activities in the meantime. From the 1970s, campaigns for the revision of the family laws were carried out continuously, headed by conservative women's organizations such as the Korean National Council of Women and the YWCA. Moreover, in the 1970s, church women became active in human rights campaigns to help prisoners of conscience or to forward their aim of prohibiting prostitution tours by the Japanese. In 1974, with the financial support of the Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungslilfe (EZE, or the Protestant Central Agency for Development Aid) in Germany, the Christian Academy began to educate women on women's issues, ultimately laying the foundations for women's movements and the realization of women's human rights. After the May 18 Gwangju Democratic Uprising in 1980, progressive women's organizations were formed under an even more oppressive military dictatorship. The establishment of the Korean Association of Women Theologians (Yeosinhakja hyeobuihoe) in 1980 and the Women's Equal Friends Society (Yeoseong pyeonguhoe) in 1983 served as a bridgehead leading to the birth of the Korean Women's Associations United (Hanguk yeoseong danche yeonhap), a coalition of progressive women's movements.

As the long-term rule of the Park Chung-hee regime began in earnest, democratic movements against military dictatorship started to take place, and women's active participation materialized. As the number of prisoners of conscience who were arrested for fighting for freedom of thought and of politics, as well as for democratization and the improvement of workers' poor conditions increased, a movement to protest human rights violations and the torture of such prisoners emerged. A family gathering was formed for the detainees, and it was the mothers who played a decisive role in the process. In 1974, the Council of Families of the Imprisoned (Gusokja gajok

hyeobuihoe) was established, which developed into the Democratic Action Family Movement Council (Minjuhwa silcheon gajok undong hyeobuihoe) in 1985. The courageous actions of women who risked their lives have contributed greatly to the international awareness of human rights violations in Korea and the improvement of the status quo with regard to human rights.

No less remarkable, however, was the women's labor movement, which started out in protest against low wages and inhumane working conditions. The movement led to the formation of unions at companies with foreign investments in the Free Export Zone, an area in which unions were strictly prohibited, and corrected gender discrimination at industrial sites as well as improved wages and labor conditions. In the 1970s, the democratic labor movements spread throughout women's workplaces, playing a role in reviving the Korean labor movement overall, which had almost disappeared under the severe anti-communist oppression prevalent in Korea from 1945 onward. During the 1970s and the mid-1980s, women emerged as the main agents of the social movement, although it appears to have focused more on the struggles against the dictatorship and for the survival of women (female workers, farmers, and poor women) than on issues peculiar to women in general.

In the late 1980s, however, the sharp decline in the number of female workers in Korea weakened the women's labor movement as multinational capital fled to Southeast Asia to avoid union activation and higher wages, and Korea's industrial center shifted to heavy industry. However, the Korean female workers' struggle became a new model for the women's movements in the Third World, leading to the emergence of the Southeast Asian women's movement in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand in the 1980s.

In 1977, Ewha Womans University opened the very first course on women's studies, and the Western theory of women's studies began to be introduced in Korea. From the 1980s, the works of feminist theorists Kate Millett and Betty Friedan were widely distributed, while socialist women's theories such as those of Engels and Zetkin were illegally published and widely read by young activists from various student movements. These works gave a strong theoretical impetus to the development of the New Women's Movement in Korea. In fact, the rapid introduction and spread of Western feminist theories was attributed to the peculiarity of Korean women's education, which is generally higher than that of other third-world countries, and to the women who had studied abroad and returned home to serve as the bridgehead for the dissemination of Western feminist theory. Since then, the feminist cultural movement, initiated by female intellectuals and artists, has also exerted considerable influence on Korean society.

Emergence and Development of the New Women's Movement: Post-1987

In June 1987, the participation of a million citizens in street demonstrations enabled Korea to realize its long-cherished desire for political democracy by ousting the military dictatorship. This historic transition also constituted a turning point for the women's movements. Instead of the combative and revolutionary social

transformation movements of the past, interest in everyday life reforms, along with ecologicalism, citizens' rights reclamation, and peace movements increased, all of which led to the development of civic movement. In this atmosphere, women who had previously been engaged in the democratic and labor movements now began to unite into various progressive women's movements. The Korea Women's Hot Line (Hanguk yeoseong-ui jeonhwa yeonhap), the Korean Women's Workers' Association (Hanguk yeoseong nodong-jahoe), and Women Link (Yeoseong minuhoe) were formed, and, in February 1987, twenty-one women's organizations established a united front, the umbrella organization called the Korean Women's Associations United (Hanguk yeoseong danche yeonhap), propelling women's movements forward at an incomparable pace.

The women's movements that began in the late 1980s are referred to as the New Women's Movement because their characteristics clearly distinguished them from all earlier movements. Since that time, women's movements have refused to be subordinate to the government or other social movements, and have sought to independently realize a society in which gender equality is achieved by provoking a complete rupture in the patriarchal system. Women's movements shared the long-standing discourse that "only when social problems are resolved can women's problems be solved." For the first time, however, the movements declared an autonomous women's movement discrete from the social movements. Nevertheless, compared to the separation of Western women's movements from social movements, the Korean women's movements have followed the path of "together sometimes, separate at other times," at times

maintaining a relationship of solidarity with civil and social movements and at others criticizing them. This strategy has contributed greatly to the remarkable success of the women's movements over the past thirty years.

The important historical contribution of the New Women's Movement was its influence on the enactment and revision of laws pertaining to women. In addition to the revision of the Employment Equality Act of 1988, the following acts were legislated and enforced: the Infant Care Act of 1991, the Special Act on Sexual Violence in 1993, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 1996, and the Act on the Prevention of Sex-Based Discrimination in 2000. In the process of this movement, women's rights were greatly improved through the mobilization of professionals focusing on



Women protesting in the streets, demanding the abolition of the Household Head System in 2005

women's policies or by continuous lobbying, media promotion, and the submission of petitions, while reflecting the needs of the female public as much as possible.

Amid the reality of the divided Korean Peninsula and the military dictatorship, however, growing militarism led to a dramatic increase in the sex industry in Korean society and severe violations of women's human rights associated with human trafficking. Conservative and progressive women's movement groups united in their resistance and, in March 2004, succeeded in enacting the Sex Trade Prevention Act. This placed Korea at the center of the international sex trade debate as one of the few nations to implement a ban on sex trade and human trafficking. In addition, on March 2, 2005, the Household Head System (*Hojuje*), a representative patriarchal family system that had existed since the Japanese colonial period, was abolished in the face of pressure from a movement comprising conservative women's groups as well as the New Women's Movement.

In order to overcome the realities of national division, women of the New Women's Movement were also active in the movements for unification and peace. To resolve the conflict between the two Koreas, the New Women's Movement carried out fundraising campaigns to interact with North Korean women, especially those suffering from the severe famine. In addition to calling for the reduction of defense spending and engaging in the disarmament movement, they also campaigned against the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and even against the dispatch of Korean troops to those countries. However, compared to other movements related to women's rights, the movements for unification and peace had difficulty gaining the



Representatives from North Korea welcoming delegations from South Korea and Japan, who passed the Panmunjeom to attend the conference on "Peace in Asia and Women's Role" held in Pyeongyang in 1992

attention of the female public.

An aspect of the peace movement that gained broader popular support was the advocacy on behalf of the women victimized by Japanese military sexual slavery. The problem of Japanese military sexual slavery, along with the international shock over the phenomenon of mass rape during the war in Bosnia, aroused deep interest around the world. The Korean women's movements placed priority on the provision of shelter for the victims, the payment of living expenses by the government, and various other welfare considerations. The protests, which were held in front of the Japanese Embassy every Wednesday at 12 p.m., reached 1,400 on August 14, 2019, setting a new record in world history. Moreover, the movement to advocate for the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery reached beyond the bounds of a single nation-state, establishing solidarity with

international cooperation and movements concerning the issue of women's human rights violations in war. The advocacy movement also propelled the U.S., Canada, and the European Union to pass a resolution pressing for an official apology and compensation for the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery from the Japanese government, and materialized its long-term vision in the construction of the War and Women's Human Rights Museum. Through this process, the advocacy movement has continued to reflect on the colonial occupation and the pain of war experienced by Korean women within a broader international context, address the destruction of women's human rights during war, create a broader coalition against it, and extend the solidarity to larger women's movements as well as social movements.

Until 2000, women's political representation in Korean society was virtually non-existent. However, with the introduction of a gender-mainstreaming strategy at the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women, women's movements adopted a more aggressive strategy to realize political empowerment. Women worked to bring about institutional improvements and conducted voter campaigns, and passed a political reform act that allocated 50 percent of proportional representation positions to women. As a result, the proportion of female legislators rose to 13 percent in the 2004 election, increasing the number of female lawmakers to double digits for the first time. A total of 57 women, 29 from local constituencies and 28 from proportional representation, were elected in the 2020 parliamentary elections (figures which shows that women's political advancement encounters greater difficulties in local elections), accounting for 19 percent of all those elected. Even so, this is still about 10 percentage points short of the OECD average of 28.8 percent recorded in 2017.

Over the past thirty years, the New Women's Movement has made remarkable achievements in Korean society regarding the improvement of women's status and human rights. As a result, the Ministry of Gender Equality was established in 2001 and subsequently reorganized as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in June 2005. Moreover, the Korea Women's Policy Institute, established in 1983, provides statistics and theories related to gender issues while taking charge of research on women's issues and preparing policy alternatives. The pressure exerted by the New Women's Movement in this way became a great driver of the implementation of policies pertaining to women during the progressive Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations. It can be seen that women's movements and the state interacted in a mutually beneficial way, creating a synergy that led to an unprecedented expansion of women's policies.

In addition, the women's environmental movement has become more active over the past decade. Women's public participation in environmental protection movements, including the denuclearization movement, has increased markedly. Moreover, women with disabilities also raised their voices against the dual discrimination caused by the internalized reality of disability discrimination in Korean society and the gender discrimination against women. The movement to advocate for homosexuals, which appeared much later than it did in the West, is now one of the pillars of women's movements.

Finally, the spectacular development of the New Women's Movement in Korea, the advocacy for victims of Japanese military sexual slavery, and the international success of these movements have made it necessary to focus attention on transnational solidarity in women's movements. The movement for the advocacy of victims of Japanese military sexual slavery, in particular, could not have achieved its current scale of success had it not been for the international network and support. Since the 1960s, the Korean Women's Associations United (Hanguk yeoseong danche yeonhap) has been actively executing projects focused on international exchanges. Numerous Korean women's organizations participated in the World Conference on Women held by the United Nations in Mexico in 1975, as well as in the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995. Based on the Beijing Platform for Action promulgated at the Beijing World Conference, Korean women's movements have been able to assert and strengthen their demands to the Korean government and Korean society-at-large.

Since the late 1980s, the financial support provided to progressive women's organizations through the Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungslilfe (EZE), a German Protestant organization, has contributed decisively to the development of women's movements and the improvement of women's status in Korea. Korean women's movements have been praised not only for interacting with female German activists and German development aid politics, but also for maximizing the autonomy of women's movements based on the Korean context. Such a transnational alliance should be internationally remembered as a desirable model of solidarity between First and Third World feminism.

After 1987, the New Women's Movement became vitalized, and certain laws and institutions were reformed to improve women's rights and interests; in the same period, conservative women's organizations also steadily carried out a wide range of projects. The most representative of the various projects executed by the Korean National Council of Women (Hanguk yeoseong danche hyeobuihoe) include the New Village Women's Association (Saemaeul bunyeohoe) and the Housewives for Caring about Their Hometowns (Gohyang-eul saenggakhaneun jubumoim). From the perspective of rule of scales, their presence is particularly significant. In an empirical survey of Gyeonggi Province and the city of Daejeon, the members of the Korean National Council of Women accounted for one quarter of the local adult female population. Although they were organized from above, the social welfare services that they routinely provided in times of national disasters such as drought and flooding played a significant role in Korea, where the welfare system was still relatively weak. There were also functional organizations such as the Nurses Association and the Physicians Association, which were mobilized for political decision-making processes such as elections to contribute to the maintenance of the ruling system. On the other hand, organizations such as the Korean National Council of Women and the YWCA also engaged in various activities centered on improving women's status from the perspective of liberal feminism. For example, conservative and progressive women's organizations collaborated closely on joint campaigns, signature drives, and lobbying activities with the aim of enacting

anti-prostitution laws, abolishing the Household Head System (*Hojuje*), and expanding women's political power.

Nevertheless, the characteristics of the Korean women's movements are that due to the ideological confrontation and conflict that arose under the anti-communist system, they were clearly divided into two camps, namely the conservative women's movement and the progressive women's movement, and split their activities between two umbrella organizations, the Korean National Council of Women and the Korean Women's Associations United. In the middle of the spectrum, however, is a plethora of smaller groups, especially the recent networks centered on netizens; however, they have had relatively little impact, and their organizations are decentralized compared to the two large umbrella organizations. These characteristics pose both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, centralization may weaken the diversity of women's movements; on the other, the two centralized umbrella organizations have the advantage of effectively rallying various women's resistance activities and effectively negotiating with the government or businesses. In fact, their power has been a major factor in the relatively successful development of Korean women's movements since the late 1980s.

Realities and Tasks of the Women's Movements in the Age of Globalization

The achievements of the Korean women's movements until 2007 were so splendid that these movements ultimately became a model for other women's movements in the Third World. Nevertheless, skepticism abounds as to whether worthwhile improvements have really been achieved. Even if women's movements have attained significant results, it will take a long time to create a society based on gender equality, particularly within Korea where patriarchal ideology has maintained its rigid hold on Korean society and gender discrimination remains severe.

The current atmosphere of the Korean women's movements is rather ambivalent. On the one hand, there is a pessimistic outlook because the tasks to be achieved are ever more difficult. As already mentioned, the low wages and non-regularization of female labor, and the near impossibility of achieving a work-home balance experienced by women cannot be solved without a fundamental reform of global capitalism, requiring a restructuring of the market and fundamental changes in social values and consciousness. Recently, women's movements have been actively promoting the slogan "Feminism is the completion of democracy," as well as the statement that there cannot be true women's liberation without the full realization of democracy.

However, with the active participation of young feminists, there is now also an optimistic view of the popularization of feminism. Already in the mid-1980s, there was a movement to overcome patriarchal and authoritarian cultures and create alternative feminist cultures, with serials such as *Another Culture* (Tto hanaui munhwa) and *Women and Society* (Yeoseonggwa sahoe) at the center. This led to the spread of women's movements through various small-scale feminist groups and throughout the cyber world.

Women's Movements in the Era of Social Media

Young feminists have emerged since the mid-1990s and distinguished themselves since the 2000s. Although they have sometimes been extreme and aggressive in their approach, they have received social acclaim for their role in shaking up and awakening Korean society. In the era of the Internet, starting with PC communication, the feminist movements developed webzines, Internet women's community activities, and feminist Internet media; as of 2000, the Internet community "Older Sister's House" (Eonnine) had 52,000 members. However, with the influx of large capital since 2000, women have literally been consumed as content on Internet sites or become the consumers. Women-only websites led by women have collapsed due to a lack of capital, while companies have established profit-making ventures based on adult Internet broadcasting and illegal pornography distribution, ultimately enabling pornography and revenge pornography to sweep through the online world.

However, Internet ethics began to change significantly after 2007, and communities where female members exceeded men began to emerge. The tenuous organizations of Internet feminists either lacked organizational skills or did not communicate smoothly with existing women's movements; rather, anonymity and pleasure culture were their main characteristics. However, as Twitter emerged around 2006, women acquired a medium that enabled participation and collective intelligence. Twitter now stands at the center of feminist issues, as a means through which could be found a weak link in the patriarchy that could easily rupture the solid patriarchal system. Women have come to take collective action to exert their social influence through social media.

#MeToo Movement

The MeToo movement, which began in the U.S. in 2017 with the disclosure of numerous cases of sexual harassment, assault, and rape by the influential Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, reached an unprecedented scale and intensity in Korea. On January 29, 2018, the MeToo movement, sparked by the incumbent public prosecutor's accusation of sexual harassment she suffered while working in prosecution, was followed by the disclosure of, and lawsuits against, sexual assault by a provincial governor, who was considered one of the most likely candidates for victory in the upcoming presidential election. This was followed by the revelation of sexual harassment



The sixth protest to denounce the biased judgment on acts of illegal filming

and assault by the two most representative figures in Korean theater and literary circles, and the MeToo Movement shook to the core the entire Korean nation. More than 340 women's labor and civic groups came together to launch the "Citizens' Coalition along with the MeToo Movement," widely disseminating the "With You Campaign."

It was the demonstration held at Hyehwa Station on May 19, 2018, however, that saw the zenith of the MeToo Movement. In Korea, where social media is widely used, the damage caused by hidden cameras and revenge pornography was rapidly increasing, while the industry responsible for commercializing illegal and obscene photographs and videos greatly multiplied its profits. However, the penalties for such excesses were extremely weak compared to those imposed in European countries and the U.S. In response, protests by women criticizing digital sexual violence and biased investigations erupted, and some 60,000 women participated in each of the six demonstrations held in the scorching heat of August. The rally may be considered the first event in the history of Korea to bring together such a large number of women. This shows



Poster for the 2019 Korean Women's Conference, containing a quotation that reads: "Gender equality is the culmination of democracy"

the great achievements of the Korean women's movements, and it is noteworthy that social media played such a significant role, especially as young feminists emerged as the new leaders of activism.

In response to the enthusiasm of the MeToo movement, the government established a set of major national policy tasks designed to eradicate sexual harassment and sexual violence, created the Council for the Eradication of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence, composed of members of twelve different governmental departments, and set up an executive body consisting of nine different departments. In this effort, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family played the role of a control tower. Comprehensive measures to prevent damages were also prepared in connection with digital sex crimes, which have emerged as a problem of grave proportions. As part of this initiative, hotlines and other channels



Protests calling for countermeasures against sexual violence by people in positions of power

for reporting sexual harassment and sexual violence were instituted in all sectors, whether public, education, or industry, in March 2018, and the Digital Sexual Crimes Victims Support Center was established in April 2018. Now, for the realization of the aforementioned laws and systems, women themselves, the state, and civil society are mobilizing together to materialize the ideals of feminism and democracy. The Korean women's movements are working to integrate gender perspectives into Korea's strategy for future development: "Gender equality is the culmination of democracy."

CHRONOLOGY OF KOREAN WOMEN'S HISTORY

700th millennium BCE: The Paleolithic Age begins.
10,000 BCE: The Neolithic Age begins.
2,333 BCE: Dangun Wanggeom founds Gojoseon.
2,000-1,500 BCE: The Bronze Age begins.
400 BCE: The Iron Age begins.
3rd century BCE: Buyeo is founded in Manchuria.
108 BCE: Gojoseon falls after being invaded by Han China.
57 BCE: Silla is founded.
41 BCE: Following King Hyeokgeose, Queen Aryeong encourages agriculture and sericulture.
37 BCE: Goguryeo is founded.
24 BCE: A shrine is erected upon the death of Yuhwa, the mother of King Dongmyeong.
18 BCE: Baekje is founded.
32: Princess Nakrang marries Prince Hodong. Goguryeo destroys the Nakrang Kingdom with the help of Princess Nakrang.
42: Gaya is founded.
157: Se'onyeo goes to Japan and becomes queen.
372: Goguryeo imports Buddhism and establishes Taehak.
384: Baekje imports Buddhism.
527: Silla officially adopts Buddhism.
540: Empress Dowager Jiso, the mother of King Jinheung, begins ruling as regent.
612: Goguryeo repels Sui China's invasion.
632: Queen Seondeok ascends the throne.
645: Goguryeo repels Tang China's invasion.
647: Queen Jindeok ascends the throne.
660: Baekje is toppled by the allied forces of Silla and Tang China.
664: Women's dress becomes Sinicized.
668: Goguryeo is toppled by the allied forces of Silla and Tang China.
676: Silla unifies the Three Kingdoms and wins the war against Tang China.
698: Balhae is founded by Dae Joyeong, a former general of Goguryeo.
754: Madame Sammo makes an offering for the construction of the bell at Hwangnyongsa Temple.
887: Queen Jinseong ascends the throne.

900: Later Baekje is founded.
901: Later Goguryeo is founded.
918: Goryeo is founded by Wang Geon.
Madame Yu (later Empress Sinhye) puts armor on her husband (Wang Geon) and encourages him to found Goryeo.
935: Goryeo unifies the Later Three Kingdoms.
1108: Women who commit adultery are registered in the Register of Licentious Women and forced to become slaves who sew.
1231: The Mongol Yuan launches its invasion of Goryeo, which fights against the invasion for 40 years.
1270: A peace treaty is signed between Goryeo and the Yuan.
1274: A ministry tasked with seeking out unmarried women to send to the Yuan for marriage is established, and 140 women are sent to the Yuan.
1274: The Crown Prince (later King Chungryeol) marries Khutugh beki Kha, the daughter of Kublai Khan.
1289: Neo-Confucianism is introduced to Korea.
1340: Gi Ja-o's daughter, sent as a tribute to the Yuan, becomes the second empress of the Yuan.
1377: Anthology of Zen Teachings of the Great Buddhist Priests (*Jikjisimcheyojeol*), the world's oldest extant book printed with metal movable type, is published.
1392: Joseon is founded.
1405: Bureau of the Inner Court Ladies is established for the first time in Joseon.
1405: Remarriage is forbidden for widows within 3 years of their husbands' death.
1408: Five women are chosen and forcibly sent to the Ming.
1412: Women are made to cover their faces when entering and exiting public spaces.
1413: The differentiation between wife and concubine is specified.
1446: Hunminjeongeum, the Korean alphabet, is promulgated by King Sejong the Great.
1469: Queen Jeonghui, the queen consort of King Sejo, begins ruling as regent, and continues for 8 years.
1475: Queen Sohye (Queen Dowager Insu), of the Cheongju Han clan, writes *Instructions for Women* (Naehun).
1477: Widows are forbidden to remarry.
1493: Queen Jeonghye officiates over a sericulture ceremony.
1545: Queen Munjeong, the queen consort of King Jungjong, begins ruling as regent for King Myeongjong, and continues for 9 years.
1567: Queen Insun, the queen consort of King Myeongjong, begins ruling as regent for King Seonjo, and continues for 8 months.
1592: Japan invades Korea; Korea's ceramics are disseminated to Japan.
17th-18th century: Silhak, or the Practical Learning of Confucianism, is introduced.
1636: The Manchus invade Joseon.
1650: Princess Uisun is the last girl to be sent as tribute from Joseon to Qing China.
1734: *Four Books for Women* (Nu sishu) and *Instructions for Women* (Naehun) are transcribed into Hangeul.
1778: Rules that ban heavy wigs for women are proclaimed.
1784: The first baptism of a Korean Catholic is held.
1800: Queen Jeongsun, the queen consort of King Yeongjo, begins ruling as regent when King Sunjo ascends the throne, and continues for 4 years.
1801: Kang Wan-suk (Colomba), the president of the Association of Catholic Women, is decapitated during the Sinyu Persecution.
1834: Queen Sunwon, the queen consort of King Sunjo, begins ruling as regent when King Heonjong ascends the throne, and continues for 7 years.
1849: Queen Sunwon, the queen consort of King Sunjo, begins ruling as regent when King Cheoljong ascends the throne, and continues for 3 years.
1860: Eastern Learning (Donghak) is founded.
1863: Queen Sinjeong, the queen consort of King Ikjong, begins ruling as regent when King Gojong ascends the throne, and continues for 4 years.
1876: Korean ports are opened formally and diplomatic relations with Japan are established.
1879: Protestantism is introduced to Korea.
1880s: Diplomatic relations with American and European nations are established.
1884: The Gapsin Coup is staged.
1886: Ewha Girls' School is opened.
1887: Dr. Howard, a woman, opens the Bogu Women's Ward in the Jeongdong

district of Northern Seoul. The ward becomes the forerunner of all women's hospitals in Korea.

1894: The Donghak Peasant Movement, the Sino-Japanese War, and the Gabo Reforms take place.

1894: The Gabo Reforms abolish early marriage and the prohibition on women's remarriage.

1895: Queen Myeongseong is assassinated. Yun Hui-sun, a woman, participates in the Righteous Army Movement of the Eulmi year (protesting the ordinance to cut hair as well as the assassination of Queen Myeongseong).

1897: King Gojong proclaims the Great Han Empire.

1898: The Chanyang Association (Chanyanghoe), the first women's organization in Korea, is founded; the Circular for the Establishment of a Girls' School is proclaimed; and Sunseong Girls' School is established.

1904: The Russo-Japanese War breaks out.

1905: The Japan-Korea Treaty is signed.

1907: A Women's Organization for the National Debt Repayment Movement is established.

1908: Gyeongseong Girls' School, a government-run school, is established.

1910: Korea is forcibly annexed by Japan.
The first picture brides arrive in Hawaii.

1913: The Korean Women's Association of Hawaii is established.
The Pine and Bamboo Society, a secret society, is founded in Pyeongyang.

1919: The March First Movement takes place; the Korean Patriotic Women's Association becomes active.

1920: The Association for the Education of Joseon Women is established.
Jo Sin-seong's Korean Youth Corps becomes active.

1922: The Aid Society for Self-Supporting Girl Students in Korea and the Korean YWCA are founded.

1924: The Korean Women's Socialist League, the first women's socialist organization, is founded.

1927: The Rose-of-Sharon Friendship Society, the first confederation of women's organizations, is founded.

1930: The Seoul Female Students Independence Movement takes place.

1931: Female workers begin their resistance movement, represented by Kang Ju-ryong's rooftop protest on Eulmildae Pavilion.

1940: The Korean Liberation Army is established in Chongqing, and female liberation fighters are actively involved in the fight for Korean independence.

1945: Korea gains independence from Japan.
The Alliance of Women for the Founding of a Nation, renamed as the General League of Korean Women the same year, is founded.

1946: The Independence Promotion Patriotic Women's Association is founded.

1947: The General League of Korean Women is renamed as the South Korean Democratic Women's League.

1948: The government of the Republic of Korea is established.
Licensed prostitution is abolished.

1950: The Korean War breaks out.
The Korean Women's Volunteer Army is established.

1953: The Korean Armistice Agreement is signed.

1956: Legal Aid for Women is founded.

1960: The April 19 Revolution occurs.

1961: The May 16 Military Coup d'état is staged.

1972: The South-North Joint Communique is issued.

1973: The Committee for the Amendment of the Women-and-Family Act is founded with 63 women's organizations and approximately 1,000 women involved to push for the amendment of the male-oriented inheritance laws.

1978: Dong-il Textiles throws water contaminated with feces at female textile workers requesting unionization.

1979: The Coup d'état of December Twelfth is staged.
187 female workers of the YH Trade Union hold a strike at the headquarters of the New Democratic Party, demanding the normalization of YH.

1980: The Gwangju Democratization Struggle takes place.

1983: Women's Hotline is founded.

1985: The first-ever Korean Women's Congress is held on March 8 to celebrate International Women's Day.
The first Basic Plan for Policies for Women is established (currently there are five such plans).

1986: Twenty-three women's organizations including the Catholic Female Farm Workers Association hold a rally to abolish subscription fees for KBS-TV.

1987: Korean Women's Associations United is founded.
The Korean Women Workers Association is founded.
Korean Women Link is established.
1990: The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan is founded.
1991: South Korea and North Korea join the United Nations at the same time.
The Conference on Peace in Asia and the Role of Women, the first civilian-level North-South exchange, takes place in Seoul.
1992: The Conference on Peace in Asia and the Role of Women is held in Pyeongyang.
1993: The Special Act on Sexual Violence is established.
1995: The 4th International Women's Day in Beijing is held; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is proclaimed.
The Framework Act on Women's Development is established (later to be changed to the Gender Equality Act in 2014).
1997: The Protection Law against Family Violence is established.
1998: The Special Women's Affairs Committee, a presidential advisory body, is newly established.
1999: The Constitutional Court rules the Veterans Extra Points System to be unconstitutional on December 23.
2000: The Inter-Korean Summit is held.
The UN Security Council adopts Resolution No. 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.
2001: The Special Women's Affairs Committee is elevated to the Ministry of Gender Equality.
2004: The Prostitution Prevention Act is established on February 23.
2005: A bill to revise the civil law, with its main focus on abolishing the Household Head System, is passed on March 2.
The South Korea Committee and the South Korean Women's Headquarters for practicing the June 15th North-South Joint Declaration are established.
2008: The Northeast Asian Women's Peace Conference is held.
2010: The Ministry of Gender Equality is changed to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.
2014: 120 women from military camp towns file a compensation suit against the nation and secure partial victory.

2014: Women Cross the DMZ is established, crossing the armistice line to host peace conferences in North and South Korea.
The first national action plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325 is announced.
2016: The solidarity movement for anti-discrimination legislation begins. The Black Outfit Protest (Geomeun siwi) to abolish the criminalization of abortion is co-hosted.
2018: The second national action plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325 is announced.
Female prosecutor Seo Ji-hyeon forwards allegations of sexual misconduct, igniting the #MeToo movement in South Korea. Six demonstrations against cyber-sex crimes are held by the Courage to be Uncomfortable group (Bulpyeonhan jinsil).

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